

Impact of Covid-19 on Education: Challenges Faced By Students, Teachers and Parents

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Abstract: The COVID-19 disease which first appeared in Wuhan, in the Hubei province of China, in December 2019 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020. Within a very short span of time it led to an unexperienced worldwide public health crisis. In order to prevent the worldwide spread of the novel coronavirus disease universities, schools, and many other educational institutions have been either partially or completely closed in many countries, by national governments. Problem of disengagement, shortage of attendance and deterioration in academic achievement was experienced by many children and youth during the pandemic. With the closure of schools and the postponement of face-to-face lessons in many countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education activities at all levels primary, secondary, high school and higher education level as well were soon affected. In order to compensate the interrupted educational activities, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became important for educational institutions to develop and implement effective strategies in order to remodel the changes that occurred due to pandemic. Shifting towards fully-online learning was a speedy yet necessary reflex to the coronavirus crisis. Therefore in order to provide effective learning-teaching environment increased importance was given to the use of information technologies in education from the beginning. Countries took quick steps towards digital transformation in education, and focus was given to the use of distance learning, teaching, and assessment approaches, which was not very common prior to the pandemic. The present situation is considered as the biggest education crisis in human history.

Keywords: Novel coronavirus, Pandemic, online learning, digital transformation, information technologies.

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 was declared as a deadly threat to humanity by the World Health Organization, the pandemic brought many changes in every aspect of human daily life, including radical changes to education systems at all levels¹. In the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, learning and teaching environments soon started to change on a dramatic scale for all stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, educationalists, etc.) due to the restriction strategies adopted and imposed by governments in many parts of the world. In order to check the spread of COVID-19, lockdown was declared and schools were closed by the government as a safety measure, around 250 million students in India were affected due to school closure. The pandemic attempted several challenges to public and private schools which included an increased number of dropouts, learning losses, and increase in digital divide². The pandemic also raised many questions viz. the readiness of the systems, including teachers to address, students to cope up such a crisis, and sustainability of private schools. However, COVID-19 also acted as a stimulus for digital adoption in school education³. All educational activities like examinations, school admissions, entrance tests of various universities and competitive examinations and others were being held during this period⁴. As the days were passing by with no immediate solution to stop this outbreak, the closure of schools and universities were hugely affecting the learning across the country. The building of the Indian education scheme i.e. learning practise, teaching methods & evaluation practises, was entirely effected, consequently there was a shift to online education with main focus on computer-generated teaching to achieve the set aims and objectives. But only a handful of schools and universities could adopt such methods and the low-income private and government schools were quite inefficient to adopt the same, thus resulted in a shutdown. Consequently, countries had afforded increased importance to the use of information technologies in education in order to provide effective learning-teaching

environment from almost day one. Due to such circumstances, countries took quick and necessary steps towards digital transformation in education, and started to actively encourage the application of distance learning, teaching, and assessment approaches far more than had ever been observed before to the pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of schools and the procrastination of face-to-face lessons in many countries, affected the educational activities of school-aged students at all levels⁵; and undoubtedly, the educational activities of students enrolled at the higher education level was also significantly affected as well. In order to compensate for the interrupted educational activities, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it soon became important to develop and implement effective strategies like online learning as a necessary reflex to the coronavirus crisis. In other words, as the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly transformed the education system in order to meet the teaching-learning needs of academicians and students as well. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the global education community to recognize online emergency remote teaching as an immediate necessary requirement to accept response to the crises. The COVID-19 outbreak set the stage to initiate digital learning as an emergency alternative education system at all levels of education.

Paradigm Shift

In order to check the progress of spread of the coronavirus disease, almost all educational institutions worldwide, were physically closed down in line with decisions taken by national governments. With the closure of schools and the postponement of face-to-face lessons in many countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education activities of school-aged students at all levels were soon affected⁶; and undoubtedly, the educational activities of students enrolled at the higher education level was also significantly affected as well. In order to compensate for the interrupted educational activities, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it soon became important to develop and implement effective strategies like online learning as a necessary reflex to the coronavirus crisis. Though schools were closed, students were attending their classes through various education initiatives like online classrooms, radio programs.

Though it was a good thing happening on the other side, some online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Zoom classes, Canvas and Blackboard were used by the teachers to compensate the loss of learning due to closure of schools. Variety of content was shared through Word, PDF, Excel file, audio, videos and many more. This was a very effective way to encourage skills like problem-solving, critical thinking and self-directed learning⁷. But there were lots of students who didn't own the resources to attend the online classes suffer a lot. Many students struggled hard to obtain the gadgets required for online classes⁸. Teachers who were all experts in Blackboard, Chalk, books, and classroom teaching were really new to this digital teaching, but they had adopted the new methods and handled it like a supporter to help the students in the current position. There was always a delay or cancellation of exams, which lead to confusion for many students and there was no room for curriculum⁹.

Technology paved the way for education and helped the students and teachers to connect virtually through online classrooms, webinars, digital exams, and so on. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey, reported a growing dependency on private tuition classes and a stark digital divide, which carries the risk of severely affecting the learning abilities of students.

Problems faced by students and parents

Along with the negative impacts there were some positive impacts also happening around us amid the Covid-19. Without differentiating Covid-19 altered the lifestyle of people. Due to Covid-19, many changes took place and it involved challenges and opportunities both, it took some time for everyone to adopt the new normal. The most common impact of Covid-19 was the closure of schools and other educational institutions throughout the world. In order to provide effective learning-teaching environments importance was given to the use of information technologies in education. Countries took rapid steps towards transformation from traditional system to digital system in education, and started encouraging the assistance of distance learning, teaching, and assessment approaches far more than had ever been seen prior to the pandemic. This situation was considered as the biggest education crisis in human history. Educated parents were supporting their children throughout the pandemic, but we need to understand that there were some illiterate parents and their feeling of helplessness to help their children in their education¹⁰. There were many students who were unable to attend the online classes due to unavailability of required gadgets to attend the classes suffered a lot. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds struggled hard to obtain the digital equipment required for online classes. Some students without reliable internet access or technology struggled to participate in digital learning all over the nation and many teachers were looking for an alternative job to support their families. There were students in India who come to school

just because they could get food. The midday meal scheme had helped many poor children by providing nutritious food to them who couldn't bring their food from the home. Because of the closure of the schools, many students were deprived from enough food for their survival. There was always a delay or cancellation of exams, which lead to confusion for many students. Most of the school-going children were involved in child labour to support their families. Along with the students the low-budget institutions and schools were also affected by this pandemic and resulted in close-down the same. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey, Students, especially those from poor families, were more dependent on private tuition. While 39.2 per cent of children overall were now taking tuitions, between 2018 and 2021, the proportion of children with parents in the 'low' education category who were taking private coaching hiked by 12.6% points, as against to a 7.2 % point increase amongst children with parents in the 'high' education category. According to ASER Centre Director government school enrolment declined around 65% since 2006 to 2018. But an increase of 5 percentage points was observed over the last year, which is very significant. While countries were at different points in their COVID-19 infection rates, more than 1.2 billion children in 186 countries were affected by school closure due to the pandemic.

2. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 has disrupted education system all across the world. As a result there was paradigm shift in education system, with the distinctive rise of e-learning, whereby teaching was undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. This resulted in largest online movement in the history of education. There was doubt even, that unplanned and rapid move to online learning with no training, insufficient bandwidth and little preparation will be able to produce expected and fruitful results or not. But some believed that the new hybrid model of education will emerge with significant benefits. Educated parents supported their children throughout the pandemic, but there were some illiterate parents who were feeling helpless to help their children in their education. There were many students who didn't own the resources, struggled hard to get the gadgets required for online classes. Every possible step was taken for the well-being of the students so that they could stay safe at home without getting affected by the life-threatening virus. We were not ready for this uninvited virus, but it visited our country too. Steps were taken by the government, schools, teachers as well as parents to update the infrastructure and undertake the situation to provide education to every child amid the pandemic. It involved challenges and opportunities both, soft copies of teaching and learning material was developed and gave an opportunities to worldwide exposure.

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