Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Education in India: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Every sector in the globe is experiencing the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. This has a significant negative impact on both the Indian and global education systems. It has imposed a global lockdown, having a highly negative impact on students' lives. All educational activities were stopped in India as around 32 crore students left their current schools or universities. We have learned that change is inevitable because to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has acted as a catalyst for educational institutions to develop and choose platforms with hitherto unexplored technology. The education industry has been working to survive the crises with a new strategy and digitalizing the difficulties to eliminate the pandemic threat. This research illustrates some of the nation's seamless educational practices. The effects of COVID 19 on the education sector, both favourable and unfavourable, are also explored.

INTRODUCTION

The global expansion of the Covid-19 pandemic has forced society to preserve social distance. The education sector, which plays a crucial role in determining a nation's economic future, has been considerably disturbed. The World Health Organization (WHO) [1] suggested COVID, an acronym for Corona virus Disease 2019, as the official name of the virus on February 11, 2020. On December 31, 2019, Wuhan, China, made the first discovery of it. On January 11, 2020, a 61-year-old man in Wuhan, China, died as the first victim of COVID 19. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared Covid-19 to be a pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic in India's state of Kerala saw its first case reported on January 30, 2020, and the victim had travelled to Wuhan, China. India announced the first Covid-19-related death on March 12, 2020. More than 4.5 million people have been impacted globally by it (WHO). The UNESCO report [2] states that it affected more than 90% of all students worldwide in mid-April 2020, but that number has since dropped to just over 67% in June 2020. Around the world, the Covid-19 outbreak has affected more than 120 crore students and young people. In India, the various restrictions and the nationwide lockdown for Covid-19 have an impact on more than 32 crore students. According to the UNESCO report, around 14 crore primary children and 13 crore secondary students - the two educational levels most commonly affected in India are affected.

Many educational institutions have been forced to cancel their classes, exams, internships, etc. and opt for online alternatives due to the lockdown. When this sudden catastrophe forced the closure of educational activities, educators and students were initially somewhat confused and unsure of how to handle the situation. But as time went on, everyone recognised how many lessons the lockdown had taught them about how to deal with pandemics of this type. As a result, COVID 19 has provided educational institutions with a variety of challenges and chances to improve their technology infrastructure and knowledge (Pravat, 2020a) [3]. For teachers and students, the lockout has provided a glimmer of hope for online learning to continue. Teachers used apps like Zoom, Google Meet, Facebook, Youtube, and Skype to conduct lectures and assign homework to students live via the internet. For effective communication, there are WhatsApp groups for parents, teachers, kids, and guardians where they can stay in touch and share their struggles.

A shift to digital learning may be easier in a country like China that employs a system of centralization that is far more centralized. Even in the U.S.A., there are some low-income children who don't utilise computers for learning and don't have access to the internet (Study Abroad Life) [4]. The similar thing occurs in India, where not all students have access to high-speed internet and technological devices, and they consequently suffer. Numerous modern educational institutions in India are now not digitally equipped to handle the abrupt transition from the traditional educational setup to the online educational system.

INITIATIVES OF GOVT. OF INDIA ON EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

The most effective response to the pandemic Covid-19 was online education (Pravat, 2020b) [5]. As a result, the government's vision of a digital India is becoming an essential tool for resolving the current issue brought on by Covid-19. With all due respect, it is a truth that technologically based education is more transparent. The Indian government has taken appropriate action in response to the issue of colleges and schools closing, as have state governments and private parties. For

students to continue learning, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) [6] has put in place a number of measures, such as online portals and educational channels on Direct to Home TV and radios.

Popular social media platforms including WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Meet, Telegram, Youtube Live, Facebook Live, and others are being used by students during lockdown as part of an online teaching and learning system. The MHRD's ICT initiative (eBroucher- https://mhrd.gov.in/ict-initiatives) is a special platform that brings together all online learning resources in one place. The following is a list of the MHRD digital initiatives for secondary and higher education during COVID-19:

Secondary education

- The Diksha portal offers curriculum-aligned e-Learning materials for students, teachers, and parents, such as video lessons, worksheets, textbooks, and assessments. More than 250 bilingual teachers have developed the content under the direction of the Country's National Boards Of Education (CBSE) and NCERT. The app can be used offline. For grades 1 to 12, it offers more than 80,000 e-Books in various languages produced by CBSE and NCERT. Additionally, the information is accessible via QR codes on textbooks. The software is available on the Google Play Store and the iOS App Store. Web address: https://diksha.qov.in or https://seshaqun.qov.in/shaqun

- NCERT offers E-Pathshala, a multilingual e-learning programme for classes 1 to 12. The app includes books, videos, audio, and other materials in Hindi, Urdu, and English that are geared toward students, teachers, and parents. For classes 1 through 12, NCERT has made 1886 audios, 2000 videos, 696 e-Books, and 504 Flip Books available on this website in several languages. Website: http://epathshala.nic.in or http://epathshala.qov.in.

- A variety of resources, including books, interactive modules, and videos, as well as a variety of STEM-based games, are available for students and teachers through the National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) portal in different languages. Classes 1 to 12 have content that is connected with the curriculum and includes tools for teachers. It includes 401 collections, 2779 documents, 1345 interactive, 1664 audios, 2586 images, and 6153 videos in various languages, totaling 14527 files. Website: http://nroer.qov.in/welcome

Higher education

- The national online education portal Swayam offers 1900 courses in all subject areas, including engineering, arts and social sciences, law, and management, for both secondary school (classes 9–12) and higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate programmes).

Its integration with traditional education is a distinctive feature. For SWAYAM courses, credit transfers are allowed, but only up to 20%. Website: https://swayam.gov.in/

- SwayamPrabha offers 32 DTH TV channels that broadcast educational content around-the-clock. Using a DD Free Dish Set Top Box and Antenna, these channels can be viewed nationwide. The site contains more information as well as the channel schedule. The channels offer content in the fields of arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities, engineering, technology, law, medicine, and agriculture for both education (classes 9–12) and higher education (undergraduate, postgraduate, engineering, out-of-school youth, vocational courses, and teacher training). Website: https://swayamprabha.gov.in/

- It is for postgraduate students to use e-PG Pathshala. During this time of lockdown, postgraduate students have access to this site for E-Books, online courses, and study resources. The benefit of this platform is that students can use these resources without being connected to the internet all day. Website: https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/

IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON INDIAN EDUCATION SECTOR

Positive impact of Covid 19 on education in India

Even though the Covid-19 outbreak has had a negative influence on schooling in many ways, educational institutions in India have risen to the occasion and are doing their best to support students throughout the pandemic. The Indian educational system now has the chance to transition from a traditional system to a modern one. The benefits listed below could be regarded as effects.

- Blended learning is becoming more popular: As a result of Covid-19, which has increased the use of digital technologies in education. Educational institutions adopted a blended learning approach. It inspired all educators and learners to advance their technological literacy. Numerous chances for a significant shift in curriculum and pedagogy were created by new modes of learning assessment and delivery. Additionally, it provides access to sizable student populations at once.

- Use of teach management systems has increased as a result of increased demand from educational institutions. For businesses building and enhancing learning management systems for use in educational institutions, it created a huge opportunity (Misra, 2020) [7].

- In lockdown situations, students were unable to gather their hard copies of study materials; as a result, the majority of students used soft copies of the materials for reference.

- A new possibility exists for collaborative teaching and learning to adopt new shapes, which will improve teamwork. Collaborations between academics and educators around the world are another possibility for mutual benefit (Misra, 2020).
- Increase in virtual meetings, webinars, and e-conferences: The pandemic has led to a significant increase in these types of meetings.
- Digital literacy has increased as a result of the pandemic scenario, which encouraged individuals to learn about and use digital technologies. Improved use of electronic media for information sharing: Learning materials are easily shared among students, and questions connected to them are answered via email, SMS, phone calls, and various social media platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp.
- Global exposure: Teachers and students have the chance to communicate with people from all around the world. Students adapted to a global community.
- Better time management: During pandemics, online learning enables students to better manage their time.
- Demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL): During the pandemic, the majority of students favoured ODL because it promotes self-learning by giving them the chance to learn from a variety of resources and customize their education to meet their needs.

Negative impact of Covid 19 on education in India

The Covid-19 outbreak has severely affected the education sector. It has had numerous detrimental effects on education, some of which are listed below:

- Classes have been cancelled and exams at various levels have been postponed, hindering educational activity. The yearly exams and entrance exams have already been postponed by various boards. Admissions took longer than expected. Students lost over three months of the entire academic year of 2020–21 because of the lockdown, which would further aggravate the situation of educational continuity and make it difficult for students to return to school after a significant break.
- Employment: Due to COVID-19, the majority of hiring was delayed. Companies delaying the on boarding of students may have an impact on placements for students. The epidemic is predicted to raise the unemployment rate. Because of the current circumstances, there are no government sector hiring opportunities in India, and recent graduates worry that their employment offers from the private sector would be withdrawn. The unemployment rate was estimated by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy to be 8.4% in mid-March but

soared up to 23% in early April and 30.9% in urban areas (Educationasia.in) [8]. As people struggle for food rather than schooling, education steadily declines as unemployment rises.

- Teachers and students who are not ready for online learning Not all instructors or students are adept at it, or at the very least, not all of them were prepared for this abrupt shift from in-person instruction to online instruction. Without a specific online learning platform, the majority of teachers are merely giving lectures on video platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, etc. This may not constitute real online learning.

- Reduced global employment opportunities: Due to Covid-19 limits, some people may lose their jobs from other nations, and graduates may not be able to find employment outside of India. Due to Covid-19, many Indians may have returned home after losing their jobs abroad. Therefore, it may be challenging for recent graduates who will soon enter the workforce to find acceptable employment. Due to lockdown, many students who have already secured employment through campus interviews would not be able to start working there. It's possible that the Indians who have been working abroad would lose their jobs. In India, recent graduates are also concerned that job offers from business sectors would be withdrawn due to the current pandemic situation's restrictions on movement.

- Parents now have a greater obligation to educate their children: Some educated parents can mentor, but some may not possess the necessary education to teach children at home.

- Loss of nutrition as a result of school closure: The Government of India runs a school meal programme called Mid-Day Meals that aims to give children of school age improved nutrition across the country. The mid-day meal programmes have been temporarily shut down, which has major effects on how well children are able to eat each day. According to numerous researches, midday meals also play a significant role in the rise in school enrollment.

- Access to the digital world: Due to the fact that many students lack access to the internet and may not be able to purchase a home computer, laptop, or supporting mobile phone, online teaching and learning may result in a digital divide among students. According to numerous reports, the lockdown has severely hurt India's underprivileged pupils because the majority of them are unable to study online learning. Thus, the use of online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic may widen the divide between the urban and rural poor and the rich.

- Global education access: The epidemic has severely impacted the higher education industry. Many Indian students, who are enrolled in numerous universities overseas, particularly in

the worst-affected nations, are now leaving those countries, and if the situation remains, the demand for international higher education may eventually fall significantly.

- Delay in paying school and college fees: Most parents will be out of work during this lockdown, making it possible that they won't be able to cover such costs, which could have an impact on private institutions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goals of the current study were to:

- To enlighten the various steps the Indian government took to support the education sector during the pandemic.
- To draw attention to the Covid-19's numerous beneficial effects on education.
- To highlight certain Covid-19 drawbacks and offer some practical advice for continuing education in a pandemic environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data and information presented in current study are collected from various reports prepared by national and international agencies on Covid-19 pandemic. Information is collected from various authentic websites. Some journals and e-contents relating to impact of Covid-19 on educational system are referred.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In order to prepare students for the future's digitally focused environment, efforts must be made to make the most of online platforms. In order to stop the spread of Covid-19 in such a pandemic situation, the idea of "work from home" is more pertinent. India needs to come up with innovative plans to guarantee that all students will have ongoing access to education. For efficient delivery of education, Indian policy must involve a variety of people from diverse backgrounds, including distant locations, marginalised populations, and minority groups. The students are greatly benefited by practicing online. It may be possible to do more, in-depth statistical research to examine Covid-19 effects on the Indian educational system.

CONCLUSION

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on India's education sector. Despite the numerous difficulties it has brought about, numerous opportunities have also arisen. In order to address the current Covid-19 crisis, the Indian Government and several educational stakeholders have looked into the prospect of Open and Distance Learning (ODL). India is not entirely prepared to use digital platforms to

spread education throughout the entire country. The current selection of digital platforms will affect the students who are less fortunate than the others. However, academic institutions and the Indian government are working constantly to find a solution to this issue. Utilizing digital technology to give millions of Indian students a competitive advantage should be the top goal. For educational institutions to be prepared for Covid-19-like events, it is imperative that they increase their knowledge and IT infrastructure. For the Indian policies to be effectively implemented, a variety of people from varied backgrounds, including those from distant areas, marginalized groups, and minority groups, must be involved. Given the fast expansion of online learning platforms, higher education institutions (HEIs) in India must implement quality assurance processes and standards for their online learning programmes. Indian traditional knowledge is renowned for its scientific advancements, ideals, and advantages in the development of sustainable technologies and pharmaceuticals. These knowledge systems in various sectors should be incorporated with a modern, mainstream higher education system.

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