

Role of E-learning in Indian Higher Education During Covid-19

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ABSTRACT : The covid-19 pandemic has affected all the sectors worldwide. Higher Education is one of the most critical determinant affected by Covid-19 pandemic up to a very large extent. According to UNESCO, “on 1st April 2020 schools and Higher Education Institutions were closed in 185 countries affecting 1,542,412,000 learners constituting 89.4 percent of the total enrolled learners.” As per the statistical data, On 30th January, 2020 the first covid-19 case was detected in India. Thereafter the number of cases went on increase. Consequently, lockdown is declared in the country from 21st March. The Indian higher education sector is affected drastically by Covid 19 and lockdown situation, resultant all the Educational Institutions are shut down during lockdown. Thus there arise a need to find new alternatives to continue the teaching- learning process.

In this paper efforts are made to study the role of E- learning in Indian higher education during covid-19.

KEYWORDS : E-learning, Covid-19, Lockdown, Higher Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Technology is playing a vital role for the fulfilment of higher education objectives during Covid-19 Lockdown. According to the report of World Bank Group on the covid-19 crisis response, many universities and colleges have moved their operations online. The report has also mentioned major actions taken by Institutions which gives emphasis on the fulfilment of short-term objectives by using digital platforms and medium & long term objectives by strengthening national and institutional capacity.

Teaching institutions through the use of online platforms of education are ensuring the continuous learning of Students in higher education during the covid-19 lockdown. Government organisations has also taken initiative in this respect which can be seen in the increase in numbers of new subscribers at the SWAYAM platform during this lockdown. As per the available sources, there is a big total of approx. 25 lakh new users at SWAYAM platform from different 60 countries. The platform is being used over worldwide in countries like India, USA, Canada, UK, UAE, Germany, Australia, Nepal and Singapore.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data used in the study is collected from the Secondary sources of published and non – published data available at websites. Secondary data is taken from Articles and Survey Reports Published at official websites of various organisations.

Purpose of the study:- The purpose of this research paper is to study the Role of E-learning in Indian Higher Education during covid-19 by examining the :

- Challenges in the adoption of E-learning in Indian Higher Education..
- Initiatives taken for E-learning in Indian Higher Education.

III. CHALLENGES IN THE ADOPTION OF E-LEARNING IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

India is a developing country and the second largest populated country in the world. Eventually many challenges are being faced by the students in higher education during covid-19. Use of technology in higher education is one of the solution to the problem. The major challenges in the adoption of E-learning in Indian Higher Education during Covid-19 are highlighted here below:-

1. **Lack of internet access :-** According to the report of India internet 2019 by IAMAI and nielsen out of the total population of India only 36% population has access to internet out of which 51% population belongs to urban area and 27% belongs to rural area. But the data for the percentage of students in higher education who have access to the internet is still not clear. A good Connectivity and broadband, free wi fi facilities, Digital resource availability etc. is very required to cope with the impact of Covid 19 on higher education.
2. **Lack of Tech Knowledge and Trained staff :-** India is a labour intensive developing nation. Lack of trained staff and tech-knowledge is one

of the big challenge here. Public Institutions as well as Private Institutions should work together for Teacher's training program and Encourage them to become tech savvy.

3. **Lack of proper nutrition:-** For the successful use of E-learning in higher education, a good health and proper nutrition of students as well as teachers is highly essential. High use of Technology for learning purpose can create many negative impact on physical and mental health. Kasturirangan chairman of Indian Space Research Organization (1994 – 2003) said to new agency PTI ,“Fundamentally, the physical and mental connection with children directly is extremely important. Playfulness, Creativity and many other aspects can never be transferred through online learning”.
4. **Poverty:-** According to the report of CMIE the rate of Unemployment in India is 36% on the basis of 30 day moving average. Thus it becomes difficult for the citizens to bear the cost of E-learning. Most of the students are lack with smartphones and internet connectivity. As per the Newzoo's Global Mobile Market Report,2019 In India, out of the 1,368.7 million population only 502.2 million population is smartphones user and smartphone penetration rate is 36.69% .
5. **Irregular electricity supply:-** A good progress can be seen in electricity generation in India but still there is lack of 24*7 electricity supply. According to the source of a audit report conducted in 2018, more than 18,000 villages are still without electricity.
6. **Shortage of funds:-** Shortage of funds is always a big challenge for the achievement of any

objective. It is also considered as one of the biggest challenge in the successful implementation of E-learning. The funds allocated for higher education is insufficient for imparting online learning and for increasing access to digital platforms during covid-19 lockdown situation.

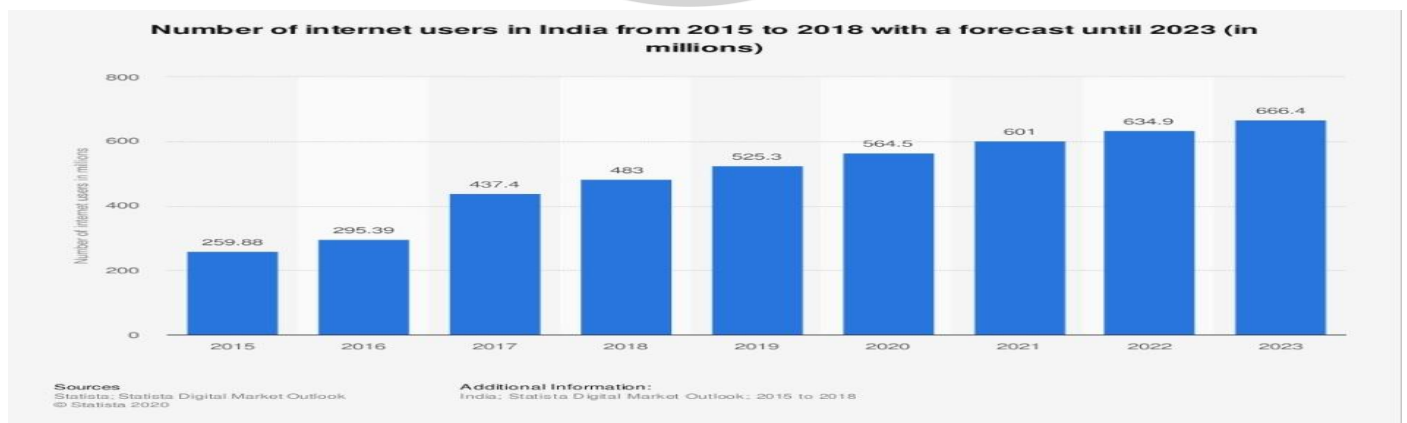
7. **Lack of efficient channel of communication :-** There is a lack of unified channel of communication between Administrating staff, Teaching and Non-teaching staff and Learners. Till now there is no any effective mode for taking teacher – student feedback.

IV. INITIATIVES TAKEN FOR E-LEARNING IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

Right to get Education is one of the fundamental right for every Indian citizen. E-learning has become the necessity to cope with the problem of Access to Education during this Covid 19 lockdown. In this challenging environment of Covid – 19 Lockdown, Various digital platforms are being used for the spread of Education and continuance of Teaching – Learning process in Indian Higher Education. These digital platforms include :- Radio, Television, Internet Based Platform (Online Audio-visual lectures), Power Point Presentations, PDFs etc.

Besides this the number of Internet users in India is also increasing day by day which is very helpful for the achievement of Educational objectives in this lockdown situation. This can be seen with the help of given graphical chart :-

A Graphical Chart Showing Continuous Increase in Number Of Internet Users in India :-



It can be seen in the above graph of statistical forecasting done by Statista Digital Market Outlook that there is a continuous increase in the number of internet users in India since 2015 and it will keep on increasing till 2023 also. At present in 2020, the number of users are 564.5 millions as shown in the graph. Thus it can play a helpful role in

increasing access to E-learning during this Covid-19 pandemic.

As per the statistical data of International Telecommunication Union, the number of internet users in India is 718,740,000 which is 54.29% of the total population of country. Thus India holds 2nd Rank

worldwide in the list of Internet users just after the China which holds 1st Rank in the list. Along with this, India holds 10th Rank in the number of Fixed Broadband Subscription which is 17,856,024. But India holds 126th Rank in the number of Subscription per 100 individuals.

As per the report of Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO Response to Covid 19, Government organisations are running several E-learning platforms like SWAYAM, SWAYAM Prabha, Moocs, CEC-UGC YouTube channel, Diksha, Nishtha (A Teacher's Training Portal), E-Pathshala and NROER (National Repository of Open Educational Resources), Webinars and other programs. Audio lectures are also being uploaded on the Radio channels for the equal access to Higher Education in rural areas thus also supporting to the students who are with the lack of Financial resources, Smartphones and Internet Connectivity. Online E-certificate based courses are also being organised by different educational institutions. Learners are using 32 DTH channels available for 24*7 basis at the official website of SWAYAM PRABHA. E-learning curriculum based videos of SWAYAM Prabha DTH TV channels for all type of graduation and post graduation courses are also being used by around 50,000 people every day. These video content is being provided by various government organisations which includes NPTEL, IITs, UGC, CEC, NCERT, IGNOU and NIOS. The National Digital Library of India is now accessible free of cost by the students and it is also being accessed by about 43000 people every day. Over 48,984,683 resources are available on NDLI to search the required content.

Many Webinars and Online Faculty Development Programmes are being conducted time to time for the online training of faculties by the GAD-TLC and other Educational Institutions. Thus contributing for the successful implementation on E-learning and Digitalisation of Higher Education in India. The platforms like YouTube, Google classroom, Google Forms, Google Meet, Quizizz etc. are playing a great role in the continuance of higher education. Virtual classes and virtual meetings are very helpful solution to fill the gap in learning process. Teachers and learners are becoming tech savvy.

As per the Budget of F.Y. 2021, Government has increased the funding for the Education sector by 5% to rupee 99,311.52 crores. Of these government has allocated rupee 39,466.52 crores to higher Education.. As per the data available, Union Budget 2020 India has increased the fund allocation for Digital India Programme by 23% to 3,958 crores for F.Y. 2020-2021. Thus it is playing a helpful role in the successful implementation of E-learning in Indian Higher Education.

V. CONCLUSION

To reduce the impact of Covid-19 on Indian Higher Education, E-learning is a useful medium. Being a

developing nation, Indian Higher Education System is facing difficulties related to Finance, Digital Structure, Trained staff, Safety & Security and other. In order to overcome these difficulties, both Public and Private Sector should come together for the successful implementation of E-learning in Indian Higher Education during covid-19. Initiatives are being taken by conducting several Webinars and online faculty development programme for increasing Teacher's knowledge and skills in the use of digital educational platforms. An Integrated, Connected and E-Structure based Educational System is the need for today's rapidly changing environment. Positive Steps in this direction is being taken by SWAYAM PRABHA, DTH TV channel, All India Radio, MOOCs, CEC-UGC, NCERT, IGNOU, E-Pathshala and many other Educational Institutions. Although E-learning is only a mean not an end but one should not ignore the role of E-learning in this Covid-19 lockdown situation. Because it is playing a vital role in Education sector. Students are learning by staying at their home and thus also fighting with Covid-19 pandemic by maintaining Social Distancing. The contribution of EDUSAT (Indian Satellite launched by ISRO in 2004) in serving the Indian Higher Education Sector is also praiseworthy. Thus the role of E-learning in Indian Higher Education during covid-19 pandemic lockdown is very contributory. The future of Higher Education may face a positive revolutionary change in India.

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