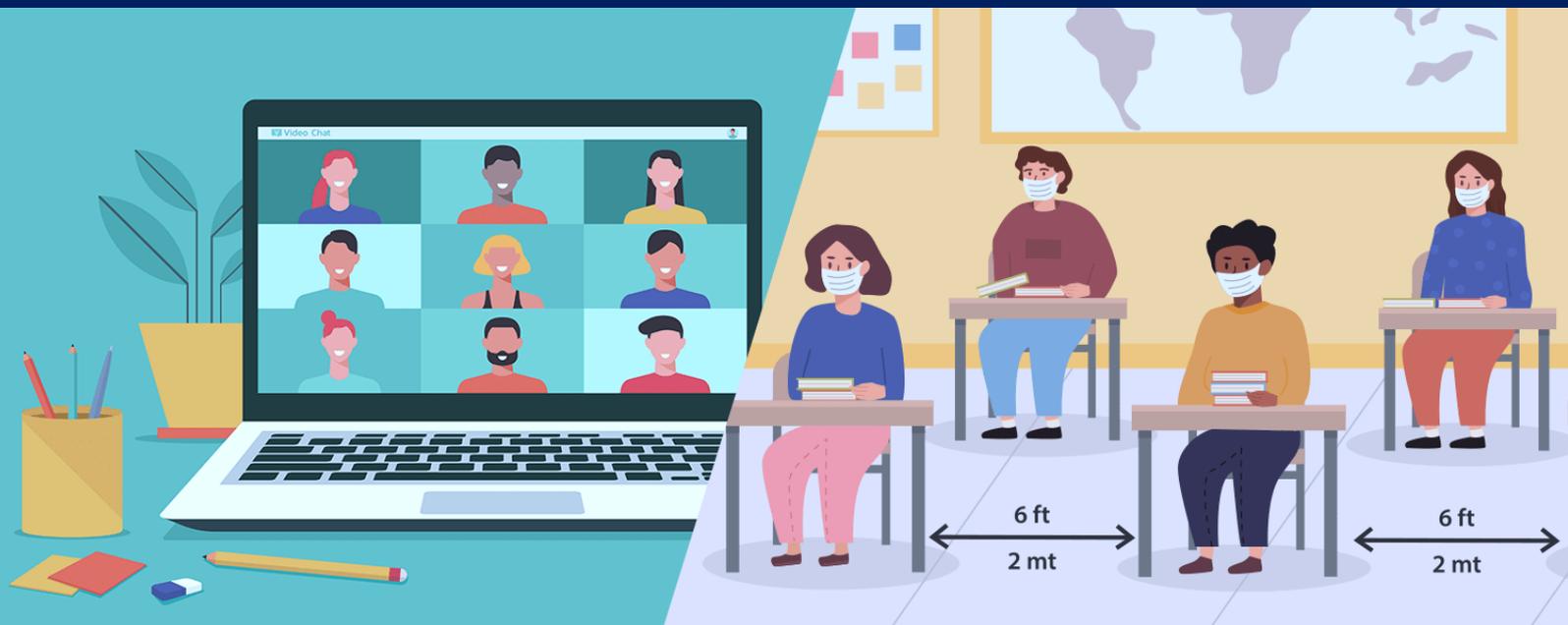


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# *AMDISA Network Responses* *on*

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

## *Challenges for Management Education*



**Association of Management Development  
Institutions in South Asia**

## *AMDISA Value Proposition*



### **AMDISA's Quality Assurance Programme**



### **International Quality Assurance Label for B-Schools**

- **SAQS** Quality Assurance Programme is an initiative of AMDISA.
- **SAQS** emerged in an EFMD – AMDISA cooperation through a European Union funded Asia – Link project in 2003–04. It is inspired by EFMD's EQUIS criteria guidelines.
-  Quality Label is a recognition to the institution's commitment to Quality and Quality Assurance through continuous improvement.
- The programme involves an overall review of the entire institution and SAQS accreditation is institutional. Institution being defined as the organizational unit providing business and management education.
- SAQS is designed as an international quality assurance programme for mentoring, quality improvement, quality assurance and accreditation.
- SAQS looks for a balance between high academic quality and professional relevance through close interaction with the corporate world.
- It is a voluntary, non-governmental process for a comprehensive review of a business school's ability to provide quality programmes of international standards.

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**For more information, please visit [www.amdisa.org](http://www.amdisa.org) or write to Executive Director, AMDISA at [execdir.amdisa@gmail.com](mailto:execdir.amdisa@gmail.com).**



**Association of Management Development  
Institutions in South Asia**

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

***Challenges for Management  
Education***

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## **Publisher**



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The information contained in this e-Book is the result of responses received by AMDISA, on request, on the theme “**COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**” from the respective authors.

**E&OE**

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# ASSOCIATION OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH ASIA

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## FOREWORD

Greetings!

It gives me great pleasure to write the Foreword for the third COVID-19 initiative in the series of collated views from the AMDISA network and beyond.

It may be recalled that the first initiative in April 2020 during the lockdown resulted in a compilation of an e-book titled “**AMDISA Network – Experiences & Practices in the Teaching-Learning and Academic Interactions amid COVID-19 Disruption**”, published in June 2020. The second initiative in July 2020 resulted in a compilation of an e-book titled “**COVID-19 Pandemic: Post Lockdown Disruption - Evolving Academic Environment**”, published in September 2020 solicited views from the AMDISA network and beyond in the backdrop of the progressively being relaxed lockdown and activities gradually restarting.

Now, we bring to you the third compilation in the series titled “**COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges for Management Education**”. In this compilation are the valuable views / thoughts / ideas of Associations and experienced Academicians with specific reference to 3 issues:

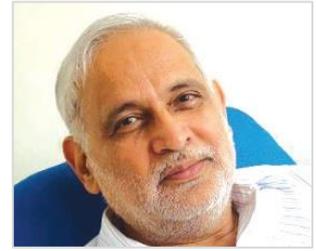
- (i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future,
- (ii) Articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels and
- (iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.

The response has been very good and I am confident that this compilation will help understand the environment from cross-sections across countries/regions and facilitate introspection and analysis in institutional contexts.

This compendium like the earlier compendiums is being circulated as a complimentary to the entire AMDISA network and beyond.

**Prof. Dr. Syed Mir Muhammad Shah**  
**President-AMDISA**

## PREFACE



The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest disruption of the century. There have been a spate of discussions and meetings on the issues arising out of the pandemic as well as on evolutionary actions taken. It has changed lifestyles at homes, work places, entertainment, etc. It resulted in educational institutions being shut, distinctive rise of e-learning through integration of information technology and work-from-home. Further disruptions in the online management education space is characterized with entry of EdTech companies, technology giants, etc.

Against the above background and the evolving scenario, we at AMDISA thought that it is time to collate views / thoughts / ideas from the AMDISA network and beyond on the crystallization of how practices will be modified, new formats / content / delivery channels and issues social and emotional in faculty and student engagements.

We have got very good responses, numbering 68, from the network which is a vivid reflection of views / thoughts / ideas of practitioners in the domain of teaching and learning. An additional interesting feature in this compilation is that it also contains responses from leading Associations which makes the presentation all the more credible. We are confident that this compilation will facilitate appropriate introspection and analysis in the teaching and learning context.

I would be failing if the commendable effort of the AMDISA Secretariat in bringing out this publication is not acknowledged. I commend the AMDISA Secretariat lead by the Executive Director and his energetic team for bringing out such a collection of views / thoughts / ideas.

**Dr. Ashok R. Joshi**  
**Chairman, Local Management Committee,**  
**AMDISA, Past President, AMDISA &**  
**Director General, IndSearch, Pune, India**

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**BELGIUM**



**Prof. Eric Cornuel**

*President  
EFMD Global  
Brussels, Belgium*



There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has deeply challenged us at all levels. At this year's EFMD Deans Conference, the business school community gathered around the theme of 'Finding Balance'. Especially now, we realise how important balance is in our professional and personal lives but also the strategies of business schools.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many challenges, but it has also reinforced the need for multilateral cooperation to find global solutions for global issues. There is a great role for leaders of business schools to set this strategic compass in motion and, in a sense, to take the opportunity to reset our strategies for impact.

Our current business education model favours academic research loosely coupled with societal needs. However, this model must evolve quickly, and the need for speed and relevance of scientific response in view of crises has been especially poignant during the pandemic. We need faculty members to be engaged in various research deliveries, including innovation in teaching and engagement in society and communities. Above all, higher education institutions have not only a scientific mission but a societal one as well.

The reflection about the relevance of research is closely entwined with the importance of ethics, responsibility and sustainability, and business schools' role in reinforcing this ethos in teaching, research, and engagement with socially relevant projects. Engagement in international networks tackling the relevance and impact challenges, such as the Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM) network supported by EFMD, is vital in reinforcing this commitment globally. We must also help schools take stock of their impact actions and analyse where there might be gaps or in which areas the school might want to learn from best practices available.

For business schools, a significant concern is currently internationalisation. The right balance between global orientation and focus on the domestic market will be different for each school. Where the school situates itself on this axis will determine its choices and affect how it differentiates itself from other schools. It will also clarify which accreditation, assessment or ranking will provide it with the best opportunity to support that strategic choice. The reflection about internationalisation has also brought up an ontological question about the nature of a globalised school that goes beyond international mobility, and that fosters a global ambition, mindset and relevance with the help of innovative learning formats and delivery channels.

The crisis has undoubtedly accelerated the implementation of tech-driven solutions to teaching and learning and the diversification of student and talent recruitment strategies.

Some of these hybrid solutions are irreversible and will enrich the schools' curricula for the years to come. Employers will increasingly recognise the rising popularity and legitimacy of online learning. At the same time, existing programmes will increasingly integrate AI and digitally enhanced learning modes in the classroom.

We will observe a proliferation of blended and flipped learning models, where students would read the material, watch lectures and work on cases at home. The classroom will be dedicated to more in-depth discussion, analytical work and problem-solving.

This is closely intertwined with the personalisation of the learning experience, which is also linked to the role of faculty as mentors and coaches rather than traditional lecturers. It is essential that students are not only given the opportunities to learn throughout their lives but are also accompanied and mentored throughout their lives.

We have also started noticing a move from linear and concentrated education towards the lifelong learning model. The increasing lifespan and relentless speed of innovation mean people constantly have to reskill and upskill to keep pace with a digitalised and agile work environment. In consequence, we will see a certain level of unbundling of existing degree programmes. The lifelong-learning paradigm also raises the value of executive education, short courses and so-called micro-degrees, which will be increasingly based on skills acquisition rather than degrees.

This blended and unbundled learning model fosters collaboration across different business education institutions, corporate universities and alternative education providers. The abundance of content at everyone's fingertips for no or little cost favours the curation of multiple content sources rather than organisations producing all their materials internally. It stimulates collaborative efforts, including joint degrees, alliances between educational actors and crowdsourcing of content. We can imagine a globalised repository of foundational content that students across the globe can reach out to, which would let institutions focus on their distinctiveness and specialisation and position themselves globally in those areas. The real added value and the real differentiation will rely on richer and more qualitative exchanges on-site between the students and their teachers.

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis makes it more important than ever to take a more global approach to recovery. We need more international cooperation and a greater emphasis on societal issues. Academia in general, and business schools in particular, have the potential to be agents of change. But to fulfil this potential, we have to ask ourselves: what kind of actions or initiatives are necessary to hasten our reorientation towards a more collaborative, socially engaged and heuristic approach? This is certainly a question that drives EFMD's agenda.

\*\*\*\*\*



**INDIA**



## **Ms. Rekha Sethi**

*Director General*

*All India Management Association  
(AIMA), New Delhi, India*



Covid has been both a curse and a blessing for management education. It has dented the conventional education model but also opened new possibilities for all stakeholders.

At the onset of covid, the lockdown brought classes to an abrupt close, and the examinations and admissions schedules were disrupted. It seemed that an academic year could go down the drain and the finishing students will lose career opportunities. The scramble to online classes ensured continuity of education but it left students and employers feeling shortchanged.

After more than a year of living with covid, everybody is coming around to accept online education as the norm, on its own or as blended with on-campus classes. Nobody sneers at distance education or MOOCs anymore.

AIMA as the apex management association has always taken a leadership role in promoting management education in the country. AIMA to a great extent felt the pulse of the disaster and therefore immediately took measures.

The complete digital transformation at AIMA in management education became the lighthouse for many. Implementation of Learning Management System, converting distance management education to complete online education delivery, virtual content creation, capability building of faculties and trainers to build virtual delivery skills, development of online engagement tools such as quizzes, competitions, simulation games with virtual lab for management students, knowledge sharing sessions and creation of repository of digital learning material are few immediate steps taken by AIMA.

To support the admission process of Management institutions in the country, AIMA introduced 'Internet Based Remote Proctored Testing' which enabled students to appear in admission test from their homes, and are remotely proctored using AI and human proctors. AIMA also developed solutions for e-interviews and e-counselling, digital evaluation of descriptive answers, which facilitated several leading institutions and continue to enable larger number of management institutions and management aspirants. Virtual Internships for management students is another unique initiative by AIMA.

To inculcate new age skills in management professionals, AIMA has also initiated online learning courses in the upcoming areas such as Strategic Financial Analysis & Business Repositioning, Financial & Valuation Modeling, Alternative Investments, and Sustainability Management, Business Analytics etc.

AIMA is not only facilitating aspirants of management profession, but the professionals and institutions also in building the more resilient future by the use of technology and collaboration across regions and nations.

The best response of management education to the Covid impact would be to convert the weakness to strength and challenges to opportunity.

\*\*\*\*\*



**Dr. (Mrs.) Pankaj Mittal**  
*Secretary General*  
*Association of Indian Universities (AIU)*  
*New Delhi, India*



## **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

### **Introduction**

As per UNESCO estimates, the COVID 19 pandemic has affected more than 1.5 billion students comprising about 91% of total enrolled students in around 185 countries across the globe. The pandemic appears to be the biggest crisis ever faced by the mankind in last 100 years. As per UNESCO Report, 1.37 billion students are now at home due to COVID 19 Pandemic.

### **(i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has confronted most of the institutions with a sudden and unprepared shift towards online teaching and learning. The main attributes which impacted this change included availability of technical infrastructure, accessibility of the institute, capacity building of teachers, distance learning competences including availability of devices and network with students. The HEIs particularly in low- and middle-income countries were unable to fully shift to online mode due to lack of technical infrastructure. It was also a great challenge for faculty to make this unexpected and unprepared shift to online learning. Specifically, the challenge was for subjects like clinical medicine, sciences, Engineering and Technology, veterinary studies and several other disciplines which involve practical training. The HEIs struggled with the timely completion of semester and conduct of examinations. Planning for the next academic session while dealing with financial constraints due to reduced tuition fee payment partially due to a potential drop in student enrolments and placements were among the biggest concerns emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has also severely impacted the students' mobility. According to QS-Indian student's mobility report (2020), COVID-19 had an impact on decision of 48.46% students who aspired to study abroad in the recent past. According to a report by Times Higher Education (THE) in the US alone, Indian students comprise 18.4% of the total enrolment. Surely these enrolments are going to be affected amidst COVID-19. A comparative lower rate of employability in an already expensive international higher education domain will also play a significant role in this respect. The top five countries which are preferred study destination by Indian students include USA (30.27%), UK (15.84%), Germany (14.33%), Canada (9.18%) and Australia (6.75%). However, with the recent COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, students aspiring for higher education in these countries might re-consider their options.

### **(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

In developing countries like India, where on-line education was not very common, the pandemic transformed the conventional chalk-talk teaching model to one driven by technology with a single stroke of pen. COVID-19 crisis created a forced move towards online teaching and learning thereby

creating space for more flexible learning possibilities, exploring blended learning and mixing synchronous learning with asynchronous learning. The pandemic has led to capacity building of staff and faculty compelling them to learn and test new tools and systems for online teaching and learning. This obviously will lead to an increase in innovation in teaching pedagogies as well as in delivery modalities. Similarly, the Pandemic has also underlined the issues relating with assessment and evaluation of the students. It is now clear to the universities as well as education regulators that taking examination at the end of the assessment is not the best way to assess and evaluate a student. As a result, many universities are shifting towards continuous and comprehensive assessment and evaluation of students as promulgated in NEP 2020. We have also learnt that the future of higher education would neither be face-to-face nor online, but a blended mode of education with extensive use of technology. The new ways to collaborate both nationally and internationally using technology and digital platforms are evolving which are both cost as well as time effective. The pandemic has worked as a wake-up call and demonstrated the importance of technology in teaching, learning and research.

### **(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

As India is a large and diverse country, with about 38 million student population, in about 1000 universities and 47,000 colleges, the availability of technical infrastructure for imparting online education varies over the length and breadth of the country creating digital divide and a sense of inequity in the minds of the students. Similarly, at students' end, the access to devices, network and sufficient band width is depriving a considerable chunk of students to continue their studies through online mode leading to furthering the digital divide. Adopting complete online learning is also becoming a health hazard for students in terms of diseases like, obesity, sleep disturbances, spinal problems, anxiety and depression. Counseling, both teachers and students is required to resolve the psychological, emotional and social issues.

There is a need to use multipronged approach to cope up with the complexities of the situation to minimize the negative impact of COVID crisis and to use it as an opportunity to learn great lessons.

\*\*\*\*\*



**SLOVENIA**



## **Prof. Danica Purg**

*President  
CEEMAN  
Bled, Slovenia*



Let me first of all make an observation. Unfortunately, the majority of business leaders have shown that they are not adequately prepared for a disruptive change, such as the COVID 19 crisis.

As business schools providing a mirror test, we have to recognize that our contributions to prepare business leaders for such a change have not been good enough. Most schools have succeeded in creating and using platforms enabling them to move their programs on-line. That required a great effort. However, whether the content is offered on site or online does not lead automatically to different results. Some advanced schools have already developed programs that are not only improving the knowledge and skills of managers and business leaders, but also their mind-sets.

In a globalizing world, shocked by disruptive change by big data, AI, and pandemics like COVID-19, business leaders and managers need to be creative, capable of using their imagination, senses, and intuition. They need to develop both sides of their brains, stressing the weaker side. That means that the offer of educational programs in business schools has to change drastically.

It is not only a question of on-site, online, blended, or hybrid. It will be necessary to use all methods and methodologies. However, the first question of all is what changes will be necessary concerning the content.

Among CEEMAN schools, so far there have been some good examples of management development institutions turning the crisis into an opportunity, and making some major innovations concerning their content and methodology. Just to give some examples of CEEMAN member schools:

- University of Warsaw, Faculty of Management has focused on distant game-based learning of management.
- Estonian Business School has launched its first nano degree Master's program.
- Greek ALBA Graduate School of Management has started a cooperation with MIT for recognition of their micro credentials toward a traditional Master's degree of ALBA.
- Slovenian IEDC-Bled School of Management has reinforced the methodology of learning leadership through arts.

IEDC-Bled School of Management, which I lead, will have a different composition in the future, including active artists from the fields of music, visual arts, and film. Also, philosophy and behavioral sciences will be a "normal" segment of the curriculum. This is just a phase in the development of the school, because by introducing these new topics IEDC has made a step forward. However, it will be necessary to integrate mind-set elements, such as ethics and sustainability, and find new ways of learning in all other topics, too.

IEDC had always promoted a "high-touch" approach in executive education. The challenge now is to keep this approach also in a hybrid or online situation.

Although the participants prefer to come physically together in a beautiful place like Bled and a school with all the best facilities, a lot can be achieved in the field of "high-touch" also through "high-tech" (online). This last necessity will become one of the main challenges of this and all other innovative schools in the future.

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**UAE**



**Dr. Mohan Lal Agarwal**  
*President*  
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### **Re-Building Business Teaching and Research for the Post Pandemic India**

The indomitable British Prime Minister Winston Churchill when dealing with the aftermath of the World War II and engaging to institutionalize what we know now as the United Nations (UN) structure, he famously exhorted his colleague world leaders and others of varying hues, by saying “Do not let a good crisis go to waste”.

How ingenious and appropriate the message is for us as too at this time of when we all are facing the biggest health pandemic never imagined by the world and the economic devastation never dealt with.

Consider some stats here. The Covid-19 pandemic that began in January 2020, has to date claimed over four million lives and infected over 200 million cases worldwide, India alone has covid deaths closing to half a million among the 30 million infected cases. The 2<sup>nd</sup> World war referenced above had claimed much more - some 75 million people including about 20 million military personnel and 40 million civilians. While demographics damage of the Covid-19 isn't as bad as the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war, the economic cost of the pandemic has been geometrically staggering. It is estimated that 2<sup>nd</sup> world war cost 4 trillion US dollar in today prices and that 40% of the world GDP then was related to war and defense activities. In comparison, the economic damage of the Covid-19 is already estimated at 16 trillion US dollars four times of what 2<sup>nd</sup> world war costed. Major advanced economies, which comprise 60% of global economic activity, are projected to operate below their potential output level through at least 2024.

### **Post Pandemic Challenges are Multi-layered**

In my humble opinion the following seven post-covid challenges will test our business and society for a foreseeable future:

1. Innovation and intrapreneurship will rule over every aspect of business and government.
2. Decentralized leadership will trump centralization.
3. Dispersed workforce working from remote locations will prefer mentor leaders and challenge any bureaucratic or rule based roadblocks.
4. Communications on the move will be the item song of the new organizational communication.
5. Everything that can be digitized will be digitized.
6. Customer service and trust will rank far above the named and famed brands who will be tested on Empathy, Pricing logic and service (call it a new EPS of Marketing).
7. Local suppliers and domestic supply chains will return to glory with a vengeance.

The Covid-19 has irreversibly disrupted business schools worldwide and substantially the core of the business education. It has produced and / or accelerated many new opportunities also at the same time.

The list of the positives coming out of the crisis, is too long, multilayers and rich. I will however highlight only three changes and positives for the business schools of the post pandemic era. The first good effect of the pandemic is the acceleration of a technology-led remaking of business education. The second positive is the shift to remote teaching and/or blended teaching where online-offline teaching will co-exist producing the best of the two worlds. The third and final good thing is the sincere and concerted efforts to reimagine research mission, activities and output in business schools.

This note carries some of my thoughts – mostly random and some possibly strategic on how to prepare business teachers for remote teaching in the online learning environment that is fully upon us and how to pursue a productive research agenda in the post pandemic environment.

### **Post-Pandemic Teaching is Edutainment**

It is my 43 year of teaching / training in business with opportunities to teach top executives, managers of all hues, Doctoral, MBA, BBAs, at the leading and wannabe business schools both full time and visiting around the world and blessed with among the best teaching evaluations. But the global health pandemic since 2020 threw a new challenge – remaining the best even while teaching online. I am relieved and happy to have received the same outstanding teaching evaluation and feedback in this medium too. So, I thought I should share what I do in my teaching online, in the hope that my faculty colleagues will share what they do and through the exchange, enrich our brave new world of online teaching. Here they go...

1. KYC (know your class) via brief and directed self-introduction, write or remember an interesting aspect of what they said to use later, and connect with something common between you and your learners.
2. Put them at ease by speaking slowly and clearly to allow unfamiliar and multiple accents, blend in and check back every 10 minutes their understanding.
3. Introduce a short dilemma, question, story, episode, anecdote they can relate to or which is contemporary, to ignite their response but do not judge them by their answers.
4. Go straight to the key pieces of grading, whether examination, tests, quiz or first or assignments in the 1 or 2 session itself, explain it clearly step by step, check their understanding with Y/N questions from as many as possible, be direct in your answer to their questions as you go along and finally, demo the process of doing assignment if you were one of them. Share the assignment samples only after they have advanced to their own proposal/ report.
5. Share the course outline, syllabus or module study guide and lecture PPTs in advance for the entire course and choose and focus on key slides only in the class to explain or illustrate.
6. Call out as many students as possible with your brief questions and keep them in the discussion. Keep the participants list open all the time and insist on their speaking. Use the chat box only for informational links, difficult words etc.
7. Engage them with frequent examples, illustrations, short yes/no questions, light hearted humor to keep the class active, fun and conclude it with take away.

### **Post-Pandemic Research is Action Research**

*“No research without action, no action without research”- Kurt Lewin, a German-American psychologist, universally known as one of the modern pioneers of social, organizational, and applied psychology or in a single word, for “Action Research”.*

Keeping the above message in mind, I urge my colleague to assess if the action research is the viable way forward to meet the different delivery standards and new expectations of the post covid society and business in India and internationally.

Another uphill task. While the tool of action research may be clearer, the path forward is not. It requires some amount of crystal-ball gazing.

So, here are seven predictions for the post covid research world.

1. Traditional researchers and survey centric researchers will yield space to the more contemporary insights and action researchers who value the purpose of research higher than the purity of research methods.
2. Journals and publication outlets of repute publishing quant articles will have to find a new respect for case studies, stories and simulation based research findings and conclusions.
3. Global indexing and ranking of the journals will undergo re-rating and re-ranking based on the inclusion of the applied research.
4. Clever matrices or modeling will face strong competition from the simplicity and directness of the applied research.
5. The concept and ratios of plagiarism will be re-defined.
6. Live, rapid and pragmatic researchers and go-to-the market reporters such as McKinsey's, HBR and Economic Times or the likes will find many more ears and eyes in this new big bad attention deficit world than the journal authors that we know of at present.
7. Finally, graduate and to a very good extent, undergraduate research will get publication outlets and a new respect.

I truly believe that the emerging republic of researchers will be substantially much more democratic and dedicated to the action research tagged to the real problems and wellness of the society. I further predict that the increasingly isolated coteries and clans of the self-seeking self-indulging researchers will soon fight for relevance.

In support, I invoke the following words of Professor Otto Scharmer who teaches at the Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and was ranked #1 among the world's top 30 education professionals in 2017. He said that the 'the key to transformative change is to make the system *see itself*'.

And above all, you also have fun while teaching in the post pandemic era. Or quit. Pure and simple.

**Dr. Mohan Lal Agarwal**

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**USA**



*“The pandemic inspired a level of creativity and agility in business education that will leave a long-term impression on teaching and learning. Leading in a time of such great change is exhilarating but must also be tempered with thoughtful reflection on evaluating effective practices – and being courageous enough to change what’s no longer working. Every industry has experienced disruption, including business education. But it’s also a unique opportunity for leaders to challenge themselves and to reimagine what’s possible. Business education will never be the same, and that idea should be celebrated.”*

*-- Dr. Caryn Beck-Dudley, President and CEO, AACSB International*

Mr. Peter Goodson is author of the article below which was originally published on **AACSB Insights**

Source: <https://www.aacsb.edu/insights/2021/june/reimagining-the-remote-classroom-experience>

### **Reimagining the Remote Classroom Experience**

*By Peter Goodson*

Seven strategies keep students engaged during online learning.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, many experts offered useful tips to help faculty move their courses to online environments. But the tips weren’t enough for me. I saw COVID-19 as a major disruptive force with long-lasting implications for the way we teach—which would justify making significant investments in innovation.

Typically, the drawbacks to remote learning include difficulty facilitating meaningful discussion and student-to-student interaction; increased potential for distraction; additional effort required to capture students’ limited attention; and fewer organic opportunities for serendipitous banter, socialization, and connection.

I did not want to fall prey to these pitfalls when the pandemic compelled me to transition my teaching to online delivery. I decided to try some experiments with my class called Turnarounds: Lessons in Crisis Leadership, which I teach at the Haas School of Business at the University of California Berkeley. Before class began, I gathered a team of six MBA students to act as teaching assistants (TAs): Megan Zweig, Hannah Greenberg, Dana Zhang, Sora Elcan, Aron O’Connor, and Austin Yoder. We asked, “How might we design an online classroom experience that is optimized for student engagement, learning, socialization—and, dare we say, fun?”

#### **Seven Suggestions**

Along with my teaching team, I conducted classroom tests for about 15 months, starting from March 2020, and we paid attention to what worked and what didn’t. We ultimately identified seven steps we could take to avoid the common pitfalls of the online class:

**1. Raise standards for student participation.** We found that student engagement was improved when the teaching team raised the standard of students' expectations for online learning, championed classroom rigor, and demanded accountability in every session.

Accountability was particularly critical for creating thoughtful, fast-paced student participation. For that reason, class participation accounted for half of all of the students' grades, and we provided multiple avenues for students to participate. Sometimes I used cold calls, calling on students without notice. Other times I used warm calls, letting students know in advance that they would be asked to speak on a topic and having them do prep work with the teaching team. We also encouraged students to take advantage of Zoom's "hand raise" icon to ask or respond to questions. Using a scale of 1 to 4, the teaching team graded the participation efforts of each student based on the quality of the interactions.

Students were required to keep their cameras on at all times to help them stay connected and alert. Class members also were required to unmute within a few beats of being called upon. If students didn't unmute fast enough, I moved on to the next student and the first one lost the opportunity to speak. To keep the conversation flowing, I also muted students who gave rambling responses. This may sound harsh, but in feedback surveys, more than 90 percent of the class applauded the use of the mute button to prevent "paraphrasing, posturing, and pontificating."

*Advanced scripting of every single student interaction promoted fast-moving dialogue, compelled student attention, and ensured an equitable distribution of participation opportunities.*

**2. Survey performance regularly.** We found that proactively surveying students about their experiences on a daily basis created a rapid/continuous feedback cycle with the teaching team. In fact, before the first day of classes, students attended four short webinars where we surveyed their preferences and discussed our expectations for how they would participate and how the class would flow.

Before classes started, my team and I met frequently to map out guest speakers and discuss student participation opportunities and scoring. Once the class began, my team and I convened every morning for 15 minutes to discuss lesson plans, identify students who needed help, and outline class participation opportunities. We also conducted surveys after every class, asking for feedback. During the following class, we recapped the feedback and discussed what we were adjusting and why. This practice gave students a voice, and it showed them how we were tailoring the class to fit their needs in real time.

**3. Meticulously plan.** Advanced scripting of every single student interaction promoted fast-moving dialogue, compelled student attention, and ensured an equitable distribution of participation opportunities. While the class still felt impromptu, every single student interaction and discussion was planned.

The teaching team created two slide presentations for each class. The first deck, designed for students, contained 100 or more slides and was shared both in advance and during the live sessions. The second deck was for me and included "case map" slides embedded within the class slides. The case map slides were teaching guides that offered discussion prompts and indicated specific students

I could call on for cold and warm calls during that particular case. The teaching assistants filled in every slot with a student's name.

The teaching team also created what we call a “survival kit,” an Excel spreadsheet that outlined the preparation process and the class flow. The kit was used to track students' cold and warm calls and to award points to students for participation.

**4. Create a “theater.”** We knew that the classroom experience would have to be attention-grabbing to maintain student interest, so we created a multimedia classroom experience. Resources included PowerPoint slides, which formed the base of class flow; video clips; and a live whiteboard in the form of a Google doc that the teaching assistants used to record key points of classroom discussions.

In addition, we often illustrated key concepts by having students role play as board members or investment committee members. Role-playing scenarios included hiring a consultant, firing an employee, and negotiating a supplier contract.

We also taught through simulations, sometimes with the help of guest speakers. For example, we taught the concept of bankruptcy by bringing in an expert who moderated the case as a bankruptcy judge, while I served as bailiff. To set the mood, we used a Zoom background featuring a courtroom. In advance of class, the TAs assigned teams to negotiate particular claims with other groups in hope of coming to a bankruptcy settlement prior to court proceedings. Students also prepared for class by doing advance readings that helped them understand the bankruptcy court process.

**5. Capture student experiences.** To help students immediately apply case lessons to real-world situations, we integrated students' work experiences into the classroom. For each case study that focused on a struggling organization, students were asked to submit parallel situations from within their own companies or other companies they saw featured in the news. After each case study was discussed in class, a student presented a slide that summarized the case alongside the relevant business situation he or she had identified. The student reviewed the parallel scenario in a commercial or leadership context.

In one cohort of MBA students, the students wrote 24 new COVID-centered mini-cases based on challenges at the companies where they worked. The one-page cases offered students timely solutions to common problems they were facing every day. We found that this strategy enriched everyone's learning, and I have since adopted this mini-case study idea in all of my courses.

*Because working remotely had eliminated commute and transition times, I devoted that extra time to students and scheduled one-on-one sessions with them in the hour before class.*

**6. Offer extensive one-on-one mentoring.** Because working remotely had eliminated commute and transition times, my team and I decided to devote that extra time to students. I used the hour before class to schedule 10-minute one-on-one sessions with students, who could talk to me about class content, career options, or anything else that was on their minds.

We also reproduced “water cooler” conversations online before classes and “poolside chats” after classes by opening up 15-minute informal conversations. Class speakers also agreed to stay for 10 minutes after their formal presentations to answer questions and informally interact with students.

**7. Nurture socialization.** Since students couldn't easily meet on campus, we created intentional spaces where they could engage in social interaction on a voluntary basis.

The teaching assistants appointed "social chairs" from the class to help come up with fun ideas. These included Zoom-hosted master classes in everything from iced-coffee making to wine tasting. We also designated themed class days ranging from "the Roaring '20s" to "private equity power suits," which inspired fun costumes and Zoom backgrounds. We also had students work in five-person teams so they would get to know each other well as they learned skills such as delegation, time management, and leadership.

## **The Results**

We believe our efforts to reinvent this course paid off—in fact, the team achieved much more than we had anticipated in our wildest dreams. UC Berkeley recognized our efforts by giving us the Extraordinary Teaching in Extraordinary Times Award. The UC Selection Committee received nearly 500 nominations for this honor.

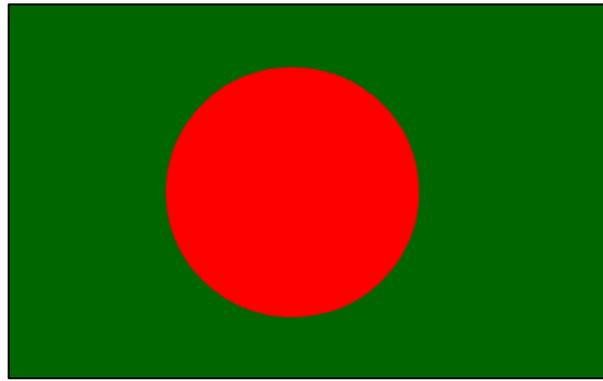
Students also appreciated the reimagined course. Ninety MBA students in two cohorts completed the course, and their feedback indicated that engagement and learning were much higher in this remote class than in their other online courses. About 72 percent of students ranked the course as the best remote learning experience they had completed, and 17 percent said it was one of the top three remote courses they had completed. Students rated the course's effectiveness in promoting learning as 9.49 out of 10, and they rated their engagement during class as 8.92 out of 10.

One student wrote in the course evaluation, "I think, in some ways, there was more offered on Zoom than there would have been in person." Another wrote, "All the interactive strategies—polls, warm calls, cold calls, case setups, case presentations, role plays, social stuff, poolside chats, and the Slack channel—there was so much that made it interactive on Zoom." Perhaps the best comment? "I cried at the end. I hate that it's over."



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**BANGLADESH**



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## **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Higher Learning Institutions in Bangladesh**

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided Bangladesh's education and academic sector a leeway to a paradigm shift in terms of academics, learning and knowledge dissemination. The status quo has transformed tremendously in the past couple of years, and there will be the implementation of modified, rigorous channels through which academics and education will get better limelight.

The current situation has transformed into an interconnected online arena where students, faculty bodies, and academicians have shifted to the new normal, the work from home culture, where there is a vast dependency on online learning, meeting, and communicating systems. This has made education and content easier to access, with campaigns and educational programs are being expedited through these distance means. However, the dependency on technology brought an adverse effect on the underprivileged, with many people in Bangladesh not having proper internet connections and technologies for online educational practices. In the foreseeable future, the inclusion of new technologies like anti-cheating software and learning management systems improves the standard of education further. There will be more access to resources for the students who cannot visit the physical libraries anymore and subsidized internet packages and student loans for buying devices to help with their ongoing education. The policy-making will also be more inclusionary and will be taken parallel and uniformly by the government and the regulatory authority.

The shift of academic activities online has resulted in more significant challenges concerning the workload on institutions, their students, and teachers. On the flip side, teaching online has also opened doors to several opportunities involving technical innovation. The introduction of video learning and recorded lectures offers flexibility and enhances engagement by showcasing a more creative side. Added features on e-learning platforms such as Digital Whiteboards, Microsoft Teams, Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom and virtual hand-raising facilitates students and teachers to recreate a classroom experience. The primary problem is the inability to conduct lab classes and classes that require specific face-to-face interactions like designing and architecture. Again, assignment-based assessment formats offer a feasible solution to postponing exams, enabling younger generations to carry on with their education duly. However, students' increased attention to the originality of submissions must be brought to attention since strict proctoring is not applicable. Hence, the scope of interaction, monitoring, and maintaining correspondence among faculties and students must be thoroughly integrated within the new systems. Although online business competitions and webinars offer collaborative measures across individuals, it remains constricted over limited options. It is also difficult for universities to collaborate between corporations, other universities, government organizations, and MOUs, and the exposure that students used to get before is now limited. Moreover, it has become increasingly challenging to attract international students and accommodate them into domestic universities due to the lockdown and overall constriction of mobility.

Due to the prolonged pandemic worldwide, it can be argued that the adoption of online distance learning will persist even after the pandemic, and a new blended/hybrid learning model of education

is expected to emerge as a future medium of classroom instruction. Blended learning is the thoughtful synthesis of offline and online learning experiences which integrate technology and online learning materials with traditional offline classroom activities. Building strong student engagement in both face-to-face and technological environments is critical for delivering effective blended learning. Moreover, there should be a constructive and comprehensive blueprint for future systems to be implemented, with a specific task force and a strategy to overcome the inertia of the new system. This calls for an additional budget in the IT sector to be allocated as well.

The reality of technology-dependent responsibilities bears the cost of miscommunication, time-lags, and low morale. The transitional economy faces the main challenge of ensuring vaccinations among all students, staff, and faculty members to reopen all educational institutions. Academic and data-driven research is hampered due to ineffective primary data collection, access to library journals and archives, and lack of government funds. On the other hand, the reluctance of students to participate is a concerning issue for delivering online education effectively. Since students cannot meet face to face, the development of emotional bonds is heavily restricted. Hence, online activities involving collaborative presentations and group study sessions organized by faculties are good approaches to promote social interaction. Additionally, the importance of mental health during the pandemic needs to be stressed as students' dropout rate prevails. Counselling sessions and psychological therapy should be provided throughout the semester. Online recreational activities such as streaming live sports or watching movies to substitute offline activities can be implemented to instill a sense of involvement and keep students motivated.

Pandemic has caused major operational change in higher education, driven by the shifting demands, the introduction and expansion of new learning technologies. Adjusting to a Covid-19 prolonged pandemic will require higher learning institutions to build malleable and robust models of education that facilitate continuous adaptation to the changing environment. Over the years, Bangladesh has experienced a huge surge in its youth bodies and the Covid-19 pandemic has halted the progress of skilling up these young stars that hinders nation's growth. More investment and allocation of funding is required to boost the education sector to adapt to the challenges incurred due to pandemic.

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## **Prof. Abdul Mannan**

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### **Management Education During Pandemic Time**

The current Covid-19 pandemic along with all other facets of our life have just played a devastating role across the world. One of the biggest losers has been the education sector. Bangladesh's education sector comprises approximately 60 million of which 45 million are in the territory level. Management education is a flagship segment in virtually all tertiary level educational institutions of higher learning. This pandemic has also created many new dimensions in the management education as opportunities emerged out of the pandemic one being the on-line business. This has shown a remarkable growth in Bangladesh. But also there were incidents of fraudulent business practices. So to make the management education meaningful under the changed circumstances curriculums had to be drastically revised in many courses. Unfortunately the urgency of the matter may not have been realised or understood in many institutions and by most instructors.

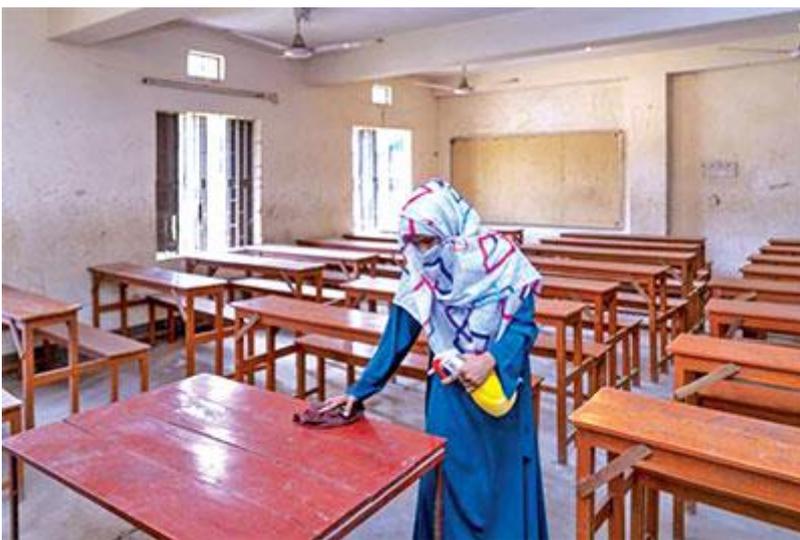
It is also a matter of fact that many universities, both in the public and private sector are also not prepared to use on-line facilities to continue their academic activities. They either lack the facilities or the necessary training. This is more true for senior faculty members many of whom are reluctant to adopt the digital technology. Many students also do not possess proper devices. The Bandwidth across the country is not even and disruption during class hours are frequent. Bangladesh still do not have EdTech companies. During my tenure as the Chairman of UGC we installed a facility called BdRen which virtually connected all the universities of the country. We also managed to connect the Indian Ren which was inaugurated by Prime Ministers of both the countries in my presence. But the results are not something we feel comfortable talking about.

Few private universities arranged for training of faculty members and students how to get the best out of the IT facilities for continuing their academic activities. ULAB and few others have done an excellent job on this front. The failure of most of the public universities to tackle the situation has resulted in trailing the few private and public universities (those adopted the new reality) by year and half. IBA of DU has performed well. But it is comparatively a small institution and have better logistics.

Once the world recovers and we are back to normal life many management related books, especially those of Marketing, Human Resources, Management, International Management, Supply Chain, Micro and Macro Economics, Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management will have to be re-written and some faculty members trained to teach these courses. Sometimes back I wrote a commentary in a national daily which is given below.

## **Bangladesh: Education in the Doldrums**

Reshmi Khatun is a student of 12th Class in Coochbihar, India. On 15th July she wrote a commentary in one of India's largest circulated Daily Anandabazar Patrika titled: 'HS Results: For rest of our life we will be branded as passing out without exam.' (HS Result: mviv Rxeḥbi gḥZv Mvḥq webv cixḥvq cvk Kivi Qvc cḥo ḥMj). Reshmi did not hide her disappointment, frustration and disgust. She mentioned that thousands of people attended the state election rallies disregarding all Covid-19 precautionary protocols but when it came to re-opening schools or conducting exams the authorities were either inactive or were less innovative. Reshmi was echoing the voice of millions like her in Bangladesh. The current 'Korbnair Hat' may trigger a new bout of catastrophe in Bangladesh too. On 12th July UNICEF and UNESCO urged governments all over the world to prioritise the safe re-opening of schools in order to avoid a 'generational catastrophe'. No sooner the appeal was made, the important policymakers in Bangladesh's Education Ministry announced that the government was eager to reopen the educational institutions. However, it will not do so now due to the high transformational rate of coronavirus. It will only be re-opened once the transformational rate drops below 5 per cent which is now on an average above 35 per cent. The remarks were made immediately after UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore and UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay issued a joint statement to prioritise the reopening of schools. The UNICEF and UNESCO's joint statement reads: 'This should not go on. Schools should be the last to close and the first to reopen.' Since the outbreak of the pandemic 19 countries, Bangladesh being one of them, never attempted to reopen the schools affecting 156 million students. Even in India classes in 9th to 12th grades were ordered to open but once the fallout of ill-conceived election timing began taking its toll they had to discontinue this effort. UNICEF-UNESCO's joint statement continued saying 'schools were closed while bars and restaurants remained open and said longer the losses that children and younger people will incur losses from not being in schools may never be recovered. From learning loss, mental distress, exposure to violence and abuse to missed school-based meals and vaccination or reduced social skills, the consequence for children will be felt in their academic achievement and societal engagement as well as physical and mental health'.



In Bangladesh attempts were made to keep the school students engaged in learning through TV, not realizing that many families cannot afford to have access to TV. From my personal experience it can be safely said that this attempt in most of the cases have become farcical. At the higher level in schools and colleges, assessments were based on 'assignment', a poor attempt indeed in Bangladesh. The policymakers perhaps are not aware that such 'assignments' in many places can be

purchased in grocery stores. The students who would finance their studies through private tuition many of them are now working overtime to write assignments for their juniors. Hypothetically if a student is required to do assignments as is common in many renowned universities and institutions of

higher learning in western countries the assignments to be of any value will necessitate use of library facilities and other references. Are our students trained to do this? And what about the facilities and access?

The UNICEF-UNESCO report said that ‘the losses for parents and caretakers are equally heavy. Keeping children at home is forcing parents around the world to leave their jobs, especially in countries (like India or Bangladesh) with no or limited family leave policies. That’s why re-opening schools for in-person learning cannot wait. It cannot wait for cases (Covid-19) to go to zero. There is clear evidence that primary and secondary schools are not among the main drivers of transmission. Reopening schools cannot wait for all teachers and students to be vaccinated. With global vaccine shortage plaguing low and middle, income countries, vaccinating frontline workers and those most at risk of severe illness and death will remain a priority.’

On Thursday the Education Minister announced that SSC and HSC examinations will be held under short syllabus in the second week of November and first week of December respectively. The Minister also said if this plan does not work ‘we have two options to assess the students. The SSC candidates will have to submit 22 and HSC candidates 30 assignments and they will be judged based on the quality of assignments. The Minister also announced that if that is not possible they will be assessed through ‘mapping’ (previous exam). Many such decisions were made since the break of pandemic but none seemed to work properly as they did not seem very practical. The better option perhaps would have been using all types of educational institutions, from primary schools to universities to conduct the exams with shortened examination hour and slashed syllabus. Currently colleges are used for HSC exam centres and schools for holding SSC examinations. If necessary, Community Centres could also be requisitioned. The Public Service Commission or some private institutions like banks can use all such centres for conducting their recruitment examinations it should not be difficult to ask all the educational institutions to come forward to help conduct the examinations. In the meantime all the adults including teachers should be ensured that they get at least the first dose of vaccine. They should be treated as frontline workers and it should be seen that all health protocols are maintained. Extraordinary problems need innovative solutions. So far we have not seen that happening.

Regarding reopening primary schools it is unrealistic that the schools will be only reopened once Covid-19 pandemic loses steam (transformation rate dropping below 5%). This I do not see that happening in near future. The decision to relax or withdraw the ‘strict’ lockdown for the Eid-ul-Azha may worsen the situation and witness a catastrophic scenario according to the public health and medical experts. One should not be surprised if people are found dying on the streets while being carried to hospital or waiting in front of a hospital to get a seat. All concerned in imparting the education getting the vaccine and contamination level going down and then deciding to reopen all schools is not only preposterous but absurd too. On an experimental basis few schools in remote rural areas (like in char areas) can be re-opened in shifts, vaccinating the teachers and adult staffs on a priority basis. In rural areas school-going children are often seen playing games in school fields or swinging in ponds. Why can’t they be brought to schools making necessary changes, if necessary in school routine and syllabus?

Regarding the universities it has been announced that after vaccinating all the students, first those staying in residential halls, the universities will be reopened. The big question is why can’t those new universities where there are no residential halls resume their in class studies? In a recent report

published in a national English daily (Dhaka Tribune) only two universities, Jahangir Nagar and SUST have managed to conduct their classes and examinations online successfully. What happened to the rest? Leadership matters. At least twenty private universities have continued their academic activities without any interruption, including conducting their exams. On the other hand, excepting the agricultural universities, all public universities have failed even to conduct their admission tests. The technical universities should have in the meantime managed to come out with solutions to solve the problems at higher level education. But they failed miserably. One new digital university came out with a software to conduct the admission test of all the public universities but failed to convince them. They said this software cannot be trusted whereas the reasons may perhaps lie somewhere else. The students who were waiting to get into public universities have already lost one and a half years. Some of these universities have announced they will administer the admission test in October or November but if previous experiences are to be taken into account, I don't see this happening and public universities reopening for business before 2022.

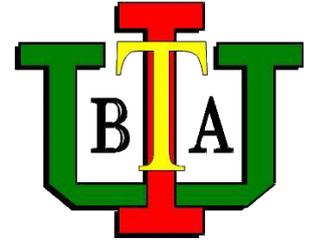
As of now, the future of a generation seems murky and many would not return to schools even when they re-open. This will happen more in the case of girl students. Already child marriage has multiplied. The economic downturn will recover in a short period of time as happening in many developing countries but the loss to education is a loss never to be recovered. It is a colossal loss to the nation. The time when Bangladesh is expected to turn into a middle income country or developed country, the country in general may lie in the hands of a bunch of mediocre people with below average intellectual ability. The big question perhaps is whom do we blame for this? Surely not the students.

The writer is an analyst and a researcher.

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**COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education:**  
**The Case of a Private University in Bangladesh**

Covid-19 struck Bangladesh in January 2020 and in mid-March the Government imposed lock-down in the country. All educational institutions were shut down and these are still closed. However, some private universities went for on line teaching within a month after lockdown and our university, IUBAT - International University of Business, Agriculture and Technology, being the first one. The task of launching on line teaching was not easy and we are still going through challenges.

The first problem was (and still) the internet technology. While in cities and towns internet connections and services were provided by the Internet Service companies, it was not available in small towns and rural areas. Most students moved out to their homes in towns and villages. There the students have to depend on internet services provided by the mobile phone companies which is expensive. In both cases, slow internet speed and disruptions during session are common problems. While monitoring classes, I found on more than one occasion, students sitting on trees to get better internet connections. Some would travel 3-4 kilometers to Union IT Centres to get better connections particularly during exam. These days, all students have smart phones. So, for them having access to internet classes would be no problem but writing answers to exam questions is a problem as word processing is slow and drawing and mathematical notations and calculations are not possible. Unfortunately, few students have P.C or Lap Top and many cannot afford the money needed to buy PC or Laptop.

In the beginning, On line Learning Platform was another problem. Fortunately, while in campus, our university has been using Moodle. It was relatively easy for us to switch over on line teaching with this LMS. However, students complained that it consumes more internet time and so, they incur more expense. Then, we allowed Zoom and Google-class as alternatives. However, these two are not as versatile as Moodle.

Another issue was the competency of the teachers to teach on line. This was addressed by arranging training program for them. Unfortunately, some very senior teachers could not adapt to this new approach and they had to be assigned other tasks than teaching.

Campus being closed, all administrative tasks had to be performed on line. Inadequacy of the existing softwares appeared to be a bottleneck. So upgrading, improving and designing softwares were necessary. It took some time but were soon done by our Software Design Section.

Most daunting problem is however cheating in the on line exam and off line exam (like take-home exam or assignment). There are softwares that can detect cheating while a student is writing traditional answer scripts. But as I mentioned, most students do not have lap top or PC to write exam answers. The software requires that the student keeps his/her camera switched on all the time during

the script writing. The basic problem is the internet speed as I mentioned earlier for which camera cannot be kept switched on. Teachers also face the same problem. On the other hand plagiarism in take home exam and assignments is a common problem.

Management education has been affected by Covid-19 situation in several ways. The business and management curriculum has been found inadequate to effectively respond to the management issues in the business firms in pandemic situation. The curriculum is not enough ICT savvy to undertake virtual management. A thorough revision of the curriculum is the need of the hour. Exposure to business environment and management practice through field visits, under-study, internship etc. have been severely affected depriving the students from gaining real-life experience. Campus being closed, Labs have been suspended. So the students cannot acquire hands-on experience from practical work in labs. Despite most business suffering from downward sales and declined revenue, some jobs for computer science and engineering graduates are available -mostly in ICT sector. But jobs for graduates of business schools have become scarce.

Closed campus, lockdown, restriction in movement, closure of sports and recreation facilities, uncertain future, financial problems etc. have adversely affected physical and mental health of the students. Research studies conducted in Bangladesh have found that many students are suffering from depression and few committed suicide. The mental condition is hampering their studies.

Many students of Business Schools have taken temporary withdrawal or dropped out for financial reason or Covid attack in the family. Admission rate has substantially declined. Much higher number of students are graduating every semester compared to number admitted. Withdrawal, dropout, fewer admission – all have resulted in huge decline in revenue of the private universities including business schools causing serious financial stress.

So far, we have noted the negative aspects of COVID-19 but there are quite a few positive contributions also. Environment pollution has declined due to restricted operations of industries and construction work, limited movement of transports and increased vegetation. Students and people have saved travel time and tiredness of commuting to campus or work place. Being on line, flexible work hours is easier to practice. More social time and attention given to the family which would improve relationship and bondage. (Of courses, opposite opinion is also there).

Many are learning to upscale or diversify skills to adapt to the changing job market requirements. Business school graduates are now realizing the need for combining ICT skill with management skill. Policy makers of the country are now emphasizing Industry 4.0 to cope with challenges of COVID. The scenario of our university that I have described so far is, if not same, more or less similar in most other private universities in Bangladesh.

It appears from the observations and opinions of the researchers and experts that Covid 19 is not going away soon. Hopes of recovery after its first wave turned out to be a great disappointment when second wave hit more aggressively than the first one. Now a third wave is being apprehended. Given the evidences, Post Covid scenario is not going to be the same as it was in the pre-Covid period. Under the circumstances, we need to innovate strategies to cope with the present situation and for the post covid new normal.

First of all, a transformation in our attitude is required to accept the reality of Covid 19 and to work out new ways of adapting with it. Innovation has become all the more important as old ways of doing things will not hold good any more. The goal may be survival in the short run, sustainability in the

intermediate run and, of courses, growth in the long run. Management education and Business Schools would not be an exception to this. B. School teachers need to reorient themselves in the on line teaching, mentoring and research skill. More effective ways of on-line class delivery methods should be innovated through research and practice. Educational institutions should create necessary technological facilities and support for on line teaching and assessment. Students must learn to adapt to the on-line teaching and assessment. However, training and development of human resources remain the corner stone for the success of all these efforts.

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**Dr. Md. Sabur Khan**  
*Chairman*  
*Board of Trustees*  
*Daffodil International University*  
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## 1. How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future?

Presently most of the educational institutions and educators are in a puzzled state. Most are still having trouble accepting the new normal and waiting to return to the previous customs. In comparison, only a handful institutions and educators in the nation are taking preparation to accept the new normal. However, this preparation is also not up to the mark in comparison to the actual necessity. In fact, this preparation demands efforts not from individual level only but from national level as well. The sooner a nation understands the necessity and gets onboard with the initiative to accept the new normal circumstances, the better result they can achieve in the near future. In Daffodil International University, we did not waste a single day after the lockdown due to the pandemic and immediately moved to platform-based education utilizing our Blended Learning Center (BLC) Platform and continued our academic functions online. This was possible because of our preparations even before we faced the pandemic but as there is no national policy to accommodate these changes and online education, we are being limited in terms of functionalities. To sustain in the future, I completely believe that there are no alternatives but to moving towards online and blended teaching and learning systems. Also, academic curriculum, delivery methods, pedagogy, platforms and even skill requirements for teachers will require major adjustments and we need to do it without making much delay to prevent lags on student and national development. Automation of the educational institution and its processes is also a vital element to consider here. New partnerships are also to be formed with the industries because a lot of changes are already in place in the industrial fields due to the pandemic. Policy makers may collaborate with universities to formulate necessary national policies in this regard.



## 2. Articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels

In Daffodil International University, we introduced the Blended learning Center (BLC) platform in around 2016. Since then, our academic departments have been engaged to develop online course repositories. However, that time students were mostly engaged through the traditional face to face class system. When the pandemic started in Bangladesh and we faced the first lockdown, we took immediate steps to onboard all students and



teachers to online education through the BLC platform. Teachers could easily adopt the platform due to their previous preparations in developing online course repositories and students were also equipped as they received free laptop devices from the university as part of the One Student One Laptop Project.

On top of that the university offered 100s of webinars and circulated different digital guidelines to both teachers, students and administrators on how to take preparations at individual level to cope up with different initiatives and changes done by the university. Because of these initiatives, the majority of the teachers became well equipped to take classes online, could create and circulate online courses, contents and materials through the BLC platform for the students to study, engage the students through different interactive contents and discussion forums to further enhance their learning process, assess the students learning from creating online quizzes, assignments and online workshops. Not only that, we worked in collaboration with prominent course providers like Coursera,



Edx, LinkedIn Learning and Sailor Academy to offer our students with quality online contents as an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills. The Career Development Center (CDC) and Human Resources Development Institute (HRDI) of Daffodil



International University was highly engaged during this time to offer necessary training to the faculty members and students of the university. Even in the pandemic, The CDC is functional in making arrangements for placing jobs for the students and graduates in different industries in collaboration with one of the pioneer job portals in Bangladesh called Skill Jobs. On top of that we have started collaborating with goedu.ac



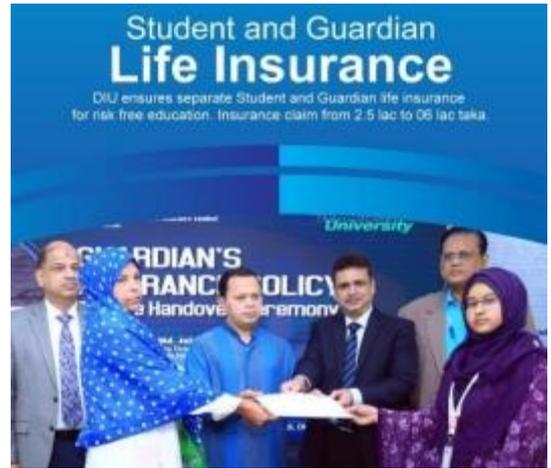
and iou.ac platforms to offer bit sized and modular supplementary professional courses for the students beyond the university border as a national contribution. Apart from that all the process of the university (administrative) is made digital through SmartEdu ERP developed by Daffodil Computers Limited which is a concern of

Daffodil Family which even covers the digitization of different reports, digital communication, digital meetings, HR management, transport management, policy management etc. I believe all these initiatives can contribute to developing models for new formats, contents and delivery channels for other educational institutions and national policy makers.

### 3. Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.

We are well aware that there are social and emotional issues among both faculty members and students. However, it is mostly because of the lack of preparations for the new normal circumstances. There are also financial issues, especially for students as there is a drop in the economy due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. To address such matters Directorates of Students' Affairs (DSA) is functional in the university where we have dedicated professional psychologists to counsel both teachers and students in need. To find out striving students we have initiated an AI based digital mentoring and counseling platform and assigned batch wise mentors to all the students among the faculty members.

To recover financial issues of the students, we have initiated special waiver and scholarship for students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and also initiated insurance to cover any unintended loss of the students. On top of that we are arranging regular digital programs and events to connect the students with their peers, to their faculty members and with industry leaders so that they do not feel separated from their peers, faculty members and the university. For students who would love to stay on campus during the pandemic, we have taken steps to take all the safety measures to our halls. Hall facility is given to even a lot of faculty members so that they can equip themselves better and continue their services without any hassle. These initiatives worked well for our favor in managing the social and emotional issues among students and faculty members during the pandemic. I believe these, if replicated properly, can work for others as well for this context.



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On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic. Given the potential spread of coronavirus, the Government of Bangladesh declared the closure of all educational institutions with effect from 17 March 2020. The government has extended the shutdown several times. Nearly half of the world's students have been affected by partial or complete closure of academic institutions for more than a year since the COVID-19 outbreak began. Prioritizing the recovery of education is critical to prevent a generational crisis articulated in different national and international forums. Students have been facing a new normal following the COVID-19 epidemic, with all educational institutions being closed since March 17, 2020 in Bangladesh. The closure has been extended many times. We anticipate more extensions due to the high risk of coronavirus transmission in the community.

Shortly, the possibility of the education system using online platforms in Bangladesh is indispensable. The digital system will bring many benefits for both teachers and learners to aid in teaching and learning. Students will be more interested in self-learning. Also, given the current shutdown situation, online courses are more suitable for them. The most important thing to consider is that students will have ample opportunity to create cognitive and polygonal strategies to achieve their educational goals. They do not need additional preparation to join themselves online, and thus in any situation, they can be ready to join the classes regardless of their time and location. In the Covid-19 situation, the opening of educational institutions is still uncertain. But the learning paths are there to enable students to gain more knowledge and not lag behind in the near future. The more digital the country becomes, the easier it becomes to create digital citizens and contribute to the management of everything published online that stands on virtual platforms at large.

In the light of shifting from on-campus to online in many areas of the world, some are questioning if online learning adoption would continue post-pandemic, and how such a shift might affect the global education industry. As a result of the lengthy epidemic, all academic institutions, especially private institutions in Bangladesh are trying to develop the infrastructure necessary for online education. However, all educational institutions are not able to deliver online education to date. In response to huge demand and crisis, many online learning platforms are offering free access to their service. Furthermore, educational institutions are developing their platforms to optimize their operations, and all private and public educational institutions are increasingly migrating to the online to survive and provide the right education with quality.

Here at Daffodil International University (DIU), we simply moved online from the very inception of the shutdown in Bangladesh. We have been using different learning platforms such as Learning Management System (developed in-house), Google Classroom, Moodle and later, we developed Blended Learning System (BLC). So it was quite a good shift from in-person teaching to online teaching as our teachers and students have become accustomed to these platforms for so long.

Besides, we have incorporated many other plugins and tools to ensure the best learning experience for our students in order for engaging them. Furthermore, we have SmartEdu, Mentoring & Monitoring system, Students' Portal, Digital Payment system (1 card), etc. to facilitate our overall operation. Moreover, we will run our academic activities in a blended mode comprising both online and offline in future as we have a robust online infrastructure besides physical infrastructure.

It may be predicted that educational institutions will adopt a mixed learning approach soon. Though there won't be any alternative to a physical classroom system, this pandemic compels us to be acquainted with a blended system. Perhaps after the epidemic, schools will continue to operate in a blended mode by blending both online and offline. Because of technological advancement, EduTech will equally lead our future and make our lives easier by making the technology cheaper. This pandemic is forcing us to utilize technology, and people will become used to it and become tech-savvy as a result. The content delivery system will be both physical and digital and it will make education as phygital (physical + digital).

At DIU, we have full preparation for phygital education and we hosted an international phygital summit as well. In the future, I suppose our academic operations will be in a blended form intertwining both in-person and online platforms.



Teaching is a noble profession indeed and assisting students in realizing their full potential is extremely rewarding anyway. The social and emotional state of the students is quite important for effective learning at any stage. Students' engagement is also equally important for effective learning. The unprecedented COVID-19 has made the teachers more responsible to take care of the social and emotional state of students with more attention and to make extra efforts for students' engagement in their academic activities. Teachers may save a generation of students from long-term detriment by dealing with the problems stemming from the pandemic and post-pandemic periods. Teachers who want to help shape the future of education must owe a duty of attention and care towards their students. Teachers may not be able to solve all of students' pandemic-related issues, but they may

take some important measures such as providing additional psychosocial support for the students during and after the pandemic. Teachers must use every teaching approach acquired to make learning enjoyable and equitable for all students, as different students have different learning styles and capacities. They need to deal with the students with empathy and sympathy while engaging them in the learning process. Certainly, teachers are not solely responsible for shaping future education; however, they will be playing a pivotal role. Both teachers and students need social and emotional support to handle the ongoing and post COVID situation to ensure the best learning experiences for students.

At DIU, we always put our best efforts into taking care of our students with sympathy and empathy and provide them with a complete psychosocial system for a healthy learning environment. To lessen the financial burden of the students during COVID 19, DIU is giving a substantial waiver of tuition fees for all the students which is a commendable initiative and can be followed by other academic institutions.

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### **Prospects and Challenges for Management Education amid COVID-19 Pandemic:** **East Delta University Perspective**

COVID-19 was an opportunity to put our knowledge into work. East Delta University (EDU) introduced 5 hours of optional online teaching opportunities back in 2012. As a University we always believed in adopting new technologies and techniques available and invested innovation drive ideas since its inception. We started working with Google for Education, Microsoft Education in 2017. We partnered with Turnitin in 2019 just before COVID-19 pandemic. Our education delivery, management and administration team has been receiving training to make an EdTech driven model of higher education work. When the whole of Bangladesh was called to not allow students to come to campuses from 18th March, we started delivering our classes from the next morning.

Students across the higher education sector have been dramatically impacted by the spread of the coronavirus, from travel restrictions to social distancing, isolation measures, quarantines, and campus closures. The situations are not different in Bangladesh as well. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, East Delta University (hereinafter referred as EDU) along with most of other Universities in the country was expected to face impediments towards functioning their regular activities. When the Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) have been asked to completely shut down since March 26, 2020, most of the operation of Universities in Bangladesh came on hold. Nevertheless, the case of EDU it was slightly different due to its long experience on blended learning.

EDU has been a pioneer in blended learning much before the Covid-19. It's flagship Master of Public Policy and Leadership (MPPL) was introduced in 2019, and since then, it was offered both online and on campus. Scholars from Oxford, Monash, Central Michigan University and IIUM have been taking these courses online, whereas the local scholars conducted several courses on-campus. Similar cases were found in the university's MBA programme. Hence, once the Covid hit and enforced online classes, EDU had nothing to worry about.

COVID-19 pandemic came with three challenges for the universities in Bangladesh

1. Continuation of engaged classes (education)
2. Understating learning progress
3. Grading the assessments

It all seemed very easy at the beginning until the universities saw gradually less engaged classes as they all progressed with online classrooms. We all realized that it is difficult to teach, to learn and to manage things that are 100% online. We saw the faculty members losing interest to teach and students losing interest to learn. We thought conducting online lectures (one way teaching) would work. Luckily, it did not take us long to realize that we were wrong. Student engagement should be our priority not just delivers lectures on online platforms. We remodeled our previous strategy. We introduced "Flipped Classroom" after 2 months since we started.

In the online study, East Delta University (EDU), realized the need for a novel endeavour. It took the lead and planned to "flip the classroom" to make the learning process smoother with asymmetric teaching methodology. EDU introduced the "Flipped Classroom", the latest trend in the global education arena, as the first university in Bangladesh.

A "flipped classroom" is a type of blended learning strategy where students are introduced to a topic by utilising recorded video content and textbook at home. Then, in the classroom, they are given a brief lecture on that particular topic, and after that, students will receive assignments and projects to practice both in classrooms and from the comfort of their homes. This strategy is the reverse of the conventional approach practiced throughout Bangladesh's educational institutions.

EDU offered a variety of avenues for our students to choose from to continue their education and set the pace for their autonomous learning. Moreover, a few students were eager to come to the campus during the COVID pandemic, while the rest of the same section attends classes from home, simultaneously. The faculty members and students are actively practicing the flipped classroom strategy that the university has implemented from the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester. The ideas of both blended learning and flipped classrooms are very new in our country, and EDU is pioneering the adoption while testing its feasibility.

EDU also developed a unique assessment process synced with latest innovation. During the lockdown period, arranging examinations as well as motivating students to adapt to this new normal, came as a great challenge. EDU's traditional assessment model consisted of class attendance, one or two assignments, a few class tests, midterm and final exams. Inside the assessment model, most emphasis was put on mid and final term examinations. Since the classroom is flipped and students are doing more than usual, it was found to be a standard best practice of constantly assessing their efforts and grading them as they move forward with a class/lesson/topic.

Although much of these steps were appreciated, EDU witnessed a 'Digital Divide' among its students. EDU conducted multiple surveys prior to and following the online classes. It raised some issues in addition to sincere compliments. The primary concern that came to light was the connectivity issue. Since internet facilities are not the same all around, the University took the "Breaking the Digital Divide" initiative to solve it. Under the "Breaking the Digital Divide initiative, the university decided to provide 30 gigabytes of free internet data per month for faculties and students to make online access and participation seamless. EDU was the pioneer in taking such measures from the early stages of the lockdown. Grameenphone actively participated in this landmark initiative by providing the students with a special SIM card where they sent the data bundle every month on behalf of EDU. A few months later, another survey found that students were joining online classes with great enthusiasm and energy.

Additionally, it was postulated that students, faculty members, and admin staff would have extra time to learn new things during the days of lockdown. To make the most out of those trying times, the institute partnered with Coursera. The successful MOOC platform hosts more than 4,500 general and certification courses offered by renowned universities worldwide. More than 3000 enrolments were recorded from the students, instructors and staff on the platform in a wide variety of courses.

Last but not the least, realising the crisis from an early stage of the pandemic, EDU removed all bars on different fees. Late fees were revoked, the deadline for all due payments was relaxed and payments in installments were introduced. To keep the flow of providing services as an educational institute and to carry out various types of expenses, including salaries and allowances of the

employees during the pandemic, it was crucial to have the funds. However, EDU took a stand not to force the students regarding clearing their payments despite the situation. Students were given the opportunity to register for the next semester automatically. EDU tried its utmost to support the students in the smooth continuation of their studies.

This is not the first time EDU has taken innovative steps to open the door to new ideas. From the start of the lockdown, EDU actively participated in finding and implementing different means to facilitate the students. Two weeks prior to the official announcement of educational institutions' closure in March 2020, the university adopted a strategy to shift everything online. From the very next day, EDU went forward with full-fledged online classes, and since then, no classes have been suspended till date. This has been the result of careful long-term planning and investment. Such transformation was possible at the right moment because of continuous digitization and modernization since its inception.

Students and staff both took all the innovative changes positively. Some of the students and staff also joined campus to implement the Flipped Classroom strategy; they responded to this call with great interest. They are now participating in the class on a rotation basis. Coming to the campus was indeed out of danger because of the University's implementation of new policies. EDU has taken necessary precautions to provide the best possible safety measures to those entering its premises. It has implemented the "Campus Movement Protocol", which all personnel must adhere to.

Due to the pandemic and its associated complications, EDU had to go through extreme challenges. The university authority struggled to manage organizational activities. In spite of this, the university authorities have kept the full salary-bonus and retained the regular promotions. While many institutes were seen trimming salaries of employees in Chattogram as new student enrolment immensely dropped, not only did the EDU authority provide the full salary-bonus but they carried it out in time. This initiative was highly commendable among the employees and was a great example set by the authorities. More than three hundred employees are currently working on EDU as faculty members, officials and staff.

When layoffs, intermittent promotions and other benefits became a common practice worldwide job market in the coronavirus outbreak, EDU took the opposite approach. The authorities honoured 33 faculty members and officials of the university in five categories for their extraordinary leadership and responsible role apart from the university's regular responsibilities from the very beginning of the pandemic. Along with a crest, the authorities also provided financial incentives of BDT 12 lakh for the honour. The Abdullah Al Noman Employee of the Year award went to Prof. Dr Rokibul Kabir, Associate Dean of the School of Business among the teachers and Mofazzal Uddin, Assistant Manager, IT & Innovations among the administration. In addition, 31 others received awards in four categories, namely Faculty Leadership Award, Staff Leadership Award, Faculty Performance Award and Staff Performance Award.

The emergency caused by COVID-19 and the transition to distance learning has made EDU faculty members face many novel decision-making situations. As the lecturer's pedagogical decisions have an impact on the students' learning experience, EDU aimed to upskill teaching ability (technology aided instruction) through different online workshops and training.

In general, online courses require educational support on the ground: Instructional designers, trainers, and coaches to ensure student learning and course completion. Digital divide also exists among students, which became apparent in the COVID time. Not all faculty members are comfortable with

virtual classrooms and there is a digital divide among those who have never used even the basic audio-visual equipment, relying on blackboards and flipcharts, and younger faculty who are aware of and adept in newer technology. Hence, the University has attempted to provide technological support to both the faculty members and the students.

In addition, all the syllabus and course contents are being revised as the courses are being taught. Assessment methods, such as exams and quizzes are being converted to online submissions. University administrators and student bodies are being accommodative and are letting instructors innovate their own best course, given such short notice. Instructors, students, and university administrators also discussed several meetings on how the teaching and learning changes between day 1 of virtual education and day X. This provided clues for how to train future virtual educators and learners within the University.

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## **COVID-19 Pandemic and the Challenges for Management Education in Bangladesh**

Tertiary level education got an impetus in Bangladesh with the permission of private university education as per The Private University Act 1992. With the assumption that private universities were not geared to quality assurance, human resource development, social service and good governance, Parliament of the People's Republic of Bangladesh repealed the Act and passed The Private University Act 2010<sup>1</sup>. The passing of this act augmented the number of private universities in Bangladesh. Now, there are 107 private universities in this country<sup>2</sup>. The most popular fields of studies for the students of private universities are Business Administration, Engineering and Technology. Along with Computer Science, Business Administration is still an important subject for both the students of private and public sector universities in Bangladesh<sup>3</sup>.

COVID-19 pandemic has created some acute challenges in management and business education of Bangladesh at the tertiary level of education. Pandemic forced the country to take preventive measures including travel bans, lockdown, remote office activities, and most importantly, social distancing. These measures compelled the citizens to stay at home and perform their activities online by using Internet. These measures again created economic problems for the lower-middle-income economy of Bangladesh, which has one of the world's densest populations. Especially, maintaining social distancing was very difficult in many areas of the country due to over population and minimal resources to implement the mitigation measures. Quick government support, sanitization and healthcare facilities, collaboration among the government, citizens, health experts and the international assistances, had also helped to alleviate severe impact of Covid-19 on the people and the economy<sup>4</sup>. To overcome the socio-economic troubles of Bangladesh, the government had to announce several financial stimulus packages of about USD 11.90 billion (Islam, et. al., 2020).

Essentially, lockdown, restrictions on mass gatherings, social distancing and border closures twisted some challenges in business education of higher educational institutions in Bangladesh. Lack of access to internet of the students, government universities decided not to continue their activities in this pandemic time. On the other hand, private universities continued their education online by maintaining the UGC guidelines. To triumph over the challenges, private universities had to fight against the uncertainties to continue with their education, and had to adapt rapid change measures in teaching-learning process in the country. Hence, policymakers of the private universities had to identify proper alternative methods to help continue their education in this pandemic situation.

The specific challenges created by the pandemic mainly concern the core activities of counseling and supporting the development of students via curricula and co-curricular activities. It stalled the interactive delivery and personalized experience in classroom teaching, which can be seen in face to face classes. In the new online arrangements, the education system got replaced from teacher-centric system to student-centric system, where students have become dominant in the teaching-learning process. Now, students control the systems and their desires get priority. This is against the education culture of South Asian countries like Bangladesh. Study shows that due to covid-19, more than 83%

of the students are facing problems related to mental stress, resulting in short temper, sleep disorder, and family chaos<sup>5</sup>. The specific challenges that are being faced during the online classes are: (i) the struggle with the adaptability with computer-based virtual classroom; (ii) poor internet facilities in the rural areas of the country; (iii) poor literacy on handling computer and smart phones; (iv) the struggle with the increased need for time management, for instance, one Zoom meeting can connect people online for only 40 minutes but the students take a longer time to respond to the class due to technical and other difficulties; and (v) difficult for the teachers to manage feedback of the students as well as engage them in the lecture materials. Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic raised the salience and demands in relation to teaching-learning process, which has reduced the emphasis on research during this time<sup>6</sup>. In addition to that, the majority (88%) of the university staff members believe that the technological skills of online courses increase the educational value which was hampered by Covid-19 due to the lack of technological knowledge of the users. The other barriers are the insufficient/unstable internet connectivity (40%), inadequate computer labs (36%), lack of availability of computers/laptops (32%), and technical problems (32%) of the users<sup>7</sup>. As the Coronavirus is still spreading across the country, more than 90% of enrolled students are now affected by some kind of limitations<sup>8</sup>.

Due to the absence of face-to-face teaching-learning methods, teachers and students have to go through three main types of challenges. They are: (i) network and facility related challenges, (ii) student-teacher interaction related challenges and (iii) personal and socio-psychological challenges. Also, challenges are related to the preparedness of the students, the mode of teaching to online lectures, and class/work from home<sup>9</sup>.

Hence, in order to continue with the online class systems, there is a greater need for the educational institutions of Bangladesh to strengthen their practices in the curriculum, and make it more responsive to the learning needs of the students in this new learning environment<sup>10</sup>. The crisis-response migration methods of universities should also recognize that online learning is different from emergency remote teaching, and quality can also be ensured in this teaching-learning system. Experts opined that online learning will be more sustainable while instructional activities will become more hybrids, provided that the challenges experienced during this pandemic are well explored and transformed to opportunities<sup>11</sup>. Hence, it is recommended that necessary steps should be taken in order to improve the internet speed and provide free or cheaper internet packages. Also, technical training should be provided on the online education to the students and the faculty members. We have to implement learning recovery programs, help the financially vulnerable students, and prepare for future shocks by building a better academic environment in Bangladesh<sup>12</sup>. These efforts will help the management education of higher educational institutions in Bangladesh to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the adoption of more resilient and flexible approaches for going forward in the future.

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### **Education Redefined by the Pandemic**

With the virus responsible for COVID-19 showing tremendous agility in circling and mutating, the end of the pandemic seems to be out of sight. Moreover, the vaccination program, which was supposed to rein in the crown-shaped microorganism, has further exposed the chasm between the haves and the have nots. We were hoping for an equitable vaccine access that would have given us the desired herd immunity. Instead, the hoarding of vaccine by the Global North is simply making any global immunity against the coronavirus hard.

For a country that still lacks basic amenities, the primary challenge is to survive. We have to have faith in science, maintain social distancing, and wear masks to minimise infections. If we do survive this ordeal, the next challenge will be to adapt to the new reality. A lot has already been said about the post-Covid-19 reality. And all will agree that we cannot return to the world as it was once before. An optimist historian reminds us that after the Black Death in the Middle Age, humans came across the Renaissance, the revolutionary change in the way humans were perceived. Maybe another such revolutionary change is waiting once we turn the corner.

One area that has been hit hard during this pandemic is education. Our lack of preparedness for an emergency shows the wide-ranging inequality that persists. Such inequality can now be measured in terms of the computers and bandwidth that we have (or do not have). Such inequality has exposed the public-private fault lines. The private sector has shown much more resilience than the public one in accommodating digital and distance learning. This has actually widened the gap between learners within the span of one year. But the online learning makes us aware of another type of privatisation. The school from its public domain has moved into private locations. The classroom atmosphere has changed, and the presence of students in their domestic space has created multiple psychosocial issues.

In response, there have been many creative efforts taken by the teachers and policy makers. More and more, people are realising that there has to be a concerted and collective response to stop our students from becoming castaway individuals marooned in lonely islands. Education is a collective effort, and if we do not invest in it, we will simply create further inequalities.

One lesson that we have learnt during this crisis is the need for making science an integral part of our curricula. Every day, we are being reminded of basic hygienic rules to protect ourselves from the havoc created by a microorganism. In essence, we are being reminded that public education and public health are interconnected. In other words, education is not only for those who go to schools or colleges—it is for everyone. The students at home have brought the schooling to a domestic sphere.

Educators themselves have learnt that education cannot remain within the rigid structure of a classroom. The inclusion of television, radio, and the internet has proved that the medium needs to be flexible and accommodative. Then again, the learn-from-home model has made the guardians the

proxy educators. The vertical relationship between a teacher and a student has found a horizontal model in which the delivery of education requires new stakeholders, new levels of participation of others.

Returning to school will thus require a new kind of readjustments. Already, the extreme form of individualisation, isolation, quarantine and lockdown have affected the mental health of our students. Many are struggling with the trauma of losing loved ones, the vulnerability of being affected by the disease, and the fear of being so close to death. We cannot simply assume that we know what the students are going through. Instead, we must create a space so that they can voice out their concerns, helping us draft a public policy for the psychosocial wellbeing of our future generation.

The needs are different in our three-track education system involving Bangla medium, English medium and Madrasa system. These streams with their diverse cultural orientations remain a constant source of discontent. One fix-all formula may not be enough to address the diversity that exists. At the same time, there has to be a clear assessment on how this distance from physical classrooms has affected these three different streams. We will also need to understand whether the skill sets identified for the twenty-first century are equally pursued by all three sectors. More importantly, how did the exposure to technology-driven education during this pandemic change the nature of these streams, and to what extent?

The government must assess the needs and come up with open digital resources for the use of local stakeholders. If we are to rely too much on international and private sources, we will end up having more inequalities within the system. A clear policy needs to be adopted as to how these resources can be effected in a blended or hybrid format in a post-Covid world.

The financial crunch caused by the pandemic will take years to recover—and many of the students will find it difficult to find jobs by the time they finish their education. It can even lead to a point where the very purpose of education will be questioned. Already, there are organisations that brag that they do not hire people with certificates, but people with skills. In a post-Covid world, the importance of educational institutions may come under a serious existential threat. Then there are others who are asking the students to become entrepreneurs and self-employed. One may very well ask: if I can learn from home and am expected to create my own job, what good is a school for? And if there are companies that do not even bother with certificates, why take the trouble of going through an institutional discipline? Again, the policy makers and civil society will have to play an active role in addressing this issue and clearing the very objective of education. Dodging it will cause more harm. And buoyed by the success of distance learning, if the government stops investing in physical classrooms, then we will enter another crisis room.

This virus has promulgated a great myth of being the ultimate leveller. The reality is far from it. The line separating the Global North and the Global South is more prominent than before. Countries with better technological infrastructure have shown more resilience to come out stronger out of this crisis. Meanwhile, in countries like ours, our supreme faith in the God-given vitamin D available in the sunlight is becoming wobbly by the minute. Then again, the Global North has realised that the virus is a great globetrotter; it cannot corral itself in a safe, sterilised half-hemisphere. There has to be collaboration for the sake of humanity. And education is the cement that can bond us.

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## **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education in Bangladesh**

### **1. Introduction**

Educational Management is a huge subject with many critical aspects related to management theories; different approach, and communication, different types of management models etc. which make the subject complicated and difficult to comprehend. Teacher is to teach the student as a whole person and it is here that teacher will find the study of educational management as one of vital significance. In fact, teacher will find it helpful at every bedside. If teacher takes seriously their responsibilities even as a public worker, teacher will find their knowledge of educational management constantly in use. The teacher can also apply this knowledge in their own learning and make themselves a more efficient person in every field because teacher knows how to cut out the loss of effort and time, which results from bad study habits (Shastri, 2012).

At this moment, the Covid-19 pandemic is the prescribed global threat to mankind and a significant difficulty we have faced since World War II (UNDP, 2020). Till 9th August 2020, Covid-19 has affected 188 countries across the world, with about 20 million confirmed cases and more than 700000 people lost their lives (BBC News, 2020). Therefore, this breakout is considered as a Public Health Emergency of international concern and officially proclaimed as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). This pandemic was first confirmed in Bangladesh by The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) on 8 March, 2020 and its first death on March 18, 2020 (*FE Report*, 2020).

### **2. Survey of recent studies**

Rahman et.al (2021) conducted a recent online survey to administer a self-reported questionnaire among 418 Bangladeshi university students through snowball sampling technique during the country's COVID-19 induced lockdown period. Majority of the participated students experienced high impact (61.48%) on their study. They were also exceedingly concerned with their mental health (47.84%) due to this pandemic. Large number of students attended online classes (69.62%). Students living in the capital city Dhaka, reported more unsafe current places than the students living outside Dhaka. Furthermore, universities supported their students through multiple financial and mental assistance initiatives. Participated students reported moderate knowledge, attitude, and high practice scores. Also moderate total KAP score was observed in this study.

In another research Khan et.al (2021) finds digital education as one of the most popular means of education due to the unexampled days caused by COVID-19 pandemic across the globe. One of the tragedies of the epidemic, beneath the death circle and economic cost, is the human cost on students and on their education. As the virus is spreading across the country, more than 90% of enrolled

students were affected by some kind of limitation posed by the educational institutions, with more than a billion impacted around the world. The miniature-term fight versus the virus is about health. But its lengthy-term effects can only be controlled by a digital education system which is comprehensive and rapid. This is the mere way to eliminate a lost generation due to COVID-19 outbreak, and in an “epidemic-aware” earth could be a stable positive step towards educational inclusion. Online Education System in Bangladesh during COVID-19 Pandemic have faced multiple difficulties.

On July 18, 2021 “The Daily Prothom Alo” has published a survey result of online classes. The research student forum, University of Dhaka has recently conducted the survey on 3700 students of the university during June 01, 2021 to June 15, 2021 to know the picture of online classes and academic affairs of the University during the COVID-19 period. Professor Md. Manjurual Karim, Department of Biochemistry was also associated with this survey. The survey result indicates the following:

- i. Regarding the completion of syllabus, 46.3% mentioned that the syllabus has been completed properly but 53.7% has showed dissatisfaction regarding the completion of the syllabus. It indicates that majority of the students are not satisfied in respect of completion of the syllabus in online classes.
- ii. Regarding the satisfaction level of online classes only 2.27% mentioned that they are satisfied. About 24% labeled their satisfaction level as average and 46% has showed their dissatisfaction while the rest 27% did not provide any opinion in this regard.
- iii. Regarding the eagerness of online examinations 52.7% mentioned that they are interested to participate in online examinations, 42% mentioned that they are not interested to participate in online examination and 4.3% mentioned that they neither agree nor disagree i.e. they haven’t yet decided on this issue. The interested students to participate in online examinations are in favor of more assignments, open book examination with short questions and multiple choice questions in the examinations.
- iv. About 30% of the survey students have applied for financial assistance to purchase online class equipments. Among them only 3.4% received financial assistance from the pertinent authority and reaming 70% had not applied for any financial assistance.
- v. Among the survey students about 85.8% students have attended online classes and examinations through mobile phone.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

This study tried to appraise the effect of Covid-19 on the management education in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To apprise the situation of management education due to Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh.
- ii. To identify the challenges of management education due to Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh.
- iii. To suggest remedial measures to overcome the challenges of management education due to Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh

#### **4. Scope and Methodology of the Study**

The present study has been carried out to evaluate the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on the management education in Bangladesh. The analysis has been conducted mainly on data from secondary sources. The relevant data and information were collected from books, articles; survey related to education sector and relevant different websites and published materials etc.

The present paper is organized in the following manner. Section one gives an introduction of the study. Section two presents the literature survey; section three and four details the objectives; scope & methodology of the study; section five gives an overview of the essentials of the management education; section six details the challenges of Covid-19 on the management education in Bangladesh; finally, section seven provides suggestions and conclusion of the study.

#### **5. Essentials tools of Management Education**

Management graduates are essentials for running the commerce, business, international trade, banking and financial system of the country. Good management education systems needs many factors. Some essentials tools of management education are as follows:

- i. Well equipped and planned campus;
- ii. Well framed international course curriculum;
- iii. Qualified and dedicated faculty members;
- iv. Capable administrative executives;
- v. Rich library;
- vi. Computer laboratories and other required laboratories;
- vii. Well equipped class rooms and study room;
- viii. Quality student enrollments;
- ix. Industrial tour;
- x. Seminar, symposium;
- xi. Students clubs;
- xii. Students' residential accommodation and good transport system;
- xiii. Canteen facilities;
- xiv. Internship placements;
- xv. Job fair and job placements of management graduates.

#### **6. Challenges of Management Education due to Covid-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh**

Due to Covid-19 Pandemic management education faces some challenges in Bangladesh. These are:

- i. Increasing rate of covid-19 pandemic since March 2020.
- ii. Educational institutions remaining closed since March 2020 till July 2021.
- iii. Total suspension of physical classes.
- iv. University residential halls being closed since March 2020.

- v. Lacks of E library, most of university libraries are not fully digitalized.
- vi. Multiple transitions of hard and soft lock down to control the pandemic thus all types of industrial tour, internships are under challenged.
- vii. Firstly, some leading private universities have started online classes and academic affairs since May 2020. But many newly established private universities have failed to start online class initially and started online classes and academic affairs lately.
- viii. Faculty members have faced challenges of conducting online classes, examination and other related academic activities.
- ix. Administrative executive faced challenges to deal issues from home office.
- x. Later, public universities have also started online classes and academic affairs with many challenges.
- xi. Large numbers of students of public and private universities lack required IT devices for online classes, examinations and academic affairs.
- xii. Many students are now staying at their home in semi urban & rural areas, and facing the problems of inadequate internet facilities, electricity facilities and infrastructure facilities.
- xiii. Due to Covid-19 situation S.S.C and H.SC examinations were not held in 2020. Later, result was provided on the basis of the performance of previous public examinations. And the S.S.C and H.SC examinations of 2021 have not even been yet held.
- xiv. Public universities have failed to conduct admission test in 2020 and 2021 due to pandemic. Hence, public universities have failed to enroll new intakes in 2020 and till July 2021.
- xv. Though private universities have enrolled new intakes in 2020 and 2021 but have failed to enroll adequate new intakes in 2020 and 2021.
- xvi. Income levels of many parents have declined due to pandemic. Hence, that might have an impact at the new enrollment of private universities.

### **7.1 Suggestions to overcome the Challenges of Management Education due to Covid-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh**

Due to Covid-19 Pandemic Management Education faces some challenges in Bangladesh. In view of the foregoing analysis the following suggestions are recommended to overcome the challenges:

- i. All the students, faculty members, administrative executives and peoples should be provided Covid-19 vaccine by the Government at free of cost under social safety network.
- ii. Government should ensure adequate Covid-19 treatment at free of cost for deserved people.
- iii. Private corporate and business people may provide financial assistance/donation to the Government, NGOs, and financially underprivileged people for improving social safety net work.
- iv. Government should take necessary steps to expand and improve electricity facilities, internet facilities, mobile phone networks and infrastructure facilities.
- v. Government as well as private universities should take initiative for E library and full digitization of university libraries.
- vi. University should take necessary measures to provide computer laboratories and other required laboratories;

- vii. Public and private universities should take necessary initiative for ensuring required infrastructure and IT facilities for online classes and academic affairs.
- viii. Government, public and private universities should take necessary initiative for providing required IT training to faculty members and administrative staffs to cope up with online classes and academic affairs.
- ix. International networking with capable foreign institutes will help the educational institute to overcome the challenges.
- x. Financial assistance may be provided by the Government to the needy students of public and private universities for required IT devices and internet packages for online classes.
- xi. More scholarship, financial assistance may be provided by the Government and private universities to the students.
- xii. Government should take necessary steps to conduct public examination i.e. S.S.C and H.SC examinations in 2021.
- xiii. Government should take necessary steps to conduct admission test in public universities for new enrollments.
- xiv. University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) may take the role for coordination among Government ministries, public and private universities and necessary regulatory bodies.
- xv. Government may prepare a long term 5 to 10 year's educational strategic plan to ensure uninterrupted education to the students.

## 7.2 Conclusion

From the sequence of our analysis, it seems clear that the management education in Bangladesh is in a process of change with the inclusion of new rules, technology over the relative position and strictly delineated functions of various types of educational institutions. Over the years the management education of Bangladesh has grown rapidly. In fact management education in Bangladesh has widened but depth has to be achieved in true sense. The education has to be made students friendly otherwise the depth cannot be achieved. We are quite optimistic that the management education in Bangladesh will get a boost if the suggested measures are implemented.

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*This contribution is inspired by the results of a large scale survey conducted among faculty and students of 5 European countries (Belgium, France, Estonia, Poland and Bulgaria), in the framework of a EU-funded project on inclusive digital education, as well as from internal reports and various publications.*

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*Further information can be found on the project website : <https://www.theideaproject.eu/>*

### **(i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

There is a consensus that there will (can) be no return to the pre-pandemic situation: online education will continue developing in all institutions. It offers lots of advantages on terms of convenience and accessibility, in particular for the conciliation of work/family/study, with more options offered to the learners. However, rules should be put in place to avoid opportunistic behaviours from learners and clientelism from institutions.

At the moment, all institutions are still in the process of reinventing their models and experimenting, building on the findings of Y1 of the pandemic.

This evolution should be progressive and cautious. There can be no “one size fits all” model and each institutions should decide on its own positioning depending on its situation, expertise and resources. Me-too strategies, merely copying competitors, or pedagogical offering dictated by the market may prove to be risky strategies in the long run.

Inside the institutions, it is recommended that special committees, associating all stakeholders, are created for planning the transition to the new model. An authoritarian top-down approach forcing the evolution is likely to be met with reluctance and obstruction.

Face to face (F2F) remains essential in normal operating conditions and 100% distance/online should be reserved to specific programmes or targets. The analysis of the learners’ and faculty’s preferences (online, F2F, hybrid) shows important variations among the learners profiles and no general pattern can be extracted. It further supports the recommendation that the approach must be customised by programme.

Institutions will need to upgrade capacities:

- IT and equipment
- Trainings for the faculty to accompany them for the adaptation of their pedagogy (this includes both trainings on pedagogical practices and on the use of technology)

- Support services for both students and professors
- Recruiting new in-house expertise such as pedagogical engineers, technicians...

Special efforts should be directed towards the faculty to support their evolution. There is a risk to see a split of the faculty body between F2F and online professors.

There is a need to invent new pedagogical methods and new assessment methods. The adhesion and commitment of the faculty is crucial and should be not only stimulated but also rewarded by the institutions.

Exams are a burning issue for both students and faculty (organisation and design, supervision, frauds). They are also the key to reputation, academic value and quality.

While an 100%online offer allows to access a wider number prospective learners and have a greater geographical reach, this advantage is counterbalanced by the intensification of the competition. Examples of American universities offering online courses at a fraction of the price of their F2F equivalent show that the competition may increase.

In the future HEIs may be challenged by new content providers, such as the GAFA, Netflix... as evidenced by offers such as Google Career Certificates., McKinsey's Academy or LinkedIn learning...

New learning strategies may emerge, such as an individualisation of the learning programme on the model of the personal learning cloud (PLC) for executive education, or institution-hopping which is the accumulation of micro credits from different institutions or providers.

## **(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

Institutions will offer a diverse portfolio of programmes that can be classified among 3 continuous dimensions:

- 100% face to face vs. 100% distance
- Synchronous vs. asynchronous
- Decided by the students vs. imposed by the institution

Efforts and pedagogical innovation must be brought in to safeguard students engagement (flipped classrooms, groupwork, increased interactivity...)

The development of new formats imposes a reorganisation of the pedagogical process, with the coordination between the faculty and new/other experts, such as digital pedagogy advisors, technical experts, integrators... this necessitates a collaborative approach that may challenge a sector that traditionally confers a prevalence to the faculty.

The development of new formats imposes to rethink the traditional organisation of the schedules, as it cannot be a digital 'copy-paste' of the face to face approach.

## **(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

Among the threats that have been the most frequently mentioned during the qualitative survey, we can mention:

## **Digital exhaustion and concentration problems.**

Isolation and depression risk (this and the latter for both learners and faculty)

Problem of discipline and course behaviours, (pyjama learning, names without faces), weaker learner participation and interactions

## **Difficulties for keeping a daily schedule**

It is to underline that online education can undermine the learners' experience: scarcer meetings and on-campus socialisation, weakening of the sense of institutional belonging, lack of interaction and collective learning.

Various surveys and research suggest that online education poses a challenge for vulnerable students. Institutions must ensure that the inclusivity of online education is maintained to minimize disengagement and drop out. Here again faculty training (re-training) is crucial. Inclusivity should be considered in its wider understanding of "the recognition of all students' entitlement to a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences" (Gravestock, 2017).

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**BHUTAN**



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## **EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Bhutan is a mountainous country with an area of 38,394 square kilometers. It is nestled in eastern Himalayas, bordered by India and China in the North.

Bhutan provides free education and healthcare services. The overall literacy rate is now over 71.4% and average life expectancy is over 70 years. The primary healthcare coverage is over 90%.

The country now has 48 hospitals, 184 Primary Health Centres (PHCs), 54 Sub-posts, 552 Out-Reach Clinics (ORCs), three thromde health centers, three Referral Hospitals and six Health Information and Service Centres (HISCs). The third democratic Prime Minister and the foreign minister are medical doctors while the health minister is a public health educator.

The first COVID-19 case was detected on 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. As of 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2021 Bhutan has a total of 2580 positive cases of COVID-19. But only 30 active cases as 2547 had recovered. The country lost only three COVID-19 patients. All with known underlying medical conditions.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic had overwhelmed the health system over-stretching the resources, both health workers and financial resources had to be remobilized to respond to the new challenge.

As Bhutan shares a long porous border with India in the East, West and the South, where movement of people are free, any spike of cases in India has a direct spillover effect into Bhutan. Thus it became inevitable that the international boundary be sealed off, and closed since 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2020.

The country had already seen two national lockdowns and several subnational lockdowns disrupting the social services including education, to prevent outbreaks and spread of COVID-19 into the country.

A 21-day mandatory facility quarantine and testing is being enforced since March 2020.

A mandatory 7-day quarantine for people traveling from high to low-risk areas. Enhanced surveillance and testing strategies implemented for early detection and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Managing a pandemic has been an uphill task for the Royal Government of Bhutan, as it involves not only combating the pandemic while ensuring continuation of health services to minimize the socio-economic damage caused as an aftermath.

Bhutan has accordingly adopted a national approach with active involvement of government and civil society to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. 53 registered civil society organizations and other stakeholders stepped up partnerships with government agencies showing solidarity in the national COVID-19 response. The strong government leadership has motivated the country to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, so far, with relative success. However, there are several challenges and vulnerabilities. With limited or no manufacturing capacities within the country, Bhutan has to import almost all of its drugs, PPEs, commodities, equipment and other medical supplies. Given this

import dependence, there are critical challenges in mobilizing and in delivering health services particularly for women, children, people with chronic conditions, disability, drug and alcohol dependence. These led to severe disruption in the economic sectors, particularly the tourism, hospitality and entertainment sectors. The national lockdowns and several localized lockdowns impacted the earnings and livelihood.

The Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu (DGRK) established under the leadership of His Majesty the King plays a crucial role in providing income support to individuals whose livelihoods were affected because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Kingdom of Bhutan has two universities: The Royal University of Bhutan and the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB). It has many colleges and schools and training institutions. The COVID -19 Pandemic equally hit all the educational institutions with lockdowns demanding online interventions while the ICT services are still not fully universal. While all stakeholders adopted innovative approaches to minimize interruptions to normality as much as possible it was not so with educational institutions as continuity in education and training of future citizens could not be afforded to be suspended. Therefore, this study attempts to look into how three learning organizations, a private college, management school and a medical university, are coping up with the PANDEMIC, viz:

- I) Royal Thimphu College (RTC);
- II) Gedu College of Business Studies (GCBS);
- III) Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB).

### **I) Royal Thimphu College (RTC)**

The Royal Thimphu College (RTC) is a private college affiliated with the Royal University of Bhutan. Since 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 it had closed in- person classes. It made significant improvements in delivery of lessons through online platforms. RTC is considering alternatives for the way forward. It had recognized communication as the most essential for providing support to its students in reaching out to students and parents/guardians for their cooperation and understanding and to keep up with an online mode of teaching-learning. It posts regular updates and advisories on campus operations on the website and Facebook page.

Continuous outreach is provided for students studying abroad including their parents, host institutions, and relevant government agencies through Emails, calls and Whatsapp groups managed by the RTC International Relations Office.

An interdepartmental Task Force is responsible for rapid information sharing and addressing issues related to the fallout of the pandemic.

As a part of its roll-out online learning, early on following key issues were identified:

- **Technical:** Enhancement of IT hardware and infrastructure to support the new avenues for online learning; Finding and rolling out online platforms that are suitable for the Bhutanese context, over and above already in place online infrastructure such as a “Moodle”-based Learning Management System or “Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)” and online “cloud” file storage and sharing for dissemination, including a wider range of tools from Google’s apps for education like Google Classroom and Meet, or Zoom;

- **Training of tutors:** Training on effective engagement and delivery to bring all onboard. It was apparent that this must go beyond technical aspects and cover also the changes in style, delivery, student interaction, etc. that must occur; and
- **Student Access, Engagement and Participation:** Addressing the issue of enhanced internet access that required for teachers off-campus, and for students being asked to learn from home/remotely.

## 1. Technical / ICT measures

**Internet access:** For getting learning back on track various online tools are being identified as the end-user expense associated with internet access, especially mobile data meeting social distancing needs. Recognizing the pressure of the nationwide internet access issues, the College has rolled out mobile data top-ups to help keep teaching-learning on track. For on-campus faculty members, WiFi access hotspots were upgraded, and the roll out of wired ethernet connections to all apartments for reliable network access.

**VLE Server platform:** Server resources dedicated to the Moodle VLE installation were immediately doubled (processors, RAM, and storage space). A separate testing platform was established to test upgrades and enhancements. The Debian Linux server and the Moodle platform upgraded from version 3.2 to 3.8.2.

**Back-ups and redundancy:** RTC a nightly back-up plan for a critical servers and data, including the RTC Management Information Systems databases, VLE, rtcCloud, other websites and portals (www.rtc.bt, my.rtc.bt, results.rtc.bt, library.rtc.bt) expanded to individuals' workstations: Google Backup and Sync to consistently backup all important data on individual staff and faculty workstations, as well as to allow access remotely.

**Setting up remote access:** In addition Google Shared Drives are deployed and their use expanded to manage common pools of remotely-accessible data. For remote working, three options were deployed: AnyDesk, Google Chrome Remote Desktop, and a Virtual Private Network (VPN). So that users could log on to their own computers from anywhere. The VPN option was installed on individuals' laptops to allow secure login-based remote access to the campus network including the MIS databases.

**Facilitating tutors' online teaching:** Besides the VLE refresher trainings and additional training on recording lessons and voice-over PPTs, two high-quality recording workstations were setup along with 4 more classrooms with wired and wireless internet access for reliable broadcast or recording of lessons in conducive and quiet environments. Appropriate guidance and technical assistance are being provided by the IT office.

**Technical support:** New channels for technical support to students and faculty members were also rolled out, including an IT Support facebook page with support over messaging, a phone hotline, a Whatsapp line, and a Telegram line. A series of quick "How-to" guides are continuously developed, including: Using RTC Classes (MIS) off campus, Setting up Google Backup and Sync, Mobile Data USB tethering to PC without wifi, Set up of Google Chrome Remote Desktop, Basic use of Google Meet conferencing, Use of smartphone as PC webcam and mic.

## 2. Human resources management.

**Employee welfare:** The staff welfare is being attended to, so that everyone is working hard and in many cases well beyond usual expectations. Hand sanitizers and masks are provided. The College organizes morning yoga and open outdoor treks during weekends to support their overall wellbeing.

With extension of the closure, more training for proper planning was undertaken preparing for possibility of a complete lockdown which helped in calming down the extremely stressful situations of the beginning.

**Work planning and redeployment of staff:** RTC's main operations revolve around the academic programmes. The transition to online teaching-learning required extensive time and effort to monitor and support of the academic programmes. As such, 4 officers were pulled in to create a pool of Programme Leader Assistants additionally to help monitoring both teaching and the students.

Offices were restructured wherever possible for efficient use of the human resources to support continuity of academic semester. Half of RTC's employees work under substantially adapted capacities and workplan.

**Work-from-home:** The College has adopted work-at-home or staggered office modes taking stock of connectivity and resources at home for all. Each staff at least one working day from home reflections helped in improvement in the development of the work-from-home guidelines. A few while the faculty already work under flexible modes, availing campus resources and attending occasional meetings whenever required.

### **3. Student well-being**

#### **3.1. Bhutanese students at RTC**

At the time of the first closure, regular students were allowed but not required to leave the residence halls. Movements were allowed for those staying back, but monitored at the gate. Normal campus services continued. Basic measures such as soap at all bathrooms and hand-wash stations, and signages on health practices were placed in all appropriate areas. Any students showing signs of illness were transported to the hospital or cold/flu clinics. Student feedback indicated that most were concerned about keeping their academics on track and most did stay behind feeling they could better focus on their studies. The Student Services Department found a few students not maintaining proper residence hall etiquette or violating curfew. Day scholars expressed concerns for not being allowed to come to campus. All were advised that the mobility restrictions were necessary health precautions. Their motivation for keeping their academics on track was commendable as the process of obtaining e-copies of required readings and scanning books necessary for all ongoing modules were facilitated. The data top-ups also alleviated some of the concerns. Professional counselling support is being provided through online appointment and via phone hotline.

#### **3.2. International students at RTC**

Appropriate communication channels were established to rapidly communicate any new development to the international students and sharing information between the students, parents, and the students' home institutions. They were informed that the semester would continue, albeit in online mode for as long as necessary. Their semester continue fully through the online mode even when in-person classes at the RTC campus resumes.

#### **3.3. RTC Bhutanese students currently abroad**

RTC has degree students abroad, but has built dedicated contact points in the RTC International Relations Office for liaising with counterparts as a matter of routine. The efforts started with pre-departure briefings and is being continued into regular check-ins including individual video calls. Since the worsening of the COVID-19 situation IRO staff were in constant touch with them to provide the support required including virtual appointments with professional College counsellor. It has a wide range of reactions among the students. Some are much calmer than others. About 1/4th of

them have needed much more hand-holding. Though the College dealt previously with Bhutanese students abroad having health issues, the nature of this crisis has been unprecedented, and the easiest solution (returning back) is not possible.

Letters are being sent to each student and their parents to explain the situation, provide the standard health and travel advice, and indicate options for coming back.

#### **4. Academic engagement**

The task of getting all on-board with online teaching-learning fully was considered as an extremely important. The online teaching-learning infrastructure were expanded quickly and several rounds of refresher training were organized for faculty members. New avenues for online learning support and interventions to meet the training and mindset challenges as best as possible for tutors and learners are constantly being pursued. Their initial difficulties were not only just the initial internet access challenges, but especially in keeping the teaching-learning organized for the students as there was risk that they can be bombarded with many self-directed tasks to carry out such as readings, videos, exercises, assignments, etc.. And some have found it was so overwhelming that they lost sight of the main concepts they are expected to grasp. Hence, a key part of the refresher training for faculty members were in emphasizing the importance of going beyond just posting materials for student consumption to actually providing detailed instruction on how to organize their learning in each topic, and making clear what learning outcomes they were expected to achieve.

##### **4.1. Engagement of tutors**

Faculty members are now all very engaged and constantly improving the quality of their online instruction. Most of the 194 VLE courses are now fully active. Many courses continue for work from home to ensure some distancing, and about half still prefer to work from their workstations because of the more conducive working environment. Some have also noted that despite not having to go daily to regularly scheduled in-person classes, the online-teaching learning is even harder work.

There are many active teaching-learning engagements and assessments happening in the Virtual Learning Environment such as voice-over powerpoint presentations, online discussion forums, assignment submissions, and even self-recorded student presentations. Several faculty members have started using Google Meet or Zoom to meet the students and engage them in discussions directly.

The Library staff have provided support in uploading e-copies of all required readings for all modules, either ebooks, articles, or scanned books from the library stock. Programme management committees weekly meetings have now been streamlined to meeting every two weeks (with some tutors joining the meetings remotely). The programme committees have explored everything from "synchronous" and "asynchronous" online teaching-learning, pros and cons of different video/audio/text communication modes, block- scheduled classes, variety in online assessments, inviting participation, two-way feedback, etc. Most have also been able to incorporate the relationship of each academic subject to the current real- world COVID-19 theme.

##### **4.2. Engagement of students**

Feedbacks from students on how the transition to online teaching-learning is going is being frequently obtained. Numerous students have provided positive feedback, including appreciation for providing the data packages. College finds very reassuring to find the high level of participation of the students by taking responsibility for their own learning like never before. It has been heartening that most of them are rising to this challenge and keeping their academics on track in the online learning mode. For a handful who had difficulties individual arrangements are being made to support them.

Feedback from the students as well as the tutors indicate preference for block classes rather than hour-to-hour classes in the online system. For example, the Business programme has assigned a day to a module and the 5 modules that each student has to study is covered between Monday through Friday with the five tutors using his/her day with lectures, videos, google meet, interactions through Messenger/ Whatsapp etc. and also give assignment to be followed up next week. This kept students focused and the tutor also more organized. While this could be one good model, there would be many other lessons that can be learnt from this new experience in different campuses of the university. It would be timely to have a common platform of the Academic Deans of all the colleges to share experiences and good practices. The University might take an initiative to form such a forum.

The RTC Task Force initiated a phone survey of students to assess their experience to find:

- i. 82% found the VLE to be user friendly;
- ii. 88% indicated they were provided with the opportunity to participate in VLE Discussion Forums;
- iii. Time spent daily online for learning varied from less than 1 hour to the whole day with majority within 1- 4 hrs daily; and
- iv. 88% indicated the VLE resource materials are enough for their reference and understanding.

A critical feedback reported was that VLE is not always user friendly, uploads are all over and not always organized. It suggested for more VLE guidelines and options be provided to resubmit assignments. More room for discussion to overcome difficulty in understanding online classes. Suggestion: Stagger the assignments from different modules. Notify students on any new upload on VLE. Students also mentioned that they are using Google classroom, WeChat, Messenger, and WhatsApp (frequently). The video conference was not always so user friendly as there were network issues; it felt crowded and voices break up.

The feedback was disseminated to the Programme Leaders and the IT Office for follow ups. Action plans are now being reformulated keeping these feedbacks in mind.

### **4.3. Monitoring and support**

The academic management monitors the progress of every course module and is constantly providing students and faculty with guidance and feedback. There is also a hotline created for students to make academic inquiries. Non-teaching staff, the IT personnel, and the college management as a whole is constantly monitoring and facilitating the students' learning and progress. Overall, the College is on track to continue the semester with minimal disruptions.

Each academic programme conducted its programme committee meetings in a weekly manner through March to monitor and reported the participation of every student in the online teaching and any interventions needed to the college management. VLE is the official platform that provides the details of work-plans/syllabus, links to the readings, and shows clear evidence of progress made by each tutor. Best practices are shared among the programmes and any technical hitches are reported in a timely manner, which is mostly assisted by non-teaching staff of the college.

Numerous other staff members at the officer level are now redeployed to assist and support the academics to ensure that there are no compromises made in terms of learning by the students and the required progress of the semester. Specifically, to facilitate the programme leaders' extensive work of managing and monitoring the tutors and the online teaching-learning, officer-level non-teaching staff members were allocated individually to each of 11 programmes as assistants to the PLs.

Three rounds of monitoring were done to evaluate tutor activity on the VLE. The monitoring system

looked at a variety of aspects of the online teaching-learning: VLE issues (amount of info, language/wording), level of value addition from tutors (e.g., clear instructions, tutor-added notes, audio, or video guidance), clarity and organization of materials and assessments, clear timelines, provision of readings, lesson coverage up to date, use of jargon-free personal and smooth instructions for students to follow, level of assignments (challenging and not only directly out of textbooks, more applied and with reference to Bhutanese context), making more direct connections between essential readings and assignments, use of formal and informal ‘check-ins’ and feedback gathering to check students’ comprehension and progress.

The first evaluation checked each of 194 module sections for minimum presence and activity on the VLE; 83% were found to be active. The next two evaluations required active presence as the minimum requirement and went beyond to checked all posts / activities / links / files for each module and generated individual feedback for the concerned tutors and respective PLs for further follow up where necessary.

Those individually contacted were encouraged to keep up with their studies and queried about any challenges they may be facing in doing so. The challenges were found to range from logistical/practical difficulties (like internet connectivity and computer access, access to resources, home circumstances) to learning difficulties related to the new style of teaching-learning (difficulty in staying organized, keeping up with schedules and deadlines, adapting to the online system, managing reading and studies more independently, challenges in seeking peer support). The monitoring team and management committees continues with their efforts to address these challenges to ensure each student has the opportunity to keep up with his/her learning

## **5. Adaptations and alternatives to the standard semester flow**

RTC has the major concern for its responsibility to stakeholders and funding sources. As the college has ongoing fixed costs, e.g., salaries which, without the completion and progression to future semesters or the infusion of new stabilization funds, leading to cash flow problems that would require severe austerity measures, or even layoffs and shutdown. The government obviously might prioritize essential sectors before considering any bailouts, stabilization, or stimulus for the tertiary education sector. Thus the sector wish rather to help the government during these difficult times by taking full responsibility and all possible steps to manage by itself.

### **5.1. Semester schedules**

While the online teaching-learning is in full-swing, several plans are being considered for altering the academic calendar for this Spring 2020 semester and beyond:

- The main alternative being considered is a limited extension of the college calendar by approximately 3 weeks. The new Autumn semester to start sometime in the later part of August. Subsequently, the Autumn semester extended by reducing the 2020-21 winter vacation. This will be one of the solutions in case the current situation prolongs for next two months and the colleges can still resume classroom teaching even by end of June, as only minimum time would be required for ‘refresher’ or review sessions before final exams, and for completing practicals. The general principle would be to expand the semester duration for now and compress semesters using reduced breaks between semesters, until the ‘normal’ academic calendar is restored.

In case of prolonged closure of in-person classes, the programme structures could be rearranged in logical sequences to club more theory-based modules earlier and more practical modules later. Where useful to do so, modules could even be taught in blocks over 3-4 weeks, one at a time, to

allow for focused engagement of both tutors and learners. An academic schedule combining both the traditional model for certain sets of modules and the one-course-at-a-time (OCAAT) model for particular modules (e.g., during ‘summer’ and ‘winter’ sessions) could work optimally to make up for any time lost due to prolonged closures.

However, the colleges and University have to be open and flexible to make adjustments both in terms of the calendar as well as how to schedule and conduct the semester-end examinations. Being prepared to take some initiatives now will also build resilience against future disruptions.

## **5.2. Assessments**

One anticipated challenge is ensuring the validity of assessments, especially examinations. The College is actively researching practices being considered by other colleges in the country as well as practices already being implemented universities worldwide.

While most continuous assessments can continue as planned, for the interim, a reasonable substitute for class tests is time-bound and scheduled VLE quizzes (comprising higher-order questions). Although these are naturally ‘open-book’, the experience thus far shows they still have the necessary reliability to distinguish stronger and weaker learners. Other substitutes include assignments and even one-on-one remote viva.

If in-person examinations remain unfeasible, the academic progression can still continue through a conversion of the assessment approach for each to one that is fully continuous assessment. The exams can then be take-home assessments that are open-book, or substituted with other assignments that do not depend critically on internet access / computer performance within a specific scheduled time slot.

The conduct of the semester-end exams remains a variable that could challenge the validity of the marks for the semester. Therefore, until the present disruption is resolved, marks could be recorded but captured on a purely pass-fail basis for purposes of calculating the cumulative average. Many universities around the world have already implemented Pass- Fail final grading during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **5.3. Use of the “Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning” framework**

The University already has a framework for accreditation of prior certified learning that in fact accepts up to 1/3rd the total programme to be recognized in this manner, in line with the provisions of the Bhutan Qualifications Framework. Essentially, the credits that are accumulated at the colleges during the present remote learning situation could be considered as ‘certified learning’ that happened outside the normal academic structure of the programmes, but which matched well with the programmes’ requirements: these credits could be fully recognized and accepted as valid for semester progression so long as there was a “pass” mark against each module of credit, while the exact percentage marks are set aside and not factored into a cumulative average for calculating the final mark on the transcripts.

The same framework actually presents a new opportunity for the University at this time. Thousands of Bhutanese students that were studying abroad are presently returning to Bhutan. Many may want to continue accumulating relevant credits while they are back in Bhutan, even in the remote learning mode. These can be accommodated in a straightforward manner and provided certified marksheets to transfer credits back to their own universities. Others, however, may decide not to return back to their universities abroad. Colleges in Bhutan could support such students in continuing their studies on a self-financed basis by accommodating recognition of at least the entire first year in the best matched

programmes within Bhutan, so they could join laterally into the upper years of the local programmes. Again, this would be done on an extraordinary basis, without requiring every single module matched, but rather recognizing an equivalent overall bulk of credit. In this manner, the University would actually contribute beyond its own walls to a wider social reality potentially growing in Bhutan.

## **II) Gaedu College of Business Studies (GCBS)**

After the first COVID-19 case in Bhutan, precautionary measures were put in place to maintain social distancing as a preventive measure **Gaedu College of Business Studies (GCBS)** based on the directives of the Royal Government of Bhutan, as a part of preparedness to fight (COVID-19), had prepared this response plan to ensure and cater regular online classes to the students and also to keep the staffs engaged. This was to cater for the exceptional situation but not an alternative to the in-class format.

The COVID-19 response plan has three objectives:

- 1) To provide a clear and concise procedure for the Staff and the Students on the online classes;
- 2) To ensure that all staff (teaching and administrative) will continually support students' learning online; and
- 3) To ensure the sharing of information related to academic activities and procedures with all concerned.

### **Procedures and Arrangements**

#### **1. Registration for New Students**

The registration was done online for the new students through college websites and social media. It was mandatory for all the students to have a personal email account. The registration was open while the failure to complete the online registration was to be considered as non-reporting.

#### **2. Online Major Selection for 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students**

For Year II major selection, the programme management was to notify all the students via Class Representatives' (CR). The information and online registration form for major selection was also be communicated to students through social media, the college website, and other modes of communication.

#### **3. Online Classes**

The online classes Teaching and learning including assessments were offered online. The Timetable for online classes was displayed on the college website and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It was also communicated to students via the College website, Social Media, and other modes of communication.

Tutors concerned shared the outlines for online courses on VLE and made them available to students before the commencement of the semester under the supervision of the programme leaders.

#### **4. Attendance in Online Classes**

Attendance was one of the important components of online classes. The Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs, Office of the Programme Management, and the tutors made the students aware of the importance of attendance. The Office of the Programme Management provided attendance sheets to the tutors. Tutors took attendance for every online class sincerely and submitted the record

to the respective Programme Leaders. Students could check their attendance status on Attendance Portal.

If the internet is unavailable to students or faculty due to electricity or other issues, the student could inform the faculty through cell phones and Apps like WhatsApp or WeChat, etc.. about his/her presence. The faculty was to inform students in advance of this requirement.

### **5. Online Continuous Assessment (Quiz, Assignment, and Project, etc.)**

For online courses, the Faculty posted the quizzes, assignments, and project contents posted in the VLE in advance on specified dates.

Quiz, Assignment, and Project reports were required to be taken in written format which the faculty had to ensure that students had posted their copies of quizzes and assignments on the specified time given in his/her VLE.

Faculty could also ask students to send their copies to the faculty provided email ID in case of uploading on the VLE doesn't work.

For oral presentations (VIVA) from students on assignments and projects, the faculty concerned announce a specific date, preferably multiple dates in the VLE well in advance with the options given to the students to give a presentation on the later dates through the ZOOM Meeting or Google Meet.

### **6. Examination**

The mid-semester test and end-term examinations were scheduled later and notified to the staff and students well in advance before 3 weeks of commencement of examinations.

### **7. Tools for Online Classes**

Tools for conducting Online classes that were made available and in use are:

- 1) VLE;
- 2) Google Classroom and Google meet;
- 3) Zoom;
- 4) Big Blue Button; and
- 5) WeChat and WhatsApp (Secondary source of sharing information)

### **8. Students Guidelines and Responsibilities**

Students were responsible for regularly checking their student portal in VLE for their course attendance, course outline, contents and specified dates. The students could coordinate with respective course tutors and Programme Leaders for clarifications, if required. Students were also responsible for timely uploading their assignments on VLE or email to the concerned faculty in case of uploading doesn't work within the specified dates. Students assessment copies that were found plagiarized were to be given "Zero" mark. Students were responsible for ensuring smooth operation of the online session and not giving online session IDs to any members who were not part of the session. All students had to ensure maintaining a minimum attendance of 90% for each online course in order to be allowed to attend the semester-end examinations.

### **9. Faculty Responsibilities**

The module coordinator must submit the module work plan for the semester Sept-Dec 2020 to the programme management office and the module coordinator along with concerned tutors would choose the most appropriate mode of assessment in term of convenience, fit for purpose and

evaluation. It would be closely monitored by the College Academic Committee and programme management. Module Coordinators were requested to closely monitor and coordinate the overall teaching/learning and assessments of the module. All the module tutors must ensure 100% coverage of the syllabus at the end of the semester. All the module tutors teaching the same module must use the same assessment tools to have a set standard across the programmes. VLE must be used as a primary mode of tools for online teaching and learning. Apart from VLE, tutors could use various other means of online delivery methods such as ZOOM, Big Blue Button, Skype, Google Meet, WhatsApp, etc. The online assessment must be completed within three weeks turnaround time. The tutors must be responsible to notify the students in advance and alert them about the assessments. Students who had failed to submit online assignments consecutively for two times would be reported to Programme Leader Office by the respective tutors.

All the tutors must submit the online teaching and learning monthly report to the office of respective programme leaders. In case of the Common Foundation, the MBA Programme leader would be the focal person. Faculty were also requested to maintain the daily online class attendance record.

#### **10. Face to Face as well as online Teaching and Learning**

First Year students (new admission) were brought into the campus for face to face teaching learning as well as provided orientation to the online teaching learning modalities and using online platforms. The Final Year students were brought back to GCBS campus and face to face teaching and learning while the Second Year Students were provided with online teaching, learning and assessments. All who come to the campus are required to bring at least two sets of cloth face masks and other necessary items based on individual needs as movement would be restricted in the college while food would be served from the common mess. All the students as well as the parents/guardians/guests must undergo thermal screening, scan the Druk Trace, hand wash/sanitize, maintain physical and social distance and wear face mask at all times.

Briefing sessions on new norms of COVID-19 safety protocols and others are conducted frequently.

#### **Phase III – Spring Semester 2021**

##### **Face to Face as well as online Teaching and Learning**

First Year students (new admission) were sent home and administered online teaching learning and assessments in January 2021. Final Year and Second Year Students were kept on campus for face to face teaching learning and assessments from March 2021. All were asked to bring at least two sets of cloth face masks and other necessary items based on individual needs as movement shall be restricted in the college. Everyone required to avail food from the common mess. All the students as well as the parents/guardians/guests undergo thermal screening, scan the Druk Trace, hand wash/sanitize, maintain physical and social distance, foot sanitizers and disinfectants in place, and wear face mask at all times. College developed a contingency plan for the Worst Case Scenario and submitted to MoH. President is the Local Gedu Covid-19 Task Force Member and actively monitors the protocol compliance both within the college and the Community and National Highway. Developed care facility in the GCBS Campus to support Domestic Violence Victims during the lockdown.

### **III) Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB)**

The Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB) as medical institution was engaged directly on pandemic related duties.

In fact selected students were trained on sample collection during the confirmation of first Covid case in the country. The trained students were involved in mass testing as sample collectors during the Lockdowns in Thimphu and Phuntsholing. The students and interns were also involved in mobile flu clinic (sample collection and testing) in Thimphu, Phuntsholing, Paro and Haa beyond lockdown. Senior residents with the teaching Faculties from JDWNRH had served in the Isolation Wards with the COVID positive patients. Students were also involved in quarantine duties in Thimphu and Phuntsholing during lockdowns. The full time teaching faculties, junior residents, interns and selected students were involved in Health Help Centre (HHC) for teleconsultations and as emergency call responders during both the lockdowns in Thimphu. The teams of officials and teaching faculties from KGUMSB had developed modules and conducted to training on basic health care to Desuups across 15 dzongkhags for additional human resources to assist health professionals during worst case scenario. Desuups-Plus will work as assistants to nurses in the isolation facilities. Similarly, the teams were involved in providing COVID related training to the 38<sup>th</sup> to 42<sup>nd</sup> batches of Integrated Desuup Training conducted in different centres.

#### **1. COVID Awareness Programme**

University had coordinated and developed the following training modules:

- a) Sensitization module for all the frontline workers;
- b) Basic health care for frontline workers;
- c) Sensitization module to RENEW volunteers; and
- d) Module on sample collection.

The selected teaching faculties of the University were involved in awareness programmes on Covid-19 precaution (hand hygiene, use of mask, physical distancing, staying at home, avoid mass gathering).

#### **2. Nationwide Vaccination Campaign**

The selected students from all the Faculties and Institutes under the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB) attended training on Bhutan Vaccination System (BVS) as well as refresher training on enhanced Bhutan Vaccination System (BVS) and different types of vaccines such as Moderna, Pfizer and Sinopharm. The trained staff and students were deployed for both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> nationwide vaccination campaign in Thimphu Dzongkhag and in Phuntsholing. The residents were posted to various vaccination centres across the country to monitor side effects of the vaccine. Eight senior students and three teaching faculties were also involved in phlebotomy (collection of blood sample) from 20<sup>th</sup> July for four days for the study of heterologous and homologues study.

#### **3. Other COVID Duty**

Director of the University is serving as the Chairperson in Technical Advisor Group and President as a member in National Immunization Technical Advisor Group. One teaching faculty is involved as eastern dzongkhag TAG and one as a team lead presentative of KGUMSB to Ministry of Health. The University also supported in providing Spa & wellness course to the tourist guides in collaboration with TCB. Similarly, non-medical staff of the University were involved in the capacity of Desuups as frontline workers.

## **Academic Activities**

Since most of the students and teaching faculties were involved in combating COVID-19 activities during the lockdowns, thus the academic activities were limited to a few online sessions. The academic requirements were covered up from semester breaks and other government holidays.

The academic sessions are now conducted following new normal COVID-19 protocol as follows:

- 1) Covid test of all students having clinical practice in the hospital and supervisor (faculty);
- 2) Random testing of first year students as they do not have clinical practice;
- 3) Hand washing facility is set up in various areas in the campus;
- 4) Initiated temperature check and tracing and monitoring of the student with flu like symptoms;
- 5) Visitors to use Druk Trace; and
- 6) Developed faculty academic contingency plan.

## **Closing**

The COVID-19 Pandemic has undermined the regular academic programmes and activities. But fortunately for Bhutan as a small nation with The King as The Head of State it could provide timely overall direction and leadership critical to overcome this medical emergency.

Added with the foresight of the political leadership of the present government, with a surgeon as Prime Minister and a qualified public health professional as health minister, the raise in salaries of the health and teachers that were effected, motivated the health ministry to handle the health issues. While teachers under education ministry were geared up to ensure the continuity of education and training of school children and university students were least affected.

Under the vision of His Majesty The King, the vision of Bhutan to upgrade ICT technology under its Digital Drukgyul was a blessing in disguise. The need for online education and training was the only viable option to reach out education and training to as many Bhutanese.

So as is indicated from the account of work of the three institutions affiliated under the two universities of the Kingdom the faculties, officials and staff have risen to the occasion to play their part in overcoming the many challenges. With the impending third wave and the future possibilities the country is consciously strategizing for living under new-normal situations in addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements. Even if things normalize, I see that future Bhutan will continue to engage many of the tools that are tried and tested in delivery of education and training towards insuring proper preparation of Bhutan's future citizens. Bhutan that I grew up with, had a culture that a full person has to be one who is knowledgeable in most of the thirteen-trade called Zorig Chusum (thirteen trades and skills).

It was more than making an individual a full person it is a strategy of equipping the person with life-skills for survival, sustainability and above living a self-reliant life. The pandemic has taught us both that a man is not alone - yet alone. So we have to be adaptable to both the possibilities to live with the rest of the World and yet in isolation. For the survival and continuity, everyone has to be aware and be prepared to handle, therefore, any trade, trick, knowledge and method that were applied in surviving the pandemic. Many technological solutions applied to overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 made possible by technology and therefore become a part of living. The smart phone cursed by many has the attributes to connect, educate and help no matter whom in surviving.

I may take this opportunity as I end this brief attempt in compilation, to sincerely acknowledge the **source materials shared by** Presidents of the three colleges of the Kingdom, AMDISA for the opportunity and Bhutan Communication Coordination Mechanism (CCM) of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria for the material on COVID -19, I had used in this effort.

Any lapses are mine and only mine own.

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### **Post pandemic teaching-learning: Reimagining education in post pandemic world**

The pandemic caused by the coronavirus has seriously upended the system of teaching and learning all across the globe. Since classroom learning has shifted to computer-based learning, almost all aspects of learning are being tested. Format of teaching and learning as a whole is being reimagined and there is a growing possibility that these things will last for decades. Closure of schools incited by the lockdowns and making the education system vulnerable, has caused the relevant authorities to strive to address challenges and plug the gap. From all of these, it is clear that a blended learning will be a new norm.

In the case of RIM, the learning has become a blend of ‘learning by screen’ or remote learning and face to face learning through actual classroom delivery. As far as the effects of the pandemic lasts, remote learning will continue to play a major role as part of a new norm. Digitisation of education is the future and we have been making significant strides towards fully becoming digital. Since digital learning comes with difficulties, steps must be therefore taken to make digital learning more accessible, hence everyone can benefit from this mode.

Despite the emergence of newer technologies, conventional classroom teaching with face-to-face delivery is still the best mode of learning. Hence classroom teachings can never be replaced although technology is a great enabler and plays a significant role in the education system. As digital learning with the aid of technologies emerges, teachers will have to adapt to technology which would require revamping of teacher training along with pedagogical upgradation. The role of the teachers will see a significant change and will have to adapt to online classes through the use of PowerPoint, audio-visual presentations and lecture recordings which is already in place as in the case of RIM.

It is understood that schools, students, families and community organizations form an ecosystem with all the interdependence that this implies. The new education system should take on the crucial responsibility of identifying, designing and connecting students to learning opportunities characterized by student support, learning by doing and community engagement. By embodying the convergence of these three things, the education system will be able to take care of the social and emotional issues in faculty and students. It is also equally important for the faculty to keep their students grounded virtually through the parallel chats and other online platforms, so that a virtual relationship is built within. The essence of the post-pandemic learning is to inculcate a growth mindset to tap on online learning as a measure of learning recovery.

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## **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

### **(i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a scourge, which portends mixed implications for the global educational landscape including management education. From late 2019, the pandemic has continued to destroy educational institutions at all levels and rendered students and lecturers redundant – a situation that calls for pragmatic solutions. Even, several proprietors of private universities and business schools are already rethinking and reinventing their teaching models as different countries of the world are opening up. Overall, the pandemic has caused inestimable economic damage, emotional stress, and psychological pains to universities/business schools, students, parents, and lecturers due to temporary learning disruptions in some countries and permanent closure in others. Worse still, hundreds of millions of people including learners and educators have lived under frustration through partial and complete lockdowns. It would be an act of insanity to imagine that education and learning would return to the old ways as the world gradually re-opens. The reality is that; it is no more business as usual. Educational administrators, teachers, parents, students, and policymakers must avoid insanity, because “insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results” (Albert Einstein).

From a professional standpoint, educational practices would obviously be modified in the foreseeable future. The future looks uncertain and bleak for lagging educational institutions because no one knows when the world will return to normal. Therefore, the three levels of education across the world – primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary institutions must embrace the learning modification in the emerging touchless world, by adopting a paradigm shift in the way education would be dispense to the learners. One important takeaway from the pandemic in the global education sector is that it has permanently shaped the way learning is done. Learning now takes place in a blended manner – an amalgam of face-to-face learning and virtual learning. Face-to-face is the traditional approach that was pervasive before the pandemic struck, while virtual learning is learning remotely on different online and electronic platforms. Virtual learning has radically transformed three key imperatives of education (3Ms), namely: message (contents), medium (mode of delivery), and messengers (teachers, instructors, and facilitators).

### **(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content, and new delivery channels**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the universities and business schools across the globe have been forced to develop new formats, new content, and new delivery channels for knowledge dissemination and learning in full compliance with the standard operating procedures (SOP) developed by the national governments. My former and current universities (the American University

of Nigeria and Universiti Brunei Darussalam respectively) responded proactively to the pandemic by embracing the new trends in education, which cover the following:

1. Blended Delivery Mode: Physical, Virtual, and Hybrid;
2. Pedagogy: Teacher-Centred, Student-centred, Outcomes-Based;
3. E-Learning Management Systems: Moodle, Blackboard, Canvas, etc.;
4. Space: Physical Space (On-campus) versus Smart Space (Off-campus); and
5. Time: Synchronous, Asynchronous, and Hybrid.

It is evidently clear that the pandemic forced the universities and the educators to adapt to the realities of the moment. Adaptive learning has come to stay. Therefore, all management educators must adapt their teaching methodologies to fit students' learning styles in full compliance with the national SOP on the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, educators particularly those teaching management education must adapt emerging teaching methodologies to their teaching styles and modules. Times are changing, so should the pedagogies and methodologies.

Electronic learning or e-learning platforms have proven to be effective during the pandemic in many educational institutions, as they offer opportunities in the areas of course creation, content storage, enrolment process, lecture delivery, taking courses, gamification, group discussion, social networking and idea sharing, certification, and evaluation/reporting on formative and summative assessments.

### **(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

E-learning comes with several challenges and issues, but the reality is that it is no more business than usual. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2021), the idiom "business as usual (BAU) means a situation when things are continuing as they always do, after a difficult situation, while "it is not business as usual (NBAU)" connotes a situation when things are not done the way they have always been done, after a difficult situation. E-learning that offers all forms of blended learning has its operational challenges. At present, e-learning has attracted EdTech companies and technology giants. Some of the effective e-learning platforms include Canvas, Moodle, Blackboard, Zoom, Google, MicrosoftTeam, Udemy, LinkedIn Learning, Teachable, WizIQ, Ruzuku, Coursera, Educadium, EdX, LearnWorlds, Thinkific, Academy of Mine, CourseCraft, Skillshare, FutureLearn, among others. The e-learning industry is growing by the day with enormous possibilities. Industry reports estimated the financial worth of the e-learning industry in 2022 at \$243 billion (Customised Enterprise Application, 2021).

From my practical experience using the face-to-face and virtual teaching modes, some of the operational issues that concern the universities, students and lecturers include:

1. Low readiness of some faculty to embrace the blended or full virtual teaching mode.
2. Inability to follow-up and interact effectively with students' academic progression;
3. Ineffective formative and summative assessments without face-to-face interaction with learners;
4. Low reputation of online courses in developing climes;
5. High variation in the quality of delivery resulting in higher dropout rates of students. It is therefore not suitable for everyone;

6. Cost of acquiring and maintain the learning management systems;
7. The challenge of retraining unwilling lecturers and students on the use of learning management systems;
8. Low internet access by the disadvantaged students in rural communities with poor internet connectivity;
9. Fluctuation in connectivity to zoom, Google hangout, Microsoft Team, and other video conferencing learning platforms;
10. Perception of online education and virtual learning as substandard and inferior to physical classes; and
11. Lack regulatory framework in several countries for online education and all virtual learning modes.

Meanwhile, the following policy-oriented questions need new thinking and strategisation by the stakeholders:

1. How should the online delivery be organised: Asynchronously versus Synchronously? Real-life delivery or uploaded recorded lectures to be accessed by students at their own time.
2. In a blended learning approach, how should a lecturer balance online and face-to-face lectures for maximum impacts and learners' engagement?
3. In what ways should online delivery be designed to improve and enrich learners' experience?
4. What learning management system (LMS) best provides rich online delivery and learning experience? Zoom, Microsoft-Team, Google Hangout, Google Meet, Customised learning platforms, etc.
5. In what ways would the students be effectively and effectively assessed and examined? What are the components of formative and summative assessments in online learning or blended learning?

With regards to the social and emotional impacts of virtual learning adoption on the faculty and students, the following four-stage chronological strategies are recommended:

1. Readiness Assessment Strategy: The faculty members and students must accept the reality of a touchless world imposed by the pandemic, and pragmatically assess their readiness to teach and learn respectively through the blended mode or full online mode in compliance with the new normal protocols.
2. Risk Management Strategy: The faculty members and students must carry out a risk assessment on their activities (as disseminators of knowledge and receivers of knowledge respectively), and then identify and prioritize observed risks, caused by the pandemic.
3. Impact Analysis Strategy: The faculty members and students must conduct an impact analysis to identifying which parts of their teaching/learning activities are most critically affected by the pandemic, and then embrace the blended learning as a continuity plan to move on.
4. Emotional Intelligence Strategy: The faculty members and students obviously need emotional intelligence (EI) more at this critical time, because the COVID-19 pandemic is a test of people's emotional intelligence and social operating system. The 4 domains of EI that

the faculty members and students require are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Having the 4 domains of emotional intelligence would help the faculty in designing and structuring their courses/modules to reflect the features of life before the pandemic and the pandemic realities while improving the class experience for the students in spite of the challenges of the online teaching/e-learning. Similarly, if students apply the 4 domains of emotional intelligence strategy it would help them cope optimally with the challenges and inadequacies of all e-learning platforms.

I thank you most sincerely for giving me this platform to express my view on an important global issue with ripple effects on management education.

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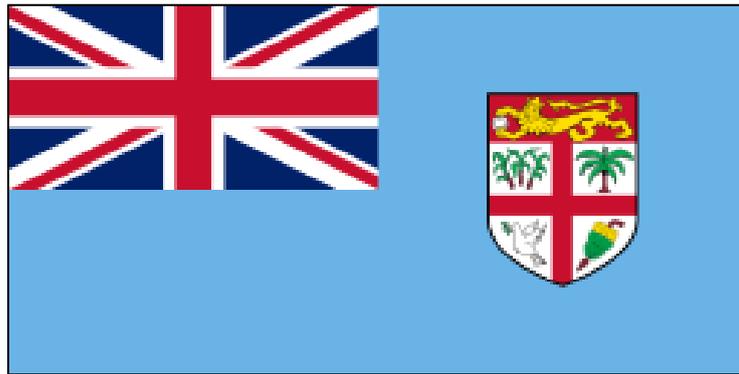
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## **COVID-19 Pandemic and Challenges for Management Education: Experience from the Pacific Island Countries**

### **Introduction**

COVID-19 is having profound impacts on tertiary education globally because of frequent Border closures, mandatory quarantine on entering a country, restrictions on mass gatherings and social distancing all posing special challenges to higher education (HE) institutions, particularly, in the Pacific. In the Universities in the Pacific we have diverse cohorts of students and staff from various Small Islands Development States (SIDS) having specific challenges due to their sizes and geographic isolation as well as facing frequent disruptions due to natural disasters and economic shocks. However, despite these unique challenges, the well-established Universities in the SIDS in the Pacific have digital and remote education capabilities besides a resilience promoting culture through the values of community engagement that enable them to respond to Covid-19.

In this paper, we share a perspective on the impacts of COVID-19 that draws upon our experience of teaching, administration and consulting in the Pacific. Our reflections are limited by our experiences and we do acknowledge our possible partiality as well as the diverse broader impacts of COVID-19 on business and society.

### **1) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future?**

#### **Current Practices**

The online teaching method has gained popularity with the teaching staff and university students. Zoom has become one of the widely used video conferencing software to cater for teaching activities online. Zoom is the replacement for the traditional teaching methods. The teaching staff have been given Zoom training to familiarise themselves with the new technology that has become the backbone for the online mode of teaching. Zoom had it all, a cloud-based conferencing service that can be used to virtually meet with students, which is widely available as desktop apps and also made available as mobile applications. Moreover, Zoom also facilitated the breakout rooms for group discussions, chat facilitations, endorsement of hand-raise, tea breaks and likes and could cater for a minimum of 100 participants (by default).

Apart from Zoom, teachers and trainers use Microsoft (MS) Teams to collaborate with students for their group projects. MS Team is also available on desktops and as mobile apps that cater for chats, audio and video calls that improves the collaboration between students and teachers. Universities also now depend exclusively on online learning modes, such as, Moodle learning management system.

For example, the group projects are submitted by students via Moodle at the University of the South Pacific (USP) and mark allocations and feedback (summative and formative) are provided online. Turnitin is embedded in Moodle to ensure that plagiarism acts are minimised at all costs. Also, traditional pen and paper exams are being replaced by online quizzes and exams.

There are, however, some drawbacks of current practices mentioned above due to the varied nature of connectivity, especially for students of the University of the South Pacific (USP) enrolled in various management courses from remotely placed Pacific island countries. Students from City areas and with tech-savvy skills are likely to gain upper hand while completing the assessment. Students who are not smart in using technologies or have poor internet connectivity, therefore, complain about the assessment method.

One of the main pedagogical emphasis has been on flipped or inverted classroom concepts. As a first step, students and practicing executives are provided with pre-recorded lectures and training material or simplified self-study material for reading. Based on this study material, they are asked to solve a few cases and experiential exercises as well as online business simulation games related to the material. When students attend live-on sessions as a part of their contact hours, their inquiry skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, i.e. focusing on the application of knowledge besides collaborative learning are developed. As far as possible, students are divided into small groups to ensure active interaction and collaborative learning.

### **Foreseeable Future Practices**

The very nature of teaching modes is now dependent on the number of COVID-19 cases, variant types, lockdowns, COVID-19 related deaths and overall, the safety of the entire population. One of the fundamental and dynamic changes noted is the digitisation of the education system where students will have an ever increasing use of flexible learning which is further enhanced by fast internet services promoting 24/7 learning experiences. Online education enables self-direction and initiatives that students use to improve their understandings. Moreover, the vast accessibility of information available online makes student learning more flexible and effortless. New and emerging technologies provide integrated education and assessment for improved student experiences for flexible, relevant and deep learning. It is understood that the emerging technologies, including flipped classrooms, will further enhance active learning through blended teaching approaches (online and offline). Also, emerging technologies will increasingly play a vital role in improving online privacy and academic integrity as there is a shift in assessment design and evaluation.

### **2) Your articulation on new formats, new contents and new delivery channels.**

The digitisation of the education system offers a world of great possibilities. Digitisation allows interactivity, social connectivity and interactions among the students and teaching staff. Across the world, online platforms like MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype and Google Classrooms have become the preferred options for online classes. The online platforms work well for the participants who have the latest operating systems on their desktops, laptops and mobiles and have access to fast internet services that simulate classroom experiences. As our dependency on digitised education grows, it is crucial to be concerned about students' available resources, adaptation and acceptance of remote learning and taking online exams.

At the same time, a few students also face issues of the poor internet accessibility, hindering their access to online university resources. This issue is particularly relevant for the students at the South

Pacific University in Fiji, which has students enrolled in courses from 12 small Island countries, some of which are very remote and, sometimes, have poor internet accessibility. Therefore, online learning facilitation could be fragmented and discontinuous. Poor internet access leads to distorted sounds, loss of screen details, blurry images that hinder student engagement towards learning. This can also be more concerning when students are doing online quizzes and exams. Some of our students face difficulty submitting their online exams in a timely manner due to stressed networks.

Teaching methods need to be moulded to complement the new and evolving technologies. There is a strong shift towards flipped and blended teaching approaches, where materials have to be posted online prior to the lectures and tutorials for the students to reflect on their work, both during and after the classes using recordings. The introduction of new applications such as Flipgrid and Wakelet facilitates a good user experience for students with increased activity and reduced distractions. Likewise, an increasing shift can be seen from summative to formative assessments. Students can be provided personalised feedbacks both in audio and video formats.

Digitisation of class materials, lectures, forums, quizzes and exams has another advantage. The structured data will produce a better personalized experience using AI models for individual students. This promotes reinforcement learning where students can be helped in their remedial work, and the areas of focus can be identified. Likewise, education chat-bots can be made available 24 hours a day to assist and direct students to the right content, frequently-asked-questions or other relevant materials.

Overall, universities in the Pacific need to consider the constraints that students may be facing when accessing online teaching resources. Significant interventions should be prioritised to enhance students' online learning experiences, and this is particularly concerning when students have to acquire knowledge during lockdowns.

### **3) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

The Covid-19 pandemic took the world by surprise and continues to have catastrophic impacts on global health and the economy. The pandemic has severely impacted the economy, as the wider population have lost jobs and income. The current pandemic situation has led to the closure of universities (on-campus learning) which has significantly impacted universities, students and staff.

The lockdown has exposed students from diverse backgrounds to face increased vulnerability, isolation, and a tendency to be left out during their learning endeavors. Many students have expressed that they used to feel lonely studying online and felt that they lacked human interactions. Also, students who were reliant on part-time jobs have lost their source of income due to the closure of businesses around the state. The slowdown of the economy will further reduce job opportunities for new or fresh graduates who could have easily found employment prior to the pandemic. The private sector will also have reduced paying capacity and may shrink employment opportunities. Unemployment is going to be stressful for the new graduates due to the unpredictable future.

Online classrooms have been introduced, but more training for teachers and students are required to optimise learning outcomes. Social activities can still be organised remotely using Zoom and MS Teams. Human interactions are pivotal for the well-being of students, and often Zoom/MS Teams fatigue drives students away. Alternate applications promoting personalised experiences such as Gather Town and Topia are excellent for social meetups. Virtual Reality (VR) applications can assist

in overcoming boredom and loneliness. Affordable VR headsets can be purchased, and social experiences amongst students and teachers can be improved using VR applications such as Mozilla Hub and Altspace VR. Likewise, quizzes can also be introduced using gaming approaches. Gamifying education can improve student engagement and improve student participation. Applications such as Kahoot and Quizizz can be introduced on online learning platforms to increase student interaction.

Universities constantly need to add and improve new technology and training to promote student well-being. Several universities also provide psychological help from clinical psychologists who help students and teachers to cope during COVID-19 restrictions via teleconferences. Although there are high hopes of vaccines that may slow or effectively halt the ongoing spread of this global pandemic, but it may take a while. Therefore, communities everywhere need to be on high alert and focus primarily on prevention and building resilience. Resilience is the ability to resist hardship and adapt to the challenges that an extreme event may pose. No doubt there has been a wide range of extreme events in the past, but we have always found ways to cope and help others cope in withstanding the hardships faced. However, with different events, different challenges are requiring different resilient responses. Understanding the type of resilient responses varies according to the hardships faced. During the Covid 19 pandemic, people everywhere have faced enormous stress and adversity as the pandemic undeniably impacted on public health and economies. One of the ways to cope with the Covid-19 Pandemic challenges and building resilience during this unprecedented time is through the social practice in Fiji of *solesolevaki*<sup>1</sup>.

#### **4) Need for a resilient and relevant “Pacification” of the management education**

This section attempts to suggest some options on how management education can be not only relevant but also resilient to meet recent disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (in addition to frequent disruptions caused by natural disasters as well as external economic and financial shocks) which has heavily impacted the growth and livelihoods in the Small Islands Development States (SIDS) in the Pacific. Though most of the management courses have topics that address disruptions, however, it is fragmented and does not have a cohesive curriculum that is tied within a short-term course or as a module in a UG or a PG course.

Suggested curriculum for Managing Disruptions can be divided into three units:

- i. Preparing for Disruptions
- ii. Managing Disruptions or “in- crises” situation
- iii. Overcoming Disruptions

##### **i. Preparing for Disruptions**

Globally businesses and economies were already highly volatile before the pandemic and face enormous challenges. Decision makers and business leaders both in public and private sectors must cultivate resilience by understanding their vulnerabilities and developing specific skills and capabilities on how to navigate the turbulent situations, reduce the risk of disruptions, improve communications using digital tools, build a culture of innovation across the enterprise architecture, and more importantly building confidence and advising customers on potential disruptions with alternative solutions.

Depending on size and resources of businesses and countries where they operate, various high tech digital tools are available which include artificial intelligence, algorithmic business thinking, understanding complex supply and value chain problems, etc. However, from Pacific perspective based on evidence-based assessments one important tool that will help both businesses and governments is designing a simple Business Continuity Plan (BCP).

This unit can compose of:

- Definition of BCP
- BCP framework and key strategies
- BCP vs Disaster Recovery- What's the difference
- Assembling Business Continuity Team who will manage disruptions and train staff
- Stages of developing a strong BCP including Business Impact Analysis, GAP Analysis Business Continuity Management

## **ii. Managing Disruptions or “in crisis “situations**

The future of work and doing business means managing through disruptions. Businesses vulnerabilities in the Pacific particularly micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have been taking the brunt of any disaster. The impact is much more severe in the informal economy. Recent pandemic and earlier natural disasters exposed the fragility and vulnerabilities of these businesses with minimum to no support from any government grants and stimulus packages. Additionally, due to high cost of insurance these businesses face significant losses which has become predictable pattern every few years. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that managers and professionals are trained in overcoming and managing disruptions to undertake “in-crises” needs assessments at different levels- macro or country level, industry or sector level, and at a small enterprise level.

‘Overcoming and Managing disruptions’ training can focus on:

- What is “in crises” disaster needs assessment
- How to coordinate and collaborate
- Leadership and communication
- Establishing networks, public-private and community partnerships
- Comprehensiveness of assessments
- Time frame for conducting assessments
- Outcomes of the assessments and preparing a comprehensive financial plan for recovery.

## **iii. Overcoming and Managing Disruptions: Lessons learnt**

To survive the discomfort and pain of disruptions, the training module on ‘overcoming and managing disruptions’ will provide an opportunity on lessons learned and how businesses need to engage from Business Continuity Planning to Business Continuity Management by focusing upon:

- Barriers to overcoming disruptions (bureaucracy, financial, technological, etc.)
- Disaster risk financing

- Designing and remodeling organizational structure to sustain and survive future disruptions (organizations include micro, small and medium enterprises -MSMEs)
- Establishing a coherent value network in which suppliers, partners, distributors, and customers are better off including targeting new customers.
- Creating a culture of learning across all levels of the organization via a powerful ecosystem of educational tools and resources built specifically around employee needs with continuous upskill and re-skill assessments.
- Supporting health, physical and mental wellbeing of everyone involved in the business in the post disruptions through counselling and family clinics.

### **Learning Outcomes**

This course aims to assist managers and decision makers in both private and public sectors to develop a thorough understanding on disruptions, its impact and survival. The course will enable participants to:

- Apply the tools and techniques to prepare and address disruptions
- Analyze Pacific disruptions and prepare an effective policy memo to the management
- Prepare a business continuity plan for a micro or small enterprise in one of the selected sectors (tourism/hospitality or agro processing or manufacturing or any other industry)
- Design a business continuity management plan including financing options to overcome disruptions
- Recommend policy measures for decision makers on preparing Pacific for future disruptions.

### **Teaching Methods**

The course will comprise various learning methods such as practitioners sharing experiences on managing different disruptions, video presentations, participant presentation either a real time experience or stimulated experiences on disruptions, case studies and small group skills development assignments. Management practitioners can share their experiences on managing different disruptions through video presentations, presenting a real-time experience or stimulating experiences on disruptions, case studies and small group skills development assignments.

Like Doctors without Borders and Engineers without Borders who work in crises situations and war zones, a team of Managers Addressing Disruptions (MAD) or Managers without Borders (MWB) should be established and deployed during disruptions, both external disruptions or within an enterprise. Business schools are well placed on developing a database of their alumni and collaborating with local chambers of commerce, private sector associations and local government. MAD can also be part of visiting faculty of the short and long-term courses and potentially create a mentoring programme for many Medium and small management enterprises (MSMEs) that cannot afford expensive consultancy and professional fees.

Learning drives innovation, collaboration, and inspiration. This is even more critical during the uncertain and troubling times of the covid pandemic. But learning is not one-size-fits-all. With the current ongoing disruption due to the Covid pandemic, the future generation of managers in the already disaster prone vulnerable Pacific must be prepared by retooling and reengineering management education. Businesses and the world need leaders who can negotiate these turmoils and

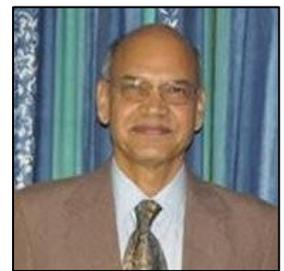
prepare for the future of unpredictability and uncertainty by being proactive, empowering their people with needed training and skills as well as helping them to overcome fear and beliefs with hope and optimism. The Next Generation of Managers needs to be resilient and equipped with relevant tools and techniques for the new normal of future disruptions.

## References

<sup>1</sup> It is an indigenous (iTaukei) social practice that held each community together and strengthened their social relationships with other groups and communities. Through solesolevaki, the values of community engagement, collective norms, knowledge diffusion, trust, cooperation, participation, shared identity, inclusion, and empowerment can be revitalised. These values are key to overcoming the huge challenges caused by the Covid 19 pandemic by allowing everyone to care for those affected during this pandemic and ensuring a sense of identity as well as a happy and quality life in the post covid-19 pandemic world (Raisele, K. (2021). Building Resilience to COVID-19 through Solesolevaki. Academia Letters, Article 1889. <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL1889>)

## Author Profiles

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**Kirtika Deo (PhD)** did research on factors influencing consumer engagement behaviour using social media marketing in Australia. Kirtika also holds an MBA degree from the University of South Pacific (Fiji) with an exceptional GPA and completed her postgraduate certificate in Business from Massey University, New Zealand. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Banking Finance and Economics, from the University of South Pacific (Fiji). Kirtika has worked in the Banking and Finance sector in Fiji and has gained profound industry experiences. Her research interests are in *Digital Marketing*, *Social Media*, *Social Media Marketing*, *Entrepreneurial Marketing*, *Consumer Engagement* and *Consumer Engagement Behaviour*.

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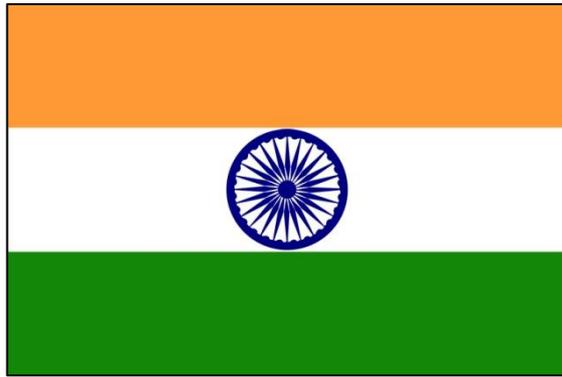


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## **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

The recent pandemic has shaken up activities and people across all walks of life. Management education is undergoing a profound impact due to this situation. The student learning experience in management education is dependent on the interaction among and within the students, faculty, and corporates. The pandemic has been successful in pushing all of us to interact but in the virtual model. The restrictions have forced us to teach and learn from home leading to a severe impact on the physical and mental well-being of the stakeholders. In the following paragraphs, I will describe the positives that we can draw from this restrictive situation. The ensuing paragraph will scrutiny how instruction, delivery and evaluation is changing. The last section will illustrate how the social and emotional issues faced by the faculty and students are affecting them and how they can tackle them.

The present situation of the pandemic refers to a continued state of no physical contact or interaction. The current model of virtual learning will continue for at least another few months, or it may extend to the new year. The prevailing conditions warranted several changes that were administered. These changes were across three activities. The first was the new delivery model, the second was the participation of the students and the third was the evaluation of their performance in the courses. The courses delivered online made active interaction and participation change. To maintain the level of interaction similar to that in a physical class, moderating the discussion posed significant challenges that demanded more time to ensure the effectiveness of the sessions. Either mute all or mute some, the dynamics were different compared to the physical class. By spending some extra time for each session, the faculty has been able to achieve 70% efficiency as compared to a physical class. The actual challenge has been the course evaluation. In the virtual mode, assignments are mostly take-home exams and assignments, unless it is a quiz. Online AI-based proctoring has its challenges with students spread across the country and the internet bandwidth being a constant challenge. The good that has happened in this time is that assignments can bring out the best in the student. The student is aware that it can be subjected to plagiarism checks and grades can be significantly impacted.

What the pandemic has done to the education system is a big positive. It has forced people to find new ways to deliver, instruct the students and assess their performance. The whole exercise of input-throughput-output has been shaken-up thoroughly. Changes have happened at all stages. Before the pandemic, most of the faculty were rigid about using the traditional set of tools to assess the student's performance. Today we have opened to seek new ways of assessing the students learning. The option of assessment tools that a faculty can consider for his course has increased dramatically- which is a positive for the management education domain. Both the faculty and students will be more open to the different modes of learning-online, hybrid and offline. The use of technical tools, teaching aids have gone up as the prevailing situation forced all the faculty to adopt these new-age tools. Times to come will witness a higher level of adaptability and a different level of work being produced by the student as assignments are to be completed with any help that they can seek however the quality is

also being maintained. All stakeholders have become more tech-savvy in these times. The content that is being delivered in these times has taken different forms. Presentations and videos are being integrated into a SCORM package that can be played back later. Storing the recordings of sessions allows the students to revise the sessions and topics multiple times. If we consider the delivery mode, the courses in the future will be blended or hybrid mode. We are moving towards what education 4.0 had highlighted, peer learning and learning from anywhere at any time. Programmes will be offered across all formats, and students will have the options to choose on-campus, online or hybrid. My gut feeling is that all three will remain viable options for the students.

Of late, social interaction has been severely impacted. There are two ramifications, one is that we are becoming habitual of virtual meetings and interactions and somehow have begun to enjoy the space we have to ourselves. Two, when we go back to in-person socialization it will be another learning curve that we will be subjected to as we are so much into the virtual that in-person will seem to be new and for some time it will be difficult to adjust as the virtual interaction was at the start of the pandemic. The other challenge that we are facing is with regards to our physical and mental well-being. Physical well-being is impacted as long hours on the virtual mode makes it extremely taxing for the body and brain. Being locked in a house/ apartment/ room makes us all yearn to go out, which is not easy, as the second wave was devastating for all of us. There has been a significant shift towards physical exercises. Exercise options that don't require space- like walking, running, cycling, have become prominent compared to going to a gym. There is a marked difference in the level of the mental well-being of people. There is a need to develop mechanisms for ensuring mental wellbeing. More people will be open to talking about mental wellbeing in the times to come as the challenge of space, having a routine, and adhering to the not so normal times frequently will change the way faculty and students will deal with their life.

If we consider the condition of the faculty and students. Both are engaged in intellectual pursuit. The pressure of performing well will be on both sides and therefore, mental and emotional challenges will become prominent. The work-life balance is a challenge as work takes up a major portion of the personal space these days. The times to come will remain to be challenging as the virus doesn't seem to be going away any soon. The lesson that the pandemic has taught us is to be more adaptive, flexible and open to performing our role. I visualize that soon we will witness new structures of the curriculum that will emerge striving hard to enhance the student learning and student learning experience to a different level. The pandemic has given us lessons including new ways of doing things. People who were reluctant to change have now begun to embrace change as if they were waiting for it. In the end, change is all that is constant.

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### **"Challenges for Management Education" arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has distressed all the spheres of life including education. This has impacted in closure of face-to-face interaction in educational institutions in around 190 countries in order to preclude the spread of the virus. COVID-19 has significant impact on the style of operation of the management schools across the globe majorly in terms of adaptation for learning outcomes. COVID-19 has exposed the corporate world to work-from-home which has set prodigious expectations from B schools to become resilient for the mutable world. With home schooling, alongside work from home and domestic obligations has led to long work hours and stress among the various stakeholders.

The management schools are centering on global collaboration with specific reference to research and innovation. The curriculum and syllabus content of the management schools is restructured, one such being the case of crisis management and change management. To add further, assessment criteria have been transformed in terms of the components and the weightage, with inclusion of more assignments and multiple choice questions. As management schools are inclined to be greatly engaged with industry, they face issue in placing students for internships, job offers, practical study tours, and student exchange programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has enforced the business schools to invest greatly in technology to offer the desired learning experience. The model of online program managers has been adopted by few schools in assisting them to transit in a well-timed way. Many management schools have capitalized on integrating their LMS and online platforms such as ZOOM, MS teams etc, with greater emphasis on flipped classes to ensure student involvement. The major challenges faced by the management schools due to COVID -19 pandemic are engaging the students and development of the communities. The other grey area being absence of peer-to-peer learning which is crucial in holistic personality development of the students. Students are the most affected stakeholders facing the issues related to mental health such as anxiety, loneliness and depression. To overcome some of these issues, some B-schools have incorporated heutagogical approach to fit hybridized environment of corporate world.

The positive side of COVID-19 has been observed, in the swiftness and quality of management educators' adaptation to the dynamic environment and the receptiveness of the student

community. This has enabled in the education ecosystem to be more agile to be sustainable business models. Also its saves lot of time in terms of travel, which can be employed for productive purpose.

To ensure the learning process transpire significant investment need to be given to digitizing the education system for remote learning. Also there is a need to offer access to quality online resources and high speed internet at affordable price along with gadgets especially for students from rural communities. It's the responsibility of the educators to assure that their students are part of the session even in virtual mode and they intermingle for accomplishing the objectives of collective learning and outcome based education system. The virtual sessions must offer a platform to students to discuss topics around belonging, inclusion and diversity. As the pandemic COVID-19 dissipates, B-schools may adopt to come up with new mechanisms to make adjustments to the academic calendars, preparing and engaging students for higher level assessments and building a reinforcing system going forward.

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### **Education and COVID-19: The Road to Recovery**

Since the beginning of COVID-19, most governments across the world temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19. These nationwide closures affected more than 60% of the student population across the globe. Some countries implemented partial closures and lockdowns, affecting millions of students. In total, about 200 countries closed their schools in March 2020, disrupting the education of more than 1.5 billion students. It is under the backdrop of these unprecedented times that we must evaluate the current needs of our education system.

These dark clouds, however, do have a silver lining. Government and educational institutions alike seek to revert eventually to traditional teaching methods. The initial pause offered them the luxury of time to develop a better plan for assuring a smoother return to campus-based learning. Some would argue that such a return is not essential. After all, since the pandemic, e-learning has been on the increase and is being lauded as the future of education. However, while online pedagogy is an excellent supplement to traditional education, it can never truly replace it. The reasons are varied and for a developing economy like India, this is an undisputed fact.

For starters, the digital medium cannot replace the human encounters that institutes promote by bringing together students from various backgrounds and cultures. In essence, they function as a melting pot of ideas and perspectives that help learners extend their horizons. Interacting with their classmates outside of class helps students acquire social skills, which are extremely important for their overall development.

Another consideration is equal access. India's wealth disparity is well-known; according to a 2020 Oxfam analysis, the country's wealthiest 10% hold nearly three-quarters (74%) of the country's wealth. This means that a major portion of India's 320 million students do not have access to the same digital resources as their wealthier peers do. The digital divide between urban and rural India exacerbates this disparity, leading to challenges in learning consistency and quality.

Returning to physical, on campus classes will be a challenge. Government, educational institutions, and regulatory organisations will need to make sure that the return to physical learning does not jeopardise students' health and safety.

In the brief period when we at Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai were able to open up our campus, we created a bio-bubble for the students adhering to the highest standards of safety while ensuring they enjoyed their campus life to the fullest. It was not easy and each day was an exercise in learning but we persevered and were able to deliver good off-campus and on-campus experiences possible — as evidenced from the exit survey of the students. It was only because of the pandemic that we undertook many such activities that we had hitherto not even thought possible!

This academic year too, as India reels under the grip of the second wave of Covid, schools and colleges will remain closed for some more time. Till we open up, we will continue to enhance our student engagement experience. In fact, some of our virtual initiatives have been so successful that they are now a permanent part of the Great Lakes offering.

However, there is still a case to be made in favour of face-to-face classes. There is an enormous amount of intangible learning that comes with the territory — right from knowledge assimilation to sensitivity training that one internalises due to social contact that no virtual classroom can match. Lengthy online sessions are tiresome, do not facilitate peer interaction, promote introversion and severely undermine the understanding of non-verbal forms of communications. Teachers too find it challenging and unrewarding since they speak into an abyss, with barely any feedback and are unable to engage with the students and hold their attention for prolonged periods of time. More importantly, in developing countries like ours, where the digital divide is a harsh reality, even these sessions remain out of reach for those at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum.

Finally, we don't know when India will be able to restart offline study once the pandemic has passed. Stakeholders must, however, make the formulation of a blueprint for the pupils' ultimate return to school a top priority. For a majority of students across the country, it is not a luxury but a non-negotiable necessity.

The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly caused a paradigm shift in the way we make decisions. Adaptation is key, with agility and innovation marking every step of the way. I relate this situation to the construction of the Waterloo Bridge. Due to shortage of labour (as men folk had enlisted to fight in the World War II) for the very first time, women were drafted to construction and engineering jobs. Women in such jobs were unheard of at that time. They did a phenomenal job, completed the project ahead of time and well within the budget.

The lesson here too is the same. It is possible to do the seemingly impossible. No doubt, the pandemic has devastated families and economies and the future is as unpredictable as it is grim, globally. But, it has opened up opportunities in areas that were hitherto unexplored and prompted us to think and do in radically different ways. Organisations too have to stay distinct or become extinct. An organisation must be able to compete from anywhere, with any one, for any resource in the world to achieve 'Globality'. Staying relevant, providing value for money whatever the circumstance with passion and compassion is the mantra for institutions today — this is just as applicable to education as it is to industry.

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Since March, 2020 till date, we all are under lot of restrictions due to Covid-19 Pandemic. Initially, for 2-3 months there was strict lock-down. Offline classes are continuing in most of the states. Now, there is a threat of 3<sup>rd</sup> wave so to say and hence when the universities and colleges are going to start offline. Teaching is a big challenge and everything is controlled by respective State Governments.

March 2020 was almost end of academic year (session) 2018-2020. Means, 2nd year MBA students were ready to join their jobs (offered on campus). However, due to pandemic restrictions such students also faced lot of problems. Same companies did not allow students to join. 1st year students of Academic Year 2019-2020 just finished or about to finish their 1st year and preparing for summer projects. Companies due to lock down restrictions cancelled their projects. Most of them have done library projects. Experiencing all these issues, I thought of writing my observations.

1. Due to this critical situation, teachers were engaged in conducting online sessions. Online conduct of classes is just a compromise alternative. As a teacher, I have not enjoyed the sessions. It was just giving same presentation, due to this fun of class-room teaching was lost. Students used to log-in, but we missed interactive session and eye-to-eye contact. In management classes, we are expected to evolve knowledge by the participation of students since the teaching plan is already shared with students. Especially, teaching at Executive MBA Program used to be really an enjoyment wherein experienced students used to share their experiences and problems. Such interaction I call it “Collaborative Knowledge Sharing” session. This is totally missing in last 16 months.
2. Students could not get the chance to do summer projects in the companies. Means, they lost an opportunity to get hands on experience.
3. Online conduct of examination with MCQs was also a farce. I suppose the actual evaluation by written papers and Viva Voce of project report was missing in this period.
4. Online teaching creates one more threat for future. Probably regular teachers (those who are on contract/temporary) may lose their jobs.
5. As a teacher, when I conduct online classes, I do not know how much the students are understanding, since there is no face-to-face communication (kinesics).
6. The transition was difficult for many teachers and students. E-learning was the strategy in pandemic, where everyone had to shift to online with no time to think and develop capability.
7. Probably, if this situation continues for a couple of months, demand on online MBA would increase which is beneficial for the management of the institution.

I hope in the ensuing Academic Year which is scheduled to start by 1st October, 2021 (as per UGC guidelines), we would start offline teaching. Let us hope for the better.

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## **COVID-19 Pandemic – Some Reflections on Future Learning Space**

### ***Introduction: Pandemic, Problems & Possibilities***

Some of our apprehensions about the pandemic might have been validated but its inherent foreign political designs could not succeed to deter the pace of innovations and the spirit of humanity. It's a fact that the pandemic due to COVID-19 has resulted in irreparable losses through its profound impacts on industry, commerce, and social transactions. To a large extent it has created a looming impact on hopes and aspirations of millions of students worldwide through stalling physical and social movements to and from several campuses, but it has miserably failed to diminish the spirit of fighting back of students' communities across the globe and their renewed determination to continue their learning journeys through different alternative modes, aided by emerging technologies and new innovations in the sector. However, we cannot deny the fact that a considerable percentage of students in India and other countries have been struggling to cope up with the challenges due to their vulnerable contextualities, including poverty, loss of income, remote locations, and lack of affordability and accessibility to digital devices and technologies. The subsequent outbreaks and waves have not only paralyzed the on-campus operations of educational institutes but have grossly impacted international students' movements, including their aspirations for education abroad. There had been no other choices to those institutions than rapidly changing their content delivery strategies, pedagogy, assessment, and student engagement approaches through digital technologies and platforms.

If we observe critically our struggles and survival efforts through a pandemic, we find that while *the theory of eventualities* has governed our life in the initial months, we have later embraced and lived with *the theory of essentialism*. Perhaps that major paradigm shift has taken place due to grounded realities, but it is expected to yield benefits to ensure our sustainable future through several digital opportunities and alternatives, including in the education and employment sectors. The so-called 'new normal' scenario may demand us to be more liberal, flexible, agile, resilient, and service-oriented, not only to excel with our potentials and progress together but to remain adaptive to extremely challenging circumstances and continuous disruptions in technologies.

### ***The New Normal, New Challenges & Opportunities***

At times our students and faculty may feel that they are restrained to travel their respective paths of learning and career, but the pandemic appears to be 'blessings in disguise' for them. We should not hesitate to confess that as institutions and teachers, we always wanted to have our dominance and control over students' learning process, and as a result, despite leveraging technologies and expanding the scope of learning, we have narrowly confined ourselves into rivalry and competition to gratify our perceptual satisfaction and security. Although the pandemic has been instrumental but there have been some dormant unmet needs of students which have exploded and accelerated

disruptions in the edu-tech sector. The emerging technologies have not only expanded the horizon of learning opportunities to students, but deployed them in the e-learning ecosystem, where they can exercise their freedom in choosing content, institutions, instructors and even learning partners and groups. While many advanced research highlighted the limitations of standardized classroom-based education system, but due to obsessive bureaucratic control over education and reluctance of many institutions, so far, we failed to transform the learning experience of students. Whatever transformation we notice today is due to disruption-led compulsions. Institutions across the globe are leveraging technology not only to expand the scale of operation by making it possible for hundreds of students to join a particular program or cohort, but also creating space for self-learning and learning from different other sources. The technology has helped us to deliver content through hybrid mode and access opportunities through blended learning, online and multimodal learning platforms. The 'new normal' phenomenon in education sector, especially in the UG and PG levels, demands the teachers to play their role more as learning-facilitators, mentors and less as instructors.

Some of the revolutionary features in the National Education Policy-2020, such as (i) academic credit bank (ACB), (ii) choice-based credit system (CBCS), (iii) multidisciplinary education, (iv) research and innovation, (v) student-centric learning opportunities, (vi) equity and inclusion etc., can create holistic learning opportunities for millions of students, if well-articulated and integrated with educational technologies. In addition, technology can enable institutions across the globe to collaborate and enter partnerships to open doors for actual need-based and choice-based learning opportunities for the students.

### ***Empathize, Engage & Excel***

There is inevitably a shift in the learning process and consequently, that may redefine the world views of transactions and relations between students, teachers, and educational institutions. The emerging scenarios indicate that in the future, the hierarchical administrative control over education, learning, and assessment will gradually be reduced, and learners will be empowered to drive their learning journey with more freedom, flexibility, and options. Consequently, that will reduce students' dependency on a single source of learning, where sources could be teachers, institutions, textbooks, physical libraries, etc. In addition, learners may leverage different modes of learning based on their abilities, adaptability, affordability, and level of comfort. The approaches and modalities of learning assessments are also transforming.

The teachers may perceive and experience new challenges and threats in terms of their stakes and changing roles in the emerging scenarios. They need not analyze situations with their positivist assumptions and traditional mind frames. Instead, they need to understand the emerging social, emotional, and functional perspectives and embrace the contextualities with an open and liberal mind. The emerging scenarios in the world of learning may demand a structural as well as an operational shift from standardization to customized and learner-centric systems. Initially, that may cause stress and anxiety, especially among teachers and students, but in long run, we can overcome all the odds through collaborations, partnerships, and a balanced approach. Instead of doing obsessive predictions about unknown social or psychological obstacles, we must engage ourselves effectively, develop interests in exploratory and action research, so that we the stakeholders in the emerging learning spaces can mutually benefit each other and achieve excellence.

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The Businesses, Government and Society (BGS) across the globe faced unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19 and experienced unseen adversities. As we all know, post-COVID effects are expected to last for longer time leaving irreparable damage. While the businesses bore the maximum brunt of the virus, the education systems across the world landed up in doll drum leaving the students and the faculty clueless about the effectiveness of teaching learning assurance. Like many business schools, Institute of Management Technology, Nagpur too faced several challenges as highlighted below.

1. **Engagement Issues:** Despite the advanced technology we adopted, keeping the students remain focused on online class is a major challenge.
2. **Technology Issues:** As such there was nothing like online classwork prior to the pandemic. While several EdTech apps were launched, apart from the existing one, getting acquainted with the platform and delivery mechanism was a major challenge. Added to this bandwidth issues at remote places was a serious concern which impaired the learning value proposition.
3. **Non-verbal communication Issues:** Unlike physical class room scenario, online delivery took away the opportunity to study non-verbal communication and the body language of the students, which is very essential in Management Education. Thus there was a loss of human touch.
4. **The quality of assignments and team projects:** The scope for learning through live assignment and team projects was impacted to certain extent since the students did not have an opportunity to sit together and discuss the things physically.

However, IMT Nagpur ensured that the rigor and the sanctity of teaching learning mechanism was never compromised. As the saying “there lies opportunity in every adversity” COVID-19 provided level playing field to all the stakeholders. Thus IMT Nagpur leveraged such testing time to innovate and stay strong. The support system at IMT Nagpur consisted of;

1. Significant investment in state of the art e-Learning resources.
2. Adoptive Technology. IMT Nagpur relies on the latest technology platforms.
3. Significant training and development to the faculty, the students and the administrative staff.
4. Innovative grading mechanism by the faculty, for instance adopting more of case study approach and open book system of evaluation to the extent possible.
5. Online team building exercises.

Thanks to COVID indeed, IMT Nagpur leveraged the newest technology to enhance the value add to the students, fellow faculty fraternity and the corporate world. The challenge faced and the technology available helped IMT Nagpur to break plant material like grass.

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**i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

The Covid-19 pandemic has hugely restructured our life and work. We must adapt to new ways, adapt quickly. Adaptation to technology will mitigate the challenges we face. In every field, collaboration and networking will lead us to success. Collaboration helps to bring together strengths of so many to face and overcome any challenge. It is not an individual who can face the challenge of the pandemic, but collective effort for which we require an organic networking to achieve conflict resolution. Educational institutions should produce graduates who are capable of working in a team with an attitude of openness, inner freedom, humility and ingenuity. That would serve the world to heal quickly and lead a life in the post-Covid era.

**(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

Teaching-Learning-Assessment (TLA) must change. Singers must be tested on singing and dancers must be tested on dancing. Learning must focus on strengths of an individual that teaching-learning-assessment of learning has to become an act of discovery, it has to discover the purpose in him/her. There is a purpose of why we exist in this world, which has to be uncovered. Learning must serve this purpose. It is a search and a re-search within by observing what is going on around us, what is needed to be done to make life meaningful. At the end of learning, one should become able to think critically and creatively, capable of solving problems with innovative ideas, and employable to transform society. In LIBA, we have developed new ecosystem of learning and restructured our curriculum to face the world in the post Covid era.

**(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements**

You live in the Covid time, and you will later in the post-Covid era. Your perspective of life must change. Life has become more important than livelihood. A healthy body and peaceful/positive mind and heart is key to a meaningful life. Therefore, view life as a free gift of God that will make you humble. Life hinges upon the choices you make, choose the good, not evil. Develop a pattern of collective living that brings in rich diversity and provides a support system. Give selflessly to the organization and to the people who are on the peripheries. That will make your life meaningful.

- From wellness desk of LIBA, we contact every week all the students over the phone and through Zoom/WebEx to enquire about their health and overall wellbeing.
- Faculty come together online to celebrate festivals and birthdays.
- Students have done Corona awareness campaign to disseminate information about safety and health.

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**Dr. B. Karunakar**  
*Director*  
*GITAM Hyderabad Business*  
*School, Hyderabad Campus*  
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**(i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

Our operations will get digitized more and more while our business model will more or less remain the same. Our business model at GITAM will continue to emphasize a corporate-ready curriculum, a good blend of faculty from academia & industry, experiential learning, MOOCs courses, entrepreneurial ecosystem in collaboration with global universities, and pursuit of academic excellence. We will continue to strive to offer the best value for money education to students from all walks of life.

We believe in making our students industry-ready, taking cognizance of the latest developments and serving the industry interests through well-trained students. We inculcate professional ethics along with professional knowledge in our students, making them eligible for responsible positions. We ensure that as future managers they (i) have a strong grounding in contemporary management & business theory (ii) understand global business (iii) have skills in working with people from diverse backgrounds and (iv) have ability to translate vision into action

NEP 2020 has correctly identified 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as fundamental to developing creators. Critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural interactions, and productivity and accountability all strengthen the individuals' abilities at the workplace. Educators could consider a design based approach where students concentrate on a subject for two to three weeks to examine how it can be applied in the real world.

**(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

The pandemic has hastened the adoption of online education. Before the pandemic, the LMS software was good to have. But with pandemic, the LMS software has become a must have. Necessity is the mother of invention. When pushed to the wall because of the pandemic, embracing the change of online education had indeed become easier.

At GITAM, we adopted Moodle as the LMS through which the conduct of classes via Zoom is facilitated. The course syllabus, course structure by topic, lecture plan, discussion forums, announcements, project reports, grade assignments using rubrics is all enabled on the Moodle. Registration of students for the courses and attendance is actionable. Coursera link is provided on the Moodle. The Moodle LMS also permits feedback from the students, assessment and student engagement.

Efforts have been made to train our faculty on blended learning viz defining learning outcomes, defining learning outcomes, designing authentic assessments, creating rubrics, creating a course plan, creating video scripts and flipping the class.

**(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

We have had town hall meetings at different levels. Our President and Vice Chancellor addressed all the faculty and staff across the three campuses, time to time during the pandemic period to address the concerns and anxieties. We had special vaccination drives at our three campuses in Vishakapatnam, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

The Pro Vice Chancellors also had been meeting virtually the Heads of Institutions to review the social and emotional issues connected with faculty and students. The Heads of Institutions had been doing the same with their Heads of departments and at times with their entire faculty group.

Communication has been the key. The emphasis has been on following the safety protocols connected with COVID. All assistance was rendered to people who got infected with COVID in terms of hospitalization, counselling and special COVID leaves.

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**Dr. N. M. Kondap**  
*Director General*  
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*Mumbai, Maharashtra, India*



## **COVID19: Mitigation Approach for Future Growth of Educational Institutes**

### **➤ Pandemic- COVID-19:**

The entry of Covid-19 in early 2020 has affected the corporate and academic institutes. The data analysis has indicated that nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents were affected. Closure of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94% of the world's student population, up to 99% in low and lower-middle income countries.

The crisis is exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth and adults- those leaving in poor or rural areas, girls, refugees, persons with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons to continue their learning.

The disruption has had, and will continue to have, substantial effect beyond education including the provision of basic necessities due to various regulatory norms.

(Source: policy brief: education during COVID-19 and beyond, August 2020-United Nations).

### **➤ Impact and challenges to educational institutes:**

Given the abruptness of the situation, teachers and administrations were unprepared for the transition and were forced to build emergency remote learning systems almost immediately.

While the online teaching and learning has emerged as one of the solutions, it also has given rise to the major limitation in terms of lack of personal interaction between teacher and student. Institutes swiftly moved to supplement on line Teaching and Learning to other remote educational experiences including social media, email, etc.

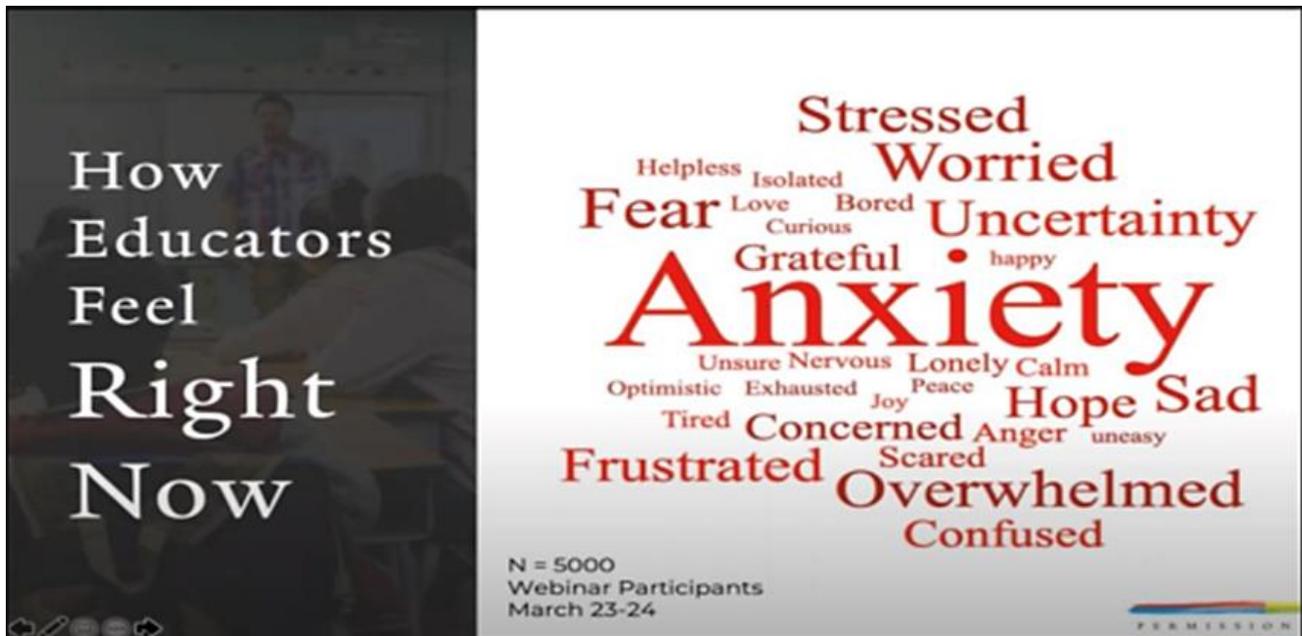
Switching to online mode of teaching and learning has revealed several global and local challenges that institutions have faced. Some of the countries were required to overcome the challenges in implementation of online learning and some of these are:

- Poor/low internet connection and internet speed
- High cost for a good internet connection
- Absence of computers/laptops/tablets/smart phones that support online teaching and learning
- Many online instruments, platforms, and websites crashed when an unexpectedly high number of clients connected to them.
- Logistical, social, and psychological challenges
- Not all students and professors have a separate room/workplace at home

### ➤ **Pandemic – Covid-19 and its Psychological impact:**

Pandemic- Covid-19 has created a considerable degree of fear, anxiety, family pressure, loss of job, new work culture. It has affected the corporate, families, staff, students and society.

Majority of the authors believe that social and emotional learning comes first and it is the foundation to the heartbeat of the classroom. It has created emotional disconnect. "It's about connecting everybody and making them feel safe and secure before one gets in to the academics."



(Courtesy of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotion)

(Source: South African journal of psychology title: Leading with heart: Academic Leadership during the Covid-19 crises 1st Feb 2021.)

### ➤ **Emerging trends:**

The impact of pandemic Covid-19 has not only brought in the advancement of technology in the educational institute but has also reinforced the teaching and learning from home. It has provided a new spark i: e. hybrid mode of teaching and learning.

Indicative emerging trends:

- Remote work and virtual meetings are likely to continue, albeit less intensely than at the pandemic's peak.
- Technical communication work can be done from home.
- Negotiations, critical business decisions, brainstorming sessions, providing sensitive feedback etc that may lose some effectiveness when done remotely.
- It may propel faster adoption of automation and AI, especially in work arenas with high physical proximity.
- Greater changes in the mix of job opportunities.
- Employees may be required to change the occupation and may have to adopt new areas like E-Commerce etc.

## ➤ Prerequisites for opening the institutes:

Institute across the globe cancelled in person classes beginning March 2020 to contain the spread of Virus. The policy makers and school leaders are making plans to reopen for the next academic year. However, there is a need for the educational institutes to be in touch with the health service providers and government agencies to provide safety to the students and employees. The institute must equip itself with all health service check up instruments with facilities for emergency service.

The institute needs to focus in the following areas:

- 1) Attendance
- 2) Health screening and quarantine procedure
- 3) Social distancing
- 4) Hygiene and cleaning

### 1) Attendance:

Attendance may not be a compulsory requirement since students and staff are required to be accommodated in limited space.

### 2) Health screening and quarantine procedure:

Health screening: must occur on daily basis for students and staff. Health and safety guidelines need to cover temperature checks, reporting symptoms and staff safety protective gear (MASK).

Quarantine: students and staff are required to be sent home immediately if they exhibit any symptoms of the virus or they report of being in contact with someone who has been suffering. The normal practice of 14 days self-quarantine is as per the guidelines issued by the regulatory authorities.

### 3) Social Distancing:

Studies of previous influenza outbreak shows that schools can safely prevent the spread of disease in some context if measures are put in place to support social distancing. Social distancing has 2 main components as identified by the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and WHO.

- a) Keeping individuals at a safe distance from one another (3-6 feet)
- b) Reducing the number of people with whom an individual interacts face to face

Social distancing in classroom:

- a) Students to maintain 6 feet of separation in class
- b) Classes be divided into one or more stable groups

Social distancing outside of classroom:

Institutes are required to consider how to keep students and staff at a safe distance from one another outside of class particularly during arrival and dismissal, meal time, recess and class periods. The related guidelines to cover:

- a) Arrival and departure of students & staff
- b) Mealtimes
- c) Recreation
- d) Transportation

#### 4) Hygiene & Cleaning:

Hygiene and Cleaning guidelines are required to be in line with regulatory requirements.

Hygiene:

- a) Mask: masks are required at all times for teachers and students
- b) Hand washing: frequent hand washing is required and sometimes as often as 2 hours

Cleaning:

- 1) cleaning needs to be frequent especially in common spaces
- 2) sharing materials – shared materials should be discouraged
- 3) cleaning products-careful cleaning with soap and water/disinfectants atleast once a day is required

(Source: reopening schools in the context of COVID-19: health & safety guidelines from other countries may 15 2020 –learning policy institute) (Research, action and impact).

#### ➤ **Way forward: academic leadership:**

In the fast changing nature of environment, the multiplicity of actions and interactions, the speed at which decisions need to be made, and the possibly life-saving implications of these, add new layers of complexity. A crisis is a source of uncertainty, disruption and change in behaviour, beliefs and outcomes. It calls for leaders who are agile and resilient. These qualities help in steering the organisation.

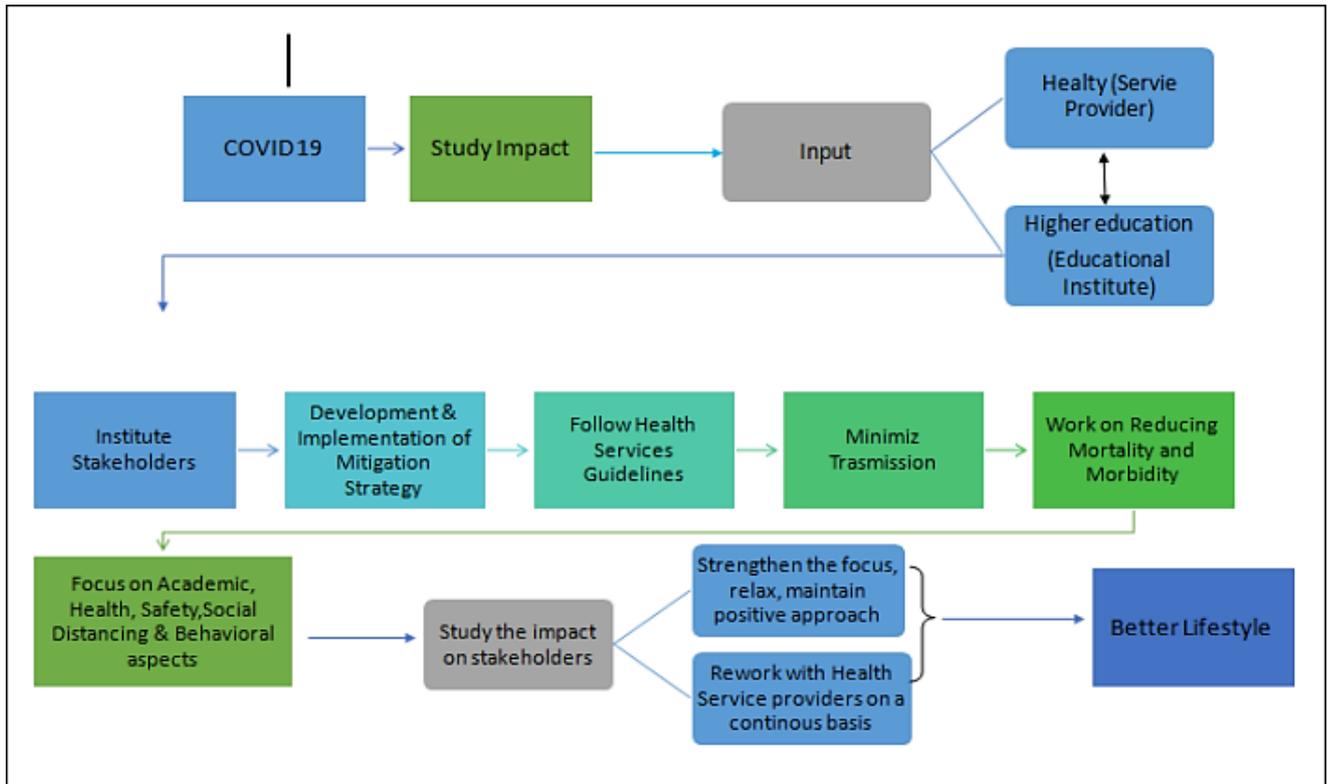
Leadership in times of crises is nothing but good leadership put under pressure in the unfamiliar context.

Leadership Approach:

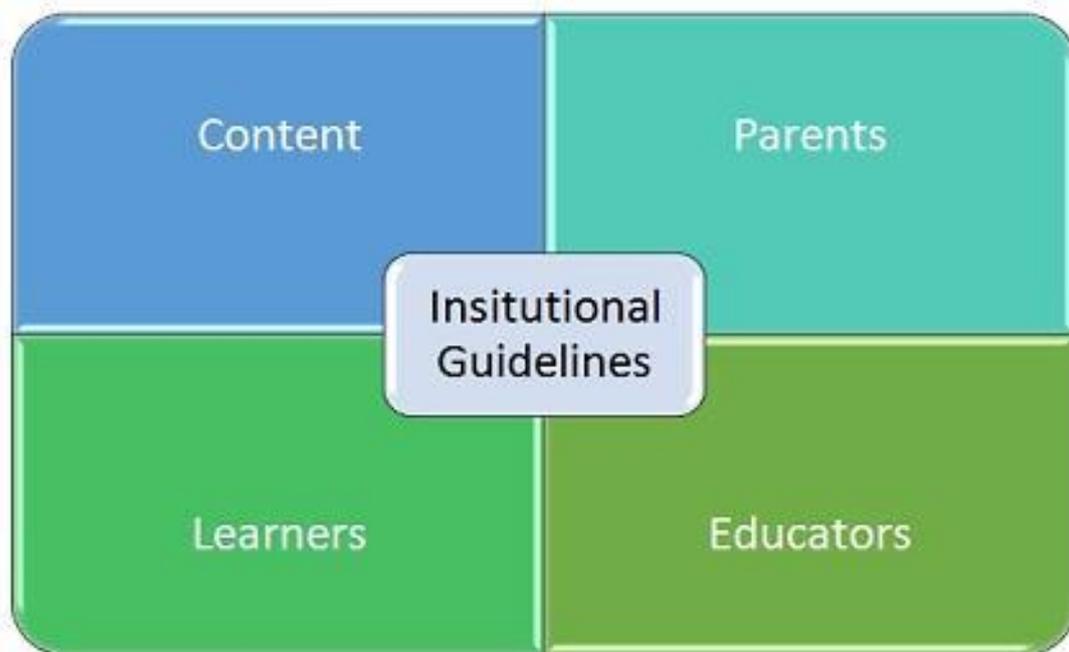
- a) Integrative leadership: which focuses on the fact that leader, the follower, and the situation all influence effectiveness and it is essential that qualitative approach is required and the academic leaders need to realise the value of collaboration and a collective response to the crises.
- b) Distributive leadership: This calls for academic leaders to understand and appreciate the importance of delinquency power, enabling and empowering people across the organisation to manage the situations with the skills and expertise they possess.

The academic leaders need to realise the fact that during the crises they must relinquish the belief that a top down response will engender stability. It is important to adapt the learning and teaching environment which responses to the fluidity of the situation.

The leaders are required to display, self awareness, empathy, vulnerability, Empathy and emotional intelligence, gratitude, trust, resilience and grit, creativity, persuasion and collaboration.



**Proposed Mitigation Strategy**



**Monitoring the performance and progress through Institutional Guidelines**

➤ **To sum up:**

**“Never Let a Good Crisis Go to Waste”**

**Winston Churchill**

**It is an opportunity to do many things**

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*Managing Director*  
*ISBR Business School*  
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The ISBR Business School (International School of Business and Research) was founded in 1990 and is one of India's autonomous management institutes. Bangalore Education Trust developed the first campus. ISBR is headquartered in Bangalore, Karnataka. ISBR maintains tight ties with a number of institutions, including the AICTE, AIMA, Annamalai University, Bangalore University, Madras Management Association, British Standard Institution - Six Sigma, and Capstone Business Simulation Games.

In response to significant demand, Due to COVID 19 there is complete shift in the teaching and learning process. At ISBR Business School, Bangalore, we have been maintaining a dynamic learning environment for our students, research scholars, and faculty members. During the lockdown time, we have made online learning activities readily available. All the departments are now trained to bring in practice of blended learning culture.

We are always exploring and refining/ structuring our long-term strategy for transforming our college into a campus of the future that provides a hybrid of online and off-line services. Simultaneously, we've launched digital alternatives to the majority of traditional offerings.

Several of our most significant initiatives are summarized below:

- ***Inclusion of E-Learning Platforms.*** ISBR authorities have specified Zoom as its main online learning platform. Additionally, authorities have urged professors to leverage additional online platforms, such as Zoom Institutional ID, to improve communication between students and teachers. The directive's purpose was to make sure the material of the course was delivered to the greatest number of people, regardless of the distribution platform. The faculty has used Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, and Google Hangouts for video conferencing. Faculty use WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Facebook groups and Messenger to ensure fast connection with students. Faculty have posted documents and other things to Google Docs, Facebook groups, or sent them through email to students with sporadic Internet access. In addition to video lectures, faculty members have recorded their synchronous lectures and have uploaded them to the course-related Facebook private group, making them available to students who may have had issues logging in for some reason. Work Progress/ Conferences/ Students Achievement/ Faculty Achievement is regularly updated on LinkedIn on the ISBR Institution profile.
- ***E- Classroom during COVID-19:*** The pupils'/ Students classes never ceased during the lockdown, and they have continued to run long after the lockdown was lifted. We decided to employ Microsoft project teams to facilitate the project delivery, and the faculties were all re-trained by Microsoft agencies to use the Microsoft project teams in the most efficient manner possible to produce 360-degree development. ***Online Examinations & results:*** ISBR went well beyond completing the third and fourth trimester online exams, and announced the results in record time. The new processes ISBR established gave the students faith in them, and they all trusted that if we hold fast, nothing can drag us down.

- **Knowledge Updates:** We keep our students informed of current events through regular conversations and debates on chat groups. Additionally, we established an intercollegiate competition to score the actions taken by governments, corporations, and non-governmental organizations to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in the context of stakeholder capitalism.
- **Skill Development Workshops:** Our students have received skill development training via virtual workshops led by our alumni and senior professionals on a variety of topics such as digital marketing, Google ads, and LinkedIn Talent Solutions.
- **Industry Webinars:** Because of our strong industry ties, our students have had the opportunity to attend some thought-provoking seminars hosted by major industry organizations and associations such as the CII, FICCI, IMC, and TAITRA.
- **Interview Preparation:** We are always conducting unique online sessions focusing on group discussions, psychometric testing, and interview advice.
- **Research-based Internships:** To maximize the engagement of students whose, Online Work from Home Internships have been implemented
- **Online Mentoring and Counseling:** To assist our students in coping with their current circumstances, we have strengthened our mentoring system by providing them with online access to counselling services. Thus, with the collaboration of faculty mentors and a certified counsellor, we have guaranteed that assistance is available for any situation, from academic concerns to relationship stress to placement-related anxiety.
- **Virtual interactions for Admissions:** We communicate with our applicants on a continuous basis via a range of channels, including emails, messages, WhatsApp seminars, and webinars led by our academics and industry professionals. We are addressing their concerns, assuaging their anxiety, and urging them to take use of this time to improve their skills.
- **Faculty Development:** We have guaranteed that our faculty members receive adequate assistance in conducting synchronous web sessions and organizing assessment modules. Additionally, our faculty members participate in a variety of skill development programs focused on online education and assessment. Several of them have been requested to serve as resource persons for numerous webinars hosted by industry organizations.
- **Starting of a new wing “ISBR Digital Academy” to bring out the entrepreneurial skills in the faculty:** Covid times are tough times and these times test us to the core. Delay in the fee receivables either resulted in salary deduction or deferment. So at such times ISBR decided to launch an entrepreneurial platform that adds to the earnings to the faculty and can also result in community development. This platform “ISBR Digital Academy” helped the faculty design their own short term courses and launch it at most reasonable and affordable prices for the community. This revenue earned through this platform was shared with the faculty. This made the team share all their experiences and knowledge towards community development. Till date about 15+ programs have been launched through this platform. Someone rightly said, “Necessity is the mother of invention”.



- **Digital Library Services:** Our library subscribes to all available e-resources and enables remote access to all of them. This has ensured that our staff and students have seamless access to e-newspapers, databases, repositories, and research portals such as EBSCO, ProQuest, and E-Brary, to name a few.
- **Ongoing Contact:** We are committed to maintaining open lines of communication with all of our stakeholders, including staff, professors, corporate partners, alumni, applicants, and current students. We've also contacted parents to assure them of our ongoing assistance for their children's online lectures and assessments.
- **Infrastructure Management:** The primary objective was to ensure the infrastructure was safe. All relevant practices, as advised by the government's health department, had to be implemented. A panel of specialists inspected the campus and provided recommendations. All of these were implemented immediately. These included temperature scanning of all visitors, sanitizers in all high-traffic areas, daily campus sanitization, maintaining appropriate social distance, wearing masks while meeting with anyone, face shields for all cleaning workers, and adherence to all SOPs. All of these activities were captured on film and photographs were taken and sent to the institution's teaching and non-teaching communities. This imbued them with confidence, and this was the start of a new normal.
- **Staff Welfare:** The team was always fearful about the Covid treatment and its associated costs. To combat this and to help its employees, ISBR insures all of its employees on Covid and its associated expenses. A COVID Vaccination Camp was set up to ensure all the employees are vaccinated. This contributed significantly to the development of trust among all team members. A few small gestures of kindness go a long way.
- **Regular Updates and Notifications:** An internal covid team was established to regularly update and notify staff and team members about what's happening and what further safeguards to take as the days pass. These were distributed by emails, text messages, posters, and Whatsapp messaging, among others.
- **Facilitating and assisting faculty in distress:** ISBR also made it possible for professors to work from home on occasion in the event of problem or distress. Each began assisting the other, as this period necessitated collaboration and proximity. The entire discourse and communication among the team and company were always good.

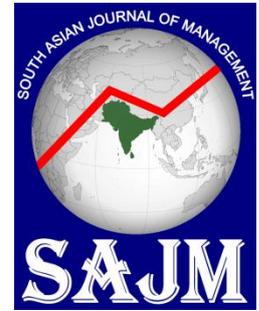
Everything is not as straightforward as it appears. There are many challenges that we have faced and addressed and many more challenges yet to be addressed at this point of time. Several of them include a delay in fee collection from students, a sudden lockdown in a few areas that made it difficult for the team to evacuate, public transportation that is still not fully operational, several team members who are still stuck in other states, and a lack of clarity regarding the reopening of physical classes. When the team feels confident, all obstacles appear little and manageable.

The Entire Academic Setting during the year 2021-2022, employees were required to give 200 percent to attain 100 percent results. There are still obstacles along the route, and we are all prepared to overcome them as we proceed.

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### **TEACHING IN COVID TIMES: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

Pandemics are rare occurrences if we view them from the short-term perspective of an individual's life-span. Many are the people who have lived their lives without ever having gone through such a horrible experience. However, if we take a long-term historical perspective, we can see that such calamities are not a rare phenomenon. Human history has been marked by the outbreaks of major epidemics like small pox, plague, Spanish flu, etc, some of which have persisted for as long as 7-8 years and taken the lives of millions. Compared to those days, we are really fortunate to have the internet technologies, which can, to some extent, mitigate the problems created by the pandemic. In other words, our more unfortunate predecessors had to go for a complete shut down of all social and commercial activities including education. The most important differentiator of the current situation from those of the previous ones is that, despite the constraints imposed on personal contacts and social interactions, we are able to carry out many of our social and educational activities in the online mode, which is perhaps the only saving grace in an otherwise frustrating environment.

#### **Formative vs Informative Courses**

In this context, it should specially be noted here that online education is not an invention of the pandemic times. It was very much there before the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, it emerged as an extension or modification of the distance education system. What was being done by the open schools and universities through the print media and the postal service could be done much faster and more efficiently through the online technologies. The use of the online system was mainly for the post-graduate courses initially, especially to supplement the in-class sessions. Many foreign universities had their courses videoed and placed online, so that the participants could take them asynchronously at their convenience. These courses were made available free of cost, if the participating student did not ask for a certificate. Hence these were eminently suitable as a supplement to in-class sessions as the students could watch them free at their convenience. Even when these courses are offered as part of a degree-awarding program with fee-payments, they are used mainly for post-graduate courses. It is in this context I would like to make a distinction between '*Formative*' and '*Informative*' courses, although these are not mutually exclusive.

The *formative* phase of an individual's life is up to school-level and to some extent during the undergraduate studies, where there is greater importance to personal guidance, mentoring, as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. At the post-graduate level, the focus is more on the information content of the courses, which may therefore be called the *informative* phase. It is easy and convenient to provide such information content through the online medium, except for the lab-work and field-work requirements. This is why the online learning system was developed initially (much before the onset of the Covid pandemic) as an extension of the distance education system with a focus on the asynchronous self-study for higher level courses.

## **The Online Learning System: Natural Evolution and Advantages**

As mentioned above, the online system is more suitable for teaching ‘informative’ courses than ‘formative’ ones. The online system was started with a view to helping people who have constraints about attending regular sessions, and hence the courses were initially offered in the asynchronous mode. The response to the new system from the community of learners was quite positive, as it offered several advantages to them, which are briefly outlined below.

- The asynchronous mode of operation gives a lot of flexibility to the learner; besides, there is no need of scheduling the session. Even in the synchronous mode, where scheduling is required, it can be done at short notice.
- The course can be taken from anywhere in the world, so that the learner need not travel, and therefore can eliminate the cost, time and pollution involved in travel.
- There is no need of any physical infrastructure such as campuses with lecture halls, seminar halls, auditoriums, furniture, faculty housing, students’ hostels, etc., which helps in avoiding the huge investments incurred for them.
- The asynchronous system would help the shy students also to participate, as they can take time to prepare their responses and post them online, without having to speak before the entire class.
- As there are many institutions providing such learning resources freely online, it is possible for instructors to use such resources to supplement their sessions by encouraging the students to avail of them.
- Since a recorded lecture can be replayed several times, as required, it is possible to save the time spent on repeating the same lecture to different batches, which would help faculty to have more time for research and consultancy activities.
- As there is no need for the faculty and students to be physically present on campus, the administrative tasks associated with the conduct of the classes (such as keeping the attendance records, house-keeping, etc.) can be avoided. In case attendance records are needed, the online system can be programmed for recording them automatically.
- The traditional constraints of batch-size do not apply to online sessions, especially for the asynchronous ones, as it is possible to admit any number of students to an online class, although for the synchronous sessions the internet-bandwidth may be a constraint.
- Similarly, there are no constraints of the physical distance of the students from the institutions, nor even of the geographical boundaries, as it is possible for students to join the class from anywhere in the world.
- The online system, especially the asynchronous one, helped in segregating the interested learners from the laggards. The former takes up the learning tasks as their own responsibility whereas the latter has to be pushed and persuaded.

## **The Online System: Dancing with Covid and Losing Credibility?**

The online learning system, which was developing on its own and was going through a process of gradual growth, suddenly got a boost with its ‘association’ with Covid. It should be admitted that the online technologies came in as a saviour of the learning and education system during the Covid pandemic, which was not available to humanity in similar pandemic situations earlier. However, many in the learning and teaching communities started treating it only as a ‘necessary evil’ and

listing its inadequacies and inefficiencies. These issues arose not because of inherent deficiency of the online system, but because it was inappropriately imposed (out of necessity) on certain groups and contexts. A story that is doing the rounds in social media in the context of work from home would illustrate this point.

A manager was admonishing his employee (who was working from home) about the disturbances to the work arising from his home-environment – about the noises heard from the surroundings, about the occasional presence of unauthorized persons in the room, about the occasional disruptions when the employee was called upon to deal with household emergencies, etc. While the scolding was going on, an old lady from the family intervened and sought the permission to speak to the manager, which was granted. She told him the story of a pedestrian traveller, who wanted to take rest for a while, as he got tired of walking. He found a place under the shade of a tree and lay down there to rest. As he was getting into a soothing sleep, he was woken up by the chirping of birds from the nest on a branch of the tree. The traveller got angry and started pelting stones at the birds' nest. The mother-bird then told him: "This was our place, where you came as an intruder. Now you are trying to evict us from our nest. This is unfair". The manager got the message that the company was an intruder into the home-space of the employee, and stopped admonishing the employee about the disturbances.

The sequel to this story is also interesting. Taking a cue from the above story, some employees were emboldened to ask their companies to compensate them for the expenses incurred by them and the inconveniences caused to their family members. They were referring to the expenses incurred on the equipment (laptop, phone, etc), the internet connection at the required speed and bandwidth, cost of electricity, rent for the limited space (especially in the context of depriving the use of it by the other members of the family), and the inconveniences caused to the work of others (especially children's classes). Although these were legitimate demands, the companies too had their excuses. They told the complaining employees that they should be thankful to the company for retaining them on the job when many were thrown out of their jobs, and a large number of aspirants are waiting in the line for employment. The implied suggestion (which some of them made explicit) was that the employees, who felt the new system to be unacceptable, could leave their jobs so that the companies could recruit freshers in their places and thereby reduce their costs significantly.

When the online learning system was evolving naturally in line with the technological developments, there were hardly any issues with its use. This was because the learners made informed choices of these products based on their personal circumstances and technological capabilities and facilities. However, when such systems were imposed on learners of all levels because of the Covid-problem, there were many who were socially, technologically, financially and educationally ill-equipped to deal with it. A few such issues are listed in the next sub-section.

### **Inadequacies and Challenges: Blame it on the Environment?**

The Covid-time experience of online learning has not been very encouraging. A survey conducted in the US has estimated that about 77% of the students are unhappy with the distance-learning conducted through the online media. This percentage will be much more in developing countries where there are serious deficiencies in terms of the internet connectivity and the availability of equipment like laptops and smart phones. News media in India, for example, is replete with instances of students not being able to attend online lectures for want of suitable equipment or connectivity. Some of them have to travel to different places to get connectivity or share the equipment with others. There are also issues about too many members of the family (including parents who have to work online) having to share the limited space and/or equipment available in the house. While these

are all issues related to the environment, there are also issues about the motivation and capability of the learner. A summary list of these issues (although at the cost of repetition in some cases) is given below.

**Issues related to the Learner:** (1) Although there are some students who are intrinsically interested in the subject and would make good use of the available learning resources, there are many others who would sit and listen to a lecture or use the learning resources only under close supervision and monitoring. Such students have greater opportunities to play truant in an online session, especially if the parents are not available at home or are unable or unwilling to monitor what the students do during the sessions. There are several cases of such students not being able to complete the assignments on time and having to repeat them or even withdraw from the program itself. (2) A second issue in this regard is the learners' inability to structure their time and learning resources, which is especially relevant in the case of asynchronous learning. Many students would need external assistance in structuring the time and resources, which is one of the critical services provided by educational institutions. For this reason, the online courses are more appropriate for PG courses, as the external structuring assistance received by the students up to their graduation studies would have given them sufficient training for structuring their time and resources. Besides, there are more of informative rather than formative content in the PG courses compared to the lower levels. (3) Thirdly, in some countries (including India) there is a system of poor students being given meals, clothing, medicines and other basic necessities of life, which they will be deprived of in an online learning situation.

**Issues related to Technology/Equipment:** These issues are particularly acute in developing countries, where there are a large number of people in the BPL (Below Poverty-Line) category. It is observed that the 'digital divide' between the rich and the poor is causing the widening of the already existing social, educational and economic gaps between them. Many are the technology-related disadvantages of the lower income groups: (1) The poor are not able to afford expensive devices like smart phones and laptops, especially when they are required for each member of the family for their online learning/work. This is not a problem that affects only the developing countries; it is reported that in Europe and the US there are about 10% of students not having their own laptops. (2) Some poor families, who don't have the facilities at home and are struggling to make both ends meet, may send their children for work rather than for online classes; and, having discontinued their studies, they may never go back to school. (3) Even when the poor manage to purchase such devices, they would go for the lower-end ones to save money, which may not have the required capabilities for all kinds of online learning applications. (4) Some institutions and charitable organizations may provide laptops, phones, etc to the poor, but their houses will have no facility to keep them safely and protect them from damage and theft. (5) Sharing of equipment among the family-members is a common practice among the poor for saving money, which is possible, for example, if the parent is working in the night shift and the son/daughter is to attend classes during the day-time. However, if different members of the family have to use the facility during the same time, such sharing is not possible. (6) The poor may not have many rooms in their houses. In fact, most of them huddle together in single-room accommodations. Naturally, multiple users of the same living space at the same time will cause disturbances and distractions. (7) For the same reason of affordability, the lower-income groups may not have the internet connections with the required speed and bandwidth, and so may experience disruptions in their online classes. Disruptions are also possible because of the problems at the service-provider's end. (8) Knowledge of the technology and the ways of trouble-shooting in case of technical problems will be limited for the poor compared to the rich who are regular users of such devices.

**Issues related to Faculty:** Since the Covid-related restrictions and the online teaching/ learning system was imposed on educational institutions all of a sudden, there was hardly any time for them to train their faculty members. Not all faculty members will be familiar with the issues involved in online teaching: (1) They need training in the operational aspects of the technology being used by the institution. (2) Teachers teaching online from their homes may feel obliged to monitor the learning sessions of their own children and may also get distracted by their household chores and visitors (3) In an online class where all the participants are not visible to the faculty at the same time on a continuous basis, it is impossible to monitor the group's behavioural cues or the expressions on their faces and tweak the lecture accordingly. It is also difficult to make the session interactive by encouraging individual participants to raise questions, which may lead to clarifications and further discussions among the students. Similarly, the possibility of giving individual guidance within and outside the session is also limited. (4) A pedagogical tool that requires high levels of in-class interaction, the case-method, is difficult to adopt in online sessions. (5) Similarly, an important function of the faculty in teaching on academic programs is the evaluation and grading of the students, which is difficult in an online system. Since it is a tedious process to conduct proctored exams, many institutions have done away with exams, while some others have relied on 'application questions', which they believe (rather mistakenly) are less susceptible to copying (from other students as well as the internet) and other manipulations by the students. Such methods of evaluation cannot ensure a fair and equitable grading system, and hence will be highly demotivating to the sincere and hard-working students. It is therefore important to design a fool-proof system of conducting online exams and give training to the faculty to ensure fair evaluation and grading of students.

### **Management Education: The Covid-time Challenges**

Online teaching/learning has become a necessity for all educational programs during the Covid pandemic, and management education is no exception. Therefore, all the issues and challenges discussed above would apply to management education as well. Since most of the programs in management are at the post-graduate (MBA) level, there may be limited concerns about the students' maturity, motivation and ability to structure their time and resources. It should also be noted that students for such professional courses are selected through rigorous processes to ensure their competence, interest and motivation. Unlike the students who are in the education system as part of the universal education policy, the students of professional courses are likely to take their classes more seriously, be they in the online or offline mode, especially because they see their studies as a passport to launching their career with a reputed organization.

The predominance of the 'informative' inputs in the higher level (post-graduate, and to some extent graduate levels) courses would make them more suitable for online classes. The 'formative' inputs in a management program are imparted through internships, live projects and interaction with practitioners (corporate executives, entrepreneurs and regulators). While the interactions with practitioners can be organized online, there are limited opportunities for organizing internships and live projects online. Although businesses in general have been adversely affected by Covid, there are some sectors (like IT/software, healthcare, delivery-services, etc) which have been thriving. Opportunities in these industries for online or offline work (especially those requiring volunteers) could be utilized to offer practical training to students.

### **Conclusion: Some Working Models**

As the world is going through an unprecedented crisis, there is more credibility for tried and tested solutions. Under the prevailing situation of confusion and uncertainties, it may be a consolation to see

that there are some models that have worked, though with limited success in some cases. This concluding section lists a few of them, with a suggestion that they are worth emulating.

1. Considering the difficulties being experienced by some students, especially those from the low-income backgrounds, in attending the synchronous sessions (as they may have problems with equipment, connectivity, work-spaces, etc), institutions should create a 'Knowledge Bank' of all the course materials generated in the system, which the students can access at their convenience. Asynchronous online learning is more effective because of the possibilities of: reading/watching at one's own pace, re-reading/viewing, skipping familiar materials and focusing on special interest areas, playing related games, etc.
2. Additionally, these institutions would periodically organize chat groups, video meetings/discussions, document sharing, collaborative worksheets, etc. for promoting interactive learning among students.
3. Some institutions have also introduced radio-broadcasting of their lectures, so that poor students could listen to them without having to purchase costly equipment and internet connectivity.
4. While providing such facilities, these institutions take care to emphasize the fact that these are supplements rather than substitutes, and encourage the students to attend the regular sessions unless it is absolutely impossible because of genuine reasons.
5. Some institutions in the developed countries conduct Online Learning Readiness (OLR) surveys among their students, which measure the students' readiness in terms of: (a) internet self-efficacy, (b) self-directed learning, (c) learner control, (d) motivation for learning, and (e) online communication self-efficacy. The result of the survey is used for counselling the students and for training the faculty.
6. For the students who are more comfortable with in-person clarifications and counselling, some institutions make arrangements for the faculty and counsellors to be available at the institution at specified times, so that students could make prior appointments and visit the campus, one or a few at a time (without violating the Covid protocols).
7. For courses like management studies, where case-discussions are unavoidable, the instructor could divide the class into small online groups, who would first discuss the case within their respective groups and make presentations to the whole group before conducting the general discussion. This system would make the students familiar with the issues in the case and enable them to take a stand and support it with case-facts and logic. In a different mode of operation, it is possible to assign different issues related to the case to different groups and later integrate the different perspectives through the general discussion, thus simulating the corporate scenario of different departments presenting their views and finally coming together (after discussions) to a common course of action. Whatever be the mode of operation, the system of having small groups with the class and having discussions within the small groups and later in the larger class would help in generating interaction and involvement of all in the deliberations and thereby simulate the collective and collaborative character of corporate life.
8. Lab work (for science subjects) and practical training and field work (for social science subjects) are difficult to organize in an online learning system. Some methods of conducting the internship programs, live projects, and interactions with the practitioners have been discussed under the section above on Management Education. For lab works at the school levels, where there is no

need of expensive and heavy equipment, some schools in the western countries have a practice of sending 'lab-kits' to the students' homes and getting the work done there. However, if the work requires heavy and expensive equipment, institutions can admit the students in batches of permitted numbers to their labs and carry out the work as well as the evaluation, as required.

9. As there are plenty of materials freely made available on the Internet, some institutions make good use of them to supplement their own resources. Many are the sources of such materials, which include the Government of India repository like SWAYAM, and many reputed international universities (like EdX of Harvard and MIT, and Coursera of Stanford). In addition, one can pick up such materials from YouTube, which in fact is the largest repository of digital learning materials. If the students are given a general instruction to use these free resources, many of them may not take the trouble of searching on the net and reading/watching them. This is why some institutions encourage their faculty to build them into their teaching scheme. One way to do this is to prescribe one or more specific materials for each topic, conduct quizzes on them and/or discuss them in class.
10. The last, and probably the most important, issue is about the evaluation and grading system. Since it is very difficult to conduct online exams in a credible manner, the easiest solution for this is to do away with exams and give a pass or fail grade based on the prescribed percentage of attendance in online courses. This, however, will be terribly demotivating for the sincere, talented and hard-working students who have ambitions to excel in studies and have a record of it for building their future career. A second option is what the Government of India has recently done in the case of CBSE and CISCE Board exams for Class 12, where there was no final exam but the final marks/grades were awarded based on the internal exams of Class 12 and the marks of the previous three years. This system has the disadvantage of not giving a chance to the students to improve their performance through last-minute preparations and performance. A third option is to conduct strictly proctored online exams, where the credibility is ensured by preventing fraud through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems and Robotics. This would require new investments in IT/AI/Robotics, which may turn out to be quite expensive for dealing with a passing phase. For higher level courses (especially for the PG), where the number of students per batch is not very large, it is possible to use the dissertation method. That is, each student will choose (or be given) a specific topic within the subject and will write a dissertation on it within the prescribed time-limit. These dissertations will be evaluated after putting them through plagiarism checks, and marks are awarded based on the quality of the dissertation. Since this would involve a lot of work on the part of the faculty, it can be adopted only for courses where the number of students is limited.

As may be noted from the discussions in this paper, EdTech (application of online technologies in education) has been the saviour of the teaching/learning system during the Covid-times. But that should not lead us to the conclusion that EdTech is the creation of Covid. In fact, EdTech came into use much before the arrival of Covid, as the new developments in IT/ITES were found to be suitable for dealing with certain needs of the educational system. The EdTech initiatives of the Government of India, for example, was launched as early as 1985, with the introduction of the digital learning and teaching framework by IGNOU to cater more effectively to the needs of distance education. This was followed by a series of initiatives by various government agencies, such as: DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), the National Teacher Platform (NTP) created in 2017 by MHRD for empowering school teachers, where teachers can upload and access teaching aids, videos, lesson plans, etc; NROER (National Repository for Open Educational Resources), launched in 2013

by NCERT/MHRD for providing access to school education materials; NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement) introduced in 2019 by MHRD for the integrated and holistic training of school teachers; and SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), introduced in 2017 by MHRD/AICTE for facilitating self-study by students from Class IX to Post-Graduation. The last one (SWAYAM, meaning 'self') is India's open university portal, which hosts about 3000 courses (including management courses) in partnership with more than 200 institutions, with more than a crore of student registrations, out of which about 7 lakhs already graduated. All these Indian initiatives in digital learning were launched before December 2019, when the Coronavirus was first discovered in Wuhan. Hence the development of the online teaching/learning system cannot be linked to the outbreak of the Covid pandemic.

International initiatives in the online teaching/learning and certification systems are much older and well-established than the Indian ones. We have already made a mention of the initiatives by Harvard and MIT (with EdX), and Stanford (with Coursera). There are many other reputed universities offering free online courses, which include: The University of California, Georgia Institute of Technology, Michigan State University, University College of London, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and so on. Moreover, as mentioned above, YouTube has the largest collection of online learning materials, not to speak of the several entrepreneurial initiatives for developing learning apps. One of them (BYJU'S, a Bangalore-based start-up, founded in 2011, and so not induced by the Covid-related opportunity) is now the most valued EdTech company in the world, with China's Yuanfudao (founded in 2012) closely behind and overtaking periodically. In the US too, EdTech companies are thriving, and the industry is expected to reach a value of USD 350 million by 2025. The long and short of the story is that the EdTech industry has a life of its own, independent of pandemics like Covid. Of course, it has helped and will continue to help in times of pandemics, but (like humanity) will survive the pandemic and live beyond. Pandemics may come and go, but online learning is here to stay.

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### **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

The Covid-19 has been more than a crisis. It has brought major changes in management education. The biggest transformation that happened during the Covid-19 was making all the activities online. COVID-19 led to major structural change in Higher Education, driven by the competitive dynamics of brand strength, shifting student demands, development and diffusion of new learning technologies, and the entry of large technology companies into the market.

#### **(i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

After imposing of lockdown, the IT team has responded timely and arranged infrastructure and facilities as follows:

- All long-duration programs, doctoral programmes, MDP classes are conducted online through Zoom, Google meet, Webex etc.
- Using Google Classroom, Google Forms, AI Proctor for conducting examinations.
- To enable seamless research remotely, students were provided the library access, research tools like Bloomberg, SPSS, AMOS, etc.,
- Admission interviews, placement activities, students' activities conducted online.
- Students were provided licensed Zoom, MS teams etc., for group activities and preparations.
- The ERP module for students has been made accessible on the cloud for carrying out various activities remotely and made available for study material on the cloud.
- All administrative work has been carried through the ERP system, which is available online.
- The office conducted examinations online using professional tools.
- The faculty evaluated answer sheets and submitted marks online.
- Students' feedback was submitted online, and students' open house addressing happened online.
- Summer internships & final placements were held completely in a remote and online environment.
- The student's general elections were conducted online.

#### **(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

- Systems have been put in place to ensure glitch-free holding of regular classes in all programs. Classes are set up by the office staff on any preferred platform (mostly Zoom) and informed to students and respective faculty via email.

- A staff member ensures that only authorized members enter the class and attendance of students is recorded. In addition, faculty members use the whiteboard, break-out rooms, annotations, etc., to ensure learning is maximized, given the constraints.
- Over time, members of faculty and staff and students have moved up the learning curve to make the best of the technology and get comfortable with it.
- Inviting guests to speak to students has been a regular feature at MDIG. The remote teaching model has given an unintended benefit - that teaching has become location agnostic.
- Faculty members can call guests from different parts of the country or even the world to address their students.
- Faculty members are using Google Classroom to administer and evaluate quizzes and analyze results.

**(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

- While teaching and learning efficiency should always be a concern, the pandemic and the rapid shift to online learning have increased focus on the importance of emotional learning, mental health, and wellness issues of students, staff and faculty.
- Conducted many motivational lectures for students, staff and faculty.
- The counseling sessions have been made available through a professional counselor for addressing queries online.
- The annual events like Alumni meet, Delphique, Imperium, HR conclave, TEDx etc., are conducted online for motivating the students.
- Students' were continuously engaged through various cultural and sports activities held online.
- The IT experts were made available for addressing students and faculty technological issues.

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**COVID – 19: How Management Education is transiting to a New Future**

Covid-19 has shaken up the entire world, all sectors of the global economy, all sections of society and international and national diplomacy, state craft, public policy and politics. Education in all categories has been hit very hard. Higher education is the worst affected component of the educational system. It is the higher education which prepares and provides manpower for various sectors in the economy. The quality of manpower as an input to various sectors should have leadership traits, ability for critical thinking, vision for growth and dynamism and capacity to nurture interpersonal relationship. These are some essential attributes which need to be possessed by them. Covid-19 has altered this equation significantly so much so that Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) will have to fundamentally change their processes, procedures, outlook and outcomes.

Particularly looking at the HEIs, the pandemic has hit all the stakeholders in the Higher Education sector including the delivery institutions, students, faculty, parents, regulatory institutions and others. In this paper, we make an attempt to look at the effects of pandemic on each of these categories of stakeholders.

**A. Delivery Institutions**

The online education is different from offline. Whereas offline is a direct mode of instructions, the offline is an indirect mode jelling much less well with the learning - teaching process. Based on the Covid-19 experiences, Table 1 compares the two on the various parameters signifying clearly that a mix – and match approach needs to be followed.

**Table 1: Offline and online learning: A Comparison**

<b>Online learning</b>	<b>Offline Learning</b>
Two dimensional experience	Three dimensional experience
Only individual experience	Both social and individual experience
Very high screen time	Very less screen time
The teaching-learning process is sometimes inadequate due to the limitations of technology	Smooth and convenient flow of the teaching-learning process
No authentic internship and field learning	Authentic learning and field learning are available
Several mental health issues	Few mental health issues
Focus on only curricular activities	Focus on curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities

Source: Anup Kumar Singh, ‘Impact of Covid-19 on higher education: Trends and opportunities’ in ‘The New Normal Challenges of Managing Business, Social and Ecological systems in the post Covid-19 era’, Bloomsbury, 2021, p 9 @ ed. Harivansh Chaturvedi and Ajoy Kumar Dey

The HEIs in the management education sector have undergone a 360<sup>0</sup> change due to Covid and caused turbulence in their regular operations. Some of the areas where the impact has been visible have been discussed below:

- 1. Teaching and Delivery Mode:** Before the pandemic, teaching in most of management institutions was on an offline mode. They were hardly prepared for this sudden shift and the need to move into a completely online mode. Leading institutions like IITs and IIMs were much ahead in terms of adapting technology for academic delivery and teaching purposes, while the other regular management institutions were quite unprepared and were caught off guard. Lack of preparedness has adversely impacted the classroom performance, personal development, choice of electives and assessing the personal traits of the students. The classroom instructions methods adopted during pre Covid-19 had to be abruptly aborted to accommodate online instructions which have its own challenges. Primarily, the effectiveness related to this mode of delivery to the students comes in question. There is a lot of discussion on digital divide which is faced by many countries across the globe.
- 2. Technology Infrastructure:** Availability of the requisite infrastructure in many HEIs such as power, trained technicians and internet connectivity hamper the adaptation of the new educational technologies. An important cause and effect relationship factor is the frequent up gradation of the gazettes and technologies by the providers which is often driven by both the profit and the prestige.
- 3. Examinations/Assessments:** The conduct of assessment exercise raises another issue. The examinations and assessments are proctored. It is revealing to know that the examinees much depend on internet and external help undermining the very objective of conducting examinations and carrying out assessments. As a part of proctored examinations, the resource persons are allotted a code by the external provider to examine a given number of examinees. In many a case, examinees opt for soft options of resorting to the user smart phones to write answers leading to very high similarity. This is likely to cause behavioral problems in future when they enter the professional world or industry. The conduct of examinations and assessments is no more between the resource persons and the students but the provider is the new intruder in the game. The HEIs are fraught with the cost, quality and ethical implications associated with the exercise.

#### **4. Administration**

Many aspects of the administrative process at HEIs have gone through hard changes during the pandemic and have impacted the institutions in a big way.

**Admissions:** The admission activity is now IT driven, faceless and much less of personal interaction. The procedures are programmed and software oriented. This ensures superior transparency but impedes personal interaction.

**Recruitment:** Similarly, the recruitment of resource persons and staff encounters issues relating to their suitability and inputs that could emerge from discussions with the selection committees. On the part of students and new hires in faculty and staff, the issues relate to the understanding that could come from the adage 'seeing is believing'. This may result in frictions between the management and the faculty which may lead to higher turnover and lesser congenial academic environment. This change in the routine processes through the

technological advance requires additional financial resources, sensitization among all the stakeholders secured through their engagement amounting to a colossal exercise in management of change.

**Finances:** Covid-19 has thrown the finances of the HEIs in a tailspin. Incomes of institutions engaged in research and consultancy have sharply declined. The 'other income' from conducting certificate courses, donations, setting up chairs, interest on deposits, organizing examinations and rentals has also registered a downward trend. The major decline in most of the cases has come from decline in admissions. In India, admissions to MBA and technical courses have averaged out to about 50 percent. To add to the woes, the onetime cash flows have to be adjusted in three to four installments as per the guidelines of the regulators. The financial support from the government has diminished or stagnant. The condition of self-financing institutions is critical.

**Drop in revenues:** As organizations are limping back to normalcy, the opportunities for HEIs in terms of consulting opportunities and training have vastly shrunk. The continuation in old frame is the order of the day. This hardly calls for innovation and creativity. The B-Schools are not approached even to build a portfolio of consulting and training projects. There have been some exceptions to this generalization. These relate to banking and finance sector and wellness industry. The automobile industry holds an olive branch in that there is a surge of activities concerning e-vehicles. The logistic industry forms another exception.

## **B. Students**

COVID-19 is building psychological distress among vulnerable college students, as they are forced to stay home, along with worsening financial situations, lifestyle changes, family situations and time spent on various activities. Many psychological interventions are being recommended to the students due to the effect of the pandemic.

- 1. Digital Divide:** The availability of the IT hardware and software acts as a severe limitation for the HEIs. So is the case with the students coming from low income groups and those hailing from the rural areas.
- 2. All round-development:** The Research studies show that the pattern of learning of a management student is in the ratio of 70:20:10. Management students learn a mere 10 percent in the classroom. Twice of this comes from the institutional setting. This means that library facilities, sports activities, cafeteria, residential campus marginally contribute to the personal development of the students. It is the interaction opportunities with the fellow participants, visiting professors, industry personnel and external world that contribute majorly to the multifaceted personality development of the students. This is an important characteristic which ensures a successful and productive executive life in the later years of management students. It is said that the net worth of a person depends on his / her network.
- 3. Mental health:** One of the biggest challenges faced by people is maintaining mental health. Mind statics is a crucial indicator of mental health but is often neglected by people. In the COVID-19 era, many suicides have been reported due to depression.
- 4. Placements:** The placement processes are undergoing fundamental changes. The recruiters do not visit campus. They interact with the students online. The assessment of the institute in

terms of courses offered, contents, cultivating soft skills, instituting electives and mentoring is done through visiting the website, telephonic interaction and social media channels. Covid-19 has impacted most of the industries nationally and internationally adversely. The companies have reduced the placement offers and in many cases even the financial packages. The industry gropes in the dark in fathoming the traits of the students which might affect the retention rate of the hires. The new hires also get frustrated as they do not get an opportunity for a physical interaction with the recruiters.

### **C. Faculty**

The faculty members of the HEIs have found themselves in a situation which is not encouraging. The individuals who are expected to keep themselves motivated, dedicated and on the top of their game for effective delivery of knowledge have found them in a very difficult situation with Covid pandemic. The faculty also misses the physical presence of the students and this may have affected the quality of delivery as well.

1. **Capacity and Mindset:** Faculty is faced with a new eco – system bereft of students in the classroom. They are engaged in synchronous online teaching. They needed to shift from synchronous online teaching to asynchronous online teaching. A new cadre of teachers has to be prepared which can continue with synchronous online teaching. The video conversations from the faculty are not well received as they consume more internet data. The old faculties holding senior positions have been at disadvantage with the new education technology and have suffered from wellness issues.
2. **Research:** During the Covid pandemic, undertaking management research is governed by new rules and regulations. It's all internet research based on online databases that are accessed in the Covid times. Action research, field visits, data collection have been given a go-bye. Physical interaction is few and far between. The quality of research in such a circumstance is anybody's guess. The research outputs lose their credibility both at the hands of industry and public policy making bodies. The sponsored research has come down drastically and the institutional research has suffered from dearth of resources and physical interaction.

### **D. Parents**

1. The impact of Covid-19 on parents has been exasperating in most of the cases. Job losses have been on rise and many families have witnessed severe drop in income sources.
2. Vulnerable age groups have especially been impacted by Covid-19. This has also hampered their activities and movements in a big way.

The overall well-being of the parents is very critical in the life of the child and the pandemic has surely disturbed the balance and had an impact on the students.

### **E. Regulatory bodies**

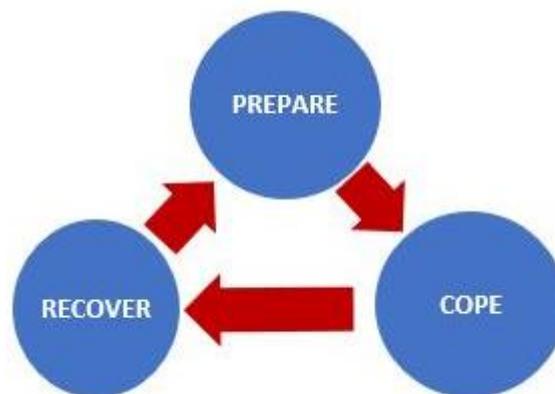
The regulatory bodies controlling technical and general education, under Covid-19, are compelled to act differently divorcing and departing from well established processes and procedures. The processes of receiving applications for setting up institutions, granting approvals, and dealing with

matters concerning accreditation have undergone a sea change. Their calendar of activities experiences frequent changes leading to delays all around giving birth to uncertainties for the stakeholders. For admissions to the PGDM programmes, the requirement of undergoing mandatory tests stands relaxed hampering the quality intake which in its train has given rise to several problems.

Educational administrators have come across the discontinuity and disruption in the teaching-learning process. The fear of financial difficulties arising from slowdown of economic activities leading to payment of tuition fees by the students has rattled the educational administrators of the non-government institutions which are mostly self-financed and out beat public management institutions phenomenally in numbers. The continuity of the business model is in question for such institutions. The dearth of adequate exposure to new educational technology is a problem looming large on their head. Maintaining safe and hygienic campuses has added to their running costs in the face of declining incomes and cash flows.

### **Emergency and Education: Adopting a Cyclical Approach**

The biggest lesson from the Covid-19 pandemic is that preparedness is crucial for HEIs. There are different scenarios that are being discussed, while many public health experts believe that the pandemic will spread in waves, many countries are talking about the third and fourth waves, which means that this is a long drawn process. Therefore the means of addressing this pandemic should also be cyclical. There is a need for the management institutions to begin to “prepare,” which means that they need to start putting together a robust and realistic response plan which is tested and tried in the real time. This will create some kind of a cushion for the institutions and will facilitate to “cope” with the uncertainties and reduce the negative impacts.



**Source: Kaliope Azzi-Hucktigran Shmis, Managing the impact of COVID-19 on education systems around the world: How countries are preparing, coping, and planning for recovery, March 18, 2020**

The plan can include introducing protocols for screenings in the academic institutions, rolling out hygiene practice campaigns, preparing for distance learning mode, revamping examination process, tweaking the academic calendar, using the unutilized infrastructure for alternative purposes and supporting emergencies, etc. As and when the emergency phase dissipates, the system could again get moving into a “recovery” mode”.

It is critical to jointly work building on global experiences. An imaginative thinking is required as to how to run the business schools in these altered circumstances. Management education is different

from the education in many other disciplines. It requires physical interaction for several understandable reasons. The diversity of the students is its basic premise. It needs to be promoted and encouraged. The regulators and public policy makers while paying attention to ‘quality’, have to ensure the sustenance of institutions engaged in imparting management education, on the one hand, and the ‘concerns’ of the stakeholders, on the other. Management education has to be considered as an ‘integrated whole’ and limited not only to instituting MBA programmes. Research, consultancy, management development activities and publications are inseparable elements of management education. Covid-19 has sized down management education to online teaching at the cost of the other elements. Consequently, the stream of benefits derived from management education stands weekend. This has to be reversed. A new ‘genre’ of resource persons has to occupy the centre stage in management education. The modern HEIs are relic and will disappear soon lest they are in sync with the change. The organizational adaptation of this change is necessary for HEIs. The importance of IT investments, supportive administration, student’s attitude research productivity and infrastructure utilization need to be well understood.

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### **(i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

COVID-19 has impacted most B schools and forced many to do major structural changes which are driven by changing student demands, fast development and diffusion of new learning technologies, reduction in international students and more importantly entry of large technology companies in the skilling space. What's upsetting is that COVID-19 has resulted in numerous closures and mergers, mainly due to the crisis in funding. COVID-19 posed a huge challenge to the way B schools are supporting the development of students through a broad range of curricula and other experiences and opportunities. Adapting to a prolonged pandemic meant that institutions needed to be agile, flexible and have resilient models of education that enable continuous adaptation to different phases of the "new normal". COVID-19 has accelerated and intensified long-run pedagogic trends.

### **(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

The methods of teaching are changing. The varying ways in which problems arise in industry require sessions that highlight the ways in which the joint application of the principles of various functions and team work will address issues suitably. As content becomes increasingly delivered in an online mode, there will also be the challenge of how to convey the critical learning that is experiential rather than functional, and B schools have to find innovative student friendly ways to do so. Incorporating sustainability issues into teaching is critical as students need to be prepared to face the challenges of the day and to understand that purpose and social responsibility are of prime importance and not profits. The pandemic is an occasion to review the curriculum and to introduce contemporary topics such as how workers from home use their time, the efficacy of different communication strategies and so on. Face to face lectures will over time become less effective. The mode of delivery of virtual classroom has altered as students have become active knowledge seekers through interactive sessions. Emphasis is on the application of content through case studies, role plays and focused group discussions. Thanks to the virtual platform students connect with their faculty beyond lecture sessions through discussion forums.

### **(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

Social and emotional issues of students is the biggest fallout from Covid. Most students in B-schools are into mental depression looking at job and employment crisis coupled with social restrictions with peers and classmates. A KPMG study on disruptions in higher education mentions ...."Although not necessarily reducing in absolute numbers, the cohort of young people seeking the immersive, rite-of-passage, full-time, on-campus, bachelor education will reduce as a proportion of the whole student body. More students will be working part-time, undertaking family responsibilities and wanting to integrate learning into their lives rather than interrupt their lives for an immersive experience". All of this means faculty have to focus on mentoring and counselling students and take help of industry.

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**SOMAIYA**  
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K J Somaiya Institute of Management

### **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR MANAGEMENT EDUCATION SECTOR**

A quote by Albert Einstein says *“In the middle of difficulty lies the opportunity”*.

Disruptions, disruptive innovations, the VUCA world, blue ocean strategy are buzz words usually associated with business. The commercial applications of rapid technological advances lead to new incumbents challenging established companies and industry sectors through creation of new business models and serving new or under served markets. In the recent past, the world has experienced unprecedented lockdowns and total disruptions in the social, economic and business activities along with those of the adjacent sectors, with health and well being becoming a primary focus for society. The saving factor has been the availability of networking platforms that helped in continued business and social activities within the available resources and limitations. Education sector being the pivot of society had to perforce move to the online mode to maintain academic schedules and is still in the online mode.

The new organization work culture is centered around work from home and hybrid business models leading to paradigm shifts in operations management of various industry sectors. The increasing complexity in conducting business, the phenomenal rise and valuation of app based businesses that are integrated with human supply chains, analytics becoming the new foundation of any business, companies having to factor in the environmental, social and governance factors into their business processes and trying to comply with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, makes us realize that we are not just looking at paradigm shifts but tectonic shifts in the conduct of business management. Such sudden shifts in the business ecosystem has implications for management education, being an industry facing educational sector. Business schools develop and provide professionally trained managers for fulfilling industry requirements but in today’s rapidly changing business context, they need to redefine their purpose, processes and strategies in order to cater to the demands for well trained professionals suitable for Industry 4.0 and beyond.

Leadership is usually discussed, written and spoken about in terms of the corporate and public life but not often with respect to the education space. Transformational leadership is the need of the hour for business schools and the quality and type of academic leadership can make the big difference in a sector that is itself facing disruptive forces, high competition within itself and from online education while working within regulatory frameworks. A simple Google search on the word ‘leadership’ threw up 2.82 billion results and search on the concept of ‘transformational leadership’ came up with 69 million results on the Google. This shows the importance of leadership and the number of discussions around its various nuances. It is time to apply these concepts in the context of academia. The role of the teacher must move simply beyond imparting knowledge but emerge as one of a transformational leader through the creation of a nurturing and positive learning environment inside the classroom. Successful leaders help in setting directions, developing people and redesigning

their organization culture for a growth mindset, and same should be followed in the case of academic institutions. As leaders, the teaching fraternity are important influencers in moulding fresh minds and their zone of influence extends much beyond their academic schedules. The tech enabled student community in the business school may have access to multiple knowledge and information resources but may be lacking in the contextualization and applicability of the same to different business scenarios.

The role of academic leaders is challenging due to inter generational gaps and technology usage gaps between the various stakeholders of the business education ecosystem such as the faculty, students and industry. The students of management education are young energetic adults and an ‘always online’ generation with or without work experience. These young students have to be mentored and moulded for Industry 4.0 requirements. The focus of change should start with the educational products being offered and the manner in which they are being delivered to the aspiring student community. Being in Asia, which is the most populated continent in the world with its unbelievable socio-economic and cultural diversity and its many challenges, developing professionally trained management graduates who are grounded in the reality of their local conditions while having a global perspective and exposure to hands on practical aspects of business management is mandatory. Experiential learning that give the young students real time opportunity for analyzing, evaluating and contemplating on the problems and solutions must be provided as part of curriculum delivery. While the subjects being taught in a business school may be similar around the world, it is important to correlate the management knowledge and its applications to the regional and socio-cultural aspects to enable the students to appreciate and resolve local challenges and opportunities. Formal mentoring, providing suitable incubation platforms and seed money could convert some of these challenges into entrepreneurial opportunities.

There are plenty of management lectures which discuss about the VUCA world and its implications for business. The COVID 19 pandemic and its lockdown situation made students experience first hand the meaning of a VUCA world and how it could be tackled. Even though academic schedules are still being conducted on various online platforms, these are possible only with collaboration and team work - the real value and importance of these concepts has been experienced first hand by the student community and these impressions will remain with them as they enter the industry for their jobs. For an intensive experiential service industry like education with its human supply chain of faculty, students, administrative staff, external stakeholders like the industry, alumni and regulatory authorities – keeping the process of education delivery moving is no mean task. It is a real test of leadership at all levels and only possible due to the utmost cooperation of all those involved in the process.

The faculty imparting management education in business schools should emerge as an important link between industry and society through research and consultancy activities. This will enable focus on pedagogical innovations such that their research can be integrated into classroom learning and can be applied to real world situations. New opportunities are arising in the education sector due to the use of the digital platforms which will ensure inclusivity of the unserved markets and flexibility in delivery and completion of the educational programmes. At the same time, maintaining local and international quality standards can bring about the desired differentiating factor for the business schools.

The virtue of discipline in all aspects of our personal and professional lives cannot be underestimated, especially in the new changed environment. The new buzz words are agility,

adaptability, resilience, swiftness, speed, stability and sustainability, and these are equally applicable for industry and education. Transformational leadership practices will ensure survival and growth of the management education sector going into the future.

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### **Indian B-Schools in 2025**

#### **Abstract**

Pandemics are remembered individually as millions of discreet tragedies, and not in a sense of collective human history. It is too early to know if we would remember this one, but the precedents suggest we won't. With time, the way of life will recover from the short-term losses of freedom. Business and management education would not change and the B-schools of 2025 will be very much like the B-schools of 2019.

**Keywords:** Management schools, Education, on-line mode, in-face mode, off-line mode, change

There is no denying the fact that the raging COVID-19 pandemic sweeping through the world is upending critical structures, such as health and medical systems, economic life, socioeconomic class structures and race relations, fundamental institutional arrangements, communities and everyday family life. Over the last 18 months, since the outbreak of the epidemic, universally, many businesses, especially those in the service and entertainment industries, have suffered double-digit losses in revenue. Other businesses that specialised in health care products and services have experienced an increase in revenues.

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Return of rural-migrant labour from cities to back home had a direct initial effect of reducing manufacturing and service labour supply, increasing the marginal product of labour and capital per worker, and thus increasing real wages in the manufacturing and service sector in cities. As the first wave subsided and the labour began to return, a substitution away from relatively more expensive labour to capital did not occur. Even with the second wave, there is no evidence of capital substituting labour.

#### **Human Magnanimity and Malevolence**

The best and the worst, both sides of human nature are being amplified by the pandemic. The crisis is enhancing digital interconnectedness that engenders empathy, better awareness of the ills facing humanity and positive public action. On the flip side, some individuals, cities and nation-states are becoming more insular and competitive as survival mode kicks in. Xenophobia, bigotry and closed

communities are on the rise and these changes will cascade through all aspects of society – including international relations, the composition of social and economic safety nets for vulnerable citizens and basic human relations.

### **This Pandemic Is Unalike**

The major difference during this time as compared to the past pandemics is the fact that we know the virus and its behaviour. We have the prowess of science and technology. We have global cooperation and commitment for managing the pandemic. There are reliable diagnostic tests and continuously evolving treatment protocols for the disease. We also have vaccines to prevent the disease that have been invented and made available while the pandemic is still raging on.

The gaps in supply and demand for the vaccines, gaps in access to the vaccines, gaps in ability to afford the vaccines, gaps in willingness to be vaccinated, gaps in efficacy and efficiency of vaccines, are creating larger complexities in managing the pandemic than the difficulties in understanding the disease itself.

The very real health risks associated with COVID-19 are making the developed world more insular, and the bits of prosperity that trickled down to the developing world has been becoming leaner.

Media has ensured that we know the terrible things about COVID – the large number of deaths, the huge amount of suffering, endless examples of the harsh realities and many examples of dislocation of life.

Given the positive association between population density and COVID infection, cities have seen greater mortality rates than rural areas. This is despite the fact that urban dwellers have, on average, better physical access to quality health care as compared with the rural population. But as the medical staff succumbed to the disease and facilities were overwhelmed, the duration and severity of the pandemic increased in the urban areas, especially during the second wave.

### **This Pandemic May Well Be Over Soon**

The educated guess is that the pandemic would be over by the end of 2021, or at worst by the beginning of 2022, through the immunity acquired by disease or by vaccine, though the virus will continue to mutate and infect people for a long time. Most of the evidence indicates that the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic would be short-term and life will bounce back to the usual.

The pandemic will leave a permanent influence not on the aggregates but on the atoms of human society – individuals. Society as a whole will recover from the COVID-19 quickly, but individuals who were affected by the pandemic will have their lives changed forever.

Pandemics and epidemics have serious consequences for trade and finance, but that the short- and long-term consequences are very different from each other. Large companies are better at surviving and adapting to pandemics and other market shocks, and government mitigation efforts often help larger companies more than smaller ones.

Things at the moment look bad but are on a road to recovery. Most B-school education is oriented towards larger companies and when these companies are unlikely to change after the pandemic, there is little reason for the B-schools to change.

B-schools thump their chests saying ‘there is only one constant in the world’ and that constant is ‘change’ and that ‘all management is change-management’ yet human beings are the slowest to change. If ‘all management’ is also ‘people management’ than ‘principles of management’ are the slowest to change. Why would B-schools change?

Unlock after the first wave of pandemic showed how quickly people returned to life as usual. This resulted in more ferocious and more deadly second wave of pandemic leading to more lockdowns. Now that the second wave is petering off and unlocking has begun, forgetting the misery and fear of mortality, people are returning to life as usual as if in a revenge-mode or as if there will be no tomorrow. Even the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to express concern over crowded people flouting Covid-19 norms in tourist places.

Would business and management education undergo a sea change? Probably not. And here is why?

### **Indian B-Schools Did Not Reinvent Themselves during the Pandemic**

Use of Online instruction, synchronous or asynchronous, were not inventions in the aftermath of pandemic. These modes of instructions were introduced as a stopgap arrangement to replace in-face instruction due to restrictions and curtailment in human get-together for suppressing the spread of disease. Online modes and distance-learning modes were always available as a second option for delivery of instruction. Once the restrictions on gathering of people are withdrawn, the in-face instruction will return for reasons of its greater effectiveness and impact, as well as a return to neutral equilibrium.

As per one PEW Research Centre Survey (October 2020) conducted among the US population - highlighted that seven-in-ten parents whose children are getting online instruction – either fully or in combination with in-person learning – say they or another adult in their household is providing at least some additional instruction or resources to their children beyond what is being provided by the school. In spite of such additional hand-holding, such parents have major concerns about children falling behind in school. The possibility that students will fall behind academically without in-person instruction should be given a lot of consideration as schools decide whether to reopen.

On-line instruction has just been a stop-gap arrangement, not satisfactory, but better than a situation of no-instruction.

Yet another PEW Research Centre Survey (October 2020) showed - College graduates are among the most likely to say that online classes do not measure up to in-person ones. Among those with a bachelor’s degree or higher, 75% say online classes do not provide an equal educational value. This compares with 67% among those with some college education and 64% for those with a high school diploma or less.

Those institutions, which tried the online instruction and distance-learning modes for the first time may be motivated to continue using them, at least partly, for benefits of economic gains and flexibility; but at the cost of losing differentiation in quality of instruction and cohort-bonding through on-campus living. The result would be commoditization of instruction. Ed-Tech is already standardising and commoditizing instruction.

The trade-off between cost-reduction and loss of differentiation will force better institutions to renounce the online instruction and distance-learning modes.

## **Changes in B-Schools Will Henceforth Be Swifter**

New formats, new content and new delivery channels have always appeared in business education. Though they have never opposed changes, Indian B-Schools have been lethargic and unenthusiastic in embracing change.

Major changes in the economy, society, commerce and technology over the last 50- years have not changed the Indian B-schools much, except for the proliferation in their numbers. Even the content has been slow to change.

The frequency of appearance of changes and rate of change in B-schools is likely to go up as a result of technology enhancements in virtual and augmented reality and artificial intelligence (AI) that allow people to live smarter, safer and more productive lives, enabled in many cases by “smart systems” in such key areas as health care, education and community living.

## **Faculty and Student Interactions may Change**

Those who are highly connected and the tech-savvy will pull further ahead of those who have less access to digital tools and less training or aptitude for exploiting them and as technological change eliminates some jobs, economic inequality among students as well as among the faculty may worsen.

As big technology firms exploit their market advantages and mechanisms such as artificial intelligence (AI) in ways that seem likely to further erode the privacy and autonomy of their users, the interpersonal relational bonding amongst the batch-cohorts and between the faculty and their students may become more transactional and short-term.

The seemingly unstoppable manipulation of public perception, emotion and action via online disinformation – lies and hate speech deliberately weaponized in order to propagate destructive biases and fears may damage social stability and cohesion and reduce the likelihood of rational deliberation and make evidence-based learning difficult.

## **The Road Ahead**

As with pandemics, the very ill and weak are unable to survive the disease and are purged from the population. People who are left behind are healthier than the preceding average. As a result, the average life expectancy figure drops after the pandemic and then rises again.

Confidence in science will increase and the concept of socialized medicine and healthcare may emerge stronger.

The pandemic is democratic, it could infect anyone; no one is, in theory, spared. As some breadwinners would perish in the pandemic, lots of their dependents would be left at behind at the benevolence of governments and society. At the population level though, the poorest would be the most vulnerable to the longer term economic downturn.

Pandemics are remembered individually as millions of discreet tragedies, and not in a sense of collective human history. It is too early to know if we would remember COVID-19 of 2020-21, but the precedents suggest we won't. The 1957 Asian flu and the 1968 Hong Kong Flu were worse than this one so far yet, we do not recall them or compare them with COVID-19. We tend to jump straight to the massive one of 1918.

Every pandemic takes toll on economic, social, human, cultural and emotional wealth yet when it goes away, the world rises from the ashes once again. Disruptions in the economy arising out of the pandemic affect both the demand and the supply side but the economy returns to normal once the pandemic is gone. This pandemic is making humanity recognise the need to reinvent or at least revamp some major systems, including market capitalism. Education, health care and workplace activities will be evolving for the better.

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### **"Challenges for Management Education" arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Since the beginning of 2020, we have been facing a crisis of enormous proportions. The COVID-19 pandemic has been wreaking havoc across the globe — including India — upsetting our lives and livelihoods. As of March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing more than 1.6 billion children and youth to be out of school and universities. This is close to 80% of the world's enrolled students. Therefore, all the enrolled students in schools, colleges and universities of India have been unable to go to their institutions for almost a year due to the restrictions imposed to check the spread of the novel corona virus since the middle of March 2020. This has hurt students and teachers immensely. Not only them but the educational institutions are also struggling a lot to maintain the minimum basic expenses.

#### **Challenges:**

##### COVID-19 and Business School

1. **Suspension of lectures:** Due to the ongoing pandemic lectures was suspended and institutions started arranging means for remote learning. Remote Learning on its own brought many challenges. One that it required data packages which would have to be bought on regular intervals to meet up the need which would not have been necessary otherwise.
2. **Less Interactive classes:** Remote learning is also less interactive there is no way a teacher can actually see the reaction of the students. They only have to rely on their intuition that the students understand and are also paying attention.  
For this reason it is also hard to pay attention while using a phone which also has several social media applications and games.
3. **Closing of educational institutions:** institutions were closed as the pandemic got worse and the academic calendar was disturbed. The students who were supposed to graduate by May or June had to wait until after three or four months.

The students who were not in the final year were promoted and did not get a chance to write exams, for the reason they did not study the courses as hard as they could have and they were actually writing exams. This might also affect the output of the students after they leave college and they start their jobs. Also because of the pandemic, most students were not able to do summer training physically and some opted for online training.

4. **Loss of learning:** The Learning of many students was affected by the pandemic. Most of the organizations that were offering scholarships stopped after the pandemic. Those that were going to school had their schedule altered. The quality of learning was reduced from physical interactive classes to online classes which are less interactive.

5. **Communication Crisis:** COVID-19 has put considerable pressure on the educational institutions in relation to the clarity and timeliness of communication with the students and staff. Resolving uncertainties is a critical leadership activity during the ongoing pandemic. But the online meeting applications like Zoom, Cisco Webex etc., solved this issue up to a great extent and has helped to reduce perceived distance between the management and the stakeholders. Communication with students has been more complex because of their idiosyncratic study pathways and the need for individualized attention to their ongoing support but with availability of given applications, things were sorted out easily.
6. **Adverse impact on social activities:** The pandemic also affects the social activities as students could no longer hold discussions like they used to do before. Interactions were reduced to video calls and WhatsApp messages and direct calls.
7. **Emotional disturbance:** The pandemic made a lot of people panic; most people bought food they did not need. Most people lost their jobs and activities were limited and people couldn't do any activities to make them earn more income. The news was only about the rising COVID cases. Relatives were sick and most people lost their loved ones. And to make it worse due to restrictions, it was hard to visit and see loved one to give emotional support and they also share love, gifts and stories etc. The pandemic made people realize how empty life can be with most gathering closed and gathering limited to twenty or less people.
8. **Uncertainty:** Due to the pandemic, most of the events became uncertain, exam dates even job searches and interviews were uncertain. Most people started feeling insecure about their jobs, their health and relationships. People could be happy about each other but still worried about their health. They were worried about downsizing by the companies etc.
9. **International students:** So many challenges were there for the international students, such as not having to go for vacations since the academic calendar was completely disturbed and also since most of the air buses stopped operating and when they did the fares were so high. Visas were cancelled and movements were reduced and ten or more days quarantine was done to people who travelled.

Up to now there is no clear way forward on what people will do to start with normal day to day activities as it was before the pandemic.

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## **COVID-19 PANDEMIC – THE XLRI RESPONSE**

As seen widely, the last 12-15 months has brought significant challenges and disruptions to every field and specifically education. The pandemic can be argued to have given us the most 'VUCA' situation (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) arguably in our lifetimes. Students and teachers alike have had to adapt to the changes. In the case of a high-cost premium MBA program like that offered by XLRI, the expectations of the students are always high, and this is the time that the strength of the brand is really tested. The institute addressed it at different levels.

### ***Academic Delivery***

The COVID-19 pandemic had laid immense challenges to conduct regular sessions, exams, seminars, and extra-curricular activities for the students. The real benefit of an MBA education comes from its immersive experience. Leveraging on the strong foundation of having a robust distance learning program that has been running successfully for many years, the Institute leadership was quickly able to move from what Zigmunt Bauman refers to as "solid modernity" (characterized by on campus learning, emphasis on lectures) to a "liquid modernity" (characterized by multichannel, social, personalized).

Professors traversed the extra mile in making their pedagogy more in tune with the online format and went to great lengths to ensure there is no drop in quality of learning delivered – by taking extra sessions, having more office hours and redesigning evaluations and assignments.

In the case of the Ex PGDM program, the curriculum was restructured to ensure better spacing of the sessions and terms, thereby facilitating better learning for students. Since the program delivery had to be online, this ensured that students who came into the program after about 5-6 years work were able to get back into the academic groove much more comfortably.

The pandemic was also a blessing in disguise in that it was now possible to bring more senior business leaders into the classroom sessions and guest lectures, thereby providing enhanced learning to the students. The physical distance no longer mattered.

To ensure that student assessment methods were adapting to the new normal, the inhouse system was further developed to reduce dependency on external vendors and also increase efficacy.

Given the dispersed nature of the student population, the library team was able to step up and procure e-books for students in advance so that the course rigour was maintained.

### *Campus resident care*

To address the safety and peace of mind of the faculty and their families staying on campus, the Institute worked closely with the District Administration in organizing frequent vaccination camps as well as tying up with vendors for periodic tests. Getting the jab in the comfort of the campus was a big relief to the residents. The facility has also been extended to students as and when they arrive on campus and need the doses. The infirmary has also been equipped to handle immediate emergency requirements by stocking up on oxygen cylinders and installing a digital EEG machine.

### *Student care*

Students have had varied difficulties in continuing their studies from home - starting from space and infrastructure constraints to dealing with social and emotional issues impacting their mental health. Placements are a linchpin of students' expectation of an MBA program and when their internship as well as final placements happened online, it led to enormous stress among students. To address these issues, the institute initiated a multi level approach by partnering with an external agency that provided counselling sessions online as well as engaging a full time inhouse counsellor to address more intense issues. This was a real boon to students as the access to such support during crucial periods ensured that the mental health did not take a beating.

### *Outreach*

Faculty and staff of XLRI have been involved in the fight against the pandemic, right from the start. The Institute early on believed that while there is always a need to support the situation in the District of East Singhbhum with economic resources, there is a big opportunity to bring to fore the intellectual resources of the campus (faculty and tech staff) to support the District Administration.

1. On the humanitarian front, this support translated into a massive relief exercise during the first wave, where faculty, staff, alumni and Institute put together a corpus which was then used to procure and distribute relief kits. The target population included BPL, single parent households in slums, transgenders and sex workers, daily wagers, rural and tribal artisans. More than 4800 weekly ration kits for about 550 rural families of 4 – 5 members were distributed during the 12-week campaign.

During the second wave, the XLRI Alumni Association and XLRI administration jointly worked out a strategy to raise funds and reach out to the people and institutions by meeting their emergency medical needs. Alumni from India and abroad were able to raise about INR 7 million to fight covid. With these funds, Alumni were able to address the urgent requirements such as ventilator support, oxygen cylinder and concentrators, medicines, hospital beds, masks, gloves, testing for covid and so on. Additionally, XLRI continued to serve the nearby villages with the supply of ration, building basic infrastructural facilities for the patients waiting in large crowds at clinics. XLRI has opened its campus facilities to the district administration for the vaccination drive for the public.

2. Besides this, the institute developed many tech interventions for fighting the COVID pandemic which were adopted by the District and then also recommended to the State. The faculty along with the IT staff of the Institute, quickly developed a one stop web portal that

- Mapped information flow to people flow

- Reduced inconsistencies and inaccuracies in data capture
- Provided real time reports for the District leadership to act on

### *Highlights of the system*

- Holistic design with data being collected from Check posts, Surveillance team visits, Containment zones, Quarantine centres and Call centres thereby developing a rich and accurate picture of the individual
  - Mobile and tab friendly design to address issues of power, infrastructure and mobility challenges
  - Training videos created and uploaded in the system so as to enable expedited learning especially when people change roles
  - Pushing of COVID test reports via SMS, and
  - Scheduling of appointments at testing centres to minimize overcrowding and also sending out test results by SMS
3. To mitigate the spread of infections, it is not enough to only increase surveillance. It is equally important to nudge the public into adopting appropriate behaviours. Marketing faculty of the Institute worked on was in conceptualizing, designing, developing and implementing a communications strategy for creating awareness about COVID and regarding COVID appropriate behaviour. The faculty put together and led a team comprising people from the media profession, as well as the District's resources. A mascot was created for the District - Hudhud Majhi (something like the Amul girl) and through him the messages were disseminated in multiple formats - hoardings, posters, social media, etc.

The faculty also designed a playbook to be distributed by the Surveillance teams to be given to people starting home quarantine. This contained a checklist of items that the Surveillance team needs to take care when visiting the house, instructions on how to follow home quarantine, and a checklist to the family on what they need to do every day to keep themselves safe.

4. Besides these, XLRI took a pragmatic approach in addressing stress management and mental calmness of the members of the district's leadership team and assessed that it is important for the team to stay motivated and focused. A workshop was organized at XLRI campus for District Administration staff where senior OB faculty facilitated the session. During the workshop, emphasis was laid on taking the situation arising out of COVID-19 as an opportunity and working with positive thinking and coordination.
5. Seeing the widespread pain and suffering and realizing the need to provide hope and healing, the Institute developed an app called XLRI Hopeline and dedicated it to the people of the District. This app not only had relevant information like the contact information of important agencies, but also a space for people to share their feelings around both recovery and loss thereby helping them to heal through a process of catharsis.

In summary, in responding to the pandemic, the Institute has strived to address the issue as holistically as possible as well as to cover as many a people as possible, in line with its principles of Magis – for the greater good.

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## **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

The Corona Virus Pandemic has put the global environment in a crisis situation. Most of the industries are allowing their employees to work from home as much as possible, less travel and many people have minimized their shopping needs which led to a depressed demand. This affects the economy as a whole.

The Government is also forced to spend on the health care, vaccination development and administration at the cost of other developmental activities. This also has a deep effect on the economy as a whole.

Education sector is one of the major sectors effected by the pandemic situation. The face to face contact of student and teacher is severely curtailed. Many educational institutions have been forced to move their pedagogy using online tools. There is a huge impact on the regular flow of student's academic path from secondary – high school – senior school – graduation – post graduation. Most of the students stick to their neighborhood for their further education as compared to pre covid time

This situation also triggered more easy access of resources across the globe. But one to one contact and action learning, group learning processes which develops a team spirit are being missed. The students also miss the opportunity to exhibit their leadership qualities, organizing skills in co-curricular pursuits.

MBA students have found themselves operating under fast changing and challenging circumstances due to the current situation. Most of the Business schools are moving towards digital environment. The challenges and opportunities of digital learning are being experienced and appropriate solutions are being developed. This will help the management students in their post education work environment.

### Opportunities:

There is going to be an increased focus from all stakeholders for additional content in management education in the areas of

- Crisis management
- Health management

- Waste management
- Entrepreneurship
- Creativity, Innovation management

#### Future of Management Education:

As we have been seeing every recession is followed by an economic boom, similarly can happen in current Covid induced economy. So pursuing an MBA at present is ideal. Also it is time that B-Schools focus more on standardizing process and get accredited for their own benefit of result oriented academics.

Due to this pandemic situation, most of the people work from home. If passionate for further academic / skill enhancement initiatives, they may enroll for online MBA.

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### **Challenges for Management Education**

The COVID-19 created an unprecedented situation where we had to take quick decisions, while keeping the health and safety of students, faculty and staff in the consideration. Pandemic has led to major teaching-learning changes in institutions, driven by adoption of new learning technologies, ever-changing student demands and industry expectation.

JIMS has a persistent drive to develop, innovate and constantly sharpen the vision so as to excel to achieve greater heights. JIMS stands for, as a vibrant Academic school with total commitment to quality of education and research in Management and Information Technology with a holistic concern for better life, environment and society.

With Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen exceptional changes, some forced some voluntary. As higher education quickly evolved with flexible and hybrid models for teaching and learning, most of the institutions with initial hiccups were able to cope up with the transition. With New Education Policy coming into picture, we had to look at entire landscape of higher education in management with a more advanced lens and urgently. We incorporated Self Directed Learning modules in the curriculum focussing on MOOCs, Social Sensitivity Projects, Live Project, Entrepreneurship Project, NCFM certifications focussed on experiential learning. The detailed course revision exercise was done with a series of meetings with in-house faculty, experienced academic experts from renowned institutions, industry professionals, alumni, and regular recruiters.

Several innovations in teaching pedagogy across the courses comprising the management program included steps taken beyond the traditional chalk and talk method of imparting knowledge. Students were encouraged to undertake relevant courses available online via NPTEL, UDEMY, COURSERA, etc. The conceptual learning was imparted to the students in applicative ways such as case study, simulations, exercises etc. The students worked on online assignments wherein the assigned tasks took the form of article writing, blog posting and critical reviews.

Student assessments were conducted online in collaboration with Mettl which is a specialized IT company offering proctored solutions for academic Institution to conduct examination. Various coordinators as well as faculty members had invigilated students in the online mode along with proctored software solution to maintain the sanctity of the examination system.

We worked hard to enhance our teaching-learning experience for the new academic session. JIMS adopted the Hybrid learning model that enabled the simultaneous delivery of face to face teaching on-campus and learning through virtual mode. It helped students in engaging and interacting with the faculty and provided an innovative shared classroom experience. All students, whether learning online or face to face, used technology throughout their sessions to interact with faculty, engage with course content and learn from their peers.

JIMS also upgraded its infrastructure to improve the learning experience. Classrooms were equipped with latest technologies, high speed data access and other facilities for an effective online mode of

learning. Latest softwares and Learning Management software were installed to enable smooth conduct of classes for students. Access to online course materials like E-books, Journals, case studies, course material were provided to the students.

Our dynamic Faculty was always engaged in academic research, corporate trainings and industry consultancy assignments for keeping abreast with times. We strengthened our professional veracity by being clear and upfront in our intentions and keeping our promises, and nurture it by supporting, encouraging and enabling JIMS members to contribute their best in learning the new technologies to increase their teaching effectiveness. Faculty were also encouraged to design MDPs keeping in view the ever changing demand of Business and professional Executives aimed at enhancing the skills of practicing managers and entrepreneurs. They developed programs focused on MSME units whether those in trading or manufacturing sector covering areas of Marketing, Finance, International Business, HR, Quality Management. Faculty Development was also focussed through series of FDP programs to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

We have tried to build a flexible and robust model of teaching and learning that enables continuous adaption to different levels of the new normal.

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### **"COVID-19 Pandemic Challenges, BPRE @ Presidency, Bengaluru"**

*"The fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed" (Hammer & Champy 1993: 32).*

Outbreak of COVID-19, STARK, DELTA, DELTA PLUS from CORONA Family, has made, entire world to adopt Business Process Re-Engineering in general, in particular to the education industry. The fundamental rethinking & radical redesigning of educational institutions operations was essential to confront the challenges posed by COVID-19.

In response to the given scenario, we Presidencian's adopted the following redesigned operations.

#### **Automation of admission procedure:**

Right from marketing to the approval of admission from the affiliating the entire process was completely automated. Various digital platforms, like Twitter, Facebook LinkedIn, & WhatsApp were used for informing the prospective students. Downloading of application, filling the same, uploading the necessary credentials were completely automated.

#### **Teaching pedagogy:**

Great amount of efforts & time were invested, in providing appropriate digital learning platform, which is student & faculty friendly. Utmost care was taken in orientation to the students & faculties, for On line streaming of classes for practical oriented subjects like computer science. Number oriented subjects like mathematics were taught through excel & whiteboard. Substantial amount of case study, illustrations, videos were used to keep student's attention alive.

#### **Examination Automation & Assessment:**

Continuous evaluation system, comprising presentation, quiz, role play, on line test & exams were used for continuous evaluation. Examination from affiliating university by following the appropriate COVID behavior.

#### **Placement & Training:**

Delloite, KPMG, EY, TCS, HCL & so on approximately 85 companies are our placement partners. All rounds of interviews were completely done through the digital platform, which are error free. Nearly 90% of eligible candidates were placed, with range of 200% to 300% of ROI. Appropriate training techniques were used for imparting the required skillset through online mode.

**"Change Management is The Buzzing Word for the New World Order"**

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*Founder Chairman*  
*Dhruva College of Management*  
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### **"COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education"**

"Some years ago at Harvard Business School, on classroom and office walls we posted a motto: "We all teach, we all learn, for life." It was intended for faculty as well as students and staff. It reflected the educational philosophy of the School, one in which everyone is expected to give and take, teach and learn, during the discussions of issues in its classrooms"-Tom DeLong, Baker Foundation Professor of Management Practice.

COVID echos Tom DeLong's prophesy - it affected different people (connected with Management Education - a student, a teacher, an administrator/edupreneur) in different ways.

**Let me first dwell from the aforementioned different perspectives as a votary of "IN-PERSON or OFFLINE" TEACHING-LEARNING" phenomenon:**

#### **STUDENT/TEACHER:**

COVID forced the managerial elites find instant solution by offering massive online courses. It changes the very foundation of "teaching-learning" in a classroom environment. Online classes in the Zoom, Microsoft Team, Blue Botton and other web conferencing applications can never replace classroom teaching. It only further accelerates existing problems.

The classroom challenges shape teachers and teaching as a profession. The distinctive pleasure of teaching in a classroom comes from the students who shape the art of teaching. It takes long time to internalise teaching skills and develop as a teacher in the laboratory of classrooms. Every class adds new experiences both for the students and teachers. The online platforms can never recreate the teaching and learning environment that a classroom offers. The interactive and participatory pedagogy of teaching and learning dies its natural death in online platforms where teachers look at students as dots in computer screen. The classroom offers limitless possibilities to engage with students, their excitements and their boredoms. So, online "teaching-learning" is not only short-sighted but also reductionist that destroys the organic space between a teacher and students. In this way, COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a severe crisis within the traditional pedagogy of "teaching-learning"!

Teachers and students are not zombies. The zooming online is a medium of interactions, and not a "teaching-learning" method. Any attempt to replace classrooms with online platforms destroy the very idea of "teaching-learning". Technology and virtual leaning environment enhance the abilities of a teacher and student. It cannot replace a teacher. The etiquettes of classroom teaching instil qualities like determination, focus, peer interactions, intercultural communication skills, debating abilities, public speaking and engagement skills via eye gaze. These are invaluable skills for the students and teachers. These set of important skills are more valuable in life than curriculum driven skills and certificates.

My points in favour of offline/direct /physical/in-person teaching:

1. Guru-Shishya relationship,
2. Guru's aura,
3. Eye contact between teacher Vs student; student vs student(s),
4. Bonhomie,
5. Networking,
6. Learning thru peers,
7. Discipline,
8. Natural,
9. Simple evaluation,
10. No scope for lethargy,
11. Cumulative experience to both for the students and teachers
12. Offers limitless possibilities to engage with students, their excitements and their boredoms.
13. Helps teachers to internalise nuances in the laboratory of classroom.
14. Etiquettes of classroom teaching instill qualities like determination, focus, bonhomie, networking, peer interactions, intercultural communication skills, debating abilities, public speaking,
15. More valuable in life than curriculum driven skills and certificates.
16. Simple evaluation,
17. Real Time TOUCH-FEEL

**STUDENT:** any student - let alone a management student is quite unhappy with this idea of topsy turvey 'teaching-learning' process. No teachers' aura, no friends' contact, no sports/games; no healthy ragging; no seeing (girl.boy) friend, no bonhomie, no club activities, no industrial visits, no real working, no natural feeling of a 'student' etc etc.

**A story :**

that illuminates "Guru-Shishya" relationship highlighting IN-PERSON teaching-learning process!

**In the third century A.D., a king in China sent his son, the future ruler, to the temple for education. The master asked the young man to go and live in the forest for a year and come back to tell what he heard there. On his return he told: "I could hear the cuckoos sing, the leaves rustle, the humming birds hum, the crickets chirp, the grass blow, and the bees buzz, and the wind whisper and holler.**

**"He was asked to go back to listen to what more he could hear. This time he came back and told: "When I listened very closely, I could hear the unheard-the sound of the flower opening, the sound of sun warming the earth, and sound of grass drinking the morning dew."**

**The master said: "To hear the unheard is necessary discipline to be a good ruler. For only when the ruler has learned to listen closely to people's hearts, hearing their feelings excommunicated, pains unexpressed, and complaints not spoken of, can he hope to inspire confidence in his people, understand when something is wrong, and meet the true needs of his citizens. The demise of the states comes when leaders listen only to superficial words and do not penetrate deeply into the soul of the people to hear their true opinions, feelings, and desires."**

## How can you ensure "human face" to a (in) human ONLINE 'teaching-learning' phenomenon?

**A Story:**

that highlights the tragedy of "virtual "!

**Year ...1971-'72**

**City ..... Hyderabad**

**Setting ..a car garage where I used to live with my wife, 2 kids, ailing parents, younger brother and his wife (newly married).**

**Saidulu, a boy from my native village was engaged to take care of my 6 month old son. Saidulu's father was employed as an assistant in our village farm for almost a quarter century. He was the most loyal servant of our father.**

**After week....Saidulu became sad, forlorn and stopped eating.**

**On my enquiry, he said "Ayya, I can't stay here-I want to go to my parents "!**

**My brother, being jovial was quite friendly with Saidulu so much so that the boy spanked him once for speaking with me in a LOUD VOICE. Saidulu's contention was - an younger brother, like Lakshman should never talk with his elder brother (me) who's like Sri Ram. Probably he learnt 'samskaara' from his father**

**Saidulu told my brother:"Ayya, here, everything is available-good food, warm clothing, loving family-yet, I'm feeling 'home sick'!**

**My brother, in order to pacify said "Arre, Saidulu, this is the pic of your parents, brothers & sisters"; "now you should feel at home by looking at them"!**

**Saidulu retorted instantaneously "Ayya, pic is a pic-how can they be my dear parents"?**

**IT WAS THE END OF SAIDULU'S STAY WITH US...**

**HOW CAN YOU ENSURE A "HUMAN FACE" ONLINE?**

**NEITHER MY BROTHER HAD AN ANSWER IN HIS REPERTWOIRE-NOR DO I AS A TEACHER WITH MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE ?!**

### **ADMINISTRATOR:**

What's there to direct/guide/boss over/discipline?

Where is the scope to discriminate between good, bad, ugly student?

Where is the scope for parental control/love; proctoring?

How can 'tehzeeb' be instilled?

**A real time episode of “Aha” moment in my 51 years of administrator/teaching career:**

**One Williams Temple (who rose to dizzy heights in his professional career in Singapore and who died recently due to cancer) was like crème de la crème of 2nd year MBA(1993) while I was director-School of management studies, JNTU. Hailing from economically ‘bottom of the pyramid’, he used to do odd jobs to pay the tuition fee. In the process, he fell short of requisite 60 % attendance .All my colleagues, friends and visiting professors pleaded with me to “somehow” push him to take the final examinations. My conscience (administrator) didn’t permit to violate the norms and naturally he was withheld! But, on the day of commencement of examinations, I (teacher) gave him Rs 6,000 to pay the penalty to recompense (70% -60%) shortage of attendance and paved the way for him to complete MBA.**

**It was an AHA moment for me to see a glow in the eyes of Williams Temple!**

***EPILOGUE:I fulfilled Willaims Temple’s last wish by visiting him in Apollo Hospitals and again there was a blinking glow in his frail countenance- probably one of his last AHA moments***

**EDUPRENEUR:**

Lukewarm admissions, coupled with non-payment of tuition fee by those already on the rolls of the college exacebates the inflow of revenue.... AND irrespective of low/zero revenue, expenses are to be borne by the edupreneur!

Hence, less said "about running B-School online "the better!

“I realized that the best leaders also possess qualities that make great teachers. The best leaders and teachers create covenant versus contractual (purely transactional) relationships. The former generates the trust necessary for cooperation and useful two-way communication. The best leaders and teachers listen deeply, communicate empathically, and motivate adroitly ... Both must be brave enough to make themselves vulnerable and admit mistakes.” says Tom DeLong.

He further laments that often the administrator/edupreneur loses the ability to listen to what students/colleagues were really saying. This was a habit they picked up as they rose in their organizations. They had drifted far from the time when they may have asked themselves what DeLong labels “the three guiding questions” of a good leader/administrator or teacher:

1. How do I experience others?
2. How do others experience me?
3. How do others experience themselves when they are in (my) presence?

These are all the ills of ONLINE 'teaching-learning' process thrust by COVID-19 Pandemic

The (less travelled) Road Ahead

1. Digitalization, Internet of Things, big data, artificial intelligence, crisis management, new-age leadership skills, excellent communication skills will be focus tomorrow.

2. Training in Life skills such as Coping with emotions, Communication, Creative thinking, Critical thinking, Decision-making, Empathy, Interpersonal & social skills, Problem-solving, Self-awareness, Stress management, emotional well being may have to be tackled differently.
3. Sporting skills, Fitness training, Industrial visits, Internships, Tours & Travels, One-on-one mentorship, Working with a practising manager, Participation in dramatics & team activities, Laboratory exercises may become a part of the history

**We have to devise altogether novel and disruptive methods to face this "Pandemic Mahamari"!**

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### **Higher Education in Management – Post Covid-19 Scenario**

It is undebated to say that Covid-19 has and will continue to have a dramatic effect on the world and how we function as communities and societies. The online education which was forced upon us due to Covid-19 is a blessing in disguise. It may actually complement the digital workspace, which is going to be the order of the day.

All areas of education, starting from pre-primary level and up to doctoral level, have been substantially impacted during this black swan event. More than one year of online mode education has not fazed Generation Z which is also known as a generation of “Digital Natives”.

The challenge is to make it more effective and ensure high levels of student and faculty engagement. Education Institutions need to widen their horizon of program offerings as well the way in which programs are offered. Flipped Classroom is the need of the hour. While it promises wider opportunities, it is paramount to relook at the content being delivered.

It is not sustainable for the education institutions to deliver the traditional programs and course structures which were prepared for delivery to the masses in F2F (face to face) mode, through MS Teams/ Zoom and call it an online mode of education. The paradigm shift is required to put the “Learners” and “Learning outcomes” as priority. Generation Z prefers to learn at their own pace and prefer highly customised pedagogy.

#### **Digital Workspace**

The students who had an experience of online mode of education are actually better prepared for the future work life which demands team building across borders. The digitally trained workforce to the industry may be a boon to the industry. In most of the industries where management graduates get their initial employment like ITES, BFSI, IT/ Non-IT Consulting, etc., the companies work across transnational levels. During the pandemic, most of the institutions could manage to place their wards. Placement, internship as well as live- project opportunities have not been adversely impacted in most good institutions, which adapted quickly.

The teachers need to play a vital role of “Curator” of loads of learning avenues available for free in the open market places. Teachers are required to wear a new hat of “facilitator & curator” and strike

a fine balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning. Curator approach allows the teachers to conserve their scarce time and energy resources and present the learners with variety to choose to their palate. Digital transformation happened in the education field enabled the teachers to be more digital-friendly. Another important aspect is cost advantages.

### **Flip side**

The informal interactions like the chat between the classes, corridor debates, canteen fights are all going to be missed badly during this online delivery mode. The social life of the students is completely suspended, and interpersonal skill development which occurs naturally during normal classes, may be affected significantly. Their emotional needs for companionship, making deeper friendships and enjoying personal mentorship from faculty may be affected negatively. Particularly so for those who have missed both their academic years to the pandemic.

There is a constant complaint regarding the hours spent in front of screens. This is a short-term impact, that may not last beyond the next few months, as F2F classes are restored. This could even lead to evolution of technology and slew of customer-friendly products being innovated to reduce screen/computer fatigue.

### **Way forward**

Online education is going to pave the way for a greener economy as travel is going to be subsidized to a greater extent. Education cost may go down further. Foreign Universities with declining enrolments may offer incentives in the form of lower-cost programs, or scholarships to foreign students. If these are offered as online learning opportunities for the time being, the student will save on travel and living costs as well.

All said and done, after the prolonged online classes, most of the student community is yearning to come back to campus. Having been deprived of collegiality in online mode, students are desperate to come to campus for the 'experience'.

But the online mode is here to stay, at least for now, either as a part of hybrid education, or on its own for some time. Institutions who have mastered the art of excelling in online mode will benefit from access to wider teacher and audience list which will ease their cost burden considerably. Online mode is going to widen their networks. Rather than viewing online mode as "substitute" for F2F classes, it can be viewed as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity presented to the world of education.

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**(i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

When the classes are moved online, initially it was a bit challenging due to students and we are accepting the reality and not used to work from home environment. However, based on my courses in MOOCs, soon, I was able to deliver my course materials online and live classes for discussion and solving problems. In the future, I would go for a hybrid mode of class sessions, that every week 1.5-hour lecture plus course materials to watch then 1.5 hours for discussion and interaction. Also, I will allow the students to join the classes online or physically based on their comfort.

**(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

The new format will be a mix of a flipped classrooms and regular lectures. The contents will be made available to everyone via online medium. Delivery channels also will be hybrid - online and/or physical.

**(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

This part is most important and I miss it in the online classes. However, after interacting with the students for more than a semester and after several weekly departmental meetings, I was able to understand the student's social and emotional issues and slowly we are able to connect to each other. The key is before giving any work to students, I check with them about their availability and bandwidth, based on that deadlines are kept flexible.

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## **"COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education"**

### **Where we are and How things look now.....**

While Covid crisis, unequivocally, has exposed the inherent vulnerabilities of our education system, we have witnessed an unprecedented response by all stakeholders in adapting to technology and digital platform to ensure academic continuity. This demonstrated a very high resilience and adaptability during the crisis time. Notwithstanding the digital and socio-economic inequities (equipment, access, bandwidth and several personal & domestic aspects) across the socio-economic strata of our economy, over 65% participation rate is recorded for online education across primary, secondary and Higher education space.

In management education space, as we look at things today, we have witnessed an impressive show of 'tolerance to ambiguity' and 'agility of adaptation' by most of the B-schools in India and world over. Evident from the echoes of the feedback from all stakeholders, it won't be an exaggeration to say that the online, blended, hybrid modes of education are here to stay forever, thus marking a major, much needed, shift in the '**Mode**' of management education.

### **Where do we go from here.....**

Given that the first major shift is gradually getting ingrained in the system, what is needed next in transforming the higher education in general and management education space in particular is major shifts on account of two important dimensions of education, i.e. 'Method' and 'Model'

For an education system characterized by least amount of innovation, both in structure and delivery, for decades, we shall convert this crisis into an opportunity to quickly transition into 'Impact & outcome based' education system producing rich talent pool that not only can sustain but drive the industrial revolution 4.0

'Method' of education refers to the set of pedagogy and the tool kits that are used to impart education and nurturing skills. The pedagogy of the future – in the so called Post-Covid Era – must be defined by learner centric participative, immersive and experiential learning methods across the board. The pedagogy of tomorrow must be 'crafted to context' and 'fit to learners' ability' in order to cultivate curious minds and lifelong learners. Without which a mere switch in the mode of education (offline to online and blended mode) will not take us where we ought to reach on the global platform.

Models of education, is another important dimension of education in India that calls for a disruptive and a transformative reformation. The age old structured format of duration-based degrees should give way to more 'Flexi' - learning-based certifications. More and more short duration / short module programs and courses should be offered in an on-demand basis without duration restriction with a possibility of choice based personalization of degree /program. The ever evolving powerful digital

technologies can enable personalization of education, equivalent to the ‘Ekal Vidyalayas’ of old ‘Gurukul’ parampara.

In short, to catch-up with Industry 4.0 we have to unleash Education 4.0 and lead India ‘Back to the Future’ – a Gurukul in a digital world.

### **The social and emotional dimensions .....**

It is evident that with the shifting of teaching-learning process to ‘online mode’, the most affected aspect is the social & emotional dimension of the learning process. With tech driven and tech enabled learning we may be moving towards achieving ‘personalization of learning’ in more of a transactional manner but in the process the ‘personal connect’ is fading and ‘emotional engagement’ is suffering. This is witnessed in high degree of absenteeism (blank screens) and less participation levels during online sessions.

But...this rather appears to be the most obvious thing to happen if only we move beyond the shift in ‘Mode of education’ and don’t restrict the role of faculty member to being a knowledge disseminator. The emotional connect can still be protected and nurtured if technology is harnessed to make education more customized and delivered in a personalized manner with students and teacher working as partners in knowledge creation. The faculty(/students) members shall graduate to their new avatar of being ‘a mentor (/mentee)’ and ‘a coach (/coachee)’ while harnessing digital technologies in building better engagement models for knowledge creation and knowledge application to establish deeper social & emotional connect among themselves. We at SIBM-H did witness several cases where teacher and learners have actually managed a greater engagement and in fact a better emotional connect during the pandemic by being creative and going beyond conventional approach.

Ultimately, we at SIBM-H do believe in the nonnegotiable fact that the Future is both ‘Digital and Fluid’. Hence it would be prudent if we use this pandemic period to depart from the conventional thinking, break-free from the age old structures, reinvent the system, build new constructs that enable us to harness technology and promote innovation while sustain and strengthen emotional bonding and social connect.

In a manner of speaking the current pandemic has provided a much needed tipping point for shifting the management education to the next higher orbit.

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### **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

It is probably a sheer quirk of fate that the biggest disruption of the century happened while the world was talking about how to manage disruption from emerging technologies. To be fair, this is not the first time the world has witnessed something like this. The first industrial revolution brought the steam engine and automated all transport throwing almost a whole generation of workforce out of work. The subsequent changes were no less brutal. And now with the emergence of artificial intelligence we are witnessing a whole dramatic shift in paradigms in how we do business and almost everything else. When it comes to Management Education, what the educators face is a double-edged sword. Not only how we teach but what we teach must change if it has to continue to be relevant. That is to say, there is an urgent need to reinvent ourselves.

When paper was invented, humans found a way to record their thoughts. It became easy to store it and pass on to the next generation and so on. Soon books became commonplace and the whole dynamics of teacher-student relationship changed. Learning independently became possible and the traditional ‘gurukul’ was a thing of past.

Today the world of education was hit by the crisis thrown by COVID at a time the educators were struggling hard to come to grips with a new technology – online teaching. The pandemic has only hastened what was already happening. But, what it also brought about is a change in the value system. That is, how we – the educators as well as students – look at the new technology. Until recently, online courses were considered not ‘effective’, and at best a poor substitute for in-class learning. Not anymore. The new norm has online education getting almost equal respectability. So, what led to this change in the mindset, in what we call the ‘yardstick’ for considering what is effective? Is it simply a psychological adjustment or the result of helplessness that the pandemic has brought us in? Or is it that we are finally recognizing, perhaps grudgingly, that the online education is equally good? After all, history is testimony that humans have always resisted adopting new technology on the ground that the old ways were ‘more effective’.

Well, the days to come will give us all the answers for sure. But the new world is already on the horizon. The combination that it most probably is of psychological adjustment, willingness of both educators and students to make the most of the new methodology, and innovation on part of the educators to maximize effectiveness is the new norm. It seems to have gained the same respectability. It won’t be surprising if even after the COVID crisis subsides, the online mode would be equally acceptable if not a preferred one in some cases.

So, beginning with all the resentment, complains, ‘hardships’ caused to participants and teachers alike, and so on, what has the journey been like in the last year and half? After all, this is the time that has seen most of the transformation.

The effectiveness of the delivery was the first thing to come under the scanner. Reading a Power Point slide on the screen and listening to the instructor drone on soon became tiresome not to say that the long hours took a toll on eyes and caused postural and sleep problems. The instructors had their share of problems too. Talking to a machine with little or no participation from the students and students' videos off made it most unpleasant. And occasional internet connectivity issues made it worse for both sides.

However, where we stand today is surprisingly very different. The same online mode has students happy and willing to give their best. The instructors have spent countless hours trying different techniques that works best for the particular subject, and have, in many cases, found innovative pedagogic ways to make their teaching effective. At the time the COVID crisis hit us, and we switched to the online mode, the students made bizarre kinds of demands for simulating the classroom experience not realizing that meeting those demands would be either infeasible or prohibitively expensive. That looked both childish and irresponsible and only betrayed the level of their unhappiness. The story was the same across all courses regardless of the nature of subject. But fast forward it by one year and you meet a remarkably more mature and understanding bunch of students. What is behind this growth story? It's both – instructors' efforts to make online more effective as well as students' willingness to do their best rather than complain.

It's a tribute to the educators' innovativeness that this revolution was possible. But the story is not complete. In fact, it's just the beginning. A long road lies ahead before we reach the desired goal. In the times to come, a lot of research into the pedagogy suitable for the online mode is going to be conducted, a lot of experimentation will be done challenging our ingenuity and stretching our resources. A lot of work still needs to be done to make assessment a fool-proof one. This is especially going to challenge techies amongst us. In fact, technology-driven solutions from the corporate world have already started appearing. It's only a matter of time that we will have a fully dependable tool for conducting all kinds of assessment. Thus, it is already clear, that a robust method of teaching online is surely going to evolve.

There is one side of online teaching that has hardly been discussed anywhere. This is the human side. Apart from the toll it has taken on health of all participants, the engagement that is possible in the in-class mode has been completely absent. Even if students' videos are on, which all instructors love, it is impossible for the instructor to even see everybody and get the much-needed feedback let alone get to know them. The recent time has also opened our eyes to the dark side of how we conduct our business. When we are face-to-face with students in classrooms, we often get to know them well especially when classes are small. We know everyone's learning difficulties, their specific challenges and everyone's family or health situation especially if someone is going through adverse times. This human touch was given a complete good bye when we switched to the online mode. It was partly the difficulty imposed by the distance mode itself but also because, allow me to say, callousness of the teaching community which could be entirely unintentional. But then instances came to light about someone facing difficulty because they are living in a tiny apartment shared by too many family members all cooped-up because of the lockdown. Someone had sick or elderly family members at home putting extra demands on their time. Someone had lost a near-and dear-one to COVID. The list is frightening and endless. But the instructors were unaware and continued their business as usual.

When 9/11 and the subsequent economic crisis and the terror unleashed by the anthrax scare hit us, we knew that it will all be over, and we will move on. That was predictable. The humans have emerged stronger and the world with a more robust order. The story has been repeated a zillion times in the history. And it's just a matter of time before the covid crisis is over and we are back to the

classrooms. But the world and those who inhabit this world would be a changed lot. Unlike the crises we have witnessed before this has transformed the order especially in the education sector at a much deeper level. Just as approach to learning underwent a tectonic shift when paper was invented, the aftermath of this crisis is going to find the landscape of education a changed one, the kind of change that happens once in a century!

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**Institute of  
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## **"COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education"**

The recent pandemic caused by Corona Virus has affected the overall education system significantly. Be it Primary, Secondary or Higher education, the era of social distancing has posed several challenges. The economic disruption that the virus has caused will take years to rebuild. Management Education has seen drastic changes in the last 18 months. The most popular Institutes among the aspirants are those that offer full-time residential management programs. But due to the continuous lockdown and classes going online, many aspirants are worried about their learning experience.

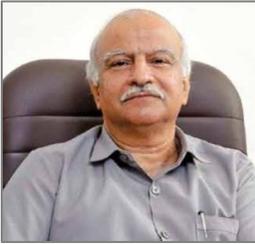
The sudden shift from regular classes to online mode was a smooth transition for the Institute of Management Technology, Nagpur. It already had the latest IT resources and classrooms equipped with Smart Boards. The smart boards helped faculty members, especially those taking financial and numerical-based courses during the pandemic. Additionally, software for conducting a remotely monitored examination, online meetings, etc., was purchased. The Institute has integrated a robust module in its ERP for conducting online admissions interviews even for the current academic year. The Institute successfully conducted the entire placement process online and placed 97% of the batch (till 30th June 2021). All students of the first-year batch were provided with Summer Internship Projects (SIPs), which were a mix of both virtual and physical in nature.

The main challenges were

- To provide the students with the experience of residential program in virtual mode of learning.
- To set up state of the art IT infrastructure for online delivery of the courses without compromising on their content and rigor.
- To train the faculty and staff for using of the relevant software.
- Redesigning the curriculum suitable for live interactive sessions through online mode.
- Increasing students' participation in virtual class sessions.
- Designing new assessment tools for evaluation.

However, the disruptions caused by the virus have, in some ways, acted as a boon in disguise. The virtual world has opened new doors for knowledge sharing. It has provided the Institute with the freedom to host and attend virtual webinars, workshops, Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) that are being conducted anywhere in the country/abroad. We were able to host virtual sessions from renowned corporates and faculty from partner institutions during this time. We have successfully conducted Management Development Programs (MDPs) for our clients and offered online certificate programs. The Institute has organized virtual conferences and completed two FDPs under the AICTE Training and Learning (ATAL) Scheme, which got a tremendous response from the participants. The Institute had also conducted FDPs for its own faculty members during this period. For the first time, student-driven clubs had organized online competitions and attracted participants from other Institutes.

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### **Management Education: Covid 19 and Beyond**

With the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic in February 2020 a paradigm shift in Management education was set into motion. The magnitude of impact of the crisis became swiftly apparent as all academic processes came to a halt with the announcement of the lockdown in March.

The lockdown propelled faculty of B-Schools into online teaching which they quickly realised was not an adequate substitute for the teaching that happened in traditional classrooms. Both teachers and students struggled to adjust to a new medium. However, by introducing innovative pedagogy such as flipped class technique and video lectures in the online sessions an innovative attempt was made to interest and prolong attention span of wayward students. Video recording of lectures was also introduced to enable students to undertake revision and paced learning. Irrespective of the speedy transition to online teaching and conduct of examinations during the months of April and May the slide in admissions for the new batches could not be arrested in 2020 and most private B-Schools continue to reel from depleted admissions even in 2021.

The quest for innovation during the above period also awakened faculty to the realisation that online learning could be effectively used for teaching simulations requiring complex problem solving. Through online chatrooms faculty were able to address queries and coach students who in turn were able to collaborate and contribute to their mutual learning akin to that in a physical setting.

One significant impact observed was that the pandemic triggered the use of the LMS to increase employability of Management graduates. As the realisation set in that learning in a virtual environment is an industry-ready skill which students need to possess a proactive approach was unleashed by B schools. Their faculty swiftly familiarised themselves with the online interface and made a seamless shift to reach a wider base of students. The repertoire of activities conducted included workshops, group sessions, work-from-home certifications, mock interviews and guest lectures. This approach specifically catered to the growing need for 'work-from-home' skills and competencies. Technology enabled guest faculty and industry experts to directly interact with MBA aspirants, widening the knowledge and talent field of these students. The virtual environment in the job market boasted of Video-call interviews, Online skill assessments, On-the-job walkthroughs, Remote workspace induction and Professional training. All these practices are now commonplace in the corporate playground, showing the importance of embracing a tech-led approach by the B-Schools to make their candidates industry-ready.

The future of Management education therefore has now to be viewed in the light of the degree of resilience that B schools exhibited in responding to the evolving situation during the year gone by. To thrive once the crisis of COVID-19 is over, schools will have to ensure that the lessons learned from the pandemic in embracing new technology tools as well as the mindset shift that helped them to adapt are not lost sight of during the coming months.

So, what will be impact of Covid 19 on the shape of future B-Schools? What will they transform into? Post the pandemic they will certainly need to revisit their business models, become more

resilient and agile, more open to innovation and swift in embracing change. More and more faculty will need to develop proficiency in dual skills of teaching online and offline. The faculty will also have to be proactive and learn to experiment and test novel teaching-learning tools and techniques.

Future B Schools are also likely to undergo following transformational shifts:

- a) Digital learning as a beacon has emerged as the numero uno learning trend. A blend of e-learning and face-to-face teaching boosted by video technology will become the mainstay. Also multi-disciplinary and modular education that involve transferable skills and 147ealize147ed learning will probably succeed.
- b) Technological tools enabling online learning are now firmly in place and faculty and students are comfortable using them. Zoom and Microsoft Teams dominate the tech tools used by business schools to provide online learning during the pandemic. Admissions interviews, support and careers services are also being delivered online. With a stronger technology infrastructure, schools will be able to seamlessly switch between offline and online methods of delivery post-pandemic.
- c) Collaboration across B Schools is likely to expand at the national and global levels. The resulting experience of sharing of knowledge through joint teaching will bring school communities closer. Digitally savvy faculty will share their learnings with their less experienced colleagues within and beyond their colleges. Virtual Conferences, Seminars, Guest Lectures and Round Tables covering online delivery formats and use of video will become key events in the annual academic calendar. Educational design and learning innovation teams will take a front seat and will adapt quickly and holistically to future challenges.
- d) There is likely to be a rethink on Campus size as well. What students are missing right now are the curricular activities, opportunities for teamwork, practical learning, networking, and the human interaction that a campus environment more readily provides. However, the pandemic has made us realize that classroom instruction, personal interactions and sharing of experiences do not necessarily require a physical space. Such factors coupled with budget constraints may well dictate the future design and size of Campuses.
- e) Consolidation in the Management education sector will result in all likelihood. Many schools even though adversely affected financially due to Covid 19 may continue to invest in online teaching systems. However, others who have been severely impacted will discontinue. Online delivery will extend the reach of bigger- brand B- Schools and students may prefer to join their blended programs and benefit from access to their expert faculty and resources.

In conclusion, it may well be said that blended or hybrid delivery coupled with the flipped classroom approach—where students learn course content independently online before putting learnings into practice in class—is increasingly where B Schools are going. No doubt there are challenges ahead, but post-pandemic business schools will emerge more agile and should the crisis continue those that adapted well will stand in a better position. They will offer more flexibility to students with blended delivery, more intakes, and a wider range of course options.

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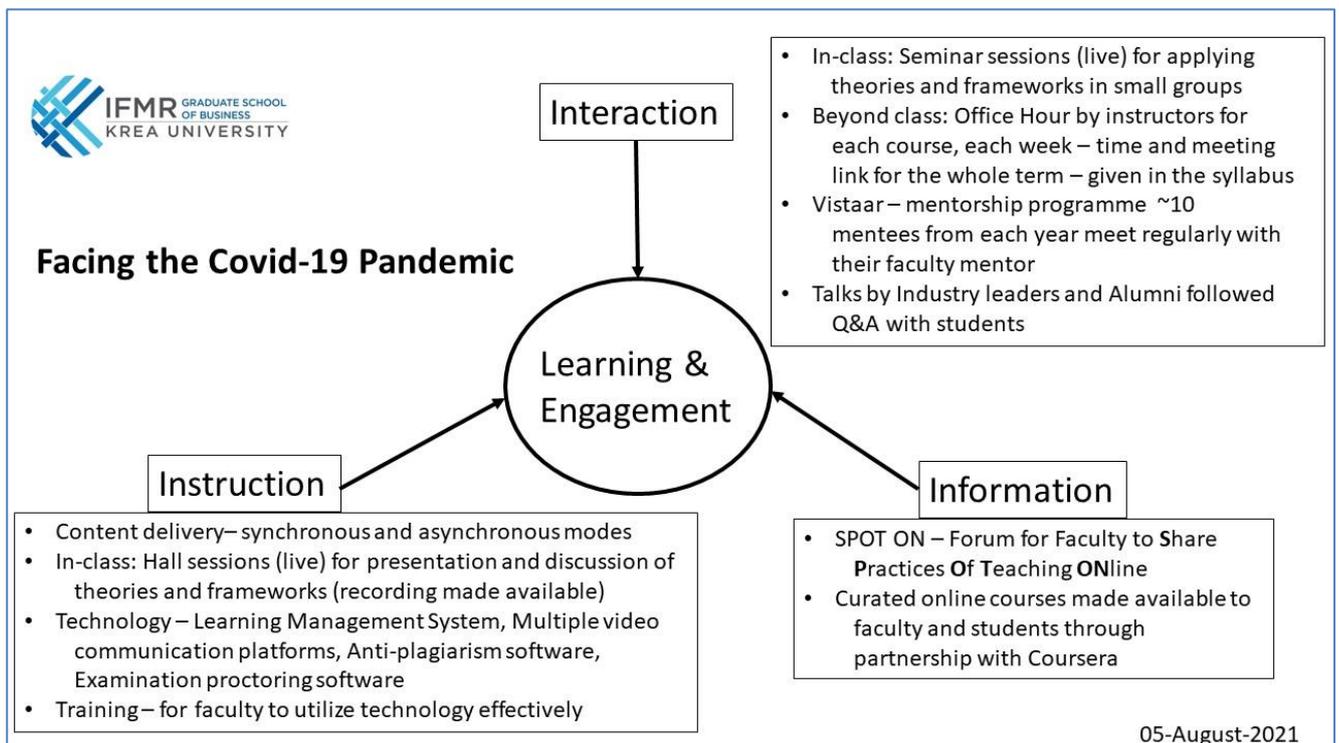


**COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

Education in a Business School must be relevant to the world of business. It includes four elements of learning - participant-centered, theory + application, industry interactions, and on-campus & off-campus inputs.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, IFMR Graduate School of Business (IFMR GSB), Krea University was able to provide the first three elements + off-campus learning to all students. When the government briefly eased regulations, we were even able to offer on-campus experience to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students who chose to come, while adhering to all safety and regulatory protocols at the time.

IFMR GSB faced the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic by continuing to focus on **Student and Faculty Learning and Engagement** with new initiatives in Instruction, Interaction, and Information (summarized in the Figure below).



**Instruction** - content delivery via synchronous and asynchronous modes, live Hall sessions to present and discuss theories and frameworks with recordings available for later viewing, technology deployed to deliver and manage courses and assessment, and faculty training for effective use of technology.

**Interaction** – live Seminar sessions for smaller groups of students to apply theories and frameworks to real business problems, office hour for each course, each week , new Vistaar mentorship program for faculty to meet their mentees regularly, and sessions with Industry leaders and Alumni.

**Information** – a forum was created for faculty to share practices of online teaching, and curated online courses were available to students and faculty through partnership with Coursera.

The three-pronged effort enabled us to maintain our high standards of student and faculty learning and engagement. This, in turn, led to all students completing summer internships in 2020 and 2021, 100% placement of students of the 2018-20 and 2019-21 batches, and on-time graduation of both batches.

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### **Management Education - Opportunities and Challenges**

The year 2020 is grappled the entire world with COVID-19. The size of the corona virus is approximately between 20nm and 500 nm in diameter and has created havoc in the lives of people globally. All countries came to a standstill for some time then felt the need to fight the pandemic and get back on track termed “the new normal”. Globally scientists worked day and night for the vaccine, one solution that could save millions of lives. The government and the people realized they need to live in the pandemic for times to come, which we call the new normal. Everyone wants change to get back to the earlier times, but change is inevitable. During this pandemic period, it gave opportunities and challenges to all the business sectors, including education. In this VUCA environment, every individual, enterprise and economies got affected. But some of them have taken this pandemic period as an opportunity to look from a different perspective.

The focus here is about management education- A re-look during this pandemic. All the stakeholders have a common goal that is get going for continuous learning. The management education at global, national and local levels needs attention and a new perspective which is discussed here.

The focus on learning individually, institutional, systemically is the current need during this pandemic. Globally, most of the B-schools are emphasizing on the sustainability ecosystem. The key players include students, academic institutions, government agencies, private sectors etc. all the stakeholders are keen on a sustainable agenda of learning of systematic and holistic players that bring the key players into this ecosystem. This pandemic has taught us that the present youth and future business leaders' goal should be not only economic impact of their business but give importance to the social and environmental aspects. The business schools are making efforts to redesign management education by incorporating sustainability aspects into all courses. The current challenges of business education include the business processes are more people-centric than the environment, disruptions caused by COVID-19 crisis, bandwidth and connectivity aspects in the developing countries, to keep up with rapidly evolving trends in online business.

The entire world, the learning is taking place in different forms like online mode, hybrid mode, blended mode, remote teaching in virtual learning environments. The perception of learners, other stakeholders of the Business School and management education are vital in the adaptation and transformation of the system.

The major challenges of online education are to engage the students with different learning pace and understanding by regular interaction, continuous feedback and implementation of creative solutions. Further, the design of the curriculum should be student-centric and create the content which ensures students learn efficiently and practically. Students should also play an active role, which is an

essential part and their responsibility in the learning process. A level of personalization is important in the design and delivery of each course, especially through online mode, which is a big challenge to the institutes. While designing the business course, it's important to include different types of learning resources and formats for better understanding and application.

The faculty members when moving from face-to-face to online teaching it is not just course translation, but a course transformation that requires new pedagogies, activities and tools. They also need support from the institutions, regulatory bodies, government and the students to reinforce better learning experience in the virtual mode of teaching and learning. The teachers need to compete with themselves by adopting technology, gaining skills in software and networking, developing content, inspiring and motivating the learners to impart better education in this virtual environment. This transformation from face-to-face to online teaching requires a lot of time and effort from the faculty to deliver high quality online learning experiences.

The institutions are facing challenges in this digital transformation in the VUCA in the short period of time. The strategy of the institutions shall be redesigned as online learning/ blended learning/ hybrid learning is the need of the hour. The redesign includes technology to be adopted institution wide, development programmes for the faculty members and training of supporting staff, internal stakeholder management and re- allocation of funds for the same. In this change management process, support structure and incentives play a significant role in the sustainability and development of the institute. The change in the institute due to pandemic especially in the areas of use of technology, alternative platforms for ease of connectivity, bandwidth and upgradation of software and also required networking and storage are crucial for better online delivery.

The online and technology based education is not only during this pandemic time but will continue and here to stay. All the stakeholders should take this transformation as the inevitable and permanent, new models of online education are emerging. The flexibility to the students for continuous learning through new courses, curriculum and syllabus needs to be framed as per the requirements of the industry, government and the community at the local, regional, national and international levels. It is really an opportunity for all the stakeholders to be part of this transformation and many challenges are to be addressed in the coming period. Let us all gear up for this change and bring synergy in the institutions, faculty members, regulatory bodies, Government and the learners to make this online education reachable to all the sections of the society in our country. The collaboration among institutions at global and national level should be the prime to develop Knowledge, enhance Talent and impart skills among the students for sustainable growth and development of the society.

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### **Rethinking Management Education in the Pandemic Era**

Shutting down of schools, colleges, and universities due the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the world to rapidly shift to teaching online. Informal education methods have also been significantly affected. These developments in the field of teaching and learning have brought to front the urgent need to rethink, revamp and redesign our education system to overcome the challenges posed by the unprecedented situations like Covid 19. While it is a well-established assumption that no pedagogical approach can replace the teacher-student direct interaction in a physical setup, with the COVID-19 crisis there has been a total shift to remote education. Use of modern approaches to teaching and learning such virtual classes, MOOCS and webinars have become more rampant.

The response of the academia to the emergent needs of the COVID 19 pandemic has been positive and rapid. With majority of the teachers and students, having little or no experience of online teaching-learning in beginning of the pandemic, the transformation from classrooms to virtual classes brought with it many imponderables. Teachers were to adopt a facilitator role and to become more familiar with digital technologies. The transition from an educational model based on teaching to a model based on learning requires a profound cultural transformation within universities. Another crucial factor in the pandemic situation was time. The transformation in the education methods were required overnight. Judging by their pace to adapt in such a short period and to maintain quality, teachers have been able to live up to the challenges thrown up by the current situation.

The pandemic caused severe disruption across the higher education sector. The efforts of the sector to bridge the huge gap created by the pandemic brought in many favourable outcomes. List of online courses offered by Institutions increased exponentially and faculty realised that they can develop and deliver online courses. The myth that online learning is not as authentic as classroom learning was busted with faculty and students having a first-hand experience of it. The terms “emergency remote teaching”, and “temporary online pivot” were frequently deliberated in academic conversations and publications. Teachers learned new skills and institutions with a little online exposure deployed large numbers of emergency remote courses. Many courses were offered simultaneously, which shows the scalability in the online learning mode.

The outbreak also has severe impact on business schools. The shut campuses and disrupted semesters have forced faculty and students into online courses. The pandemic has demonstrated the strength and adaptability of the business schools to face hard times. Many promising cases of innovative problem-solving and informed decision-making have helped academia to survive in these challenging times. All over the world, Faculty members of business schools are working quickly to review their curricula to meet the need for the new skills and knowledge that world would require after the pandemic. The two recent developments in digital transformation in the Business education industry during the COVID-19 pandemic are the rapid growth of Online learning and the increased innovations in educational technologies. These trends are brought out in the subsequent paragraphs.

## **Expansion of Online Learning**

Online learning can be learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere to learn and interact with instructors and other students. Synchronous class sessions are when participants gather on a virtual platform in real-time, and complete lessons and activities in sync with one another. Synchronous classes can meet with the use of video, audio, and chat features. Asynchronous means that the instructor and the students in the course all engage with the course content at different times and they complete tasks in a self-paced manner within a given timeframe.

During COVID 19, the digital technologies have played a crucial role in helping business schools to facilitate student learning even when the campuses are shut. While adapting to the online mode, preparedness of faculty and student needs to be assessed and supported accordingly. Adaptability to new learning environment would depend on the individual mindset. There is no one-size-fits-all pedagogy for online learning. There are a variety of subjects with varying needs. Different subjects and age groups require different approaches to online learning.

The use of right pedagogy for online courses may depend on the experience and skill to digital technologies of both teacher and the student. Some of the online meeting platforms used commonly include platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom. These platforms offer options like chat, video conferencing and file storage that enables well organised classes. There are various Learning Management systems like Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas, etc., which can facilitate effective teaching and learning process. Variety of content like Word, PDF, Excel file, audio, videos etc can be easily shared in these platforms. Provisions are also there for tracking of student learning and assessment in these platforms.

## **Embracing E-learning technologies**

The emergence of new technologies has already introduced novel approaches to education with the role of teachers becoming more of facilitator. New training modalities and mass education and new ways for collaborative learning among students resulted in improvement in the acquisition of skills with access to large amounts of information. Few approaches which can be used for effective teaching and learning process in Management Education are as follows:

### **Blended Learning**

The tryst with ongoing Pandemic has helped us realise that newer and effective ways of learning need to be developed which adopts available, amenable and affordable technologies and integrates in-person and online activities while defining the learning objectives and assessing the expected learning outcomes. Blended learning is an approach to systematically mix face-to-face teaching with online learning, where the online component can be delivered through both synchronous modes and asynchronous modes, where people learn in different locations at different times. It helps students to explore technology and use different tools or techniques for learning and improves the quality of education and information assimilation while making teaching more efficient and productive.

### **Flipped classroom**

The flipped classroom is a simple strategy for providing learning resources such as articles, pre-recorded videos and YouTube links before the class. The online classroom time is then used to

deepen understanding through discussion with faculty and peers. In the traditional framework, students get first contact with new concepts in class and then higher-level interactions are all on the student side through homework. Flipped learning puts first contact with new ideas for homework and then uses the group space for active learning on mid- and upper-level tasks. This is a highly effective way of encouraging skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and self-directed learning.

### **Online Collaborative Learning (OCL)**

Collaborative learning is a model of learning in which students are encouraged and supported to work together by sharing the workload equitably as they progress toward intended learning outcomes. Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) is one of the accepted teaching approaches in online education since it can help foster community among students who may be feeling otherwise disconnected. The aim is not to replace the teacher, but to use the technology primarily to increase and improve communication between teacher and learners. It involves participants working together, exchanging ideas and opinions, developing a shared understanding of specific topics, and constructing collaborative products. In OCL models, all learners are considered to be stakeholders and learning takes place through collaborative discourse.

### **Instructional design (ID)**

Instructional Design aims to identify the skills, knowledge and the attitude gaps of a targeted audience and to create, select and suggest learning experiences that close this gap. Instructional Design are integral and essential to the rapidly growing Online Education space. A good quality design is associated with clear learning objectives, carefully structured content, controlled workloads for faculty and students, integrated media, relevant student activities, and assessment strongly tied to desired learning outcomes. The primary focus is to make the content organized by ensuring the flow of information to be sequential and smooth without losing context and to unclutter concepts that caters effectively to a wide variety of learners.

### **MOOCS**

The term Massive Open Online Course was used for the first time in 2008 by Georges Siemens and Dave Cormier in reference to Stephen Downes and Georges Siemens' "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge" course. MOOCS was first introduced to education in 2011, when two Stanford professors offered the course "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence" to 160,000 students from around the world, of whom 20,000 completed the course. Since then MOOCs, have seen a surge in enrolments. The traditional audience for MOOCs is adult learners, who take free classes, or pay a modest fee for a completion certificate, and who are not seeking college credit. Massive open online classes, or MOOCs, form an important part of the educational response to the pandemic . MOOCs have the potential to make a difference where conventional eLearning has evidently slopped off. Open MOOC platforms and the ease of curating MOOCs sanctioned by advances in educational technology further predict a promising future for MOOCs.

### **Learning Management Systems (LMS)**

Learning Management System for higher education serve as virtual classrooms and despite the distance, students can still learn and study in their respective homes. LMS is seen as a software that operates and encompasses many services that are meant to aid teachers in managing their lectures and

courses, and they were created in order to monitor and evaluate students, give grades, to monitor course attendance or additional administrative actions that can be demanded by educational institutions. Through these platforms, teachers can upload and supply students with information and resources to which they would not have had access during face-to-face classes, and students can easily share information, state their difficulties and receive feedback. LMS includes diverse features such as forums, chats, private messaging, and higher education institutions can use it as an additional method to traditional education, or for exclusively online learning.

### **Future of Management Education – Need for Accelerating Digital Transformation**

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced higher education institutions in general and business schools to develop newer and effective ways remote learning for students scattered around the world, by adopting available and affordable technologies which integrates offline and online activities. Teachers are experiencing new possible ways of teaching differently and which provides more flexibility. The transition to remote teaching however requires a professional approach and Business Schools which have invested in their learning design paths, would be able to handle this transition efficiently and effectively. Business partnerships between educational institutes and technology providers are expected to go high. With this trend, there is going to be higher impetus on instructional design capabilities of the institutions and this will be considered as necessary skills for teachers. While the unplanned and rapid transition to online learning – with no training, insufficient bandwidth, and little preparation could result in a poor user experience that is uncondusive to sustained growth, it believed that a new hybrid model of education will emerge, which will offer significant benefits. Hence, experts believe that there will be an increase in the use of information technology for education and that online mode will eventually become an integral part of education.

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## **A Perspective on Management Education in Covid and Post-Covid Scenarios**

### **Management Education During Covid-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented crisis in all areas. In the field of education, this emergency has led to the massive closure of face-to-face activities of educational institutions in order to prevent the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact. After two deadly waves of covid infections and subsequent relaxation of lockdown restrictions, there are signs that education institutions in India will start regular face-to-face classes perhaps from September of this year. Students across the country are also keen to get back to campuses after attending online classes for more than 15 months. However, even as the normal educational activities are set to resume after the lockdowns, some of the effects of the covid pandemic are expected to linger and exert a strong influence on many aspects of education in the post-covid era.

Firstly, with both the teachers and students shedding their initial reluctance and scepticism about the feasibility and efficacy of online education, an obvious and logical consequence will be adoption of blended and other hybrid teaching models with online teaching as one of the components in the post-covid world. The ease of use of the technology coupled with the convenience of delivering courses online at an affordable cost will be the main drivers that will sustain this trend. For instance, inviting experts from other cities or even other countries to deliver online sessions without the need for them to travel to the campus for face-to-face interactions with students will encourage schools to engage them in their programs more often. Secondly, many online courses and programs have gained traction during the lockdown with participants realizing the benefits of asynchronous or online learning such as flexibility in learning from anywhere and at any time and that too at affordable price, more time available for them to do other activities and opportunities for them to develop self-learning skills.

### **Taking Stock of the Lessons Learnt to Plan for the Future**

The Covid crisis has exposed many inadequacies in the online education system such as unequal access to the broadband and devices needed for online education, supportive environments needed to focus on learning, and misalignment between resources and needs. While all the schools have made concerted efforts to maintain learning continuity during the crisis, students have had to rely more on their own resources to continue learning remotely through the Internet learning platforms. Teachers also had to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and modes of delivery of teaching for which they were not trained.

According to the latest EFMD report, *The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Business Schools*, the biggest internal challenge that schools faced during the crisis has been adjusting to a remote learning environment. To meet this challenge, schools focused on meeting student expectations of online

education by aligning faculty skills to asynchronous delivery, and using appropriate technology. However, unequal access to students to remote learning technologies and addressing this issue has proved particularly challenging. Based on similar reports from other sources, a common set of challenges faced by both the faculty and students at business schools in India and other neighbouring countries are listed below. It is worthwhile for academic administrators to examine these issues and learn from the experience of others of using online education during the recent crisis while introducing online and hybrid models in the future.

#### Challenges in Implementing Online Education

- Difficulty in sustaining interest of students during online sessions. Loss of students' concentration due to fatigue from spending long periods on laptops and mobile phones.
- Lack of adequate internet bandwidth in semi-urban and rural areas to access online sessions and content. Unequal access to online learning opportunities widened pre-existing gaps in access to information and knowledge hindering the learning process that distance education seeks to provide. These gaps must be viewed from a multidimensional perspective, for it is not merely about differences in access to equipment but also in the skill sets needed to leverage the potential of ICT, which are uneven among students and teachers.
- Difficulty in teaching management concepts using the case method, role-plays, etc., which are an integral part of pedagogical techniques used in business schools. Similarly, carrying out internship projects without direct interactions with concerned people proved to be extremely difficult, if not impossible.
- Lack of quality online resources for learning. The faculty could not identify and recommend good quality online resources due to abrupt cancellation of face-to-face classes.
- The absence of face-to-face interactions between the faculty and students made online classes uninteresting for the students.
- The new circumstances have meant teachers have to use virtual platforms and methodologies with which they may not be familiar resulting in ineffective teaching in many cases.
- Students experiencing a sense of loneliness working from home and remote locations was highly demotivating.
- Lack of social interactions in the virtual mode made it difficult for students to learn important social skills.

#### Some Suggestions to tackle the Challenges of Online Education:

- Providing training for lecturers on effective teaching in virtual mode.
- Providing virtual resources to mimic classroom discussions or use interactive tools, such as videos and 3D animation that are significantly more effective than text materials such as PowerPoint and pdf, voice recordings.
- Providing accessible online resources such as e-books and instructional videos for practical lessons.
- Decreasing the time spent online to reduce students' stress.
- Providing online quizzes and assignments after every session to measure the degree of students' understanding.
- Increasing the available time to solve the online tests.

Also, as schools reopen, there are two significant opportunities that schools can seize when they resume regular academic schedule. The first is to take stock of the lessons learned in this crisis as students return to school and to assess the learning or the lack of learning that happened during the period of online learning. This exercise should focus not only on the extent to which students gained the knowledge and skills intended in the curriculum, but also on what skills and competencies they demonstrated, or failed to demonstrate, during the period of distance or remote learning. Absence of face-to-face learning has clearly placed greater demands on students' autonomy, capacity for independent learning, self-monitoring and capacity to learn on line. These are all essential skills for the present and the future. It is likely that some students were more proficient in them than others and that, as a result, were able to learn more than their peers while not in the classroom. The plans to return to school should, therefore, focus on more directed efforts to cultivate these essential skills among all students.

The second, which is equally important, will be to build on the already ongoing efforts to develop the infrastructure for online and remote learning, and to continue to develop the capacity of students and teachers to learn and teach in that mode. This is essential because there is a possibility that any return to school may again be interrupted as a result of future outbreaks or other major disruptions. Looking beyond the COVID-19 situation, there are evident benefits to students in expanding their learning time and opportunities beyond and outside the classroom by being able to learn using a variety of distance learning approaches. Schools planning to reopen could, therefore, consider using blended models that include online teaching to allow all students to support their learning.

### **Addressing Social and Emotional Issues Faced by Faculty and Students with Online Education**

Teachers and supporting staff have played a vital role in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and have had to face a number of different demands during the social and health crisis which they have never experienced earlier. Most teachers had to hurriedly re-plan and adapt to online education processes including adjusting teaching methods and curricula, designing materials, and delivering content using new formats and virtual platforms. The need to adjust to distance education has also created additional responsibilities and demands that hugely increased the time teachers spend preparing for classes, delivering the content, monitoring and assessing students' performance and provide regular feedback in the virtual format. Teachers had to face the demands of providing social, emotional and mentoring support to students, which have become increasingly important facets of education during the pandemic. While performing their teaching activities and meeting these new demands, teachers often found themselves with inadequate training and resources to address the challenges of adapting teaching content and formats to ensure that none of the students were excluded from the learning activities. The use of virtual systems also created a risk of losing the links formed during face-to-face interactions and posed challenges in maintaining teacher-student relationships essential for effective teaching-learning process.

In this rare scenario, teachers require unequivocal social and emotional support from academic administrators during the lockdown and post-lockdown periods. Administrators should proactively implement creative interventions and also provide social and emotional support and in some cases economic support as well to enable teachers to address educational continuity. To start with, the management can empower teachers and support staff to make flexible pedagogical decisions while maintaining an appropriate balance between autonomy and the provision of support. Other important interventions include providing training, mentoring and adequate and relevant resources to the teachers to work on different distance education formats including training in skills and methodologies for use of ICT and alternate distance teaching and learning platforms.

## **Post-Covid Scenario**

Referring to the EFMD Report cited earlier, business schools recognise an urgent need to adapt their business models, with 73% of schools considering change highly likely, as disruptive change becomes a feature of their working environment. 60% of respondents consider the mass introduction of digital teaching and learning a highly likely scenario. The post-pandemic scenario, therefore, is likely to be very different from pre-pandemic and pandemic situation. Digital teaching or virtual classrooms will continue to exist along with face-to-face classrooms in business schools and the schools might use hybrid models to take advantage of benefits of remote and face-to-face learning models.

## **Acceptance and Adoption of Online Programs**

Apart from the widespread adoption of e-learning systems, Covid-19 has fundamentally altered the perceptions of full-time MBA especially among the working professionals. The current crisis has exposed the value proposition of many full-time management programs with the result that many of them are reluctant to commit large amounts of time and money to pursue full-time regular MBA programs. Even before the pandemic, many of them were opting to gain real-time business education through on-the-job learning, networking, and using alternative learning platforms such as mini-MBA—all without leaving the workforce for two years instead of pursuing a two-year full-time MBA program. The acceptance and popularity of e-learning is expected to accelerate this trend in the post-covid scenario. The heightened job insecurity and companies downsizing workforce to cut costs to survive the lockdowns is also expected to provide further impetus to online programs.

## **Rise of Microcredentials**

Another emerging alternate learning platform that is expected to increasingly dominate the discourse in academic circles will be ‘microcredentials’. With employers and employees looking for shorter, more flexible program options that enable learners to build requisite skills and competencies as and when required, microcredentials delivered through e-learning platforms are expected to provide immense opportunities to business schools. Australian educationalist Beverley Oliver defines microcredential, also known as digital badge, micro-certification and open badge, as “a certification of assessed learning that is additional, alternate, complementary to, or a formal component of, a formal qualification.” Microcredentials can add to or complement formal qualifications such as degree programs or can be designed as stackable qualifications leading to full-fledged programs if the participants decide to pursue them in the future. They are essentially short, low-cost online courses delivered as ‘bite-sized’ chunks that provide learners with a digital certification or a ‘digital badge’ after completion of a courses. This new learning concept is gaining recognition and is expected to be highly sought after in the professional community. This trend offers tremendous opportunity to business schools to sustain and grow in a highly dynamic and volatile environment characterised by intense competition not only from other business schools but also from emerging EdTech companies, new digital technologies and changing expectations and demands of students. Microcredentials will undoubtedly dominate the future business education landscape providing exciting new opportunities for business schools to remain relevant and enhance their reputation for expertise and quality. However, to seize this opportunity, business schools need to be agile and entrepreneurial and overcome their current mindset of offering only long-term programs.

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**Covid-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education:  
Experience of IMT Ghaziabad**

**Introduction**

Covid-19 has disrupted the world in a big way, and in case of India, the longer duration of stringent nationwide lockdown and huge surge in coronavirus cases, the impact has been severe and prolonged. This disruption has pushed educational institutions across the world to figure out ways to provide quality education on a continuous basis without any hiccups and sustain engagement with various stakeholders. The pandemic has forced educational systems across the globe to transform the existing teaching and learning methods and move to online mode. So, it is important to change the existing delivery and pedagogical methods by seamlessly integrating classroom learning with e-learning modes to build a unified learning system. Consequently, B-Schools that could leverage technology, has visionary leadership and nimble and flexible are and quickly able to build an eco-system of virtual learning, teaching and evaluation to lessen the impact of this pandemic and use this crisis as an opportunity.

A study of premium B-Schools in India revealed that while there has been minimal impact on their admissions though some institutions have made modifications in their admission process. Whereas in placements, many organizations have deferred joining of B-School pass-outs or revoked offers. At the same time, few B-schools have seen an upward surge in their executive and online courses as the prolonged pandemic has given rise to an "appetite for learning". Several B-Schools have re-designed their courses and evaluation parameters, while the teaching and learning have been happening online as is the case with examinations. Last year, most of the first year MBA students had to contend with virtual summer internship, while industry visits and industry-interaction programs have been affected in a big way, thereby substantially impacting practical learning. The student and faculty-exchange programs have taken a beating impacting the global exposures. Access to libraries and learning resources is limited as very few institutions have been able to provide remote access of these resources. Student activities, clubs, as well as sports that play an important role in personality development have been missing. So students are missing on peer-to-peer learning and moments of togetherness. In many institutions, the new academic year has commenced with a delay of almost two months.

## **Experience of IMT Ghaziabad**

Realizing the enormity of the task, IMT Ghaziabad made early efforts in responding to the challenges posed by this pandemic. The institute started with building capacity in reorienting the teaching-learning process under the new normal. The initial hiccups faced by faculty in moving from offline teaching to online teaching was addressed through organizing multiple practice sessions. Some of the faculty members at IMT Ghaziabad had been undertaking online synchronous teaching with few external partners in executive education space since 2008. This past experience gave them the required confidence and necessary changes were brought in to quickly switch to online mode of teaching.

The admission process for PGDM Full Time, PGDM-Executive and PGDM-Part-time programs switched to online mode and the process was completed without any major glitches. Orientation & technology support was designed for faculty and staff to conduct online interviews. The candidates were asked to upload their introductory video. It is fair to mention here that the enrolments in all programmes were good and in PGDM- Executive and PGDM Part-time programs there have been an improvement over last year. The enrolments in the PGDM-BFS program also has gone up this year. However, enrolments in PGDM-DCP program have declined owing to uncertainty in international travel caused by the pandemic.

The summer internship of students scheduled during April-June got adversely affected owing to shift from on- field activity to work from home activity, thereby depriving the students of the scope of on-job learning. While the final placement offers for students more or less remained intact, barring very few cases, the date of joining was postponed to a later date in most of the cases. Throughout this period of uncertainty, the placement department of IMT Ghaziabad remained extremely supportive to the students and held their hands in addressing issues they faced.

The final placement for the PGDM batch of 2019-21 has been good despite the prevailing circumstances of pandemic situation. In order to prepare students for their final placement, a professional agency was engaged to support the students. The placement department organized a number of knowledge sharing sessions by industry experts in the form of webinars and leadership talks to ensure that the students remain updated about the current developments of the industry.

IMT Ghaziabad has optimized the usage of its IT and digital resources during the pandemic. We have been using highly secure Life-size cloud and Microsoft Team for online classroom sessions, meetings, and other activities. IMT Ghaziabad has taken an exclusive subscription to Coursera during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is one of the most trusted online certification platforms with more than 3,700 online courses. All the courses are available for the students of the IMT Ghaziabad free of cost. All our library resources, including e-books, e-journals, databases, and other electronic materials, have been made available via Remote Access Services (<https://ezproxy.imt.edu>).

IMT Ghaziabad has conducted a series of webinars in association with the Alumni Association, bringing in notable alumni, industry experts to interact with students.

The customized executive education programs offered to corporate clients were adversely affected because most participants chose not to travel or attend online training classes. However, the online certification programs have made significant gains with enrolment and revenue increased by almost 200%. This has ensured that the revenue from this account of the institute has remained stable.

The overall consistency in students' enrolment numbers and revenues from executive education has ensured that the finances of the institute remained stable during this pandemic time.

The faculty and staff performance appraisal went ahead as planned, and increments and incentives were disbursed as per decisions.

The institute conducted a faculty selection process. Similarly, the staff recruitment process is currently going on.

Faculty members received incentives based on their quality publications. The institute also provided faculty development funds to attend workshops, conferences, etc.

### **Safety Measures Taken at Campus**

Following measures/activities have been carried out by IMT administration related to COVID-19:

1. Installation of Automatic Touchless Sanitizer Dispenser Machines at prominent locations across the campus.
2. Installation of Foot Operated Sanitizer Dispenser Machines at various locations across the campus.
3. Touch Free Face Recognition Machine for Attendance
4. Awareness posters to prevent the COVID-19
5. Standard Operating Procedures were shared with faculty and staff members of the institute.

### **Future Strategy for B Schools**

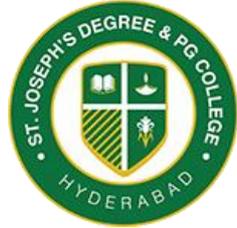
Based on our experience we suggest the following:

- a) **Future outlook:** We have to accept the current new normal situation. Depending on the trend of incidence of Corona, we have to allow Work from Home for faculty & staff as well. Now we are used to transact our activities, academic and non-academic through online. It means, the Institute has to invest well in technology upgradation for smooth conduct of the online deliberations. The B-Schools have to deliver classes online, transact all business through online and HR practices also need to be integrated through online. Therefore, it calls for investment in right kind of software and other technology. We conducted our appraisals also online.
- b) **Delivery Channels:**
  - (i) Admissions processes have to be online
  - (ii) Classes can be on a blended mode, i.e., some classes through online, some classes in Campus and some lessons through accessing online courses of other universities.
  - (iii) There has to be greater networking among the institutions for effective delivery of classes to support learning process of the students.
  - (iv) We have emphasised on the issue of Academic evaluations, be it Assignment, Project Report or Mid Term/ End Term evaluations. We have to encourage ethical practices and instil the integrity to build the character of the students. Therefore, it requires investment in right type of software for plagiarism check.

- (v) Another important issue is proctoring the examinations effectively. It will require investment in technology.
  - (vi) In lieu of the Global Immersion/ Exchange, B-Schools have to invite outstanding professors from international universities and let them deliver lectures online. This may facilitate exposure to international business scenario.
  - (vii) The placement forum also will require a change in approach, as many companies may prefer to conduct online selection process for both summer projects and final placements.
  - (viii) Remote access to Library has to be provided to the students and faculty as well for effective learning and research purpose. At IMT Ghaziabad, we could even provide remote access for our Bloomberg terminals.
- c) **Social and Emotional Issues:** There is a possibility that during lockdown and work from home, there could be emotional problems and social drift among the students and faculty as well. In view of this, the following can be done:
- (i) Online counselling for the students by professional organisations.
  - (ii) Continuous dialogue and discussions with the students, by the faculty of the institute, to provide comfort level to the students.
  - (iii) It would be also necessary to contact the parents for preventing any social disharmony.
  - (iv) Faculty need to be in conversation with the Management for any specific issues during lockdown and work from home. In such a situation, HR practices need to be dovetailed according to the needs of staff and faculty.
- d) Health issues need to be addressed on a priority: At IMT Ghaziabad, we have taken the initiative to enhance coverage for the health insurance.

Given the situation, it is very difficult to predict how long pandemic will continue and when there can be free movement without fear. Accordingly, we have to continuously monitor the wellbeing of all stakeholders of B-Schools.

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### **The Management Education: Post Covid Twists and Turns**

#### **THE SCENARIO**

“THE WORLD WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN”. This is the word of spread today in the whole world. The pandemic, as everyone can agree with me that the precious nature of change is immeasurable and unknowable, at this time now, no matter which area is under our study. The change prediction should give some direction now to begin but not be unguided, but to re-think and re-draft and re-frame and re-design the old systems of every economy.

According to UNESCO, around the world, about 63 million teachers were affected in 165 countries. A total of 1.3 billion learners around the world were not able to attend schools or universities, and approximately 320 million learners are affected in India alone<sup>1</sup>. Indian government had announced the lockdown and closure of educational institutions as a logical solution to enforce social distancing within communities. The nationwide lockdown did not have the same effect of the expectations of quality deliverables to the students who are from urban and rural areas, because our Indian system of education is the classroom dominated one.

#### **The CRISES**

The crises of unfavourable situations and adverse opportunities, lead to two kinds of crises: Educational chaos, the temporary closure of Private homes have abruptly been turned into parents' workplaces and children's classrooms, with all the hurdles posed by households which are not usually well prepared to handle such activities. Nor do families have enough electronic devices for all members' remote work and study, and many homes also lack the connectivity that such a heavy workload requires. These deficiencies are worse for low-income families, so the pandemic has thus intensified existing inequalities, creating the second kind of emotional chaos, generating anxiety and exhaustion, deepened when family members lose their jobs: in summary, educational and emotional chaos have invaded millions of students' lives.

The crises involve not only public health or economics, but also the social and human domains. Without basic values, shared by all, it is impossible to overcome global challenges. There are also challenges on a personal scale: how to help people live a full life with dignity, so graduates can understand their professional career as a way of nourishing others' lives.

COVID has restricted the access to international destinations to pursue education and hence it has had an adverse effect on the educational sector too along with the students. The young adults aspiring to pursue higher education from better universities to improve their skill set for coping up with the trends in the industry have taken a huge blow amongst the whole COVID facade. Pursuing Bachelors or Masters degrees through the online mode has held back the ambitions of many students. A study showing the effects of COVID-19 on College Students' Mental Health in the United States<sup>2</sup> has observed that in 195 students, 138 (71%) indicated increased stress and anxiety due to the COVID-19 outbreak. They have concluded that there is an urgent need to develop interventions and preventive strategies to address the mental health of college students. Lack of parental guidance, especially for young learners, is another challenge, as both parents are working. There are practical issues around physical workspaces conducive to different ways of learning. There are economic, social and psychological repercussions on the life of students while they are away from the normal schedule of schools. Many of these students have now taken online classes, spending additional time on virtual platforms, which have left children vulnerable to online exploitation. Increased and unstructured time spent on online learning has exposed children to potentially harmful and violent content as well as greater risk of cyberbullying.

## **IMPACT OF COVID ON EDUCATION SYSTEM**

### **Positive Impact:**

Indian education system got transformed itself into the opportunity of a new from traditional as can be seen from the following points:

- As the teaching fraternity could not give physical notes, on-line materials were developed and kept as a source of permanent record and reference.
- Faculty members could use the services of guest speakers from various fields of industries and other educational institutions, resulting in collaborative teaching and learning
- The unlimited and unrestricted time created a massive rise in teleconferencing, virtual meetings, webinars and e-conferencing opportunities.
- The pandemic resulted in the increase of digital literacy and it induced people of all category to use the ICT tools.
- Learning material and classes were exchanged across the WhatsApp and Facebook platforms, the social medias
- Learners could establish international contact resulting in worldwide exposure
- Online education could save the time of the learners benefiting them with better time management.
- The pandemic season encourage self-learning rather being dependent on faculty or the instructors.

### **Negative Impact:**

The Covid, has, no doubt, created a strong sense of negative impact on the students' learning and some of them are as below:

- The assessment and evaluation pattern was totally changed affecting the very purpose of testing

- Rural students were stranded with their education due to improper knowledge on the ICT and the cost involved in it such as purchasing laptops, mobiles, data charging etc.,
- The face to face learning was missing in the learning process and hence the control over students for the quality learning was not there.
- Shortcomings are acute result in poor educational design; few virtual learning resources; no adequate tutorial support or assistance with solving technology issues

### **Challenges to Education system:**

In this connection, Education system of the economy plays a greater role to shape the post-Covid-19 world, by shaping the education system first. The term that we use to describe the post-covid situation is 'new normal' and the reason to call it so is that Covid is not only a health issue, but also a social, political and culture one, which have a major impact.

Online education has taken the lead Distance education, with various names (online, digital, open, virtual), has moved into a dominant position after having been marginal to the educational system for so long, with its validity often questioned. No one could have foreseen this and, though one might argue that this situation is temporary, we know it will not vanish quickly. Higher education has to react rapidly and take strong decisions to reorganize teaching and learning, along with research activities. The prospects of entire societies therefore, depended partly on how well and how the academic institutions respond to the Covid-19 crisis. Nevertheless, some opportunities have been created for higher education in this new situation, as set out below. Re-thinking higher education The educational emergency opens up the possibility to re-think higher education, not only its teaching and learning, but also its higher purpose and its relationship with society: how can we place human beings at the centre of the curriculum? Hence, The Education system should

1. Attach Values and commitments to higher education
2. Establish a new relationship necessary to build with the pandemic affected local communities
3. Redesign its collaboration beyond its campus
4. Fix new institutional practices to be ethical and empathetic
5. Work together locally, nationally and globally to respond to multi-faceted issues from the pandemic.

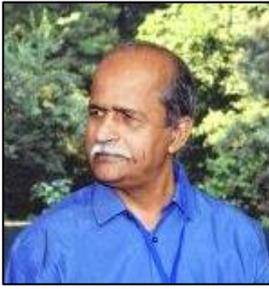
While adapting to the new changes, staff and student readiness needs to be gauged and supported accordingly. The learners with a fixed mindset find it difficult to adapt and adjust, whereas the learners with a growth mindset quickly adapt to a new learning environment. There is no one size-fits-all pedagogy for online learning. There are a variety of subjects with varying needs. Different subjects and age groups require different approaches to online learning. The use of suitable and relevant pedagogy for online education may depend on the expertise and exposure to information and communications technology (ICT) for both educators and the learners.

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Management education is once again facing a transformational challenge partly due to Covid-19 and mainly due to the rapid changes taking place in the industry itself with the advent of Big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning Block Chain, Internet of Things and similar advanced digital technologies.

Business education is experiencing fundamental changes in content, delivery & assessment. The pace of Edu-tech adoption got a sudden impetus owing to the unexpected occurrence of a global Pandemic. Everyone is innovating and so are the accreditation agencies, both national and international, to cope with the new normal. One thing is quite clear that Business education will never be the same.

Everyone agrees that the Covid-19 had been devastating in taking away so many lives and disrupting businesses leading to disastrous job losses and loss of livelihood for millions. But at the same time it has also been transformative for education industry particularly supercharging the education delivery leading to a new and complete transformation of teaching and learning as we know of leading to the awareness that learning and not degree that matters and that learning should be lifelong.



Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the way today's businesses compete and operate. By putting AI and data at the center of their capabilities, companies are redefining how they create, capture, and share value—and are achieving impressive growth as a result. Whatever the industry or business model, one cannot afford to ignore this exciting, highly disruptive trend.

Covid-19 ironically came as blessing in disguise for the Business schools as they were vacillating in ushering in changes in the curricula to match with the tectonic changes taking place in the industry to which they cater to ultimately. This hesitation was due to the normal resistance one encounters with the uninitiated to the new technology regime and also the perceived high cost of the digital technologies in the everyday running of the B-schools when things were in any case going as usual.

Covid-19 changed all that rapidly as the deadly infection led to worldwide lockdown following unexpectedly huge amount of deaths early 2020. Faced with no choice but to send back the students in hostels and close down the colleges, the higher education institutions started to review the digital options anew and speeded up their induction.

In India, which was one of the earliest nations to totally shut down the economy and industry from February end of 2020 was also quick to adopt to digital techniques to continue to keep the students engaged.

That many of the B-schools had already been using digital platforms to an extent certainly helped the transformation. For instance open source platforms like Moodle, Blackboard were already in widespread use while paper publishing platforms by EasyChair, Elsevier, Springer were already digital. Thanks to many B-schools adopting accreditation both Indian and International, there has been fair familiarity with digital data submission, assessment, metrics building and such other. Also the entire International Accreditation system comprising many competing platforms were completely digital. Using Skype, internet explorer, Whatsapp video, duo were already done by schools to which platforms like Zoom, Google classrooms, Microsoft Teams got added.

Assessment and instant case platform like Peregrine Global services was already popular and the students were also familiar with admission platforms like GMAT, CAT, SNAP etc., Covid 19 triggered lockdown actually resulted in not only reviewing all these various technologies already in use but sporadically but aggregating these for widespread and almost universal usage.

A World Bank Report in late 2020 stated “What we are learning from COVID-19, similar to what we have seen in previous pandemics, is that preparedness is crucial. While different scenarios exist, several of them assume that the COVID-19 spread will happen in waves, which means the process of addressing it should be cyclical. Countries not yet impacted should begin “preparing,” starting with a response plan. This would facilitate “coping” once the crisis hits and minimizing the negative impacts. The plan can include introducing protocols for screenings in schools, rolling out hygiene practice campaigns, imposing school closures, offering distance learning, using closed schools for emergency purposes, etc.”

This precisely is what the B-schools did. They closed in phases and shifted the courses to digital platforms and now they are completely on digital mode. However, shifting to digital mode not only required technology investment and its induction, but also preparing the students and the faculty for the new mode of teaching and learning. Admirably with little or no intervention almost the entire B-school network adopted to the change with great élan.



All the B-schools today conduct their classes, their exams, case studies and event internships are being negotiated for online mode.

The world bank report quoted earlier observed “Educational administrators and policy makers can use this crisis as an opportunity to introduce new learning modes that can reach everyone, to prepare for emergencies, and to make the system more resilient.”

The challenges are many as much of the student cohort are from non-technology or traditional technology schools rooted in theory with little practice. And many among the faculty also are not trained or are not aware about the new technologies that are being invented almost on the fly. There is much learning to be done and the industry involvement in education is going to be much greater and not less in the future of Business Education. The old school MBA programmes have to be rewritten and made more practical and new tools with the help of the industry need to be crafted to hone the MBA graduates so that they would be able to face the challenges of the digitally transformed businesses.

# The MBA, Then and Now

Different business schools have adopted different approaches to developing their newly minted MBA programs. In large part, however, they are responding to the same market trends. As a result, they are making similar choices in their redesigns, which show just how much the MBA is changing:

THE OLD MBA...	THE NEW MBA...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Focuses on required courses aimed at the core business disciplines, often offered in no specific order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Focuses on core and industry-specific courses and activities, offered in a sequence designed to build skills over time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offers a general business education that covers the core disciplines of business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Often requires students to choose a specialization in their first year of study</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Allows students to take electives based on a variety of interests, often at any time during their programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Allows students to take electives at predetermined times in their programs, based on their chosen specializations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Includes developing communications and career management skills as a separate course or activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Integrates development of communication and career management skills throughout all courses</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Encourages students to work alone, except for time-limited projects or class discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Requires students to work in teams for a semester or even for the entire program</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Encourages faculty to work alone to teach their chosen disciplines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Often requires faculty to work in teams to integrate several disciplines in a single course or project</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Includes staff-provided career counseling to students in the second year of the program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Brings in mentors, executive coaches, and leaders from industry to give students advice and feedback from the start of their programs</li> </ul>

“The world of work is changing. Artificial intelligence, automation, and robotics will make this shift as significant as the mechanization in prior generations of agriculture and manufacturing. While some jobs will be lost, and many others created, almost all will change” McKinsey. A new report from the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) indicates that up to 25 percent more workers than previously estimated may need to switch occupations. This episode of the Inside the Strategy Room podcast looks at how the COVID-19 crisis has permanently changed workplace conditions and skillset needs and how corporate leaders can prepare for this future.



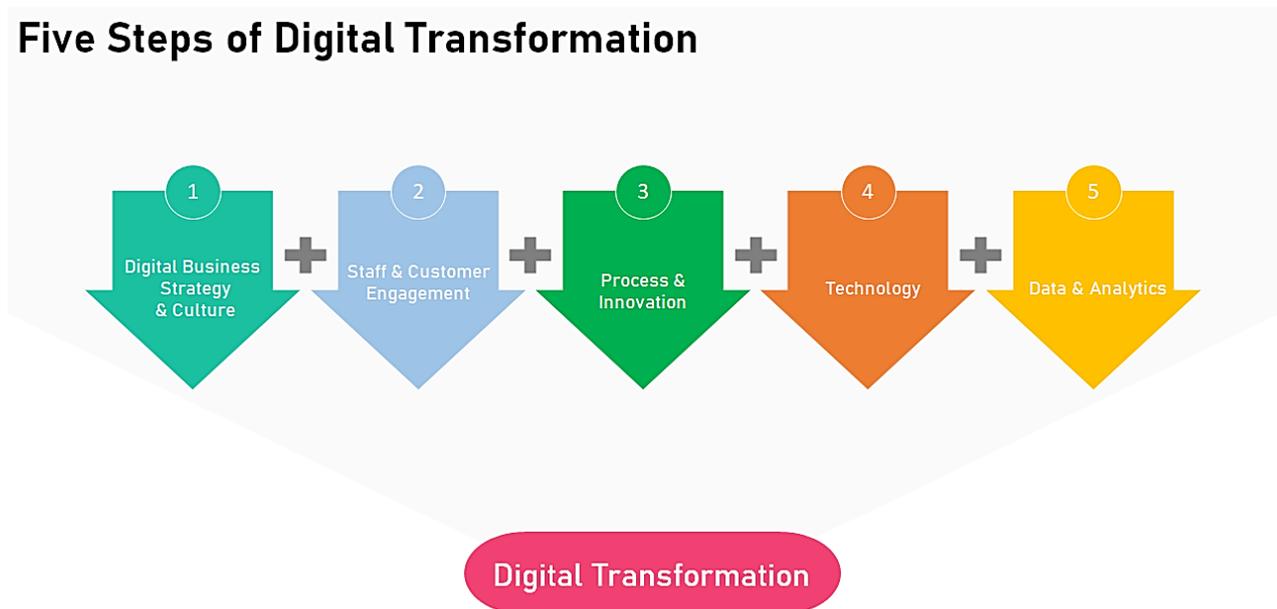
This also means the B-schools preparing leaders for the future industry should be able to follow the digital transformation trends and tweak their offerings to suit the need. “As digital networks and AI increasingly capture our world, we are seeing a fundamental transformation in the nature of firms. But despite all this newfound digital automation, we

can’t do away with management just yet. However, leading through these challenging times will require a new kind of managerial wisdom.” – Marco Iansiti, David Sarnoff, Professor of Business Administration Harvard Karim R. Lakhani, Charles Edward Wilson, Professor of Business Administration Harvard School of Business say.

Once the Covid-19 crisis passes, will it be business as usual at the MBA schools? This question has been intriguing many. Several studies in the recent months suggested that the opinion is divided

between completely shifting to online mode and opening physical class rooms in full. The consensus seems to be the hybrid class rooms that share digital technology platforms with that of the classroom intervention may be the way go.

## Five Steps of Digital Transformation



The new MBA curriculum unlike the previous MBA offerings both old and the recent ones in the post Covid Era has to take into account Digital Transformation of businesses already underway. The students need to be aware of the nuances of the transformation enumerated in the image above.

One thing is certain that the Covid 19 coupled with the external technological challenges has finally made people realise that education is not the end game which means completing the MBA programme is not an end in itself but continuous life long learning really is. This means there are amazing opportunities for the Business schools to keep their alumni constantly engaged and even profit from “educating” them on the new businesses and techniques almost without end.

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## **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

### **(i) How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

The environment is gradually changing. In our case, all faculty members alongwith non-teaching employees visit the campus daily. In view of the Corona Protocol, the students cannot be called to the campus. All classes including practical sessions of Engineering and Science are taking place on the online platform only. Mid-Term and End-Term Examinations are also conducted online. It appears that we may have to continue with the same arrangement during the current academic session i.e., 2021-22 too. However, if situation remains in control, we may be able to call students at the earliest from January 2022. Otherwise, we may be able to revert back to pre-pandemic position from July 2022 when institutions of higher learning will be able to call students to the campus. In the meantime, institutions of higher education shall continue to do what they have been doing in the past 16 months.

### **(ii) Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

Blended approach is going to be the norm after normalcy returns. Institutions of higher learning will have to decide that what to teach in the physical class and what to teach through online platform. Further, students will also be allowed to complete some credits by doing certain courses from the platforms like coursera, MOOCs, NPTEL, Swayam and others. The contents of the courses will be required to be restructured. The pedagogy for teaching-learning process is going to be different from what it used to be earlier. Project based learning is expected to emerge as an important method for giving exposure to the students to real life problems. Similarly, case method shall gain popularity in B-schools. Even evaluation system has to be more innovative, Assessments will be done differently during the course of time.

The teachers will be required to function more as facilitators than those who are epitomes of knowledge. The students will be having multiple sources of knowledge, and would come to class for clarifications and endorsement of their understanding, or may be for add-ons. Webinars have become very popular now and would continue to function as channels for bringing subject experts in touch with the learners, irrespective of the geographical distance. It will be easier to connect experts from renowned institutions across the world. Thus, networking is going to gain more importance over the period of time. Institutions may attract the segment of learners who have work experience of substantial number of years. Institutions may have to design more short-term courses which will be offered alongwith long-term programs.

**(iii) Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

It appears that when students are on campus, may be next year (2022), institutions shall have to extend professional help, if necessary. A full time trained counselor may have to be either on rolls of the institution or may be in a visiting role. As it is generally said that we may see normalcy differently, but after a while when everybody is on campus, people may interact from a certain distance till they would learn to overcome any state of panic and accept each other and feel comfortable working together once again. A new segment of employees may grow in size i.e., those who shall prefer to work from home.

It will be necessary to retrain faculty for effective delivery in the class. In other words, investment in continuous faculty development will be an important function of an institution. It will be easier to have global exposure. Further, cross-cultural research shall dominate in the disciplines like social sciences and management.

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### **The state of education in the pandemic – experiences from a business school**

Mankind has gone through devastation, a time of helplessness in the wake of an invisible enemy. The loss of lives, pain of losing, being locked down and away from loved ones, uncertainty of when we would return to normalcy in life, put learning and education on the back burner for several months in 2020. Slowly, with a spirited effort and as comprehension dawned about the new normal, classrooms were reimagined, the teaching learning processes were renegotiated in a myriad way. Speaking into our laptops and devices paved the pathway to our distributed classes. The academic world began to frame questions that needed. Suddenly academic skill sets took on digital overtones and had to be tested in a new battleground – the virtual space. Academicians struggled with experimenting and testing new skills for an old and familiar process. Taking a class took on an entirely different meaning. Students became co-travellers in the digital classrooms, and watched in anticipation as their instructors brought alive various concepts and knowledge on the screens.

Compared to 2020, the administration of academic programs, planning for the academic year and conduction of online classes has improved in 2021. The reference point being 2020. Academic planning remained realistic and cautious in 2021 while aiming to be hopeful and optimistic. Plans were made for the short term even though much visibility was not available for the long term. Duality became acceptable and enhanced agility in academia. Simultaneously however, the fatigue with the screen, relying on the “machine” for interpersonal connection and to “teach” has begun to take its toll.

Traditionally, value and learning in a business school have been associated strongly with the processes of teaching learning in a physical classroom. The pandemic however has emptied our classrooms and forced a shift towards using digital platforms to add value and achieve learning outcomes. A year of being an online business school Professor has given rise to myriad experiences and concerns. These experiences span the length and breadth of the course design and development stages to the actual delivery and the evaluation process.

The planning process assumed greater importance as course deliveries continued in the digital space. Planning the course content became critical especially in the pandemic context, with a view to urgently include content on managing resources and organizations in crisis situations. Amazingly, the crisis also triggered an outpouring of humongous amounts of content freely available to the academic world for enriching skill sets or then course outlines. It seemed as if the bottled up angst had been transformed into higher efforts to help fellow academics cope in these challenging times. For many of us, redesigning of the course outlines saw the inclusion of cases and articles related to the pandemic, or then an inclusion of response strategies of organizations battling the impact of Covid.

While the pedagogy continued to rely on using breakout rooms, polls and main sessions in the synchronous mode, various techniques for asynchronous learning were utilised by the instructors. These ranged from engaging with the students outside of class through one-to-one sessions, designing collaboration based group work to redesigning assignment work that was highly engaging.

It was interesting to observe that the online delivery mode enabled talks and guest sessions from speakers unconstrained by geographies, and so international voices were brought into the classroom enabled by digital modes and only constrained by time zones, thereby adding to the learning experience of the students.

Keeping the sessions fatigue free and lively has become a growing concern. Student learning experiences in the physical classroom were often shaped by the physical infrastructure, creating the right ambience and conducive learning environment. The digital classrooms however, were boundaryless, shapeless, and only defined by the architecture of nudges, voices and visual stimuli. How does an instructor create an enabling learning culture that sustains 30 hours of instruction and several hours of pre and post class engagement? Very often, instructors like me have experimented with different types of content, pedagogical approaches and evaluation components to elicit the all elusive “vibrant class participation”! Some approaches worked, some did not, often requiring improvisation and almost always depending upon a small but eager set of students who were probably driven more by their intrinsic motivation than the “class atmosphere”.

A pedagogical approach that has proved to be effective especially for courses that heavily use management cases to drive learning, is communicating the structure of the class discussion and giving ownership to students in a pre defined manner to lead the discussion on case elements. I have even specified roles of devil’s advocate and evaluator before hand so as to enable a deeper discussion and the development of a contrarian stance, even as we worked to create a psychologically safe space.

A critical and related area is assessment of learning. Somehow, across the history of education systems, the role of assessment has never been as critically examined, as it was during the pandemic. Progression to the next academic year caused much consternation. While academia generally prefers to build rigorous evaluation and assessment mechanisms, in the past year several of the commonly held beliefs and assumptions about evaluation were challenged. For a business school, proctored exams and tests have become a common mode across India. The effectiveness of these, however, is quite another matter. Much has been debated about the sanctity and the relevance of online assessment. Several instructors now prefer to rely on complex assignments and critical thinking based evaluation to assess and grade students.

With the disruption in the learning environment and the stay at home norms, students have been forced to recast their identity. A learner’s identity was earlier tied closely to the physical classroom and the physical presence of the instructor as well as peer learners. The physical infrastructure had a role to play in inducing the learning mindset. However, over 2020 and much of 2021, the learner’s identity became intertwined with their devices. Physicality of the books and notes has given way to e-learning material. The symbolism associated with the process and phenomenon of learning has seen a shift and is becoming strongly associated with newer symbols, this symbolism will be an interesting area of exploration as we move ahead.

In the midst of this tsunami of e-content, the challenge for instructors is to craft courses and course content in a distinct manner creating strong linkages between learning objectives, the family and the

home has come into the learning space, creating conflicts that have required resolution to facilitate learning. Ironically, the hunt for the meeting link for the day's classes has become a common student activity!

Large swathes of the student population have also had to let go of their higher education goals and instead attend to more pressing economic and medical challenges faced by the family. Additionally, crucial months and years that otherwise should be spent in building strong foundations, have been spent grappling to keep mind, body and spirit together. Students have seen themselves, their family and loved ones suffer in the midst of the pandemic. Cruel reminders may still remain.

Questions that haunt academia revolve around assessing if the students have learnt effectively? Are we as instructors mapping these gaps, or are we mindful of evaluating the impact of these powerful events on the young psyche and learning ability? If the purpose of education is to prepare for life ahead, have we as academicians succeeded?

The spirit of the human race will undoubtedly help it to rise above the current challenges – developing the vaccines in a speedy manner and facilitating learning through the virtual mode have become apparent examples of “human will” and fortitude. Going ahead, plans for hybrid classes, enhanced use of technology, smart classrooms, integrating collaborative platforms into the hybrid or virtual classes, drawing from recent social phenomena, offering refresher programs to fill up learning gaps, customising learning using technology and preparing students for the unknown will become key features of education. Indeed, the world of education has been the recipient of several decades worth of change and volatility in just one year.

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### **The Current Scenario.**

As I write this, the second wave of the pandemic has receded and there are some opinions about a third wave hitting the country in the next few weeks, if not months.

In the context of PSG Institute of Management, this has meant completing a cycle of online graduation of one batch and two online cycles of admissions and the 2021 admitted students joining the program virtually and with a history of completing their final year of graduation too virtually.

Effectively we are educating, for the first time, a “virtual” batch of students, many who have not even seen the campus yet or indeed met us physically.

A majority of students have no work experience and join right after graduation. This places a lot of challenges for us. Management education by nature, is holistic and calls for development of multiple skills, which unfortunately, cannot be delivered. Overall, this is an unsatisfactory position and the anxiety is there if we are preparing them well to meet the world as an MBA.

Online teaching and “zoom-fatigue” is now a well-documented phenomenon. These pose a different set of challenges of ensuring the teaching-learning connection and the resulting learning outcomes, which under current circumstances is compromised.

The challenge, we feel, will be overcome once the 19-45 vaccinations are completed to enable some return to normality.

### **Adapting to the New Normal: The teaching-learning processes.**

Moving forward, we are anticipating changes in the way we work:

- ❖ There will be enhanced focus on self-learning and development of content towards this. Institute like ours will be curating our own MOOCS. Lessons-on-Demand content will also be the norm.
- ❖ The teacher will have to prioritize taught, peer and self-learning topics and redesign course plans effectively.
- ❖ There is now a discussion about optimal class sizes: Bandwidth limitations and the ability of the faculty to engage students may mean an overhaul of the traditional time-table, smaller sizes-classes and faculty needed to deliver the same content multiple times in a day. For example bit-size teaching, flip- learning and 30 minute sessions could be envisaged as the traditional 50 minute sessions are clearly not delivering the intended value.
- ❖ Physical attendance hours may be reduced and a hybrid mode may be adapted to work round this. Teaching online poses a different set of challenges and calls for a different skill-set

which, thankfully, most of our faculty have adapted . A potential exists for more effective engagement with the students , for which training and mentoring is needed: this needs to be addressed.

- ❖ Whilst technology is here to stay and has been enhanced at PSGIM , it cannot deliver a wholesome education experience. The new format could be Study-From-Home and where one can envisage a possible clustering of students into cities/locations where they could collaborate physically a few times a week and create a peer-learning process and engage in activity-based/project /field learning. This would mitigate the risks somewhat but enable better learning. As we have very little out-of-state diversity, this clustering is viable for us.
- ❖ Gamification of learning will now enter the fast-lane. This suits the current Gen Z. Whilst testing a few models, our experience is that faculty need to adapt to this rather than the student adapting to this mode of learning. We have been using simulation and online platforms from sources like Capsim and Harvard Publishing. The category will expand substantially and as it is clear now that data and technology are in the forefront of decision making , we envisage greater use of these tools.

### **Managing the Mind, Body Atma: The Underlying Need.**

The second wave has brought this pandemic closer to home with fatalities amongst colleagues and alumni. It also marked a year-long WFM and Coimbatore becoming a national hotspot.

PSGIM approach has always been to focus on the Mind Body Atma model and this took on greater significance. Several initiatives were put in place

- a. Online summer internships, for all students both during 2020 and 2021 meant that students had a break from routine classes whilst fruitfully engaged.
- b. Faculty used this period to enhance their skills and learning through online courses, organizing and attending virtual conferences and increasing their research and intellectual contributions . In fact, three faculty members defended their PhD thesis successfully during this period,
- c. When the pandemic began, the academic year had almost come to an end. This meant that we could prepare for this new normal:
  - i. Substantive investment in technology and software meant that the faculty could readily adapt to the online mode. Individual high quality wifi headsets were provided with teaching aids to help this transition.
  - ii. Micro-teaching sessions and rehearsals with mentoring from senior faculty helped faculty to adapt comfortably to this paradigm.
  - iii. Whilst a LMS (Moodle) system was already in place, it facilitated content delivery, assessments, quizzes and learning smoothly.
- d. It was inevitable that Zoom-fatigue would set in and this generation preferred smartphones rather than laptops or other larger screen devices. The teaching schedules were modified to create additional breaks and the course plans were modified to accommodate these changes and self and peer learning was encouraged through use of simulation, mini-modules, worksheets, etc., to cover topics which faculty felt could be self-taught and help lessen the virtual engagement which would be an ongoing challenge.

- e. Each batch has a tutor who is available to the students to personally communicate with and seek help and advice. Tutors too increased their individual group and individual interactions to offer support and help mitigate problems. To complement this we have senior faculty who are trained in 178 counseling who conducted drop in sessions and offered individual support where needed . Several projects were undertaken which provided a break from the routine. For example, Tamil Nadu witnessed state elections in April 2021.Students successfully conducted “ **Article:326-Voter Engagement Project** ” campaign in March to encourage voting and also collected information pre-and post polling through telephonic survey, to understand what challenges were perceived prior to election and how the process was conducted keeping in mind the health and safety practices. A virtual poster-book featuring A3 sized advertisements in Tamil and English featuring over 60 advertisements to motivate voting was also created by the students and many were also posted and circulated on their social media sites.
- f. I may also add here that Emotional Intelligence is offered as an elective which is popular and with effect from the summer of 2021 it is now mandatory for the new upcoming batches.

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**MALDIVES**



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## **MANAGEMENT EDUCATION – TOWARDS A NEW REALITY**

It is time to rethink and reflect. COVID 19 situation appears to gradually ease here in the Maldives. What we considered reality and “rules of the game” are changing in many sectors including the higher education sector. Management education is no exception. Like everyone else, students and faculty are longing for direct face to face human interaction. Amid this evolving situation, how do we ensure that we continue to serve the society?

While there are many questions in our minds, a key one is how do we continue to explore the new opportunities available to us? I firmly believe the importance of management education will rise to an all-time high. We may see some short term contraction in the overall demand, however, it does not mean its importance to the society has dwindled. On the other hand, it is very likely that the demand will pick up soon and emerge stronger and better.

Today, we still continue to experience some of the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, we see supply chains disrupted, businesses on the verge of bankruptcy, sky rocketing freight costs. At the same time, new businesses continue to emerge, primary sectors such as fisheries and agriculture continue to flourish and remain vibrant. Amid all these, how do we ensure we survive, remain resilient and do better? I believe, in part, management education is the answer.

As management educators, regulators, we need to rethink our curriculum, programme design and delivery configurations vis-à-vis the new technology platforms. We need to build better institutional capacity to handle short and long term financial pressures. We have to create more sustainable financing models rather than just rely on government grants or student fee revenue from semester to semester. We need to use technology to enhance programme delivery while at the same minimizing our operational costs.

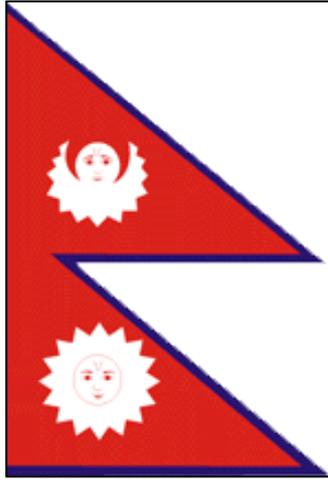
A second question we face is, are we going to cater to the same student segments or, are we going to diversify and move beyond our traditional comfort zones? Technology has taught us that the impossible is possible now. Why not we explore greater opportunities within the South Asian region and beyond? Greater collaboration within the region need to be conceptualized and implemented. We need to leverage management education to tap the full potential of the South Asia region. Student exchanges, cross institutional programme accreditation, faculty exchange and collaborative research are few ideas that come to mind.

Maldives is a geographically dispersed country. There is no island to island transport infrastructure except scheduled air and reasonably regular limited sea transport to some inhabited islands. Except in a few regions, population is relatively scattered throughout the country. Reaching students in the outer scattered islands in a cost effective way continues to be a challenge. Technologies we experimented and utilized pre-pandemic and now to deliver online lessons need to be embraced and deployed to the fullest in the new normal era.

Staff and students have started to experience online fatigue. I have had many staff who are eager to be on campus and meet students. We start to realize how energized and motivated we are when we interact with students and colleagues face-to-face. The energizing benefits and value of face to face human interactions cannot be questioned now.

Finally, a key question, many regulators and to some extent, some administrators and the public keep on asking is the quality of teaching. Now we have experimented with technology based lesson delivery, we are more familiar with ways of enhancing quality. We know that technology itself is not a silver bullet for all our challenges. How we integrate technology in programme design and delivery and how we utilize them to provide enhanced learning support are the key towards the new reality in management education.

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**NEPAL**



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### **Some Issues in HE in Post-pandemic era**

#### **1. How things look now and how practices would be modified in the foreseeable future**

Education system around the world is passing through a precarious moment brought by the pandemic Covid19. Almost all major activities of the economy have been badly affected by it. Yet, thanks to the technological development, education sector has not come to stand still like some other sectors e.g. aviation, hospitality, transport, construction, agriculture etc. Many academic institutions have gone online for teaching and interacting with the students. While challenges to higher-education institutions have been to keep their students, faculty, and staff safe simultaneously delivering their missions to educate, conduct research, and contribute to their communities, society, and the public good.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic growing at a fast rate around the globe, the Government of Nepal imposed lockdown in the country on March 24, 2020. Most of the academic institutions called off classes in March, 2020 as the priority of the academic institutions was to ensure safety of students, faculty and staff. Obeying the lockdown and keeping physical distance among faculty, staff and students was very important to contain the spread of Covid-19. When the academic institutions suspended classes as a precautionary measure to contend Covid-19 pandemic effects in many of these academic institutions classes of Spring semester and trimesters were in progress. Despite the complexities of the situation, the academic institutions made decision to go for alternative way of teaching-learning in the interest of the students so that they can complete their study within time.

With the growing use of vaccines, increasing public awareness and development of infrastructure the effect of pandemic in the developed countries has subsided in 2021 in comparison to 2020. As per one study conducted by McKinsey countries like USA will come out of the severity of COVID-19 to a large extent by the end of the third quarter of this year while other developing countries will also be in much improved situation by the end of this year or beginning of the next year. However due to the new variant of COVID in both the developed and developing countries the situation has not been as expected. The situation is worse in India and Nepal where the variant is spreading at a fast rate due to low percentage of people being vaccinated, inadequate infrastructure and low public awareness. It is expected that in Nepal the situation will remain as of present state at least for about a year.

Although it is assumed that things will come under control and return to near normalcy in about a year higher education institutes in Nepal are not in position to continue with the physical classes in near future. Considering this, academic institutions are expected to run their classes through online to complete the study as per the academic calendar without any significant delay. During the lockdown period academic institutions have made encouraging progress in delivering courses online using different platforms such as Google hangout or meet, zoom etc. The academic institutions have modified their rules and regulations regarding the online delivery of courses and conduct tests and examinations.

The COVID-19 has forced the academic institutions to go online teaching- learning without any choice. This has exposed the faculty and students to the tools and techniques of online teaching and made them used to such tools and techniques. What I see in the future is a hybrid system of teaching where the physical classroom teaching will be complemented by the online one. Taken these together, the teaching can be more effective in the future. However, for this, the government has to be serious and address the problems of inadequate infrastructure e.g. limited bandwidth, problems of availability and accessibility.

## **2. Your articulation on new formats, new content and new delivery channels**

Studies point out that the “fallout from the pandemic threatens to depress this generation’s prospects and constrict their opportunities far into adulthood. The ripple effects may undermine their chances of attending college and ultimately finding a fulfilling job that enables them to support a family.” Academic institutions are concerned with the issues in handling the “unfinished learning” of the students so far the effects of pandemic continue.

For some academic institutions such as KU School of Management the use of electronic means is not a new phenomenon. Faculty frequently use Moodle, LMS and some form of virtual classes in delivering courses and giving assignments and tests to the students. With the COVID-19 pandemic, their use has been extensive in the academic institutions. Faculty use Google meet, Google classrooms, Zoom etc. in the delivery of courses. In the beginning, some faculty members faced problems with these methods. However, with the technical support from the academic institutions and help from their colleagues, they overcame these problems. Currently, academic institutions run almost all the courses online. Although academic institutions faced some problems regarding students’ participation in online courses in the beginning, the participation increased substantially later with the passage of time. Different facilities provided by telecom companies also helped the students to get access to internet facilities at lower cost such as e-shiksyha.

One of the major challenges facing the academic institutions was to administer tests and examinations. The problem was to conduct the evaluation of student’s academic performance without sacrificing the quality. In this respect, in some academic institutions faculty were given autonomy including the one to conduct tests. In the present context, faculty members can decide on the modality of tests considering the nature on the courses they are teaching at the post graduate level.

Experience gained so far indicates that new approach of teaching-learning is required to deliver courses effectively during such pandemic period. Traditional styles without modifications will not be fully functional in the years to come as the academic institutions will compete with each other to be more innovative and come out with new ways. This is quite challenging for the academic institutions.

The first thing the academic institutions need to do is to redesign the courses in such a way that they do not compromise with the contents and at the same time make it possible to deliver the courses or some of their parts online effectively without sacrificing the quality of teaching.

Faculty members of Academic institutions are expected to adopt both synchronous and asynchronous methods in delivering the courses. For this, the teaching materials need to be improved, specified and prepared if necessary. Reference materials and assignments need to be mentioned and made available to the students on time. Courses should be redesigned on a modular basis, with appropriate class spans.

Academic institutions should use up-to-date technology by upgrading its Information system that will not only have appropriate bandwidth but also speed to facilitate the use of Moodle, Google meet, Google classes, Zoom etc. Programmes such as MOOCS, Coursera etc can also be used to support learning in the classes.

One of the problems in online teaching is to assure adequate participation and involvement of students in the class. Google and Zoom etc. have come up with the ways to facilitate group formation and divide the classes in small sizes to encourage students involvement. These techniques will be used in the future to support physical classes when necessary.

With the use of technology, academic institutions will have more participation of renowned faculty from foreign academic institutions at affordable cost. This will increase regional and global cooperation in teaching in the university education. This is particularly important in the present context where the probability of raising tuition and other fees is low.

### **3. Addressing issues, social and emotional, in faculty and student engagements.**

One of the major problems facing faculty, staff and students during the pandemic relates with the mental health and social and emotional well-being of the faculty and students. Due to online classes students are detached from each other and this has adversely affected the important aspect of human relation and behavior which they learn in the physical face to face classes. Learning comes not only from class participation but also from interaction of students with each other in the canteen, library, garden, study lounge in the campus. All these give them a memorable moment of their life. Online classes debar the students to have such opportunity to learn and gain experience.

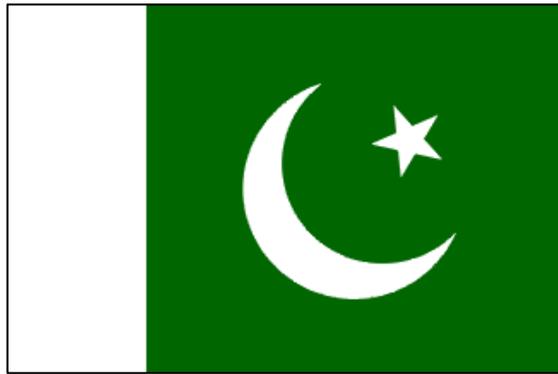
Online teaching also leads to screen fatigue among the faculty and students when the classes are stretched too long. In such case, the teaching and learning becomes highly mechanical. Faculty and students get much distracted in the household environment and lack seriousness of the physical classroom. This sub-optimal teaching-learning environment of household learning affects the knowledge of students.

To overcome these problems academic institutions should

- Safely reopen classes for in-person learning as far as possible Where the size of class permits, in-person learning should be encouraged specially at the post-graduate level. Classes can be arranged in different sessions and at different times.
- Engage students in effective learning environments. Students engagement can be increased by using different tools and techniques which are embedded in programs like Google meet, Google classes, Zoom, Moodle etc. Assignments for prior preparation to attend the classes can also increase students' involvement.
- Recommit and reimagine our education systems for the long term. COVID-19 has taught many lessons to academic institutions. It is necessary to revisit and revamp the education system in the light of these lessons.

It is necessary to ensure the society that academic institutions are not for profit purposes and run only in cost recovery basis, if so needed. Resentment from the society comes when academic institutions fail to convince the society on this.

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**PAKISTAN**



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**Suleman Dawood**  
**School of Business**

As with business schools globally, SDSB has been impacted by the pandemic. Some clear adverse effects but in many ways also in a positive sense. Our academics have galvanised their efforts to use technologies that widen their pedagogic approaches and outcomes. Our curriculums have altered somewhat enabling experimentation with new methods of approaching subjects. With lockdowns being altered in their rigidity over the past 18 months, we have explored novel blended techniques (eg. Limited access to campus supplemented by online work). We have also launched new masters' programs which will evolve taking account of opportunities presented and lessons learned during the pandemic. No doubt, the dire effects of the pandemic on the population generally will pass, but our business education delivery will have seen permanent progress from the lessons derived.

Our efforts to offer assistance to students, staff and faculty have been fine tuned to deal with the strains the pandemic has caused.

Our advisory services have been supplemented within the business school and university-wide. It is likely that post-Covid we will be much more in tune with the type of assistance crises can bring on.

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### **Business Education and Engagement during COVID-19 and Beyond: Insights from Pakistan**

In this article, I argue for a multi-stakeholder approach to higher education, with a focus on business and management education, and the need to develop a socially responsible response to COVID-19 where institutional continuity and stakeholders' well-being are equally valued. These reflections are based on my personal experiences, observations, and contributions to institutional responses to COVID-19 and derive from my exposure to several institutions and national bodies of higher education in Pakistan and wider South Asia.

First and foremost, it must be acknowledged that COVID-19 has not only highlighted our failure as a human society but also the failure of our higher education institutes and business schools. As Ghalib says: qarz ki peete the mai leikin samajthe the ke haan/Rang lai gi humari faaqa masti aik din (free translation: We used to drink wine on borrowed money but hoped that one day our merriment in adversity will come to fruition). In another line, Ghalib says: meri taameer mein muzmir hai ik soorat kharaabi ki (transl: There is a seed of destruction hidden in the very way I've been constructed.) What I mean to say is that COVID-19 has highlighted or re-highlighted a crucial intersection between business and society, and the failure of educational institutions to pay attention to this vital intersection. The pandemic has shown that businesses and business/management schools cannot and must not disconnect themselves from society-at-large, with a narrow focus on creating and enhancing shareholders' value or the financial bottom line. Indeed, Covid-19 started as a public health crisis and quickly spiralled into a financial, economic, and social crisis. As the pandemic made its way across the world, no organisation or academic institution was spared. There is, thus, a need to rethink our approach to education and multiple stakeholders and to address endemic concerns such as declining public health and education, neglected diversity and peace, increasing inequality, climate degradation, rising corruption, deteriorating public institutions, and the increasing risk of pandemics. The rapid spread of the coronavirus has reminded us of how our wellbeing is interconnected with education and management, and this makes the role of university leaders and educators much more important and challenging.

From a stakeholder and engagement perspective, two key principles may be identified which, in my view, are also valid in the context of business education and engagement during COVID-19. I discuss these principles as follows.

First, all stakeholders should have a right and opportunity to participate in decision making, particularly in those decisions and responses to COVID-19 which affect them. For example, at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), the focus has been concurrently on the learning experience and well-being of students who we consider the most important stakeholder, followed by faculty, staff, alumni, businesses, board members and trustees, society, and government. For public

sector universities, government has a very significant role because of its influence on their funding and sustainability. So, all stakeholders should have a right and opportunity to participate in decision making. An important starting point in this regard may be an honest acknowledgement and realisation by university administrators and managers that they have a responsibility to consider the interests of all stakeholder groups, not just board members or government officials, not just students or faculty, but the legitimate interests of the entire variety of stakeholders.

The second principle is that a university's mission or objective, particularly in a crisis, ought to be revisited and aligned to cater for all stakeholders. While COVID-19 poses a threat to institutional operations and business model, it also offers an opportunity to all administrators of universities and higher education policy bodies to reframe the entire issue, to look at this crisis as an opportunity to revisit institutional mission and goals and consider interests and needs of all stakeholders. In other words, no single stakeholder group should have primacy over others.

These two interconnected principles may serve as a key theoretical framework upon which a university's response to COVID-19 and engagement could be based or evaluated. However, such response also needs to be context sensitive.

In my research and publications in the past two decades or so, I have been arguing that while we should continue to benefit from experiences and research insights from north America, Europe and elsewhere, at the same time, ample attention should be given to contextual and indigenous wisdom, experiences, sensitivities, and innovations. This also applies to how we formulate and implement our response to COVID-19.

Arguably, there is a need to develop and utilise indigenous insights, for example, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist insights in South Asia, in terms of their common emphasis on philanthropy, humanity and collective well-being in a crisis. The idea is not to treat one specific religion or ideology as superior to others, but to benefit from all such insights, and at the same time, consider the cultural and societal sensitivities while identifying and engaging with diverse stakeholders. For example, from an Islamic perspective, according to the Quran, humans are God's trustees on earth. Thus, as government leaders or university leaders, it is important to consider that we are the trustees of the Divine, and life on earth is a test for all of us. So, the notion of trusteeship is the first principle from an Islamic lens. And secondly, we must be mindful of the rights of all stakeholders. That, as leaders and administrators, we are responsible and accountable to fulfil our responsibilities and stakeholders' rights enshrined in Islamic teachings. For example, there is a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, a Hadith, which says: give to everyone his or her right. So, it is important that people's rights, whether they are students or teachers, women or men, staff or alumni, businesses, or wider community, must be respected because we are accountable as leaders and managers. The term which has been used in the Islamic and Arabic literature is *haq*, or *huquq* in plural, which denotes something that can be justly claimed or the rights that different groups and individuals have been granted in law or religion. Similarly, Hinduism's approach to philanthropy can be found in the notion of *daana*, which involves nonreciprocal giving without the motive for immediate self-interest. Indeed, the reference point here is not only religious teachings but also the rights which have been granted within the domain of law or which are deemed to be a social and ethical responsibility.

The impact of COVID-19 has been diverse and enormous on universities across the world. It has, generally, not only reflected the pattern of the academic year and the mode of teaching but is also shaped by the respective university's financial model such as its reliance on international students or

faculty members. For example, given the over-reliance on international students in many universities in Australia and elsewhere, the entire university system may be crumbling due to stricter controls on international borders and immigration. In Pakistan, this is not the case given that almost all students at Pakistani universities and schools happen to be local.

From a teaching perspective, for several universities, the pandemic emerged midway through the academic year while the teaching term was still on, so drastic changes had to be incorporated to cater not only to students' teaching needs but also to full academic programs and external regulatory requirements. In Pakistan, for example, some of the external requirements were imposed not only by the health ministry of the government but also by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). The first COVID-19 case appeared in Pakistan on 26th February 2020, the situation escalated quickly, and a complete lockdown was imposed on 23rd March 2020 to effectively overcome the effects of this pandemic. In a very brief period of a few weeks, the universities were required to go virtual. This means that the universities had to shut down their regular face to face teaching and routine operations. The universities had to struggle not only in terms of managing academic programs but also the disparate expectation of students, faculty members, staff, and other stakeholders. For example, students were given extensions to submit their thesis, dissertations, and other written assignments. Moreover, the universities had to rapidly adapt their teaching pedagogy and approach to student assessment. Faculty members were concerned about virtual teaching and the ways to monitor and ensure students' progress and performance in different courses and programs. Many teachers had to design and incorporate a mix of assessment tools such as quizzes, polls, and mini assignments in the online teaching to keep the students engaged and make the lectures more interactive and assessable.

These developments not only affected the on-campus teaching but also other elements of operations and stakeholder engagement. For example, LUMS has an active and widely respected executive education centre, the Rausing Executive Development Centre or REDC, which serves three important purposes, i.e., engagement with the industry, faculty development and financial revenue. Owing to COVID-19, REDC, at least for the first few months, was visibly affected as the corporate sector had limited interest in virtual trainings and the centre did not have adequate infrastructure to comply with COVID SOPs or to offer virtual or hybrid programs. As a result, at least temporarily, engagement with businesses was affected. Other auxiliary services also suffered such as physical access to library, hostel, and cafeteria. Hostels had to be vacated due to health precautions, and strict SOPs were implemented in the food outlets. In addition to these immediate challenges, COVID also, to some extent, affected student recruitment and external engagement. All in all, these developments adversely affected financial inflows.

Universities in developing countries such as in India and Pakistan were particularly affected because they were not well equipped for online education. There are several pre-requisites for online classes by any university: availability of the Learning Management System (LMS), faculty readiness, course readiness for the online mode of learning, technology readiness, i.e., platform to conduct online classes, and last but not the least, students' readiness to learn online. Other contextual challenges facing individual students and staff members included the following: low internet low bandwidth, electricity fluctuation or outage, unavailability or unaffordability of personal desktop/laptop, a lack of a dedicated space for studying, juggling between family life and education, physical and mental health issues, fear of being infected, gender discrimination and domestic workload. There is a related issue of digital divide due to differences in social class, age, and gender.

Universities had to engage in dynamic and innovative ideas to address these issues through a planned and structured adaptation to the new normal, e.g., through gradual changes in infrastructure, such as ventilation and air-conditioning system, open air classrooms, mandatory masks and hand sanitising, social distancing, hybrid classrooms, provision of Zoom and other online teaching and interaction platforms, as well as changes in institutional culture, such as training of faculty members and staff, adjustments in assessing students' class participation and performance, etc. Traditionally, online education was viewed with scepticism and only a small number of faculty members were interested or engaged in online teaching. The pandemic radically changed this pattern and online teaching not only became a norm, in the new normal, but also became an organisational and job requirement.

To better engage with stakeholders, i.e., students, faculty members and support staff, awareness posters and SOPs, in English and Urdu languages, were displayed all over the campuses, clarifying specific guidelines by the government and the WHO. New SOPs were introduced, and relevant staff members were trained. For example, at the entry points of the LUMS campus, security staff were trained in terms of using infrared thermometers and disinfectants. Personal hygiene and safety behaviours such as regular hand washing and social distancing were promoted and strongly encouraged. Hand sanitisers were provided in each building or at the classroom entrance. There was an increased frequency of cleaning of classrooms, labs, washrooms, and other facilities. Large-scale meetings and gatherings such as annual convocation and scholarly conferences were cancelled. Until now, LUMS has not started the face-to-face teaching mode on a full scale although gradually, such classes are being offered, and hostel and food facilities are being opened, albeit with strict SOPs.

Another thing that LUMS did around mid-2020 was to create a new professional post, i.e., Director of Health Services (DHS), a medical expert who monitors and ensures that in its everyday operations and decisions, employees and students' well-being is not compromised. DHS is also a part of the steering committee responsible for designing and evaluating the university's response to COVID-19.

In other measures, quarantine wings were created in hostels to accommodate and take care of the affected students. Additionally, a system of student monitors was introduced to educate, encourage, and implement social distancing on campus. Furthermore, 24/7 medical support was made available on campus. Random COVID tests were offered, free of cost, to those faculty members and staff who came to campus on a regular basis.

At the same time, issues of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility were considered. Some faculty and staff members as well as students had connectivity issues, particularly those from rural and remote areas. (In Balochistan, for example, nine out of 32 districts do not have internet facilities, while others have poor internet connectivity due to lack of the fibre optic transmission lines. In Gilgit Baltistan, a reliable and stable internet connection is a rare commodity.) There were issues of the right quality of internet connectivity or infrastructure in terms of a good laptop at home. Many employees had pressure of managing work life balance, concurrently handling the home front and the office front. This was natural because they had not designed their work lives to be working from home. Thus, in addition to providing infrastructural support such as laptops or Wi-Fi devices, LUMS also made use of two-way communication. Several open house meetings and live sessions were organised to disseminate latest information as well as brainstorm about the collective way forward. Staff were assured that their jobs were safe though the new model required some readjustment in terms of the nature and delivery of their work. At the same time, regular communications from health services, HR and the university administration ensured physical and psychological well-being of the university community. LUMS also started a COVID-19 Campaign to raise PKR 50 million to address

financial problems faced by students and staff. Similar measures were taking by other universities. For example, IBA Karachi, in coordination with District Health Office, carried out COVID-19 PCR tests for students, staff and faculty members. Moreover, as a precautionary measure, isolation rooms at both the campuses and boys and girls' hostels were designated for individuals exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. IBA also initiated a student liaison and counselling office to virtually connect the student body with different departments.

According to Prof Alnoor Bhimani, Honorary Dean of the Suleman Dawood School of Business (SDSB) at LUMS, at the onset, the university struggled to understand COVID-19 and its unfolding implications. Multiple meetings were held a day to discuss these issues. Initially, there were two major sets of discussions. The first set of discussions concerned how to alter systems to cater to the existing ongoing teaching and other activities. Here the university had to deal with a rapid transition to online teaching which implied a shift of resources. Much of this was affected of course by who/how many could access the campus when there was a need. There were ongoing activities around registry, admissions, convocation, and other day to day university operations. The second set of discussions focused on the next academic year. So, monitoring national and other institutional bodies' guidance and policies, how the university budgets were being affected, whether the university was likely to get the students sign up to online classes, launching new programs, making investments now that would allow the delivery of quality instruction, etc. There were wider decisions also on not decreasing the workforce and how the university could cope with a much tighter budget to allow this.

Professor Bhimani further said:

*“Considering our experience and difficult times that we have somehow endured in the past one and a half year, we hope that in the future we will be more pandemic-ready. Also, we will invest in smart classrooms and virtual platforms. The whole process of instruction and administration will maintain the same intents but alter in how they are run. Clearly, there are many positives out of this. We now know people can adapt when there is an absolute need. Also, there is more positivity to teaching, meeting and doing things using technologies and sometimes that works better.”*

The pandemic reminds us that as leaders of universities, businesses, and organisations, we are not only responsible for our core operations but also for the well-being of our stakeholders, which in this case are students, faculty members, staff, employers, and others with whom we physically interact. At the same time, we should be concerned about the issue of strategic continuity.

Last year, I happened to facilitate a high-profile panel discussion in our executive education centre on the topic of 'Leading and managing businesses in the new normal'. Several top leaders from public and private sector organisations participated in that panel. One common theme that emerged from the panel was the concurrent emphasis on two dimensions of organisational response to COVID-19. The first dimension was the well-being of employees and other stakeholders, and the second dimension was business continuity.

In my view, these two issues are also relevant to universities and business schools. That is, while we should focus on and ensure well-being of all stakeholders including students, faculty, alumni, and staff, we should also be concerned about our operational continuity as a university. For example, despite the challenges and pitfalls of social distancing and campus closures, faculty and staff may learn to work remotely to ensure continuity of university's mission and operations. Accordingly, measures may be taken to ensure a relatively smooth transition and to adjust to the new normal.

From a slightly different angle, COVID-19 may also be seen as a unique opportunity to reimagine and reconfigure the education system for the future. In terms of businesses, e-commerce, and essential supplies sectors such as online supermarkets, domestic sanitation as well as healthcare brands have experienced unprecedented levels of demand. Similar positive implications may also be capitalised in the education sector. For example: online learning can reduce the overall cost to students and the institution, even if the tuition charged to students is the same as the tuition for face-to-face instruction; online education may not only save the transportation costs of students but may also reduce the opportunity costs of travel time; blended learning can save institutions the cost of new facilities by reducing classroom demand and allowing institutions to reduce the impact of commuter student traffic and use of on-campus facilities and services; some features of online teaching such as breakout rooms offer efficient use of small group discussions and efficient use of time; and virtual teaching also enables inviting guest speakers who are otherwise hard to invite due to issues of logistics and time.

Of course, technology has a great role to play in facilitating institutional responses to the new normal. For example, several universities in South Asia, such as IIM, IIT, IBA and LUMS have provided individual subscriptions to platforms and tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to faculty members, as well as mobile Wi-Fi devices and laptops depending on faculty members' needs and job requirements. Some universities have adopted the mixed mode of synchronous and asynchronous teaching which helps faculty to deliver lecture notes and recorded lectures via email, digital repositories, or deliver live lectures using software tools such as Microsoft Teams, Google or Zoom. Digitisation and curation of traditional courses and academic programs, incorporation of written class participation (CP) along with oral CP, the use of interactive tools such as online polls and chat spaces, provision of audio-visual devices and managing the diverse expectations of heterogeneous stakeholders are some of the current trends. For those students who do not have access to internet, suitable Wi-Fi connections or devices have been provided at LUMS. To facilitate faculty's rapid familiarisation with online teaching, training sessions have been designed and offered by LUMS Learning Institute. Some of these sessions have been led by the VC, Prof Arshad Ahmad, who has an expertise and special interest in teaching and learning.

In terms of the pitfalls and the complexities of online teaching and assessment, and how online courses and programs may be improved in terms of industry engagement, faculty members may find it challenging to engage with the industry in a virtual format. For my own MBA and undergraduate classes at LUMS, for example, I encourage students, whenever they are required to present a project based on a field study, to conduct video interviews with relevant industry leaders and managers. Similarly, corporate leaders and academics from Pakistan and abroad are routinely invited as guest speakers and panellists in academic and executive education programs.

Students are, evidently, the most affected stakeholder due to this pandemic. I acknowledge that, occasionally, there is evidence of anxiety and frustration from the students' side as they want the university administration to open the campus. It may be noted that students at LUMS not only value faculty interactions and meetings but also cherish the campus ambience and the overall learning and social environment. That is something which students greatly miss during the lockdown. LUMS is currently implementing a gradual approach to allowing students on campus. Depending on their individual circumstances and needs, students are being allowed to come back to the hostel on a gradual and incremental basis, and the university continues to monitor the situation.

LUMS has coordinated with relevant government departments to ensure that all its faculty members and staff and most students are vaccinated before the start of the Fall term 2021. Moreover, free of cost voluntary tests have been introduced to check the incidence of COVID-19 on campus to ensure that the university offers a safe environment to all the stakeholders.

In terms of financial sustainability, LUMS, like several other universities, has faced some hardship but also strives to act in a responsible manner. Last year, a routine annual increase in the tuition fee was waived off in view of COVID-19's adverse impact on public, which in turn affected the university's financial inflows. (Some other universities such as the UET Lahore faced major financial challenges and had to drastically cut down their teachers' salaries.) This was an additional burden given that LUMS' revenue streams such as from executive education, consultancies, hostels, and cafeteria had already suffered. And, of course, there are fixed costs which must be borne. In this entire crisis, the university has adopted a consultative model. LUMS administrators including the VC, Provost, and Deans, continue to consult various stakeholders including faculty members and staff but also students who are represented in various committees and councils. I have the honour of representing the business school (SDSB) as an elected member of the LUMS University Council where important matters are discussed and members' input is solicited.

There is no denying the fact that, at the most basic level, COVID-19 has posed a challenge to the core activities of teaching and developing students through curriculum and co-curricular experiences. Of course, face-to-face and personalised delivery systems have been compromised. The pandemic has highlighted the need to build resilient and flexible models of education that should enable continuous adaptation to different phases of the new normal. We should, thus, continue to design and redesign courses and programs that would help decision makers formulate models and approaches that deal with complex problems and uncertainty. The COVID crisis not only poses a challenge in terms of physical and financial threats, it also gives us an opportunity to forge, test and refine our leadership skills. In the foreseeable future, virtual and remote models will be an integral part of the education system. This may in turn enable greater inclusion and access.

It may be hoped that, in this new normal, most of us have learnt that although we are socially distanced, still, we may remain spatially connected. We cannot allow this pandemic to disconnect us from each other and from our stakeholders. Arguably, social distancing is prompting business schools and businesses to rethink how they are connecting with their stakeholders, and while spatial connecting may be the new norm, the future is likely to be more hybrid than pure. This hybridity will also reflect in pedagogies and learning experiences because teachers and students will need to learn how to use technology in academic programs and other interactions. At the same time, individuals and institutions will realise the crucial role of physical interactions and human contact in building relationships, work life balance and team solutions.

To recap, COVID-19, along with its constituent uncertainties, anxieties and ambiguities, is the new normal. Such anxieties and ambiguities, along with individual and collective conduct, may be guided through consistently aligned and reinforced organisational vision and values. Regular and transparent two-way communications are particularly crucial during the crisis, e.g., to clarify who is responsible for communication and on what issues, clarification of health-related SOPs, making sure that students come back to campus in a gradual manner while complying with SOPs, etc. A participating approach may be enabled through a robust structure of consultation and inclusion. Corporate world is rapidly adapting to this new normal because, for them, it is a question of survival. In a similar fashion, educational institutions need to adjust to the new normal. More importantly, they need to revisit the

content and intent of their academic programs and curricula to consider the multiplicity of stakeholders with a particular focus on common and far-reaching issues such as health, climate change, diversity, and peace. There are indeed challenges involved in this journey but that's the real test of leadership in a crisis. Finally, technology can alleviate but not completely replace the warmth of the face to face and personal interactions. As teachers, we know there is no substitute to the energy of fifty students in front of us. Yet, with all these caveats, challenges and opportunities, future will be hybrid and fluid. We can safely predict that remnants of the new normal will be the normal of the future.

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### **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Education**

The coronavirus crisis has challenged higher education institutions in many new and unexpected ways. As universities take radical measures and make major efforts to slow the contagion and to better understand the virus, they are forging new paths in crisis management. This brings both challenges and opportunities to universities and higher education institutions, specifically in relation to digitalisation and digitally enhanced learning and teaching, open science, research, quality assurance, university autonomy, funding and civic engagement.

As places that gather many people, universities are emptier now than before, but this does not mean that they are closed. Learning and teaching are very active online and universities remain central in the research of new treatments and possible vaccines. The crisis has opened a window of opportunity for universities to engage even more with society, support governments through research and innovation and help prepare a more resilient society.

Over the past year and a half, higher education institutions have proven to be extremely adaptable and thus, highly responsible in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis. The crisis-led digitalisation allowed a majority of students to continue their studies. Despite the great and concerted efforts behind this, one avoids speaking of this moment in history as a success for higher education. While the long-term impact of the crisis on the current generation of students, the future of higher education and society, cannot be clearly foreseen, its short-term impact is already immense.

When students return to campuses this Fall, universities effectively will be welcoming not one but two new cohorts. Many of last year's freshmen have yet to set foot on campus, and none had the sort of "normal" first-year experience they expected. As a result, schools will look for ways to provide something closer to their expectations. This includes figuring out how to resume in-person student engagement opportunities – experiences historically tied to persistence and retention – while supporting students with wellness and academic resources as we emerge from the pandemic.

There is no quick and easy solution to finding this balance, but here are some practical approaches for this transition into a post-pandemic campus environment to overcome/find solutions for the challenges in management education:

***Student engagement:*** When it comes to planning events and activities, listen to students. Learn what they want and how they want to participate, perhaps through outreach at the beginning of each semester. This might depend on where they live and what else is going on in their lives. It likely means continuing to provide a mix of in-person events and virtual experiences with both synchronous and asynchronous options.

Don't forget one important lesson from the pandemic: virtual opportunities enable participation by students challenged to participate in person due to their location, schedules, health concerns or abilities. Virtual events can be especially helpful for student organisations to expand access for new

members in remote locations. For students who might be experiencing electronic overload, activities such as outdoor fitness challenges provide hands-on opportunities to accomplish something and share the results in person or virtually.

The pandemic reinforced the importance of finding innovative ways to build community among residential students. We created “online learning materials and support” using the LMS to serve as a virtual hub for events and discussions and access to resources. Even as in-person activities return, virtual platforms make it easier for students to meet new friends, interact with faculty and connect with staff.

While in-person recreation opportunities might resume on a larger scale this Fall, schools that offer e-sports have found that students who might not otherwise have been able to connect can do so by participating in video game competitions and watching them live or on replay through platforms such as Twitch. Popular e-sports-related messaging sites like Discord put students one click away from live conversations with one another and with peers from other schools during competitions.

*Health and wellness:* The extended nature of the pandemic is a concern since the mental health effects of trauma are more pronounced when experienced over longer periods. Some returning students will feel energised, while others will be apprehensive. It’s important to recognise that both reactions are normal and acceptable, and to have both in-person and remote service options available.

For students experiencing stress, things can seem as if they’re spiralling out of control. When it comes to wellness support, remind them of what’s in their control. Encourage them to focus on what they can do, not what they’ve lost.

*Academic advocacy:* The pandemic reinforced the value of academic advocacy, which goes a step beyond traditional advising. By adopting an advocacy-based model, staff can take a proactive, data-driven approach to identifying students who might experience academic hardship through each stage of their college careers. Leverage data analytics tools to follow student progress and anticipate challenges and use targeted outreach to provide them with the right support at the right time to improve persistence and remove barriers to graduation.

Get your staff trained in intrusive outreach techniques. Advocates are trained to accelerate their level of intrusive outreach based on the severity and timing of student needs and they take a holistic care approach that addresses personal, academic and financial challenges. For us at NUST Business School, academic advocacy took on an even greater role after instruction transitioned online and referrals for support spiked. Even as in-person instruction resumes, the advocacy model will remain important for serving students arriving on campus for the first time or re-acclimatising after more than a year of remote study.

*Storm clouds of pandemic teaching:* The pandemic teaching experience has been fraught with difficulties. A primary challenge had to do with teaching remotely via tele-commuting software. Before the pandemic, students and teachers had normal face-to-face connections and in-person learning environment but during the pandemic due to remote teaching – I wish we (in the academia) could say that our teachers were connected strongly with several of the specific students – but that is wishful. In fact, many students keep their microphones and cameras off during classes and despite my career-long effort to stay genuinely connected with students, I too experienced this gap. On a basic level, remote learning generally pales in comparison to in-person classes when it comes to making meaningful connections with students.

This said, the teleconference approach to teaching does have some silver linings that we in higher education would do well to capitalise on in the future.

*Building digital connections:* As the pandemic drags on, our faculty members and support staff at NUST Business School started being more proactive in connecting with students, hosting regular online meetings, in both individual and group contexts. This helped us with assessment but also created an opportunity to check in with students and their families, to make sure that we could provide support and help in any ways needed. Students clearly appreciated this. Through this more proactive approach, we were able to foster important connections along the way, while making students feel supported and cared about. We plan to continue to regularly check in with students in this way, aided by teleconference software, into the future such as MS Teams, ZOOM, or WebEx etc.

### **Bottom line**

No one is happy about the pandemic. Higher education, like all industries, is hit hard. The production of high-calibre lectures both synchronous and asynchronous to complement the delivery of materials has been a true benefit of pandemic teaching – one that will have positive effects into the future. Further, the ability to meet with students wherever they may be located geographically allows us to stay connected with students in ways that were barely imaginable two years ago.

I say we keep these tools in our pockets as a pandemic silver lining that will help us better support our students into the future, whatever that future holds. This experience enables us to test many of our capacities and competencies. I think that the reality of a global pandemic is something that we must come to terms with. The world is changing, and I think that we really need to begin to anticipate these kinds of events going forward. As business schools, we need to take lessons that we're learning from this experience, very seriously.”

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**School of  
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### **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Education**

Covid-19 pandemic has affected people all over the world regardless of their income, level of education, nationality or gender. It has massively exposed many inequities and deficiencies in the education system too – from the environment needed to facilitate learning and access to online education, up to the misalignment between needs and resources. The lockdown due to Covid-19 has led to the closure of all educational institutions around the globe. Not only the actions of educational bodies but the business world, the world of tourism, and health has been affected exponentially (Billy, 2020). The entire situation put forward exceptional trials in the private and communal life domains. The defensive measures, including social distancing, called for unexpected shutting of educational bodies, leaving the digital solutions as the primary mean of continuity in the educational centers (Maqsood, Abbas, Rehman, & Mubeen, 2021).

While every person is struggling due to this situation, students are relying on their own resources to continue online learning. Teachers are also doing their best efforts to introduce new pedagogies and modes of delivery so that they can facilitate the students in the finest way. Both the teachers and the students are struggling to adapt themselves according to the new ways which we call the “new normal” of COVID 19. In most under developed and far flung areas where students do not have access to digital learning and lack the resilience and engagement to learn are at risk of lacking behind. The deterioration in the international student’s mobility following travel limitations is already plummeting the funds (Aboagye, Yawson, & Appiah, 2021). The absence of face-to-face collaboration with the teacher, response time and nonexistence of traditional classroom socialization were among some other matters emphasized by higher education scholars (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). Despite of all the challenges faced by educational institution, they are trying their best to facilitate all the stakeholders by providing best possible solution to every problem. They were quick in replacing physical classes with online and hybrid mode of learning. Though, the situation is gradually getting better with every passing day, the universities are revisiting their learning environments to expand the digitalization and to improve the student-teacher relationship. Many countries have devised new ways to facilitate the students by providing them with instructional packages and online resources. This situation will further improve in the future as governments are using several tools to reach the largest proportion of students possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced sudden transformation in the teaching pedagogies. For example we have conducted the online and hybrid classes in such a way that encourages the students to participate in the class and develop their interest on a certain topic, in a fashion that is more desirable to current lot of students specifically the ‘generation Z’. To create a collaborating and cooperative environment, we divide the students into groups by assigning them to various breakout rooms so that they can discuss and come up with different ideas. In addition to this, we have used the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) which comprises video teachings, understandings, assessments, and

dialogue opportunities. Different countries are using diverse ways to improve their online system. In Greece, Portugal and Korea, the lectures and learning contents are broadcasted through television programmes to help those students who have inadequate resources for online education. In Mexico, “Your Teacher Online” service has been activated to facilitate the students and provide them with proper mentoring. Despite many hurdles and challenges, the online education is improving and leaving its mark in the world – something which no one thought could ever happen.

These new formats, content and novel delivery channels are becoming the new normal and educational institutions are adapting themselves to this. This system is helping the students and teachers to learn beyond the textbooks in numerous formats that can bridge space and time. The arrangements then familiarize the educational understanding to suit students’ individual learning charms with great granularity and accuracy. The virtual laboratories are giving the students the opportunity to project, conduct and acquire information from the experiments rather than learning about them. According to my opinion, this blend of information technology in education will be further enhanced and online education will ultimately become an essential constituent of teaching. It has changed the way of education and we all can reach out to the students more professionally and meritoriously through chat clusters, video conferences, voting and also manuscript sharing. These new formats and online learning is effective in a number of ways. Digital technologies have enabled new prospects for learning and teaching. The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has become increasingly prevalent among the students.

Along with number of positive aspects, there are some challenges also which should be given attention. Increasing the attitude towards the learning can assist students to overcome some of the latent trials modeled by virtual education such as, remaining intensive and relevant during online lessons or upholding adequate enthusiasm. Optimistic approaches towards education, self-regulation and intrinsic inspiration to learn play an imperative part in refining educational performance. Students’ assertiveness and characters are prejudiced to a large extent by the sustenance they get from their families and instructors. Diverse forms of care from relations and teachers, including parental emotional support and teachers’ eagerness, are found to be significant for the progress of constructive attitudes towards online learning. Education system should try to strengthen the engagement of student, teachers and parents in order to get better results. On the other hand, teachers should be given proper training about the use of digital resources for pedagogical exercise and endorsing practices. Teachers need provision to integrate technology efficiently into their learning practices and approaches and comfort students in this difficult era of pandemic.

The pandemic has also affected the teachers and students both socially and emotionally. Negative emotional responses such as stress, panic, fear and anger are becoming common in students. According to a report published in the United Nations, this pandemic is also a mental health disaster, which is denting everyone psychologically. There are plentiful difficulties faced by students in this pandemic that includes work burden, adapting to new system, loss of support, insecurity etc. which are affecting their mental health (Banati, Jones, & Youssef, 2020). Conversely, it is negatively impacting their education and growth and limiting their ability to focus and engage in online lessons. On the other hand, teachers are also facing substantial stress related to their work. Since in this challenging time, they are expected to show up for an abrupt transformation from physical classes to online learning that has increased the level of stress and anxiety among teachers. They feel that it is their duty to support learners’ academically during this period, while also navigating struggle and hassle in their private lives (Besser, Lotem, & Zeigler-Hill, 2020). This pressure has frequently been

escorted by the indications of nervousness, unhappiness, and sleep commotion as a consequence of the increased overload of work due to virtual teaching. The foremost challenges recognized were an absence of adequate readiness for the disease and of pandemic-specific progressive simulation movements (Izumi, Sukhwani, Surjan, & Shaw, 2020). Also the working hours of teachers increased as they have to be available for their students not only for teaching but also for mentoring. We are having proper open counseling sessions online through zoom every week to listen to the problems of students and help them in every possible way. In short, Covid-19 has social, emotional, economic, and educational consequences on everyone.

To this new pattern, teaching profession has brought a lot of stress due to communication problems, work overload, job insecurity and insufficient training. Covid-19 has worsened the issue of job instability with more layoffs and insecurity. However, the countless variations in teachers' and students' lives around the globe instigated by COVID-19 have brought a chance to check its capability to familiarize with unexpected traumatic circumstances in which people have been involved in new private, social, educational, and specialized surroundings and responsibilities. This catastrophe will likely have enduring possessions on teaching, so that it could become a prospect to reconsider the syllabus, education–knowledge assessment procedures, and the growth of students' capabilities while firming their knowledge assistances and nourishing their enthusiasm. Therefore, students may need extra resources and services to deal with the physical and mental health consequences of this pandemic.

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### **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

COVID-19 had staggering impacts upon the students worldwide. In Pakistan, the crisis emerged at the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester. Soon after detecting the first COVID case in Pakistan, the country went into complete lockdown, followed by various smart lockdowns and distancing measures. These lockdowns and establishment of social distancing badly hampered or slowed down the process of education, forcing educational institutions to adopt online education (e-learning).

The universities and institutions faced (continue to face) three types of challenges while shifting to the online education system. The first is “Readiness” in IT infrastructure for enabling universities to continue online education. Several universities, including the public sector, found themselves poorly or, in most cases, entirely unprepared for online teaching. They were struggling hard to align their IT infrastructure (e.g., internet accessibility, e-learning solutions providers, and localized education technology) with the need for online education. Nevertheless, a few universities, which had already recognized the importance of IT and were equipped with state-of-the-art connectivity and other infrastructure, remained extremely successful in adopting online education. For example, at IoBM, Learning Management System (LMS) was adopted in 2018 to leap for uplifting the quality of education by capitalizing on modern technologies. The same LMS played a central role when the institution was suddenly forced to adopt the online education system. The LMS helped to smoothly transform to the online education system without any significant hiccups.

The second challenge that universities were facing and some yet continue to face is “Response,” which stems from the faculty members' expertise to use the IT infrastructure for imparting online education. Although most of the faculty members in the universities are experts in using digital gadgets, a large number are yet struggling with online education systems. Especially the questions like as to what should be the design of assessments for the online exam?, what should be the ideal blend of the synchronous and asynchronous modes of teaching? and as to how the various online sources, videos, case studies, forums can be combined to make an ideal blend for online education? Are yet can be heard from various faculty members. To address these challenges requires constant training, motivation along with the evaluation of teaching methods through unbiased and effective feedback are the key remedial strategies.

The third and most significant challenge is “recovery”. Lets bygone be bygone; universities have to ponder upon as to how the system of imparting education (online, hybrid or any other) can be brought to the level that does not compromise the quality of the education and best fits into the present uncertain scenario.

Putting together, having started as an emergency online education, universities, and institutions, both public and private, must invest in acquiring robust internet connectivity, developing specialized authoring tools, and creating awareness for getting the most out of online teaching. Faculty members need to be trained to effectively use the online modalities and innovative pedagogies for reducing cognitive load and increase interactivity.

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### **COVID-19 Pandemic – Challenges for Management Education**

COVID-19 is having a significant impact on higher education across the country. Border closures, aircraft capacity limits, mandatory quarantine upon entry into a country, mass gathering restrictions, and social distancing are all challenges for higher education (HE) institutions. Learning activities have been forced to relocate online as the Pakistani government has required that colleges close their campuses. Many university administrators, professors, and students may find it difficult to adapt to the self-proclaimed "new normal" ways of learning in this challenging situation. Since then our institute is struggling and we never get back to normal academic activities till now. The Covid-19 pandemic had a severe impact on academic activities at SIBAU in terms of enrollment, finances, faculty and staff hiring, instructional delivery, and assurance of learning, while the long-term impact of the crisis is uncertain.

The institute has taken timely and innovative actions to ensure the academics may not have derailed due to the ongoing lockdown. Since the lockdown, we have trained our faculty/professional staff with the necessary usage of technology to fight against the imposed Covid-19 restrictions. Experts predict that everyone must adjust to a situation that will be vastly different from what we were used to doing before the Covid-19. Realizing that it will not be business as usual, the institute has drawn up plans for the present and the future foresees. Below are the actions the institute has taken keeping in view the pandemic going on around the country.

1. Installation of sanitizing gate at the entrance of Academic Block I-II and III, Admin Block, Main Gate-I, and Alternate Gate-II of the university.
2. Installation of sanitizers liquid box on the wall at every block and outside of different offices.
3. Installation of the thermal machine to record/check the temperature of every individual crossing from Main Gate-I of the university.
4. Strict instructions to students, faculty and other staff to wear a face mask, and maintain social distance.
5. Institute carried out around 800 random Covid-19 tests of faculty, students, and professional staff. Necessary actions were taken if found positive results.
6. Institute arranged a Covid-19 vaccination camp for the faculty/professional staff and almost 100% of faculty and staff are now vaccinated.
7. Instructions to follow/maintain social distance in classrooms, a library, cafeteria, hostel mess, and other campus premises.
8. CovidSafeMoving application is developed by the institute to detect any suspicious Covid-19 cases in a specified radius area.
9. Currently, conducting classroom sessions in two shifts. One in the morning and the other one in the evening, to ensure the social distance at the campuses.
10. Conducting exams in two shifts to reduce the rush at the campuses.

11. Dedicated appropriate resources, financial and technical, to ensure the quality education for all is maintained during the COVID-19 crisis.

During the lockdown, faculty, and students are facing unprecedented changes. such as remote schoolwork, hybrid models, and new safety requirements. As school systems were forced to rapidly pivot to atypical instructional practices, teachers served as the front-line workers of the educational system. Teachers were tasked with implementing new teaching practices to promote student learning while also maximizing student safety and well-being. Further, Staff, each academic and professional, had been drastically affected by COVID-19. The pandemic has necessitated the biggest and fastest transformation of pedagogic and evaluation exercise ever visible in modern-day universities. At the maximum essential level, COVID-19 poses a task to our middle interest of supporting the improvement of college students thru a wide variety of curricula and co-curricular studies and opportunities.

**Preparedness to support digital learning:** Faculty/students reported a high need for training in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). During the pandemic, the institute has supported the faculty/students by providing a couple of training sessions on various digital technologies. The training includes, how to use Learning Management System (LMS), Google, Zoom, and other digital sources. Along with the formal training, informal training and links are shared via email to faculty and students' domain. The department and Higher Education Commission provided the guidelines on Online Readiness which is helping faculty to design online courses.

**Remained student-centric:** The current COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures mean that vulnerable, high-risk students from diverse backgrounds are less likely to receive the support and additional services they need, and the gap between students experiencing additional barriers and not expanding is likely to widen. Closures can also have a significant impact on students' sense of belonging to and pride in their school. These are the keys for inclusion in education. Therefore, it was important to consider the students living in remote areas of Pakistan who could not participate in online sessions due to poor or no internet connectivity and others who did not have access to digital learning tools. Institute has communicated that such students will be supported with alternative learning plans. All the faculty members recorded the live lectures and then upload these onto LMS from time to time, so that students with difficulty attending synchronous lectures may continue to participate in assessments promptly. Further, discussion forums via LMS, and online groups such as WhatsApp, etc., are also formed so that students could discuss with their class fellows and teachers where appropriate and required.

Provided with the resources: All essential support in terms of resources is being provided to faculty and students throughout the lockdown.

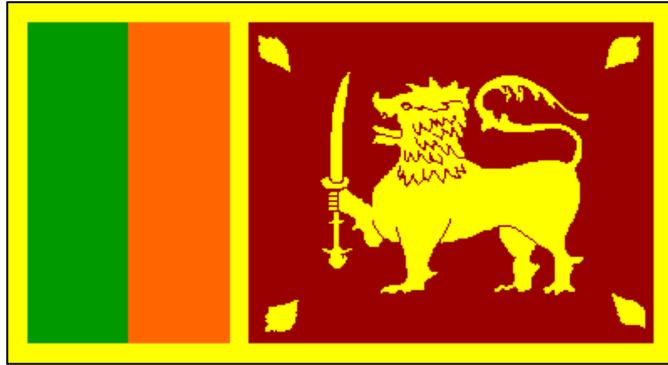
- 1) It is ensured that faculty and students are equipped and readily accessible to various learning resources. Such as library access made free for all faculty, and students. Also, online material accessible to all was shared to faculty and student domain.
- 2) Students from backward areas (Due to non-availability of internet and other required
- 3) resources) are permitted to live in the hostels and made the necessary arrangements operational in the same way as before the lockdown.
- 4) Faculty from backward areas (Due to non-availability of internet and other required resources) are allowed to take classes from their offices/hostels by following the SoPs and procurement

department of the institute provided relevant gadgets/resources to faculty to smooth conduct of online classes from home or hostels.

- 5) Online courses are made available to all faculty and students.
- 6) Strict SoPs are developed and implemented within the premises of the institute.
- 7) Faculty are provided with flexible timings to take the online classes.
- 8) The salary is releasing on time since the lockdown has started.
- 9) New grading policies are implemented to support the students during the period of the pandemic.

The future is still uncertain; the institute is still in phase of exploring the opportunities which can help us in developing such strong strategies to cope up with the ongoing covid-19 outbreak.

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**SRI LANKA**



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## **Learning Challenges amidst COVID19: Leveraging the Novel Tools of “New Normal”**

### **Abstract**

*This paper attempts to explore the vistas of learning in a post-COVID-19 era with emphasis on higher education related to management. It aims to discuss the prospects offered by emerging technologies and both the promises and pitfalls related to learners as well as learning facilitators. The versatility of solutions available and the veracity needed in deciding on the right choice could pose a challenge to academic administrators and resource personnel alike with regards to ensuring effectiveness. The paper adapts the McKinsey’s Seven S framework to elaborate a possible assessment to ensure the most appropriate approach is taken. It also recommends key strategic moves to ensure the effectiveness of learning in the post-COVID-19 scenario. The paper highlights the learning initiatives of the Postgraduate Institute of Management in line with the resilient response required.*

**Key Words:** Learning facilitation, post-COVID-19, technology solutions, effectiveness challenges, resilient response,

### **Introduction**

Learning involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in discovering one’s surrounding. It is a life-long journey that is from the womb to the tomb. Learning can also be viewed as how a person acquires and develops new knowledge, skills, capabilities, behaviours, and attitudes (Armstrong, 2009). Learning has taken place when people can demonstrate that they know something that they did not know before and when they can do something they could not do before (Honey and Mumford, 1996). Much is being said about online learning during COVID-19 locked down. There are both bouquets and brickbats for online learning worldwide.

Online learning may mean many things to many people. It essentially is different to physical gathering where the learners assemble to a place to learn. The terms online learning and e-learning are interchangeably used. The term distance learning is an umbrella term where online learning can be one mode within its broad categories. There can be distance learning with the use of a Learning Management System (LMS) with much less interaction with the learners. Whilst the intention of reaching out to the learners remain same, the intensity of involvement of both the teacher and the learner significantly differ in both cases (Dharmasiri, 2019).

According to encyclopedia.com, online education is a flexible instructional delivery system that encompasses any kind of learning that takes place via the Internet. Online learning gives educators an opportunity to reach students who may not be able to enroll in a traditional classroom course and

supports students who need to work on their own schedule and at their own pace. On one hand, it offers far greater flexibility. On the other hand, there are serious concerns about the overall effectiveness.

Learning in the “new normal” has been an increasingly significant aspect. Sneader & Singh (2020) highlight that the return after the pandemic will be a gradual process rather than one determined by government publicizing a date and declaring “open for business.” As they further observe, “collaboration, flexibility, inclusion, and accountability are things organizations have been thinking about for years, with some progress but the massive change associated with the coronavirus could and should accelerate changes that foster these values”.

### **Assessing the Effectiveness of Online Learning**

Effectiveness is all about achieving the desired results. This can be approached in many ways. Let me attempt a structured way of doing so by using the McKinsey’s Seven S framework, involving *strategy, structure, systems, shared values, style, staff, and skills*. Some fundamental questions that need to be raised and answered in each of the above Ss will shed clarity in terms of how effective online learning is all about.

#### **Strategy:**

1. *Is there a clear game plan to use online learning as a core mode of delivery?*
2. *What specific objectives are to be achieved through online learning?*
3. *How is the online learning connected to the long-term plans of the host institution?*

#### **Structure:**

1. *Is there an assigned team with clear responsibilities to take care of online learning facilitation?*
2. *Is there flexible decision making in the institution to ensure smooth functioning of online learning facilitation?*
3. *Is there a satisfactory level of presence of the needed technology and infrastructure in order to ensure online learning facilitation?*

#### **Systems:**

1. *Is there a robust Learning Management System (LMS) that is linked to online learning facilitation?*
2. *Is the online learning assessment through LMS adequately supported by the other systems (such as human resources and administration) in the institution?*
3. *Are there adequate controls to ensure the consistency of online learning facilitation?*

#### **Shared Values:**

1. *Are there clearly identified set of core values that support initiatives such as online learning facilitation?*
2. *Are there key behaviors stemming from the core values that support the commitment required for online learning?*
3. *Are there reviews that take place to assess the level of demonstrating the core values by the team members involved in online learning facilitation?*

**Style:**

1. *How participative is the overall management/leadership style of the institution?*
2. *How adaptable the organization is, particularly its resource personnel in embracing new technology?*
3. *Is there an engaging and encouraging style towards online learners being demonstrated?*

**Skills:**

1. *Are there required information communication and technology (ICT) skills within the organization for online learning facilitation?*
2. *Is there a process to strengthen the skills of the learners in getting the best out of online learning sessions?*
3. *Is there a mechanism to develop the skills of the learning facilitators to offer the best using the available online learning platform?*

What is required is an overall satisfactory level for above questions in solidly supporting an online learning initiative with strategy, structure, systems, shared values, style, staff, and skills. On the other hand, from the learner's perspective, the availability of affordable technology such as broadband facility could be a challenge in some cases with regards to Sri Lankan scenario. One may argue that the digital divide between the "have"s and "have-not"s may prevail here as well. Inequality in education can be further widened as not all children have the necessary facilities for online learning during prolonged curfews, lockdowns or when schools are kept closed indefinitely (Nanayakkara, 2020).

Pham and Ho (2020) describe the Vietnam scenario, where e-learning up until now, it has played a peripheral role in the formal education systems related to higher education (HE) there. With the unprecedented outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the application of e-learning in HE is poised to become much more prominent in the learning institutions of Vietnam. They discuss the challenges of reaching to economically deprived communities and how it became a success story. Many such cases can be encouraging to countries such as Sri Lanka in order to ensure the equitable inclusivity of all deserving learners in meaningfully outreaching to them.

**From Virtual to Real with a Blended Learning Approach**

Morvant (2020), shares a few concepts around the creative formats that some have adopted to address the needs of the students.

**Blended:**

In general, this model is one where students have some in-person time and some online time. The normal structure can be 50/50 with half of the time in-person and the other half as asynchronous online content and engagement. Other divisions are possible, as long as the content and learning objectives of the course are equivalent to that of a three-hour in-person course. Traditional blended practice of teaching (pedagogy) moves direct instruction to the asynchronous online portion and using the in-person for high impact engagement activities.

**Flipped:**

This model moves direct instruction to an online format (video or reading) and uses class time for dynamic engagement and problem solving. A discussion based course with prior reading assignments

is a pre-video version of a flipped classroom that goes back centuries. For some disciplines with more graphical or dynamic content, videos of the instruction prior to class can enable the students to be prepared for in class engagement and critical thinking. It may require creating or curating videos for students to watch online as well as low stakes assessments to assess if they are prepared for the in-person activities but uses valuable in-person time for the most impact. Due to the use of the in-person time on high level engaged activities and critical problem solving, this is a recommended model for courses that have moved to a blended format.

### ***Dual Delivery:***

This model is based on early teleconferencing courses. The instructor teaches both to in-person students and students in a remote location at the same time. The difference between the older system with specific sites and today's version is that students could engage through Zoom or similar platform anywhere and not be tied to a specific location. The model requires students to either be in-person or online at the same time and engage with the instructor either through in-person or online engagement methods.

### ***HyFlex:***

This model is a complex pedagogy to execute but gives the most flexibility to the students. It can, based on student choice, have a majority in-person, a majority online, or a hybrid of both. Although sometimes associated with dual delivery, it is a more advanced concept with student engagement that spans both in-person and online within the same structure, an integration of in-person and online pedagogy. The main feature of the HyFlex model is the choice for a student to choose in-person or online.

Hutton (2021) highlights the need to have personalization as one of the methods used to enhance educational content to keep employees engaged. Personalizing the e-learning journey refers to incorporating experiences like meaningful feedback, having accessibility across multiple devices and participation in making their own video content. By personalizing instruction, trainers can better evaluate what learners already know and tailor the training programme to better suit and test their knowledge to each individual.

As McBride (2020) observes, gamification has also proven to keep learners engaged and active in the learning process, which could be especially helpful for online training. Gaming design in courses conduct an activity to spur learners and reward them with incentives as they progress. Rewards can be specially curated for the audience, making it relevant to their preferences and needs.

### **Glimpse of an Institutional Response**

The author involved in online facilitation during the pre-COVID-19 for both local and international audiences. The Master of Public Administration (MPA) offered by the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM), University of Sri Jayewardenepura, adapted a blended learning approach to reach out to the North and East with study groups in Jaffna, Trincomalee, Vavuniya together with the Colombo group. It was a significant assistance for the military personnel after the ending of the war, to engage in meaningful learning, whilst being in service in the North and East. It also catered to the deserving public sector officials and academics around the country to enhance their competencies.

The overseas study groups of PIM's MBA programme in Dubai, Doha, Muscat, Kuwait City, Bahrain, and Dhaka also have a blended learning experience. The resource personnel from Sri Lanka

had a significant portion of their subject contents delivered during pre-COVID-19 and now the entire process has become online. In fact, the PIM was one of the first among the state-sector higher education institutes to resort to Zoom-based online sessions since March 2020.

In connecting to the big picture, the PIM has come a long way amidst key challenges yet having a forward path to pursue. PIM's theme says, "We ignite human imagination". As Pink (2005) proposes in his best-selling book, "whole new mind", the future belongs to "right brainers". It is seen that that *imagination* is the starting point that leads to *innovation* and *implementation*. This should be the case for all sensible institutions battling COVID-19.

The PIM, as we aptly claim as the Nation's Management Mentor will continue to contribute to the value creation in terms of producing leaders with required competence and confidence, in line with its vision, mission and values. In hindsight, we can be satisfied the way we sought "serendipity in adversity" in the wake of COVID-19. "Performing, responsible management is the alternative to tyranny and our only protection against it.", so said Drucker (2005). PIM will continue to serve the aspiring learning community locally and regionally in broadly contributing to the socio-economic upliftment of our beloved nation.

### Way Forward

The author's personal involvement in conducting webinars and virtual sessions at PIM was an encouraging sign of the novel learning in the new normal. Whilst exploiting the opportunities offered by the online learning solutions, a blended approach is much recommended in terms of overall effectiveness. The post-COVID-19 era will have ample opportunities for such a combination to ensure not only flexibility but also focused results. Such an endeavour should be a vital aspect of a holistic approach towards overall enhancement of learning in Sri Lanka.

With adequacy and accessibility ensured, the promising prospects of learning in the post-COVID-19 era can be envisaged. It is a sold case of responding to the VUCA 1.0 *reality* (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) with a VUCA 2.0 *response* (Vision, Understanding, Confidence and Agility) (Dharmasiri, 2020). It is worthwhile to reflect on what Henry Ford said about learning. "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young."

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## Technology in education

Present-day computers, mobiles, and the internet have revolutionized education by making access to facts and information instantaneously, significantly changing the way we learn. The ever-changing modern-day world of education is constantly adapting these technologies to benefit teachers, students, and society in general as Prensky (2011) claimed that with currently available technologies, students are now learning in a way that was never possible before. Warschauer (2011) viewed three primary goals for using technology in education: first, to improve academic achievement, second, to facilitate new kinds of twenty-first-century learning, and third, to promote educational and social equity.

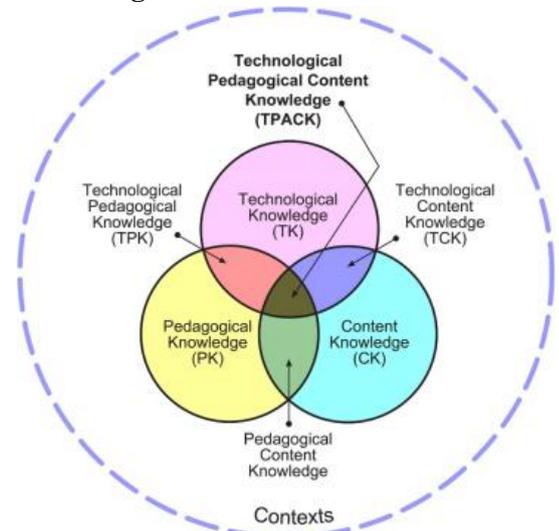
## Pedagogy and Technology Agenda

Mathew Koehler's (2012) views on the types of knowledge and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework would be convenient to understand how forward for facilitating the successful integration of technology into the classroom with a specific instructor knowledge. The TPACK framework is a complex one. However, Educators can benefit from fully understanding the forms of knowledge and the best ways to apply the framework to ensure the effective integration of technology. It outlines the interconnectedness of three primary forms of knowledge, namely, (a) Content (CK), (b) Pedagogy (PK), and (c) Technology (TK). It also emphasizes emerging types of knowledge that lie at the intersections between CK, PK, and TK, representing four more knowledge bases (the fourth being the intersection of the first three) that educators can apply to technology-based pedagogy. They are

- a. Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK),
- b. Technological Content Knowledge (TCK),
- c. Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK) and
- d. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK).

Authors articulate that the effective integration of technology into pedagogical approaches to specific subject areas requires developing sensitivity to the dynamic, transactional relationships among these types of knowledge. Different factors confirm that every situation is distinctive and that no single combination of content, technology, and pedagogy will apply for every teacher, every course, or every view of teaching. Figure 1 depicts how the multiple combinations

**Figure 1: TPACK Model**



Source: Mishra & Koehler (2006)

configure. Management educators need to have a deep understanding and a practice for bringing the technology into pedagogy and content delivery.

## **Technology Role**

Technology can be an effective tool, but it remains just that, a tool. In a virtual setup, educators may engage in imparting subject knowledge. However, we may miss the life learning factors (soft side of life) in the technological platform. Therefore, educators provide the backbone of the students' learning experience. The outcome is and should be capability development. Hence, specific instructional design methods need to be adopted, requiring rigorous, relevant, and goal-oriented features.

## **Knowledge of Evaluating Digital Tools**

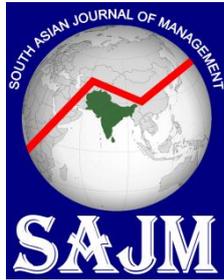
Information should not be confused with knowledge of evaluating digital tools. Knowledge is the recall of information, observation, finding, or naming. Management educators should define what knowledge (not information) students will need to apply when using a digital tool. It requires work and careful planning to implement the use of digital tools in defined ways. Before introducing a digital device into a learning context, teachers/lecturers should understand how they will support students and manage it independently. Also, educators should contemplate how this online tool will allow us to hone in on each student's thought process and provide targeted, formative feedback that can be immediately and usefully applied. We should not forget that management education is all about opening new vistas and assisting them to solve problems effectively. It is not just imparting knowledge only.

In moving from enhancement to transformation in management education, the educator's role is irrespective of the context (Covid-19 transition or post-Covid scenario), enhancing understanding, increases productivity, allows students to grow their research skills, and teaching appropriate digital responsibility. Also, creating spaces for making, collaborating, and tinkering would be a handy approach in this regard. Educators should drive students to build and create using real-world tools and solve open-ended, real-world problems. It is about creating spaces for students with challenging problems to solve where there is no correct solution. Through self-directed learning, students are driven to find answers to create a product that has value.

Management educators will have a challenge in keeping the digital engagement through different models in blended learning, flipped classrooms, games, virtual learning, etc. Perhaps, one of the best steps would be giving students access to open courseware and open source technology to explore additional and reference knowledge. Classroom sessions are significant discussions, and thereby, educators may reach enriching goals and objectives.

It argues that the promotion of autonomous learning may lead to the total disappearance of the teacher/lecturer. However, it is more likely that teachers/educators will continue to play an integral role in education and learning, whether technology-based or not.

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