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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXISTENCE OF COVID-19 A RECONDITE STATE BUT A CATALYST FOR TRANSITION

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Abstract

The world is under the squall of corona virus popularly known as COVID-19 which has ruptured the proximity among human beings. The higher-risk attached to this virus has created fear and anguish among people of different races. It has derailed the daily lives and caused immense damage especially the under-privileged and great unwashed. Despite the disruption caused, it can never destroy the spirited fight displayed by individuals and governments across the world. It is a pandemic, declared by The WHO which has caused panic among people. The consternation is mainly due to its devastating effect on human souls. The latest updates on the number of people perished in this pandemic show it all. However, among the dark clouds comes the silver lining which is hope for change, plod but strive for a come-back. In the words of Berinato, S. (March 23, 2020), that discomfort you're feeling is grief, Harvard Business Review: Nothing causes more embitterment than the anxiety which is more to do with Anticipatory grief and isolation attached to this virus attack. A situation of anticipatory grief occurs when the mind moves from the current state to the future state and where the scene in the future is wretched. The dilemma is such that we are clueless about what to do – should we turn to David Kessler (Globally acclaimed Expert on grief), or let move to religious scholars, maybe a motivational speaker for calmness.

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Introduction:-

The Covid-19 caused a worldwide lockdown but something to reflect upon as the catastrophe like this will bring out the character in the human race. A time to identify individuals who have a self-vested interest and the flip side is the one who stands out to be socially responsible. We have already seen some super-heroes in the form of medical practitioners, media professionals, and good Samaritans who have sacrificed their interest for the greater well being of the society. This is a challenge in itself and this is where we see the silver lining among the gloominess.

“Ignored and spurned with the spread of the pandemic and literally in the lurch with nowhere to go. Why can't people understand our point-of-view as we are equally challenged and disturbed by the social distancing and on top of it a disruption in our daily routine with Procrustean bed learning?” STUDENT VOICES

Definitely the pandemic is forcing for a major transition and that could be in any field. One of the fields where its impact is visible is in the field of education. The opportunities could harness and channelize systemically provided necessary initiatives are taken by leaders ensuring a positive transition to take place. The educationalist in India

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especially the higher educational institutions showed a mixed reaction to the crisis-driven experienced by the key stakeholders – the students. Some have a rigorous built-in system in place where everything goes on as usual, with the only differentiating factor being that the classes are not happening in a physical setting but through a platform that is well addressed. However, some institutions are caught napping during a pandemic explosion. The only way to address this ongoing fracas is by looking into the reactive modus operandi which includes:

Technology embedded/infused system:

The institutions that have foreseen the lockdown and the state they are in today, have taken adequate measures thus helped in running the classes in a scheduled manner. They have the platform in place, which includes – Easy class; Zoom Classroom, Nearpod, Google Form, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Mentimeter, Brainpop, Flipgrid, Edufow, and Video Ask by Typeform, Google Hangouts Meet, YouTube Videos, and Screen Recorders. Despite the platform in place, several attempts were initially made for training and demos, before getting into the actual class settings which are truly remarkable. The challenge is with those institutions which have ignored the alarming situation thus caught in a state of absolute uncertainty. There is always a way out and presuming that the Lockdown opens for a few days or some liberalization in the rules are made then the institutions should envisage the situation and thereby take precautionary measures. In that short-span institutions of higher learning should place things in such a way that adequate resources are provided with higher internet connectivity; digital library access, and other useful materials. The instructors must also be trained to use these technology-driven online classes without any hiccups. In India, it is always a challenge not in accessing the system or platform in place but how to use it effectively. Once the instructors are trained then the next important task for these teachers is to help the students to use the system. Being a young population, a few hours of teaching are good enough for students to pick the skill sets required. Therefore a technology-driven system will help through the on-going situation.

Emotional Connect with the key stakeholders:

The most important thing to do in this panic-stricken situation is to create not only awareness among the key stakeholders (students) but also support them emotionally. A case in point is India with a young, vibrant population, is in an utter state of confusion as they have never witnessed such an event in their life. For this group, life seems very difficult as they are under constant fear, uncertainty, and over time it turns into anxiety and further state of panic. Here the role of leaders and support staff including teachers are of paramount importance. The management must ensure that the students have the right tool they require to engage in meaningful discussions and deliberations.

This means that the virtual classroom can engage students in their learning with proper technological support. Again to make certain that the devices used by the teachers and the students have the right software so that it is in sync with the system used. It is also important to provide adequate support whenever required through initiating a process where the IT staff can come into play when a student approaches in case of difficulties. Overcoming initial technological barriers are like resuscitating and that will help gain students' confidence and boost their morale. Once it is fixed then more than taking subject-related lectures creates awareness programs through lecture series on social bonding and provides an open forum for students where they can share their views. According to Rasmus Hougaard, J. C. (2020, March 19), Build Your Resilience in the Face of a Crisis, Managing yourself, Harvard Business Review, initially, timely scheduled activities should be chalked down which should focus more on their emotional aspects like simple fun interaction, videoconferencing and discussions in small groups and even identifying students who need mental support thereby assisting through advocacy organizations

“Emotional connectivity with students is a missing link with most of the educational institutions in India and that has an adverse effect in their attitude that eschewal them from the system put in place and dissuades in the learning process”

Leaders must be engaging but transformative for greater impact:

It is a leadership test amid corona virus pandemic. The unsurpassed leader process information which is easily available at a rapid speed, which is significant in the situation, thus takes decisive action with true conviction. The decision making delays and at times emotions and anticipatory grief overrule the situation. However, leaders with courage and conviction will ultimately overcome distress. The immediate and pressing issues should supersede the less important ones, thus work on a priority basis. The situation is not disappearing overnight and the more leadership ingrain this in mind the better the decision making will be. This calls for an urgent need for open and frequent communication from the top level. Any flaws in communication or lack of communication will build mistrust among the stakeholders. It is apparent that initially, during the remote work situation productivity may not

be higher or as good as usual physical work setting and leadership must be cognizant of it. Instead of looking at productivity, the leadership should primarily focus on their employees' health and their families well being. The security and comfort during this time will help create an emotional bond between the employees (academic & non-academic) and the leaders which will translate into greater returns in the future. These are ideally a vision of a transformative leader who raises their bars during the crisis and adopts a flexible system. In the academic field and that too in a country like India, it is a rare blend as most leaders are not used to such disruptive moments. Doris Kearns Goodwin, a historian and a Pulitzer Prize-winning author in the book Leadership in turbulent times has stressed the change in the leadership style that the way they lead. The true leader is the one who cruises through the situation and sail past the storm with the members intact, a big ask for the current scenario, but hopeful of as emerging champions.

Conclusion:-

It is obvious and visible that during online class time, engaging students have become a daunting task. The students are open to different online and other social media platforms which cause distractions and limit their learning. The distractions become louder when they are joined online from their home for classes. The study done in the developing country signifies that the availability of the platform including net connectivity becomes a cause of concern for many students and that becomes another means of distraction from an uninterrupted and engaging session. Thus institutions must follow the above points to be successful which includes having a technology embedded system in place; maintain an emotional connect with the students and the leaders must be proactive, engaging but transformative in their approach for greater impact.