

Radical Solutions for Education in a Crisis Context: COVID-19 as an Opportunity for Global Learning, edited by Daniel Burgos, Ahmed Tlili and Anita Tabacco

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In this path-breaking book, the editors, Daniel Burgos, Ahmed Tlili and Anita Tabacco, from diverse countries present a selection of research about education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The four parts of the book, (1) Global Learning and Crisis, (2) Teachers Support in Crisis, (3) Learners Support in Crisis, and (4) Case Studies, contextualise the discourse of education during a crisis.

There was a paradigm shift from face-to-face teaching to remote online teaching with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each chapter under the four different parts gives insight, up-to-date views and radical solutions on how to face adversity in uncertain times during the crisis context. For example, in terms of the paradigm shift from face-to-face learning to remote learning, the book explores self-learning, project-based learning, shared work, online assessment, virtual classrooms, eGames, interactive planning and many other techniques and skills (p. 4). Whatever the reader's assessment of the book, it covers a wide range of complex social, economic and technological challenges. In addition, there is also a discussion on the EdTech digital technology that revolutionised education, which provides a counterbalance to uncritical techno-optimism (Mirrlees and Alvi 2020).

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The fundamental question asked by the authors is: “What is the nature of education during the COVID-19 crisis, and how can we provide solutions to challenges occasioned by a crisis?” Furthermore, they ask, “What are the action plans for education and the methodology for the challenges of adversity during a crisis?” One of the answers, among many, juxtaposes the optimists’ view that a crisis is an opportunity to bring about change with the view held by critics that crises reinforce the status quo. Interestingly, during a global pandemic, a crisis in education is inevitable because of social, economic and political inequalities. Although education is a human right, this right is taken away from many children during a natural disaster or an educational crisis (p. 11). Critics point to capitalists, neoliberalists, technology and politics as some of the reasons for these inequalities. Here, key steps that can be taken to minimise the impact of the crisis need to be considered.

This book presents strategies for opportunities for global learning in times of a global education crisis. Examples of these strategies for going online as an emergency plan include the following: making a decision, first aid for shock (comfort zone), digital tools, technical support, follow-up and formative assessment and future reforms (p. 14). Moreover, further strategies to prevent drop-out and minimise demotivation could be reflected in evidence-based solutions, one of which involves the active collaboration of parents and a framework to design, develop, implement and assess online teaching with the ADDIE instructional design (p. 38). The authors emphasise that non-instructional designs are as important as instructional designs, for example in terms of security, safety and health. The implications of the global crisis in education lead to a decrease in enrolment because of social distancing, travel bans and lockdowns. According to the authors, digital recruitment becomes the order of the day. Given the ways in which digital technology and education are connected, disabled students are experiencing even more challenges. There is a lack of certain assistive technologies for the disabled (UNICEF 2020). A practical recommendation, given the above interventions, is online assessment. A Spanish study recommended, among others, online juries and oral defences using video conferencing tools and auto-explanatory videos (p. 88). In higher education, crises pose challenges for universities, for example in terms of the culture of open educational resources, ethical sustainability, social justice and human rights. How can these challenges be addressed? The authors identify means through policy sustainability models and international co-operation. Importantly, the adaptation methodology is a key strategy in the shift from face-to-face methods to online teaching. Lastly, the restriction of movement causes education methods to be more creative. The above key issues are the overarching themes to address the global crisis in education during the COVID-19 pandemic. This brings us to the following specifics about how teachers are supported during the crisis.

With almost a billion learners and students doing online learning at home, a major transformation has occurred. For example, lessons, content, collaboration, interaction, feedback and motivation have been transformed. This book demonstrates how the teacher’s role changed from delivering a curriculum to designing how learning takes

place and thus becoming an instructional designer. Given the ways in which the role of the teacher has transformed, a framework for teacher support is of the utmost importance during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as any other crisis. Alongside this, the book highlights the paradigm shift from physical campuses to online campuses whereby teachers are key social actors who need continuous training to develop online pedagogical strategies. This training should be on a daily basis and should include a full set of recommendations for schools and teachers. The authors further explain teachers' perceptions about the technology needed for learners and teachers.

Central to the book is learners' support in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Learners have to adapt to online learning and the authors juxtapose experienced and inexperienced learners within the context of global inequalities. An example is the Carnarvon study by Christie (2020), which illustrates that schools in South Africa are not decolonised and educational reform is slow and thus inequalities persist. This example is a micro phenomenon within the macro space. In the global context, inequality in relation to access to technology for online learning remains a challenge during the educational crisis. Alongside this, Ruha Benjamin's (2019) scholarship on technology, science and racism could be engaged as an example showing that socially and geographically education technology is stratified.

The final chapter brings the reader to the methodologies used in the case studies of the seven countries that the authors highlight. It emphasises providing adaptation and innovation for a successful environment in which teaching and learning occur. The countries under review in this book are China, Italy, Spain, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Morocco and Canada. Methods used to obtain data from the different countries include focus groups, web surveys, case studies (qualitative), and personal analysis. The case studies in the different countries were used to highlight key enablers for education during the crisis. Examples are support and services for teachers and students, online curriculums, examination and admissions tests, pure online ecosystems, active communication, policies, the Open Space Educational Framework (OSEF) and ending the digital divide. These case studies are suggestive but in-exclusive. Although the book draws on many examples from a few countries about the focus on the education crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is a pity that it did not include countries from sub-Saharan Africa, because it did not engage effectively with the inequalities and legacies of colonialism and apartheid in this region. Such insights through broader fieldwork could have broadened the debate on the impact of technology in terms of the equity versus self-interest dualism.

In conclusion, during the United Nations General Assembly (UNESCO 2019), UNESCO advocated that education should be reimagined in terms of how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity in a context of increasing complexity, uncertainty and during a period of crisis. This sombre prediction of UNESCO was made just before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the educational crisis caused by the pandemic it was found that contextual analyses of the orienting context (what context

learners bring to the instruction), instructional context (where instruction takes place) and transfer context (the context in which learners will be applying the learning) were important (p. 41). Throughout the book, the authors make valuable contributions on how to prevent a gap in education during the COVID-19 education crisis and when a new crisis comes. The chapters in the book highlight previous backgrounds, the current context and the future. The solutions to challenges recommended in this book that should be implemented include the following: making education as a human right accessible to all; storing data properly to use for analysis; providing more support to parents; providing more workshops to learn online; integrating formal and informal learning; encouraging more collaboration plans between government, companies and associations; and implementing an action plan during an unavoidable crisis. This book fits into existing literature, for example Decker's (1997) work that offered experiences to learn from and to share without starting from scratch. It also extends current debates about education during adversities, for example those experienced by refugees (Bach and Schraml 1982) or as a result of earthquakes, hurricanes and pandemics (Buus and Olsson 2006). Lastly, the phenomenon of social actors and social institutions within the social structure is contextualised within a complex framework. In a time of crisis where teaching and learning are provided remotely, ethics should be important, for example in terms of privacy, data protection, equity and discrimination.

Whatever the shortcomings of the book under review, it represents an important narrative about the COVID-19 education crisis, the opportunities for global learning, the role of teachers and learners, associations, and industries, as well as case studies from different countries. All the stakeholders involved in the education community will benefit from the useful recommendations to apply in times of crisis. Lastly, the book also engages with and contributes to the epistemological debate between educational traditions and different disciplines within education sciences.

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