ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 5 - number 148 Wednesday 3 march 2021

# Universities and eLearning: what future after the pandemic?

***What is the future of the post-covid university? Will there be a return to traditional education or will a 'hybrid' model of education emerge?***

The pandemic and the lockdown have catapulted **schools and universities** into the world of **distance learning**. It was obviously not a gradual transition but a compelling necessity. Although educational technologies and eLearning have made great strides in recent years, few universities adapted to virtual modes of teaching before the arrival of COVID-19.

What will happen in universities after the end of the pandemic? Will they return entirely to the traditional mode of teaching? As Rahim Rezaie, associate director of the International Virtual Engineering Student Teams Project at the University of Toronto, explained in his article " Universities should not abandon online learning after the pandemic", it is possible that they will return to the traditional system that relies on the physical presence of students in the classroom.

Why? According to Rezaie, a 'romantic' version of **classroom education** persists, which is based on the idea that learning is better in the classroom. The question is, are the interactions during a lesson with hundreds of students better in the classroom or online? According to Rezaie, in some cases, virtual learning could increase (and improve) interactions between students and professors and among students themselves and reduce distractions, with the possibility of reviewing the lesson at a later date and, consequently, achieving greater flexibility.

When the health emergency is over, Rezaie hopes that the **advantages of distance learning** will not be forgotten either. He emphasises that both online and more traditional education have their advantages and disadvantages and, therefore, it would be good to invest in a hybrid approach that would allow everyone to access quality and more inclusive education.

The "brake" on digital options also appears in the article " Pandemic has pushed online universities" in the Harvard Business Review, by Sean Gallagher and Jason Palmer. However, the authors also show how some American universities are using the new technologies to reduce **costs for students**, among other advantages. The changes brought about by distance learning, in fact, are not only limited to teaching but also to the digitisation of university services based on AI.

Here too, the hope is to take further steps towards the **digital transformation of teaching**. Higher education, between digital and traditional modes, could be transformed into a lifelong learning pathway where the link between universities and companies is strengthened and where students are constantly trained through different learning modes.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator