COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE INDIAN EDUCATION SECTOR

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Abstract: *COVID-19 has resulted in an exceptional impact on the Indian Education sector, with the shutdown of educational institutions due to pandemics, students, as well as teachers, witnessed to transform themselves from the traditional form of education to the online mode of education conducted through virtual modes through video conferencing applications. Most of the students have witnessed problems in adapting the technology to attend their regular class work, which leads to a long-lasting effect on the health and nutrition of the students. The present paper aims at presenting the problems faced by the institutions, teachers as well as students towards the adaption of technology in giving their best and effective utilization of digital platforms of education initiated by Central and State governments as well as Institutions and agencies.*

Key Words: *Covid-19 pandemic, Higher Education, Teachers, Institutions, Students, digital platforms.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

On March 11, 2020 World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 as a pandemic on 11th March 2020. Covid-19 has affected almost all the countries of the world, in India first death reported on 12th March 2020, immediately Government of India observed Janta Curfew for a day on 22nd March 2020, followed by 14 hours Curfew on 24th March to combat against Covid pandemic. Then, Government of India initiated its plan of action through Lockdown in five phases 1.0 to 5.0 ended on 30th June 2020, throughout all the five phases the educational institutions are remained closed, no relaxations were issued to educational institutions and its activities. With respect to closure of educational institutions, it is reported that Covid-19 outbreak has impacted more than one billion children worldwide by closure of educational institutions, particularly in India, around 32 crores have been impacted during pandemic. Governments around the globe made their sincere efforts to balance the education system from the closure of educational institutions through facilitating the continuity of education for all age groups of students through various virtual / online modes of Learning.

According to India's MHRD report, on higher education it was presented that there are 993 Universities, 39931 Colleges and 10725 stand- alone institutions which delivers education to the student community. Even the country has more new methods but still due to lack of awareness and knowledge on technology utilization as well as availability of internet services in the Rural India, students haven't avail the services of online modes. The lesson taught by the pandemic explained the importance of adaptation of technology in the teaching – learning process by creating the knowledge databases, technology played the crucial role in almost all the categories of education.

The students who enrolled for their higher educations in the Foreign universities are disrupted significantly, specifically in the nations where the pandemic hit on a large scale, due to which the expectations and demand for abroad education has slightly declined.

Schools and Universities includes all types of educational institutions has responded for the change and tuned themselves to "Go Digital", identifying and analysing the Indian conditions and planning for the suitable LMS for the institutions has been the toughest task for the institutions because as the students may hail from the various segments, which has to be considered for effectively delivering the lectures. Teachers in early stages faced some problems but tuned themselves with the adaptation of technology, which also strengthened to develop their own curricula and new styles of delivery.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study is based on the following objectives:
- To present the positive and negative impact of Covid-19 on Indian Education Sector.
- To present the various lessons learned from the pandemic.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on the secondary data information. The secondary data collected from the relevant reports and publications from National & International organizations, different Articles, journals, and books, etc.

"COVID-19" – EFFECTS ON EDUCATION SECTOR:

However the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affects schooling, Colleges, Universities of India have acknowledged the demands and made honest effort to offer consistent help administrations to the understudies during the pandemic. Indian schooling system got the chance for change from customary framework to digital / online mode. The following might be considered as **the Positive Effects**:

Provided Platform to learn new technologies: Teachers, students and all the stake holders of the education system are switched themselves to adopt technology as a basic mode of delivering their lectures to their students, which paved them to be tech-savvy. Apart of delivering lectures almost the evaluation process has been done through online mode. This shift from traditional mode to online mode has transformed the pedagogy.

E-Sources of learning resources- In the lockdown, institutions, as well as teachers haven't provided the learning resources directly through hardcopies, shift from hard copies to soft copies and higher quantities of related sources of material is made available through online modes by them, apart of that, Governments at Central and State Level also created the platforms to deliver the lectures to the people through Televisons, Websites, applications etc at a free of cost, enabled the student to gather the their learning resources.

Increase in use of Online Teaching Platforms and LMS: Teachers and Students are interacting through online teaching platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Class room, etc. Apart from the usage of online platforms some institutions have stepped forward to develop their own Learning Management Systems for effective delivery of their services to its students and other stake holders.

Improvements in Collaborative work: Collaborative activities facilitate knowledge transfer in the various categories, covid-19, and lockdown of schools created an opportunity to new forms of teaching and learning.

Enhanced Digital Literacy through Online Platforms: Closure of educational institutions leads to shift online or digital mode, which made people to increase their skills and potentialies to adopt the technology, which leads to enhanced digital literacy. Many programmes initiated towards the enhancement of skills and knowledge of the stakeholders.

Online Meetings leads to worldwide exposure: All the knowledge sharing activities has been switched to online modes i.e., conduct of meetings, academic enrichment programs etc. People from different parts of the world can interact and can gain exposure towards the unexplored areas.

Demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL): The students who are not in the position to go the regular mode of education can avail the opportunity of Open and distance mode of education, During "Covid-19 pandemic" with shutdown of education institutions, students preferred to go online as well as distance mode of education to meet their respective needs in their own customized way.

4. NEGATIVE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION:

The outbreak of "Covid-19 also remained many negative impacts on the Indian Education system, some of them are listed hereunder:

Class room teaching hampered: Exams at various levels have been postponed and classes have been suspended. Annual examinations and entrance tests have already been postponed by various boards. The admissions procedure took longer than expected. Pupils lost approximately three months of the whole academic year of 2020-21 due to the continuation of lockdown, thus deteriorating the situation of educational continuity and making it impossible for students to resume schoolwork after such a long break.

Loss of employment opportunity: COVID-19 caused the majority of the recruitment to be postponed. Companies delaying student onboarding may also have an impact on student placements. The unemployment rate is likely to rise as a result of the pandemic. Because of the current circumstances, there is no recruitment in the government sector in

India, and recent graduates fear losing their job offers in the private sector. Jobless estimates from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy increased from 8.4 percent in mid-March to 23 percent in early April, with the urban unemployment rate rising to 30.9 percent. When unemployment rises, people battle for food rather than schooling, which leads to a decline in education.

Lack of awareness as well as preparedness to handle technology- Not all teachers/students are adept at it, and not all of them were prepared for the abrupt shift from face-to-face to online learning. Most lecturers deliver lectures via video platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and others, which may not constitute true online learning in the absence of a specific online learning platform.

Parents Shared responsibility of teaching their kids with the teachers: Some educated parents can guide their children, but others may lack the necessary education to teach their children at home.

Health issues due to loss of nutritious food: Mid-day meals is an Indian government school meal programme that aims to improve the nutritional status of school-aged children across the country. Due to the temporary closure of mid-day meal programmes, the closure of schools has major repercussions for children' daily nourishment. Various studies have found that mid-day meals are an essential role in increased school enrolment.

Access to digital world and global education: Online teaching-learning may create a digital divide among students since many students have limited or no internet access, and many students may not be able to afford a computer, laptop, or supporting mobile phone in their homes. According to numerous sources, the lockout has disproportionately impacted impoverished students in India, with the majority of them unable to study online learning. As a result, during the pandemic COVID-19, the online teaching-learning approach may widen the gap between affluent and poor, urban and rural. A considerable number of Indian students registered in numerous universities overseas, particularly in the worst-affected nations, are currently departing those countries, and if the scenario continues, the demand for foreign higher education will fall significantly in the long run.

Delay in payment of schools / college tuition fess: During the lockdown, the majority of parents will be unemployed, and they may not be able to pay the fees for that time period, which may have an impact on private institutes.

5. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC OUTCOME:
The following lessons, which inform the recommendations, focus on the challenges faced by Indian teachers and have been identified and presented hereunder:

Visionary planning: Countries all over the world have had to take severe measures to stop the COVID-19 virus from spreading, leaving many people unprepared for the repercussions. For an indefinite period of time, schools and teachers were entirely unprepared to make an overnight move from classroom-based to distance learning. Early planning and preparation, such as teacher training, school hygiene, and increasing student acquaintance with information and communication technology (ICT), could have made it easier for the education system to adapt to school closures. It is critical to learn from this experience in order to develop a strategy response to similar emergencies in the future.

Identifying the need of digital divide: According to parents and instructors, the most significant barriers to continuous learning have been device and data affordability, as well as network connectivity infrastructure. The creation of a robust and widespread power infrastructure that supplies reliable, inexpensive, and uninterrupted electricity to facilitate technology use is a key prerequisite.

Need for teachers support and assistance: The educational system's foundation is made up of teachers. They are critical to children's overall development and must be given all of the resources they need to do their jobs effectively. Given the desire to transition to a blended-learning education system, it is necessary to assess how teachers' roles are evolving, as well as what professional development and support they require.

EdTech roll out: There appears to be growing scepticism about the aim and usefulness of e-learning, in addition to issues of access, navigation, and quality. Teacher, administrative, and parent buy-in is critical to the successful implementation and uptake of EdTech programmes. In addition, the essential value addition of in-person connection between students and teachers in schools must be recognised. Children's holistic development in schools contributes to social cohesiveness, tolerance, and peacebuilding (through interaction with peers from various ethnic and religious

backgrounds, group work, play, and a strong feeling of community). The development of these soft skills through long-term interpersonal relationships and the enjoyment of India's diversity cannot be replicated by technology or online.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS TO BUILD BACK BETTER:

These recommendations consider ways to build on the successes and lessons learned from the COVID-19 experience:

Reduce the digital divide: Increase access to technology by forming partnerships with mobile networks to supply educational data for free or at a reduced cost. Add digital services to social protection programmes, adapt existing learning apps for slower internet connections, and invest extensively in supplying reliable electricity to even the most rural locations.

Upskill teachers for e-learning – Invest in instructors and offer them with ongoing support so that they may provide e-learning and distance education to all of their students during school closure and thereafter through a mixed form of instruction.

Create a remote learning approach for the most disadvantaged people – Contextualized measures to support distant learning are needed to ensure that the most vulnerable children do not drop out and can continue studying in the face of another systemic shock. The strategy should concentrate on identifying why certain children are more at risk of dropping out or falling behind, developing context-specific solutions to reach these children, teaching them foundational literacy and numeracy skills, and addressing the underlying causes of children being at risk and providing a safety net against dropping out.

Improve data gathering to direct targeted investments — Extensive monitoring is required to acquire real-time data. This should contain information on school WASH facilities and compliance with safe school rules, as well as information on school infrastructure, notably the quality of electricity and internet access.

7. CONCLUSION:

The government has made significant attempts to respond to COVID-19's consequences, and its dedication to education is shown in the 2020 National Education Plan, which was released despite the pandemic. In such a populous and diverse country, its decentralised strategy to coping with COVID-19's implications makes sense, and several states have created measures that could be productively copied abroad. Both the NEP and the response to COVID-19 emphasise the necessity of adopting digital technology in the future, yet there are numerous reasons why digitalization will only offer a portion of the educational infrastructure in the future. It will be crucial to recovery to address the learning loss sustained by children during school closures, particularly children from poor and displaced families.

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