



UNIVERSITY NEWS

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Reinventing Higher Education Post Pandemic: New Realities and Vision

Suresh Garg*

COVID-19 has infected more than 5 Million people and caused about 1.3 Million casualties globally so far. These numbers continue to increase as there is no reliable treatment (medicine/vaccine) available so far. (If press reports are to be relied, a vaccine should become available in 1-3 months. In our country, the logistics of distribution are going to be quite challenging.) But one thing is clear: due to intense global collaborations among medical/health care researchers/professionals, a lot is known about corona. Corona is a microscopic virus (it is not clear till now whether the virus is a living entity or non living) and we need the most powerful microscopes to view its structure; it cannot travel more than a few feet at a time by itself but has reached all countries on the globe and felled the mightiest that can change the face of the earth in a matter of minutes. COVID-19 locked down cities, overwhelmed health systems, put tourism in tatters, and academic/political conferences as well as sporting events were either cancelled or moved to e-mode, wherever feasible. The world faced unprecedented social and economic crisis due to migration of labour and substantial decline in demand, trade and manufacturing. In fact, COVID-19 induced events made us believe that fleeting things are very potent and human mind finds a way out of adversity through disruptive innovations.

COVID-19 has affected education extremely harsh. This article seeks to examine need for reinventing higher education post pandemic. When corona first reached our shores and began to infect, everyone—from political leadership to academic administrators—was highly confused for the direction to take to provide education. After considerable discussion, e-mode was considered the most suited option for teaching-learning to save loss of academic semester as well as human lives. As such, this change posed unique challenges to teachers as well as students. Teachers showed resilience and adapted with incredible speed to the challenge of digital transformation; they overcame camera inhibition overnight and forego privacy for the sake of their students, who, in spite of inconvenience, travelled without travelling through new technologies.

This brings us to the use of technology, which is on the centre stage of all human activities—education, sports, agriculture, aviation, banking, security, governance—as never before. The entry of technology in classroom was heralded by the Open University of UK in 1968. It facilitated a paradigm shift in the role of a teacher; the focus shifted from teacher to learner and teaching to self-learning. Moreover, it marked the beginning of the transition of education from art to craft to technology. However, COVID-19 made us to believe that post pandemic, future of teaching-learning would be in hybrid; a mix of word of mouth for face to face (F2F) interaction and online digital education supported by multiple media (study materials). For students, this mode is new

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