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COVID-19 Virtual Learning - The New Age Schooling

The Covid-19 pandemic heralded a new age of online education. Virtual learning has shifted focus towards distance learning and online teaching equipment. Here's how education institutions can stay ahead by adopting these new

By Amazon Business Editorial Desk Published on September 14, 2020



We are in the midst of an unusual predicament, and the future will be defined by how we embrace change within our present. There are some who say that life will never be the same again, whereas others choose to see the glass as half full. Perceptions differ, but the fact remains that changes are in order, one such being the education sector.

It will not be an understatement to say that the Covid-19 pandemic has revolutionised the education space in India. Virtual learning, which was a common mode of study only for select post-graduation and a few specialized courses prior to the pandemic, has now made its way into the daily routine of students across the length and breadth of India, from toddlers to adults. Given the student population of a country like India, virtual learning has proved to be a boon that has helped keep the learning journey of students steady during these challenging times.

Challenges Brought by Covid-19

In March 2020, when the pandemic took grip and the country went into a lockdown mode, all educational institutions were closed until further notice. Before the pandemic, both children and teachers were habituated only to a physical classroom-teaching environment.

However, physical re-opening of schools was out of the question, and even after one year, the situation is almost the same. According to a [KPMG report](#), an indefinite closure of schools had the probability of impacting an estimated 253 million students in India. An extended closure could also lead to social and psychological issues in students. An alternative had to be found.

Virtual learning or online learning was the natural option to continue schooling. However, considering the nationwide tally of schools, only a minuscule percentage of schools had the experience and digital equipment to start providing distance learning from the word go.

The Response of the Education Sector to the Pandemic

With the long-term disruption of educational institutes, governments worldwide encouraged continued learning. When the nationwide lockdown was imposed in March 2020, most students were in the middle of or were about to appear for their final examinations. Several such examinations were either postponed or canceled altogether, with students promoted to the next class based on internal assessments.

A couple of months following the Covid-19 lockdown implementation, i.e. June, when the new academic sessions usually begin, educational institutions had two options; bring about a total halt to studies and waste an entire academic year, or develop measures for adapting to digital pedagogies. Schools took the challenge of virtual learning head-on by revamping their methodologies. While some have chosen to retrace their steps back to **correspondence**, a vast majority are trying to recreate an online school setting using **digital tools**.

Most schools in metropolitan cities have adopted online learning via digital tools and video-conferencing software. Schools involved parents in the online learning process as the method is entirely new, and students have to be encouraged to adapt to it at home. Metropolitan cities have an advantage in terms of uninterrupted broadband connectivity, which smoothenes the distance learning process. This teaching model was somewhat new to the teachers, too, but now, it has comfortably become a part of their daily teaching apparatus after several months.

In contrast, a significant student population does not have access to a broadband connection and other digital resources required for online learning. The Government took the initiative of preparing video course material for them on a grade-wise basis and offer a virtual learning apparatus to such students through 'Swayam Prabha' television channels to maintain continuity of their education for free.

The Shift to a World of Digital Education

Covid-19 made it imperative to bring about an overhaul in the way we teach and learn. For years, we have just been discussing the future of digital transformation in the **education sector** without devising any concrete execution plans. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the shift to digital learning was deemed a massive challenge for which our system was not ready. Come pandemic, and we have no choice but to adapt to digital learning.

The use of the online learning medium has changed various aspects of the school learning system; the way we share knowledge, deliver/access information, impart education, everything has undergone a transformation in the digital era. The pandemic and its subsequent impact on our lives have raised the need to embrace innovative teaching methods, and a **Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)** is an example of how children could learn in the future.

The Role of Teachers in Virtual Learning

From addressing parents' concerns to making sure the teaching sessions are interactive for students, teachers have played a pivotal role in pushing the virtual learning model. Virtual learning systems are an excellent enabler for continuing education, but they cannot be successful without the people managing them, i.e., teachers. Teachers are using digital online learning tools to create content-rich videos and develop teaching and examination models that provide students with an experience similar to the physical classroom experience.

Teaching is not only about textbook learning but the whole social atmosphere with classmates and teachers. Schools have made efforts to maintain that bond with their classmates by conducting fun-games, annual day events, and other recreational activities.

Essential Tools Required to Set Up Virtual Learning Classrooms

One of the most effective ways to teach students online and mimic a classroom as much as possible is through an open-source video and audio recording tool that allows you to record, stream instantly, and do a lot more. Laptops are an essential gadget to sustain any form of virtual learning. It is estimated that only about **40%** of women teachers have access to laptops.

Many such recording tools and **IT infrastructures**, such as laptops, monitors, video cameras, and microphones are available on **Amazon Business** and schools, colleges, and other educational institutes can purchase these tools and enable teachers to continue imparting education. With Amazon Business, you get the benefits of availing input tax credit through **GST-compliant tax invoices**, exclusive **B2B discounts and offers**, and **bulk shipping assistance across 99.8% pin codes** in India. You have the advantage of getting the most competitive rates from our more than 3.5 lakh business category vendors at the click of a button, with the same convenience you enjoy while shopping for personal needs on the Amazon. in platform.

Besides, there are several free education apps that enable teachers to create a virtual classroom where they can chat, share pictures and videos with students. Several tech firms are working on their own online teaching portals that could be helpful for all stakeholders in the process of learning.

What is the Future of Virtual Learning?

Things are never going to be as they were. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the education landscape forever. Whether for good or bad, only the future will tell.

The virtual learning environment is at a nascent stage in India. Several hurdles are associated with it, for example, privacy, student security, data leaks, internet accessibility, infrastructure support, lack of national policy, and several more. Undoubtedly, we can overcome such problems with seamless execution based on a well-formulated plan and framework by including the suggestions and inputs of all stakeholders.

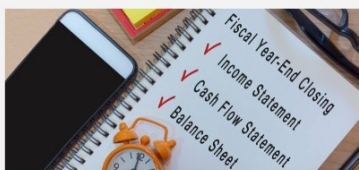
A country like India, with an exploding student population, cannot entirely switch to virtual learning. Nor is it recommended. For example, students in the lower grades need to be taught in a controlled environment of schools as they easily get distracted. Another point of contention is exams. Virtual exams are not effective and increase the scope of malpractices among students. Besides, face-to-face interaction is vital in several aspects of student growth and development that technology cannot replace.

However, online learning during the pandemic has shown us that several aspects of teaching can be taken online. Moving forward, a hybrid model where schools integrate online lectures and classroom attendance in a complementing manner can form the new age of schooling. Such a model can save costs on classroom infrastructure, save travelling time, and widen flexibility for students. The saved resources can be directed towards better virtual learning facilities for students.

Another possibility we are likely to see is pre-recorded videos with only a few live meetings. In such a scenario, a teacher will have limited control over the cycle of learning. Learners will start focusing only when their interest piques and they will take their own time to learn. Teachers will therefore have to put more effort on gaining children's attention. In the future, instead of imparting knowledge, educators will have to inspire learners to get more involved in the subject, go looking for their own questions, and get back with their answers.

An event like COVID-19 is an inflection point for speedy innovation. While we have not seen anything truly innovative with virtual learning after the pandemic hit, it is one industry where companies will continue to invest. This pandemic has made us all realize the importance of disseminating knowledge across all sections of society and of how virtual learning can play a major role here.

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