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COVID-19: WORST AFFECTED EDUCATION SECTOR AND ITS CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT:

COVID-19 is a popular term to the present day world. It has got attention of the entire world due to its deadly character. Our day to day life has been totally disrupted due to the outbreak of COVID-19. We have become bound to stay at home. Industries, transportation, hotel, restaurant, offices, schools, colleges, universities –all are closed due to the announcement of lockdown. Even at the phase of unlock educational institutions are closed. Regular classes are being hampered. Quite a good proportion of teachers became restless by being away from teaching-learning process. They were in search of ways and means to reach their students. As a way out there came the process of online education. The present paper seeks to analyse whether online education is just a stop gap arrangement or it is a paradigm shift in mode of teaching. Online education may be just a stop gap arrangement, it can never be an alternative mode of teaching learning to face to face class room teaching learning which had, has and will have a justified essence in the literature of education.

Key Words: COVID-19, Online Education, Self motivation, Self control, Blended mode of teaching

INTRODUCTION:

COVID-19 is a popular term to the present day world. It has got attention of the entire world due to its deadly character. Our day to day life has been totally disrupted due to the outbreak of COVID-19. We have become bound to stay at home. Industries, transportation, hotel, restaurant, offices, schools, colleges, universities –all are closed due to the announcement of lockdown. Even at the phase of unlock educational institutions are closed. Regular classes are being hampered. Quite a good proportion of teachers became restless by being away from teaching-learning process. They were in search of ways and means to reach their students. As a way out there came the process of online education. But there

arose a big question regarding the proportion of students who could be reached out. A portion of teachers raised their voice as the majority of the students will be encapsulated to remain outside the scope of availing the facilities of online classes due to their incapacitation of having Laptop or Smart phone along with poor internet facilities or total absence of internet facilities. This is the hard reality we faced while going to impart online education to our beloved students. The students who have had no access to online classes have become the worst sufferer of newly introduced system. At the same time a considerable proportion of students having access to online classes started bunking classes due to loss of interest in present mode of teaching. The present paper seeks to analyse whether online education is just a stop gap arrangement or it is a paradigm shift in mode of teaching.

Education during pandemic COVID-19 :

On March 11, 2020 World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 as a pandemic. Covid-19 has affected more than 4.5 million peoples worldwide (WHO). In India, the first affected case of Covid-19 was detected on 30 January 2020 in the state of Kerala and the affected had a travel history from Wuhan, China. In India, around 32 crore students have been affected by the various restrictions and the nationwide lockdown for Covid-19. Most Governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to control the spread of the pandemic Covid-19. This worldwide closure has impacted drastically the world's student population. Governments around the world have tried to facilitate the continuity of education by using different digital modes of learning. The recent pandemic has changed the pedagogical approaches and has paved the way for introduction of virtual education in all levels of education. As we do not know how long the pandemic situation will continue, a gradual move towards the online/virtual education has become the demand of the current crisis. UGC and MHRD have launched many virtual platforms with online depositories, e-books and other online teaching/learning materials. Combination of the traditional technologies (radio, TV, landline phones) with mobile/web technologies to a single platform with all depositories would enhance better accessibility and flexibility to education. This would involve upgrading the service platform to enable it to meet the required volume of educational demands of students. All service providers need to be mobilized to provide proper access to the educational service platforms to the disadvantaged groups of population also. Virtual education is the most preferred mode of education at this time of crisis due to the outbreak of Covid -19. The post Covid-19 education seems to be an education with widely accepted online/virtual education which may perhaps be a parallel system of education. Student safety and well-being issues are important deciding factors for students and their parents for movement to international institutions for higher study. New modes of social distancing will continue for quite some time and may affect on-campus face to face teaching learning. Most of the parents will prefer to find workable alternatives closer to their home and may restrict for less movement within the country due to the pandemic. The international education

has also been affected by the crisis. Many international universities have been closed and are discharging all educational activities online. Many international conferences in higher education have been cancelled or turned into a series of webinars. So, the national and international student movement may be diminished. Learning may not be confined to classes or to any specific boundaries. Students may be the virtual learners with one teacher leading dozens of students in the new age. The learning modules may be modified to suit different learning styles and the learning contents may come from different sources to meet the learners' aspirations and needs. Students may pursue their learning in the new paradigm as per their choice.

Learners from low-income families and disadvantaged groups are the more likely to suffer as they may not afford high-speed internet connection and required technical gadgets for online learning. It will widen the gap between privileged and unprivileged learners creating inequality. More and more students will depend on technology and digital solutions for teaching learning, entertainment and connecting themselves with the outside world. Students will use internet technology to communicate virtually with their teachers and fellow learners through Email, WhatsApp, Video conference, Instant message, webinar or any other tool. Educational institutions may run with different shifts per day. The need for social distancing may imply lesser students in each class. So, most of the educational institutions may work in different shifts per day which may put more pressure on the teaching and administrative staff of the institution to manage. Covid-19 has accelerated adoption of digital technologies to deliver education and encouraged the educational institutions to move towards blended mode of learning. All teachers and students became more technology savvy. The traditional face to face mode with post Covid-19 technology mode is going to lead the education towards blended mode of teaching learning and it may transform the structure of the education system. It is to be pointed out here that the success of online mode of teaching learning rests on two basic premises. These are:

1. Students must be self motivated
2. Students must be self-disciplined

These two are essential prerequisites for the success of online mode of teaching learning and these are self explanatory too. Without having an arrangement of proper infrastructure dependence on online mode will be self defeating for the majority of the students

Conclusion:

As the majority of the students will be encapsulated to remain outside the scope of availing the facilities of online classes due to their incapacitation of having Laptop or Smart phone along with poor internet facilities or total absence of internet facilities, dependence on online mode of teaching learning will lead to lopsided growth of education where a considerable proportion of students will be

simply thrown out of the sphere of education. This is in contrast with the constitutional provision as laid down in Article 21(A) of the Indian Constitution. This very Article ensures the right to education. Therefore without proper arrangement to ensure the provision of education to all belonging to the age group 6-14, introduction of online mode of teaching and learning is a gross violation of the provision of Indian Constitution.

Coming to the case of self motivation on the part of students we must carefully note that motivation is a result of teacher-student relationship and through a human touch on the relationship motivation gets materialized. It can never be achieved through a system where there is no scope of face to face interaction- there is hardly any touch of love and affection.

Self-discipline is much more important prerequisite to achieve success. Students are not matured to be disciplined enough as their curiosity is almost boundless at their tender age. With the easy access to internet on their part there is quite a high risk of pushing them into the world of entertainment which does not suit their culture and social norms. To be very brief majority of them may spend much time to fulfill their thirst for curiosity and thereby may get entrapped into a world withdrawal oneself from where becomes very difficult. They may realize the reality at a point of time when they have made themselves ruined. Therefore online education may be just a stop gap arrangement, it can never be an alternative mode of teaching learning to face to face class room teaching learning which had, has and will have a justified essence in the literature of education.

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