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could be the start of something fresh in the world of the “new normal.”

If there’s an optimistic outcome that the lockdown has led to, it is the acceleration in the adoption of digital technologies, which now seems to be a force that can upgrade the entire education system – whether it is for the teachers or students. However, on the other hands, the critical short-term disruption is being felt by many families: especially since the concept of home-schooling was never familiar to Indians and now, it has sent a wave of shock to children’s learning and social life, and also parents’ productivity. But the experts from the fraternity are in fact recommending educational institutions to not only adapt to this change but also polish and perfect this form since online education seems to be the only way to protect students from facing academic losses and also from the fear of jeopardizing their careers.



Chandan Bagwe

But can we analyse how much the pandemic has already or will continue to affect learning? Not very aptly; but studies conducted by large institutions and government bodies prompt the truth and the order of magnitude. In fact, according to a survey of the Mumbai-based digital marketing agency, C Com Digital, on the “opportunities and challenges for universities, institutes, and colleges amidst the

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COVID-19 world”, it was observed that more and more educational institutions are already undergoing a phase of development in the learning systems owing to the market demands and the need for an education revolution. A similar yet strong approach to this subject comes from a respondent of the survey, Dr. Harish Kumar S Purohit - Director at the Parle Tilak Vidyalyaya Association's Institute of Management, who estimates that the only way to move past the severe impact of the pandemic on the education system would be to introduce specialized technical skills that align with the way the virtual learning functions. In his opinion, the crisis has stemmed the need to inculcate the specialized skills among students, of which, the basics can be self-learned through online programs and pre-recorded versions, and advanced parts can be taught by faculty members. He also pointed out that the institutes and universities can establish their own ERP systems for the betterment of the students as well as their parents who play the role of a guide in situations like these. Along with this, many educationalists who participated in the survey backed the fact that Artificial Intelligence (AI), data mining, and high-quality content, will gain importance more than ever, leading to better career opportunities in the said stream. The educational reform in the country right now seems to showcase how need, certainly, is the mother of invention, sometimes reinvention.

While this switch in the study culture is potentially a first for India to experience and experiment, alchemizing education with technological education is also, to a great extent, leaving a blend of positive and negative outcomes. The lack of physical classroom lectures, prolonged remoteness, and increased pressure to embrace the change, has even triggered behavioural challenges and mental health issues among many students, as pointed in the report of the conducted survey.

Professor Meera Shankar – Director at Jankidevi Bajaj Institute of Management Studies (JDBIMS) and a consultant for Stress Management & Emotional Intelligence, highlighted in a survey

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conducted by them that out of the total 900 respondents (students), 41% are pursuing masters, 22% are undergraduates, 36% are enrolled into a professional degree course, and 1% have completed their intermediate studies, and amongst them, 20.8% reported a feeling of restlessness, 23% felt depressed and anxious, 6.3% encountered sleepless nights, and 26.1% showed no signs of concerns. When analysing these numbers and the outcome of this study, it can be noticed that the larger problem of the crisis is not just the sudden shift to the virtual world, considering those from the disadvantaged backgrounds, but rather, the fear of financial instability in the family, lack of opportunities, and insecurity of job placements owing to the economic slowdown.

However, on a brighter note, the evidence collected through the survey suggests that faculty and staff members of JDBIMS are now, not just looking at shortcomings of the crisis but also altering the deep-rooted practices of admissions, placements, classroom teaching, and examinations into modern techniques by utilizing platforms like Zoom, WebEx, and Namaste, coupled with applications like E-Learning and WhatsApp. And at present, the institute is directing its focus on delivering much more than syllabus and is rather sensitising the teaching staff to tackle the situation wisely.

Professor Shankar further shared, that “the concept of online teaching, virtual classes, and distance learning is likely to gain momentum and academicians, more than anybody else, will be seen utilizing this opportunity as the number of aspirants seeking services of this nature will rise multi-fold”.

As a matter of fact, among many universities and institutes taking advantage of the crisis to turn the odds in their favour, the one to have truly benefited is the PTVA Institute of Management. Being a respondent of the survey, Dr. Tejashree Deshmukh – Dean of the said institute, reported that the pedagogy at PTVA has already taken

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videos for YouTube, and designing of integrated platforms to access learning resources. “At the moment, our aim is to improve the process of transition for the educational institutions within the limited bandwidth. It’s time for everyone – be it institutes, corporates, or independent freelancers – to make use of technology since it is certain to lead to a new era where remote working and social distancing will no longer be the norms but the new normal. For this to be a reality, a radical change in the thought process is needed in the mind-set of authorities, policy-makers, students, and particularly, educationists. Now is the time to outmanoeuvre the classroom model by taking a step forward towards analysing the current systems’ capacity and creating a multi-layered digital learning strategy that considers both short as well as long-term goals whilst attuning the risks involved. To highlight the importance of the same, this in-depth survey was conducted by our agency.”

Key Takeaways

Uncertain times call for well-strategized and supervised measures, and the education industry, by working alongside mavens of the fraternity, is slowly stepping up to take a few. We will be seeing huge change in the education cycle like getting degree online, online examinations, admissions will be completely online, virtual classroom, feedback on teachers’ method of teaching, also community learning will gain momentum like online group discussion and group studies. Though the study reveals that by next 2 to 5 years the entire dynamics of the education system will change as we know it and some positive changes are taking place, starting with the replacement of classroom teaching with educational videos, the fact remains that there’s a long way to go in terms of improving the use of technology and helping students seek its rewards in order to self-learn, build a stronger community, and stand at par with international standards.



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Is COVID-19 crisis catalysing educational transformation in India?

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By Chandan Bagwe

The coronavirus crisis has clearly been a sledgehammer blow to the Indian economy. Lockdown - the route to following social distancing – has antagonized the “business-as-always” and has pushed industries to recognize, reconsider, refurbish, and recover. The entire education sector has been interrupted by the pandemic. But, given the fact that delivering education needs to continue, the adoption of technology seems like the only option left. Although the Indian education system is not completely prepared, trained, and equipped to embrace this unprecedented change – this, the alpha version –

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This survey, and consequently, its observations, has thrown open new insights which can hopefully spur transformations and transitions in the whole of the education sector, and hopefully we see a new form of education in the near future.

(Chandan Bagwe is the Founder and Director of C Com Digital, a Mumbai based award-winning techno-digital agency. The company was born in early 2000 and since then has withered many storms and has managed to stay put and also change with time. C Com Digital works with clients like Times network, Bluecross laboratories, Edelweiss, Globus India, Manna, Wellingkar institute, and many more. Views expressed in the article are of the author.)

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a drastic turn and the traditional process of classroom teaching has now been replaced with educational videos and believes that other advanced level improvements are certain to take place over a period of time.

On an institutional level, most of the colleges and schools, including PTVA, are now utilizing communication platforms like emails and WhatsApp, and other video applications are being accessed for conducting lectures and internal interactions.

Nonetheless, experts of the industry like Dr. Samir N Kharkhanis – the CEO of Yangpoo Executive Education feel that “All colleges, universities, institutes have to change the pedagogy. Corona has taught you how to study, watch, order, learn, call online and also for those who were not doing it already. Everyone has understood what kind of education is possible online. Such a crisis may come again and to prepare for it, online education is a must”.

The current situation doesn't fail to prompt that COVID-19 is here to stay for a long time and nothing but technology can play a major role in transforming our education system for good. There's no looking back from this moment and thus, it is essential to improve the use of technology and take advantage of the drive that aspirants possess for self-learning, building a social community beyond the walls of the classroom, and proving the relevance of this new form of learning to that of the global scale, asserted Mr. Shridatta Suresh Haldankar - President of Chetana Education Trust, whilst sharing his survey response. Looking at the transitions and changing preferences, he anticipates and firmly opionates that, prestigious institutes and universities will establish full-time degree courses online, and that, the electronic version of teaching will become popular as compared to traditional classroom methods.

Another initiative and example here are that of C Com Digital, who, under the directives of its Founder, Mr. Chandan Bagwe, is offering services and guidance by delivering e-content modules, polished

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