Movement from Classroom to Webroom.
An Analysis of Students' E-Learning Readiness and Initiatives Taken to Prepare the Learners for the Migration

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Abstract - Covid'19 has moved teaching learning from classrooms to webrooms, from brick and mortar campuses into virtual spaces. This pedagogical shift in methodology while not altogether new, is now becoming imperative and will dominate course delivery choices. Facilitators cutting across universities and school boards are being trained to deliver e content. The query that arises is whether our learners are ready for this transition.

For any tectonic shift in practices to be effective in the long term, all stakeholders have to come on board. Structured questionnaires through Google forms sought to measure the readiness of the learning community at Nagindas Khandwala College, Mumbai, to transfer to new avatars of knowledge acquisition and ascertain areas of concern.

Recommendations include the usage of smart phones as hardware platform for virtual classrooms and a bottom up change management approach to partner with the stakeholder learners and engage with parent-guardians during the course of the transition.

Keywords: Webrooms, Brick and Mortar classrooms, E-content, Bottom up change management approach.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Covid'19 has thrown us many challenges. A tectonic shift in Teaching-Learning practices is one of them. While most webinars and colleges are focused on preparing facilitators to adapt to electronic mode of pedagogy and rightly so, an equal if not more emphasis on learner readiness to move into these platforms is needed.

Since March 16, 2020, Indian universities have been on lockdown mode in deference to the University Grants Commission notification regarding the precautions to be taken for the safety of students, faculty members and the staff of educational institutions. Work from home has become a standard operating feature since then. In its April 2020 general guidelines, the UGC has advised affiliated universities to offer at least 25% of the syllabi in digital format and to prepare the teaching fraternity accordingly [1]. For any change to be effectively implemented all

stakeholders must be involved. While all colleges under their university umbrellas are offering online training to teaching faculty the same may not be true with learners. The younger generation is surely tech savvy and may use mobile phones for entertainment purposes. Still, orienting them to e-learning will be required. It becomes imperative that learners and the decision makers in their homes are prepared for this new method of education and assessment.

2 PURPOSE

Objective of this study is therefore to ascertain the learner willingness to adopt e learning platforms. An attempt has been made to understand the economic compulsions of students, technology support available to them and the readiness to upgrade and then tailor recommendations accordingly. The research has included the initiatives taken to handhold the mentees as the pedagogical transformation takes shape.

3 LITERATURE SURVEY

Park, S. Y. (2009) [2], conducted a research on 628 learners of different South Korean universities and their learning attitude to all chronic e-learning methods. The study concludes that the willingness to employ such pedagogical methods will depend on the user's self-belief whether the user is convinced in his mind that he is equipped to successfully navigate through the new pedagogy. Parks calls

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this self-efficacy. Personal factors of motivation such as fear of falling behind peers and concerns for future career prospects play a role as well.

D. Christopher Brooks and Susan Grajek [3], (2020,March.) research on student, faculty, and institutional preparedness for Online Learning can help institutions better understand what aspects of teaching-learning that are preferred in online mode and in face-to-face mode. They studied what percentage of learners have already used LMS and the most common devices.

4 METHODOLOGY

The structured questionnaire focused on the current ownership and usage of laptops, desktop versions smartphones and WIFI connections at residence. Questions included information on occupation and annual income of the parents / guardians of the sample group in order to gauge the economic readiness of students to upgrade their learning instruments and understand reasons for reluctance if any. MS Excel was employed to filter and analyse data to evaluate the monetary and infrastructural concerns of learners who have homes in other states and stay in Mumbai only for their education.

5 ANALYSIS

5.1.OCCUPATION

The occupation of my parents/guardian is
2,127 responses
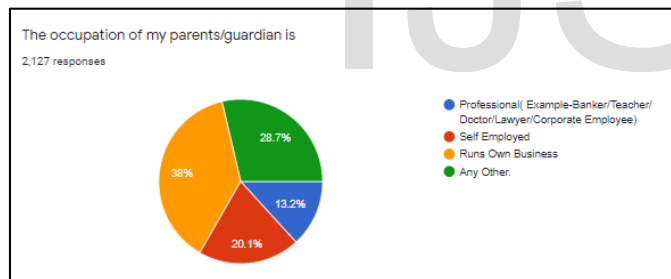
As the graph displays 20.1 % of the students learning at Nagindas Khandwala Campus come from a self-employed sector and 38% run their own businesses. This accounts for an enormous 58.1%. It is these sectors that have faced the most Covid'19 induced monetary uncertainties. With economic establishments shut and service industry limited to essential activities since March 25th, 2020 the lower strata and the middle classes have had to face the brunt the most. Statista.com on April,28,2020 has in it is online article reported that from a 9% percent fall in income in late February there has been a drastic 45.7% southward move in mid-April [4].

5.2 ANNUAL INCOME

The annual family income in Rupees is
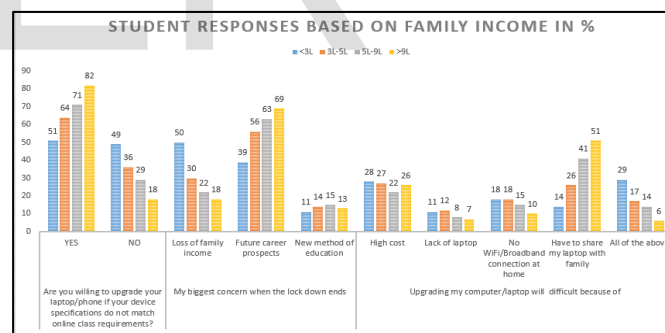1,993 responses
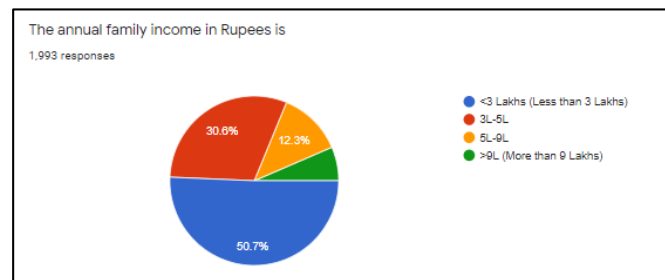
As is evident in the graph the college serves a community of which 81.3% have an annual household earning of Rs.5 lakhs and less. Therefore the authors are confining their findings and recommendations to the above mentioned sub group in this study.

6 FINDINGS

STUDENT RESPONSES BASED ON FAMILY INCOME IN PERCENTAGE

	Are you willing to upgrade your laptop/phone if your device specifications do not match online class requirements?		My biggest concern when the lock down ends			Upgrading my computer/laptop will difficult because of				
	YES	NO	Loss of family income	Future career prospects	New method of education	High cost	Lack of laptop	No WiFi/Broadband connection at home	Have to share my laptop with family	All of the above.
<3L	51	49	50	39	11	28	11	18	14	29
3L-5L	64	36	30	56	14	27	12	18	26	17
5L-9L	71	29	22	63	15	22	8	15	41	14
>9L	82	18	18	69	13	26	7	10	51	6

STUDENT RESPONSES BASED ON FAMILY INCOME IN %

1. All economic groups have demonstrated that they are not worried about moving to E- learning platforms. The concern that is largely dominant is the cost of the transition - lack of laptops and accessories required such as webcams and audio headsets.

2. 49% of the lowest income bracket being studied are unable to upgrade their laptops as the device is shared by many at home. WIFI connections are not available to all.

3. Falling household income hinder buying personal devices due to the high cost involved

4. Learners in the 3 lakh -5lakh bracket have shown almost the same reasons for facing obstacles to upgrading their systems to match online requirements.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Learning through mobile phones-The advantages

1. 98.4% of the participants own smartphones. These devices come with inbuilt software and hardware compatible with e-learning pedagogy. So, the need to incur unbudgeted expenses to upgrade is minimised.

2. The e-content is delivered to the personal device and can be accessed from the safe confines of homes. Most telephone networks offer pocket friendly user packs that India is already making the most off.

3. The institution may roll out its course delivery immediately. Time spent on stakeholders to move to the new pedagogical gateway is reduced.

4. Time gained from learning from home may be spent in acquiring more certifications and internship experiences.

5. The 7.7 % migrant student population will benefit as well.

### BOTTOM UP APPROACH TO MANAGE THE CHANGE IN INSTRUCTION AND EVALUATION DELIVERY.

While managements across the country are investing their resources in training the trainer to be online prepared, for an effective roll out this change has to be accepted by the student bodies and their families as well.

All departments engaged with their learners in the month of May to familiarise with the new demands.

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MULTI MEDIA AND MASS COMMUNICATION -A COLLABORATIVE VENTURE

The Department ably assisted by two tech proficient facilitators from the Departments of Computer Science and Information Technology trained the First and second year class representatives to understand the platforms and use its features. These students in turn helped their classmates to navigate the new method. Google classroom, Zoom and Google Meet were explored and there was an overwhelming support for the Google Meet platform. Zoom had security issues and Google Classroom did not provide for visual interaction. Participants acquired the knowledge: how of signing in, uploading audio and video content and using the default settings of the platform to enhance their experience.

Live activities were curated to test the efficacy of the practice sessions. Presented below is the feedback given by the tutees. Highly noticed was the lagging audio visuals caused by varying bandwidth.
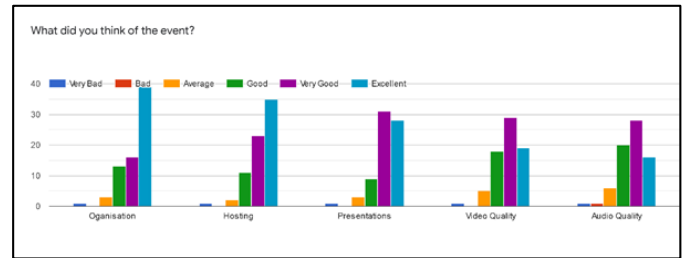
Parent Stakeholders were invited as observers. Only 5.9% of the 17 respondents responded negatively .Similar such programmes in the coming months may be conducted with parent-guardian collaboration to win the naysayers to the changing pedagogy.
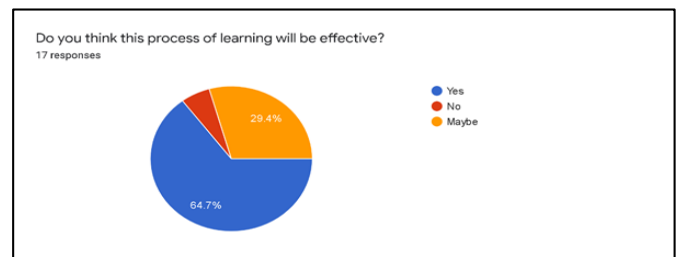
8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1. Temptation to move away from the virtual classroom to browsing the internet, chatting in WhatsApp groups as the facilitator is engaging with the rest is a possibility that exists across such methods. To retain attention a constant interaction between the learner -course deliverer is a must and can be attained through the following:

Conduct e polls every 15 minutes to elicit opinion on the topic. Encourage interaction on the chat box.

Deliver time barred quizzes at the end of the session. Link attendance to them.

Discuss the results and answers of polls and puzzles with statistics received.

2. Size of the screen, memory and battery strength of smartphones may be limiting.

The recorded versions may be uploaded on Google drive for later access from other devices is an option.

To make the presentation different from a normal classroom lecture presentation, as the size of the projected screen in the classroom will differ if a student attends a session through a smartphone. We can use images, charts instead of text.

Stream short and multiple capsules of each lecture video instead of one long one to be compatible with differing bandwidth requirements.

3. To help parents monitor online screen activity apps like Romauld, PikaPika can be downloaded on the learning devices. These send notifications to the guardians.

4. To minimise on line screen stress a fixed schedule must be adhered to with an effective work life balance for both the staff and students. Vacations and breaks must be respected.

9 LIMITATIONS

The sample group is restricted to the Nagindas Khandwala College learners. However it is felt by the authors that most colleges serve similar demographic groups and the recommendations made at the end of the study will be useful to all educational managements and content deliverers.

10 FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH MAY

Trace Learners comfort ability on choice of Learning Management Systems.

Study the needs and compatibility of students with learning disabilities.

Observe the short and long term impact of remote learning on student-teacher relationships, interpersonal and soft skills, career choices etc.

11 CONCLUSIONS

Can or should online platforms replace on site education?

Students of ivy colleges in the USA feel cheated. Having paid big monies for a degree the learners are now in April, 2020 having to switch to online platforms to complete their course. Their complaints include a lack of onsite experience. Access to sports and library facilities, independent living away from families and everyday social exchange with fellow classmates and facilitators, extracurricular programmes and placement history are factored in while paying the tuition fees [5].

VALUE OF LEARNING IN A BRICK AND MORTAR CLASSROOM.

Textbook information is available today by a click of a button. When someone enters a classroom the person seeks an experience that goes beyond information collection. 21st Century skills is about acquiring social and conflict management capabilities and learning to respect diversity and practice inclusion. These are crucial nation building blocks that online education will find difficult to offer at least immediately. However till a vaccine is found for the Novel Coronavirus and campuses become once again the epicentre of social interaction and growth mobile phones will serve as an interim Gurukul.

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