



Special Editorial

Education warriors

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When the Pandemic gets off the global scene, we shall all superlatively acknowledge the performance of great many sections of the society that shall remain a part of our long lasting memory. They have been referred to as the "warriors" who fought this battle against the unimaginable microorganism that is unseen by the human eye but is nevertheless the eye of the storm. Every day they do extraordinary things like taking care of lives that are at immediate risk, either as first responder healthcare workers, sanitation workers, police & defense force personnel, bankers, media, milk vendors, farmers, vegetable vendors, daily need workers and so many other jobs, that we barely knew existed and came under the category of "essential" services.

Yet another "warrior" whose commitment needs to be mentioned is from the field of academics. The academic institutes that exhibited academic leadership, the teachers and the IT professionals who opened the doors of online teaching, till now unknown to so many in this profession. These are the EDUCATION WARRIORS. When the first lockdown was announced in this part of the world, they woke up in the morning of 24th March 2020, without realizing that they will have to deal with a situation that they had never dreamt of, even on the previous night. Things changed for them overnight. In times like this, we are reminded of how community and creativity have the power to change the world.

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The Pandemic has been a strong driver of creativity and innovation. Current Covid-19 has also suggested that one cannot take time to respond creatively in times of such crisis. The education warriors learnt quickly how to deal with this unprecedented situation where time was against them for discoveries.

Many institutes both schools & colleges started online teaching in March 2020 when the first lockdown was declared, anticipating the inevitable. In the initial phase there were challenges on HOW to implement. But, necessity teaches humans to face the impossible. Teachers who had never used a laptop started doing creative online teaching. From audio to video to interactive classrooms, to mentorship programs and to parent teacher meetings, we have examples galore of all of them.

Due credit should be given to these education warriors who are coping with several challenges that the institutes and the teachers face during this process, such as student attendance, parent resistance, non-payment of fees, loss in salary or job and several others. Yet another challenge is the social and economic divide of both the teacher and the student. Not all students have access to the internet and even if they do, there are frequent network breakdowns and not all teachers are conversant with online mode of teaching and the technology involved. The add-ons are the personal and emotional challenges faced by them which are very subjective. There is no way a teacher can identify the emotional barriers facing the students which was otherwise possible during face to face interactions. The teacher and

the student have their own learning preferences which is difficult to address during this process. For a progressive teacher who is well versed with the technological jargons involved, things were exciting. But for those several who were first timers in this process have learnt quickly and for them, every day is a new learning. The demands of the technical skills required in such teaching learning are high, but our "education warriors" have lived up to the expectations not only in the teaching process but also in the assessment schedules.

The future opportunities that are there to stay in the online mode are visible due to the strong feedback teachers are receiving in the areas of small group tutorials, mentorship programs and parent teacher meetings. It is also

making the government contemplate seriously in making technology available to the remotest of the remote village in the country. There is also an awakening to look at parents as partners in learning.

No doubt, online teaching has its own limitations. But "The show must go on" says the "education warrior".

Author biography

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