ONLINE LEARNING, A TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA - BLESSING OR TORMENT

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Abstract

In any civilised society education plays a pivotal role. The growth of the country is measures by the amount of knowledge its citizen have,. It is not wrong to say that education is the backbone of any country. From time immemorial paramount importance is given to education in India. Indian education system is based on Guru- Shishya primipara. A teacher is not someone who only gives knowledge of text to the student but also teaches lessons of life. Post-independence in the Constitution it is enshrined that the state is duty bound to provide means of education. The judiciary of the country very clearly stated that right to education flows from right to life under article 21.Our education system is based on face to face interaction inside the four walls of classroom. But with the advent of the pandemic, COVID 19 the entire education system is changed. Online learning is the new norm of present era. Now teaching learning is beyond boundaries now the education is not just confined to classroom. Instead, it is available virtually with the help of information and technology tools. This virtual mode of education has positive and negative impact . Judiciary is trying hard to create a balance in order to ensure education to every student and at the same time judiciary is concerned about the economic rights of the teachers.

Keywords- Pandemic, COVID 19, Constitution, Virtual education , Article 21

Introduction-

Education is one of the important weapons in the hands of humankind. Education is important for overall development of individual. It is one of the basic human right. It is a right related to the dignity of the person. Education is a social and economic right .In the ancient India during Gurukul era idea of education has been very grand, noble and high. Modern education system was implanted by British rulers. In 1835, Lord Macauley introduce modern education in India which is known as Magna carta of Education System. Several commissions are been created by government like Radhakrishna Commission (1948-49) for university education, Kothari commission (1964-66) for restructuring the education system. After independence in the Constitution education has been given paramount importance and elementary education is recognised as fundamental rights. Similarly, state is duty bound to run several schemes and scholarship programmes to ensure higher education. But COVID 19

pandemic has changed the fate of education in India. Education is shifted from classrooms to virtual platform. In order to reduce the impact of pandemic government imposed total lockdown from 16th March 2020. This has affected the education sector drastically. This was the new change for which the institutions were not prepared. The academic session got delayed, board exams are not conducted due to pandemic. So, this ,article will analyse the impact of COVID 19 on education sector in India. Moreover, the role of judiciary to provide education which is mentioned as a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution.

Impact of Pandemic on Education Sector in India-

The times that have been never dreamt of. The pandemic times which blow around the globe, leaving no space untouched. They certainly have left a very memorable impact in the field of education. By the end of March 2020, the pandemic was everywhere, resulting in the closure of most of the schools, colleges and universities in India.[i]COVID-19 has affected a large number of students across states, class, caste, gender and region. The shutting down of schools and the decision of shifting traditional classrooms to digital platforms is not only increasing learning inequality among children, but also pushing many children out of school due to the digital divide. Other than learning, the absence of schooling would also have a long-lasting effect on the health and nutrition of children. The role of the budget in the current situation as well as beyond the pandemic is very crucial to ensure inclusive education for all.[ii] According to the Report 2020 by (UNESCO) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for any education system in this pandemic to respond is a big challenge. The schools are closed and parents, teachers, students, and the government are facing a remarkable challenge to ensure learning continuity. The report said that the income of the country plays an important role in the use of technology in education. As per the report, as compared to 36 % of low-income countries there are 74 % of lower-middle-income countries who use television programs in primary education. However, including India and other lower and middle-income countries can use television to broadcast programs. In comparison to the rich countries, the sum is considerably low where the practice of online methods has been 93 percent for primary education and secondary education.[iii]

Online Classes and Pandemic- Pros & Cons-

The total student population in India is about 32 crore give or take a few. It is the largest student body in the world, and almost touches the entire US population. Covid has been an unannounced guest and has stayed longer than we had anticipated. The impact has been

cataclysmic. But to despair at things beyond our control is accepting failure at the face of adversity. Covid has necessitated several innovations in education sector.

Firstly, we will look at the positive impact of pandemic in education sector, few of them are as follows-

1) In the earlier time parents request teachers that please let my ward sit on the first sit . The only concern of the parents was that their child can easily understand the subject. With online classes every student is sitting on the front seat. So, we can say that online classes has lessen down the discrimination . With the online classes concept of **back benchers** gets eradicated.

2) Pandemic helped the students and teachers to know the better use of Information and technology tools. Not only the classes are conducted online but their assessment can also be done virtually. In one sense it can be said that pandemic has increased **digital literacy.**

3) One of the other benefits of online mode of education is that it has diminished the boundaries. It gives a very **wide exposure** to the students. The students can participate in any event just sitting in their homes. Further they have a benefit to listen to the thoughts and ideas of eminent personalities of their field through virtual platforms.

4) Pandemic and lockdown restricted the movement from one place to another. These restrictions have benefitted the students also as now they do not have to spend their time in travelling to their schools or colleges or universities. They can utilise this time for their **skill development** through online workshops and internships not only at national level but also at international level.

5) Before pandemic students as well as teachers do not pay much emphasis to audio, visual mode of learning. They were inclined towards traditional way of education. This entire scenario of traditional learning and teaching gets changed during this pandemic. Today is the era of technology as well as **blended learning.** With audio- video mode of learning the student gets a clearer view about the problem and its solution.

6) Online learning has reduced the use of paper. All sorts of assignment and exams are conducted in online mode. The teachers provide E-content to the students and also upload their lectures on virtual platforms. This increases the efficiency of teacher as well as students. As they do not worry about their lectures and notes even if they missed the classes.

7) Several **online courses** are being introduced by the government in the form of MOOCS to enrich the students with knowledge. Portals like Swayam, Swayam Prabha and e-PG

Pathshala are introduced by the government provide easy access to the E- Content also they can enhance their skills.

On the one hand online mode of education open the vistas of knowledge for the student. At the same time, it helped the educators to enhance their knowledge in technology. There are negative impact of this mode of education in India which can be discussed as follows-

1. In still there are large number of students who are devoid of education because of poverty this pandemic has shattered their dream of getting education once again. It is not possible for every strata of people to provide this online mode of education. As the parents do not have adequate money for the same as. There are ***financial constraints***. Secondly, they are unaware about the use of information and technology.

2. During pandemic government of various states gave guidelines to suspend classes . This has hampered the entire education system. Due to the postponement of classes institutions were not able to conduct the examination on time. Due to these students were not able to appear for various competitive examination as their result was not declared. There was lot of chaos and dilemma regarding the future of the students.

3. Pandemic affects the teachers also badly. They were unprepared for this sudden use of technology in education as they were more inclined towards traditional teaching.

4. Pandemic has hugely affected the employment sector. Recruiters postponed their recruitment process. the current situation. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's estimates on unemployment shot up from 8.4% in mid-March to 23% in early April and the urban unemployment rate to 30.9% (Educationasia.in). When the unemployment increases then the education gradually decreases as people struggle for food rather than education.[iv]

5. Mid – day scheme was launched by the government to provide nutritious food to the children. Due to pandemic, there is a ***failure to provide nutritious or healthy food*** to the children They have to eat whatever they are having at their home.

6. ***Lack of infrastructure*** is one of the important issues in providing online education. In India only handful of schools and colleges have adequate infrastructure to provide virtual learning. In the education policy of 2009 emphasis was laid that the education sector must go for blended mode of learning with the help of videos, clippings etc. But still priority was not given either by the government nor by the administrators in education sector to revamp their mode of education.

7. In the online mode of education most of the time learning goes passive. Student just sits on one place in front of their laptops, mobiles or any other electronic gadgets for very long hours. This eventually affects their physical wellbeing.

8. *Network issue* is a very common problem faced by students during pandemic . Sometimes this situation occurs at the end of student and sometimes teachers also faces such technical glitches. These technological difficulties does not provide effective learning .

9. In the world of technology *cybercrime* is also increasing. So it is the responsibility of the parents to sit with their child especially those having the age till 10 years. There is a possibility that the student can click on some mysterious sites while attending classes or while making any assignment.

Judicial Approach – Education In Pandemic

A Division Bench led by Chief Justice S. Manikumar on the public interest litigation for a directive to the government to take steps to identify students who lacked TV sets, smart phones, laptops or computers with internet facilities for online classes. The petition was field by P.V. Krishnankutty and another social worker of Kochi. According to them, the government had assessed that about 2.6 lakh students did not have TVs, smart phones, laptops or computers with internet connection. Kerala high court declined about online classes. This gives result to another debate about article 21 A of the Constitution which provides right to education as a fundamental right. Kerala high court said right to *access internet is the part of right to education*. Therefore, internet access is a fundamental right. Further in Delhi a Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar, conducting the hearing through video conferencing, refused to entertain a petition seeking direction to the private schools not to charge tuition fees from the students keeping in view the present situation arising out of coronavirus, at least during the lockdown period. So long as schools are disseminating education online, they are certainly entitled to charge tuition fees.ᵛAccording to the court teaching student in online mode is not an easy task.Thus, judiciary is giving guidelines to the government so that the right to education can be ensured in India even by the virtual mode. Kerala High Court in its judgement clearly sated that the student can not be restricted from education because he or she is devoid of internet. So, this is the duty of the government to take [proper measures in order to ensure network connectivity.

Conclusion & Suggestions-

Although education is the foundation for any civilised society. But it can be said that it is the neglected area by the government. The administrators are also not serious enough to change themselves in the era of technology. The importance of technology and its nexus with education is clearly visible at the time of COVID 19. The sixth commission in the history of commission in India. The Report of the Education Commission (1964-66) began with a solemn proclamation. ***"The Destiny of India is now being shaped in her classroom.*** So… *there is a need to think that whether this virtual education is actually shaping the future of the country in right direction.*

For making the teaching, learning process effective in India there is a need generate more awareness about digital awareness. The government should conduct certain faculty development programmes to enhance the knowledge of teachers about digital platforms. Institutions must create effective infrastructure so that online classes can be conducted smoothly. Government should run some schemes for such students who are not able to avail education because of financial constraints.

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