Problem of accessing equal educational opportunity to all during COVID-19 pandemic with special reference to Indian context and recommendation to authority for overcoming this challenge.

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ABSTRACT

Education is panacea for disease of illiteracy. Education is continuous and lifelong process. The longer we live, the better we learn. So the role of education is very crucial in our life. COVID-19 pandemic has pause this process. Most of the students are not getting the opportunity for availing education during this pandemic. We should find alternative for dealing with this situation. For finding out the solution of the problem present research is conducted. In this research paper researcher followed descriptive research method, purposive sampling is used for collecting data from government data base, newspaper and article. Result and finding shows that infrastructure, Electricity, availability of smart devices are barrier for conducting and availing the online learning. To deal with the situation researcher recommended many points to the authorities.

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, online learning, Equal Educational Opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

"*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*

-Nelson Mandela

We know the important of education in our life. To respect the important government take many initiative for providing education to all like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Right to Education (RTE-2009), Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) and especially PWD Act-1995 for ensuring right of Person with Disability. But still there are problem to availing education during lockdown period due to Pandemic of COVID-19. For overcoming from this situation and providing continuous education many institution organize online learning platform for continuing the process of education. But for country like India where huge number of people live, it's difficult to meet the needs of all the student. Most of the students don't have internet accessibility and not familiar with the online learning. This thing create pause in students learning during lockdown period. We should face the challenge and prepare our self for this types of situation. Because we never know in the future such kind of thing may happen. To face this challenges we should prepare our self for future life.

RATIONALE OF THIS RESEARCH PAPER

Education is the basic right of all the children and which is ensuring by our constitution. Life without education is like day without light. Human civilization are changing day by day through acquisition of education. But recent time the process of getting formal as well as non-formal education are getting hamper due to COVID-19 pandemic (Corona virus disease December 2019). For continuing the process of education institution take initiative for dealing with the situation by organizing online classroom and virtual class room. But it's not working in most of the area of India. Because for accessing online learning require digital device but the reality is that most of the student don't have digital device which is require for attaining online class. For that reason the universal accessibility of education get hamper. In this paper researcher focus on, to find out the solution of present occurrence. Keeping all the thing in the mind researcher find justification to write a paper on Problem of accessing equal educational opportunity to all during COVID-19 pandemic with special reference to India context and recommendation to authority for overcoming this challenge. After study the literature review researcher found that no such attempt had been done in the past especially in this topic.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PAPER

The current research paper is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To understand the problems of Indian education for providing equal educational opportunity and participation to all during COVID-19 Pandemic.

2. To give recommendation to the authority for ensuring equal educational opportunity and participation to all during COVID-19 Pandemic.
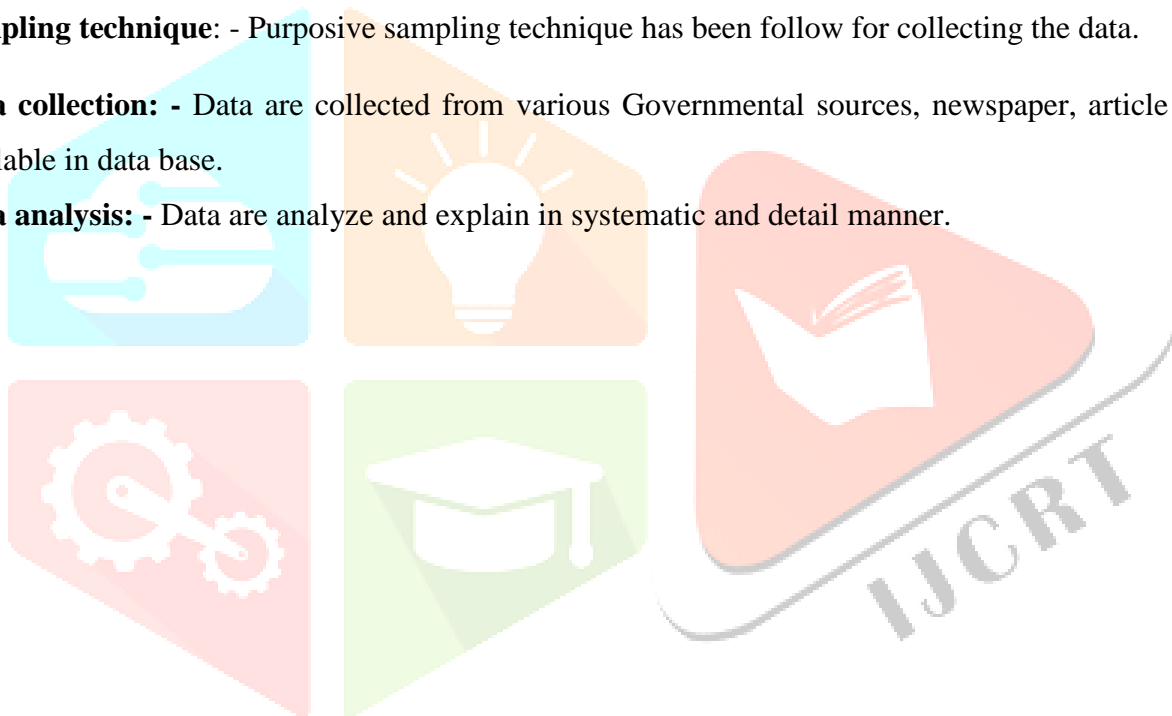
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Method: - Descriptive research method has been followed for this research paper. In this study the researcher analysis the different aspect of problem of online learning in the India.

Sampling technique: - Purposive sampling technique has been follow for collecting the data.

Data collection: - Data are collected from various Governmental sources, newspaper, article which are available in data base.
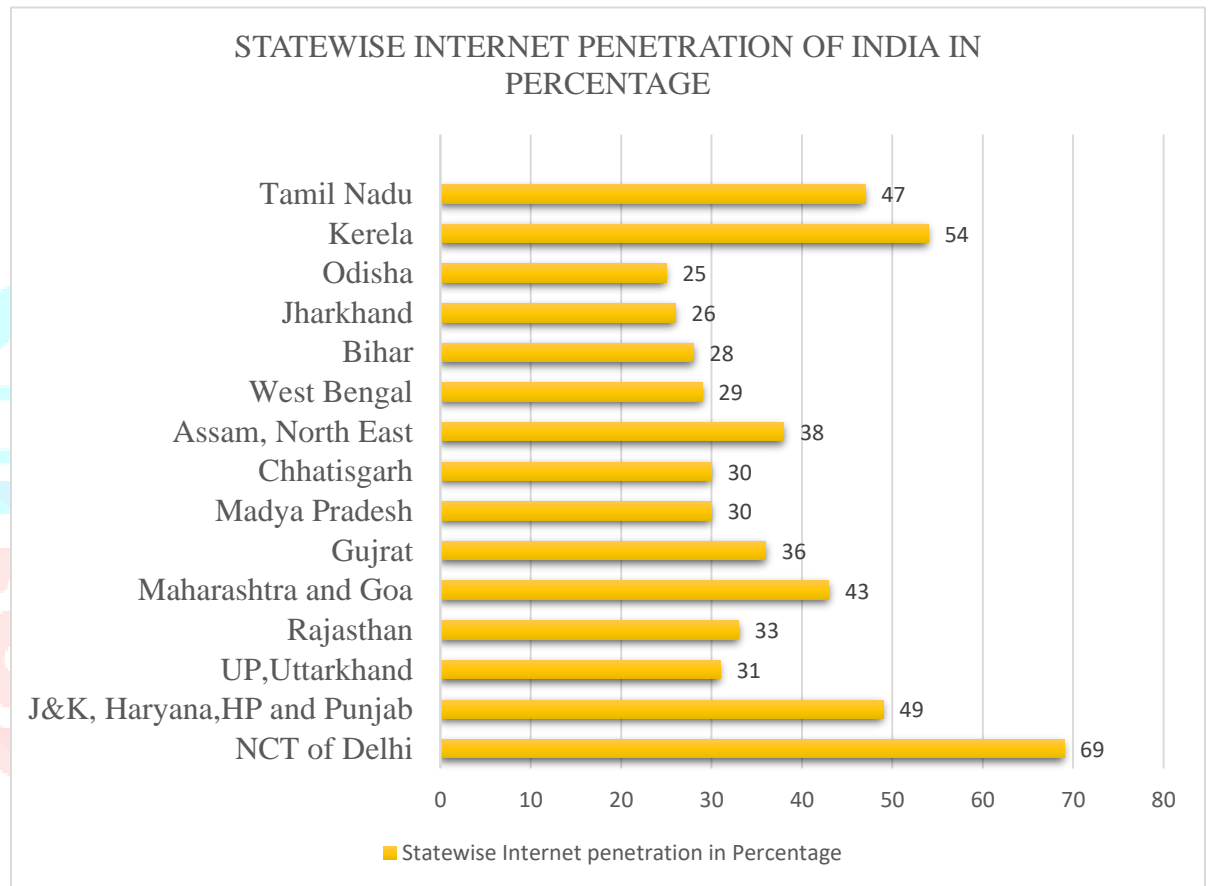
Data analysis: - Data are analyze and explain in systematic and detail manner.
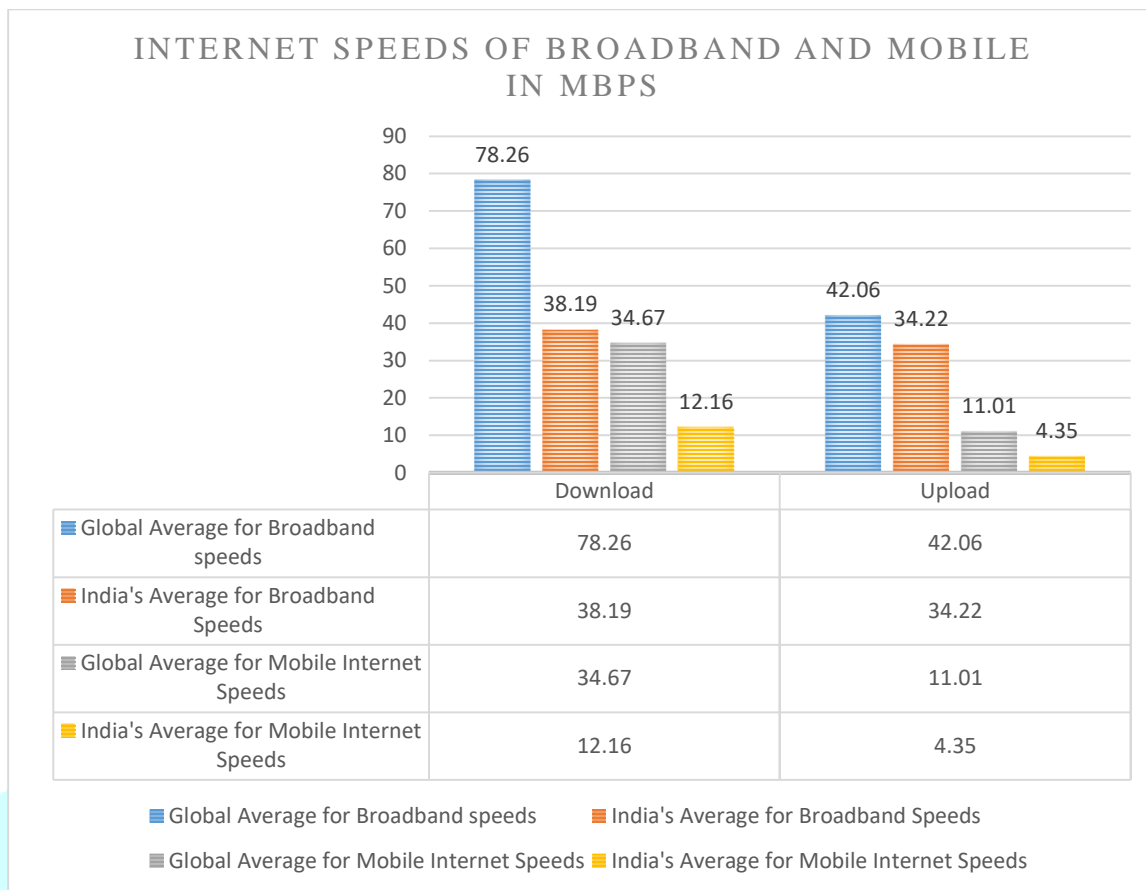
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Objective -1: To understand the problems of Indian education for providing equal educational opportunity and participation to all during COVID-19 Pandemic.

1. **Internet accessibility and penetration: -** Internet is require to avail the online learning without proper internet facility there are no possibility to access the online learning. But due to the lack of accessibility to internet most of the student are not getting the chance to attain the online classes as well as the online courses.
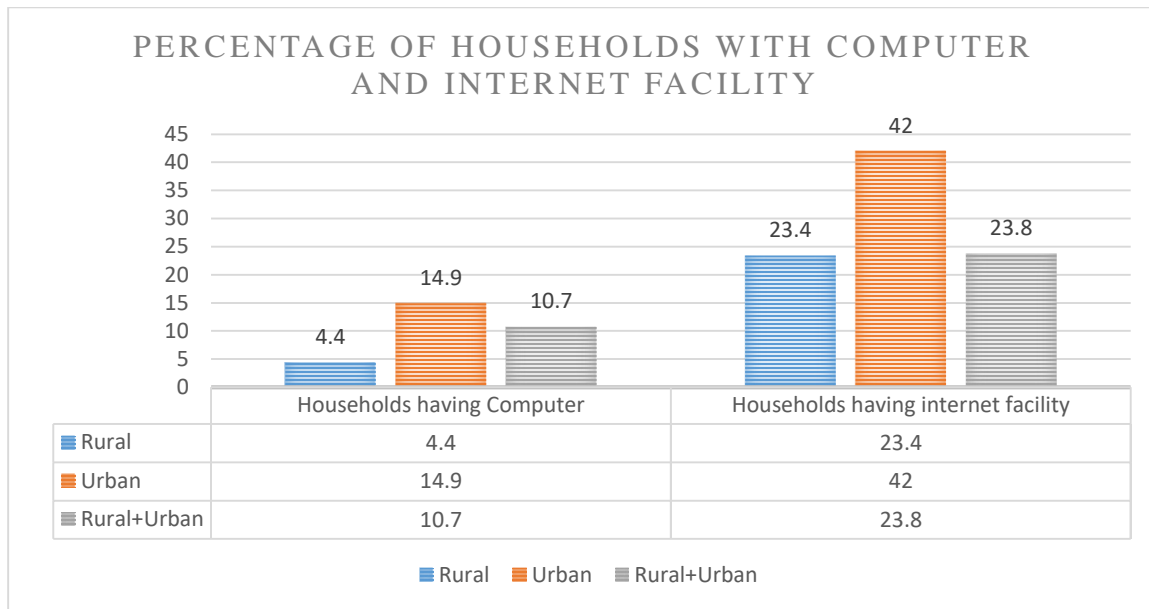

STATEWISE INTERNET PENETRATION OF INDIA IN PERCENTAGE

State	Statewise Internet penetration in Percentage
Tamil Nadu	47
Kerela	54
Odisha	25
Jharkhand	26
Bihar	28
West Bengal	29
Assam, North East	38
Chhatisgarh	30
Madya Pradesh	30
Gujrat	36
Maharashtra and Goa	43
Rajasthan	33
UP,Uttarkhand	31
J&K, Haryana,HP and Punjab	49
NCT of Delhi	69

Source: - Internet and Mobile Associations of India (IAMAI). India Internet 2019.

2. **Poor speed and connectivity**: - Speed Test, a site give rank mobile and fixed broadband speeds from around the world on monthly basis. In its report shown that COVID-19 pandemic put impact on speeds of internet around the world which was updated on April. In this report it's showed that 6% speeds is decline in Broadband speeds and 18% in mobile internet speeds compared to the month of March. As per June report India's current broad band speed is an average 38.19 mbps for downloading and 34.22 for uploading and mobile internet downloading average speed is 12.16 mbps and uploading speed 4.35. Which is less than global average. Below data are given-
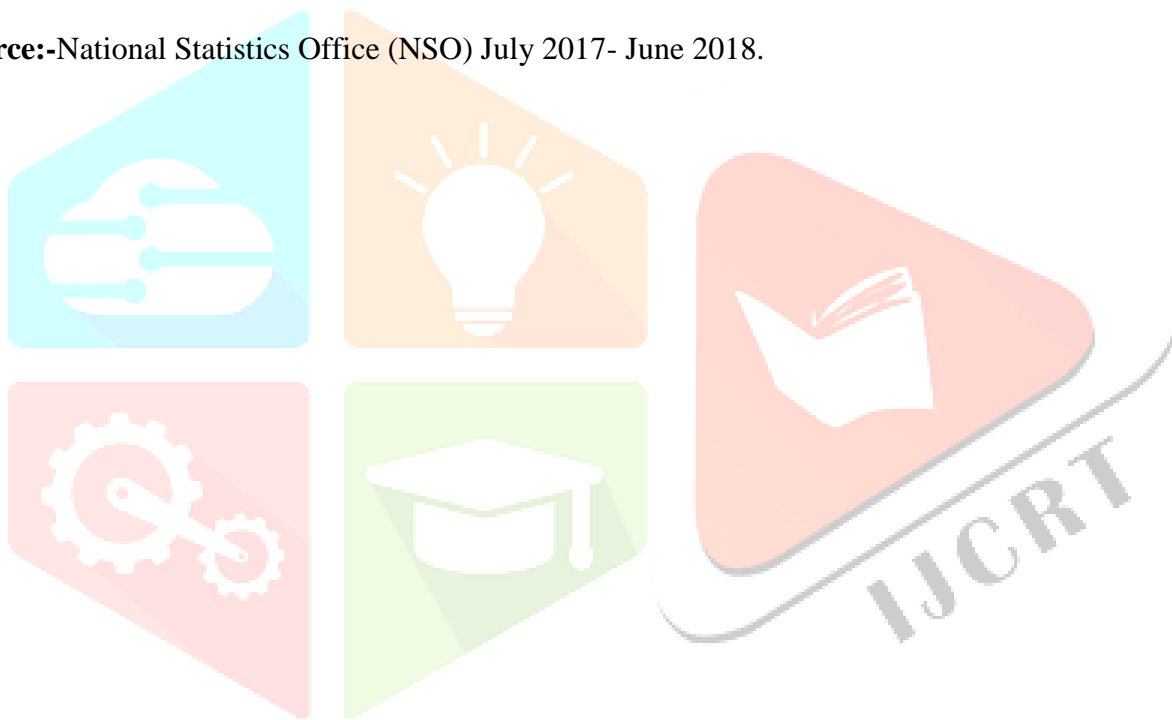
INTERNET SPEEDS OF BROADBAND AND MOBILE IN MBPS

	Download	Upload
Global Average for Broadband speeds	78.26	42.06
India's Average for Broadband Speeds	38.19	34.22
Global Average for Mobile Internet Speeds	34.67	11.01
India's Average for Mobile Internet Speeds	12.16	4.35

Sources: - Speed test Global Index, June 2020.

3. **The Digital Divide:** - The digital divide is another problem for India which effect across all the class, gender, region or place of residence. Research found that among the poorest 20% households, only 2.7% have access to a computer and 8.9% have access to internet facilities. On the hand among the top 20% households, the ration percentage are 27.6% and 50.5% approximately. At the same time peaceful environment and a separate room are not available for learning.

4. **Availability of devices of Household:** For availing the online classes require device like smartphones and computer. Study found that the number is quite low. Those student who don't have smart device generally use their parents device between two parents child prefer mother one. But data showed that availability of smart device among households is low. below data are provided-

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH COMPUTER AND INTERNET FACILITY

	Households having Computer	Households having internet facility
Rural	4.4	23.4
Urban	14.9	42
Rural+Urban	10.7	23.8

Rural   Urban   Rural+Urban

Source:-National Statistics Office (NSO) July 2017- June 2018.
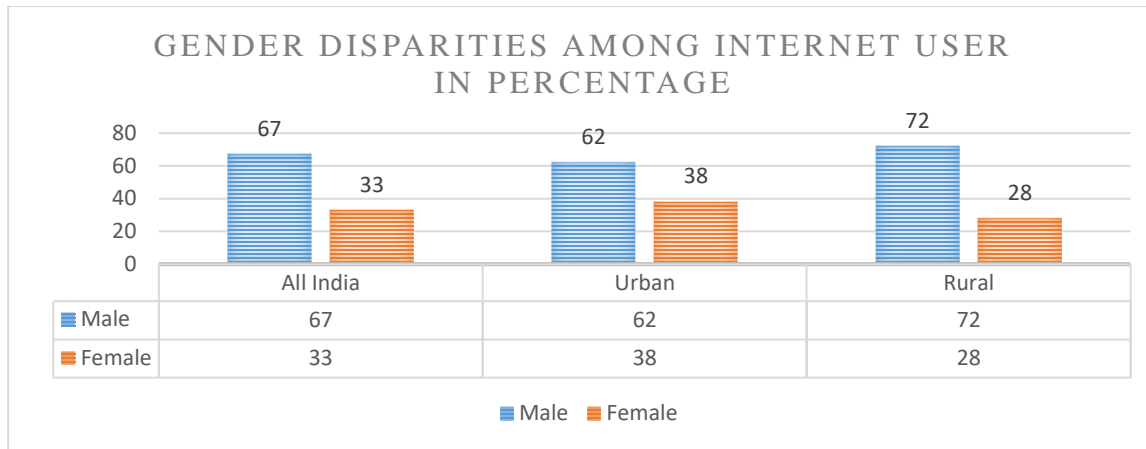
For this survey, a computer included devices like, desktop computer, laptop computer, notebook, netbook, palmtop, and tablet (or similar handheld devices). However, Smartphone was not considered as computer.

Percentage of households with computer and internet facility for different state						
State	Rural		Urban		Rural + Urban	
	Computer	Internet facility	Computer	Internet facility	Computer	Internet facility
Andra Pradesh	1.5	10.4	11.6	29.5	4.8	16.6
Assam	3.7	12.1	30.8	46.9	7.5	17.0
Bihar	2.7	12.5	20.0	38.6	4.6	15.4
Chhattisgarh	3.2	10.6	22.0	34.6	6.9	15.2
Delhi			34.7	55.8	34.9	55.7
Gujarat	4.4	21.1	20.1	49.1	11.2	33.2
Haryana	5.9	37.1	29.5	55.4	14.7	43.9
Himachal Pradesh	10.5	48.6	28.7	70.6	12.9	51.5
Jammu & Kashmir	3.5	28.7	16.0	57.7	6.6	35.8
Jharkhand	1.3	11.9	15.6	40.2	4.4	18.0
Karnataka	2.0	8.3	22.9	33.5	10.7	18.8
Kerala	20.1	46.9	27.5	56.4	23.5	51.3
Madhya Pradesh	2.3	9.7	17.2	35.4	6.1	16.3
Maharashtra	3.3	18.5	27.4	52.0	14.3	33.7
Odisha	1.8	5.8	17.2	31.2	4.3	10.0
Punjab	9.4	39.4	26.7	57.1	16.2	46.4
Rajasthan	6.4	18.5	26.6	49.9	11.7	26.7
Tamil Nadu	11.6	14.4	24.7	24.8	18.1	19.6
Telangana	1.6	9.9	17.6	41.9	9.1	24.9
Uttarakhand	7.0	35.2	32.5	64.3	14.3	43.5
Uttar Pradesh	4.0	11.6	22.3	41.0	8.2	18.4
West Bengal	3.3	7.9	23.0	36.0	9.4	16.5
All India	4.4	14.9	23.4	42.0	10.7	23.8
Note: Figures for rural Delhi is not presented separately. However, "rural +urban for Delhi includes", 'rural' also.						

Source:-National Statistics Office (NSO) July 2017- June 2018.

5. **Availability of Smartphone among Indians: -** In 2018 pew research conducted a study on smartphone ownership among Indians. In this study they found only 24% of Indian have smartphone. In this study around 64% of Indian respondents who were part of Global survey in 2018 owned a mobile phone.

6. **Gender disparities among internet user: -** Data found that gender disparities is there in internet user. It's true that child those don't have smartphone they generally uses and prefer their mother's phone. In this situation female are require more internet accessibility but data are not favorable with situation. Here the data-

GENDER DISPARITIES AMONG INTERNET USER IN PERCENTAGE

	All India	Urban	Rural
Male	67	62	72
Female	33	38	28

Source: - Internet And Mobile Associations of India (IAMAI). India Internet 2019.

7. **Infrastructural barrier:** - In the country like India where immerse number of school, college and university are situated. Most of the institution don't have proper infrastructure for providing online learning. For building proper infrastructure required huge amount of money. But it not easy to spending huge amount of money for develop online learning infrastructure in very quick time. But government take many initiative to overcome from this situation and it will take much time. Due to the infrastructural problem, it become difficult to organized online learning in country like India.

8. **Adapting to new Technology:** - In the theory of 'Law of exercise' by E.L. Thorndike. He mention the important of exercise in our life. More we exercise and more we learn. In India Many teachers have never taught online. Many students have never learned online. For providing online learning more discipline is required. Those who are not explore with modern technology face trouble. Now it very difficult for them to organizing online learning. So it is one of the problem for student to availing online learning.

9. **Parent's awareness:** - Parents awareness and sincerity play a vital role in their child learning. Many research revealed that especially in the rural area the parents are not aware about their child education. Even they don't know about their child educational progress due the limited knowledge about educational process. They not give the important of their child needs. So it is another reason that create problem in online learning. On the other hand they do not prefers online learning they thing how can teaching and learning possible through online due to their lack of knowledge about online learning.

10. **Financial limitation:** - From 1964-66 Kothari commission to New Education Policy 2020 recommended Government should spends 6% of their GDP but it's still in document only. Financial incapability in one of the reason which is become a barrier in building proper infrastructure. The annual public investment in education in India over the last 5 years has been hovering around 3% of GDP which is low as per requirement is concern. On the other hand for accessing online learning require data. But it quite difficult for the people who are daily earner in India where approximately 20-30 Crores people are daily earner. It is quite difficult for them to accessing the internet as well as the digital device which are require for online learning. Even though the price of data is cheaper in India compare to other country. But still have a problem to accessing internet.

11. **Learning Environment:** - For learning proper environment is require. But in the country like India where 130+ crores people live and we see in the rural and slum area 4-5 people live in single room. So it is difficult for them to accessing the online learning in crowd environment. In many family home environment is not suitable for learning and family disturbance is occur. Interestingly we see number of student stay out site home for getting the learning environment. They usually use school, college and University library for their learning. But due to COVID-19 pandemic school, college and university are close. In this situation they face problem.

12. **Electrification and frequent power cuts:** - We live in 21st century still there are many village where proper electric facility is not available and frequent power cuts is common. We know for managing the digital device require electricity. Data from the Mission Antyodaya, a nationwide survey of villages conducted by the ministry of rural development, found that 20% of India's households received less than 8 hours of electricity only 47% received more than 12 hours. It also a problem to accessing online learning.

13. **Psychological influence:** - We are the human being and we have emotional and mental aspect. Technology cannot replace the teacher at all. It can be play a supporting role in this process. In online learning teacher can see only virtual appearance of students but teacher not able to understand student's emotional and mental condition. Different students have different level of understanding and some problem which cannot be solve through online mode where the time and resources are limited. That why we can say that online learning have some limitation. But we should not forget the important of the online learning in present context.

14. **Student's willingness about online learning:** Some time we see that some students participate in online class but due to their unwillingness to attaining the class they just join the class but they do not participate actively. So it is difficult for the teacher to know whether the students actively participate in the class or not. So we should to be find out the solution of the problem.

15. **Slow administrative process:** - To organizing any academic course it require approval. For getting the approval of any course we should go through various administrative process. The process of getting approval is quite difficult and time consuming. So authority should take positive action in this regards.

16. **Policy regarding online learning**: - For doing any work first require a frame work or blue prints. But in India there are no policy properly define about online learning. So it face problem for implementation. So we should introduce proper policy otherwise the process of online education will be hamper.

17. **No unified Curriculum**: - Curriculum is the overall learning framework for the students. In the curriculum all the learning material are included what to teach and what not to teach it all are the part of curriculum. In India we see the curriculum of one university differs from the curriculum of another university. There are no unified curriculum available. So some time we see that when student take one course in online mode from one university and other university did not recognize his achievement due to the different in curriculum. So we should take this problem into the consideration.

18. **Health related Issue**: - In resent data suggest that many students complaining that they face physical and mental problem in online learning some students complain headache, shoulder pain, eye problem and insomnia etc. So it is another issue in availing online class for long time.

Objective-2: To give recommendation to the authority for ensuring equal educational opportunity and participation to all during COVID-19 Pandemic.

1. **Develop techno-pedagogical skill among the teachers: -** In this era of COVID-19 we understand that techno-pedagogical skill very much require for teachers. Techno-pedagogical skill are those skill which are require for conducting online classes. If teacher are not familiar with techno-pedagogical skill then it became very difficult for them to organize online classes. Therefore institution should give scope to our teacher for exercising and developing techno-pedagogical skill. After that it will be very easy for them to organized online classes.

2. **Promote digital literacy:** -Digital literacy is in demand at present time. For promoting the digital literacy Government of India propose "Digital India Campaign". But reality is that most of the people are not familiar with digital platform. People are not literate with digital platform due to their accessibility and awareness about it. The phenomenon also a barrier for online education in India. So Government should focus in this area.

3. **Newspaper can be used for learning purpose: -** Newspaper can be the best option for reaching to everyone. Newspaper is mostly available to every place and it is cost effective. The resource person can deliver learning material through newspaper. In Newspaper there should be a section for learning material. This technique can be very useful for the country like India.

4. **Class through television channel and radio: -** Radio and Television can be another option for learner. Because the reach of radio and television is impressive. To understand the important MHRD introduce "SWAYAM PRABHA" a branch of 32 DTH channel with 24×7 service students can learn as per their convenience and "GYAN VANI" is an educational FM Radio station. But the contents in this platform are very limited. So need more in number as per courses and faculties is concern.

5. **Online learning portal: -** After understanding the important of online learning MHRD introduce "SWAYAM" (Study Web Active Learning for Young Aspiring Mind) Portal collaboration with Microsoft. But awareness about SWAYAM among the people is less. So Government should encourage our generation about the "SWAYAM" portal and courses.

6. **Give open access to learning material:** - Price of some quality book is very high. At the same time some students face problem to purchasing this books. So open access learning material can be very useful in this regards.

7. **Barrier free access to Internet:** - Even though the price of data is low in India. But still some people do not have accessibility to internet due to their financial condition and internet penetration rate. At the same time we see internet penetration rate in India village quite low and poor connectivity is also an issue. It create barrier in teaching learning process authority should take this into consideration and should provide barrier free access to internet.

8. **Fast forward the administrative process: -** In Indian administrative system regarding online education is quite rigid. MHRD have propose many policy but not properly achieve as far implementation is concern. It also a problem for Indian education to providing equal accessibility as far online education is concern. Indian education System need to be Flexible as far online Education is concern. So authority should open the door for online learning. Meanwhile it will play a supportive role in teaching learning process.

9. **One nation one curriculum policy: -** In Indian context we see curriculum of different state different from each other. So, different in curriculum is one of the barrier for providing online learning to vast population like India due to different objective which is mention in the curriculum. Institution face problem for providing Credit as well as some Institution not give validity to online learning certificate. So we should take this into consideration and we should unified our curriculum in national level. At the same time one nation one curriculum approach should be adopted.

10. **Adopt Flip learning: -** This COVID-19 Era give us strong message to our educational authority that flip learning can be very useful for present education scenario. In flip learning we can divide our learning into two mode online and offline. In this regards 25 percent course can be cover through online mode and rest of 75 percent can be cover through Classroom tradition way.

11. **Develop infrastructure for online learning: -** For providing online education it's require proper infrastructure to delivering the learning. So we should develop our infrastructure as per requirement. Keeping this thing in the mind some institution provide free internet for learning through online

mode which is available in institutions only. We should appreciate this move towards online learning but the number is very low.

12. **Providing digital device to needy students:** - Most of the student in India they don't have android Smartphone and other digital device which is require for online learning. Meanwhile those are not able to avail the online learning. So Government should provide some digital device to those whom it require. We see Government take initiative to providing free laptop to research Scholar. But it not get implement properly. Even though it's not fully possible due to financial issue but still Government can take small steps towards it.

13. **Financial Assistants:** - Extra financial assistants should need to give to the institutions for exercise digital atmosphere in teaching learning process. Authority should give financial autonomy to Institution for managing their learning in digital mode. As per the recommendation of New Education Policy 2020 Government should spend 6% of their GDP in Education.

14. **Mental support to the Students:** - During lockdown period students are going through stress and anxiety which cause depression. To dealing with this situation MHRD Ministry introduce "MANODARPAN", a portal which aim to provide psycho-social supports and counseling to students for their mental health and well-being. Role of parents during pandemic period is very crucial for maintaining their child mental health.

CONCLUSION

With the existing digital divide, expand of online education will not work properly. It increase inequity in educational outcomes. If the governments continue online education without taking any necessary alternative measures, online learning could translate go through into wider educational inequalities among students. After analysis all the aspect related to online education in India we can say that there are problems in this process but we know that every problem have possible solution same with online learning. In the process of implementing the online learning we face challenges like Electricity, Lack of digital equipment and Adaptability with the technology and so on. So we should face the challenge as we face many challenge in past and bring out the best of it. In the country like India which is also known as the country of Engineers and IITian for them it quite easy to build digital infrastructure for learning. So we will progress and we will bring the best as always. But it just a beginning of new era of education.

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