Managing Academics During COVID-19

In December 2019, an outbreak of pneumonia of unknown origin was reported in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. The disease is called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). When an infected person sneezes or coughs, sending tiny droplets into the air, people can catch coronavirus. People also can get infected if they touch an infected droplet on a surface and then touch their own nose, mouth, or eyes. The transmission rate is relatively high and the virus can lead to pneumonia, respiratory failure, septic shock, and death.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and necessary measures taken to tackle the spread of the virus has caused significant disruption to almost every public activity such as work from office, the provision of education & training, transportation, hospitality and many more. Measures to lower the transmission rate can be washing hands often, keeping common surfaces clean, limiting contact with other people, and wearing cloth face masks.

The COVID-19 has resulted in the closure of educational institutions which affected the students learning. The assumption was that this would pass soon enough and students could do with some downtime. But as the virus has progressed from one region to another, it has become more and more apparent that this lockdown is not going away anytime soon. As a result, educational institutions had to adopt the alternative means of teaching (online teaching) so that students can resume academics without much gap.

Studies have shown that higher education students enrolled in online learning courses performed just as well as those enrolled in on-campus courses and programs. However, those who combined online learning with occasional on-campus visits actually performed better academically than individuals in traditional, on-campus formats.

E-learning, is basically learning and educating oneself through electronics and technologies. It isn't restricted to things like online classes, or self-studied documents. It can be anything as long as it's being taught through electronic medium. Online teaching combines teachers, videos, interactive and innovative technology to deliver the concepts, feedback, and assessments.

The online method of learning is suited for every student especially in this lockdown period. Unlike classroom teaching, with online learning the teaching sessions can be recorded and accessed unlimited number of times which helps in the revision of the topic. Students can study in own time at their own pace.

E-Learning is a way to provide quick delivery of knowledge. It helps in creating and communicating new training, concepts, and ideas. Online teaching enables educators to get a same degree of coverage as in the classroom to communicate the message in a consistent way to the students.

Having spoken about the advantages of online learning, it is imperative to look at some of its limitations:

The effectiveness of online education depends on the robust internet connectivity. Knowledge of the functions of the internet, typing and software programs are necessary. It should be considered that not all students might have laptops or computers. Most importantly, students need to remain focused and motivated. As of now, evaluation of the students is a major challenge. In some of the institutions, only theory classes are conducted via online (Zoom/webex) for now. Most teachers

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and students are digitally literate, but full-time online education is still a new experience so, the instructors are not sure how effective the online teachings are as not all students are tuning in. For educational institutions that are not so used to the digital world, the new reality can be more difficult.

Finally, with this sudden shift from the classroom to online learning, it is to be seen whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic, and how such a shift would impact the education system.