

RE-DEFINING TEACHER EDUCATION: A PREPARATION FOR NEW NORMAL COVID-19 ERA

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ABSTRACT

The temporary closures of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) due to the COVID-19 pandemic are no longer in news, because most countries have stopped face-to-face teaching but bridge the gap between teacher and students through Online-Education. Although the impact of the pandemic on HEIs was abrupt and there was no back-up plan other than to attempt to continue classes online to help students who need assistance to continue their learning. Indeed, one could say that the pandemic brought opportunities with uncertainty. On one side, it helped to explore new ideas to continue education whereas on the other hand it added a further degree of complexity to education globally particularly providing education to students residing in backward region because of the unresolved challenges it faced such as in accessibility of online classes due to lack of internet facility or knowledge about ICT. It is truly said that, "A school is not paradise. But school is a place where paradise can be created". In the same way, "The online classes with all its limitations remain a location of great possibility for the development of the students". In the past few months, we have gone from Classroom to zoom, from pedagogy to 'panicgogy'. During this period much has been changed and so redefining Teacher Education which is going to play a major role in future is the need of an hour. The objective of this study is to identify the areas of teacher education which needs to be redefined to develop necessary skills in pupil teachers to participate actively in online teaching trends in education. To provide necessary suggestions with respect to teacher education to achieve the objectives of education in present scenario.

Keywords: Higher Education, COVID-19, Pandemic, Online Education, Redefining, Teacher Education.

Introduction

Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. These nationwide closures are impacting over 91% of world's student population (UNESCO, 2020). It has been observed that we started conceptualizing a way to come out of this crisis, ensuring the possibility of continuous education. Schools and Universities are deploying a mix of innovative and renewed approaches to ensure the right to education. To face the challenges occur due to COVID-19, faculty are encouraged to choose appropriate learning platforms they are familiar with. Coronavirus outbreak has significantly accelerated development of online education in higher education. Internet, big data, Artificial Intelligence and cloud-based platforms, among other technologies, have been put into service of education. However, a more flexible way of teaching and learning does not end up with infrastructure; it is only the first step towards a new paradigm of teaching and learning in post-pandemic time. This paradigm could represent a shift from traditional, teacher-centered, and lecture-based activities towards more student-centered activities including cooperative learning, peer tutoring, multisensory approach and limited use of traditional lectures. This requires rethinking of nature of teaching and learning, roles and relationship among teachers, learners, and content. Complete long-term integration of online teaching and learning into university curricula requires further attention to quality, which can be achieved through - continuous development of open educational platforms which allow access to the high quality of learning resources; conducting quantitative and qualitative research and evaluate current models of online teaching and learning, with a particular focus to their long-term sustainability; developing teachers' capacity for online teaching, and professional staff capacity for supporting teachers and online systems; encouraging cooperation between universities (private & public sector), international organizations, community and other stakeholders, to promote high-quality online learning.

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Online learning is defined as learning experience in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices i.e. mobile phones, laptops with Internet access. Using these environments, students can learn and interact with instructors and other students from anywhere. In other words, we can say that synchronous learning closely mirrors the in-class teaching- learning experience whereas in asynchronous learning is self-paced and not reliant on adhering to a schedule. Students require capacity to conduct self-disciplined and self-directed learning and faculty require further professional development for the effective implementation of online education. Challenges in online education system include mainly lack of holistic quality assurance systems for online teaching and learning. The pandemic has revealed the fact that quality of education does not refer only to achieving learning outcomes, but also to social and emotional development of students.

Disruption caused during COVID-19

Unexpected closure of educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic created great stress in teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders of education. However, this impact is particularly severe for the most vulnerable and marginalized students and their families. The resulting disruptions worsen the already existing disparities within the education system. The **UNESCO** studies summarize fatal impact on society due to closure of schools as follows:

- As Schooling provides essential learning and so when schools get closed, children and youth are deprived of opportunities for growth and development due to interrupted learning specially under-privileged learners who tend to have fewer educational opportunities beyond school.
- Unexpected closure of school for unknown duration also causes stress and confusion in teachers as they were unsure of their obligations and how to maintain connections with students to support learning.
- Challenges in creating, maintaining, and improving online teaching- learning arise due to inaccessibility of internet and smart device among the rural students to avail the facility of online learning.
- Parents with limited education and resources were unprepared for distance learning or home schooling. Thus, when schools get closed, parents struggle to perform the task to facilitate the learning of children at home.
- Rise in dropout rates is a challenge when schools reopen after closures as parents may not send their children to school due to risk associated with their health.

Need of Redefining Teacher Education

Teachers play a crucial role for providing high-quality distance education. They are expected to have knowledge, skills, and ethics to conduct online teaching effectively, and that demands for more flexible and dynamic teacher education. To fulfill the demands, Post-pandemic national teacher education could be redefined. Redefining teacher education composed of training in face-to-face teacher education, blended teacher education, and online teacher education. National online teacher education could be categorized into sections which provide learning opportunities to future teachers at all levels: early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, vocational education sectors etc. Online teacher education platforms could function as a traditional teacher education institute which provides pre-service and in-service programs. This could be supported by online platforms with rich digital materials and resources. Curriculum and pedagogy need to be updated, and should become models of successful online pedagogies that could be taken into future teachers' practices. Lastly, it is critical to build up an enabling institutional environment for sustainable national online teacher education. We need to develop evidence-based policies supported by guidelines for their implementation. To provide professional reference base for online teacher education, a framework of competencies for conducting online teaching, and other standards, should be developed. In post-covid period, online and offline education cannot be thought of, without each other. Therefore, development of a holistic teacher education system should be planned, which could support present and future teachers in becoming more resilient to crisis we may come across in future, similar to COVID-19.

Objectives

- To identify the areas in teacher education that needs to be redefined.
- To provide necessary suggestions for holistic Teacher Education Programme.

Research Methodology

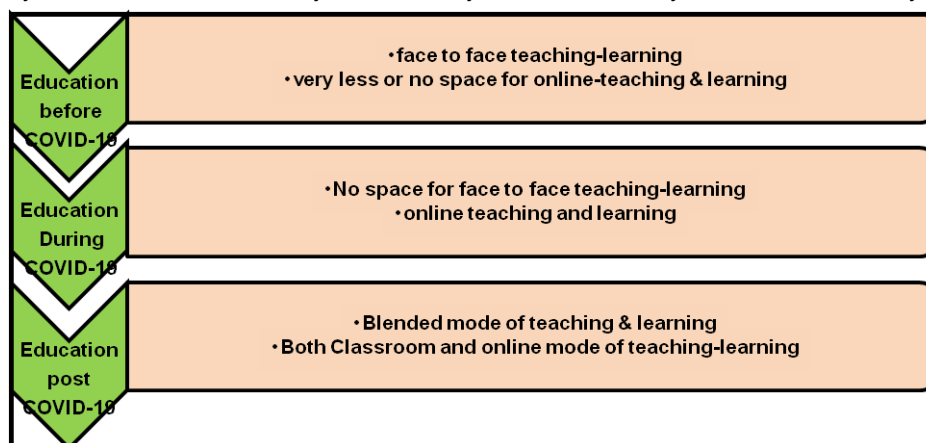
Study conducted is Descriptive in nature. A survey based on secondary data is used as a tool to identify the areas that need to work upon in teacher education as per the today's need of school education and then suggestions have been given to develop holistic teacher education Programme for making teacher education appropriate as per the need of present education system.

Analysis & Discussion

Analysis of the education system on the basis of need and interest of learners and need of the society during, Pre- and Post-COVID-19 period has been done and it has been observed that demand of education system has changed drastically within few months' time and thus as teacher who is holding important place in the education system need to be changed to fulfill the demand these demands.

Following points have been focused to bring desirable change in the teacher education:

- Identifying the characteristics of the teachers needed for facing the upcoming challenges in the education system due to COVID-19 crisis.
- Defining the elements of teacher education programme, that can prepare teachers for facing the challenges.
- Identifying the Institutional, State or National policy structure, that can support such programme for the preparation of teachers.
- Reinvent the role of teacher that can contribute for the transformation of face to face education system to online education system to satisfy the needs of today's learners and society.



Suggestions

It has been analyzed from the present situation of education around the world caused due to COVID-19 that notion of a teacher or an educator as the knowledge-holder who imparts wisdom to pupils is no longer fit for the purpose of the future. With today's students who are being able to access knowledge and learn many technical skills, through a few clicks on their phones, laptops and computers, we will need to redefine the role of the teacher in the classroom of tomorrow. This means that the role of teachers will need to move towards facilitating development of students, rather than just lecturing. For this purpose they need to be trained in a way that they can hold students queries, engage them in a productive task and direct them for the purposeful learning. For this, following changes need to be implemented in Teacher's Education Programme-

- **Placing ICT as a part of curriculum in all semester of programme**

In present crisis only those who are tech. friendly are going to survive whether it's a teacher or a learner. Around 20% of the pupil teachers have not yet worked on computers and so for them getting appointment in any school is a challenge as the eligibility of teachers for future education will be decided not only on the basis of B.Ed. degree but their ability to use technology in teaching.

- **Training for Blended Teaching Learning strategy**

Although online learning replaced the face to face learning few months back, but one should not forget that face to face learning plays an important role in social and emotional development of the students. So, pupil teacher should practice both classroom and online mode of learning for inculcating moral values in the students.

- **Including Online Teaching Methodologies in the Pedagogy of Teaching**

Along with the other methods of teaching, pupil teacher should be trained in the online teaching methodologies like use of Moodle cloud, Classroom app, Massive open Online Courses (MOOC) etc. which will provide them insight of teaching online.

- **Providing experience of online teaching as a part of Practice Teaching**

Pupil teacher should be taught to make lesson plan for online teaching along with classroom teaching and implement those plan using different modes of online teaching during practice teaching. This will help them to get well versed in online mode of teaching along with face to face teaching.

- **Preparing pupil teacher for making use of digitalized teaching aids.**

Teaching aids place an important role in making teaching more effective and interactive, so pupil teachers should be taught about how to make use digitalized teaching aids like Power point presentations, 3D pictures of objects or any structure, films, Audios or videos Related to content etc. this will help them to engage their students and develop their interest during online teaching.

- **Preparing pupil teacher for Flexible Learning System**

'Flexibility' is defined as offering choices in the Educational Environment. Providing the possibility of making learning choices, will soon be a part of education system and so, pupil teachers should be prepared for learning choices w.r.t. class times, course content, instructional approach, learning resources and location, technology use, the requirements for entry/completion dates, and communication medium etc.

- **Preparing pupil teacher in strategies like cooperative learning, flipped classroom and peer tutoring strategy**

As per the need of present generation students, pupil teacher needs to be prepared for the use of strategies like cooperative learning, flipped classroom and peer tutoring which will help them to handle students who are not interested in acquiring theoretical knowledge but want to understand the applicability of knowledge shared so that they can develop insight and able to apply knowledge in real life situation.

Conclusion

The pandemic is giving an opportunity to experiment with remote teaching. Education providers would have to undergo a transformation as per the need of an hour. Digital infrastructure may become one of the most weighed components in the parameters included in ranking of educational institutions. Another indicator of quality could be effectiveness of digital teaching which can only be achieved by redefining teacher education, as teachers are the carriers of information and plays a major role in the development of learners.

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