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Can Blended Learning Address Indian Academic Issues?

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Background

- The pandemic has put limits on India's education development (Source: (India Today, 2020) [1], (Jena, 2020) [2].)
- India has implemented social reforms, aimed at providing education to all. This is observed from the growth in GER (Gross Enrollment Ratio), which is estimated to surpass 50% by 2030.
- Coronavirus has affected the learning mechanism, which is the core of any 'education'.
- This has become a challenge to be tackled by all. Indeed, the pandemic is testing the functions, efficiencies, and practices of India's schooling framework.

- A wider acceptance of 'social distancing' rules has resulted in the use of contact-less teaching methods, such as online meetings, but not all people are getting used to it.
- It may be estimated that three-fifths of the global student population has been affected by the pandemic, due to lockdown measures and closures of educational institutions as a precautionary measure to restrict the spread of COVID-19
- According to estimates (as of March 23, 2020) by UNESCO, some 135 crore students around the globe couldn't go to class during the pandemic
- According to KPMG India study findings, education has been affected by the pandemic.
- Educational institutions resume classes as they return to the 'new normal'. It is likely that learning activities will never return completely (KPMG, 2020)

Objective

- The main objective of this paper is to provide an overview of strategies that may help continue the process of learning and teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic
- Further, we discuss ways to continue imparting education to all

Analysis & Discussion

- Use of technology as an enabler to address the issues and the situation.
- There are different views on this aspect of whether technology is an enabler in imparting education to all.
- These are expressed by teachers and students of different institutions.
- With the beginning of the pandemic spread in India, the education sector gradually came to standstill with all the institutions closed and their activities such as classes and teaching are suspended
- Many management and law institutions have considered MOOCs as an option for imparting learning.

- As the pandemic started in March 2020, the institution made some courses available to the public.
- This has allowed students to learn using both legal study materials and digital resources.
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Ministry of Human Resources and Development have both authorized these course materials (MHRD). (Source : G. S. Bajpai, Professor, and Registrar of NLU, Delhi, talks about the increased involvement of technology-based tools in imparting education.)

Home Education has Limited Reach (MSCERT, 2020)

- **A study conducted by MSCERT and UNICEF to understand how it is accessed by students from standards I to VIII shows the disparity, and ways to upscale so that children have smooth access to online lessons. Some of the outcomes of the said study are listed below:**
- **Home Learning Package Access Mode**
 - **Overall, 50% of students access the package.**
 - **34% via digital learning material.**
 - **34% through TV.**
 - **26% via online classes.**
 - **10% via radio**

Barriers to Learning

- Learning material not appropriate to the learning level
- The learning material was not interesting
- No support from teachers
- No smartphone
- Poor network connectivity
- The internet is not available
- No money to recharge phones
- Engaged in household chores
- Learning material was not available in their medium of instruction (Urdu, Kannada, Gujarati, etc.)

Conclusion

- For the limited working of adolescent personalities in this time of emergency, a balanced and successful instructive practice is essential
- It will develop skills that will boost their employment, profitability, well-being, and prosperity in the coming decades, as well as India's overall progress
- At these conditions, maintaining continuity of instruction in government schools and universities is critical
- This disruption of education has prompted policymakers to reassess present delivery and pedagogical approaches in schools and higher education by blending classroom learning with e-learning modalities to create a standard learning framework

- It may be concluded that there is a need to strengthen existing (basic) education infrastructure in India.
- A blended learning approach – an integration of the traditional systems with modern methods using technology, can be explored.
- The authors believe that concentrated efforts by the entire stakeholders (of the education sector) viz.
- The Government, and Education sector to understand the need of each other and accordingly provide continued learning that will benefit each other, the society, and the nation.

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