INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESIS (ES)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

LIMITATIONS

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

REFERENCES

APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The spread of pandemic due to Covid-19 has drastically disrupted every aspects of human life including education. It has created an unprecedented test on education. In many educational institutions around the world, campuses are closed and teaching-learning has moved online. In India, about 32 crore learners stopped to move educational institutions and physical classroom teaching brought to an end and government, so far, has declared so many conscious and preventive precautionary measures like total lockdown of entire economy, partial lockdown of containment zones, unlocking phase-1 and phase-2 and so on to maintain safe distances among people to minimize its vast spread as India is one of the high population density countries in the world. Despite of all these challenges, the educational institutions have reacted positively and managed to ensure the continuity of teaching-learning, research and service to the society with some tools and techniques during this pandemic lead to announce 250 billion dollar stimulus package by the government of India to revive this sector. The present study, therefore, is to design and understand the student's perspective, attitudes and readiness about online classes being conducted at the educational institutions and also focuses on the central and state governments' initiatives that have already been taken and have to be taken in future to boost online learning in India.

KEYWORDS

Covid-19, MHRD, education sector, online teaching-learning process, students' response.

JEL CODES

I20, I29.

INTRODUCTION

Formal education in India can be broadly classified into school education (elementary, secondary and higher secondary) and higher education including vocational education. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the nodal ministry responsible for development of school education and literacy in the country, for bringing world class opportunities of higher education and research to the country and for formulating and implementing associated policy framework. Following the constitutional amendment by Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years as a Fundamental Right, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) was enacted to ensure that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality and prescribes certain essential norms and standards to be followed by schools. Higher educational institutions in India can be classified into central universities, state universities, deemed universities and private universities, depending on the manner in which they are set up. Higher education is regulated and governed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956, which inter alia determines and maintains the standards of teaching, examination and research in universities and their affiliated colleges in India. Additionally, the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) initially established by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and now an independent autonomous body provides accreditation of technical programs and courses and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) provides accreditation to higher educational institutions. The Government of India (GOI) established the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) that would consist of nationally recognized qualification systems including schools and vocational education institutes. Further, each professional course is regulated by a separate body- such as the Medical Council of India for medical studies, AICTE for technical courses and the Bar Council of India for legal studies. MHRD has announced that they are formulating separate sets of regulations for governing online education at the different educational levels which are closed during last six-seven months of pandemic caused by vast spread of novel corona virus. Many government and private institutions, including IITs and IIMs, have taken a leap from conventional classroom teaching to online digital teaching to cope up with the pandemic prevailing almost throughout the world. Many institutes have started teaching their students through online classes so that the global covid-19 pandemic does not affect the students' education for long period of time.

The campuses have been shut down, but teachers are busy working from home, preparing effective study material for their students so that there isn't any halt in the teaching-learning process. In this paradigm shift, teachers are available online through the use of technical devices to reduce the hardship and disruption being caused to the students across the country due to the spread of pandemic. This shift in education from traditional classroom learning to ICT based digital learning might be one of the largest educational experiments right now. Very shortly, learning digitally will be the new face of Indian education. It will be a very useful and constructive means for both teachers and students in the coming years. The government is working with various agencies to build up new platforms where students, teachers and parents can closely connect.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To Study the impact of COVID-19 on education sector in India.
2. To understand the threats and challenges faced by the education sector in India.
3. To suggest the appropriate measures to overcome the challenges and threats of Indian education sector.

DATA BASE OF THE STUDY

In this paper survey reports and study reports by various central agencies like UGC, NCERT, MHRD, Government of India and various state government agencies, etc. have been taken into consideration for procuring data relevant to education sector in India. Also, I have studied few research papers, news articles and daily e-newspapers which have published in the last six-seven months to understand the severe impact of covid-19 on education sector almost throughout the entire world. Internet surfing has also been used for procuring data relevant to the present study.

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE THREATS, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF ONLINE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS IN INDIA

For implementation of ICT digital learning much amount of fund is required for investment in purchase of modern technological equipments, which is a precondition of digital learning. For a developed country with much high rate of GDP and per capita income, the practice of online teaching-learning in education sector will be a much easier option to switch it from physical classroom teaching to ICT digital learning. Whereas in a developing country like India, there are many students from low income family who do not have proper access to internet facility through the use of broadband, Wi-Fi, computer or laptops or any other technical devices, digital learning might not be the ideal solution in that case. When classes actually commence online, many students will suffer because of their inability to bear the cost of technical devices and other equipments. Unless government of India makes internet available to all, there are chances that the gap in

education quality may widen between the students' from rich income families and low income families, which is the most alarming and undesirable event of Indian economy. It is believed that a mix of online and offline education is what will work in the coming months, which can hopefully be converted to a permanent module.

The conventional Indian education system follows face-to-face or physical teaching, even though the trend of audio-visual aids in classrooms was introduced a decade ago. Renowned universities in India are already offering online classes to its students. But many higher educational institutes in India are not equipped with such facilities. Higher Education survey in 2018 focuses that the leaders of well-known global universities were of the opinion that online teaching could never match with physical classroom teaching. In the event of covid-19, online teaching has become a necessity, for not only educational institutions in India but world-wide to look for innovative solutions in a short period of time and to always have a Plan-B in place.

On the national level, widely used online learning platforms are Skype, Team Link, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom, Webex Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc. Besides, interactive tools like webinars, WhatsApp, virtual labs and peer-tutoring learning are also being used to provide e-learning materials to students. These platforms are presently connecting students and teachers over the video-enabled virtual classroom. Using electronic media and ICT-based technology, students' are easily accessing study-materials in the forms of e-content, reading materials, video lectures, graphic contents and preparing their assignments and can do virtual collaborations, discussions, debates and so on. It is ensuring physical distancing, staying safely at home and learning through online 'anytime'. The government of India is also propelling its e-platform named Swayam Prabha to expatriate free telecasting e-contents to students of class I to XII through 32 DTH channels. The HRD Ministry and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting are working together to telecast Swayam Prabha channels on DTH for wide access of e-learning materials to those who do not have proper internet access in remote areas. The channels can circulate e-contents for 4 hours a day and also repeat the same five times in a day so that students' of remote areas can also be able to grab the opportunities to acquire knowledge and expertise themselves to get the appropriate jobs causing employment opportunity. Recently, on May 17, a new dedicated education channel named PM e-Vidya was launched to multi-modes access to digital education under Swayam Prabha DTH channels. It is a one-nation, one-digital platform set to facilitate online lectures for school students. The HRD Ministry is also exploring other options like All India Radio (AIR), Doordarshan, and 2G networks to outreach e-learning materials in rural areas. The Ministry has boosted the Diksha portal (e-pathshala) which has over 80,000 e-books available for all teachers, students and guardians. Besides, amid the lockdown, NCERT has also amplified its e-pathshala by adding 1886 audio files, 2000 videos, 696 e-books and 504 flipbooks for students of class I to XII. The e-pathshala enables millions of students to access various textbooks and other related learning materials in different languages.

Moreover, in pursuit of promoting online classes, the government of India has launched the 'Bharat Padhe Online' campaign on April 11 where over 3700 suggestions have been received. Another program, VidyaDaan 2.0, was launched on April 23 inviting contributors to develop e-contents due to an unusual increase in the demands of e-contents. Besides these initiatives, various other e-services are there like SCERT's YouTube channel, NIOS's courses, MOOC learning, National Academic Depository (NAD), National Digital Library of India, National Project on Technology Enhanced Learning (NP-TEL), free educational TV channel, Virtual labs, Spoken Tutorial, E-Yantra, Free and Open Source Software for Education (FOSSEE), which are among the other noteworthy initiatives taken by the government to connect institutions to easily access learning resources.

RESPONSE OF STATE GOVERNMENTS TOWARDS SHIFTING FROM PHYSICAL CLASSROOMS TO ONLINE DIGITAL LEARNING:

As the lockdown continues and physical classroom education postpones, several state governments have also prompted digitally-packed management systems to facilitate e-learning through different virtual platforms. For instance, the state of Andhra Pradesh has stepped up by providing online access to educational institutions. The state has created its self-learning app named 'Abhiasa' to provide e-contents and video lectures. Doordarshan and radio broadcasts are also being used to telecast lessons for school students daily for two hours in the morning and evening. Moreover, the state has also projected the development of online curriculum, instructional design and e-learning content for school students.

Similarly, the state like Kerala has also taken several initiatives to provide ICT-enabled education in government schools. The Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE) started the KOOL e-learning platform that provides training for teachers. It is India's first massive government-sponsored online program (MOOC), and so far, over 12,000 teachers have benefited. KITE has also digitized all school textbooks and placed 57,843 laptops and 25,011 projectors at different schools in the state. The platforms like 'Avadikaala Santhoshangal' and 'Akshara Vrikshams' are boosting e-learning through creative writing, stories, poems and mathematical experiments.

The online classes have also received an 'overwhelming response' from the state board students of West Bengal. The state has planned for virtual classes on TV channels for students of class IX to XII. The online classes have been telecast by ABP Ananda from 3 pm to 4 pm six days a week and by DD Bangla from 4 pm to 5 pm. The students will have the opportunity to ask questions to teachers through WhatsApp and phone calls during the interaction session on the TV channel's studio. Besides, the government also prompts schools of state-aided, state-run and privately-owned to connect over virtual classes and use WhatsApp for sharing e-learning materials among students. Most of the higher educational institutions in the state have already been started the online education and the state government has already taken initiatives to shift the traditional classroom teaching to digital learning so that students can acquire knowledge, groom and expertise themselves to get the employment opportunity in future.

Further, several massive government-sponsored initiatives and campaigns have been undertaken in different states to boost online learning. The e-learning project named SMILE (Social Media Interface for Learning Engagement) was launched by the government of Rajasthan to provide online classes through various social media. The state has created over 20,000 WhatsApp groups to share study-materials with students and teachers. Similarly, the Haryana government with its state education department and SCERT have also launched a full-throated e-learning campaign under the banner of 'Ghar Se Padhao Abhiyan' (Teach from Home Campaign) to connect students and parents with over 50,000 teachers using WhatsApp, SMS and phone.

The state of Bihar has also pushed its educational institutions to advance online classes to students of different levels. In the state, around 10,000 education institutions including both government and private are rendering online classes to students. The Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC) has launched an innovative mobile app named 'Unnayan –Mera Mobile Mera Vidyalaya' for students of Class VI to XII of over 70,000 government-run schools. Also, the state like Uttar Pradesh has developed over 65,943 e-contents with the help of teachers from various state universities and colleges to impart online education. Besides, several states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Meghalaya and Manipur, etc have also ordered their respective educational regulators to push institutions to embrace e-learning platforms amidst the crisis.

INEQUITIES AND CHALLENGES SURROUNDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION AMIDST COVID-19

Online learning is something new to both teachers as well as students. The execution of lockdown had no pre-preparation in terms of both availing ICT-enabling technology and providing training intervention for developing digital skills to adapt to online classes. Many teachers have trouble in operating electronic devices, referring to different academic links, information processing and even establishing a connection over virtual classrooms. Many of the teachers have also expressed awful experiences while conducting online classes. Some teachers have also raised doubt about the effective curriculum transaction at online classes as such. Generally, Kids don't understand half of subject matter taught even in the real classroom. A teacher on a computer screen would hardly make sense to them. Further, as the students' mental health is at risk due to the work-load and long-time screening, institutions must hear parents' concerns and provide the necessary support and counseling. At home, parents have to maintain learning-engaged healthy practices for students such as creative writing, drawing, story-telling, and theme-based open-discussions, etc.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

A country with the world's largest youth population has now been thrust into an e-learning experiment of unprecedented scale and scope. While it may be feasible for students in metropolitan cities to adapt quickly, there is little hope for those in rural areas. Mobile connectivity in rural areas though, is not so bad. As per the

data collected from the Telecom Service Providers in 2019, it is estimated that out of 5, 97,618 inhabited villages, including gram panchayats, about 5, 69,897 are covered by mobile services.

However, one must consider that having mobile connectivity does not imply that every such person would also have access to the internet or that all such mobiles would be smart phones that can support e-learning technology. Even if it is assumed that most people having mobile phones have access, one cannot ignore the issue of lack of digital literacy. Rural India's poor internet penetration is further exacerbated due to low household incomes, frequent cable cuts, unreliable electricity and insufficient diesel supplies for generators in towers.

Data published by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in February, 2020 reveals that India has around 115 crore wireless subscribers, of which only approximately 66 crores have access to broadband-quality internet. Therefore, merely half of the country's population has access to decent quality of internet.

The 75th National Sample Survey report indicates that there is a stark digital divide between rural and urban India. According to the report, the proportion of households in the country having computers was found to be around 10.7% (only 4.4% of rural households and 23.4% of urban households possessed a computer). 14.9% of rural households, 42% of urban households and 23.8% of households all over India were found to have internet facilities.

In rural areas, only 9.9% of persons above the age of 5 were found able to operate a computer and 13% were found able to use the internet. In urban areas, 32.4% were found able to operate a computer and only 37.1% were found able to use internet.

Overall, only 16.5% were found to have the ability to operate a computer and only 20.1% were found able to use internet in India. Even if it is assumed that these numbers have doubled or tripled over the past 1-2 years, it would be fair to say that India largely remains digitally illiterate.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In light of rising concern about the novel corona virus pandemic, a growing number of educational institutes across the world have either canceled or postponed all their activities such as workshops, conferences, sports and other activities. They have moved quickly towards transition of various courses and programs from class room learning to online delivery mode. The health and safety of students and staff should be the very best priority. The present study reveals that maximum students are in favor of studying through online classes, but they feel that there is a lack of co-curricular activities in the online mode of conducting classes. The educational institutes should design a plan so that along with studying their regular course, students also get to participate in some fun-loving activities so that they wholeheartedly continue to have an interest in the online mode of education.

Institutions should encourage students to remain connected through the web or any social media platform and move forward together during this extremely difficult time. It is safe to say that the present pandemic will not only affect the Indian economy adversely, but it will also affect the education sector adversely. Already, six-seven months is lost. Moreover, education system is especially vulnerable since mass gathering cannot be avoided in our traditional classrooms teaching. Online classes are not substitutes for classroom lectures for a variety of reasons. The digital divide will only lead to discrimination and practical classes based on laboratories cannot be held online. Giving instructions for mathematical courses is also difficult online. The interaction between the teachers and the students is a crucial component of teaching-learning process and cannot be replicated only by online digital mode of education. Research has been severely hampered due to the lockdown although digital research has been started and hence the sooner normalcy returns, the better will be for the education sector, for the entire economy, for the human civilization and for the society as a whole.

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