

Editorial

In April 2020, author Arundhati Roy described the Covid-19 pandemic as a portal or a doorway to the future. She wrote, “Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew”. In this instance, the viral spill-over from animals to humans causing severe human disease sent us a powerful message. If we continue to encroach on natural ecosystems and destroy diversity of habitats, these systems can breakdown causing devastating consequences. Do we continue with business as usual, promoting living in overcrowded cities and frequent long-distance travel? Is there a different way to see the world and to live in it, and to live well together, in harmony between people and with the natural world?

The digital transformation or the new normal for education systems began not only with Covid-19 forcing education systems to go fully online, but with how education is experienced by students, some of whom were taking to the streets, boycotting school, in waves of protest marches to chant or to demand that they have a right to a liveable future and to fulfilling jobs. They are making us question, what it means to be human, how to lead a meaningful life, how to live ethically. They are demanding us to consider the well-being for all life, and to protect the planet for future generations.

Traditional models of education may be insufficient to meet the changing needs of society and the economy. Lifelong learning, retraining and upskilling throughout the lifespan may become the new model of education; as what is learned today may be irrelevant within a decade, in the digitally and environmentally transforming world.

Afnan Nizam and Fathimath Saeed’s case study of online teaching and learning in a secondary school in Male’, Maldives during the corona virus pandemic demonstrated that teachers need extensive training to do self-regulated online learning, and to have the language proficiency to do so, if they are to fully utilise the benefits of digital education for themselves and for their students. Furthermore, children who are at risk of not achieving their full potential need to be a central focus in investments for home improvements for learning. Barriers to learning at school level were low internet speed and affordability, lack of skills and knowledge to develop self-regulated and collaborative learning, and unawareness of how to create or find relevant content.

Mariyam Azlifa and Fathimath Saeed in exploring the process of digitalisation of Maldivian schools, highlight that the relationship between equity, equality, and access to digital education is very context-specific and multi-layered, requiring intervention, knowledge sharing, collaboration and investment at all levels. Students learning across disciplinary boundaries on real life problems need to be aware of socio-cultural and economic implications of technological

change, while utilising digital tools to mobilise, network, collaborate and to share knowledge.

Societal and environmental problems that transcend national borders such as climate change, environmental destruction, gender and racial inequality and discrimination, poverty, war, forced migration, rogue governments and corporations, forced land acquisition and exploitation, zero-hour work contracts and sweatshop work conditions termed “wicked problems” or “grand challenges” require international research and collaboration. Human rights are a theme which cuts across all of these issues.

To bring about deep change through working together to make different kinds of investments, to change habits of over-consumerism, and exploitation; industry, government, educators and society need to plan together, to enable young people to use their creativity and energy to create a fairer and more inclusive world for all life and for the planet. This requires a focus on not only human rights but the rights of nature to survive and thrive. Ahmed Shahid’s paper on globalisation and human rights obligations identify the need for a much wider role by the governments and international organisations to ensure human rights are met through development of regulatory frameworks and implementation.

Mohammed Muazzaz and Velu Vengadeshwaran provide us with a practical design idea to evaluate the learning outcomes for all students to check if students are meeting the expected standards of programmes of study. This design tool is an example of what can be achieved through collaboration, to find concrete, practical ideas and context-specific solutions to achieve our vision of high quality education for all.

We wish to promote IJSRI as a valuable platform to share knowledge and present ideas that can positively influence policy level decision making for a sustainable future. We are always willing to work with authors, and encourage everyone to contact us at any point during their research and writing process.

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