



COVID 19: CHALLENGES BEFORE THE HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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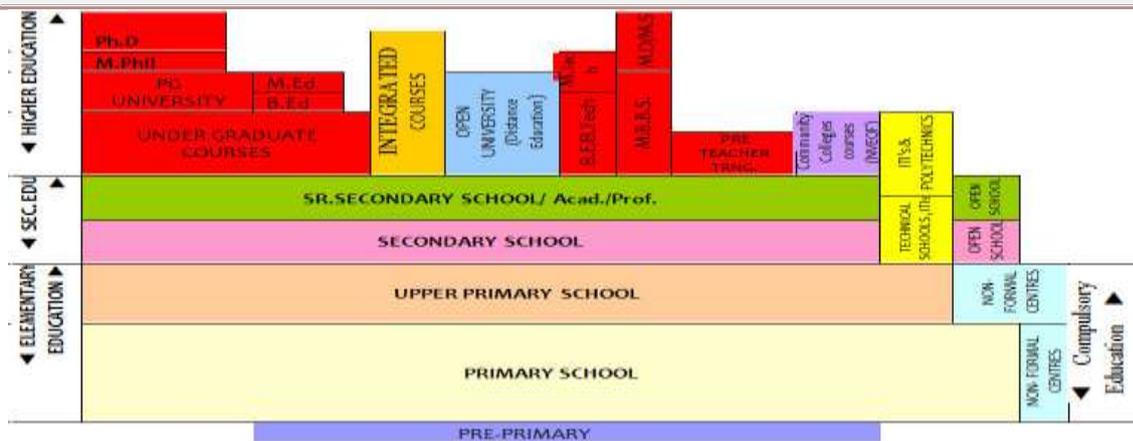
Introduction

The impact of shocking COVID-19 has shaken the entire world. The Governments of most of the countries have temporarily closed educational institutions in order to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. In India also, as a part of the nation-wide lockdown all the educational institutions, across the nation, were closed. This, as a result, has affected learning community. As per one of the reports of UNESCO, about 32 crores students, at all levels of education, are affected in India. Amidst all these challenges, the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have managed to ensure the continuity of teaching-learning and research during the pandemic.

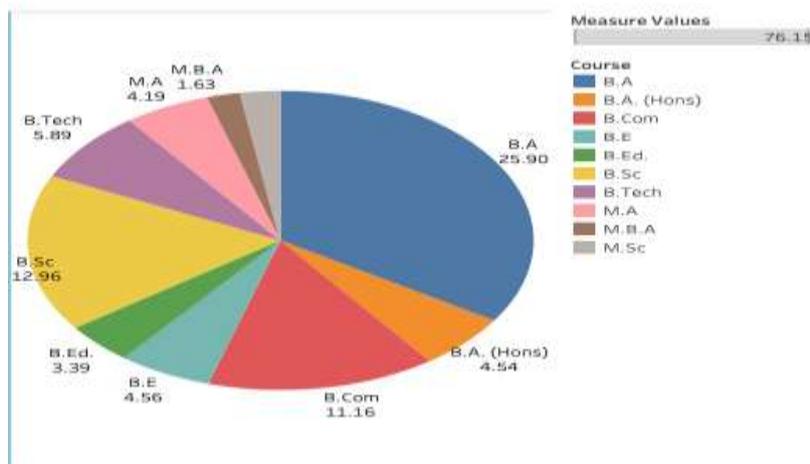
This sudden shocker COVID-19 had put the nations across the world into lockdown disturbing all the economies developed or underdeveloped. Work from home (WFH) has become the new normal practice, especially for services. Following Educational /academic institutions are not an exception. Hence, they had to find new ways of academic delivery, and the online classes were the way onward.

Current Status of Higher Education in India

Higher education in India is after the completion of 12 years of schooling i.e., Pre-University or Inter-college. It is all about Under-graduation, Post-graduation, University and Doctoral education. As per the report of MHRD (NIRF-2015), India has the third largest Higher Education system in the world, behind China and the United States with 795 universities, 39,671 affiliated colleges, 10,15,696 teaching faculty and 2,37,64,960 students including 29,34,989 post-graduate and 2,00,730 research scholars.

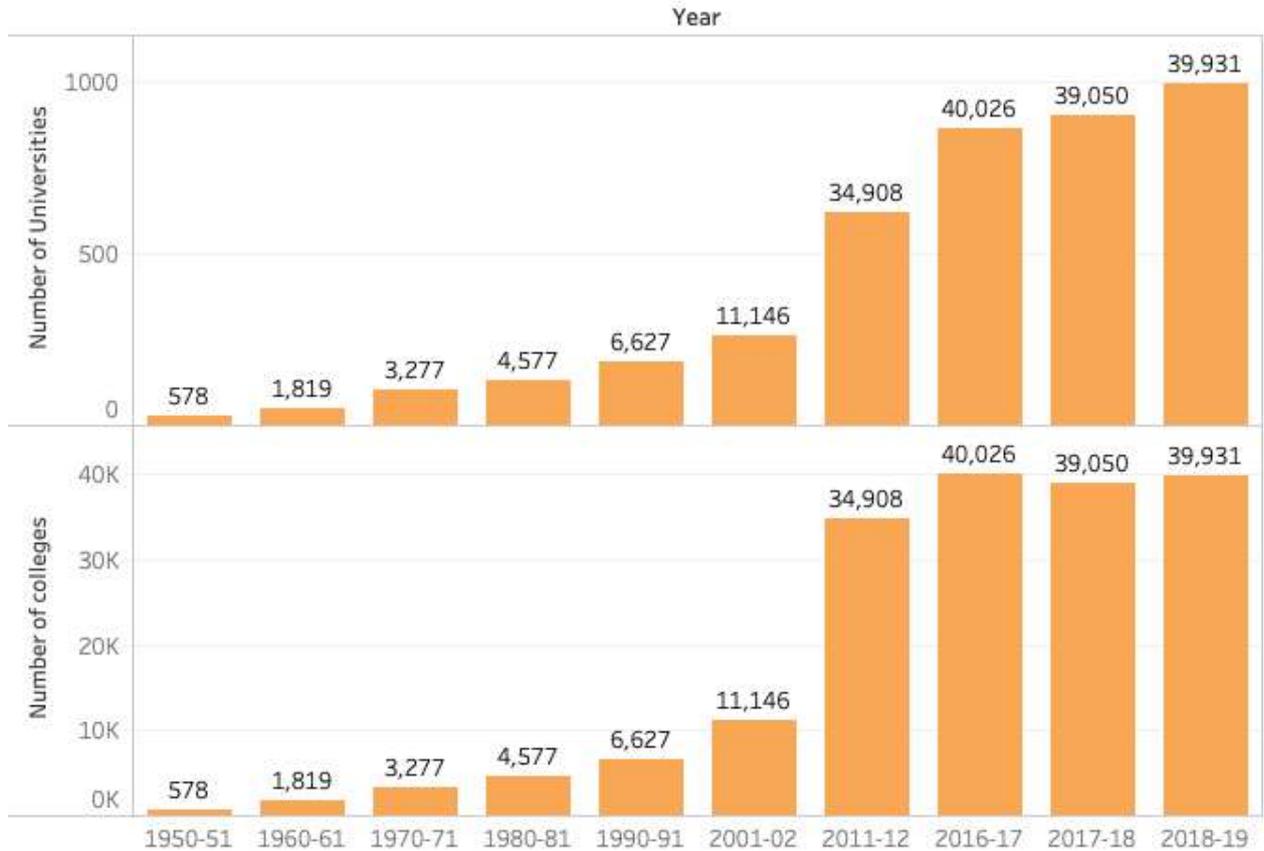


Above is the Higher Education Model and system in India. Higher education, as shown, starts at the age of 18. There are many courses an individual can study in the higher education in India. The 10 most popular programs are shown below:



Source: Dept. of Higher Education, MHRD

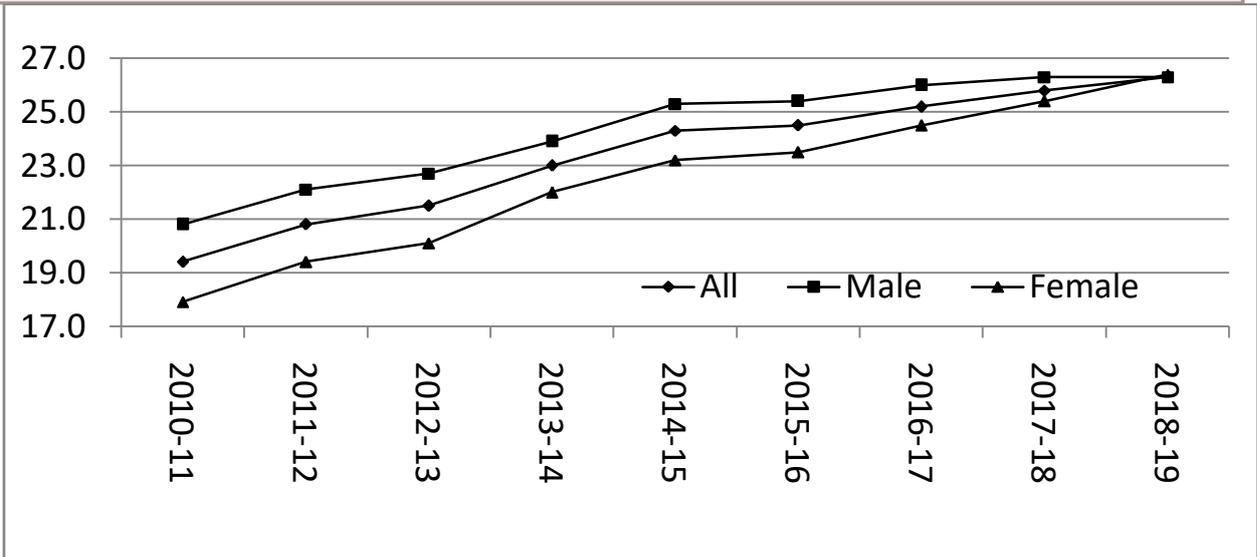
The country is witnessing increase in the number of colleges and universities since independence and planning. In 1950-51 we had 578 colleges and 27 universities. Now the numbers have multiplied. As per 2018-19 statistics there are more the 39000 colleges and 993 universities. Total enrollment in higher educational institutions had been increasing i.e., 37.4 million (2018-19).



Sum of Number of Universities and sum of Number of colleges for each Year. The marks are labeled by sum of Number of colleges.

Source: *mhrd.gov.in*

The nation is also witnessing an upward positive trend in the Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in India (GER). It was just 1.5% in 1960-61 and gradually gone up and in 2018-19 it is 26.3%.

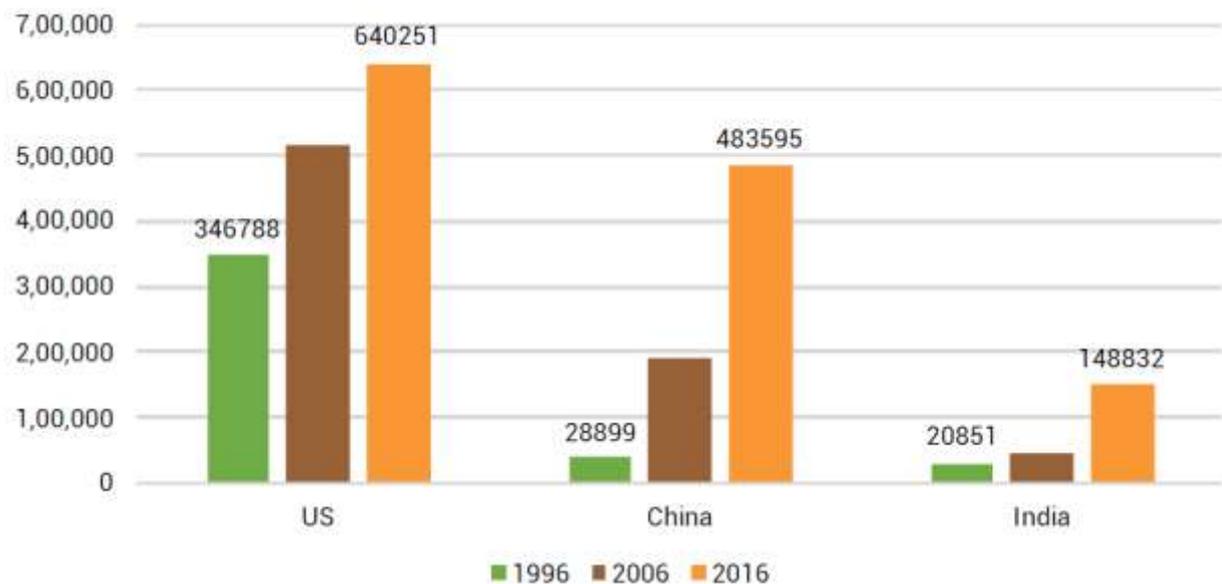


Source: mhrd.gov.in

When it comes to the research publications, we are more into scientific publications than socio-economic areas.

Though we stand 3rd in the world in scientific publications according to NSTMIS Survey Report

The number of publications is very less.



Source: <http://www.nstmis-dst.org/>



Major deficiencies in Indian Higher Education System

The writers have made certain observations in their teaching career in management education. They are as below;

1. **Low Enrolment** – Majority of enrolment is in non-STEM streams
2. **Low quality of Teaching & Learning** - Chronic shortage of qualified and committed teaching faculty, poor teaching quality, outdated curricula and pedagogy, no accountability, no quality assurance and no research orientation
3. **Limitations on Research and Innovation** - 5.31% of the total world publications in science and engineering
4. **Shortage of Resources** – failure to create and maintain teaching-learning infrastructure and promote research and extension
5. **Low skill-base** – Skill – mismatch in graduates in meeting the expectations of recruiters (Companies)

When the Indian Higher Education System was in need of a face-lift and to be reworked on the above deficiencies, the Covid-19 brought in a pandemic affecting the entire economy adversely. To combat the adversity there was lockdown which had a Ubiquitous impact affecting all the sectors, regions and people. It has resulted in Economic recession with severe job loss, loss of incomes, loss of demand and no production.

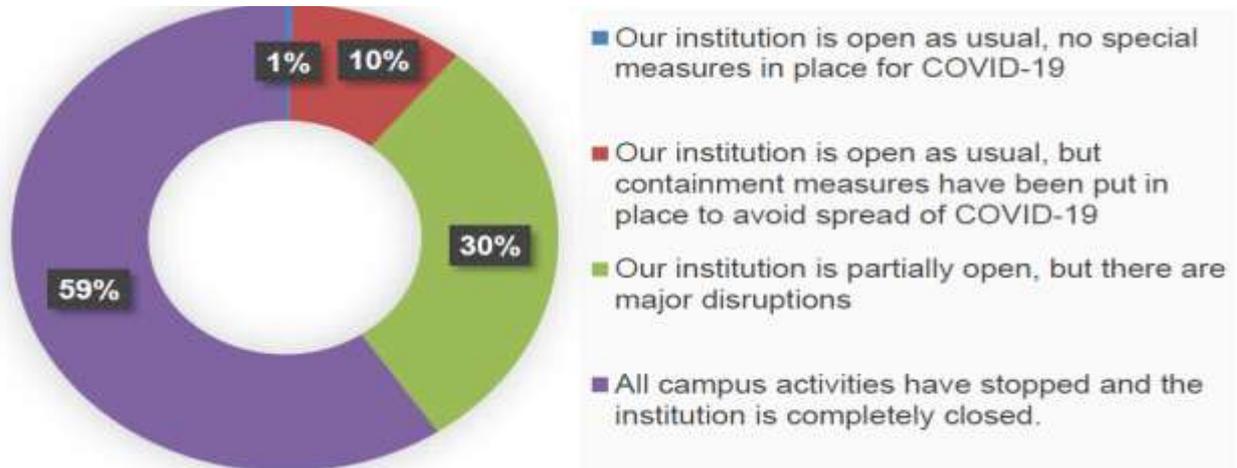
As per the report of UNESCO, schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) were closed in 185 countries, affecting 154,24,12,000 (89.4%) learners. The education sector is not an exception.

Impact of COVID –IAU Survey

General Assessment of Covid-19: Impact on Higher Education

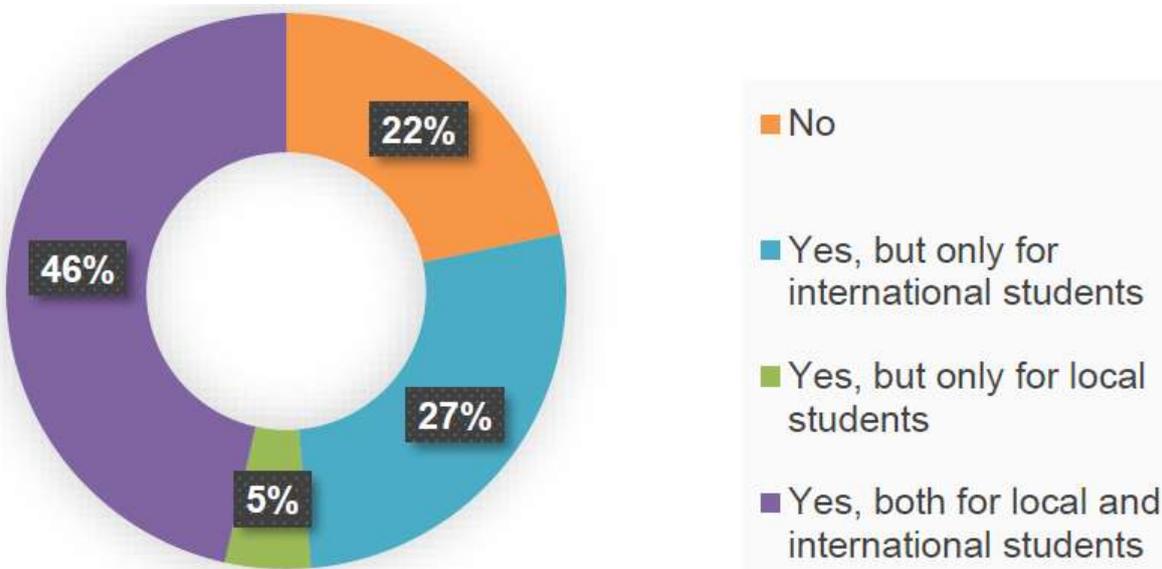
How has COVID-19 pandemic affected your institution?

HEIs Open or Closed?



All the 424 respondents (HEIs) replied to IAU survey. 59% HEIs stated that all their campus activities were stopped and the institutions were completely closed. 30% responded having partially open with major disruptions of course.

Enrolment for the next year



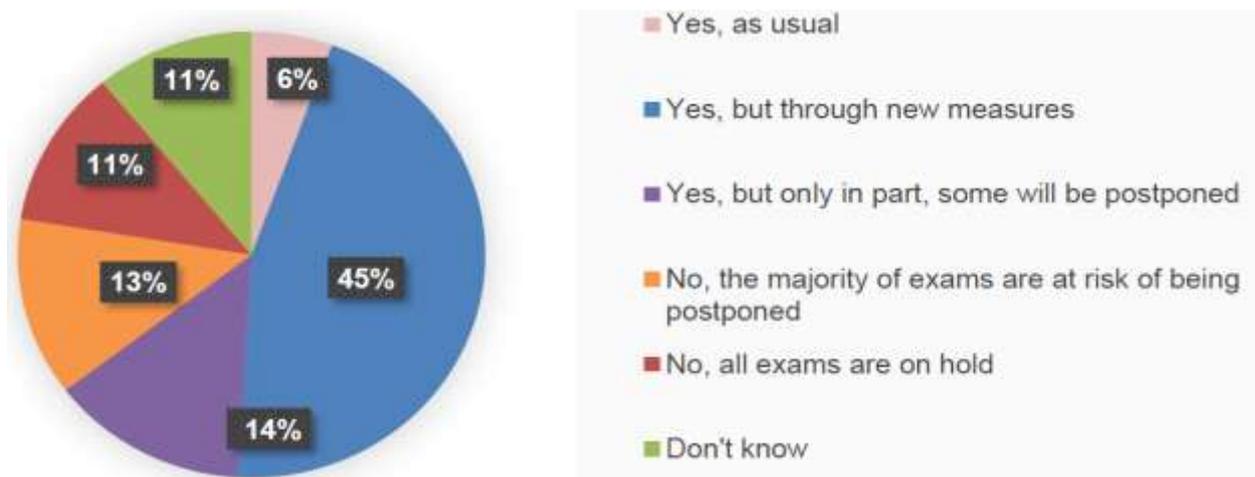
Almost half of the respondents (46%) indicate a serious impact of Covid-19 on the enrolment of both local and international students.

Teaching and Learning Affected



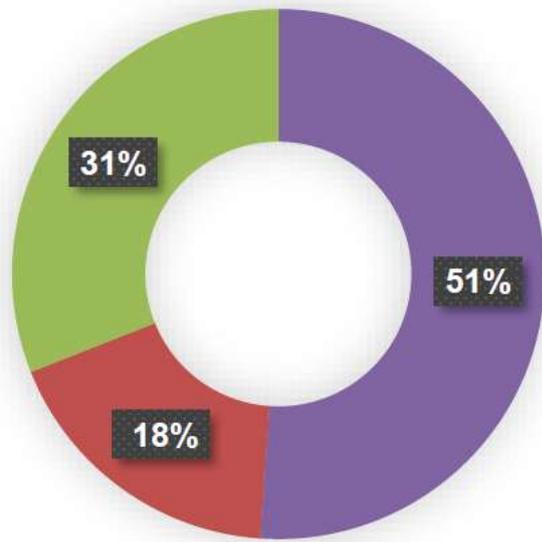
Majority of the institutions (67%) continued the teaching & learning on distance mode of education. Only 7% reported that the institutions have cancelled teaching all together.

Conducting Semester Examinations



There is a mixed response from HEIs on this front. Majority, 45% would like to go with their examinations as planned but on different modes. Some want to hold the exams and some do not know what to do.

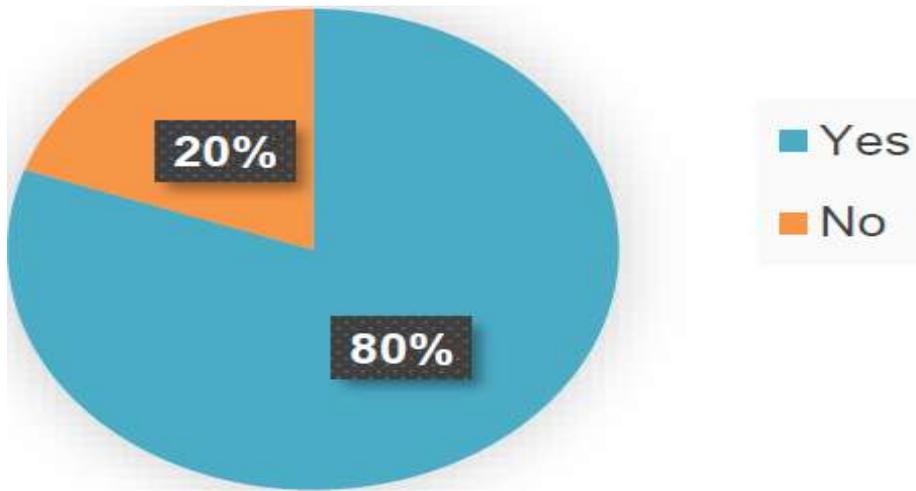
Partnerships and Collaborations



- It weakened them, we had to concentrate resources on local issues
- It strengthened them, we coordinated our efforts to respond to COVID-19
- It created new opportunities with Partner institutions (e.g. virtual mobility, shared resources, etc.)

Majority responded having experienced new opportunities of partnership and strengthened their collaborations.

Research Affected at Institution



How?



Majority responded (80%) affirmatively stating their research has been greatly affected by Covid-19 pandemic due to various reasons such as cancellation of conferences and travels, incomplete research projects, etc.

Impact on Students – observed

- Classes suspended: Never know when do they start
- Examination: No clarity
- Admissions delayed: Uncertainty, Dilemma
- All entrance and eligibility tests put off for an unknown period
- Job joining delayed: Stress and Uncertainty
- Plans to study abroad: Uncertainty
- Adjustment: 'New Normal' - e-learning
- Missing the campus life: co-curricular, extra-curricular, peer learning
- Financial burden: Repayment of Educational loans (due to recession)
- Exclusion: high dropout and discontinuity of education rates in higher education
- Anxiety/Nervousness: Isolation and socio-emotional imbalance



Time increased on

Leisure

Household tasks

Sleeping

Time decreased on

Educational activities

Working

Impact on Teachers&Staff- observed

- Academic Plan: Disrupted
- Work from/for home: Work Life Balance - disturbed
- Immediate digital transformation of HEIs: requires the incorporation of technologies and modification of processes. Training of faculty and staff to work on new technologies of online & Blended Learning
- Infrastructure deficiency: work from home
- Limited peer group interaction
- Missing the students
- Sudden stoppage of research: academic interactions like conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.
- Termination of the temporary contracts and Lay off of part time staff
- Discounted salary
- Reduction in the non-teaching and support staff

Impact on Administration and Management- observed

- Disruption of Administrative plans: Affecting the financial plans too
- Reduced enrolment: A big issue



- Pressure to reduce or exempt fees or moratorium on fee payment: Affecting the financial Status of the institution
- Underutilization of resources: especially the infrastructure
- Uncertainty: Decisions regarding reopening of HEIs. Getting back to 'Normal' from 'New Normal'

Opportunities put forth by Covid-19 to various stakeholders

1. To the HEIs as Changed Educational Model

- Brick & Mortar learning Vs. Virtual learning
- Blended Teaching and Learning models
- Examinations: Shift from physical to online proctored model
- Entry of Foreign Universities
- Increased collaborations

2. To the Students

- Delay in examinations: Don't panic. Enough time to study. Be hopeful
- Focus on skill development: Free or less expensive Online courses
- Prepare for entrance and eligibility tests
- Get connected to your teachers and peers to be in touch with the courses

3. To the Teachers

- Adapt to changes: Work online/ work from home
- Development of e-content and effective online delivery
- Multiple forms of intellectual contacts: virtual conferences, workshops, FDPs, etc.

4. To the Administration

- Creation and maintenance of infrastructure in such a way that physical touch points are reduced and social distancing is assured
- Focus on Blended Learning Model
- Training to teachers
- Easy monitoring productivity of students and teachers
- Scope for collaborations and partnerships



- Decide on Examination modes

Conclusion

The fact is that, virtual classes fail to bring in the advantage of being connected. It cannot be denied that the learning process is largely effective with the interaction of teacher and a student. Despite the fact, the learning process is impacted with reduced conversion of information to learning, the virtual class room has proved to be a savior in this pandemic situation.

It was observed that there was a drive to start blended learning mode by the higher education institutions. The blended learning being a combination of recorded lessons and ready material provided to the students as pre-learning material and a detailed explanation by the facilitator on a pre-visited information by the students. The pandemic situation has forced the online mode of learning and blended learning to speed up which otherwise would have implemented in near future either ways.

The best part of the situation is all the members of education ecosystem have very well accommodative. The education system, the suppliers for online education (zoom, google meet, google classroom, etc.) facilitators and students are instrumental in bringing in a successful change in the new normal of education industry.

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