

Indian Education System Aftercovid 19: Threats and Opportunities

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Abstract

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) being as an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Coronavirus pandemic significantly disrupted various sectors in India, including employment, business, automobiles, social life, tourism, agriculture, retail, and industry. It also disrupted the Indian higher education system and brought crucial time for the higher education organization and universities. The state governments across the country have shut down schools and colleges for uncertain time. Large numbers of school closures have turned a spotlight on inequities and other shortcomings of our education system. This crisis seeks a well-rounded and effective educational practice for the capacity-building of young minds to develop skills that would drive their employability, productivity, health, and well-being in the decades to come. The past has already been gone; present is crucial and is able to influence the future of generations diversely. Considering the present situation and dark future there is a global challenge to bring all things back to their situation as they were earlier. World is looking India with the hope, and India relies on its youth to stand the nation once again. Youths are in dilemma and their entire potential needs to be edged by education. This study is an effort to spot the areas affected by COVID-19 pandemic and also the threats and opportunities before Indian higher education in the era of COVID-19 have been discussed.

Introduction

“A rare disaster, a coronavirus pandemic, has resulted in a tragically large number of human lives being lost. As countries implement necessary quarantines and social distancing practices to contain the pandemic, the world have been put in a Great Lockdown,”

Gita Gopinath (IMF's chief economist)

The whole world is in a war, and the entire world is a war place now. A virus just six months old has brought the world's greatest economies on their knees. Every individual is now a part of this war; none knows the end of this war, but until the war is not over, everyone will have to fight. The path of the enemy relies upon the traditions of means of social interactions. With every infected touch, this virus is spreading. This coronavirus pandemic has also affected educational systems of the entire globe, leading to the near and total closures of schools, colleges and universities, most of the governments around the world have temporarily suspended all types of educational institutions in an attempt to break the chain of COVID-19 pandemic. With the coronavirus spreading rapidly across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States, countries have taken swift and decisive actions to mitigate the development of a full-blown pandemic. These nationwide closures are impacting over 90% of the world's student population. Several other countries have implemented localized closures impacting millions of additional learners. The coronavirus pandemic has also toppled Indian education system; to combat the spread of the virus, nearly all schools in every state have been closed their doors for extended periods. It is an independent subject of study on how schools are being impacted. In a matter of weeks, coronavirus (COVID-19) has changed how students are educated around the world. Those changes give us a glimpse at how education could change for the better - and the worse - in the long term.

In past during the Ebola outbreak, five million children in Africa faced school closures (Sifferlin, 2014). Schools in Sierra Leone were closed for nine months, and schools in Guinea and Liberia were closed for six (Sifferlin, 2014; Paye-Layleh, 2015). In Nigeria, schools that were supposed to open in August remained closed until October (BBC News, 2014). Now, these risk-control decisions have led millions of students into temporary 'home-schooling' situations, especially in some of the most heavily impacted countries, like China, South Korea, Italy, and Iran. These changes have certainly caused a degree of inconvenience, but they have also prompted new examples of educational innovation. Although it is too early to judge how reactions to COVID-19 will affect education systems around the world, signs are suggesting that it could have a lasting impact on the trajectory of learning innovation and digitization. Every crisis has two faces. It depends on the viewer what does he seek to see? The most negative word in 2020 is 'Positive' (Warrell, 2020). But none can forget that there exists an opportunity in every crisis.

In this pandemic situation, MHRD gave some critical instruction to all educational institutions, to maintain regular communication with the students and teachers through electronic means and keep them fully informed so that there would be no anxiety among the students, teachers and parents. In India all education agencies' efforts to mitigate the immediate impact of universities closures, particularly for more vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, and to facilitate the continuity of education for all through remote learning. Initiatives, taken by MHRD and the UGC, to continue the teaching-learning process using online modes such as Google Classroom, Google Hangout, Cisco WebEx Meeting, YouTube Streaming, OERs, SWAYAM Platform and SWAYAMPBHA (available on Doordarshan (Free dish) and Dish TV), has somehow helped the learners to minimize their study loss due to pandemic. The faculty members have contributed a lot for the benefit of students during the lockdown period by using several tools like WhatsApp groups, other social media tools and emails. MHRD also requested to educational organizations to notify help-line numbers/emails, which students can access for their queries. MHRD is committed to ensuring the safety and security of students as also the maintenance of the academic calendar and all possible steps will be taken. UGC has been framed many recommendations for the Examinations and the Academic Calendar in the Indian Universities. The guidelines are advisory in nature, and each university may chart out its plan of action, taking into consideration the issues of COVID – 19 Pandemic. Every university/ college has to ensure that it is prepared in all respects to carry out the academic activities following necessary advisories/guidelines/directions issued by the UGC or MHRD. Thus the rapid spread of COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of building resilience to face various threats, from pandemic disease to extremist violence to climate insecurity, and even, yes, rapid technological change. The pandemic is also an opportunity to remind ourselves of the skills students need in this unpredictable world such as informed decision making, creative problem solving, and perhaps above all, adaptability. To ensure those skills remain a priority for all students; resilience must be built into our educational systems as well.

Possible alternative measures for higher education during COVID-19

- To provide support for digitalization to teachers and students.
- Attendance rule may be relaxed in the light of lockdown.
- Measures should be taken to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on job offers, internship programs, and research projects.

- Exploring options for remote learning and use of other educational resources like teachers, school staff and communities to ensure inclusive methods of distance learning are adopted and communicated
- Digital solutions are less accessible; consider low-tech and gender-responsive approaches.
- In contexts where digital solutions to distance learning and the internet are accessible, ensure that students are trained with the necessary digital skills, including the knowledge and skills they need to stay safe online.
- Development of strategies and policies around school closures and should be distance mode learning-based to meet their experiences and needs.
- Allow automatic promotion and appropriate opportunities in admissions processes that recognize the particular challenges faced by learners.
- Improve connectivity for schools that need it most—providing support for digitalization to teachers as well as students.
- Improve financing of digital curriculum and materials (digital libraries, lessons, learning items, etc.)
- Improve telecommunication capabilities for schools to be able to deliver education online.
- Heads of institutions should have the onerous responsibility of safeguarding the associated health interests of all stakeholders of their respective colleges/ institutions.

Threats and Opportunities in era of COVID-19

There were substantial closings in many places during the 1918 Spanish Flu, some as long as four months, but not as widespread as those we see today. Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva emphasized "Saving lives and saving livelihoods go hand in hand with stopping the pandemic," the managing director added. "We simply cannot restart the economy to the fullest, and without restarting the economy, finance ministers are not going to have the revenues they need, including for their health services."

The outbreak of the virus and lockdowns at the national level could be used as the best test for the education technology interventions for distance learning. Unfortunately, few systems arrived at

this point fully prepared. In a matter of weeks, coronavirus (COVID-19) has changed how students are educated around the world. Those changes give us a glimpse at how education could change for the better - and the worse - in the long term. As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has spread across the globe, it has hit hardest for education. The emerging Indian education system has also been affected a lot.

We are living amidst what is potentially one of the greatest threats in our lifetime to global education, a gigantic educational crisis (Saavedra, 2020). According to the World Bank report, as of March 28, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing more than 1.6 billion children and youth to be out of school in 161 countries. This is close to 80% of the world's enrolled students. We were already experiencing a global learning crisis, as many students were in school, but we're not learning the fundamental skills needed for life. The World Bank's "Learning Poverty" indicator – the % of children who cannot read and understand at age 10 – stood at 53% of children in low- and middle-income countries – before the outbreak started. This pandemic has the potential to worsen these outcomes even more if we do not act fast.

The Indian government is working with the country's regions to downsize the maximum limit of students; a suggestion is likely to set the limit for each class around 20, in each classroom for the upcoming school year, in order to minimize the risk of coronavirus transmissions. IMF has warned that the global forecast will be characterized by "extreme uncertainty." Within weeks, however, the virus was global; every country had to react. The immediate actions were roughly the same at India universities, technical colleges, and all forms of education provision in between: shut down campuses; send students home; deliver instruction remotely established online portals, conducts webinars, promote online learning. But there are many threats and questions are raised up. Can each student actually benefit from technology at home? Here we clearly have an equity issue. While financially well-off families can afford computers and multiple devices, students from struggling families can hardly afford simple devices and may likely not have the internet at home. Sometimes net connectivity has become widespread, and internet connections may enable students to connect to a different type of learning resources. Many organization systems do not become habitual to use digital content in education. Some of the universities lack adequate IT infrastructure for the effective delivery of education through eLearning mode.

Threats

We tend to regard our school systems uniformly, but actually schools are widely different in their operations and impact on children, just as our students themselves are very different from one another. Children come from very different backgrounds and have very different resources, opportunities, and support outside of school. Now that their entire learning lives, as well as their actual physical lives, are outside of school, those differences and disparities come into vivid view. There are several issues that the Indian education system is undergoing and the major one is the poor rural education scenario.

- The big threat for India is the dropout rate of students. In given table it is showed that boys and girls quit school in equal measure. Considering the problem of COVID-19, in near future education is going to be costly.

Gender	Initial	Elementary	Secondary	Senior
Boys	100	94	75	70
Girls	100	94	75	70

- For example, Parman (2013) examines the impact of the 1918 influenza pandemic on the siblings of those children born during the outbreak and finds that older siblings received an additional three months of education while younger siblings received slightly less education relative to children who did not have a sibling born during the pandemic.
- Marcotte and Hemelt (2008) find that unscheduled school closings due to weather negatively affect student performance on third-grade state assessment exams. Middle-grade students may have lower rates of educational attainment if their learning is disrupted during key periods of development (Lloyd, 1978; Hernandez, 2011).
- Even when schools may not have been officially closed, there is evidence that parents worried about sending their children to school. For example, even after the delayed reopening in New York City, worried parents withheld their children from school; up to 200,000 students were absent the first

few weeks after schools opened, and the district announced "leniency" for parents who failed to send their children to school (The New York Times, 1916a).

- If a significant portion of the student population in 1916 did experience delays in starting school, and it may have resulted in individuals acquiring less education relative to those in their age group who were not impacted by illness and school closures.
- Studies shows that the polio pandemic of 1916 had different effects on educational attainment for children of different ages. School-aged children who were old enough to have labour market alternatives (those who were between ages 14 and 17), and who were living in areas more affected by the pandemic had lower educational attainment than similarly-aged children living in areas with lower polio morbidity rates.
- In urban India, the number of schools is way higher in number as compared to rural India. Almost all the patches of the city have schools which makes education more accessible. And with this it lacks of amalgamation of technology with education.

Following the above studies and findings, it can be said that the threat is not current pandemic only. It is also important to see the threats in after COVID-19 waves. Bringing back all the students is a big challenge. Considering the cost of education, less awareness of stakeholders, and numerous numbers of factors it is going to be a challenge for generations of generation.

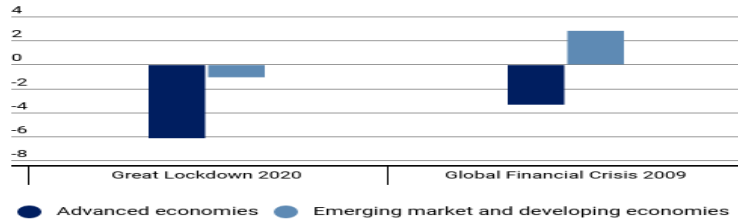
Opportunity

World Bank's report claims that emerging Asia is projected to be the only region that grows in 2020, at a rate of 1.0% - still being more than 5 percentage points below the previous decade's average. In China, where the coronavirus's impacts were first recorded this year, first-quarter economic activity could have contracted by 8% year on year. China is projected to grow at 1.2% in 2020 and 9.2% in 2021. While the projection India's modest 1.9% in 2020, is supposed to be more than 8% in 2021. But here is a crucial clue for Asian countries including India. It depicts that India will have significant positive growth in year of 2021. It's an excellent opportunity amid the odds.

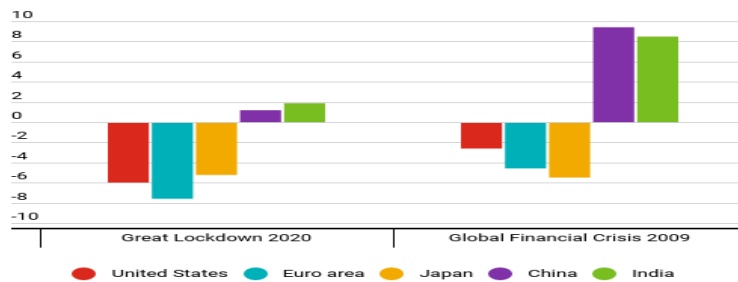
Global crisis

Both advanced economies and emerging market and developing economies are in recession. Major economies have also been significantly downgraded.

(real GDP growth, year-on-year percent change)



(real GDP growth, year-on-year percent change)



Source: IMF, *World Economic Outlook*.

Note: For India, data and forecasts are presented on a fiscal year basis, with FY2020/2021 starting in April 2020. India's growth is 0.5 percent in 2020 based on the calendar year.

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Now countries are shifting from globalization to localization of economy. India too can seek this perspective to make it's economy self-reliant and service sector-based.

- It is an excellent opportunity to excel the made in India movement along with start-up India.
- It is also revealed in reports released by various economic surveys that agriculture will be among the few sectors to gain profit amid COVID-19 crisis. So India can again promote
- Most of our large systems don't have a backup. Now, however, we're not only going to have to construct a backup to get through this crisis, but we're going to have to develop new, permanent systems, redesigned to meet the needs which have been so glaringly exposed in this crisis. For example, we have always had significant gaps in students' learning opportunities after school, weekends, and in the summer.
- This is the time to think how do we make our school, education, and child-development systems more individually responsive to the needs of our students? Why not construct a

system that meets children where they are and gives them what they need inside and outside of school to be successful? Let's take this opportunity to end the "one size fits all" factory model of education.

- This is the best time to put the agenda of universalization of education on the table. Moving outside the class may be helpful to make education child centred.
- Entire education system seeks a more informal and less formal pattern of interaction through the Cyber School or virtual classroom with more resilience structure.

The coronavirus pandemic has a lot of dark sides. No matter how serious and sad all of this is, there are upsides as well. However, "Always look on the bright side of life" let's not forget those and make the best of what the crisis gives us. As the proper old SWOT analysis tells us, there are not only threats but also opportunities that are available in the higher education sector. Online education should see a considerable boost. Challenging times offer an excellent opportunity for learners social bonding and other ways of connecting. The current crisis provides us with an opportunity to reconsider to learners to reorganize a way that has less impact on our planet. A time of crisis is also an opportunity for all education systems to look into the future, adjust to possible threats, and build their capacity. We believe that the Indian system has enormous potential for this to happen, regardless of COVID-19.

Conclusion

21st century has been divided into before and after corona (COVID-19)era. So many principles will be forgotten and so many new will be established. But there are some key areas which demand shared responsibility among Government agencies,educations institutions and students in responding to COVID-19.Firstly, there is a need to amplify cooperation in theaccessibility of education to all. Secondly, all educational agencies need to increase investment.They also need to have generated the resources and take action necessary to collect online materials and modules. Thirdly, it is important, now more than ever, educational institutions to become even more readily accessible to researchers, policymakers, media professionals, scientists and the community at large.The pandemic is also an opportunity to remind ourselves of the skills students need in this unpredictable world such as informed decision making, creative problem solving.Education may be slow to change, but the post-coronavirus economy will demand it.Time never waits; this tough time will also pass.The Chinese symbol for "Crisis" is a combination

of symbols of “Danger” and “Opportunity”. COVID-19 might be a trailer for several such challenges that await us. Till then stay safe, stay at home!

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