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BEYOND LECTURES: INSIGHTS FROM BUSINESS DISCIPLINES (REFLECTIONS, TRANSFORMATIONS, AND THE HUMAN SIDE OF TEACHING)

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT
UiTM CAWANGAN JOHOR

Beyond Lectures: Insights from Business Discipline-

(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human Side of Teaching)

Chief Editor
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POST-COVID19 EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: INSIGHTS FROM TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES AT UITM JOHOR

Rudza Hanim Mohd Anuar, Nazihah Omar, Khairunnisa Rahman

Introduction

The year 2020 marked an unprecedented moment in modern history as the world confronted a global health crisis triggered by the emergence of COVID-19, a novel virus believed to have originated from animals in Wuhan, China. The sudden outbreak resulted in millions of deaths worldwide, including in Malaysia. In response, the Malaysian government implemented the Movement Control Order (MCO) as a containment measure to curb community transmission.

Borders were closed, public movement became severely restricted, and schools were shut down to prevent the virus from spreading among students. The use of face masks became compulsory, and social distancing was introduced. Despite comprehensive containment measures, fatalities continued to rise until vaccines were successfully developed approximately one year after the first documented cases in Wuhan.

COVID-19 not only destabilised global economic, political, and social structures but also reshaped communication systems and educational practices. The dramatic impact of the pandemic reflected the reality of a highly interconnected world in which many nations were unprepared for a crisis of this scale (Zakaria, 2021).

Within the Malaysian education system, the pandemic presented challenges never encountered. For Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), this period represented its first-ever disruption of such magnitude. Lecturers and students faced a dual challenge: maintaining academic continuity amid mobility restrictions while ensuring mental and physical readiness during prolonged uncertainty.

As the situation worsened, the government mandated the closure of all universities. Strict access regulations were imposed on lecturers entering campuses, while many students were stranded in their hometowns with limited learning access.

The educational landscape underwent a rapid and dramatic transformation: teaching and learning, previously conducted face-to-face, shifted almost overnight into fully online environments. This sudden shift compelled the acceptance and integration of digital learning, a change previously recommended but not fully embraced before the pandemic (Yong Zhao & Watterson, 2021).

Students and lecturers living in rural or remote areas struggled with weak internet connectivity, inadequate digital devices, and emotional strain due to illness or the loss of family members. Some students had to take on part-time jobs to support their families following unemployment or bereavement caused by the pandemic.

However, through continuous support from UiTM's administration, counselling services, and collaborative problem-solving between lecturers and students, these challenges were gradually mitigated. As noted by Galloway (2020), the pandemic catalysed major systemic changes while creating new opportunities for innovation. UiTM thus entered a new educational era, transitioning from conventional face-to-face delivery to fully digital learning environments.

The Transition from Physical Classroom-Based Learning to Fully Online Learning Environments

Technology plays a fundamental role in communication and knowledge dissemination. The advancement of digital tools has strengthened educational systems by enabling more efficient

and flexible teaching practices. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of educational technologies (EdTech) and presented opportunities for integrating more innovative digital solutions (Kang, 2021).

Before the pandemic, online learning technologies were underutilised by most lecturers and students, who preferred conventional face-to-face methodology. COVID-19, however, served as a powerful catalyst, compelling the higher education community to embrace digital learning platforms fully. Since then, the education sector has undergone a transformation into the online and digital era, and it has not reverted to traditional methods.

During the pandemic, UiTM staff and students adopted various online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Cisco Webex, Skype, and WhatsApp. Some lecturers also uploaded recorded lectures on YouTube for asynchronous access. However, these platforms initially had limitations such as restricted meeting durations, participant caps, and limited recording functions thus making them less optimal for full course delivery.

To address these issues, lecturers and students collaborated to restructure learning schedules beyond the conventional 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. window. Online classes were held in the evenings or on weekends to accommodate internet accessibility and family responsibilities. Lectures, tutorials, assessments, discussion forums, and email communication were used extensively to ensure academic continuity.

The increased use of online tools enabled uninterrupted teaching and learning despite geographical distance. Although students initially struggled with the lack of face-to-face interaction and reduced spontaneity during academic discussions, these challenges were progressively resolved through continuous adjustments, reflective dialogue, and shared problem-solving.

In addition, many students faced difficulties due to the lack of access to digital devices such as tablets, particularly those from the B40 socioeconomic group. To address this issue, the government provided assistance by distributing devices to eligible students, thereby enabling them to continue their learning process.

Post-Covid-19 Learning Legacies and the Rise of the Artificial Intelligence Era.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the end of the global COVID-19 emergency in 2023, marking a transition into post-pandemic recovery. Three years of online learning deeply transformed digital teaching competencies, with lecturers and students becoming increasingly adept at navigating virtual learning environments. This shift enabled teaching and learning to take place with greater flexibility than ever before.

A year later, the education sector faced yet another major transformation with the rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI), regarded as one of the most revolutionary technological advancements of the 21st century. AI significantly enhanced teaching and learning processes by providing intelligent support tools, personalised learning assistance, and automated content generation.

For students, AI tools enable faster access to information, promote understanding of complex subjects, generate academic outlines, produce multimedia materials, and support the preparation of essays and assignments. Intelligent search systems and educational chatbots provide instant explanations without requiring in-person consultations with lecturers.

For lecturers, AI facilitates the rapid creation of quizzes, tutorials, and assessment items. AI-based analytic tools also assist in evaluating students' written work efficiently, saving valuable time and improving feedback quality.

Today, AI is widely used both within and beyond the university environment. The evolution of learning systems, from pre-pandemic face-to-face instruction to early online learning and now to AI-enhanced education, marks a significant paradigm shift.

Online and hybrid teaching approaches continue to remain relevant and are expected to persist even after the pandemic era (Garcia-Morales et al., 2021). Communication between lecturers and students has become more efficient, and the pandemic has transformed traditional educational systems into one of the most technologically advanced learning ecosystems of the modern century.

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