Opportunities and Challenges in Online Teaching for MBA Students in India During the Covid Pandemic

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Abstract

The covid 19 pandemic has taken the entire education system worldwide by a storm and India being an educational hub with over 260 million students has been hit hard. This article focuses on the online teaching for MBA students during the pandemic and has made a systematic review from various research papers, articles, cases for arriuving at the oppurtunities and challnges posed by online teaching during the covid times. This paper portrays the opportunities and challenges faced by MBA institutes under Mangalore university in engaging students through online mode of learning during these critical times. Efforts are made to reflect on the evolution of management education in India and its current status so as to narrate the nature of teaching learning process adopted before and after the pandemic. This paper has adopted a qualitative approach in arriving at the paradigm shift in teaching practices of management institutes. The intent of this research paper is to arrive at a holistic picture of the opportunities made use of and challenges to be combatted by MBA institutes in ensuring smooth conduct of academic activities in order to craft globally acceptable management graduates.

Keywords: Learning During COVID-19, Management Education, Online Teaching.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). This virus was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization declared a Public Health Emergency of International concern regarding COVID-19 on 30 January 2020, and later declared it as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. This pandemic spread among individuals during close contact and resulted in millions of deaths across the world. The severity and fierceness with which this covid-19 has spread and killed millions has resulted in making it the greatest health crisis since and after centuries of human civilization (Remuzzi and Remuzzi,2020). In order to control the spread of this deadly pandemic Nations across the world resorted to lockdown which involved restricting people from leaving their place of living resulting in stay at home across the world.

In India 21 days of lockdown was declared from March 25,2020 which was further extended on April 15,2020 for another 19 days that ended on May4,2020. However, educational institutions in India started shutting down campuses from March 16,2020 as a measure to contain the spread of Coronavirus. COVID-19 pandemic started becoming very serious for higher education after the 20th of March 2020, when, according to the data by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020) more than 1.3 billion learners of all levels of education in 142 countries are affected by the lockdown. Being proactive for the oncoming serious situation, UNESCO urged governments all around the world to take measures in order to restore educational function to the best possible extent (Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson, & Hanson, 2020). Educators across various levels were left with no choice but to replace the well accepted traditional learning with the newly introduced distance and online learning approaches. From kindergarten to post-doctoral programs, from elementary to tertiary, from medicine to management all forms and levels of education had to shun traditional learning methods and adopt to online learning mechanism in order to stay connected with the students in the months that followed .

Review of Literature

Dhawan (2020) rightly identified that the COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to

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pave the way for introducing online learning. Billings (2007) defined online learning as an information delivery mechanism where educator and learner are physically separated. Subedi et al(2020) E-learning tools have played a crucial role during this pandemic in helping schools and universities facilitate student learning during the closure of universities and schools . The adoption of online learning mechanism saw a shift from traditional chalk and talk method of learning to modern click and learn method. Petrie, (2020)identifies Some of the online platfoms that to have unified communication and collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Canvas and Blackboard, which allow the teachers to create educational courses, training and skill development . Other than these, there were a plethora of learning options luring teachers and students alike to connect during these tough times like zoom, webex, Neo, Classtime, Classwize, Ted-Ed, Coursera, Bakpax, Pronto, Skillshare, ClassDojo, Edmodo, Blackboard Learn, Parlay, Docebo, Feedback Fruits, Udemy, WeVideo, WizIQ, Flipgrid, Codeacademy, Gynzy, Adobe Captivate, Seesaw, Edx, GoGuardian, Elucidat, Kami, Pluralsight, G Suite, Otus, Articulate 360, Floop, Future Learn, Hapara, Shift, Lectora Inspire, Kialo Edu, Buncee, LanSchool and many more (Loknath Mishra et al,2020).Kashyap, Sailaja et al(2021), researched that 80 per cent of the higher education sector educators and learners confidently adapted to this new mode of learning as an smart alternative during these uncertain times.

The advent of management education in India was marked by the constitution of Indian institute of social welfare and business management in 1954 .It was soon followed by opening of management departments in university of Andhra Pradesh, Bombay, Delhi and Madras. Philip J.(1992). Kumar and ashok (2013), have opined that the 60s saw the emergence of India as a major center of management education. The establishment of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IIMC) in 1961 and the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmadabad (IIMA) in 1962, the establishment of the management division at the Xavier Labor Relations Institute (XLRI) in the year 1966, offering of full-time MBA programs in Delhi and Bombay universities and the entry of a number of other universities marked a quantum jump with respect to the numbers, recognition, prestige and impact of management education system in the country .Brainfeed Magazine 2019, reported that in the 1970s and 80s the demand for Management education in India grew at a fair rate. The dawn of economic liberalization in India in the 90's and the emergence of AICTE gave a new direction to Management education. Within a time span of two decades, between 1990 and 2010, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) permitted the players in the private sector to set up a large number of education institutions providing management education. In the academic year 2012 to 2013, there were a total of 3,882 institutions providing management education with a total student intake of 44,44,487 which was reduced to 3,070 institutions with a student intake of 3,73,456 students in the year 2019-2020. Goyal Et al (2020)

The structure of Indian management education at present is divided into six categories. They are as follows:

1. Indian Institute of Management which is set up by the Government of India.
2. Departments of Management Studies at various Universities, Distance/Correspondence and Part-Time Courses.
3. Colleges and Institutes affiliated to various Universities.
4. Private institutions or Government Institutions approved by AICTE.
5. Private Institutes or Colleges without any affiliation to any university or by the AICTE.
6. Private Institutes offering Master of Business Administration

Need for the study

With a fleet of institutions offering management programme in our nation, the concern with regards to study on impact of online teaching owing to covid 19 pandemic has emerged as an interesting area of study for several researchers. In the light of this, the topic for this research paper was drawn in order to enable researchers understand the adoption of different method of online teaching by management institutes as well as the challenges encountered by them so that the same paves the way for more concrete and empirical research in this area of study.

Objectives

1. To understand the scenario that led to MBA institutions adopting online teaching.
2. To identify the opportunities capitalized by MBA institutes during the covid pandemic
3. To examine the major challenges faced by MBA institutes in adopting to online teaching
4. To analyse the transition from old to new methods of teaching learning adopted by management institutions.

Methodology

This paper has been crafted using qualitative data drawn from research articles and case studies published by refereed journals and renowned publications

and research reports by KPMG, newspaper articles, blogs, websites of higher education department, MHRD, AICTE, UGC etc. have also been refereed to. Data relating to online methods adopted by MBA institutes affiliated to Mangalore University in Mangalore, Karnataka have been drawn from their websites and collected from interviews with institute Directors. In all this paper is a culmination of efforts expended by various MBA institutes in keeping students engaged through online mode of teaching in order to ensure continued learning during covid times.

Findings and Discussions

Management Education Delivery Process Before the Pandemic:

Management education across the country was concentrating on skill development along with academic excellence and hence were striving continuously to provide education through a wide range of value added courses, curriculum and pedagogy. Classroom teaching learning included a wide range of activities such as case study analysis, management games, video analysis, use of Ted Talks, role plays etc. for curriculum delivery and was extensively extended through the usage of the following methodology:

a) Orientation & bridge Course: An initiative of the management institutes to help students from all walks of life to smoothly transit into the management education scenario and instill confidence among them.

b) Student Seminars & Presentations: It is specifically designed to identify and develop the cognitive abilities of students. It also serves as an instructional techniques involving student participation and interaction.

c) Live Projects: These opportunities make management education transcendental in nature, as it provides real-time experience for a short period of time. It certainly benefits students in understanding the nuances of work life and also helps them develop employability skills.

d) Project Reports: Undertaking project reports by students on various topics enables them to achieve insights on the chosen topic and provides a clear understanding in their chosen field.

e) Industry Internships: Industry based internships helps students in gaining real time experience along with an in depth understanding of various challenges and probable solutions.

f) Participation in Sports & Cultural Activities: Student participation in cultural activities contributes towards their holistic development and contribute towards balancing of stress in student life.

g) Organising & Participation in Management Fests: Continuous involvement in management fests provides a great platform to exhibit confidence, decision making and that students possess and participating in external fests helps them showcase their talents.

h) Outreach & Extension Activities: These activities provided for a holistic development of the students personality and helped them in strengthening universal human values and at the same time accommodated teaching -learning in an unstructured format. Extention activities inculcate social values and responsibilities among students and create awareness about social issues.

i) Industry – Academia Nexus: Collaboration of this nature is the catalyst to explore the alternatives available for solving realtime issues. Though combining industry -academia forces can have its own challenges, the experience is astounding for students.

j) Mentoring & Counselling: Mentoring and counselling have become the pillars of management education. Teachers in management institutes have been nuturing students through the mentoring and counselling sessions, to be future ready. They not just learn from experience of the mentors but have a constant guiding light to to help them focus on their goals.

k) Skill Enhancement Activities: Through these activities, students become more competent and confident to follow their dreams.

l) Examinations: Conduct of examination for students is like the litmus test of teaching-learning. It examines not just the theoretical knowledge of various concepts leart by students but also inculcates a sense of competition and a feeling of achievement upon successful completion of the same.

m) Accreditations: This propels education institutions to strive hard in order to maintain high quality standards in imparting education. It authenticates the quality of work and ensures best practices in all forms.

n) Pre-Placement Training: From training students in corporate ettiquets and soft skills to coaching them in cracking aptitude -reasoning test and interview skills pre-placement training plays a vitol role in enabling enhancement of placement prospects of the students for all institutions.

o) Campus Placement: creates a long standing relationship between the company and the institute; at the same time it creates opportunities and possibilities for the student to scale greater heights.

p) Participation in Conferences: It facilitates learning

and creates a platform for showcasing the talents such as their capacity to plan, organize and implement along with team work, leadership skills and multitasking ability of students.

q) Participation in FDP/MDP: Teachers participation in FDP/ MDP enables them to identify the learning objectives and adapt to the changing needs. It also enables them to improve efficiency of delivery and ensures quality education.

Management Education Delivery Process After the Pandemic

According to AICTE academic guidelines (2020), all institutions were instructed to start classes for existing students and new students as per the academic calendar released by it in online mode only. Educational Institutes can shift to offline or classroom teaching only after necessary directives are issued by the MHRD in this regard. To prevent the loss of an academic year by students, MHRD soon directed academic institutes to impart education and continue with the teaching learning process using multiple modes of communication and technology such as the internet calls, SMS, email, E-learning platform and so on, which may not prove to be as effective as claimed by many B-schools. Internet tools have impacted the monitoring, personalized feedback and referrals (Mangunkusumo, 2006), but are yet to establish it as one of the effective modes of teaching and learning. In support of this statement, the results of a survey conducted by Tamajyan in (2008) have reveled that there is a change in attitude towards online learning and students are mentally prepared to participate in e-learning. Some professors also demonstrated positive attitude and learning towards technology as they believed that positive changes are important for both students and teachers. A survey report published by Campus Technology (2020) states that higher education's current shift to online learning may leave a sour taste in the mouths of students and faculty across the country if not done right but every cloud has a silver lining.

Identification Of Opportunities And Challenges – An Analysis:

All educational institutions the world over are impacted by the ongoing pandemic i.e. COVID-19. This pandemic has created the most disastrous effect on the teaching learning process in India in particular where substantial importance is given to the bond shared between the teacher and students. Online learning has come to play just in time as the magic bullet. Can online teaching take over the traditional method of Face to face teaching learning and emerge as winners with equally substantial outcomes, only time will tell. But what we have already realized is that it has opened the pandoras box for education institutions.

Intervention of technology in education has unveiled a plethora of opportunities to create a competitive edge for institutions that intend to dive through the abyss. Educational institutions are trying to come to terms with the guidelines issued by the local authorities, Affiliating Universities, AICTE, UGC, State & Central Government on the Online teaching methodology along with social distanceing norms. Online & Blended mode of teaching-learning, flipped classrooms and computer mediated activities with the use of artificial intelligence, though very rosy in picture has its own challenges. On the one hand it is considered to be easily accessible and teachers can reach out to remote areas as well. On the other hand there are serious questions raised on the affordability of internet packages, flexibility in conducting and attending online sessions and teaching-learning peadagogy along with the lack of human interaction that is contentious in online mode of learning. Lack of human interface, access to technology, changing role of teachers in a technology driven world, affordability of tools required for online teaching-learning, locus of control & participation in online classes are some of the challenges associated with it. However that is just one side of the coin. On the other side we have a horde of opportunities opeing their doors wide and waiting to be utilized. A number of new technological interventions have created a new platform for teaching learning, post COVID-19. Online education is not just creating ease for the learner but also gaining recognition among the employers. Online distance education are getting their due recognition among all stakeholders and is here to stay. The penetration of internet had facilitated distance education, 4G & 5G at affordable prices have now set the momentum for a technology friendly teaching learning environment.

Conclusion

The deadly COVID-19 pandemic has been a major game changer for all educational institutions and MBA institutes are not an exception. Several MBA institutes have infact very gracefully adapted to the changes and converted multiple challenges into meaningful oppurtunities that has resulted in total transition of the management education process fuelled by online teaching. The findings of this research paper can be fruitfully used by researchers intending to do emphirical study on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on online teaching and contribute more meaningfully to this area of research.

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