

COVID–19: A Creative Destruction in the Education Sector of India

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The spread of coronavirus and the resulting lockdown has significantly disrupted every facet of human life including education. Educational institutions from elementary to tertiary level in India were shut. This unexpected move had created a huge gap within the education sector. In India, almost 32 crore learners stopped going to schools, colleges. Since change is inevitable, the education world reacted positively to all elicited challenges and ensured the continuity of teaching-learning by reinventing themselves and adopting to various online teaching tools. This chapter is a depiction of online teaching-learning adopted by educational institutions of India from elementary to tertiary level; hence, it addresses required essentialities, changes, government initiatives, digital revolution opportunities, issues in practical learning in online mode, Ed-Tech start-ups, challenges, and inequalities for the same in Indian context.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 disease caused by novel coronavirus initially appeared in Wuhan city of China at the end of 2019 and became a pandemic. The novel coronavirus then began to spread (1) in Thailand, Japan, Korea, USA, Vietnam, Singapore, (2) afterward to Australia, Nepal, Europe and later in Germany, Finland, Italy, Malaysia, Canada, the Middle East, and other countries of the Western Pacific Region and South-East Asia Region, (3) and then onwards to Russia, Africa, and Latin America (WHO, 2020). This prompted, the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare the COVID-19 a pandemic on 11th Mar 2020 (DG, 2020). By the end of 14th Jun 2021 COVID-19 had spread across 217+ countries and territories, with almost 17,56,86,814 confirmed cases, 38,03,592 deaths and 2,18,78,74,534 vaccine doses administered (WHO, 2020).

In India, the first COVID-19 positive was reported in Kerala on 30th Jan 2020 and affected has the travel history from Wuhan, China (Wikipedia, 2020). Since then, India has witnessed sparkled growth in COVID-19 cases through two waves of COVID-19. As of this writing, India has reported 9, 08, 547 active cases, 2, 82, 72, 780 recovered cases, and 3, 77, 061 death cases (COVID-19, 2020). In India, the first death was reported on 12th Mar 2020 and India observed Janta Curfew for a day on 22nd Mar 2020. India again observed 14 hours Janta Curfew on 24th Mar 2020, thereafter the 1st phase of lockdown was announced by the Prime Minister on 25th Mar 2020 for 21 days. Since then, the government of India has taken several steps to curb the spread of the COVID-19 like lockdown, social distancing, quarantine procedure, wearing masks and sanitation etiquettes (Khachfe et al., 2020).

EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA

India, the country situated in South Asia, is the 2nd most populated country, seventh-largest country by area, and the largest democracy in the world. Total population of India is 1.366 billion. Table1 shows population at school level: (1) Pre-primary: 69,409,922, (2) Primary: 121,821,478, (3) Secondary: 177,585,036 and (4) Tertiary: 123,012,080 (UNESCO, 2021). India has 2nd largest number of students in the world and India's higher education system is 3rd largest in the World after the United State of America and China.

Table 1. School Age Population

School-age population by education level		Official school ages by level of education	
Pre-primary	69,409,922	Pre-primary	3-5
Primary	121,821,478	Primary	6-10
Secondary	177,585,036	Secondary	11-17
Tertiary	123,012,080	Tertiary	18-22

The Indian Education sector is significant since it has 1.4 million schools and 993 Universities, 39931 Colleges, 10725 Autonomous institutions according to the AISHE web portal (AISHE, 2019) and as shown in figure 1. Total number of enrollment in all higher educational institutes' is 37.4 million which

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