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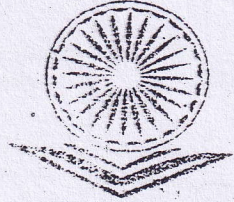
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2. Education at Rural India in Pandemic : Need of Technology Based Online Education

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Abstract

The spread of CORONA Virus (COVID-19) has endangered the whole world. Its worldwide consequences can be counted more horrific than the destruction and devastation caused by the dropping of nuclear bombs during the Second World War. No doubt, there have been epidemics in the world earlier, but the threat of CORONA Virus is bigger than all. Soon after its first patient, found in December 2019, it rapidly spread in several countries. As the CORONA virus infected several lacks of people and killed lacks of people out of them within a short time, it was declared Pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO). The pandemic situation influenced the several fields of human life and the field of education could not be an exception to that, more particularly in India. In Indian villages, towns and small cities the established teaching-learning mode, with few exception, is offline. Both the teachers and learners are accustomed to that mode. However, during lockdowns, declared successively by the central and State governments due to pandemic situation, the schools, colleges and other teaching-learning places were strictly kept closed, which almost suspended teaching-learning process in traditional offline mode. It gave birth to technology based online mode of education, particularly in rural part of India.

Keywords: Education, Pandemic, CORONA, Tradition, Technology, Mode, Challenge.

Introduction

The worldwide spread of CORONA Virus (COVID-19), has greatly influenced the field of education beside several other fields, particularly agriculture, transport, industry, market. The field of education was never so influenced as that of due to Pandemic situation. The situation almost compelled the authorities to think, plan and execute the process of educating, examining and evaluating through technology based online mode. The concept of technology based online mode of education is not a new one, even in India. However, in India before Pandemic situation the technology based online teaching mode was used to some extent specifically at esteemed

institutions, running professional, technical courses. To be true, at rural part of India this mode was used neither by the teachers nor by the learners. Perhaps, at rural part of India this mode of education would not have been used for many years to pass had there been no pandemic situation.

The present paper aims to critically evaluate education in Pandemic in general and the need of technology based online education at rural part of India, in particular. As mentioned earlier, the concept of technology based online mode of education is not a new one. As an appropriate alternative to the current challenges facing traditional colleges and universities - including higher tuition, budget cuts, and course shortages - nearly three million students currently are enrolled in fully online programs and six million are taking at least one online course as part of their degree. As such, online education has been accepted, though by city based learners, as one of the higher education alternatives. However, the issue doesn't end here. Preferring technology based online mode of education willingly as an alternative to traditional offline mode of education, and making it obligatory/compulsory as the only available mode is certainly not one and the same thing. With the acceptance of LPG revolutionary changes were introduced in several walks of life. Digitization of all the fields is the prime concern of that process of change. In the field of education, particularly the higher education, there was constant demand to introduce more and more technology, to produce digitally equipped graduates, post-graduates to be able to meet international standards. However, it is a Herculean task to replace the age-old traditional mode of education to a modern, digital mode in a few days. In case of India, where the major part is occupied by villages, it is a dream. To be frank, changes are too slow to take place with us.

## Education at Rural part of india : Current Scenario

The process of education goes through four stages- Primary, High school, Graduate and Post-graduate. Education has spread widely and almost reached to all the corners in India. Again to be fair, that is in quantity and not in quality. The quality of education at all stages at rural part of the country is below the mark. It has been proved by the fact that in the first hundred standard universities / institution not even one is Indian. Whether it is primary/high school /degree of post-graduate degree institution in rural part of the country, do not have enough infrastructure and learning sources even today. The old buildings with small-dark rooms, broken furniture, with very few or no means of teaching –learning are called mansions of learning. Most of these

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schools/institutions are run by private managements / bodies whose first aim behind running the school/college is to earn money. The issue of providing proper teaching-learning facility that generates the teaching-learning atmosphere is far away from them. The poor quality of education, even that of higher education at rural India is reflected in the scene that these institutions do not even meet the minimum requirements to be awarded the status of permanent affiliation by the University and the status of 2f and 12B of UGC thereafter. The poor parents/guardians admit their wards at such institutions only because they are the nearest, easy-to-reach and affordable. The government primary schools and high schools run the state curriculum in the medium of state language, with English as one of the subjects. The higher education institutions run the traditional courses. No attempts are made to introduce professional / technical courses as they require updated set up which is not affordable on the part of these institutions and also on the part of parents. The teachers teach the students prescribed syllabus in traditional methods, without any innovation. The percentage of the students, regularly attending the classes, is very poor. Their parents, mostly illiterate or half literate, seem to be interested, with few exceptions, in sending their wards to schools/colleges rather than educating them in real sense. Naturally the approach of such wards to learning is simply examination oriented rather than to be career oriented. Due to the lack of original sources of learning, they rely on notes-based preparation. Naturally, the outcome is very poor.

During lockdowns, declared successively by the central and State governments due to pandemic situation, the schools, colleges and other teaching-learning places were strictly kept closed for traditional offline mode. In cities and some towns, institutions run by private managements, Christian missionaries, equipped with technological means like Computers, Tabs, Laptops, T.V., CD, VCD Players, Multimedia Projectors, Internet server, ran the teaching-learning process in online mode. However, the government primary schools and high schools, at rural part, towns were almost closed. Without technological means, both with the teachers and the learners, at rural part the teaching-learning process was almost suspended. At higher education level the teachers tried to run classes in online mode, using smart phones, tabs, laptops, etc. at their end. However, majority of the students couldn't afford these means, and hence were deprived of learning. Unavailability of Network or poor Network also influenced the process at rural part.
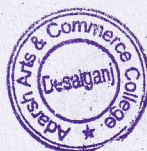
Opportunities of Technology based Offline/Online Mode of Education

Today's smart world, dominated by LPG, is most appropriately called the cyber age. In this smart world revolutionary changes take place minute after minute. There is a constant demand for the replacement of old ways, old values, and old ways of entertainment, communication; even teaching and learning. The new world has opened up new avenues of understanding the true concept and ultimate goal of education. Today's smart learners and teachers need to cope up with these changes. Again today's smart world demand smart human resource with sound technical knowledge. Rather the human resource has to compete with the machines and prove to be smarter and master of machines. While every other department is computerized, and demand employees who are experts in computer skills, able to navigate different learning management systems (LMS) and programs, able to create and share documents, incorporating audio/video materials into assignments, completing online training sessions, etc. In this situation unless and until the learner has gone through the technological mode of education, and has mastered the technology cannot find entry in various fields. As such the opportunities in the world market are open to those candidates who can handle and manipulate technological modes of affairs.

As such, today's online mode of education which has attracted the attention of today's smart learners should be seen as the advanced version of education. There are so many advantages of this mode of education like saving of time and energy, effective performance, etc. both on the part of teachers and learners. Gaining practical, presentable knowledge, technical skills are some other advantages of technology based mode of education on the part of learners. As such, with traditional courses, traditional methods and traditional mode we are going to produce the useless graduates.

To conclude, the teaching-learning process through traditional offline mode at rural part of India was greatly influenced during pandemic situation. There was very little learning or no learning at all. It is also true that traditional offline mode of education has certain limitations, while there are so many advantages of technology based mode of education or online mode of education. Hence, whether it is pandemic situation or any other similar situation, technology based online mode of education should be systematically incorporated at all stages of education. To achieve this end the government should equip the schools with technological means and train the teachers to use the means timely and effectively. As the learners at such schools are from

poor strata of society, they should be provided by the government with means like tabs, smart phones, free network, etc. Whether it is pandemic or any other emergency, the process of teaching-learning should go on continuously. Hence it is high time to accept the technology based mode of education or online mode of education not as a forced mode but as the need of today's digital smart world.

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