

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract: COVID-19 outbreak has caused a downward spiral in the world economy and caused a huge impact on the higher education system. The sudden closure of campuses as a social distancing measure to prevent community transmission has shifted from face-to-face classes to online learning systems. This has thrown the focus on utilizing eLearning tools and platforms for effective student engagement. Which may have limitations of accessibility and affordability for many students. The pandemic has exposed the shortcomings of the current higher education system and the need for more training of educators in digital technology to adapt the rapidly changing education climate of the world. In the post-pandemic situation, the use of eLearning and virtual education may become an integral part of the higher education system. The higher education institutions and universities need to plan the post-pandemic education and research strategies to ensure student learning outcomes and standards of educational quality.

Keywords : Covid-19, higher education, impact, virtual education, teaching-learning.

Introduction:

The Covid-19 pandemic is not only a global health problem but also has severe impacts on human and social life, including employment, education, agriculture and the other spheres of the world economy. The pandemic is expected to have enormous economic consequences, and it is also having a devastating impact on global education. According to UNESCO, around 1.3 billion learners across the world were not able to attend school or university as of March 23, 2020, and current UNESCO statistics put this figure at over 1.5 billion (McCarthy, 2020). The paper intends to critically study the impact of the Covid-19 on higher education and the sudden shift of education to the online mode of teaching- learning.

Objectives:

- Highlight the impact of Covid-19 on higher education sector in India.
- Emerging various approaches of India for higher education.
- Put few suggestions for continuing educational activities of HEIs facing the challenges created by Covid-19.

Research Methodology:

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the Impact of COVID-19 in higher education system. Here the data from Various reports of national and international agencies on Covid-19 pandemic are searched to collect data for current study. As it is not possible to go outside for data collection due to lockdown, information are collected from different authentic websites, journals and e-contents relating to impact of Covid-19 on higher educational system .

Initiatives of Govt. of India on education during Covid-19:

To prevent spread of pandemic COVID-19, the Government of India has taken number of preventive measures.

Higher Education:

- **Swayam** is the national online education platform hosting 1900 courses covering both school (classes 9 to 12) and higher education (under graduate, post graduate programs) in all subjects including engineering, humanities and social sciences, law and management courses. The unique feature is that, it is integrated with the conventional education. Credit transfers are possible for SWAYAM courses (max. 20%). Website: <https://swayam.gov.in/>
- **SwayamPrabha** has 32 DTH TV channels transmitting educational contents on 24 x 7 basis. These channels are available for viewing all across the country using DD Free Dish Set Top Box and Antenna. The channel schedule and other details are available in the portal. The channels cover both school education (classes 9 to 12) and higher education (undergraduate, postgraduate, engineering Out-of-school children, vocational courses and teacher training) in arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities subjects, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture. Website: <https://swayamprabha.gov.in/>
- **e-PGPathshala** is for postgraduate students. Postgraduate students can access this platform for eBooks, online courses and study materials during this lockdown period. The importance of this platform is that students can access these facilities without having internet for the whole day. Website: <https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/>
- **Improved the use of electronic media for sharing information:** Learning materials are shared among the students easily and the related queries are resolved through e-mail, SMS, phone calls and using different social Medias like WhatsApp or Facebook.
- **World wide exposure:** Educators and learners are getting opportunities to interact with peers from around the world. Learners adapted to an international community.
- **Better time management:** Students are able to manage their time more efficiently in online education during pandemics.

- **Demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL):** During the pandemic situation most of the students preferred ODL mode as it encourages self-learning providing opportunities to learn from diverse resources and customized learning as per their needs.

Impact On Higher Education:

Pandemic Covid-19 has severely affected the total educational system of India as well as the globe but some of the most impacted areas of higher education of India are as mentioned below.

- **Destabilized all educational activities:** Due to Covid-19 has compelled lockdown in every sector including education. The institutions got closed with cease of educational activities and created many challenges for the stake holders (Pravat, 2020a). So, the various activities such as admission, examinations, entrance tests, competitive examinations conducted by various boards/schools/colleges/ universities are postponed. Many entrance tests for higher study got cancelled which created a big challenge in the life of a student for there higher education.
- **Mixed impact on Academic research & Professional Development:** Covid-19 has both negative and positive impacts on research. If we take the negative side, it has made impossible for researchers to travel and work together with others nationally and internationally. Some joint research work or project work are made complicated to complete. Some scientific laboratory testing/research work could not be conducted. If we look at the positive side, academicians got much time to improve their theoretical research work. Academicians got acquainted with technological methods and improved their research also they can attend online webinar for there professional work.
- **Severely affected the educational assessment system:** Most of the external examinations have been postponed and almost all the internal assessments have been cancelled. The cancellation of assessments has negative impact on students' learning. Many institutions have been managing the internal assessments through online mode using different digital tools but the postponement of the external assessments, has a direct impact on the educational and occupational future of students' life.
- **Reduced employment opportunities:** Many entrance tests job recruitments got cancelled which created negative impact with a big challenge in the life of a student in higher education. The Indians who have been doing their jobs abroad became upset of their job withdrawal also. In India, there is no recruitment in Govt. sector and fresh graduates are in pressure of fearing withdrawal of job offers from corporate sector due to the pandemic situation. Many students may lose their jobs from India and overseas. The pass out students may not get their job outside India due to various restrictions caused by Covid-19. All these facts directly affect towards increase of unemployment rate because of this pandemic. With increase of unemployment situation, the interest for education may gradually decrease as people struggle for food rather than education (Pravat, 2020b).

- **Move towards Blended Learning:** COVID-19 has accelerated adoption of digital technologies to deliver education. Educational institutions moved towards blended mode of learning. It encouraged all teachers and students to become more technology savvy.
- **Rise in use of Learning Management Systems:** Use of learning management systems by educational institutions became a great demand. It opened a great opportunity for the companies those have been developing and strengthening learning management systems for use educational institutions (Misra, 2020).
- **Enhance the use of soft copy of learning material:** In lockdown situation students were not able to collect the hard copies of study materials and hence most of the students used of soft copies materials for reference.
- **Improvement in collaborative work:** There is a new opportunity where collaborative teaching and learning can take on new forms. Collaborations can also happen among faculty/teachers across the world to benefit from each other (Misra, 2020).
- **Rise in online meetings:** The pandemic has created a massive rise in teleconferencing, virtual meetings, webinars and e-conferencing opportunities
- **Enhanced Digital Literacy:** The pandemic situation induced people to learn and use digital technology and resulted in increasing the digital literacy.
- **Improved the use of electronic media for sharing information:** Learning materials are shared among the students easily and the related queries are resolved through e-mail, SMS, phone calls and using different social Medias like WhatsApp or Facebook.
- **World wide exposure:** Educators and learners are getting opportunities to interact with peers from around the world. Learners adapted to an international community.
- **Better time management:** Students are able to manage their time more efficiently in online education during pandemics.
- **Demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL):** During the pandemic situation most of the student preferred ODL mode as it encourages self-learning providing opportunities to learn from diverse resources and customized learning as per their needs.

Suggestions:

- India should develop creative strategies to ensure that all children must have sustainable education during pandemic COVID-19.
- The Indian policies must include various individuals from diverse backgrounds such as - remote regions, marginalized and minority groups for effective delivery.
- Immediate measures are required to lessen the effects of the pandemic on job offers, internship programs, and research projects.
- Across the globe, Indian traditional knowledge is well known for its scientific innovations, values and benefits to develop sustainable technologies and medicines and this knowledge systems in different fields should be integrated with a present-day mainstream higher education system.

Conclusion:

This study has outlined various impacts of COVID-19 on higher education in India. The pandemic created an opportunity for change in pedagogical approaches and introduction of virtual education in all levels of education. As we don't know how long the pandemic situation will continue, a gradual move towards the online education is the demand of the current crisis. UGC and MHRD have launched many virtual platform such as online depositaries, e-books and other online teaching and learning materials with the help of these materials student can build up their knowledge in this pandemic situation. Even they will be more aware about the technology which is very important in this era.

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