

Effect of Covid -19 Pandemic on Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities

The spread of pandemic COVID-19 has severely disturbed every facets of human life. From the first phase of lockdown announced on March 25, 2020 to all the phases of lockdown the educational institutions throughout the nation remained closed for educational activities. This obstructed significantly on the education sector. Institutions were closed and teaching has moved through the online mode to ensure the continuity of teaching-learning process. Covid-19 has augmented acceptance of digital technologies to deliver education. It encouraged all teachers and students to use technology for sharing information, online activities, webinars, National level competitions ie Moot Courts with the help of e-conferencing tools like Google Meet and use of electronic media like WhatsApp, Google drive etc. Students submitted the scanned copies of the assignments, projects, seminar, moots submissions to the institution through email during the lockdown for Covid-19.

Covid-19 has both negative and positive impacts. Students miss their offline classes, interaction with their classmates and the campus life. Attending online classes requires long hours of internet, peaceful space and one device/ phone dedicated to each student in a family, might not be affordable for everyone. There is a digital divide between those students who have access and have not accessed to the new technology. Thus, the sudden shift from classroom learning to digital learning has created the digital divide between rich and poor, urban and rural. The cancellation of external assessments and entrance test has negatively affected on students' learning.

On the positive side the pandemic created an opportunity for change in teaching-learning pedagogy and adaptation of virtual education in all levels of education. Online/virtual education is the demand of the current crisis and which may perhaps become a parallel system of education. The effective ways of teaching, conducting assessments and ensuring teaching-learning to be interesting, engaging and context-specific are central for online mode of education. Teachers and students should be trained to utilise online teaching learning process using technology. Access to online libraries, books, journals should be created to promote learning. If the pandemic Covid-19 continues, new approaches for academic assessment/evaluation should be adopted by the institutes. Educational institutes also need to strengthen their

resources to run virtual educational activities in terms of better access to internet and technology. These facilities and services should be considered as a necessity and not a luxury. The success of the online teaching-learning will depend on engaging the students and to bring about innovative solutions in making digital learning hassle-free and effective.