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Understanding the Impact and Challenges of Corona Crisis on Education Sector in India

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Abstract : In the second week of March 2020, governments of all states in a country suddenly declared shutting down of all colleges and schools for a temporary period of time as an immediate measure to stop the spread of pandemic that is of novel corona virus. As the days pass by almost close to a month with no certainty when they will again reopen. Due to pandemic like this an alarm bells have started sounding in the field of education where a huge impact can be seen on teaching and learning process as well as on the entire education sector in turn. The pandemic disruption like this is actually gave time to educators of today to really think about the sector. Through the present research article, the author is highlighting on the possible impact of coronavirus on education sector with the future challenges for education sector with possible suggestions.

Keywords - Education, Impact, Learning, Pandemic, Teaching.

I. INTRODUCTION

The mankind has witnessed several calamities in history, containing disastrous outbreak of disease. However, dreadfulness of the hazardous impact of COVID-19 and the improbability of finding preventive drug has created chaos among the entire population, administration and worldwide government. The speedy spread of virus has left no option but to isolate ourselves and maintain social distancing by confining ourselves to homes.

The pandemic novel corona virus has considerably disrupted many sectors in India like retail, automobiles, agriculture, aviation, oil and gas to mentioned few. With uncertainty which is imminent over the future of world economy, India is not an exception to this with far-reaching repercussions on GDP, inflation and unemployment in turn. There is no sector which remain unaffected by the pandemic. In this health crisis of COVID-19 many countries including India have rightly decided to shut down all universities, colleges and schools as primary precaution. Due to the closure of educational institutions more than 32 crores of students in India both at school, institution and university level get affected. Considering the current scenario, there is nothing but only the uncertainty regarding reopening of schools and colleges. No doubt, for education sector this is very dilemmatic and crucial timing to cope up with, as many school and college examinations are on hold, many entrance and competitive exams of various universities are due which are generally conducted during this time. Various board examinations, school and college admissions can't be ignored in this situation. The speed of the lockdown and these closures shifted classroom teaching and learning to distance learning through online mode. Before understanding the impact and consequences of COVID 19 on educational sector let us first understand the current scenario of what all educational institutions are doing at present to fight against this pandemic. The primary measures which have been taken at present by the educational institutions are mainly-

- Closure of schools and colleges
- Sanitisation of educational premises.
- Postponed/cancellation/rescheduling of exams

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- Switching to online learning for completion of syllabus.
- Delaying deadlines for applications for next intake.
- Preparation for upcoming semesters as a precautionary measure considering the long term uncertainty.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH WORK

The research article emphasized on the below mentioned objectives:

- To understand the overall impact of Covid-19 pandemic on education sector in India.
- To highlight the several actions taken by Indian Government due to pandemic for education sector.
- To enlighten the various optimistic effect of COVID-19 on the field of education.
- To discuss some of the undesirable influences of COVID-19 and to enlighten some effective recommendations for current education system in India in the pandemic circumstances.

III. METHODOLOGY

The information and the data discussed in the present research work, is mainly gathered from different reports and articles presented and published by various agencies at national and international level during Covid -19 Pandemic. The different authentic websites are referred for collecting information, along with journals and e-content.

IV. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATIONAL SECTOR IN INDIA

As mentioned above, most of the entranced and competitive examinations are on hold including streams like medical, engineering, law and agriculture etc., The institutions like IITs and IIMs have all closed and shifted to online classes. The standardized exams like GRE, GMAT, SATs, ACT remain on hold and the future of many of the pupils hangs in balance and in uncertainty.

The current situation can be an alarming bell primarily for all private universities. It might be possible that employees and faculties related to educational institutions may have to face cuts in salary or increments which might be postponed.

A) Students trapped in the cross-wire:

If to focus on school students first, the impact of pandemic can be clearly seen especially on secondary level that is class 9th to 12th mainly because board exams for 10th and 12th have to be postponed. They are not knowing when their exams will be held. Again the same age group students will be affected as the entrance exams for medical, engineering, architecture etc., generally get conducted in this span.

At college and university level students they have bigger issues to deal with as these students do not have final results mainly because exams either not take place or were left in middle. Due to the disruption in education process due to Covid-19 pandemic, students might face a big challenge of proving their skills and ability for their further journey. Because of the absence of hard academic indicators or pointers mainly their grades, marks students might find themselves in total chaos to get themselves prepared for the job opportunities and education competition they face at the next level of their career.

B) Impact on the structure of Teaching and Learning

The structure of teaching and learning and methodology of assessment or the evaluation was the first and foremost to be affected by these closures. Though most of the schools and colleges have opted for online teaching methods or e-learning solutions, the feedback is mixed. As the good, private schools and colleges who have all infrastructure and set up to conduct the online classes, at the receiver's end their students too have all the facilities or means like Google, Whatsapp etc., to mentioned few can access to these classes. Their teaching and learning is going fine. But in a developing country like India where majority of the population belong to middle or lower class where there is no internet access or connectivity issues. Even some low-income government and private schools and colleges may not be able to absorb or adopt themselves to online teaching methods. This unequal access to technology might majorly prevent students to continue their learning. The government or low income schools and colleges on the other hand have to totally shut down for not having any access to online learning or e-learning solutions. Hence the academic experts are pushing and insisting for online models of teaching and learning, we have yet to see how successfully our country which generally relies

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on offline mode of teaching can flawlessly adopt to an online method of teaching and learning method of education. The question is considering the digital gap in India, to what extent the digital model of education will be successful? Will the country like India be able to carry out or embrace teaching learning anytime, anywhere?

C) Impact on Higher Education Sector

Due to pandemic it is the higher education which might get significantly affected as it is a very crucial element of a countries economic prospect. The huge number of Indian students-second to China- get enrol themselves in abroad universities like the US, UK, China and Australia. These are the countries which are at present severely affected due to pandemic. Many of such learners have now been restricted from leaving these countries. If the situation will get worst, it might be possible that in long run, there will be decline in the demand for international higher education.

D) Impact on Placements and Employment Rate

Another crucial concern is employment and placement. As the global economy is witnessing an enormous deterioration for an indefinite period of time, many companies are on the verge of declaring an 'outplacement'. The students who have completed with their graduation recently may have the fear of withdrawal of job offers from corporates due to current lockdown. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economies have calculated employment shortage rate from 8.4% to 23% in the early month of April. Even for placements situation is same as for professional courses, technical institutions. In current scenario institutions are not even thinking about placement of their students as their first concern is how to get done with the examinations. Due to lockdown which has generated uncertainty, it might get resulted in slowing down internships and placements of students. The lower fee collection, delayed admissions can create hurdles for institutions in managing their capital.

E) Impact of Pandemic on Education Setup in India

The orthodox education system in India relentlessly follows physical or face to face teaching and learning even though a decade ago there was an introduction of audio-visual aids. Though many well-known universities and institutions in our country are presently offering such facilities, but many higher educational institutions are not yet fully equipped with such facilities in today's time. In such widened gap, some learners might face brunt viciously, which in turn can distress their entire academic year.

F) The Social and Economic Consequences

The closure of educational institutions mainly the schools have not only affected teachers, students and their parents but also it has an extensive social and economic consequences. According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development of Government of India, more than 11.59 crore school going children of our country are joined in government's mid-day meal scheme. This imposes an additional burden to those parents who are generally daily wagers and are from weak economic background. Hence the parents of such students are struggling hard to provide food for their family.

The uncertainty will further affect the fees payment of learners as the delay payment of fees will directly going to affect the revenue generation of schools, in turn affecting the financial condition of institutions in turn affecting the salary of teaching and non-teaching faculties in the future.

V. Initiatives of Govt. of India on education during Covid-19

To avoid the spread the pandemic, the Indian Government has adopted many preventive measures. Besides declaring a lockdown countrywide from 16 March 2020, The Central Board of Secondary Education adjourned exams of SSC and HSC since 18 March 2020 onwards in India. Considering the challenges of schools and colleges as they were shut, MHRD has come with the several arrangements line providing educational channels, online portals to continue learning. The social Medias like Whatsapp, Google Meet, Zoom, YouTube, face book live etc. The online portals like Swayam, Diksha, E-Pathshala app by NCERT provided audios, videos and e books for classes in multiple languages.

VI. Is Indian Education System Prepared to Handle the Change: The Future Challenges

One thing is very clear that, the COVID-19 pandemic has transmuted the teaching method from centuries-old chalk and duster model to one determined by technology. The Corona virus related disruption can give time to

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policymakers to rethink about the educational sector. The pandemic like this is pushing educators to really think about various e- learning solutions and solving the digital divide. It is again proved that technology will always to continue to play a crucial role in educating our upcoming generations. It is the right time to think about how we educate future generations due to the lockdown, where so many countries around the world have seen schools and educational institutions lockdown at the same time for the same reason with uncertainty. Hence there is great urge to grapple with the new innovative ways of interacting with our students away from lecture halls and typical classrooms.

There is a need to redefine what we require to teach and what we educators are preparing our pupils for. There is a need to form a strong Indian education system in the long term.

VII. Need to Reformulate the Role of Educators

The age old of impression of teacher as the knowledge-holder who teaches to their students' knowledge and education is no longer suited for 21st century education purpose. Thanks to computer and internet where knowledge is just one click away, students can easily access to knowledge today and can even learn technical skills through few more clicks on their computers, phones or tablets. Hence the prime role of educators will need to move towards being a facilitator and developing young mind's as responsible members of society.

VIII. Need to Instilled Life Skills

With the changing time and changing global environment, today's young generation require flexibility and adaptability, the skills which are very much essential to sail across through this pandemic. The employers or recruiters are looking for important soft skills or life skills such as communication, innovativeness, flexibility, team building along with emotional intelligence to mention few.

IX. CONCLUSION

Is our Indian Education System prepared to handle the change?

When we discuss how well Indian education system can handle the change, we need to understand that the online teaching in India is relatively new. The first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) was developed by University of Hong Kong in the year 2012 only. So one thing is clear that it will take time to Indian colleges and schools to adjust and handle the change and be open to the new methods and approach. In the pandemic of COVID-19, teaching and learning through online tools has become a necessity in India. The government by providing grants to set up new technology for helping in the preparation during and troublesome incidents. The new approach, innovativeness and the usage of new technology can only prevent our students and educational sector to suffer in future because of any such pandemic.

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