



DEPRIVATION IN EDUCATION AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS

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Abstract

The education sector is one of the most affected areas by the pandemic. It caused a huge chasm that could affect the teaching-learning industry in the future. Although it is possible to have deprivation in education, the concept must not be embraced. Instead, HEI should focus on developing new and innovative ways of delivering education constructively. This paper focuses on the importance of both research and teaching in education. The two areas are identified and analyzed respectively to adopt innovative methodologies to enhance productivity in a higher learning institute. This paper intends to propose relevant teaching and learning methods to benefit the students, the university, and society. This paper utilizes several factors involved in the pandemic crisis and suggests ways to use several methods to regenerate the learning environment without hassle.

Keywords: Education, Research, COVID-19, Pandemic, Deprivation, Innovation

Introduction

Amidst all sorts of notions about the hardship of humankind and the impact on global communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is remarkable to perceive that the communities are succeeding in overcoming the crisis. Although almost every aspect of life is affected, physical, emotional, social, communal, spiritual, financial, and political, humankind strived to discover ways to either eradicate or immunize themselves from the impact of the COVID-19 virus – a remorseless killer.

A question that may arise is how did humans overcome or in the process of overcoming this virus? Will this virus annihilate the human's existence? Scientific researches say, "No." However, it has awakened humankind towards a paradigm shift in almost all aspects of life. The shift declared a new norm, "no handshaking," "no public spitting," "frequent handwash," and "maintaining cleanliness." The pandemic limited physical contact, increased online transactions for every little and large financial transaction, boosted awareness about healthy living, and so much more in society solely to fight the virus and anything that may happen in the future. The paradigm shift is also seen in the education sector that was highly impacted, causing a total disengagement from a learning ambience to digital dependence. A brief overview of the deprivation and its impact on education must be considered to remedy the situation.

Deprivation during COVID-19 Pandemic

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the largest and the most extended isolation in history to reduce the spread of the virus (Choukér 2020). The impact of the pandemic deeply wounded humanity as the fatal virus wiped away millions of lives. The entire world faced lockdown that disconnected the society that would perhaps no longer be the same. People not only lost lives, but jobs, basic needs, medical assistance, and education. The scarcity was such that every aspect of life was affected, creating deprivation in all aspects. It has been suggested that differences in the essential daily activities of people such as using public transport, attending work, or education settings living in deprived communities are linked to higher risks of COVID-19 infection (Beale et al., 2021). Another study reports that, in Canadian research, hospitalization rates for H1N1 were shown to be related to lower education in a deprived community (Bambra et al., 2020). Thus, isolation was the only approach that ultimately created deprivation in almost all aspects of our lives to minimize the spread.

Deprivation in Education during COVID-19 Pandemic

Several scholarly thoughts have pondered on deprivation in education from several perspectives. May it be poverty, lack of resources, inequality, etc. (Bhatty 1998). However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic left all the other notions on depriving aspect behind. The deprivation is felt in every sector; however, the workflow continued with the least possibilities. But the impact on education almost paralyzed the primary to the higher education sector. Since the pandemic began, more than 1.6 billion students have been kept out of school because of temporary closures caused by the outbreak (Azevedo 2020; educationcannotwait.org 2020).

In India, the learning institutes were unprepared to react with the right approach to deal with the global devastation. Hence, the result was a total suspension of physical classes and evacuation of boarding students. No institute was ready to take the risk of keeping the students or continuing classes. In fact, the lockdown imposed by the government of India required an immediate response from every sector, including the education sector. Therefore, institutes hastened to follow the instructions given by the government without any further plan or preparation, assuming that the pandemic would live short and everything will be back to normal. However, the reality was quite the opposite. The wait from weeks turned into a month, and there was absolutely no idea how to respond to the situation. Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a book *"Years Don't Wait for Them": Increased Inequalities in Children's Right to Education Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic*, documenting how school suspensions associated with Covid affected kids unequally since not all kids had the opportunities, equipment, resources or access to continuing learning during the pandemic (ReliefWeb 2021; Sheppard et al., 2021).

Overcoming Deprivation in Education

Although several aspects require attention as the pandemic is still impacting the education system, this paper is limited to focus on empowering two equally essential areas in the present time. During this time of crisis, to facilitate students to continue their education and retain students' enrollments, several institutions attempted to implement possibly everything to resolve the discrepancies. Several thought-provoking sessions discussed utilizing the best method to bring teaching-learning on track. The following section on research briefly presents two areas that educators may need to focus on for improved methodologies for the future endeavor in education. The first is research, and the second is teaching. These two areas, though, may not appear to be crucial during the pandemic crisis. However, it is undeniable that both research and education have kept the momentum high during the pandemic, providing information and educating.

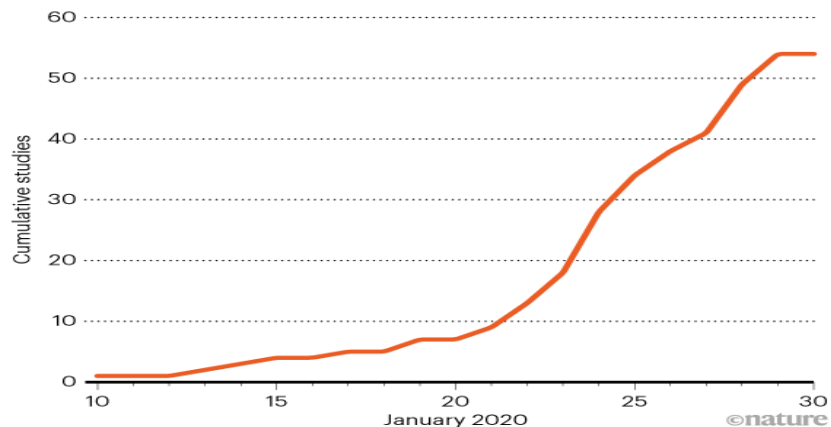
Research Amidst Crisis

One may ask how we accomplished so much, learned to a great extent about the virus, pandemic, and bridle the spread of the virus? The answer is – Research. It is the research community that is inexhaustibly engaged in investigating and ascertaining the possible ways to learn about the virus and discover solutions to eradicate it completely. In the last one years, numerous articles have been written on the subjects related to coronavirus. According to Nature Index, 23,634 articles related to covid-19 have been indexed on Web of Science and Scopus between January 1, 2020, to June 30, 2020 (Nature Index: 28 August 2020). Alone, the journal Scientometrics has

published more than forty scientific research articles (Springer). According to Nature news, only in the month of January 2020, more than fifty research papers were published on the subject (Emma Stoye 2020).

CORONAVIRUS RESEARCH

Dozens of studies about the virus have been published since the outbreak began.



Source: Analysis by Nature news team.

The current global challenge is the spread of a new strain of coronavirus that is scientifically verified to be a mutational process of the coronavirus (Wise 2020:1). Although I do not personally believe in the theory of evolution, I certainly agree that humans are the classic example of mutation and adaptability. One must not forget that humans are survivors of the harshest condition and have successfully overcome any crisis. Imagine if we were like dinosaurs or any of those lost species who could not save themselves from the chaos that lost their identity. What makes us different from those lost species is research. Hence, it is crucial that as responsible citizens of a nation, a steward of nature, a participant in a society, we must involve in asking the right question – How, Why, What, When?

Engaging in research is the need of the hour. It does not only benefit an individual but advances synthesizing and conceptualizing the finding towards educating society. Research amidst crisis demands a focused community that thinks, creates, and initiates systematic efforts to create awareness, evolve existing worldviews and approaches, and adapt contextually conscious parameters towards survival and prosperity.

Teaching in the Pandemic Crisis

In the ongoing pandemic crisis, humankind had to go through a lot. Several such incidences have been recorded in the past. However, the overall impact on society had never been the same. COVID 19 is impacting the global economy (PTI Business line, 2020). It is also affecting social stability, muddling every single aspect of life. Not only does it impact society in every way at present, but it has signaled that it may impact the future as well. Considering the future, the most crucial role of an institution is to either make or destroy society's future.

In response to this pandemic situation, learning institutions must take a stand that saves the future of many students who might be a contributing factor to society and set up an extraordinary step utilizing contemporary learning methods such as ICT and MOOCs.

Current Challenge

Currently, universities face a challenge to complete the course work, which is pending and requires at least one intensive class to complete the coursework. It means that the teacher (already prepared with the lesson plan) will provide the students with all the remaining course materials, lecture notes, etc., to complete the syllabus.

E-Learning coursework

There are possibly two ways to complete this task. Each track is highly appreciated in the learning community in the present scenario. The two ways are:

1. Google Classroom

Google Classroom has been a trending culture at several institutions, and it has been helpful to several students and teachers while not being in the class. The teacher can share all notes, links, even google drive folders for the students to access and possess the materials on their computers, laptops, phones, even their google drive account.

The only challenge this app has is that it does not provide any 'live' or online visual-based classroom where students are present to learn directly from the professor.

2. Zoom Classroom

Zoom is a real-time video conferencing software that allows people to conduct meetings. Several educational institutions have taken this platform to continue their semester work involving teachers teaching students to live on a video conferencing platform. It is noteworthy that this application is easy to use and can include 99 people at once in the live session, free for 40 mins. After 40 mins, the teacher and students can reconnect and continue with the class if needed.

The zoom classroom culture will benefit the institution in several ways:

1. Employees are back at work.
2. The learning has been re-initiated.
3. The syllabus can be completed (Only through Intensive class).
4. Students get the opportunity to learn for which they paid the fees.
5. Utilizing such an advanced method will be an essential factor contributing to the institutional profile.

Zoom classes are easy to initiate and do not require high IT skills. It requires a computer with a camera, a laptop, or even a phone to access the meeting. In the Zoom classroom, a professor can share files, show PowerPoint, and share screen as well. It is suggested that each teacher takes a day (4 hours) and creates an intensive classroom over Zoom (with 10 min break every hour) to complete the syllabus. Thus, we can complete every batch in six working days for each batch. Alternatively, we shrink the classroom hours to meet all the other classes.

Open Book Exam

Open book or take-home exam is quite relevant at this time of crisis as social gathering is not only prohibited but also a criminal offense. Open book exams traditionally allow students to use notes, textbooks, and other resources in an exam situation (UNSW). Open book exam is essential because due to COVID-19, there is a high chance of students not being able to return to the universities in the near future, and therefore, upholding a physical examination is questionable. Also, it is an injustice to delay or postpone the students' future.

Therefore, it is suggested that an open book exam, either a limited time exam or a specific time (next day), would be ideal for facilitating exam culture at ease for all and modern-day methods of conducting the exam (especially in such crisis). It is noteworthy that AICTE has initiated such a policy to be implemented in the education system on November 20, 2018.

MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses)

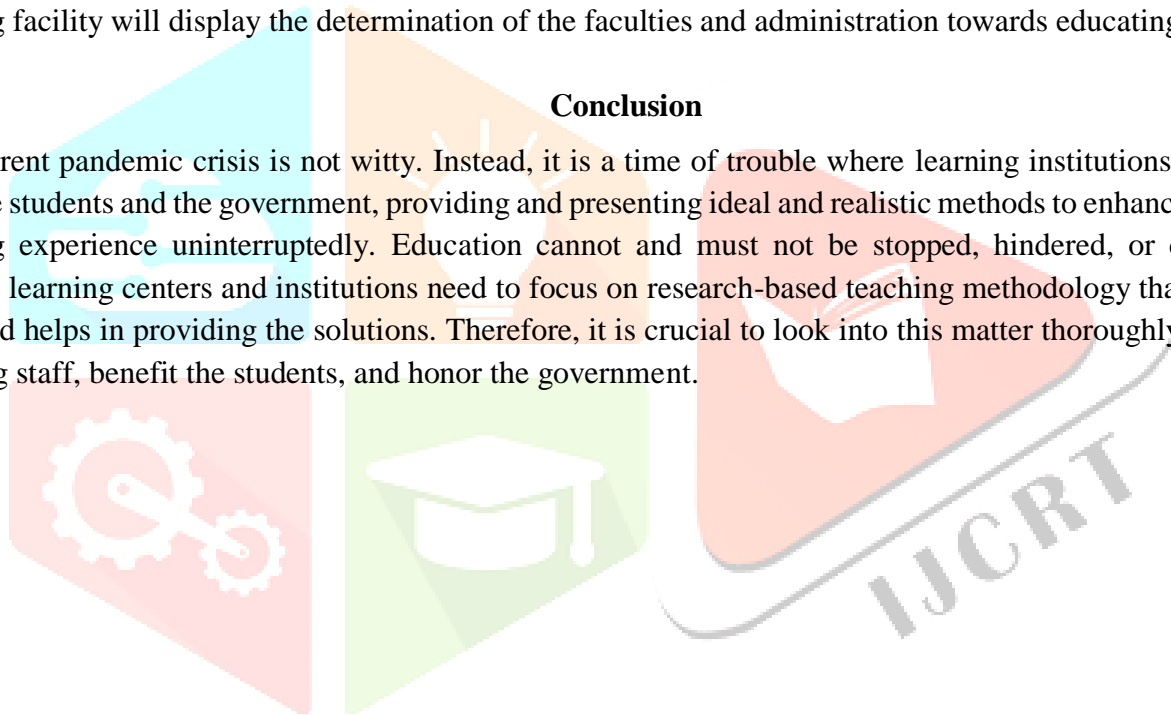
MOOC is an advanced learning platform that opens the possibility of inducing a mass towards a learning platform. In an article published by the World Bank's EduTech Blog in the context of Ebola virus pandemics, which started in February 2014 and officially ended only on May 9th, 2015 (Trucano 2014). MOOC is highly appreciated by AICTE and is promoted under the name SWAYAM, providing the most comprehensive online learning platform portal in terms of MHRD's No.8-26/2014-TEL (Pt.), dated 21st March 2016 through blending academics with technology (SWAYAM).

Future Enrollment

As the school year 2021-22 is has begun, there is a high chance of the impact of COVID-19 on the new admission for the school year 2020-21. Therefore, if online learning (e-learning) is implemented for the coming school year until the pandemic crisis is over or under control, it will not significantly impact admissions. This additional feature will also be helpful for the institutional profile. While the government agencies such as UGC and NAAC involve in improving the teaching-learning experiences, a conscious approach to the enrollment and improved teaching-learning facility will display the determination of the faculties and administration towards educating India.

Conclusion

The current pandemic crisis is not witty. Instead, it is a time of trouble where learning institutions need to stand with the students and the government, providing and presenting ideal and realistic methods to enhance the students' learning experience uninterrupted. Education cannot and must not be stopped, hindered, or compromised. Instead, learning centers and institutions need to focus on research-based teaching methodology that explores the need and helps in providing the solutions. Therefore, it is crucial to look into this matter thoroughly to utilize the teaching staff, benefit the students, and honor the government.



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