

## Impression of School Students on Online Education: An Experience-based Survey

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### Abstract

*The educational functionaries are in continuous endeavour to keep the flow of education uninterrupted amid any hiatus. But it is a matter of fact that this is somehow a challenging task during this pandemic situation. The present study is inclined to explore the real picture that how much the educational functionaries are successful to reach the learner, how much this new online system is being effective and how much this new era of digital education is being accepted by our learners. India, being a developing country harbours a massive population of 1400 million. It holds the largest share of the global poverty, which is one of the biggest concerns of United Nations to reach the targeted benchmark of Sustainable Development goals. In this context an attempt has been undertaken to fetch the ground reality. The sample of the present study is learners, chosen randomly from the slum areas of Kolkata, capital city of West Bengal, India. Face-to-Face interviews were carried out with each learner. The aim of this paper is to study the real scenario of neo-normal education, to find out the shortfall, if any, to identify any more effective and appropriate methodology and techniques, to know the needs of the learners finally to fulfil the real purpose of education for a better INDIA.*

**Key Words:** online education, covid-19 pandemic, learners' need, challenges in online education

### Background

COVID-19, one of the real deadliest threats of human civilisation has affected all over the globe. Normal activities of human being were seriously affected. Every sector of a society is circumscribed. EDUCATION system which is the backbone of a society is facing the unforeseen challenge. Conventional offline classes have to be postponed due to nationwide or local lockdown to cease the spreading of the highly contagious COVID virus. As a result, by mid-April of 2020 more than 1.58 billion children and youth representing 94% of learners worldwide were affected by the pandemic in 200 countries (UN,2020). In India more than 321 million learners were away from school due to pandemic (UNESCO,2020). We do not know the magnitude of actual learning loss and its far-reaching consequences. Government took the initiatives through the educational institutions to continue the teaching learning process and to make up the shortfall by using the online platforms like Google Meet, Zoom, WhatsApp, you tube etc. So, the question remains on whether the online teaching learning method is effective, engaging, equitable and sustainable and most importantly accessible by the common pupil specially the vulnerable group of our poor society. Online teaching learning require minimum equipment like desktop or a laptop or a tab or at least a smart phone with sufficiently strong network connectivity. Now the question arises how many pupils of our society can afford these and the answer of the question will give us the idea about the magnitude of learning loss we faced. In this context we are keenly interested to know the real scenario by visiting door to door and exploring the truth of our society.

### Introduction

Our planet is struggling with one of the deadliest catastrophic threats to human civilisation, the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) corona virus-2(COV-2) namely COVID-19 which was first detected in Wuhan, Hubei province of China in December of 2019 and declared as pandemic by WHO (World

Health Organisation) officially on March 11, 2020. It took 67 days to infect 1 lakh people from COVID-19, 12 days to infect next 1 lakh and only 4 days to infect next 1 lakh victims. The severity and highly contagious nature of this virus resulted one of the deadliest health crises of our time and emerged as a public health emergency of international concern. More or less all the countries and territories of this earth were affected by this highly infectious disease causing 5.6 million people's death and more than 35.6 million of confirmed cases till date. The gravity of the situation was being worsened day by day.

The most tragic point is that the number of people who are affected directly and indirectly is thousand times of the number of people who are infected. Each dimension of human civilisation is being affected by this virus. May it be social, may it be economical, or may it be educational, all the spheres of human life were seized to an uncertain future. We all are confused about what to do and what not to do in this unforeseen situation. Countries across the globe were adopting different policies like complete or partial lockdown, suspension of international and national migration, closure of educational institutions and so on which affected the society in different dimensions. But the major impact was on economy of the countries. Covid -19 "has not just been a public health crisis, it's also been an employment and human crisis" (Guy Ryder, Director General of the International Labour Organisation). A recent report released by World Health Organisation and World Bank reveals that more than half a billion people are being pushed into extreme poverty. More than 1.6 billion workers, which is nearly half of the global work force lost their job (ILO news, GENEVA) but the actual scenario is even much more pathetic than the official figures represent. Pandemic has pushed millions of poor people to starvation and death.

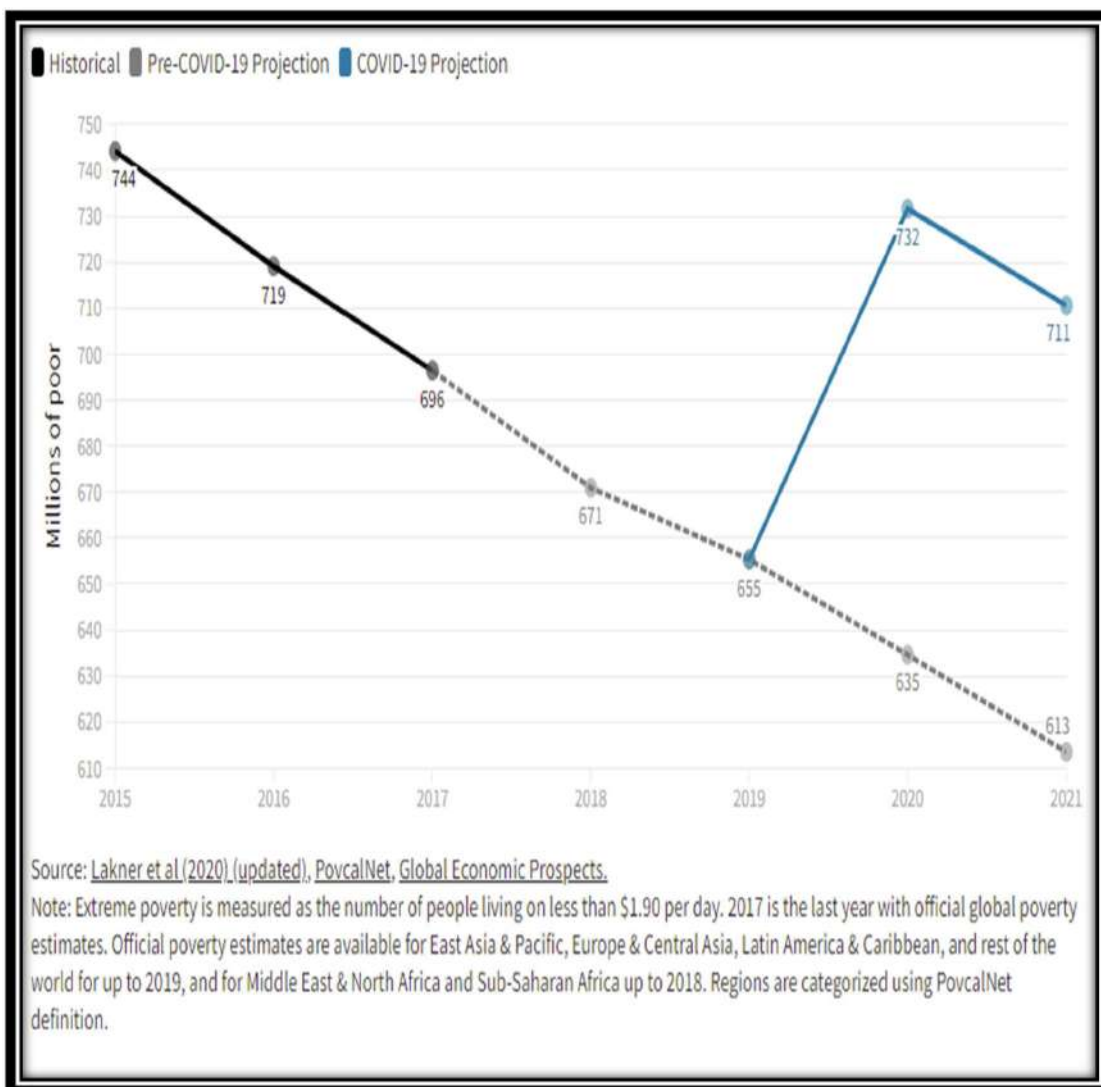


Figure-1 showing the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty.

India, a poor country of the third world, with the second largest population burden of 1.4 billion people struggling with poverty, pollution, unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, poor sanitation and healthcare system and now with the devastating COVID -19. Again, the high population growth rate in India is one of the major reasons of poverty in India. 29.5% people of the country lives below poverty line (Rangarajan committee definition: people living with a daily earning of 47 in urban areas and Rs.32 in rural areas are defined as poor). For such a huge population millions of new jobs are to be created every year which is next to impossible. Now India has been a hot spot of huge informal sector. 90% of the working population in India still works in the informal sector; a sizeable portion includes rickshawalas, migrant labourers etc. (The Economic Times,2020). According to the Global Hunger Index Report in 2021 India ranks 101 with a serious score of 27.5 out of 116 assessed countries. Malnutrition caused 69 % of deaths of children below the age of five in India (October,2019 UNICEF). Over 33 lakh children in India are malnourished (November,2021 Ministry of Women and Child Development, GOI). One in every three children are underweight (NFHS,2021). In spite of several poverty alleviation programmes taken by Government of India like-PMGAY, IRDP, MGNREGA, NOAPS, ANNAPURNA, JGSY, AYUSHMANBHARAT, UJJWALA, PMGKY etc. the overall number of poor in India is still increasing and the situation has been worsened further after the pandemic situation. There are several people in India who still live on the streets and beg for the whole day for meal. Over a sixth in India is permanently hungry and undernourished. Nearly 190 million people go to sleep hungry most of the days. More than 15 farmers committed suicide each day as revealed in latest report of GOI (in the year 2014). Underprivileged children are unable to attend school and those become drop out after a year or so.

Another tragic reality is the DIGITAL DIVIDE in the poor countries like India where only 28% households with currently enrolled students have any internet access.

People below the poverty line live in unhygienic condition and are so prone to many health problems. With this the vicious cycle of poor health, lack of education and more poverty keeps on increasing. An analysis by Pew Research Centre showed that the economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic pushed 75 million more people in India into poverty compared with what it would have been without the outbreak and this number is nearly 60% of Global increase in poverty in 2020. According to the World Bank the poverty rate of India will increase from 7% to 10% in financial year 2022. The International Monetary Fund had said that India will account for half the number of people who are being pushed into extreme poverty globally due to the pandemic (Alfred Schipke, IMF mission chief for India). The number of these new extremely poor in India is even higher than sub-Saharan Africa. According to UNESCO, approximately 0.32billion students in India have been affected by school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO,2020).

Covid 19 pandemic is the biggest threat for children and rolling back the progress made for kids in last 75 years (UNICEF). More than 1.6 billion children are shut out of schools due to lockdowns. COVID-19 pushed a staggering 100 million more children into poverty which is 10% higher than 2019 (UNICEF). Hungry poor people are forcing their children for earnings; girls are being forced to marry in early childhood. Child labourer has been raised to 160 million (ILO). The inequality and poverty have increased further globally due to pandemic making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

The world is rapidly becoming more urban. By 2030 the world's population will have increased by as many as 1.7 billion. 90% of this urban explosion will occur in Asia and Africa. By 2030 more than 400 million people will be living in cities in India. Furthermore, today one in every six of India's urban households live in slums, a number forecast to rise exponentially over the coming years.

In this context, an attempt has been taken to study the actual condition of our education system which was compelled to be conducted virtually to avoid physical contact and to minimise the spreading of the SARS COV-2 virus. Efforts have been taken to know the facts and figures about the students who can use the smart phone or computer, who can afford the adequate recharge for the hours long online classes and to collect the study materials online. In this connection, the focus has been given on the idea about the attitude of guardians towards their children's proper education and future prospect. An opportunity is taken to have a real picture of our prevailing education system and its constraints and ultimately to search for a new horizon to meet up the deadlock.

No such ground level work was found during the literature review. So, it became a matter of great excitement to work with this study which will definitely yield a huge scope for further research in this arena in future.

### **Novelty of the study**

While conducting the study, no such related work was noticed to study the underprivileged section of our society who live below the poverty line and most importantly who reside in slum area where the ambience is anti-academic and teaching learning is a struggle against the surroundings of a student. Effective steps have been taken at the ground levels by visiting our pupil in their house from where they come to school so as to understand the hard reality of their environment. For the purposes of the study, primary data were collected and so it minimised the data transaction error. Detailed interactions were taken with their parents, relatives, and friends to get more specific and unmasked data. The interview process actually privileged to get personal touch of the respondents and their family to have the comprehensive idea and it significantly helped to assess and analyse the whole picture in a compact manner.

### **Scope of the study**

The study posits high optimistic scope because-

1. This study will anchor similar pan India survey to have a clear nationwide overall view.
2. An elaborate idea about our present education system will be revealed.
3. The need for readdress and modification of the loopholes in our present system can be highlighted.
4. The causes behind the problems and redefining new dimension in education system can be explored.
5. New techniques, new methods, new strategies, facilitation technologies etc. in search of alternate way and correspondingly to point out the necessary amendments, if any, of the present system can be devised for adoption in future.
6. Over and above, the study will be helpful to combat this type of catastrophe in future and successfully overcome the emergency with uninterrupted education system to maintain the growth of our nation in a smooth continuum.

### **Literature Review**

For literature review Google scholar and CORE were extensively used. Several research articles were reviewed in this context and consequently the followings are the findings of literature review:

- I. A study by Butnaru et.al in Romania concluded that this online education system is just a temporary solution in this pandemic situation and not any permanent method and it can never replace the face-to-face teaching method.
- II. A study by Drasler et. al to compare the online system compared to the traditional system of teaching learning, it is found that both educators and the pupils favouring the traditional one.
- III. Dr.P.K.Jena in his paper suggested that India should develop creative strategies to ensure that all children must have sustainable access to learning during pandemics.
- IV. A survey by B. Moralista and F. Oducado revealed that the Faculties of Higher Educational Institutions prefer the face-to-face classes rather than online mode due to lack of technological issues, poor internet connectivity etc.
- V. Dr. M.K. Irrinki suggested in his article to rework on the Government policies so that one can access the online platform more effectively.
- VI. There are few studies to explore the effectiveness of online studies among the students of higher educational institutions (Dutta, 2020).
- VII. Mahmood (2020) discussed with various teaching strategies to enhance the digital learning system.
- VIII. In a survey conducted by Chakraborty et.al. 2020 it is observed that undergraduate student in an Indian university prefers physical classroom than online. Same picture was revealed from the study conducted by Sarkar et.al. 2021 conducted in educational institutions in Bangladesh.
- IX. Suganya &

Sankarshwari, 2020 concluded that the stakeholders of education system must be properly trained to get best output from online system of education in the critical situation like pandemic.

X. On the other hand, in the country like Georgia a case study by Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020 revealed that the online form of education is successful.

XI. According to Khattar & Jain, 2020 students feel that online teaching can supplement classroom teaching but it cannot substitute the classroom environment.

XII. Adnan & Anwar, 2020 concluded in their study that online learning cannot produce desired results in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan where a vast majority of students are unable to access the internet due to technical as well as monetary issues.

XIII. Ahmad & Zabadi, 2020 prescribed further studies and research to improve the quality of online learning in Palestine.

XIV. Rahman et.al 2020 concluded after a study with the 35 Universities of Bangladesh that the online class system be improved and the government should develop online education friendly curriculum.

XV. Most of the medical students in Philippines found themselves unfit for online learning (Baticulon et.al.,2021).

XVI. The findings of study by Rameez et. al. 2020 was that the Universities of SriLanka encountered several challenges in terms of online delivery.

XVII. Research conducted by Churiyah et.al.2020 in Indonesia revealed that both teachers and students need to develop the capabilities and expertise to cope up with new digital system of education.

XVIII. Nambiar, 2020 discussed with various aspects to develop the online educational programmes successful.

XIX. Goutam & Goutam, 2021 found that in Nepal both faculties and the students are facing challenges to adjust with online teaching learning methods. Proper technique and learning support should be provided to teachers and students and Government support is also crucial at such stage.

XX. Rigorous quality management programs and continuous improvement are pivotal for online learning successful and making people ready for any crisis-like situation (Dhawan, 2020).

### **Research Gap**

The broad literature reviews, however, fail to include any discussion about the ill-fated poor pupil of India on this issue. The special intention of the study is to know the actual scenario of students who come from poor families. The focus of the study is to know their situations with hand on experience and that is why it is decided to survey in localities of poor people especially in slum areas of Kolkata, West Bengal.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To find the participation of school going secondary students in the online mode of teaching-learning.
3. To know the acceptance and feasibility of the online system among the secondary students.
4. To explore the reasons behind the crises in participating during online teaching method as an alternative of conventional offline method.

### **Design of the study**

**Method:** Descriptive survey

**Area:** Randomly few of the slum areas in Kolkata, the capital of the state West Bengal, India were chosen and visited door to door and met with the learners, parents, relatives of the learner/students and collected primary data.

**Population of study:** School students/learners of Kolkata, West Bengal

**Sample size:** 186 upper primary and secondary level students from Kolkata.

**Tool:** A self-constructed tool was developed after thorough review of the literature and focusing on the objective of the present study and to pull out some relevant information. The questionnaire was developed in English and Bengali.

Data were collected through this self-made questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of: socio-demographic information like participants' name, address, father's occupation, etc. and 6-7

statements on online teaching-learning parameters seeking for descriptive responses. The collected data/responses were analysed and interpreted according to the objectives framed.

### Findings

From the study it was found that only 15% learners could attend the online class regularly, 27% of the learners could attend occasionally and significantly 58% of the learner were unable to attend the online classes. Figure-2 represents the fact diagrammatically where X-axis represents the frequency of classes learners could avail and the Y-axis represents the percentage of learners.

Another relevant observation of the study revealed that the students who could not attend the class regularly had the real problem of accessing the device i.e., a laptop or at least a smart phone. Despite having the device, a significant number of the learner could not attend the online classes simply for net recharge issues.

**Analysis pertaining to Objective-1:** To find the participation of school going secondary students in the online mode of teaching-learning.

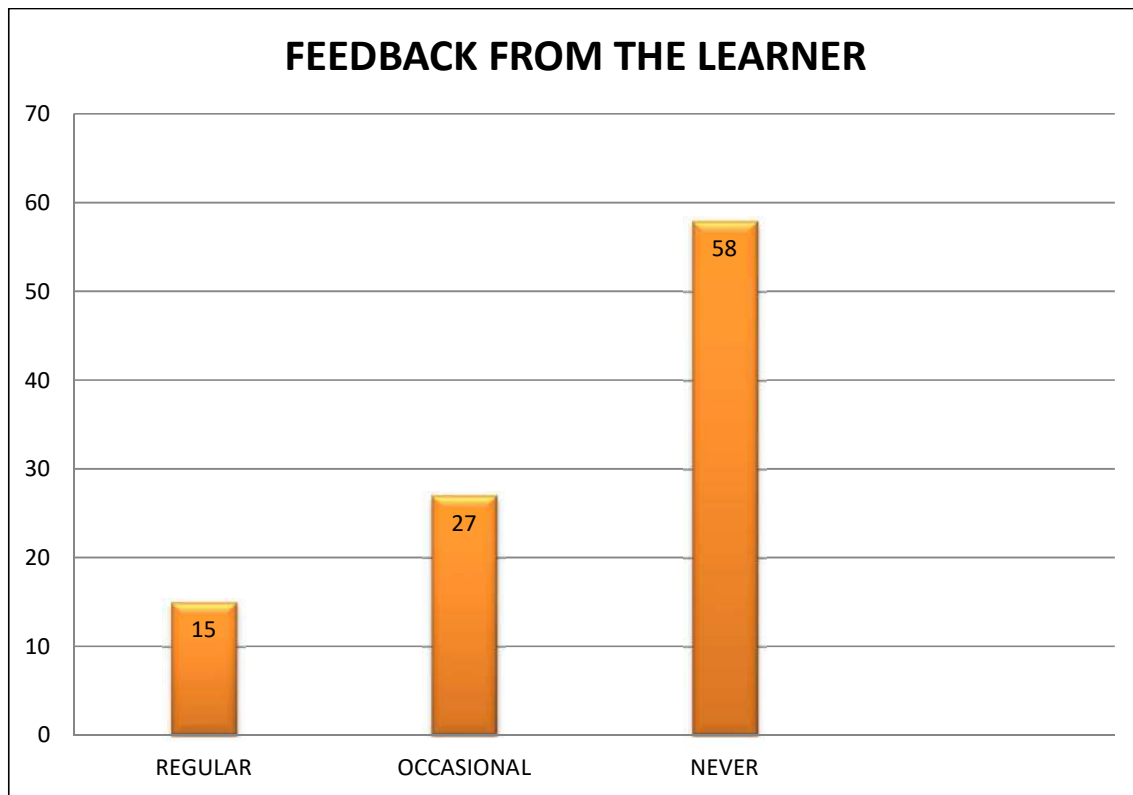


Figure2: Showing the percentage of students with frequencies of classes they could avail.

**Analyses pertaining to objectives 2 & 3:** To know the acceptance and feasibility of the online system among the school students and reasons behind these crises.

The responses obtained from the students/learners are interpreted below:

Most of the students could not attend the online classes just because they do not have any gadget like laptop or mobile and the percentage of this category is 63.83%. Thus, only 36.17% had the opportunity to access a mobile only (No laptop or desktop computer) and among those 10.63% of the students did not have the sufficient recharge to continue the online classes for hour after hours. Another problem was noted which was the Network issue. 23.40% of the students complained about the negligence of the school of not having the arrangement of any online classes at all. Students were circumscribed in their houses and were very interested to join/participate in the online classes as they could connect with their friends and classmates. But they did not have the opportunity to access the class just for lack of any device. The students could have attended the classes if they had at least a smartphone.



Another issue emerged that is, most of the students did not have their personal mobile. There is only one phone which is their fathers' and that is why they could attend the class only when their fathers were in the house.

The respondent students were classified among three categories according to their family income viz., less than 10 thousand (k)/Month, between 10-20 thousand (k)/Month and more than 20 thousand (k)/Month.

Most strikingly it was observed that about 88.33% of the students who don't have the device (i.e. a smartphone) had a very low family income of less than 10 thousand per month. When asked to know the reason for not attending the online classes of the students, it was found that 74.46 % of the students could not access the online class just for their personal issues (like not having a smartphone or not having proper Net Recharge) and among those 78.57 % of the students had a family income of less than 10k per month. 18.57 % had a 10 to 20k and 2.86 % had a higher than 20k income per month.

### **Discussion**

Education is the foundation of a nation. May it be a first world country or a developing world like India, education is the basic need to grow and sustain. Every nation should exert upon development of human resource. But it becomes a challenge when the country like India where population is itself a burden upon it, where most of the people are poverty stricken, where unemployment is the social curse, where children are forced to be child labour, where girls are forced to marry in their childhood, and where one in every fourth people is illiterate.

India is committed to 100% gross enrolment ratio in school education by the year 2030 as declared by NEP-2020. Our country is committed to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all by Sustainable Development Goal-4. So, the study is focusing on the right target but there is a gap between statistics and the fact. This small survey reverberates that if the future of education is supposedly technology-driven then, it must adopt a comprehensive strategic approach to minimise the crises in filling the gaps between those arise out of technology-haves & have-nots.

The nation is trying its best despite its limited resources but perhaps not up to the satisfactory mark. The country is interested to achieve 100% enrolment but still unable to reach to 100% enrolled learners. This fact demands serious introspection.

Here, two important issues have been identified by the study. Firstly, there may arise more serious challenges like this pandemic in future for which everyone must be prepared to tackle the unprecedented situation. Human civilisation should never be interrupted. Life must go on ceaselessly. So, from this study everyone must take the advantage of this pandemic situation to acquire knowledge and requisite experience to cope up with future disasters. Secondly, another aspect is that everyone must be ready to accept change since change is a natural phenomenon and society is changing every day, human civilisation is moving on every day, we are changing every day, so cannot hold on the same traditional teaching learning method. What is needed is be more practical, relevant and competent to deal with the ever-changing scenario occurring around us frequently.

This study earnestly looks forward to have more rigorous policy making implementation and management system to have a better teaching learning method to reach 100% of our student to achieve the educational journey in a successful, meaningful and affordable manner to make our country a better India.

### **Recommendation**

The ground level real experience gathered from this micro survey muster to put some humble recommendations with the expectation for a better, brighter and stronger future education system as stated below:

1. Since the Government has the primary responsibility to provide and maintain appropriate and sustainable arrangements to ensure quality education for the common people, it should have strong policies in low- and middle-income country context.
2. Proper training must be imparted to our educators to make them ready and fit for such emergencies with all online materials, with all required electronic gadgets, with all technical knowledges.

3. The learners/students must also be trained properly. They must be motivated to adapt with the remote learning system by means of promoting them for self-study and self-assessment and self-monitoring.
4. Total as well as broad based social awareness must be raised about the requirements of digital world. All the stakeholders of our educational system to include not only teachers and students but also private tutors, parents, relatives of learners should have an understanding or basic knowledge or at least some awareness about the necessity of the technological devices.
5. Frequent connectivity interruptions and network issues while using the online platform of data sharing mutilates the spirit of learning process significantly. Proper alignment with the network provider is needed, so that it can be accessed throughout the country whether it is a megacity or any remote village in an uninterrupted manner.
6. There must be proper orientation of our systems as per emergency requirement. It requires a huge collaborative association of all the stakeholders from Government to network service provider, from educators to learners.
7. Everyone in the society must be ready for future emergencies. Appropriate techniques and pedagogical approaches and multiple future planning should be ready for use in emergency situations.
8. There should have flexibility in our curriculum to cope up with sudden necessity like the pandemic. There must have plan -B ready in hand when plan -A is not working or may not be possible to continue further.
9. There must have cardinal policies to increase accessibility of digital world to common people and to root out the gap between the 'HAVE AND HAVE NOT's.
10. In social spheres comprehensive understanding of the technology for education and its various dimensions from major to minor must be inculcated in a flexible manner to keep pace with the changing crisis periods.

### Conclusion

The students are our consumers and we are bound to arrange and modify ourselves with a suitable and appropriate education system for our future citizen to ensure our nation's growth, development, and prosperity. The present study shows that we are unable to satisfy our consumers or at least reach to them in many situations up to the mark. So, like every system with unsatisfied consumer this education system is going to be collapsed in near future if we are unable to take any prompt action for its remedy. Our future will be in danger and so the country as a whole. Unanimously WE, i.e. all the stakeholders of the present education system are responsible for this tragic consequences. Therefore, it should be our earnest effort to search out and implement a better policy to reach our student. It is highly needed to scan, review and reshape our present conventional approach. Our primary and most crucial goal is to reach to our students and then only we can have the opportunity to teach and equip them properly for tackling future contingencies and for that purpose any type of modification and alteration is welcome and this is of top most urgency. Our nation is in the corner of a deep valley. A strong master plan accompanied by powerful innovations in the teaching-learning process is very much necessary to lift our future nation from this situation to fight back to their golden era of growth, prosperity and sustainability.

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