

CRISIS MANAGEMENT WITH ICT ENABLED TEACHING IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr. B. T. Chavan

Assistant Professor

Dayanand College of Commerce, Latur

E-Mail ID: chavan.laji@gmail.com

Mobile No. 9923715080

Introduction:

Education in crisis situations like COVID-19 is very imperative. It fosters social consistency, provides access to life-saving knowledge, address psycho-social needs, and offer a stable and safe environment. It also helps people to rebuild their communities and pursue productive, meaningful lives. ICT can facilitate the delivery of education in places and in contexts where children and youth are more difficult to reach due to geographical or situational barriers. It enhances collaboration and the development of teaching and learning resources among teachers through online platforms.

UNESCO estimates that over 850 million children and youth roughly 80% of the world's student population have to stay away from schools and universities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationwide closures are in force in more than 110 countries and local shut-downs in many others. This represents more than a doubling in the number of learners prevented from attending educational institutions, with further increases expected during this Covid-19 pandemic.

Impacts of Covid-19 on education sector:

- ✓ Interrupted learning: The disadvantages are disproportionate for underprivileged learners who tend to have fewer educational opportunities.
- ✓ Unequal access to digital learning portals: Lack of access to technology or good internet connectivity is an obstacle to continued learning, especially for students from disadvantaged families.
- ✓ Social isolation: Schools/Universities are hubs of social activity and human interaction. When they close, many miss out on social contact that is essential to learning and development
- ✓ Parents unprepared for distance and home learning when schools/Universities have to close education from their premises.

ICT initiatives in Higher Education:

University staff, students, sponsors and parents looks to the University leadership for directions to ensure any interruption to Teaching and Learning is kept to a minimum in this situation. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and University Regulating Bodies like UGC should impose the strict use of ICT tools such as radio, TV, Laptop, mobile devices so that no learner is left behind.

In the case of the Higher Education Leadership at the Institution level in response to the crisis, it felt necessity of being in constant communication with all stakeholders, as the Institutions had to take emergency policy decisions to adapt to the national policy changes and directives. The University leaders also had to get the staff to quickly make the necessary academic decisions that impacted on students living on campus, living off-campus as well as international students concerns.

They had to provide guidelines to alternative ways of teaching, including the use of ICT mediated learning such as online learning. The academics and especially the ICT staff had to ensure that the ICT infrastructure is able to handle the immediate migration to online teaching and learning, online assignments, take-home exam, etc.

We are still amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In many countries, it is still yet to peak. This pandemic will have an epoch effect on mankind. It is already making us ask fundamental questions on what matters most to us. I believe it will also have a big impact on how we learn and teach. Now we have to enhance greater use of technology-enabled learning and teaching by Universities, schools and even corporate training. The successful will be ones that understand that it takes a systematic and systems approach to technology-mediated learning and teaching to make paradigm shifts.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education is the mode of education that uses information and communications technology to support, enhance, and optimize the delivery of information. ICT can lead to an improved student learning and better teaching methods. The results specifically showed that the students who are continuously exposed to technology through education has better 'knowledge', presentation skills, innovative capabilities, and are ready to take more efforts into learning as compared to their counterparts.

The Mobile learning as a form of e-learning is a rising trend where the education has outgrown the physical constraints of the classrooms and acquired mobility. Students'

access information whenever and wherever they want, and institutions that provides such advanced technological terrains is rising in number day by day.

Various devices/technology in ICT includes:

- Access of course materials through remote devices,
- Online digital repositories for lectures, course materials, and digital library,
- Online/ cloud based academic management systems,
- Employing the flipped classroom concept,
- Making use of handheld computers, tablet computers, audio players, projector devices etc.
- Also, the rising number of Massive Open Online Courses(MOOCs) like the coursera, khan academy, and edx tells us that there is a huge demand for off-the-classroom learning facilities. The future of our institutions will depend on whether or not they can satisfy those needs.

Benefits of ICT in Higher Education:

Policy makers accepted that ICT in education can help the students to compete in the global economy by being part of a skilled workforce and facilitate social mobility by:

- Enhancing learning experiences and providing new sets of skills,
- Reaching more students with Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs),
- Facilitating the training for faculties,
- Minimizing costs and saving time associated with the information delivery and automating regular day-to-day tasks,
- Improving the administration of institutions to enhance the quality and efficiency of service delivery.
- Motivating Factor: The internet can act as a motivating tool for many students so education must capitalize on this internet excitement and enthusiasm about the internet for the purpose of enhancing learning.
- Fast Communication: The internet promotes fast communication across geographical barriers.
- Co-operative learning: The internet facilitates co-operative learning, encourages dialogue and creates more engaging classrooms.
- Locating research materials: Apart from communication, research is what takes many people to the internet. There are many resources on the internet than the college library can provide.

According to UNESCO, "Measuring ICT in education is therefore important to inform policy makers in setting national priorities and developing ICT in education

policy.” Enabling ICT in institutions will also be useful for NAAC, NBA, and ABET accreditations. The movement of education industry towards quality assurance programs has been picking up pace and the NAAC and NBA accreditation are evidence for that. These certifications are bound to become the norms for selecting institutions by students and the government is already taking measures to assure high quality education. Also, more and more institutions are applying for accreditation every day to imply that the education they provide is of high quality.

Conclusion:

To summarize, enabling ICT in education, and making use of technology in education creates an easy-to-manage learning environment where the delivery of information is so much smoother and the learning easier. Also, ICT is definitely the path to take for institutions, especially in countries like ours, as our growth is directly aligned with technology and the field of education is no exception. And assuring higher quality education for its students will define whether the institution should move forward or perish. ICT plays vital role as a strong agent for change among many educational practices i.e. conducting online exam, pay online fees, accessing online books and journals. Thus ICT in Higher education improves teaching learning process, provides the facility of online learning to thousands of learners who cannot avail the benefits of higher education due to several checks, such a time, cost, geographical location and crisis like COVID-19 etc.

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