

EDUCATION DURING COVID- 19 PANDEMIC AND THE COMPOUNDING CHALLENGES IN INDIA



Prof. Baliram N. Gaikwad
English Professor

Abstract

The human history has witnessed most destructive pandemics cyclically. Outburst of plague, waves of tuberculosis, HIV, flue Pandemic, cholera, black death, and now the most recent Covid-19 pandemic began from Wuhan, China in December, 2019 had all brought

massive destructions. The traces of their massive annihilating impact on all sectors of life are clearly visible but the tragic impact of Covid-19 on higher education in India is deep rooted and demands further probe. Hence it is obligatory to understand the problems in education in India in the last three years to formulate a future policy to control the damage on priority basis. This paper construes the magnitude of the global issue of higher education with special reference to India during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has enormously affected higher education systems in India and we were forced to convert syllabus into an online format which in itself was an inherent challenge. The present study deliberates the execution of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Indian higher

education situation and examines the challenges experienced by both students and teachers during this period to explain their readiness for online education. To understand this issue with greater depth and understanding this research study employs qualitative method and analyses research papers, books, newspaper reports and reports of various agencies.

Keywords

Covid- 19 pandemic, Higher education, Challenges, India, Technology.

Education During Covid- 19 Pandemic and the Compounding Challenges in India

Introduction

More we unified, more we jeopardised, was the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. As it was not limited only to any specific national borders but across all borders, encompassing all citizens, all levels of education, and people of all gender and levels of income. Strikingly, it did not affect us all uniformly. Its impact was felt disproportionately. Corona or Covid 19 pandemic had swiped the entire globe and pushed us into the necessary evil called quarantine: an all-round emergency. This bizarre situation affected the most vulnerable hardest and crippled the education system globally. Geographically, culturally highly diversified Indian population was not an exception to get affected of this tiny virus Covid-19.

Bio

Prof. Baliram Gaikwad is a professor in English and has 23 years teaching and research experience. His classic translation of the Marathi book Fakira has been published by Penguin publication. Dr. Gaikwad is also an active academic administrator and has visited the USA, Russia, Malaysia and Singapore for academic purposes.

Research Objectives

Covid had deeply impacted all walks of life and education could not be exempted. In the multilingual Indian scenario challenges in learning were worse than one could expect. The present paper offers an opportunity to comprehend the educational issues in India during Covid.

Indian education system from KG to PG was so tragically impacted of this situation, that it will have its residue for much longer period.

India is home to one of the largest higher education systems in the world with over 1000 universities in 50000 colleges and institutions together catering to nearly 39 million students in India. Due to Covid 19 pandemic people were forced to stay home as a result million workers lost the jobs and the healthcare system came under stress and became handicapped itself, local businesses were at risk of closing permanently, the heat of recession reached almost all, the crisis laid bare the inequalities. This situation emanated the problems of having a sufficient number of teachers with desirable soft skills, self-motivation, tenaciousness, management skills and abilities to deal with the pandemic driven situation.

Objectives

The present study is focused on the following objectives.

- Underscore the global impact of Covid-19 on higher education sector.
- Understand the challenges in Higher education on India during and post covid.
- Enlighten on various online platforms emerged post covid situation.
- To offer insights on future horizon on higher education.

Methodology

This research work employs analysis of published research papers, various reports on Covid-19 pandemic. Collecting and collating information from different authentic websites, journals and e-contents relating to impact of Covid-19 on higher educational system of India.

Covid- 19 Pandemic and the Compounding Challenges in India

As a response to the government's call for lockdown, all universities hurriedly closed their premises and substituted traditional teaching to online learning. But this change posed challenge to learning and assessment equally. It also questioned on the worth of the university education, networking, social opportunities, educational content and examinations conducted during this time. To answer that universities will have to work on building fresh learning environments were introducing digital platform in education adding value to the teaching learning process and not becoming an impediment. But during lockdown this coordination was missing as a result many individuals in academia were struggling to deal with this new situation with a sudden move but due to technological limitations and insufficient experience struggled to handle it. This situation potentially affected the academic quality and students learning outcome. In spite of that these technologies can be effectively leveraged to keep classes rolling. The higher education landscape in India is also changing with the advent of new technology and many institutions were forced to offer online learning with many new courses on various online platforms. Public funding of education in various countries also got affected due to the pandemic crisis and the mobility of the international students too turned out to be binational issues.

Most seriously the way the children lost the instructional time delivered in school and college setting is irrecoverable. Hence effective measures were to be taken so that students learning during school closure would be continued on priority basis. But globally, it was found that the preparedness of the teachers to equip classrooms with digital learning was insufficient. The classroom sizes and critical parameters and the kind

of vocational education provided during the lockdown turn out to be a serious issue.

During lockdown, some students with privileged backgrounds, supported by their parents and eager and able to learn, could find their way to learning when school doors were closed. Those from disadvantaged backgrounds often remained shut out when their schools' doors were fastened. This crisis has exposed the many inadequacies and inequities in our education systems. From access to the broadband and computers needed for online education to the supportive environments needed to focus on learning, up to the misalignment between resources and needs. The lockdowns in response to COVID-19 have interrupted conventional schooling and colleges with nationwide closures in many countries. Students from the well to do family could arrange the resources to continue learning remotely through the Internet, television or radio but the students from the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups had no access to online learning resources. Teachers who had training in traditional mode of teaching and had no exposure to new pedagogical concepts found themselves helpless and unequipped to deal with the situation.

Relevance of eLearning during Covid 19

If anything could be rightly called as the lifeline of education during covid pandemic was undoubtedly remote learning. Among the available portions, it proved to be too useful that it will, unarguably, remain on the global horizon of education in long run. The platform of Digital technology consisting of YouTube, email, Google classroom, Google forms, zoom video calls, what's app, Online Teaching, PPT Slide shows, Virtual labs and many applications and software programs introduced by various companies during this time opened up completely new

landscapes of education proving the facilities for both students and teachers. It helped to coordinate, learn, record and assess the outcome equally. Technology has also provided the platform for personalised learning styles with precision and high level of accuracy.

MOOC Courses

Globally, one of the striking things observed in education in last three years was availability and marketing of numerous free of charge Online course from language learning to cooking, science, home science, origami and all such online course were offered by the internationally top-ranking universities to the local colleges. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) were also made available for all. It provided a reasonably priced and elastic way to acquire new skills, advance once career and instil high quality educational skills are planned under MOOC courses. There was surge in opting MOOC in India too and Indian higher education institutes too encouraged students to undertake these useful courses for change in career, corporate learning and training.

Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic has enormously affected higher education systems in India and we were forced to convert syllabus into an online format which in itself was an inherent challenge. The intense probes reflect the execution of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Indian higher education situation and underscored the challenges experienced by both students and teachers during this period to explain their readiness for online education. It is understood that the challenging

areas like computer literacy level, the electronic environment and support, the preparedness of academic staff and students for online learning, the psychological preparedness could have been considered before replacing conventional teaching learning methods and have played a damaging role. The students seem to have insufficient motivation and knowledge and IT skills in the use of e-learning. Yet some positive observations were noted that the active teachers were motivated and successfully maintained high level of interest among students in academics and knowledge gaining. But many have observed that sometimes the teachers had merely conducted lectures on video platforms such as Zoom, Google meet and others without a dedicated online learning platform. Many teachers appointed on temporary basis lost their jobs and some were working under pressure of losing the job also impacted the performance of the teachers in the difficult phase of covid. Many heart wrenching stories of the difficulties of the students in rural areas and they were forced to give exam going on the top of mountains as to get the network access.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 has deeply impacted education system across all the countries and so did in India. India the second largest populated country in the world also had to undergo that rough journey of handling situation ranging from health to education hence, like all countries India too grappled in handling the situation. But the sudden transition of a classroom from real to virtual, curriculum from text book to digitized and teacher to digital platform was highly challenging to implement across all section of society

considering the inequities were very challenging. But the higher education landscape in India is fully equipped with technology driven classes and courses like MOOC and many others too have opened an alternative window to learning.

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