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READER SUBMISSION

Coronavirus: A Thought on Higher Education

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The novel coronavirus pandemic has shuddered the entire world—people from all walks of life are going through unprecedented events and experiences. Around the globe, from the North to the South, high-income countries to low-income countries, lives of the masses have come to a grinding halt.

Thousands of international students are enrolled in hundreds of universities worldwide—to pursue their higher education—owing to their high-quality education, institutional reputation, proper academic amenities, employability etc. However, current and sudden outbreak of coronavirus has severely affected global education system in general. Here, I would like to highlight some impacts on higher education, which might interest potential students in the middle-way of their odyssey to higher education abroad.

Currently, a large number of students are among the worst sufferers, those who are about to complete their final semester and year program. Most likely these students have to accomplish the rest of their programs through online teaching methods; there is a ghost of a chance to resume classroom teaching in the ongoing academic year. Many universities are adopting a binary pass or fail system instead of conventional grading system.

Students who are going to commence their programs in 2020-21 are about to be affected. Timely inauguration of academic programs might not be feasible, or it would go online if regular timeframe needs to be ensured. Thousands of students have received admission offers, funding, scholarships, but further processing like applying for respective country visas cannot be performed right now due to the temporary closure of diplomatic missions and embassies.

Students who had previously planned to start in 2020-21 session, with a self-financing modality, I would request you all to reconsider your decision.

Given that following months as well as the rest of the period of this year would be uncertain in many ways, but certainly oscillating. In addition, I urge you all to get country specific information and advice from your friends, peers or acquaintances, who are already studying and living in your country of desired destination. For instance, many students opt for part-time jobs to manage their own living costs; economic recession will trim such opportunities heavily.

Now, applicants with an awarded scholarship and secured full-funding, take a bow. You must maintain all sorts of regular communications with your respective university, scholarship-awarding authority, and funding agency to keep yourself up-to-date. As you already have a confirmed decision, you don't have to worry much about your movement and required actions.

Lastly, but most importantly, those who are in the row to apply for the next sessions, particularly 2021-22 and 2022-23—you have to be meticulous, and keep observing all latest developments in the political world and your field of interest. Following this ongoing global crisis, the interest and priorities of global leaders would be subject to change, which will shape university funding; the total number of scholarships could be discounted, and a set of academic disciplines would obviously get higher funding than before, which might include biomedical engineering, genetic engineering, molecular biology, medical science and research, nursing education, bio-informatics, artificial intelligence, applied physics, public health, telemedicine, health economics, crisis response, and humanitarian action, to name a few. Consequently, potential applicants should have to prepare themselves accordingly to upgrade their portfolios.

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Can social isolation lead to the end of our burnout?

ROSHNI SHAMIM

Much like the confusion in defining self-quarantine and self-isolation these days, the line between “stress” and “burnout” falls very thin. While both accentuate the eventual demise toward emotional and physical exhaustion, their projection differs widely. In the context of a workplace, stress is what would make a person go a little crazy by the end of the week; burnout will make the person not even show up.

During this period of what is defined as social isolation, a silver lining does exist in the form of burnout recovery. Interestingly, most of us remain unaware that there are various types of burnouts that may be affecting us in different ways. Burnouts can be caused through individual, interpersonal or organisational factors. In the long run, these factors can inevitably spill and destroy the individual's relationships with other people. If not taken seriously, burnouts can cause a long-lasting damage to a person's mental health.

Therefore, while most of us are currently spending hours deciding over what to watch on Netflix, now can also be an excellent time to utilise the self-space and recover from any presiding burnouts. Aside from doing self-care in the form of face masks, workout videos and bingeing shows, it is time to dig a little deeper. The first step therefore, is to figure out the factors that contribute to our burnout.

The problem with identifying contributors that cause burnouts is the fact that most of us choose to remain in denial of what we are processing internally. By taking some time off from the outside world, a little quality time on ourselves can lead to correctly probing and figuring out where that drained uneasiness comes from. Once we have our stressors figured out, it becomes easier to heal ourselves from within. By separating the factors that cause our burnout, we already begin to take tiny steps away from the exhaustion that has been winding us down consistently.

For those of us who are working from home, it is time to make a daily habit of appreciating ourselves for each task that furthers our progress, instead of only aiming to frantically reach the end. Sleep also plays a significant role here; all that physical and emotional exhaustion is not only draining for the mind, but even for our bodies. The social isolation period serves as the perfect opportunity for us to rest our minds as well as to relax our taut muscles.

Although this transition of practicing social isolation is already difficult to accept readily, using it wisely can lead to much happier days ahead. A step towards working on ourselves through simple means can brighten up this dark time, perhaps even by a great margin.



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