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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ADAPTATION TO NEW EDUCATION SYSTEM DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Dr. Rituparna Basak

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Muralidhar Girls' College, Kolkata, India.

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Abstract

In the educational field, the Covid-19 pandemic caused students' academic careers to come to a halt. Governments around the world, including India's, declared a state of emergency lockdown to prevent disease contamination and enforce social isolation. In a press release (March 21, 2020), the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRDa) of the Government of India shared numerous free digital e-learning platforms, taking into account the future of students. Despite having many negative consequences around the world, the unexpected Covid-19 outbreak forced the entire world to switch to a new digital system. This provided a chance for India's education system to change from a traditional to a digital model. Teachers and students both play an important part in successfully executing teaching and learning in a digital classroom, bridging the gap between traditional and virtual systems by adapting the essential technologies. During the lockdown, teachers, students, and parents were confronted with the unforeseen position of having to integrate the ICT curriculum to run the system successfully.

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Introduction:-

Covid-19 pandemic shakes up the whole world adversely and affected every corner of the world. A small infectious virus brought the devastating earthquake and incurred huge loss in all facets of life. Governments of the countries including India announced a lockdown to stop the spread of the contamination of the disease and to enforce social distancing among the people. The Prime Minister of India announced a nationwide lockdown on March 24 (The Hindu Net Desk, 25 March 2020). Along with the Govt. of India, the Chief Ministers of the states declared the complete lockdown throughout the country as a preventive measure for stopping the spread of Covi-19. The pandemic and lockdown had a tremendous impact on the worldwide educational system. A total of 1.3 billion learners around the world could not attend school or university and approximately 32,07,13,810 learners are affected in India alone (UNESCO, 2020). The whole educational system due to this sudden brake raised uncertainty in global education and compelled the educators to reinvent the education by reshaping the whole system for imparting learning.

In the educational field, this lockdown brought a sudden halt to the academic career of the students. Considering the future of the students the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Govt. of India in their press release (March 21, 2020) shared various free digital e-learning platforms like National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning, e-Pathshala, Study Web for Active Young Expiring Minds (SWAYAM), SWAYAM Prabha, DIKSHA portal, National Repository of Open Educational, etc. to continue the learning process smoothly during this lockdown period (MHRD, 2020a). The ministry also issued an advisory for the educational institutions to

Corresponding Author:- Dr. Rituparna Basak

Address:- Muralidhar Girls' College, Kolkata, India.

Email: rpbasak@yahoo.com

continue teaching-learning through online mode and requested academicians to pursue teaching from home. This unprecedented situation suddenly brought the transformation of teaching from traditional method to virtual method where both teachers and students were to innovative educational methodologies (Joshi, Vinay, & Bhaskar, 2020). This new virtual classroom system provided the online platform for teaching, learning, debate, discussion, competition, and evaluation and made learning equitable, convenient and accessible to both teachers and students.

Impacts On Education:-

The disease Covid-19 has spread across the globe, forcing humanity to maintain social distance. Study showed both negative impacts like educational activity hampered, reduced employment opportunities, increased responsibilities of parents, loss of nutrition and positive impacts like blended learning, learning management system, digital literacy, worldwide exposure etc. of Covid-19 on the whole world (Jena, 2020).

The education sector suffered a lot due to this sudden Covid-19 outbreak for which a traditional world converted to a digital world which is a matter of great significance. Academic institutions were closed, classes were suspended and exams at the different levels were exempted and postponed. The whole academic year got delayed due to this sudden unprecedented situation. At first teachers and students, were not much skilled in digitalization and most of them were not at all prepared for this sudden transformation from the traditional physical form of learning to online digital mode. All faced lots of problems and challenges to deal with the situation where many students could not attend the class due to lack of smartphone or network issues and many teachers could not take the proper class due to lack of skill and knowledge of technology. Lockdown affected the poor students mostly as the majority could not afford computers, laptops or smartphones through which they could attend the online classes. This lockdown made the difference between rich and poor students more clearly visible which was in a passive state of vision in the physical mode of offline learning. Mid-day meal programme which was designed to provide better foods to the school children was stopped for which the nutrition of those children was badly affected.

Despite bringing lots of negative impacts worldwide Covid-19 brought some positive impacts also. For this sudden pandemic whole world transferred to a new digital system. This allowed the Indian education system to transition from the traditional method to the digital method. All teachers and students were compelled and motivated to use technology for making the online teaching-learning methods more friendly and handy. It induced teachers and students to use different tools or apps to make softcopy of the study materials like jpg, pdf, word etc. and to share others. They were encouraged to learn and use various digital libraries and access the books, journals, articles etc. for academic progress. This Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in the use of teleconferencing, virtual meetings, webinars, e-workshops, and e-conferences which brought opportunities for the academicians to interact with the people of their interest around the world and adapt to international communities. Online workshops, webinars, and conferences are becoming popular because of the self-paced learning system, saving money and time for travel. This pandemic and lockdown provided people in the educational system an opportunity to develop their skills in online teaching-learning methods for accomplishing the digital India vision of government and start a new era in the history of education.

Challenges & Adaptation:-

Online teaching is a relatively new technique in developing countries like India. COVID-19 epidemic has made it obligatory for the teachers to use online platforms for teaching and assessment to run the educational system ceaselessly. The teachers needed to adapt the technology for the successful execution of online teaching and assessments as they are the frontline soldier in building the nation. Research showed that teachers faced various challenges like network issues, lack of training, less attendance etc. during this lockdown to resume teaching-learning in digital mode (Arora & Srinivasan, 2020). Before March 2020 the use of technology in education was very limited to some particular subjects and the rest used the chalk and talk methods and were least familiar with the ICT system. This pandemic and lockdown obliged the teachers, students and guardians to encounter a novel situation where a virtual platform is the only way to run the system continuously as this was a matter of careers of students. According to Eickelmann and Gerick (2020) teachers had to adapt the online mode of teaching with the use of different tools and techniques for solving various online teaching-learning related problems.

During this novel situation, numerous researches have been conducted to address several aspects of life. In educational fields, many researchers conducted the research to explore various issues related to either teachers or students or the system. Various challenges related to technology, training teachers having insufficient infrastructure, internet problems, lack of highly configured laptops or mobile, and poor technical knowledge were stated by Kaup

et al. (2020). Teachers' willingness, resistance, lack of skills, and time management towards online mode all were explored globally by various researchers. According to a study, students sometimes purposefully generate indiscipline by playing music, making noise, and posting negative remarks through bogus profiles (Punit & Qz.com, 2020). Teachers encountered personal challenges for the better future of the students. Many of them despite not having any knowledge of the online method of teaching and evaluation, adapted and equipped themselves with the system to run the whole system smoothly.

Online teaching-learning is completely different from the traditional teaching-learning process for the students also. Adapting this online teaching through technology was a great challenge for all the students. Students from every corner of the country were required to attend the classes, attempt quizzes, and debates, and give exams online mode. Basak and Manna (2020) found that urban students are more comfortable with e-learning than rural students due to the easy access and availability of resources in urban areas. Students who enjoyed various technological facilities perceived e-learning as more friendly. Here the majority of students showed favourableness towards e-learning for studies in future although they liked both online and offline learning for study. ICT which was once restricted to a few limited people suddenly become the only possible means to live life and open to all in this unprecedented situation.

There are some courses which involve numerical, experiments and direct interaction. Both teachers and students faced challenges like teaching and learning some numerical and practical courses online and adapting online assessment and evaluation techniques. In a study, students from a commerce background showed more interest in e-learning than arts and science students whereas arts students received more positive feedback and reviews for using e-learning (Basak & Manna, 2020). Students were more anxious about their academic careers and experienced difficulty sleeping weight changes, and an uncertain future. With strong social support, a person can handle the stressors better than those with less support who are more vulnerable to the stress. The study showed students with more social support especially tangible support are less depressed than the students with less support (Basak & Sinha, 2020).

For the successful execution of teaching and learning in the digital classroom, both teachers and students play a significant role and bridge the gap between traditional and virtual systems by adapting the necessary technologies required for it. Keeping in view the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown and considering the press release (29 April 2020) by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, University Grants Commission issued guidelines on examinations and academic calendar (MHRD, 2020b). The covid-19 pandemic showed us the importance of technology in the academic field that turned the traditional physical system into a digital tech-savvy system. Training both students and teachers in various LMSs and making it mandatory for all academic purposes put the whole system on a different path.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Development, Government of India has recently proposed a National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 where the focus is given to promoting online teaching and learning method. In the NEP-2020, HEIs are directed to dedicate a budget for online EdTechs like LMS, Moodle, Microsoft teams, MOOCs, Google Suite and so on. The policy also gives importance to promote teaching through advanced technological tools such as artificial intelligence, big data, virtual reality, 3D printing and robotics, develop suitable technical infrastructure and support the advanced teaching and learning system (MHRD, 2020c). The essential knowledge about online methods gained during this pandemic situation would help the HEIs to plan their academic curriculum and execute the teaching-learning process both through online and offline in future.

The novel Covid-19 pandemic has confounded such an unprecedented situation that requires teachers and students to adapt to the online teaching-learning process. Before March 2020 the globe was familiar with traditional classroom teaching methods where teachers use to follow formal lecture methods, do evaluations physically and students require to listen to those lectures, work individually or in groups, and submit assignments and assessments. The lockdown confronted teachers, students and parents with this unexpected situation where ICT curriculum integration becomes mandatory for them to run the whole system continuously. König et al., (2020) found that almost all teachers reported having maintained communication with students and their parents. In addition to assigning tasks and offering feedback to their pupils, the majority of teachers said they had presented new learning topics.

The COVID-19 situation not only enhances the knowledge and skills of the teachers and students but also confidence regarding success in the online teaching-learning process. ICT curriculum becomes an important issue,

reflected by all teachers and students in education worldwide. The critical discussion has evolved in connection to how digital technology aid student learning in the classroom, as part of the GEW (GewerkschaftErziehung und Wissenschaft, 2020) (e.g., BuabengAndoh, 2012; AutorengruppeBildungsberichterstattung, 2020). Professional knowledge of teachers and students about technologies for application in teaching and learning situations was not limited to a specific subject. It means that independent of their specific subjects, they were successful to apply technologies to pedagogical concepts and teaching-learning practice.

Conclusion:-

Covid-19 pandemic brought an educational renaissance globally which posed unprecedented challenges requiring the whole educational system to think innovative and adapt online teaching-learning for the smooth running of the system. The sudden halt due to the pandemic and lockdown in education compelled all to implement new approaches in the educational system through digitalization. This novel situation required teachers, students and guardians to use various digital tools and techniques to solve the problems created due to this pandemic. Along with the students, teachers also maintained contact with the guardians to account for social and professional integration. In addition, this pandemic provided all personalities related to the educational system an opportunity to experience a novel digital world which can be simultaneously run with the traditional method when the pandemic ends and everything returns to normal.

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