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Introduction

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The book *Humane World through Global Higher Education: Pre-Challenges and Post-Opportunities During a Pandemic* responds to some of the conversations presented at the 2020 inaugural Virtual Star Scholar conference hosted by the University of Katmandu, Nepal. This conference aimed to bring together voices from worldwide to talk about what a *Humane World* will be in the post-COVID era. It is important to note that the meeting convened during the height of COVID-19, at a time hope was only a dream.

COVID-19, a world pandemic, had not been seen since 1819, nearly a hundred years ago. The Pandemic laid bare its impact on the economically poor, socially and physically disadvantaged, and disenfranchised indigenous populations, condemning them to further hardships and hopelessness. Its impact was felt worldwide and in all communities. In December 2020, at a time before there was a vaccine and hope, those attending the conference shared their concerns about many issues in higher education, including the need for improved and better educational delivery models and attention to the quality of teaching, equity, mental health, and learning for all. The COVID-19 pandemic reminded conference attendees that the world is experiencing a crisis in consciousness, civic imagination, and democratic values, and it is a moment in humanity's evolution.

There were six themes at the conference culminating in a keynote address by Noam Chomsky. The conference themes were "Online," "Learning," "Academic Education, Opportunities and Challenges for the 21st Century," "School," and "Leadership and Professional Development." Noam Chomsky's address centered around the triad of Internationalism, Solidarity, and Extinction which inspired the authors to re-envision their presentations for this book. His overarching idea focused on shaping a world for a just and humane society pre and post the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Chomsky asserted that educators are responsible for using education to address problems of racism and exclusion, caste, economic inequality, social, and most importantly, existing environmental injustices.

Chomsky suggested that we connect education to social change and reject the notion that educators are just stated public servants and that students were mere consumers preparing to become workers. He expressed that university academics were the protectors of democracy and intellectual

and academic freedom and should and must act to ensure the masses have an opportunity to work in a just and fair society. He acknowledges that while universities face a constant struggle to maintain their integrity and their fundamental social role in a healthy society, they must, in the face of external pressures, defend their integrity and ethical commitments to a just and fair society which he adds are honorable and worthwhile.

The authors in this book explore how higher education institutions address the challenges by identifying tools needed while pointing out the weaknesses of existing delivery systems. They explain the essential policies and training required to achieve success; explore issues of massifying learning opportunities, leadership, training, employment, research, and technology; and prepare an educated citizenry for a just and human society. These issues are globally within the scope of higher education's mission goals and objectives and are more imperative to address today than ever before. Continuous and effective planning, research, and decision-making impact how higher education operates to shape a humane society where justice and equality are natural pillars and contribute to an enlightened society. Throughout, the authors reveal how change is possible.

This book has four themes: economics, environment, social change, and education impacting the world and higher education.

Economics

The COVID-19 Pandemic inflicted the world economy with turbulence in every market sector, reverberating effects on people everywhere. In 2020, the World Bank envisioned a 5.2 percent contraction in global GDP, erratic stock markets, price increases, and country destabilization could expand into the decade. It correctly predicted lower investment, an erosion of human capital through lost work and schooling, and the fragmentation of global trade and supply linkages that continued through 2022. The Pandemic damaged most countries, with per capita income contracting in the most significant countries globally not seen since 1870. Finally, Global poverty rates rose as about 93 million additional people fell into poverty due to the Pandemic (World Bank, 2020).

The U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) estimated that COVID-19 would cause the global economy to shrink by nearly 1% by the end of 2021, while the International Labor Organization (ILO) projected an increase in global unemployment of between 5.3 million and 24.7 million. The World Trade Organization (WTO) launched a 13 percent to 32 percent international trade decline (Tripathi & Amann, 2020). These predictions were on-target in terms of significant impact related to job markets and job opportunities. The subsequent waves of COVID-19, and most importantly, the Omicron variation drove economic disruptions that reduced global growth further in 2021, aggravating supply bottlenecks and inflationary pressures (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1106812>)

Environment

The development and spread of COVID-19 brought to attention the devastation of environmental mismanagement, including massive urbanization, demolition of habitats, fragile ecological change, animal trading, and global travel. Many of the root causes of climate change also increase the risk of pandemics (Cohen, 2021). Climate change continues to impact also the environment and the economy (Ching & Kajino, 2020). Some evidence suggests a close link between COVID-19 and climatic changes and offers insights into how a global climate crisis is affected and may be managed (Manzanedo & Manning, 2020). The current Pandemic has proven that our ecosystem is fragile, and we cannot protect ourselves from pollutants (Usman et al., 2022). For example, poor air quality increases the mortality risk from severe and chronic diseases, such as stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections.

Concurrently, temporary response measures, i.e., lockdowns, mask-wearing, and social distancing, also impact the climate. Lockdowns allowed the environment to reduce ambient pollution despite economic, social, and health disruptions (Sarmadi M, 2021). For example, the emissions of NO₂ and CO₂ have significantly decreased because of the lower usage of transportation, a decrease in electricity demand, and a reduction in industrial activities. (Usman et al., 2021). All the world's major emitters have reported a decline in the emission of fossil CO₂, including 11 percent in the European Union, 1.7 percent in China, 12 percent in the USA, and 9 percent in India (World Economic Forum, 2020). In a study in Pakistan, Mehmood and colleagues (2021) investigated the association between COVID-19 and climatic elements. Using GLM (generalized linear model) and GRA (gray relational analysis) techniques, the authors reported a statistically significant association between COVID-19 cases and climatic factors. Climate can modulate the spread of the Pandemic. A cleaner environment and air quality during the lockdown due to the Pandemic has demonstrated that human society must improve the air quality (Ching & Kajino 2020). For example, a study by Harvard found that Italy, France, Spain, and Germany have had 78 percent of deaths from their five most polluted areas (Wu & Nethery 2020).

Meanwhile, contreras and colleagues (2021) share six crucial lessons from the COVID-19 epidemic and discuss six critical tasks that can be removed from the COVID-19 epidemic. The main lessons included reducing the usage of fossil fuel and greenhouse emissions, rapid response, a sustainable environment, trust in science, the limits of rugged individualism, and the opportunity for more significant change. They identified while these are important, the reality is that Environmental modifications play a significant role in spreading COVID-19 (Muhammad et al., 2020).

COVID-19 Pandemic and among other things, has provided further evidence that well-resourced, equitable health systems with a strong

and supported health care workforce are essential to protect us from health security threats, including climate change. Over the past decade, the austerity measures that have strained many national health systems will have to be reversed if economies and societies are expected to be resilient and prosperous in an age of change. In closing, Arthur Wyns prophetically stated that the 2020 coronavirus pandemic might lead to a deeper understanding of the ties that bind us all on a global scale and could help us to more effectively cope with the most significant public health threat of this Century – the climate crisis.

Social

The Pandemic is a major social problem, particularly for those in vulnerable situations—people living in poverty, older persons, disabled, youth, and indigenous people. When health disasters hit, global inequality is sustained and reinforced and paid for with the lives of the poor and marginalized. While there is evidence of temporary climatic change among adequately resourced nations, in less-resourced nations, the impact is devastating. It acts as poverty multipliers, forcing families into extreme poverty because they have to pay for health care. At least half of the world's population does not enjoy full coverage for the most basic health services.

During the launch of a COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan in March 2020, the focus was placed on a dire need to aid the vulnerable, and the ultra-vulnerable – millions of whom are least able to protect themselves. It includes those who suffer from disabilities and face the challenges of educational access due to a lack of availability, affordability, and discrimination. For many, pre-existing health conditions leave them more at risk of developing severe illness or dying due to being excluded from health information and mainstream health provision and being disproportionately more likely to live in poor institutional settings.

During both the pre-and post-pandemic periods, youth continue to be in a vulnerable spot. Youth, typically ages 14-25, are easily overlooked by governments and are disproportionately unemployed. Those employed often work in the informal economy or gig economy, on precarious contracts, or in the service sectors of the economy that are severely affected by COVID-19. Vulnerable youth, such as migrants or homeless youth, are in precarious situations. Alone, the disruption in education and learning will likely have medium and long-term consequences on education quality, further lessening their options.

Indigenous peoples, who are always in danger, are particularly vulnerable during COVID due to significantly higher rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases, lack of access to essential services, absence of culturally appropriate healthcare, and, if any, under-equipped and under-staffed local medical facilities. Many indigenous peoples outside the social protection system further contribute to vulnerability, mainly if they depend on income from the broader economy – produce, tourism,

handicrafts, and employment in urban areas (United Nations, 2020). Skepticism by the citizenry worldwide is on the rise. Noted reactions include blaming others for the beginning of the Pandemic, thereby fueling racism, hate, and vile attack on people, particularly those of Asian descent. Many countries' social fabric is under siege by citizens who believe their governments have, failed them, are corrupt, and threaten society. Some examples include the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, a fight for democracy in Hong Kong, mainland China, Europe, India, Russia, and Brazil. Finally, it is reflected in racially and ethnically motivated threats and attacks on others who are different by gender, race, class, or ethnicity.

Education

Access to higher education remains the key to moving societies out of the potential devastations caused by COVID and its aftermath. Key issues include access, financing, research, and higher education.

Access

The Pandemic is having a devastating impact on education globally. Higher Education Institutions, including universities, colleges, and other tertiary education institutions are quite vulnerable. According to UNESCO, around 1.3 billion learners worldwide could not attend school or university as of March 23, 2020, and current UNESCO statistics put this figure at over 1.5 billion (McCarthy, 2020). One year into the COVID-19 Pandemic, over 800 million students, more than half the world's student population, still face significant disruptions to their education, ranging from full school closures in 31 countries to reduced or part-time academic schedules in another 48 countries, according to new data released on UNESCO's interactive monitoring map. Most governments worldwide have temporarily closed educational institutions to contain the spread of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and several countries have implemented localized closures. The COVID-19 Pandemic upended and exacerbated existing academic problems and made them more visible, thus generating new challenges, including affecting society's development to support equal opportunity, justice, equality, and access to those opportunities that lead to community development, well-being, and expansion. Higher education was already feeling the pressure for answers to society's needs growing out of unsustainable changes, and COVID has raised the stakes.

Financing

Troubling for higher education is UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2021), which showed that, even before the COVID-19 crisis, only 1 in 5 countries demonstrated a solid commitment to equity in education through their financing mechanisms, and there is little evidence of a substantial

equity angle in COVID-19 responses. Government education spending as a share of GDP has remained flat in the past ten years. Current government spending levels in low- and lower-middle-income countries fall short of the levels required to achieve the SDGs at every level. Government funding pre-COVID for education as a share of national income has not changed significantly over the last decade for any income grouping. Disparities in spending on education per child or young person between rich and developing countries are significant and have widened spending levels. In roughly 40 percent of low-income countries, spending per child or young person has fallen. Education budgets are not adjusting proportionately to the challenges brought about by COVID-19, especially in poorer countries. Despite additional funding needs, two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have cut their public education budgets since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic (UNESCO, 2021). In comparison, only a third of upper-middle and high-income countries have reduced their budgets. These differing trends imply a significant widening of the already large spending disparities between low- and high-income countries. Moreover, denied access to capital affects students' ability to enroll, receive needed training, and obtain job opportunities, leading to a downward spiral into deeper poverty and despair. Although the impact varies from context to context, higher education's overall effect is likely.

Research

The International Association of Universities 2020 survey indicates that COVID-19 impacted international student mobility at 89 percent of HEIs. The impact varies from institution to institution, but it has been negatively everywhere. Eighty percent of HEIs reported COVID-related problems at their institutions. The most common effects of COVID-19 have been the canceling of international travel (at 83 percent of HEIs) and the cancellation or postponement of scientific conferences (81 percent of HEIs). Collaborative scientific projects are at risk of not being completed (52 percent of HEIs). The IAU Global Survey (2020) reveals that almost 80 percent of the respondents believe that COVID-19 will impact the new academic year's enrolment numbers. Nearly half (46 percent) believe that the impact will affect international and local students. Some HEIs reported that this impact would have adverse financial consequences, especially private ones. Overall, the effect on higher education is likely to be quite significant. Student mobility will remain severely impacted in 2022. However, virtual collaborations will help to sustain international collaboration, research, and outreach.

Higher Education

This section focuses on educational programming, higher education in a humane society, challenges and responsibilities, benefits, and opportunities for success.

Educational Programming

Until the Pandemic, colleges and institutions were allowed to implement and create models that governments, associations, and institutions could brag about relative to efficiency and innovations. It was a choice that institutions could make as part of a funding formula. Now higher education institutions realize that choice of selection is no longer a choice but a necessity. Specifically, effective teaching methods, conducting assessments, and teaching-learning to be interesting, engaging, and context-specific are crucial for the online education model. The Pandemic has altered the traditional delivery of higher education, changing it from once were choices into necessities defined in electronic education, online, distant, and hybrid instruction. It reminded higher education institutions how inadequately prepared they were and revealed a total lack of knowledge about the value and need for distance learning. It surfaced that faculty and administrators were less prepared to implement new technologies and strategies to promote understanding. It revealed that many students were not prepared to access nor profit from distance learning. Troubling is that it put new educational technology planning further out of reach with the likelihood of long-term setbacks in developing nations.

With the sudden shift to the online mode of education caused by COVID-19, yesterday's disruptors prove to be today's lifeguards. Online education is directly tied to successfully ensuring student engagement tools and teacher training for sustainability. However, remote learning is just a first step in the long journey to offering comprehensive, consistent, and wholly adopted practices.

Attending online classes requires long hours of Internet, peaceful space, and one device/phone dedicated to each student in a family that might not be affordable. Too few students belong to the same socio-economic background throughout India, Nepal, China, and Africa. Conditions are such that women and men have to take care of domestic chores, family members, and children, manage limited space in the house on a meager budget, and have poor connectivity, particularly in rural areas. These conditions may cause students to deal with discomfort, frustration, and shame. Possibly online classes can contribute to students' already existing vulnerability feelings. Thus perhaps, the COVID-19 Pandemic can accelerate inequality for the less than wealthy.

Universities and Colleges under the Pandemic have made decisions that impact budgets, educational offerings, opportunities, and learning. It is understood that they will undoubtedly have a long-term negative impact on access, especially related to the poor and underprivileged student populations. Like Monash University and Victoria University, some universities in Australia have temporarily stopped their regular learning to design online learning. At the same time, universities like the University of Queensland continue face-to-face learning with physical distancing protocol with online recordings (Crawford et al., 2020). All schools and

universities were halted in China until the Lunar New Year, with a planned return next year (Crawford et al., 2020). Higher education pre- and post-pandemic conditions are under siege. It raises the importance of higher education for all governance sectors, including Associations, government boards of Trustees, the private sector, and Foundations. It challenges institutions to find better ways of educating the masses needed to address the challenges proposed by the Pandemic and others yet to be realized in the 21st Century. In the middle of these challenges and opportunities, higher education leaders bear responsibility for developing an educated citizenry that can respond to society's challenges now and into the future. Leaders are expected to shepherd their institutions through dire times like no other time. Therefore, programming, curriculum offerings, funding, student services programs, community engagement, and relevant training become essential.

Finally, higher education is at the top of the chain for contributing to a new pathway that allows us to deal with humanity. In this context, higher education must address the issues of training and development, and life-long learning Post pandemic. More than ever, the challenges of creating and developing a Humane society rest in its hand because of its historical goals and mission, and position in world societies.

Higher Education and a Humane Society

The future well-being of humanity and the planet depends on successfully resolving the interconnected economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability challenges. The benefits are high. Higher education levels correspond to lower levels of unemployment and poverty, and adults with higher education levels are less likely to depend on social safety-net programs, generating decreased demand on public budgets. Personal health and lower incarceration rates are high among people with more education. Given the extent of higher education's benefits to society, gaps in college access are matters of great significance to a country.

Challenges and Responsibility

It is understood that higher education pre- and post-pandemic conditions were under siege and raised the importance for all governance sectors, including Associations, boards of Trustees, and Foundations, to expand their influence and outreach. The inflection challenge these institutions to find better ways of educating the masses needed to address the realities presented by the Pandemic and challenges yet to be realized in the 21st Century. Higher education leaders bear significant responsibility for developing an educated citizenry that can respond to these and other societal changes in the middle of uncertainty and change. Succinctly they are expected to shepherd their institutions through dire times. Therefore, programming, curriculum offerings, student services programs, community engagement, and relevant training are essential.

Higher Education roles extend beyond preparation for employment; it is responsible for human standards, where all are relevant, valued, and have a viable pathway to success.

The demographics of forced migration will shift our world's color, cultures, and languages. All these have and will continue to have chilling and irreversible impacts on how we as a society conduct business. These conditions undoubtedly will hurdle Higher Education Institutions into the spotlight. Questions surface more regarding their future role and link to the promotion and support of a just and Humane society where everyone on the planet is made to feel heard and valued with an opportunity to reach their highest potential.

Benefits

Higher education contributes to a just and humane society is immeasurable. It is necessary to create an educated citizenry capable of taking care of itself and the community in which it lives. It has the responsibility and charges for providing the needed leadership that requires courage, vision, and the will to make a difference. To demonstrate the point, much of the benefit of higher education accrues to individual students and their families. For members of all demographic groups, average earnings increase measurably with higher levels of education. Over their working lives, typical college graduates earn about 73 percent more than regular high school graduates, and those with advanced degrees make two to three times as much as high school graduates. More educated people are less likely to be unemployed and less likely to live in poverty.

These economic returns make financing a college education a good investment. Any college experience produces a measurable benefit when compared with no postsecondary education, but the benefits of completing a bachelor's degree or higher are significantly more significant. As is the case for the individuals who participate, the benefits of higher education for society are monetary and nonmonetary.

Society also enjoys a financial return on investment in higher education. In addition to widespread productivity increases, the higher earnings of educated workers generate higher tax payments at the local, state, and federal levels. Consistent, productive employment reduces dependence on public income-transfer programs. Because the individual outcomes affect others, it is impossible to neatly separate the benefits to individuals from those shared by society.

Most workers benefit from the increased productivity of their coworkers. Unemployment damage those out of a job and results in a loss to the entire economy. In addition to the economic return to individuals and society, higher education improves the quality of life in various ways, only some of which can be easily quantified. Moreover, the economic advantages already mentioned have broader implications. Added to increasing material standards of living, reduced poverty improves the population's

overall well-being, and the psychological consequences of unemployment are significant. They are more likely to be in good health and are less likely to be incarcerated. The young children of adults with higher education levels are read more frequently than other children; they have higher cognitive skill levels and better concentration than other children. All of these areas affect social expenditures, in addition to general well-being. While it may be challenging to provide a comprehensive measure of the benefits of higher education, there is ample evidence suggesting that it makes a difference to people and the society in which they live.

The benefits are high. Higher education levels correspond to lower levels of poverty and unemployment, and adults with higher education levels are less likely to depend on social safety-net programs, generating decreased demand on public budgets. Personal health and lower incarceration rates are high among people with more education; civic participation, including the extent of higher education's benefits to society, and gaps in college access are matters of great significance to a country.

Higher Education Institutions Opportunities for Success

Through the Pandemic, higher education has been offered an opportunity to reset its path toward universal access and equity to improve the global citizenry to make a more just and humane society. Globally, there is optimism in universities due to new teaching and learning processes and how they impact learning. We have other pathways to use. For example, we can effectively utilize the benefits of technology and its untapped potential to revolutionize the acquisition and transmission of knowledge.

Higher education institutions stand at the apex for directing and influencing sustainable and democratic societies with a maximum impact on communities. Thus, higher education leadership must be undergirded by values and responsibility. It must be malleable and strategically evolving to ensure success, access, and equity. We can more effectively employ higher education leadership in a quest to improve institutional success, cost efficiencies, and compassion for the less fortunate through the skillful use of advocacy and resource allocations. Leadership is a core aspect of quality higher education, vital in enabling institutions to respond to complex challenges and rapid societal change. We can learn from the transmission of knowledge fueled by research and its application to solutions. Nowhere is the higher education post-COVID-19 future as positive or as enjoyable as in the realm of teaching and learning.

Turning Conflict into Change

The potential for people to find their inner strengths counter many of the weaknesses shared in this introduction. In light of the unknown, there is a reluctance to embrace change. Nonetheless, even in the post-COVID world, change is now a necessity. In this context, important questions related

to how to create new higher education institutions that are grounded in equity and social justice. What changes should we implement, and most importantly, how should we implement them? What should higher education institutions in the future look like to create a just and humane society? Indeed, we will have to be agile, creative, imaginative, and resourced to address diversity in higher education globally.

Structure of the Book

This book arises from the Stars Scholars 2020 Katmandu conference in December 2020, when hope was on the horizon with the promises of a vaccine. The conference was simultaneously held at Nepal Open University and virtually for the rest of the world to be included. The authors talked about their role in creating a just and Humane society during a world crisis. The chapters in this book embody those leaders who have constantly voiced their opinions and challenged the status quo with a call for thinking out-of-the-box solutions to solve complex issues and conditions evident in higher education. The authors in this volume express their opinion and share their research on how and what higher education must do to address the issues of leadership, training, student development, and relevant programming as responses to not only the Pandemic but also the challenges associated with the massification of higher education and how to address the consistent issues of access, the have and the have nots pre-pandemic. These topics inspired this book, *Shaping a Humane World through Global Higher Education: Pre-Challenges and Post Opportunities during a Pandemic*.

Chapter 1: Dzulkifli A. Razak & Abdul R. Moten shed light on Chomsky's views that higher education should help develop integrity and courage capacities, diligence and self-sacrifice, commitment and service to others, and a sense of higher purpose. They argue that educators must cultivate "double consciousness" to humanize technology through a bold vision of moderation and middle ground. They remind readers that educational institutions are about articulating ideas and recognizing one's responsibilities to those ideals. They suggest that educational systems should be more wholesome, inclusive, sustainable, equitable, and resilient frameworks that should be WISER: Worldwide, Inclusive, Sustainable, Equitable, and thus be *Rahmatan lil' Ālamīn*. They suggest that this will lead to a more just and humane world as a higher purpose of life. As a solution, they argue the best lead base is Education 2030, focused on "The World We Want" aligned to UNESCO's Pillars of Learning for the 21st Century, namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be, and more recently, learning to become with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals.

Chapter 2: Hari Kamali focuses on teaching the Gita as a response to COVID-19 and other learning, equity, and purpose issues. He adopts a hermeneutic stance that he maintains is an "interpretive research approach

which can examine complex human phenomena from multiple perspectives to produce rich theoretical and experiential interpretations of these phenomena. through his analysis, he deduced some guidelines to mitigate the challenges in HEIs. Kamali contends that current teachings in higher education may not be sufficient to bring about changes in human nature and can and should be supplemented by other studies related to humanities. He advocates contextualizing teachings of the GITA to Higher Education in the COVID-19 pandemic context and other lingering issues such as the massification of higher education, the transformation of higher education from a public good to a private interest to the knowledge economy, and the impact of new technology that can bring about positive results for what ails us today.

Chapter 3: Bernard Luskin provides insights into the changes and new developments in learning psychology and how to translate them into positive learning opportunities and relate them to online and distance learning, which has become the response to facilitating the teaching-learning process, particularly in ta COVID-19 pandemic. He reminds us that learners have become human-centered and screen-deep. Luskin explains that people learn a great deal through their computers - iPads, iPhones, Apple Watch type wrist devices, cable, satellite webinars, and social media. Based on his experiences and interviews across the field, he offers the readers twelve Online Best Practices in Community College Leadership and Administration as a model to consult. He opines that One critical key to success in online courses is having easy access to faculty.

Chapter 4: Siddiqui continues using the community college as a model to illustrate the implications and opportunities online transitioning brings for students' faculty and college leadership. He offers that to make online teaching and to learn successful experiences, institutions must begin by paying attention to student and faculty needs. He explains that the student perspective involves social interaction, technology support, non-academic resources, counseling, advising, and career coaching. Regarding the faculty's attitude, attention should focus on faculty development, support, and acceptance. He concludes that no single factor will guarantee the success of the educational transition to an online environment, especially in a crisis. However, success cannot be attained without considering the experiences of students and faculty, a point echoed by Luskin in the previous chapter.

Chapter 5: Ghimire, Bhattarai, and Rajbhandari suggest that disadvantaged students in higher education, particularly in Nepal under COVID-19, have been unevenly impacted due to the lack of digital preparedness and the absence of proper student support. They explain that the crisis expanded disadvantaged students to multifaceted challenges and limited their opportunities to participate and continue in higher education studies, thus forcing them to remain outside the system. If left unattended, they suggest such conditions will hurt students' participation in higher education, their engagement in learning, and their completion of the university course cycle, further relegating them to possible chances of increased

poverty. The authors challenge leaders to find alternative approaches and allocate proper funding to improve ICT infrastructures and teacher training. They call on policymakers to reconsider their existing ICT policies and implementation strategies. They believe that universities and educators need to devote more efforts to make available the resources and enable students' skills to effectively respond to future disasters or crises and 21st Century higher education challenges.

Chapter 6: Abdullah and Singh expose another vulnerable population during the COVID-19 pandemic, described as international students whose mobility has been restricted. Many borders have closed, and virtual education is the norm. As explained by Abdullah and Singh, international programs are sought after by students to enhance their employability, gain global citizenship skills, and contribute to economic prosperity. With on and off responses due to variant strains, the authors wonder how and what shape online learning will take for such students. They optimistically conclude that technology might be the leveler the global higher education landscape requires in making internationalization more inclusive and accessible beyond the elite few who can afford the experience. However, they warn that institutions will have to think outside the box in offering competitive courses and extracurricular activities, programs, and experiences to attract and hold international students. They advise institutions to be creative and innovative in their practices and start now in pedagogical action research in collaboration with colleagues far and wide.

Chapter 7: Rohit and Karna explain that COVID-19 opened new opportunities to shift from traditional pedagogy to online learning. They point out that the teachers were underprepared and resourced to handle the challenges of online teaching. They detailed the experiences of lectures in Nepal and concluded that for online learning to be effectively employed for student learning, lecturers need to have technological and pedagogical knowledge to deliver content knowledge through online mode. Students need access to digital devices and training on how to use them. However, in Nepal, limited ICT infrastructures, poor internet connectivity, lack of specific strategies for e-learning management, and poor administrative support acted as significant barriers to implementing online learning for faculty and students, particularly those living in remote villages. Nevertheless, with few resources, faculty and students were committed to and making great efforts to catch up.

Chapter 8: Bohle continues the discussion on the living experiences of faculty during COVID-19 via online university examinations in Nepal. They offer insight into students' transitioning from the university and the challenges encountered. They used semi-structured interviews to collect primary data from purposively selected university teachers, students, and administrative staff based on qualitative research. They report that while university teachers and executive teams worked hard to conduct the online examinations and students managed to face them, traditional thinking, negligence, and negative attitude by Higher authorities served as

critical obstacles to systematizing online education and studies in Nepal. They concluded that forming appropriate policy and practical implementation steps to establish suitable web-based systems, servers, applications, and advanced ICT infrastructure is needed for success. They maintain that capacity development of human resources could ease the quality management of online examinations in Nepal's higher education system. Moreover, they discovered that any online success in teaching and learning was due to integrating collaboration, cooperation, readiness, accountability, and commitment among the teachers, administrative staff, and students to adopt an alternative examination mode.

Chapter 9: Ruma and Gaulee use a mixed-method study to explore the conditions of students with disabilities in Nepal during the Pandemic and certainly the most vulnerable across higher education worldwide. Their findings give us great insight and reveal some unique challenges students face with disabilities (SwDs) during the Pandemic. While finances were the most challenging, others included transportation, social and attitudinal issues, and inadequate teaching and learning materials in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) for SwDs, particularly the incompatibility of the infrastructure of HEIs, with little or no accommodation for STDs. The author offers leaders several concrete solutions related to financial support, scholarship, appropriate equipment for the SwDs, special libraries and laboratories for SwDs, disable friendly toilets, awareness, and unique campaigns for the people of their community, specially trained teachers, Cooperative friends, and families, and Technological and online supports for STDs.

Chapter 10: Hu and Kee explain that C19 has brought challenges to higher education that affect students, educators, and the communities they serve. They explain that higher learning institutions, students, educators, and communimust join to take practical measures to overcome the prevailing challenges. The authors believe higher learning institutions should leverage the renewed opportunities presented post-COVID-19 in lifting global higher education to the next level. *They think leaders should take active responsibility* for common humanity, well-being, and sustainability; they believe leaders should draw strength from intercultural and epistemic diversity and create interconnectedness at multiple levels. These and other new approaches can enhance learning across the globe.

Chapter 11: Adhikari and Rana expose the readers to the challenges under-resourced countries like Nepal face in online learning management during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Using qualitative research and semi-structured interviews and observation to collect data, the authors indicate that COVID-19 has opened new opportunities to shift from traditional pedagogy to online learning. However, limited ICT infrastructures, poor internet connectivity, lack of specific strategies for e-learning management, and poor administrative preparation are significant barriers to implementing online learning for all students, including those living in remote villages.

Although encouraging, one-shot training provided by university campuses does not equip teachers and students with adequate ICT skills. They need sufficient training to use digital technologies and implement online pedagogies for the effective practice of online learning. They need advanced knowledge of student-centered methods such as discussions and group work, making online learning effective and productive.

In chapter 12, Fran White offers that Online learning is one of the imminent trends and learning strategies in the education sector around the globe. It is prevalent in secondary, postsecondary, and higher education through the Internet. She opines that the advantage of a student-centered virtual learning environment is its availability anywhere, anytime. She warns that its disadvantages are opportunities for plagiarism, possible detachment from classmates, and the overall learning experience. White offers guidance on the success of online experiences during a pandemic that includes re-examining emergency courses to determine how they can be improved to meet the necessary standards, format, and quality of online course taking and establishing benchmarking tools, checklists, and rubrics for faculty who are new to devices that measure the quality of online learning.

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