



Impact of COVID pandemic on education

Description

Theme:

- The COVID pandemic affected almost every aspect of our lives including the way we learn. It reshaped the education sector and some changes that were brought during the pandemic are going to stay.

The positive impact of the COVID pandemic on education:

- Schools had to close down fearing the further spread of the virus. So, to continue the education of students, many schools and colleges shifted to an online mode of education. Even though e-learning was there before the pandemic too, the pandemic accelerated the usage of e-learning. The adoption of technology in education has increased and more teachers and students are using smartphones for education. This has also led to the expansion of online education, making it more accessible to students in the most remote areas & also to the differently abled students, and has opened opportunities for self-paced learning, which allows students to learn at their own time and pace. This will immensely help students with learning disabilities.
- During the COVID-19 lockdown, several essential facilities in schools such as separate toilets for girls and playgrounds were improved. Attendance of teachers and girl students in school has increased.
- Rural schools where Mid-day meals are served daily have reached 89.5%, and schools, where drinking water is available, have reached 76%.
- More families are now choosing to enrol their children in government schools, resulting in a greater increase in enrollment numbers in government schools compared to private schools.

The negative impact of the COVID pandemic on education:

- Even though e-learning is a boon for the education sector, especially during the pandemic time, it increased stress in students as they had to sit in front of screens for a long time with

no physical interaction with teachers and other students. Some students faced eye problems and headaches too. So, that slowed down some students and they lagged behind in their studies.

- Teachers too were stressed as they had to teach children online and that comes with its own challenges. Teachers couldn't concentrate on all students and couldn't understand whether they understood the concepts or not. Moreover, they had to learn many new things related to technology while opting to teach in online mode.
- The pandemic has led to uneven learning opportunities for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. As the internet and smartphones are not available to all, the education gap widened between the haves and have-nots. Several children had to stop education and had to go to work because they do not have access to other benefits of school such as the midday meal scheme. People and the government had to struggle hard to bring several children into schools. And now, this pandemic reversed all these changes.
- The gender divide was deepened in education during the pandemic time. As many lower-income groups were affected by the pandemic negatively, they had to opt for budget cuts. And as there was a low priority on girls' education in many lower-income groups, the education of several girls was stopped. And some girl children are forced into child marriages.
- As children had to stay at home, some children felt isolated and that affected their mental health.
- The pandemic has disrupted traditional classroom learning and resulted in a loss of hands-on learning opportunities for students, particularly in subjects like science and technology.
- The prolonged closure of schools in India as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant decrease in the learning levels of students, undoing years of gradual improvement that India had achieved in the status of education in rural areas.
- According to the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report), 2022 the elementary and math skills of students have become worse than 2012 levels.
- Reading skills and arithmetic skills of children across ages have been washed away during the pandemic. As per the report, it was found that only 43% of class 5th students were able to read class 2nd level textbooks, and only 26% were able to perform basic division of numbers, a decline from 47% and 25% respectively in 2012.

Few more points:

- Field surveys conducted by ASER (Annual Status of Education Report), 2022 indicated that states which experienced a significant decline in student learning until 2021, have since shown improvement. Chhattisgarh, in particular, has seen a remarkable recovery in student learning.
- According to the ASER 2022 report, class 3rd students' reading and basic subtraction skills remained unchanged despite the pandemic lockdown and schools reopening in 2020.
- Girls in the age group of 15-16 saw the sharpest rise in enrolment rate, reaching close to their male peers.
- There was a fear that many children will drop out of school during the pandemic. But the ASER, 2022 report revealed that overall enrolment figures have increased from 97.2% in 2018 to 98.4% in 2022, recording the highest enrolment for the 6-14 age group.

Way forward:

- As schools and colleges are now reopened, many educational institutions are opting for [hybrid learning methods](#) to include both e-learning and offline mode of teaching. This is helping students to a great extent.
- There is a need to increase investment in digital infrastructure and technology in schools located in rural areas. This includes providing students and teachers with access to reliable internet and devices, as well as training and support in using these tools for learning.
- Prioritize policies and programs that address existing disparities in education and ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to quality education.
- The ASER 2022 report highlighted the lack of compliance with pupil-teacher ratio, libraries, and computers in rural schools. Government should address these to improve rural education opportunities and reduce disparities.
- Another important step is to build on the positive developments that have taken place during the pandemic, such as the expansion of online education. This could include integrating more technology-based learning opportunities into the curriculum and providing support for self-paced learning.

Conclusion:

The COVID pandemic forced many changes in the education sector, and some changes will stay even after the pandemic. Several students suffered mental health issues due to isolation during the lockdowns. But a few changes such as e-learning, and blended learning (hybrid learning) are helping in making education more accessible. There is a need to bridge the digital divide and make e-learning accessible for all.

ASER, 2022 report highlights a decline in learning levels and an exacerbation of existing disparities in education. To address these challenges, it is essential for the government to prioritize investments in digital infrastructure, teacher training, and classroom resources in rural schools. Additionally, policies that ensure equal access to quality education for all students, regardless of their background, should be implemented. It is also important to recognize the efforts of teachers and educators who have worked tirelessly to adapt to the new normal and to continue providing education to their students despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Your Turn...

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References:

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[Annual Status of Education Report 2022 flags widening learning gaps](#)

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