

As a global crisis goes on, from second to third year, educators around the world continue to grapple with its impact. In some countries, the struggles are far more than in others, as the pandemic rips open the fundamental inequalities among nations and magnifies them. Nation-based consciousness, sustaining nation-based social progress and even nation-based education, allows the inequalities to stay, seen as normal, as reflection of the efforts of each group of people separated by political borders. But we know that individual or even communal efforts mean little relative to vast differences in material resources, conditions for enterprise, individual freedom, fairness and equal opportunity, or recourse for justice when the average individual is wronged or taken advantage of. In some countries, students haven't seen the face of college or school for months, while others get the short end of the stick in the disrupted distance learning that their institutions have put together. In some others, students are returning home after in-person schooling for some time, uncertain if and when they will be able to continue their education.

The pandemic has made education less equitable and less accessible, especially for those who were traditionally marginalized: in terms of race, caste, gender, sexual orientation, class, geography, social privileges, and political connections. Public education in particular has become alarmingly more expensive; where I come from, in South Asia, the gap between public and private higher education is closing, even as the quality of public education banks on prestige and not on any progress made. The complacency of the educated and established—those who lead or benefit from the institutions—is equally alarming. Where I come from, professors of public universities charge obscenely high fees for delivering content in the name of training or talks, as their institutions collect obscenely high fees from poor students for whom the public education is meant. The blatantly unreasonable cost of often unrelated academic events, toward unreasonable lining of pockets by public servants, reflects

an erosion of values that undergirded public education. And even as the pandemic has shrunk the cost of academic discourse, professional development, and often instruction, neoliberal excesses seem to be on the rise.

The models of education were already changing before the pandemic. The pandemic has in some ways provided dirty water for neoliberal exploitation of public systems by private-like enterprises and even the top leadership of public institutions. It is time for educators who care about public education to raise our voices, to call out vulgar behaviors, to demand accountability. We cannot let fundamental values of public education—such as access, equity, and social responsibility—to become the frog in boiling water. We must not be the frog that doesn't realize its slow death; it is our values that must sustain our presence and impact, contribution and motivation as educators and members of our communities.

International education has become another domain where the pandemic seems to be used as an excuse for shifting priorities. While there is no indication of institutions addressing challenges of foreign students that are aggravated by the pandemic, they instead seem to be targeting the highest bidder in a shrinking market. Advocates of transnational mobility would hope that the pandemic would make the field more humane, even fundamentally change the business model toward greater support and care: more equity and justice, respect and care, humility and understanding. Unfortunately, educators themselves don't seem to have spared their time and attention to the impact of the pandemic on international students. Instead, concerns about academic integrity have led to tyrannical uses of technology; instead of seeking to understand how students approach education when they are stressed and sick, tired and scared, institutions and instructors alike have turned to surveillance and control.

However, the landscape of higher education during this pandemic, locally and transnationally, also shows indications of shifts at deeper levels. The consciousness about the kinds of problems I briefly highlighted above seems to be on the rise. Listening carefully to ongoing conversations—in publications, in research projects, in professional development events, and in hallway conversations—strongly suggests that a new generation of students and scholars are waking up to issues of inequality and injustice within education. More and more members of academe seem to take its goodness for granted; we don't consider education as a necessary equalizer but as a potential means for aggravating social inequalities and injustices. It is when the educated use education to

affect justice, when educational institutions put their money where their value-articulating mouths are, that equality and justice are advanced in society (starting from within academe). Scholars are awakening to the vulnerability of the more socio economically developed countries, as well as the alarming rate at which nation-based economies and geopolitics are damaging the environment. We are having a reckoning about the fragility of science-based social policy and politics, civic discourse and governance; indeed, even school districts, curriculum experts, academic publications, and journalistic reporting are becoming victims of anti-science and disinformation politics. Bad actors, from misguided individuals to state agents, are having a bigger sway than they have had in nearly a century. These exposures of the vulnerabilities of science and society are not just bad news; they are the result of response to reality, instead of the kind of complacency about issues of access and equity in education highlighted above.

Technology is no longer romanticized as it was in the years before the pandemic. In fact, technological romanticism seems to have turned on its head and given rise to a new wave of anti-tech sentiments across society. This is not good news, but at least the reckoning against romanticism is likely to do some good in the long run, such as by balancing out the romanticism with realistic appraisal of what particular platforms and tools do and do not help educators achieve. This reckoning may lead to new possibilities that are driven not by hypes but by the experiences of educators who were forced to adopt technologies the pandemic, as well as those who had been exploring emerging technologies before this crisis.

The pandemic has also fostered connections and collaborations across national and other borders (such as disciplinary, social, and regional). Even though the initial explosion of academic events due to the lockdowns seems to have given way to now shows and relatively anemic participation, new connections have been forged and often followed up. Scholars have created new partnerships and explored new possibilities across borders. In professional development initiatives organized by scholars in South Asia, for instance, I have seen interdisciplinary programs become more of a norm than remain an exception. Research and publication themselves seem to have become more transdisciplinary among an increasing number of scholars.

It is in the context of some depressing development and some others that are more inspiring that this journal's humble efforts are being advanced. A new team of associate and assistant editors have expanded

the editorial board. From providing opportunities to doctoral scholars to be mentored alongside more established scholars, we have more of the latter lead the charge for this venue. The new team fully embraces the vision of maintaining rigor and quality without embracing exclusionary traditions, and we hope to expand opportunities for more scholars whose voice wouldn't be heard without providing an extra layer of mentor-review while reaching further into new communities. We are keenly aware that the ever-spreading global neoliberal machine of scholarly publication is cannibalizing the very mission of higher education; by pushing the "publish or perish" competition into more and more societies especially in the global south, transnational agents behind the neoliberal machines sideline the need for societies to advance their own interests. We support a dozen scholars at a time, a tiny fraction in today's world of journal publication; but we help many more scholars with feedback they can use for publishing their work in another venue (or submit again). We look beyond quality in traditional terms and instead seek to create space for new communities, new voices, and new causes.

We are grateful to all the reviewers who help us help the authors from around the world. We hope you will find articles in this issue relevant and interesting in light of the work you do in higher education. And we hope that you will consider the journal for your own future work, as well as sharing it with other colleagues in your network.

- Editorial Team