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The Application of Online and Blended Learning During Outbreaks, Epidemics and Pandemics: The Case of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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The Application of Online and Blended Learning During Outbreaks, Epidemics and Pandemics: The Case of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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Abstract

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in full or partial lockdowns of higher education institutions (HEIs) in most countries worldwide. On the other hand, HEIs around the world were faced with the difficult questions of how to continue to provide training, learning and research activities to students during outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics. Online and blended learnings are relatively new modes of teaching and learning activities which enable HEIs to offer either online only or a combination of online and physical-based programs of study respectively. Adoption of such learning practices helped ensure continued HEIs operations during outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics. However, there are HEIs which still have no or limited investment in online and blended learning. This chapter outlines the different models of online and blended learning that HEIs can adopt, demystify the benefits, values and challenges posed by these models, necessary infrastructure including information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as required staff and student support services to ensure effective and efficient uptake and usage. It further shows that with a deliberate initial investment in the necessary infrastructure, staff and student support services, the resources of and potential for online and blended programs can be enormous. It also outlines remote learning models that HEIs can adopt, how to support students' readiness for online and blended learning, the benefits and challenges posed by employing online and blended learning in HEIs and the necessary infrastructure and support services.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions, online/blended learning, remote online learning model