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Online learning during covid-19 pandemic and right to education in India

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Abstract

The power of an invisible enemy has affected every walk of human life be it political, social, Economic, educational, Environmental and almost everything. This invisible enemy in current situation is none other than Covid-19 also called Corona Virus which is emerged from Wuhan Province of China in December 2019 and spread across the world by transmission from one human to another. The impact of Covid-19 is most disastrous on the developing and overpopulated countries like India. The Covid-19 pandemic has been the worst shock to traditional education system in India. Schools are just not meant for educating children but they socialize and civilize children and the future of the nation is decided by the quality of teaching and learning maintained by the schools. Education is a fundamental right in India under article 21-A enshrined in part III of Indian Constitution and under RTE act 2009 and it comes under right to life and personal liberty and according to Indian constitution this right can never be violated at any situation. Due to closures of Schools the traditional classroom practices needs to be transformed to e-learning tech based online learning. The study primarily deals the evaluation of impact of Covid-19 on right to education, challenges and associated opportunities.

Keywords: Covid-19, constitution, RTE, e-learning

Introduction

Education is undeniably crucial in contributing to country's welfare and individual growth but COVID- 19 pandemic has created largest disruption in education system and affected the learning of millions of students.

COVID-19 has greatly disrupted access to education in India with around 250 million students were affected due to school closures at the onset of Lockdown. In March 2020, A nationwide lockdown was imposed forcing Schools and colleges to close and abandoned the traditional pedagogical methods of teaching and learning to ICT/Online/Virtual pedagogical teaching learning practices The pandemic posed severe challenge for educational institutions which included rise in dropouts , learning losses and increase in digital divide.

COVID-19 Pandemic has come up as a challenge for educational institutions and exposed online mode of teaching learning practices which requires transformation and technological skill enrichment for teachers as well as for learners.

India has been strengthening its educational system since 2009 - when the Right to Education Act (RTE) was passed, mandating free and compulsory education. However, this progress has been significantly hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Observer Research Foundation, close to 250 million children in India were adversely affected due to school closures due to the early lockdowns imposed by the government in response to Covid-19. Several children from less-privileged circumstances ended up dropping out of schools, some were forced to take up jobs in order to support their families who were dealing with pandemic-related deaths and income loss.

Significance of the Study

The research is very significant in many ways as the study will provide some innovative digital pedagogical skills for making online teaching-learning process more interactive and productive. The study will be helpful for teachers as well for learners to utilize digital learning effectively.

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Aims and Objectives

- To Analyze the awareness of learners regarding online learning.
- The Assess the development of digital skills among the learners and teachers.
- To Evaluate the challenges associated Online Pedagogy.
- To analyze the impact of Covid-19 on Right to education act.

Right to education act-2009: The right to education mandates free and compulsory education to all the children from 6-14 years of age. The basic reason for introducing RTE act is to ensure all round development and improving learning outcomes to minimize detention. But due to outbreak of Corona virus the quality of learning outcomes decreased. Students who were ensured free and compulsory education were not able to attend classes due to worldwide lockdowns. Even the national Education policy-2020 has not mentioned anything about online learning. Now looking at the pandemic situation The Right to education act needs amendment and right to internet accessibility needs to mentioned under this act.

Challenges, Opportunities & Way Forward

Major Challenges identified by many researchers related to virtual classroom practices are:-

Accessibility: Internet facilities are not accessible to every section of society. Primarily to the deprived section of students and moreover those living in far flung areas where internet connection is not stable.

Affordability: India is a developing nation in which people lack their basic amenities such as food, health and shelter. So to purchase a smart phone and recharge it every month becomes very difficult for them.

Stability of internet connection: Internet connection is also hampering the online studies in many parts of the country. Especially to the hilly terrains of Himachal, J & k, Uttarakhand and north eastern states of India.

Digital literacy of teachers and learners: Many teachers as well students are not digitally skilled to handle the online teaching learning process easily. So it is crucial for the effective implementation of RTE to enrich the learners and teachers with the digital skills.

Socio-economic background of the learners: Learners with poor socio-economic background or socially and economically deprived students have been affected most during the pandemic.

Filling the digital gap that is a divide based on technology and access: Uninterrupted education relies on the availability of and access to digital infrastructure including the Internet, laptops and phones. While students in urban schools tend to have better access than those in rural schools, inequalities across class and gender still impact who can and can't use these tools. What's more, access issues are further compounded by other constraints such as unreliable electricity supplies, home environments and study spaces, etc.

Content development, Assessment, Evaluation and conducting online examinations: Teaching learning if not properly evaluated then the objectives of teaching and learning can never be attained but assessment and evaluation through online classes become a difficult task when students lack basic infrastructure issues.

Linguistic, socio-cultural and cognitive diversity of the learners to make virtual classes more inclusive, productive and interactive.

But the need of the hour is to take these challenges as opportunities and maximize the utilization of multiple online learning platforms such as Blended Learning, Flipped Learning, Mobile Learning.

Blended & Flipped learning: Pandemic has forced the traditional education system to be transformed into technology based innovative methods of teaching and learning. There are many ways which are helpful for the teachers to make teaching learning process effective and fruitful such as blended and Flipped Methods of Learning.

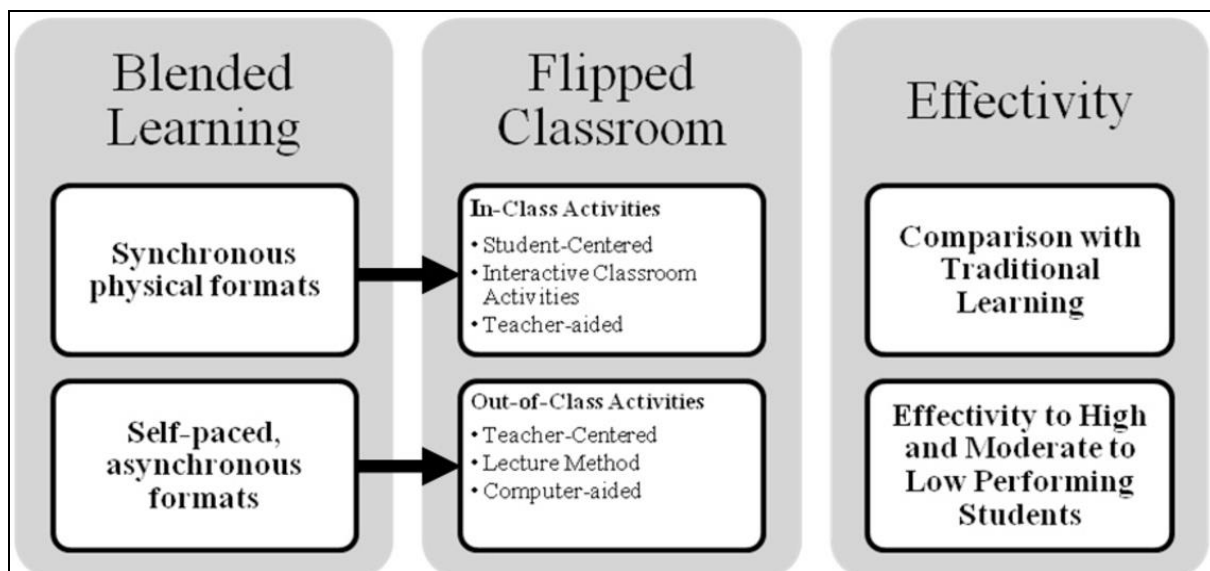


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

Blended Learning

Blended learning combines the best of traditional face to face classroom training and high tech e-learning. While the classroom learning offers an opportunity for role playing with immediate face to face feedback, online learning offers personalized, self pace learning.

Flipped Learning

Flipped learning is also known as inverted classroom. It is a pedagogical approach in which conventional notion of classroom based learning is inverted. In a flipped classroom students watch online lectures as pre-class homework then spend time in active learning experiences such as discussion, presentation, problem solving & group activities.

How to develop E-learning Material

- 4D's will be helpful for teachers to develop e-learning material.
- **Decoding:** Discover key ingredients which can motivate and engage students.
- **Designing:** Creation of quality e-content which includes tests, images, audios, videos.
- **Developing:** Uploading e-content on school/college website, Google classroom etc.
- **Delivering:** The content should be easily accessible for the learners.

Way Forward

- COVID-19 has come up with many challenges in every aspect of human life and traditional education system has been affected by it vigorously and to fight against this pandemic social distancing is necessary. So it requires transformation from face to face classroom learning to online mode of learning.
- The way forward is to utilize multiple pedagogies such as blender learning, flipped learning , skillful use of technology by teachers as well as learners, using synchronous and asynchronous mode of communication effectively , developing e-learning material efficiently and moreover transformation from traditional teaching-learning practices to online pedagogical practices.

Conclusion

It is found that online education has many challenges and associated opportunities. The pandemic has revealed major loopholes in Indian Education System. The closure of Schools has made a severe impact on underprivileged students. The need is to use a combined approach to online learning with increase in investment on the technology up gradation of educational institutions. Innovative tech based learning such as Blended learning, Flipped learning and Mobile learning can be helpful for Teachers as well as for students at the time of Pandemic when the physical classes are not feasible. Teachers as well as students have to enrich themselves in e-learning to utilize technology In the best possible way. The basic idea of RTE-2009 that is univesalization of education can only be fulfilled if schools implement the online teaching learning practices effectively. The amendment in the RTE act is essentially required and right to internet should be added under this act. So that the traditional teaching learning practices shall be transformed to online/tech based teaching learning practices.

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