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## Popularity of Coaching “Classes” In India

Jehangir Bharucha

*Director, Post Graduate Studies, H R College, Mumbai, INDIA*

*Email: jehangir.bharucha@hrcollege.edu*

### **Abstract**

Coaching classes have gained immense popularity in the metropolitan cities of India in recent times. There are classes catering to diverse needs in terms of different courses, varying timings and locations and course material requirements. The main purpose of this research paper is to identify how popular coaching classes are with the students pursuing commerce based courses in the city of Mumbai. With the help of a structured questionnaire circulated among a sample of students from Mumbai University, the paper aims at identifying the need and relevance of coaching classes and tries to understand the gaps in the education system. The study concludes that the need for coaching classes has much to do with disillusionment with college faculty and to a large extent to supplement the learning done at college. The paper recommends policy measures in this regard.

### **Keywords:**

coaching, need, popularity, future.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Several coaching centres, popularly known as tutorials or tuitions have sprung up all over the India and are a big part of the nation’s educational system. They have come to be a mainstay and with the kind of competition faced by students these days at every stage, coaching classes have become a very popular parallel education system. This parallel education system supports the huge chaotic and overburdened formal education system. Classes providing guidance on every course and field of study are now available to students with great facilities in terms of locations, timings and method of instruction based on their needs and wants. The popularity of these classes has increased by almost 35 per cent in the past six years (DNA, 2014). They have almost become parallel to the mainstream education system, rivaling schools and colleges for student timings, attention and fees.

### **REASONS FOR THE RISING TREND**

One of the main reasons for the growth of these classes can be seen as a social domino effect. Coaching classes, which were initially viewed as a last option to understanding course matter, have slowly evolved into a necessity of sorts for students. As more and more students opt for coaching classes, they also cause more and more people think that joining coaching classes is the correct option, which set off a vicious cycle. Coaching classes and private tuitions have slowly changed from being a luxury to a prerequisite for a good academic performance. The result is that today as many as 83 per cent of India’s high school children juggle time around school, extra-curricular activities, and tuitions at these coaching centres, (Asian Development Bank, 2012)

The growing competition and increasing expectations from students across different schools of study in India, has given rise to a steady growth in coaching classes. Classes providing guidance on every course and field of study are now available to students with great facilities in terms of locations, timings and method of instruction based on their needs and wants. They have almost become parallel to the mainstream education system, rivaling schools and colleges for student timings, attention and fees.

Parents are now feeling the obligation, both socially and practically to send their children to coaching classes or private tuitions, primarily because of the number of other kids being sent to them, and adding to that, is the fear that since so many kids require coaching class attention, there might be an issue with the mainstream education being received at the school/college, leading to further conviction, that the student requires additional coaching. According to the Hindu Business Line (2013) since parents want their offsprings to get on the fast track to prosperity they are pulling all kinds of strings to get them into the very best educational institutions. This aspiration has spawned a shadow industry of ‘coaching classes’ as they are known in common parlance.

It has almost become mandatory to enrol in a ‘coaching class’ these days. Students do not feel confident about many concepts and sometimes teachers do not have adequate time to complete the syllabus in school. Educationists believe that the Indian schooling system, which is unable to keep up with the numbers, is the reason behind the booming coaching industry. In large classes it is often difficult to give individual attention to students and the pressure of finishing the portion is a source of constant tension to teachers. In the olden days parents would often coach their children themselves, but today's parents do not have much time as both the husband and wife have their careers.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

There is hardly any available literature to study the relationship between enrolment in a coaching class and examination results. Also, it is difficult to come across studies examining the psychological physical or intellectual repercussions. Data collected by the Joint Entrance Exam Cell (for Engineering Colleges) based in Mumbai shows that 60% of the students who were admitted into the seven old Indian Institutes of Technology in recent years opted for some kind of coaching. A survey by the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India found that 87% of primary school children and up to 95% of high school students in metropolitan cities opt for private tuitions.

## **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The research problem that this project aims at throwing light on is the relevance and popularity of coaching classes with respect to graduate level courses in Mumbai by surveying such students studying in various institutions in the city of Mumbai. The results of this research can help educational institutions, to which these students belong, understand their shortfalls and guide them to make improvements in a direction that can eliminate the need for students to require extra coaching. Apart from educational institutions, coaching classes can understand how they are perceived and work on their strengths and weaknesses accordingly.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To understand why students choose to join coaching classes and the basis on which they select a particular coaching class to join
- To analyse students’ decisions on whether or not to enrol in coaching classes
- To understand the popularity and relevance of coaching classes
- To gauge the views of students on the competence of faculty in colleges
- To gauge the expectations of the students from coaching classes

**DATA COLLECTION**

The data collection was done through primary and secondary sources. A pilot study was carried out to get more precise insight into the various aspects of the issue which needed to be investigated. This helped the researcher to outline the research problem more clearly and test the main questionnaire and to modify certain questions. Usable responses were obtained from 60 respondents with some replacements from the original sample. We had to replace some of the respondents due to absence or non-response. The respondents were all students of Mumbai University and the sample was limited to the city of Mumbai. The Simple Random Sampling Plan has been used for conducting the survey. Secondary data collection sources included Research Organization Reports, Scholarly Articles, University Publications and Newspaper Articles.

**ANALYSIS OF DATA**

**Table 1: Reasons for enrolling in a coaching class**

Reason	No of responses	% of responses
Appearing for Board/University examinations and prefer to have a backing	27	45.00
Think they help to get good grades and gain a competitive advantage	18	30.00
The subject is difficult	16	26.67
The faculty at the college is unsatisfactory	16	26.67
Influence of friends	14	23.33
Opting not to attend college	9	15.00
Extensive participation in extracurricular activities so unable to attend college	4	6.67
Pressure from Parents	3	5.00
Lured by the marketing strategies of coaching classes	1	1.67
Other	1	1.67

From amongst the students who have opted to enrol in coaching classes (65%), a substantial (45%) do so because they appear for Board/University examinations and do not wish to take any kind of risk. It is found that even if students are confident in their ability to study by themselves, they lack the confidence in the ability of the faculty to complete the portion on time. 30% respondents think that tuitions will help boost their grades while almost 27% opt to join coaching classes because they find the subject in question is difficult to study. Educational institutions should note that 27% of the respondents cited the reason for needing additional coaching to be an unsatisfactory level of teaching in the colleges. When it came to the marketing strategies of coaching classes, a little less than 2 % of students claim they were lured to join the class because of promotional offers like discounts and packages. Coaching classes should note that perhaps trying to spread positive word of mouth or concentrating on quality would work wonders as opposed to offering discounts.

**Table 2: The main advantage of enrolling in a coaching class as perceived by the respondents**

Advantage	No of responses	% of responses
Ample practice for exams	30	50.00
Examination oriented study material	22	36.67
Reputation of completing the portion on time	18	30.00
More attention due to smaller groups	17	28.33
Learning at an individualized pace	9	15.00
Prospects of attaining a question bank for the exam	7	11.67
Other	1	1.67
Don't take Coaching	21	35.00

A sizeable 50% of the respondents claim that gaining ample practice for the exams is one of the main advantages they perceive in joining a coaching class. It is found that colleges are defaulting in this sphere and even the tests given by the college are for the most part never assessed or discussed with the students with feedback on their performance.

Coaching classes are known for giving a brief, to-the-point notes and not wavering from the syllabus for the examination. 36.67% respondents said they joined classes to gain access to notes that are framed strictly from the point of view of the examinations.

30% students said that a major advantage of coaching classes is that they finish the portion well ahead of time giving them ample time for self-practice and to clear any doubts. It was also found through oral interviews that the faculty at the coaching class is available to answer questions on their mobile phones throughout the day and even till late at night the day before the exam and the same cannot be said for college professors. Students, on the other hand would feel both awkward and scared to phone their college faculty.

**Table 3: Factors considered in choosing a coaching class**

Factor	No of responses	% of response
Recommendation of senior students	24	40.00
The quality of faculty at these classes	23	38.33
Location flexibility of the class	18	30.00
Timing flexibility of the class	17	28.33
Results of previous batches of the class	16	26.67
Recommendation of Peers	16	26.67
Fee structure	12	20.00
Infrastructure and technology used	5	8.33
Discounts/Promotional offers by the class	1	1.67
Advertisements of the coaching class	0	0.00
Don't take Coaching	21	35.00

This study reveals that 40% of respondents take into account the recommendation of the senior students while choosing a coaching class, probably because they have experienced things first hand. Students often find mentors in senior students and thus trust their word over that of their peers.

38.33% of the respondents felt that the faculty teaching in the coaching class is an important factor to consider while choosing which class to join. Students also give preference to a class which is located in close proximity to their residence or college (28.33%) so that they don't have to travel long distances to attend extra coaching.

It is noticed here again that discounts and promotional offers (1%) as well as advertisements (0%) don't play much of a role as a deciding factor while students choose between coaching classes.

**Table 4: Hours per week spent IN the coaching class**

Hours per week	No of responses	% of response
1 --3	10	16.67
4--6	13	21.67
7--9	5	8.33
10--12	8	13.33
>12	3	5.00
Don't take coaching	21	35.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The survey reveals that 21.67% students spend around 4 to 6 hours per week attending coaching classes apart from the daily routine of college. While 16.67% spend 1 to 3 hours per week attending such classes, only 5% spend greater than 12 hours in them. It is found in the survey that these students are the ones attending classes for multiple subjects or are in the process of completing their Chartered Accountancy examinations. Many of the students have to sacrifice participating in extracurricular activities and festivals in college, which are an integral part of college life.

**Table 5: Opinion of the respondents whether they would rather take coaching from a faculty in the college**

Response	No of responses	% of response
Yes	7	11.67
Maybe	15	25.00
No	17	28.33
Don't take coaching	21	35.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Contrary to the popular belief that students prefer to take tuitions from the faculty in college as there are chances of being favoured or getting some hints for the examination questions, the majority of respondents who take coaching (28.33%) said they would prefer not to take coaching classes from a teacher in college. 25% were unsure about their thoughts on the same while 11.67% were positive they would rather opt to take coaching classes from faculty members in college. Private tuitions are very profitable for the teachers as they earn more through this avenue than from their regular salaries. Also, they have the advantage of flexible timings and lesser number of students. Some teachers have quit their regular job in a college and are today running their own business of private tutoring.

**Table 6: Consultation on whether to enrol for coaching classes**

Status	Response	No or response	%
Take Coaching	Yes	35	58.33
	No	4	6.67
Don't Take Coaching	Yes	11	18.33
	No	10	16.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It is very interesting to note the difference in responses between those who are enrolled in private classes and those who are not. 58.33% of students (belonging to the category of enrolled students) said that they consulted someone before taking a decision on whether to

attend coaching classes, while only 6.67% of them said they did not. If one looks at students who are not enrolled in coaching classes almost an equal number said they consulted or did not consult anyone before taking a decision.

**Table 7: People consulted before enrolling for coaching classes**

Status	Person consulted	No of responses	%
<b>Take Coaching</b>	Parents	13	21.67
	Peers	20	33.33
	Seniors	27	45.00
	Teachers	4	6.67
	Siblings	13	21.67
	Internet Search	2	3.33
	Did not Consult	4	6.67
<b>Don't Take Coaching</b>	Parents	9	15.00
	Peers	4	6.67
	Seniors	9	15.00
	Teachers	4	6.67
	Siblings	3	5.00
	Internet Search	0	0.00
	Did not Consult	10	16.67

It appears that a majority (45%) of students who enrol in coaching classes, consult the senior students, 33.33% rely on the advice of peers while 21.67% consult their parents and an equal number take suggestions from their siblings. It is interesting to note though that when it comes to students who do not enrol for extra coaching, majority of them consult seniors and their parents before arriving at a decision. While researching on the reasons students joins coaching classes it is found that a major reason is the perception of the students of the unsatisfactory performance of the faculty in college, among other things. Oral interviews revealed that this is a major concern, even for some students who did not seek any kind of external assistance.

**Table 8: Problems encountered with college faculty**

Status	Problem	No of students					Total
		Never	Sometimes	Half the time	Most of the times	Always	
<b>Taking Coaching</b>	The faculty rushes through the portion	2	10	16	9	2	39
	The faculty is unable to complete the portion	9	20	6	2	2	39
	The faculty leaves the college mid-semester	12	22	4	0	1	39
<b>Not Taking Coaching</b>	The faculty rushes through the portion	0	12	7	2	0	21
	The faculty is unable to complete the portion	3	14	3	1	0	21
	The faculty leaves the college mid-semester	7	12	2	0	0	21

33 students out of 60 (55%) of respondents feel that the faculty rushes through the portion not giving adequate explanations about the topic and just “doing it for the sake of finishing the portion”. 34 out of 60 students (56.67%) students did express the view that sometimes the faculty in college is unable to complete the portion at all and resort to giving

it for “self-study” or calling them for extra lectures a day or two before the examination leaving the students with no time for self-study later. 34 out of 60 students (56.67%) also responded saying there was a chance their faculty would leave/ get replaced halfway through the semester, leaving them to fend for themselves. Thus, it is clear that there exists problems in all colleges in recruiting and retaining good faculty and over the years, this is having a psychological impact on students compelling them to join coaching classes. Most of the time there is a perception of a failure on the part of a college faculty.

**Table 9: Perception of whether attending coaching classes help in attaining a higher score**

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of students</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	26	43.33
No	1	1.67
Maybe	12	20.00
Don't Take Coaching	21	35.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

43.33% of the respondents attend coaching classes as it helps them to attain a better score. Though joining a coaching class does not guarantee outstanding results, this feeling is one of the factors indicating the popularity of coaching classes amongst students.

**Table 10: Amount spent on coaching classes**

<b>Amount per year INR ('000)</b>	<b>No of students</b>	<b>%</b>
4—10	11	18.33
11—30	15	25.00
31—50	6	10.00
51—80	7	11.67
Don't Take Coaching	21	35.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The study reveals that 25% respondents spend almost INR 20000 per annum for their coaching classes. Compared to India’s per capita income, this is a very high amount to incur as additional expenditure. 11.67% respondents spend between INR 50,000-80,000 on coaching classes annually. That is almost 10-15 times higher than the per capita income of an average Indian. This shows the tremendous sacrifice, especially middle income households are willing to make to send their children for coaching classes.

**Table 11: Whether respondents would recommend coaching classes to other students**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>No of students</b>
Take Coaching	Yes	29
	No	1
	Maybe	9
Don't Take Coaching	Yes	2
	No	10
	Maybe	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>

When it comes to the service sector, word of mouth is one of the best forms of marketing and publicity. The survey reveals that 51.66% students would recommend coaching classes to others and this includes those students who themselves are currently not

enrolled in any coaching class. It is interesting to see that majority of those who are currently enrolled in a coaching class would recommend it to others while a majority of those who aren't currently enrolled stated they would not recommend coaching classes to other students. Almost 30% students are unsure about whether they would recommend personal coaching to others and on further questioning revealed that it is a personal choice and a subjective decision based on the ability of the student as well as determination to study regularly.

**Table 12: Reasons for not enrolling in a coaching class**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>No of students</b>	<b>%</b>
Confident to study by self	16	26.67
Subjects to study are easy	15	25.00
Repetition of concepts from previous years	10	16.67
College faculty satisfactory	9	15.00
No time to go for extra coaching	8	13.33
Think it is a waste of money	6	10.00
Access to notes of the tuition from a different source	6	10.00
Feedback from seniors that classes are not required	3	5.00
Presence of a mentor (older sibling, parents) at home	2	3.33
Financial constraints	1	1.67
No coaching classes near residence	0	0.00
Seats unavailable i.e. class fully booked	0	0.00
No peer joined any classes	0	0.00
Fear of being looked upon as a below average student	0	0.00
Taking Coaching	39	65.00

The analysis reveals that 26.67% students do not feel the need to enrol themselves in coaching classes as they feel confident to study the subjects by themselves. 25% feel that they had a rough idea about the subject beforehand and find it easy enough to study and do not require additional coaching. 16.67% students feel that many topics are repeated from the previous years, thus are already aware of the concepts or had even perhaps taken tuitions for the same subjects in the past. 10% students feel that tuitions are a waste of money and 10% also said that they had found another source for the “brief” notes of the tuition class and could manage by themselves from there on.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY**

It is evident from the primary research conducted that coaching classes are indeed popular among students in Mumbai. Attending coaching classes is no longer a rarity, and these classes are widely advertised and marketed to students of all ages. The parallel education system has become an industry in itself worth billions of dollars. Competition in the academic environment has a new face altogether, pushing students to score their maximum. Cutoffs for admissions soars above all heights. The pressure creeps on slowly till the family finally gives in and the child joins that extra coaching class.

Most students believe that sometimes college lectures may not be able to provide them with the required level of practice and attention. In this case, they turn to coaching classes. Therefore coaching classes must be careful to ensure that students find a difference in the atmosphere and the way topics are handled and taught in these classes. The students do not want another college; they want a centre to supplement the learning at college. Most students are of the opinion that the experience of the teachers in the class goes a long way in the learning process. The reputation of the classes in terms of their reviews by fellow students and the number of years it has been around, also contribute to the students' selection process

of the coaching classes. It is rare to find a student who is not aware of coaching classes in the field. While it is true he may not necessarily enrol in the class, he may still recommend it to someone else. Parents, senior students, siblings, peers and teachers too, support the cause of extra coaching.

The reputation of the classes in terms of their reviews by fellow students and the number of years, it's been around, also contribute to the students' selection process of the coaching classes. The rise in coaching classes is also partly due to the lethargy and disinterest of faculty teaching in colleges and the unsatisfactory service conditions of teachers. Most of these institutes do not indulge in proper teaching, they simply specialize in making students solve past question papers and provide valuable tips to the students how to score well on the examinations.

Private tutorials are expanding at an alarming rate and people are spending staggering portions of their incomes on it. Private tuitions and coaching centres in the commerce field have become a profitable business without any fear of loss, which is the main reason of having a number of tuition centres mushrooming on streets of mega cities. There still exists a sizeable portion of students who prefer to study on their own and do not require or avoid resorting to additional help. Many households can barely afford to pay for the education of their children, especially for additional coaching.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

Due to the limited sample size, the result may not be indicative of the larger populations to be assessed. Due to geographic limitations as well as time constraints, only students from Mumbai University based colleges could be addressed. A further, detailed research may yield more definite and exhaustive results. Not all courses of the commerce section were displayed or analysed on account of the absence of data. Further, the collection of data and greater understanding of every course can help overcome this problem in the future. The accuracy of the data collected through questionnaires cannot be judged to be a 100% correct as there is no way of verifying the data collected from the respondents. The criteria used to judge the popularity may not be the most subjective fitting as popularity is a concept by itself.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

It is essential for the family to consider all factors before selecting any coaching class. If the quality of the college faculty is satisfactory, there may not be a need to seek additional help. If the faculty at colleges can provide the same attention and dedication by the coaching centres, this would totally diminish the importance of these coaching centres. Students should be more aware of the pros and cons of joining these classes, especially the tiredness factor and not rely solely on parent or peer advice.

Students in the third year of their degrees are more conducive to joining a coaching class as this is the year they sit for their university examinations. Coaching classes must therefore focus more attention on these students. The pressure of the university level exams and the parental and friends' influence will lead more students to join coaching classes, providing the classes with a greater number of students. The research shows consensus to a herd mentality, but not an acceptance towards it. A greater awareness and responsibility of students could make the picture clearer. Coaching classes should also can services to students from economically weak backgrounds at reasonable fees. The psychological advantage of

coaching classes that the same students who would top without extra coaching now top with the help of extra coaching needs to be conveyed to the students. Governmental regulation of these coaching classes is very essential.

However, at the same time, traditional colleges and institutions can never be replaced as they cater to the needs of countless students, including those enrolled in coaching classes, in ways that extend beyond the boundaries of academics. It is heartening to note that the international syllabus of the IB which is gradually expanding in India is eliminating the need for these coaching 'shops'.

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