

Impact of COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Nepal - Challenges and Coping Strategies

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Abstract

The pandemic spread of Novel Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, has significantly disrupted every aspects of human life, including education. The alarming spread of the virus caused a havoc in the educational system forcing educational institutions to shut down. According to a UNESCO report, 1.6 billion children across 191 countries have been severely impacted by the temporary closure of the educational institutions. In order to mitigate the impact, educational institutions have responded to the closure differently in different contexts with a range of options for students, teachers, managers and parents, depending on the resources, both materials and human, available to them. Most of the options have to incorporate innovative technologies (e.g., digital and mobile technologies combined with traditional technologies such as radio and TV) in order to provide at least some form of educational continuity. As distance and online education is dependent on technological facilities, including internet and Wi-Fi, the discrepancies that exist in their availability are widening the gaps in access and quality of education. This article investigates the impact of COVID-19 on the Nepalese education system, with a focus on the school education. Based on the published documents, reports and news commentaries, the article provides a critical analysis and reflection on the opportunities and challenges the pandemic has presented for the technologization of the education systems. The findings indicate that the pandemic has had serious impacts on students' learning and well-being, and that it potentially widens the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children in their equitable access to quality education. Furthermore, the findings suggest that Nepal has formulated a number of ICT and education related policies since 2000; however, the challenges it is experiencing in the advent of Covid-19 are mainly due to its faulty implementation strategies and inability to implement those policies. A discussion of the challenges and their potential managing strategies is provided in the final section of the article.

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