

## Report of the Webinar on **Learning During COVID 19: Challenges and Remedies**

Vidyavardhaka Law College and Youth Red Cross Committee, Mysuru jointly organized a one day webinar titled *Learning During COVID 19: Challenges and Remedies* on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Sadananda R., Lecturer in English, Writer & Critic, Govt. P.U. College for Girls, Hunasuru, presented a keynote lecture on *Learning During COVID 19: Challenges and Remedies*. Prof. P.Deepu, Principal, Vidyavardhaka Law College, welcomed the guest and all the webinar participants. Prof.K.B.Vasudeva, Director, Vidyavardhaka Law College, will be presided over the webinar.



The key points and important insights from R. Sadananda's lecture is mentioned below:

At no time has higher education been so comprehensively impacted as it has been by the COVID-19 pandemic, demanding complex and innovative responses. The effects of the global pandemic can be found in countries, communities and on campuses everywhere, causing unique educational, economic and social challenges and deepening existing ones.

Student affairs and services, students, institutions, living and learning communities and higher education stakeholders are compelled to innovate and collaborate more effectively, especially across borders and regions, to mitigate the impact of this crisis on education, society, culture, attitudes and practices.

There are more than 50,000 tertiary colleges, universities and institutes worldwide serving 200 to 300 million students and communities. The impact of the pandemic is of epic proportions and institutions are scrambling to find ways to continue the learning and development process and doing so in a safe environment for students, academics, administrative staff and support staff.

Some institutions will not survive this crisis. Others will be forced to reinvent, retool and rethink their mission and how they deliver on their goal to educate, conduct research, and provide a meaningful service to society and advance social justice in communities and across the globe.

Practitioners and scholars of student affairs and services, or SAS, have been challenged to respond to the crisis in ways that innovate and invent new avenues, to continue to preserve

efforts to meet student needs, to enhance student learning and development, and to advance social justice for all.

### **Many challenges**

All regions share concern about how to care for students adequately and ensure their return, if possible, to a safe home. They are concerned about maintaining services if not with facemasks then remotely, and are concerned about student visas, accommodation and health care.

The concern is about COVID-19 driving students back into homes which are sometimes not safe, into communities which are not always aligned with goals of higher education. COVID-19 is also depriving some students of work study opportunities, casual and part-time work, which provide essential income to many students.

Apart from these more obvious challenges around student wellness and teaching and learning continuity, we are aware of risks that student affairs and services is focusing mainly on crisis responses, essentialising SAS to a narrow range of response services which aim to provide a service to the pragmatic aspects around learning.

The COVID-19 crisis has laid bare the inequalities in education systems. When we confidently hoped that education would be a social equaliser and a social mobility avenue, we are now staring in the face of the deep rifts between the connected and the unconnected.

But it is not only the access to internet connection that is dividing our world. We are also divided on issues of access to facilities and resources, clean water, safe homes and adequate health care. We are divided on issues of institutional autonomy and regulatory bodies, on political control of our institutions and funding formulas, and institutional and student readiness for innovation.

COVID-19 has increased fear: fear of contagion, which has led to a contagion of fear. Fear of each other. A fear that we may not be able to mitigate with online chats, webinars or learning platforms, a fear that we may not be able to address when students hunch over their keyboards. When studying at higher education institutions is reduced to mastering content, then the overall aims of higher education are missed.

When engaging with tertiary education, students should develop a consciousness of their role as agents in social justice, leadership awareness and competencies, critical thinking and acting, and an appreciation for inclusion, diversity and pluralism.

The assertion is not that this cannot be developed elsewhere, but that many opportunities of student development are missed when the university experience and teaching and learning are reduced to an online engagement.

These are the real challenges for SAS – how do we advance these graduate attributes and competencies when online learning of modularised learning units becomes the norm? How do we utilise the COVID-19 crisis as a student, staff and institutional learning experience?

This has become the challenge for the post-COVID-19 world: how do we ensure students become agents of social justice, develop a sense of belonging and empowerment to be part of knowledge creation, and ultimately develop the kind of attributes that equip them to shape the world into a shared place where fear of the other is replaced by care for each other.

Prof. K.B. Vasudeva, in his presidential address shared his highly commendable knowledge relating to the educational crisis affected due to Covid 19.

Dr. K.L.Chandrashekhara, Coordinator, Youth Red Cross Committee, VVLC, Mysuru concluded the webinar through his vote of thanks.