



EDUCATION SYSTEM PRAGMATIC CHANGES AND IT'S DEVELOPMENT DUE TO COVID- 19

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धन्यानामुत्तम किं स्वित।
धन्यानामुत्तम दाक्ष्यम ।

What is best of all laudable things?
The best of all laudable things is skill.

ABSTRACT

Education is a field that provides ample of opportunities to an individual leading to the great heights of success. But analysing today's education system was the need of the hour and taking appropriate measures to improve the same. Although due to coronavirus pandemic there has been an upgradation in education system to some extent but on the contrary it has also given rise to some negative implications. This paper aims to highlight the implications of online education amongst the students. Several problems and issues have arisen with the emergence of coronavirus, which needs to be solved in order to sustain the quality of education for future generations. Through this paper the researchers have tried to analyse the impact of Covid- 19 on education sector. The study also covers the positives and negatives of the New Education Policy, 2020 and the challenges faced with the introduction of Digital Education. At the end, the researchers have finally proposed some recommendations to improve the education system.

Keywords: Digital Education, New Education Policy, Technology.

INTRODUCTION

The education sector which is the most important sector of our country is in disarray. In the previous regime, there was no right to education. However, in the case of **Mohini Jain vs. the State of Karnataka**¹, it was ruled by the Supreme Court that the right to education is a fundamental right. Then, through the Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 Right to Education² was expressly made a Fundamental Right. In this disastrous time of COVID- 19, the education sector is one of the most affected sectors. This virus emerged from China and subsequently, there was spread of this virus across the globe. To control this situation, from March 18, 2020, there was imposed proper lockdown in India. Due to the lockdown, until now the education sector is closed to ensure the safety of everyone. COVID- 19 is spreading thick and fast in India, with around 50,000 cases being recorded daily.³

It is getting difficult for the country to overcome this situation anytime sooner. However, Russia has come- up with the Corona vaccine but it will take time for mass production. Even India has also come up with vaccine but the vaccine is in the phase of the trial. These dire circumstances have shaken

¹ 1992 AIR 1858

² INDIA CONST. art. 21-A

³ *Prioritise treatment*, THE TRIBUNE (Aug 20, 2020),

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/editorials/prioritise-treatment-119335>



the institutes of education that are schools, colleges, and universities, as they grapple with the trying times. However, India has come up with an alternative of starting education through virtual mode, which indeed is the right step, as currently, this is the safest option to practice. Online classes have been started for children of all age groups. But a lot of heated debates and arguments emerged against E-Education system. The conducting of online classes till 5th standard has not been considered to be feasible⁴ because the students were not able to concentrate and parents were facing problem too because of frequent internet recharges and children health issues. Even the New Education Policy⁵ has also been introduced but will be implemented from next year.

The situation of our country is getting worse day by day and there are no chances of opening the education sector and conducting physical classes. Many students face problems during online classes. Parents are also of the view that virtual classes can never replace physical classes completely. Various issues have come up with the emergence of digitalized education.

Issues

- Whether conducting online classes would be beneficial for students and lead to steps towards digitalization?
- Whether the New Education Policy will lead to increased efficiency in students?

⁴ No online classes for primary, pre- school, TIMES OF INDIA (June 19, 2020, 15:01 IST), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/no-online-classes-for-primary-pre-school/articleshow/76464309.cms>

⁵ New Education Policy 2020, http://niepid.nic.in/nep_2020.pdf

- Whether the New Education Policy will lead to development in India?

IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION SYSTEM

The number of COVID- 19 cases across the country is rising enormously day by day even now. The longer this crisis continues, the worse it is going to impact the economy. The education sector is one of the most impacted by the pandemic. Principle concerns such as reopening school and colleges or holding of the exact collect fees, or holding virtual classes defy general or quick-fix solutions in the absence of a common denominator.

Students in our country have been demanding the cancellation of exams. Virtual classes have been commenced in some places and some exams have already been cancelled. In these hard times, there is hardly any family that is unaffected by the unfolding situation. Parents are demanding that the private schools or institutions should not hike their fees⁶ but on the other hand, these institutions say that they also require money to pay the staff and the teachers.

There are few schools and colleges which stopped teaching entirely during these tough situations, while others resorted to online classes. People like us are lucky enough, who have all the access to the internet and can continue studying during this situation but what about people who do not have internet available to them? The people who belong to remote villages lack access to digital devices,

⁶ Vaibhav Ganjepure, Parents protest against fee hikes by city schools, TIMES OF INDIA (Aug 8, 2020, 5:08), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/parents-protest-against-fee-hike-by-city-school/articleshow/77422020.cms>



so how will they adapt to the digitalized environment?

These poor students would not be able to attend online classes. So many people have lost their jobs and have been pushed into poverty due to the impact of COVID- 19. Even if this situation ends these poor people would not be having money to send their children to school because of fee hikes⁷ and if fee would not be paid then the students would be expelled from the school.

The major issue that arises here is that whether conducting online classes would be beneficial for students and lead to steps towards digitalization?

This would lead to proper digitalization, only if technical issues would not subsist in the economy, and every student in the country is having access to the internet with a strong connection and can easily attend classes. However, currently, this is not the situation in our country where everybody possesses digital devices, with good connections, and even education through physical classes cannot be replaced completely with virtual classes and can create hindrances in the development of the child and their social life.

The pandemic has created a lot of problem in the education system which is as follows:

The major problem that has emerged in this pandemic is fee hike in educational institutions. Nowadays, students and parents are already under a lot of stress. Some private institutions in our country are not conducting any online classes but they are still charging fees from parents.⁸ Some private institutions are only holding online classes but are charging exorbitant fees.⁹ Even after knowing of the tremendous financial hardships faced by the parents of these schools, universities are charging fees that parents cannot afford to pay. Due to this, several parents approached to SC for a moratorium on the fee hike.¹⁰ There are some states which have already taken action against this. **For instance** the Kerala HC recently held that schools cannot additionally charge for conducting online classes.

Another problem relates to whether exams should be cancelled or not?

Continuous cancellation and postponement of the examinations in recent months have led to increased tensions and stress among students. Whether the grading system would be beneficial or not for the students is entirely uncertain. All this has led to anxiety and depression amongst students and parents as well. Even in extreme cases, the students have also committed suicide because most of the poor students were unable to attend online

⁷ *Don't collect fees during closure: Gujarat govt to unaided schools*, TIMES OF INDIA (July 22, 2020, 17:11 IST), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/dont-collect-fees-during-closure-gujarat-government-to-unaided-schools/articleshow/77107851.cms>

⁸ *Schools that skip online classes cannot demand fees*, TIMES OF INDIA (May 3, 2020, 4:55), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/dehradun/schools-that-skip-online-classes-cannot-demand-fees/articleshow/75511524.cms>

⁹ Tarun Krishna, *These colleges want full fees for only online classes. But students say they won't pay*, THE PRINT, (Aug 12, 2020, 8:00 am), <https://theprint.in/india/education/these-colleges-want-full-fees-for-only-online-classes-but-students-say-they-wont-pay/479268/>

¹⁰ Abraham Thomas, *New petition in SC seeks moratorium on school fees*, HINDUSTAN TIMES, (June 30, 2020 at 21:38), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/education/new-petition-in-sc-seeks-moratorium-on-school-fees/story-FgtoIfU9fVsaSFIUBNkNCK.html>



lectures, because of no smartphones and technological constraints.¹¹ This matter brought a chaotic situation throughout the country. There was a lot of uncertainty about whether to conduct exams or to cancel exams.

Bar Council of India issued various guidelines concerning online examinations. Wherein it was said that the Universities must adopt an alternative strategy for conducting examinations for those students who are unable to avail of the online examinations for any reason. It was also decided that intermediate semester students will be promoted based on the performance of the previous year and marks obtained in internal examination of the current semester.¹²

So, several Universities across the world decided to hold Open Book Exams. Wherein students would appear in the exam through online mode and give the exam by the use of the internet and can even use books while writing the exam. This system of conducting Open Book Exams has proved to be a success in some of the Universities and colleges

because the questions in Open Book Exams force the students to think critically. However, the students and experts were against this system of holding Open Book Exams.¹³

Students even demanded the cancellation and postponement of the exams for a long time. Some exams in India have been cancelled completely like the CBSE and the ICSE Board Exams of class 10th and 12th.¹⁴ Exams of Chartered Accountancy¹⁵ students and CLAT students have also been postponed. In one of the case the petitioners who are final year students have challenged the UGC's guidelines mandating to conduct the exams by the end of September in respect of which Karnataka High Court has issued notice.¹⁶ However, there are many Universities whose matters are still being heard in various courts; still, no certain outcome can be seen. Similarly, the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) and NEET had also been postponed earlier. However, recently the Supreme Court dismissed the PILs which was filed for the JEE and NEET exams for further postponement of the exams. SC said all necessary precautions would be taken to keep

¹¹ Shrinivasa M, Mysuru: *No smartphone for e-classes, girl commit suicide*, TIMES OF INDIA (Aug 19, 2020, 9:30), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mysuru/mysuru-no-smartphone-for-e-classes-girl-commits-suicide/articleshow/77626367.cms>

¹² <http://www.barcouncilofindia.org/press-release-dated-09-06-2020-guidelines-for-online-and-offline-examinations-for-all-the-centres-of-legal-education-plea-by-bar-council-of-india-in-continuation-of-the-earlier-guidelines-dated-27-0/>

¹³ *Education experts, students against open book exams*, TIMES OF INDIA (July 29, 2020, 13: 03), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/education-experts-students-against-open-book-exam/articleshow/77228503.cms>

¹⁴ Nandini, *CBSE, ICSE exams cancelled, students left with many questions*, HINDUSTAN TIMES (June 26,

2020, 9:53), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/education/cbse-icse-board-exams-cancelled-students-left-with-many-questions/story-Mrmb677bBfW4G5JeLvQIM.html>

¹⁵ FE Online, *ICAI CA May 2020 exam cancelled due to Covid- 19 pandemic; to be held with November exams*, FINANCIAL EXPRESS (July 4, 2020, 10: 04 AM), <https://www.financialexpress.com/education-2/icai-ca-may-2020-exam-cancelled-due-to-covid-19-pandemic-ca-november-exam-www-icai-org-ca-exam-may-2020-latest-news/2013039/>

¹⁶ Lydia Suzanne Thomas, *Karnataka HC issues notice in plea challenging UGC Guidelines mandating final year exams by September 30*, BAR AND BENCH (Aug 6, 2020, 2: 47 PM), <https://www.barandbench.com/news/litigation/karnataka-hc-notice-challenge-ugc-guidelines-final-year-examinations-by-september-30>



the candidates safe.¹⁷ It was even said that further postponement of the NEET/ JEE will put the ‘career of students in peril’.

After all this also, the situation has not been normal till now, a lot of chaos regarding examinations of final year students is still prevalent. Various questions have come up with no certain answers that when, how that through what mode will the final year student’s exams be conducted? **The questions have arisen that How can there be exams without teaching? How will poor, downtrodden, and those without technology cope up with this online system?** UGC’s directive to the Universities that is to hold final year semester examinations by September 30 has also been challenged. The matter is still being heard in the court whether UGC can override the State and mandate for the exams to be still held?¹⁸ It can be said that the fear of pandemic is already looming over the heads and this undue pressure of exams is too much to handle at this point of time. So, the authorities should be a little more considerate with the decisions because at the end it is happening only for the students. So their safety is of utmost importance at this point of time.

¹⁷ Murali Krishnan, *NEET and JEE Main 2020: Supreme Court rejects plea seeking postponement of exams*, HINDUSTAN TIMES (Aug 17, 2020, 12:33), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/education/neet-and-jee-main-2020-supreme-court-rejects-plea-seeking-postponement-of-exams/story-FisTwutdEsHwa99g3G1ctL.html>

¹⁸ Radhika Roy, *Can UGC Direct To Hold Exams Overriding A State Where A Certain Situation Exists? SC Asks Reserving Judgement In ‘Students vs UGC’ Case*, LIVE LAW (Aug 18, 2020, 2:05 AM), <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/can-ugc-direct-to-hold-exams-overriding-a-state-where-a-certain-situation-exists-sc-asks-reserving-judgment-in-students-vs-ugc-case-161597>

ANALYSIS OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY, 2020

Education has always been a necessity and plays a vital role in an individual’s life. Recently, the Education Ministry unveiled India’s ground-breaking new education policy. On 74th Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the New Education Policy will play a key role in making India self-reliant and modern.¹⁹ This policy will play the most important role in connecting the youth to the roots and will make them modern as well.

This policy aims to create robust infrastructure in the education sector that ensures uninterrupted learning even during these catastrophic circumstances.²⁰ This policy that our government has brought in, has addressed almost all the major points of criticism in their new policy and this will bring a revolutionary change in the Indian Education System.

Positives of New Education Policy:

▪ **The first major change by the Government is that students will have more flexibility in choosing their subjects and there would be no hard separation of streams.**²¹ Earlier in the existing education system the major point

¹⁹ Prashant K. Nanda, *New Education Policy to play key role in achieving self-reliance: PM at Red Fort*, LIVE MINT (Aug 15, 2020, 9: 34 AM), <https://www.livemint.com/education/news/new-education-policy-to-play-key-role-in-achieving-self-reliance-pm-at-red-fort-11597463752137.html>

²⁰ Sonam Chandwani, *National Education Policy, 2020: Challenges And Criticism* (Aug 7, 2020), BW BUSINESSWORLD, <http://www.businessworld.in/article/National-Education-Policy-2020-Challenges-And-Criticism/07-08-2020-305937/>

²¹ Nandini, *New Education Policy 2020 Highlights: Schools and higher education to see major changes*,



of criticism was that our education system tried to fit the students into three categories after class 10th i.e. Science, Commerce, and Humanities. And this was a problematic situation because if you chose one stream, you cannot study the subjects of other streams. However, many students have an interest in different subjects, but through this classification of streams, students become helpless and can only study subjects of the stream which they have chosen. Even students were forced to select a particular stream by their parents having the orthodox mentality that Science is chosen by those who are the most intelligent and commerce and arts are the subjects for students who are not good in studies. However, now after this New Education Policy, the old system will be replaced with the new system and there would be no classification of the stream. And no one will be able to force the students to select a particular stream. A student can now study any subjects say, Accountancy with Political Science and Chemistry with History.

- A second major change by the Government is that they have replaced the existing 10+2 academic structure with the 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 system now.²²

Earlier in the 10 + 2 system, education began at the age of 6. However, in the New Education System, education would now start at the age of 3. Pre- School would be from the age of 3 to 6 and then class 1 and 2 for the next two years.

Then there would be a “**preparatory stage**” for the next three years in which focus would be upon playing, discovery, and activity-based classroom learning. Class 6 to 8 would be the middle stage in which experiential learning would be focused upon that is science, mathematics, arts, social science, and humanities.

Next would be the second of class 9 to 12 in which “**multidisciplinary**” studies would be focused upon.

Like in western developed countries, there would be given **vocational training** to the students. The job of gardening, plumbing, working in the supermarket, etc. These things are given a lot of importance in the developed countries. However, in India, these jobs are considered by people to be meant only for lower-class people. So, this mind-set needs to be changed. From class 6th onwards the students would have to do internships in vocational training jobs. The students would be imparted experience in such a job. Even **coding** would be taught to children from

- Another positive step would be taken by the government is to ensure that there is no rote learning by the students.²³

Earlier what the students used to do was they used to mug up each and everything and whatever they learned used to write in the exams. And all that we learned vanished in a few days or months because of rote learning. Due to this thing, many students in India are just degree holders with good grades because

HINDUSTAN TIMES (July 30, 2020, 17:30), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/education/new-education-policy-2020-live-updates-important-takeaways/story-yYm1QaeNyFW4uTTU3g9bJO.html>

²² How does New Education Policy affect you? THE INDIAN EXPRESS (July 30, 2020, 2:45 AM), <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil->

nadu/2020/jul/30/how-does-new-education-policy-affect-you-2176624.html

²³ Surabhi Sharma, *End of Rote Learning regime in India with the New Education Policy 2020*, THE OPINION (July 31, 2020), <https://medium.com/the-%C3%B3pinion/end-of-rote-learning-regime-in-india-with-the-national-education-policy-2020-f9aac0addb50>



they do not get employed or during placements they are not selected because of lack of practical training and this rote learning method. But, now the government has said that the exams would be designed in such a way that there would be elimination of rote learning. This would indeed be a positive step if implemented because students will develop critical thinking and would be able to know about concepts practically.

- **Another important positive step taken by the government is that education after class 12, there would be multiple entries and exit programs.**²⁴

Under the NEP, the undergraduate degree will be of either a 3 or 4-year duration with multiple exit options within this period.

For instance, this option proved that say an individual is pursuing a degree which is of 4 years. But later if he wants to drop because of any reason or having no interest he can do so. If he drops out after 1 year, then he will get a certificate if he drops out after the second year, then he will get a diploma. If after the third year, he will get a Bachelor's degree and after four years, a bachelor's research degree. Earlier, this option was not there, if a student got himself enrolled in any university, then if later he thoughts of dropping, there was a lot of pressure and stress by parents that entire year would get wasted. But now there would be the option of multiple entry and exit.

Negatives of New Education Policy:

The New Education Policy has been criticized the most on the point of language. The policy says that till class 5th and beyond

the medium of instruction will be a home language that is mother language and regional language.²⁵ This will create a lot of problems for the students and parents as well. Because if the parents get transferred, for instance, earlier a family is living in Punjab and their child has studied until class 4th in Punjab. So, the child would be familiar with the Punjabi language. But later the family shifts to Kerala, then there the language taught in schools would be different, then how will the child be able to cope up. This would restrict the movement of the people from one state to another. So, English should also be given priority, because it has become a global language.

The policy has its own positive and negative sides as mentioned above but the **question arises whether this policy will bring development in the country? Whether students' efficiency would be increased?** These questions depend upon the implementation of the policy. If proper implementation would be there then definitely, students would be able to enhance their skills and would be able to foster different unique capabilities of themselves and not just theoretical but practical understanding if developed, then definitely later on with these developed conceptual, multi-disciplinary skills and vocational training, students will become industry ready with increased efficiency and ultimately this will help in modernizing and developing India.

²⁴ Flexible degree courses, multiple exit options among other reforms in NEP, BUSINESS STANDARD (July 30, 2020, 00:57), https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/flexible-degree-courses-multiple-exit-options-among-others-reforms-in-nep-120072902136_1.html

²⁵ Prashant K. Nanda, What does the New Education Policy say about language of instructions? LIVE MINT, (July 29, 2020, 10: 20 PM), <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/what-does-the-new-education-policy-say-about-language-of-instructions-11596041008782.html>



But it would have to be ensured that all the students, be it rich or poor should get the benefit of quality education. It does not mean that only rich students who can only afford to pay for online education; they are only getting benefitted by this, the poor should also get the benefit. All the equipment necessary for making the online education accessible to the remote villages and students should be made available.

CHALLENGES FACED WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF DIGITALIZED EDUCATION

Although the government has come up with an alternative of virtual classes but many problems are being faced by the students, teachers and even parents too during the pandemic which is as follows:

- In physical classes teachers used to have an interactive session with the students but through online classes it is not possible. It is more of a monologue from teacher's side. As many a time's students and teachers face connectivity issues and all the students do not get a chance to ask questions or clear their doubts. Even it is also not possible for teachers to listen to every doubt student's doubt.
- Even there has emerged a situation, where faculties are being abused and bullied by the students for not knowing how to operate their digital types of equipment. They make fake ids to waste the entire lecture by disturbing.

This system is new for each one and students behave in a much-unexpected manner as they know the teachers would not be able to identify them.

- For students like us who are privileged enough to attend online classes there is no problem. But the students belonging to poor families, not having an internet connection, how will they study. Many students from poor families have committed suicides they were unable to attend online classes. **For instance**, in one of the village parents sold their cow, which was the main source of income, just to buy their children a smartphone, so he could attend online classes.²⁶
- Due to prolonged sittings in front of laptops and computers, and no physical exercises have impacted student's health. Eating habits and sleep cycles are getting deteriorated. Also in this situation, students are not able to socialize much with their friends, which has led to increased tensions and depression among students.
- Students are facing connectivity issues due to which they are not able to understand the concept and proper meaning. **For instance**, in Odisha, one student used to climb to roof every day at a particular point in search of network.²⁷ This is the level of struggle poor students are facing.
- Through online classes, the scope of practical knowledge has vanished, and more of the theoretical portion is there. Even extracurricular activities are also not there.

²⁶ Ravinder Sood, *Man sells cow to buy smartphone for online studies of his children*, THE TRIBUNE (July 22, 2020), <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/himachal/man-sells-cow-to-buy-smartphone-for-online-studies-of-his-children-116524>

²⁷ Diana Sahu, *Great Digital Divide: Here's how online education poses massive challenges in rural*

Odisha, THE INDIAN EXPRESS (Aug 9, 2020, 10:30 AM), <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2020/aug/09/great-digital-divide-heres-how-online-education-poses-massive-challenges-in-rural-odisha-2181055.html>



- Those parents who are not educated, how will they assist their children in understanding the concept and how will they help their child in login and attend the class.

SUGGESTIONS

- It is very important for the government to regulate the fees hike of the private schools and institutions. During these circumstances, only tuition fees should be charged considering that everybody has got affected by the pandemic and financial stability of the parents has got affected. Proper legislation should be made to regulate the fees hike of schools and colleges.
- Education of poor students should be taken care of and there should not come a situation that would create hindrance in student's education that there are limited or no teachers in government schools and colleges. The government should make sure that there are no technical constraints faced by the poor and the downtrodden students. They should get tablets and laptops with proper internet connectivity for smoothly continuing their studies and for the successful implementation of NEP.
- Even committee can also be appointed to ascertain the school fees wherein accounts of educational institutions should be checked to know about the normal income and expenditure and what changes have occurred after lockdown, so as to provide concession to the students accordingly keeping in mind the financial stability of the parents.²⁸

CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be said that, Educational sector has been one of the foundational

sectors in the national developmental planning. Article 21- A of the constitution guarantees the right to education to everyone. However, this pandemic has led to the emergence of problems in everyone's life but this has also provided us with the opportunity of digitalization and introducing an alternative system of online education and study even during unforeseeable situations. However, the challenge now lies in ensuring equitable education facilities for government school students in the new online education normal amid Covid. Because we already know that the competitive disadvantage these students face in comparison to private school students. Even, there is an introduction of New Education Policy, 202. There was a need for New Education policy because earlier education policy was age-old and it was felt that in upcoming years the skills acquired according to the old education system would not be useful in the future. The aim of the new education policy to make India a knowledge superpower is a praiseworthy step. For this aim to be possible proper implementation of the policy should be done by moving in the right direction. The students should grow in such a way that in the coming situations ahead they live a sustainable and dignified life, and develop skills accordingly. Developing skills is the only way to enhance the quality of human resources and contribute to the economy.

²⁸ Mehal Jain, [Online Education] Calcutta HC Appoints Committee to Ascertain School Fees, LIVE LAW (Aug 18, 2020, 7:53 pm), [https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/online-](https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/online-education-calcutta-hc-appoints-committee-to-ascertain-schools-fees-161624)

[education-calcutta-hc-appoints-committee-to-ascertain-schools-fees-161624.](https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/online-education-calcutta-hc-appoints-committee-to-ascertain-schools-fees-161624)