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IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION IN PUNJAB: AN ANALYSIS

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In some ways disease does not exist until we have agreed that it does, by perceiving, naming, and responding to it. **"-Charles. E. Rosenberg, 1992**

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population. This has brought far-reaching changes in all aspects of our lives. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Reopening of schools after relaxation of restriction is another challenge with many new standard operating procedures put in place. Within a short span of the COVID-19 pandemic, many researchers have shared their works on teaching and learning in different ways. Several schools, colleges and universities have discontinued face-to-face teachings. There is a fear of losing 2020 academic year or even more in the coming future. The need of the hour is to innovate and implement alternative educational system and assessment strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning. This paper aims to highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Education system in Punjab State.

Key Words: Covid-19 Pandemic, Education

Introduction:

On 31st December 2019, a cluster of cases of illness whose symptoms were similar to pneumonia were first reported in Wuhan, China .1 Upon further investigation, researchers found that the disease, subsequently named COVID-19, was caused by a newly discovered coronavirus: the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Early cases were traced to a seafood market, and the extent of human to-human transmission risk remained unclear. By mid-January, cases had begun to surface in other parts of China, as well as the rest of the world. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). All age groups are at risk of contracting COVID-19, but elderly people and those with underlying health conditions are particularly susceptible to severe illness. While the primary transmission route is through respiratory droplets expelled from an infected person, the disease can also spread through airborne routes, as well as through contaminated surfaces and objects. Infected persons may also display.

In Punjab, efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 were already in place when the nationwide lockdown was announced. Even before the lockdown, the Government of Punjab had already instituted a state wide curfew, and the promotion of prevention measures such as frequent handwashing and physical distancing, IEC activities and contact tracing of confirmed cases using technology had already commenced. The first case in Punjab was reported on 9th March 2020, following which, the state government initiated prompt action. Punjab took the lead in instituting many successful policies and responses– the state government set up various high-level committees to spearhead the COVID-19 response.

Covid-19 Pandemic compelled the human society to maintain social distancing. Every sphere of Education system is affected worldwide.　The learners and teachers around the world from pre-primary to secondary education, technical and vocational education and training institutions, universities, adult learning, and skills development establishment disrupted badly. In the Month of March, 2020 many countries enforced lockdown to control the spread of this deadly virus. It affected the international education negatively. School closures were endorsed in most countries under diverse setting. Due to this class were suspended and all examinations of schools, colleges and universities including entrances tests were postponed indefinitely.

OBJECTIVES:

The overall objective of this study is to analyse the Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Punjab. In particular, this study examined:

1. How the education system in Punjab is facing the Impact of COVID-19, and highlighting the role played by teachers and students through online education.
2. What is the Impact of Covid 19 on Education System in Punjab?
3. What is the Various initiative taken by the State Govt. to uplift Education System During Covid-19?
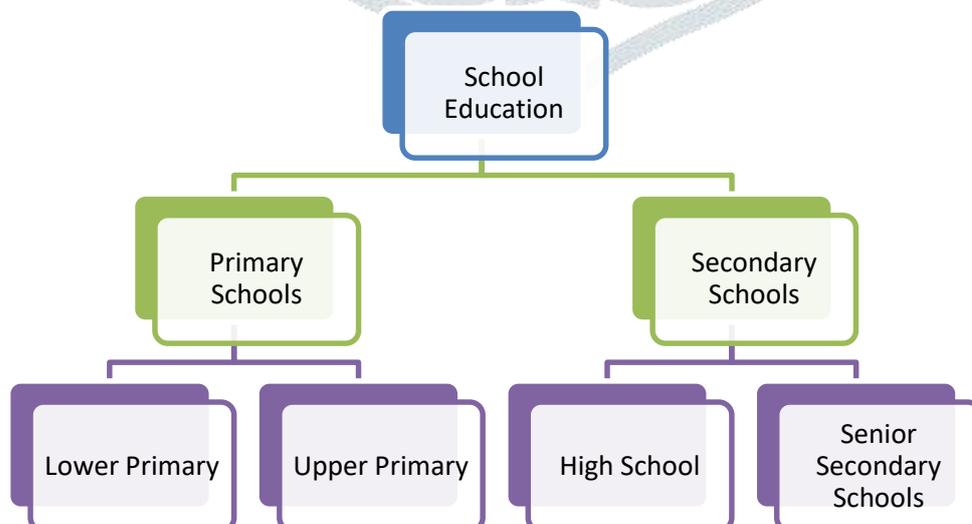
Methodology:

Data and information presented in the study are collected from various reports and articles published by national and international agencies on impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Information is also collected from various authentic websites. Some journals are also referred relating to impact of COVID-19 on educational system are referred

Need and purpose of the study

All systems have strengths and weaknesses. Maximizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses in order not to miss the opportunity to move forward should be the goal. The main purpose of the study is to analyze the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian education system. It covers the impact of COVID-19 on rural and urban students, Higher education Institutions.
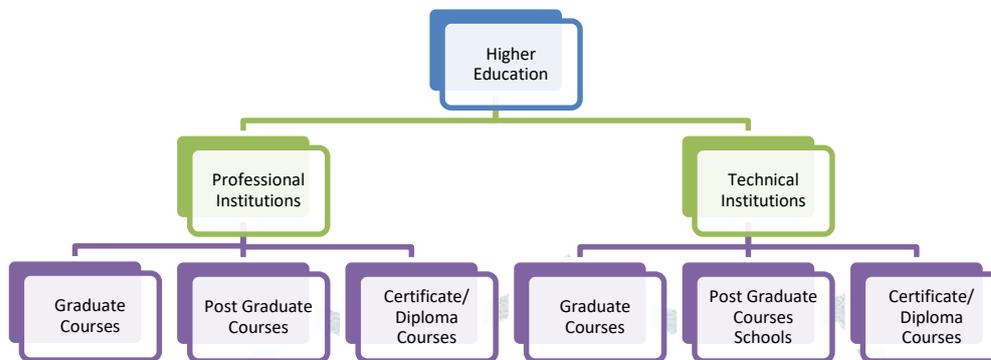
Education System in Punjab

Schools

There are several schools which are either international school with Day boarding, international schools with a boarding facility, National Schools with boarding and day boarding facility. The schools in Punjab are not affiliated to only one state board, there are schools available with CBSE, ICSE, IB and CIE Board.

School Education

Higher Education

Punjab is enriched with many prestigious higher education institutions across its districts and Chandigarh (Union Territory). Some of them are institutes of national importance.

Impact of Covid 19 on Education System in Punjab:

Covid-19 pandemic has pushed several private schools into a fiscal crisis in Punjab. As many as 33,132 students shifted from private to government schools in the state during the first week of the new academic session (2021-2022). In fact, a number of private schools have closed down over the past few months. Owner of a private school said, "Without any financial support from government, we were finding it difficult to pay our staff. When some of our staff have been laid off, we don't have teachers to teach students. The government, in fact, should think seriously of coming to the help of private schools, financially." "Private schools cannot compete with the government arrangement of holding online classes and providing education through television channels. Very few private schools have been able to manage the situation well. Parents are, thus, opting for government schools," a teacher said.

Government authorities, meanwhile, have shown a lot of innovation and teacher participation in making the student contact programme successful. Education Secretary Krishan Kumar himself made use of the public address system of gurdwaras and visited homes "door-to-door" in various villages.

The data compiled by the Education Department indicated that the overall increase this year would outdo the increase of around 15 per cent recorded during the last academic session. The number of students in 2019-2020 was 24,02,548 and it rose to 27,20,616 in 2020-2021.

As per information, 3,450 students have shifted to government schools in Ludhiana, 3,145 in Hoshiarpur, 2,548 in Patiala, 2,178 in Gurdaspur, 2,080 in Bathinda, 2,041 in Jalandhar, 1,790 in Amritsar, 1,527 in Sangrur, 1,227 in Fatehgarh Sahib, 1,209 in Pathankot, 1,200 in Fazilka, 1,180 in Nawanshahr, 1,151 in Tarn Taran, 1,093 in Mohali, 1,089 in Ferozepur, 1,074 in Moga, 1,035 in Barnala, 1,005 in Ropar, 983 in Muktsar, 919 in Kapurthala, 635 in Faridkot and 573 in Mansa.

VARIOUS INITIATIVE TAKEN BY THE STATE GOVT. TO UPLIFT EDUCATION SYSTEM DURING COVID-19

1. **Learning enhancement guidelines for continuous learning:**

- face-to-face interaction between teachers and students as well as among the fellow learners, has been replaced by the use of various alternative modes, such as – online, TV, mobile, radio, textbooks, etc. The alternative modes, though praiseworthy, have certain limitations. The alternative modes do not ensure equitable quality learning for all students due to various factors such as unequal distribution of time of teachers, students having differential access to technological devices, and lack of support for learning at homes in several cases. As a result, closure of schools is likely to lead to loss of learning and deficiencies in the achievement of students' learning outcomes.

- States/UTs and MHRD have been making efforts for providing education to children at their homes through alternate means of delivery such as, distribution of textbooks at homes of learners, telephonic guidance by teachers, online and digital content through TV and radio, activity-based learning through the Alternate Academic Calendar released by NCERT, etc.

- With a view to address the issues related to gaps and/or loss of learning among students, during and after the lockdown, the MHRD entrusted NCERT with the task of constituting a committee, comprising of academic and curricular experts drawn from NCERT, NIEPA, CBSE, KVS and NVS. The Committee conducted a survey in KVS, NVS and CBSE schools for collecting information about various digital modes being used by students to receive online education and their concerns regarding children not having digital devices.

2. **Covid-19 related health and safety sop/guidelines for school re-opening:**

   After issue of MHA guidelines for unlock-5, on 5th October, 2020, this Department has issued detailed SOP/guidelines regarding health and safety precautions for reopening of schools.

- Part I of these guidelines refers to the health and safety aspects for reopening schools. These are based on the prevailing instructions of Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Education with regard to health and safety protocols, and are to be implemented by adopting/adapting in accordance with the local situation in all states/UTs.

- The Department along with NVS has also developed a SOP for re-opening of residential school incorporating the residential components in alignment with the SOP of MoE and guidelines of MHA.

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   CONTINUOUS LEARNING PLAN (CLP)

   In the backdrop of uncertainty on the one hand, and the multiple innovative interventions on the other, the DoSEL had written to all states/UTs to undertake school-based child-wise planning or preparation of Continuous Learning Plans (based on an indicative format prepared by DoSEL) for ensuring continued learning for every learner.

- CONTINUOUS LEARNING PLANS or CLP for STATES/UTs has been initiated in all states/UTs. In the CLP, each school needs to have a Continuous Learning Plan for 10 each grade and each child. The

Continuous Learning Plan for the unique requirements of each learner, or groups of learners, in the school education system is required to be resilient.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEACHERS DURING PANDEMIC

Nishtha (National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers for their holistic advancement) online:

• As the name suggests this is an online capacity building programme for covering all 42,00,000 elementary school teachers and school heads of the country.

• This programme was conducted face to face before the pandemic. However, in its wake, this programme was contextualised to the needs of teaching and learning during the pandemic and made 100% online.

• In order to facilitate teachers to undertake online NISHTHA training, financial support up to Rs 1000 per teacher for procuring pen-drives, printing of modules and high-speed data-pack has been provided at elementary level on reimbursement basis and subject to successful completion of the training course. • There are 18 modules in this programme: 12 for teachers, 5 for school heads and 1 specialised module on teaching and learning during COVID-19 times.

• Each module consists of guidelines, primers, training package with QR coded econtent, videos on each module, and other e-resources.

• NISHTHA Online for elementary teachers was launched on 6th October, 2020 and at present 3 Modules are live on DIKSHA.

• Key usage Metrics of NISHTHA courses on DIKSHA platform as on 22nd October 2020 are as follows: o 18 courses uploaded and 3 Live courses on each State/UT/Central Organization tenant in Hindi/English/Regional languages o 17 States/UTs and NCERT launched NISHTHA on 16th October 2020 o 17 Cr+ learning sessions on DIKSHA o 30 Lakh enrolments across courses o 16 Lakh Digital Certificates have been issued to the teachers for completing the courses

SPECIAL CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEACHERS ON HOW TO CONDUCT ONLINE CLASSES WHERE FEASIBLE

capacities of their teachers as soon as the lockdown started, to ensure continuity of learning through online means, wherever possible.

• In the process, CBSE has trained 4,80,000 teachers (during April-September 2020), KVS trained 15855 and JNV trained 9085 teachers all India. Training was also imparted by NVS to teachers regarding online assessment and GeoGebra.

• Several bite-sized modules were also prepared and disseminated post training to augment the capacities of teachers.

• In KVS, online training programmes organised by the Zonal Institutes of Education and Training focused on use of different learning platforms, developing & usage of various e-resources and online assessment of students.

• Special orientation for primary teachers and HMs in KVS was organised for sensitizing them on handling Class I students and conducting their classes online since they were admitted during Covid times and schools are not functioning.

Initiatives taken for the Students during this Pandemic:

PM e-VIDYA:

• As a part of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Programme, a comprehensive initiative for using Technology with Equity, called PM e-VIDYA has been initiated which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education.

• PM e-Vidya has following components: ○ DIKSHA – One nation, one digital education platform ○ One class, one TV channel – Swayam Prabha ○ E-content for Open School ○ Extensive use of Radio, Community radio and podcast ○ E-content for visually and hearing-impaired students

• Each of the above components is being developed in such a manner that the same e-content available on one digital mode is also available on other digital modes.

DIKSHA (DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING) - ONE NATION, ONE DIGITAL EDUCATION PLATFORM:

• DIKSHA is the 'one nation; one digital platform' for school education on which 35 states and UTs have their own vertical along with those of NCERT, CBSE and NIOS of central government.

• DIKSHA can be accessed through a web-portal and mobile application.

• DIKSHA consists of e-learning content for students of grades 1 to 12 in 31 Indian languages.

• It also contains modules for capacity building of teachers uploaded in different languages by the states and centre.

• At present, DIKSHA has 100,000 pieces of e-content

ONE CLASS, ONE TV CHANNEL- SWAYAM PRABHA TV CHANNELS

• Swayam Prabha DTH channels are meant to support and reach out to those students who do not have access to the internet.

• In the Ministry of Education, a total of 32 channels are devoted to telecast high quality educational programmes. Of these, 12 TV channels are earmarked for the one class, one TV channel under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Programme for the Department of School Education and Literacy.

E-CONTENT ON DIKSHA, MOOCS ON SWAYAM AND CONTENT ON SWAYAM PRABHA FOR OPEN SCHOOLS BY NIOS:

• Online MOOC courses relating to NIOS (grades 9 to 12 of open schooling) are uploaded on SWAYAM portal

• Around 92 courses have started and 1.5 crore students are enrolled. Students and teachers can access all the course modules - text, videos and assessment questions etc. through SWAYAM.

EXTENSIVE USE OF RADIO, COMMUNITY RADIO AND PODCASTS

• Radio broadcasting is being used for children in remote areas who are not online.

• NCERT is producing high quality audio/radio programs with effective media treatment such as apt music, sound effects and involvement of seasoned and refined artists of good repute in the media world.

• These Radio Programmes are also available at: https://ciet.nic.in/radio.php?&ln=en&ln=en • These radio programs are mainly produced in Hindi, English, Sanskrit and Urdu.

• The programs are produced under 2 major categories –

• Curriculum based audio programs from classes 1 to 8.

• Enrichment, infotainment and edutainment programs.

E-CONTENT FOR VISUALLY AND HEARING-IMPAIRED STUDENTS:

• One DTH channel is being operated specifically for hearing impaired students in sign language.

• For visually and hearing-impaired students, study material has been developed in Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language; both are available on NIOS website/ YouTube.

• 55 NCERT textbooks of different grades are uploaded on DIKSHA in audio format.

• 82 sign language videos for CWSN are uploaded on DIKSHA portal by NIOS.

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