CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION IN THE PERIOD OF COVID-19 IN INDIA

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Abstract

Globally, online education has met with some success. In the case of India, we still have a long way to go before digital learning is seen as mainstream education, because students living in urban area have the facilities for digital education, however, rural area students do not have the required infrastructure .The purpose of this paper is to discuss the importance of digital education in teaching and learning process, and role of technologies in effective Team work, Challenges of education system in the time of Covid-19 and Problems Facing in Rural Education during Covid -19 in India

Introduction:

Due to the COVID-19 entirely state governments across the country temporarily closed schools, colleges, and universities. Based on the present condition, it is uncertain when schools, colleges, and universities will be reopened and this is very critical time for the Indian education system,

The COVID-19 situations that has forced people into their homes and forced schools, colleges, and universities to take virtual classes blew up educational dreams with ample conditions: a computer or at least a Smart phone, a proper Internet connection, and an uninterrupted power supply.

Technology plays an important role during covid-19 situations, such as study at home by online classes and work from home. In India, some private schools can use online teaching methods. But Low-income private and government public schools may not be able to adopt online teaching methods. As a result, the e-learning solution will be completely shut down due to inaccessibility.

Most students in rural areas suffer from network problems and cannot buy iPads or smartphones. India is a country with many cultures, languages, customs, and ideas. Designing a platform suitable for multiple regional languages is a difficult task. However, many e-learning platforms now support widely used languages, which benefits most people. Many government websites provide content in English and Hindi, and also support local languages.

There is a huge digital divide in urban and rural schools. In a recent survey, over 75 pc of students are impacted due to the lockdown as they found hard to study online, over 80 pc students said they need hand holding to shift from offline to online and over 25 pc said they need proper training to pursue education through online. Adapting to online education is easier for English medium students and teachers due to the ready availability of tools or content. The situation is opposite in vernacular languages that dominate the Indian school education scene. Only a few ed-tech firms provide vernacular content.

Digital learning has many advantages in itself like online learning has no physical boundaries, it has more learning engagement experience rather than the traditional learning, it is also cost-effective and students get to learn in the confines of their comfort . However, digital learning is not without its limitations and challenges, since face-to-face interaction is usually perceived as the best form of communication as compared to the rather impersonalized nature of remote learning.

The several surveys said that 39.6 per cent of families did not have smartphones and 14.8 per cent did not have a cable TV connection for children to watch lessons on government educational channels. Only 36 per cent of schools had TV sets, but they are not in a usable condition in 10.4 per cent of schools.

Pedagogy in digital education is an important link between course content, educationists, technology and course-takers. Democratization of technology is now an important issue, comprising internet connectivity, telecom infrastructure, affordability of online system, availability of laptop/desktop, software, educational tools, online assessment tools, etc. But it is a fact that technology-based education is more transparent and does not make difference in front vs back benchers or girls vs boys.

It should be noted here that missing from all the narratives of online education is the question of equity and equality, the cornerstone of the Constitution of India. Envisioned in the Constitution of India is the aim of providing equality of education opportunities to all citizens irrespective of caste, class, gender and religion. Article 29 (1) provides for equal access to educational institutions maintained by the State without discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them. Similarly, the Right to Education Act 2009, mandates to provide equitable quality education to all children from six to 14 years of age. However, all the efforts of the government to facilitate education processes during the pandemic draws attention to the fact that the milieu of government education system, and low fee private school or affordable private schools, are out of the purview of government initiatives of online education. Even people from disadvantaged communities- be it, teachers, students or parents-have been left to fend for themselves while Government is making provisions for online learning or planning to resume offline on-campus school post-COVID. Alarming is the fact that the government is oblivious to the stark realities of social inequalities which are proving to be the greatest barrier to access online education.

Challenges

1. Lack of hardware and software facilities which hinders the reliability of e-learning.

2. Children with special needs face completely different challenges.

3. Lack of policies, strategies, and monitoring to ensure cross-departmental and multi-stakeholder participation.

4. Lack of knowledge and training for the use of e-learning materials and services provided.

5. There is no sufficient stock and supply of quality smartphones, laptops and hotspot instruments in the present Market.

6. A problem in finding willing technicians to training illiterate rural areas of India.

7. Primary schools did not teach computer courses or skills so it is difficult for students to attend online classes whose parents are illiterate.

8. Insufficient skills of trainers and computer operators.

9. Content development is irrelevant and participatory.

10. Prepare the Emotional wellbeing of students, teachers and parents.

11. Unable to provide services to rural, tribal areas and hill stations.

12. Lack of Readiness for Conducting creative online examination and evaluation.

13. The quality of content is a bigger issue. There is no check on the quality of content provided by the platforms to students

14. Immediate Professional development for teachers in the e-learning environment

15. Students are struggling with connectivity issues, insufficient screens, and no electricity, teachers also get into trouble.

16. Most families have Smartphone's, but some students cannot attend classes because their parents take the smart phones from them whenever they go to work.

17. Background noise disrupts the student's concentration in their home.

18. There is no programme from the both governments for getting free internet pack for online class.

Problems Facing in Rural Education during Covid -19 in India

- Teachers of rural schools in a small town and villages get a low income. Many teachers have not received their salaries in the lockdown so there is a possibility that teachers give less attention to children while teaching online.

- Most schools do not have appropriate infrastructure. So they don't get most of Computer education and other facilities. In this pandemic period, most of the teachers who don't have computer knowledge, are unable to teach students online.

- Unable to obtain supplementary education. Provide quality education to growing students means more teachers need to be trained so that they can maintain sufficient personalized student-teacher engagement.

- There is not enough electricity supply in the rural areas and the availability of just one TV set in each school makes it difficult to accommodate 100-200 students at one time."

- Parents of students, especially in the rural areas, are demanding that regular classes be started, citing the lower spread of the virus in their areas. A major reason for this is access to mid-day meals for children. Daily wage earners who lost their jobs during the lockdown can barely manage a meal per day.

Conclusion;

Since the COVID -19 pandemic has disrupted the normal lifestyle of people across the globe, the virtual world has come to the rescue. Amongst many institutions schools have also shifted their base to virtual platforms to conduct classes online. Consequently, catering to the needs of all stages of education from pre-primary to university level, online education has emerged as an alternative to ordinary face to face classes.

The use of technology in teaching will lead to a new era wherein the best of faculty will be available from across the nation to students. Education quality will be gauged not just by the quality of faculty but will also have quality of IT infrastructure and familiarisation of the faculty will digital teaching technologies as important parameters.

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