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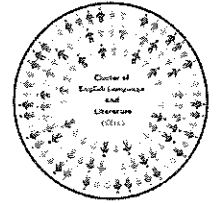
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One Day

## International Web Conference



ON

POST PANDEMIC REJUVENATION OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020

*Organized by*

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Sangvi, Pune 27**

*In Collaboration With*

**Cluster of English Language and Literature (CELL)**

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# CERTIFICATE

This certificate is awarded to

Prof./Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs. GAURI MATEKAR of

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for active participation in the One Day International Web Conference on  
'Post Pandemic Rejuvenation Of Higher Education: A Global Perspective'  
held on Friday, 5th June 2020. He/She has submitted a research paper entitled  
COVID19: Challenges to Opportunities in Higher Education for publication.

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# **COVID19: Challenges to Opportunities in Higher Education**

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## **Abstract:**

COVID-19 locked everything and tried to change the scenario of Higher Education in India. This crisis comes with deep challenges and opportunities or transformation in the education system. E learning becomes the only way out in this locked situation. There are many platforms supported by the Government of India. But it's necessary that students and faculty must be comfortable with technology and bridge the digital divide. Conventional educational model will not become obsolete and blended learning will be the norm after the pandemic.

## **Keywords:**

Pandemic, E-Learning, Higher Education, challenges, opportunities

## **Introduction:**

COVID-19 pandemic is unlike anything we have seen before, creating enormous waves of change affecting our lives, the economy, health care system, and education system. The pandemic has significantly disrupted the higher education sector as well, which is a critical determinant of a country's economic future.

As the pandemic hurled itself on us, schools and colleges were forced to shut their gates overnight. Covid-19 has forced universities across India, and the world indeed, to suspend physical classrooms and shift to online classes. This is a crucial time for the education sector — degree examinations, laboratory activities, entrance tests of various universities, and competitive examinations are all held during this period. Some privileged institutes are shifting to online learning approaches, through using technology to facilitate electronic learning. There is a desperate need for continuing education through alternative learning pathways. It must be a top priority right now, to ensure the interruption to education is as limited as possible.

Such dark ages have happened many times in the past, and with coronavirus, some of these changes are already underway. The coming changes won't be all bad. Cooperation for the greater good is what will get us through this pandemic. What

several futurists and education technologists have been forecasting for long, is now happening.

### **Challenges of E learning:**

The pandemic has led to novel shifts in how we educate our students. The crisis has presented us with a starting point for collective reflection about our educational systems, with the learners at the centre. With every crisis comes deep challenges and opportunities or transformation.

Over the past 20 years, this crossover to online learning was happening in fits and starts, in islands across different— colleges, universities, skill development companies and corporate learning centers. Most policy level changes remained half-hearted attempts stemming from old mindsets.

But switching from traditional classroom and face to face instructor training to computer-based training in a virtual classroom makes the learning experience entirely different for students. Their resistance to change doesn't allow them to adapt to the online learning environment, whereas it takes time for them to get accustomed to the methods of computer-based education.

There are real risks because many of these approaches can be very solitary and didactic when a teacher is just asking students to sit and quietly watch videos, read documents online, or click-through presentations—that's boring. The worst form of learning is to sit passively and listen, and this may be the form that most students will receive during these closures. It serves no one well, especially those who are the furthest behind.

Many feel that online education is not as easy as speaking into the microphone at one end, and connecting a laptop or phone and listening in on the other. There are other challenges and dangers with this form of education which are faced at both ends of the spectrum that our learners as well as faculty members.

Higher education is seldom about exams, classes, or grades. Rather, it is about an experience that prepares a student to become a functioning member of the workforce, with the requisite knowledge, skills, and life experiences.

It is about interactions, broadening of ideas, free-flowing open discussions, debates, and mentoring of each student. While we try to do all of this, a lot gets lost in translation on the online platform. There is substantial learning that is lost when education goes online.

There are so many difficulties, especially for a discipline like law, public administration, education, management, etc. where discussions and debates form the backbone. These

activities cannot engage online in the same manner as in a class. Viva, MOOCs, debates, presentations, and classroom discussions on polarising topics require nuanced perspectives — these lose their flavour when done online.

The online education model cannot replace the physical classroom. Universities are great spaces for young citizens to interact with each other across lines of diversity, get along, have fun, and engage in academic pursuits. Online education should be a supplement.

E-learning is good news, but at its initial stage, it poses certain threats to students. Attitude change and technological literacy would help them gain the confidence to succeed in their courses with a positive vibe.

At the same time, higher education has undergone a major transformation in recent years which includes the increasing supply of online and blended learning (a combination of classroom and online modes); and a rise in internet services in all countries. All of these issues bring with them the need to improve and guarantee quality and recognition and call for innovative measures by governments and institutions which also address equity and access. (Gul)

There are many platforms created to enable online education in India. These are supported by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), and the department of technical education. There also are initiatives like e-PG Pathshala (e-content), SWAYAM (online courses for teachers). Other online platforms aim to increase connectivity with institutions, and accessibility to content. These are utilised for course materials and classes, and running of online modules. They include the National Project on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL), National Knowledge Network, (NKN), and National Academic Depository (NAD), among others. (Seethal and Menaka)

Online education is conducted in two ways. The first is through the use of recorded classes, which, when opened out to the public, are referred to as Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs). The second one is via live online classes conducted as webinars or zoom sessions. Universities require high-speed internet and education delivery platforms or learning management systems, besides stable IT infrastructure and faculty members who are comfortable teaching online. Students also need high-speed internet and computers/mobiles to attend these sessions or watch pre-recorded classes.

Most educators across institutions agree that there is a need to invest in creating standardised online education platforms, and not using apps and Google hangouts only, and to train both students and teachers. Others highlight the necessity to introspect on the nature of these

platforms and how students are taught using different online tools and methods while keeping accessibility and equity challenges in mind. At the same time, there is an urgent need for some investment in infrastructure and additional training for teachers and students would be required.

To attend class online, you need a certain degree of technological proficiency—including the ability to successfully log in, participate in classes, submit work, and communicate with teachers and classmates. This includes understanding online communication etiquette and knowing student rights and responsibilities in an online learning environment.

Many students are not provided with the high bandwidth or the strong internet connection that online courses require and thus fail to catch up with their virtual classmates. Their learning experience becomes problematic. Moreover, most of the online learners live off campus and find it difficult to keep in tune with the technical requirements of the chosen course. Some of them don't even have their computers and seek help in Resource Centres for technical assistance. The only solution to this problem is knowing exactly what kind of technical support they will need for a certain course before enrolling in it, as well as properly equipping themselves for the course's successful completion. This means that learning resources need to be available on every kind of device and it means, for students who don't have access, we still need to find a way to reach them.

The pandemic has transformed the centuries-old, chalk-talk teaching model to one driven by technology. This disruption in the delivery of education is pushing policymakers to figure out how to drive engagement at scale while ensuring inclusive e-learning solutions and tackling the digital divide.

UNESCO provides technical support and advice on innovative approaches to widening access to higher education, courses, and study programmes with an emphasis on developing new types of learning opportunities both on-campus and online. Support to faculty and teachers to adapt and develop traditional tertiary provision for online, distance, and blended-learning modalities is provided. The focus of the UNESCO 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference on Higher Education (2020) will be on universities as communities of lifelong learning.

It is possible to incorporate mentoring, interpersonal relationships and brainstorming, all of that if you know how to deploy the technology. The key success factor is that both students and faculty must be comfortable with technology.

### **New Opportunities:**

The new, total technology-mediated education can be termed as Education 4.0. I think it's an opportunity for the education sector to unite, forge connections across countries and continents, and truly share what works globally. Before this pandemic, we were never able to do this, and we would be missing a big opportunity if we don't try to do that now. Instead of recording a video with the instructional element, it's better to find someone who has done that well already. One of the most important things teachers can do now draws on what others are doing: Form community online, share the burden, and make things a bit easier.

The more engaging learning styles are more interactive ones, and that face-to-face learning is better than 100 percent online learning. We also know blended learning can draw on the best of both worlds and create a better learning experience than one hundred percent face-to-face learning. If, after having done 100 percent online at the end of this, I think it's quite possible that we can then think about rebalancing the mix between face-to-face and online. Teachers will have started to innovate and experiment with these online tools and may want to continue online pedagogies as a result of all this.

### **Conclusion:**

Even in the post COVID-19 era, offline or conventional education models will not become obsolete. They will survive. At best, old processes could be replicated with some modern technology tools for a few courses as an 'experiment', or part of their existing classroom courses as 'blended learning'. However, blended learning will be the norm. Institutions and teachers will blend the two judiciously according to the context and the content.

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