

Corona Disease, University and Educational Policy in Post-Corona Conditions (Case Study: Students of Guilan University)

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ABSTRACT

In the last few years, educational planning in universities, especially in the exceptional circumstances of Corona, has faced the authorities, families, and students with many contradictions, and students as academics acting have shown different reactions to it. The basic questions of the article are what educational strategies are appropriate in alternative and post-corona conditions? And what problems do students face in virtual education? The purpose of this article is the qualitative study of the university in the situation of Corona and the symbolic expansion of the educational policy of the university in the post-Corona era. In this study, a qualitative approach, thematic analysis method, semi-structured interviews, and purposeful sampling were used. According to the logic of theoretical saturation, 35 students of Guilan University were interviewed individually. The findings of the research show that regarding the educational planning of the university in post-corona conditions, three types of strategies can be observed in the studied students, including face-to-face, virtual, and combined, and most of them are placed in face-to-face and combined types of education. The supporters of the strategy of “face-to-face training” or “metaphysics of presence” in the university in terms of individual characteristics are mostly native, single, studying, and unemployed students. Opponents of the strategy of “face-to-face training” or “Proponents of virtual education” in the university are mostly married students, mothers, working people, non-native students, students who are less interested in studying, and weak and physically disabled students. Supporters of combined education strategy (face-to-face and virtual) on the one hand, often want face-to-face training in practical, laboratory, and specialized courses, and on the other hand, they want virtual training in general courses. From the findings of the research, it can be concluded that integrated education has many facilities and capacities in the field of teaching-learning and taking into account the hardware and software facilities, the type of university, the differences and individual characteristics of students, and local requirements, regional and cultural is suitable for educational policymakers in the alternative, similar, post-modern and post-corona era.

Keywords: Face-to-face training, Virtual training, Illness, Educational Policy, Conditions post-Corona.

Introduction

Students have various "life experiences", one of their experiences is "being" in the conditions of Corona and virtual education. According to the results of the research, this form of experience or being is not the ideal state of an academic person. On the other hand, face-to-face education is also not possible and affordable for some students due to personal reasons and the anxiety of illness, and it has put them in an exceptional situation. From a sociological point of view, every social phenomenon is a limitation in some ways, but it is an opportunity creator in other ways (Giddens, 1991). The coronavirus pandemic also disrupted the normal situation and structure of society, but against it, it provided opportunities for people to experience life differently way and change their social relations despite the problems and sufferings caused by this disease.

The results of field research also show that virtual education is not a sufficient substitute for face-to-face education. With the transition of the global coronavirus crisis, it is still possible to develop virtual education and use it as a supplement to face-to-face education in the post-corona era (Lashkari, 2022).

With the start of the spread of the coronavirus in Iran, Guilan province was one of the first provinces where a high number of infected people was announced. This caused the closure of universities in Guilan province for a while. So, society has created two types of educational forms or structures to meet educational needs, the old structure (face-to-face education) and the new structure (virtual education). Each of the aforementioned constructions as a social structure has confronted students with contradictions. At the same time, the nightmare of corona disease still exists in society, and according to Giddens, similar diseases have faced humanity with "existential insecurity" (Giddens, 1991). The meaning of the educational policy of the university in the post-corona period is that with time the improvement of the conditions and the reduction of deaths caused by the coronavirus disease, there was talk of the return of students to the universities. Also, the reopening of universities in the last two years has created a challenge for officials, families, and students. This presence of anxiety has created resistance among some people. With this introduction, the fundamental questions of the article are what educational strategies are appropriate in alternative and post-corona conditions? And what contradictions do students face in virtual education?

Methodology

In the present study, relying on a qualitative method, semi-structured interviews were used. Purposive sampling was used to select people and ended with theoretical saturation. 35 students were interviewed. After being written down, the recorded interviews were reviewed several times and grouped according to common semantic categories, and, finally, the findings obtained from the interviews were presented in the form of thematic analysis.

Findings

Types of educational attitudes

Face-to-face training •

According to the answers of the interviewees, face-to-face education can be divided into two groups: absolute and conditional supporters.

A) Absolute supporters

A group of students are generally in favor of face-to-face education at the university. According to them, the amount of learning is higher in face-to-face classes. Also, students can communicate better in person with their professors and friends, but there is no such face-to-face communication in online classes, and as a result, the intimacy decreases, and after the end of the class, there is no interaction and conversation between them. These problems among students cause confusion and avoidance of virtual classes and tend to face-to-face classes.

b) Conditional consenters

There is a group of special and conditional supporters that includes a wide range of students, due to problems and especially frequent internet outages in Iran, they do not have much desire to participate in virtual classes. They state that universities should open provided that health protocols are followed and students, professors, and university staff are fully vaccinated; In other words, the atmosphere of the university should be provided in such a way that students do not have the worry and anxiety caused by the corona disease.

• Virtual training type

This group of students do not want to attend face-to-face education and reopen universities due to fear and anxiety caused by the spread of the Coronavirus. They emphasize that face-to-face education in these conditions endangers the health of students and their families because one family member getting sick causes other family members to get involved. Especially, these concerns are more common among non-native students. They are concerned about the dormitory, salary, transportation, etc. Reasons such as the coronavirus infection and the risk caused by it, the ubiquity of virtual education classes, the lack of transportation costs, etc., have increased the tendency toward virtual education among some students.

• Combined training type

The point of view of some students was that in the era of Corona, the necessary preparations for the complete reopening of universities have not yet been made. At least face-to-face practical lessons should be held; Because participating in online classes is not beneficial for practical lessons and such lessons should be held in workshops or laboratories in person and learning should be combined with gaining experience and using university facilities. However, this group tends to participate in virtual classes for theory courses in the situation of the Corona crisis.

Conclusion

Students can be categorized into three spectrums supporters of face-to-face education (absolute supporters, conditional supporters), supporters of virtual education, and supporters of hybrid education. Among them, integrated education has considerable possibilities and capacities and puts new strategies in front of policy-makers and educational trustees, and it has more adaptation and compatibility for educational policy-making in the alternative, similar, and post-corona times. In addition, based on the conceptual instrumental of Derrida (2013) regarding the metaphysics of absence, in the absence of professors and students and their virtual presence, virtual education can be transformed into textual and written communication and increase the learning of students and audiences. Finally, the use of the meta-combination method will play a significant role both in research and in the field of implementation in educational policy. The post-corona situation is new. The new position also requires multiple and continuous research to reassess its feedback. It should be noted that this research, conducted with an in-depth and qualitative method, has positive and negative points. Although it has more depth and internal validity, it should be refused to generalize to the entire statistical community and the country level, and other research, especially the quantitative method of the gap and its limitations, will be completed.

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