



# The Challenge of Learning and Teaching During the Outbreak of COVID-19 (COVID Challenge) Problem or Opportunity

Malahat Shabani Minnabadi<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Language, Teaching and Linguistics, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

\*Corresponding author: Assistant Professor, Department of English Language, Teaching and Linguistics, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran. Email: m.shabani.phd110@gmail.com

Received 2020 April 06; Accepted 2020 August 23.

**Keywords:** Distance Learning, COVID-19 Disease, COVID Challenge

## 1. Context

In late December, the world faced a huge challenge called COVID-19 caused by a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), and as a result, the economic, industrial, health, and education systems faced challenges. The spread of the virus has led to the closure of face-to-face learning in educational centers, schools, universities, and language centers in Iran, and has given rise to a sense of hopelessness in the country. Also, the COVID-19 challenge, i.e., the closure of educational centers, has caused concerns among parents, teachers, and professors. In this article, we have tried to provide roles and solutions to turn this dilemma into opportunities for prosperity using training technology and cyberspace.

## 2. Online Training a Way to Save (Prevent Wasting Time and Opportunity)

The H1N1 virus spread in 2011 in the United States drew attention to the use of online education and learning. A comparative study on the websites of 50 universities conducted by Meyer and Wilson showed that only one-third of people used online teaching methods so that most of the research sample underestimated learning and expanding knowledge through online, digital platforms. Changes such as the current situation that the world faces an outbreak of Coronavirus, new technology, and modern teaching have to help teaching and educations (1). While emergencies such as the coronavirus outbreak have challenged and shut down educational centers in Iran, and parents and even some educators may view these conditions as a problem or a scourge of education, with a positive prospect, this situation, with all its problems, can be an opportunity to expand distance education infrastructure in

Iran, provided that the government and the nation work together to provide a serious decision to create online education infrastructure. Therefore, in this short article, we tried to provide suggestions for crisis management, turning dilemmas into opportunities.

## 3. Appreciate Learning Through New Technologies Such as the Internet, Mobile Phones, and More

The fact is that few students have spent time getting acquainted with distance learning. Although the use of new technologies such as mobile phones and programs such as Telegram, WhatsApp, etc. has been popular among young generations, why is it not popular to use these spaces in education for adolescents and young people? The reasons may be:

1. The inattention of educational trustees (Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Training, Ministry of Islamic Guidance) to the maximum and appropriate use of these technologies in education
2. The inability of the Ministry of Communications to create suitable, strong, and indigenous infrastructure for using new technologies in education and learning.
3. Lack of interest and motivation in students to use online educational spaces in learning, which maybe because of the inability of people in charge of the option described in 1 and 2 in providing incentive and attractive platforms to guide students to use online learning spaces.
4. The unfamiliarity of parents with the unique and attractive benefits and features of online education using the Internet.
5. Lack of unity or unique, healthy educational environment to exploit for distance education

In summary, it can be said that the outbreak of COVID-19 can be an opportunity for the government (Ministry of Communications, etc.) to provide educational infrastructure, create incentives to use distance education by those in charge of education, get parents familiar with distance education and finally, make a tendency in young people and adolescents toward distance education during the outbreak of COVID-19.

#### 4. Confronting the COVID-19 Challenge from Educator, Content, and Learner Points of View

##### 4.1. Educators' Challenges for Distance Learning

The challenges that a trainer or professor faces in the distance learning process can be whether the necessary and sufficient tools are available for distance learning? Has the trainer ever received enough training to use virtual and online learning spaces? Therefore, we can consider the spread of this virus as an opportunity to evaluate the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Training in terms of training forces.

The unconventional use of online and distance learning spaces by instructors will result in the wastage of time for them and students. The instructor will be successful in the field of distance learning if he uses thousands of resources and creativity to make online education warm, lively, and effective.

##### 4.2. Educational Content Challenge

When we look at the position of content in distance learning during the COVID-19 outbreak and later online education, we can say that there is an opportunity for education authorities to look at the content of education with a critical look by summarizing the lessons and deleting inappropriate and valueless books and revolutionary work to improve educational content. On the other hand, we can encourage trainers to collaborate on compiling engaging, relevant, and up-to-date content.

##### 4.3. Learners' Challenge

The challenge that plagues learners not only during the COVID-19 outbreak but also during normal times and prevents the country from achieving its educational goals is that many learners do not have access to cyberspace requirements such as the Internet, as many remote villages in Iran are still taught in Multiple-Grade Classes, and many students are not able to buy and use distance learning devices such as tablets, smartphones, etc. Therefore, this problem can be solved by the government by using the capacities of donors to give such an opportunity. Another challenge for learners can be in educational content that

they do not consider appropriate to their needs for success in their future lives, which can provide an opportunity to use themselves or learners when compiling content. Also, with the expansion of distance education, the opportunity for a sense of educational justice in the target community is realized (2).

Finally, in the author's opinion, we should focus not only on the negative and black dimension of the COVID-19 outbreak but also on the benefits that come with seeing the opportunity and trying to expand remote and online educational infrastructure using the experience of this viral outbreak.

#### Footnotes

**Conflict of Interests:** There is no conflict of interest.

**Funding/Support:** None declared.

#### References

1. Meyer KA, Wilson JL. The role of online learning in the emergency plans of flagship institutions. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*. 2011;**14**(1).
2. Merrill M. First principles of instruction. *Educational Technology Research and Development*. 2002;**50**(3):43-59. doi: [10.1007/bf02505024](https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02505024).