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Post Covid-19 Era: Higher Education Transformation from Offline to Online

Jyotsna Meshram[1,*]

[1]Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj, Nagpur University, Nagpur 440033, India

*Corresponding author: E-mail: drjsmeshram@gmail.com

During the past few months, with somewhere to coronavirus everywhere, the invisible virus has taught us lesson. Post COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the entire scenario of higher education and the educational Institutes in India have undergone massive reformed transformation. We have started to look into new openings to educate ourselves to find the solutions to paradigm shift in learning from traditional teaching method of chalk, talk and board to virtual teaching by means of innovations in technology. However, structural imbalances exist even in this digital era. The major issues with the rural learning are the problem of Internet access, electricity and ICT tools like laptops and smart phones. The Government of India should take steps, consider the ground reality, work to bring poor, lower stratum of society, underprivileged students in the forefront of main stream quality education. Our country's policies should ensure a strong foundation in this difficult time of crisis to innovate, ensure quality education to all for few critical months and future as well with sustainable inclusive development.

With the spikes in the rate of COVID-19 pandemic cases across the globe, the higher education has permanently taken a higher leap and reshaped our world with quicker transformation than expected in last couple of months. Post COVID-19 changed the entire scenario and pandemic crisis has reformed the education sector in India with the education at the doorsteps.

With the advancement in technological developments, use of ICT tools, multiple trends, interactive applications, the HEIs for tomorrow are switching to online teaching, learning aids which is growing at enormous pace is becoming a fast reality.

❖ To make youth of the country globally fit to survive and proceed.
❖ To help students to become competent, confident, the mapping of interest, ability and demand is needed to develop innovative thinking abilities in the young minds.
❖ To help strength and talent of our country to have an open, flexible mind with strong determination.
❖ To prepare the learners for capacity building, for the society of tomorrow for active creative learning by bringing them to the forefront of mainstream education.
❖ Adaption of virtual learning during lockdown period can be utilized to encourage the learners to develop the communication skills that will ensure employability, productivity to ensure overall GDP growth of India.
❖ The acquired knowledge with appropriate social skill, decision making, creative problem solving can then be used to solve the practical situations in society.
❖ The traditional Indian knowledge can be blended with current mainstream education for serving the large cause of humanity.

The studies were on the peak, the teachers were busy teaching, giving home assignments, seminars and completing the syllabus. Students were busy completing the assignments, practical periodicals. The theory classes and practical were going on with full swing. It was month of March 24, 2020, when the 1st nationwide lockdown period was declared by Government of India, in order to break the chain of pandemic. All the educational institutions were shut down for the invisible enemy virus. At that time it was difficult to predict the reopening and normal functioning of school, colleges and universities, it's been more than 4 months, but still the uncertainty.

In mid March 2020, syllabus was incomplete, the practical exams were not conducted, and internal evaluation was not done. Pre COVID-19 pandemic, traditional centuries old chalk, talk and board method was used effectively and efficiently. After lockdown in these unprecedented times, when everyone was being asked how to continue teaching students outside of the classroom e-learning was a significant step in this direction. It was changing role of teacher to the society to secure the future generation during post COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher role was expanded, adequate and accurate steps were taken to reach unlimited students, not only from his/her Institution, but get connected globally to deliver the expertise knowledge. The pandemic has been working as a catalyst for educational institutions to grow and opt for the platforms they have not used before. It was probably for the 1st time in India to blend education with technology and the paradigm shift from traditional teaching methods to the virtual world for online lectures. The adopted online teaching aids were ensuring that the students suffer no losses of the studies and can connect through e-learning as per their time and pace.

"In life no one will remember you, how you looked, walked and talked or what you did, everyone just remembers you by the way you made them feel when they were with you".

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

Massive rise in e-business, e-books, e-learning, digital promotion has pushed India towards virtual learning. The faculty's training, active participation in curriculum framing and redesigning will make the difference. Besides syllabus, the faculty must think out of box to inculcate multidisciplinary aspect. In this regard, introduction of online teaching- learning free educational platform, SWAYAM, MOODLE, MOOC, NPTEL by eminent subject experts from prestigious elite Indian institutions helped to serve large number of students offering these courses and a rapid rise in the enrolments of students every passing month was observed. Enabling fundamental right of every student accessible to high quality education sitting anytime, anywhere with no fees, the best teaching – learning resources were open to all across the globe.

Covid-19 taught us to stay connected, yet maintaining physical distance and a progress was made by introducing online refresher courses, online PhD viva-voce examination, online conferences, online seminars, online workshops, webinars that not only saved the money, but time as well.

"Education of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence".

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

India is a educational hub with most diverse and largest education system with 1,000 Universities, 45,000 degree colleges, 15 lakh schools, one crore teachers and more than 33crore students enrolled. The government, private sector, NGOs, institutions, diverse organizations, educational professionals, technocrats, should respond collectively to the ensure strategy for education for the pandemic crisis and join hands together to raise funds to benefit the youth of the country, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized.
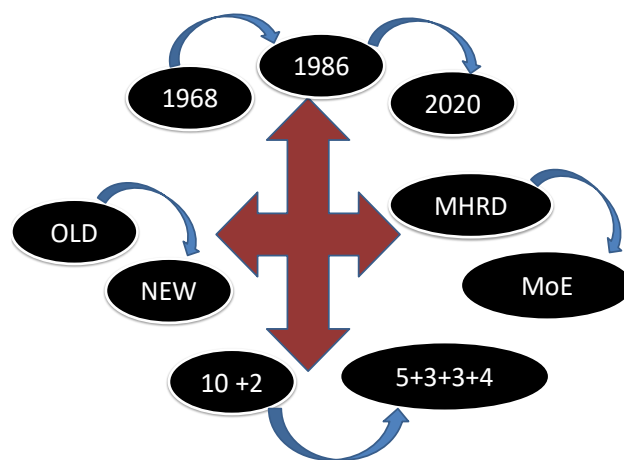
Now the question before many of us-
❖ Post COVID-19 offline education will become obsolete?
❖ What will be the role of flipped classrooms and blended learning ?
❖ How to carry experiments in Science labs?
❖ What is the scope of R & D in HEI and other institutions?

Today it is COVID-19, we don't know what is there in store in future for us and the the million youngsters. We have to test our boundaries, be prepared as learning never stops, it's a life long process. Maintaining the physical distance, keeping in mind the rules and regulations issued by the Government of India from time to time, online classes at present are the only options adapting new age learning. However the challenge is to connect all the corners of the country, across the globe through digital platforms for virtual learning. Only few privileged students are in the online learning sphere, due to high cost of digital devices and data plans. The eye to eye contact, the rigorous assessment, improvement of slow learners in the class, everything will be missing. The challenges are there, but these challenges are to be converted into opportunities for the bright future of the students. Educational Institutions and Government of India are relentlessly working to cope up with the situation and resolve the problem for socio-economic equality. But still a lot is yet to be done. Yes the time has changed, the virus taught us greatest lesson and in this Post Covid-19 crisis we have started thinking of new openings, new transformed world, laying a strong foundation for long term benefits for effective educational practice which has become online by default during the long lockdown period. Time will tell working for this purpose, philosophy and passion is fruitful or not.

Union cabinet in India on 29th July 2020 approved National Education Policy (NEP) and renamed MHRD ministry as Ministry of Education. However this big plan has to be successfully implemented.

National Education Policy

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Author biography

Prof. Jyotsna Meshram is Professor and Head, Department of Chemistry, Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj, Nagpur University, Nagpur. She has more than 130 publications to her credit. She has delivered many guest lectures in National webinars, National and International conferences, symposiums, workshops. She has recently received UGC- Mid Term Career Award, New Delhi.