

To Accept The Unacceptable

by Jasmeet Singh Narota

Being an **international student** is always a challenging task to do, new world new possibilities to face. I came to Norway in 2018 with many dreams to catch. I felt much honored to be part of the Eu-hem program as it is a joint degree program of 4 top universities of Europe UIO is one of them. And, my primary focus was to build a very strong social relation with the students around me. It is always difficult to understand the mind setup of people who belong to different culture or country. As an international student it is one of the factors to deal with. But, surprisingly all the students I met were very kind and friendly. Furthermore, financial support is also very important as living in one of the expensive country is tough, getting a job was bit difficult as I do not speak Norwegian but after few efforts I found one and they were paying good enough to cover my expenses.

But this year 2020 I started my semester in March because my father was sick and I have to look after him. I arrived on 11th March 2020 to Oslo and from 13th March the spread of Cornona virus was already out of reach from the government and they decided to lock down the entire country. All the flights were cancelled neither I can go back to India to my family nor I was in the position to stay as I have limited money in my account. Majority of my friends back to their countries due to corona as all the classes were online. I was quarantined for 14 days as I was a traveler hence all alone in my room, I cannot go out, being locked inside in a room for 14 days is itself a trauma. But somehow I passed that phase. Now the other challenge is to survive when you have no source of income, expenses are the same, same rent, same groceries, and same personal expenses, I tried to reach the international student representatives if they can help us with some financial aid. They tried to contact the ministries of Norway if they can provide some help to international students but authorities gave clear red signal.

In such situations when you cannot share your pain and stress with your family which is very far away from you, it only means you are spreading your mental disease to them as they cannot do anything because the situation is same in my country to. I cannot ask my family to send me some money because they also have limited source of income. I cannot even ask my friends to help me in such scenario as they are just like me.

My international student representative even tried to convince the ministry of education of Norway if they can provide some aid to the international students like 'nav' benefits who lost their jobs due to corona but they ministry denied all the help said 'not everyone can get the benefit'. Even we also try to seek help from the 'SIO' if they can suspend SIO housing rents for 3monthts, but they were sorry too.

This outbreak turned international students' life upside down in just one night. Suddenly there is no income, no help from any side, we cannot even go back to my country as no flights were functional. I think all of us were near dead end, only hope we can have is if our university do some efforts to support its students. Universities are not only an educational temple but also a shelter to all the students especially those who travelled 1000s of kilometers far from their home land. I appreciate the efforts done by the UIO for international students.

The **pandemic experience** is totally new for us, but irony is we were never taught in our educational time that if suddenly there is an emergency like this then what kind of problems we can face and how to tackle it. I personally feel that educational institutions do not know either. All the educational institutions should be aware of this kind of emergency and if the institutions want to invite international students they must know how to support the students in such circumstances. For instance, Erasmus University Rotterdam(EUR) Holland sent emails to its international students that either they go back to their country and EUR will refund the air tickets, they said it when there were no flights operational, or they should sign a 'liability letter' that we are no longer the responsibility of the university if we decided to stay. But, strange thing is they teach ethics as a course to the students and it is missing in treating them. How can universities be that harsh with international students 'go back or go anywhere'.

COVID 19 has taught us many things, first is that you are always alone if you are not in your country if there is an emergency situation. Purpose of international student union is to solve problems of international students but if they fail to help at that time when you need the most then what is the purpose of such associations. I recommend only those people should come in front and be the representative if they know who to manage and help in any uncertainty. Connections with the ministry of education and government should be very strong so that the communication will be more effective in any problem which comes forward.

University administration should also take part in international students affair if the situation is too critical. For instance, when international student union failed to get help from the education ministry then university administration should have come forward and took the matter in its hands. This kind of actions develops a great sense of confidence among students that they are in safe hands and the university stands by them in any situation. COVID-19 pandemic is not unprecedented for the world but for students it is because we are far away from our loved ones and we cannot go back or can't even stay. It is a great pain to bear for those who have no close ones around. University is the home for us and professors and non teaching staff is our family. And families take care of each other which I personally felt missing.

Student exchange is a new challenge for us, all the classes are online which makes it even more difficult for us to gain student life interaction. The interest we develop in class is not possible

when we study on a computer. Motivation is the key to succeed forward with studies, it is very boring to study on a computer and only few people are available and among them many are sleeping or listening songs. But, current situation is very sensitive so online study is the online option that we have. Good thing about online classes is that you can have access to the lectures at anytime so no chance of missing any information.

This pandemic has taught us many things especially if you are a student, going to other country for few months doesn't require much preparation but now I think it is important to have good health and all the medical history should be included in the university record before sending student for exchange.

I come from a developing country '**India**' which is moving forward at a very fast pace but the current COVID-19 situation has a very deep impact on the lives of people and economy of the country. Health sector has been greatly affected by the virus spread as no. of patients are increasing swiftly and availability of the beds are too short not even have place to put dead bodies, Which proves that there is a lot to do in the health sector because there could be any uncertainty which could give a very hard challenge to the country. I will be working as a health economist in the government sector, private health institutions or pharmaceutical companies. Financial management is the biggest factor to regulate the smooth flow of the health services. This can only be possible if we can work in a team i.e all the govt. officials, health care workers and people.

But, the focus should be more on saving the lives of the people and control the spread of the virus. Being a health economist it will be more challenging to manage the financial aspect as India is big country with the population around 1.3billion. Majority of the population is daily earners which earn daily and feed their families but now 'Corona' has created huge job crises which are no started taking lives of people as they do not have enough money to feed themselves nor their families. So for them COVID-19 is not an enemy but hunger is. Managing the health emergency is not going to solve the problem, it is also important to generate jobs for them. This is another challenge that I have to face which will be more difficult to handle.

Due to job loss it is difficult to say whether in this situation I can have job or not because due to 'lockdown' measure government is not able to collect taxes which makes it hard to pay salary to the employees, government is planning to terminate the contracts of millions of employees. In that scenario I stand very less chance to get a job in the position where I belong.

This situation has created a dilemma in my mind that whether I have took the right course to study to achieve my future endeavor, other countries were hiring the health economist but now I cannot apply for even internship as all the borders are closed, I cannot even go back to my own country as my country as not accepting flights as the government think that travelers can bring corona. In Europe also all the countries have their own language it is not possible to learn new

language in few weeks. So considering a European country is not possible either. USA has very high demand of health economist but the government has declared emergency there, chances are very low there too. The only option for me is to find a job in my own country or start learning Norwegian so that I can able to find a good position here in Norway.

For me it is a big question which I don't know the answer 'what should I do now?' the only option I have is to accept what is happening now.

Sustainable healthcare is the only feasible solution to solve this health emergency around the world not only for now but also for the future, COVID-19 is just one reason of deaths across the world there are way more dangerous diseases which are taking lives way more than COVID-19. But, the difference is, it has become a pandemic which is spreading across the world in just few months and put the whole world into halt. This disease has showed the world that all the technology and advancement countries have gained or developed is nothing compared to what a microscopic organism can do. Entire world now understands that health sector is the sector which every country should emphasis more than any other sector because people are losing lives not because they are exposed to COVID-19 but due to the lack of health facilities. Developing countries are the worst hit by this virus, people not able to get admission in the hospitals, ICU is far they cannot even get the general ward for the patients. This situation is taught us that how important it is to have a strong and sustainable health system which can manage the sudden need of increased patient in flow. Moreover, lack of health equipments are also a big for the countries, majority of the countries were lacking in having PPE kits which is the first line of defense for controlling the outbreak of COVID-19. But, countries were reluctant to improvise with shortage of kits to protect their medical staff from infection.

In India, PPE kits were imported from China which were all defected some of them even causing skin problems to the medical staff. In the emergency authorities did not have the time to check the quality of the product as the dire need was to supply it to the hospitals Which taught the lesson that every country should be self sufficient to provide the basics health needs of the local population because such disease does not give time to prepare for the suitable measure. Coordination among the various local authorities is very important to handle health related emergencies.

Countries should also set a bridge among each other so that they can work as a task force to provide necessary help and support when required. Good example is that FDA and EU have loosened the regulations and laws for the approval of new drug which is considered effective for the COVID-19. There should be one platform functional at such times where all the countries come together to fight against such challenges. This will bring a sense of far better sustainable healthcare initiative.

There must be one regulatory authority that can monitor the actions and guide them when they will deviate from the path.

Ethical issues can very commonly seen in the developing countries as well as developed countries. As stated above Norwegian govt. refused to give 'NAV' benefits to the international students, why? When we work we pay taxes to the government as others do, so how can government deny to help students! Similarly in India many hospital they increased their per bed charges up to by 20 times as original. Public hospitals do not have the capacity to acquire every body and people prefer to choose government hospitals first as they are free or way cheaper than private hospitals. It is the responsibility of the government that if they are not able to accommodate everyone then it should make the desired arrangements for the patients in other places or at least give orders to the private hospitals to work under the government rules and regulations.

Since this disease will leave its deep marks on the history of mankind all countries should understand that people who are under privileged they suffer the most because not only they lost a job but also their whole future, their loved once or their solo earners lost their life because they were not blessed being rich. People will keep asking the questions to the government that, why our loved ones died? Ethically and morally it is the responsibility of the government to make sure that all the citizens should get equal right to health care. If they failed to receive that then government should identify the root cause and correct it.

In the end, I would like to say that being an international student I learned a lot for the episode of life, when we travel 1000s of kilometer far from our home from our family we have dreams to catch, but when you are suddenly encounter a situation where all the doors are closed and there is no hope to get any help from any side while trying vigorously then life shatters just like a glass fallen on a rock.

Life stuck at one particular point where you cannot go forward or go back then we left with only one option '**TO ACCEPT THE UNACCPETABLE**'.