COVID-19 Pandemic: Issues and Challenges in the Indian Education System

Abstract: The education system is the foundation stone of any country and plays an essential role in developing any country. The education system in India based on physical classroom instead of virtual classrooms. In today's pandemic situation, it becomes challenging to provide quality education to the students due to closures of schools, colleges, and universities to maintain social distancing to avoid further spread. The closures of education institutions directly influenced the learning process, student's evaluation and assessment procedures. This paper highlights the issues and challenges the Indian education system faces and puts forward specific ways to overcome these challenges in the current pandemic situation. Primary and Secondary data use under the study, primary data collected from students and secondary data collected from the available sources. The issues and challenges faced by the Indian education system in the current situation are critical for all the stakeholders (students, parents, institutions, teacher and government). The government shall take practical and dedicated actions to resolve them timely.

Keywords: Education System, Pandemic Situation, Issues and Challenges, physical and virtual classroom.

1. Introduction:

It generally believed that India has a robust educational system. The various gauges like changing the curriculum regularly, adding new courses, robust methodologies, and educator training assist in delivering quality content. The pandemic (COVID-19) influenced the educational institutions around the world; most countries provisional closed down the schools, colleges and universities. "As of June 2020, almost 1.725 billion students are affected due to the pandemic. According to UNICEF, in the world, 134 countries followed nationwide lockdown and 38 countries followed local closures. Only 39 countries currently open their educational institutions" (COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response, UNESCO. 2020-03-04. Retrieved 2020-06-07). In India, approximate 320 million learners directly influenced by the sudden closures of educational institutions due to the pandemic (COVID-19). Indian government immediate recommended shifting "physical Classroom" into "virtual classroom." But in India, the national sample survey (2017-18) report represents that household internet access was only 23.8%. In rural household, internet use was almost negligible, and only 12.5 % of learners had access to smartphones. Subsequently, India's education system challenges accomplishing its objectives of providing quality education to learners.

On the other hand, in India, if we look at the employability of the education system output, results are not empowering. Current educational issues and challenges upgrade this gap (due to unproductive). Hence, existing students will face Nemours problem in getting employ. This study focuses on understanding and evaluating the issues and challenges faced by Indian educational institutions and providing a feasible solution.

The objective of the study:

- To study the status of the Indian Education System
- To evaluate the issues and challenges faced by the Indian education system in the current pandemic situation.
- To find out the possible way to resolve the issues

Research methodology:

This paper based on qualitative research and empirical approach. Primary and Secondary data uses for its analysis. A questionnaire used to collect the preliminary data. Data was collected from 152 students to know the major problem and challenges they faced during the virtual classroom.

Scope of the study:

The study firstly understands the status of the Indian education system, then evaluate the issues and describe the challenges in the current pandemic scenario. Finally, the investigation is concluded with specific suggestions and recommendations to resolve the problems.

Research Limitations:

- The study covers a broader view of issues and challenges faced by the Indian Education system in today pandemic situation. Still, it does not cover the critical issues of every state of India.
- The researcher has not intended to compare issues and challenges the Indian Education system in the Pandemic situation with that of other countries.
- The way to face the challenges is derivative mainly on the basis of the community view and inferences of others researchers.

2. Review of Indian Educational System

		Types	Numbers
Number of schools*	Level-wise	Primary	840546
		Upper Primary (In total)	429624
		Secondary (In total)	139539
		Senior Secondary (I total)	112637
		Total	**1533346**
	Management-wise	Government	1102783
		Government Aided	83787
		Private Unaided	335776
		Total	**1522346**
Numbers of institutions in higher education	University	Central university	43
		State public university	329
		Deemed university	122
		State public university	197
		Central open university	1

		State open university	13
		Institutions under state legislature act	5
		Others	13
		Total	**799**
		Colleges	39071
	Stand-alone institutions	Diploma level technical	3876
		PGDM	435
		Diploma level nursing	3060
		Diploma level teacher training	4403
		Institute under ministries	158
		Total	**11923**

Data source:

For school education: national institute of educational planning & administration, New Delhi
For higher education: department of higher education, MHRD, the government of India
Figures are provisional*

The route of the Indian Education System was very robust, and it's focused on quality education. After the Independence in 1947, the Indian government recognised that education is an essential aspect of country development. But to impart quality education to the Indian citizen that belongs from different cultures and different demographic profiles is considered one of the challenging tasks for the central and state government. The Indian government has developed many independent governing bodies for regulating the Indian education system. Indian government formed governing bodies for primary education, middle education, senior secondary education, higher education, and technical education. The central governing bodies are

- The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)
- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)
- The Council of Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE)
- the state government boards
- National Institute of open schools
- the international school(under the International Baccalaureate, or the Cambridge)
- UGC and AICET etc.

Private, Government and International Schools: In India, schools categorised into three categories (Private, Government and International schools). The enrolment rate of students in private schools has been rising rapidly, regardless of their demographical and social profile. Enrolment of students in private school upturned up to 38%.

Higher Education: Its covers colleges, central, state and private universities. UGC in India directs higher education.

Open and distance learning programme: open learning programmes are provided to the students at the school level and at the higher education level. The purpose of open eduaction to offers an opportunity to continue their education for those who are unable to get regular education due to any reason. These institutions include:

- National Institute of Open Schooling
- State Open School
- Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

Vocational Education: In India, there are 4,599 vocational educational institutions. They provide degrees, diploma and post-diploma course in various filed like hotel management, technology, architecture, pharmacy, engineering, town services and others.
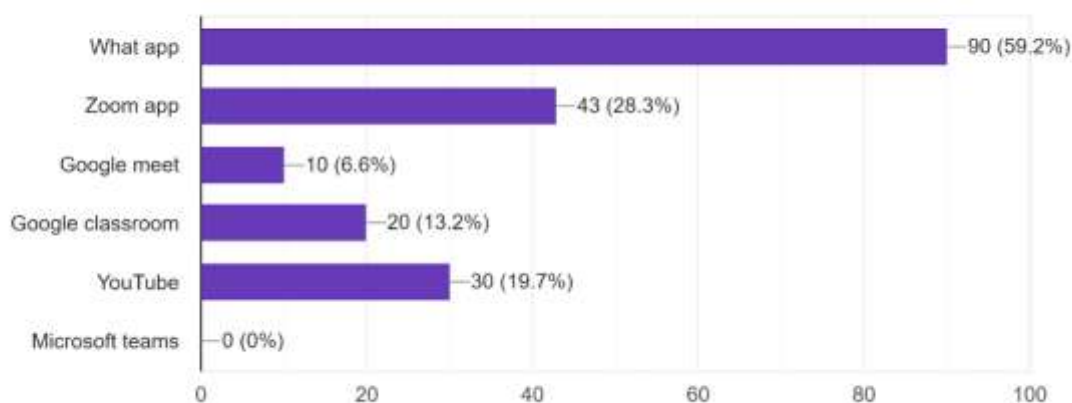
3. Issues And Challenges – An Analysis

Indian education system already faces challenges due to different culture, religions and languages. The issues and challenges upgraded during the pandemic situation (COVID-19) all the education system stakeholders face various challenges. The various problems and challenges are defined here:

Challenges face by Students/learner: now, the students participating in virtual learning (based on home learning). As per the students, the workload of these classes is much higher than the regular physical classes. Primary data collected from the 152 students in Delhi NCR which problem they face during the virtual courses. Under the study, it found that What app is the most common means of providing the course contents along with assignments but real-time interaction with all the students at the same time not possible with the use of what app as we can do in Zoom App, Google meet etc

Which platform you are using for the Virtual/ online classes?
152 responses

Platform	Responses
What app	90 (59.2%)
Zoom app	43 (28.3%)
Google meet	10 (6.6%)
Google classroom	20 (13.2%)
YouTube	30 (19.7%)
Microsoft teams	0 (0%)

- **Online learning is boring:** 77.6% of students believe that virtual classrooms, just like reading e-books, believe that virtual classrooms are not attractive. Students get exhausted with online classes and show a lack of interest and motivation towards online classes. It found that only 22.4% of students find it attractive.
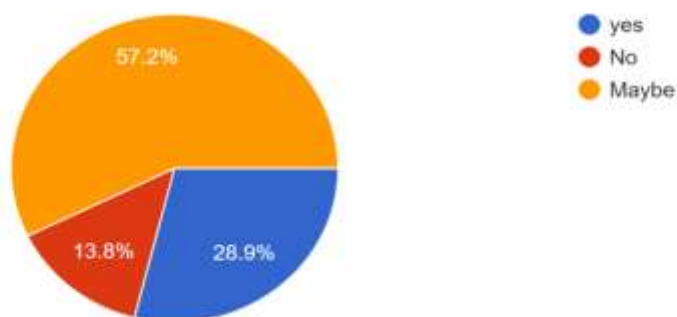
Which mode of teaching learning more attractive?
152 responses

Which mode of teaching learning more attractive?
- Virtual class room Mode
- Physical Class room mode
77.6%
22.4%
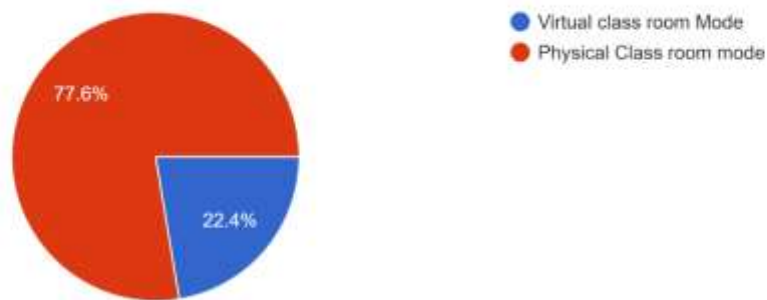
Do you have proper knowledge how to you tools/devices to attendance the virtual classroom ?
152 responses

- yes
- No
- Maybe
57.2%
13.8%
28.9%

- **Adapting to Unfamiliar Technology:** during the pandemic situation, classrooms are shifted to web-based classes. However, many Indian students are unfamiliar with the technology and face many technical issues during the Virtual session. Under the study found that only 28% of students are aware of the tools and devices they can use to attend the virtual classes.

- **Non-availability of resources:** Sudden closure of educational institutions, number of educational institutions adopted the web technology. But the major challenge is the non-availability of appropriate device to attend the class. It found that 7.9% of students don't have any device to attend the virtual classes; further, 85.5% of students use smartphones to follow the virtual. The use of smartphone often decreases their focus, and they are prone to many health-related issues.

which device you are using to attend the virtual classroom?
152 responses

- Smart phone
- Desktop
- Laptop
- Tab
- Smart TV
- Non Availability of any of device
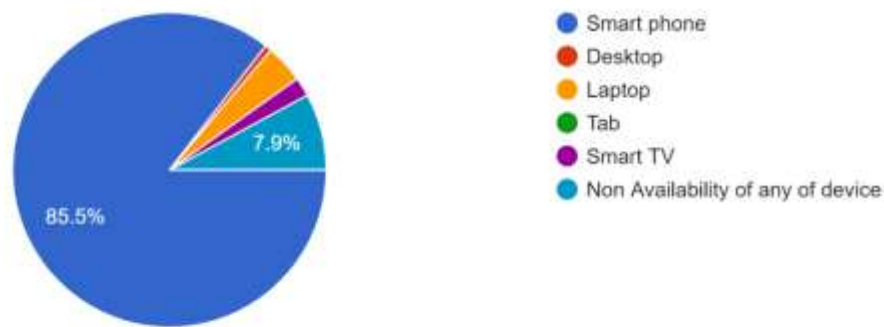
- **Data Privacy and Security**: Data privacy and data security are the prime concerns of any user when using a virtual platform. Under the study found that 52% of students faced the same challenge, and 31% believe it may be issued; only 17% think it was not issues and a challenges.

Do you think data privacy and security is major issues during the virtual classroom?
152 responses

- yes
- no
- maybe
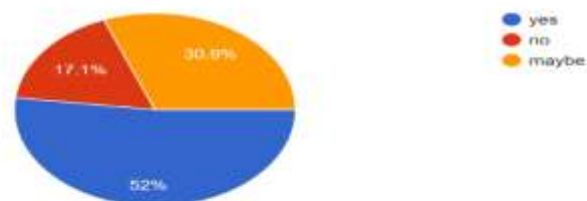
- **Lack of In-Person Interaction:** students require regular interaction with other students, teachers and classmate during the session. In recorded lecture and web base video lecture students get irritated because of the lack of human interaction and an inability to discuss it with their teacher and classmates. In addition, it found that the confidence level of students reduced under the virtual classroom.

Do you think confidence level is higher during the physical classroom as compared to the virtual classroom?

152 responses
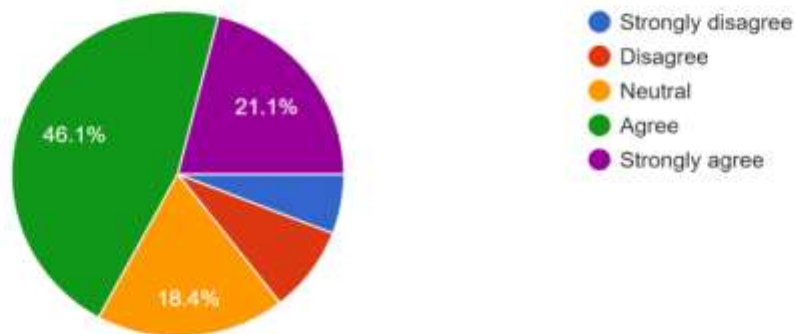
- **Lack of Practical Exposure:** under the study found that 76.3% of students believe that virtual classroom reduced the practical exposure of the topic. They think it just like distance learning where we get the online lecture, content, and cannot interact with other students and faculties.

Do you think Virtual classroom reduces the practical exposure of the topic?

152 responses
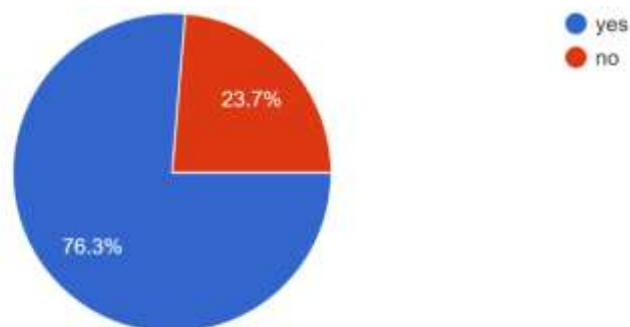
- **Face difficulty in Time Management and Distractions: the** major challenge is poor internet connectivity. But it also finds that 58% students believe that they cannot concentrate during the virtual classroom and as level as issues related to time management.

- **Uncertain future:** a sudden change in the classroom pattern (physical to online classes) creates anxiety among the higher class students regarding placement, internship, and future.

Which problems being faced during Virtual Classroom?
152 responses
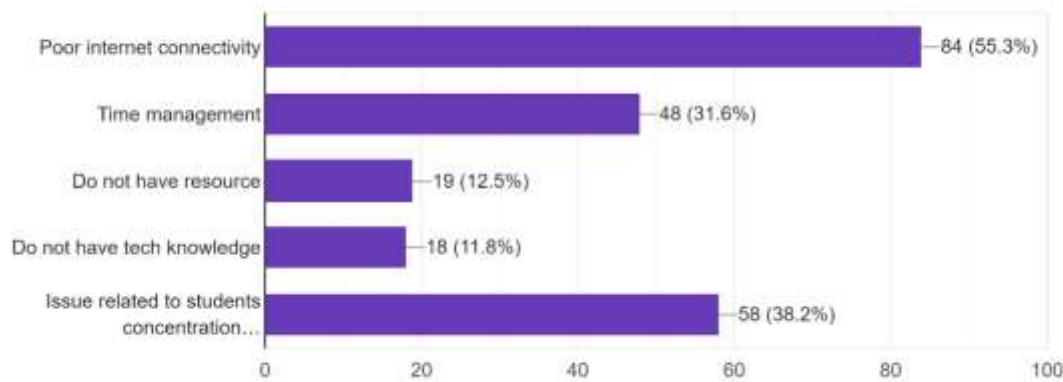
Challenges face by Educators: according to the report of UNESCO, "In India approximate 2.7 million educators have been found inexpert to deal with online, Virtual and technology-based classes. They need the training to tackle with emerging demand of education sector". More common challenges they are facing are:

- **Transforming study Material:** it's challenging for educators to transform the study material into computerised (Digital) material at concise notice. In India, insufficient numbers of educators have strong ICT skills.

- **Difficult to maintain class decorum:** educators significant challenges during the online classes are how to engage the students during the online session because students get distracted from the social networking sites during the online learning classes.

- **The problem in the assessment of students grade**

- In India, teacher and students belong to different economic and social class. Moreover, they do not have access to a laptop and internet connection. So it is another significant challenge to arrange online courses.

- **Increase the Stress level for the educators:** In the current situation, educational institutions closer for unforeseen periods, educators face problems regarding their duties and responsibilities. Although the educator can manage classes remotely and the online learning platform creates frustration, they have all the required resources.

Challenges face by Parents:

- During the covid-19, "**each home is considered educational institutions and each parent consider an educator".** So it becomes a challenge for limited and uneducated parents to assist their wards in-home learning.

- AS per MHRD, In India, approximately 11.59 crore students availed the facility of the mid-day meal scheme of India's government. The sudden closure of school due to covid-19 create **extra pressure on economic weaker** session parents, whose children got one-time food under the mid-day meal scheme.

Challenges faced by educational Institutions:

- **Adverse effects on the financial condition of the educational institutions:** delay in the students' tuition fee directly affects the financial conditions of educational institutions because, as per government guideline, they have to pay salary dues of teaching non-teaching staff.

- **Contacting students:** in India, there are numbers of students who came from a different economic sector of society, and they do not have access to a computer, laptop, and internet and even do not have access to the smartphone. Moreover, it is extraordinary for educational institutions to provide primary education to students in a pandemic situation, as mentioned earlier.

- **Increase the risk of student dropout:** In India, migrant workers came to urban areas to earn their livelihoods; during the lookdown, many migrant workers returned to their home town.

- **We need to make a suitable change in the current academic curriculum**

- **Uncertainty about re-opening educational institutions:** no precise timeline and roadmap is prepaid by the government when and how to open the educational institutions.

- **Postponement of educational institutions annual operations:** due to current pandemic situations, various activities delayed like distribution of textbooks, uniforms, and academic calendars.

- **Major problem face by higher education institutions is how to conduct the assessment and procedure of promoting** students.

Challenges faced by the government: In India, approximate 70% of educational institutions managed by the central government, state government and government bodies.

- To conduct time bond examinations
- To upgrade the technology
- To prepare the roadmap for the future and current educational system
- Fiscal Burdon

4. Steps to overcome the challenges

- **Use of board casting media for imparting education:** In India, Doordarshan (k-12 channel and DD regional Channel) can impact the students′ knowledge. This channel must have dedicated time, and each class and radio schedule can be used for the same purpose.

- **Focus on technology-based education: the physical classroom model of education should be integrated with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to provide** quality education.

- **Financial support by the government:** In the education budget 2020, Rs. 99,300 crore allocated to the education sector. The government of India should provide immediate financial support to the educational institutions to set up technology infrastructure.

- **Providing training to educators provides the training and empowerment to develop their own content, learning objective,** and outcome and grading criteria.

- **Assessment:** the assessment should be based on an integrated evaluation system. The evaluation system needs to modify according to learning objectives and outcomes. Focused on opting for online examination based on class participation and creative learning way.

- **Protect the privacy and data security**: the educational platform does not violate the educators and learners personal privacy. So that data security should be provided by institutions.

- **Focused on Creativity and Innovation like blend learning:** assessment and grading should be based on the creativity, innovation and real-life problem-solving base. The virtual classroom should be student-centric and so that students can utilise their creativity.

- **Support vulnerable groups:** try to provide education to weaker society sessions by providing paper-based contents and materials and granting access to elementary digital devices.

- **Educators focused on pedagogical modifications and facilitated alliance among educators**: emphasised not only to provide the training to the educators but it also required collaborations among them. Through the partnership, they can design new learning programmes, particularly for TV and Radio based.

Conclusion

Covid-19 not only affects the Indian economy but also adversely impacted the Indian education system. The Indian education sector was not prepared for the current pandemic situation (Covid-19). When the Indian education sector responded to the problem, it will consider as the **"paradigm change in learning and its delivery".** The Indian education system is more focused on physical classroom learning than virtual learning; in the current pandemic situation in becoming a necessity to convert the physical classroom into Virtual classes. Physical classroom learning is significantly different from virtual learning due to the non-existence of human connection, and lack of teacher supervision and collaborative learning is impossible. Approximate 80% of Indian institutions stated that research work had been affected. Out of which 21% institutions (scientific institutions) said their research work completely stopped due to Covid-19. The educational institutions and the government focused on digital learning and broadcasting (TV and radio) platforms to provide education remotely. Emphasised should be given on "Blend learning", it's a student's centric approach under this teacher gave instructions to the students and students used its creativity to solve the problem. Used certain apps and tools like Google classroom, where students can access the classroom contents, assignment, tests, and check the assessment grade, it also reduces the parent's overload. So the education system focused on boosting the accessibility of learning to the vulnerable groups, upgrading existing learning pattern and

platform, distance learning (for all subjects and levels), and offering training to educators to enrich their pedagogy and provide quality education remotely.

References:

- *amplify-education-inequality-in-India.html Offbeat Society, 2009, Education System of India: Its Functions, Drawbacks and Its Contribution, http://theviewspaper.net/education-system-of-india-its-functions-drawbacks-and-its-contribution/ 13th July*

- *Appu Srva, 2017, Present Education System in India, http://www.groupdiscussionideas.in/present-education-system-in-india/, 28th January.COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response, UNESCO. 2020-03-04. Retrieved 2020-06-07*

- *Giorgio Marinoni and Hans de Wit: A severe risk of growing inequality between universities:https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=2020060815405140*
- *Gwang-Chol Chang and Satoko Yano, UNESCO's Section of Education Policies: How are countries addressing the Covid-19 challenges in education? A snapshot of policy measures: https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2020/03/24/how-are-countries-addressing-the-covid-19-challenges-in-education-a-snapshot-of-policy-measures/*

- *MapsofIndia, 2016, Education in India, http://www.mapsofindia.com/education/, January 19MHRD., 2016, Educational statistics at a glance, http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics/ESG2016_0.pdf*

- *Nanda, Prashant K. 2017, NIRF rankings amplify education inequality in India, http://www.livemint.com/Education/jtktzCDnDYJ30EE2jHayLL/National-rankings-*

- *Prayatna, 2014, Education in India: Past, Present and the Future. Ideas, Policies and Initiatives, http://prayatna.typepad.com/education/datastatistics/, 14th February.*
  Sanyal D. K., 2017, 14 facts about the Indian education system and a remedy,https://sanyaldk.in/doing-it-in-open-source-way/14-factsabout-indian-education-system-and-a-remedy/

- *https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/05/14/covid-19-in-india-education-disrupted-and-lessons-learned*

- *Urvashi Sahni: COVID-19 in India: Education disrupted and lessons learned: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/05/14/covid-19-in-india-education-disrupted-and-lessons-learned/*

- *Word Bank 2020. The World Bank Education Global Practice Guidance Note on Remote Learning & COVID-19. at:http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/531681585957264427/pdf/Guidance-Note-on-Remote-Learning-and-COVID-19.pdf*

- *World Bank Group education: The COVID-19 Crisis Response: Supporting tertiary education for continuity, adaptation, and innovation: http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/621991586463915490/WB-Tertiary-Ed-and-Covid-19-Crisis-for-public-use-April-9.pdf*