



Reorienting Management Education for a New Era: Pandemic Lessons and Opportunities Under NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the profound impact of the COVID-19 on the higher and management education sectors in India, alongside the transformative structural opportunities presented by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Based on secondary data, the paper evaluates both the critical challenges and positive adaptations induced by global disruptions. The findings reveal that while the pandemic severely disrupted traditional academic schedules and exposed prominent digital divides—particularly regarding internet accessibility and infrastructure constraints in remote regions—it simultaneously acted as a crucial catalyst for technological integration. Significant positive shifts include the widespread acceleration of blended learning models, increased institutional reliance on Learning Management Systems (LMS), and enhanced digital literacy among students and educators. Concurrently, the paper examines systemic flaws historically inherent in the Indian higher education ecosystem, such as rigid disciplinary fragmentation, limited institutional autonomy, and low research output. The study highlights how NEP-2020 introduces a robust framework to remedy these deep-rooted issues by establishing a single holistic regulator (HECI), offering flexible multidisciplinary degrees with multiple entry/exit options, and launching the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC). The paper concludes that the convergence of pandemic-driven digital adoption and strategic NEP reforms is actively reshaping Indian management education.

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1. Introduction

India's first Education Policy was passed and executed in 1986. Following 34 years, the National Education Policy (NEP) for India has been refreshed, reconsidered and endorsed on 29 July 2020. The arrangement connotes a gigantic achievement for India's Education framework, which will positively make India an advanced education hub around the world. The policy is based on the Five pillars i.e. "Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, Accountability" and it will result in the transformation of the country into a vibrant knowledge society. The National Education Policy 2020 envision an India focused education system that contributes straightforwardly to changing and transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by giving excellent and high-quality education to all, regardless of any factor.

Higher/Management education assumes a critical part in advancing human just as cultural prosperity and in creating India as imagined in its Constitution - a vote based, just, socially conscious, cultured, and compassionate country maintaining freedom, uniformity, fraternity, and equity for all. Higher/Management education altogether contributes towards reasonable jobs and financial improvement of the country. As India moves towards turning into knowledge economy and society, an ever-increasing number of youthful Indians are probably going to aspire for higher education.

The effect of pandemic COVID-19 is seen in each area all throughout the world. The education sectors of India is also gravely influenced by this. It has implemented the overall lock down making exceptionally terrible impact on the student's life. The outbreak of COVID-19 has

instructed us that change is inescapable. It has functioned in as an impetus for the education institutions to develop and settle on stages with advance technologies, which have not been utilized previously. The education sector has been battling to endure the emergencies with an alternate methodology and digitizing the difficulties to wash away the danger of the pandemic.

The world is going through quick changes in the landscape of knowledge. With different logical, scientific, technological and mechanical advances, like the AI, Big Data, and computerized reasoning, numerous untalented positions worldwide might be taken over by machines, while the requirement for a talented labour force, especially including math, software engineering, and information science, related to multidisciplinary capacities across technical studies, sociologies, and humanities, will be progressively in more demand. With environmental changes, there will be a sizeable change by the way we meet the world's energy, water, food, and disinfection needs, again bringing about the requirement for new talented work, especially in science, science, physical science, farming, environment science, and sociology. The rise of pandemics will likewise call for collective examination in irresistible infection the executives and the advancement of antibodies and the resultant social issues increases the requirement for multidisciplinary learning. There will be a developing interest for humanities and arts, as India moves towards turning into a developed country just as among the three biggest economies on the world.

The higher education institutions and colleges had to be closed down because of COVID-19 pandemic and thought of a choice to continue the educating learning measure through advanced method of schooling. Because of many deficiencies in computerized method of learning, it is presently important to resume the educational institutions. As students are significant stakeholders, the perspectives and ideas are essential before really taking a choice on resuming of the Educational Institutions.

2. The Positive Impact of COVID – 19 on Education

The Indian Educational institutions have accepted the challenges occurred due to COVID-19 and they are trying their best to provide flawless support and services to the students. Indian education system got the chance to change from traditional system to a new technological era. Few positive impact of COVID-19 are:

2.1 Move towards Blended Learning

Coronavirus has sped up selection of computerized advances to convey education. Educational institutions moved towards blended method of learning. It energized all teachers and students to turn out to be more innovation savvy. Better approaches for conveyance and appraisals of learning opened enormous opportunities for a significant change in the space of educational program advancement and learning method. It likewise offers admittance to enormous pools of students all at once.

2.2 Rise in use of Learning Management Systems

Utilization of learning management systems by educational institutions turned into an extraordinary interest. It opened an incredible open door for the organizations those have been creating and reinforcing learning management systems for the educational institutions to utilize effectively.

2.3 Enhance the use of soft copy of learning material

In lockdown circumstance students couldn't gather the printed versions of study materials and thus the vast majority of the students utilized of soft copies of the materials for reference.

2.4 Enhanced Digital Literacy

The pandemic circumstance instigated individuals to learn and utilize computerized innovation and brought about expanding the advanced proficiency and digital literacy.

3. The Negative Impact of COVID – 19 on Education

Education sector has suffered a huge loss due to the outbreak of COVID-19. With positive impact it also has created many negative impacts on education sector and few of them are:

3.1 Educational activity hampered

Classes have been suspended and tests and exams at various levels postponed. Various boards have effectively deferred the yearly assessments and entrance tests and also the admission process got postponed. Because of continuity in lockdown, students endured a deficiency of almost 3 months of the full academic year of 2020-21 which has additionally weaken the circumstance of continuity in education and the students would confront numerous troubles in continuing tutoring again after a huge gap.

3.2 Impact on employment

Most of the recruitment got delayed because of COVID-19 placements for students is influenced along with organizations postponing the on board of students. Unemployment rate is expected to be expanded because of this pandemic. In India, there is no enrolment in Govt. area and fresh graduates fear withdrawal of their work offers from private areas as a result of the current circumstance. The Center for Monitoring Indian Economy's estimates on joblessness shot up from 8.4% in mid-March to 23% toward the beginning of April and the metropolitan joblessness rate to 30.9%. At the point when the unemployment expands then the schooling continuously diminishes as individual's battle for food rather than education.

3.3 Unprepared teachers/students for online education

Not all teachers and the students are good for attending online classes or if nothing else not every one of them were prepared for this unexpected change from offline learning to figuring out how to use digital platforms for web-based learning. The majority of the educators are simply conducting lectures on video stages, for example, Zoom, Google meet, and so on which may not be genuine online learning with no committed web-based learning stage.

4. Major Problems Currently Faced by the Higher/Management Education System in India

- a. A rigorously fragmented higher educational ecosystem;
- b. Less focus on the development of analytical and cognitive skills and learning outcomes;
- c. A firm and rigid separation of subjects (disciplines), with early specialisation and students cascading into narrow areas of study;
- d. Limited ingress particularly in socio-economically underprivileged areas, with few HEIs that teach in local languages.
- e. Finite teacher and institutional autonomy;
- f. Marginal emphasis is given on research at most universities and colleges, and lack of competitive peer-reviewed research or scholarly publications funding across disciplines;
- g. Poor governance and leadership of HEIs;
- h. An unproductive regulatory system;
- i. Many affiliating universities resulted in stunted standards of undergraduate education.

5. Key Changes for Reorienting the Higher/Management Education

- a. Moving forward with a higher educational system consisting of large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges, with at least one in or near every district, and with Higher Educational Institutions across the nation that offer medium of instruction or programmes in local/Indian languages;
- b. Moving towards a more interdisciplinary undergraduate education;
- c. Moving towards teacher, instructor, faculty and institutional autonomy;
- d. Renovating curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support for enhanced student experiences;

- e. Reaffirming the integrity of teachers and institutional leadership positions through merit appointments and career development based on teaching, research, and service;
- f. Formation of a National Research Foundation to fund outstanding peer-reviewed research and to actively seed research in universities and colleges;
- g. Governance of Higher Educational Institutions by high qualified self-sustaining or independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy;
- h. “Light but tight” regulation by a single controller for higher education;
- i. Increased access, equity, and inclusion through an array of measures, including greater opportunities for magnificent public education; scholarships by private/benevolent universities for underprivileged students; online education, and Open Distance Learning (ODL); and all infrastructure and learning materials accessible and available to learners with disabilities.

6. Provisions and Opportunities for Reorienting Higher/Management Education

- a. Replacing UGC and AICTE with Higher Education Commission of India. Except legal and medical colleges, all higher education institutions, to be governed by a single regulator and common norms to be in place for both public and private higher education institutions. It regulates and would keep a track of the whole higher education and would also assist in policy making as think tank.
- b. Undergraduate degrees will be of either a three or four-year duration, with multiple entry and exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications for those dropping out at a certain point in the course. Higher Educational Institutions will also be able to put forward different master’s courses of different designs, based on the undergraduate degree of the student.
- c. The concept of a physical campus or geographical location to dissolve giving flexibility to students to study either in a national or an international institution
- d. An interdisciplinary approach to introduce an “Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)”, which will help to digitally store academic credits earned from various acknowledged HEIs (national and international). This will also allow degrees from Higher Educational Institutions to be accorded considering credits earned.
- e. Top 100 Universities across the planet will be allowed to set their campuses in India. These foreign universities will be given special immunity regarding governance, regulatory, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India.

7. Review of the Literature

The study establishes that the Coronavirus pandemic has adverse effects on education. COVID-19 has major effects on school characteristics, including research, academic programmes, Staff professional development and jobs in the academic sector etc. These effects were felt by both educational institutions, educators, students and parents and other stakeholders in education. The study emphasizes the need for adoption of technology in education, as a way to curb the effects of Coronavirus and other future pandemics in education. Thus, the study acknowledges that the decision to shut down schools for Coronavirus across the world may be hurtful, but it is sensible considering the rate of spread, and the dangers imposed by COVID-19 pandemic. The unprecedented school closures for Coronavirus remains a lesson and a warning to the entire educational world particularly those who are yet to embrace or adopt emerging learning technologies that support online or remote education. Stakeholders in the education sector have to develop robust strategies to deal with post-Coronavirus era (DR. AABHA SHARMA, 2020).

Even if the COVID-19 crisis stretches longer, there is an urgent need to take efforts on maximum utilisation of online platforms so that students not only complete their degree in this academic year but also to get ready for the future digital oriented environment. India should

develop creative strategies to ensure that all children must have sustainable access to learning during pandemic COVID-19. The Indian policies must include various individuals from diverse backgrounds including remote regions, marginalised and minority groups for effective delivery of education (Dr. Pravat Kumar Jena, 2020).

The National Education Policy 2020 has a huge potential to change. Whether or not it will be a change for improvement largely depends on its implementation. Education being a subject of the concurrent list, the implementation would depend heavily on the decisions and actions of particular state governments. This is indeed necessary because the educational scenario is very different across the different regions of India. This is also in tandem with NEP-2020's support for decentralization- in the form of more autonomy to educational institutes and engaging local community members in education to teaching content with 'local labour.' While the policy has been made, the dialogue about it is still ongoing. The policy's impact would depend on dialogue and negotiations between the population and the government agencies, and the particular circumstances on the ground (Ramanand, Sohom).

Criticism for low-cost private schools sometimes stems from the belief that education should be the government's responsibility. With the help of government resources, education can be made available for all. Some studies have argued that the New Education Policy 2020 is an opportunity to ensure handholding between private and public (Government) to provide inclusive and equitable education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (KPMG, 2020).

8. Objectives

- a. To uncover the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in the management education.
- b. To study the major problems faced by the Higher and Management Education system in India.
- c. To study the key changes, provisions and opportunities for reorienting the Higher and Management Education.

9. Research Methodology

9.1 Methodology

Research design is the strategic plan of exploration of the research problem and to find the answer of the research query. It is the overall layout of the analysis. The current study is explorative in nature. The present study will describe the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the higher/management education sector as well as it will also analyse the NEP implemented by the government. Here, in this study secondary data will be used for analysing and the research design for my study is Explorative in nature.

9.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

A total of 1.3 billion learners around the world were not able to attend schools or universities, and approximately 320 million learners are affected in India alone (UNESCO, 2021). Under the circumstances of COVID-19, government imposed nationwide lockdown on March 25th, 2020 to combat the consequences faced by the people and especially for students from rural areas due to COVID-19, which has made severe impact on the education system as well. By the end of March 2020, the epidemic had spread to over 185 countries and resulted in the closure of over 90% of all schools, colleges and universities impacting close to 1.38 billion students (India Today, 2020). The pandemic leads to the closure of schools and universities which is hugely affecting the learning across the country as the Indian education system is dominated by offline learning i.e classroom study but the present scenario has made the functioning of the educational institutions go very difficult that affected the students as well as the educators.

Over 1.5 million schools across India closed down due to the pandemic A switch to large-scale digital education is not possible now as only 24% house-holds have access to the

internet, according to a 2019 government survey (Kaushik Deka & Shelly Anand, 2021). The speedy spread of the epidemic leads to the closure of higher education institutions and the transition to online teaching was so rapid that that it hardly gave any time to plan and to look into the potential risks like availability of the device to attend the online classes as well as better access to internet facilities. As in the above data it is stated that only 24% of the households have access to the internet it. The underprivileged areas has many issues regarding the internet accessibility and only few students have devices or internet facility, even for the higher levels of Education the face the same problems. Lack of access to the internet and devices has also fabricated a gap in E- Learning.

At present, central and state allocations to the sector is less than 3%. Ironically, the education ministry's budget for digital e-learning was slashed to Rs 469 crore in 2020-21-the year COVID struck-from Rs 604 crore the previous year (Kaushik Deka & Shelly Anand, 2021).

The recently announced budget 20-21 has allocated Rs. 93,224.31 crore to the education sector which is Rs. 6,086.89 crore less than the previous year. Despite of being one of the fastest growing sectors, online education did not receive the government's attention in terms of money (Sheetal Banchariya, 2021). But, The Economic Survey 2020-21 reported that spending on education as a percentage of GDP stagnated at 2.8% during 2014-2019 and increased to 3-3.5% in the 2019-21 period (Economic Times, 2021).

A KPMG and Google study, done before the Covid-19 outbreak, estimated that the online education market in India was set to grow to \$1.96 billion (Rs 14,836 crore), with 9.6 million users by 2021, up from \$247 million (Rs 1,870 crore) and 1.6 million users in 2016 (Kaushik Deka & Shelly Anand, 2021).

Graph 1: Budget Allocated for E-Learning (Rs. In Crore)

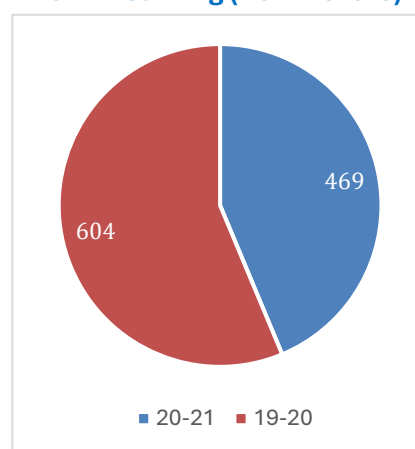
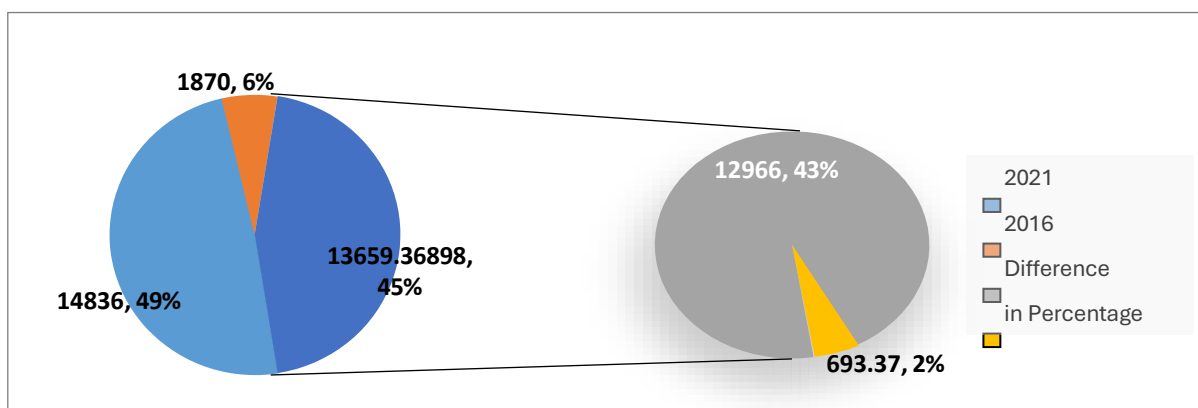


Chart 2: Online Education Market in India



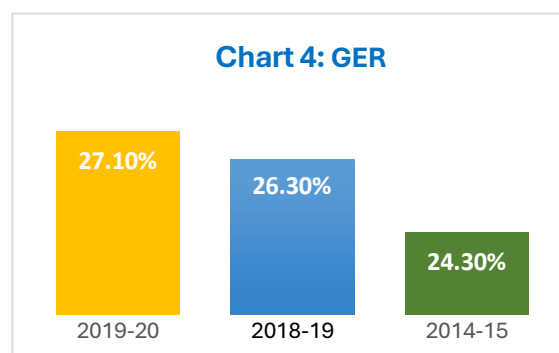
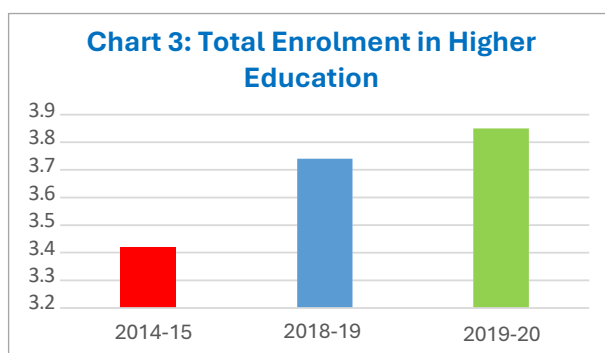
The above graph shows the difference in the growth of digital platforms between the year 2016 - 2021. It conveys that there is a huge growth of online education market in India. Due to the pandemic the online education has gain maturation as every sector is shifted towards the digital platforms which also indicates that the E-Learning will have an immense growth in the upcoming years.

The Ministry of Education on Thursday released the latest edition of the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20. The report mentions that the number of institutions of national importance have increased to 135 in 2020 from 75 in 2015 (BusinessLine, 2021).

As you can see in the graph, India have improved in GER, Gender parity Index. The number of Institutions of National importance have increased 80% from 75 in 2015 to 135 in 2020. In the last 5 years i.e from 2015-16 to 2019-20, there has been a growth of 11.4% in the

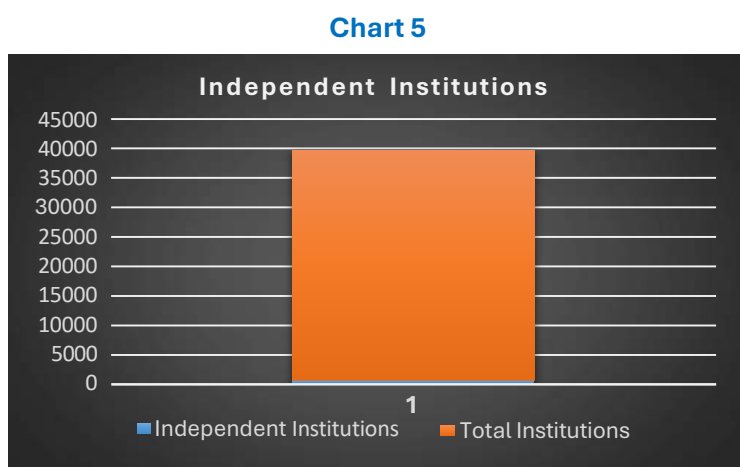
student enrolment in India. The rise in female enrolment in higher education during the period of pandemic and the introduction of new NEP 2020 is 18.2%. It shows that the continuous focus given by the government on education of girls and empowerment of socially backward classes as well as women empowerment are well reflected by the increased participation of women population in Higher Education. As the NEP focused on the modernization of the education sector using information technology with the focus of restructuring teacher education, early childhood care, women's empowerment, and adult literacy. The NEP also proposed that the autonomy of universities and colleges will improve the quality of education services. But it could not achieve its objectives successfully. NEP 2020 has proposals of a liberal education to support multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary education and research.

The number of students pursuing PhD in 2019-20 was 2.03 lakh as against 1.17 lakh in 2014-15. The total enrolment in higher education stood at 3.85 crore in 2019-20 as compared to 3.74 crore in 2018-19, registering a growth of 11.36 lakh (3.04%). The total enrolment was 3.42 crore in 2014-15 (BusinessLine, 2021).



The implementation of the new NEP 2020 increases the GER in higher Education including Management and Vocational educations. Also, the graph represents the Total and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), the percentage of students associate to the eligible age group enrolled in Higher Education, in 2019-20 is 27.1% as compared in 2018-19 which was 26.3% and 24.3% in 2014-2015.

Move could result in number of Higher Educational Institutions coming down to 15000 from 50000 and 96% of HEIs in India currently have enrolments of more than 3000 (KPMG, 2020). Institutional rebuilding and solidification will fundamentally affect the volume of HEIs in the country by diminishing them to almost 33%.



Anyway, it is important that the normal enrolment per school in India as of now remains at 693 while the strategy intends to make enormous HEIs with 3000 or more enrolments. Despite, India just has 747 independent Institutions out of its almost 39000 Institutions.

Over 20% of the colleges have annual enrolment less than 100 students making them nonviable to improve the quality of education and only 4% of colleges

enroll more than 3,000 students annually due to regional imbalance as well as the quality of education they offer (Aithal, 2020). It additionally noticed that the enrolment of the students is less and it is because of local imbalance as well as the nature of training they offer. In the

present scenario, 45% of India's Universities are uni-disciplinary and with the implementation of new NEP 2020 will be impacted as NEP 2020 will introduce multi-disciplinary Universities which will bring a great change in the near future.

Around 11% of the total higher education enrolments in India are through ODL (Open and Distance Learning) (KPMG, 2020). And the GER of the SEDGs are poor and very less percent of the students has financial support approach. To enhance the GER the Special Education Zones are established in the areas of SEDG and the private institutions are also helping by providing scholarships and remedial intervention in order to enhance the graduation outcomes among this segment. With the improvement of open distance learning has added a major percent in the enrolment of Higher/Management education in India through ODL. Also with the introduction of Online programmes it is expected to cater a significant number of students in management education as well an increase in the online learning systems in the coming few years which will also help to double India's GER.

10. Findings

The Indian Educational institutions have accepted the challenges occurred due to COVID-19 and they are trying their best to provide flawless support and services to the students. Indian education system got the chance to change from traditional system to a new technological era.

The impact of the pandemic COVID-19 can be seen positive to a great extent. As it helped the nation to move towards Blended Learning which leads to the rise in use of Learning Management Systems. It also enhanced the use of soft copy of learning material as students couldn't gather the printed versions of study materials and thus the vast majority of the students utilized of soft copies of the materials for reference. It also strengthens the digital literacy as it instigated individuals to learn and utilize computerized innovation and brought about expanding the advanced proficiency and digital literacy.

The students faced a lot of challenges due to COVID-19. Educational activity is hampered as classes of the students have been suspended and tests and exams at various levels postponed. Various boards have effectively deferred the yearly assessments and entrance tests and also the admission process got postponed. The recruitment got delayed because of COVID-19 placements for students is influenced along with organizations postponing the on board of students. Most importantly not all teachers and the students are good for attending online classes also not every one of them were prepared for this unexpected change from offline learning to figuring out how to use digital platforms for web-based learning.

The Government of India has taken number of preventive measures. The government announced a countrywide lock-down of all instructive foundations on 16 March 2020. Likewise the a large portion of the state Governments and other instructive sheets deferred assessments because of COVID-19. Govt. of India has noticed one day cross country Janta-curfew in time on March 22 and carry out lockdown from March 25, 2020 onwards in various stages. Govt. of India has been stretching out lockdown periods now and again receiving various systems to battle with the pandemic however educational institutions stayed shut constantly. The lockdown 6.0 was proclaimed on June 29, which is viable from first July to 31st July 2020 with some less limitation in different areas aside from instruction. Practically all state government services have taken measures to guarantee that the scholastic exercises of schools and universities don't hamper during the lockdown time frame.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has made a few courses of action, including on the web entries and instructive channels through Direct to Home TV, Radios for students to continue learning. During lockdown, understudies are utilizing well known online media apparatuses like WhatsApp, Zoom, Google meet, Telegram, Youtube live, Facebook live and so forth for web-based learning system.

Redesign the higher education system, and create world-class collaborative and multidisciplinary higher education institutions across the nation, and also to boost GER to at least 50% by 2035.

NEP 2020 has a proposition of liberal schooling to help multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary schooling and examination in under-graduation and post-graduation levels.

The NEP 2020 will be replacing UGC and AICTE with Higher Education Commission of India. Except legal and medical colleges, all higher education institutions, to be governed by a single regulator and common norms to be in place for both public and private higher education institutions.

With the implementation of NEP 2020 the Undergraduate degrees will be of either a three or four-year duration, with multiple entry and exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications for those dropping out at a certain point in the course. Higher Educational Institutions will also be able to put forward different master's courses of different designs, based on the undergraduate degree of the student.

India's Universities are uni-disciplinary and with the implementation of new NEP 2020 will be impacted as NEP 2020 will introduce multi-disciplinary Universities. And with the improvement of open distance learning has added a major percent in the enrolment of Higher/Management education in India through ODL. Also with the introduction of Online programmes it is expected to cater a significant number of students in management education as well an increase in the online learning systems in the coming few years which will also help to double India's GER.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), the percentage of students associate to the eligible age group enrolled in Higher Education, in 2019-20 is 27.1% as compared in 2018-19 which was 26.3% and 24.3% in 2014-2015.

11. Suggestions

The government should provide proper device to the students and especially to the students of underprivileged and backward areas need to get proper equipment and facilities for attending the online learning.

Providing easy accessibility of internet to the students should be taken into consideration by the government, as we have got to know that the internet accessibility is a major problem of the students to attend the online classes irrespective of any areas.

The students and the educators should be provided an awareness program in order to enlightened them and make them knowledgeable about the digital platforms.

The government should provide proper training to the students as well as to the educators. It will help to bridge the gap between the offline and online classes as Indian Education system is basically classroom based so the students and the educators are facing problem to adapt the technology and this training will help them to enhance their digital literacy.

12. Conclusion

The study builds up that the Coronavirus pandemic adversely affects the education system of India. Coronavirus has major consequences for school attributes, including Higher and Management education. These impacts were felt by both educational institutions and teachers, students and guardians and different partners in schooling. The study underlines the requirement for reception of innovation in education, as an approach to check the impacts of Coronavirus and other future pandemics in schooling. Hence, the study recognizes that the choice to closure schools for Coronavirus across the world might be frightful, however it is reasonable considering the pace of spread, and the risks forced by COVID-19 pandemic.

Higher/Management education is a significant angle in choosing the economy, societal position, innovation appropriation, and sound and healthy human conduct in each country.

Further developing GER to include each resident of the country for Higher/management education contributing towards the growth of the nation and it is the responsibility of the education department of the nation government to provide every facility to each and every student. National Education Policy of India 2020 is walking towards accomplishing such goal by making imaginative strategies to work on the quality, appeal, moderateness, and expanding the stock by opening up the higher/management education for the private area and simultaneously with severe controls to keep up with quality in each higher educational organization. By empowering merit-based admissions with free-ships& scholarships, merit & research based continuous performers as faculty members, and merit based proven leaders in regulating bodies, and severe checking of value through biennial accreditation dependent on self-announcement of progress through innovation based observing, NEP-2020 is required to satisfy its destinations by 2030. All higher/management education organizations with current classification of partnered schools will extend as multi-disciplinary self-ruling universities with degree giving force in their name or becomes constituent schools of their subsidiary colleges. A fair-minded agency National Research Foundation will finance for inventive tasks in need research spaces of essential sciences, applied sciences, and sociologies and humanities. Higher/Management system will change itself as student driven with the opportunity to pick center and unified subjects inside a discipline and across disciplines. The educators will get the opportunities to select their curriculum, methodology, pedagogy and evaluation models within the given policy framework. Therefore, we can say that the Indian Education sytem is moving towards student centric from teacher centric, information centric to knowledge centric, choice centric to competency centric and from examination centric to experimental centric, and learning centric to research centric.

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