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# Challenges Faced by Higher Education Institutions amid Covid-19

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## ABSTRACT

*We humans have come a long way in terms of education. Starting from the 'Gurukul' system to present scenario of teaching-learning we made some significant strides. But, with the arrival of Sars-Cov-2 (Covid-19), a necropsy has happened to this century-old educational system. The sudden shift in education from traditional classroom learning to virtual learning is probably one of the largest educational experiments till date. In India, no one was ready for such a sudden shift. From premier institutions to the colleges/universities in both urban and rural areas, everyone found it difficult to some extent and huge amount of ground level correction work is needed to overcome the obstacles. Technology has to be developed, institutions have to be armed with proper infrastructure, teachers are required to be trained, policies have to undergo with adequate number of changes, contents need to be developed, collaborations need to be built, employers are to be assimilated with the problems regarding unemployment and the list goes on. In this paper we have highlighted major impacts of Covid-19 on higher educational institutions in India. Some suggestions that can prove to be fruitful to carry out educational activities amid pandemic are also pointed out in the paper.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19, higher institution, impact, India.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The SARS – Cov – 2 coronavirus species (usually found in Bats) made a jump to Homo sapiens (Humans) in the form of Covid-19 disease at one of the Wuhan's open market where customers used to buy meat and fish. The first case of Covid-19 was reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019 and after that the virus quickly spread to 28 other countries till the end of January. On 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 Covid-19 was declared a global health emergency by WHO<sup>2</sup>. India got its first case on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 in Kerala and in the coming few days it was declared in the state and went into lockdown from 23<sup>rd</sup> March. To curb down

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<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, *Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) SITUATION REPORT – 1*, THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, (2020) (10 June 2021, 11:00 AM), <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200121-sitrep-1-2019-ncov.pdf>

the effect of the virus the country as a whole went into Lockdown from 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2020<sup>3</sup>.

The country witnessed an unprecedented setback in every sector, but the one sector which never got a relaxation to start off with their activities was the education sector. Thus, the outbreak of Covid-19 impacted significantly on the education sector. According to the UNESCO report, 68% of the entire world's student population were affected by Covid-19. By the end of June, 2020 closure of about 1.5 million schools imparting primary and secondary education affected 286 million children, and closing of 993 universities, 39,931 colleges, and 10,725 stand-alone educational institutions affected 37.4 million students. Coming more precisely the students that were in the higher education institutions were among the most affected ones<sup>4</sup>. The life of students in colleges was greatly affected as there was a sudden shift in the teaching that was used to be followed from way back to ancient times. The sudden shift from classroom teaching to learning through the use of web and taking lectures through webcams was difficult for them to get familiar in such a short while. The sudden paradigm shift towards digitization was not at all easy for the teachers as well. The teachers too have been affected significantly, as they were also being compelled to adopt virtual modality eventually, by losing their continuity unconventional way of teaching. Here few questions undeniably arise; We all must be aware that digital higher education is there around for more than a decade now and various universities like IITs, NITs, DU, IISERs, etc had their fair contribution too in it. Then, why still did it not take over the other universities too before covid era? Why is it still not becoming a daily routine, that too when major business tycoons had already moved from offline to online mode? The attitudes of the existing educators are partially to be blamed along with the system of governance. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in a phase technological revolution going around the globe, India still haven't got a proper digital infrastructure for teaching and e-learning. Not only this, the higher educational institutions (HEIs) have faced an extraordinary challenge in conducting annual exams and valuation of the students due to closure of the colleges. In the end of March 2020, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India had asked all higher education organizations and universities to extend the date of final semester examinations as well as intermediate semester examinations<sup>5</sup>. Most of the colleges because of the circular and to safeguard student's life took the end semesters examination at the end of September. The

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<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia, *COVID-19 pandemic in India*, WIKIPEDIA, (9 June 2021, 10:30 AM), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19\\_pandemic\\_in\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_in_India)

<sup>4</sup> Dr Anjana Kannankara, *Covid effects on education in the changing world*, MATHRUBHUMI, (11 MAY 2021, 10:00 AM), <https://english.mathrubhumi.com/features/specials/covid-effects-on-education-in-the-changing-world-1.5569560>

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Crawford et al. "*COVID-19: 20 countries' higher education intra-period digital pedagogy response*" JOURNAL OF APPLIED LEARNING & TEACHING (2020)

students in the last year of their graduation programme were eagerly waiting for their graduation and pursue further what they aspired for such a long were majorly affected by this closure.

With the end of July, the ray of hope started arising when the graph showing the number of people affected per-day by Covid-19 was going considerably down, and relaxations were also started giving to the states taking in view in the number of cases in that particular state. Things were getting normal gradually and people were heading towards their normal lives at a faster pace. The Union Government too gave out the permission reopening of schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) in phases after October 15, depending on the local situation<sup>6</sup>. Students were ready with their packed bags to enter back to their normal school and college in 2021, when the country witnessed an exponential hike in the Covid cases in most of the states<sup>7</sup>. In the month of April, India recorded the highest-ever daily surge in the Covid cases, which crossed 97,000 cases in one single day. The surgency came at the time when college students were waiting either for their final exams, results or were very enthusiastic about joining a new session. The saddest part from all this is that despite this being the second time when the classes have had to go online, our country universities and education authorities are still not prepared. The HEIs were still struggling with the e-learning concept of teaching that was prevailing in the country for a year. The new academic session in universities across India is still facing uncertainties as so far, the rule making bodies have miserably failed to prepare a full proof assessment system with no leaps and bounds<sup>8</sup>. In India nearly 40% of the teachers reported a strong need for training in the use of ICT for teaching and recommended that authorities must set up proper rules and regulations for conducting examinations<sup>9</sup>. Even though the country is trying to adapt to the new age of learning, there still lies many obstacles that have to achieve in the nearby future.

With the above back drop the paper is based on the following objectives:

1. To highlight the impact of Covid-19 on higher education sector.

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<sup>6</sup> Ritika Chopra, *Explained: When will universities and colleges reopen in India?*, THE INDIAN EXPRESS , (9 MAR 2021), <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-new-ugc-rules-out-who-can-return-to-college-and-when-6966227/>

<sup>7</sup> Anurag Maan, *South Asia crosses 30 million COVID-19 cases as India battles second wave* , REUTERS, (1<sup>st</sup> April 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/south-asia-crosses-30-million-covid-19-cases-india-battles-second-wave-2021-05-28/>

<sup>8</sup> Pinaki Chakraborty et al. “*Opinion of students on online education during the COVID-19 pandemic*”, WILEY ONLINE LIBRARY (2020)

<sup>9</sup> *THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION - INSIGHTS FROM EDUCATION AT A GLANCE 2020*, OECD (2020) (20<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 11:00 AM),

2. To put few suggestions to continue educational and employment activities, facing the challenges turn out by Covid-19.,

## II. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION

### (A) Pandemic Came Up with Digital Divide

Covid-19 embellished a boundary between the privileged and unprivileged sections of the society in the education sector as well. The digital divide in India has severely affected the students from the marginalized communities and especially those in the rural areas. Though there has been an increase in the number of wireless subscribers in India over the past few years in the rural areas, as per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) but, online classes and e-learning requires more than just telecommunication. A steady internet connection on a smartphone or laptop is a basic requirement to run the software's on which the educators connect with the students, where the urban-rural gap makes a significant amount of difference. According to the 75th round of National Sample Survey conducted between July 2017 and June 2018, just 4.4 rural households have a computer, against 14.4 per cent in urban areas, with just 14.9 per cent rural households having access to the internet against 42 per cent households in urban areas<sup>10</sup>. One of the reports released by the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) also tell us that, merely 8.5 per cent students in India have access to Internet – probably a technological handicap that is at the cost of the children's right to education amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting in the closure of schools<sup>11</sup>. This suggests that students from the families with finer means of living can easily overpass the transitions to remote learning, students from unprivileged backgrounds are probably to succumb to inefficiency and a lack of moderations, because of the inaccessibility of the technology in the area where they reside.

Further, the country wide lockdown in the month of March last year and again in May this year, left Lakhs of migrant workers who came from the rural areas unemployed due to the closure of work in urban cities in total. On 14 September 2020, Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar stated in Parliament that information collected from state governments indicated an estimated 10 million migrants had attempted to return home as a

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<sup>10</sup> Kundan Pandey, *COVID-19 lockdown highlights India's great digital divide*, DOWN TO EARTH, (10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, 12:00 PM), <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/covid-19-lockdown-highlights-india-s-great-digital-divide-72514>

<sup>11</sup> Daya Sagar, *Merely 8.5% school students in India have internet access, education disruption due to COVID-19 second worst in South Asia: UNICEF*, GOANCONNECTION, ( 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021), <https://en.gاونconnection.com/online-education-india-internet-access-rural-villages-covid-coronavirus-unicef/>

result of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown<sup>12</sup>. Loss of income due to the closure, food shortages and uncertainty about the future left migrants with no other choice but to return back to their villages or towns with their family and children. In such a situation, the emphasis on technology-driven education is creating a hurdle in the way of many students in the country from continuing their education. So, busting the myth of living in a tech-savvy era, there is a huge population living on the wrong side of the digital divide, lacking access to a technology that is widely considered as a fundamental right.

### **(B) The Shift Affected both Students and Teachers**

An abrupt closure of higher education institutions amid Covid-19 led to the sudden paradigm shift in the way of teaching; transition in learning from face to face to e-learning spawns a lot of barriers for teachers as well as for students. Barring some top institutions like IITs, IIMs and DU, there was a lack of sufficient technical resources and skills to conduct online classes anywhere, but it was imagined that all teachers and students have the adequate resources to teach and learn online. Even before the crises, teachers reported a strong need for training in the use of ICT for teaching, with 18% on average across OECD countries identifying this as a higher training need. During the pandemic, few universities took initiatives by conducting orientation programs for the teachers for the difficulties faced by teachers in adapting to teaching online, but as the shift was very sudden, many teachers continued to face difficulties while using online teaching platforms<sup>13</sup>. The challenges were also directly linked to a lack of teacher preparedness- as only less than 20% of teachers reported receiving orientation on delivering education digitally while in Bihar and Jharkhand, the figure was less than 5%. The study has also revealed that a staggering 84% of the college educators reported facing challenges in delivering education digitally with close to half the teachers facing issues related to the internet both signal issues and data expenses<sup>14</sup>. Two out of every five teachers lack the necessary devices to deliver education digitally; the situation is particularly grave in UP and Chhattisgarh where 80% and 67% of teachers respectively lack the requisite devices to deliver education online<sup>15</sup>. Other than technological shift, a survey of more than 10,000 teachers revealed that

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<sup>12</sup>Yogima Seth Sharma, *Labour minister Gangwar clarifies his response on migrant workers in Parliament*, THE ECONOMIC TIMES, (10<sup>th</sup> June 2021), <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/labour-minister-gangwar-clarifies-his-response-on-migrant-labourers-in-parliament/articleshow/78142699.cms>

<sup>13</sup> *THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION - INSIGHTS FROM EDUCATION AT A GLANCE 2020*, OECD (2020) (20<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 11:00 AM),

<sup>14</sup> Roshni, *84% of teachers facing challenges during online classes: Survey*, INDIA TODAY (20<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 11:30 AM), <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/latest-studies/story/84-of-teachers-facing-challenges-during-online-classes-survey-1780816-2021-03-18>

<sup>15</sup>Roshni, *84% of teachers facing challenges during online classes: Survey*, INDIA TODAY (20<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 11:30 AM), <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/latest-studies/story/84-of-teachers-facing-challenges-during-online-classes-survey-1780816-2021-03-18>

92.8% of teachers suffered emotional exhaustion, stress, anguish due to confinement and distance education. Excessive bureaucratic tasks, unclear instructions, lack of support in teleworking, and lack of technical means were the main problems pointed out by teachers<sup>16</sup>

Students also suffered a setback with the sudden change in the learning method as they missed their peers and found it hard to adjust to online learning, that ultimately lead to a loss of motivation on the part of many. A collaborative project on media education in India during the pandemic by Dr Usha Raman and Devina Sarwatay of the University of Hyderabad found that students who had to pivot to online classes in the middle of their course had difficulties adjusting to e-learning while students who began their classes completely online adjusted well<sup>17</sup>. The possible reason behind that could be the consciousness of the pandemic situation by the newly enrolled students as compared to the senior one's who were taken aback by the unexpected interruption and a change in their mode of learning. Physical classes also offered students occasions to study in groups that help each other in making of the assignments and also in studies for exams which wasn't as workable with online classes. This eventually led to the anxieties and stress to students while working on academic tasks. Staying at home was not one of the worst things in the world, but stresses over academics that a student was undergoing with along with their social lives was weighing them down.

### **(C) Deprived Students from Having Experimental Knowledge and Research**

One of the most important aspects of higher education in India is research. A lot of this research is contingent to the academic institutions and their infrastructure provided by them to the research scholars. Another issue is that the research requires access to library, online journals and stable internet access. Data collection, interviews and other important parts of the research process were also affected by the sudden closure of higher educational institutions. This further led to the delays and stagnation of the work of many research candidates who couldn't submit their work on time. Many universities managed to give extensions to scholars from those in the older batches, but students from newer batches are still uncertain about their extensions.

The engineering and medical students of the country witnessed a major setback with their laboratory experiments and trainings that form an integral part of their study. The laboratory experiments help students understand science subjects effectively; hence, these are an integral part of science education. It assists the students in gaining experience through concrete

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<sup>16</sup> Luis Espino-Díaz et al. "Analyzing the Impact of COVID-19 on Education Professionals. Toward a Paradigm Shift: ICT and Neuroeducation as a Binomial of Action," SUSTAINABILITY (2020)

<sup>17</sup> Sreshtha Ladegaam, *Multi-faceted impact of COVID-19 on higher education in India*, THE SIASAT DAILY (30<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 1:00 PM) <https://www.siasat.com/multi-faceted-impact-of-covid-19-on-higher-education-in-india-2115668/>

materials, improving students' working habits and problem-solving skills, enhancing their abilities to understand practical problems and improving their attitude towards education<sup>18</sup>. Closure of colleges with no future dates for their reopening had made every undergraduate to worry for their careers.

#### **(D) Shortfall in Assessment Procedure**

One of the major components of an education system is assessing the credibility of the students with respect to the subject they are enrolled in their higher studies. This credibility is assessed in the way of annual examination, which also created a lot of fuss during this pandemic. Lakhs of students those in their final year or those who were going to start off with their choice of careers after 12<sup>th</sup> were battling because of the varying guidelines, changing exam dates and the whims of authorities as they were preparing for their exams. Almost every university postponed their entrance exams for different graduation programmes in which freshers who have passed Class 12<sup>th</sup> appeared. This postponement was done more than twice within a month or two which eventually resulted, the late start of student's career in their respective colleges and lead to the pressure on freshers' minds to study more portion in lesser time. Further the assessment for the final year and interim semester's students was done in two ways amid covid: (A) remotely proctored exams (time-constrained) and (2) open-ended assessments. Though both of the types can be said to be the good alternative but both cannot form an integral part of the student's life as both when critically examined were having too many of shortfalls<sup>19</sup>. Where proctored type of exams was facing infrastructural barriers due to the absence of electricity, stable internet connection and other basic system requirements in remote areas, open-book and take-home assessments seems to be vulnerable to academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty was not only disadvantaging the cheater, but also the other students who felt that their hard work is not getting rewarded.

The most disturbing plight was seen during this year when every other educational institution was once again sailing on the same boat like the one in the previous year and were ready to put students' career at stake for one more time. This clearly tells us that where were standing exactly after one year of the outbreak of Covid-19 in our country. In May, where in a normal situation, students in their final semester are likely to get appointed or go further to pursue masters, are again waiting for their last semester exams with an uncertainty. Universities like

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<sup>18</sup> N. Kapilan et al. "Virtual Laboratory: A Boon to the Mechanical Engineering Education During Covid-19 Pandemic," SAGE JOURNALS (2020)

<sup>19</sup> *Rutgers School of Art and Sciences: Remote Exams and Assessments*, RUTGERS, (20<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 2:00 PM), <https://sasoue.rutgers.edu/teaching-learning-guides/remote-exams-assessment#special-advice-for-open-book-assessment-in-quantitative-courses>

Delhi University and many others are likely to postpone their entrance tests which will directly affect the freshers of class 12<sup>th</sup>. The national education policy, 2020 was introduced last year on 29<sup>th</sup> July that outlines the vision of India's new education system, and despite of this fact we are somewhere lacking behind to achieve that vision even after a long gap of one full year.

### **(E) Surge in Future Unemployment**

As the Covid-19 pandemic sends ripples around the world, the health sector as well as the economic sector has suffered a devastating effect. Therefore, the companies that had gathered in India's top institutions just a few months ago to hire fresh talent, are taking a serious relook at their options. Already, research firm Gartner has withdrawn offers that it extended to students at various IITs for the year<sup>20</sup>. According to the All-India Survey of Higher Education by the ministry of Human Resource Development, India saw 32.9 lakhs students graduates from the Arts, Commerce, Science and Humanities streams in 2019<sup>21</sup>. Graduates from Engineering and MBA accounted for around 16 lakh which can be expected to be more this year. In an already desolate job market with growing unemployment rates, a majority of these graduates are expected to find it exceptionally difficult, if not impossible, to secure employment. According to data from the Centre for Monitoring India Economy, the unemployment rate of the country surged from 8% in March 2020 to 24% in April, 2020 – an immediate impact of the countrywide lockdown<sup>22</sup>.

Now with the Covid-19, it would not be of much significance that how well polished ones' graduation is as the employers are themselves fighting for their well-being and somehow, they have to sustain for one more full year. So, in this type of situation whether its lateral or fresher hires, all will be suffering anyways

Further, to make things more miserable for the young graduates, the data in our country indicate that not only the private sector, but also the government has also slowed down the hiring amid the pandemic, both at the centre and the state level. Hiring for government jobs is drying up, reaching the lowest level in at least three years in FY21 as the coronavirus pandemic spread misery far and wide. The central government hired almost 119,000 people on permanent rolls in FY20, but the numbers dropped to 87,423 in FY21<sup>23</sup>. Similarly, states hired 389,052 people

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<sup>20</sup> Manu Balachandran, *How Covid-19 is affecting student placements*, FORBES INDIA (12<sup>th</sup> May 2021 , 2:30 PM), <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/coronavirus/how-covid19-is-affecting-student-placements/58925/1>

<sup>21</sup> *Aishe: All India Survey on Higher Education 2018-19* , AISHE (2018-19) ( 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021, 11:00 AM), <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/coronavirus/how-covid19-is-affecting-student-placements/58925/1>

<sup>22</sup> *CMIE Series of Unemployment: Unemployment rate in India*, CENTER FOR MONITORING INDIAN ECONOMY, (10 June 2021, 3:30 PM), <https://unemploymentinindia.cmie.com>

<sup>23</sup> Prashant K. Nanda, *Govt job hiring in FY21 drops to lowest level in three years*, MINT (28<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 1:00 PM), <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/govt-job-hiring-in-fy21-drops-to-lowest-level-in-three-years-116219>

in FY21, a drop of almost 107,000 from the year before. This is being by the government to reduce permanent seats in the government offices and hire people more on contract basis, as it will benefit the government in two ways – first by the reducing the employment costs and second the employees on contract basis will not be able to speak up for the system.

For some graduates, mostly that came from rural or economically backward classes getting employment was extremely important to clear off the debts that they have taken from the banks in the form of loans to pursue their type of careers for which they aspired for. Unemployment will result in borrowers paying a higher instalment repayment or an extension in the loan repayment period. If this type of job losses continues in the coming months, it could become a major cause of concern globally and will eventually have an adverse effect onto the economy of the country.

### **III. SUGGESTION**

From the analysis done so far, the paper puts forward few suggestions and strategies that can be employed by stakeholders at different levels to ameliorate the studies being done with the use of the internet. The proposed suggestions are outlined below:

1. The brief empirical research has revealed that there is probably a widening of the digital divide along the urban and the rural stretch during the pandemic. While some states have tried to tide over these barriers by providing ample amount of internet facilities, smartphones and in some states like Uttar Pradesh where laptops were also distributed to students studying in higher institutions, the need is to have a pan- Indian strategy, to reduce the gap between haves and have-nots. Near-future developments have to be monitored in a timely manner and produce effective and targeted policy responses by using the information. Actions and policies must go beyond fixing the pandemic's ill effects and work in a direction to drive out the digital divide entirely.

2. The teacher's role in the effective use of virtual tools in the teaching- learning process after the Covid-19 crises is very important. For these teachers have to get trained that will eventually lead them to grasping the pedagogical uses of ICT. Along with that the government and the private sector have to set up institutes where educators from whichever field, they belong, must be taught with basic knowledge of using different tools and software which are used to impart education in their respective institutions. Though it will be a tough job to determine the future of virtual learning in the higher education institutions around the globe, for the current scenario it is very much clear that the institutions must work on evolving an

advanced combination of face-to-face and virtual learning that will help to meet students' expectations and escalate their learning experience in the current virtual environment.

3. Some studies show that frequent in-class assessments are more effective for earning retention than take-home exams. But none of these solutions are even close to the physical examinations, which allows us to revisit the evaluation system based on single terminal examination. The New Educational Policy, 2020 that was introduced to us last year has made some significant number of promises to the students and the citizens of the country which are still to be implemented in a way ahead. Assessment of students should be done on a regular basis with quick results. These results will facilitate students to get an understanding that whether their studies are going in the right direction or not, and if not, they can correct themselves then and there; Instead of waiting for the last month of the year to prepare the entire syllabus at one single shot. India definitely needs a credible assessment system for a brighter future, which can only be done by eliminating one shot terminal exams and implementing regular assessment programmes in institutions across the nation.

4. India needs to restore purchasing power that has drastically fallen down amid covid-19 in urban and rural areas for growth to pick up again, which can only be by reviving jobs that were lost due to pandemic through both an existing rural employment guarantee scheme and by introducing a similar program in urban areas where work has gone down with a steep fall. Local and short time actions have to be taken for implementing and providing complementary responses to the national plans to provide income support. This can be done by assisting workers and firms to navigate national programmes, providing direct financial aid to those who lost their job due to covid and by offering access to skill enhancement programmes for easing out training and adjustment.

5. WHO has already pointed out in one of its reports that the Covid-19 may turn out to be a virus which can never be eradicated and people have to mould their lives accordingly. "It is important to put this on the table: this virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities, and this virus may never go away. HIV has not gone away, but we have come to terms with the virus. I think there are no promises in this and there are no dates. This disease may settle into a long problem, or it may not be" WHO emergencies expert Mike Ryan said in an online briefing<sup>24</sup>. After this statement many countries are planning to switch to virtual mode of education for the forthcoming years and now India should also plan for the same.

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<sup>24</sup> Sandhya Ramesh, *What it means for Covid to never go away and become endemic — like HIV, malaria, measles*, THE PRINT (11<sup>th</sup> June 2021, 10:00 AM), <https://theprint.in/health/what-it-means-for-covid-to-never-go-away-and-become-endemic-like-hiv-malaria-measles/423217/>

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This study has sketched various aspects of Covid-19 on higher education in India. The recent pandemic has encouraged for the change in pedagogical approaches and the introduction of virtual education in all levels of education. The main challenge that the higher education system in India has to face today are teachers' resilience to change and working on lessening the digital divide that the country is undergoing. Training programs are the need in the present situation, to help them to understand that the future of learning and education system involves the online environment. As we do not know how long the pandemic is going to make the country suffer, a gradual move towards online education is the demand of the current crises. University Grants Commission and Ministry of Human Resource Development have launched various virtual platforms with online stores, e-books, and other online teaching/learning materials. The combination of conventional technologies (television) with smartphones/internet technologies would encourage better accessibility and flexibility in education. The system should work with a motive to upgrade things in a way that will further facilitate the future prospects of the students; finding a permanent alternative to offline examinations are one of those aspects that will play a significant role in students' life.

The next few years will encounter societal level changes in many countries. Unemployment is probably to rise, but the government's intervention is likely to increase as they have offered wage subsidies, employment schemes, and other forms of support. The ambit of learning through ICT is enormous and can help to realize the potential of each student. Thus, there lies both challenges and opportunities for the government and the private sector. The focus should be to ensure equal and reasonable access to such platforms as our nation continues to globalize and get with advanced economies. If the Indian education system seeks to adapt to online learning in the future, it must give more weightage to policies that bridge the technological gap and move India closer to accomplishing Sustainable Development Goals.

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