



Chapter 9

Digital Education During COVID-19 in Odisha: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

One of the worsts hit by the COVID-19 pandemic has been the education sector, which has led to the closure of all educational institutions. Hence, an effort has been made in this study to examine various issues and challenges of digital education in Odisha. The study found that most of the educational institutions in Odisha have gone for online teaching. Additionally, to promote e-learning, various digital platforms have been provided by the state and central governments. But digital education in Odisha is facing many challenges like uneven access of internet and digital gadgets, low tele density, lack of support structures, low computer literacy, and less competency. Additionally, power cut, financial constraints, lack of parent's involvement in the process are some of the issues that are adding woes to the effectiveness of digital education in teaching and learning process. Hence, there is need to evolve a judicious mix of normal and digital education with revised curricular post-COVID-19 to provide more learning opportunities for the all-around development of the students.

INTRODUCTION

The newly detected corona virus pandemic has become a global health crisis and is moving like a wave to every continent except Antarctica. It was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11th March 2020 to take immediate actions to detect, treat and reduce transmission to save people's lives.

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More than 10,474,029 cases of Covid-19 have been found over 215 countries and territories, resulting in around 5,09,000 deaths and over 57,16,000 recoveries as on June 2020. In 2021 we are living with the second wave of the corona pandemic with the fear of third wave in the coming future. More than 203,944,144 cases of Covid-19 have been found over 215 countries and territories, resulting in around 4,312,902 deaths and a total of 4,394,596,684 vaccine doses have been administered as August 2021. But Covid-19 is not merely a health crisis with the potential to create devastating social, economic and political crises in both developed and developing countries (Nicola et al., 2020). The United Nation's framework for immediate socio-economic crisis said that "The Covid-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis affecting societies and economies at their core. It will most likely to increase unemployment, poverty and inequalities at a global scale making achievement of Sustainable Development Goals even more urgent" (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2020, pg. 03). The widespread transmission of the covid-19 pandemic put challenges for the economic development of the almost all economies of the world but the worst hit in terms of achieving the sustainable development goals specifically for developing countries. One of the major challenges for achieving SDGs are poverty and hunger because this pandemic situation first time rise the extreme poverty level in 2020 where additional around 124 million people were pushed back to poverty (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Report, 2021). Along with poverty covid-19 pandemic also adversely affected the progress in health and reduced the life expectancy. Around 90% of the nations are still facing the disruption in one or more essential health services. This emergency situations and urgent needs of medical services creates shortage in the supply of doctors, nurses and other health workers. Universal access to quality education is one of the major key for ensuring human development, eradication of poverty and increasing standard of living. According to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Report, 2021 around 260 million are still out of school globally in 2018 and covid -19 pandemic adds fuel to the fire again. In 2020, due to severe outbreak of the virus there was temporary school closure in almost all countries which impacted around 91% of the students worldwide. Based on UN report, nearly 369 million children who rely on school meals faced problem for searching other sources of daily nutrition requirements.

Every country are trying to slow down the transmission of the virus by testing and treating infected people, limiting travel and social distancing by cancelling mass gathering sports and social events and educational institutions. On March 18, 2020, the UNESCO estimated that 107 countries had implemented national school closures affecting 862 million children and young people, roughly half the global student population related to Covid-19 pandemic (Viner et al., 2020). Government of India announced 21 days lockdown from 25 March followed by Janata curfew to fight against Covid-19. The country is now fighting with this pandemic with 3.2 crore cases, 4.29 lakh deaths compared to 5,74,926 cases, 17,038 deaths in the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic. But all the educational institutions across the nation are prohibited to open putting students, teachers and parents in the stress and it not only disrupting the ongoing teaching-learning process but also cancellation or re-scheduling examination starting from primary schools to different universities. There is a wide adoption of technology for the teaching learning process during the pandemic willingly or unwillingly. UNESCO (2020) has reported that around 320 million students have been affected due to corona virus in India. Department of Higher Education in this regard said "Institutions shall promote the digital learning among students so that they can continue their learning by making full use of available digital/e-learning platforms and access to these resources were made available free of cost". This will help the students for the ample utilisation of the e-resources ensuring social distancing norms. Online platforms like Microsoft team, Google classroom, Video conferencing (Google meet, Zoom, Slack, Cisco, Webex, Hangout) Canvas, Blackboard are new era tool in the hand

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