



# RETRACTED: The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and e-Learning

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## INTRODUCTION

Online education is a well-established pedagogical paradigm that has been studied and discussed from numerous perspectives (Kanuka et al., 2007; Blayone et al., 2017). Moreover, online education is often associated with a variety of opportunities and obstacles (Gillett-Swan, 2017; Ferri et al., 2020). While crises and disasters are not a new phenomenon in education (Winograd, 2016), the global pandemic, namely COVID-19, made contact teaching in an unprecedented move temporarily impossible (Fuchs and Karrila, 2021). The list of countries that mandated their educational institutions to shift toward online education has been growing by the day in 2019 (Ng, 2021). Henceforth, the paradigm of emergency remote teaching (ERT) emerged. Nevertheless, there is a distinguishing difference between emergency remote teaching and e-learning (i.e., online teaching or online learning). This opinion paper discusses implications for educational researchers when using the terms as a synonym and provides a value-added perspective on the differences between ERT and traditional online education.

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## DISCUSSION

Emergency remote teaching is a temporary shift in the delivery of education to an alternative delivery model in which all teaching is conducted online (Hodges et al., 2020). It is said that online education has been studied for the better part of the previous two decades (Martin et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is a relative agreement on the aspects that do not add substantially to online education's efficacy (Shen et al., 2013; Alqurashi, 2016).

Modality, pacing, student-instructor ratio, pedagogy, the role of assessment, the instructor's role, the student's role, communication channels, and feedback sources are examples of these characteristics (Hodges et al., 2020). There is reasonable doubt ERT classrooms will feature these properties as educators may not have enough time and experience adjusting their course syllabi and thereby unwillingly creating an unsatisfactory learning environment for the students (Torres Martín et al., 2021).

To provide further content, a search query was executed on 15th April 2022 in Scopus, Google Scholar, ERIC, and Web of Science, which revealed an abundance of literature related to ERT. However, upon taking a closer look, the publications that form the body of knowledge about ERT, are exclusively dated 2020 or more recent (i.e., 2020–2022). To further illustrate, when singling out Elsevier's abstract and citation database Scopus, as of 7th May 2022, there were 532 publications related to emergency remote teaching and learning. The majority of these publications (original research, short communications, conference proceedings, and review articles) relate to the field of social sciences ( $n = 402$ ).

Moreover, most of these publications were indexed in 2021 ( $n = 350$ ), however, the number will likely be surpassed in 2022 as it currently stands at 97. Lastly, the leading authors and experts in the field of emergency remote teaching and learning are Ogata ( $n = 7$ ), Fuchs ( $n = 6$ ), and Majumdar ( $n = 5$ ) with an overall contribution of 5.11% in Scopus related to ERT (see **Table 1**).

**TABLE 1** | Summarized findings from the database inquiry in Scopus.

Inquiry date	Type	2020	2021	2022	Total
15 April 2022	Overall	85	350	97	532
	Social sciences	51	269	81	402
7 May 2022	Overall	98	389	125	612
	Social sciences	79	282	98	459

Consequently, it is reasonable to state that the phenomenon of emergency remote teaching and learning emerged in 2019 with the appearance of the global pandemic, namely COVID-19. Many landmark studies address the perceived usefulness, opportunities, challenges, as well as good practices (Adedoyin and Soykan, 2020; Ferri et al., 2020; Fuchs and Karrila, 2021; Gelles et al., 2020; Fuchs, 2021; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021; Stewart and Lowenthal, 2022). When comparing ERT with online teaching/learning, it is noteworthy to mention that online teaching/learning “carries a stigma of being lower quality than face-to-face learning, despite research showing otherwise (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 2).

Therefore, when the newly emerged paradigm of ERT is being compared with a rather established mode of education, it creates two implications. First, it affirms the stigma and general perception that online education is of lesser quality, and therefore, deteriorates the reputation of an educational paradigm that is likely to grow in the future. Second, the temptation of comparing ERT with online teaching/learning is comparing apples to oranges. Indeed, both are educational models with opportunities and shortcomings, however, the nature of planning, implementation, and execution is fundamentally different.

A study by König et al. (2020) further illustrates the misperception that a synonymous application of both paradigms entails creates. The authors studied how teachers adapted to the temporary shift toward ERT while erroneously referring to online teaching. They conclude that “opportunities to learn digital competence are instrumental in adapting to online teaching” (p. 608).

However, I would argue that the necessity for digital competence would largely differ in the context of ERT compared to traditional online teaching. Going a step further, beyond the simultaneous application of both terminologies, it also creates confusion for future research. For example, a review study conducted by Masalimova et al. (2022) sought to examine students’ attitudes toward studying online during COVID-19. However, the study neglects to mention the paradigm of ERT and consequently, uses the search items “Distance learning” AND “University” AND “COVID” omitting a vast majority of studies that correctly address the paradigm of emergency remote teaching/learning.

Research conducted by Topuz et al. (2022) examines the use of online assessment systems, but specifically delimits the scope to ERT to establish a clear distinction between regular online teaching and emergency remote teaching. Although, it could be conjectured that, with time, emergency remote

teaching transitions into the paradigm of regular online teaching (Guppy et al., 2022). All barriers and shortcomings perceived by educators and institutions that were addressed by Hodges et al. (2020) would eventually diminish over time and a transition toward online education would take place. For example, Donham et al. (2022) identified that ERT would entail at least twice as many barriers compared with regular online education, wherein educators and students are conceptually prepared to conduct classes online.

Similarly, there are elemental misalignments between online education and emergency remote teaching as relatedly firmed by Rapanit et al. (2020). There are elemental misalignments between online education and emergency remote teaching. Online education, for example, assumes an existing organizational infrastructure that serves the aims of online teaching and learning. In contrast, COVID-19’s emergency remote teaching has frequently been improvised without much proper time to consider implementation (Ferri et al., 2020; Fuchs and Karrila, 2021).

Establishing an effective online course or teaching online within the paradigm of e-learning takes several implementations to eliminate flaws and improve course content (Magunje and Chigona, 2021). The first word in ERT stands for emergency, and that is the fundamental difference between ERT and e-learning. In ERT, there are no longer planning cycles or several course implementations that allowed educators to mature their course content to precision. Emergency remote teaching can be envisioned as a mere patch on a burst bicycle tire that still has a few kilometers to run. In that analogy, ERT is the patch that allows continuity for institutions, educators, and students before resuming a traditional classroom arrangement. Therefore, it would feel appropriate to measure and evaluate ERT through the same lenses as e-learning.

## CONCLUSION

To put it in a nutshell, studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning around the world conclude that valuable lessons have been learned and certainly pose the opportunity to advance the paradigm of online education in the future. Nevertheless, I would like to argue that it is profoundly misleading to put emergency remote teaching/learning on the same pedestal as online teaching/learning. Academia and the research community would benefit from a clear distinction between the two educational paradigms and recognize them

for what they are, otherwise, we face the risk to feed into the general perception that online education is of lesser quality.

## ENDNOTE

The author synonymously interprets the terminology “emergency remote teaching” and “emergency remote learning”

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in the context of this paper, wherein teaching and learning refer to the perspective of the corresponding stakeholder, i.e., teacher and student.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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