



**Mariam Shaikh**

Regional Director - Middle East & India

## Online Education Make Education more flexible

I would like to extend my special Greetings to the dignitaries and eminent personalities present here today.

Mrs. Shinkay Karokhil (Member of the National Assembly), Dr. Rangbar, Mr. Sadat (former Minister), Mr. Habibi (Provincial Governor), Sayed Javed Andish (Founder Karwan University) and all participants of today's event.

To briefly introduce myself my name is Mariam Shaikh and I have recently been appointed as Regional Director for the Middle East & India for a UK Based Company SSUK. - Student Safety UK. We provide welfare services, expert support, guidance and reassurance for international students from around the world coming to study in any University in the UK.

Prior to this, I spent the last 35 years in international education where I have achieved global recognition and many Leadership Awards. Over this period, I have held senior positions in many leading schools and Universities within the Middle East, along with establishing new institutions and creating successful

partnerships between local and foreign education providers, developing the international education market regionally.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Sayed Javed Andish the Founder Karwan University, the senior leadership team and all the faculty members who have been working so diligently to provide the best online education for your students. I especially would like to mention that this is a wonderful initiative to provide inclusion for students from a lower socio-economic status and especially girls and women and make education available for any student anytime with the flexibility of choosing modules and time slots as per their convenience.

Since the coronavirus outbreak, online classes have become the cornerstone of modern higher education. While most Universities, colleges or other educational institutions have made the complete transition to online teaching, teachers are still struggling with ways to engage students online. They are required to make tough decisions everyday whether between asynchronous and synchronous learning or educational tools that they need among hundreds of options.

Before the obligatory transition, online courses came in many forms, from Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) to single modules or full online bachelor's and master's degrees being offered online. They

had been regularly used in pedagogies like blended learning and flipped classroom. Online classes are now the only option that teachers have to continue teaching. This situation is expected to disrupt education irreversibly but it is still too early to observe the outcomes. Luckily, previous studies have shown a very positive relationship between the use of online learning, student engagement and outcomes of learning.

Online classes make education more flexible, which in turn makes higher education more inclusive. Many students, particularly adult students or working students need flexibility in their schedules and module choices in order to access education. Online classes also provide opportunities for students from traditionally marginalized groups. Studies have shown that students who are first in their families to study at university level, people from low socio-economic backgrounds, female students, people of colour and students with disabilities benefit significantly from the availability of online courses.

Online classes also appeal to newer generations of students. The widely hailed generation of 'digital natives' are now in higher education and are used to having technology as a thread through their everyday lives. Millennials have different expectations of higher education with flexibility, active learning and digital tools being some of



them. Online classes also appeal to millennials who are comfortable with technology and are used to ingesting large amounts of digitally provided information.

Active learning, which turns away from the tradition of static, unidirectional lectures, uses more interactive forms of learning, including activities such as: conceptual mapping, brainstorming, collaborative writing, role playing, project based learning, simulation and peer teaching.

Online classes, whether fully online or as a part of more traditional teaching methods do have stumbling blocks.

Technical difficulties are a barrier to the use of online courses. Both students and teachers are frustrated with complications, and these difficulties can lead to students engaging less with the courses. Instructors must often devote time to fixing technical issues and editing content can become a complex and arduous task.

The availability of working internet connection, electronic devices such as laptop or mobile phones or even existence of a suitable learning environment changes from student to student.

Online classes delivery can be improved by Digital specific course design and by utilizing face-to-face interactions whenever possible.

But that's not the whole story, If the closure of physical campuses continues into the fall, Universities will need to replicate the vibrancy of the campus experience online. Already, young musicians play 'together' online. Undergraduates conduct research in virtual labs. Even Campus athletics have turned to E-sports.

Universities are trying to maintain their coop and **'Earn While You Learn'** programs in which students work with businesses and non-profits around the globe. Those experiences will now happen virtually.

And regardless of the length of the physical and social distancing, Online learning will be a big part of those plans. It will cause institutions to invest in improving their offerings, which will seep into their traditional offerings as well.

As these experiences take root and improve, students at some of these institutions will come to enjoy hybrid learning experiences that mix online and offline learning in novel combinations.

But when faculty and staff members gather to talk about what is working, one theme that arises over and over is the level of engagement. And not just intellectual engagement with the course content, but human engagement -- between faculty and students, and even more strikingly, among students

from around the world whose main commonality is this shared digital adventure.

But for once, so many of us across the globe are going through similar things in different contexts and learning from each other. I have seen so much sharing across the globe and within institutions, so I imagine new relationships and solidarity might last beyond this pandemic.

Congratulations once again and I wish you the very best in your initiatives.

Regards,

Mariam Shaikh

Regional Director - Middle East & India