

**IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION IN INDIA****Ms. Shilpa Suryawanshi***K.E.T's V.G.Vaze College of Arts, Science & Commerce (Autonomous)**Mithaghar Road, Mulund (E), Mumbai-400081.***Abstract**

The nationwide outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has caused a massive as well as downward spiral in the world economy and also adversely caused an enormous impact on the higher education system. The immediate closure of schools, colleges and universities as a social distancing measure to prevent community transmission of the pandemic has shifted the concept of physical classes to online learning systems. Due to the outbreak of pandemic the focus on online learning is majorly emphasized but the limitations, accessibility and affordability attached to the e-learning is hampering many of the students. The pandemic has exposed the positive as well as negative effects of online learning on the primary as well as higher education system and the need for more training and practice of educators/professors in digital domain to adapt to the rapidly changing educational system of the world. It is evidently observed today that the post lockdown situation, is majorly focusing on eLearning and virtual education as an integral part of the primary and higher educational system. The primary as well as higher educational institutions and universities needs to plan and channelize the post-lockdown educational reforms and research strategies to ensure optimum learning outcomes and standards of educational quality.

Keywords: COVID-19, Higher Education, Virtual education, Teaching-learning.



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Introduction

The outbreak of pandemic Covid-19 has spread across the whole world and compelled the several sectors of the economy as well as human society to follow and maintain social distancing. The outbreak has significantly disrupted the education sector which is a critical and important determinant of a country's economic future affecting more than 4.7 million people worldwide. A report published by the UNESCO, has mentioned that more than 80% of the total student population of the world have been affected by the pandemic and change in the educational system but by May 2020 this affected percentage was brought down nearly to 66%. Also 13 crores of primary and 14 crores of secondary education students have been adversely affected in India. Several other reasons such as armed conflict, forced displacement, mental health issues and protracted crisis have affected the education of nearly 74 million children globally. (UNESCO report 2020) Numerous other important facilities such as water and sanitation are also equally important and responded to the educational needs and cannot be neglected because it has a detrimental impact



if it doesn't get addressed. Also the another consequence of the corona virus is that, as the pandemic is a ongoing crisis its implications will lead to more interruptions in education and it will be adversely affecting the vulnerable section of the society.

And there are many such students who have been deprived of the basic right to education and it is specifically affecting the girl students who are more likely to be exposed to health and psychological well-being risks during the pandemic. Without access to adequate education there are serious other implications such as loss of life, adverse impact on mental health, loss of livelihood as well as domestic finances being strained and increasing needs as well as demands. There are a few school children those who are denied the right to education and are forced into child labour, thus leading to their exploitation. The educational sector currently is going through a radical transformation. Increased awareness and appreciation of schools and colleges can serve as the basis for a new revival of public education, which can transform the idea of schooling.

Objective:

To highlight the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on educational sector with reference to Primary and Higher education.

Impact of the Pandemic on Educational Sector within India

India is witnessing an e-learning boom. Education, as a result has largely moved online. According to the World Economic Forum report increase in the use of language apps, more focus on virtual tutoring, emphasizing more on video conferencing tools, and development of online learning software is observed in the last three months of the pandemic. Lectures have been conducted on Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Zoom App, What's App and Skype are becoming the norm for students, parents and teachers. Meanwhile, millions from Government schools and colleges, especially in rural areas, will not even have access to education because of the online mode. As less than 14% of rural Indian households have Internet as opposed to 43% urban Indian households (World Economic Forum report 2020). Almost nine months after schools and colleges were shut from March 2020 till today, owing to the Covid-19 outbreak in the state; the state education department has proposed to reopen classes IX to XII starting from November 23, 2020. And the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP'S) mentioned by the educational department are: schools to run in two shifts in a day on alternate days and each shift not exceeding three hours. Only one student can be seated on one bench, maximum of 20-30 students, one metre apart is allowed. The State Education Minister Ms.Varsha Gaikwad mentioned that schools will have to take written consent from parents. But the grades of the students will not be depended on their attendance and online learning will be continued. For colleges, a decision on opening campuses will be taken post Diwali. Higher and Technical education minister Uday Samant mentioned that a decision for college students to return to the classroom will be taken by the Chief Minister and Vice-Chancellors (VC) post Diwali, but all VCs are not in favour of resuming physical classes. The final decision will be based on UGC's guidelines and in consultation with the State's Disaster Management Council on Covid-19. The state is planning to hold board exams for HSC and SSC in May 2021 by cutting down syllabus by 25%. The Central government allowed partial re-opening of schools for higher classes from September 21, 2020 but Maharashtra government decided in a Cabinet meeting in October that the state would think about this post Diwali.



The Government is still waiting to reopen schools even though the Centre has permitted them to do so but due to increase in number of covid cases the health and safety of students and teachers is of great importance. Government has now permitted 50% of teachers and non-teaching staff to be called in at a time. But the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to keep the schools and colleges closed till December 31, 2020. In Mumbai the schools will remain closed based on the assessment of the local conditions where the number of cases continues to rise. Other parts of Maharashtra such as Pune, Nagpur and Pimpri Chinchwad had earlier decided to open schools and colleges from November 23, 2020 but Pune Mayor Murlidhar Mohol announced that all public and private schools and colleges in the city will remain shut till December 13, 2020, and in Pimpri Chinchwad the schools will remain shut till November 30, 2020. Similarly in the state of Haryana the schools and colleges till be shut down till November 30, 2020. In the state of Assam odd-even pattern of conducting the lectures in schools have been implemented. The premises of the colleges and schools should be disinfected, conducting of thermal screening of students, checking their oxygen levels via oximeters and compulsory for teachers to get Covid-19 tests done are some of the strict and mandatory preventive measures which needs to be taken down. The digital initiatives of MHRD for secondary as well as higher education during COVID-19 have been Diksha Portal, E-Pathshala, National Repository of Open Educational Resources, Swayam, Swayam Prabha and E-PG Pathshala. India should develop creative and concrete strategies to ensure that all children must have sustainable access to learning during the pandemic.

Conclusion

The outbreak of the pandemic has a severe impact on the educational sector in India as well as in other countries too. Many positive and negative challenges have been observed in this time of economic crisis. The Indian government and several other stakeholders have explored the educational system by installing the possibility of open and distance learning (ODL) by adopting several initiatives related to digital technology to cope up with the current situation of the pandemic. The priority and importance is given to e-learning in order to create an advantageous position for millions of students in India. More and more innovation and development of knowledge in the Information Technology sector is the need of the hour. It is also estimated that the second wave of corona virus is likely to hit the entire world and in such situation more importance should be given to the online learning platforms so that the students are not deprived of their education. India should develop sustainable and viable strategies and policies in the educational sector. Also the connectivity issue in the rural areas should be addressed so that children from all the sections of society can get benefitted out of the online learning.

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