



## Navigating the Crisis and Beyond Future of Higher Education – Impact Covid-19

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## NAVIGATING THE CRISIS AND BEYOND FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION – IMPACT COVID-19

The unprecedented impact of Covid-19 on education systems around the world has affected more than 1.6 billion students representing 91% of all students in the world. World over Education is experiencing Non-Linear Changes.

COVID -19 has given a death blow to Higher Education by attacking the essential element of social connection on which the university and higher education system thrives forcing the world over all the universities within 7 to 10 days to go for online education. At the moment, universities are focused on ensuring academic continuity for students through “emergency remote teaching.”

The big question that arises is that will this Online Teaching be able to produce lasting change?

A decade back when MOOC courses were introduced by COURSERA, EDEX, UDACITY, and those kinds of platforms there was a general feeling that Higher Education as we know will go through fundamental disruption and University Education systems will suffer.

But that didn't happen with obvious question why? And what is different now with COVID-19 and global online teaching.

There is a big difference

When MOOCs were created they were running parallel to the university education system so the universities were not affected but with COVID – 19 every university globally is experimenting with online teaching and if we look back in history whenever there is exogenous shock there is massive experimentation that happens in the society for which the society resisted before and post exogenous shock there are permanent changes.

For example during World War II British men had to go to war and there were a lot of factory jobs lying vacant that they were doing. So women were encouraged to take up the factory jobs almost out of necessity. Post World War it was realized that women not only did those jobs but they did it pretty well and women's movement since 1950 has never looked back.

COVID- 19 presents both shocks and challenges but also opens enormous opportunities for us to fundamentally reimagine higher education.

### TRADE-OFFs FOR FUTURE:

Today we have to prepare and future proof ourselves.

The future is not what we do in the future. The future is what we do now.

Higher Education system should not get caught in the moment as of now as these are short term challenges instead should allocate time for short term challenges and long term strategies because the long term strategies start as of today.

Higher education leadership now has the option for seizing the tremendous opportunity by understanding the forces that are coming together:

**1. Digital technologies** have matured and they can be deployed at scale and they will continue to improve which means very high quality and immersive online education can be offered.

**2. Faculty resistance to change** in experimenting with online teaching is all-time low as psychological barriers to change have come down and in a short period of time they have realized the potential of technology out of compulsion.

### **COVID-19 & BUSINESS CONTINUITY:**

Higher education in terms of business continuity must think in terms of the following:

**1. There will be a significant drop in International Students.**

**2. There will be potential deferral in admissions.**

So far enrolled students for the semester have taken online teaching because they were captive audience and were very appreciative of the fact that universities rose up to the occasion and delivered them quality online education to the best that they can.

When universities ask fresh admissions to start online education then there are chances that students might start or might hold on causing deferral in admissions. Even if they decide to take admission they would be expecting reduction in fees as now universities will not be offering their complete suite of educational services

**3. There will increase demand for financial aids and assistance from students** as after COVID-19 many people have lost their jobs.

**4. Last but not least how the higher education institutions plan to open their campuses safely.**

These are all short term challenges related to business continuity. These short term challenges should be the top priority.

### **LONG TERM STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & CONSIDERATIONS:**

Higher Educational institutions must initiate Strategic Conversations now as it will help in deciding for short term moves as long term strategic initiatives are related to allocation of resources and even the short term moves have to be aligned with long term initiatives.

COVID – 19 is very different from what we have seen anything before.

We know how to deal with

KNOWN and UNKNOWN

UNKNOWN and KNOWN

But we do not know how to deal with UNKNOWN and UNKNOWN which we are dealing with now.

Under these circumstances, we can't **PLAN** for the FUTURE because planning with so many UNKNOWN is meaningless BUT we can **PREPARE** for the future.

### **PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE:**

Higher Educational Institutions must develop their point of view about the future and can accordingly start with small experiments in the following months or maybe a year as a marathon race by simply

THINKING BIG

STARTING SMALL

SCALING-UP FAST

Universities & Higher Educational Institutions must realize that the learning needs of students are changing fast. The generation universities will be dealing tends to learn very differently.

Educational Needs in our country are fundamentally very different.

In India, 40% of the Universities have 20% gross enrolment ratio whereas in America the gross enrolment ratio is 70%, so if India has to match the gross enrolment ratio of that of America then India needs 80,000 to 1, 00,000 new colleges and universities which is practically not feasible with brick and mortar model as it will difficult to have enough faculty to staff them.

What Indian students need is not a 3 or 4 yrs. college. They need **COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAMS** for upskilling and this means designing and putting up say 4 to 6 functional & operational courses in different areas of competencies may be in Technology, Branding etc.

## **TRADE-OFFS**

Higher Education Institutions must develop and put into practice two different TASK FORCES

1. SHORT TERM TASK FORCE for operational reporting and clearance of 2K20.
2. LONG TERM TASK FORCE for developing the BLUEPRINT for the year 2K21 onwards.

2K20 is not the year for the commitment of enormous resources.

This year and maybe the next year also start with small experiments and to develop these experiments it is essential that Higher Education leadership must have INTELLIGENT and INFORMED POINT OF VIEW for the years to follow. Small Experiments are low in cost because the cost of learning as well as the cost of failure is very low. For example such small experiments could be communicating internally with faculty to prepare and go online not only for the next semester but for the next few semesters. This will help them in redesigning the Higher Education Business Model – Post COVID-19 with 12 months to experiment.

## **PATHWAYS / MODELS - (POINT OF VIEW):**

Three Models or possibilities that are most likely to emerge post COVID-19 are:

1. AUGMENTED IMMERSIVE RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM
2. HYBRID PROGRAM
3. FULLY ONLINE PROGRAM

Universities & Higher Education Institutions have to follow a combination of pathways as one size doesn't fit all!

### **Augmented Immersive Residential Programs:**

This model focuses on fulfilling the Social Needs of students' learning. We are social beings and our social interactions are the basis of our learning. We need social development, emotional development, intellectual development and the universities provide safe and healthy ways for such developments but the COVID-19 has attacked the social fabric of the higher education system.

Universities and Higher Education Institutions can offer Augmented Immersive Residential learning experience for some of the courses where personal interaction is an essential part of the learning process at a premium price tag.

### **Hybrid Programs:**

In the past few months we have realized that what courses can be SUBSTITUTED by technology and what courses can be AUGMENTED by technology and what courses can be COMPLEMENTED by technology. COVID-19 has taught us where digital technology can be used for enhancing the learning experience.

Courses with pure transfer of knowledge where there are predetermined answers can be migrated to the ONLINE learning schedule. Courses with the transfer of knowledge where the answers have to be validated by experiments can have a blend of ONLINE and IN CAMPUS learning schedule leading to development of COMPETENCE BASED LEARNING PROGRAMS.

### **Online Programs:**

Online programs can be scaled with ZERO marginal cost. Universities & Higher Educational Institutions can offer certain courses & programs purely ONLINE. Because online programs have zero marginal cost hence the pricing for these online courses have to be done accordingly. In an Online course the real advantage comes from the Economies of Scale but only if the Online learning experience is very engaging and involving.

Imagine a gaming company entering into online education space by developing immersive programs as they already have experience in that domain.

TECHNOLOGY is ASSAULTING the knowledge workers and this assault is going to continue with increasing impact. Universities & Higher Educational Institutions should develop **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE RESISTANT COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAMS**. These programs include courses in CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, COMMUNICATION & PERSUASION, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, and many more.

#### **WHAT UNIVERSITIES & HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS CAN DO?**

1. Decide the delivery model for courses offered:
  - a. AUGMENTED IMMERSIVE RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM
  - b. HYBRID PROGRAM
  - c. FULLY ONLINE PROGRAM and accordingly, decide the course charges.
2. Develop Competency-Based Programs by collaborating with the experts in that domain.
3. Train Faculty for delivering the Competency-Based Programs. (ESSENTIALLY IMPORTANT)
4. Avoid taking long term policy decisions.
5. Unbundle the VALUE CHAIN and FOCUS on COMPETENCIES – (Teaching & Research).
6. Allocate resources based on BUDGET ESTIMATES and cut unnecessary costs.
7. Start with LOW-COST EXPERIMENTS.
8. Also, the Universities & Higher Educational Institutions must UNBUNDLE their VERTICALLY INTEGRATED EDUCATION MODEL where they do almost everything from TEACHING to PLACEMENTS as this will ease the COST BURDEN.

COVID-19 is here to stay and we have to learn to live with it for at least till the vaccine is available.

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