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Expanding Educational Access: Opportunities in Online Learning During the COVID-19Pandemic

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on its benefits, challenges, and preservation strategies to ensure flexibility and resource access. Online learning offered flexibility and access to digital resources, but it also brought significant challenges, especially communication gaps and inequalities in digital access. The study uses a qualitative research method and a descriptive research design, selecting teachers, students, and parents from Dhankuta Municipality and Kathmandu through purposive sampling. The researchers took six months to gather information for the study. Interviews with teachers, students, and parents showed that low-income families struggled due to a lack of high-speed internet and digital devices. Teachers found it difficult to adapt to online teaching, and students faced challenges staying connected without in-person interaction. These difficulties were worsened by financial inequalities, causing stress and anxiety for many families.

The study found that online learning benefits mental health and reduces academic pressure, but the pandemic slowed progress and increased inequalities. Limited

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infrastructure in low-income areas made online education less effective, creating challenges for teachers, parents, and students.

To ensure fair access to online education, governments and institutions should invest in better digital infrastructure, teacher training, and student engagement strategies. Socioeconomic support, hybrid learning models, mental health resources, personalized assessments, digital literacy training, and improved ICT facilities are essential for long-term success.

The pandemic disrupted global education goals, emphasizing the importance of personal and systemic resilience. The study suggests that while online learning has potential, education systems need reforms to make it more effective and sustainable for the future

Keywords:COVID-19, online learning, Education opportunities, Digital divide and Digital Literacy

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning, significantly impacting the global education system. Approximately, 1.6 billion students across 190 countrieswere affected, highlighting the urgent need for alternative educational delivery methods. Online learning emerged as the primary tool for continuing education during lockdowns, offering flexibility, accessibility, and new teaching methodologies that enabled students to continue their studies without attending physical classrooms(UNESCO, 2020).This rapid shift permanently transformed the education sector, making online learning the dominant mode of instruction. While digital education had been gradually expanding due to technological advancements and increased internet access, the pandemic drastically accelerated its adoption (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

Educational institutions quickly embraced online platforms, video conferencing tools, and digital resources to facilitate learning, addressing immediate challenges while also revealing long-term possibilities for improving education. This transition helped reduce educational disparities by overcoming barriers related to distance, time, and socio-economic status.However, the shift to online education also introduced significant challenges. The digital divide emerged as a major obstacle, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds and rural areas, affecting their ability to fully engage in remote learning (UNESCO, 2021). Additionally, government support programs and communication gaps between parents and teachers played a crucial role in determining the success of online learning. The sudden

change in teaching practices disrupted traditional education systems, and the stress of the pandemic negatively impacted students' mental health (Nen et al., 2022). The crisis also had broader economic and social consequences, such as job losses, rising education costs, and financial hardships for families.

Despite these challenges, online education presented unique opportunities. When effectively implemented, it can foster personalized learning experiences and greater flexibility, making education more accessible to diverse learners (Bao, 2020). The pandemic-driven shift to digital learning provided valuable insights into how technology can restructure education. According to Koehler & Mishra (2009, as cited in Chan et al., 2022), effective teaching now requires a blend of subject knowledge, an understanding of how students learn, and technical skills. Remote learning platforms transformed education into a more interactive experience, although tracking student progress and maintaining quality education remained challenging.

The COVID-19 crisis disrupted every major global system, including education, the economy, and social structures (WHO 2020, cited in Chan et al., 2022). As a result, stakeholders had to adapt quickly to new methods of teaching, assessment, and student engagement. While the pandemic exposed weaknesses in traditional education systems, it also created opportunities for rethinking and reshaping how learning is conducted. The increasing reliance on online platforms highlighted their potential to revolutionize education, paving the way for a future where digital learning plays a more integrated role in mainstream education. This study explores these opportunities and challenges, examining their impact on students and teachers and considering the long-term implications of online education.

The adoption of online learning during crises is not new. Previous studies have shown that digital education platforms provide a flexible alternative to traditional in-person teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupted global education systems, forcing schools, colleges, and universities to close and billions of learners to transition to online learning. The pandemic facilitated was widespread digital education, enabling millions of students to continue their education from home, demonstrating the potential for transformation in the educational landscape. While online education has exposed inequalities in technology access, internet connectivity, and digital literacy, but also prompted a reconsideration of future education delivery methods. The pandemic has encouraged the development of innovative digital education methods, highlighting the potential of online learning to shape the future of education. According to UNESCO (2020) reports that the pandemic was affected over 1.6 billion students in 190 countries, highlighting the

need for alternative learning methods. Online education emerged as a powerful solution, reimagining the future of education. Similarly, Anderson and Dron (2011), online education allows for a broader reach, enabling students from remote areas to access quality education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Moore (2013) highlighted that online learning fosters self-paced and independent study, which can lead to improved outcomes. Before the pandemic, online education was already gaining momentum with rapid advancement in technology and accessibility of the internet. The crisis accelerated this further at a pace that had never been seen before. According to researchers, such rapid transition showed both the potential and challenges that come with online learning in a global context (Dhawan, 2020).

In this context, Hodges et al. (2020) emphasized the rapid shift to emergency remote teaching, which created an uneven learning experience, particularly for students lacking access to digital infrastructure.Despite these challenges, the literature indicates that online learning offers unique opportunities for educational advancement, including greater access to diverse resources, increased flexibility, and the potential for a personalized learning experience (Selwyn, 2011).

Considering this fact, this study focuses on the following objectives: to explore the role of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and focusing on its benefits for students and educators. Moreover, it examines the impact of online platforms on student experiences and outcomes, as well as the challenges faced by students, teachers, and parents and how online learning opportunities can be preserved post-pandemic, ensuring flexibility and resource access.

Method and Materials

This research is a qualitative research study, wherein semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, and parents who have been involved in online education since the COVID-19 pandemic began are used. The study used a qualitative method to collect information from teachers, students, and parents in Dhankuta Municipality and Kathmandu. This study has included two teachers, two students, and two parents from each district in Nepalese community schools during the pandemic. Their experiences and views about online learning have been gathered through the use of interview method using structured questionnaires.

The researchers took six months to gather fundamental information for the study. The study highlights the significant opportunities that online learning has provided, particularly in ensuring access and continuity of education. The qualitative approach provides insights into the integration of online learning opportunities into

educational practices post-pandemic, evaluating their role in the future of education. The study aims to understand how online learning opportunities can be effectively integrated into educational practices post-pandemic. The qualitative approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges of online learning, aiding in the evaluation of its role in the future of education.

Result and Discussion

The data acquired from the field study are analyzed in depth and the result obtained from the analysis are arranged in the following headings and sub-headings:

Online Learning Opportunities& Challenges

Science and technology have progressed considerably in this age of globalization. Furthermore, information and communication technology (ICT) has fueled the growth of e-learning trends in developed countries worldwide. The pandemic has led to significant opportunities for online learning, providing flexibility for students and teachers. This flexibility allows access to educational materials from anywhere, at any time, making education more inclusive and accessible to students from remote areas or socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.Mantziu et al. (2018) highlight that ICT's distinct features can be utilized in education, bringing significant benefits (as cited in Mikropoulos, 2018). Young children today are accustomed to using mobile devices and playing games for fun, and similarly, contemporary students need new educational opportunities provided by technology and internet access.Bozkurt& Sharma (2020) has mentioned that this situation has created unprecedented opportunities for educational participation.Zhang et al. (2016) stress the crucial role of ICT resources in education, indicating that they enable innovation in pedagogy, content, and methods, thereby improving teaching and learning processes. The authors focus on global trends in ICT-based education, noting that schools in Nepal have started implementing online learning programs, which require further enhancements to become more effective. Furthermore, online platforms increased access to a wide variety of educational resources. Examples of these include video lectures, interactive simulations, and discussion forums, which are increasingly possible with the help of digital tools. Khalil et al. (2020) commented that this pandemic has exemplified online education's potential in rendering learning a bit more proactive, interactive, and personalized. People in the 21st century are widely recognized as being more modern and active. Instead of adhering to the traditional educational system, they demand flexibility in their learning through the integration of educational technologies. Huang, Spector, and Yang (2019) defined "educational technology" in the 21st century as the use of various tools, technologies, procedures, processes, resources, and strategies to improve learning outcomes across different contexts, including formal, informal, non-

formal, lifelong, on-demand, workplace, and just-in-time learning. The field of educational technology is rapidly expanding to include mobile technologies, virtual and augmented realities, simulations, immersive environments, collaborative learning, social networking, cloud computing, flipped classrooms, and other innovative methods. As previously mentioned, the 21st century is characterized by its distinct advancements over the 20th century, primarily driven by modern technologies like mobile devices and high-speed internet. This shift has also brought to the fore how online learning could further promote self-paced education, in which students would progress based on their speed of comprehension. Students now expect to access education anytime and anywhere, along with a desire for greater flexibility in their studies.

Online learning came with many opportunities including significant challenges. There was the digital divide, in which access to high-speed internet and proper digital devices created a real and significant barrier for a majority of students from low-income families and from developing countries. millions of students from around the world could not access online education because of various resource constraints, which reduced the effectiveness of this new mode of learning (World Bank, 2020).

The next significant challenge was how to keep students engaged in their online learning. The teachers and students struggled with how to make the interactive and social aspects of face-to-face learning continue to work virtually. The lack of physical classrooms also meant reducing opportunities for collaborative learning and peer interaction that are so vital and form a major part of the conventional educational experience (Bao, 2020). Hodges et al., (2020) reported a that change in teaching methods on the part of the teacher, but not all educators were created equal in digital skills to perform well on online platforms

Overall, distance learning has significantly enhanced education accessibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing new opportunities for both students and teachers.The shift to online platforms enabled agile study, reaching out to students in remote areas amid technology and connectivity challenges. Disparities of access to digital units and availability of the internet, however, still persist as great stumbling blocks towards making education universal.

Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Opportunities and Challenges of Online Learning

The perceptions of stakeholders i.e. parents, teachers and students related to the challenges and opportunities of the online learning education are incorporated analytically in a sequential order in this sub heading.

The feedback received from the teachers regarding the challenges of online learning education are arranged as follows:

Firstly, the lack of technological skills impeded the transition to distance learning. Additionally, concerns about inconsistent pay caused further anxiety. Many students also lacked internet access at home, making remote teaching less efficient compared to traditional in-person classes. While the challenges in face-to-face education are clear, those in distance learning are more complex. Effective teaching relies heavily on in-person interaction, which is compromised in remote education, particularly for hands-on learning. The COVID-19 pandemic unexpectedly disrupted the curriculum, leading to setbacks, and the uncertainty in education, coupled with income loss, has been a source of frustration and created sustainability issues for families.

The above perspective highlights three key barriers to effective distance learning: technological limitations, financial insecurity, and unequal internet access. While face-to-face instruction has well-defined challenges, distance learning's complexities—especially its impact on hands-on learning—are more pronounced. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these difficulties by disrupting curricula and creating uncertainty, leading to setbacks in education. Moreover, income loss during the pandemic not only increased frustration but also threatened the financial stability of families, further complicating the sustainability of remote education.

Similarly, the views of parents on the similar topic are arranged as follows:

Being unexpectedly tasked with handling online classes without prior experience, we, parents struggled in this trend. The need to provide separate devices for each child further strained our finances, already impacted by reduced income during the pandemic. Additionally, we found it difficult to monitor children’s online activities, and noticed a decline in children's academic performance overall.

These above-mentioned notionshighlight the multiple challenges are being faced by theparents to shift the online learning education. Without prior experience, they struggled to manage virtual classes, while the need for multiple devices added financial stress, particularly amid pandemic-related income reductions. Monitoring their children's online activities became difficult, leading to concerns about academic performance. These factors combined created a challenging environment for both parents and students, negatively affecting both learning outcomes and household stability during the pandemic.

Likewise, the opinions received from the students on this topic are managed in following paragraph:

We emphasize our unfamiliarity with online classes and limited access to essential technology, many of us had to find internet connections outside homes, which hindered their ability to complete assignments and fully engage in online

learning. Additionally, we encountered difficulties due to teachers' differing levels of readiness for virtual instruction.

This perspective of students underscores the dual challenges students faced during the shift to online learning: lack of access to technology and teachers' uneven preparedness. With limited internet access at home, many students had to seek external sources, impeding their ability to complete assignments and stay engaged.

The inconsistency in teachers' readiness for online teaching further complicated the learning process, creating disparities in educational delivery. These factors combined to undermine the effectiveness of remote education and widen the gap in student performance.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought an extreme transition toward online education, which offered new opportunities for creativity and expanded educational options. However, a number of challenges also came with this change, especially on the side of the student, teacher, and institution.Based on the analysis of the perceptions of the stakeholders, the existing challenges in online education during the COVID period are presented in the following points:

Digital Divide

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the digital gap, a significant obstacle to online learning due to disparities in socioeconomic status and technology access.In low-income families in the study area and rural students face difficult challenges in accessing the resources needed for online education. According to Selwyn (2004), such gaps in technologies widen previous educational inequalities that in turn shut students off from full participation in online learning activities. For example, a study by Zhang et al. (2020) established that students cannot log in or do not have access to digital learning platforms in areas with poor infrastructure; Thus, it leads to disrupted learning and widening achievement gaps. This divide also extends to student engagement and participation in the virtual classroom, as Van Dyck (2005) points out, because students who are not adequately equipped with technological resources miss out on the benefits of a collaborative and interactive classroom. Again, this brings into focus the need for policy interventions to upgrade digital infrastructure, providing access to technology at an affordable cost for all students.

Digital Literacy

While online learning is becoming quite common, digital literacy has been hailed as a big opportunity in promoting education during the COVID-19 pandemic. As per the

scientist Bawden (2008), digital literacy is defined as "the set of skills necessary for identifying, locating, retrieving, and processing information existing in digital media." The pandemic accelerated this requirement for educators and students to develop these competencies on online platforms and tools. While students especially the younger ones, have grasped the ways of using digital tools, teachers are still lagging with proper training in digital pedagogy. In addition to this, as a result of this shift on online platforms all of a sudden, the educators also find it hard to cope and the quality of education (Hodges et al., 2020). Emergency remote teaching is usually characterized by the absence of clear guidelines on effective instructional strategies and often leads to less participation by students. For instance, research by Selwyn 2011 claims that as the learners progress to a higher level of skill within digital literacy, then their ability to collaborate, interact and self-direct learning improves thus enabling lifelong learning practice. This would also increase opportunities for equality since through the practice of digital literacy; various learners from different walks of life may get access and learn from global education resources. It follows, therefore, that digital literacy meets present-day educational requirements, preparing students for possible future employment in light of the ever-digitizing economy, leading to specific personal and societal benefits.

Student Engagement and Motivation

The absence of a physical classroom environment led to numerous students experiencing difficulties in focus and motivation. Maintaining student engagement in online learning has proven challenging due to the rapid changes in the environment and the need for interactive tools and timely feedback (Bao, 2020). Moreover, tools such as online interactive quizzes and consequence are supported, along with discussion forums, to facilitate active engagement with feedback provided on the spot and peer collaboration. This is supported in Ryan & Deci (2000). Kahu and Nelson (2018) identified that such interactive elements might help students stay on-task, avoid distractions, and maintain their motivation longer. Furthermore, online learning environments give shy or introverted students an opportunity to engage more in class through discussion boards or chats, making the whole learning process more inclusive. In this regard, by capitalizing on these opportunities for improved engagement and motivation, online education creates better learning results, especially in disrupted times such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Socioeconomic barriers

Socioeconomic disparities increased amidst a COVID-19 pandemic that caused an economic recession characterized by high job losses. Many disadvantaged students faced severe technology access and access to the internet barriers. Financial pressures were adding extra stressors to students who were already struggling to continue their education. Due to this, education systems provided free or low-cost internet services, distributed digital devices, and utilized other replacements for low technologies, such as SMS-based or radio broadcasts for students in disadvantaged communities, as cited by Hodges et al. (2020). Public-private partnerships have driven the creation of more affordable technologies, including shared devices and community learning centers. Non-profit organizations have been instrumental in providing digital literacy programs and financing to students from low-income backgrounds through various programs. While these measures do not remove the socio-economic barriers, they are helping to create a framework for greater equity in education that should pay long-term dividends. The concept below represents a start to digital inclusion for learning-newly reimagined education, more accessible, adaptive, and sustainable-especially for those who have traditionally been left behind.

The Psychological Effect:

Online learning has created serious challenges in the area of mental health for students and teachers. Increased screen time, together with social isolation and uncertainty about the future, has increased levels of stress and anxiety, which in turn make it more difficult for students to focus and achieve at high levels. According to Khalil et al. (2020), the psychological effects do not bear sparing a thought for the students, teachers, and parents alike. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has afforded an opportunity to create a platform for online learning in education, which may help improve one's mental wellbeing. As a result, students felt isolated and anxious due to a lack of personal interactions and difficulties in adapting to the new virtual platform. On the other hand, online learning can support mental health since flexible schedules reduce academic pressures, allowing students to learn at their own comfort. Online platforms can be designed to introduce, apply, and provide mental health resources, virtual counseling, or other techniques that can help students deal with stress and sustain emotional balance. As teachers and schools adapt, tools like mindfulness apps, social-emotional learning programs, and collaborative virtual spaces will add to student engagement in and resilience against the demands of education. In addition, online learning has proven to be a safe space for introverted

students to express themselves even better than they would have in the physical world, building confidence and participation from the students. This is in accordance with the study by Palloff& Pratt, 2013. With proper support, online education will go a long way in contributing to positive mental health and ensuring continued learning during and after the pandemic.

Assessment and Evaluation

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of online learning methods, enhancing flexibility, creativity, and critical thinking in evaluation and problem-solving. Online platforms offer continuous assessment through digital quizzes, discussion forums, and peer reviews, providing instant feedback for learning improvement at every stage (Romero-Ivanova et al., 2020). However, this involved issues with academic integrity, as it became far easier to cheat in online assessments. This is why educational institutions introduced plagiarism detection software, proctoring tools, and time-bound assessments. In addition, online assessments offered personalization opportunities that can be done according to different learning styles and various needs and will facilitate more inclusive practices regarding assessments. It is technology, amidst concerns, begins to hold promise for making assessment more dynamic and adaptive. In addition to knowledge, these new methods test and build competencies for better assurances of learning outcomes measured in more meaningful and individualized ways. As online education continues to evolve into the norm, these methods have the potential to revolutionize the way students are assessed, affording even more opportunity for creativity and ongoing assessment.

Global Education Goals and SDGs

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted global progress towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in economic growth and poverty reduction. The pandemic caused economic recessions across various nations, disrupting businesses, increasing unemployment, and plunging many into poverty. This setback hindered progress toward SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Global supply chain disruptions further exacerbated food insecurity; threatening SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) as vulnerable regions faced worsening malnutrition (United Nations, 2020). The healthcare sector also faced unprecedented challenges, as systems were overwhelmed, diverting resources from essential health services, leading to setbacks in efforts to reduce child mortality and combat diseases like malaria and tuberculosis (UNICEF, 2020).Social inequalities were magnified, particularly in education and environmental

sustainability. School closures forced a global shift to remote learning, but this exposed and deepened the digital divide, with students in low-income regions being disproportionately affected by a lack of access to the necessary technology. This setback impeded progress towards SDG 4 (Quality Education) (United Nations, 2020). Additionally, the initial environmental improvements, such as reduced emissions, were temporary. The increased reliance on single-use plastics and medical waste due to the pandemic is created new environmental challenges, further complicating progress toward SDG 13 (Climate Action) (OECD, 2021).

The Role of ICT in Education

Application of ICT during the COVID-19 pandemic played the most significant role in maintaining the continuity of education. Though challenging, ICT tools ensured continuity in learning through video conferencing, digital classrooms, and educational apps when the physical schools were closed, hence bringing newer opportunities for online education. According to Zhang et al. (2016), although these teaching methodologies and pedagogical tools have been implemented worldwide, their effectiveness is unequal, above all in countries like Nepal, due to the persistence of infrastructural problems. According to Dwivedi et al. (2020), ICT created interactive and flexible learning environments; therefore, students got the opportunity to access a wide range of digital resources, including multimedia and e-learning platforms, which made learning quite fascinating for them. ICT promotes personalized learning in that students have the opportunity to learn at their own pace. In some instances, there is poor access to technology, especially in rural and low-income areas. During the pandemic, a leap was realized in the need for digital literacy for both students and teachers to exercise new skills in the use of the tools. ICT in education has significantly contributed to creating more inclusive and resource-rich learning environments, addressing the growing challenges faced in the education sector. With this in sight, in the future, ICT will no doubt be indispensable in shaping the future of learning in a more adaptive and sustainable manner.

Learning Technology Evolution

Some of the most prominent developments in the use of mobile devices, virtual and augmented realities, simulations, and collaborative learning environments for education have taken place during the 21st century. The conception of such new methods of learning is to enhance learning performance and meet the multidimensional needs of learners. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed the evolution that has taken place in learning technology and formed a new era in educational practice. With schools and institutions promptly adopting digital platforms, the tools at hand-likelearning management systems (LMS), video

conferencing software, and interactive educational apps-became crucial to remote education (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). Besides assuring continuity of learning, it further facilitated blended learning approaches that integrate in-person and online interactions together effectively. Besides, the pandemic made adaptive learning technologies necessary, which make education more individualized in response to each learner's needs. Overall, these learning technology trends create a foundation for flexibility, engagement, and accessibility in future educational landscapes.

Transformation of Educational Practices

The shift in educational approaches from teacher-centered to student-centered and technology-integrated was expedited by the COVID-19 epidemic. Indeed, global trends and changing educational system faces have compelled this transformational shift due to rapid technological changes. With this in perspective, traditional approaches to teaching were reconsidered by many educators and shifted toward online learning, expanding access to diversified populations (Hodges et al., 2020). With digital tools and platforms in use, it has become possible for teachers to construct more interactive and engaging learning experiences with increased participation from students. The shift also influenced newer forms of assessment to emerge, such as project-based assessment and online portfolios, which tend to increasingly measure critical thinking and problem-solving skills, among others (Gikandi et al., 2011; Romero-Ivanova et al., 2020). These changes in educational practice are, overall, very valuable opportunities toward the creation of an inclusive and adaptable learning environment to meet the needs of all learners(Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020.)

Challenges for Teachers, Parents, and Students

The sudden shift of learning to online due to the COVID-19 pandemic was a great challenge for teachers, parents, and students all together. This has also made each one of them face their own particular difficulties. For instance, some of the few problems that have afflicted teachers while teaching remotely include constraint access to technology, frustration, and burnout as they adjusted to new digital learning environments with less training or resources. All these factors made it difficult for parents to combine their job duties with the organization of children's time for online education and demonstrated the lack of communication and coordination between families and educators(Zhang et al., 2020). In turn, students experienced an inability to adapt to the new conditions of learning: too often, lack

of motivation and engagement in virtual learning might retard academic progress. In spite of these aforementioned challenges, the situation has necessitated a review of educational practices in light of better supportive frameworks to enhance learning experiences for all involved in the process(Hodges et al., 2020).

In summary, while technology played an essential role in sustaining education during the COVID-19 pandemic, the gaps regarding access, readiness, and digital literacy have equally been widened among students, teachers, and parents. The challenges currently require attention to fully utilize educational technology and ensure effective, inclusive learning environments. The pandemic underscores the necessity for personal and systemic resilience to handle future crises and establish more equitable education systems.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated online learning, indicating the opportunities and challenges in education. Education could continue thanks to the flexible digital platforms that allowed self-paced learning, with access to broader resources. However, the pandemic also exposed major inequalities in access to technology, particularly affecting students in disadvantaged areas. This brings into perspective that the online mode of learning might just reshape the future of education, being more adaptive and reachable, especially in areas that are quite remote or underprivileged. To make this shift sustainable, challenges such as the digital divide, lack of digital literacy, and inadequate infrastructure need to be overcome. It emphasizes that, if access to technology is not improved, nor proper teachers' training provided, nor support systems installed, online education will further increase disparities rather than help bridge the gap. Moreover, insufficient teacher training further exacerbated the effective employment of online platforms. This, therefore, called for urgent attention to such disparities. If these structural challenges are not resolved, the advantages of online education run the risk of further increasing the existing inequalities instead of diminishing them. As the educational system continuously develops in the post-pandemic environment, there is a unique opportunity to learn from these diverse experiences and build from them in developing inclusive, innovative teaching methods, such as blended learning. This transformation can only truly succeed with necessary investments in digital infrastructure, together with comprehensive teacher training. The policymakers, educators, and providers of technology have to strive to establish a system whereby

every student benefit from digital learning, leaving behind inequity in education for future learners of diverse characteristics.

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