

A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is a dynamic and evolving profession that adapts to changing educational needs, classroom environments, and student learning requirements. However, despite significant technological advancements and societal transformations, traditional teacher-centred approaches continue to dominate many educational settings. In an increasingly globalised and technology-driven world, these conventional methods may not adequately prepare students to meet contemporary academic and professional challenges. Modern education requires learners to develop critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, analytical reasoning, evaluation, and innovation skills, moving beyond the basic acquisition and retention of knowledge. Consequently, contemporary educational trends emphasise learner-centred instruction, technology-integrated teaching, collaborative learning, and the development of higher-order cognitive abilities.

The implementation of emerging educational trends requires educators to adopt flexible and innovative approaches that respond effectively to diverse classroom needs. Iterative design methodology provides a valuable framework for this process by encouraging educators to introduce new teaching strategies, evaluate their effectiveness in real classroom settings, and make continuous improvements based on feedback and observed outcomes. This systematic process supports the gradual integration of innovative pedagogical practices and promotes continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

The present study examines emerging trends and challenges in higher education by drawing upon existing research, expert perspectives, and relevant academic discussions. It provides an overview of the changing higher education landscape and identifies significant developments and potential challenges confronting educational institutions. The study also highlights the implications of these trends for educational planning, institutional development, and policymaking. Its findings are intended to assist policymakers, educators, and higher education administrators in anticipating future developments, formulating appropriate strategies, and addressing emerging challenges effectively. Furthermore, the study may serve as a foundation for future research by identifying relevant themes and research gaps within the higher education sector. Understanding and responding to evolving educational trends is essential for strengthening the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of higher education in a rapidly changing global environment. *Keywords: Higher education, educational technology, trends and challenges in higher education.*

INTRODUCTION

In order to become employable, students need to be able to widen their intellectual horizons and develop the skills necessary for a particular trade or field of expertise. When it comes to creating and transferring knowledge and skills, the industrial revolution and colleges go hand in hand. Engineers, accountants, and managers were needed for the manufacturing.

Doctors, architects, and administrators were needed as a result of the growing urbanization. University research aided in the development of stronger weapons of war and defence for nations and companies. Trade and trade expanded rapidly, necessitating the services of competent professionals. All of these conditions were met by universities. The libraries and labs played a crucial role in that endeavor.

With computers, the internet, and cell phones upending the traditional approach of producing and spreading knowledge and skills, things have begun to change. The price of maintaining a top-tier university has multiplied many-fold. However, the value increase for typical students is not significantly greater than the expense. A student can self-teach, for instance, coding and become a programmer after receiving a strong education in school. His short-term classes and online courses, which are far more affordable, will provide value for him. By participating in an internship at a respectable business, that student can expand his knowledge and abilities. The return on investment for students' time and money will be far higher than enrolling in a four-year, full-time software engineering programme at a prestigious university. The university system could experience significant disruption if this is the case for the majority of the streams. Average institutions have a bleak future since they might not be able to produce significant returns for their students.

“Face to face education has relevance which will stay but reimagining cost-effective classroom teaching with practical experience may shape the future university”

One needs to consider the emergence of new educational institutions. The growth of online learning platforms like Coursera, Edx, IBM University, LinkedIn Learning, Khan Academy, and high-quality videos of lectures by eminent scholars and thinkers aids students in learning and delving deeper into specific subjects. The current approach of sharing knowledge and skills is being put to the test by the emergence of Byju's app, Upgrade, and learning academies.

The development of AI and machine learning will assist businesses in creating personalized learning for each individual, which is not now attainable. Students can also use the Google Assistant, Alexa, and Siri as teachers. Students will learn from the podcasts. According to studies, organizations like Google and Amazon have started selecting employees based more on their skillsets than necessarily their academic credentials. These are emerging themes that will converge in the ensuing years. But it is undeniable that the way that colleges and universities operate today is changing.

Universities have hopped on the Edx and courser platforms after taking note of the changes. The likes of Harvard and MIT have accomplished that. Some colleges have made their MBA programme entirely online and completely destroyed their MBA programme. The MBA will change after one year, with six months of classroom instruction and six months of on-the-job training. Government and corporate research funds are the most sought-after.

Face-to-face instruction is still relevant and will remain so, but reinventing classroom instruction that is both efficient and practical may help to define the future of higher education. The new cohorts will be looking for engagement as well. People in their 50s and 60s will apply for admittance as people live longer and want to learn new things. In order to meet the changing needs of society and the global community, universities must be reinvented and remade.

POPULAR TRENDS TO ADDRESS THE POST-PANDEMIC EDUCATION CRISIS

The covid-19 pandemic has completely altered the educational landscape in unexpected ways. It has been increasingly difficult for pupils to predict exactly how the upcoming year

will unfold post-COVID-19. Because to anomalies in their studies, students still have no idea what they will do in the future.

SELF-CARE

Teachers and their families have experienced severe hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nobody ever imagines that they will have to deal with such a challenging school environment. Many kids and parents developed a new understanding of the need of self-care during the course of the previous year as schools shifted to online learning and teachers tried to adapt with new ways of teaching. While the details of the upcoming year are still being worked out, it is crucial for students, instructors, and parents to take care of their general health and wellbeing. By introducing more assignments, teachers can have time for self-care in addition to helping pupils manage their stress.

BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning refers to a school or classroom setting where students receive teaching from the teacher as well as further instruction via self-directed activities. If students continue to use this method of instruction in the upcoming years, this combination will be more beneficial.

Personalized learning

The last few years have seen an increase in personalized learning. Because it seeks to tailor instruction to the needs, interests, and strengths of each individual student. It encourages learning so that each learner can advance at their own speed. Teachers can utilize the same approach with all of their kids in their classroom thanks to new adaptive software tools.

STEAM curriculum

You may have heard about the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) curriculum, which prepares students to enter the workforce with relevant knowledge and strong practical skills in high-demand fields. But in recent years, we've seen that not only science is effective—arts students actually perform better academically as well. Thus, developing STEAM (STEM plus arts) offers pupils a more comprehensive, real-world education.

Genius hour

Genius hour is that precise hour of the day when a student works for an hour on a self-directed, self-selected activity. It's a novel instructional strategy that encourages students to develop their originality and independence of thought.

Digital citizenship

Digital citizenship is the effective and responsible use of technology and the internet in the age of the COVID-19 epidemic. To deal with this learning, which has moved from the conventional manner of learning to modern online learning, good digital citizenship is required.

Bite-Sized learning

With the use of the technique known as "bite-sized learning," kids can receive brief, intensive instruction that focuses on particular academic abilities. Instead of lengthy classes, it divides the content into manageable parts. Only length contributes to its composition. The modules are only 10 to 15 minutes long.

Social-emotional learning

The term "social-emotional learning" is still very relevant today. The COVID-19 crisis scenario forces many kids to lead stressful lives. Teachers now spend an hour fostering students' academic growth using strategies for social and emotional development. Because it aids in reducing behavioural problems in the classroom.

Gamification

The use of the gamification strategy in education increases students' enjoyment of games while also fostering positive learning and the development of certain abilities. Through the use of strategy, pupils are taught by playing games.

Experimental learning

Since it enables students to broaden their horizons outside of the classroom, learning outside of it always has an impact on education. Parents and teachers can encourage their pupils to go on field excursions and give them homework that will help them learn.

Virtual or online learning

Currently, online learning possibilities are supported by 48 states and the District of Columbia. These opportunities range from occasional classroom augmentation to full-time programme enrollment. These options, which include dual enrollment, credit recovery, and summer school programmes, can let students enroll in remedial classes or Advanced Placement and honors' courses.

Full-time online school

The following virtual or online schools accept full-time students. The online school is where students who enroll in these programmes receive all of their coursework and earn all of their credits, not a physical school. Both mandatory courses and electives can be done online, and many of them come with online study tools. Many online learning options are provided through contracts with commercial companies or other states, however other online schools and programmes are self-developed.

Use digital resources well

Schools can assist teaching and learning in a variety of ways by utilizing digital resources. A few examples of how technology can be used to support learning include electronic grade books, digital portfolios, learning games, and real-time feedback on instructor and student performance.

□ Current Educational Issues

Technology and education

What lessons about successfully delivering courses online have been learned by educators and institutions? What are the potential dangers of online learning? Do all kids have access to the right technology? What dangers could arise from allowing kids free access to the internet? Are all users' levels of involvement with learning the same?

Government policies and spending

- How is the government handling the rise in student enrollment? How does this response affect secondary school overpopulation and teacher recruitment?
- What do teacher and student budget cuts mean?

Assessment and attainment

- How has the new GCSE grading system impacted learning?

- What effect has the COVID-19 pandemic had on assessments and results?
- How accurate are SATs results for primary schools? Is placing this level of pressure on children a viable way of testing intelligence?

You should also familiarize yourself with the nature of the exam system and global trends in attainment.

School reform

- What are your views on all schools becoming academies?
- How successful are Free Schools?
- What is the curriculum and how is it taught?
- What do you know about school funding reform?

Health and child development

- How can we better support pupils' mental health?

Education and the curriculum

- How important are arts and drama education in secondary schools?
- How much early year's education should be provided for free?
- What are your views on the flipped classroom?
- Has inclusion been impacted by Brexit? How does this impact citizenship education and exploring British values?
- What is your approach to mainstream education for deaf and hard of hearing students?

Trends that will shape the future of higher education

Schools and universities have been compelled to move a significant portion of their instruction online since the start of the latest pandemic. This appears to have sparked a number of improvements in the educational field. Universities all across the world have welcomed greater flexibility by providing both physical and virtual courses. The SAT exam for college admission in the US has lately been reduced and digitalized, making it easier to take and less stressful for students. Coding is also finding its way into more school curriculum.

- It may appear that education is undergoing much-needed transformation as a result of these changes. When examined closely, these actions, however, fail to address the actual issues that face higher education. Higher education is typically not available to those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, validates knowledge rather than fosters learning, and concentrates on quickly out-of-date information. In a nutshell, it is failing in terms of both quality and accessibility.

□ Higher Education Trends

In the past year, real reforms that address the underlying problems with education have begun to emerge. The four trends we anticipate affecting higher education in 2022 are listed below.

- **Learning from everywhere**

Learning results across the education spectrum have been acknowledged to have worsened

as a result of schools and universities around the world being forced to suddenly switch to online instruction. The experiment with online instruction did, however, prompt a reconsideration of time and space in the field of education. Students learning at their own pace and performing science experiments in their kitchens had certain advantages. Hybrid learning allows for truly immersive and experience learning, enabling students to apply concepts acquired in the classroom out in the real world. Hybrid learning goes beyond simply merging a virtual and physical classroom.

Therefore, educational institutions should adopt a "learn from everywhere" strategy rather than switching to a "learn from anywhere" approach (offering flexibility) (providing immersion). The European Business School, Esade, one of our partners, introduced a new bachelor's degree in 2021 that combines classes taken in Barcelona on campus and online via a platform especially designed for learning with immersive practical experiences working in Berlin and Shanghai while students develop their own social enterprise. This type of course offers a fully blended educational environment.

- **Replacing lectures with active learning**

Both successful teaching and ineffective learning occur during lectures. They have been used for centuries at universities and colleges as an affordable way for teachers to teach pupils. It seems absurd to pay thousands of dollars to listen to someone give you information that you can acquire elsewhere at a much lower price, especially in an age where digital information is widely available and free. This was made clear by the collapse of schools and colleges as useless lectures found their way into parents' living rooms.

Some educational institutions are beginning to adopt teaching strategies that draw on the science of learning in order to demonstrate good learning results. This demonstrates that listening to information does not help our brains learn, and the information we do learn this way is readily lost (as shown by the Ebbinghaus forgetting curve, below). Real learning is based on concepts like spaced learning, emotional learning, and knowledge application.

This approach, referred to as "totally engaged learning," has progressively gained the support of the educational establishment. There is proof that it not only enhances academic results but also closes the educational gap with students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. For instance, Paul Quinn College, an HBCU with Texas roots, introduced its Honors Program in 2020, combining fully active learning with internships at local businesses. Students from historically marginalised backgrounds now have the chance to put their university education to use outside of the classroom.

- **Teaching skills that remain relevant in a changing world**

A recent survey found that 96% of chief academic officers at universities believe their institutions are doing a good job of educating students for the workforce. Only 11% of business leaders and less than half (41%) of college students agreed with this statement. Even if these talents and the technologies that support them will eventually become obsolete, universities nonetheless put a lot of emphasis on teaching specific skills using the newest technologies. Universities must therefore constantly catch up with the skills demanded by the workforce of the future.

We must impart knowledge and abilities that are applicable in fresh, evolving, and uncharted circumstances. For instance, in the past, journalism students may have learned how to write long-form articles that could be published in a newspaper; more recently, they

may have learned how to write shorter articles and post content on social media. The ability to recognise and connect with readers, write well, and select the best media for your intended audience are more durable talents. These are transferable talents that apply to both scientists and attorneys regardless of their respective fields of study.

Minerva University, situated in San Francisco and founded by a member of the Minerva Project, has divided cognitive abilities like critical thinking and creative thinking into basic ideas and mental practises. Regardless of the major a student decides to pursue, it teaches fundamental concepts over the course of the four college years and across disciplines.

How would you perform if you took the final exam for the topic you majored in today? The majority of us would fail since the exam only evaluated the knowledge we had at the time, not how much we had learned. In addition, a lot of us have certifications in fields we don't fully understand.

Instead of assessing actual ability levels, many students are admitted to higher education based on standardized tests that are biased toward a particular socioeconomic class. Instead of separating their assessment of competence from socioeconomic level, universities then attempt to address this problem by enforcing admission quotas. There have been various initiatives to replace high-stakes exams with other metrics that not only assess learning outcomes but also improve them as more US universities—led by Harvard—start to reject standardised assessments.

Students are encouraged to actively improve their performance rather than just having it evaluated through formative assessment, which includes both official and informal evaluations throughout the learning journey. In place of one-dimensional, alphabetical or numerical grades, a variety of metrics are used in the reporting and recording of this assessment.

CONCLUSION

This article gives a broad overview of the present shifts, trends, and difficulties driving the transformation of higher education, emphasizing the central role of pedagogical innovation enabled by technology. The IDEAS framework aims to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, indicative rather than exhaustive. It is suggested as a guide to help identify important issues and support organizational planning, structural design, decision making, and the development of strategies for institutions to stay at the forefront of transformational higher education while addressing issues and obstacles. It can be utilized as a catalyst for critical consideration, idea generation, discussion, and creative planning for upcoming policies at the institutional and cross-institutional levels. Finally, by offering focal points to develop, it can be used to advance study on the different related issues being examined.

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