Higher Education Global Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the response of international higher education to the COVID-19 pandemic through the lenses of broadband connectivity, faculty fatigue over teaching online and student performance during the public health crisis. It also addresses the global supply chain challenges the world experienced and its effect on higher education related to technology. Finally, the paper identifies lessons learned and strategies for future success for higher education in an online environment.

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, and was first identified in Wuhan, China. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID Data Tracker reports over 40 million cases of COVID-19 across the United States and more than 700,000 deaths since January 2020. As of October 5, 2021, approximately 76% of all eligible persons age 12 and over have had at least one vaccine dose.
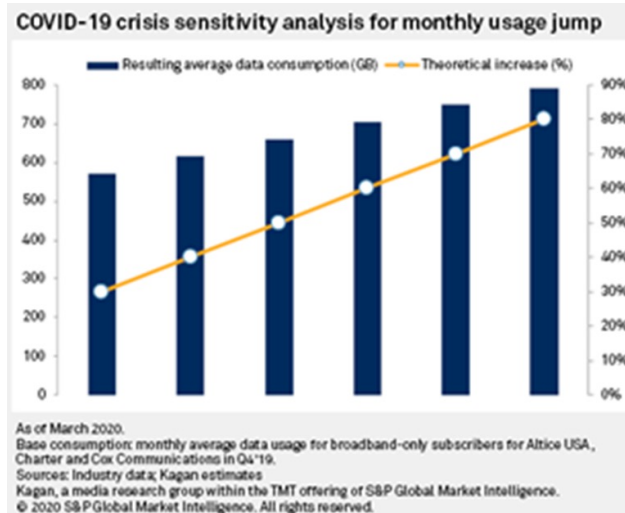
RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide positive encouragement to students is extremely important. Provide asynchronous content for online classes is important for multiple reasons. Marginalized students had more challenges for example students with disabilities as they had accommodation needs, they had to sort through during the remote COVID environment.

DISCUSSION

Supply chain focused on manufacturing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks even companies with different specialties such as Apple shifted to manufacturing PPE. With the shortage in supply chain caused delays in shipment of technology to higher education institutions. With technology in high demand, Tacoma Community College Foundation purchased 600 computer laptops to support students during the pandemic. Increased rates of at-home internet use did result in lower efficiency for many broadband internet service providers. These internet service providers have undertaken company-wide initiatives to introduce higher broadband capacity, increased data usage capabilities, and accessible Wi-Fi hotspots The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has focused its COVID-19 response on expanding internet access and ensuring that networks can support the increased internet traffic. Congress was helpful to the FCC's efforts in ensuring network connectivity with the increased traffic by appropriating $200 million in the CARES Act. The FCC took several regulatory actions to promote internet connectivity including providing telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary for telehealth services. There is a diverse set of needs based on student population. Universities provided technology bundles (including Wi-Fi hotspots) for students who needed equipment to complete coursework. Universities purchased hundreds of laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots and projected Wi-Fi to the campus parking lots. Many students faced unemployment and due to socioeconomic status could not afford the technology needed. With two billion students worldwide forced to receive their education online, there was a serious concern for the physical and emotional needs of students. Many faculty and students had great difficulty and fatigue from online learning and teaching. Surprising, an initial study found that students performed better in the online environment. Mexico-US border and Canada-US border made complications for international higher education as a result of the pandemic. Postponed or cancelled certain examinations and many universities had research and study abroad programs cancelled. Universities in U.S. and China delayed the start of spring semester or quarter in order to allow faculty to prepare and train to teach online. Noticeable enrollment drop of local and international students. South Africa had technology infrastructure in place to meet faculty and student needs.

COVID-19 crisis sensitivity analysis for monthly usage jump

Resulting average data consumption (GB)   Theoretical increase (%)

As of March 2020.
Base consumption: monthly average data usage for broadband-only subscribers for Altice USA, Charter and Cox Communications in Q4'19.
Sources: Industry data; Kagan estimates
Kagan, a media research group within the TMT offering of S&P Global Market Intelligence.
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REFERENCES

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