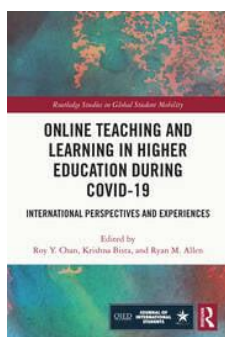# Book Review: Online teaching and learning in higher education during COVID-19. International perspectives and experiences. By Roy Y. Chan, Krishna Bista, and Ryan M. Allen

Eugenia Belén Iglesias Rama
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

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The book *Online teaching and learning in higher education during COVID-19. International perspectives and experiences,* edited by Roy Y. Chan, Krishna Bista, and Ryan M. Allen (2022), provides an in-depth analysis of teaching and learning practices in tertiary education during the 2020s pandemic. With the arrival of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), and the numerous lockdowns ordered around the world, many studies have focused on analysing how the situation has influenced education and what methods are the most effective in terms of online teaching. At the core of the volume lies the necessity to portray online education during the spring of 2020 and to offer an outlook on how online teaching should be seized to be profitable for students.

This volume is mainly aimed at educators in higher education who, due to the coronavirus disease pandemic, had to adapt their materials and courses to online formats. With the adaptation of the course to an online one due to the situation experienced in 2020, it has been questioned what is the best way to teach the class. In addition, there has been a lot of concern about how students have been adapted to this method along with the various personal problems they may have

faced, both in terms of resources and health. In this sense, the chapters included in this volume could be used as a resource for all those educators who still need to use online teaching methods or may use them in the future, especially because they want to respond to students' needs and the possible circumstances or difficulties they may be facing.

The 17 chapters of the volume are organised thematically in three sections, together with an epilogue:

- Part 1 counts for *Innovative Forms of Online Teaching, Learning, and Assessment during COVID-19* (Chapters 1-6).

- Part 2 involves *Impacts of Distance Education on Students, Social Inclusion, and Access during COVID-19* (Chapters 7-11).

- Part 3 delves into *COVID-19 as a Catalyst of Change* (Chapters 12–17).

The book opens with an introductory chapter by the editors, pointing out the increasing demand for online and distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This statement is supported by an American Council on Education (ACE, 2020) survey, in which it is stated that 55% of colleges and universities intended to offer mainly online classes in the spring 2021. Due to this sanitary crisis, universities and colleges had to change their methodology immediately, accelerating their digital transformation and facing three primary challenges: (1) the technical infrastructure and accessibility, (2) the distance education pedagogies and competences, and (3) the field of study (The International Association of Universities [IAU], 2020). Chapter 2 explains the procedure to create authentic learning in online courses. Michelle Rippy and Monica Muñoz provide strategies that will be helpful to obtain an engaging environment and inspire students. Chapter 3, examines social media, and the interactions on it, during the pandemic. Specifically, Linda Dam analyses the online community created by educators on Facebook focused on pedagogy. The author uses Wenger's (2000) practice theory, which proposes that a single perspective on an issue can be developed by a community of practice. Chapter 4 delves into the incorporation of synchronous tools in online education in order to improve the trustworthiness and efficacy of the assessments. The chapter that follows (Chapter 5), points out the key challenges and opportunities the authors found when adapting teaching to the online format. As examples of challenges, they found the interruption during classes, or the failure to respond to all the students participating on the chat. Finally, Chapter 6 is focused on authentic assessment and its effectiveness during the pandemic in order to find out if

it works better at RMIT University (Vietnam). Although this kind of assessment improves students' satisfaction in the pre-COVID period, it was ineffective during COVID-19.

The following section is constituted of five chapters that reflect on the repercussions COVID-19 and online learning had on students, specifically on social inclusion, access to the different platforms and materials, and their well-being. Chapter 7 maintains that students' sense of belonging to their higher institutions has been developed during the pandemic thanks to the use of social media. Jack Reed and Catherine Dunn, the authors of the chapter, point out that Sobaih et al. (2020) proved how students used those channels to form communities and, this way, a sense of belonging. Chapter 8, written by Vander Tavares, consists of a research that explores international student experiences at a Canadian University. Specifically, it investigates how the shift to online teaching due to the pandemic impacts the perceptions and experiences of those students around social interaction. International students suffered from limitations related to building meaningful social interactions with the university and creating that sense of community, therefore, the author claims the need to humanise online teaching in higher education. Chapter 9 reviews those challenges related to online learning that restrict equitable access to learning resources and outcomes. The authors, Romana Manzoor and Wayne Bart, examine how these issues can be addressed or solved by institutions to prevent the widening of the equity gap, and they call attention to the opportunity to start a review process thanks to the new way of learning: online education. With this critical review, they claim that higher education institutions (or HEI) are able to meet these challenges and, more importantly, correct their weaknesses. The next chapter (Chapter 10), takes Botswana, Africa, as the setting to explore the use of ICT and its contribution to education during the COVID-19 pandemic. With this research, Mmabaledi Seeletso concludes that this global situation has created a great opportunity for the development of Open and Distance Learning (ODL), or distance education, but the use of ICT may promote social exclusion in higher education. The last chapter of this section, Chapter 11, presents a study that analyses the difficulties found for students when shifting to distance education and the challenges they faced. Specifically, the study is focused on Russian public universities, where the main challenges were technical problems, such as those related to the Internet connection, communication issues with the faculty or its community, and their regulation of the learning skills.

Finally, in the third section of the book, the chapters include case studies of online lessons during the pandemic. The first chapter of the section, Chapter 12,

offers an evaluation of higher education made by the authors (Raffaela Borasi, Richard DeMartino, Nathan Harris and Dave Miller) using the term proposed by Christensen (2013) "disruptive technology". This kind of phenomenon was described as innovations that come to replace a process or a product that was already established and, therefore, make the traditional solution obsolete. With this concept, the COVID-19 is evaluated by Borasi, DeMartino, Harris and Miller in order to determine if it could be a stimulant for disruption in higher education. Chapter 13, examines the way in which the author, Anatoly Oleksiyenko, lived the pandemic. He uses the term "cyber existence" to analyse his professional and social experiences, and to provide an improved understanding of the current situation. Chapter 14 focuses on the case of Hong Kong's community colleges, specifically on the unique conditions and dynamics of it when experiencing the process of emergency remote teaching (ERT) and the possibility of a liberal education. Chapter 15 consists of a research about Indian higher education's distance learning during the pandemic based on an online survey of 106 students. With it, the authors present the pros and cons this kind of learning has, such as the inconvenience of physical distance from peers or the faculty. Chapter 16 also examines online education during the COVID-19, especially English teacher education. Eden Stephens and Jen Scoot Curwood base their study on real experiences lived on Australian HEI during the time between March and July 2020, considering COVID-19 impact in the design and management of English teacher education courses. Chapter 17, the last chapter of the third section and the book, revolves around blended learning and its implementation in the United Arab Emirates public HEI. With the pandemic, the actions related to e-learning have been accelerated and evaluated significantly in the UAE. However, students, who are used to face-to-face communication, may face difficulties with this transition. Due to this, blended learning, which combines in-person teaching and online tools, is the preferred method in order to promote students' autonomy.

Taken together, the chapters included in this volume offer us a complete picture of what distance education has been like during the pandemic experienced in the spring of 2020. Specifically, how it was experienced in HEI. Chan, Bista & Allen's book is a guide for all those educators who have to adapt to the "new normal" and to the new methods and media used for teaching. For this reason, the book has a strong pedagogical value not only for those professionals working in higher institutions, but also for those in secondary education, becoming a possible guide to many teachers.

Furthermore, The various experiences presented in this book from different points of view, together with the studies carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, invite researchers to continue delving into a topic as important as improving education.

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EUGENIA BELÉN IGLESIAS RAMA

Is currently doing her PhD in English Linguistics at the UCM and working as an ESL teacher in secondary education. Her research focuses on facework and the differences between CMC and FtF TV series' fan interaction.

eugeigle@ucm.es
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4981-3622

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