

Article

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Some issues of Education sector during Covid19

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Abstract

During the ongoing crisis of covid19, education was one of those sectors which were hardest hit and responses to the sector were slowest. Considering these facts into account we explored the challenges to the higher education of India. The data for the study was collected from a survey where students and teachers were the main respondents. The result shows that the infrastructure and delayed response to the sector made the situation more unfavourable during the Covid19.

Keywords: Covid19, education, higher education, government, income distribution.

1. Introduction

Covid19 is a health crisis that has shown unprecedented changes in the lives of human being. The high rate of infection and unavailability of the vaccine makes it more dangerous. As a safety measure we are left with precaution and to maintain a good immune system. During the crisis, the government across the world decided to diminish its spread by controlling the movement of people. The decision to control the movement resulted in closure of all non-essential services. As a result, the education system across the world got closed for months and many countries have not resumed their usual activities even today.

India reported its first Covid19 infection on 30th January. Since then India has taken several measures to control the spread of Covid19, the nationwide lock-down is one such example. Before this lockdown, the government decided to close all the educational institutions in the country. Most of the educational institutions have remained closed for the

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entire period of this health crisis. During those days educational institutions were advised to use online platforms for the teaching and learning process; however, the need of academia was never addressed. The condition of our public sector institutions are not up to the mark, they lack basic infrastructures like buildings, library, lab, computer, and internet etc. In such a condition the advice to conduct online classes or connectivity on phone was neither easy nor feasible. Further, no special arrangement was made during those days. Apart from this, the NSSO report on 'Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India', 75th round 2017-18 suggests that there is a digital divide in India in terms of access to internet connectivity. Considering these facts into account our objective was to understand the status of various teaching-learning equipments used in our universities to suggest suitable changes for the betterment of education system in India.

Review of Literature

A literature review is one of the most crucial parts of a study however finding relevant literature is a difficult task. The current study which tries to understand the 'status of various teaching-learning equipments used in our universities, during Covid19' has a serious literature gap. However, we have tried to accommodate relevant kinds of literature here:

The education system of India has expanded from 32 universities in 1950-51 to 900 universities in 2017-18; which makes India the second-largest hub of education in the world (Tilak, 2019). The progress of Indian education is more inclined towards quantity, not quality. During the Covid19 we have faced numerous challenges in the teaching and learning process. United Nation's policy brief on education observes Covid19 as the new threat to pre-existing education discrepancy which may lead to dropout among the poor, vulnerable and refugees. Its impacts will last long. ILO (2020) observes that adequate resources are desired for teaching in a safe environment during the Covid19. Mukhopadhyay (2020) focusing on the current situation of India argues that there exists a digital divide in India where the access to internet and computer is very limited; only long term solution is possible however we can subsidize data and computer/ smartphone for the benefit of needy. While Tilak, (2019) observes that in the age of globalization the education in India needs structural reforms which include- better financing, teacher-student ratio, and infrastructural bottlenecks. Apart from these he also talks about reform in education governance.

Data and Methods

In this study, we have used primary survey data that we have collected using Google form. The sample size of the study is 208. In this survey, the participants were from higher learning institutions across India. Participation in the survey was voluntary. We asked questions related to their income, educational activity during Covid19, and facilities that are available to them in their universities. Apart from this, their observations on educational policy were also recorded. We have used a simple statistical tool to represent the findings of our study.

The objective of the Study

Covid19 has brought undesirable changes in our education. Schools and colleges have gone online. The conferences are being organized online. In such a situation the vulnerable section of the society that is the poor's and the person who lives in a remote area are facing difficulty in catching up. Considering these facts the objective of the study is to understand the status of various teaching-learning equipments used in our universities; so that we can suggest suitable policy changes for the betterment of education in India especially in times of Covid19.

Result and Discussion

Results

In our survey, 33.65 per cent or 70 participants were female while 66.34 per cent or 138 participants were male. Among the participants, 56.7 per cent were living in urban areas the rest of them were belonging to villages or rural areas. The income distribution among the participants was highly unequal 65 (38 percent) were receiving less than 5000 a month. 32 (18.7 percent) were receiving between 5000-10000. 11 people were receiving 10000 to 20000 per month while 23 people were receiving 20000 to 30000 per month. The highest income bracket in our survey was 30000 or more, where a total of 40 people or 23.4 per cent were in this category. Among our participants, only 59.1 per cent were receiving regular payment during the Covid19.

On the question of 'whether receiving or conducting any online classes,' 68.8 per cent replied yes and 84.1 percent of the total participant was aware of publically available online resources. In the survey, we also asked a few questions related to Covid19 and health. 143 participants were covered under at least one health insurance policy while all of them were aware of Covid19 and they believe that they taking care of it.

During the Covid19 a lot of focus is given to the online mode of education so, we also asked questions related to the availability of some of the important facilities (resources) at the academic institutions of the participants and their responses were mixed. Table 1 represents the item and response of the participants. An online lecture facility was available in the case of 133 participants. Journal of participants field were available in case of 76 participants while magazines were available in case of 78. Availability of newspapers was slightly higher to 87 cases. A lecture recording facility was available in 55 cases. Remote access to these services was applicable in the case of 31 cases only that 14.9 per cent of the total. A total of 38 participants were not aware of facilities that are available in their institution.

Table1. Availability of resources at the academic institution

Resources	Availability	Per Cent
Online Lecture	133	63.9
Journal of your field	76	36.5
Magazine	78	37.5
News Papers	87	41.8
Lecture Recording	55	26.4
Internet	53	25.5
Remote access to these resources	31	14.9
Not aware of facilities available at the institution	38	18.3

Source: Authors' computation based on their survey data

Results of NSSO 75th round report

The Indian education system has always been criticized for its inadequate student-teacher ratio and poor infrastructure. During the Covid19 these institutions went online and continued the learning process, however, the lack of infrastructure and poor preparation for lockdown exposed the whole education system. Here the report of the 75th round of NSSO is important to mention. The report was associated with household social consumption of

education in India. Table 32.1 report states that only 10.7 per cent of households have a computer and 23.8 per cent have an internet facility. The data shows a great digital divide between urban and rural households; the computer and internet facility in the urban household is 23.4 and 42 per cent respectively while in the case of rural India it is 4.4 per cent and 14.9 per cent respectively.

The States like Kerala and Delhi has better internet facilities while the major populous states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have a low level of internet connectivity which is also lower than the national average. Further, the ability to operate the computer is also low in the case of states like Bihar, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand etc. Kerala and Delhi perform above the national average of 16.5 per cent. The ability to use the internet is lowest in the case of Odisha which is followed by Bihar while Delhi and Kerala perform well above the national average of 20.1 per cent.

Discussion

The findings of the two separate studies show the survey conducted by us and the NSSO, 75th round study on key indicators of household social consumption on education in India. If we consider both these studies together then we would find that there exists a gap or divide in the access of computer and internet facilities among the Indian states and also in the case of rural and urban India. Further in our survey, the participants have talked about the issues in accessing the internet facilities. In many cases, they have devices to use the internet but they are facing poor connectivity issues during the online classes. Some educators have said that they had no prior experience of teaching online and students are also new to these platforms and which also incurs additional costs. Therefore, it is not easy to conduct classes smoothly.

The information on the availability of resources in the academic institutions that we have presented in Table 1 explains that the basic facilities are not evenly available in our academic institutions and response from the policymakers was also slow during the Covid19 era. So we cannot make a common policy for students and teachers in the Indian education system.

Conclusion

No doubt Covid19 has brought unexpected changes in our educational institutions where we have shifted with the best possible alternative to continue the education. The educator and students both have faced numerous challenges. However, the poor and vulnerable people are the major sufferers of the crisis. Many of those who could not afford to join the ongoing digital revolution in times of crisis are left behind.

The period of Covid19 would likely to increase the drop-outs in India mainly because the crisis has led to economic hardship and digitalization of education as the poor may find it difficult to afford it. Its impact may last longer on the literacy rate of India. In a big country like India, it is difficult to make a sudden change in the education system further the training is also needed to be given to students and teachers. So we can suggest the following steps for the betterment of education:

- Development of infrastructure in academic intuitions so that we can take benefit of various means of teaching and learning.
- Students and teachers should be given training on online and digital learning, it would help in remote learning and it would also help in cutting costs and in reaching remote areas.
- More allocation of funds to make the changes possible.
- Proper management and governance of education.

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