# The New-Normal of Talent & Knowledge Management – A Framework towards Virtual Learning – Post- COVID-19

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## ABSTRACT

Indian economy since the pre and post-independence period has witnessed a drastic transformation from an agrarian economy to a knowledge-based economy thus creating a knowledge-based workforce and organisations. With the change of time, the learning became more complex and necessity thus creating havoc and high-pace change in the character of the job in an organisation even creating a situation where artificial intelligence is replacing human intelligence.

Today's employees are more competitive in terms of skills, pay-packages, and also work challenges. Amidst of all these changes, the present uncertainty and crisis hovering the entire world i.e .the Corona Virus pandemic which has forced almost all organizations to accept virtual learning and virtual knowledge sharing as a competitive edge and adapting virtual-cost-effective learning and communication system. It is prime time when the management of the organisation has to initiate a holistic approach towards virtual learning and knowledge sharing with a clear objective of up-skilling its workforce to new normals during and post-pandemic. The new normal norms will bring in new challenges of a new set of skills and competencies and operational processes to revive the broken economy and business setbacks.

This paper further concentrates and focuses on applying and improving virtual knowledge management practices in organisation. It also focuses on effective talent up-gradation and management systems which most important in the present scenario to have a 'Fact-Based Communication' And 'Virtual Connectivity'.

Here, Descriptive Research is adopted for the study. Literature review of articles and research papers is analytically conducted to develop a significant process for crucial talent management systems that will aid in the up-skilling workforce through virtual mode to combat and resurgence the Post- COVID-19.

*Keywords--* Talent and Knowledge Management, Virtual Learning, Competitive Edge New Normals, Present Pandemic Situation, Virtual Learning Environment, E-Learning

# I. INTRODUCTION

The drastic transformation of the Indian economy has replaced the current HR Practices with innovative HR Practices like training is replaced with talent and knowledge management and knowledge which is considered to have a strategic prominence behind organizational success. Organizations are giving more emphasis on competencies and intangible resources as a competitive advantage (Kiessling and Harvey, 2006). Most of the knowledge which acts as a source is of tacit type (McDonnell et al., 2007) which is difficult to be documented and shared as it is rooted in people's actions and experiences.

Organizations changed significantly in the way they manage knowledge workers. Some organizations the center of attention is on increasing productivity and performance while other organizations the focal point is on relationship and teamwork among people. Most of the other organizations devote more time and money on training and development and structure knowledge work for flexibility and change (Lepak and Snell, 2002). This varied management approach is highlighted prominently on the differences in performances of knowledge-intensive organisations within the same industry (Gauthridge Et al 2008). Talent management and knowledge management have growing bodies of literature. There are two perspectives on talented employees with high potential and organization talent management is one of the primary tools for 21st-century **human asset management** (Ingham, 2006; Ashton and Moreton, 2005; McGee, 2006; McCauley and Wakefield, 2006; Heinien and O'Neill, 2004). The essential approach of talent management as a competitive advantage for the company is to differentiate and develop skills required for the future (Frank and Taylor, 2004) According to McCauley and Wakefield talent management processes must be; "more strategic, connected, and broad-based than ever before. Talent management processes include workforce planning, talent gap analysis, recruiting, staffing, education and development, retention, talent reviews, succession planning, and evaluation. To drive performance, deal with an increasingly rapid pace of change, and create

sustainable success, a company must align these processes with its business strategies" (2006, p.4). The need of the hour for the organisations is to create a learning organization and develop new skills and knowledge required for the fast-paced and changing environment.

The current change that needs to be addressed by the entire corporate world is the COVID-19 pandemic situation which had left most of the organisations to stand still for a few months. With time by implementing proper strategies organisations have to switch to virtual learning or E-learning to be at the forefront of competition and combat the economic wrecks. Virtual learning and '**Virtual Learning Environment'** (VLE) has emerged recently and implemented at the topmost priority in the field of education. A well maintained virtual learning environment enables students of all learning styles to receive the best possible education (Williams and Fardon, 2005; Vigentini, 2009). A similar style is adopted by the corporate world to nurture the skills required by employees. Keeping in view the relationships between employee participation engagement and learning outcomes. This makes the organizations be proactive and adapt to changes right away, categorize, and develop the vital skills and competencies required through E-learning.

It is of utmost importance that organisations today should prepare a broad action plan addressing some of the major issues like the implication of talent and knowledge management post-COVID-19 and development of skills competencies and knowledge among the workforce through a virtual learning environment. It should also focus on the different tools and methods to be considered to implement a conducive virtual learning atmosphere, analysis of the cost of learning in terms of virtual learning environment, skills knowledge, and competencies developed in comparison with effectiveness in performance. The organizations have to formulate strategic plans to make learning through virtual genre a customary practice and consistent method in the days ahead.

## II. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Knowledge is now recognized as significant strategic organizational asset and many of the companies illuminating or focusing on employee's skills, competencies, capabilities, and talent, and intangible resources as tools, techniques of competitive advantage (Kiessling, T. and Harvey, M.2006). Most of the knowledge that acts as a competitive advantage is tacit in nature and is difficult to be formally documented and maintain it as a repository. Over the years most of the organizations have implemented knowledge and talent management practices to convert tactical knowledge into explicit knowledge.

It is argued that the manpower approach when used aptly can build up leadership (Romans, Frost, and Ford, 2006), maintain learning initiatives (Bersin, 2007), and develop organizational capabilities (Kates, 2006) that enhances capability building and development through knowledge acquisition, creation, sharing, and management. The significance is on capacity and capability building which is wide and broader in comparison to the training of individual skills and raising the levels of education in the organization. It refers to the practice of continuously identifying nurturing utilization and retention of people in the organization who are valuable because their potentiality is required for the future or have competencies required to solve business and operational problems that are crucial to the organisation.

Knowledge management is the field that came into existence in the mid-1980s in response to the growing strategic significance of organizational assets. Knowledge management is the systematic management of organizations knowledge assets and meeting of strategic and tactical requirements. It consists of strategies procedures and initiatives that sustain and improve the storage refinement assessment sharing and creation of knowledge. Knowledge management (KM) therefore implies a strong tie to organizational vision and strategy. It involves the management of knowledge that is useful for some purpose and which creates value for the organization thus, it provides the right tools for people's knowledge cultivation and culture to improve learning.

E-Learning / Virtual learning environment is an online learning platform that offers digital solutions and enhances the learning experience. An interactive and active learning environment is created that helps the organizations to create a store and disseminate content plan for the skill development program and fosters communication of information even in real-time.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study and provides auxiliary subjective evidence. The area under discussion of this research and its epistemology framework support it with the qualitative method as the center of attraction is on mounting new thoughts and probably new theory. (Creswell 2003). The qualitative approach is beneficial in understanding, exposure of innovative acumen and for barging in sophisticated details and elements, reflective strategies (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 11) With descriptive research methodology and secondary data collection through different research findings, in this study an attempt is made to understand the initiation, approaches, E-learning methods and procedures, virtual learning environment, cost-based learning, development and nurturing of competencies and skills among the workforce in comparison with performance and a standard E-Learning method to be

incorporated by knowledge-oriented organisations considering the present COVID -19 situation.

### 3.1 Statement of the Problem

Talent management and Knowledge management comprehends or embraces the HR/OD functions of identifying, developing, and retaining high potential employees for future visionary leader-managerial positions in the organization and is used as a competitive advantage by all knowledge-based organizations. Talent management enriched fad after McKinsey's 1997 research and the 2001 book on The War for Talent. It is the art and science of utilizing strategic HR to bring in value-added business and to create a learning atmosphere and attain the vision.

The year 2020, posed many challenges for the entire globe because of one major drastic change in the external environment i.e. the emergence of COVID -19 pandemic and its continual effects on the economy, the existence of mankind globally. Among these many challenges an attempt was made to understand and analyze the effect of virtual learning on the development and nurturing of skills and competencies among the workforce of a different organisation. Further adding how and what strategies and methods can be incorporated by organisations to improve and enhance the talent of employees and measure the impact in terms of product performance and cost management.

### 3.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To, understand the implication of talent and knowledge management in the post-COVID-19 scenario.
2. To, analyze the effectiveness of virtual learning and training on up-gradation or enhancement of skills, competencies (Talent), and knowledge among the workforce of the organisation.
3. To, understand the cost of learning (COL) in terms of virtual learning and knowledge transfer and evaluating performance to match against the cost incurred.
4. To, evaluate and comprehend a standardized practice in the virtual learning system.

### 3.3 Scope of the Study

This paper mainly highlights on the new learning environment and atmosphere that should be implemented by organizations, through virtual or E-Learning genre organisations can focus on gap analysis and skills development and nurturing. Further, a reference is also made on how best and whether the existing employees or workforce accept the present learning changes and get accustomed to it. The study also covers an overview of the cost that the organisations have to incur in terms of capital and productive time. This paper gives a brief of the impediments of E-learning declining the effectiveness of such learning. The study also emphasizes the top management's leadership to encourage the workforce to understand and accept the required changes and focus on the development of skills and performance-wise and thus, implement a standard E-learning methodology.

### 3.4 Limitations of the Study

1. The phenomena of virtual / E-learning are still under development and change and are not established thereby any this study can only provide a generic strategic frame-work approach in the present situation.
2. The study is mainly dependent on secondary data because of the lack of time and the present pandemic situation.
3. The existing or present virtual learning platforms are the third party based software/app/platforms as organizations have yet not focused and attempted to develop their own customized E-learning tools, techniques and strategies because of which measurement of an exact cost analysis of E-learning (COL) could not be justified in this paper.

## IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Understanding the objective of this study and thereafter analyzing the secondary source of data, we consolidate the finding in four major points in parlance to the objectives of this research study.

### 4.1 Talent and Knowledge Management Post – Covid-19

"Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge." …. Plato

Learning from the quote of Plato, it is affirmative that till there will be human existence, there will be knowledge initiation, development, and percolation among the human race. Knowledge is the survival strategic tool to combat any challenging situation evidenced in human civilization.

Amid the Corona pandemic, the operation of all organisation have manifold altered and calls for new ranges of talents, skills, and knowledge in order to cope up with the broken economy and stabilizing it. The post-COVID-19 situation is much more emphasizing qualitative skills which will be the base of competence development of the workforce now to stabilize the business by effective productive means.

Now, knowledge and skills such as; leadership, flexibility and adaptability, critical thinking, tech-savvy, fact-based communication, and emotional intelligence, creativity, and innovations are the most perennial skills for the taskforce that any organisation will be seeking today. As per a report published at E- TIMES, Mumbai on 14th May 2020, it was detailed that, the employees would now require virtual technological skills, emotional intelligence, adaptability to change to grow in the post-COVID-19 market for sustenance.

This is the time to work out strategies that re-align the organisational vision to the current economic slowdown and restructure the mode of operation. Every knowledge percolation that takes place in an organisation today must be primarily focused on **'Goal-Based- knowledge'.** Up-skilling the workforce and knowledge management of the organisation must focus on the new-normal business process and operations that are pursued clubbed with a new framed vision to pull- up of the wrecked economy.

Now, the intake of fresh talents (recruitment) in the industry has greatly converged and the scope of the new talent intake in organisation has changed due to the pandemic hit. In the present scenario, the cost of learning (COL) for inductions for a fresher in the industry will be minimal and will continue days ahead. So, even if there are sporadic fresh talent acquisitions in an organisation the expectations from such fresher will be much higher in terms of industry-oriented skills, competences, and knowledge management.

The present scenario calls for more process owners than just process managers and executives. As said by Mr. Sunil Kant, Chairman of Hero Enterprise, "Approaching this situation with an open mind and expecting the unexpected will be a necessary ingredient of all leadership and almost all managers. Only then you are successful, regardless of what happens to the situation". Intrapreneurship is the need of the hour; with shared responsibility and accountability at the highest level among the workforce at different layers of the organisation to re-install, develop, and sustain economic stability. To develop intrapreneurial competencies a constant learning environment promoting **'Visionary Leadership'** is a mandate design for any learning and development by which **'self-reliance' & 'self- dynamism'** are created among the employees in post-COVID -19.

### 4.2 Effectiveness of Virtual Learning Post-Covid-19

COVID-19 has brought in the concept of social distancing. In such an environment of social distancing, the only way to continue learning and upskilling the workforce is a virtual means which is already getting popular and acceptances worldwide. But countries where the education system is still majorly based on physical class interaction it's a challenge to induce people in the virtual learning mode; as learning is all about the 'Mind- Game' to 'Accept or to Dispose of'.

The pandemic has forced organisation to introduced E-trainings, webinars, E-learning protocols in its Learning Management System but its effectiveness is still under screening. Organisation needs to make this learning process more streamlined, effectual, proficient, relative, and motivational for participants.

It is observed across the globe, that due to the distress and mental agony of the threat of the pandemic, the patience of an individual is declining every day. The stagnancies in life today keep mind blocking, so any learning becomes a predisposed or futile exercise unless the learning is made content and participants friendly.

Virtual learning should focus on the end-learners participatory mode of deliverables along with an online activity or fun-time based learning. Virtual involvement of the mind of the learner is a challenge over physical learning. Attaining such involvement would call for the participation of top management personals in the learning process and sessions, which will automatically engage individual employees in such sessions. Using social media such as Facebook page, Linkedin, Instagram, Google the organisation can publicly recognize and facilitate individuals for best learning bringing forth a sense of achievement among them.

In this economic downsizing scenario, virtual learning is the best cost-effective medium that management can deploy to create a platform for employer-employee participation in decision making, and 'Employee Assistance Programmers'.

To homogenize the virtual learning, organisations need to develop the 'VL-SOP' (standard operating procedure) for virtual learning and it's assessments. In days to come competency of an individual will have virtual connectivity and virtual learning as one the key indicator of performance.

Some of the impediments of virtual learning which declines the effectiveness and are yet under development and standardization are appended below:-

1. Lack of awareness of the benefits of E-learning among the workforce of the organisation
2. E-learning is having a misconception of easy and cheap preparation deliverables among participants.
3. Lack of E-content for conducting such learning sessions and ambiguity of understanding.
4. Preparation of the subject expert to impart knowledge and information (content and delivery) virtually.
5. The technicality of IT supports the system such as the availability of gadgets and internet connectivity at the participant and expert end.
6. Proficiency in using the internet, gadgets, and software used in virtual learning.
7. Security of the content and information exchanged over third party knowledge sharing platforms/ Softwares/ apps.
8. Lack of participatory interaction, ambient, and tranquillity in learning.
9. Difficult to judge the level of understanding of the participants in virtually.

These impediments and its magnitude varies from organization to organisation and requires constant research of the learning and development department to ensure the

best possible strategies to overcome such impediments and ensure effective learning.

### 4.3 Cost of Learning (Col) Post-Covid-19.

The cost of learning (COL) in any learning management system (LMS) generally refers to the 'hard cost' the price the organisation pays to conduct and impart such learning. But learning **'TIME COST'**, which is matched against productivity and effectiveness the employee has gained after such learning.

Due to the pandemic, the changeover of the Learning Management System of every organisation will incur a 'change over cost'. The change over cost will include the cost of technology, material, recourse expert, and time cost. The cost management for the Learning Management System requires vigilant scrutiny of the cost heads of the learning system and match the productive return on the investment in terms of money and time in the Learning Management System. In this economic turbulence, every organisation has to keep a check on the cost drainage, therefore every cost drain even at the micro-level in Learning Management System should be stringently monitored and controlled to the best possible extent so that parity between cost investment and effective return is rationally obtained.

The ratio of virtual learning management and work productivity has to be continuously equated; measuring the effectiveness of such E-learning and knowledge sharing in the organisation and its productive impacts on operation.

### 4.4 Standardisation of Virtual Learning Post-Covid-19

Now, E-learning provides a wide scope for learning for an organisation, but the effectiveness of E-learning is still under development, as the standardization practices of the E-learning process and its deliverables are still under review and framing. The main hindrance of the virtual learning and virtual knowledge sharing is that there is no well-defined uniformity of process/protocol for E-learning in the context of organisations. Without a standardized E-learning environment, process, and system the learning inputs cannot be persistent thereby causing drainage of cost and time having minimal impact on productivity.

In the present scenario of COVID-19, social distancing will be a long term practice. Virtual learning is the only medium of safe learning, but the organisation needs to develop the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) of its virtual learning management system. It has to define the scope of the E-learning, the process of delivery, security of the learning peripherals, and evaluating the learning with the desired performance rating. Standardization of E-learning will have different parameters at different hierarchical levels of the organisation and in context to organisation's view on value addition.

A virtual learning SOP subsequently aids to make the virtualization of the learning system more physically evidential and makes the participants adhere to the learning system and significantly develop a focused learning team achieving the defined objectives of learning.

The SOP of the virtual learning also portray the leadership of the organisation for upskilling and upgrading the workforce, focusing how the organisation envisages on the performance of the workforce, the process of attaining customer's delight through its products and services deliverables, and attainment of the organisation's vision enduring the effective performance of the workforce.

Organisation like **National Standard For Quality,** have developed certain parameter based process certification of teaching, learning, quality measures for online learning, and knowledge sharing which may be effective to monitor and control the virtual learning process, thus organisation who is not having an immediate SOP may adopt such certification standards.

## V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Amid of the COVID-19 pandemic the operation of all organisations has changed and calls for new ranges of talents, skills, and knowledge among the workforce in order to cope up with the broken economy and stabilizing it. The post-COVID-19 situation is much more emphasizing upon qualitative skills and competencies of the workforce.

Knowledge and skills such as; leadership, flexibility and adaptability, critical thinking, tech-savvy, fact-based communication, and emotional intelligence, creativity, and innovations are the most perennial skills for the taskforce.

Organistions requires to formulate strategies that re-structures the organisational vision to the current economic slowdown and restructure the mode of operation of the organisation. Every knowledge percolation in an organisation today must be primarily focused on 'Goal-Based- knowledge' to be more focused and avoid ambiguity.

COVID-19 has brought in the concept of social distancing. The only way to continue learning and upskilling and upgrading the workforce is by virtual means. Countries where the education system is still majorly based on physical class interaction it's a challenge to induce people and resource experts in the virtual learning mode in a short time frame.

Many organisation has already introduced the E-trainings, webinars, E-learning protocols on third party software platforms, but its effectiveness and security protocol is a question. Organisation needs to make this learning process more streamlined, effectual, proficient, relative, and motivational for participants.

It is observed across the globe, that due to the distress and mental agony of the pandemic, the patience of an individual is declining every day. The stagnancies in life today keep mind blocking, so any learning becomes a predisposed or futile exercise unless the learning is made participant -friendly. Virtual learning should focus on the end-learners participatory mode of deliverables along with an online activity or fun-time based learning.

Due to the pandemic, the changeover in the Learning Management System of every organisation will incur a 'change over cost'. The change over cost will include the cost of technology, material, recourse expert, time, and cost. The cost management for the Learning Management System requires stringent scrutiny. The cost drainage even at the micro-level in Learning Management System should be stringently monitored and controlled to the best possible extent.

The ratio of virtual learning management and work productivity has to be continuously equated for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of such introduction new learning and knowledge system in the organisation and its productive impacts.

In the present scenario, E-learning though provides a wide opportunity for learning for an organisation, but the effectiveness of E-learning and E- knowledge is in dilemma, as the standardization practices of the E-learning process and its standardized deliverables are still under review and framing.

Today, the top management's strategic leadership will play a vital role in introducing the change in learning management in the organisation. In the era of virtualization and digitalization with great emphasis on 'Big Data' and 'Artificial Intelligence', human society has already geared up and used to with the digital lifestyle. Organisations were accelerating in the digital business process and digitalization of operation much prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but when it comes to training, knowledge management, and sharing the nature of digitalization was sporadic in nature. The strategic leadership of the management and departmental leading moves can make it possible to achieve a digital learning transformation and attain the learning objectives of the organisation along with upgrading the present workforce to match the new normal policy post-COID-19.

## VI.    CONCLUSION

**"Knowledge sharing is essential to economic survival"**, This study predominately gives an insight that knowledge and continual learning is directly proportionate to the growth of the organistaion. The growth of the organisation is based on progressive learning and knowledge-based leadership of the total workforce of the organisation. Today where the world's economy has wrecked due to the COVID-19 pandemic, lives are threatened, distressed, and panicked, it is indeed a cumbersome situation to drive out productivity from workforce complying to the strategic needs of the hour. In such a scenario, to elevate human productivity and effectiveness combating the economic slash; strategic knowledge and learning are the only means. The upskilling and enhancement of competencies among the workforce today is a must' to be at a competitive age.

Considering the social distancing and new normalness of COVID-19 safety measures, the possible and cost-effective way to impart learning and upgrade the workforce is having a virtual E-Learning Management System. Qualitative skills viz; emotional intelligence, adaptability skills, are most vital among the workforce to cope up with the new mode of operations. The present condition calls for a sturdy leadership of the top management to upskill and upgrade the workforce getting them adhering to virtual learning and E-learning technologies and environment. The present scenario requires a conversion of process manager to process owners, i.e. incubating the intrapreneurial competencies among task force with shared roles, responsibilities, and accountability. To keep the employees learning and up gradation ongoing phenomena, the management of such organisation can have cost-effective rewards and recognition.

Organsiation has to take all initiatives at war footing priority to introduce a standardized virtual learning procedure by eliminating all impediments strategically so that the effectiveness of learning and knowledge sharing is achieved. Only with the best skills, competencies, knowledge at different levels of the organisation can combat the economic slash of the pandemic and maintain the competitive age of the organisation to grow by overcoming the down beating impacts.

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