



Online Education: The Need of the Hour

¹Sanat Rout, ²Sadananda Sahoo, ³Rabindra Kumar Mishra

^{1,2}School of Management Studies, GIET University, Odisha, India

³Department of Commerce, P.N. College (Autonomous), Khordha, Odisha, India

E-mail: hisanatrout@gmail.com

ABSTRACT : COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered Corona virus. It spreads mostly through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes (WHO). The virus has completely disrupted life throughout the world and almost all the industries in India. Till 13th June 2020, there were 145779 active cases with 8884 deaths in India. This pandemic has seriously affected various sectors in India including hotel, retail, oil, gas, tourism, agriculture, automobiles, aviation, education, and many more. The Covid-19 pandemic has totally destabilized the education system and forced changes in the educational environment and redefines the system, but there looms rays of opportunities as well. An attempt has been made in this paper to study the impact of Covid-19 on education and possible scope of transforming education for future purpose.

Keywords: Covid-19 Impact, Corona, Pandemic, E-learning, Education, University

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of us are born in independent India, never experienced plague, famine of large extend. In India 1994 Plague covered 5 states affecting 693 suspect cases with 56 deaths. Indian government reported 1833 deaths from swine flu in 2010.

While considering all the epidemics that the world has faced since the year 1900:

- Spanish Flu in 1918-20 claimed around 100 million lives in Europe
- The Asian flu pandemic in 1957-58 which originated from china claimed more than 1.1 Million lives in the world.
- AIDS pandemic and epidemic since 1981 to present day, have claimed 35 million lives around the world.

- H1N1 Swine Flu pandemic: 2009-2010 claimed between 151,700 and 575,400 lives, according to the CDC.
- Ebola ravaged West Africa between 2014 and 2016, with 11,325 deaths from Africa, Europe & United States

The death rate in Spanish Flue in 1918-20 was of a very tall order but limited to Europe. Above all, what the world is facing now was never experienced before. The Pandemic has well and truly cornered the entire world.

2. COVID - 19 AND SOCIAL-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was first reported on 31st December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei Province of China. Further on 13th January, the first case outside China was reported in Thailand. On March 11, 2020 The World Health Organization (WHO) declared novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak as a global pandemic. This has further risen and till 15th May 2020, there are 82085 active cases with 2646 deaths in India. Whereas, there are over 4.4 million confirmed cases with more than 3 Lakh confirmed deaths in 215 countries, areas, or territories (WHO).

The first of the COVID-19 case in India was reported on 30 January 2020, with travel history from China. On 22 March 2020, India observed a 14-hour voluntary public curfew on the insistence of the honorable Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi. On 24 March, Modiji ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days. Then on 14 April, he extended the ongoing nationwide lockdown till 3 May, and named it lockdown 2. It was further extended beyond 4th May 2020, as a part of lockdown 3.

The effect of COVID 19 on our socio-economic sector has been very severe. The lockdown has pushed everybody inside his/her house as the Government of India thought saving the life of the citizen is vital. This could be carried out by compromising on the economic development of the country as India is a hugely populated country. The Modi Government's slogan was

(in Hindi language) “Jaan he to Jahan he”. In English it can be termed as “Health is wealth”.

As a result country faced the Social problems:

- The lockdown process started so fast that many people were held up in different location (includes domestic locations as well as foreign locations) but could not return home. Faced several financial, psychological problems.
- Several Students, Job holders could not come back
- The Pandemic has had its impact mostly on senior citizens. According to Health Ministry report 75% cases of deaths in patients who are aged 60 years and above. This has created serious havoc in the mind of senior citizens and their children
- Due to restrictions from the government agencies, many functions like marriage, birth, and death could not be celebrated as per the rules of custom and tradition.
- The most disturbing thing happened with lakhs of people who work as labourers in different industrial cities were held up in states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala & etc., could not come to their home land. Due to their poor economic status they hardly had food. They even tried to walk hundreds of kilometers to reach their home. As they could not maintain social distance, created serious chances of spread of the disease

Economically the entire world including India has been seriously hit due to complete lock down in India. The lock down turned out to be lock-out for all the companies in India. All production stopped except for the health care sector

The impact of covid-19 on Indian economy can be as follows:

- Employment factor has been seriously affected. Due to shut down of the companies. Workers of informal sectors & daily wage workers are now completely at dark with very little or no money in hand and no-certainly about the future. According to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) the unemployment touched 26% in the 1st month of unemployment itself.
- Without very little monetary transaction, revenue generation for the government has shrunk.
- Supply-chain was seriously strained during the first lock-down stage even though it has improved a lot in the later stages.
- Complete collapse of tourism, hospitality & entertainment industry.

- With very little movement the fuel (petrol, diesel & CNG) consumption has seriously plunged. Instead the LPG consumption has increased as people stayed indoors and focused on home prepared foods.
- The consumer activity has been seriously limited to buying and consuming of essential commodities.

Sectors which showed positive growth

- Digital & Internet Sector
- FMCG & Retail has been benefitted immensely.
- Local Pharma
- Diagnostics
- Agrochemical & Fertilizers
- Specialty Chemicals: Firms dealing in Chemicals like disinfectants, sanitizer & Liquid Soap
- Protection Kit manufacturing firms producing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kit, masks & ventilators.

Several sectors in India like hotel, retail, automobiles, aviation oil and gas, tourism, agriculture have been seriously affected by the pandemic. The impact may be more or less, but all the sectors are going to be affected by the crisis. The same is with the education sector in India. Let us find out the impact of covid-19 pandemic on education in India with some possible solutions.

3. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

Education plays a major role in the human development process. Education helps in being literate, acquiring necessary skills and knowledge for survival, understanding the rules of the society and land, developing basic and professional skills for personal & professional growth. The Covid-19 pandemic has totally destabilized the education system and also has forced to redefine the system. So it is important to analyze the following:

1. How education has helped in the current scenario in delivering the message about the pandemic.
2. The impact of Covid-19 on education and the universities

3.1 ROLE OF EDUCATION IN DELIVERING MESSAGE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Education has played an important role on development of human resource through professional training, teaching of skill to survive and knowledge about the virus. The role of education till now has been very significant in fighting Covid-19. WHO the parent body of the world on health issues, keeps educating the national bodies of all member nations in the world on new methods, research, developments, invention and process of managing the virus. Indian Council of

Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi, is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research. ICMR in tie up with Ministry of Health, Govt. of India is taking all the responsibility of training, research of all Corona related activities. We cannot find anyone who does not know about Covid-19, how it is spread, what the precautions are and what somebody has to do if somebody gets affected by the virus. So the government agencies have been successful in delivering the message about the pandemic

3.2 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION

There has been several impact of Covid-19 pandemic on education and universities. The stages of shut-down have seriously impacted academic / examination activities. The pandemic has forced several changes in the educational environment. But there looms rays of opportunities as well.

3.2.1 IMPACT ON ACADEMIC / EXAMINATION ACTIVITIES

The spread of the pandemic was so fast that the Government of India had to go for the complete shutdown. The education authorities had no reaction time to plan and adjust to the new challenge, which they never faced before.

3.2.1.1 THE TIME FIRST SHUT-DOWN HAPPENED

- It was the last phase of even semester academic season for all the universities and colleges
- Most of the universities were already notified for the semester end exam in the month of May.
- Schools were approaching for their final examinations. The 10th Board examinations were finished for some boards and mid-way for some others.
- All class promotion examinations for the schools were still pending
- Some papers for CBSE class 12 examinations are still pending
- All the entrance examinations for different career like engineering, Medical, MBA etc. were scheduled on different dates in the month of April and May.
- Students could not move to coaching centers for their academic and entrance examination preparatory activities

3.2.1.2 REMEDIAL MEASURES TAKEN BY DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Government has eased the shut-down of many sectors but not the education sector.

- Hence all examination or entrance tests are postponed beyond July 2020.

- All classroom activities were completely shut-down in any platform like school, college or coaching centers.
- Many schools, colleges were forced to go for online classes.

3.2.2 CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Covid-19 has forced to have a relook towards our academic system. There has been a complete paradigm shift in the system. The online class has become a new reality for all the students as they were forced to leave the classroom.

Yes, there are many **challenges on conducting online classes:**

- Network issues
- All faculties / teachers are not ready to deliver
- Many students don't have the access to smartphones, Laptops or Desktops
- E-learning / online education may result in dropouts as many students don't have the environment to catch up the new way of learning.
- Traditional classroom understanding between the teacher and student will not be there
- Many teachers may not be having required infrastructure to prepare e-materials and transfer to each student
- Even if some schools and colleges have been able to implement online educations, the government schools and colleges along with some low-earning private colleges have shut-down their operation, due to lack of infrastructure and solutions.
- Internet speed is very slow in India. If we compare Singapore with India, in Singapore the average speed is around 70 Mbps whereas in India it is around 8Mbps. Hence delivering quality teaching on digital platform is not possible.

The challenges for the universities & colleges can be:

- Autonomous universities can take quick decisions regarding methodology of teaching
- In affiliating University concept taking decisions won't be easy and fast as they are dependent on UGC directive
- With uncertainty prevailing, conducting examinations will be a mounting challenge. It won't be surprising if online examination becomes a new normal.
- There has been a serious impact on socio-economic situation of many families of the students. Job loss and salary cut will definitely

affect higher education plan of students in India and abroad.

- Training teachers / faculties to adopt to new way of teaching is not easy
- With many people are jobless or not getting timely salaries, collection of fees will be very difficult. This will put pressure on the colleges to meet their expenses, which includes salary of staffs.
- With admission season fast approaching, colleges are getting increasingly nervous as movement of students / parents & marketing team is restricted
- Recruitment of staffs and faculties will be a challenge
- Placement of final year students is a huge challenge

There are some **factors in education which cannot be delivered in the digital platform**:

- Research based on primary data will not be possible
- Internship is a very important aspect for all professional students like MBA & BTech. During Internship the students get the taste and demand of corporate life, which is so important for a student to choose a right career and self-preparation for the challenge ahead.
- Practical classes for technical students will be a huge disadvantage
- Coordination and cooperation between industry and education will be a challenge
- Student's personality development aspect like interpersonal skill, group discussion, understanding body language will be impossible

3.2.3 NEW OPPORTUNITIES

As online teaching/ training is slowly becoming a new way in imparting education, it has shown some promises:

- Some premier B-schools like IIM Sambalpur have already started online classes after conducting online entrance test & interview.
- UGC also getting ready with online education as an option
- Attending webinars is now becoming a habit for educated Indians
- Online training has no boundary, a student can join from anywhere in the world with a network in place
- As Virtual / Digital platform is much cheaper compared to physical infrastructure

- Teaching is going to be outsourced and will become cheaper
- Branded institutes can reap rich benefits by providing online courses with competitive price
- A blended / hybrid education model with good features of both classroom and online education methods is a definite possibility in the post-covid-19 scenario.

4. CONCLUSION:

There will be challenges and opportunities for the education industry. The government has to take a big role to play in creating an infrastructure for online training which is being offered now in a limited way by several free apps like CiscoWebEx, Zoom, Skype, Join.Me, Google Meet & Apache OpenMeeting. There is no doubt that the education industry will find its own route, but the current Covid-19 pressure will definitely create a new positive dimension for the field of education. With increasing number of affected cases and deaths, the post-covid-19 horizon is not visible; the online education is certainly the need of the hour.

REFERENCES

- [1] Choudhary. Richa. *COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact and strategies for education sector in India*. 16 April 2020. 25 May 2020. <<https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/education/covid-19-pandemic-impact-and-strategies-for-education-sector-in-india/75173099>>.
- [2] India Today Web Desk. *How the Covid-19 pandemic has thrown education around the world in a loop*. 7 April 2020. 25 May 2020. <<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilipia/story/how-is-the-covid-19-pandemic-affecting-education-all-over-the-world-1664380-2020-04-07>>.
- [3] Goyal. Malini; Seetharaman. G; Sharma. Shantanu Nandan. *Coronavirus: Faced with an unprecedented challenge, how is India faring?* 5 April 2020. 25 May 2020. <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/coronavirus-faced-with-an-unprecedented-challenge-how-is-india-faring/articleshow/74986805.cms>>.
- [4] Hananto, Akhyari. *Rank of Countries with Fastest (and Slowest) Internet in The World 2019*. 12 July 2019. 25 May 2020. <<https://seasia.co/2019/07/12/rank-of-countries-with-fastest-and-slowest-internet-in-the-world-2019>>.
- [5] India Today Web Desk. *Coronavirus: 75% cases of deaths in patients aged 60 yrs and above, 83% have co-morbidities*. 18 April 2020. 25 May 2020. <<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/coronavirus-india-health-ministry-pc-deaths->

- comorbidities-percentage-total-cases-1668391-2020-04-18>.
- [6] INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH. 2020. 25 May 2020. <<https://main.icmr.nic.in/>>.
- [7] Joseph, Crawford., et al. "COVID-19: 20 countries' higher education intra-period digital pedagogy responses." *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching* 3.1 (2020): 1-20. 25 May 2020.
- [8] MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT. "EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS AT A GLANCE." STATISTICS DIVISION, 2018. 25 May 2020. <https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/ESAG-2018.pdf>.
- [9] Organisation, World Health. *Coronavirus*. n.d. 25 May 2020. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1>.
- [10] Praghlapati, A. "COVID-19 IMPACT ON STUDENTS." *Department of Nursing, Faculty of Sport Education and Health*, (2020): 1-6.
- [11] PTI. *Nationwide lockdown to cost Indian economy \$4.64 billion every day: Acuite Ratings*. 5 April 2020. 25 May 2020. <<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/nationwide-lockdown-to-cost-indian-economy-4-64-billion-every-day-acuite-ratings/1917175/>>.
- [12] Rastogi, Siddhartha. *The New Normal: Analysis of COVID-19 Impact on the Indian Economy*. 29 April 2020. 25 May 2020. <<https://blog.smallcase.com/the-new-normal-analysis-of-covid-19-on-indian-businesses-sectors-and-the-economy/>>.
- [13] Singh. Nirvikar . *India's Covid 19 crisis response: Challenges are greater, getting money to individuals and firms is not as easy*. 3 April 2020. 25 May 2020. <<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/indias-covid-19-crisis-response-challenges-are-greater-getting-money-to-individuals-and-firms-is-not-as-easy/1917479/>>.
- [14] Wikipedia. *1994 plague in India*. May 2020. 25 May 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1994_plague_in_India>.
- [15] Wikipedia. *Economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in India*. May 2020. 25 May 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_impact_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_in_India>.

