


INFLUENCE OF COVID-19 ON TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS

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Abstract:

The present paper aims to highlight the influence of COVID-19 on the teaching learning process. The once in life time pandemic brought fast revolution in the adaptation of virtual communication through technology in the conventional education system in India and the world. Not just the younger generation hooked up to the technology but even the elder generation of teachers accepted the fact that its only viable option left with them to survive and progress. At every level attempts were made by the central, state and local bodies to continue the process of teaching and learning. When many businesses collapsed in the pandemic it was a boom period for EdTech companies. Covid-19 also brought to forefront the digital divide between the student communities.

Keywords: *Virtual communication, pandemic, EdTech digital divide.*

“There is no greater violence than to deny the dreams of our children.”

– Kailash Satyarthi

Introduction:

COVID-19 is the disease caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. WHO first learned of this new virus on 31 December 2019, following a report of a cluster of cases of ‘viral pneumonia’ in Wuhan, People’s Republic of China. India currently has the largest number of confirmed cases in Asia: 30 January, 2020, India reported its first case of COVID-19 in Kerala, which rose to three cases by 3 February all were students returning from Wuhan.

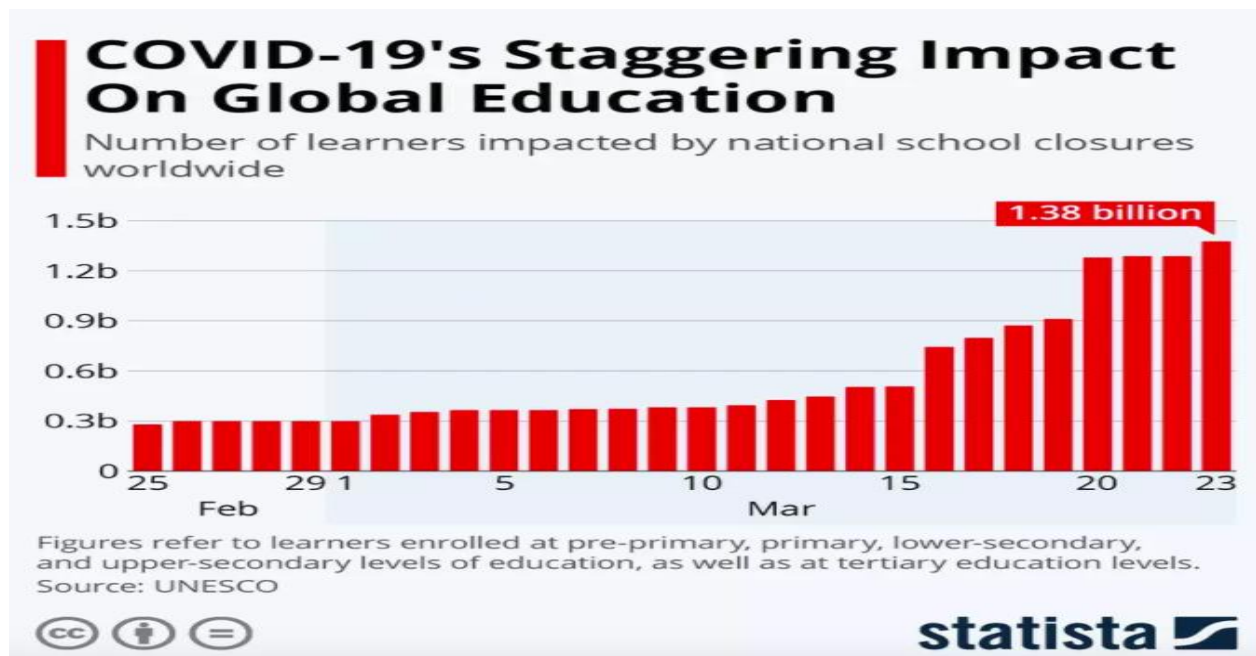
As the pandemic progressed throughout the world, the Indian government began issuing recommendations regarding social distancing measures and also initiated travel and entry restrictions. Throughout March, several shutdowns and business closures were initiated, and by the end of the month, the Indian government ordered a widespread lockdown. On 16 March, the union government declared a countrywide lock-down of schools and colleges. Schools across the country have been closed since mid-March, even before the coronavirus lockdown was imposed.

The data published in March, 2020 by UNESCO, says that over 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries were affected by COVID-19 school closures. UNESCO further expressed concern over deployment of distance learning employed by the respective governments as these countries grappled with the complexities of providing remote education which had its share of connectivity challenges especially in the rural and remote



areas. UNESCO further stated that equity was of paramount concern because closures will disproportionately hurt the vulnerable and disadvantaged students who rely on schools for a range of social services, including health and nutrition. Since closing of schools to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, governments have been deploying distance learning solutions and are grappling with the complexity of providing education remotely, from delivering content and supporting teachers to providing guidance to families and addressing connectivity challenges.

UNESCO reiterated that Equity is of the paramount concern because closures disproportionately hurt vulnerable and disadvantaged students who rely on schools for a range of social services, including health and nutrition.



In India the Ministry of Home Affairs, on May 17, released a guideline for the fourth phase of lockdown. The guidelines issued said: “Schools, colleges, educational, training, coaching institutions etc. will remain closed.” It further added: “Online and distance learning shall continue to be permitted and shall be encouraged.” On May 12, Prime Minister Narendra Modi confirmed that India will go to the fourth phase of COVID-19 lockdown. The announcement had been made during his address to the nation.

Covid-19 has led to the testing of distance education on an unprecedented scale. (Sun, Tang, & Zuo, 2020). There was a sudden surge of education sector reliance on online learning which included remote instruction, technology like video conferencing platforms and learning management systems that became the new norm. We witnessed the sudden shift away from the classroom and institutions directly into the homes of students and teachers.

In a nation like China that practices a considerably more centralization system, a change to digital learning will be simpler. While even in a nation like the U.S.A, there are some low-pay students who don't approach



broad bands and PCs; computerized learning probably won't be the perfect arrangement. The same is the situation with India, not every student here is well informed or approaches the high-speed internet and will along these lines suffer. At the point when classes really start on the web, numerous students will endure as a result of their powerlessness to bear the expense. Except if India makes web accessible to all, there are chances that the gap in education quality may widen. (Study Abroad Life, 2020)

The period of turbulence experienced by the learners:

Some of the features associated with online learning are individual learning, interactive, accessibility, affordability and flexibility. The severe explosion of Corona Virus disease can make us add one more argument in terms of online learning, that is, online learning serves as a panacea in the time of crisis. (Shivangi Dhawan, 2020). However online learning also brought out the dark truth of digital divide among students. Parents from affluent and higher middle class could afford laptops, smartphones, and internet facilities while a large majority of the parents who were struggling to cope up with job loss were unable to provide online education to their children.

The factsheet presented in August, 2020 by UNESCO high lights various issues related to online learning in COVID-19. In its global analysis of the potential reach of remote learning policies it was found that:

1. Almost all countries implemented digital and broadcast remote learning policies, but only 60 per cent Although television presents constraints in terms of sharing course materials, TV-based remote learning had the potential to reach the most students did so for pre-primary education.
2. At least 463 million – or 31 per cent – of schoolchildren worldwide cannot be reached by digital and broadcast remote learning programs enacted to counter school closures
3. Globally, 3 out of 4 students who cannot be reached by remote learning opportunities come from rural areas and/or poor households

The period of turbulence experienced by teachers:

The period soon after the lockdown was a stage of chaos for most of the administrators as many of them were unaware and reluctant to adopt technology. The pandemic has transformed the centuries-old, chalk–talk teaching model to one driven by technology (Richa Choudhary, 2020). Similarly the senior teacher experienced heavy stress and dependence on family members to operate apps like the zoom app. Not all teachers/students are good at it or at least not all of them were ready for this sudden transition from face to face learning to online learning. Most of the teachers are just conducting lectures on video platforms such as Zoom, Google meet etc. This may not be real online learning without any dedicated online learning platform. (Pravat Kumar Jena, 2020). The difference between the mute and unmute options was quite draining. The sheer absence of chalk and blackboard made many teachers to adopt innovative practices and most frequent use to search for YouTube channels to learn to download pen, jam boards and onscreen recorders. Teachers were juggling between household chores, online teaching and attending webinars to learn



how to conduct online teaching. While the administrators were watchful and anxious especially the private institutes to collect fees and paying their teachers.

The period of Recuperation:

What at first seemed like a temporary, emergency precaution quickly gave way to a new normal, as students—even graduating seniors—were forced to finish the school year remotely (Jon Gorey). As it is said that necessity is the mother of all innovation on the similar lines many innovative and cost effective teaching method came to the surface by the efforts of many teacher innovators. Many aspirational districts have initiated innovative, mobile-based learning models for effective delivery of education, which can be adopted by others. (Richa Choudhary, 2020). In the beginning of the new academic year both students and teachers downloaded eBook library-eBalbharti for textbook, Pragyan app provided single platform for teachers to access content, take up teaching ideas and demonstrate the same in the classroom. The online education mode taken up by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) school teachers gained lot of momentum. Teachers were given special training on online education. Students were being reached through WhatsApp, Zoom cloud and Google Meet. BMC also formed group on Telegram where teachers upload their daily activities. At the national level during the turbulent times when the students are missing out on studies, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in association with National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) have launched an initiative in the domain of digital learning, named, DIKSHA. The aim of this initiative is to help teachers and the students to continue their studies as usual, however, through different mode. (Nidhi Gupta, 2020)

Booming Edu-Tech Industry.

Even before COVID-19, there was already high growth and adoption in education technology, with global edtech investments reaching US\$18.66 billion in 2019 and the overall market for online education projected to reach \$350 Billion by 2025. Whether it is language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools, or online learning software, there has been a significant surge in usage since COVID-19. (Cathy Li & Farah Lalani, 2020). In comparison to its traditional face-to-face counterpart, online education is perceived as more convenient, and in the vast majority of cases, less expensive, allowing those who otherwise may not be able to pursue their educational dreams an opportunity to earn their desired degree. Kaufman points out that some of the main variables within the online educational arena are curriculum and student body diversity, fast-paced self-learning experience, a shift from passive learning to an active, project-based learning model, and cutting-edge, ever-evolving innovative technologies (Kaufman, 2008).

The COVID situation has catapulted the Edtech sector into the limelight. With a sudden spurt towards online education, the market size projections for Edtech in India by 2022 have seen a substantial increase. As per a recent report, the Edtech market in India is projected to reach \$3.5 billion by 2022 which was earlier projected to be in the range of \$2.8- \$3.2 bn. Edtech market size in 2019 stands at \$735 million (NASSCOM, 2020) India's Edtech industry is the second biggest in the world and it is only rising. It is one of the sectors that



have seen rapid growth in the pandemic. During the lockdown schools and coaching classes had to depend on technology to continue teaching. These EdTech companies are making it easier for students to prepare for their competitive examinations. With the aim to make education truly interesting these Edtech startups in India are changing the Indian education landscape. These Edtech startups all target different pain points for students and vary in costs. These startups go on to show that anyone can learn if they want to (Waqar Azmi, 2020). Interactive screens, online classes and MOOCs are all examples of EdTech. According to Byju Raveendran “The main idea behind starting BYJU’S was to make learning accessible, effective, engaging, and personalized for everyone”. Edtech startup also focuses on building the complete institute management system. With features like smart attendance, insightful student reports, online video selling, fees records, online tests which assist the institutions to complete all their administrative work through online mode. Covid-19 bought hey days for EdTech companies in India and the world over and this change is here to make a long haul and further transform traditional education into blended education system as more and more learners are finding it more comfortable to study in the online mode.

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