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Higher Education and Academic Challenges under the Shadow of Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has been identified as the most wide spread contagious disease in the World, which appeared in the second half of the year 2019. It started from Wuhan, which is the capital city of Hubei province in China and reached to almost every corner of the world. It has various impacts not only on physical and mental health but on economy, education and social life of the individual through out of the world. After the outbreak of the pandemic, higher education has been significantly disrupted as millions of students around the world are now studying remotely as campuses shut down in an attempt to help contain the virus in their respective areas or zones. It has posed various challenges and also provided several opportunities for higher education in India and abroad. This paper tries to speculate the problems of higher education in India after COVID-19.

Keywords: Pandemic, Virtual, Higher Education, Institution, Pandemic

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge to the whole world. No country has been freed from its devastation. All developed to developing countries are more or less affected. Its bad effects are being seen all walks of life. Our education system has not been left out. At present, this virus has changed the structure of the education system. Indian higher education system is third largest system in terms of number of institutions in the world. It is one of the oldest education systems with glorious history. It has played an important role in the growth and formation of human civilization in India and abroad.

After independence in 1947, higher education has been changed rapidly to fulfill the objectives and requirement of the society. Basically, knowledge is the base for vision, growth and direction to the society. Education especially, higher education is the basic source of knowledge. Value based education is one of the most valuable determinants for a prosperous human society. Society grows as per the nature of knowledge and value structure of the society. India is a multi-dimensional society with different language, religions, castes, etc. Education system provides the direction and guidance to the political, socio-economic, cultural and religious orders of the society. Post-independence various efforts were made to improve the higher education in the country. A change in structures, strength, quality and accessibility takes place in the post-independence era. The objectives of accessibility, equity, quality, affordability and accountability can be achieved with the effectiveness and efficiency of the system at all levels. Hence, the administration of advanced education and the complete systems administration of the framework have gotten a significant issue for powerful administration. The move can happen just through a foundational

approach towards change and the advancement of its human asset, and the most extreme utilization of data and correspondence innovation.

Challenges of higher education in post COVID era:

India is a country which has wide geographical area and huge population in the world. Our traditional education system of conducting regular classes in academic institutes is in lockdown due to the global Corona virus impact. The schools and colleges are shut and the academic professionals as well as students have been trapped at home. We are now facing restricted contact with friends or have some contact virtually. All the universities and boards have postponed or cancelled their examinations for this year which can be seen as major impact of COVID – 19. Now our higher education system is facing various challenges related to the its different dimensions. The pandemic further aggravated the problem more, due to its serious impacts on human life.

Socio-economic challenge:

India is third world country. And multidimensional society with socio-economic backwardness can be seen here. Social structure never allows the girl students to go away for education. Especially in rural areas girl students are facing the problem of narrow thinking and social restrictions. Female is still considered as subordinate to male in a male dominated patriarchal society. Due to gender biasness and security reasons most of the parents in rural areas never allow their daughters to go in cities for higher education. The poor economic conditions and financial problems also create a challenge for higher studies. Even the middle- class families are not able to provide education to their wards in the private managed institutions. Most of the students of rural area never join higher studies after secondary education due to their economic problems. Professional education such medicine is a dream for these students.

Financial challenge:

Due to economic backwardness, financial challenge always remains one of the biggest problems of the Indian educational institutions. Very less percentage of GDP is allotted for higher education. Higher education has gotten less consideration regarding public spending than different levels. It is difficult to create and maintain the quality educational institutions with the low level of financial support. Universities and colleges get financial support from centre and state governments for infrastructure growth and research etc. But the amount of financial aids and grant is very low. In the post covid-19 period government is facing serious challenge of financial crisis. Due to lockdown of economic activities and business, government is losing revenue and other taxes which are the main source of their income. Beside this the government has to spend lot of amount for the safety and security of the citizens. It has to create new medical facilities to protect the people from Covid-19 threat. Moreover, the institutions at their own level are facing the same problem. In the changed scenario, the most prompt test for most foundations includes income. As organizations are losing stopping charges, feasting outlet deals, and other assistant incomes, they are additionally confronting startling costs, remembering halfway discounts for expenses, room, and board, and the need to scale virtual commitment modalities. To guarantee congruity for the time being, a few foundations will probably need to quickly rebuild their tasks.

Inadequate infrastructure and facilities:

Higher education institutions are lacking infrastructure and basic facilities required for an academic institution. Even the government-controlled institutions in rural areas are facing the problems of basic facilities of toilets etc. According to 2016 Annual Survey of Education Report, 3.5% schools in India had no latrine facility while only 68.7% schools had useable latrine facility. Percentage of schools with separate girls' latrine has increased from 32.9% in 2010 to 61.9% in 2016. 74.1% schools had drinking water facility and 64.5% of the schools had playground. A considerable lot of university and college don't have sufficient infrastructure or facilities to teach students. They are lacking build-up area, sports ground and indoor facilities. In the post covid-19 era the problem of infrastructure will increase. Now the institution has to build or develop the infrastructure as per the norms required for the containment of the infection of virus. For the security of the students, institutions have to restructure their building and other constructed of unconstructed areas. In the same manner, they have to provide computer and laboratory facilities to the students for e-delivery of the content. Therefore, institutions have to make various efforts

for creating and maintaining infrastructure and other facilities for the students in the post covid-19 era, which will be a big challenge at the stage, when economic conditions are deteriorating in the country due to lockdown and other impacts of the pandemic in the country.

Obstacle of E-learning:

Higher education institutions may adopt new age teaching learning process, but the biggest problem is the lack of infrastructure for e-learning. What still remains intact is that only 45 crore people of our total population of the country have access to the internet and thus to e- learning. The individuals dwelling in country zones are still particularly denied of the most recent headways and accordingly hampering the reason for web based learning. Presently, virtual study halls are reliant on e-addresses as well as expect one to approach the e-content and online investigation material, practice' sheets and so forth too. What's more, that is the place we linger behind as India isn't completely prepared to make training arrive at all sides of the country through advanced stages or online study halls. In the post COVID-19 period, it will be the obstacle for on the web and e-conveyance framework in the nation.

Lack of interest:

Due to covid-19 outbreak, socio-economic and other changes in the society the will to learn and know has become extinct. Due to commercialization of human life and its value system people has lost the zeal to study and learn new things in life. Tendency towards the use of information technology is increasing. Students are busy to collect more and more information than the understanding of the concept. Moreover, they try to get readymade information from internet and tools rather than reading books and other study material

Problem of quality education

Quality education is one of the important dimensions of a good education system. Indian education institutions are lacking quality-based education. Staff deficiencies and the failure of the state instructive framework to pull in and hold very much qualified educators have been presenting difficulties to quality training for a long time. Quantity is considered to be more important than quality. None of the Indian University succeeds in getting place in top 100 Universities in the world. NAAC under UGC and HRD Ministry are trying to maintain quality in higher education institutions. In post covid-19, it will be going to be more serious problem. Class room teaching is being replaced by online teaching. Online of digital learning is important but quality problem will be more in this method of teaching and learning. Higher education institutions are already facing this problem. It may go down due to loss of quality in the Education Institutions. As class room teaching has been affected by corona virus spread, it is difficult to maintain quality through distance learning or online mode of learning. Quality needs availability of resources and their use for creating environment for understanding of the knowledge.

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Challenge of enrolment and mobility:

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in education sector in India, is very much low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the expansion of enlistments at school level, the gracefully of advanced education foundations is inadequate to satisfy the developing need in the nation. Normally 15% students enrolled themselves in higher education. As per the statics of 2016-17, 294.27 lakh students were enrolled in higher education institutions in the country. Out of the total students 35.15 % students joined Arts, 16.88% Science, 13.23% Commerce and Management and 35% joined the professional faculties recording the highest percentage in Engineering / Technology 16.25%, followed by 4.02% in Medical Courses, 4.04% in Education (Teacher Training courses, Agricultural Courses 0.82% percent and in Veterinary Science, it is 0.12 %.). The overall enrolment of the student was very low due to socio-economic, cultural and other factors, mostly female students, rural area students, economically backward and lower caste students remain away from higher education. After the out-break of pandemic, it will increase, due to problem of safe transport and finance. It will be difficult for the students to travel for admission and study in other states. Normally, students were used to go in different parts of the country specially for admission in medical, non-medical, engineering and other courses. Now due to security reasons they have to restrict themselves to their own state or region. Moreover, financial problems are increasing. People are losing their jobs, employment and businesses due to lockdown and other restrictions. The financial crunch will definitely affect the mobility and enrollment of the students in the country.

Problem of teaching-learning process:

Higher educational institutes are facing serious problem in the teaching learning process. Already students are highly unmotivated. They take admission in the institution without any reason. They simply join the institution with-out any academic objective. Such students create problem for academic environment in the campus. They involve themselves in non- academic activities and spoil the academic atmosphere in the institution. Shortage of well qualified faculty is another problem. It creates problem for quality education. Due to less salary/payment, low academic level, lack of commitment, absence of accountability and other factors they never indulge themselves in serious teaching and have an adhoc approach towards teaching learning process. Non-seriousness towards class room teaching is also increasing in the institution of higher learning. Though, old and traditional teaching methods are also a challenge for quality education. But in the time of post covid-19 scenario use of technology is going to be more important. Lack of technical and e-resources is a big challenge for higher education in India. The effect has been sensational and ground-breaking as instructors scramble to set up serviceable momentary answers for far off teaching and learning, especially in developing business sectors, where students are confronting extra provokes identified with financing and accessible framework. The genuine test lies for the institution in which they have selected. Can traditional, campus-based universities adapt by choosing the right technologies and approaches for educating and engaging their students? 5Most of the institutions are not equipped with computers and network facilities. Even students from rural background and interior areas do not have smart phones or internet connectivity. They are not able to attend online class. In the absence of class room teaching students will be not able to continue their studies. Another main problem is related to the examination system. In the pandemic age it is difficult to conduct examination at the right time.

Research and Innovation:

Poor and low level of research is another challenge in the higher education in India. There is inadequate focus on quality research and innovation in the HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) Insufficient resources and facilities for research keeps the good scholars away from the research activities, as well as limited numbers of quality faculty is available for the supervision of research. Most of the scholars are without research fellowship, which directly

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or indirectly affect their research work. Lack of good academic environment conducive to research is also a problem mainly in public funded institutions established in rural areas. More over commercialization of research activities is also posing a threat to the quality research in the country. Small number of students take research activities seriously, most of the students try to manage the degree through others means. Research scholar prefers to join private institutions to get degree in easy way than hard work. Due to outbreak of corona pandemic the problem will increase in coming time. Due to lack of financial resources and other problems it will be difficult to continue research in laboratories and institutions. In post covid-19 scenario, research activities should be carried out through international collaboration. Here it is critical to set up "most genuine" among staff. The sum saved money on framework (hostel, mess, water and power bills and so on.) can be occupied to fortify examination labs. Exploration joint effort will supplant research rivalry in the coming time.

Conclusion:

Though COVID-19 created new challenges for higher educations, it has also created new opportunity for higher educations. Students should be given maximum opportunity of participation in webinar, workshop through on line mode, so that they can explore their knowledge as well as COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to grow scientific temperament by maximum use of technology and in the view of scientific and technological develop teaching method should be adopted for better learning process. Use the ppt, smart classroom and e-learning should be encouraged in teaching. At the end off, this COVID-19 crisis has taught us is what we have always known and perhaps forgotten, that there is no substitute for a good teacher. It has compelled us to trace new avenues for teaching. The impact of the current situation will have a profound impact on universities around the region in many ways and will force institutions to rethink their operating models, strategies, and fundamentally how higher education will be delivered. India ought to build up a decent foundation for online instruction like a portion of the serious nations. The greatest advantage of such a system is education can get global. It ought to be adaptable, more creative, more locally connected and socially mindful, more cooperative and less danger loath. India is passing through very crucial period, nobody knows the future of young generation in higher education, and it is the time to manage higher education properly as per the prevailing conditions.

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