

An EMERGING CULTURE *in* EDUCATION *for* BETTER TOMORROW

L. S. Raheja School Of Architecture's
initiatives during COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

Article -1

Due to the sudden outbreak of Corona Virus pandemic globally, it was essential for the educational sector to take immediate remedial measures by temporary closing of institutes, to safeguard the individuals associated with it from getting affected and thus avoiding the further spread of virus. Soon as the directives were received from the central and state government it was mandatory for educational institutes to completely lockdown. This disconnects in the mainstream teaching method at the end of academic year was unpredicted and lead to evident confused responses from the academic fraternity. Circumstantially it was difficult for the Board of Studies of every faculty to revert back immediately with appropriate suggestive methods. However the educational challenges were manifold. Along with the lockdown came challenges of mobility, as the transportation stopped, stationery and other essential resources for education curtailed with closure of shops etc. Knowing the initial lockdown of 21 days many non-local students moved back to their hometowns. This eventuality led the institutes not only adopting innovative teaching methods to embrace its student community, but also to remain connected to them to keep track of their wellbeing.

Bombay Suburban Art and Craft Education society's L.S. Raheja School of Architecture is a 68 year old institute and amongst the pioneer institute imparting knowledge in the field of Architecture, Landscape & Interior Design. The college is known for its mammoth share and contribution towards shaping the urban development of the city and country. Through its legacy and culture, the institute has always remained humble and shouldered its moral responsibility in the field of education. The Covid19 lockdown was taken up as a challenge to the modus operandi of our institutes, and though it was distanced, it avoided creation of any kind of disconnect and extend maximum support in every possible way not only to the students but to every individual of the institute. Though as per the initial directives received of closing the educational institutes for students and teaching staff, the management of our institute could foresee the magnitude and took up an unblemished decision of closing the institute for everyone.

The seriousness of the never experienced before situation of total Lockdown due to Global pandemic was initially difficult to be penetrated into the community. Anticipating the challenges ahead, immediate meetings of various departments



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and their staff hierarchies were initiated and teaching and Non-teaching staff were made alert of the situation. Ideas, opinions and mindsets were shared to encounter the condition of remaining connected through social distances. Distinctly meeting was organized to educate the maintenance staff and create awareness amongst them about the consequences of the spreading virus and habits they should observe during the lockdown.

By then, the social media had become a huge platform for sharing the statistical extent of COVID19 and remedial measures to avoid the spread were widely discussed. Government and civic authorities were releasing information through media to combat the situation and avoid any panic.

Before the temporary closure and during the last working week, the immediate steps taken at institute were to try disinfecting and sanitizing the whole premise at regular intervals. Information manual regarding self-sanitizing and maintaining social distancing were displayed at prominent and visible location and same was being circulated through social media like whatsapp messaging. Fortunately the full time core teaching staff was well conversant with the online working methods for maintaining attendance records and academic records of the students. This data was available on the cloud and for ready to use online whenever needed. The full time teaching staff anticipating the Lockdown did their last minute gathering of the data on cloud to make it up-to-date. Each one, knew that the teaching, learning, organizing, accounting, recording, archiving methods are going to change, and changes with respect to social distance will have to be adopted.

It would be vital to understand in nutshell, what efforts do go into perceiving the architecture education. As at L.S. Raheja School of Architecture impart education

for Bachelors in Architecture, Master in Architecture (Landscape) and Bachelors & Diploma programmes in Interior Design, we, with authority can express these educational challenges.

The academic activities involve, class room lectures, studio working, workshops activities, lab trainings, industrial visits, case studies, study tours, international study programmes, co-curricular activities, competitions participation etc., as integral part of education. The educational proficiency in these careers is not a tranquil experience for many. The primary focus of Architecture Pedagogy is more design centric, which is a rational outcome of many other technical and humanity based subjects. The 5-years bachelors' course of architecture is the biggest and contemplated as one of the most stressful educational career. The education demands sleepless hard-work culture from the students. Though not too much mugging up is essential, the students are expected to be alert, observant, responsive, sensitive, creative and innovative in their thought process to approach their designs and defend the criticism of their mentors. The design complexities become more challenging in every formative years of education. The modes of expression for grading in most of these subjects are in the form of submissions. Technical legitimate drawings with cogent supportive manuscript and convincing communication skills are the integral part of assignments. Mentoring and guiding face to face, or by remaining connected to students through online support are primary imperative essentials of student and teachers relations. The education in this field is beyond the classroom learning and requires bond between 'The Guru – Shishya' which grows as the time progresses. The dependence of students to their mentors is timeless and expects additional informal interactions beyond orthodox teaching learning methods. Encouraging, Inspiring,

Reassuring and boosting the morals of the aspiring students is a selfless contest altogether of a devoted teacher in this field. Also Architectural education is largely supported with the participative support of visiting staff from the industry for sharing their expertise.

Understanding this, The COVID -19 Lockdown came up as one of the most crucial challenge, any educational institute would have ever envisaged. The teachers together played an important role in combating this situation. With the Lockdown the guardians of the non-local students were alarmed and in response their wards immediately started leaving the hostels or shared rented accommodation and left from their hometowns. The easiest connect to these students available was through their Mobile whatsapp groups of class colleagues and their academic class in-charge. The Class in-charges caringly shared all the possible relevant information to their students groups and remain connected to them through whatsapp messages. Fortunately most of the non-local students reached their hometown or to their local guardians place safe before the closure of public transport and informed about their safety to their class in-charges. Everyday started with the news of fresh extremes of spread of Corona Virus. The news channel, media were flooded with information about the COVID19 and necessary care to be taken for against getting affected and avoid spreading. With everyone quarantined at home and almost no mobility, the teachers started raising concerns about academic completion of the work with regards to the semester ending. 'WORK FROM HOME', 'OBSERVE SOCIAL DISTANCING', 'STAY HOME STAY SAFE' were amongst the few ideologies which spread rapidly amongst all the working communities. It was important for the students to be kept alert and not lose out on the vital routine ongoing academics.

With the initial discussions amongst the Principals, HOD's and fulltime teachers it was decided to find out innovative resources for initializing the studies back to its routine without idling out any further.

Through the initiatives & alertness of seniors and timely enthusiasm of young resourceful teachers, a new emerging trend was getting cultured to set up avenues for the formative learning-guiding systems. Understanding of various software and their benefits and shortcomings were studied. Analysis of which online internet support suits best for academic activities was done. Group meetings were shared through mobile conferencing and data was shared through emails amongst the teachers and strategies were made for online teaching. The conclusions led us to formulate following modes of online media for innovative working:-



1. For lecture-based subjects:

- Skype or Zoom for conducting Lectures: The teachers through whatsapp initially shared topics for which the lectures would be conducted. As the schedules then students would plugin to the link and attend the Lectures. Subjects like History & Humanities, Building Materials, Environmental Sciences, Design theories and few other theory-based subjects were benefitted through these lectures.
- Teachers video recorded their development of sketches to understand the sequential order of drawing for subjects like construction, graphics and uploaded the same so as to get a classroom experience for the students.
- Lectures and Tutorials in PPT formats

were shared with students for subjects like building services and building materials so that these become ready last minute guide for students during tests / exams.



Studios conducted on Google Classroom

2. For studio based subjects:

- Google Classrooms were established by class in-charges for different studio based subjects like Architectural Design, Design Dissertation, and Architectural Representation and Detailing, Building Construction, Building Services & Allied subjects like Interior design, Landscape Design etc. These subjects are usually accessed by single group in-charges (1 guide: 10 students) or in case of a final submission the same students work is accessed by multiple guides for fair grading. The Senior students worked on ACAD supported drawings and uploaded PDFs or AutoCad drawings, the lower semester where the hand drawings were expected to be scanned and uploaded, knowing the difficulty that the students would be challenged with respect to paper stationary, the students were asked to use the back side of already done submissions and later Mobile scan or take photograph of the same and upload the same in the PDF formats. The students finding difficulty in scanning and uploading PDF were asked to submit their drawings in JPEG format through simple mobile whatsapp messaging.
- Subject expert Teachers through whatsapp messages and emails had send meticulous checklist of contents of each and every topic. This helped the students to self-evaluate their drawings before uploading their submissions on the Google classroom.

- Time slots were given to students with possibility of Editing within the time limits for uploading the drawings.
- The link of these students uploaded work was shared with concerned teachers for online assessment.
- Guidelines of marking were meticulously drafted for various criteria for online marking system, so that all the marking / assessment were done in all fair means.
- The Google classroom also helped to generate a data of the timings of the assessors and the comments shared by them during the assessment. The administrator could also set format of whom to access the data so as remain confidential or share openly.



3. Test series for theory subjects:

- Sample test /prelims were conducted in subjects like Theory of Structures, EVS etc. Students were given test paper and asked to submit the PDFs of the scanned answer booklets for assessment. This attempt was done for preparing students for their Theory exam ATKT.

4. Slow Learners and Defaulters:

- Considering the Lockdown period challenges and giving benefit of doubt to the defaulting students failing to submit online on time or for slow learners who could not meet up to the expectations were asked to resubmit there work online on time extended link for resubmission. Parameters of markings

were discussed with the guides for such students so as to remain fair with the students who submitted the work up to date as per schedule.

- Few defaulters are genuinely technologically challenged and also deprived of stationary due to lockdown. In few cases their hometowns have difficult of internet connection with required band width. The class-in-charges were asked to deal with such cases very sensitively so that the students do not under depression. Their parents are communicated and asked to advocate their wards and stay connected for any necessary counseling.

Jents Name	BARC	BARC	BARC	BARC	BARC	BARC	BARC	ELIGIBLE FOR APPEARING SEMESTER	
	1006 EVS	1007 ARD	1009 AT	110 PP	11 BC	1015 DD	1021 EL10		
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
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	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Eligible

ATTENDANCE & SESSIONAL RECORDS

5. Attendance & Sessional Records:

- The class in-charges have prepared the attendance records as per the Mumbai University Guidelines till 14Th March 2020 and later from 16th March 2020 till 31st march 2020 all students were given 100% benefit of attendance of the Lockdown period.
- The class in-charges have prepared the Sessional Records for the Even semester of the academic year 2019-20 and uploaded on the website through Google share for viewing.
- The exam committee after going through the records have formulated their list of students eligible for the college conducted exams for sem. 2,3,4,5 and 9 and for the university held exams for the sem. 6,8 and 10.

6. Paper Setting for examination:

- The exam committee before the Lockdown had issued letters of appointment to Paper setters to setting Question papers for the college to conduct Summer examination 2020. These Question papers were received on the Principals and Exam Incharge email Id for proof reading and further necessary action.

(The directives regarding conduct of exams are awaited from the BOS- Architecture of the University of Mumbai.)

7. Time table and Scheduling of AY 2020-21:

- Time table for the Academic year 2020-21 has been prepared considering the 16 weeks schedule per semester. This has enabled to ascertain the class in-charges. The class in-charges are asked to make the yearly calendar for the respective teachers considering the teaching load per week and all the subject teachers are expected to submit their teaching plans. Considering a delay in the reopening of the college semester due to extending of COVID Lockdown, the teachers are instructed to be future ready; they are directed to prepare and deliver the entire theory part of the subject through online methods.
- With early completion of the theory subjects through online methods the teachers will have sufficient time later for conducting continuous subject wise studios. As studios require more one to one interaction and mentoring the balanced days and time can be curated for efficient use.
- The coming academic year seems or may be deprived with Local or International study tours, with this respect the teachers are asked to prepare PPT presentation of

the study tours and industrial visit which can be shared online with the students for widening their exposure.

- Class wise meetings of visiting teachers and subject teachers are conducted on Google Hangouts for formulating Architecture Design briefs of AY. 2020-21.

8. Webinars:

- There has been a vast increase in the online Webinars conducted for Free or paid by the industrial experts. Mostly the teachers and alumni receiving the links of such Webinars forward it through whatsapp messaging and the information is passed on to every connected individuals.

9. Instagram & Twitter:

- The college has its Instagram handle as 'we_lsr' & 'welsrite' for its social media updates and is remarkably active. The excellent academic work of students or any college related activities are immediately uploaded on Instagram for social information.
- The college has recently logged on to twitter account with certain prime objectives of branding, creating a platform for outreaching masses, building acquaintance within the architecture and its allied community, sharing views and voicing for appropriateness within the industry.

10. Evaluation Model:

- Evaluation Models for Feedback from the students regarding the Online teaching methods and its adaptability was done through a Google forms circulation through links on whatsapp message. The same has been in receipt and pie charts are generated for its assessment.
- Self-appraisal of teachers for evaluating their active partition in Online teaching

methods during the Covid19 Lockdown period has been done on Google form and sends to teachers for their feedback. The same will be evaluated for learning the benefits and shortcomings of the same,



website: <http://www.lsrsa.edu.in>

11. Website

- During the current Lockdown a team of senior teachers has been dedicatedly working for updating and restructuring of the college Website. The website in construction aims to be well apprised with up to date information made available to the aspiring candidates seeking admission to B.Arch., M. Arch (Landscape) and Interior design courses.

12. Initiatives planned

- Reacting to the Global state of affairs, it is paramount that the country as whole and society & communities as sections should become self-sustainable. The nation should evolve as wide platform for opening up avenues for its growth with lesser hurdles. Our dependencies on imports should minimize. As educational institute these challenges shall be cultured for encouraging students to develop enterprising skills and become entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

The unfortunate Covid19 Lockdown has manifested communities to change their orthodox working methods, and solicited them to contemplate differently. The change is inevitable but it has ill-chosen its platform to begin with.

The Charles Darwin 1809 theory of "Survival of the Fittest - It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change" evokes rethinking for the future.