

Education During the Pandemic in the U.S.

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic that emerged in the U.S. in spring of 2020 significantly impacted all aspects of American culture. This paper examines the specific impact on education, both PK-12 and higher education. It examines financial issues, personal mental health-related concerns, and Covid-19's effect on student learning. By examining multiple surveys, governmental data, current scholarship and popular media, the analysis concludes that four key themes define the Covid-19 pandemic for education – being embattled, confounding uncertainty, emergent responses, and potential positives.

Key words: Higher education, service quality, trust, university.

Introduction

One decade in U.S. history has been given a popular label, “the roaring twenties.” Interestingly, the label doesn't refer to the current decade of the 2020s, but instead to the 1920s. It was a decade that began with impactful changes and events then closed with a deflating whimper as the global depression emerged in 1929. Burns (2015), in his historical analysis, “1920: The Year that Made the Decade Roar”, highlighted that 1920 brought: prohibition to the U.S. with the 18th amendment to the Constitution; women's right to vote with the 19th amendment; the establishment of the League of Nations; the re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan; the worst U.S. terrorist attack up to that time in New York City; and, the birth of mass media with the first-commercially-licensed radio station broadcasting the live results of the presidential election.

But all of us living today appreciate that the current decade, commencing with the devastating Covid-19 pandemic that overwhelmed the world in 2020, rivals the start of the 1920s and may contain a louder roar eclipsing anything that happened those 100 years ago. The impact, in terms of the number of Covid cases and deaths, disrupted businesses and the economy, and the challenges affecting everyday life have been enormous. Many people across the globe are struggling. For example, McKinsey & Associates (DeSmet, Dowling, Mugayar-Baldocchi & Schaninger, September 2021) reported that between April and September this year over 19 million Americans quit their job, what they described as a record pace, likely to persist and accelerate. According to Yeyati & Filippini (June 2021), the Covid-19 global recession is the deepest since the end of World War II. New York Times reporter Adam Grant (NY Times, April 19, 2021) popularized the label of “languishing” to characterize how people are feeling today while experiencing a period of pandemic. This notion of languishing is drawn from research by Keyes (2002) who created a continuum of mental health from flourishing to languishing. Individuals with low scores on emotional well-being scales were classified as languishing. In Grants' terms (April 19, 2021), this is characterized by a sense of stagnation and emptiness, when you feel as if, “you're muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield.”

In the U.S., the pandemic must be considered in the context of other environmental factors affecting the country. The most contentious election in recent times occurred, and despite the outcome, the challenges and divisiveness linger. Issues regarding race and diversity, most notably the treatment of Black and Asian Americans, has been profound. And much turmoil emerged and still festers around issues of wearing masks and getting vaccines to control the spread of the virus.

While the pandemic has been unsettling for all aspects of American culture, the impact on schooling has been especially significant, and school closures created by the virus have a ripple effect throughout the entire culture. If children are home from school, for example, parents may not be able to attend work unless some child-care arrangements are created. Evidence suggests that many pre-pandemic disparities

impacting students from lower SES backgrounds were exacerbated since the pandemic started (Office of Civil Rights, 2021).

This paper examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on PK-12 schools and higher education in the U.S. It considers financial issues, personal mental health related impacts, and how learning was affected. It argues that for the PK-12 sector, struggles with considering plans for re-entry and the potential for re-design of schooling were dominant features of the impact. The higher education sector dealt with many of the same factors, especially concerning challenges related to the future that should emerge post pandemic. Both sectors struggled with the unpredictability leaders face in planning when normal processes and practices get disrupted quickly as happened when the pandemic took hold without any prior indication.

The paper begins with a brief review of literature on pandemics as well as research on crisis management and leadership. Then, the specific impact of the current pandemic on PK-12 Schools and colleges and universities in the U.S. is examined. The paper closes with conclusions that emerge from considering the effects of the pandemic on education in the U.S.

Methods

This descriptive review drew from multiple sources in gathering data to fashion a picture of the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged for both pre-K through 12th grade schools and higher education in the U.S. Multiple surveys were consulted, along with data generated by foundations and federal agencies examining the impact of the virus on education. The data presented are representative of other sources not included in this review and analysis.

To conduct our analysis, we reviewed sources from multiple data bases. A LexisNexis review covering March 2020 through October 2021 was conducted to identify news articles focusing on both pre-K through high school and post-secondary education experiences for students, teachers, administrators and families dealing with the impact of Covid. The news publications *Education Week* for Pre-k through 12th grade and *the Chronicle of Higher Education* for post-secondary schools were especially helpful. A Google Scholar review of academic publications on academic, emotional psychological, and work-related impacts of the pandemic on education experiences for students and educators at all levels through the same time period elicited approximately 1,000 publications, though a significant portion covered experiences beyond those for U.S. students and educators. These sources were all reviewed for issues relevant to the questions driving this research in terms of learning achievement, financial, personal mental health and related impacts. Data bases and reports from major organizations including the American Association of University Professors, American Psychological Association, the Center for Disease Control, The National Student Clearinghouse, and the Office of Civil Rights were reviewed.

Findings

Probably the most direct historical precedent for the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic was from the influenza pandemic in 1918. That pandemic was in a different time period and quite severe (e.g., estimates of about 50 million deaths worldwide compared to Covid's approximately 5 million, see, Beach et al., 2020; Worldometer, November 24, 2021), though American deaths from Covid-19 now exceed the number from the 1918 influenza pandemic (Branswell, September, 20, 2021). But the episodes do share multiple characteristics. A 1918 report out of San Francisco highlights some of the similarities to today's situation. As Dolan (2020) described it, a report in the California State Journal of Medicine in 1918 warned of alarming reports from the east coast about the rapid spread and onset of this flu, how it affected mortality rates, and the need for physicians to start documenting cases and reporting patients and their contacts. Since this was a respiratory droplet infection, sneezing and coughing was to be checked with the idea to warn patients and caregivers. San Francisco made recommendations about social distancing and self-quarantining, and eventually passed a mask ordinance that year. This led to challenges and protests, and the formation of an Anti-Mask League in that city. Beach, Clay & Saavedra (2020) concluded that the impact of the 1918 influenza pandemic was large and diffuse, caused economic contraction, with businesses and schools temporarily closing down. Of course, the quality of life and life expectancy today far exceeds that of 100 years ago, and the 1918 influenza's impact was certainly affected by arriving on the heels of the devastation worldwide of World War I. At the same time, another differentiating feature of the current pandemic is the influence of electronic media, as the pandemic is an everyday topic for discussion, information, and misinformation across modern day communication venues - like the internet, television, and social media - none of which were available 100 years ago. Yet Beach et al. (2020) underscored that, "both pandemics involved the spread of a novel, highly contagious virus that induces respiratory distress." (p. 10).

Among the more insidious features of the current pandemic is the growing realization that issues with individual mental health are growing. Veer et al. (2021) utilizing global data, highlighted the depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms the pandemic prompted. They argued that social distancing and quarantining can have additional psychological effects and that other studies indicated additional psycho-social problems, such as loneliness and domestic violence. According to an American Psychological Association survey (APA, 2020), nearly 80% said that the pandemic was a significant source of stress, and 67% indicated that they had experienced stress over the course of the pandemic. The mental health consequences are no doubt affected by the economic strains and long-term financial stressors the pandemic has engendered. As the World Bank (June 8, 2020) reported, "Over the longer horizon, the deep recessions triggered by the pandemic are expected to leave lasting scars through lower investment, an erosion of human capita through lost work and schooling, and the fragmentation of global trade and supply linkages." (p. 4).

Although the pandemic has altered normal routines for individuals and elements in all impacted countries and cultures, prior literature on leadership has considered the importance of crisis management for organizational and individual effectiveness. Pearson & Clair (1998) could have been writing about the current pandemic when they defined an organizational crisis as a "low probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect and means of resolution..." (p. 60). The research in this area emphasizes that mishandling a crisis can have long lasting effects that linger for years (James & Wooten, 2005). An entire literature has emerged on dealing with the effects of financial cutbacks in organizations, often the result of larger societal circumstances like fiscal recessions. A key focus for many of these studies is on working to maintain staff morale (Behn, 1980). Research on resilience in leadership related to crisis management suggests that "the survival of an organization during crisis is dependent on resilience of its members as well as its leadership." (Teo, Lee & Lim, 2017, p. 136).

In the case of the current devastating pandemic, leaders and all organizational members and clients have been severely impacted. For the education sector – PK-12 schools and colleges and universities - the impact has been severe. The next section details some of the organizational, fiscal, and personal costs associated with the current pandemic situation for education in the U.S.

Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

COVID-19 Impact on PK-12 Schools

The COVID-19 pandemic created multiple problems for schools. Most districts fully closed in the spring of 2020 by mid-March, many moving to some sort of model including fully online classes or mixed instruction models with some face-to-face and some online elements – often referred to as hybrid instruction. Many schools and districts struggled with how they might be re-designed when re-entry was planned for fall, 2020 (Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Garcia & Weiss, 2020). The Education Week Research Center (Bushweller & Lloyd, 2021) reported that on July 23, 2020, for the fall semester, 13% of schools were planning to be face-to-face full-time, 13% were fully remote, and 78% some form of hybrid. In the spring semester, 26% had moved to fully face-to-face, only 5% were fully remote, with 69% some form of hybrid model.

At the same time, many students who were sent home when the pandemic hit didn't have the capacity to connect online, decreasing their ability to continue learning through schools (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). For many students, this heightened the inequities that existed prior to the pandemic. Bushweller & Lloyd's (2021) report on the Education Week data found that opportunity gaps put low-income students at a distinct disadvantage compared to better off peers. Specifically, only 34% of educators provided online learning opportunities when more than 75% of students were low-income, compared to 73% of educators providing those opportunities when less than 25% of students were low income. Indeed, studies have identified multiple impacts for students caused by the pandemic, each causing significant disparities for specific groups including students of color and ethnic minorities, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ students (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). Disparities were identified in areas including illness, financial and economic crises, participation in full-time in-person instruction, ability to stay on-line and connected in distance education, academic growth, threats of harassment (sexual, identity-based and racial), amount of time missing school, sense of safety, and learning supports (Office of Civil Rights, 2021).

In terms of learning impacts due to the pandemic, estimates vary. McKinsey & Company (Dorn et al. (2021) reported losses of five months in mathematics and four months in reading. They suggested that students started school last year with only 2/3 of the typical gains in reading and 44% of the typical gains in mathematics. Another study (Bailey et al. (2021) suggested that achievement gains for advantaged students

were .3 standard deviations higher in mathematics and .25 standard deviations higher in reading than for disadvantaged students. But just in terms of overall learning loss, the Renaissance Group (2021) reported:

“By the end of the 2020-2021 school year, the average gap between typical pre-pandemic performance and observed performance had grown in every grade...we estimate that (in math), it would take about 11 weeks to make up that ground...our analysis of scores showed reading growth rates that were below typical...it would take students approximately 7 weeks to close this gap” (p. 24).

The impact of the pandemic went well beyond just academic disparities and overall learning losses. Multiple sources reported data on mental health issues for students, a significant issue with school closures as the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics reported that 35% of adolescents receive mental health services exclusively from school settings, with a total of 57% receiving some school-based mental health services (Golberstein, Wen, & Miller, 2020). According to the EdWeek Research Center (2021), comparing their experiences pre-pandemic and one year into the pandemic late January 2021, about 70% of students reported more problems than a year earlier, with 77% of Black and LatinX students reporting this, 68% of white students. High school teachers reported that 93% of students were experiencing more problems in the same survey. Active Minds (2020) surveyed 2,051 students in September 2020, and found that:

- 87% experienced stress or anxiety
- 78% disappointment or sadness
- 77% felt isolated or lonely
- Stress (84%), anxiety (82%), sadness (73%), and depression (60%) had all increased since the beginning of the pandemic.

Those working in schools shared these concerns about mental health issues. For example, a study examining impacts in Minnesota (Potter, et al. 2021) found that student and staff mental health support was school administrators' number one reported challenge, with teacher and support professionals reporting that their own mental health was their top challenge, followed by the mental health of their students. Indeed, data from the CDC Foundation (2021) from teachers indicated that 27% reported symptoms associated with clinical depression, 37% reported symptoms associated with general anxiety, 53% were thinking of leaving the profession, and 19% started or increased their alcohol use to deal with stress. Parents, too, were shown in the CDC data to have pandemic associated mental health issues. Sixteen percent reported that mental health had been poor for 14 days the prior month. Overall, the proportion of those with frequent mental health distress was slightly higher than before the pandemic. Those parents who experienced involuntary unemployment and lower income were more likely to experience frequent mental health issues. And finally, those who believed that the vaccines weren't adequately tested experienced mental health distress at higher levels.

Overall, these data suggest that the pandemic had a significant impact on the PK-12 education environment. Both politically, given the contentiousness between the two major political parties, and scientifically, given the skepticism about vaccines and treatments some adhered to, many issues were (and remain) highly contentious. But clearly, students struggled with issues like learning loss, stress, and motivation. Educators and parents were similarly impacted. Learning loss is apparent and learning gaps have increased between majority race and ethnic groups and multiple minority populations. As the broader literature on societal impact cited earlier suggested, so too are there heightened mental health concerns for all those in the education field. Part of the anxiety no doubt arises from the uncertainty about the future. Not knowing what teaching and learning will be like is unsettling for many in schools.

COVID-19 Impact on Higher Education

Just as in the PK-12 sector, higher education faced dramatic consequences from the pandemic. The American Association of Colleges and Universities (Finley, 2021), in their poll of their members, reported the following as the top challenges facing higher education:

- Financial constraints (74%)
 - 60% indicated they are very concerned about overall financial stability of their organization
 - Specific financial concerns included:
 - Concern about financial need among families and students (79%)
 - Concern about ability to withstand another tragedy (62%)
 - Concern about enrollment declines (60%)
- Recognizing and overcoming persistent inequalities (46%)
- Capacity building for organizational change and transformation (37%)

The financial impact due to the pandemic has certainly been severe. Estimates suggest as much as a \$183 billion loss to higher education in the U.S., with about half of that total from lost tuition revenue (Friga, 2021). Enrollment has been the most visible area impacted. Colleges and universities preparing teachers, for example, based on a survey by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, identified that 19 percent of undergraduate-level and 11 percent of graduate-level programs saw a significant drop in enrollment for the 2020-2021 academic year (Goldberg, 2021). Comparisons of enrollment clearly set out the trends. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2021) indicated that compared to Fall, 2019, Fall 2020 enrollments were overall down approximately 2.5 %, with the decline at the undergraduate level of 3.6%, while the graduate level enrollments increased by 3.6%. Community colleges had the most significant enrollment declines of about 10.1%. For Spring 2021 compared to Spring 2020, the overall decline was 3.5%, with a drop of 4.9% at the undergraduate level, with the graduate enrollment again up 3.6%. Community colleges again were the hardest hit, with declines of 9.5% from spring to spring.

All racial and ethnic groups experienced enrollment declines at the undergraduate level in both comparisons. As indicated in Table 1, Blacks and Native Americans experienced the largest declines in both comparisons and declines for all groups increased in the spring semester, 2021. Not reported on the table was the severe reduction of 43% of international students coming to U.S. institutions in the 2020-2021 academic year (National Student Clearinghouse, 2021).

Table 1. Enrollment declines for U.S. Higher education during the pandemic by race/ethnicity*

Race/Ethnicity	Fa 2019 to Fa 2020	Sp 2020 to Sp 2021
Asian	-.3.1%	-4.8%
LatinX	-5.4%	-7.3%
White	-6.6%	-8.5%
Black	-7.5%	-8.8%
Native American	-9.6%	-13.0%

*Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2021)

Both the financial impact and shifting realities of faculty and staff work were especially stark in higher education. As was true in the PK-12 sector, spring of 2020 forced most every institution online. Even academics skeptical of online instruction shifted to that mode for teaching. But the revenue impacts forced significant financial cuts. According to the U.S. Labor Department (Bauman, 2021; AAUP, 2021), there were historic job losses, with 1 in 8 higher education workers losing their jobs, a net loss of 650,000 workers. This represents nearly about a 12% decline in the higher education workforce in one year. Included was about a 5% decline in adjunct faculty. But notably, over half of the job losses were for low paid typically non-white workers, with women overall being slightly more impacted than men (Bauman, 2021). According to the American Association of University Professors, adjusting for inflation, there was a decline in real wages of about .4% (Petit, 2021).

In terms of other work-related impacts on faculty, most universities adjusted promotion and tenure timelines and clocks along with systems for how instructors should be evaluated during the pandemic. Ways to document the impact of the pandemic for evaluation purposes, for example, by including impact statements in assessment reviews, were additional adjustments that evolved (Petit, 2021a; Chronicle of Higher Education, 2021). This was reasonable given the inability many faculty members confronted in trying to collect data for research while at the same time having traditional teaching approaches disrupted. Several states even raised the specter of reconsidering tenure, either through legislation or through governing board policy, in states like South Carolina, Iowa, Georgia and Kansas.

Faculty themselves indicated multiple impacts of the pandemic on their health, mental health and perspectives about their work and career. The effects of the pandemic were distinct and disruptive. One survey (Course Hero, 2020) of 570 full and part-time faculty from two- and four-year colleges and universities found that:

- 74% indicated significant stress caused by challenges using new modes of teaching
- Nearly 2/3 indicated significant stress in meeting students emotional and health needs
- 40% indicated they considered leaving their jobs
- 25% considered their institution or department might close
- Nearly half expected closures or mergers with other colleges
- 60% expect that institutions will close programs
- 75% expect class size/teaching mode changes hurting quality
- Biggest stressors:
 - Frustrations with administration (53%)
 - Personal matters (childcare, finances, etc. – 53%)

- Outside events (e.g., the election, social unrest – 65%)
- Signs of burn-out:
 - Increase in emotional drain (53%)
 - Work-related stress/frustration (52%)

Naturally, college students experienced related kinds of emotional issues. Surveys suggest severe impact on college students who never anticipated the circumstances that would characterize their college experience. For example, a survey of 702 college students by BestColleges.com (Dennon, 2021), all who had remote classes at least partly in 2020, found that:

- Over 95% of students reported experiencing negative mental health symptoms
- 97% reported impacts such as more screen time, more time indoors, etc.
- 40%-50% lamented the loss of campus activities (interactions with friends, clubs, sporting events, traditions, etc.)
- 71% reported increased stress/anxiety:
 - 91% fear for their own and family health
 - 89% reported difficulty concentrating
 - 86% indicated disrupted sleep patterns
 - 82% had concerns regarding academic performance
- 48% indicated the pandemic has impacted their education:
 - 46% were lonelier/more isolated
 - 40% indicated they slept less
 - 39% reported less exercise and they were eating worse
 - 32% expressed feelings of hopelessness

An interview study (Son, et al., 2020) found that 71% of students in their research indicated increased stress and anxiety due to Covid-19, with 44% experiencing an increased level of depressive thoughts, and 8% reporting having suicidal thoughts due to the pandemic.

As indicated earlier, multiple studies reported on the disparate impacts, most notably for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) students. One study reported that for BIPOC students, the pandemic exacerbated issues around race and ethnicity in terms of disparities and challenges (The Steve Fund, 2020). Given recent curricular concerns that have evolved regarding critical race theory, the ongoing contentious political climate, family deaths, food insecurity, and financial strain, it is likely these disparate impacts will endure. For all students, there was an increase in the percentage indicating that college wasn't worth the cost (up to 65%), fears about getting a job after graduation (79%), concerns about ability to pay tuition (67%), and difficulty in staying motivated to learn if education remained online (84%) (Klebs et al., 2021).

In sum, the story for higher education in the U.S. due to the pandemic is a troubling one, with many issues facing higher education prior to March 2020 exacerbated in the atmosphere of the COVID-19 impacts. There were significant financial impacts including budget cuts, job losses and enrollment declines. For students, faculty and staff, human costs related to health and stress issues, disruption of work and study, and uncertainty about the future. Most recently, the rise of the Delta variant diminished hopes for a return to normal practices and created additional issues regarding controversies related to mask wearing, vaccinations, and what teaching might be like in the future. The lingering pandemic has extended remote and hybrid work and learning practices with the real possibility that higher education will be transformed to incorporate in-person, remote, and hybrid work and course offerings. While this shift brings areas of concern such as home-office spending, cybersecurity, and challenges of adopting hybrid models; it also has the potential to increase employee and student morale and to improve retention of employees and students. A Bloomberg News survey conducted by Morning Consult in May 2021, found that out of 1,000 U.S. adults surveyed, 39% would consider leaving their job if work practice policies were not flexible about remote work (Melin & Egkolfopoulou, 2021).

The Federal Government Response

One aspect of the American experience was the huge influx of governmental funding and widespread availability of vaccinations. Between the Trump and Biden administrations, funding packages totaled nearly \$4 trillion. While only a portion of those funds went directly to education, the amount of funding was significant. To put this in perspective, only four countries in the world have a gross national product of about \$4 trillion or more. The Trump administration Corona Virus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was approximately \$2 trillion with \$30.74 billion directed to PK-12 education, another \$14.24 billion to higher education. In the Biden administration, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act was a total of nearly \$2

trillion, with about \$170 billion targeted to PK-12 education, another \$40 billion to higher education. In both cases, the funds had specific foci and designations, but the total funding that was provided was enormous (an analysis of the funding for the CARES Act can be found at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46378>. For the ARP Act at https://www.bipc.com/assets/PDFs/Insights/Advisory-Govt_Relations_Analysis_Congress_Passes_american_rescue_plan_of_2021-20100310.pdf)

Regarding vaccination rates, the U.S. currently ranks 17th in the world in terms of the percentage of the eligible population fully vaccinated. While availability of vaccines is abundant, data drawn from the University College London YouGov Public Monitor reported that for the U.S., 26% of the eligible population remained unvaccinated and not willing to be vaccinated, with another 5.38% unvaccinated and uncertain about being vaccinated. (Our World Data, 2021).

Conclusions

The pandemic that emerged in early 2020 is still clutching the world today. It is clear that the decade of the 2020s started off with a fateful pandemic that certainly rivals the beginnings of the aptly labeled decade a century ago, the roaring 20s. For the field of education, exactly how schools and colleges might potentially evolve as a result of going through such an impactful episode remains conjecture. The American experience to-date is certainly not unique, with all nations in the world struggling with the impact of the virus given their local context and conditions (e.g., see, Aristovnik et al., 2020; Chaturvedi et al, 2021). But as the wealthiest and probably most visible nation in the world, the data from the U.S. offer both a window as to how the education sector fared as well as a guide to what other nations with differing circumstances might expect.

We suggest that four broad themes or conclusions emerge from analyzing the U.S. experience with COVID 19 as it impacted the PK-12 and higher education fields. We label these as, Being Embattled, Confounding Uncertainty, Emergent Responses, and Potential Positives.

Being Embattled - For the U.S. and all the world, the pandemic had devastating effects. The education sectors have been particularly embattled. In PK-12, children were sent home, educators were forced to struggle with how to directly serve students while the virus was still spreading as new semesters rolled around. The existing disparities that characterized U.S. schooling were exacerbated due to the pandemic's forcing the need for tracking student progress outside of school with little control of the technology available in the home. Learning losses in multiple subjects emerged, and this differentially impacted minority groups. Mental health issues were heightened, and the recent emphasis on student socio-emotional needs were hampered. For higher education, the financial and enrollment losses were profound, normal work practices in teaching and research disrupted, inequities were also exacerbated, and mental health-related concerns evolved. On these and multiple other factors, schools and colleges/universities were ravaged by the pandemic.

Confounding Uncertainty - Related to this, the pandemic created an array of uncertainties for the fields in education. Most obviously, the question of how to best teach when students couldn't be in face-to-face classes emerged and posed difficult decisions at all levels of education. In the PK-12 sector, how to reach and engage young children who typically spent the majority of their days in school was a critical dilemma for educators. Concerns about how to serve the academic and mental health needs of students was evident in survey data. Some of these same issues impacted higher education, but the uncertainty about the fiscal future of many institutions, especially with declining enrollments, created an atmosphere of the unknown that pervaded the education space.

Emergent Responses - Several responses to the pandemic were noteworthy. The U.S. federal government responded to the pandemic by infusing trillions of dollars into Covid relief, with tens of billions directed at education. These dollars undoubtedly cushioned some of the potential problems schools at all levels faced. When funding was needed, it was provided. At the same time, any hesitancy about moving education online was shattered as a result of the pandemic. Everyone went online. This quick response was especially noteworthy, teaching changed, and it is likely that teaching in the future will be altered given the positive experiences many had with learning to teach in different formats and with varying technologies.

Potential Positives - Finally, what emerged from the rubble of the pandemic was that the entire education field proved itself quite adroit at adjusting quickly. Researchers focusing on change in PK-12 schooling, for example, have lamented for decades how slow education is to change, what Tyack and Cuban (1997) referred to as the "grammar" of schooling. But schools changed rapidly, some more successfully than others, moving away from traditional approaches to teaching to fully online in both synchronous and asynchronous ways. New technologies were employed for instruction that heretofore were never considered. New ways to connect with and support students emerged. And many of these changes unfolded in the space of just a

few weeks. The often-cited criticism about education's intransigence and conservative proclivities were shattered in the face of how schools and higher education changed so quickly to meet students' pandemic-related needs. Some of the changes related to remote or hybrid classroom and work practices will likely be adopted permanently by schools and higher education supporting increased flexibility for learning and working in the future. And despite the very real concerns about student mental health and socio-emotional problems caused by the pandemic, it seems also plausible that some students stiffened their resilience and organized their work in ways to foster success even in the challenging atmosphere the pandemic created. In other words, the experience of the pandemic for some educators and students will serve them well in the future.

In the end, the full story of the 2020 pandemic remains untold. The virus still lingers, and the ups and downs of its severity and the means for dealing with it continue to rankle education at all levels. What seems clear however, is that history will have a nuanced story to tell as the U.S. and the world emerge from the shackles of the virus that continues to alter our norms.

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