

Experiences: Teaching – Learning During Covid 19 in Rural Areas

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Abstract:-

Teaching- learning has become an inevitable part of human life. Not but education has separated and separates Homo sapiens from the fellow animals. Teaching-learning emerged as a separate and special branch of study with the development and evolution from primates to the modern human beings. Gurukul and Ashrams were replaced by modern schools. These schools/ colleges required highly trained persons to handle the modern needs. To cite an example from India, we had special Educational colleges which trained men to be teachers. The degree from these colleges was the essential condition to become a teacher. Methodologies to impart teaching were offered in these schools/ colleges. Computers have brought revolution in every field life. Artificial Intelligence offered skills at par with that of human beings.

Unhampered life and process was going on smoothly. However, Covid 19 Coronavirus posed the new challenge. Governments had to impose lockdown to check the spread of the pandemic. Schools- colleges had to be shut. Imparting education could not be stopped. As a rescue measure, Government proposed online teaching- learning. However, one wonders, how much it is going to be successful endeavour in the country like India, which has manifold diversities, different level of educational facilities like the state- of –the art schools at one end and tribal, who have not seen even a paper at the other end !

KeyWords:-

Covid 19, Lockdown, Education Policy, ICT

I. INTRODUCTION

Education makes the man a man. It isolates the man from other animals. It nurtures us and shapes our personality. No wonder that along with three basic needs of animals viz. food, shelter and clothes, education is considered one of the fundamental needs of man. Intellect, acumen, reasoning power and ability of comprehension as well as certain qualities that are specific to human beings are sharpened and enhanced by means of education. Teaching-learning of skills and transfer or transaction of knowledge and information are special abilities of human beings. Covid-19 pandemic has stalled the education process of teaching –learning in the schools and colleges, and hampered the traditional teaching –learning process.

COVID-19 : 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.' The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

A report in the past reads (published on 15th August, 2020): "NEW DELHI: With an increase of 65,002 Covid-19 cases and 996 deaths reported in India in the last 24 hours, the coronavirus count in the country crossed 25 lakhs on Saturday. According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), the tally rose to 25,26,193, including 6,68,220 active cases, 18,08,937 discharged and migrated, and 49,036 deaths." ("Times of India.")

This paper studies overall scenario of the world during Covid 19 Pandemic and India with particular reference to its effects on the education sector.

II. POST- COVID-19 PANDEMIC SCENARIO IN INDIA ("LOCKDOWN"):

Havoc world over:

Unlike SARS-CoV-1, the speed at which novel coronavirus spreads is breath-taking. Within just 2 months, the number of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide has already exceeded the total number of SARS cases by nearly ten times.

On 22 March, 2020, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India appealed to observe a 14- hour voluntary public curfew, calling it 'Janata Curfew'. At the end of the curfew, Modiji stated: "Janata Curfew is just the beginning of a long battle against COVID-19". Hon'ble Prime Minister Modiji gave calls for 'Lockdown' and later, partial relaxation was declared. States followed the calls as per the situations in their respective states. Recently, the Govt. of Maharashtra declared Lockdown with certain relaxations in the state of Maharashtra till 31st January, 2021.

Stalled economy ("Economy"):

Same as the effect on the World economy, coronavirus pandemic has devastated Indian economy. According to Nomura India Business Resumption Index, economic activity fell from 82.9 on 22 March to 44.7 on 26 April. Unemployment rose from 6.7% on 15 March to 26% on 19 April and then back down to pre-lockdown levels by mid-June. Under complete lockdown, less than a quarter of India's \$2.8 trillion economic movement was functional. Supply chains suffered a lot.

Package ("Chatham"):

Within India, an estimated 40 million internal migrant workers, largely in the informal economy, were severely impacted by the government's COVID-19 lockdown. To tide over the disaster, in March 2020, the Indian government instituted the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKB), a \$22.6 billion relief package. The World Bank announced \$1 billion funding to accelerate social protection support, in part through the PMGKB.

Reverse Migration (Pasricha, Anjana) :

In recent decades, more than 100 million people from India's vast countryside sought city jobs, lured by higher wages working at construction sites, in factories, offices and hotels, or as security guards and drivers.

After cities were shuttered in late March and millions lost jobs, many faced the prospect of hunger as they were confined to small rooms during a stringent lockdown, while others made arduous journeys of hundreds of kilometres home, sometimes on foot, as all transport halted. Many pictures of their exodus to native places were common sites. Millions of Indians have lost jobs in the formal sector since April due to the economic stress caused by novel coronavirus.

Rural Life/ Agriculture (Mitra, Shuvik) :

A significant proportion of rural household incomes comes from migration and daily-wage labourers. The nationwide lockdown halted interstate transportation excluding passage of essential goods. In Kerala, a sudden blockage on the dairy sector resulted in wastage of milk in thousands of litres and the grape farmers of Karnataka dumped their produce to compost pits. The interruption in the supply chain of products made farmers' life worse and resulted in financial implications amidst the pandemic.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there should be one doctor for every 1000 people, but the Indian scene is pathetic; there is only one doctor for 10,189 people. In the case of COVID-19, the lack of healthcare mechanisms had direct implications in the rural fringes of the country.

The education sector in rural India suffers a lot. Ministry of Education declared online teaching as a rescue measure. Many Indians live hand to the mouth life. Can they afford Smart phones? Even otherwise from government's part there is a failure. India entered 21st century and dreams of being the world class economy in the near future. Many parts of the country have Internet accessibility even today. In the face of the poor Internet connectivity, online teaching has almost failed. Poor connectivity has also affected in delivering proper information to people in rural areas.

III. EDUCATION

Etymologically, the word "education" is derived from the Latin word *ēducātiōn* ("A breeding, a bringing up, a rearing") from *ēducō* ("I educate, I train") which is related to the homonym *ēducō* ("I lead forth, I take out; I raise up, I erect") from *ē-* ("from, out of") and *dūcō* ("I lead, I conduct"). ("Wikipedia")

Education facilitates learning. Through education one acquires knowledge, imbibes skills and beliefs, and values, and inculcates habits. Education is imparted by means of a slew of methods like, teaching, storytelling, discussion, direct research, experiments, demonstration, hands-on training, apprenticeships and many others. Education is imparted formally and in an informal milieu. Any experience with formative influence is education. Pedagogy is the methodology of teaching.

The Academic Situation in Modern India :

Education in modern India started with the British era and thus, came the study of English language which was given more emphasis than other language learning. The recent form of education in India was an idea proposed by Lord Macaulay in the 20th century who believed that Indians should attain modern education to come out of their traditional thoughts, interests, intelligence and morals. The western education in India witnessed the setting up of several missionary colleges in various parts of the country. Post independence, the education sector was largely controlled by the central government, but, slowly became a joint effort by the central and the state governments through a constitutional amendment in 1976. By the start of 21st century, came education policies and planning like the free and compulsory education for children till 14 years of age policy and the plan to spend 6% of GDP in education, focusing primary education more.

Education in Modern India: Education Commissions ("Bitstream"):

Under the British rule, there were 17 universities and 636 colleges (with a total enrolment of 2,38,000 students), 5,297 secondary schools with 8,70,000 pupils (which implied that not even one youth in every twenty in the age-group 14-17 was in school), 12,843 middle schools with two million pupils (which meant that only one child out of every eleven in the age-group 11-14 was enrolled) and 1,72,661 primary schools with fourteen million pupils (which implied that only one child out of every three in the age-group 6- 11 was in school). Vocational and technical education was poorly developed, both at the school and university stages, and the supply of high level trained scientific man-power was very limited. ("bitstream") There was too much of emphasis on English and too little stress on Mathematics, Science or the Indian languages.

University Education Commission (1948-49) : University Education Commission (1948-49), under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was the first Commission on education after Independence. It remarked that "our secondary education remains the weakest link in our educational machinery and needs urgent reforms." The Commission suggested : The function of a school should be to provide suitable education to those who join higher education and also to those who do not have the intention of proceeding further.

Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), under the chairmanship of Dr. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliyar in 1952, had envisaged schools to play a crucial role in developing democratic citizenship. It recommended : The major improvement in methods of teaching, text books and system of examination; • emphasis on education and vocational guidance; • three language formula; • diversified courses; • installation of higher secondary system.

The Education Commission (1964-66) : Under the Chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari reviewed almost all aspects of the education system. According to the Commission, education was intended to increase productivity, develop social and national unity, consolidate democracy, modernise the country and develop social, moral and spiritual values. It suggested the restructuring of education into a uniform pattern of 10+2+3.

National Knowledge Commission (2009) was constituted in June 2005 by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh under the Chairmanship of Mr. Sam Pitroda. To improve quality and generate accountability, improving school infrastructure and revamping school inspection with a greater role for local stakeholders and greater transparency in the system. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to be made more accessible to teachers, students and the administration. NKC also recommends both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes be subject to the same regulatory, authority and with adequate monitoring of the training provided by private organisations.

NEP -2020 ("National") :

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), on 29 July 2020, under the leadership of Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan, outlines the vision of India's new education system. It replaced the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. National Education Policy 2020 envisions an India-centric education system that contributes directly to transforming the nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all.

Teacher education :

The NEP 2020 puts forward many policy changes when it comes to teachers and teacher education. To become a teacher, a 4-year Bachelor of Education will be the minimum requirement needed by 2030. The teacher recruitment process will also be strengthened and made transparent. The National Council for Teacher Education will frame a National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education by 2021 and a National Professional Standards for Teachers by 2022. The policy aims to: ensure that all students at all levels of school education are taught by passionate, motivated, highly qualified, professionally trained, and well equipped teachers.

Information and communications technology (ICT):

Information and communications technology (ICT) is an extensional term for information technology (IT) that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals) and computers, as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audiovisual systems, that enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information. ("Wikipedia-information.") ICT may offer us competence to stand ahead in the global competition. By using it in education and other fields we can better our standard and quality of our life. It can be used to improve upon sanity, health and hygienic services.

It can be said that utility of ICT is undisputed. However, it should be used applying proper restraint. It is summarized that ICT cannot replace a teacher with flesh and blood, for we cannot expect a machine to comprehend psychology of a student and apply different tactics from student to student. ICT is a scaffolding to build up the enclave of learning. We must remember

that man has made ICT; the reins should be in the hands of a man and not the opposite. The biggest loophole in ICT teaching is that students and teachers lack direct contact. ICT should be used judiciously. It is true of every technology; if used rationally it is boon, if not, it is like a fire stick in the hands of a monkey. The underlying need is to have motivation for learning; the thirst for knowledge is must. Right from young age, students should develop interest in study. A habit of doing everything seriously and wholeheartedly should be imbibed. Job assurance on acquiring knowledge should be there. Malpractices, corruption for securing a job should have no place at all. For any policy matter to become successful, strong and honest bureaucracy has a great role. There should be sincere policies right at the policy makers' level, if we expect them to percolate to the root level. In the absence of incessant supply of Internet of 4G level, the very good facility like ICT is bound to fail.

Amid Covid-19 Corona virus pandemic we experience merits and high uses of ICT. Thanks to ICT facility that teaching-learning process continued unhampered. Teachers' community has been attending Webinars and FDPs online and benefiting. ICT became imperative in the present time.

Experiences in Rural Areas:

Though much bombastically, online teaching was proclaimed, it has to be sorrowfully conceded that it has met its purpose a little. Many students come saying that they have no smart phones; hence, they cannot attend the classes. For saving their years the government proposed online exams. It is wondered, up to what extent the standard of the learning and examination are being maintained in such a situation! In such a situation the students, who have more facilities at their homes would leap high. The students with poorer and lower education background are bound to be pushed down more and more. The degrees they will have for sure, but what about the educational standard? The situation is very pathetic.

IV. CONCLUSION

"The soul of India lives in its villages," declared M. K. Gandhi at the beginning of 20th century. (qtd. In "Villages"). Truly, India lives in villages. Indian economy is mainly depended on rural economy. Nevertheless, it is the most overlooked part of the country. There is exodus of the poor people from the villages to the cities for earning their livelihood. If the migration to the cities is to be checked, and the swelling up of the cities is to be ceased, it is imperative to provide facilities and infrastructure at the rural level. Purpose of online teaching, imparting skills of artificial intelligence, and to say, realizing the dream of Hon'ble President Sir A. P. J. Abdul Kalam will remain a distant dream only. The world will become super power and we Indians will be living primitive life even in the 21st century.

Experiences of teaching – learning at rural level during Covid 19 pandemic are not so encouraging. In rural areas really much needs to be done.

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