

CHAPTER-15

TEACHING EXPERIENCE DURING COVID-19



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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a noble profession and I believe no other profession can match with its divinity. Teacher is leading masses from darkness to light of wisdom. These aspiring thoughts ultimately tuned me as a professor in management discipline. Teachers are responsibilities to mould better citizens for better community. He is always elevating student's inner spirit to achieve their life goals. They can leverage young minds through proper mentoring and guidance. Faculty members are always engaged in various academic activities throughout the year.

The academic cycle was revolving with course revisions, session planning, lecturing, assessments, Evaluations and result publication. Every academician's lives were normally devoted for conferences, seminars, Industry Institute interactions, presentations and other faculty development programs. Teaching community always extend support to curricular and extracurricular activities of their disciples. This new year also brought remind us the call of final year exams. I was also

scheduling my academic activities to finish the end term duties.

Things were all normal for me till the last week of March. I was busy with the internal assessment evaluations and its submissions. At the same time I was managed to schedule my students' question papers for their upcoming annual exams. Things took a "u" turn when the central government imposed a month lock down towards the end of March. But our college was proactively arranged online teaching practices to their faculty members just before the lockdown days. At the same time the institution planned to shift the in house learning practices in to online platform.

The global pandemic –the so called Corona virus was the real villain of this chaos. It was something new for me as well as to the whole community. In order to protect and safe guard the people's life, government has to proceed with lockdown procedures. I know it was something new for everyone who has experienced it. Like any other organization, the educational institutions are also

stopped their operation till further notice. At that point of time we had to just adjust for a month of lockdown which as we all know later on the lockdown has been expanded for like 6 months of time. The complete economic activity of this country has been stopped during this period. All shops were closed for indefinite period. Many people lost their jobs because companies started to run on losses, the plight of migrant workers were so bad, they had to travel on bare foot to their home villages for thousands of kilometres many lost their lives in between. They lost their last hope of seeing their loved ones. The government institutions were all closed.

The educational institutions across the country were closed till further notice. Initially the lockdown thrilled but later it killed my days. I know we all enjoyed it at first I believe but sitting idle inside the four walls for pretty much long period may bring us lot many issues also. Soon I was able to start my online lecturing sessions. I have to motivate my students to adjust the new learning environment. I have constantly

contacted my students during the time and tried to give them small assignments and works to keep their morale high. They were also faced many issues such as network connectivity, lack of adequate materials which normally support learning, health problems etc. Slowly they were able to adjust with the new normal.

I had now to adapt to a new method of teaching that was online classrooms. Besides teaching online, we also had to support students to complete assessments and tests. As a faculty we also learn to face the challenges imposed by the global pandemic virus. Initial challenge was to boost the student's morale and recoup their confidence. Online platforms like google meet; Zoom etc are widely used to interact with students personally.

We used to mentor our students through virtual meetings. These group wise engagements also really supported the students to adapt to the new online learning practice. At the same time we had to stay in constant touch with parents about their wards' progress through WhatsApp groups, and virtual

parent-teacher meetings. This blurring of professional and personal boundaries took a toll but the students got the opportunity to gain more knowledge and skills. Parents had to invest in seamless Wi-Fi connectivity and ensure that their children paid attention to classes. In some cases, new gadgets had to be bought as well. However, students were quick to adapt to online classes and, even if they missed a session, we shared recorded sessions. We were able to conduct quiz, class test and assignments through innovative learning management system (LMS).

Thus, it became possible to independently navigate the world of online learning. I would like to comment more regarding the online classes. The government has also encouraged digital learning through initiatives such as DIKSHA and eVidya. However, students belonging to less affluent families or living in remote places with no mobile network were left behind because of the cost of digital devices, data plans, or network connectivity. All this led to the broadening of the digital divide. So the digital divide

among the students has increased which we as teachers find it very difficult to see. The reason is it's really heart wrenching to know that students are not able to study because of their poor financial status. To an extent this has been cleared by many initiatives from the government side, but I think there is more to do because these online platforms will continue till the time we have made a proper remedy for this corona virus.

Another problem is that syllabus of several boards cannot be taught in a virtual platform. Universities should take initiatives to reduce the load of the syllabus. I also appreciate the efforts made by some universities, to change the existing schedule for online classes. Now the student has to sit only in forenoon session for academic learning .He can effectively spend the afternoon session for extracurricular or non-academic activities. We have to underline the fact that, education is not all about book learning. There is something more to it. In professional campuses students interact each other

directly they exchange their ideas, thoughts so that there is a group learning which is missing in this online sessions and it may affect their studies to some extent. These unexpected situations remind as the importance of proactive planning especially in the teaching domain.

Anyways were requires considerable planning once the lockdown lifts. It is imperative to re-evaluate every school activity and emerge with new systems, which will become the 'new normal'. We should now try to bring in the so called hybrid learning system which is a proper mix of both online and offline teaching. Following strict social distancing measures and regimented one-desk-one-child seating arrangement could be implemented once schools re-open.

Parents may opt for home schooling, if the situation worsens. While this strategy may not result in finishing the quarterly curriculum, it will at least reduce the learning gap that students are likely to experience if schools continue to remain shut. Blended learning could also be the next normal. Schools can

explore tutoring platforms with video conference facilities, customized modules, and assessments using technology and data that can help analyze what students like, their learning patterns, and their understanding of the concepts. So these are the ways which I feel will be the new normal in my working space. Till this time, it has been a really great experience for me in all ways. One great thing is I could spend a good time with my family but at the same time I do miss my students. Hoping to see them very soon.