IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION: A CASE OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM COLLEGES IN ARUSHA

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 (popularly, the Coronavirus pandemic) outbreak and its massive and instant spread froze mobility globally on an unmatched scale and extensively and rapidly limited access of the need for education. This research provides an assessment of the impacts of this pandemic which has become a health, economic and geopolitical crisis with a direct effect on the education system at international, national and local levels. It also deals with how the use of ICT and online classes phenomenon developed from the unprecedented lockdown and social distancing practices imposed by the government with a chance to provide a unique opportunity for the education system. This research paper used empirical data from colleges to examine the pacts of covid-19 on the education system and how the colleges interacted with the effects of the pandemic. Some colleges responded to the impacts of covid-19 with the use of online classes and other ICT means to continue providing the service to their clients (students) while others face difficulty due to lack of means necessary to conduct such classes and have the accessed by many. This research then discusses on proper means of integrating ICT and college institutions in to achieve the proper way of ease of access to education anywhere.

Key words: Covid-19, Education, Hospitality, ICT, Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Corona virus (Covid-19 pandemic) started from Wuhan state, Huibei province China on December 2019, it then spread rapidly in China and the world with 21,836,828 reported cases, 773,196 fatalities and 14,568,432 within these 1,123,142 cases 25,678 deaths and 838,452 recoveries were from Africa (Msigwa, 2020). Tanzania an East African country with a population of 59,568,773 on 16th march 2020 it reported its first Covid-19 case in response the government announced closure of colleges and schools on 17th march 2020, as this was a necessary containment and mitigation measure irrespective its indirect impact to the country (Msigwa, 2020). In response to the government measures students were sent back to their homes with international students remaining at campuses as a result of travel restrictions and on the other hand colleges being unable to use the conventional methods of teaching i.e. face to face teaching (Mtebe *et. al,* 2021). Even after all this the government and other stakeholders realized learning had to continue (Msigwa, 2020). In place of such difficulty the government then employed the use of radio, television programming and e-Learning remotely at home (ILO, 2021).

Tanzania institute of education prepared lessons for television and radio programs in accordance to the Primary and Secondary school syllabuses, whereas community and national radio stations were utilized for maximum coverage with students being able to engage by asking questions remotely as well as public television station dedicated for mainstream to form VI candidates by NECTA (ILO, 2021). On the other hand, higher learning institutions such as UDSM appointed a taskforce launch technology-enhanced teaching through audit of existing ICT infrastructure, information systems, policies and guidelines for e-learning (Mtebe

et. Al, 2021). Mtebe *et al* (2021) further explains the team identified ICT infrastructure, information system as (Moodle system, Zoom video conferencing system and Postgraduate information management system (PGMIS)) and skills gap among instructors on the systems was also part of the identification.

While there seems to be efforts that were done to ensure there was learning during the closure of schools, colleges and universities, a big effort was focused on the primary schools and secondary schools with most colleges and higher learning institutions left to find their way out of this moment.

This study focuses on the ways that hospitality and tourism colleges adapted to the environment of remote learning by trying to shed a light on the initiatives taken by the colleges to ensure that their students were learning even when they are not at campuses. Also try to know what the students were doing for studying during the pandemic. As it is stated by ILO (2021) most girls during school closure resumed household responsibilities with even others subjected to forms of harassment and domestic violence.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was considered appropriate to examine the tourism educators' perspective regarding COVID-19 on the future of tourism education (Creswell, 1998; Mei, 2017; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). An interpretive paradigm was adopted to explore the educators' concerns regarding the ongoing situation (Saunders et al., 2009). This section is articulated around two key areas, namely data collection and data analysis. The structure is adopted by most research method books (Brunt et al., 2017; Fox et al., 2014)

DATA COLLECTION

The study used purposive sampling for collecting data through an online questionnaire. This market research format enables to obtain of accurate information from respondents and facilitates data analysis (Brunt et al., 2017). The questionnaire included both close-ended and open-ended questions which were initially mailed personally to a list of 42 educators teaching tourism and hospitality courses in different institutes across the world. As surveys tend to be ignored in general (Brunt et al., 2017), the respondents for this survey were selected following two criteria (in order of importance): first, all the selected respondents had collaborated in the past with the authors of this study; and secondly, their geographical location, as a global representation is wanted for this study. To ensure a balanced global representation, the questionnaire was later shared on the LinkedIn platform.

The online survey, designed in the English language, included three main sections. The first section collected the institutional information related to tourism and cognate courses (such as MICE, Airfare Ticketing etc.), annual student enrolment, number of teachers, and percentage of students who join the industry after completing their graduation (Chaisawat, 2005). The second section of the questionnaire examined the challenges faced by educational institutions in providing tourism education after the outbreak of COVID-19. The questions were adapted from Gu et al. (2007), Chaisawat (2005), and Hjalager (2003). These authors analysed the career issues and institutional challenges in China, Thailand, & Thailand, respectively. Lastly, the third section included five open-ended questions related to the likely transformation of tourism education in the post-COVID-19 phase adapted from Tan and Morgan (2001) and Sheldon et al. (2010),

because these authors reported the relevance and future of tourism education. It included questions like what radical changes might come in the tourism education realm, skills which will be considered vital for tourism students to obtain, and how to make tourism education robust to deal with similar crises in the future.

Brunt et al. (2017) emphasised that a well-presented and engaging online survey is likely to increase the number of successful responses generated. Initially, 17 responses were received from the listed educators (40% of the respondents targeted). While qualitative research explores the themes in-depth (Mei, 2017; Vaismoradi et al., 2016), the number was sufficient (Byrne, 2001). However, there was over-representation of some countries in the received responses. As the balanced composition is imperative in purposive sampling to generalise the findings (Gray, 2014), the authors shared the questionnaire on social networking sites, mainly LinkedIn. After a couple of days, five more responses were added. There was no major difference in the last five responses received except that they belonged to different countries like Spain, Philippines and UAE. Subsequently, a total of 22 responses were considered in the study for further analysis. The sample size is consistent with theoretical saturation (Goulding, 2002) which we found at 22 interviews, given that no further significant codes were generated. This is also consistent with Guest et al. (2006) experiment with data saturation and variability which concluded that saturation for the most part occurred after the analysis of 12 interviews. As the primary focus was to examine at least one country from each continent (Crawford et al., 2020), the study includes 22 responses from 15 different countries across the world such as Germany, Kenya, Philippines, India, UK, France, and Saudi Arabia to name a few. This information

is essential as it is part of the purposive sampling strategy of this study. Indeed, part of this sampling approach includes quota sampling, which takes strata into account (Fox et al., 2014).

DATA ANALYSIS

Finally, the responses were exported verbatim to NVivo software 12. This software is used for qualitative analysis which offers tools for aggregating, coding and visualising data (Brunt et al., 2017). The use of the application positively contributes to the efficiency of the analyses by adding rigour to the study (Alhojailan, 2012). The authors, then adopted thematic analysis (Hannam & Knox, 2005; Walters, 2016) to investigate the personal opinions of tourism educators (Percy et al., 2015). Thematic analyses look for themes and interconnections that occur in the data (Fox et al., 2014).

FINDINGS

OVERALL FINDINGS

The analysis highlighted the variability as tourism educators belonged to different countries. However, the responses related to the implementation of digital learning and teaching, the worrisome situation of unemployment in the industry, the need to redesign the curriculum, and collaboration with the industry stakeholders and government were mutually represented by the 22 respondents. represents that tourism-related courses are majorly offered at undergraduate and post-graduate level. The 22 respondents belong to different institutions across 15 countries. Half of the respondents noted that course enrolment for tourism courses was not more than 100 in their institution. Also, the number of lecturers are sufficient to meet the educational requirement in colleges and universities. For example, in a university where less than 50 students are enrolled, the number of teachers counts 1 to 5. The term "sufficient" implies a favourable teacher–student ratio (Kiplinger, 2012) in the institutions offering tourism and related courses. Further, the respondents were asked to select the top three reasons which motivate students for selecting tourism-related courses, and it was found that attractive job offers, opportunities for an international career, and multifaceted use of the degree were considered by students. The study conducted by Hjalager (2003) also reported that students regard the tourism profession as an opportunity to take up jobs abroad. Likewise, the respondents were asked to select the three significant challenges that they face after the COVID-19 outbreak. The lack of practical sessions, placement pressure, and low degree of students participation were noticeably reported. The question regarding educators' opinion on whether COVID-19 will affect tourism education was measured through a 5-point Likert scale, and it was found that about 40% think that it will have a negative impact.

Following is the list of themes and sub-themes which have extracted from the open-ended responses related to the post-COVID-19 scenario on deterring factors, skills required by students, radical changes in the tourism education system, and suggestions to make tourism courses robust.

DISSUADING FACTORS

The first theme denotes the plausible dissuading factors in taking up tourism-related courses in the post-COVID-19 scenario. It was an open-ended question, and the majority of the respondents emphasised that the present situation of joblessness in the industry may dissuade potential students

from taking admission in the tourism and cognate courses

BLEAK CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND JOBLESSNESS

Respondents replied that the lack of job opportunities in the tourism sector after the outbreak of COVID-19 might deter potential students from taking tourism and cognate courses. A respondent quoted the example of British Airways, which has laid off employees and similar other companies in the tourism domain. A respondent opined, "Many companies may not survive the crisis as we can see there are lay-offs in the tourism and hospitality industry. This situation will ultimately lead to fewer job opportunities in the near future. Students realise that tourism is a discretionary and dispensable industry. (Sic)"

GLOBAL TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Another emerging dissuading factor was the restriction on global travel which may act as a deterrent for taking admissions in the preferred college. Due to strict airline rules, visa restrictions, and restricted movement would thwart students from travelling to foreign countries to take up admission. Figure 1 presents the major dissuading factors in tourism education.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR STUDENTS TO COUNTER POST-COVID-19 CHALLENGES

The second theme is related to the essential skills which students should possess to combat the challenges faced by the tourism industry currently. The respondents emphasise three significant domains- Creativity and innovation using digital media change in the academic course structure to teach skills amongst students, and vocational skills. Figure 2 presents the essential skills for students to counter the post-pandemic challenges:

INNOVATION AND CREATIVE SKILLS

The emphasis on digital advancement and skills was made by 50% of the respondents. Words such as digital awareness, digital knowledge, and digital marketing were prominently used by tourism educators in the survey. Along with this, the educators focused on enhancing the innovative and creative aspects in tourism education as reported by Batra (2016). However, the context was not very clear as to how innovation skills can be developed in students. A respondent replied:

"Now, students will learn more online, sitting at their native place, which will lead to the actual implementation of tourism theory in a realistic setting. It is also important that students work on the implementation of project-based learning and its effective application in realistic settings."

ACADEMIC COURSES

Various respondents stressed on the need to introduce emerging concepts in the academic curricula such as health and safety measures in tourism, crisis management, risk management, business continuity, and resilience for tourism and hospitality industry. The respondents realised that these concepts could help students prepare theoretically and practically to understand

crises and help them to take critical strategic decisions to survive in the market.

"I believe that crisis management related courses will be introduced (mainly at the graduate level) that will provide necessary tools to students on how to deal with similar situations."

VOCATIONAL SKILLS

Soft skills such as language, IT skills, communication proficiency in English and other foreign languages, analytical thinking, creativity, and social interaction skills could help students in creating a niche in the industry (Ayikoru et al., 2009; Cooper & Shepherd, 1997; Tan & Morgan, 2001). One faculty acknowledged the greater degree of professionalism that could be offered by tourism graduates:

"Certainly, visitors who will visit the tourism destination just immediately after COVID-19 settles down, they will look for disciplined services in every aspect. Only the students from the tourism department have both theoretical and practical knowledge and will understand the degree of professionalism required to serve the tourists. I am sure employers will look to hire people from this discipline."

RADICAL CHANGES IN TOURISM EDUCATION IN THE POST-COVID-19 PHASE

The third theme relates to the potential changes in the tourism education system post-COVID-19. Until now the classroom education was considered ideal, but Ritalahati (2015) highlighted that the academic community requires rethinking concerning teaching and learning. The responses also echoed the upcoming transition in learning and teaching through

online medium, as presented in Figure 3 below.

ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The pre-dominance of the online mode of learning and teaching was noted in the survey replies. While responding, around 30% of the respondents, the changing paradigm in the teaching methods such as a blended form of teaching, and gamification. The expansion of the interdisciplinary discipline, along with practical training sessions makes it challenging to conduct online classes. Nevertheless, online teaching has accepted widely positively, and one respondent noticed that:

"For our country (Algeria), the crisis has allowed the teachers to adapt to new ways of teaching as previously they were not familiar with the distance-learning technologies. But now, we have noticed that more and more teachers are using it easily."

In spite of the positive responses, one of the respondents criticised that the post-COVID-19 phase may result in reduced admissions and may discourage and demotivate students who are currently studying tourism courses. Likewise, a participant from Nigeria highlighted the dark side of the development in education, saying that:

"Lack of logistics, internet limitation, and students who cannot afford to buy laptops or smartphones to access the online platforms may face the challenge of the changes which have taken place in the education sector within last few months."

THE REINVENTION OF TOURISM EDUCATION AND A ROBUST FUTURE AHEAD

The last theme is related to the transformation required in the current tourism education

system to make it more robust and specific to meet the requirements of the industry in the post-COVID-19 phase. The same is presented in Figure 4 below.

RESEARCH

Kunwar (2018) rightly said that research is the building block of knowledge, which gradually takes the form of discipline. The respondents echoed his findings by emphasising the promotion of ethical research works. They further responded that support from the government would be a pre-requisite for funded research projects. In the same context, one respondent said:

"Expanding the educational orientation of the programs towards the normal level of classical universities and active involvement of students into research practice should be promoted. Even the expansion of university-

DISCUSSION

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED AND IMPACTED

It is not unique to mention that the tourism industry is the most vulnerable industry during any crisis (Kebede, 2018; Kumar, 2020). The pre-COVID-19 studies indicated that salary was the major deterring factor for not choosing tourism industry (Gu et al., 2007). This study emphasised that joblessness and sectors' vulnerability may prove to be significant deterring factors for students in the post-COVID-19 scenario. As all the educators considered, the placement pressure is real. Also, it considers it as a dissuading factor soon for potential students to take up admission in the tourism courses, re-positioning and marketing of the courses is advisable. The tourism industry is labour intensive wherein employing skilled

based fundamental research projects should be prioritised in the future."

CURRICULUM DESIGN

A vital component in every educational program is its curriculum. The curriculum planning and designing should be done in incorporating the suggestions of industry professionals (Cooper & Shepherd, 1997; Gu et al., 2007). It should focus on both theoretical and practical aspects of learning (Tribe, 2001). Thus, tourism academicians and institutes should strengthen their links with the industry for better functioning and effective outcomes.

"Tourism educators should collaborate with industry stakeholders so that they will be in a better position to prepare an adequate response by modifying their curricula. The revised curricula should include relevant courses and topics that will enable the students to tackle emerging issues."

professionals has a positive effect on service quality (Ladkin, 2002), the curriculum and teaching methods of tourism programs should be centred on the forthcoming industry requirement. The tourism educators were also confident that vocational or soft skills would play a crucial role in the recovery phase, so many of them emphasised on foreign language, relationship building, communication and digital media networking etc. It is also suggested by Dredge et al. (2012), Gu et al. (2007), and Hjalager (2003).

Workshops could be conducted, to ensure the transferability of theoretical knowledge into vocational skills. These workshops could develop reflective practices amongst tourism professionals (Felder & Spurlin, 2005; Lashley, 1999). About 18.1% of the educators emphasised that government support would help tourism courses to remain robust in the current scenario. One such

initiative was taken by the Thailand government named as Tourism Academic Association of Thailand (TAAT) with a 360-degree approach to developing tourism academics, curriculum, research activities, and teaching potentials (Chaisawat, 2005). The salient point in the redesign of tourism education was centred on curriculum design planning, similar to the suggestions given by Hsu (2018) such as including subjects like crisis management, resilience in tourism, risk management etc. Some respondents highlighted the need to reshape the teachings methods such as gamification and blended learning methods. The tourism educators' responses confirmed that the collaboration and partnership between the industry stakeholders and tourism academia are crucial for the development of industry and skills of students (Chowdhary et al., 2020 Jamal et al., 2011).

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