Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Right from the big businesses to educational institutions this pandemic has literally altered and devastated the traditional ways of carrying out things. Education sector is no exception in these hard times. The educational sector has been fighting to survive the crises. The worldwide pandemic due to the new corona virus is playing a vital role in higher education systems. Some of the important affects are disturbing the completion of the terminal exam, completing the syllabus, starting of the new academic year and loss of jobs. The Covid-19 pandemic motivates the education institutions and stakeholders for remote learning as well as makes it a new challenge in the global economies. The teaching learning and evaluation methodologies have been completely altered by this pandemic. The digitalisation of education became a necessity in order to provide seamless education. This research paper focuses on the impact on higher education in the era of Covid-19 pandemic as well as the government support rendered to higher education during this crises period.

Keywords: COVID-19, higher education, coronovirus, teaching, learning.

I.Introduction

Times of crisis is a great teacher as along with the inherent challenges it can throw open many new opportunities. While most of the challenges presented by the pandemic have been efficiently handled it is also important to make use of the opportunities the crises provides. A case in point is the new opportunities the crises have thrown open in the higher education. Due to Covid-19 both students and teachers are impacted. The closure of educational institutions disrupted the structure of learning, assessment and examination which made the Indian education system go through an irreversible teaching & learning crisis. And therefore sudden shift was made from traditional face to face classroom method to the online mode of education. It just became like the yesterday's disruptors became today's survivor. Online method was considered as the threat but today it has come to rescue. However, there were several

issues that also started coming up along with the introduction of online mode of teaching in higher educational institutions (HEIs).

Undoubtedly, the negative impact of the current pandemic on the education sector has been tremendous! But is the situation all bleak, or is there any silver lining in this dismal scenario? Let's dig more into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education and the opportunities it presents for Indian colleges and universities.

II. Methodology

The present paper is based on the secondary data collected from the secondary source i.e. published literature of the subject concern. Descriptive and analytical method has been applied in the entire study.

III. Objective of the Research Study

The specific objective of the study was to assess the impact of COVID 19 on higher education sector in India.

IV. Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education

Around the second week of March 2020, state government across the country began to shut down the schools, colleges due to COVID-19. As we all know that this was the crucial time for students as different University, college examination are usually held during this period and also different entrance test of various universities and competitive examination were to be held during this period. And since there found to be no immediate solution to prevent the outbreak of COVID 19, college, school and university closure had to be made compulsory to prevent the spread of virus. In the end of March 2020, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India had asked all higher education organizations and universities to extend the date of final semester examinations as well as intermediate semester examinations. It has affected more than 285 million young learners in India. Students had to face severe problem as they were not aware of the future examination especially students who were in the final year and also those who were to answer entrance test.

Mobile applications or virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, Google meet became the virtual meeting hubs for teaching-learning. Educational institutions directed teachers to engage classes through online mode using the virtual meeting platforms like Zoom & Google meet. The teachers who were not well versed with modern technology and mobile applications had to struggle a lot to engage online classes due to the sudden shift from face to face teaching to online teaching. Some teachers were just conducting classes because they were asked to do so. A lot of students were just joining the classes to mark themselves present. They hardly paid attention towards what was being taught by the teacher as the factor like class control doesn't exist on these virtual platforms.

The students have been impacted by losing face-to-face learning at higher educational organizations (HEOs).Students who are waiting to start their higher education are also getting difficult in selecting the dream institutions. The teachers have been affected significantly by losing their continuity in conventional teaching activity and they have been forced to adopt virtual modality.

Especially, in developing countries the growing institutions are facing difficulty in maintaining their financial status due to the overall effect of Covid-19. In India, many private educational organizations had decided to collect less fees. The COVID-19 may possibly create a severe blow on the professions of this academic years' graduates. Also, the senior students are experiencing foremost disruptions in learning and evaluation in the closing portion of their college educations and the young graduates would face heavy challenge on job market due to global recession.

In the case of the country like India this online teaching has registered devastating impact on the lives of those students who are underprivileged and coming from very poor section of the society. In India, it has also brought certain severe effects on the conventional learning process of face to face interaction even when some technical aids were introduced in the classrooms. However, it is pertinent to note that there are still certain educational institutions in India which are not very well equipped to the modern technological facilities in the classroom. Thus, we can say that with the introduction of new method of learning through digital mode of learning, learning became very easy to the students as they can sit at home and get access but at the same time some students also had to face problem due to the poor internet connectivity which brings to the notice that even after India is adapting to online learning methods, still there lies an obstacles as entire population do not have access to internet and E-learning facility. Rural people are still deprived of technology.

The various pillars of higher education and research are networks, resources, public health, and social policies as well as multidisciplinary research. The effect of Covid-19 on these pillars will be felt for several years to come. Covid-19 has created several negative impacts on higher education such as reducing the efforts on international education, passive learning, unprepared teachers for virtual class and altering structure of student enrolment. Many entrance tests, job recruitment too got cancelled which created a negative impact on the lives of the students. All these imply towards increase in unemployment in India. Thus, with the increase of unemployment situation, there were enough chances of diminishing interest for education due to the struggle for food. This growing issues has caused mental stress amongst the youngsters and youths who are the future of India. These were certain problems which affected the people in India who were severely affected due to the pandemic which created threat to the future of India. At the same time, the Covid-19 has also created some positive impacts on higher education such as blended learning, providing new and strengthening the learning management systems (LMSs), improving the quality of study materials, and collaborative teaching.

V. Some Key Government Initiatives to Support Higher Education in India

E-Gyankosh,- One of the initiative taken by national government to share digital learning learning resources which is developed by the open and distance learning institutions in the country. Study material is also made available for the students.

Gyandhara- It is an internet service wherein students can listen to live discussions made by the teachers and experts and also can interact with them through telephonic conversation and chat mode.

Swayam- SWAYAM is an initiative by Ministry of Human Resource Development and covers over 1900 courses that are available and accessible online and which covers High School till all higher education subjects and skill sector courses to ensure that every student benefits from learning material through ICT. SWAYAM involves development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) compliant e-content (video and text) and building a robust IT platform; Whereas, in order to disseminate educational content to masses, the MHRD has launched 32 Direct-To-Home (DTH) educational TV channels called "SWAYAM Prabha" broadcasting education content 24x7 basis, and the content developed under SWAYAM would be used for transmission in SWAYAM Prabha (SP) DTH channels.

Development and change is one of the inevitable parts of human life. However, during the pandemic people had to accept sudden change as it became necessary for the survival. It encouraged personalized learning which in long run will be beneficial for qualitative teaching and learning process. It will also facilitate improvement in collaborative work for teachers, researchers and all stakeholders involved in higher education.

VI. Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for higher education across the world, and India is no exception. In a nation where higher education is still not accessible to many, the pandemic has dashed the hopes of a large number of students who were hoping to pursue higher studies in top universities in India and other countries. The students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and economically weaker sections of the society have been particularly hard hit. Online mode of learning can be the best mode of teaching if it can be accessed by all the sections of the society. But, it can pose threat if certain sections of the society cannot avail this facility and thus are excluded. It is therefore important to take cognizance of online education and plan for interventions that will prioritize greater inclusivity, connectivity and equitability.

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