



**T. Teaching Impact**  
The Future of Learning and Teaching

**Will future learning and teaching be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic?**

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### **Abstract**

This impact paper is presenting how our post-pandemic pedagogical approaches will be affected across the higher education ecosystem: training students in an interconnected world, redefining and adapting the role of trainers, considering blended learning as a key asset for higher education institutions, and managing the complexity of learning technologies. This might just be the required disruption to get us all to rethink how we educate and how we adapt our teaching approach to a truly student-centred learning approach.

Keywords: student-centred learning, learning technology, blended learning, interactive-oriented training.

## **Will future learning and teaching be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic?**

In recent weeks, higher education institutions have demonstrated their significant ability to adapt very quickly to the crisis, with flexibility. But how many of those had anticipated this kind of crisis by implementing a more sustainable educational approach? It is already widely accepted that the Covid-19 crisis is not only a short-term emergency, but a turning point in different social behaviours. One of the most relevant changing behaviours is that working, teaching or learning online will no longer be considered a second alternative. In many cases, it will be our best alternative.

It's clear that some industries (productivity and collaboration services, online platforms, streaming, telemedicine and digital transformation in general) will benefit from a post-Covid-19 era. When it comes to learning, it would be relevant for higher education institutions to reflect on the profound implications of this crisis for the future. At the same time, those designing a strategy for higher education institutions must figure out whether Covid-19 creates a completely new scenario or is only accelerating a disruption process that was already happening and that they did not want to acknowledge.

For a time, trainers around the world have been talking about the need to rethink how we educate future generations. This might be the disruption that we needed to make us rethink how we educate, what we need to teach and what we are preparing our students for. So as educators learn (or improve) new ways to communicate with our students outside of the classrooms, it's a good time to reflect on how this crisis can help us design what learning should be like for current and future generations.

The generations we are teaching now have grown up in a truly globalized world. Those students who belong to Generation Z are probably reflecting on the future of their education as a result of a truly global pandemic, with exams and all kinds of academic events cancelled. This generation is defined by technology and their expectations are related to instant communication and feedback. This is also a generation that sees the power of working collaboratively to solve the world's greatest challenges: sustainability, customization and collective responsibility are keywords of their agenda.

The next generation, the Alpha one, will be the first 100% digital generation. This generation is the one for whom technology is simply an extension of their own identity, and social media a way of life. Students of this generation may not be aware of the impact of this global pandemic, but surely, technology will be unconsciously present in their way of learning. I'm sure that other trainers are wondering how we should prepare our students for the future. Some international reports about the future of work (Manyika et al., 2017; Vanson Bourne 2018) show that around 85% of job positions in 2030 haven't been invented yet. That means the Alpha generation students will work in jobs that don't even exist today. This current crisis may well change our perspective on future learning and teaching. I would like to share some thoughts about how our pedagogy will be affected across the future higher education ecosystem.

## **Reflecting on how we train students in an interconnected world**

Covid-19 is a pandemic that illustrates how globally interconnected we are: problems and isolated actions no longer exist. Successful trainers and students in the coming years must be able to understand this interrelationship and navigate across limits to take advantage of their differences and work in a truly collaborative way.

In this ever-changing global environment, the next generations will require resilience and adaptability, skills that are proving essential to manage effectively throughout this pandemic. Some of the most important skills employers will be looking for will be creativity, communication and collaboration, along with empathy and emotional intelligence; as well as being able to work in different time zones and take advantage of collective intelligence through effective teamwork. There will be a great opportunity for those higher education institutions knowing how to unlock the massive advantage of collective knowledge, that is, how to transform the student into a producer of content and knowledge.

## **Thinking about how to redefine the role of trainers**

The notion of trainers as the owners of the knowledge delivering it to their students no longer fits the expectations of the next generation. Since students can gain access to knowledge and even learn a technical skill by a few clicks on their devices, we will need to rethink the role of the trainer in the classroom. This means that the role of trainers should evolve: they are to act as facilitators, using their experience and knowledge to identify which micro learning pieces must be engaged to develop a certain skill.

## **Discussing whether online and blended learning will be strategic assets**

Most trainers (and higher education institutions) were working with online education before Covid-19 pandemic. However, there is a great variation in the degree to which online education was core to the strategic goals of each higher education institution. I think all this will change after this crisis. Now, the governing councils of higher education institutions are understanding that online training is not just a source of potential new income. Instead, online training is being recognized as a core asset of educational institutions' resilience and academic continuity plan. This post-pandemic understanding will change the decision process of higher education institutions recognizing the importance of planning, managing and financing online initiatives. Online and blended learning management will be integrated into existing academic leadership structures and processes.

## **Demystifying and unlocking the complexity of learning technologies**

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced higher education institutions to suddenly take advantage of and use the set of technological tools available to create content for remote learning for students scattered around the world. Trainers are experiencing new possibilities for teaching differently and with more flexibility. Teaching and learning are core capabilities of all higher education institutions. Universities and Business Schools that invested in their learning design paths, with professional instructional designers, are able to efficiently manage the transition to remote teaching. The scale and intensity of higher education institutions and business partnerships (technology providers) is likely to increase.

And the instructional design capabilities of the institutions will be increased and centralized as core skills for trainers.

The remote teaching and learning efforts that all of our teachers and students are now involved in are unlike what we used to picture when thinking about traditional online education. Quality online learning programs are high-contribution operations, requiring both time to develop and significant investments to execute. However, this does not mean that the change required to shift to remote teaching will be negative for student learning (Chen et al, 2020). The greatest benefits of virtual instruction will happen when both teachers and students return to their physical classrooms to exchange ideas and to discuss job-oriented situations.

The need to teach and learn with asynchronous and synchronous tools will yield significant benefits when these tools are used in face-to-face teaching, facilitating a more interactive and practice-oriented training. We now have a much more shared understanding that digital tools are complements to face-to-face learning. Valuable classroom time will be used more productively for discussion, debate and guided practice.

## **Conclusion**

After working for approximately fifteen years designing and managing face-to-face, online and blended programs, for both Universities and Business Schools, I think we are being presented with a great opportunity to align our teaching methods with the learning expectations of future generations.

Very soon, all trainers will realize that by personalizing our teaching and learning pathways by connecting different pieces of knowledge and expertise, we can obtain a more unique learning experience which will more accurately meet specific market or recruiting needs. This matching process is already technology-assisted.

When my students have to solve a complex challenge, I always like to tell them "the only limit to solve it is our imagination". At the moment, higher education institutions have a great opportunity to gain legitimacy by demonstrating that they are a great source of knowledge and expertise for society and that they can adapt their processes to deliver a truly student-centred learning approach. Are we ready to step up?

## **References**

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