Issues and Challenges in Administration of Higher Education due to COVID 19: A step ahead from Paperless office to Humanless office

Dr. Pranati Tilak
Dean, Department of Management, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth

Dr. Shrirang Kandalgaonkar
Research Guide

Mrs. Vrushali Raut
Research Student

ABSTRACT :

The Pandemic of COVID-19 is affecting the entire world including India's education sector. After the closure of the colleges, thousands of students, teachers and staff have to stay at home. Due to this, the significance of online education is highlighted. The administration of the education sector is also affected due to this current crisis. This pandemic creates new learning opportunities in the educational field to the student as well as for the staff and to find out something positive in the current situation. Educational institutions have conducted various webinars, online conferences, online meetings to carry on the activities with the help of digital technology and Artificial Intelligence. In this paper, we will be discussing the importance of digitization and Artificial Intelligence in educational administration with the help of case study of the administration of Smt. Maniben Nanavati Women's College, Vile Parle, Mumbai.

KEYWORDS :

COVID 19, Higher Education, Administration, Paperless office Administration, Human less office Administration, Digitization, Artificial Intelligence, Office Automation.

INTRODUCTION :

The whole world, including India, is facing a crisis due to the pandemic COVID 19. It is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus. A strict lockdown has been implemented by the Government of India as this disease is a pandemic. The government has forced people to stay at home. Due to this lockdown, the Government has decided to close down the schools, colleges and universities for an indefinite period. This has affected the Academics and Administrative sections of the education institutions.

In academics, College Teachers and Students are switched to the online mode for the continuation of their studies by using a digital platform. The good thing about most of the online classes is that students can watch the recordings any number of times later and study. The online teaching/learning process requires self-discipline, time management skills, determination and a strong motivation. Online teaching and learning is a great help to educational institutions to push ahead with the academic calendar. But this trend has raised

many concerns among educational fraternity. The learning has become difficult where there is no internet connectivity, power shortage or power failure.

On the other hand, sudden lockdown has greatly affected the administration of the Higher Education Sector. A lockdown situation arises, following an emergency protocol to prevent people from leaving a specific area. So the Administrative staffs were unable to go to the colleges and the administrative work was held up as all the related administrative documents, correspondence was left in the office. The colleges which were already having a digitized administration system are able to manage the office administration easily and smoothly from home. But the others faced a lot of difficulties. Similarly, the staff who are not having computer or internet facility at home also show their inability to work from home. The lockdown has accelerated the adoption of digital technology. So almost all the Higher Educational Institutions have started their administrative work through digital technology. Digitized office administration has achieved the goal of the paperless office and now in this lockdown, it is achieving the unexpected goal of human less office. This emphasizes the significance of digital technology for the administration of the colleges. Nowadays most technological trend known as "Artificial Intelligence" has been great help to the administration to carry out their work.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the working pattern of digitized office administration
2. To analyze the steps towards paperless and human less administration
3. To know the benefits of Artificial Intelligence for the administration

METHODOLOGY:

This research paper is based on the case study of Smt. Maniben Nanavati College, Vile Parle, Mumbai

Primary Data:
For the purpose of this case study, a special questionnaire was prepared and forwarded to the Office Superintendent of Smt. Maniben Nanavati College, Vile Parle and an in-depth interaction was arranged with her.

Secondary Data :
This research paper is also based on the secondary data available on the subject area of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Research articles, reference books, research papers have also been referred for gathering the secondary data.

PAPERLESS ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE:

A paperless office means an administrative office where the use of paper is eliminated or greatly reduced to save the ecological environment. This is done by converting documents and important papers into digital form and promotes office automation. In 1970, George Pake, the head of Xerox Corp.'s Research Centre in Palo Alt in his article titled "The Office

of the Future" wrote the word "Paperless office" This idea was also flashed in 1975 Business Week article.

The paperless administration concept was initiated by scanning the documents which is a continuous process. However first need is to trained the staff for the use of modern technology. It is very much essential that the technology used for this should be very simple and specific so that it can be easily usable and manageable. Monitoring and upgrading is the most essential part of the paperless administration. Digital technology generates, stores and processes data as a string of binary digits. Digital technology is increasingly making machines smarter. In some cases, the machines no longer need human beings to operate them, freeing up employees from often repetitive and boring tasks for more interesting pursuits. Various types of software and tools are available for college office automation which helps to reduce the tedious work pressure. This promotes the paperless administration.

There are several advantages of paperless administration. They may be noted as follows:
1. Paperless Administration saves the environment
2. It saves time
3. It is easily accessible for all the stakeholders
4. It enhances customer service.
5. It saves office space.

There are certain difficulties in paperless administration. They are as follows:
1. Administrative Staff is unaware about the use of technology.
2. There is risk of data loss in paperless administration.
3. Reading on the computer screen is sometimes difficult.
4. Some government norms where manual record keeping is must, the paperless administration cannot be implemented.
5. A scanned signature is still not acceptable in many documents by many organisations.

In the present COVID 19 situation, educational institutions are switching over to the paperless, digitized administration for managing their work from home. The managements have trained their staff to use digital administrative technology through online meetings. Government of Maharashtra approved the electronic uses as authentic source vide their circular dated 05-06-2020. So all the Government circulars and resolutions are circulated through emails and modern media like what's app. This all promotes the concept of Paperless administration.

HUMANLESS ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE:

Human less Administration is described as the office with no human being physically present and working. The human less office can also be described as a robot operated or machine operated work. Mathematician Alan Turing's mind discovers the idea of machines operating like human beings and whether the machines have the same ability to think and learn by themselves. In this study, we will be discussing the administrative work which is done from a place other than normal office location i.e. without going to the office which results in a

human less administrative office. IT sector is familiar with this concept since many years. One of the ways to stop further spreading of COVID 19 pandemic disease is by placing in measures like the "work from home" policy. It means the routine office work is carried out by the staff from home. A majority of employees continued to work from home during the lockdown period. The ideology of working from home has spread up across the world, which has given a new dimension of running an organization at ease, for the employees and employer. All the Government Departments also carried out the work by using digital technology. Higher Education Department and Universities have instructed all the colleges by issuing the circulars to maintain minimum attendance in the office and follow the "work from home" policy. To cope up with this situation, the administrative staff is trained themselves to switch over to this new technology. Further to the paperless office, the human less office concept has some pros and cons. It has certain advantages and disadvantages as follows:

Advantages of Human less Office are as follows:-
1. Human less office increases the productivity of an employee.
2. It helps employees to work flexibly.
3. It develops confidence among the employees.
4. It helps to maintain a work-life balance.
5. It benefited cost-wise to the employee and employer.

Disadvantages of Human less Office are as follows:-
1. It is difficult to focus on the work with distractions hovering around the employee.
2. It disturbs the daily schedule, as there is no specific fixed timing. So the clock pattern is disturbed.
3. It is difficult to explain the some basic concepts and new ideas or assignments remotely.
4. It becomes difficult to monitor the employee's performance.
5. It may create health issues, to the employees in administration.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI):

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an area of Computer Technology that emphasizes the creation of an intelligent machine that works and reacts like a human being. John McCarthy in 1956 in his first academic conference proposed the idea of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The need for AI is increasing day by day. Computer scientists have predicted that very soon 85% of customer interactions will be managed without a human interface. AI is not a robot but it controls the robot. Artificial Intelligence has many advantages like it increases work efficiency, it works with highest accuracy, it reduces the cost of training and operation etc. Machines can think much faster than human beings and can perform multi-tasking jobs to obtain the best results. Stepping to the era of globalisation, Artificial Intelligence is the most influential technology.

Some Sources of Artificial Intelligence are as follows:-

1. **Industry 4.0**: Industry 4.0 is a transformation journey in which technology is used to combine digital information with the physical world. It is the trend towards automation and data exchange and processes which include cyber-physical systems, the internet of things (IOT), cloud computing, cognitive computing and artificial intelligence.

2. **Data mining and Data Warehousing:** Data warehousing is the process of compiling and organizing data into one common database, whereas data mining is the process of extracting meaningful data from that database. Data mining can be done once data warehousing is complete.

3. **Robotic Process Automation**: Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is machine learning capabilities and use of software with artificial intelligence (AI) to handle high-volume; repeatable tasks that previously required humans to perform.

4. **Block chain**: It is a process of distribution of data between two parties and it is managed by the cluster computer.

5. **Cognitive Computing**: The goal of cognitive computing is creating computing frameworks that can solve complicated problems without human assistance.

6. **Cloud Computing**: Cloud Computing is a technology that uses the internet and central remote servers to maintain data and applications. People can save a great deal of time, spent on updating the records. It prevents duplication of work and unnecessary efforts.

Applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education Sector:

In this crisis teaching-learning process is done with the help of AI. Similarly, Administrative work of the education sector like admissions, fee collection, results monitoring, alert SMS, attendance, student's progress check, salary, bank transactions, accounts, various reports, etc. is managed with the help of Artificial Intelligence. It has become useful for the educational institution for the tracking of the Alumni, find out the students to avail scholarship/free ship, job opportunities for the students, to know the status of employee's statutory benefits, to follow the government's instructions etc.

Although Artificial Intelligence made our lives much easier, saved time and made work perfect it loses the emotions, it could not identify the personal problems. There may be chances of misuse of technology. So human monitoring is also required to control and maintain the machines and software. Since machines are learning and doing things more efficiently and effectively on time, this could be the reason of human extinction from the offices.

CASE STUDY OF ADMINISTRATION OF SMT. MANIBEN NANAVATI WOMEN'S COLLEGE, VILE PARLE, MUMBAI:

As part of this research paper, the researchers decided to make in-depth study of administration of a degree college in Mumbai.

A good example of Digitized Office Administration is the Administration of Maninben Nanavati Women's College in Vile Parle(E), Mumbai. This college is aided and affiliated to SNDT University. The college was accredited by NAAC with B Grade in the year 2004. It was reaccredited again with a B Grade in 2009. In the third cycle of accreditation, the college is reaccredited with A Grade by NAAC.

Office Superintendent of said college has been taking tremendous efforts for the digitization of administration. The researchers have taken an in-depth interview of Mrs. Keyaa Mukherjee, Office Superintendent of Maninben Nanavati Woman's College to know the success story of digitization of college administration. Lead questions were prepared and forwarded to her in advance. They are as follows:

1. Why did you feel it essential to Digitize Office Administration?
2. Which are the broad areas of office administration that you felt to be digitised and what steps have you followed for that?
3. Which are the standardised formats, data/record generation forms used for Electronic Correspondence Management System?
4. How have you planned for the Inventory Management System?
5. Student Information Management system is a very important data within and even for the outsiders, please let us know,
   a) How have you been manipulating student's data?
   b) What are the benefits to the students and the college?
   c) How do you maintain its secrecy?
6. How do you foresee the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Higher Education Sector's Office Administration?
7. How do you foresee Post COVID era of Higher Education?
8. What type of new soft skills do you feel are essential, for the employees in Office Administration of Degree College?

She switched on to office automation in 2012 and since then college is using ICT system for entire Administrative operations. She said that due to digitized administration, her office is functioning smoothly and very effectively. The college gets the student and staff information easily at anytime and anywhere. She proudly said that the college has also initiated the concept of paperless office administration and successfully followed the mantra of "Go Green"

Following are the main points of her replies; Here is an excerpt:

1. The college administrative department's V**ision** is "**Digital Administrative college office**". The **Mission** is "**To provide access to online services 24 X 7 around the**

world" and their **Goal** is "**To run the data into information and information into insight**".

2. The college has started the digitisation work through online admissions and now they have introduced Electronic Correspondence Management System, Electronic Service book Management System, Digital File Management System, Inventory Management System, Examination Information Management System, Electronic Attendance Management System, fully computerized accounts department, etc.

3. The college has introduced the Inventory Management System, mainly to control stationary expenses. She specifically mentioned that the Student Information Management system is a great help to serve their customers i.e. students/parents. She added that due to password security at every level, there is no risk in digital administration

4. The college has benefited from this eco-friendly digitized administrative office system. The college presented the concept of office automation to the peer team of NAAC in 2016 which was appreciated by them. Various Government authorities also appreciated the paperless office automation of the college during their visit to the college.

5. The office administration of the college is not at all affected due to the current lockdown as most of the administrative work is on cloud and the staff can easily perform their duties from home. Nowadays due to lockdown, the office is also human less, but the administrative work is not suffered at all. **The college is using Google Drive, Google Sheets, Google docs and other software** to perform their regular routine duties. She felt that optimum use of various Google online applications in each and every daily task is very much important to perform the office duties efficiently. She also makes sure that though the office is human less now but human touch should be there. So she is taking regular meetings with the staff, understanding their problems and resolves it. She believes in adopting the new challenges and immediately resolving the administrative issues if any.

6. When the researchers asked her about the impact of COVID on Administration of Higher Educational Institutions, She immediately said that look at the positive side of this crisis. Every college administration and the administrative staff learnt something new in this lockdown to perform their duties. She added that, it's a chance to prove to be more efficient and productive by developing new and improved professional skills/knowledge through online procedures. She felt that Higher Education Institutions also needs to accept the importance of Artificial Intelligence.

7. Normally there is fear that due to AI, people will be jobless. But She strongly believes that due to this fear, someone should not stop the progress and afterall a person is always required to instruct and maintain the machine. She suggested that everyone should note that AI is the way of improvement and the administration should grab all the new technology/new soft skills immediately to survive and compete globally in the educational field. Mrs. Keyaa Mukherjee is of the firm opinion that "**Keep upgrading ourselves is the need of the hour**."

CONCLUSION:

Office administration is the backbone of any organisation. More so, during the present day situation, its importance is underlined. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being implemented in almost every field of life. Artificial Intelligence saves manpower and also increases accuracy and productivity. It decreases the workload and empowers human beings to upgrade their skills. In this pandemic situation, every organisation cannot ask the office staff to attend and perform office duties. So there is a need to automate the routine office work. Although it is justified, many times the staff are not well versed and trained to handle this digitized office system. So many institutions have been organising training sessions for their staff to use the digital platform to switch over to this technology.

In this research paper, we have studied the basic concepts of Paperless and Human less Administrative Office. Though COVID 19 pandemic has affected the education system, Artificial Intelligence has brought a transition in the Educational Sector. We learnt the importance of Artificial Intelligence in the Educational Sector and the various sources of AI. We have also studied the administration of Maniben Nanavati Woman's College, Vile Parle, Mumbai. This case study clearly shows that effectiveness of Digitized Administration and the significance of Artificial Intelligence. The study is concluded that Artificial Intelligence is an essential modern technology and Higher Education Sector needs to adopt the same to compete in the world.

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