

4 EDUCATION PLUS



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**Karnataka Education Review**

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9/10/2020 pg 4.5

**Looking ahead, looking positive**

The Pandemic has certainly affected education sector in a big way like it has to other sectors. But what's the way forward? MANASA KAMBANNA finds out

Bengaluru has been a prominent hub of higher education in India. Students from across India look forward to seek admission into not only programmes in engineering, business and medicine, but also various other fields from pure sciences, social sciences to humanities in the city. But as soon as the pandemic hit the country, all educational campuses became bereft of students and activities. Since March 2020, how has the pandemic changed the scenario of higher education in Karnataka? How have institutions, faculty and students coped with the altered situation? The Hindu talks to heads of institutions and students to trace the process of adaptation and grasp the current situation.

"The first two weeks after the lockdown were the most confusing times. None of us were sure of taking any decision. But when it was clear that the situation was not going to get better any time soon, we decided to go with online teaching," recalls S. Sacchidanand, Vice-chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS). If most colleges took to online mode for conducting the last semester exams, others like RGUHS continued with the offline mode. "We have successfully conducted exams as usual with at most precautions since August and they have been almost completed for all the years," he informs. "Some

concessions had to be made for students coming from far away states," he adds.

When it comes to attending online classes, "there were difficulties faced by students who could not afford high-speed internet connection. However, for 90 per cent of our student community adapting to online classes has been smooth," remarks K.N. Subramanya, Principal, R.V. College of Engineering.

It took about two-three months for the institutions for taking everything in a


full-fledged manner to the online mode. Whereas for Sacchidanand, students and faculty at RGUHS adapted easily and almost instantly to the online classes as they were trained to do various processes online as part of their curriculum even before the pandemic. "The pandemic has been a blessing in disguise in this respect, as the emergency of the situation compelled everyone in the education sector to act and adapt faster," feels K.N. Subramanya. Sharing her experience of attending online

classes since June, Gauravi Suren, a first-year student of English literature at Christ (deemed-to-be) University, says: "Attending virtual classes has in no significant way been different from the regular ones. Teachers are delivering lectures for almost the same number of hours. If we have doubts or questions, we can always press the 'raise hands' button. We are also able to converse with our classmates by holding meetings ourselves after the class."

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For computer science department also there has been no difference in terms of teaching, lab testing and conducting projects. "However, other streams such as civil, mechanical engineering are not able to have the hands-on experience in their labs," observes K.N. Subramanya. While the medical colleges are finishing their theory part of the syllabus, students are waiting to hit their labs to understand the practical. "Many of our students have already expressed their longing for being in the college campus and in the vicinity of their teachers," he chuckles.

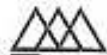
Colleges are making use of various online meeting platforms such as zoom, webex, microsoft teams etc. for teaching.

K.N. Subramanya is grateful for some of these plat-

forms for providing their service free of cost for educational institutions at least during the initial days of the pandemic.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, does the number of admissions in the higher education sector in Karnataka go down this academic year? "Certainly there will be a drop in number of students coming from other states this time. They might end up joining colleges closer home. However, this vacuum might be filled by students who were unable to go abroad for their higher studies and also those from tier-three cities from within State," observes K.N. Subramanya.

"Once the Covid process is fully over, we would get a clarity on admission numbers and composition," he adds.



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Nothing seems to slow down the NMIT (Nitte Meenakshi Institute of Technology) Placement and Training department, not even constraints created by the pandemic. In an adverse and unpredictable economic



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lined up to recruit students

for this opportunity. We had never had Amazon come to our college. Due to the great work of the placement department, we were lucky to get this opportunity'. Ms. Muskan Chaudhary who also got a job at Amazon says