Chapter 17
Reframing Educational Tools as Open Access and Sustainable Funding Models

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ABSTRACT

The SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic drastically forced millions of students, faculty, staff, and administrators into a digital world of the unknown. The unexpected perplexities of these unknown digital environments resulted in unacceptable percentages of student losses in school attendance, student academic performance, and as a result loss to local communities. One perpetual reminder this pandemic taught is that even post-COVID, educational institutions will have to rely upon remote, digital interfaces due to future challenges such as hurricanes, fires, flooding, rolling blackouts, etc. However, each of these barriers also presents new opportunities to learn and provide access to products and services such as hardware and Internet access, which will improve student success and retention.

INTRODUCTION

The SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic drastically forced millions of students, faculty, staff, and administrators into a digital world of the unknown. The unexpected perplexities of these unknown digital environments resulted in unacceptable percentages of student losses in school attendance, student academic performance, and as a result loss to our local communities. One perpetual reminder this pandemic taught us is even post-Covid, educational institutions will have to rely upon remote, digital interfaces due to future challenges such as hurricanes, fires, flooding, rolling blackouts… However, each of these barriers presents us with new opportunities to learn and provide access to products and services such as hardware and Internet access, which will improve student success and retention. Some of these new

opportunities include creating and implementing sustainable funding models that can provided needed hardware and Internet access, reframing the idea of open access to include access to the Internet and hardware, and properly advocating for and obtaining varied types of funding for proper Intranet access and hardware. Many of these types of funding models include reallocating existing educational institutional funding, federal and state grants, private philanthropic funding, and consortia funding. Some entities have already begun to creatively provide funding to expand Internet access and hardware access to impoverished areas, which prevents a future barrier for student learning and education. Many other communities and educational institutions should expound upon these examples and continue to provide adequate access to Wi-Fi and hardware for students, faculty, and staff in need. One of the impetuses that re-highlighted this need of hardware and Internet access was Covid-19.

BACKGROUND

In March of 2020, due to the SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic, the world witnessed basketball seasons cancelled while games were in progress. Also, schools, restaurants, retail outlets… all closed within a matter of days around the world, and suddenly, the world's denizens and many of their reliable societal institutions came to a standstill. As a result, educational institutions at the K-12 level and higher education institutions no longer offered in-person instruction, and administrators scrambled to determine how their school staff could continue to offer pedagogy to students in a remote fashion. Educational institution administrators selected Zoom (Zoom, 2021), Microsoft Teams (2021), Google Classroom (2021), Canvas (Canvas, 2021), Blackboard (Blackboard, 2021), and a variety of other digital interfaces and learning management system platforms on which to offer pedagogical materials to students. This dramatic shift from in-person instruction to online instruction exhibited valiant efforts via administrators at local independent school districts, private K-12 schools, and at the college and university levels. However, this swift transition to on-line learning environments presented enormous learning curves for administrators, students, teachers, and staff, which also resulted in many technological barriers (Aristovnik et al., 2020).

MAIN FOCUS - ISSUES, CONTROVERSIES, PROBLEMS

The main issue depicted in this chapter is how the pandemic highlights how virus outbreaks, hurricanes, floods, fires, and other disasters force educational institutions to rely on online learning environments. However, many students do not have access to proper Wi-Fi and hardware to successfully participate in an online learning environment. Therefore, this chapter presents some opportunities moving forward to discover perpetual funding models for newly created open access opportunities that include hardware and Wi-Fi.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology utilized to examine this problem is a literature review. This literature review depicts the problems Covid 19 highlights in regard to students, faculty, and other key stakeholders not having access to reliable hardware and WiFi during the pandemic. This lack of access resulted in numerous

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