IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT: The petrifying and severe impact of COVID-19 has shaken the world to its core. Further, most of the Governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. In India too, the government as a part of the nationwide lockdown has closed all educational institutions, as a consequence of which, learners ranging from school going children to postgraduate students, are affected.

Keyword: Impact, Covid-19, Education system

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INTRODUCTION

These nationwide closures are impacting over 91% of the worlds' student population. Several other countries have implemented localized closures impacting millions of additional learners. UNESCO is supporting countries in their efforts to mitigate the immediate impact of school closures, particularly for more vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, and to facilitate the continuity of education for all through remote learning. The UNESCO report estimates that the corona virus pandemic will adversely impact over 290 million

students across 22 countries. The UNESCO estimates that about 32 crores students are affected in India, including those in schools and colleges.

Therefore, the government has come up with e-learning program. Many ed-tech firms have tried to leverage the occasion by offering free online classes or attractive discounts on e-learning modules. These measures have been met with overwhelming response by students with some startups witnessing as high as 25% uptick in e-learning. Remote learning seems a viable solution to students during this time as they

offer convenient, on -the- go and affordable access to lessons. E-learning also comes as an interesting and interactive alternative as compared to classroom teaching.

Nevertheless, Covid-19 has prompted experts to rethink the conventional mode of education. Digital education appears to be a viable solution to fill in the void for classroom education for a period of three to four months while minimizing the chances of any infection to students until classes resume. More importantly, it has also brought the hitherto peripheral issue of digital education in India to the centre stage. Going forward, digital education is likely to be integrated into mainstream education. This will enable inclusive education by facilitating learning across diverse geographies in India. Moreover, it will provide an opportunity for educators to come up with customized learning solutions for every student.

A complete revolution in the way we learn today has been brought about by Technology. Each student gets in contact with a world-class education, which is not easy to impart by the traditional white chalk and blackboard method of teaching. This

new learning is more interesting, personalized and enjoyable. A massive open online course (MOOC) is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. India is considered to be the biggest market for MOOCs in the world after the USA. Since the population of India is huge, massive open online course (MOOC) is said to open gateways for a lot of Indians in terms of bringing an educational revolution. Online distant learning programs give a great opportunity to avail high-quality learning with the help of internet connectivity.

Digital learning has many advantages in itself like digital learning has no physical boundaries, it has more learning engagement experience rather than the traditional learning, it is also cost-effective and students get to learn in the confines of their comfort zone. However, digital learning is not without its limitations and challenges, since face-to-face interaction is usually perceived as the best form of communication as compared to the rather impersonalized nature of remote learning. Globally, online education has met with some success. In the case of India, we still have a long way to go before digital learning

is seen as mainstream education, because students living in urban area have the facilities to opt for digital education, however, rural area students do not have the required infrastructure nor are financially strong to avail the resources required for digital education. Building of the digital education infrastructure by the Government of India presently appears to be difficult due to lack of budget. Further, even if the digital infrastructure is built, training has to be given to the teachers to use the digital system to provide authentic and proper, uninterrupted and seamless education to the students. Remote learning increasingly relies on the reliable power supply and ubiquitous Internet connectivity which might be a far-fetched thing for Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in India.

Another challenge is that e-learning comes across as somewhat patchy and impersonal experience. Also, e-learning is likely to witness a high dropout rate due to the lack of atmosphere for studying. Students might tend to get distracted by gaming consoles, social media at home and might not feel a sense of community while taking online classes. Successful delivery of education is also in question because learning at the level

of higher education and learning at the kindergarten/school level can be different. Digital education cannot be applied the same at every level of the education.

If we further up the light on the educational material, digital education will have a limited scope as compared with the written and handy material which is provided in an educational institute. Moreover, the authentication of the educational material is at stake. E-learning will always provide the students with different information in different ways. So, the authenticity of the educational material should be tested before these materials are circulated with the students. Creation of content, dissemination of content and evaluation of content should be done. Blended education has to come face to face and distance education should go hand in hand currently. Educational data circulated in online should be properly maintained. Because ultimately these digital educational course classes will also lead to hacking systems and intruders coming in. The digital safety challenge will remain at large while imparting education.

Due to the outbreak of the pandemic, the work from home (WFH) culture is booming in India. As social distancing is prescribed

as the best way to curb the spread of COVID 19, companies are faced with an unprecedented challenge of ensuring it is business as usual even if everyone is working remotely. Therefore, not only businessmen or start-ups in India have opted for an online platform like Zoom App to stay connected with their employees who are working from their homes but also the educational institutions have opted for different digital platforms to facilitate learning for their students. However, only educational institutions in urban areas can provide those facilities. Again the questions are raised for the learners in rural areas, the educational systems in rural areas and their growth.

With so many different ways to define e-learning and the educational approaches that can be taken in these learning environments, many colleges and extra curriculum activity classes have started making use of the technology. Through applications such as Zoom, various colleges especially engineering and designing colleges of Pune have undertaken the task of educating students through video conferencing. Undeterred by the security concerns which such video conferencing applications may

pose, these applications are widely used and have proved to be beneficial and with a lot of advantages. There is picture, sound clarity which makes imparting of knowledge and learning effective for both the instructor and the student.

But at the same time, there is a glaring disadvantage as exams have to be postponed. Examinations cannot be conducted online. It is not only just the question of imparting continuous and uninterrupted learning during the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic but also the most important challenge for the instructor is to focus on the overall elements of a well-developed course. Developing a purposeful and well-defined online course, which supports the instructor and learner, means devoting the appropriate time and embedding the applicable course elements into the e-learning environment. Through the use of technology, we can, if not provide a strong alternative to the conventional education system, mitigate and compensate for the impediments posed and inconvenience caused due to COVID 19 pandemic to the education system and learners by extension. Learning, as they say, is a continuous and ever-evolving process.

The educational institutions in India, from schools to universities, can use this present adversity as a blessing in disguise and make digital education a major part of the learning process for all learners in the future.

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