



Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education in India According to The Ministry of Education

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of the unprecedented COVID-19 education disruptions which affected more than 220 million tertiary-level students around the world, UNESCO conducted a global survey aimed at providing an evidence-based overview of the current situation of the higher education system at national and global levels. The results provide insights on how some countries were able to transform challenges, brought by the rapid digitalization of education, into opportunities through strong government support and international cooperation. The survey attempts to assess the varying impact the pandemic had on higher education systems in terms of access, equity and quality of teaching and learning, university operation, national challenges, emerging issues, and strategic responses. The impact of COVID-19 can be seen in every sphere of life. Especially when it comes to education; this is the biggest sector that has been adversely affected by this pandemic. It forced many great nations to enforce lockdown thereby bringing everything to an abrupt halt for a certain period of time. Right from the big businesses to educational institutions this Pandemic has literally altered and devastated the traditional ways of carrying out these things. The educational sector has been fighting to survive the crises. The teaching learning and evaluation methodologies have been completely altered by this pandemic. The digitalisation of education became a necessity in order to provide seamless education. The Paper deals with trials made by Ministry of Education in India and New Education Policy currently.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, education, higher, UNESCO, challenges, issues, strategic, global, national levels

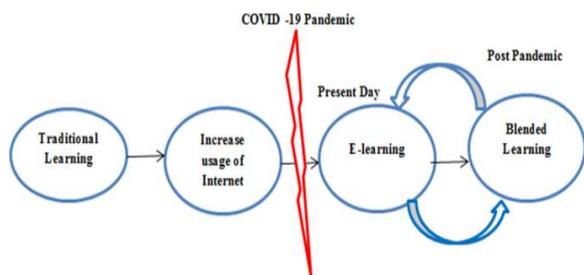
1. INTRODUCTION

The key findings for the various assessment dimensions are:

Mode of teaching and learning: The major impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning is the increase in online education. The hybrid mode of teaching has become the most popular form. [1]

- **Access:** The impact of COVID-19 on enrollment varies by regional and income levels. High income groups are better able to cope with the disruption due to government funding support and increase in domestic enrollment.

- **International mobility:** Mobility took a major hit, affecting international students significantly, but virtual mobility could compensate or even replace physical mobility.
- **University staff:** Despite the closure of many universities, the impact of COVID-19 on university staff compared to the previous academic year is limited.
- **Disruption of research and extension activities:** COVID-19 caused suspension and cancellation of teaching and research activities globally.



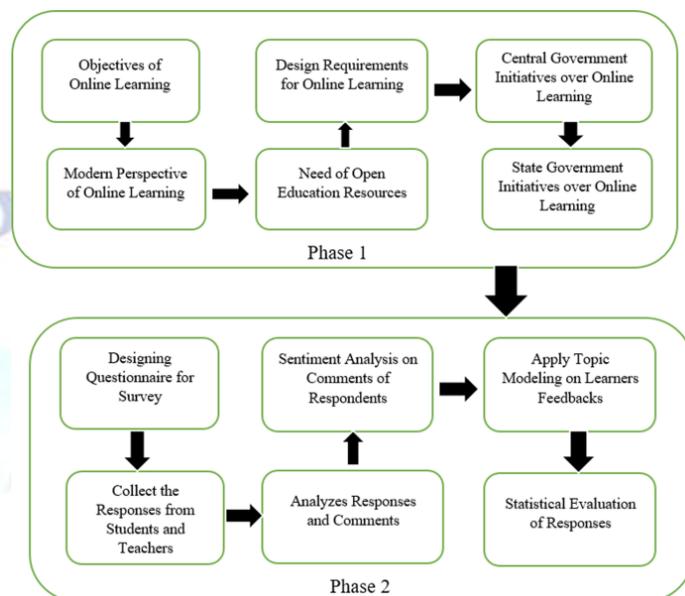
- **Widening inequality:** The mixed impact of the pandemic on university finance shed a light on the exacerbation of inequality in higher education. Financial support from the government and external sources are crucial to the survival .
- **University operations:** The strong impact of the pandemic caused reduced maintenance and services on campus and campuses closures .
- **National challenges:** Health and adaptation to new modes and models of teaching are the top concerns for students and institutions.
- **Transition from higher education to work:** The significant reduction of job opportunities makes the transition from higher education to the labor market more difficult. Employers are also seeking applicants with higher technology skills.
- **National priority:** Strategic options for country-specific response are to improve infrastructure and availability of digital devices for online or distance learning as well as support for teachers and more international collaboration in research and policy dialogues.

The global survey was addressed to the 193 UNESCO Member States and 11 Associate Members. Sixty-five countries submitted responses, fifty-seven of which were used for the analysis that informed the report.

2. DISCUSSION

The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced many countries to enforce lockdowns that brought everything to a standstill including the teaching and learning process. The educational sector suffered the most due to this pandemic. This pandemic has made the world to observe social distancing in the public space. COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China and then it gradually started spreading in other parts of the world. It was only in 2020 the WHO declared it as pandemic. It has claimed millions of lives across the world. According to the UNESCO

report more than 90% of total student population in the world was affected due to the pandemic during the initial phase of its outbreak.



It has caused a serious and very deep rooted impact on the social, economic and also psychological life of people in different parts of the world. The guidelines that were issued by the WHO which were ratified by the most of the countries across the world compelled the governments to shut down the institutions of mass gatherings. So along with the educational institutions the academic year end exams and also competitive exams were postponed indefinitely. [2] This step was taken in order to slow down and contain the spread of Corona virus in India by segregating the people who were infected with COVID-19. This process came to be known as Lockdown wherein the Govt. had imposed severe restrictions on the movement and the gatherings of the people in order to control the spread of this airborne disease. So ultimately in this process all the educational institutions suffered a massive setback in India. All the educational institutions in India had to be shut down Right from the primary schools to the universities. The regular classes were suspended citing threat to the lives of the learners and the teachers. It also affected the lives of the aspirants who were preparing for competitive & entrance exams. It has raised multiple issues right from the health to the wealth also affecting the day to day functioning of the life due to its rampant spread across the world and India is definitely not an exception to it.

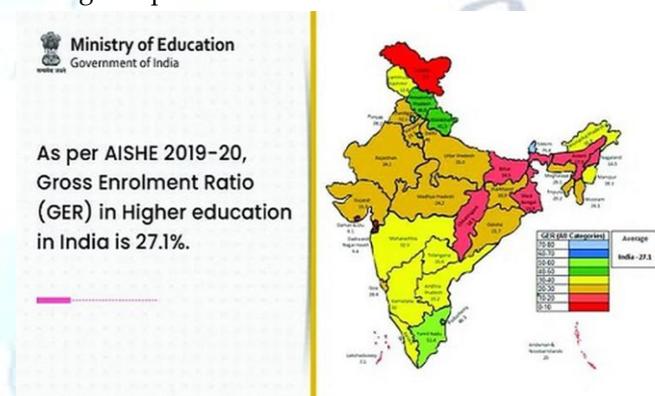


The economy has suffered severe setback which can be reflected in different sectors. One of the major and devastating impact this pandemic brought in the global education is , it led to sudden shift of education from classroom teaching to the online mode of teaching and learning that has affected the teaching and learning process in Universities, colleges and schools and thus it has significantly disrupted the higher education sector in India. This shift in education has brought a great change in the pattern of learning with certain positive and negative impacts. In the case of the country like India this online teaching has registered devastating impact on the lives of those students who are underprivileged and coming from very poor section of the society. In India it has also brought certain severe effects on the conventional learning process of face to face interaction even when some technical aids were introduced in the classrooms. [3] However also it is important to note that there are still certain educational institutions in India which are not very well equipped to the modern technological facilities in the classroom. Thus we can say that with the introduction of new method of learning through digital mode of learning, learning became very easy to the students as they can sit at home and get access but at the same time some students also had to face problem due to the poor internet connectivity which brings to the notice that even after India is adapting to online learning methods, still there lies an obstacles as entire population donot have access to internet and E-learning facility. Rural people are still deprived of technology. Therefore it is important to understand that there are positive as well as negative effect on the Indian society. This paper intends to understand the issues that

are associated with the higher education in India due to COVID-19 and also to focus on certain drawbacks in the context of online education and its psychological impact on the lives of the students.[4]

3. IMPLICATIONS

Around the second week of March 2020, state government across the country began to shut down the schools, colleges due to COVID-19. As we all know that this was the crucial time for students as different University, college examination are usually held during this period and also different entrance test of various universities and competitive examination were to be held during this period.



And since there found to be no immediate solution to prevent the outbreak of COVID 19, college, school and university closure had to be made compulsory to prevent the spread of virus. It has affected more than 285 million young learners in India. Students had to face severe problem as they were not aware of the future examination especially students who were in the final year and also those who were to answer entrance test. This closure of educational institutions disrupted the structure of learning, assessment and examination which made the Indian education system go through an irreversible teaching & learning crisis. And therefore sudden shift was made from traditional face to face classroom method to the online mode of education. It just became like the yesterday's disruptors became today's survivor. Online method was considered as the threat but today it has come to rescue. However there were several issues that also started coming up along with the introduction of online mode of teaching in higher educational institutions (HEIs) One of the significant question arises regarding online learning that whether it is effective? However answer is that it is effective for those who have right access to the technology. [5]



Internet plays very vital role for better learning and for higher education. However in the country like India all students cannot be expected to have all the required facilities due to different socio-economic background which might cause discomfort and frustration to students which might give the student the feeling of segregation and thus create digital divide between the rich who can avail all the facilities and the poor who cannot afford to purchase the equipment's that are required for E-Learning. So in India lot of people are not completely well equipped with all the facilities and many times they cannot get access to fast internet which is needed at the time of Teaching & learning process. Therefore India is still facing this challenge of digital divide. Lack of student involvement during the online classes has increased absenteeism and poor performance. Unfortunately student's passive role in the classroom became one of the significant reason for ineffective online teaching and learning process. Mobile applications or virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, Google meet became the virtual meeting hubs. Educational institutions directed teachers to engage classes through online mode using the virtual meeting platforms like Zoom & Google meet. The teachers who were not well versed with modern technology and mobile applications had to struggle a lot to engage online classes due to the sudden shift from face to face teaching to online teaching. Some teachers were just conducting classes because they were asked to do so. A lot of students were just joining the classes to mark themselves present. They hardly paid attention towards what was being taught by the teacher as the factor like class control doesn't exist on these virtual platforms. Many entrance tests, job recruitment too got cancelled which created a negative impact on the lives of the students. All these imply towards increase in unemployment in India. Thus with the increase of unemployment situation, there were enough chances of

diminishing interest for education due to the struggle for food. This growing issues has caused mental stress amongst the youngsters and youths who are the future of India. These were certain problems which affected the people in India who were severely affected due to the pandemic which created threat to the future of India. [6] Initiatives taken by the policymakers to make the educational system learner friendly . Though COVID-19 created many negative impacts on education, at the same time it has brought new dimension to the teaching learning process in India. Though there are many drawbacks of online learning, it became survivor during the worst situation in the country. It enhanced the digital literacy. People started learning and using digital technology. Electronic media was used for sharing information worldwide. Students and teacher got good opportunities to interact with different people around the globe improving the communication. Students preferred Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of learning as it encourages self-learning. The HEIs also gave their positive response by adopting different strategies during this crisis situation. UGC, MHRD also have made available teaching and learning materials for students to motivate learning. Some of the digital initiatives have proved to be very effective during the COVID crisis. Some of them are listed below: E-Gyankosh,- One of the initiative taken by national government to share digital learning resources which is developed by the open and distance learning institutions in the country. Study material is also made available for the students.[7]

4. RESULTS

Gyandhara- It is internet service where students can listen live discussions made by experts and also can interact with them through telephonic conversation. E-Adhyayan, Swayam- It is said that SWAYAM covers over 1900 courses are available which covers school and higher education. The Government of Goa decided to take up Herculean task by creating a new E-Learning platform called as DISHTAVO (Digital Integrated System for Holistic Teaching & Virtual Orientation). DISHTAVO- The E- Learning platform called Dishtavo was especially developed during the COVID crises. It is very complex and holistic as it extraordinarily addresses the different study packages that consists of; B.A, B.COM, B.Sc. and so forth under the Goa University at the UG and PG degree level. It has

been designed as per the guidelines prescribed by SWAYAM for MOOCS to enhance the experience of the learner and to make that platform more learner centric. The main Motto of this platform is to create a repository of the e-content as in step with the prescribed syllabus by the Goa University. The principle cause is to provide the students with lectures both in online mode as well as in offline mode. Students can directly watch the lecture videos and download the reading material related to it from the DISHTAVO portal if they have access to the internet. If they do not have access to the internet then they can ask the college to provide them with the lecture videos which they can copy in their pen drive & take those videos at home. This initiative of the government of Goa has in the true sense changed the nomenclature of teaching and learning process. Those who miss out lot of things that are taught during online classes due to various reasons can watch the videos of the lectures from the DISHTAVO portal.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi recommended New Education Policy currently

Secondly this platform has strengthened the educational system or one can say that it has made educational system immune against the serious challenges arising from pandemic or disastrous situations like this. Development and change is one of the inevitable part of human life however during the pandemic people had to accept sudden change as it became necessary for the survival. It encouraged personalized learning which in long run will be beneficial for qualitative teaching and learning process. It also facilitate improvement in collaborative work.[8]

5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of education is to enable oneself to better the world in which they live. Technology today has

become need of an hour. It is difficult to imagine colleges and university education without the use of digital resources which has provided different educational and academic information. However it is also necessary to understand that it shouldn't reinforce structures of power and inequality. It should not create digital divide between rich and poor. As we cannot expect in country like India to have availability of all required resources due to different socio-economic conditions in India. Online mode of learning can be the best mode of teaching if it can be accessed by all the sections of the society however it can pose threat if certain section of society cannot avail this facility and thus exclusion. It is therefore important to take cognizance of online education and plan for interventions that will prioritize greater inclusivity, connectivity and equitability. It is important that colleges and University understands the experience and issues of the students and prepare according the further and design the study pattern in such a way that all students benefits.[9]

Conflict of interest statement

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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