



A Memoir on Academic Shifts during a Pandemic

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2020 has been a year that has challenged most people to alter and adapt their lifestyle in face of turmoil, and students are no different. In light on the COVID-19 pandemic that has gripped the world, most conventional institutions have been shut down in an attempt to reduce transmission of the virus, academic institutions among the most significant. As a result, students have had to adapt to an influx of online classes, assignments, and pseudo-examinations in lieu of a classroom setting, whilst combating the ever-present creep of stagnation and procrastination. I, being a student myself, have experienced such first-hand and will therefore attempt to chronicle my experiences in such a climate, thus providing a student's perspective on the matter.

For the past 4 years or so, the disillusionment of formal education developed to such an extent that I began to feel overwhelmingly burnt out when it came to schoolwork, only pushing on due to a familial and societal obligation in lack of self-given purpose. Therefore, when the prospect of school shutting down for an indeterminate period of time came to be, it felt like a godsend, an utmost reprieve from a place that I grew increasingly worn out from. For the first few weeks, this state of contentment persisted up to a point, and I'd be lying if I said that much work was done during this time. Most of my time was spent occupying myself with hobbies and other acts of leisure that were restricted during the regular school period, and that blissful feeling of nothing began to set in. Unfortunately, this feeling did not last. As the days grew shorter and time hazier, the constraint of the walls of my room and my house started to take their toll. The

constant and unchanging cycle that was my regime became dull, unchallenged by the presence of meaningful work that still needed to be done. This happened to such an extent that even aforementioned hobbies of leisure grew stale and I once again became disillusioned. Staying within the confines of my house for such a prolonged and seemingly persistent period of time became draining. It was suffocating. It was unclear to me as to if this was a result of the quarantine and lack of work being done, or if it was lasting feelings that began years prior, but it was at that point I strongly, albeit begrudgingly, decided to will myself to resume my studies. To some margin of surprise, this change made me feel much more comfortable and relaxed than I would've thought, and the aspect of doing something meaningful in the form of schoolwork and studies put me at ease, as I knew that the time spent was not being wasted on "that blissful feeling of nothing" and before long, I began a slow return to form that had slightly diminished over this time.

A significantly crucial adjustment that had to have been made was adapting to the shift to online classes for both formal and informal sources of education. Most of my lessons and few of my school teachers shifted their focus to hosting such classes at varying times of day, from the ungodly hours of the morning to marginally late at night. These classes usually were held on Zoom, and despite the numerous allegations of privacy-scandals associated with the site, this persisted as the preferred platform. Such classes felt much slower and low-energy than those that were held in-person, and my capacity to focus was challenged to an extent. The comfort of being at home in a private setting made it slightly difficult to concentrate and direct specific attention, as the classes felt dull compared to the somewhat lively and engaging aspect of being in a classroom, and it felt seemingly less effective as a method of teaching when compared to being in person, despite the exhaustive efforts of some of my teachers to provide an enjoyable setting. I firmly believe that this is not fault of the teachers, however, and is simply a crux of the medium, as the aforementioned comfort of being home does seem like a limiting-factor to concentration and fails to compare to the experience of being in person in the presence of your

peers and a dedicated teacher, whereby all (or, at least, most) of your intention is focused in front of you, engaged and attentive.

In terms of overall change, the ones that were underwent over the past few months were truthfully not too drastic in terms of scale. However, their effects and the changes to this year and what it brings for students, specifically those writing exams, are not to be dismissed. Whether or not this extended period of time will have any positive or negative effect on the performance of students during exams is still indeterminate, and with exams looming ever closer, one thing that is certain is the constant pressure and weight of expectations hanging over each student. Regardless of how these uncommon events affected us, I still hold an inkling of hope that it still might bode well for most, and the outcome will still be favourable and put students at ease, especially after the years of constant stress.