

COVID - 19 Pandemic Impacts On Higher Education in Georgia

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Abstract:

The article discusses the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on online higher education, challenges and opportunities of online and blended learning. The article analyzes and evaluates the importance of introducing digital technologies in higher education institutions and ensuring the quality of the teaching / learning process. This article discusses how Georgia has adapted to the new reality.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemics, higher education, online and blended education, quality assurance, digital technologies, monitoring, digitalization.

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies has penetrated in every sphere of human life and the education system is no exception. Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the process and turned traditional learning into distance learning.

Covid - 19 the pandemic has put the whole world in front of a new reality, including Georgia. institutions of Higher education have faced serious challenges. distance learning was the only safe way to continue the learning process. Many developed countries around the world have already adapted to online learnings, but this experience did not exist in Georgia before and consequently, the situation turned out to be much more difficult. However, it's notable that the introduction and development of digital technologies in higher education institutions in Georgia in recent decades has facilitated Internet-based learning in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Law on Higher Education has been amended and the term "distance learning" has been added. It became necessary to plan the curriculum properly, use appropriate approaches and methods to organize and conduct the learning process.

The Covid - 19 pandemic has had a global impact on the implementation of online and digital higher education, learning and assessment in higher education. The pandemic has facilitated the digitization of higher education institutions, revealing both the potential and benefits of online learning, as well as the disadvantages.

The content and outcomes of online and blended learning programs should be analogous to those of traditional educational programs and should lead to exactly the same outcome as traditional educational programs. Implementing distance learning requires appropriate teaching/learning and assessment methods, appropriate infrastructure, use of resources and digital technologies, readiness of students and academic staff, and appropriate quality assurance standards.

Current programs of the institutions of higher education in Georgian are accredited by the standards of ensuring the quality of traditional, face-to-face teaching, which does not provide for the implementation of online teaching. Consequently, there should be no expectation that the replacement of traditional-fitted accredited educational programs with online training will fully meet the quality assurance requirements. Switching to full-time distance learning in a force majeure situation obviously caused some

inconvenience, as there were infrastructural problems in the country, higher education institutions were not equipped with distance learning technologies, many students did not have access to the Internet, which caused huge anxiety and dissatisfaction among the students, there was no electronic literature, the Academic staff didn't have sufficient knowledge and skills to use technology in the learning process. However, it should be kept in mind, that the state has adapted to the new reality. Various learning platforms have been set up, curricula and assessment systems have been modified in line with e-learning and the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancements has developed an e-learning quality support document for universities.

It should be noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly hindered the normal functioning of educational institutions. It's necessary to pursue a clear quality assurance policy of the university, which will be in accordance with the national framework. Challenges originally arose from logistics, inadequate hardware and software as a result of the curriculum and assessment. A large proportion of the academic staff and students met the distance learning unprepared. Lack of access to digital devices and the internet has revealed digital persistent problems. Many institutions didn't have strong online programs, sufficient teaching and technology staff, relevant course development processes and well-structured support mechanisms for students.

Based on the above, distance learning is both a challenge and an opportunity. To facilitate distance learning and to ensure a high quality of teaching/learning effectiveness, it is important to monitor distance learning. Higher education and quality assurance need to move into a new context and need to become more flexible.

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