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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA

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Abstract: Covid-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted every aspect of human life. As the covid-19 spread across the globe alarm bells are sounding in the education sector too. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced schools and colleges to shut down temporarily and it has a great impact on education system from continuous running functions. According to UNESCO Report more than 157 crore students across 191 countries severely impacted by closure of educational institution due to this Covid-19.The impact of Covid-19 on education sectors is a debatable issue now in worldwide. Closing universities and cancelling classes have become a covid-19 reality in many countries in the world, leading to huge anxiety and uncertainty. The education sectors of India as well as world are badly affected by this. It has enforced the world wide lock down creating very bad effect on the students' life. Around 32 crore learners stopped to move schools/colleges, all educational activities halted in India. The outbreak of COVID-19 has advised us that change is inevitable. It has worked as a catalyst for the educational institutions to grow and opt for platforms and techniques, which have not been used before. The education sector has been fighting to survive the crises with a different approach and digitizing the challenges to wash away the threat of the pandemic. The purpose of this paper is to identify the positive and negative impact of covid-19 pandemic on education sector in India. This paper will provide a critical reflection on opportunities and challenges for internatiolization and will also focus how higher education system across the globe learns from each other to protect themselves from new challenges of covid-19. This paper will try to find out the revival strategy from this pandemic which will help this sector to get back their previous glory and necessary place as before.

***Index Terms*: Pandemic, anxiety, uncertainty, covid-19, digitizing.**

1. INTRODUCTION:

Since its foundation, universities, like any other social institution, have had to face devastating epidemics that have impacted their daily functioning. And they have survived and continued their mission even with their doors closed. In 1665, Cambridge University closed due to a black plague epidemic that struck England. Isaac Newton had to return to Woolsthorpe Manor, his home. One day, sitting in the garden, he saw an apple fall that inspired him to formulate his theory of universal gravitation or, at least, he told William Stukeley who included this anecdote in Newton's biography that he would publish after his death (Stukeley, 1752). The moral of this story is that, in as much as the doors of higher education institutions have to be closed, academic activities continue where there are spirits committed to science and training, and, sometimes, with surprising results. Incidentally, the University of Cambridge has closed its doors now in 2020, for the second time in its history.

The pandemic Covid-19 has spread over whole world and compelled the human society to maintain social distancing. It has significantly disrupted the education sector which is a critical determinant of a country's economic future. On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) proposed an official name of the virus as COVID-19, an acronym for Coronavirus disease 2019. It was first identified in Wuhan, China on December 31, 2019. First death by COVID-19 was the 61-year old man in Wuhan, China on January 11, 2020. WHO declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The first case of the COVID19 pandemic in India was reported on 30 January 2020 in the state of Kerala and the affected had a travel history from Wuhan, China. The first death due to COVID-19 was reported in India on March 12, 2020. It has affected more than 4.5 million peoples worldwide (WHO). According to the UNESCO report, it had affected more than 90% of total world's student population during mid April 2020 which is now reduced to nearly 70% during May 2020. Outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted more than 120 crores of students and youths across the planet. In India, more than 32 crores of students have been affected by the various restrictions and the nationwide lockdown for COVID-19. As per the UNESCO report, about 14 crores of primary and 13 crores of secondary students are affected which are two mostly affected levels in India. After observing the corona virus pandemic

situation the WHO advised to maintain social distancing as the first prevention step. So, every country started the action of lockdown to separate the contaminated people. The education sectors including schools, colleges and universities became closed. Classes suspended and all examinations of schools, colleges and universities including entrance tests were postponed indefinitely. Thus, the lockdown destroyed the schedules of every student, Colleges and HEI's. Though it is an exceptional situation in the history of education, COVID-19 has created many opportunities to come out of the rigorous classroom teaching model to a new era of digital World. The lockdown has compelled rather we can say that the situation has forced many educational institutions to cancel their classes, examinations, internships etc. and to choose the online modes. Initially, the educators and the students were quite confused and didn't understand how to cope up with the situation of this sudden crisis that compelled closure of the educational activities. But latter on all realized that the lockdown has taught so many lessons to manage with the emergence of such pandemics which has become a very positive side in this sector. Thus, COVID-19 has created many challenges and opportunities for the educational institutes to strengthen their technological knowledge and infrastructure. The lockdown has given them a ray of hope for teachers and students to continue their educational activities through online. The teachers assigned work to students via internet, delivered lectures through live video conferencing using different Apps like Zoom, Google meet, Facebook, YouTube, and Skype etc. There are Whatsapp groups of guardians, teachers, students and parents for affective communication through which they are always in touch to share their difficulties through this e-medium. In a nation like China that practices a considerably more centralization system, a change to digital learning may be simpler. Even in a nation like the U.S.A, there are some low-pay students who don't approach broad bands and unable to use computerized learning arrangement (Study Abroad Life). The same is the situation that happens with India where not every student is well equipped with the high-speed internet and digital gadgets and are along these lines of suffer. Numerous advanced educational institutions in India are not also equipped with digital facilities right now to cope up with sudden change from traditional education set up to the online education system.

The decision to temporarily close HEIs was prompted by the principle that large gatherings of persons constitute a serious risk to safeguarding public health during a pandemic. HEIs and indeed all educational institutions tend to close their doors in situations where some form of confinement or quarantine has been legislated. In Europe today, the only country not following the recommendation to suspend classroom activities is Sweden. In the United States, state authorities have mandated closure but the vast majority of campuses had already closed, particularly those of large public and private universities had closed weeks before the government's intervention. As the pandemic spreads, which seems inevitable, the remaining countries will also institute mandatory measures to suspend face-to-face activities for all educational institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW :

Jena (2020) stated in his research paper "Impact of Pandemic COVID-19 on Education in India" that like every sector in India has suffered a huge loss due to this pandemic and education sector is not the exceptions. Researcher also emphasized the positive side and negative side of this pandemic and government initiative to cope up this situation and make a proper atmosphere for stakeholders of this Sector.

Report issued by IESALC (2020) expressed the fact through their report named "COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow: Impact analysis, policy responses and recommendations" that how different stakeholders of this sector has reacted in this situation and discussed with proper data steps taken by different Nations in whole world. This Report also helps to analysis the situation through worldwide.

Report issued by Parthenon (2020) showcased in their report called "COVID-19 Assessing the impact on education sector and looking ahead" that stakeholder's view in different situation and government initiative which helps to explore the situation much better.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY :

i) To know the current situation of this pandemic and its positive impact of Covid-19 on education sector.
ii) To find out the negative impact of Covid-19 of this sector and to explore the corrective steps to overcome the negative impact.
iii) To know the various measures taken by Government of India for education Sector during this pandemic.

4. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY :

This study is based on secondary data. Data have been collected from different secondary sources like websites, Report by leading organisation, E-library and blogs, published research paper.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY :

i) Time constrain is the main problem to prepare this paper.
ii) No primary data that is direct feedback of stakeholder's considered for this research.
iii) Only Indian perspective is considered here.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY :

Coronavirus pandemic has significantly disrupted various sectors in India including oil and gas, automobiles, aviation, agriculture, retail, etc. We can't ignore that hardly a sector would remain unaffected by the crisis. The impact may be more or less. Same is with the education sector in India. Let us find out the impact of coronavirus on education in India with some possible solutions.

As we know that due to coronavirus pandemic the state governments across the country temporarily started shutting down schools and colleges. As per the present situation, there is an uncertainty when schools and colleges will reopen and start their daily activities. No doubt, this is the crucial time for education sector because entrance tests of several universities and competitive examinations are held during this period. Along with them how can we forget about board examinations, nursery school admissions, etc.? Another thing we have to consider that whole system is in distress.

The immediate solution of coronavirus is necessary or if like these days pass then closure of schools and colleges does not even have short term impact in India but can even cause far-reaching economic and societal consequences. We have to explore that due to the closedown of educational institutes it is estimated to affect around 600 million learners across the world. For this purpose some measures taken by the educational institutes are as follows:

- Closed schools
- Postponed or rescheduled the examinations
- Cleaning and sanitization of premises.
- Consideration of long term uncertainty etc.

Positive impact of COVID-19 on education:

Though the outbreak of COVID-19 has created many negative impacts on education, educational institutions of India have accepted the challenges and trying their best to provide seamless support services to the students during the pandemic. Indian education system got the opportunity for transformation from traditional system to a new era. The following points may be considered as the positive impacts.

- **Move towards Blended Learning:** COVID-19 has accelerated adoption of digital technologies to deliver education. Educational institutions moved towards blended mode of learning. It encouraged all teachers and students to become more technology savvy. New ways of delivery and assessments of learning opened immense opportunities for a major transformation in the area of curriculum development and pedagogy. It also gives access to large pools of learners at a time.
- **Rise in use of Learning Management Systems:** Use of learning management systems by educational institutions became a great demand. It opened a great opportunity for the companies those have been developing and strengthening learning management systems for use educational institutions.
- **Enhance the use of soft copy of learning material:** In lockdown situation students were not able to collect the hard copies of study materials and hence most of the students used of soft copies materials for reference.
- **Improvement in collaborative work-** There is a new opportunity where collaborative teaching and learning can take on new forms. Collaborations can also happen among faculty/teachers across the world to benefit from each other.
- **Rise in online meetings-** The pandemic has created a massive rise in teleconferencing, virtual meetings, webinars and e-conferencing opportunities
- **Enhanced Digital Literacy:** The pandemic situation induced people to learn and use digital technology and resulted in increasing the digital literacy.
- **Improved the use of electronic media for sharing information:** Learning materials are shared among the students easily and the related queries are resolved through email, SMS, phone calls and using different social Medias like WhatsApp or Facebook.
- **Worldwide exposure:** Educators and learners are getting opportunities to interact with peers from around the world. Learners adapted to an international community.
- **Better time Management**: Students are able to manage their time more efficiently in online education during pandemics.
- **Demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL):** During the pandemic situation most of the students preferred ODL mode as it encourages self-learning providing opportunities to learn from diverse resources and customized learning as per their needs.

Considering the above positive impact of Covid-19 on Education sector, following figure (Fig-1) showed that mixing response have been accepted from different stakeholders. So level of positivity is under a big question marks.

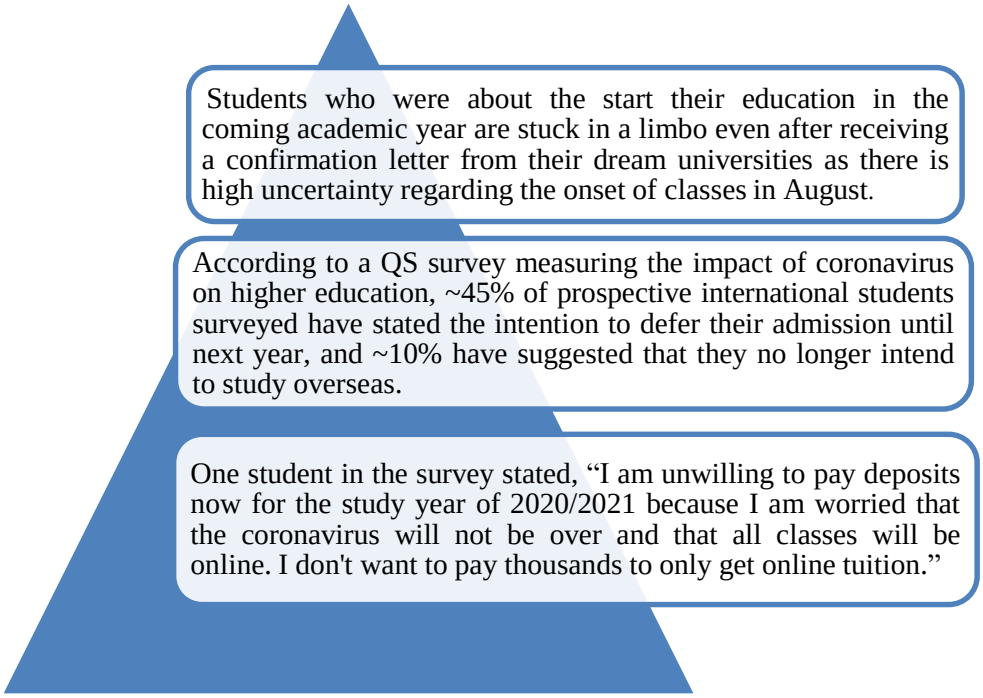

Figure – 1: Impact on Students due to COVID - 19

Source: EY-Parthenon Report, April 2020.

While for the current batch of students, universities across the world have shifted to online classes, most uncertainty has been around the next intake of students. There has been varied response across universities. Some of the major steps taken by universities include:

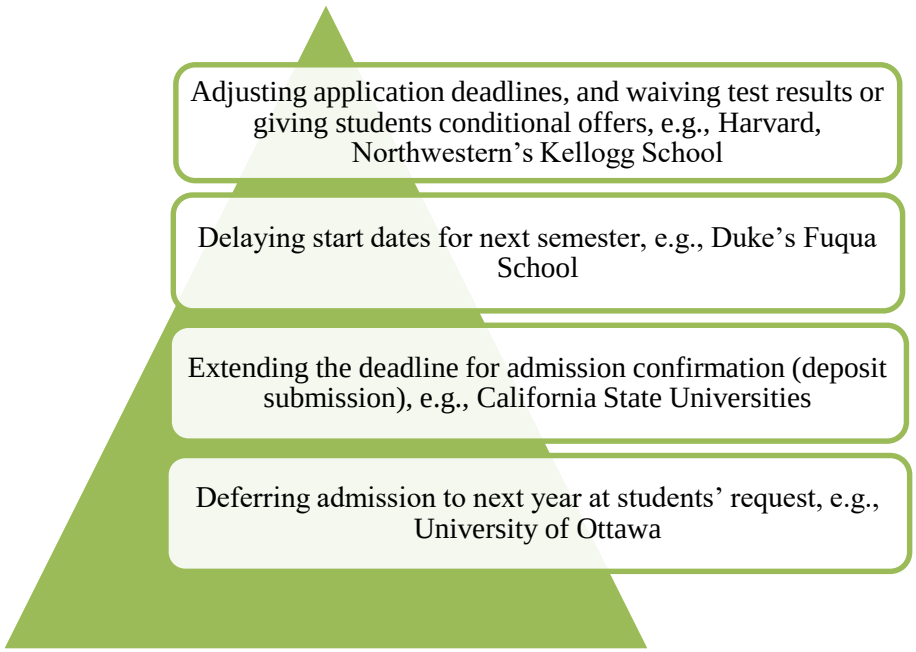

Figure – 2: Response from the Universities/HEI

Source: EY-Parthenon Report, April 2020.

Above Figure (Figure2) also showcased the international approach regarding this matter which will be most considerable issue while finding out the negativity of this concern. After considering all important issue of impact of Covid-19 on education Sector negative impact will be discussed for our research purpose.

Negative Impact of Covid-19 on Education:

All major entrance examinations are postponed including engineering, medical, law, agriculture, fashion and designing courses, etc. This situation can be a ringing alarming bell mainly in private sector universities. Maybe some faculties and employees may face salary cuts, bonuses and increments can also be postponed.

- The lockdown has generated uncertainty over the exam cycle. May be universities may face impact in terms of a slowdown in student internships and placements, lower fee collection that can create hurdles in managing the working capital.
- Another major concern is that it can affect the paying capacity of several people in the private sector, which is catering to a sizeable section of the students in the country.
- Student counseling operations are also affected.
- Several institutions may pause faculty hiring plans for existing vacancies which in turn affect quality and excellence.
- Structure of schooling and learning includes teaching and assessment methodologies and due to closure, it will be affected.
- Technology may play an important role in the lockdown period like study from home and work from home. In India, some private schools could adopt online teaching methods. Low-income private and government school may not be able to adopt online teaching methods. And as a result, there will be complete shut down due to no access to e-learning solutions. In addition to the opportunities for learning, students will also miss their meals and may result in economic and social stress.
- Higher education sectors are also disrupted which again pave an impact on the country's economic future. Various students from India took admissions in abroad like the US, UK, Australia, China etc. And these countries are badly affected due to COVID-19. Maybe there is a possibility that students will not take admissions there in future and if the situation persists, in the long run then there will be a decline in the demand for international higher education also.
- Another major concern is employment. Students those have completed their graduation may have fear in their minds of withdrawal of job offers from the corporate sector due to the current situation. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's estimates unemployment shortage from 8.4% in mid-March to 23% in early April. In the urban unemployment rate is 30.9%.

To overcome this situation and remove the negative impact of Covid-19 on Education sector central and different state government took some corrective measures by issuing some notice and adopting some technical means to reach more and more students. MHRD and other higher education authority have tried best to overcome this situation by spending a lot of money and spread their message through different media according to the class of audience and their adequate infrastructure. In some extent universities established in extreme rural area has adopted the radio platform to teach their students as far as possible. Hopefully this measure will help all students to continue their uninterrupted study during this Pandemic.

Following figure (Fig-3) represents the response from different stakeholder in negative aspects. Here researchers have tried to accumulate the gist of response from students and parents, education providers and investors. All stakeholders focused on same issue which is negative impact of this pandemic on education sector in India. So it can said that by analyzing their thoughts the impact of this issue has a long term effect and recovery from this situation is quite tough for all stakeholders. Researchers' also focused the remedial measures taken by the government of India to overcome this scenario but positive side of this impact has identified through this research prompt action taken by Government irrespective of Central or state. Another positive idea has gained from this negativity that Government is preparing themselves to fight against this pandemic in near future.

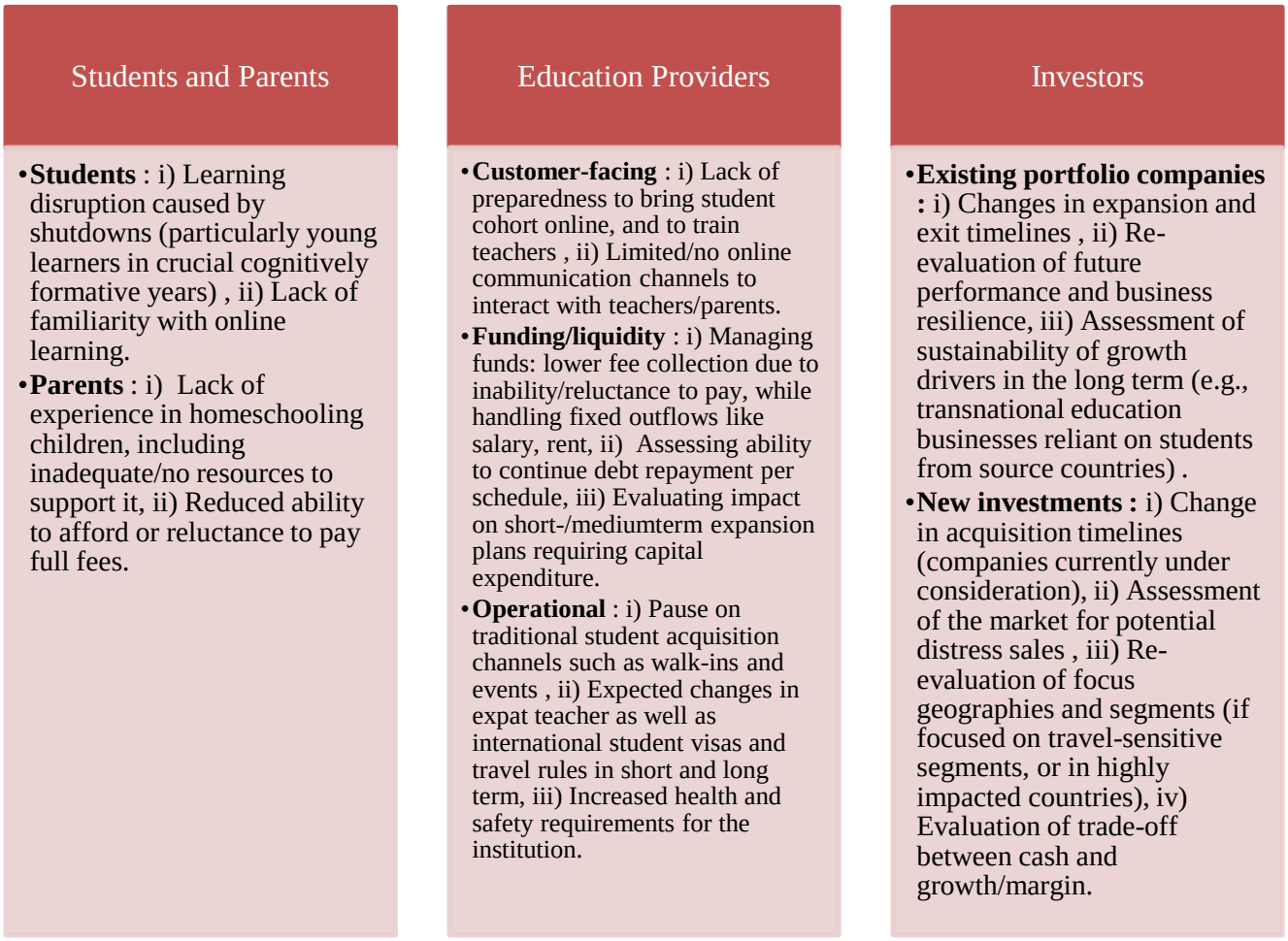

Figure – 3: All Stakeholders — Students and Parents, Providers and Investors — in the Education Sector are Facing Disruptions

Source: EY-Parthenon Report, April 2020.

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

To prevent spread of pandemic COVID-19, the Government of India has taken number of preventive measures. The union government declared a countrywide lock-down of all educational institutions on 16 March 2020. Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) postponed all examinations of secondary and higher secondary schools on March 18, 2020 throughout India. CBSE released revised guidelines for examination centres to conduct examinations by maintaining a distance of at least 1 meter between the students taking the exam with a class not having more than 24 students. If the rooms of the examination centres are small then the students should be divided into different rooms accordingly. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) postponed the interview for the Civil Services Examination 2019 .Similarly the most of the state Governments and other educational boards postponed examinations due to outbreak of COVID-19. Govt. of India has observed one day nationwide Janta-curfew on March 22 and implement lockdown from March 25, 2020 onwards in different phases. Govt. of India has been extending lockdown periods from time to time adopting different strategies to fight with the pandemic but educational institutions remained closed continuously. On May 17, 2020, the 4th phase lockdown has been extended till 31st May 2020 with some less restriction in other sectors except education. Almost all state government ministries have taken measures to ensure that the academic activities of schools and colleges do not hamper during the lockdown period. They have instructed the schools to hold all their classes online. The lockdown has accelerated adoption of digital technology. It has provided a chance to develop new and improved professional skills/knowledge through online learning in more efficient and productive way. Online learning is the best solution during this pandemic Covid-19 situation. So, the digital India vision of the government is emerging as a vital tool for solving the present crisis due to Covid-19. It is a fact that technology-based education is more transparent with all respect. Looking at this challenge of colleges and schools being shut, government of India, as well as state governments and private players have undertaken proper initiatives. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has made several arrangements, including online portals and educational channels through Direct to Home TV, Radios for students to continue learning. During lockdown, students are using popular social media tools like WhatsApp, Zoom, Google meet, Telegram, YouTube live, Facebook live etc. for online teaching learning system. ICT initiative of MHRD is a unique platform which combines all digital resources for online education. The digital initiatives of MHRD for secondary as well as higher education during COVID-19 are listed as below:

Secondary Education:

- Diksha portal contains e-Learning content for students, teachers, and parents aligned to the curriculum, including video lessons, worksheets, textbooks and assessments. Under the guidance of its national boards of education (CBSE) and NCERT, the content has been created by more than 250 teachers who teach in multiple languages. The app is available to use offline. It has more than 80,000 e-Books for classes 1 to 12 created by CBSE, NCERT in multiple languages. The contents can also be viewed through QR codes on textbooks. The app can be downloaded from IOS and Google Play Store.

- E-Pathshala is an e-Learning app by NCERT for classes 1 to 12 in multiple languages. The app houses books, videos, audio, etc. aimed at students, educators and parents in multiple languages including Hindi, Urdu, and English. In this web portal NCERT has deployed 1886 audios, 2000 videos, 696 e-Books and 504 Flip Books for classes 1 to 12 in different languages. Mobile Apps is available.

- National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) portal provides a host of resources for students and teachers in multiple languages including books, interactive modules and videos including a host of STEM-based games. Content is mapped to the curriculum for classes 1-12, including aligned resources for teachers. It has a total of 14527 files including 401 collections, 2779 documents, 1345 interactive, 1664 audios, 2586 images and 6153 videos on different languages.

Higher Education:

- Swayam is the national online education platform hosting 1900 courses covering both school (classes 9 to 12) and higher education (under graduate, post graduate programs) in all subjects including engineering, humanities and social sciences, law and management courses. The unique feature is that, it is integrated with the conventional education. Credit transfers are possible for SWAYAM courses (max. 20%).

- Swayam Prabha has 32 DTH TV channels transmitting educational contents on 24 x 7 bases. These channels are available for viewing all across the country using DD Free Dish Set Top Box and Antenna. The channel schedule and other details are available in the portal. The channels cover both school education (classes 9 to 12) and higher education (undergraduate, postgraduate, engineering Out-of-school children, vocational courses and teacher training) in arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities subjects, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture.

- E-PG Pathshala is for postgraduate students. Postgraduate students can access this platform for e-books, online courses and study materials during this lockdown period. The importance of this platform is that students can access these facilities without having internet for the whole day.

Following figure (fig-4) has tried to explain the switching platform and learning mode by different institutions for this pandemic. This figure is just a symbolic presentation of transformation taken place in this valuable sector in India and different part of the World. This study is mainly focused on Indian perspective and its impact on Indian education environment. But symbolic representation considers lot of important issues which is an integral part of Indian education sector.

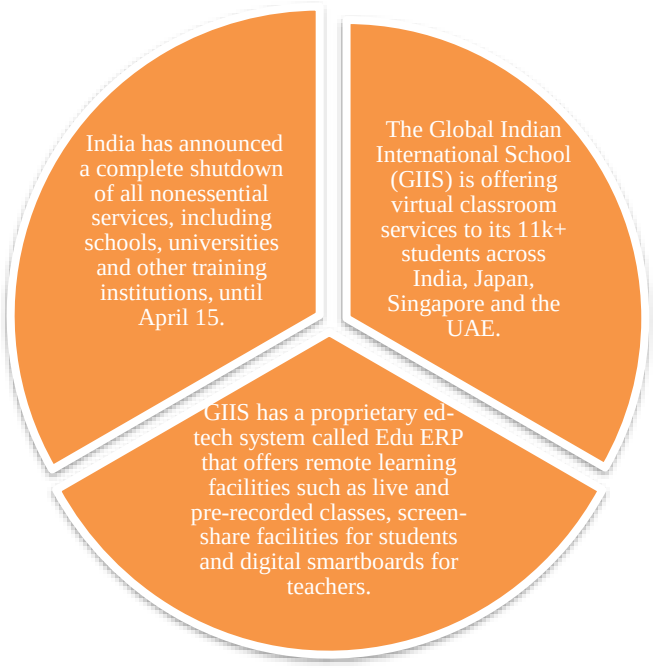

Figure – 4: Core Education Providers have switched to remote Learning, and also are forming guidelines for Fees, Grading and Examinations – India, GIIS (K –12)

Source: EY-Parthenon Report, April 2020.

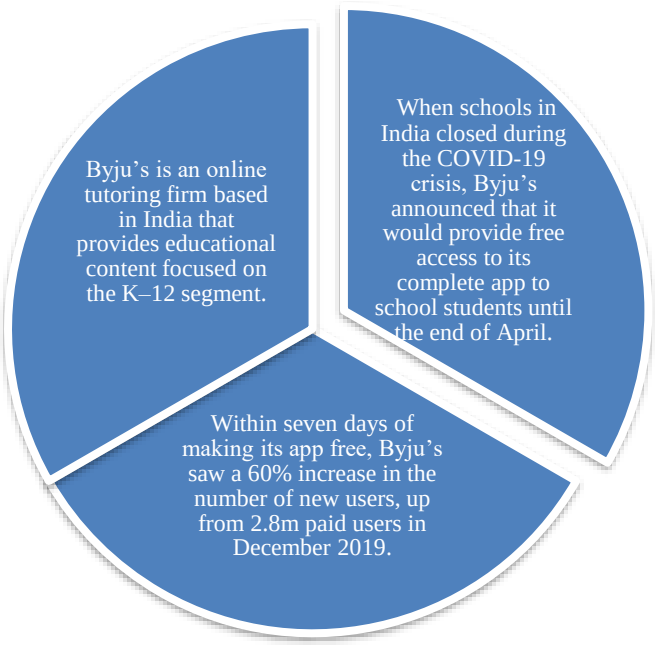

Figure – 5: Ancillary Education Providers also have Stepped in with Various Initiatives, most notable being Ed-tech Providers – India, Ed-tech in K–12 - Byju's

Source: EY-Parthenon Report, April 2020.

Above figure (fig-5) exposed the recent changes adopted by Indian institute. To overcome the situation different MNC engaged in education sector has got a new vibes to run their process and spread about their product through different media. It has positive effect in near future and

researcher would like to say that method of education sector teaching learning process will take new turn that is much more needed to comply with globalized economy and market.

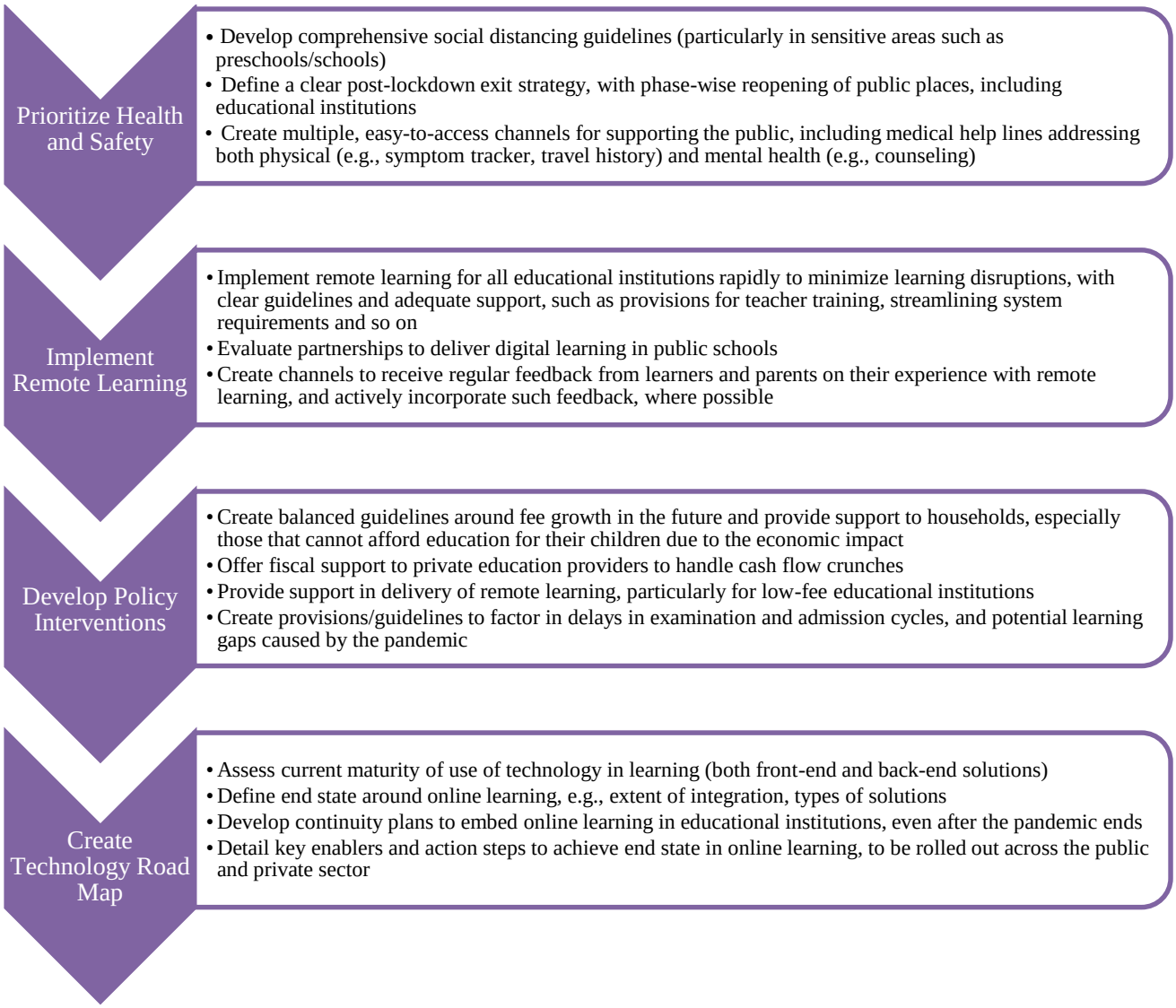

Figure – 6: Key Considerations for Governments

Source: EY-Parthenon Report, April 2020.

Above figure: 6 have exposed key considerations to overcome this pandemic and its impact on education sector. Government has considered main four pillars to fight against this situation. These are i) Prioritize Health and Safety, ii) Implement Remote Learning, iii) Develop Policy Interventions iv) Create Technology Road Map.

7. CONCLUSIONS:

COVID-19 has impacted hugely to the education sector of India. Though it has created many challenges, various opportunities are also evolved. The Indian Government of India and fellow State Governments along with different stakeholders of education have explored the possibility of Open and Distance learning (ODL) by adopting different digital technologies to cope up with the present crisis of COVID-19. India is not fully equipped to make education reach all corners of the nation via digital platforms even in rural India sufficient infrastructure is not available till now. The students who aren't privileged like the others will suffer due to the present choice of digital platforms and they are eagerly trying to attend the digital platform classroom but situation denied them to avail this facility. But universities and the government of India are relentlessly trying to come up with a solution to resolve this problem and not only Government university from different states have taken initiative to do their best and choose proper platform as per their capacity which will help the educators to reach more and more students .The priority should be to utilize digital technology to create an advantageous position for millions of young students in India. It is need of the hour for the educational institutions to strengthen their knowledge and Information Technology infrastructure to be ready for facing COVID-19 like situations. Even if the COVID-19 crisis stretches longer, there is an urgent need to take efforts on maximum utilization of online platforms so that students not only complete their degree in this academic year but also to get ready for the future digital oriented environment. The concept of "work from home" has greater relevance in such pandemic situation to reduce spread of COVID-19. India should develop creative strategies to ensure that all children must have sustainable access to learning during pandemic COVID-19. The Indian policies must include various individuals from diverse backgrounds including remote regions, marginalized and minority groups for effective delivery of education. As online practice is benefitting the students immensely, it should be continued after the lockdown which will help this sector to explore more and getting benefits from globalized educational exchange programme. This pandemic has learned us that how to tackle the unwanted situation and how to survive in worst and pathetic situation that's why education sector has been gaining a lot and this line should be recalled again " Survival of the Fittest".

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