

A Study Refer To Impact of COVID-19 on Education System in India

Mayur R Koti

Research Scholar, Faculty of Business Studies, Sharnbasva University, Kalaburagi.

Dr. Chandrakanth Jewargi

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Business Studies, Sharnbasva University, Kalaburagi.

ABSTRACT

In developing countries like India, where online education was not very common, the pandemic transformed the conventional chalk-talk teaching model to one driven by technology with the single stroke of a pen. The COVID-19 crisis forced a move towards online teaching and learning, thereby creating space for more flexible learning possibilities, exploring blended learning, and mixing synchronous learning with asynchronous learning. The pandemic has led to the capacity building of staff and faculty, compelling them to learn and test new tools and systems for online teaching and learning. This obviously will lead to an increase in innovation in teaching pedagogies, as well as delivery modalities. The pandemic has worked as a wake-up call and demonstrated the importance of technology in teaching, learning, and research, this article tries to bring light focus on the impact and changes in Indian education during this pandemic time

Keywords

COVID-19, teaching – Learning Process, Impact on higher education

INTRODUCTION

Indian universities, realizing their commitment to students and the community, displayed adaptability, agility, and innovation in dealing with the pandemic. While academic continuity planning was of prime importance, they also understood the need for emotional support, healthcare infrastructure, building awareness, and creating new learning opportunities. Many key reform initiatives were undertaken by the universities to build resilience, ensure continuity, and create an impact in times of COVID-19. These included the transition to online classrooms to maintain academic continuity, knowledge creation through Webinars, ensuring emotional wellness by building strength, support, and awareness, the launch of online & blended learning mode degrees, learning and development by building access for student communities to online MOOCs and e-resources, healthcare infrastructure upgrade, creating scholarship opportunities, global immersion by expanding international collaborations, admissions mobility by adopting AI-enabled processes, the establishment of The Office of Digital Learning & Online Education, etc

Universities counseled and mentored students through virtual engagement platforms, offering all information along with virtual office hours wherein they could contact staff and have live video chats with faculty. Ongoing staff training involved admission, academic, and administrative training for remote working. As its contribution towards service to the community, the Universities with medical colleges and hospitals admitted COVID patients, and affordable treatment was provided with the help and expertise of its doctors and other medical staff. The safety of faculty and students was ensured by following safety guidelines for safe conduct on campus, as per World Health Organization (WHO) protocol.

At the Government level, to foster an ecosystem where institutional support is made available, rendered voluntarily to society, and leading to measurable outcomes, All India Council for Technical Education launched the Best Institution Award under the theme “India Fights Corona” and introduced a course on Universal Human Values. To help the students under duress amidst the lockdown, a web portal (<https://helpline.aicte-india.org>) was created to support stranded students and re-connect them to their family, colleges and meet their urgent personal needs, including psychological support. The Government of India also announced a National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) as a Public-Private partnership model to bring the best technological products in education technology on a single platform for the convenience of learners. The Enhancement in Learning with Improvement in Skills (ELIS) portal was created to provide all students with content to enhance learning for regular subjects and increase valuable skillsets required for the actual work environment. The Government of India also launched a ‘Drug Discovery Hackathon’ as a national initiative to support the drug discovery process through the participation of professionals, faculty, researchers, and students.

India has taken sufficient steps to combat the impact of COVID-19, but it is felt that the government and institutions need to invest heavily in technical infrastructure to enable the shift from conventional to a blended education model. Learning assessment and examination approaches should also be reviewed to comply with online teaching and learning pedagogy. High-quality Open Source Educational learning resources in various Indian languages should be developed, especially in subjects requiring practical skills. The development and training of staff and faculty for online teaching and learning pedagogy through extensive capacity-building programs would go a long way in improving the quality of online teaching and learning. Digital footfalls tripled in the country just a week after the lockdown on digital initiatives, like

SWAYAM ‘Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds,’ which provides an integrated platform for various online courses across educational levels and subject areas, including skill sector courses. SWAYAM hosted about 2000 complete courses, including teaching videos, weekly assignments, examinations, and credit transfers.

Review of Literature

UNESCO has estimated that around 1.26 billion children or 70 percent of children around the world have had their education interrupted because of the pandemic and a large number of these children are from what UNESCO calls the “low tech or no tech” phase, with India contributing 300 million of the 1.26 billion children.

Given this backdrop, Professor Sahana Murthy explained the context behind the surge of online education in India as the idea of "Emergency Remote Teaching". She asserted, however, that there is a difference between emergency remote teaching and effective online learning. She explained that for online teaching, along with the requirement of tools such as online platforms, one needs access as well as trained teachers. She concluded her opening statement by emphasizing the importance of changing the mindsets of the teachers as well as students since online teaching only limits through a face-to-face lens. One way in which this could be implemented is through the LCM Model, which focuses on a "learner-centric approach towards the designing and conducting of online courses."

Dr. Shakila Shamsu shed light on the use of technology for education should not be seen as an outcome of the pandemic, but as an idea that has been continuing for several years. She corroborated this point by outlining the efforts of the National Mission on Education Through ICT which was a strong recommendation of the 11th five-year plan. She explained how the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment in the 1970s and educational broadcasting that happened over the radio were ways in which technology was used in the field of education, giving "equitable access" to all those learning through those mediums. The Union HRD Ministry had launched a TV channel for students to take online courses and at present, 15 million students are enrolled with it. It also launched a subsidiary direct-to-home channel in 2019, called Swayam Prabha. The number of viewers has been doubled compared to its parent channel. She believed that the reason India is not able to transition swiftly from face-to-face education to remote learning is the lack of institutional preparedness and accessibility by students to the new mode of delivering classes. She also suggested that "higher education institutions should begin to construct an academic plan of action." Therefore, there is a "need to guide institutions, faculty, and students to repurpose e-content in a manner that fits into the curricula for achieving the desired learning objectives of that particular course". She concluded her opening statements by saying that to reach a larger audience, it is essential content should be made available in regional languages

Dr. Ashwin Fernandes pointed out that COVID-19 brought a "second wind to higher education in India." He believed this is because of three main reasons. Firstly, the increased use of technology for various ideas, especially for education, has "instilled confidence for users" Secondly, India has tried to follow the footsteps of UK, US, and UNESCO models of online education, and lastly it depends on how both these factors "level the playing field for Indian universities." Discussing the survey conducted by his organization which focused on whether India was ready for a digital transformation, he revealed that more than 80 percent of India's population use their mobile hotspot for accessing the internet. Out of which, 96 percent of students who used mobile hotspots to gain access to educational resources had problems with internet connectivity. This, according to him, could be happening because of the low cost of the internet in India, as it led to the overloading of systems. He believed that India is currently in Stage 1 of the transition from face-to-face learning to online education, where classes have

begun to be taken online. Stage 2 of this transition is where there is “100 percent course delivery online (assessment, grading)” and Stage 3 is where there is “complete delivery of course credit online (online degrees).” He concluded by suggesting that, for India to make an effective shift to online platforms for education, it needs to address the power supply issues as soon as it can, enable a shift in mindset towards online teaching and learning and conduct robust training for faculty and students on ed-tech tools.

Dr. V. Sridhar explained the “Taxonomy of Online Education”, which includes “Learning Management”, “Course Delivery”, “Assessment and Evaluation” and “Sync Course Conduct.” Agreeing with Dr. Fernandes on the overloading of network connections leading to the poor connectivity experienced by students in online education, he suggested a few potential solutions. Firstly, we should record for later reference and providing internet connectivity through DTH or cable networks or give internet connection through landline infrastructure. Another roadblock to online education is the monitoring of online assessment. To improve internet connection in remote areas, connections could be taken from cities or places with the possibility of higher internet connection and access. "

Research Methodology

The present study is based on Descriptive Research. Present research work is set to study the following objectives.

1. To study the impact of COVID 19 in higher education in India.
2. To understand Challenges and Opportunities in higher education in India
3. To understand the teaching and learning process after COVID 19 from different stakeholders required data is collected from various reports of Government Agencies, Different Educational Apex body reports, and websites. This study is restricted to the Indian Higher Education Sector only

Discussion

Digital learning has many advantages in itself like digital learning has no physical boundaries, it has more learning engagement experience rather than traditional learning, it is also cost-effective and students get to learn in the confines of their comfort zone. 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. 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 to opt for digital education, however, rural area students do not have the required infrastructure nor are financially strong to avail the resources required for digital education. The building of the digital education infrastructure by the Government of India

presently appears to be difficult due to a lack of budget. Further, even if the digital infrastructure is built, training has to be given to the teachers to use the digital system to provide authentic and proper, uninterrupted, and seamless education to the students. Remote learning increasingly relies on a reliable power supply and ubiquitous Internet connectivity which might be a far-fetched thing for Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in India.

Another challenge is that e-learning comes across as a somewhat patchy and impersonal experience. Also, e-learning is likely to witness a high dropout rate due to the lack of atmosphere for studying. Students might tend to get distracted by gaming consoles, social media at home and might not feel a sense of community while taking online classes. Successful delivery of education is also in question because learning at the level of higher education and learning at the kindergarten/school level can be different. Digital education cannot be applied the same at every level of education.

If we further up the light on the educational material, digital education will have a limited scope as compared with the written and handy material which is provided in an educational institute. Moreover, the authentication of the educational material is at stake. E-learning will always provide the students with different information in different ways. So, the authenticity of the educational material should be tested before these materials are circulated with the students. Creation of content, dissemination of content, and evaluation of content should be done. Blended education has to come face to face and distance education should go hand in hand currently. Educational data circulated online should be properly maintained. Because ultimately these digital educational course classes will also lead to hacking systems and intruders coming in. The digital safety challenge will remain at large while imparting education.

Outcome of Study

✓ A rise in Blended Learning

Universities and colleges will shift to a model of blended learning where both faces to face delivery along with an online model will become a norm. This will require all teachers to become more technology savvy and go through some training to bring themselves to the level that would be required. New ways of delivery and assessments of learning outcomes will have to be adopted which opens immense opportunities for a major transformation in the area of curriculum development and pedagogy.

✓ Learning management systems to be the new norm

A great opportunity will open up for those companies that have been developing and strengthening learning management systems for use by universities and colleges. This has the potential to grow at a very fast pace but will have to be priced appropriately for use by all institutions.

✓ Improvement in learning material

There is a great opportunity for universities and colleges to start improving the quality of the learning material that is used in the teaching and learning process. Since blended learning will be the new format of learning there will be a push to find new ways to design and deliver quality content especially because the use of learning management systems will bring about more openness and transparency in academics.

✓ The rise in collaborative work

The teaching community to a large extent has been very insulated and more so in a country like India. There is a new opportunity where collaborative teaching and learning can take on new forms and can even be monetized. Faculty members/ teachers can deliver online courses to even students from competing institutions. Collaborations can also happen among faculty/teachers across the nation to benefit from each other.

A large number of academic meetings, seminars, and conferences will move online and there is a possibility that some new form of an online conferencing platform will emerge as a business model. After all this, there is one certainty that we can envisage and that is going to change how higher education will operate globally and in India. India is not just going through a reform in the higher education sector, but now it will go through a major transformation in general

✓ Upskilling create on graduates and working professionals

We update apps on our phones to operate the latest version of the same. Similarly, in every aspect of life, people need to upgrade continuously to remain relevant in the fast-paced world of technology. This applies to the current situation of the graduates and working professionals too.

To remain employed and be relevant in the competitive job market, upskilling is the need of the hour for the employed professionals. The pace of technological changes is making employees adopt new skills to stay fully productive and have a better-employed future. Furthermore, the industries need to invest in upskilling their employees on emerging skills. Educational Institutions would also need to invest in skilling graduates on future skills platforms.

✓ fill up the industry-academia gap

The gap between the curriculums taught in colleges and the skills that an employer need is indeed wide. Going forward, the career trajectory of an employee will revolve around digital technologies such as AI, Analytics, and Robotics for which the conventional structure of universities is outdated.

Businesses nowadays are more inclined towards the use of analytics. Robots have advanced to the extent that they can surpass an industry expert. Even AI has tremendous potential in the Indian job market. However, the engineering students in our country are yet to adopt these

advancements as educational institutions across the country still teach outdated technologies that are irreverent in the current scenario.

The industry needs to tie up with educational institutions to get customized courses running in parallel to standard degree programs like B Tech, BCA, etc. so that the students gain relevant skill sets and get employment ready by the time they graduate.

Moreover, educational institutions need to offer more than the mandatory components of Internships and On-Job-Training to provide exposure to students on emerging skills. Entrepreneurship Training, student exchange programs with educational institutions worldwide, and international research collaborations are some of the avenues that universities should actively explore. Industry-Academia collaboration can also see Centers of Excellence being set up jointly to focus on research and training in specialized sectors of Future Skills.

✓ common challenges teachers face during online classes

Before the COVID-19 lockdown in India, not many reckoned that the face of the educational institutions could change so drastically. Schools that never allowed students to carry an electronic gadget turned into learning centers for online classes. Both teachers and students are getting accustomed to this new normal, which is definitely more challenging for the teachers to cope with.

Online classes have led to increased expenses for the teachers that can be overwhelming for them. To tackle this situation, educational institutions should subsidize and reimburse those costs. Challenges in adopting new technologies and tools for online learning can be strenuous for the teachers. Institutions and the Government should be investing in mass-scale Teacher Training Initiatives to address such issues. The teachers also face challenges in designing effective lessons and changing pedagogy when shifting to online learning; this can also be resolved through workshops and training.

✓ The critical trends of education to follow post-COVID

The COVID-19 Pandemic has revealed some of the major loopholes in the Indian education system. Decisions related to education once attained will have long-term significance in the future of the education system in the country. Furthermore, the closure of schools has had a severe impact on vulnerable and marginalized students.

One of the critical trends that can be followed is the need to have a blended approach to online learning. Following that the increase in investment in the upgrading of the technology infrastructure of institutions requires accurate limelight. Stress needs to be given to training the teachers. Apart from that, updating curricula across major sectors and focus on Startups and Entrepreneurship should rise.

✓ Advice to the academicians and administrators across the country

The pandemic has resulted in highlighting the existing inconsistency of the education system. The time to act for a better future and make a difference is now, and the academicians and administrators have a significant role to play in this.

A traditional proverb says that a wise teacher makes learning a joy. Having said that, investment in the biggest assets of education, which are teachers, can be an extremely fruitful decision. Encouraging innovation and creativity as well as maintaining communication with Teachers, Parents, and Students can do wonders.

Taking extra care of the mental health of all stakeholders by removing any form of stigma revolving around it will make a lot of difference. Additional precautions and guidelines should be taken care of whenever an institution is opening up. Last but not least, the creation of a dedicated Technology and e-learning task force within the educational institutions should be a primary focus for the upliftment, development, and growth of the institutes.

Conclusion

Post Covid-19 is an opportunity to transform the higher education system. Institutes/ universities should utilize this opportunity to transform themselves. Curriculum design, collaborations, skill development, and faculty involvement — all should focus on internationalizing higher education. Also, this is the right time to strengthen online education to be prepared for any future pandemic situations. The entire education system has to change with the active involvement of faculty. The tremendous use of technology in teaching amidst crisis will lead to a new era in the education sector wherein the best of faculty will be available from across the globe to students. Quality of faculty, quality of IT infrastructure, and familiarization of the faculty with digital teaching technologies are important parameters foreseen in the future. There is no doubt that the crisis has accelerated the adoption of technologies to deliver education and will help strengthen the country's digital learning infrastructure in the long run. COVID-19 has struck our education system like a lightning bolt and shaken it to its core. Just as the First Industrial Revolution forged today's system of education, we can expect a different kind of educational model to emerge from COVID-19.

Reference

- ✓ Pravat Ku. Jena (2020). Challenges and Opportunities created by Covid-19 for ODL: A case study of IGNOU. International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Filed, Volume-6, Issue- 5, Pg. 217-222.
- ✓ Pravat Ku. Jena (2020). Online learning during the lockdown period for covid-19 in India. International Journal of Educational• Research, Volume-9, Issue- 5(8), Pg.82-92.
- ✓ Andersen, S C, and H S Nielsen (2019), "Learning from Performance Information", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*.
- ✓ https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/covid-19_and_he_resources.pdf//27/05/2020/8.15hrs
- ✓ <https://voxeu.org/article/impact-covid-19-education/28/05/2020/11hrs>
- ✓ <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/28/05/2020/11hrs>
- ✓ <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200525005226/en/Research-Report-COVID-19-Forecasts---Online-Education>