

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Field of Higher Education in Contemporary Sri Lanka (with Special Reference to Sri Lankan National University Education)

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The global education landscape has transformed in favor of distance learning (Remote learning) in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, online learning system has become an integral part of the learning/ teaching process in the higher education sectors during the COVID-19 era. The COVID-19 pandemic posed a challenge to the traditional Sri Lankan higher education system. Prior to the pandemic, online education was rarely seen in the field of higher education in Sri Lanka. Thus, while promoting online education among the university student community as an alternative solution to the educational crisis that has arisen due to the closure of Sri Lankan national universities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are many peculiarities that can be observed. This research seeks to provide an insight into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on university learning and teaching process and challenges faced by the students in maintaining the online education system. Moreover, the research methodology was used was content analysis and scientific statistics method. A team of 500 university students covering 14 national universities in Sri Lanka was selected as the research sample and observations, questionnaire, formal interviews and informal discussions were used to collect data. The findings of the research show that the university students face a number of challenges in organizing the work processes and time management, technical issues, computer literacy, distraction, understanding course expectation and lack of in-person interaction. The study argues that, moreover, in the face of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching and learning process in higher education sector needs to be more effective and focused on the hybrid education and training system as a solution to the problems observed in the online education system while introducing new trends and opportunities.

Keywords: COVID-19, Online education, Higher education, Sri Lankan national universities, University student community