



Rs. 30.00

ISSN- 0566-2257

UNIVERSITY NEWS

A Weekly Journal of Higher Education

Association of Indian Universities

Vol. 59 • No. 16 • April 19-25, 2021

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– Convocation

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#Let'sBeatCoronaTogether

Pragmatic Education Policy: Implementation Strategies in Research and Technology

Y S Siddegowda*

It is predicted that India will be the largest economy in the world by 2030-2032 with an estimated GDP of 9 trillion dollars. It is evident that the nine trillion economy will be driven by knowledge resources and not by the natural resources of the country. In this regard, the present dispensation has introduced a comprehensive National Education Policy 2020. This is in lieu with the PM's recent call on leveraging the Fourth Industrial Revolution to take India to new heights. This policy is a water-shed moment for the Indian Education System, which is bold, comprehensive and envisages large scale transformational well-reasoned reforms.

A competently written compendium, the policy overhauls the existing education system by bringing about a pragmatic shift in its content. In the arena of Higher Education NEP 2020 has outlined an ambitious task of making education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, creating multi entry and exit points in a four year degree program, catalyzing research, improving faculty support and encouraging internationalization. It seeks to bring about a paradigm shift through its transformational reforms in education on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability, and is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge super power. Our huge human resource potential to be realized and tapped needs the effective implementation of this dynamic policy. It is heartening that the policy states education as a public good and public education system is the foundation of a vibrant democratic society. It is public education that contributes to the building of nations, culturally, and technologically and the building of a humane society.

The underlying aims of Higher Education is to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. The Higher Education Institution's will offer holistic and multidisciplinary quality education that will enable students to study one or more specialized areas of interest at a deep level, and also develop character, ethical and Constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, spirit of service, and 21st century capabilities across a range of disciplines including sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, languages, as well as professional, technical, and vocational subjects.

Indian Higher Education is the second largest educational system in the world, and has a great potential to compete with global universities. In order to realize the contributions of higher education

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to nation building, a transformative and innovative approach would be required across all pedals of higher education, from curricula and pedagogy to the use of technology to partnerships, governance and funding. Building rapid progress for future higher education would require a committed and concerted effort from all stakeholders involved i.e. academia, industry, and Government. For capital human capital theory, higher education is an effective tool to develop science and technological capabilities that are required for a standard of living in a global knowledge economy. (e.g. Ding and Zeng, 2015). Economies are moving from manufacturing based economies towards knowledge-based economies that rely heavily on scientific research and a trained workforce. Nations no longer compete for industrial capacity or access to natural resources, but skilled workers, intellectual property and knowledge.

Significance of Research and its Implementation

In today's world, research and innovation constitute the neo-quantum of the academic strength of a nation. India intends to impact the global academia by remarkable contributions in research by expanding the frontiers of human intellect. Hence, it is pivotal to develop a robust system that fosters research and innovation. In this direction, NEP 2020 has proposed the National Research Foundation to facilitate research. This will give an impetus for path breaking research activities. Vibrant research and innovation culture across higher education institutions is of great significance. Research labs and other research organizations are the backbone for innovations in a technology driven competitive world. NRF would play a very crucial role in creating a culture of high quality research and build capacity in disciplines that are critical. There is an urgent need for a significant expansion of research capabilities and output across disciplines.

A String of Suggestions for Implementation is Imperative

NRF should be legislated as the key central funding agency to govern and regulate all research activities. NRF needs to be competitively funded for all disciplines to successfully carry out research through close linkages with government agencies as well as industry and private/ Philanthropic organizations in India. NRF should strive to play a major role in funds by bringing all the funding agencies onto a single platform. It should collaborate partnerships

to harness the collective intelligence of networks and, NRF should advocate an audit and ranking of research at the University level that will act as an impetus to higher educational institutes to bring about quality research. Encouragement should be given to collaborations both national and international through research conferences, exchange programs to enhance productive research is essential.

It is of paramount importance that both the central and state governments allot a fixed fund for research in the budget as a regular budgetary commitment. In order for research to be given due importance and recognition, the research and innovation investment, which currently stands at 0.8% of GDP, needs to be enhanced to at least 2% of GDP. To attract funds, universities should secure intellectual property from their research or to actively court private industries. It should provide a competitive access to government research grants through a merit-based system to incentivize and support Research and Development activity. It should also be necessary to note that there should be role clarity between NRF and other funding agencies such as DST, DAE, ICAR, ICMR, DBT, ICHR, UGC in the allocation of funds and monitoring of research. The funding bodies should be committed to embedding quality and diversity for research in all fields.

It would be pertinent to mention that, the projects funded by NRF should strictly adhere to create a national research credit bank for all those it funds and monitor the output of their research. To foster research publications, integrated national digital library membership should be made compulsory in all HEI's by converting their libraries into digital libraries and there should be access to books, periodicals, journals, patents. This will aid in multiple subscriptions of library resources to be eliminated and thereby decrease government expenditure on library resources.

In order to maintain sustainable quality, the college faculty should be encouraged to publish open access scholarly research papers with copyright certificates from government of India and more significantly patent submissions. As there is a dearth of research guides, the services of retired professors in this direction would be beneficial and highly qualified and proven researchers should head various research agencies. NRF should act as a liaison between researchers and industry, which will further

aid in policy making. Students should be expected to conduct research based on industry internship and publish scholarly papers and own patents during their degree education. It would be edifying to note that all Universities should start their own digital publication units in order to bring out high quality research at par with global indexing agencies.

Significance of Research Universities

Research is a tool for building knowledge, facilitating learning and an essential component in generating knowledge. Research Universities have the capacity to produce powerful academic structures and make it possible for nations to compete in a sophisticated, global and in-depth knowledge economy. These universities are intrinsic to the success of any contemporary, knowledge-based economy. Our research universities should be nationally and internationally recognized for the quality of its research and the breadth of its research outputs and create an environment that is entirely conducive to scholarly pursuits. The university should hone research on areas of critical importance and represent a perfect choice for international students looking to get involved in world-class research in an innovative, diverse and welcoming environment. There should be diverse research programs that engage in a complex, global society, instilled with an awareness of issues in sustainability alongside an in-depth understanding of varied cultures and differing international perspectives. The university should be known for its ground-breaking education model, global character and cross-disciplinary approach to its academics and research. The research university through its high – quality programs and impactful research must seek to expand knowledge through basic and applied research, serving diverse economic, cultural and societal needs of its local, state, national and international constituencies. Research universities should overcome the trend of becoming more and more specialized, and instead try to integrate undergraduate teaching and research to create a true community of scholars. Nobel Prize winners should be associated with research universities for guidance and direction. Research Universities should attract scientists, scholars and students from around the globe to carry out cutting-edge research and learn from leading authorities. These universities require investment in State-of-the-art facilities. Specialized research infrastructure is the key to the production of quality scientific discovery. A Research Excellence Framework for assessing

quality of research is essential. It should include all forms of research output that should be assessed on a fair and equal basis, including interdisciplinary and collaborative research.

Implementation Pathways for Research Intensive Universities

Research Universities should form regional academic alliances to build enough strength in selected fields to promote participation in global science. There should be a linkage to global academic system of science and scholarship so to understand advanced scientific developments and participate selectively in them. There should be creation of a differentiated academic system for research Universities with diverse missions, structures and patterns of funding for at least 80% of competitive research funds. Universities too should take the onus for long term financial sustainability for research through proactive diversification with enterprises including cross-border Consortia, Foundations and other private sources. At the National level a Flagship Research University should be established for leadership in higher education. The funding of research universities and merger of research universities to provide better economies of scale greatly aids in economic use of funds. Funding of research Universities must be available on a sustained basis. Social Sciences and humanities should be included alongside hard sciences. An approximate mix of funding sources and regulated allocation mechanism encourage innovative research ideas. Research universities need autonomy to shape their own programs, manage their budgets and the academic community. Faculty should be highly trained, committed to research and scholarship. Local research universities need to focus on local needs by bringing international scientific trends to bear on local problems and contribute to the development of domestic industry, agriculture and society. Research universities have a responsibility to disseminate research and analysis in local languages. Research Universities provide the skills needed by 21st century economies and societies and reflect the best academic values.

The role of research Universities in advancing society and the economy is multi-faceted and highly important. In fact, the importance is so high, it is crucial for national leaders and decision makers to have a thorough and shared understanding of the functional benefits generated by them.

Internationalization of Education-Measures for Implementation

Vishwa Guru, envisioning India as a global destination for providing premium education at affordable costs is a right step for internationalization of education. The encouragement to high performing Indian Universities to set up campuses abroad and permitting selected Universities among top 100 Universities in the world, to operate in India is laudable. To start with the government should ensure only not for profit institutions offering multiple programs to set up campuses in the country. Measures should be taken to establish an overall policy reform that encompasses the specific courses to be offered, exchange programs, affiliation, international scholarships, international collaboration, funding and networking activities that are to be taken up. Steps should be taken to synchronize Indian credit system with international credit systems and enable credit transfer between Indian and international credit systems.

Digital Infrastructure and Adoption of Technology

Technology is the cornerstone to democratize education and it can create powerful communities. It has played a pivotal role in enabling the shift, especially in cities and towns with high speed internet connectivity. In the 21st century, knowledge of internet usage is a fundamental human right considered at par with reading and writing. The policy is vocal about digitalization in education, but the challenges of disparity in between regions, population, classes, delayed infrastructure development, bandwidth availability should be addressed. The most important element that supports the use of technology in the educational system is the internet. E-learning has become one of the fastest moving trends in education and poses a promising alternative to traditional learning. Knowledge of internet usage is a fundamental aspect that should be inclusive.

The policy lays emphasis on leveraging the benefits of technology in making the youth future ready. This noble initiative will be successful only if the government works on improving the basic infrastructure that will support the digital infrastructures as majority of the rural institutions lack digital class-rooms, remote expertise driven teaching models, AR/VR tools that are essential to bridge the gap between physical teaching and laboratory. It has been proposed that the key to the continued

viability of institutions of higher education in light of increased competition in the global market place will be their adoption of learning technologies that increase flexibility, access and convenience (Smith and Oliver, 2000).

Technology plays an important role in facilitating learning. It has facilitated many effective educational methodologies such as self-directed, independent and collaborative learning. It can connect people whom, separated by schedule and location, might otherwise not be able learn from each other. And it can provide the opportunity of receiving immediate feedback assessment, making learning appear comparatively more achievable than it would without instant feedback. The strategic expansion of the higher education system to increase access to education for all social groups and geographies through virtual class rooms becomes a reality only when, especially in rural areas, internet connectivity is easily accessible, given the fact that it is nearly non-existent, making digital learning a major challenge even after tremendous growth of ICT. This calls for a timely summon to enhance the use of technology in education to achieve greater understanding by students across all disciplines.

Research has demonstrated that smartphone applications and the internet are introducing a new degree of responsiveness and flexibility, within educational process. This responsiveness is facilitated by the ease with which content can be updated, instruction can be personalized, information can be accessed, information can be distributed, and content can be standardized. (M.J. Rosenberg, John Cradler)

In order to realize the vision of NEP 2020, there should be experiential learning and industry-academia partnerships. In this context, blended and online learning will be crucial and hence it is important that the government allocate appropriate funds to develop digital infrastructure in all areas of the country. Many students rely on technology for their academic needs; technology contributes to the long-term retention of knowledge and acquisition of skills such as interpersonal communication, psychomotor and cognitive skills within different courses.

We have witnessed a tremendous growth in the information and communication technologies that has revolutionized the business practices and strategies of entire industries and the field of higher education is not exception to this phenomenal. Application of

information technologies in the education sector is also referred as educational technologies

In the upcoming budget, there should be allocation of funds to develop digital infrastructure across the nation, especially in rural India. The Government needs to evaluate the ground situation and spend on assets for the long run that includes smart class rooms, internet connection and skill up-gradation of teachers in line with NEP–2020. Teachers also need to adapt to the changing pedagogy and restructure their teaching methodologies. It has also been pointed out that, by comparison, those with a high level of technology in their teaching may be better at instilling students with a desire to learn and the development of critical thinking skills. (D.Ritchie, K.Wiburg)

The budget should provide and incentivize to set up research and technology up-gradation and accessibility. The private sector should also fund through their own resources or through CSR on research and technology .External commercial borrowing and Foreign Direct investment is essential to boost quality and research.

The policy needs to be very loud and clear on the guidelines to increase digital literacy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, NEP–2020 is truly visionary, aspirational and comprehensive, bringing about a paradigm shift in all spheres of education. Strategic planning and a larger vision that correlates economic development to transformation in the education

sector, particularly in higher education and research will go a long way in making our nation globally competitive. The newness of the vision shall focus on the genius and capability of our people and our civilizational ethos, create the desired intellectual, economic, and social value and also prepare the road-map to achieve the vision, aligned with our excellent policy foundation. We look forward earnestly with a sense of pride and hope for its successful implementation.

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Performance Evaluation of College Principals: A Need for Creating Scope for Career Growth[#]

R T Bedre*

The higher education sector across the world is evolving as an industry. Education now considered as a commodity where society and students are the customers and Higher Education Institution (HEI) is the service provider. The payer should receive what s/he pays for. It has compelled the governments to be the key protectors and monitors of the system to see that quality is maintained in the higher education sector as it transforms the human energy into human resource. In India the quality assurance agency like National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA) are the result of this approach of the government. It evaluates the performance of the HEIs with its prefixed parameters and grades them accordingly for the better convenience and choice for the learners. In the course of time, NAAC has made a good number of revisions in its functioning and parameters. The present new framework is one such. It is well proven fact that time bound pay revisions of the employees in the HEIs are made in tune with the requirement of quality enhancement. The Performance Based Appraisal System-Academic Performance Index (PBAS-API) is one such appraisal method for the teachers, librarians and directors of the physical education at the various stages of promotions under career advancement scheme. However, the evaluation of the performance of the captains of the Colleges has escaped the attention of the policy makers in HE in India. The present paper attempts to suggest one such system and parameters to judge the performance of the college principals.

The fifth pay commission for the university and college academic staff had the self-appraisal system for the fresh/direct appointments and promotions under Career Advancement Scheme (CAS). This self-appraisal system did not have the method of assessing the performance of the academic staff in terms of numerical marking, it only considered the stipulated span of service and participation in the training programmes like Orientation Programmes and Refresher Courses. The contributions in research and publication had merely mention in the form; therefore,

it had become a matter for formality for the teachers and screening committee members involved therein.

The sixth pay commission introduced in 2006 replaced the prevailing system with the Performance Based Appraisal System and devised the Academic Performance Indicator format. It devised a format divided into three major categories—Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Related Activities, Professional Development, Co-Curricular and Extension Activities, Research and Academic Contributions - and having a good number of sub-categories having allotted fix marks for each sub-category and fixed a minimum number of score to be earned by the employees for the promotions at various levels. The third category received maximum focus of all and the academic staff particularly engaged in teaching began to devote more efforts thereon (UGC 30, June 2010). Since the introduction of the PBAS-API, it faced various inadequacies and challenges, and consequently, it underwent minor and major changes in terms of methods of calculating the score in the teaching-learning, evaluation work, extension activities, capping for paper presentation and invited lectures, clubbing the scores of category II and III etc (UGC Regulations, 3rd Amendment, 2016). UGC also brought revisions in the calculation of research and academic contributions in terms of reducing scores for paper presentation and invited lectures score for research guidance, research projects (UGC Regulations 4th Amendment, 2016). To this date, UGC has introduced four major amendments in its guidelines. In Nov 2016, UGC made clarification regarding the reappointment of the incumbent principals and detailed the constitution of the external peer review committee but again without the methods and parameters for the same (UGC, Notice, 29 Nov 2016). The MHRD notification dated on 2nd November, 2017 sent to UGC did not make any major changes in case of principals except two cadres of college principals which goes as: the pay of Principals in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Colleges shall be (i) Undergraduate Colleges: The pay of Principals shall be equivalent to the pay of Associate Professor i.e. Academic Level 13A with rationalized entry pay of Rs. ,31 ,400/-, with the existing special allowance of Rs.2000/- per month.(ii) Post Graduate Colleges: The pay of Principals shall be equivalent to the pay of Professor i.e. at level Academic Level 14 with rationalized entry pay of Rs.1,44,200/-

[#]Reprinted from *University News*, Vol 58 (38) September 21-27, 2020.

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with the existing special allowance of Rs.3000/- per month.

A major paradox seen in the further extended guidelines of the 7th CPC is that an associate professor after having completed three years may be found eligible for the designation and monetary benefit of professor. It notes its eligibility as: Associate Professors who have completed three years of service in Academic Level 13A. However, though the college principals particularly working in UG colleges in the pay band of Rs.1, 31, 400/- will remain in the same pay band, and s/he will be deprived of the designation of the professor, on the other hand, an associate professor will be placed in the professor's pay scale i.e. Rs.1 ,44,200/-.

In fact, the eligibilities for the post of principal and that of professor do not differ much except difference of score of 10 marks in Research and Academic Contribution. Quite interestingly one of the major eligibilities laid down in the July 2018 Notification for the post of college principal is: Professor/Associate Professor with a total service/ experience of at least fifteen years of teaching/research in Universities, Colleges and other institutions of higher education.

In short, the principals having been asked to meet the requirements prescribed for the post of professors and deprived of the latter's designation and monetary benefits under CAS and his/her subordinate associate professors will enjoy benefits of designation of professor under CAS.

Need of the Evaluation Method and Parameters

The number of the posts of principals is almost equal to those of librarians and directors of physical education. It is quite surprising that UGC has devised separate PBAS-API formats for college /university teachers, librarians and directors of the physical education. However, the key person of the higher education, the principal of the college and director of a higher education institution has been deprived of any method to assess his/her performance as principal/director.

These administrators face demand of high expectations from the stakeholders of the higher education system. The State Government of Maharashtra had introduced a novel idea of KPI in discussion for the assessment of university administration (vice chancellors and other officers of universities) in the state in the month of Aug 2011, which has been into abeyance since then. At present, the principals and directors have to present their performance in the same format devised for the teachers despite the fact that the

principals and directors discharge a quite different type of duties from the teachers.

The stipulated eligibilities for the post of principal/director laid down by UGC make it explicit that it expects principal/director to be an academician of highest merit. These eligibilities are paramount to that of a professor in university (long standing of 15 years, designation as an associate professor, and 400 score from the category III- Research and Academic Contributions and some universities expect to be a recognized guide (State Govt. of Maharashtra 15 Feb 2011).

In nutshell, the person desirous to be principal /director has to prove that s/he is an acclaimed and experienced academician. However, once the person becomes a principal/director, s/he fails to spare time for his academic and research activities, as s/he has to devote time for administrative duties that includes everything under the sky of the college/institute campus apart from statutory commitments towards university, state government, UGC and society. There is no separate PBAS-API for the principals. It may be because UGC pay revision guidelines have made no provisions for the principals. On the other hand, the professors of the university have opportunity to be promoted in the grade pay of Rs 12,000 when they work for three years in the grade of Rs. 10,000 (UGC Regulations, 2nd Amendment, 2013. Therefore, the teachers working as the principal find the post of the principal as the final/ last position and finally find themselves in the lethargic stage, as they have neither time nor inclination for developing their CV in terms of PBAS API format. Consequently, very select few principals find themselves in the higher posts like registrars and vice chancellors for the appointments of which research performance is weighed more than the administrative skills. Their administrative achievements/ performance are not duly assessed as there has been no proper method for this purpose. Incentives in terms of promotions under CAS, special increments instead of allowances and prospects for future opportunities are the universal methods employed to increase the efficiency of the employees. This needs to be applied to the principals too.

Considering these facts, the college principals/ directors do need a separate evaluation method based on the nature of duties they perform and expectations of the higher education stake holders they serve. A modest attempt is made here to present a format to evaluate the performance of the principals. Less weightage need to be given to his teaching, research and publication while assessing his/her performance as the principal.

Table 1: Principals' Performance Indicator

I A	Whether the college/ institution is accredited by NAAC or equivalent agency?	
	If Yes,	
	Grade A++	50
	A+	45
	A	40
	B++	35
	B+	30
	B	25
	C++	20
	SSR submitted	15
	IEQA submitted	10
	LOI submitted	05
I B	Whether the college/ institution is included u/s 2(f) & 12 (B) of UGC?	
	If Yes,	
	Whether it is included in your incumbency period	25
	If applied in your period	10
I C	Whether the college/ institution has received grants from UGC?	
	If Yes,	
	Has the college received College Development Assistance? If yes	20
	If applied	04
	Has the college received grants for IQAC? If Yes	10
	If applied	02
	Has the college received grants under Sports Development Scheme? If yes	20
	If applied	02
	Has the college received special grant for the construction of women's hostel? If applied	20
		02
	Has the college received grants under remedial coaching classes Scheme? If yes	10
	If applied	01
	Has the college received grants to establish chair under Scheme of Epoch Making Thinkers? If yes	10
	If applied	01
	Has the college received grants to organize seminar/conferences? If yes	10 per event
	If applied	02
	Has the college received grants to undertake major research projects? If yes	10 per project
	If applied	02
	Has the college received grants to undertake minor research projects? If yes	05 per project
	If applied	01

	Has the teachers of college teachers availed teacher fellowships under FDP? If yes	05 per faculty member
	If applied	01
ID	Whether the college/ institution is recognized as CPE? If Yes,	
	If awarded	25
	If applied	10
I E	Whether the college/ institution is recognized as an autonomous institution?	
	If recognized	50
	If applied	10
IF	Whether the college/ institution has received an ISO certification?	
	If Yes,	10
	If applied	02
IG	Whether the academic audit of the college/ institution has been made?	
	If Yes,	10
	If applied	02
IH	Whether the Green audit of the college/ institution has been made?	
	If Yes,	10
	If applied	04
II	Whether the energy audit of the college/ institution has been made?	
	If yes	
	Till June of the next financial year	10
	If not	00
IJ	Annual Accounting	
	Annual accounting completed and reports received	
	Till June of the next financial year	12
	Till Sept of the next financial year	09
	Till Dec of the next financial year	06
	Till March of the next financial year	03

I IA	Students' performance		
	Performance in university examination		
	Percentage of results	Above 90%	15
		Above 80%	12
		Above 70%	09
		Above 60%	05
		Less than 60%	05
IIB	Performance in sports events		
	Position earned in national level events	Winner	15
		Runner up	12
		Participation	06
	Position earned in state level events	Winner	10
		Runner up	08
		Participation	06
	Position earned in inter collegiate level events	Winner	05
		Runner up	03
		Participation	02

IIC	Performance in cultural events		
	Position earned in national level events	Winner	15
		Runner up	12
		Participation	06
	Position earned in state level events	Winner	10
		Runner up	08
		Participation	06
	Position earned in inter collegiate level events	Winner	05
		Runner up	03
	Participation	02	
IID	Performance in co-curricular activities		
	Position earned in national level events	Winner	15
		Runner up	12
		Participation	06
	Position earned in state level events	Winner	10
		Runner up	08
		Participation	06
	Position earned in inter collegiate level events	Winner	05
		Runner up	03
	Participation	02	

IIIA	Faculty Development		
	Teachers promoted under CAS		
		100%	20
		80%	15
		60%	10
		40%	05
		Less than 40%	00
	Research encouragement through local funds	If Yes	10
		If No	00
	Whether the service books of the college employees are updated	If yes	2 marks per employee
		If no	00
	Pension Cases	Submitted within 6 months before retirement	10
		Within 3 months before retirement	05
	In the month of retirement	02	

IIIB	Student welfare schemes		
	Whether the placement cell for students is established	If Yes	02
		If No	00
III C	Whether the earn and learn scheme for students is implemented		
		If Yes	10
		If No	00

IIID	Innovative schemes for students	If Yes	10
		If No	00
	Students adoption scheme	If Yes	05
		If No	00
	Fee waiving scheme	If Yes	05
		If No	00
IIIE	Whether the college publishes Prospectus every year		
	Students adoption scheme	If Yes	05
		If No	00
IIIF	Whether the college publishes annual issue every year		
		If ten issues	10
		If five issue	05
		If One issue	01
IIIG	Whether the college conducts elections to the Students' Council		
		If yes	10
		If No	00
III H	Whether the college has taken measures towards ensuring safety of girl students		
	Anti –ragging committee	If yes	5
	Committee against sexual harassment	If yes	5
	Suggestion box	If yes	5
	Sanitary napkin vendor	If yes	10

III-I	Special Achievements of the college		
	Award to college	Award to College from University	15
	Award to teacher	from university	5
		From NGO	2
	Award to principal	From the state	10
		Award from university	5
		From NGO	02
	Academic award to students	From the state government	20
	From the university	10	

IIIJ	Contribution to University Management		
	Individual contribution	As a Dean	15
		As a Member of Management Council	10
		As a Chairman of BoS	5
		As a member of Academic council	4
		As a Member of BoS	3
		As a Senate Member	2
	Teachers' contribution	As a Dean	5 per teacher
		As a Member of Management Council	4 per teacher

		As a Chairman of BoS	3 per teacher
		As a member of Academic council	2 per teacher
		As a Member of BoS	1 per teacher
III K	Contribution to Social/Corporate Management (excluding political)		
	Individual contribution		2 marks per position
	Teachers' contribution		1 per teacher

This is to admit here that the present format is an attempt at primary level, and not exhaustive. This is the first step in the direction of devising a format to assess the performance of the principals/ directors as the administrators. It needs additions, deletions and editing too. In case of principals' evaluation, the weightage given on the Research and Academic Contributions needs to be reduced and to be laid on the administrative achievements. Suggestions and positive criticism from the sincere academicians and administrators are expected on this write up.

Recommendations

1. There should be a proper systematic method to evaluate the performance of the principals which could be useful for further promotions and opportunities.
2. Such proposed evaluation method should take into consideration the nature of responsibilities the principals are subjected to discharge.
3. The promotion opportunities should be offered to the college principals at par with the professors in terms of designation and monetary gains under CAS.
4. Distinction of pay must be maintained between the principals and his/her colleagues.
5. The tenure based nature of the post of the principals should be removed as it has been challenged in the High Court of Maharashtra.

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Examinations System of Higher Education in India : Some Suggestions to Improve

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India is the second largest country of today's world with a population of 1200 million. The University Grants Commission (UGC) is the apex body in this country which looks after the higher education. As per 2018-19 report of All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) there are 962 universities and 47,367 colleges including stand alone institutions imparting higher education in the field of Agriculture, Veterinary sciences, Medicine, Engineering and Technology, Commerce and Management, Science, Law, Arts which includes Humanities, Social Sciences, Languages etc. and others such as Library and Information science, Fine Arts, Journalism and Mass Communication etc. Total number of students enrolled in higher education during the academic session 2018-19 were more than 37 million. Approximately half the number of total 962 universities are of affiliating nature and another half include Central Universities, Private Universities and Deemed to be Universities. The total number of students registered with each of affiliating universities ranges from 5000 to 2 lacs approx.

Examinations

In India, in particular, in affiliating universities the centralized system of examinations is followed. The examinations of all academic programs of a college are conducted by the parent university twice in a year and in very few cases once in a year. To conduct the examinations of large number of students is a very big exercise which consists of three phases namely pre-conduct, conduct and post-conduct. The entire responsibility of examinations lies with the Controller of Examinations (CoE) which is a statutory post in each of the universities. Activities of three phases are explained below.

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Pre-Conduct Phase

This phase starts with the opening of the semester and first of all date-sheets or schedule of examinations are prepared in such a manner that there is no clash of examinations of any two or more courses and then requests are sent to teachers for setting of question papers, the names of such teachers are supplied by Board of Studies of various teaching departments offering different courses. Question papers of each course are generally set by two different teachers and then the final question paper is selected by the Controller of Examinations (CoE). After the close of semester classes, names of eligible students are supplied by different departments and institutions to the university along with prescribed fees. Based upon the list of eligible students Admit Cards of students are generated by the university which permits them to appear in the examinations.

All the material used to conduct the examinations in a smooth manner like blank Answer Books, Instructions booklets, different kind of envelopes etc. are supplied by the university to the examination centers which are created with the approval of CoE. Each examination center conduct the examination of approx. 240 to 300 candidates and these centers are generally created in the institutions where students are admitted for their studies. Teachers from the university and affiliated institutes are deputed by the university to act as center superintendents, deputy superintendents, invigilators and supporting staff. Generally Centre superintendents and deputy superintendents are appointed by the university and rest of the staff is deputed by the head of the institution where an examination centre is created. In addition, Head of the institution act as supdt-in-chief and flying squads or/and observers are deputed by CoE to conduct the examinations in a fair and transparent manner. In this phase all preparations takes place so that the examinations run without any problems as per the schedule/date-sheet.

Conduct Phase

This phase starts after the closing of semester classes and with the joining of Centre superintendent at the examination centre. He takes all measures so that examinations run in a smooth manner. Centre supdt. is responsible to prepare seating plans for students and depute invigilators in different rooms as per requirement. Generally one invigilator is deputed for thirty students. He is custodian of question papers which are supplied by the university on the day of examination or 2/3 days prior to the date of examination. The sealed envelope containing question papers are opened fifteen minutes before the start of examination in the presence of deputy superintendant and Centre clerk and an opening certificate is prepared in this regard which is duly signed by Centre superintendant, deputy superintendant and centre clerk explicitly certifying that the question paper was opened at a particular time and date. The question papers along with blank Answer Books are handed over to the invigilators who distribute these to eligible candidates in different rooms of the examination centre. During the examinations students are advised not to leave their seat before half the time of total time of examination which is generally of three hours duration. The students are thoroughly checked for any unwanted materials like written slips, mobile phones or any other electronic device. In addition to this observers or flying squads also inspect the examination Centers. If any student found using unfair means their answer books are sent separately to the university and those students have to appear before an unfair means cases committee which award them the punishment depending upon their fault. Even help of local police and administration is sought to avoid any outside disturbance at the examination Centers. After the examination is over the written Answer Books of the students are sealed in an envelope and are sent-back to the university on the same day. In this manner examination of each course is conducted and this phase continues approx. for 30 days depending upon the total number of courses. This is very crucial phase of Indian examination system and the universities remain in headlines of local print media during this phase. The CoE and the entire examination wing of the university remain on toes during this phase.

Post-Conduct Phase

After the examinations are over, the Answer scripts received from different examination centers

are assigned confidential codes so that these can be sent to evaluators for the purpose of evaluation. For this purpose two types of modes are adopted. Either the Answer Scripts are directly supplied to evaluators or most of the universities create Spot-Evaluation Centers in some selected affiliated institutes. Teachers are called on these Evaluation Centers and asked to evaluate the Answer Books of their subjects. Each evaluator is asked to evaluate not more than approx. 40 Answer Books on a single day. After evaluation, the Answer Scripts are sent back to the university where de-coding takes place and awards are ported against the Roll Numbers of the candidates. After all compilation and calculations results are prepared which are then published in local newspapers or placed on university website. The Detailed Marks Cards (DMC) of the candidates are dispatched to the concerned institutions and students are directed to apply for re-evaluation within 15 to 30 days from the date of issue of DMC, in case candidate has any doubt about the marks obtained. Moreover, students can inspect or can get a photo copy of his/her Answer Script under Right to Information (RTI) Act. This phase is over after declaration of results but before the end of this phase again Pre-conduct phase starts for the next semester examinations. How much time the university takes to declare the results depends on the number of students enrolled with the university and the technology used by the university. But in many cases the results are declared just before the start of next semester examinations. Due to this delay in declaration of results students cannot plan for their re-appear examinations and sometimes they are not able to apply for admission to some good institutes for further studies and in some cases this delay is a big hurdle in their job opportunities.

Re-Evaluation

The students get their DMC after declaration of results. In most of the universities there is provision under which if a student is not satisfied with his/her result then he/she can apply for re-evaluation of his/her Answer Scripts of some particular subject/course. The students have to apply within a prescribed time limit and with certain amount as fees of re-evaluation. The Answer Scripts of those students who have applied for re-evaluation are got evaluated by university. Each university has its own set of re-evaluation rules. But maximum number of universities have adopted the following rule of re-evaluation.

If the re-evaluated score is within 15% of the original score the average of these two scores is treated as the final score. Otherwise the Answer script is sent to second re-evaluator for his/her opinion. In such cases out of three scores average of those two scores is taken as final score which are closest among the three scores. Sometimes this process of re-evaluation takes such a long time that the students do not get benefit of it. In addition to re-evaluation students can get their Answer Scripts re-checked which means he/she can inspect the Answer Script and check whether the Answer book is properly checked or not.

Unfair Means Cases (UMC)

During the examinations some students use various kinds of unfair means to pass the examinations like chits of notes, pages of books, mobile phones or any other electronic device. In some cases it has been detected that students even get the devices stitched in their shirts. The staff deputed to conduct the examinations generally checks the students for unfair means, if any student found using unfair means or he/she misbehaves with the staff deputed at the examination Centre then his/her Answer Book is separately sent to the University explicitly mentioning that the student has been found using unfair means. The university then appoint a UMC standing committee which examine all such cases and recommend the punishment to be awarded depending on the gravity of the fault of the students. The punishment varies from cancellation of the examination of one particular subject/course to the cancellation of entire examination of the candidate. In some very rare cases student may be debarred to appear in any of the university examinations up to 2 to 3 years.

Examination Wing

All the jobs related to Examinations like conduct of examinations, paper setting, evaluation of Answer Books, Re-evaluation and declaration of Results are handled by the Examination wing of the University which is headed by CoE. Keeping in view the variety of jobs and their complexity the Examination wing is generally further splitted into four branches, namely Conduct Branch, Secrecy Branch, Result(s) Branch and Re-evaluation Branch. Table-1 describes the duties of each branch.

Table -1: Branch-wise Duties for Conduct of Examination

Sr. No.	Branch	Work Assigned
1.	Conduct Branch	(i) To prepare Date-sheets (ii) Receipt of list of eligible students from Teaching Depts./Institutes. (iii) Issuance of Admit Cards. (iv) Creation of Examination centers. (v) To depute the officials for conduct of examinations. (vi) To supply the material related to examinations at the examination Centers. (vii) To handle unfair means cases.
2.	Secrecy Branch	(i) To get the question papers set as per the syllabus and scheme of examinations. (ii) To get the question papers printed as per requirement from confidential printer. (iii) To conduct the viva-voce examinations, if any, for all academic programs. (iv) Coding and De-coding of written Answer Books. (v) Supply of photocopy of Answer Books under RTI Act.
3.	Result(s) Branch	(i) To prepare the results. (ii) To publish the result of all academic programs. (iii) Issuance of DMCs (iv) To settle the complaints regarding question papers. (v) To verify the documents of pass out candidates. (vi) Issuance of Degree Certificates. (vii) Conduction of convocation function.
4.	Re-evaluation Branch	(i) To handle re-evaluation cases. (ii) Re-checking of Answer Books.

In addition to duties mentioned against each branch, any other job can be assigned by CoE. Now-a-days, some of the affiliating Universities, particularly technical universities, have set-up an Electronic Data Processing (EDP) Centre where many jobs related to Result(s) branch and Conduct branch are handled online.

Some Remedial Measures to Improve the Present Examination System

If we look at the present scenario there is need

for complete overhauling of present examination system. In the present system, in most of the universities, results are delayed because of many manual processes. Therefore it is need of the hour to use technology so that the students do not suffer due to late declaration of results. It should be made mandatory for each university to declare the results within 30 or 40 days after the last examination. Following measures are suggested in this regard.

- I. Examination wing of each university should have its Electronic Data Processing Centre with competent manpower and equipments. In addition Centre of Excellence for Examinations Reforms should be established in each State at least in one University which can produce different online modules for the benefit of each university.
- II. Answer Books should be tagged with an OMR sheet which consist of three pre formatted parts. Part I should have details of students name and Roll number where as part II & part III can be utilized to file the marks awarded by the evaluators. All the three parts should have same bar codes. This will save the time used in coding and de-coding and the scanning of these parts will directly port the marks against the roll numbers of the candidates. In addition this will put a check on the errors committed by personals of examination wing in transferring the awards.
- III. Internal assessment awards and practical awards of the candidates should be submitted online through university website. Even the awards of end semester examination can be submitted online provided teachers are provided unique user names and passwords. By doing so the errors committed during scanning can be eliminated.
- IV. Many a times evaluators takes unnecessarily long time to evaluate the Answer Scripts. It should be made mandatory for each teacher to evaluate the Answer Books within a prescribed

time limit and no exception should be granted in this regard.

- V. Examination related duties should be made mandatory by State and Central governments so that teachers and other supporting staff finishes their jobs related to examinations in time.
- VI. Question papers be got set online in password protected files.

There is a school of thought in this country which suggest that the Examination & Evaluation system of North America and Europe may be adopted to improve the existing system. But keeping in view the diversity of India culture and not so mature academic environment that type of system shall not work. Few Indian states in past adopted the system of complete & comprehensive internal evaluation but its results were not encouraging rather this type of approach reduced the quality.

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Online Teaching and Learning Experiences during COVID-19 Lockdowns: Ten Lessons for Higher Education Institutions

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India has one of the largest systems of higher education in the world with 993 Universities, 39931 Colleges, 10725 standalone Institutions, 26.3 per cent gross enrolment ratio, 37.4 million students, and 1.41 million teachers. Indian higher education system is dominated by traditional institutions (often called as face to face mode educational institutions), as there are only 16 Open and 110 dual-mode Universities, and enrolment in distance education constitutes about only 10.62 per cent of the total enrolment in higher education (MHRD, 2019). Therefore, it is obvious to conclude that majority of teaching and learning in the higher education sector in India is conducted through face to face mode in classroom situations and contact between teachers and taught deemed necessary to achieve any educational objective. Learners are mainly assessed through internal and external examinations and Degrees are awarded after they get required scores in the final examination. These examinations are also conducted mostly in offline mode and in-person settings. Needless to say, the traditional or face to face mode is seen as the most dominant and prestigious mode of teaching and learning in higher education among academic institutions, faculty members, and the public in India.

Online Teaching and Learning Initiatives by HEIs during COVID-19 Lockdown

In March 2020, the majority of the higher education institutions (HEIs) in India were busy with completing the prescribed syllabus. The institutions were also preparing to start semester-end examinations in April 2020. Suddenly, Corona virus has taken the world by surprise, and the severity of COVID-19 disease forced governments all over the world to go for complete lockdowns. Lockdown in whole India was administered on 25th March, 2020 for 21 days in the first phase, and since then it is continuing so

far. This sudden Lockdown caught HEIs unguarded and clueless as they have to abruptly end the ongoing teaching, learning, and examination related activities. This sudden closure started affecting studies and HEIs were forced to comprehend how they will manage the losses of students. And then, the HEIs realized that the only choice left for them to face this situation is to migrate to the online mode of teaching and learning.

Considering this situation, less prepared, and under sourced faculty members of the HEIs were asked to continue teaching and learning via online mode. Most importantly, the calls to start online teaching and learning came via Government(s) and regulatory bodies. The majority of faculty members in traditional HEIs were not prepared to switch to online mode for teaching and learning. For the majority of faculty members, it was their first real experience to experience online teaching. Fortunately, the majority of these faculty members were having access to smartphones, internet, and experience of using online social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. And these personalized tools and experiences helped them to put their first steps in the world of online teaching. This experience can best be described by using the words of Neil Armstrong, the first person to walk on the moon, “*That’s one small step for me, one giant leap for traditional teaching world.*” Let’s have a look at the experiences and initiatives of such faculty members of HEIs.

Types of Tools and Technologies Used

Terms and tools like online Learning Management System (LMS), learning portal, customized online teaching, etc, still not exist in the lexicon of the majority of HEIs in India. When directives to continue teaching and learning during lockdown came, institutions, in general, were neither having any learning management systems nor any institutional mechanism to connect and deliver content to the students. Fortunately, WhatsApp, one of the most popular social messaging platforms among faculty members, emerged as savior. Teachers started using it for group discussions, connectivity, and supply of material in a different format. This became their

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first and foremost medium of communication and contact. When teachers were pushed to deliver online lectures (in a similar format as they do in traditional classrooms), they started searching free of cost tools to do this and landed on apps like Zoom, Google Duo, Skype, Google Meet, Webex, Microsoft Team, etc.

The ease of use and facility to connect to 100 users for free, made Zoom as one of the most used apps by teachers for online teaching. But news about security issues regarding the theft of data and subsequent advisory of security labs and the Ministry of Home Affairs forced educators to look for other alternatives, such as Google meet. For sharing content, giving assignments, and conducting tests, teachers mainly used Google Classroom, Edmodo, and tools of similar nature. YouTube also became a preferred mode of visual communication during the lockdown. Teachers recorded their lectures with the help of their mobile camera and placed them on YouTube for viewing of students. Smartphones became a lifeline for many teachers, and they used them in many ways. And those who have not found solace anywhere else used email and telephony.

Types of Teaching and Learning Activities Performed

Lockdown presented a herculean task before faculty members of HEIs, the task was to plan and conduct teaching activities to accommodate a new set of mechanisms and environment. As an initial step, teachers started delivering scanned versions of printed materials through emails and apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, etc. Some of them also delivered pre-recorded short and concise videos and voice lectures through these platforms so that the students having low bandwidth internet connection may also use it. Teachers formed WhatsApp groups to send study material, assignment, and to initiate discussion on students' related problems. Teachers also approached students through phone calls to solve their problems. A good number of teachers started taking online classes and organized webinars, workshops, seminars, and tutorials for students by using platforms like Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet, etc. Some also experimented by organizing online quizzes and creative competitions.

HEIs also directed the teachers to upload lectures/content on the institutional website or any other site of their choice. Attempts have also been made to organize virtual practical classes. For

example, Father Muller Medical College in Mangaluru, Karnataka conducted virtual surgery classes for its students (Abrar & Ishwar, 2020). During this period, the focus of HEIs remained on the delivery of content related to the curriculum. Libraries were asked to provide E-books/content to facilitate teaching and learning. Students were advised and motivated to use learning resources provided by governments and non-governmental agencies in different forms and formats. This advocacy mainly included taking benefit of the ongoing initiatives by MHRD like SWAYAM, SWAYAMPBHA, National Digital Library, e-PG Pathshala, Shodhganga, e-ShodhSindhu, e-Yantra, and Virtual Lab project (MHRD, 2020). Apart from these resources, HEIs also started building its database of resources to provide support to students. Some private players also came forward to support learning and provided free access to their products until 15th May, 2020 (AICTE, 2020).

Types of Psychological Support Provided

To provide support and motivation to students in the time of crisis, teachers relied mainly on one to one contact and connecting with students through phone calls and social media like WhatsApp and guided students to utilize their time constructively by learning new things and using available resources. Teachers also started using these tools to offer emotional support to minimize the effect of isolation and social disconnection among students. Like other initiatives, teachers have taken the help of different student communities like National Social Service (NSS) and National Cadet Corps (NCC) to spread awareness about protection from COVID-19 among the public. Following government advisories, some HEIs also opened a helpline for students to offer psychological and professional support.

Types of Assessment Activities Performed

Examinations were in progress in the number of HEIs but its sudden stoppage during lockdown left students in uncertainty. There is still uncertainty about the resuming of the entire process because exams attract large gatherings in exam hall and worries are mounting that how the assessment will be done for outgoing students. Governments/regulatory bodies have formed committees/task force to look for the possibilities of online examination and evaluation for the award of degrees/diploma to students but the feasibility of the same still seems a distant dream. Teachers at the individual level used different online

means (Google classroom, Google form, email attachment, etc.) to assess students learning outcomes via conducting quizzes and assignments. But, they were never sure whether these assessments would be counted in final results or not.

Ten Lessons for Higher Education Institutions

Irrespective of many shortcomings and challenges, these online teaching and learning experiences that were carried out in such a short notice and without any proper preparation were successful to establish that (i) online teaching and learning is possible in HEIs, (ii) online mode can very well supplement/complement traditional mode of teaching and learning, and (iii) teachers teaching in traditional classroom setups can successfully adopt online tools and techniques for teaching and learning purposes. Based on these promises and experiences, HEIs can implement following 'ten lessons' for utilizing the potential of online mode and means of teaching and learning for significant academic gains in days to come (*post-COVID*). The lessons are:

Lesson 1: Develop Blended Teaching and Learning Policy of the Institution

The experiences told that barring few, no HEI was having any policy to practice online teaching and learning. Traditional HEIs generally use face to face methods for teaching and learning and there is hardly any policy in place for online teaching and learning, making it difficult for teachers and students to practice blended learning (combining both online and offline mode). In absence of such policy, teachers and students have developed a flawed opinion about online teaching as they simply discard it as wastage of time. And any attempt to integrate online teaching always turns into an endless debate between advantages of face to face versus disadvantages of online teaching. These debates are misleading and out of context because the integration of technology with the traditional mode of teaching is supposed to bring better learning experiences and outcomes. To overcome these challenges, HEIs must come up with a blended teaching and learning policy of the institution.

This policy should be binding and every faculty member and teaching department should be asked to submit the action plan of implementation of blended teaching and learning at the beginning of the session, although, Departments may be provided flexibility to

make the necessary change to accommodate contextual teaching and learning requirements. Beside, HEIs may also form a digital learning committee to act as facilitators and motivators to teachers and students in practicing blended learning. This policy planning will help HEIs to regulate online teaching and learning processes and make teachers ready to adopt emerging online teaching tools and practices. Most importantly, this policy will be much helpful to recognize and reward the efforts of teachers to implement blended learning by taking the best from both the worlds (online and offline).

Lesson 2: Convince Teachers to Practice Blended Mode of Teaching

Experiences revealed that online teaching was conceived as a forced rather welcome choice by many of the practicing faculty members. The desired result of online teaching and learning will remain a distant dream until all stakeholders are taken into confidence. Teachers stand at the primary end in this process and their role and confidence in the adoption of online teaching need to be built systematically by making them realize that they are irreplaceable and technology is mainly to help them in this task. They have to be politely reminded that traditional teaching can be more effective by using online tools and techniques. To make this happen, HEIs must regularly organize awareness programs and workshops with a focus on attitude modulation/change. During this process, every teacher needs to be treated like a student to minimize their resistance. It has been noticed that often teachers get conscious about their self-image on camera which generates feelings of anxiety among them. Fear of being making mistakes on record is one of the foremost barriers in the integration of technology into corridors of traditional HEIs.

To overcome these fears, teachers need to be narrated that mistakes are part and parcel of any new experiment, since they are venturing on a new mission to take benefit of technologies in their classrooms, and it will not harm their self or academic image. HEIs must devise a strategy to provide positive feedback to those who attempt to inculcate blended learning in traditional classrooms. Cooperation from all the stakeholders is very important for the success of any process, and if anyone feels that he/she is being laughed for not knowing something or committing silly mistakes, he/she will never give his/her best. Being one of the most important

stakeholders of educational processes, teachers of HEIs should be convinced about changing modes of teaching and learning and be assured that they are free to experiment and fail as well. Once teachers will be convinced that the intersection of technologies is helping to make teaching and learning processes more liberal and decentralized then they will not need any more advisory on online teaching.

Lesson 3: Train Every Teacher for the Blended Mode of Teaching

Stories emerging from online teaching during the lockdown period revealed that the majority of teachers lack basic skills to maximize the benefit of technology. In this context, a well-planned strategy of training every teacher regarding the integration of blended learning model can be a game-changer. HEIs must attempt to train every teacher on two aspects i.e. (i) orientation about blended learning, and (ii) handling of different technological tools and techniques. Teachers must be made acquainted with the working model of blended learning and its pro and cons. HEIs must realize that it is very pertinent to make teachers understand that transporting traditional classrooms to the internet is not blended teaching as commonly believed and practiced in academia. HEIs must train teachers to realize that blended learning is not all about supplementing to face to face classroom, but it is an extension of learning where technology-mediated learning significantly increase productivity and help them to provide additional ways and methods to engage and facilitate continuous learning. Most importantly, this training will help every teacher to learn that ‘simply putting offline material on the online platform cannot make learning happen’.

HEIs must realize that handling of technology is a herculean task and most of the teachers are not comfortable in the use of technology in traditional teaching and learning environments. HEIs must plan a strategy to train teachers in a phased-out manner. First, willing teachers of respective institutions should be trained in the use of technologies and available platforms for teaching and learning. Their confidence and skills about the use of available platforms will create a positive atmosphere and will motivate other teachers of the institution to accommodate technology in their classrooms. Once the second line of teachers will develop a positive outlook to integrate technology, they can be trained as well. HEIs must make a policy to depute every teacher to take compulsory training on

effective and efficient use of technologies for teaching and learning purposes.

Lesson 4: Have Online Means and Apps to Practice Blended Mode of Teaching

Online teaching and learning experiences during lockdown indicated that the majority of institutions are lacking basic tools and techniques to facilitate blended learning. Learning Management System (LMS) is still fighting to find a place in the basic learning requirement list of HEIs. In the absence of institutional LMS, teachers were bound to rely on third-party software for the management of online classes. Similarly, during the lockdown period educators struggled to find out a reliable, affordable, and easy to handle video conferencing platform to conduct online classes. Their search zeroed on Zoom App but security agencies have red-flagged it over data security issues, leaving them wandering in search of another secure and user-friendly platform. Internet is flooded with hundreds of software/Apps but navigating a workable solution is a daunting task for those teachers who are not techno-savvy. Tacking clue from these problems and challenges, HEIs must necessarily have an institutional LMS for use of teachers and students. Besides, HEIs must also enlist appropriate apps for various teaching and learning purposes. These measures will be helpful for both teachers and learners to practice blended teaching and learning in an organized and hassle-free manner.

Lesson 5: Revisit the Curriculum to Accommodate the Blended Mode of Teaching and Learning

Experiences during lockdown revealed that the curriculum prescribed by the majority of HEIs hardly offer any scope to accommodate online teaching and learning activities. The curriculum is a blueprint that guides teachers and students to attain predefined goals of learning. Instead of calls by governments and regulatory bodies to inculcate online learning in different parts of the curriculum, the majority of HEIs are still comfortable with and using face to face teaching and learning oriented curriculum. The age-old curriculum makes it difficult for teachers to bring online tasks, activities, and practices to support prescribed content and intended learning outcomes. Therefore, it becomes obvious that the existing curriculum will be revisited to accommodate online teaching and learning.

Therefore, HEIs may pay attention that revisited curriculum should contain detailed information about the methods to involve learners in online learning as well as the activities that teachers and learner will be able to perform in blended mode. Each unit must have clear instructions about the role and responsibility of the teacher and learner by mentioning prescribed technology along with the intended learning outcomes. The revisited curriculum must also have adequate space for interactive learning. The curriculum should be revised to accommodate activity-based learning by giving learners a choice to perform online experiments to document his/her experiences. Inclusion of online quizzes, projects, presentations, and games in the curriculum will also be helpful to motivate teachers and learners to move towards the blended mode of teaching and learning.

Lesson 6: Have Provisions for Online Assessment of Learning

The most robust challenge faced during lockdown by HEIs was ‘how to assess learning by online means’. The experiences highlighted that individual institutions as well as agencies lack a credible mechanism for assessment of learning in online mode. There is no policy framework regarding the execution and regulation of online assessment in HEIs. In the absence of any viable policy, both institutions and regulatory bodies are struggling to find out the way to conduct the online assessment. Regulatory bodies are trying to work out the solutions but the educators and learners are skeptical about the entire process and resentment are growing among them. This situation is creating a sense of distrust among end-users (students) and also making life difficult for knowledge providers (teachers).

Considering that ‘learning without assessment goes directionless’, HEIs must have clear-cut provisions for assessment of learning in online mode. As the first step, institutions must allow teachers to use inbuilt mechanisms like assignment and quiz with online learning platforms for assessment and subsequent grading. HEIs must devise and design online assessment processes and practices with the help of technology experts. Teachers may also be authorized to adopt different methodologies to assess learning outcomes with the help of available technologies. Online assessment of learning should not be limited to the subjects taught and semester-end examinations but also include continuous evaluation of learning of students by online mode. HEIs may

also ask teachers to develop a set of ‘*ungoogleable*’ questions focusing on critical thinking abilities for use of assessment in online mode.

Lesson 7: Make Budgetary Provisions to Support the Blended Mode of Teaching

The majority of the teachers who practiced online teaching and learning during the lockdown phase mainly used their resources (laptops, computers, smartphones) and finances (data expenses, electricity costs) to carry out the process. This practice was good for a short period, but not meant for a longer run. Considering this, HEIs need to have adequate budgetary provisions for online teaching and learning regularly. Besides, funding agencies may also adopt a well-planned strategy to disburse the budget for the promotion of online teaching and learning in HEIs. Government/funding agencies should support HEIs by providing seed money to acquire the necessary tools and software for online learning cyclically. Once the set up has been readied, institutions may be asked to generate resources to wear the cost of maintenance on their own.

Both government agencies and institutions must realize that old practice of ‘building big ICT labs, acquiring many computers, an army of technical staff, and huge financial support’ is no more relevant for practicing online teaching and learning. Instead, providing a smartphone with a monthly data pack to an individual teacher is a much more viable approach to promote online teaching in HEIs. Institutions must have priorities to utilize the money, and priorities must include (i) ensuring internet connectivity to every teacher and learner in campus via wired or wifi mode, (ii) having a resource room to answer online teaching and learning queries of teachers and students and to offer technical support, (iii) developing an online LMS for wider use of teachers and learners, and (iv) offering training to make teachers more proficient users of online teaching and learning.

Lesson 8: Give Equal Weightage to Online Learning Activities

The majority of students who got engaged in online learning during lockdown are often discouraged by the fact that these efforts will hardly have any bearing on their grade sheets. Lack of recognition is a major deterrent in the promotion of online learning in HEIs. Regarding recognition of online learning in HEIs, the problem persists at three levels i.e. (i) acceptance of online learning as a credible source of

learning, (ii) the lack of a mechanism to recognize credit earned through online learning in academic score sheets of students, and (ii) attitude in academia to see online teaching and learning as an ‘inferior rival rather able supporter’. To overcome these hurdles, policymakers should put in place a clear-cut policy regarding allotment of credit to online learning activities and equality of these to credits earned through traditional modes of learning. Official recognition of online teaching and learning activities will be helpful to better the attitude of stakeholders and they will be encouraged to participate in online teaching and learning activities confidently.

Lesson 9: Publish the Best Institutional Practices of Online Teaching and Learning

During the lockdown period, several HEIs came up with good initiatives and innovative ideas regarding the use of online teaching and learning. To continue this spirit further, HEIs must come up with a plan to regularly publish best practices of online teaching and learning on the institutional website. Focus areas of such practices could range: pedagogies adopted, instructional designs used, processes of implementation like the class, course, and programme level, assessment methods used, problems encountered and solved, and learning outcomes achieved. This documentation may also include experiences and stories of teachers and learners during online interaction. Publication of such practices will be helpful to portray the institutional efforts in society and academia and also motivate fellow institutions to come up with better practices of online teaching and learning.

Lesson 10: Recognize and Appreciate the Online Teaching and Learning Initiatives

The faculty members who have conducted online teaching have one very important question to ask that ‘whether online efforts are at par with traditional classroom teaching’. They have every right to ask this question as HEIs hardly have any policy to recognize and appreciate the online teaching efforts of faculty members. To overcome this deficit, HEIs must come with a plan and policy to recognize and appreciate the online teaching efforts of faculty members. Appreciation may be provided to faculty members in many ways, such as best practitioners of online teaching certificate, the inclusion of such members in policy-making bodies, asking them to act as a mentor for other colleagues, appointing them as advisors for other institutions, etc. HEIs

may also facilitate these teachers by deputing them to get advanced training in online teaching from technologically advanced institutions. HEIs may also provide financial assistance to such faculty members for the implementation of innovative ideas along with research projects for the development of models to practice blended teaching and learning. As other useful measures, HEIs may collaborate to make and publish a directory of the ‘online teaching champion teachers’ of different institutions and request them to motivate and support those who have just entered the world of online teaching.

Conclusion

Online teaching and learning initiatives and experiences carried out during COVID-19 lockdowns in India established that ‘online teaching and learning is possible in HEIs’. But there are widespread fears that this euphoria will be over soon, and post lockdown, institutions, teachers, and students will be back to their old ways of teaching and learning. Therefore, this is the most opportune time for HEIs to come up with such plans and policies to keep both teachers and learners motivated to continue using these newly learned practices. HEIs must realize that helping teachers and learners to mix traditional and online learning practices will be a win-win situation for every stakeholder of the higher education sector. Researchers hope that the implementation of suggested ‘lessons’ will be helpful to empower both teachers and students to make the best use of online modalities to create a more engaging and joyful teaching and learning environments in HEIs.

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Research and Technology Integration : Two Key Components for Worthwhile University Education

Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, World Health Organization delivered the Convocation Address at the 55th Convocation of the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata on 27th January, 2021. She said, “Technology is a tool that should be used with and under the guidance of humans, in order to solve our problems, we have to use them smartly, we have to see where they help us. India has a long tradition of statistics and data. And we need to maintain that. We need to ensure that we educate people. That people who understand the details of a particular discipline are able to communicate that in a way. I said, there is need for building up scientific literacy and health literacy so that people do not have irrational beliefs, but rather focus on evidence based and data based communication and messaging. That is something that we, as, technical experts, need to make a conscious effort to do more of and to do it better, and to communicate in a language that people understand and appreciate. It’s a skill that can be built over a period of time.”
Excerpts

Greetings from the World Health Organization, and first of all, I would like to start by congratulating all the graduating students of the Indian Statistical Institute, for this year, those who are getting their degrees and going out to pursue their future careers. It’s a moment of great excitement for all of you, but also of some anxiety and trepidation, particularly as you’re stepping out at a time when there is a global pandemic, when there’s a lot of uncertainty out there. But I want to reassure you that along with challenges in life, usually there are opportunities and this is a time when young people like you can really face up to the challenges that are facing society today as a whole and think about how you can contribute, how you can use your skills to address problems. In fact, in my own life, I find that I have been happiest when I’ve had a problem that I need to work on and to resolve, which keeps me up at night, which keeps my brain active and thinking which makes me talk to people about it, work with colleagues with different people from different parts of society to help solve that problem. So in a way it stimulates you to do your best and to come out of difficult situation.

I would like to spend a little bit of time describing my own experience over the last year or so, at the WHO where I’ve been sitting in a sort of position which has an eagle’s eye view over what’s happening across the world. It has been a time of huge challenge. It’s been a time that’s been very humbling because of the lack of knowledge we had about this virus, when we started off early in January, 2020. The amazing scientific collaboration and cooperation that I’ve seen globally, across the world in order to develop new tools and technologies and also learning from the successes and failures that

we’ve seen around the world. So I’d like to touch on some of those aspects. But let me go back to January, 2020. We first heard on the 31st of December, 2019, that there was a cluster of atypical pneumonia cases—and of course, the WHO has through its emergency program, a very well designed mechanism for focal points in every country, which all report according to the International Health Regulations to WHO when there is some suspicious activity. In addition to that we also have ways of collecting data from non-governmental sources, from lay media, from press, which is then looked at by an artificial intelligence algorithm, that about 9 million of these alerts that come out every month and then out of that, there are a few 100 of them, which need to be further investigated, because they seem to be serious. So that’s something that goes on day in and day out. And the fourth of January last year was when the WHO first issued what we call the disease outbreak news to the world, warning people that there was this outbreak, that it looks serious, and that we will be working on it and providing more information. So that’s the day. That you know, focal points for International Health Regulations around the world. Every country has a focal point. We’re alerted, and ministries of health actually got into action and started following what was happening in Wuhan.

Now, at that time, we knew very little about this virus. But on the 10th of January, Chinese scientists actually published the whole genome sequence. And it was clear that this was a virus that was very similar to the SARS COV I virus which caused the severe outbreak in 2003, which also spread around the world, but ultimately was controlled in a matter of eight months, with about 8000 people

being infected and 800 lives being lost. This virus turns out to be quite different from the SARS one in that it's much more easily transmissible. People who don't have symptoms can transmit this virus, it tends to result in Super spreader events. So one individual in a particular setting can actually lead to a lot of infections. Research done in India, that was published a few months ago showed that 15% of infections were responsible for over 80% of secondary transmission. We're still trying to understand where and how and when this happens, but it's clear that not everyone is transmitting to others equally. We also know now that most transmission occurs within either households, or within settings, where people are spending a lot of time together, and especially if it's a closed environment. So we talk about the three C's: the close contact with people, the closed environment, and being in close proximity.

Now, all of that knowledge started coming up over time. So on the 14th of January, when we first put out the technical guidance documents on how countries must start acting to prevent what surveillance needs to be done, what are the things that need to be done in terms of taking care of patients, the infection prevention and control, all of that was done basing our guidance on other similar respiratory viruses and this is where the Science Division that I lead in WHO comes into the picture. We are responsible for quality assurance of all the normative guidance. WHO is a normative agency, we do standards, we do guidance, we do recommendations. And all of that needs to follow a process, which is standardized, which is responding to the end user needs. It's timely, it's relevant, it's based on the best available scientific data and evidence, it's quality assured through a review process, which is also standardized. We make sure that there are no conflicts of interest amongst the members who develop the guidelines, and involve the right stakeholders in the discussions. So there is a process which needs to be followed. And we ensure that that's done. We set up a Publication Review Committee, which would turn around within 48 hours, documents that were being produced, because in an emergency, it has to be done quickly. But at the same time, we needed to ensure that it meets the standards of rigorous science-based advice. So this is a balancing act. Always on the one hand, you have to be as fast as possible. On the other hand, you have to ensure that your quality is not suffering.

The other major thing we did right in January was convening researchers, academics, as well as the private sector, working on new tools. The first diagnostic test was described on February, 12. This was the RT-PCR test. At that time, there was a huge shortage of reagents of diagnostics, there were a few companies that were responsible for most of the reagents. And, in fact, we had a situation where in the whole continent of Africa, there were only two labs that could do this test- in South Africa and Senegal. In India, there was only one lab, the National Institute of Virology. But very quickly, of course, this got scaled up in India. Today, I think there are over 2000 Labs both in the private and public sector that can do the RT-PCR. And I know that we do approximately a million tests a day in India. So that's been a huge expansion of capacity, as well as of manufacturing the reagents and kits that you need within the country. But there was during February, March, April global supply shortages and the supply chains had broken down. And that's when it was really very sad to see the huge number of infections and deaths that occurred among health care workers. Globally, 7% of all infections have occurred among health care workers. And in the beginning, when there was a shortage of personal protective equipment, we saw a number of deaths among nurses and doctors and other paramedical staff. And this continues because they get exposed a lot more than others. And so we continue to see deaths of health care providers. But over time the supply chains have improved.

So going back to the science, this global convening led to a research road map in February that we prepared, which identified the knowledge gaps, and laid out the research priorities and be divided into nine thematic areas. Starting from the origin of this virus, you know, which animal did it come from, most likely, we believe it came from a bat, because it has a very close similarity in the genetic sequence to some bat Corona viruses and bats have lots of Corona viruses. But how and when and where it jumped into humans, whether there was an intermediate animal or not---that is one whole area of work and as you know, there's a team now in China that's investigating that. Then there was a team looking at transmission, at epidemiology, at infection prevention and control, at the development of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, and also social and behavioral research--very, very important for public health programs. We often think, at least doctors tend to think in a biomedical way of an intervention, whether it's

a drug or some other product, But very often it is not easy for the community to take it up, especially if it's a behavior change. You ask people to stop smoking- it's not just a question of providing them with the right knowledge or guidance. That often doesn't do the trick. What you have to do to bring about behavior change is much more complex. It requires a multidisciplinary approach. It requires an individualized approach, it requires messaging in different ways.

Around that time, we also coined the term infodemic, to describe the huge amount of information that is out there: credible and good information, but also a lot of misinformation- rumors and myths. And we see that continues to occur. All kinds of absolutely outrageous ideas linking the virus with 5G, linking the vaccine with chips being embedded in people and so on, just creating a lot of confusion and fear and anxiety. We were working on the science and the guidance, and so on, which public health experts can understand and implement. At the same time, we had a huge emphasis on communication to the lay public and to the media. The Director General, and several of us would have daily press conferences for the first three or four months. And following that, we now moved to a twice-weekly press conference schedule. And this is an opportunity for journalists from around the world to connect and ask questions and then learn about the latest. We do events on Facebook Live. Many of us are active on social media. So that's been a change from the past. We've been really trying to reach out to people. We have created a WhatsApp bot, which can answer questions in many different languages, including several Indian languages. We worked with the technology companies- with the social media companies- to ensure on the one hand, that misinformation was being removed from their websites, and on the other hand, to provide useful, credible and practical information for people.

So, that has been equally important, I think, in this response. For countries that have responded better, there are certain characteristics and qualities. The first one, of course, is political will and leadership. And there, it's often said that countries that have been led by women leaders have done remarkably well. And, you know, quoting the example of New Zealand, of Finland, and a few other countries. But what is needed is really a leader who's willing to take on board scientific advice, given to him or her by the experts in the country, and have a science-

based approach, have humility, have compassion, look at people's problems and understand what they need. It's very easy to tell people you have to go into a 14 days isolation or a 14 days quarantine. But what is not recognized is that it's not everyone who can do that easily. There are people for whom a daily wage is important, otherwise, they're not going to be able to feed their family. So it's only when governments recognize that and support people to go into isolation, taking care of the family, making sure they have food, making sure they have their essentials, ensuring that the environment you provide is conducive, it's pleasant, - that is the way to get cooperation. The point is: without engaging the community, without empowering them, without explaining, without getting their buy in, it's very hard for a massive public health program to be successful.

I think these are lessons that we learn from this pandemic, which we need to apply to other disease control programs. We have many public health priorities. Tuberculosis is something I've worked on all my life, we have a half million people who die of TB every year in India- a much higher death toll than we've had from COVID-19. Luckily, we've kept our mortality rates very low,- (despite the fact that we have lost 150,000 people)- relatively low compared to what some of the other countries have faced in terms of deaths per million population or even cases per million. We have huge public health problems like non-communicable diseases, including hypertension, diabetes, (all going up), mental health disorders. And we need to take the lessons from handling the pandemic, into those areas.

I think one major lesson that we've seen is that countries that have invested in public health and primary health care over a period of time, have succeeded. This doesn't happen overnight. There needs to be a sustained investment-in infrastructure, in human resources, in data systems, in digital health, in supply chain, logistics, in continuous training, in the community engagement component, in regulatory systems, in building institutional strengths and capacities. All of this needs to be in place in order for the system to be able to really respond effectively when there's a sudden emergency. This is also what we call resilient health systems that should have the capacity to withstand the shock, and still be able to do a good job.

We did a survey in the summer looking at essential health services and how those were impacted. And it was quite dramatic, that 90% of countries that were surveyed, came back and said that their essential health services were disrupted in one way or another and the lower the income of the country, the more the impact. So 44% of lower middle income countries had severe or partial disruptions in at least 25 essential health services, including immunization, antenatal care, tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment, cancer treatment, essential surgery, blood transfusion services. All of those were affected.

What that results in is really a setback to other health needs of the population, people not getting diagnosis, not getting treatment in time, leading to definitely a negative health impact. And while many state governments really made efforts to try to fill that gap, it was for several months that- people were not able to get to health centers. Health centers were either closed or dealing only with COVID-19. For example, in tuberculosis, India normally has something like 2.2 million cases, being notified every year to the central government-to the TB control program. And this number has been going up because the private sector has been also notifying cases. You can see over the last few years, the notification for TB has been consistently going up. But this year it's shown a dramatic decline of over 50%. Hopefully this will recover at some point, but that's an example. Patients who had suspected cancer, couldn't get their diagnosis on time, and so on. So it's important for health systems to also look at how to maintain essential health services while dealing with an emergency.

And then of course, you have the non-health impact. And that is something as economists, as demographers and statisticians, you understand much better than I do.

- What's been the impact on livelihoods. The estimate is that a 100 million people just in India alone could be pushed into poverty- a lot of jobs lost.
- Impact especially on girls and young women, because they've had to do more of caring at home for the children who have been out of school.
- In poor families, this may be the time that girls don't go back to school because they've been out of school now for several months. There's a higher chance of being trafficked and there are already

reports of increase in trafficking of young women and girls, globally.

- The impact on children who have been out of school. 1.6 billion children were out of school, but many countries prioritized school education and got their children back in school, even while restrictions were placed on other activities.

In India, now, the schools are beginning slowly to open up but certainly the impact on children has been more than just missing out on classes. It's for a child's physical, mental and cognitive development, they need that environment and for many children, the midday meal and just being away from the family environment for some hours in a day is very, very important. We are going to see all that play out over the next couple of years. There will be a period of catching up to do. The projection is that there's been a massive setback in the Sustainable Development Goals. Not only in the SDG for health, but also on the other SDGs. We will have to think about a concerted effort to overcome that. And that's where I think innovation, young people play a role, because we've seen the enormous innovations that had already been occurring. Our ecosystem for innovation had been growing, but the pandemic forced an acceleration perhaps, and in some cases, a leap frogging. Take the example of digital alternative. We do everything now virtually. Normally, one would be thinking about my flying to Kolkata to deliver this lecture. And that would have made it quite difficult. And we would have had to negotiate a time and a date and so on, apart from adding to all the air miles of flying and to the global warming. So some aspects are good, I think we are more efficient now,- we get a lot done this way. Of course, meeting and personal interaction is a different feeling and one needs that as well, you can't only be always on Zoom, it's very different to have that personal interaction. So that needs to continue, for sure. But a lot of work can be done this way. A lot of health care is now being delivered through telemedicine, Many parts of the country, which lacks specialist services, can use telemedicine and specialists who are sitting in cities, big hospitals, or district hospitals, to provide their services to people who are in rural communities, maybe with having a health worker in between as an intermediary and the eSanjeevani Clinics have been trying to do that in India. And I understand that they're going to scale that up massively. So there have been some experiments that have happened,

which have enabled the leapfrogging and hopefully providing better quality health services. But at the same time, we have to remember that technology cannot solve all our problems.

Technology is a tool that should be used with and under the guidance of humans, in order to solve our problems, We have to use them smartly, We have to see where they help us. But ultimately, we have to keep the goal in mind, which is improving health outcomes of people.

The last point I'd like to make is that rigorous monitoring, evaluation and research are really important and critical. I think we need to learn how to be a learning system, We need to be constantly, not just experimenting with new ideas and innovations, but learning from them. Some will be successful, some will not be so successful. And we need to make sure that we are self-critical, that we look at the evidence and see how we can do things better and improve health. Again, I'm thinking about health, but the same applies to other programs as well. You take education. There's a huge need to improve education standards, in schools and colleges across the country. Think about ways of doing that, of mentoring other people. As young people, you can mentor people who are less fortunate, who have not had the exposure or the opportunities to have the kind of studies and the teachers and the facilities and infrastructure that you've had. A lot of people do want to help. We need to find a way. This is where I feel very encouraged when I see a lot of social entrepreneurship happening everywhere and young people particularly with brilliant ideas on how you can actually crowd source and make things better, without necessarily having to invest a huge amount of money.

So I think the idea of data would appeal to all of you, as well as the need for decisions being data driven, being science driven, and evidence based. I think that also needs to extend to scientific literacy in the community. I think institutions like the Indian Statistical Institute, have a role here. It is a very well respected institution that has had many, many stalwarts and giants of statistics and demographics, working in India has a long tradition of statistics and data. And we need to maintain that. We need to ensure that we educate people. That people who understand the details of a particular discipline are able to communicate that in a way. I said, there is need for building up scientific literacy and health literacy so that people do not have irrational beliefs, but rather focus on evidence based and data based communication and messaging. That, is something that we, as, technical experts, need to make a conscious effort to do more of and to do it better, and to communicate in a language that people understand and appreciate. it's a skill that can be built over a period of time. I'd like to congratulate all the graduating students, I'd like to congratulate their parents who I'm sure are watching and are extremely proud of their sons and daughters. And I'd like to congratulate also Dr. Sanghamitra, the Director, and others in the Indian Statistical Institute- the faculty, and staff, and wish you a very good convocation.

Acknowledgment

Transcribed by Sandip Kumar De and Sushavona Chatterjee, Library with support from Professor Debasis Sengupta, Dean of Studies, and Dr. Soumendu Sundar Mukherjee, ISRU, Indian Statistical Institute.

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CAMPUS NEWS

National Web Lecture on Health and Fitness Awareness

One-day National Web Lecture on 'Health and Fitness Awareness' was organized by the Centre for Disability Studies and Educational Research (CDSER) under the aegis of School of Education, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), Kolkata through Zoom App, recently. Dr. A N Dey, Director, School of Education, Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata presided over the programme. He spoke on health as a key of staying focused in life long struggle. Prof. Sabyasachi Mukherjee graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

The digital event started with greetings from Dr. Papiya Upadhyay, Assistant Professor, School of Education, Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata the Host and Organizing Secretary of the event. She highlighted the sequence of events in brief and staged the initiating spirit of Dr. A N Dey, Director, School of Education, NSOU and unparalleled inspiration of Prof. Subha Sankar Sarkar, Vice Chancellor of the host university in organizing the digital event dedicated towards global citizens. The formal welcome of the invited speakers, participants, delegates and other attendees was addressed by Prof. Swapan Kumar Sarkar, Head, School of Education, NSOU.

Prof. Sumanta Chattaraj, Professor, School of Education of the host university introduced the illustrious speakers with their lauded credentials. The next phase of the event was thematic deliberations by the distinguished speakers. Prof. A M Moorthy, Former Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University threw light on the positive impact of yoga on dealing with physical and psychological ailments. He also cited different examples where medicines have failed but yoga might not disappoint the patients but have disappointed the disease. He advised that yoga actually boasts an impressive plethora of physical benefits suitable for all groups and can be used as complementary therapy in combination with conventional treatments of various diseases.

Prof. Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Vice Chancellor (Officiating), Laxmibai National Institute of Physical Education (Deemed University), Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh enumerated that the purpose of yoga is to establish strength, awareness and harmony in

both body and mind and stimulates them to work harmoniously in a linear way. He assured that the relaxation techniques incorporated in yoga can lessen chronic pains.

Prof. Asis Goswami, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute, pictured how the age old techniques of yoga helps a person to manage stress, anxiety, traumas which are known to have devastating effects on mind and body. He assured that Yoga's incorporation of meditation and breathing can help improve a person's mental well being.

Prof. Sanjib Mridha, Head, Department of Physical Education, Jadavpur University indicated that the main mantra of survival in the struggle of life is health and fitness. In a mentally depressed society, good health and sound body are the only two way out which can be achieved only by physical fitness.

Dr. Sudarshan Biswas, Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, Visva Bharati and President, Physical Education Foundation of India (PEFI), West Bengal Chapter told that a good health means that a person is physically and mentally strong and fitness refers to the ability of the person to encounter the demands of the environment.

Dr. Sougata Sarkar, Head, Department of Sports, Mizoram Central University threw light on the inter-relatedness between health and fitness. Health is coined as the state of well being in which a person is free from illness and injury. Fitness denotes a stage of being healthy and physically fit.

Dr. Hira Chatterjee, Assistant Professor, Prabhu Jagatbandhu College delivered a vibrant and motivational lecture on the 'Importance of Health and Fitness'. She stressed on that health and fitness should be a lifestyle for all people. She also adumbrated the necessity for a healthy and fit community for a prosperous nation like India.

The sessions were moderated by Somsankar Chatterjee, Assistant Professor, SNIPEW, Hastings House, Kolkata and Biswajit Bala, Assistant Professor, West Bengal University of Teachers' Training, Education Planning and Administration (WBUTTEPA), Kolkata. This was followed by summing up of all the deliberations by Prof. S K Ghosh, School of Education, NSOU.

The event progressed with the Presidential Address delivered by Prof. A N Dey. He extended his gratitude to all the eminent speakers, their contribution towards the society at large and their valuable lectures. He also hinted that these professionals and academicians are an inspiration to the youth and community for their tireless effort for making a healthy nation. The event passed to the end with proposing Vote of Thanks by Dr. Parimal Sarkar, Assistant Professor, School of Education, NSOU. Participant's feedback from the link was released in the Zoom Chat box for the participants to fill in and submit. E-certificates were emailed to all participants of the event.

International Webinar on Quality Concerns in Education and Educational Research

A Three-day International Webinar on 'Quality Concerns in Education and Educational Research' was jointly organized by the Department of Education, The Gandhigram Rural Institute (GRI), Dindigul, Tamil Nadu and All India Association for Educational Research, recently.

Dr. Ponnusamy, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, at the outset of the programme, explained the history and legacy of The Gandhigram Rural Institute and joint effort taken by AIAER in collaborating with GRI for the successful conduct of the webinar. Dr. A Jahitha Begum, Professor and Head, Department of Education, GRI welcomed the gathering and briefly touched upon the need of the Quality in Education and Educational Research. Dr. William Baskaran, Dean, School of Social Sciences, GRI delivered presidential address of the webinar discussing the quality of Education, Educational Research and the new perspective of educational research. Dr. Sunil Behari Mohanty, President, AIAER stressed on Quality Research Reporting, Research Publications in indexed Journals with high quality and Need of Interdisciplinary Research. Dr. P S Sreedevi, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, GRI proposed the Vote of Thanks.

Prof. Manjula Vithanapathirana, Resource Person, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka delivered a lecture on 'Buddhist Psychology Perspective for Educational Research'. She compared Buddhist Psychology with Western Psychology and highlighted cognitive aspects of Psychology for wellbeing, intervention research as practice based research, importance of interdisciplinary research paradigm, action research, etc. The concluding

remarks of the session was delivered by Dr. Ponnusamy Assistant Professor, Department of Education, GRI.

During the Technical Session, Dr. A Jahitha Begum, Professor and Head, Department of Education, GRI welcomed the gathering and introduced the Resource Person of the session, Prof. Margaret M Solomon, Professor of Education and Leadership, La Sierra University, USA. The resource person delivered her lecture on 'What is Good Research and How to do Good Research? She drew the attention on what is research, four types of knowledge, Theoretical explanation of research, Methodology and problem as deriving force for research, genuineness of giving empirical finding of the research, Research for justice, equality and social change. The session ended with the concluding remarks given by Dr. R Bagdha Vachala Perumal.

Dr. K Thiyagu, Assistant Professor, Central University of Kerala threw light on 'Required ICT Tools in Terms of Its Usage to Research Scholars and Teaching Fraternity'. To mention a few ICT tools like lens.org, Mendely, Zotero, Easy Bib, Endnote, Google scholar button, Microsoft forms, Refine, Evernote, Google assistant, etc. He elaborately explained the various softwares useful in research. He provided the active webpages of softwares. A very good hand on experience was given to the participants. Dr. R Bagdha Vachala Perumal concluded the session.

Prof. A Jahitha Begum, Professor and Head, Department of Education, GRI delivered the lecture on 'Quality Concerns in Education and Educational Research' and stressed the ways to select appropriate research problem, nature of psychological variables and assessment, process of systematic research, required research skills, need for qualitative method in research, right attitude and trustworthiness in research, the importance of genuine reviews and genuineness in research reporting. The session came to an end with the concluding remarks of Dr. N Devaki, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, GRI.

Dr. Ravichandran, Associate Professor, Binary University, Malaysia focused on the theories of online teaching and different domains of educational experiences like social, cognitive, teaching presence and discussed the concept divides (Elements and Categories motivating and encouraging) by Garrison, Salmon's five-stage models, strategies to enhance students' participation such as independent networking, pedagogical approach, hybrid model and new pedagogical approach and symbiotic relationship along with appropriate resource, needs of policy makers, positive attitude, and critical approach.

With the concluding remarks of Dr. N Devaki the session was over. Dr. VPR Sivakumar, Registrar, GRI appreciated the effort taken by Department of Education, GRI and All India Association for Educational Research (AIAER) to conduct the event and the interested participation from different states of India and a few countries also and then the webinar ended formally with the vote of thanks proposed by Dr. M Deivam, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, GRI.

International Conference on Advances in Mechanical Engineering Design

A two-day Virtual International Conference on 'Advances in Mechanical Engineering Design' is being organized by the Design Division, Department of Mechanical Engineering, College of Engineering Technology, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur Campus, Chengalpattu, (Tamil Nadu) during May 03-04, 2021.

Engineering Design in Mechanical Engineering is advancing at a rapid pace due to rapid growth of technologies in various related fields including computer science which has revolutionized the way in which the information is processed, shared and inferred. One of the main purpose of engineering design is to provide a solution to a problem by applying scientific knowledge and in doing so it also becomes important for the design to have an aesthetic look with an enhanced product life. For any design engineer it becomes necessary to look into the need of the design, research the possible designs, selecting the most promising design, evaluating the design, communicating the design and re-design if required. The conference will focus on the recent topics of design engineering where various sessions will be conducted on recent topics ranging from designing concept to simulation of concepts further digging into enhancing the product life. The topics of the event are:

- Finite Element Methods.
- Experimental Mechanics.
- Biomechanics and Ergonomics/Bio Medical and Image Processing.
- Modelling and Simulation.
- Optimization Techniques.
- AI / ML Applications.
- Collaborative Design.
- Design of Experiments.
- Design for Manufacture.
- Vibration and Noise.
- Condition Monitoring and Signal Processing.
- Fracture Mechanics.

- Rapid Prototyping/ 3Dprinting.
- Virtual and Augmented Reality.
- Product Design and Reliability.
- Rotor Dynamics.
- Tribology Multi-body Dynamics.
- Nonlinear Mechanics.

For further details, contact Co-convenors, Dr. E Vijayaragavan / Dr. Sandipan Roy, Department of Mechanical Engineering, College of Engineering Technology, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur Campus, Chengalpattu-603023 (Tamil Nadu), Mobile: 09884214710 / 08584966296, E-mail: icamed2021@srmist.edu.in Website: For updates, log on to: <https://www.srmist.edu.in/icamed-2021/>

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International Conference on New Directions in English Language Teaching

A Three-day International Conference on ‘New Directions in English Language Teaching: Issues, Practices, Challenges’ is being organized by the Department of English, Swami Keshvanand Institute of Technology, Management and Gramothan, Jaipur during May 03-05, 2021. The faculty members, industry experts, research scholars, students from multi-disciplines may participate in the event.

Gone are the days, wherein, the language teachers used to handle a chalk and talk programme, writing all that was necessary to be infused into the minds of the language learners, on black board and then washing their hands off, leaving all to the end of the learners to be acclimatized with the advanced grammatical systems, norms, rules etc. The theory was dumped into the brains of the learners, reproduced by them in times of necessity. However, the system of learning has undergone a tremendous change during the 21st Century, wherein, the teacher-centered approach has turned into learner-centered approach. Language items were stopped figuring on black boards and instead, they started to appear in the form of sound systems and the practice sessions. New approaches were found interesting and thus the shift in paradigm has benefited the language learner a lot and left more challenges to the language teacher, who

has to meet the challenges to adopt different teaching methodologies and language teaching approaches to the heterogeneous groups of learners. To make the language learner quite suitable to meet the global needs in developing language competencies, the language teacher of the modern times has to pick up an appropriate model and adopt the apt teaching approach and methodology to impart language learning habits among the learners. As English educators, our goal is to equip students with the knowledge of global literacy and critical awareness of how new directions in the teaching of English defines and positions their languages symbols identities communities and futures. Consequently, English educators and teachers of English need to envision the subject of English within the context of global management mediation and multimodal communications. To accomplish these goals, a teacher of English should sync with multiple topics to identify the cultural frames of reference in order to evaluate the values and beliefs constructed to the messages. Participation in the proposed conference will promote interaction among English teaching expert professionals’ teachers and scholars to enable them to discuss the major challenges and issues related to English teaching in the present context eventually catering to a virtual paradigm for basic building blocks of language learning to face the challenges in the present scenario. The Broad Thrust Areas of the event are:

- The Role of Grammar in the Teaching of English.
- Post- COVID Approaches and Methodologies.
- Curriculum / Materials.
- Use of ICT in Language Teaching.
- ‘English for All’: Issues and Possible Solutions.
- Testing English Proficiency: Problems and Perspectives.
- Second Language Acquisition.
- Corporate Collaboration in the Teaching of English.
- Teaching Young Learners.
- Teaching English as a Foreign/ Second Language.
- Mass Media and the Teaching of English.
- Other Areas in ELT.
- Regional Language v/s English Language as a Medium of Teaching.

For further details, contact Organising Secretary, Dr. Geetika Patni, Swami Keshvanand Institute of Technology, Management and Gramothan, Jaipur-302 017 (Rajasthan), Mobile: 09785805888, E-mail: englishconference@skit.ac.in. For updates, log on to: www.skit.ac.in.

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