

Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Educational Institutions in India

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Abstract

There is no denying the impact that the novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) outbreak has had on many aspects of our lives. This article looks at the impact of COVID-19 on higher educational institution in India. Higher Education is important to individuals and society and also higher education provides social, economic and cultural benefits to students and society, but due to Covid-19 pandemic, it will be negative impact on Indian higher education system in particular. Higher educational institutions have suggested that there may be very significant losses to higher education as a consequence of Covid-19 and the magnitude of losses is very uncertain. Teachers, Student, student's family and others have more psych-economical pressure due to this pandemic. Thus, I have argued in this study that higher education is not exactly like other public expenditure, but this does not necessarily mean that it is exempt from all policies that are applied to other expenditure.

Keywords: Covid-19, Higher Education, Teacher, Students, Economic

Introduction

Globally, there have been 16,558,289 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 6,56,093 deaths (WHO, 5:36pm CEST, 29 July 2020). In India there has been 1,531,669 confirm cases and 34,193 cumulative deaths. COVID-19 has also affected all levels human society and also COVID-19 has affected all levels of the education system, from preschool to

higher education. Over 100 countries have imposed a nationwide closure of educational facilities. UNESCO estimate close to 900 million learners have been affected by the closure of educational institution. The impact on undergraduate education, the most significant impact is on the postgraduate research community with research into many non COVID related topics being placed on hold. Additionally, concerns have been raised regarding the number of scientific conferences that have been cancelled or postponed. These conferences are the key to scientific research in many disciplines, allowing dissemination of research as well as providing networking opportunities for collaboration and job-seeking. Many conferences have moved online, however these 'virtual conferences' are often not as amenable to networking and informal means of scientific communication (Nicola, 2020). COVID-19 affected society and global economy; it also affected global environment as well as education sector in particular.

Restricting mass gathering is an important objective of public health care system. COVID-19 is spread from person to person through direct contact. Thus, the spread of respiratory illnesses during the mass gathering is a major public health concerns with the potential of distribution of these infectious diseases. Govt. of different countries postponed all types of religious, cultural, social, scientific, sport, and political mass gathering events in different parts of the world along with all educational events like seminars, conferences, workshops, symposiums etc.

Historicity of COVID-19 pandemic

WHO has declared the COVID-19 pandemic as a global health emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic is considered as the most crucial global health calamity of the century and the greatest challenge that the humankind faced since the 2nd World War. Covid-19 disease originated in December 2019, Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. It is a new infectious respiratory disease emerged most initial cases were related to source infection from seafood wholesale market from live animals like bat, frog, snake, bird, marmot and rabbit are frequently sold at the Hunan seafood market. China and was named by the World Health Organization as COVID-19 (corona virus disease 2019). A new class of corona virus, known as SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2) has been found to be responsible for occurrence of this disease. As far as the history of human civilization is concerned there are instances of severe outbreaks of diseases caused by a number of viruses. It has rapidly spread around the world, posing enormous health, economic, environmental

and social challenges to the entire human population. Almost all the nations are struggling to slow down the transmission of the disease by testing & treating patients, quarantining suspected persons through contact tracing, restricting large gatherings, maintaining complete or partial lock down etc (Chakraborty and Maity, 2020).

Pandemics in general are not merely serious public health concern, rather these cause terrible socio-economic and political crises in the infected countries. COVID-19, apart from becoming the greatest threat to global public health of the century, is being considered as an indicator of inequity and deficiency of social advancement. As is implied in the name COVID-19, 'CO' stands for 'corona,' 'VI' for 'virus,' and 'D' for disease, and 19 represents the year of its occurrence. Corona virus is a single stranded RNA virus with a diameter ranging from 80 to 120 nm (Ibid, p.2). International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) named the virus as severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Gorbalenya et al., 2020). According to WHO, in 2002–2003, more than 8000 people suffered and 774 died of a corona virus, called SARS. In 2012, MERS-CoV pandemic broke out infecting more than 2494 persons and killing over 858 lives worldwide (WHO, 2004, 2013). Corona viruses belong to a large diverse family of viruses. These can be categorized into four genera namely, α -, β -, γ -, and δ . All the previously discussed corona viruses responsible for worldwide spread of pandemic, namely SARS, MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 are β - corona viruses (Ibid, p.3).

Apart from COVID-19, the human civilization has witnessed at least five pandemics in the current century, e.g. H1N1 in 2009, polio in 2014, Ebola (out broke in West Africa in 2014), Zika (2016) and Ebola (Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019). Subsequently COVID-19 outbreak has been declared as the sixth public health emergency of international concern on 30 Jan 2020 by the WHO. These worldwide outbreaks triggered a large number of fatalities, morbidities, and cost billions of dollars (Ibid, p.4). The first reported case in the United States was on 20th January 2020 and the first case in the United Kingdom was detected on 31st January (Franchi, 2020). The first case of corona virus outbreak in India was reported on 30 January 2020 in Kerala's Thrissur district when a student had returned home from Wuhan University in China.

In the present paper, our main focus is to highlight the impacts of COVID-19 on higher educational institutions, and attempt has been made to point out the preventive routes for minimizing the risk factors.

Discussion of COVID-19 on Education

1) Problem of Higher Educational Institutions

Loss of lives due to any pandemic causes definite irretrievable damage to the society. But apart from this, COVID-19 has severely negative effect on higher educational institutions in general and India in particular. In order to restrict further transmission of the disease in the community, many of the affected countries have decided to undergo complete lock down and India also did so. Major international flights and also all types of transports have been deferred amid different countries. Due to lockdown all domestic flights, railway service (except goods trains), bus, truck, and vehicles transports are suspended with special exemption to those associated with essential communities as well as all the COVID-19 stricken countries, entire educational institutions (university, colleges and schools etc) are closed.

2) Psychological Pressure on Teachers

The setback was that the closure included only the holidays declared to students and not to the faculty members. This decision of withholding the teachers back on the job has created a lot of psychological impacts on the morale of the teachers. The teaching community is trying to question back as how are they safe from the pandemic disease if not the students and on the other hand few educational institutes are mulling to terminate a few teachers for saving the money. In this situation, the Indian government must think of balancing between keeping the teachers engaged in the academic area without risking their life. Instead of forcing a teacher to get into the institute and load him with additional academic and non-academic duties, the government, universities and institutes must take specific alternative positive steps (Bhat, et al., 2020).

3) Psychological Pressure of students

During this corona virus pandemic, most of the educated people and health professionals are aware of this infection, possible preventive measures, the importance of social distancing and government initiatives were taken to limit the spread of infection. However, there are increased worries and apprehensions among the public regarding acquiring the COVID-19 infection. Students have higher perceived needs to deal with their difficulties. There is a need to intensify the awareness program and address the mental health issues of people during this COVID-19 pandemic. There is no study to date that evaluated the

psychological perspectives of student during the COVID-19 pandemic. And also, it is important to study the mental health impacts in various populations (general populations, cases of COVID-19, and close contacts of COVID-19 and healthcare workers) for planning effective intervention strategies for them (Roy, et al., 2020).

4) Family Pressure on Students

Lockdown and social distancing measures to prevent spread of COVID-19 have heightened fears of increasing levels of domestic violence, which includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse. One of the UK's domestic abuse charities, has reported a 25% increase in calls made to its helpline since lockdown measures were announced (Ibid, p-190). In addition, it is widely recognized that parental assistance with and support of student learning has also likely varied depending on the age of the student as well as other social, economic, and family-related factors. And the students are going to pressurise day to day life during COVID-19 (Wyse, et al., 2020).

5) Financial Situation of Higher Education

The institutions most likely to fail are those with higher levels of external funding, lower levels of cash reserves. Without help from the government access to higher education would be decreased, disadvantaged students would be worse off and less able to select a university that best suits their learning needs. Educational institutions will most severely affect (Ahlburg, 2020). Should they be saved? Will students be able to best suits their learning needs? Is the Treasury's measured support appropriate?

6) Less educational expenditure

Lockdown will directly affect the GDP of each country in the major economics along with affect the educational expenditure as a whole. Thus, there is solid evidence that Higher education is a good investment for most students and the government, but there is also solid evidence of courses and institutions for which there is little or no economic return. And this was before Covid-19 (Ibid, p.2).

7) Challenges of Online Education

The present time shall be utilized by the institutes by providing the teachers the free access to a few paid e-learning platforms or academic article databases and tell them to utilize

it from their home. Free online faculty development programs and conferences can be arranged. Here, language barrier is a important problem on online classes in India.

8) Stable Enrolment in Higher Education

Enrolment in higher education is going to stable although the enrolment rate will be continued to remain low due to pandemic. Presently, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education is 25 percent. The government of India has set a Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education target of 30 per cent by 2020 but it is difficult to achieve the target.

9) International Students

The spread of COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of college and university operations and life in general. As you look ahead, consider ways the pandemic could impact your current and potential international students so you can implement plans to address the challenges (Hope, 2020, p.8).

10) Slow Growth of Higher Education in India

In the era of COVID-19 shows that the higher education system grow at a noteworthy pace, such that currently it is one of the largest higher education systems in the world. An ever improving higher education system along with the demographic dividend make the perfect recipe for India to be a knowledge super power in the 21st century. However, this will only be true if the concerns of quality access, finance, reorientation of curriculum, accreditation, of institutions are ready to look at the present with the perspective of future in mind. The education system needs to maintain in the society with innovative ideas Indian society.

11) Others Problems

COVID-19 has resulted in the loss of close family members and friends, changes in the way that universities, schools, hospitals, businesses, and churches, operate, pay cuts and job loss, and a host of other changes. Teachers, parents, and students faced new challenges as schools were closed and education was transitioned to a home environment from March 2020 through the end of the academic year. This transition brought many changes as teachers grappled with how to continue to instruct and communicate with students, provide students with activities to help them practice what they were learning, and in some cases still try to assess what students may have learned at home. Teachers' approaches to instruction, practice,

and assessment were varied as was the level of participation in the instruction, practice, and assessment by different students. In extreme cases, there were students that did not access any materials provided by their teachers (Ibid, p.1).

Important of Medical Education

The outbreak of COVID-19 has become a clinical threat to the common population and healthcare workers worldwide. Since this is a very new virus, much knowledge about this novel virus is therefore not available. So far, there are no exact antiviral treatments or vaccines for COVID-19 disease. Therefore, it is an urgent necessity of time to develop a safe and stable COVID-19 vaccine. And also research will continue to play an important role to discover new drugs or vaccines to prevent and control the COVID-19 infections. Frequent rotations between departments and hospitals make medical students potential vectors for COVID-19. Equally, as trainee doctors we stand to learn a tremendous amount and can contribute to the care of patients. More immediate concerns among medical students centre on the impact of COVID-19 on medical education. Several resourceful initiatives were implemented, leading to progress in medical education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to discuss the impact of COVID-19 reviewing from several journal and website and results suggested that the negative impact fall dramatically on the higher educational institutions during COVID-19. However, the higher education sector in India is clearly of significant socio, economic, cultural importance but it has predicted the likelihood of very significant losses to the sector as a consequence of Covid-19. And also, it is indispensable to control the source of disease, cut off the transmission path, and use the existing drugs & means to control the progress of the disease. Immediate relief measures need to be implemented and adjusted for those that may fall through the cracks. Medium and longer term planning is needed to re-balance the education following this crisis. Finally, it is important to mention in future that, higher education needs to be clear about how it will use any funds from the government and what it will give in return.

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