

ST forum to examine ripple effects of Covid-19 on higher education

Focus on what needs to be done to equip the young on the way forward in changing world



Students at Aix-Marseille University in Marseille, southern France, last November, when the university opened rooms for students to take courses online during a national lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The impact of Covid-19 has dramatically transformed education systems around the world.

In the higher education sector, the pandemic has caused institutions to challenge deep-rooted notions of when, where and how they deliver education. It also has led to public discussions on the value of a degree education, the role of universities and the distinction drawn between traditional and non-traditional students.

In an interview with The Straits Times on the pandemic's effect on universities, Education Minister Lawrence Wong said that during the circuit breaker period, universities had to move their teaching and even examinations online.

Universities in Singapore and around the world had already been trying out various models of blended learning, he noted. These included online lectures as well as discussions in class to go deeper into the concepts. But the pandemic accelerated the changes.

"They now realise that the blended model can have a positive impact on students," Mr Wong said, adding that he does not see universities going back to the lecture-tutorial system that had been used for decades.

Singapore Management University president Lily Kong agreed that universities that had previously prepared their faculties to adopt blended learning were successful in pivoting swiftly to full online courses when the pandemic emerged.

But she said: "Learning from both a physical classroom and an online learning environment must be balanced and optimised, with courses designed to leverage their respective strengths so as to enrich the learning experience."

So, how are universities rethinking the basic purposes of education and the pedagogic models better suited for the ever-present possibilities of insecurity, risk and relentless change?

The Straits Times Education Forum 2021 on Reimagining Universities, Post-Covid, held in partnership with Singapore Management University, will examine the ripple effects of the coronavirus pandemic on higher education and the changes that it will forge.

The forum, to be held online on Feb 5 this year, will provide more insights from Mr Wong, Professor Kong and ST's senior education correspondent Sandra Davie.

The webinar will be moderated by Ms Lydia Lim, head of schools and education products at Singapore Press Holdings.

Straits Times editor Warren Fernandez said: "We are living through a period of wrenching and relentless change, across the board, in the way we work, live and play. How we learn and become educated, and even the kind of education we need going forward is also changing."

"The pandemic has amplified and accelerated all of this, with major implications for students, parents, teachers and employers."

"Our ST Education Forum aims to help focus minds and add to the discussion on what needs to be done to equip our young on the way forward in this changing world."

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EDUCATION
FORUM 2021

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SMU SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

Reimagining Universities, Post-Covid

EVENT DETAILS

The Straits Times Education Forum 2021 (online) on Reimagining Universities, Post-Covid, in partnership with Singapore Management University

Date: Feb 5, 2021

Time: 10am to 11.15am

To sign up, go to str.sg/JDxm by 6pm on Jan 29