

The COVID-19: Opportunities and Threats for Education in India

Paper Submission: 15/12/2020, Date of Acceptance: 28/12/2020, Date of Publication: 29/12/2020

Abstract

The coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) originated in China at the beginning of 2020, which shocked the education sector across the globe. The education system of India, as well as most of the countries, is severely affected by this Pandemic. This COVID-19 has imposed the lockdown, which is creating horrible effects on the student's life and their career. Around 33 crore students' students stopped to go to schools/colleges, and all the educational events were cancelled in India. Most of the governments everywhere in the world has temporarily closed educational institutions in an effort to hold the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In the wake of this emergency, educational institutions are striving to sustain in this crisis with shifting to digital online learning approaches of crisis management. To ensure continuity of learning, this is required an unprecedented shift from offline-based to emergency online educational settings. This paper addresses crisis management measures taken by the Government of India to give continuous education in the county. The opportunities and threats of COVID-19 on education are deliberated, and some meaningful suggestions are given to restarts teaching activities during this pandemic situation.

Keywords: Online education, Coronavirus-19, Crisis management, Opportunities, Threats.

Introduction

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) over the globe had forced human being to keep social distancing. This crisis has adversely disturbed the educational settings, which is a crucial element of economic growth of the country. The first novel coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) was identified in the Wuhan region of China in December 2019. On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the name of the virus as Coronavirus disease 2019 as well as Pandemic. In India, the first case of the COVID-19 was reported in Kerala on January 30, 2020. According to the UNESCO report, it had affected more than 121 crores of students and youth around the world. In India, around 33 crores of students have been affected by the lockdown for COVID-19. According to the UNESCO report, around 14 crores of primary and 15 crores of secondary students are affected by COVID-19 in the education sector of India.

The nationwide lockdown has forced several educational institutions to stop their classes, examinations, practical etc. and adapted for the online methods of teaching. In the beginning, the teachers and the students were quite disordered and could not recognize how to manage the circumstances of this unexpected crisis that bound to the closure of the educational events. Thus, COVID-19 has fashioned many opportunities and threats for the educational institutes to cope up with this challenge by creating opportunities by adopting and strengthen the digital learning and infrastructure (Jena, 2020). The COVID-19 has brought a new method to continue their educational activities online. The teachers gave homework to students through online and delivered lectures video conferencing using different Apps like Zoom; Google meets, Facebook, Youtube etc. Due to the emergence of the Pandemic of Covid-19, the whole world is experiencing a huge death toll along with widespread panic and uncertainty. Countries of the world are trying to shun the gap and minimize the losses of students caused by the ongoing Pandemic. However, the outcomes of online education are not always a blessing to the learners' community as revealing a number of pitfalls to the context of online teaching and learning resulting in widespread concerns over the controversial issue of teaching-learning – online education during covid-19. With the consideration of the



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fact, the present study tries to discuss COVID-19 opportunities and challenges facing the education sector in India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate various initiatives taken by Govt. of India in the education sector amidst of Pandemic.
2. To addresses the opportunities and threats in the learning process by the students and teachers during the COVID-19 global Pandemic.
3. To give some meaningful suggestions for continuing education during the COVID-19 situation.

Methodology

Data and information obtained for this study are collected and reviewed from various secondary information set by various agencies on COVID-19 Pandemic and education. Information is collected from various websites and magazines. Some journals and e-contents from google scholars and ProQuest, researchgate.net concerning to effect of COVID-19 on the educational system.

Preventive Measures were taken by Govt. of India in education during COVID-19 Pandemic

Government of India has taken several preventive actions to contain the spread of COVID-19 Pandemic. On March 16, 2020, the Modi government declared a countrywide lockdown of all educational institutions. On March 18, 2020, all the examinations were postponed by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and higher secondary schools throughout India. Correspondingly, most of the state Governments and other educational boards postponed examinations. Govt. of India had implemented lockdown from March 25, 2020, onwards in different phases and subsequently extending lockdown periods from time to time implementing different strategies to fight with the Pandemic. But educational institutions remained closed continuously.

The lockdown 6.0 was declared on June 29, which is effective from July 1 to July 31, 2020, with some less restriction in other sectors except education. During the lockdown periods, almost all state government ministries had taken measures to ensure that the academic activities of schools and colleges to hold all the classes through online mode. The COVID-19 has enhanced acceptance of digital technology. Online education is the finest solution during this Pandemic Covid-19 situation (Jena, 2020). It is a fact that the online mode of education is more transparent with all respect. In response to shut down of colleges and schools, the Indian government, as well as state government and private players, have come up with innovative initiatives for online education. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has made numerous measures, such as online portals and educational channels through Direct to Home TV, Radios for students to continue learning. In this lockdown, students are learning through electronic and social media tools like WhatsApp, zoom; Google meet, Youtube live, Facebook live etc. for the online teaching-learning system. ICT initiative of MHRD (e- Broucher-<https://mhrd.gov.in/ict-initiatives>) is a unique umbrella which customizes all digital resources for online

learning. The MHRD digital innovative strategies for secondary as well as higher education during COVID-19 are enumerated as below:

Digital initiatives in Secondary education System

1. Diksha

This portal comprises e-learning materials for students, teachers, and parents linked to the syllabus and courses together with video lessons, textbooks, worksheets and assessments. Under the supervision of its national boards of CBSE and NCERT, the study materials have been prepared by more than 260 teachers who impart in multiple languages.

2. E-Pathshala

This is NCERT an e-Learning app for classes 1 to 12 in multiple languages. The app contains numbers of books, videos, audio, etc. designed for students, educators and parents in multiple languages including Hindi, Urdu, and English which can access through the mobile app.

3. National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER)

This portal customized a congregation of study materials for students and teachers in multiple languages including books, interactive modules and videos. Content of the materials is planned to the curriculum for classes 1-12 students and as well as resources for teachers.

Digital initiatives in Higher Education System

1. Swayam

This is the national level online education platform running more than 1900 courses which cover classes from 9 to 12 standard and higher education level graduate, postgraduate programs in all subjects. The course is combined with conventional education. Credit transfers of a maximum of 20 % are possible for SWAYAM courses.

2. Swayam Prabha

This is DTH TV channels telecasting educational contents on a 24 x 7 basis. These channels are presented for viewing all across the country using DD Free Dish Set Top Box and Antenna. These channels cover school education classes 9 to 12 and higher education undergraduate, postgraduate, engineering, vocational courses and teacher training.

3. E-PG Pathshala

This is used for postgraduate students. Study materials can access from this platform are e-books, online courses during the lockdown period. The advantage of this platform is that students can read these facilities without connection of the internet.

COVID-19 and Opportunities for Education

The education system in India got the opportunity for revolution from the conventional system to the online era of education. The following points may be viewed as opportunities-

1. Increased Digital Literacy

The lockdown situation encouraged students and teachers to learn and use digital technology and resulted in increasing digital literacy in the education system.

2. The approach towards Blended Learning

Educational institutions encouraged the blended mode of learning. It stimulated all teachers

and students to become more technology savvy and digital enabling.

3. Enhance the use of the soft copy of learning material

In this lockdown, students were unable to get together the hard copies of study materials and henceforth most of the students using soft copies materials for their learning.

Call for Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

During the lockdown, most of the students opted ODL mode as it inspires self-learning providing opportunities to learn from diverse resources and personalized learning as per their choices and preferences.

COVID-19 and Threats for Education

The outbreak of COVID-19 has disrupted education system in India. It has several threats on education which are given as below:

1. Educational activity suspended

Outbreak of COVID-19 has been suspended all the teaching-learning activities and exams at different levels postponed. All the education boards have already suspended the yearly examinations and entrance tests. The admission process of the new academic session got late.

2. Problems of teachers/students for online education

The COVID-19 has brought sudden changeover from offline learning to online learning has created problems for teachers as well as students to adjust the new mode of the digitally connected learning process. The teachers who are just conducting lectures on video platforms such as Zoom; Google meets etc., which may not be real online learning without having any steadfast online learning platform.

3. Impact on employment

The COVID-19 stop the recruitment process and placements for students who cease employment opportunities. In India, there is no employment in Govt. sector and fresh graduates distress the withdrawal of their job offers from private sectors because of this pandemic situation.

4. Problems of Internet Access

As many students may not be able to access or limited access to the internet and may not afford a computer, laptop or supporting mobile phones in their homes. The online mode of learning may generate a digital split among students. Thus, the online teaching mode during COVID-19 lockdown may increase the gap between rich/poor and urban/rural students.

Suggestions

1. India should create feasible policies to safeguard the interests of all students to access education during COVID-19 Pandemic.
2. The educational institutions and faculties should focus on student's engagement sessions and redefine online teaching priorities.
3. The Indian government should take pro-active measures to alleviate the psychological stress of the students during the Pandemic.

4. The government should facilitate basic infrastructures and access to technology and the internet for online classes to every student.
5. The government and educational institutions should design the plans to impart the teaching by maintaining social distancing.
6. The state government and private organizations should come up with innovative ideas to resolve the issues of online education during Pandemic.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has obstructed massively to the education sector of India. Though it has twisted many theatres and opportunities are also evolved during this Pandemic. The Indian government and many stakeholders of the education sector have discovered the possibility of online learning by adopting various digital technologies to cope up with the present pandemic situation. India is not fully equipped to make education reach all corners of the nation via digital platforms. Despite a number of challenges encountered by students and teachers in case of teaching-learning online, the great news is that no doubt conducting online classes is a praiseworthy initiative taken by the present government to minimize the loss of students' academic activities. For the proper implementation of this task student and teachers should be encouraged and take it as a challenge to implement in a befitting manner. Students should bear in mind that they are the key stakeholders and so they should be self-motivated to have greater interest getting a response to online classes with their all efforts. India should come up with creative approaches to ensure that all students must have justifiable access to the online mode of learning during pandemic COVID-19.

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