

EDUCATIONAL POLICY-MAKING FOR A PANDEMIC: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND THE PHILIPPINES.

Elaboración de políticas educativas para una pandemia: Un estudio de caso comparativo entre Colombia y Filipinas.

Laura Alejandra Rodríguez García, Jhomber Estiven Pira Ávila, Hyeun Kim, Galvan, Fatima Beatrice F., Danica Regine P. Encarnacion, Zelina Mari M. Mendoza, Julianna Victoria C. Torres, Karol V. Forero. COIL Course

Abstract

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Despite having comparable tertiary education structures, the Philippines and Colombia took notably different stances on policy in addressing the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This sudden change both created and exacerbated distinct social issues and inequalities in both countries. As global society transitions into the “new normal,” there is significant insight to be gained by analyzing the respective policies the Philippines and Colombia chose to adopt, and their efficacy in addressing emerging and existing inequalities in both tertiary education systems.

To provide a more comprehensive understanding, the analysis of these policies should also account for the specific socioeconomic contexts of each country, such as income disparity and regional access to resources, which heavily influenced the effectiveness of their respective educational responses. For example, rural areas in both

countries faced additional challenges in adapting to online learning, as limited internet infrastructure further widened the gap between urban and rural students. Moreover, cultural and governmental priorities, including the level of public investment in education and technology, also played a pivotal role in shaping the success or failure of each approach.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic; educational policies; higher education.

Resumen

A pesar de tener estructuras de educación terciaria comparables, Filipinas y Colombia adoptaron posturas políticas notablemente diferentes para abordar la llegada de la pandemia de COVID-19. Este cambio repentino creó y exacerbó distintos problemas sociales y desigualdades en ambos países. A medida que la sociedad global hace la transición hacia la “nueva normalidad”, es posible obtener importantes conocimientos al analizar las políticas respectivas que Filipinas y Colombia decidieron adoptar y su eficacia para abordar las desigualdades emergentes y existentes en ambos sistemas de educación terciaria. Se empleó la teoría de la política educativa en el análisis del sistema híbrido inicial establecido en Colombia, en comparación con el período de más de dos años que Filipinas dedicó a un sistema completamente remoto. Un factor importante que perjudica a ambos países y que debería abordarse de inmediato si se recomienda cualquiera de las dos opciones es la brecha digital. Este desafío se refería tanto a la comunicación entre los estudiantes, sus compañeros y educadores, como a la escasez de recursos que podrían proporcionarse para mantener un entorno de aprendizaje estable para los estudiantes.

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Para proporcionar una comprensión más integral, el análisis de estas políticas también debe tener en cuenta los contextos socioeconómicos específicos de cada país, como la disparidad

de ingresos y el acceso regional a los recursos, que influyeron en gran medida en la eficacia de sus respectivas respuestas educativas. Por ejemplo, las zonas rurales de ambos países enfrentaron desafíos adicionales para adaptarse al aprendizaje en línea, ya que la infraestructura limitada de Internet amplió aún más la brecha entre los estudiantes urbanos y rurales. Además, las prioridades culturales y gubernamentales, incluido el nivel de inversión pública en educación y tecnología, también desempeñaron un papel fundamental a la hora de determinar el éxito o el fracaso de cada enfoque.

Palabras claves: Pandemia de COVID-19; políticas educativas; educación superior.

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To provide a more comprehensive understanding, the analysis of these policies should also account for the specific socioeconomic contexts of each country, such as income disparity and regional access to resources, which heavily influenced the effectiveness of their respective educational responses. For example, rural areas in both countries faced additional challenges in adapting to online learning, as limited internet infrastructure further widened the gap between urban and rural students. Moreover, cultural and governmental priorities, including the level of public investment in education and technology, also played a pivotal role in shaping

the success or failure of each approach.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic; educational policies; higher education.

Resumen

A pesar de tener estructuras de educación terciaria comparables, Filipinas y Colombia adoptaron posturas políticas notablemente diferentes para abordar la llegada de la pandemia de COVID-19. Este cambio repentino creó y exacerbó distintos problemas sociales y desigualdades en ambos países. A medida que la sociedad global hace la transición hacia la “nueva normalidad”, es posible obtener importantes conocimientos al analizar las políticas respectivas que Filipinas y Colombia decidieron adoptar y su eficacia para abordar las desigualdades emergentes y existentes en ambos sistemas de educación terciaria. Se empleó la teoría de la política educativa en el análisis del sistema híbrido inicial establecido en Colombia, en comparación con el período de más de dos años que Filipinas dedicó a un sistema completamente remoto. Un factor importante que perjudica a ambos países y que debería abordarse de inmediato si se recomienda cualquiera de las dos

opciones es la brecha digital. Este desafío se refería tanto a la comunicación entre los estudiantes, sus compañeros y educadores, como a la escasez de recursos que podrían proporcionarse para mantener un entorno de aprendizaje estable para los estudiantes.

A pesar de tener estructuras de educación terciaria comparables, Filipinas y Colombia adoptaron posturas políticas notablemente diferentes para abordar la llegada de la pandemia de COVID-19. Este cambio repentino creó y exacerbó distintos problemas sociales y desigualdades en ambos países. A medida que la sociedad global hace la transición hacia la “nueva normalidad”, se pueden obtener importantes conocimientos al analizar las políticas respectivas que Filipinas y Colombia decidieron adoptar, y su eficacia para abordar las desigualdades emergentes y existentes en ambos sistemas de educación terciaria.

Para proporcionar una comprensión más integral, el análisis de estas políticas también debe tener en cuenta los contextos socioeconómicos específicos de cada país, como la disparidad de ingresos y el acceso regional a los recursos, que influyeron en gran medida en la eficacia de sus respectivas respuestas

educativas. Por ejemplo, las zonas rurales de ambos países enfrentaron desafíos adicionales para adaptarse al aprendizaje en línea, ya que la infraestructura limitada de Internet amplió aún más la brecha entre los estudiantes urbanos y rurales. Además, las prioridades culturales y gubernamentales, incluido el nivel de inversión pública en educación y tecnología, también desempeñaron un papel fundamental a la hora de determinar el éxito o el fracaso de cada enfoque.

Palabras claves: Pandemia de COVID-19; políticas educativas; educación superior.

Resumo

Apesar de terem estruturas de ensino superior comparáveis, as Filipinas e a Colômbia assumiram posições políticas notavelmente diferentes na abordagem ao advento da Pandemia da COVID-19. Esta mudança repentina criou e exacerbou questões sociais e desigualdades distintas em ambos os países. À medida que a sociedade global transita para o “novo normal”, há uma visão significativa a ser obtida através da análise das respectivas políticas que as Filipinas e a Colômbia escolheram adoptar, e a sua eficácia para abordar as desigualdades

emergentes e existentes em ambos os sistemas de ensino superior. A Teoria da Política Educacional foi empregada na análise da configuração híbrida inicial estabelecida na Colômbia, em comparação com o período de mais de dois anos que as Filipinas dedicaram a uma configuração totalmente remota. Um factor importante que prejudicou ambos os países e que teria de ser abordado imediatamente se qualquer uma das configurações fosse recomendada foi a exclusão digital. Este desafio ocorreu tanto em termos de comunicação entre os alunos, seus pares e educadores, como também na escassez de recursos que poderiam ser fornecidos para manter um ambiente de aprendizagem estável para os alunos.

Apesar de terem estruturas de educação terciária comparáveis, Filipinas e Colômbia adotaram posturas políticas notavelmente diferentes para abordar o legado da pandemia de COVID-19. Esta mudança arrependida criou e exacerbou diferentes problemas sociais e desigualdades em ambos os países. À medida que a sociedade global faz a transição para a “nova normalidade”, ela pode obter conhecimentos importantes para analisar as políticas específicas que Filipinas e Colômbia decidiram adotar e sua eficácia para abordar as desigualdades emergentes e existentes em ambos os sistemas de educação

terciária.

Para proporcionar uma compreensão mais abrangente, a análise destas políticas deve também ter em conta os contextos socioeconómicos específicos de cada país, tais como a disparidade de rendimentos e o acesso regional aos recursos, que influenciaram fortemente a eficácia das respetivas respostas educativas. Por exemplo, as zonas rurais de ambos os países enfrentaram desafios adicionais na adaptação à aprendizagem online, uma vez que a infra-estrutura limitada da Internet aumentou ainda mais o fosso entre os estudantes urbanos e rurais. Além disso, as prioridades culturais e governamentais, incluindo o nível de investimento público na educação e na tecnologia, também desempenharam um papel fundamental na definição do sucesso ou fracasso de cada abordagem.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

When the COVID-19 outbreak spread outside of China, the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic as of March 11, 2020 (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). Governments across the world did their best to limit the spread of the virus, and this meant having to impose quarantine measures (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). Governments imposed “social distancing” or “physical distancing” in order to limit the interactions between people and minimize any kind of contact that could spread the virus (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). Because of this, many universities and colleges had to close their campuses (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). Many students were affected, and higher education institutions had to adapt to challenging times to continue delivering quality education. Face-to-face classes were not allowed in most universities and colleges, and one of the alternatives was shifting to online classes or remote learning. At first, such alternatives enabled most students to continue their education and helped professors and students connect from the comforts of their homes. Online classes and remote

learning have their advantages, such as the flexibility of asynchronous learning and helping students who can't attend traditional classes fulltime (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). However, the pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of higher education and shown that not all students can keep up with such alternatives (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). Many problems were seen with remote learning, such as unequal access to the internet, not having access to laptops and computers, and the lack of interactions between students (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). Professors and faculties also had to overcome many hurdles, such as having to adjust their curricula and having to deliver their lectures through various mediums (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). The challenge now rests upon higher education institutions, governments, faculty, and students to navigate their way through the pandemic.

In the Philippines, 3.5 million college students enrolled in 2,400 higher education institutions (HEIs) were affected by the pandemic (Joaquin et al., 2020). To continue delivering quality education, policies and measures were put in place. These included a mixture of synchronous online sessions with real-time lectures and time-based outcomes, as well as

asynchronous sessions with pre-recorded lectures and self-paced activities (Joaquin et al., 2020). However, such measures were met with criticism. Many students and faculties urged the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to cancel online classes since it proved to be harder for most students (Joaquin et al., 2020). Many argued that in the Philippines, access to the internet remains a privilege, putting many students at a disadvantage (Joaquin et al., 2020). They further argued that not all students had an environment that would help them focus on their classes (Joaquin et al., 2020). Others also argued that having online classes contradicts the purpose of the lockdown, which was to focus on one's health and safety (Joaquin et al., 2020). Online classes only added to the stress and burdens of the lockdown (Joaquin et al., 2020). Such problems only added to the long-standing deep socio-economic issues in the country that had been present before the pandemic (Joaquin et al., 2020). For example, in rural areas, many students don't have proper roads or electricity for them to attend classes normally, let alone online classes. (Joaquin et al., 2020). The pandemic further pointed out the "digital divide" in the country (Joaquin et al., 2020). Many universities and colleges have tried to balance the concerns

of their students and faculties with the need to continue delivering quality education. Universities, such as Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), have suspended synchronous online classes and continued with asynchronous online classes for self-paced learning (Joaquin et al., 2020). Others, such as De La Salle University (DLSU) and the University of Santo Tomas (UST), continued with synchronous classes but adapted flexible grading systems to lighten the workload of their students (Joaquin et al., 2020). CHED continued to encourage HEIs to use all "available flexible learning" in delivering quality education; however, there were no rules or measures implemented, forcing HEIs to make their own policies (Joaquin et al., 2020). In the case of Colombia, many pre-existing weaknesses and unaddressed requirements that undermine the basic prerequisites for effective teaching and learning were also revealed by COVID-19. Like the Philippines, Colombia was forced to rapidly shift to online and remote learning modalities in response to the pandemic, presenting significant challenges for both students and educators. This pandemic had a significant impact on student learning in Colombia (Vegas, 2022). Despite the availability of online platforms and other technology-based In educational

activities, remote learning cannot fully replace in-person learning. Moreover, there is an unequal distribution of the needed digital devices, and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds will experience a much more severe effect on their learning capacities during the COVID-19 crisis (OECD, 2020). Access to higher education is already not easy for a large part of the population in Colombia, and the pandemic added conditions that had not been previously considered (Tibasosa, 2022). Except for specialized universities, some higher education institutions did not provide virtual platforms for distance learning programs (Tibasosa, 2022). It was reported that only 62% of students reported having a computer to use for school (OECD, 2020). School dropouts had also increased due to the number of infections (Tibasosa, 2022).

According to Tibasosa (2022), universities in Colombia implemented three main strategies to resume their operations and learning activities:

- Implementation of virtual programs to allow both teachers and students to continue with their classes. However, this caused a meaningful change and not all academics were satisfied with this new learning

format, especially since not all students had access to the internet.

- Adaptation of measures to transition to face-to-face classes, such as limiting the number of students and teachers attending intermittently, to prevent the spread of infections.
- Vaccinations were made mandatory in order to quickly resume daily activities, which led to the reopening of educational spaces in Colombia by August 2021.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruption across the world abruptly. Many sectors and fields were affected, including higher education. As governments across the world moved to contain the spread of the virus, one priority was making sure that higher education continued to be delivered. Governments, in partnership with higher education institutions, came up with new policies and measures to continue delivering quality education to their students. However, this proved to be difficult because of the new obstacles they had to overcome, such as unequal access to the internet and technology. This, on top of

existing inequalities predating the pandemic, has made it difficult for governments and institutions to cater to the needs of their students.

1.3 Research Questions

This paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. How did the pandemic worsen existing educational inequalities and what steps did the government take to address these disparities during the shift to online learning?
2. What specific policy measures did the government in the Philippines and Colombia implement to address the challenges faced by the educational system during the pandemic, and to what extent were they successful?
3. How did the governments from the two countries act in the process of transitioning from online education to face-to-face classes, or the “new normal,” and how can these be applied to improve educational quality, equity, and resilience in the future?
4. What were the key challenges faced by educational institutions during this transition to the “new normal,”

and how can these challenges be addressed to improve educational quality, equity, and resilience in the future?

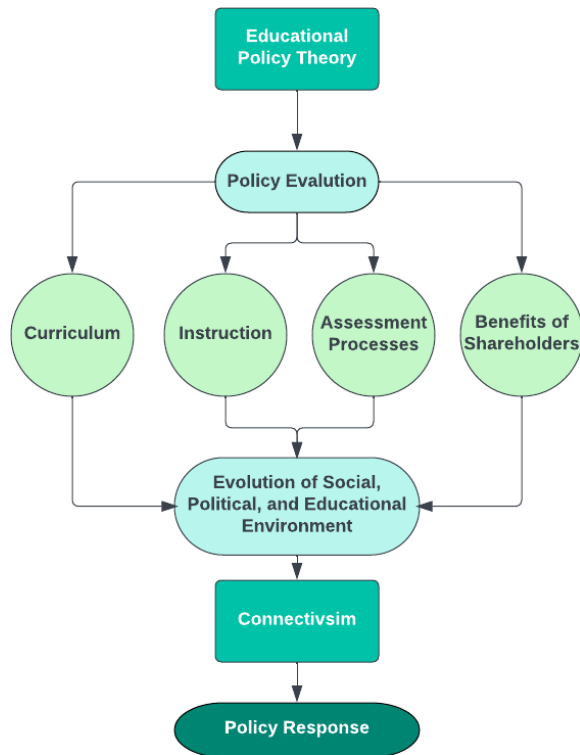
1.4 Objectives

This paper aims to:

- Identify and compare the educational policy responses implemented by Colombia and the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for higher education.
- Analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the government’s responses in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic, including access to education, quality of education, and student learning outcomes.
- Explore the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted existing inequalities among students in higher education and marginalized communities.
- Provide recommendations for policymakers and educational institutions in both countries in order to improve preparedness and responsiveness of educational systems during future crises.
- Contribute to the global discourse on educational

polycymaking in times of crisis.

2. *Theoretical Framework*



The Philippines and Colombia are two countries with developing educational systems that were forced to rapidly adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this instance, it fell to

polycymakers to address both new and exacerbated issues that emerged due to the parameters of the pandemic. With similar tertiary educational challenges but notably different policies implemented, there is much to be gleaned from analyzing the priorities and debates of Filipino and Colombian polycymakers when addressing the “new normal.” The relationship between the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and government policy for higher education is best observed through the lens of Educational Policy Theory. As stated by this theory, the foundation of sound management decisions and classroom practices leads to coherent and effective educational programs and systems (Edwards, 2017). The pandemic introduced several new variables to consider in light of this theory, the first of which was the precaution of “social distancing,” which barred access to the physical classroom, where a large part of both learning and assessment were administered. In response to this, the Philippines and Colombia shifted their more traditionally physical or “face-to-face” classrooms to full online setups. However, this abrupt change highlighted both states’ lack of standardized remote education and required an immediate recalibration of education policy to address these new challenges. During lockdown and the abrupt shift to remote learning, policy evaluation must then be administered in order

to centralize and stabilize what tertiary education would look like to accommodate these new restrictions. Not only does this account for daily life in the classroom, such as instruction and assessment processes, but it must now account for what lessons must be prioritized in the curriculum in the wake of the “new normal” and what benefits stakeholders such as students, parents, and teachers would achieve from this new system. Furthermore, there was the broader changing landscape of the social, political, and educational environments in the Philippines and Colombia that also had to be taken into consideration during the over 2-year period in which the two countries primarily provided remote education. To better flesh out these considerations, this paper draws from the Connectivism Learning Theory, which departs from traditional theories and aptly leans into digital age considerations in order to identify and remediate knowledge gaps that emerged in the new system. This theory was relevant as it emphasizes the cooperation between the educator and the learner (Western Governors University, 2021). As per theorist Siemens (2004) the role of the educator is to "create learning ecologies, shape communities, and release learners into the environment," in acknowledgement of how it falls to the curriculum to adapt to the situation but must also provide the necessary resources for

students to supplement their learning when acknowledged by both parties. These identified gaps would then go on to inform the Policy Response of both countries to tertiary learners, manifesting in expanded learning programs and systems that would also transition as symptoms of the pandemic were alleviated.

3. ***Methodology***

The methodology that was used to carry out this article was the investigation of archives based on documents, considering that what is mainly sought in this is the panorama of the educational policies of the Philippines and Colombia during the COVID-19 Pandemic. For this, scientific articles and papers developed by academics were considered, who in turn, through citations and references from various authors, sought to explain the measures chosen by Each country is in such a crisis. In addition to this, information from the Department of Education of the Republic of the Philippines to have official and first-hand information. To conclude, it was decided to carry out a theoretical framework that would allow conditioning the scientific information collected in order to solve our main objectives, which are mainly related to finding efficient ways to respond to the different crises that may arise without violating the rights of any individual,

mainly in relation to the higher education of the Philippines and Colombia. Document analysis was a key component of this research, with sources drawn from peer-reviewed journals, policy papers, and studies conducted by education experts. The investigation involved critically examining various scholarly articles that cited and referenced works from other researchers, thus offering a multi-faceted perspective on the decisions made by both governments. Through this, the research aimed to explore the effectiveness and impact of the policies implemented in each country and to identify common challenges such as the digital divide, social inequality, and access to resources. In summary, the methodology combined a rigorous analysis of secondary sources, official documents, and theoretical modeling to address the research questions effectively. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how both the Philippines and Colombia responded to the challenges posed by the pandemic and offered valuable insights for developing more resilient and inclusive education systems in the future.

4. *Findings*

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on every

aspect of society, including the education system. Governments around the world have had to implement various measures to ensure that education continues despite the pandemic. The Philippines and Colombia are two countries that have been affected by the pandemic, and their educational policies during this period have been studied in this article. The findings of the study indicate that the Philippines and Colombia have taken different approaches to their educational policies during the pandemic. In the Philippines, distance learning has been the main mode of delivery of education since the pandemic started (Tibasosa, 2022). The government has implemented various measures to ensure that students can continue their education, such as providing them with gadgets and internet access. However, the lack of physical interaction and the challenges of remote learning have been identified as potential issues. In Colombia, the government has implemented a hybrid approach to education delivery. Some students attend classes in-person while others continue their education remotely. The government has also provided schools with resources to ensure that they can provide a safe learning environment for students who attend in-person classes (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). However, the country has faced challenges in providing access to technology and the internet, especially in rural areas.

The study highlights the importance of having a flexible and adaptable educational system that can respond to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings suggest that countries should focus on providing access to technology and the internet to ensure that all students can continue their education remotely. Additionally, the study recommends that governments should provide support to teachers to help them adapt to new teaching methods. It is advised that education policymakers in the Philippines and Colombia continue to employ the Educational Policy Theory and Connectivism Learning Theory to reevaluate their educational strategies in order to address new problems and knowledge gaps brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to enable students to supplement their learning, they must give priority to curriculum lessons that will benefit stakeholders. They also need to establish learning ecosystems. Expanded learning initiatives and systems that underwent transitions as the pandemic's symptoms subsided should be the result of the policy response. In conclusion, the study conducted on the educational policies of the Philippines and Colombia during the COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the challenges both countries have faced in ensuring that education continues

despite the pandemic (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). Education policy must be reevaluated due to the shift from traditional, on-site classrooms to remote or online learning. The study highlights the challenges that both countries have faced and the measures that they have taken to ensure that education continues despite the pandemic. The measures they have taken to address these challenges have also been discussed in the study. The findings of this study can serve as a valuable resource for other countries looking to develop effective educational policies during crises. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing discussions about educational policies in the hopes of providing meaningful insights. The COVID-19 Pandemic has had a significant impact on the education industry, prompting the need for a reevaluation of education policies. With the shift from traditional, on-site classrooms to remote or online learning, new problems and knowledge gaps have emerged. This paper advocates for the use of the Educational Policy Theory and Connectivism Learning Theory to address these issues. Prioritizing lessons in the curriculum that will help stakeholders is crucial. In addition, learning ecosystems should be developed to enable students to enhance their learning. Education policymakers can utilize these theories and strategies to develop coherent and efficient educational systems that would benefit all

parties involved. By implementing these policies and strategies, the education industry can continue to thrive despite crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the lives of millions, even in the smallest of ways. With the declaration of the pandemic, initiatives such as lockdowns and community quarantines were made by the Philippine and Colombian governments to minimize the spread of the virus, including in the education sector. From primary to higher education, the shift from face-to-face classes to remote learning amidst the pandemic was a new challenge, yet a glimpse of hope for both educators and learners to continue providing and learning quality education. In this paper, the researchers aimed to compare different educational policy responses implemented in higher education by the Colombian and Philippine governments. Furthermore, it aimed to examine the effectiveness of the new educational policies, to measure how the existing inequalities among students were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and to provide recommendations for the education sector in preparation for future crises.

In this paper, the researchers conducted a comparative analysis of the educational policy responses enacted by the Colombian and Philippine governments in higher education. The study specifically evaluated the effectiveness of these policies in adapting to the new learning environment, highlighting their impact on both educational quality and accessibility. Additionally, the research explored how pre-existing inequalities among students, particularly those related to socioeconomic status and access to digital resources, were further exacerbated by the pandemic. Finally, the paper presents recommendations aimed at strengthening the education sector's resilience, offering strategies to better prepare for future crises and ensure that all students have equitable access to education in times of uncertainty. In the case of the Philippines and Colombia, governments from both countries exerted their efforts in shifting from traditionally physical or "face-to-face" classrooms to remote learning to lessen the spread of viruses. With the use of related literature, archival research, and document based research, the findings have revealed that despite the governments' efforts, with the rapid shift of classroom settings and pre-existing inequalities, both educators and learners from the two countries were

affected by the conditions given to them. Most significantly, the digital divide experienced by educators and students, unequal access to technology, and other socio-economic factors that hinder the learning process were present. Furthermore, the findings have revealed the limitations of online learning due to the lack of physical interaction between educators and learners. Lastly, the research suggests the reevaluation of education policies that promote inclusivity, the strengthening of learning ecosystems, and initiatives that will satisfy all stakeholders, including students, educators, and parents, and that will serve as a preparation for future crises.

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