

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TRAINING SCENARIO

COVID-19 created a culture change by introducing social distance, hand hygiene and masks as new social norms. One particular requirement, social distance or physical distance, is going to change how trainings are going to be conducted in future.

Traditional classroom training programs require a thorough review in view of this new requirement.

Government of India released “Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Functioning of Training Institutes of the Central and State/UT Governments” to be implemented from 15th July 2020.

Dr MCR HRD Institute of Telangana (MCR HRD IT) started these initiatives three months ago, when the Institute converted the whole SFC (Special Foundation Course) for AIS officers into virtual program by introducing online FC - instead of discontinuing the program - immediately after lockdown without losing time. Sri B.P. Acharya, IAS, Director General and Spl. CS to Govt. steered the Institute in the right direction, in the face of crisis.

This saved precious time for the officers by saving them from the need of undergoing the course again. The officers can devote their precious time for public service.

Later in the month of June, the Institute started 3-day training programs for teachers working in the schools run by Tribal Welfare Department of Telangana and lecturers of Junior Colleges, covering academic and administrative topics.

About 1500 teachers and 400 lecturers attended these virtual programs.

One of the teachers, in his interaction with the Secretary, Tribal Welfare, stated that as a physically challenged person, he faced many hurdles while attending training programs, but now he completed the training program without facing any problems, from the comfort of his home.

Advantages of Virtual training programs:



For trainees: Need not travel to the Institute, can attend the program from home. They can have the cake and eat it too: spend time with members of family and complete the training simultaneously.

Freedom to interact with the faculty: Earlier, in class room setting, very few trainees used to interact with the faculty-those who can overcome barriers such as stage fright, spoken language fluency, scarcity of time and so on. In the virtual mode, they can access messaging option through Chat box and ask questions and share comments even while the class is going on. They can use

video or audio anyway at the end of the session or whenever the faculty provide them the opportunity for interaction.

For faculty: Virtual trainings save time to travel to the Institute and expenses.



For Training Institute: Less expenditure on accommodation, food and so on. Can save expenses on travel of faculty. Sometimes, Institutes spend a fortune on air travel. MCR HRD IT could invite national and international speakers for some sessions, without much effort.



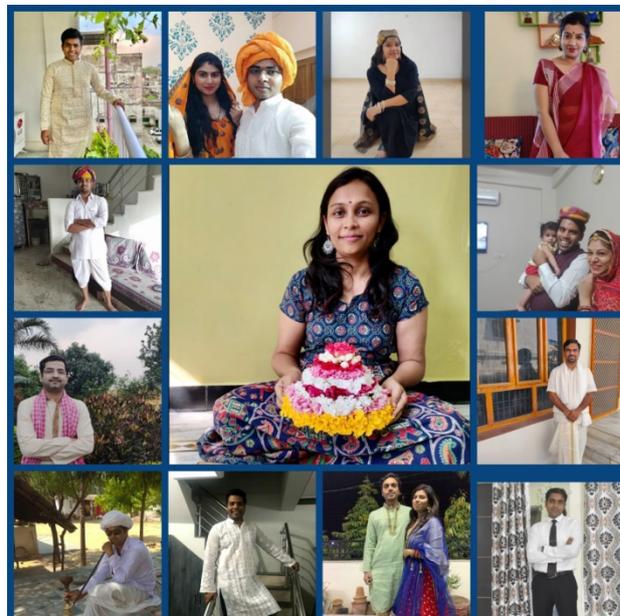
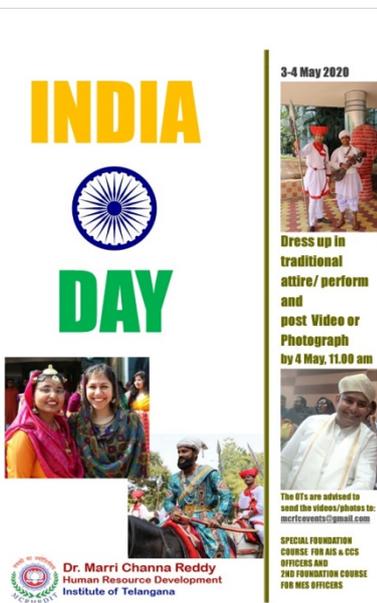
Dr Narendar V Rao from Northeastern University of Illinois, USA delivering talk at SFC

Concerns about Virtual trainings

For trainees:

Peer learning: An important component of learning – this can be compensated to some extent by organizing group/ panel discussions and other initiatives such as virtual cultural events by the Institute.

Most of the video conference applications allow free meetings up to 40-50 min. limit. This allows trainees to conduct video meets themselves, informally.



A Flyer prepared for virtual traditional dress competition and the response.



Sports and Recreation: Institutes like MCR HRD IT are so attractive to the trainees that they offer so many options for sports and other recreation...it is quite difficult to wean away trainees from the campus life. But the Institute can cater to the need of a few officers, whereas, online programs have no such limitations.

Virtual cultural event: Nothing is impossible

For Training Institutes and faculty: Earlier Trainer Development Programs focused on skills that are not so relevant now.

In virtual mode, very few trainees can appear on the screen and most of them are invisible.



This throws a major challenge: whether trainees are actually listening or not? This is a different ball game and requires completely different set of skills: engage the trainees in a continuous discussion with short questions and making the presentation attractive that trainees cannot afford to look away.

This may be the same problem faced in class rooms where some of the trainees remain physically present but immerse themselves in their own thought processes.

Obtaining feedback and conducting course end exams pose some other challenges.

Faculty need to be trained in using virtual platforms effectively: using screen sharing, presentations, white board and other innovations.

COVID-19 can be blamed for many of the consequences but not for its timing. At least it arrived when we have the Internet ready and when video conferencing applications are accessible to common people.

MCR HRD IT proved that the virus is just a punctuation mark in the history of training.

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