

## The “Ivermectin” to South Africa’s Educational Landscape

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### The Educational Cost of Disasters

Globalisation is making the threats we face more intertwined. In addition to the COVID-19 outbreak crossing international borders, South Africa is experiencing devastating floods. Despite its diversity, it has affected everyone, regardless of nationality, education level, income level, and gender. Despite this, the repercussions have disproportionately impacted the most disadvantaged. Education is no different. With the help of parents coupled with the desire to learn, students from wealthy homes may be able to make their way past restricted higher education institutes to other learning prospects. When institutions shifted fully online, those from low-income families were disadvantaged. These disasters have brought several shortcomings and inequities in our educational institutions, ranging from a scarcity of access to the internet, connectivity issues, and computers required for online learning to the absence of supportive surroundings needed to engage with learning to a mismatch of resources and necessities.

Averting an educational emergency from becoming a generational disaster demands transformative action. Online 21st-century teaching methods were considered a luxury in the South African educational landscape (Patrick, Abiolu and Abiolu, 2021). Before COVID-19, traditional teaching methods were favoured due to the country’s socio-economic status. Most of the country’s population stems from under-resourced communities, with families earning a below-average income (Gumede, 2021). As a result of the immense actions made in a transient period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educators were reminded that reform is possible. Due to the educational emergency, facilitators, instructional designers, teachers, and other stakeholders had to adopt new teaching methods and practices in South Africa and bring about difficult or impossible changes (Mhlanga and Moloi, 2020).

South African educators and students were caught off guard by the sudden implementation of online teaching and learning. Teaching and learning methods were inflexible because there was no reason to consider the latter alternatives. The scarcity of notice and preparation forced all teaching and learning participants to become educational modernisers (Khatoon, Akhter and Talib, 2021).

To give our South African educators and students a fighting chance at triumph, one must consider the following factors. The South African educational system is not fully prepared for the new normal of teaching and learning. Currently, South Africa is not equipped to fully implement the new normal of online, blended, or hybrid educational methods. Many educators and students’ lack of skills and training in connection to the level of access to resources impede the educational journey. Conjointly, South Africa also encountered stumbling blocks such as load-shedding, looting, and water outages which further delayed educational practices. Educational Institutes in South Africa should implement the lessons learned from COVID-19 in their educational system to prevent these disruptions and narrow the negative impact for the future.

### Preparing for the Unexpected

The future appears to be one of uncertainty. On the other hand, the pandemic has exposed our sensitivity to disasters and revealed how fragile and intertwined the economy we’ve built can be. Pandemics are not the only cause of massive disturbances; natural, political, financial, and climatic disasters also can cause massive instabilities. Governments’ forethought, preparedness, and planning will determine our ability to respond effectively and efficiently in future scenarios. Educational institutions need to create the capabilities

and attributes required now and for the future. This preparation means evaluating how South Africa should progress in the face of adversity and identifying the skills, information, technology, and training required to sustain it. Meaningful reform often occurs during major incidents, and the country might not revert to the traditional ways of education when circumstances return to “normal” at this time. While these disruptions have far-reaching consequences, particularly for education, it has no fixed solution. How these changes impact our reactions will influence us. In this way, the pandemic and natural disasters serve as a wake-up call to recommit to the Sustainable Development Goals. At the centre of education’s promise to the future is guaranteeing that students have the chance to succeed academically and acquire new knowledge, abilities, mindsets, and beliefs necessary to make a difference. The capability to handle massive interruptions has been tested throughout these crises. Currently, it is up to us to develop a much more sustainable country. Therefore, educational systems should be adapted to cater to all events that might hinder teaching, learning, and assessment.

Against this backdrop and the consequences of the 2020 lockdown, the educational system was predisposed to implement a hybrid learning approach. This learning method engaged the students more actively in the learning process. Some students have grown up in a world dominated by smartphones, tablets, and other electronic devices (Lindsay, 2004). By incorporating technology into the learning environment, facilitators could communicate and exchange course information with students in a safe and secure environment (Creative Commons, 2015). Although many underprivileged students could not afford to have this luxury, the hybrid learning method integrated face-to-face instruction with online resources rather than replacing traditional learning methods (Lindsay, 2004). Therefore, students could select the learning method that best suited their needs.

The synchronous virtual sessions were one of the most prominent features of the hybrid approach (Creative Commons, 2015). These sessions were frequently recorded so that students could access and view them asynchronously. This approach allowed them to be more flexible in their learning. The hybrid approach facilitated collaborative work that enhanced students learning of new contexts (Creative Commons, 2015). Hybrid teaching provides students with a choice of format, but it also produces enriched and superior educational outcomes and academic achievement compared to face-to-face or online education alone.(Creative Commons, 2015). Both formats have advantages that are difficult, if not impossible, to duplicate; integrating the two into a single experience can result in significant learning possibilities (Lindsay, 2004).

Given the unique opportunities that hybrid learning provides, careful planning is required. Instructors must understand the advantages of online and face-to-face education and how they can complement each other in the future (Creative Commons, 2015). Therefore, a hybrid course design should provide students with access to the same resources that facilitators use for a face-to-face class; these assessments are implemented using a learning management system provided by the institute (Creative Commons, 2015). However, these resources should be adapted with best practices and technology for an online environment.

### Joining Forces with Positivity

Looking at the background of the South African landscape of educational practices, we must learn from the positive influences that emerged from COVID-19 instructional methods and implement ways to improve the future of education. The pandemic and natural disasters have taught us that reinventing education in the 21st century to include technology, fun, and adventurous ways of learning can optimise the learning process. This process will help students from marginalised backgrounds and technologically advanced students to get the most out of their learning experiences. Curricula can be tailored and developed for educational scaffolding, increasing students’ understanding and retention of essential concepts. Hybrid education can be favourable when students can’t reach a physical classroom due to unforeseen circumstances. Facilitators and students have now reimaged and reinvented teaching, learning and assessments with the help and influence of technology. The flexibility and adaptability of asynchronous methods allow students to be presented with engaging material that will enable them to interact with it in innovative ways. South Africa is not at a stage where online learning can be implemented in totality, but its stakeholders are unquestionably at a stage where COVID-19 has coerced better teaching and learning methods with the help of technology. South Africa has a great deal to learn about best practices and implementation of inclusive education.

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