

Impact of Pandemic COVID-19 on Education Sector in India and Role of Social Media, e-Learning Tools and Government efforts to overcome the Crisis

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Abstract

Today most of educational institutions in India are shut down for uncertain period to prevent the spread of pandemic COVID-19 even if central government issued various guidelines for opening of educational institutions from October 15, 2020. These closures have a huge impact on education sector in India. This paper made an attempt to study the impact of pandemic COVID-19 on education sector in India and role of social media, e-learning tools and government efforts to overcome the crisis. This crisis has direct impact on teaching methodologies, placements of students and status of students studying abroad. Today chalk-blackboard teaching model is shifted to online teaching model. Most of teachers are unprepared and untrained for online education. Low income private schools and government school may not be able to adopt online teaching methods. Students of government schools are also missing mid day meal. The sudden shift to online teaching without any planning in country like India where most of schools have no genuine digital infrastructure for online teaching, students can become a passive learner. Only online teaching via Zoom or Google class App is not a complete solution. Some proper Strategies should be made to overcome this crisis completely. School and colleges should have a tighter relationship with use of educational technology. Edu Tech Companies should focus on developments of best Learning Management systems for school or colleges. Teachers should be given a proper training for online teaching and use of new innovative teaching methods and they should be encouraged to develop best e-learning contents for students. Students should be motivated to use various e-learning portals and apps launched by the government and education bodies such as DIKSHA portal, e-Pathshala, Swayam, recently announced by central government PM e-Vidya program and also various social media platforms for a collaborative work in education.

KeyWords: COVID-19, Online teaching, Zoom, Goole class, DIKSHA, Social media.

1. Introduction:

Amid the rising cases of COVID-19 across the country, educational institutions are still closed in many states even after central had allowed partial resumption of activities in schools for students of classes 9-12 on a voluntary basis from September 21, 2020 and further issuing various guidelines for opening of educational institutions from October 15, 2020. Along with state governments, parents are unable to take any concrete decision about sending children to school due to the increasing cases of COVID-19. The unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19 has caused extreme distress to the students and is a temporary setback to academic activity and they are constantly worried about their career. Premises of schools or colleges are being cleaned and sanitised. Schools and colleges are opting online teaching /distance learning instead of arranging physical classroom teaching for students. This crisis has a direct impact on teaching methodologies,

placements of students and status of students Many parents will avoid sending students abroad for higher education due to high risk from the pandemic. If the situation persists, in the long run, a decline in the demand for international higher education is expected. A slowdown in student internships and placements are seen. Lower fee collection in schools and colleges may create hurdles in managing the working capital. Today chalk-blackboard teaching model is shifted to online teaching model. Most of teachers are unprepared and untrained for online education. Low income private schools and government school may not be able to adopt online teaching methods. Students of government schools are also missing mid day meal. The sudden shift to online teaching without any planning in country like India where most of school has no genuine infrastructure for online teaching, there is a risk of student to become a passive learner. Most of the teachers are just conducting lectures on video platforms such as Zoom or Google class which may not be real online learning in the absence of a dedicated online platform specifically designed for the purpose. Only online teaching via Zoom or Google class App is not a complete solution. Some proper Strategies should be made to overcome the crisis completely in education sector. School and colleges should have a tighter relationship with use of educational technology. Edu Tech Companies should focus on developments best Learning Management systems for school or colleges. Teachers should be given a proper training for online teaching and use of new innovative teaching methods and they should be encouraged to develop best e-learning contents for students. Students should be motivated to use various e-learning portals and apps launched by the government and education bodies such as DIKSHA portal, e-Pathshala, Swayam, STEM based games recently announced by central government PM e-Vidya program and also various social media platforms for a collaborative work in education. UNESCO is also supporting under developed countries to facilitate the continuity of education for all through remote learning. A well advanced leaning assessment tools should be designed for evaluation. A+, Riddle, Hot Potatoes, Class Marker, ProProofs, edmodo etc are some assessment software tools are available at present for use. UGC has suggested for 10-20 % coverage of syllabus via online mode even at normal time. This paper made an attempt to study the impact of pandemic COVID-19 on education sector in India and strategies to overcome the crisis.

2. Objectives :

1. To study positive and negative impact of COVID-19 on education sector in India.
2. To investigate to role of social media, e-learning tools and government efforts to overcome the crisis in education sector due COVID-19 in India.

3. Research Methodology:

Descriptive methodology is used for study the impact of pandemic COVID-19 on education sector in India and strategies to overcome the crisis by observing and measuring without manipulating variables. Data and information presented in this study are collected from various authentic websites, journals, e-contents and reports of national and international agencies related to COVID-19.

4. Impact of Pandemic COVID-19 on Education System in India:

There is big impact on education system in India due to pandemic Covid-19. Not all are negative impact but also this crisis created some positive opportunities to make a tighter relationship of educational technology in education system.

4.1 Negative Impact:

4.1.1 Teaching methodologies:

The pandemic has transformed the centuries-old, chalk–talk teaching model to one line digital platform. Structure of schooling and learning includes teaching and assessment methodologies are badly affected due to closure. Teachers are untrained for online teaching methodology. Teachers have more command on their students in face to face teaching class room environment in comparison to online teaching platform. Online education cannot be and should not be a 100% substitute for conventional education, especially where lot of laboratory based and experiential learning are necessary.

4.1.2 Low income Private School and Government School:

Technology plays an important role for teaching from home. Every student is not well equipped with the high-speed internet and digital gadgets. Even advanced educational institutions in India are not equipped with digital facilities right now to cope up sudden shift from traditional class room teaching to online teaching. Only few private schools rich in digital infrastructure are providing online teaching to their students. A large number of students in country like India are not taught at present time. Low income Private School and many Government School are unable to adopt digital mode of teaching.

4.1.3 Missing of mid-day meals due to school closure:

Mid day meals is a school meal programme of the Government of India which is designed to provide better the nutritional food to school-age children nationwide. Students of government schools are missing their mid-day meals and this may result in economic and social stress.

4.1.4 Passive learning by students:

The sudden shift to online learning without any planning especially in countries like India where the backbone for online learning was not ready and the curriculum was not designed for such a format has created the risk of most of students becoming passive learners and they seem to be losing interest due to low levels of attention span.

4.1.5 Examination Pattern:

Schools or colleges have an option to conduct examination on online mode from home. There is a chance of using unfair means by students. It is not easy to check subjective answers of individuals, through software all the time.

4.1.6 Effect on health on Students:

One of the major consequences of the transition to online learning during lockdown is its impact on student health specifically sleep habits, eyes strain , anxiety and stress.

4.1.7 Engagement of working parents:

Working parents are missing their work, they have to stay at home and take care of the children. This also affects productivity, incurs loss in wages, consequently affecting the community and the economy as a whole. A large number of health-care professionals are women. Their work may be disrupted by the presence of their children at home due to school closures, causing unintended strain on health-care related systems.

4.1.8 Higher Education:

Higher education sectors are also disrupted, many students from India took admissions in abroad like the US, UK, Australia, China etc. And these countries are badly affected due to COVID-19. Students will not take admissions there in future and if the situation persists, in the long run then there will be a decline in the demand for international higher education also.

4.1.9 Placements:

Another major concern is placements of students. Students those have completed their graduation may have fear in their minds of withdrawal of job offers from the corporate sector due to the current situation. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's estimates unemployment shortage from 8.4% in mid-March to 23% in early April. In the urban unemployment rate is 30.9%.

4.1.10 Reduction of global employment opportunity:

Some may lose their jobs from other countries and the pass out students may not get their job outside India due to restrictions caused by COVID-19. Many Indians might have returned home after losing their jobs overseas due to COVID-19

4.2 Positive Impacts:

4.2.1 Enhancement of digital literacy:

COVID-19 crisis situation force people to learn and use digital technology and resulted in increasing the digital literacy.

4.2.2 Advancement of digital infrastructure in schools or colleges:

Present crisis has provided opportunities to establish a tighter relationship with educational technology in Indian education system. EdTech companies will see and perhaps seize the opportunity to fill the gap that may exist in bringing more schools on to the digital platform. This is an ideal time to accept technology and its latest offerings in order to make education delivery to students more efficient and make it more productive through online learning and assessments.

4.2.3 Digital mode of education system:

Personalized, quality, expanded, high engagement, competency based, collaborative and assessment for learning are some major features of digital mode of education system. Personalized learning will help students to learn at the best pace and path for them. There is a new opportunity where collaborative teaching and learning can take on new forms and can even be monetized. Teachers can deliver online courses to even students from competing institutions. Collaborations can also happen among teachers across the nation to benefit from each other.

4.2.4 Increased demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL):

During the pandemic situation most of the students preferred ODL mode because it encourages self-learning providing opportunities to learn from diverse resources and customized learning as per their needs.

4.2.5 Teaching from home:

Teaching from home is convenient for both teachers and students and customized in nature. Travelling time to school is saved. Perhaps future culture of teaching will be teaching from home.

5. Strategies adopted to overcome crisis in education sector due to pandemic COVID - 19:

Followings are some major strategies may be adopted to overcome crisis caused due to pandemic COVID -19

5.1 Role of Social media:

Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies which facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. It is Internet based service allow users for photo or video sharing, for texting of message, information exchange, blogging, social gaming, business promotion, providing platform for online teaching or meeting , interaction with new people or making friends and much more in real-time. People use social media via desktop, laptop, tablet or smart phone. Most of the people use it via smart phone or tablet referred as Mobile social media. It gained popularity with the popularity of smart phone among youth. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, WeChat, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Weibo, Twitter, Tumblr, Telegram, Reddit, QQ etc are some most popular social media of world on basis of daily active users. Students can use these sites to benefit themselves from online tutorials and resources shared through it. They connect with teachers to clear their doubts and discuss on common project or assignments in group via social media. Institutes can share supportive and positive post to all students at the same time.

Facebook Project is a tool based on collaborative concept, allows work among peers. Facebook page is a professional learning community to allow users to come together to share ideas, explore new ones, host events and engage students and teachers in global conversation. WhatsApp is a very simple mobile application which is very fast, flexible and easy for communication. It can be helpful for both teachers and

students for their purposes. Student can borrow notes from their friends and interact with teachers to clarify doubts through class groups. Teacher can create audio and video lessons that can be sent directly to class groups. Twitter can be used as a discussion platform or message platform for a class. Teacher can create a single Twitter handle per class. The 280 character limit makes student think critically and present concisely and effectively. Twitter can be used as a valuable learning tool because it has positive impact on collaborative language learning, reading and writing skills. Instagram is an online photo sharing social networking site. It can be used for photo essays. Students can use Instagram to present a series of photos in a visually appealing manner. It allows students to practise digital story telling in ways other social media platform does not allow. YouTube Learning is a channel that features some of the best tutorials, experiments and illustration and educational videos on YouTube. School or teachers can create their own YouTube channel and upload learning materials for students. Photomath is one of the most popular tool used for math education, has partnership with snap Inc, that invites Snapchat users to solve math problems through camera. LinkedIn Learning is a part of LinkedIn that provides video courses on area like marketing and social media, taught by industry leaders. Telegram has a useful feature, the channels which have own public or private link to which anyone can join to access educational contents. There are many different platforms available on social media like Blogger, WordPress, Square Space, Tumblr, Medium etc where teachers or students can create a class blog to make discussion posts about their academic activities. Thus social media platform play an important role in online teaching during COVID-19 crisis.

5.2 Focus on Blended Learning:

Educational Institutions should adopt the concepts of the blended learning and flipped class rooms. The AICTE and the UGC have both already adopted the HRD ministry's SWAYAM MOOCs which was initially created by AICTE and has over 2000+ courses online. The students can do 20% of academic credits of their respective university from SWAYAM courses. The teaching –learning would have to be blended one and the 20% limit for online academic credits transfer should be increased to 30 or 40%.

5.3 Developments of Advanced Learning management systems:

Present crisis provided a great opportunity for educational technology based companies to develop some advanced learning management systems at very reasonable cost so that every universities and colleges can use. It opened a great opportunity for the companies those have been developing and strengthening learning management systems for use of educational institutions(Misra, 2020).

5.4 Improvement in learning material and development of e-books:

There is a great opportunity for universities and colleges to start improving the quality of the learning material that is used in the teaching and learning process. Open-source digital learning solutions and Learning Management Software should be adopted so teachers can conduct teaching online. Teachers should focus on development of e- books at large scale. Since blended learning will be the new format of learning there will be a push to find new ways to design and deliver quality content especially due to the fact that the use of learning management systems will bring about more openness and transparency in academics.

5.5 Use of government e-platforms for education:

Students should be motivated to use various e-learning portals and apps launched by the government and education bodies such as DIKSHA portal, e-Pathshala, STEM based games recently announced by central government PM e-Vidya program and also various social media platforms for a collaborative work in education. In higher education, initiatives of MHRD such SWAYAM, National Digital Library (NDL), E-

Shodhsindhu etc can play an important role in providing quality education in more effective manner during lockdown period. Swayam Prabha has 32 free DTH TV channels transmitting educational contents on 24x7 basis, covering both school education (Class 9 to 12) and higher education (undergraduate, postgraduate in art, science, commerce, performing art, law, agriculture, engineering and medical). e-PG Pathshala is for postgraduate students, where they can access e-books, online courses and study materials during COVID-19 crisis. The best thing of this portal is that students can access online study materials without having internet for the whole day.

5.6 Enriching digital infrastructure in educational institutions:

Only teaching online through Zoom, Google classes, Microsoft Teams, Webex etc are not complete solution. Educational Institutions should increase internet bandwidth requirement and whole campus should be connected with wi-fi. They should use well advanced learning management software according to their need. Virtual classrooms and various online tools today allow us to make the engagement between the teacher and students as close to a real, in-classroom like experience, as possible. Technology-based education makes the education system more transparent and equal. There can be virtual laboratory in some courses using training simulation techniques. For example, the trainee pilots have to undergo training on simulators before taking up flying in real air crafts. The same could be adopted for courses that require laboratory work by having virtual laboratories. Students those are coming from low-income groups or presence of disability, etc. distance learning programs can be included.

5.7 Online training of faculties:

Online training workshop should be organized for teachers for teaching online which include both technical and soft skills. Also, a large number of academic meetings, seminars and conferences will move online and there is a possibility that some new form of an online conferencing platform will emerge as a business model.

5.8 Online placements:

Measures should be taken to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on job offers, internship programs, and research projects. Institutions like IMMs and IITs are working in this area. But every college or universities should attempt to work on online placement.

5.9 Online Assessment:

A well advanced learning assessment tools should be designed for evaluation. A+, Riddle, Hot Potatoes, Class Marker, ProProofs, edmodo etc are some assessment software tools are available at present for use. Immediate submission of practical file, feedback and accurate marking can provided during online assessment.

6. Conclusion:

Covid-19 crisis has provided opportunities for making a tight relationship with technology in educational institutions to provide quality online education to students. Teaching only through Zoom or Google classrooms are not sufficient. Each school or college in India should develop digital infrastructure in their campuses. Teachers are trained for teaching via offline classroom environment, but they had to teach online mode from which many of teachers are not aware. So proper training of teachers are required for teaching online. They should focus on development of e-teaching learning materials, e-books and advanced e-assessment tools. Students who learn in virtual classrooms or labs finds that their learning experience is as good as or even better students learning via real classroom situation. A setup in each colleges or universities should be developed for online placement after completion of education. The concept of “work from home” has greater relevance in such pandemic situation to reduce spread of COVID-19.

7. Recommendations :

1. NCTE should revise curriculum of B. Ed students and include technology parts which are useful in online teaching.
2. Regular training workshops should organized for teachers so that they can new technologies in their teaching.
3. There should be established a centralized online placement cell at national or state or university level.
4. Telecom sectors should provide data to students at very reasonable rate.
5. Proper guidelines for online teaching by government should be provided to schools or colleges for uniformity.
6. Educational Institutions should plan to continue the educational activities maintaining social distancing. Students and teachers may attend schools/colleges in two shifts per day or implementing even-odd concept to carry on educational activities by following strictly guidelines for COVID-19.

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