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E-Learning Experience of Management Students in B-Schools During COVID-19 Pandemic - A Primary Survey

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To seek qualitative and quantitative survey of PGDM students of B-Schools in Bangalore regarding their experience about E-learning methods used by their faculty and institutes and determine its effect on their education and engagement.

Abstract

This study is aimed to seek online feedback and conduct phonic interviews of Management students in B-Schools regarding their experience with E-learning methods used by their faculty and institutes.

COVID-19 has turned the world into an unrecognizable and unthinkable setting. Various sectors have come together to battle this pandemic. Work from home (WFH) has become a norm and, so has studying from home. The purpose of this study is to understand the technology adoption, teaching and learning process, student engagement, and experience towards virtual classrooms during Lockdown due to COVID 19 in Business schools in Electronic City, Bangalore. This study uses inductive reasoning and qualitative research methodology to collect the data from the students of B-Schools who are currently pursuing courses such as PGDM, M.B.A, M.Com, M.C.A, etc. The students are currently in their hometowns across India and attending classes through various online platforms. The focus of this study is to find out the impact of online education on Learning Aspect and Student Engagement during this period. This study also emphasizes on how the current scenario has an impact on policymakers like educationalists, students, and the adoption of technique by faculty in the future. An indistinct study is done on the tactics and strategies that would be implemented in the ongoing pandemic. The current study is limited to the sample frame of around 300 students from business schools in Electronic City, Bangalore, India. Hence, the findings of this study cannot be generalized forentire India. Even though COVID 19 has created cognitive dissonance in students' and faculties' minds towards various situations they have faced in their day-to-day life. The learning and teaching have not stopped and are continuing at a fast pace and without any disruption.

Keywords: COVID-19, Technology, E-learning, Student Engagement, Lockdown.

Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 has presented a disastrous roadblock to the Indian education system. With COVID-19 entering into the picture, the Indian education system is going through an unprecedented shift from traditional to online methods. This lockdown has brought several challenges to state and government authorities. India is a highly diversified country with a thick density of population. This pandemic has spurred the adoption of distance learning at all educational levels. As the closure of schools and educational institutes were in steady, the mass transition of adoption of e-learning over physical learning came into the picture. This ramping of online learning may not be ideal but a consideration of an emergency response. Institutes have now started filling the gaps in technology. The Covid-19 has resulted in the shutting down of schools and one on one interaction with teachers is unseen Online. Courses offered through online portals have increased. Studies are made on how to use effective methods for skill development.

The emphasis is given on e-learning throughout COVID and the situation has not improved yet. Now the world completely dependent on information technology. This can be cited with an increase in the number of technology learners.

Literature Review

Online teaching allows one to carry on studying even along with job and Massive Open Online Courses can be supplemented along with classroom teaching for dispensing knowledge in a better way amongst the students. [1] In recent years, many studies have been performed analyzing the advantages and challenges of massive data analysis in higher education (8-12). For example, a study of Gasevic et al. [2] Within a few days, the COVID-19 pandemic enhanced the role of remote working, e-learning, video streaming, etc. on a broad scale. [3] Related to autonomous learning, many studies have been performed regarding the concept of self-regulated learning. [4] Researchers indicated that students with strongly developed SRL skills were more likely to be successful both in classrooms. [5] These studies and the development of adequate tools for evaluation and self-evaluation of learners have become especially necessary in the COVID-19 pandemic to guarantee good performance in e-learning environments. [6]

Growing Influence of Online Education

The magnanimity of information technology influences multiple aspects of learning. Today students cannot be refuted. The flourishing innovative technology has taken a head start. It has been providing ways towards utilizable solutions to educators and policymakers, thus allowing the implementation of information technology during these quarantine days.

There have been several studies based on the significance and efficacy of implementation of online or e-learning, and many universities across the world are promoting teaching with this method and it is also being more acceptable.

Shift From Traditional Learning

Teachers and students have found new ways to engage in this new era and break the iceberg of traditional learning. Students' engagement and teachers' interest have taken a steep shift towards e-learning. Stakeholders involved including institutional administrators, teachers and, students are making a considerable amount of effort to optimally make use of the resources available and minimize the gap that results in technology glitch and modern way of learning.

Problems in Adopting to E-Learning

Despite the wide adoption of E-learning, it is difficult to consider it as a whole new aspect and a formal way of education to many. Schools, colleges and, other institutions have been struggling to

accept this mode of learning. This drastic shift in education and learning from traditional classroom to computer-based learning might be one of the largest educational tryouts to date. As the online teaching and learning process has become more prevalent and important in India due to COVID 19, it becomes particularly vital to know its progress and to identify whether it's helping the college and school students achieve what they expect or to facilitate them with alternative sources which will be of benefit. At this time of crisis, it becomes challenging to keep the students' education continuous and unaffected due to this disaster. There has to be a system where there is togetherness between the students and teachers without actually being together. Several studies have been conducted to observe the learning experience, where it appears that different institutions have been adopting and doing well with this new learning environment. In this time of crisis, various educational organizations have come together and developed a variety of platforms to participate in online teaching-learning.

Benefits of E-Learning

Principally it is the students who are working and having family responsibilities who are benefited from the online learning method. This gives them a greater flexibility and comfort schedule that they can adapt and learn from. Apart from the different advantages, there are certain challenges which the online mode of teaching and learning throws at faculty members as well as the students. Different online courses have been developed by the Government Of India through its agencies like SWAYAM and NPTEL. There are a lot of Ed-Tech startups across the globe which are emerging as a unicorn in this category. Although Students have been taking up different courses to gain more knowledge, the system of taking online classes in colleges for regular course completion was never adopted by various institutions. All of this has led to a more digital system of teaching as well as learning. Digitalization in the learning and teaching process has largely affected the present state of education in our country.

Preventive Measures

The disruption caused by COVID-19 somehow forced the institutions to conduct classes online. As COVID-19 spread like fire in the forest, all educational institutions were shut down as the country followed quarantine policies and lockdown, which could prevent the spread of Covid-19. This has led to a change of face of education from traditional classroom teaching to technology-based online teaching. Learning is a continuous process, and amidst the lockdown of 21 days, the government and private institutions transformed teaching from classroom to online to keep the learning process on the go. Many government and private institutions, including IITs and IIMs, have leapt from conventional classroom teaching to digital teaching. They have started teaching their students through online classes so that the global COVID-19 pandemic does not affect the student's education.

The campuses have been shut down, but professors are busy working from home, preparing efficient study material for their students so that there isn't any halt in the teaching-learning process. Teachers are working hard and are available for students at all times of the day to reduce the hardship and disruption being caused to the students across the country at this point due to the COVID 19 pandemic. A teacher's job is not just making their students learn. Their job is to overall groom their students letting them know what is right and what is wrong.

Questions

The questions were framed on the following lines and asked:

1. Age
2. University Name.

3. Year of enrollment into the course.
4. Faculties adaption of online mode of education.
5. Students adaption of online mode of education.
6. Teaching modes used by the teachers and students.
7. Use of additional online platforms for certification.
8. The extent of understanding.
9. The extent of comfortability in communication among peers.
10. Attention span.
11. Level of concentration.
12. Difficulties faced by students.
13. Further suggestions.

Research Methodology

This research was conducted using Google Forms as an online survey and, circulated through WhatsApp and E-Mails. Each response was recorded on the form and, the file was downloaded for analysis. The incomplete surveys and invalid responses were omitted. The range of the age of participants was from 20-27 years. No other demographic variables such as social, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, or residence were considered in the survey. The questionnaire included 13 questions covering health, behaviour and technical aspects. There were applied on a sample consisting of 297 participants which consist of students from various B-Schools across Bangalore. These respondents pursued courses such as PGDM, M.B.A, M.Com, M.C.A, etc. The period of application of the survey was from 10th to 30th of November 2020. Of the respondents, 53% were females while 47% were males. The survey was developed using the software “Google form”, and further analysis was done using MS-Excel. Questions were asked in mixed form, multiple-choice based formats and, descriptive types. There were no right and wrong answers, but it was made to analyze various opinions. After collecting the data, every question percentage was calculated, and a comparative analysis was made.

Analysis

A survey was conducted among 297 management students from various B-Schools in Electronic city, Bangalore. All the students who took the survey were stationed at various locations of the country. It was a mix of students who had been studying offline and had to go back due to the lockdown and of new admission students who had joined the new academic year and had neither seen the campus nor meet any of their friends in person.

It was found out that all B-Schools had adopted online teaching methods. Among the most common online platforms used were Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Google Classroom. Mettle platform was used for examinations in all B-Schools. 22.10% of the students informed that the online platform “Coursera” has been used by their college to encourage the students to get certification from various universities across the globe, and their colleges have tied up with the platform and give out free certification. 18.94% of the students have taken Swayam courses and found them to be informative and a great opportunity. Although it was found by Levy Y. [7] that Seventy percent of the respondent thought that social skills wouldn't develop because of the online interaction, there has been 5 folds on websites like SWAYAM as per the statement by released by Union HRD ministry.

The maximum grievance faced by the students was of Network Imbalance. 95% of the students reported the problem as the number one concern. Due to this, they might not understand the classes properly as it creates a disruption in between and it results in them facing a problem understanding

the syllabus. It is possible that due to this, only 2.10% of the students were able to grasp the syllabus completely and the average of participants grasping the syllabus was 60%.

The respondents reported Family Commitments and Technological Dysfunction among the top two challenges apart from Network Imbalance. 77% of the students faced health issues especially related to eyes, as they had to sit in front of the screen for an extended period. A lot of students did not have the availability of laptops for various reasons [8] and had to attend the classes by arranging a smart phone which, is highly likely might be a factor responsible for their eye-related issues.

There was a mixed response among if the students were able to connect with their peers. 47% responded with an affirmative, although they were online. On further analysis, it was noticed that those who had been studying offline, less than 30% said that they could bond well. With the growing technology and apps, it has become possible to connect with our peers as never before, which would help the respondents feel that way.

A lot of students (74%) suggested that the timing of the classes be reduced and to have a blended kind of learning. A few suggestions also included the change in curriculum. Arguably the change in the methodology of learning, demands a change in teaching too. It might be useful if the Educational Institutes provide workshops on how to adapt to the new normal and teach the students and the faculty to enhance their productivity along the process.

Limitations and Scope for Study

This study is confined to the survey of B-Schools in Bangalore, India. The students' demographics or their economic background was not considered as well. The study focuses on the education sector adapting to technology at the graduation and post-graduation level. The experience can be different for different users. There is a lot of scope for further studies in this field. In India, we have lots of technical issues when it comes to data consumption and usage. [9] As colleges are opening up gradually, there can be a comparative analysis done on the psychological impact, pre and post the online method. Data can be collected and the effectiveness of blended learnings can be checked.

Conclusion

As students were attending their sessions from various places across the country and the survey is confined to the B-Schools in Bangalore, it might not be right to place a blanket statement that the study might be true for various educational institutes in different parts of the country.

The findings clearly showed a sharp drop in the understanding and grasping of the syllabus. The discomfort in adaption to change was quite evident. The participants had complaints about their health due to the new method of learning. Although the attendance of students has increased [10], students have not been paying attention. We conclude that although there are a lot of benefits of online classes, it is possible that due to the lack of resources, online education is not able to meet the demands of a lot of students.

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