

IMPACT OF COVID 19

On various sectors of Indian Economy

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Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Indian Higher Education

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Abstract:

The impact of COVID-19 can be seen in every sphere of life. Especially when it comes to education; this is the biggest sector that has been adversely affected by this pandemic. It forced many great nations to enforce lockdown thereby bringing everything to an abrupt halt for a certain period of time. Right from the big businesses to educational institutions this Pandemic has literally altered and devastated the traditional ways of carrying out these things. The educational sector has been fighting to survive the crises. The teaching learning and evaluation methodologies have been completely altered by this pandemic. The digitalization of education became a necessity in order to provide seamless education. This paper would be discussing the problems faced by the students in India who are pursuing higher education during this pandemic. This paper also tries to find out the positive & negative impact it had on the teaching, learning and evaluation methodologies at undergraduate level & what steps our policymakers have taken in order to provide seamless education to the students who are pursuing higher education in India. Some suggestions have also been pointed out in this paper with regard to how we can further revolutionize the teaching & learning process to improve the experience of both; teachers and learners during the pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19, Pandemic, Higher Education, India, post Covid-19, Impact

Introduction:

The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced many countries to enforce lockdowns that brought everything to a standstill including the teaching and learning process. The educational sector suffered the most due to this pandemic. This pandemic has made the world to observe social distancing in the public space. COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China and then it gradually started spreading in other parts of the world.

It was only in 2020 the WHO declared it as pandemic. It has claimed millions of lives across the world. According to the UNESCO report more than 90% of total student population in the world was affected due to the pandemic during the initial phase of its outbreak. It has caused a serious and very deep rooted impact on the social, economic and also psychological life of people in different parts of the world. The guidelines that were issued by the WHO which were ratified by the most of the countries across the world compelled the governments to shut down the institutions of mass gatherings. So along with the educational institutions the academic year end exams and also competitive exams were postponed indefinitely. This step was taken in order to slow down and contain the spread of Corona virus in India by segregating the people who were infected with COVID-19. This process came to be known as Lockdown wherein the Govt. had imposed severe restrictions on the movement and the gatherings of the people in order to control the spread of this airborne disease. So ultimately in this process all the educational institutions suffered a massive setback in India. All the educational institutions in India had to be shut down Right from the primary schools to the universities. The regular classes were suspended citing threat to the lives of the learners and the teachers. It also affected the lives of the aspirants who were preparing for competitive & entrance exams.

It has raised multiple issues right from the health to the wealth also affecting the day to day functioning of the life due to its rampant spread across the world and India is definitely not an exception to it. The economy has suffered severe setback which can be reflected in different sectors. One of the major and devastating impact this pandemic brought in the global education is , it led to sudden shift of education from classroom teaching to the online mode of teaching and learning that has affected the teaching and learning process in Universities, colleges and schools and thus it has significantly disrupted the

higher education sector in India. This shift in education has brought a great change in the pattern of learning with certain positive and negative impacts.

In the case of the country like India this online teaching has registered devastating impact on the lives of those students who are underprivileged and coming from very poor section of the society. In India it has also brought certain severe effects on the conventional learning process of face to face interaction even when some technical aids were introduced in the classrooms. However also it is important to note that there are still certain educational institutions in India which are not very well equipped to the modern technological facilities in the classroom. Thus we can say that with the introduction of new method of learning through digital mode of learning, learning became very easy to the students as they can sit at home and get access but at the same time some students also had to face problem due to the poor internet connectivity which brings to the notice that even after India is adapting to online learning methods, still there lies an obstacles as entire population don't have access to internet and E-learning facility.

Rural people are still deprived of technology. Therefore it is important to understand that there are positive as well as negative effects on the Indian society. This paper intends to understand the issues that are associated with the higher education in India due to COVID-19 and also to focus on certain drawbacks in the context of online education and its psychological impact on the lives of the students.

Objectives of the study:

- To study the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Higher Education
- To enlighten various emerging approaches of India for higher education
- To Enlist post Covid-19 trends of HEIs
- To provide few suggestions for continuing

educational activities of HEIs facing the challenges created by Covid-19

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 pointed below.

- **Destabilized all educational activities:** Outbreak of 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. So, the various activities like 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 great challenge in the life of a student of higher education. The primary challenge was to continue teaching learning process when students, faculties and staff could no longer be physically present on the campuses. The obvious solution for the institutions was to depend on online teaching learning. However, within a relatively short time, HEIs have been able to provide support to the students through online modes. Covid-19 has accelerated adoption of digital technologies to deliver education. It encouraged all teachers and students to become more technology savvy. The HEIs have started conducting orientation programmes, induction meetings and counseling classes with the help of different e-conferencing tools like Google Meet, Skype, YouTube live, Facebook live, WebEx etc. to provide support services to the students. This initiative has taken to create an effective virtual environment of teaching learning and to create motivation among students for online activities. The

teachers and students improved the use of electronic media for sharing information by making use of WhatsApp, Google drive, Telegram, Twitter etc. They have been sharing important documents with the group members and creating online local repository also. Students are advised to submit the scanned copies of the assignments to the institution through email. Institutions have also started receiving internship reports and projects through email during the lockdown for Covid-19.

- **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. Webinars and e-conferences became normal methods for sharing expertise among students and academicians around the globe with similar issues. They could get much time to concentrate on professional development by doing research and to improve knowledge by sharing ideas through webinars and e-conferences. They enhanced their technical skill and could get the scope for publishing articles in journals, publishing books in this free time.
- **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. This uncertainty has created anxiety among students as they are stuck in the same grade/class without promotion. Similarly, many students who had appeared final/board examinations would suffer a lot as by the time they get their certificates, it might be too late for them to apply for the forthcoming academic year in other countries due to lockdown.

- **Reduced employment opportunities:** Many entrance tests job recruitments got cancelled which created negative impact with a great challenge in the life of a student of 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 sectors because of 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 simply towards increase of unemployment rate due to this pandemic. With increase of unemployment situation, the interest for education may gradually decrease as people struggle for food rather than education.

Emerging Approaches of India for Higher Education during Covid-19:

Many challenges are created by Covid-19. The HEIs have responded positively and adopted various strategies to face the crisis during the pandemic. The Government of India has also taken number of preventive measures to prevent spread of pandemic Covid-19. The MHRD and University Grants Commission (UGC) have made several arrangements by launching of many virtual platforms with online depositories, e-

books and other online teaching/learning materials, educational channels through Direct to Home TV, Radios for students to continue their learning. During lockdown, students are using popular social media tools like WhatsApp, Zoom, Google meet, Telegram, YouTube live, Facebook live etc. for online teaching learning system. ICT initiative of MHRD (e-Broacher- <https://mhrd.gov.in/ictinitiatives>) is also a unique platform which combines all digital resources for online education. UGC has released Guidelines on Examinations and Academic calendar in view of COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown on 29th April, 2020 (UGC notice). All terminal examinations have been postponed and shifted to July 2020 and suggested commencement of classes from August 2020. UGC has also prepared complete calendar for the academic session 2020-2021 with new dates keeping in view of the lockdown.

Some of the digital initiatives of UGC & MHRD for higher education during COVID-19 are pointed as below:

- **e-GyanKosh** (<http://egyankosh.ac.in/>) is a National Digital Repository to store and share the digital learning resources which is developed by the Open and Distance Learning Institutions of India. Items in e-GyanKosh are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).
- **Gyandarshan** (<http://www.ignouonline.ac.in/gyandarshan/>) is a web-based TV channel devoted to educational and developmental needs for Open and Distance Learner. A web-based TV channel devoted to educational and developmental needs of the society.
- **Gyandhara** (<http://ignouonline.ac.in/Gyandhara/>) is an internet audio counseling service offered by IGNOU. It is a web radio where students can listen to the live discussions by the teachers and experts on the topic of the day and interact with them through telephone, email (gyandhara@ignou.ac.in) and through chat mode.

- **Swayam** provides Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) with 140 universities approved credit transfer feature. SwayamPrabha provides high quality educational programs through 32 DTH channels transmitting educational contents. e-PG Pathshala (<https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/>) is for postgraduate students. Postgraduate students can access this platform for e-books, online courses and study materials.
- **e-Adhyayan (e-Books)** is a platform that provides 700+ e-Books for the Post-Graduate courses. All the e-Books are derived from e-PG Pathshala courses. It also facilitates play-list of video content.
- **e-Pathya (Offline Access)** is one the verticals of e-PG Pathshala which is software driven course/content package that facilitates students pursuing higher education (PG level) in distance learning as well as campus learning mode. It also facilitates offline access.
- **National Digital Library of India (NDLI)** (<https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/>) is a repository of e-content on multiple disciplines for all kinds of users like students (of all levels), teachers, researchers, librarians, library users, professionals, differently-abled users and all other lifelong learners. It is being developed at Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur. It is designed to help students to prepare for entrance and competitive examinations, to enable people to learn and prepare from best practices from all over the world and to facilitate researchers to perform inter-linked exploration from multiple sources. It is a virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility. It is also available to access through mobile apps.
- **e-Yantra** (<https://www.e-yantra.org/>) provides hands on experience on embedded systems. It has about 380 Lab and made 2300+ colleges benefited.
- **FOSSEE** (<https://fossee.in/>) is short form for Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education, which is

developed to promote open source software for education as well as professional use.

- **Virtual Labs** (<http://www.vlab.co.in/>) has developed web-enabled curriculum based experiments designed for remote operation. It has over 100 Virtual Labs consisting of approximately 700+ web-enabled experiments which are designed for remote-operation. It provides remote-access to Labs in various disciplines of Science and Engineering. These Virtual Labs caters to students at the undergraduate level, post graduate level as well as to research scholars.
- **e-ShodhSindhu** (<https://ess.inflibnet.ac.in/>) is a collection of e-journals, e-journal archives and e-books on long-term access basis. It has 10,000+ e-journals, 31,35,000+ e-books. It provides access to qualitative electronic resources including full-text, bibliographic and factual databases to academic institutions at a lower rate of subscription.
- **Shodhganga** (<https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/>) is a platform for research students to deposit their Ph.D. theses and make it available to the entire scholarly community in open access. The repository has the ability to capture, index, store, disseminate and preserve Electronic Theses and Dissertations submitted by the researchers.
- **VIDWAN** (<https://vidwan.inflibnet.ac.in/>) is a premier database and national research network which has profiles of scientists/researchers and other faculty members working at leading academic institutions and other Research & Development organizations in India.
- **National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT)** (<https://neat.aicte-india.org/>) is an initiative for skilling of learners in latest technologies through a Public-Private partnership model between the Government (through its implementing agency AICTE) and the Education Technology companies of India. It brings the best technological products in education pedagogy on a single platform for the convenience of learners.

- **SAKSHAT** (<https://sakshat.ac.in/>) is one Stop Education Portal for addressing all the education and learning related needs of students, scholars, teachers and lifelong learners. The portal provides the latest news, press releases, achievements etc related to Ministry of HRD.

Post Covid-19 Trends of Higher Education

Change is inevitable which has been forced upon the society due to Covid-19. The opportunities created by the pandemic Covid-19 will lead towards a better tomorrow. Tomorrow will be a new morning which will entirely be in our own hands. New technologies will certainly challenge the traditional paradigms such as classroom lectures, modes of learning and modes of assessment. The new trends will allow the education sector to imagine new ways of teaching learning and some trends may be pointed as below.

- **May encourage personalized learning:** Learning may not be confined to classes or to any specific boundaries. Students may be the virtual learners with one teacher leading dozens of students in the new age. The learning modules may be modified to suit different learning styles and the learning contents may come from different sources to meet the learners' aspirations and needs. Students may pursue their learning in the new paradigm as per their choice.
- **Student Attendance may slow down:** Many parents may be reluctant to send back their children to schools/colleges suddenly after the end of lockdown. Some poor family parents who have lost their livelihood during the pandemic may not be able to afford the expenditure to send their children to institutions. This may lead to home education for another few months.

- **National and International student mobility for higher study may be reduced:** Student safety and well-being issues are important deciding factors for students and their parents for movement to international institutions for higher study. New modes of social distancing will continue for quite some time and may affect on-campus face to face teaching learning. Most of the parents will prefer to find workable alternatives closer to their home and may restrict for less movement within the country due to the pandemic. The international education has also been affected by the crisis. Many international universities have been closed and are delivering all educational activities online. Many international conferences in higher education have been cancelled or turned into a series of webinars. So, the national and international student movement may be diminished.
- **Learning with social distancing may continue:** All will maintain social distancing and avoid warm handshake, hug, personal greeting, and intimacy for a long time. Invisible restrictions may constraint the fun & joy of campus life. Sports, Gyms, tournaments may be in low gear for a longer period resulting less physical activities of students.
- **Educational institutions may run with different shifts per day:** The need for social distancing may imply lesser students in each class. So, most of the educational institutions may work in different shifts per day which may put more pressure on the teaching and administrative staff of the institution to manage.
- **May raise the gap between privileged and unprivileged students:** Learners from low-income families and disadvantaged groups are the more likely to suffer as they may not afford high-speed internet connection and required technical gadgets for online learning. It will widen the gap between privileged and unprivileged learners creating inequality.

- **Teaching learning may run with technology:** More and more students will depend on technology and digital solutions for teaching learning, entertainment and connecting themselves with the outside world. Students will use internet technology to communicate virtually with their teachers and fellow learners through E-mail, WhatsApp, Video-conference, Instant message, webinar or any other tool.
- **Assessment system may be changed to new shape:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) may help teachers to deal with assessment, evaluation, preparing mark-sheets and monitoring the performance of each student easily. AI may use digital platform extensively to reduce burden of examiner in handling examination and evaluation systems. If these activities are made simpler, the academicians would be able to concentrate more on course development, qualitative teaching-learning and skill development.
- **Demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and online learning may grow:** Covid-19 has forced the human society to maintain social distancing. It has created more challenges to continue teaching learning by maintaining social distancing. To meet these challenges there is more demand for ODL and online modes of education and the same trend may continue in future also.
- **Blended learning may take the leading role:** Blended learning combines both face to face and online learning modes. Covid-19 has accelerated adoption of digital technologies to deliver education and encouraged the educational institutions to move towards blended mode of learning. All teachers and students became more technology savvy. The traditional face to face mode with post Covid-19 technology mode will lead the education towards blended mode of teaching learning and it may transform the structure of the education system.
- **Student debt crisis may rise:** In India, lots of students or their parents take education loans for higher education. If

the employment market does not pick up, student debt crises may rise and create serious issue. Students may face increased stress, anxiety and depression due to their student loans.

- **Unemployment rate is expected to be increased:** There is no recruitment in Govt. sector and fresh graduates fear withdrawal of their job offers from private sectors because of the pandemic Covid-19. Many Indians might have returned home after losing their jobs overseas due to Covid-19. Hence, the fresh students who are likely to enter the job market shortly may face difficulty in getting suitable employment.

Suggestions:

- Educators and learners should be trained to utilize online teaching learning process using technology. Policy should be adopted by Government/educational institutions to provide free internet and free digital gadgets to all learners in order to encourage online learning as a result of which people would get engaged and remain safe during pandemic.
- Immediate measures are required to lessen the effects of the pandemic on job offers, internship programs, and research projects.
- Many online learning platforms offer multiple programmes on the same subjects with different levels of certifications, methodology and assessment parameters. So, the quality of programmes may differ across different online learning platforms. Therefore, establishment of quality assurance mechanisms and quality benchmark for online learning programmes must be developed and offered by HEIs in India keeping in view of rapid growth of the online learning platforms.
- If the pandemic Covid-19 continues, new approaches for academic assessment should be adopted by educational

institutions. Academic assessment of the students may be done through online mode or through quizzes and small projects.

- Government should support HEIs to strengthen their resources to run virtual educational activities. Students also need to be supported with better access to internet and technology as most students are unable to afford the facilities. During this pandemic, the HEIs should focus more on virtual educational activities including television, radio and web-based education.
- WHO has recently pointed out that the Covid-19 may never be eradicated and people will have to live with it. “It is important to put this on the table: this virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities, and this virus may never go away. HIV has not gone away, but we have come to terms with the virus. I think there are no promises in this and there are no dates. This disease may settle into a long problem, or it may not be” WHO emergencies expert Mike Ryan said in an online briefing. With reference to this statement, many countries are now planning to continue education through distance or virtual mode and India should plan for the same also.
- 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 recent pandemic created an opportunity for change in pedagogical approaches and introduction of virtual education in all levels of education. As we do not know how long the pandemic situation will continue,

a gradual move towards the online/virtual education is the demand of the current crisis. UGC and MHRD have launched many virtual platforms with online depositories, e-books and other online teaching/learning materials. Combination of the traditional technologies (radio, TV, landline phones) with mobile/web technologies to a single platform with all depositories would enhance better accessibility and flexibility to education. This would involve upgrading the service platform to enable it to meet the required volume of educational demands of students. All service providers need to be mobilized to provide proper access to the educational service platforms to the disadvantaged groups of population also. Virtual education is the most preferred mode of education at this time of crisis due to the outbreak of Covid-19. The post Covid-19 education seems to be an education with widely accepted online/virtual education which may perhaps be a parallel system of education. This paper has not covered any statistical analysis on impact of Covid-19 on higher education however further in-depth study with statistical research may also be undertaken.

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