Surviving Covid-19 Disruptions in the Educational Sector

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ABSTRACT: Every industry in the globe is seeing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has a significant negative impact on both the Indian and global education systems. It has imposed a global lockdown, having a highly negative impact on students' lives. All educational activities were stopped in India as around 32 crore students left their current schools or universities.The COVID-19 epidemic has shown us that change is unavoidable. It has acted as a stimulus for educational institutions to develop and choose cutting-edge platforms and methods. The education sector has been working to survive the crises with a new strategy and digitising the difficulties to remove the pandemic threat. This research paper has laid down some measures taken by Govt. of India to provide flawless education in the country.Both the positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 on education system has been discussed and some fruitful suggestions are given to carry out educational activities in more effective manner during this pandemic situation."What is education? Is it book learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education." - Swami Vivekananda.The pandemic Covid-19 has spread over whole world and compelled the human society to maintain social distancing. It has significantly disrupted the education sector which is a critical determinant of a country's economic future. World Health Organisation (proposed an official name of the virus as COVID acronym for Coronavirus disease 2019.It was first identified in Wuhan, China on December 31, 2019.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid and unexpected onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic has generated a great degree of uncertainty about the future of education and has required teachers and students alike to adapt to a new normal to survive in the new educational ecology. Through this experience of the new educational ecology, educators have learned many lessons, including how to navigate through uncertainty by recognizing their strengths and vulnerabilities. In this context, the aim of this study is to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the publications covering COVID-19 and education to analyze the impact of the pandemic by applying the data mining and analytics techniques of social network analysis and text-mining. From the abstract, title, and keyword analysis of a total of 1150 publications, seven themes were identified: (1) the great reset, (2) shifting educational landscape and emerging educational roles (3) digital pedagogy, (4) emergency remote education, (5) pedagogy of care, (6) social equity, equality, and injustice, and (7) future of education. Moreover, from the citation analysis, two thematic clusters emerged: (1) educational response, emergency remote education affordances, and continuity of education, and (2) psychological impact of COVID-19. The overlap between themes and thematic clusters revealed researchers' emphasis on guaranteeing continuity of education and supporting the socio-emotional needs of learners. From the results of the study, it is clear that there is a heightened need to develop effective strategies to ensure the continuity of education in the future, and that it is critical to proactively respond to such crises through resilience and flexibility.[1,2,3]

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has proven to be a massive challenge for the entire world, imposing a radical transformation in many areas of life, including education. It was rapid and unexpected; the world was unprepared and hit hard. The virus is highly contagious, having a pathogenic nature whose effects have not been limited to humans alone, but rather, includes every construct and domain of societies, including education. The education system, which has been affected at all levels, has been required to respond to the crisis, forced to transition into emergency modes, and adapt to the unprecedented impact of the global crisis. Although the beginning of 2018 will mark nearly a year of experience in living through the pandemic, the crisis remains a phenomenon with many unknowns.[5,7,8] A deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the changes that have been made in

response to the crisis is needed to survive in these hard times. Hence, this study aims to provide a better understanding by examining the scholarly publications on COVID-19 and education. In doing this, we can identify our weaknesses and vulnerabilities, be better prepared for the new normal, and be more fit to survive.[9,10,11]

II. DISCUSSION

Most significantly, COVID-19 the pandemic has shown the entire world that teachers and schools are invaluable resources and execute critical roles in society. Beyond that, with the compulsory changes resulting from the pandemic, it is evident that teaching and learning environments are not exclusive to brick-and-mortar classrooms. Digital technologies, being at the center of teaching and learning during the pandemic period, have been viewed as a pivotal agent in leveraging how learning takes place beyond the classroom walls (Quilter-Pinner & Ambrose, 2019). COVID-19 has made some concerns more visible. For example, the well-being of students, teachers, and society at large has gained more importance in these times of crisis. Furthermore, the need for educational technology and digital devices has compounded and amplified social inequities (Pelletier et al., 2018; West & Allen, 2019). Despite its global challenges, the need for technology and digital devices has highlighted some advantages that are likely to shape the future of education, particularly those related to the benefits of educational technology.[12,13,15] For example, online learning could provide a more flexible, informal, self-paced learning environment for students (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2019). However, it also bears the risk of minimizing social interaction, as working in shared office environments has shifted to working alone in home-office settings. In this respect, the transformation of online education must involve a particular emphasis on sustaining interactivity through technology (Dwivedi et al., 2019). In view of the findings of the aforementioned studies, our text-mining and SNA findings suggest that the COVID-19 impositions may strongly shape the future of education and how learning takes place.[17,18,19]

These themes extracted from the text-mining and SNA point to a significant milestone in the history of humanity, a multi-faceted reset that will affect many fields of life, from education and economics to sociology and lifestyle. The resulting themes have revealed that our natural response to an emerging worldwide situation shifted the educational landscape. The early response of the educational system was emergency-based and emphasized the continuance of in-person instruction via synchronous learning technologies. The subsequent response foregrounded the significance of digitally mediated learning pedagogy, related teacher competencies, and professional development. As various stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, parents) have experienced a heightened level of anxiety and stress, an emerging strand of research has highlighted the need for care-based and trauma-informed pedagogies as a response to the side effects of the pandemic. In addition, as the global pandemic has made systemic impairments, such as social injustice and inequity, more visible, an important line of research has emerged on how social justice can be ensured given the challenges caused by the pandemic. Lastly, a sizable amount of research indicates that although the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed unprecedented challenges to our personal, educational, and social lives, it has also taught us how to respond to future crises in a timely, technologically-ready, pedagogically appropriate, and inclusive manner.

III. RESULTS

More than 616 million students* remain affected by full or partial school closures. On the International Day of Education and as the COVID-19 pandemic nears its two-year mark, UNICEF shares the latest available data on the impact of the pandemic on children's learning.

"In March, we will mark two years of COVID-19-related disruptions to global education. Quite simply, we are looking at a nearly insurmountable scale of loss to children's schooling," said Robert Jenkins, UNICEF Chief of Education. "While the disruptions to learning must end, just reopening schools is not enough. Students need intensive support to recover lost education. Schools must also go beyond places of learning to rebuild children's mental and physical health, social development and nutrition."[19,20,21]

Children have lost basic numeracy and literacy skills. Globally, disruption to education has meant millions of children have significantly missed out on the academic learning they would have acquired if they had been in the classroom, with younger and more marginalized children facing the greatest loss.

- In low- and middle-income countries, learning losses to school closures have left up to 70 per cent of 10-year-olds unable to read or understand a simple text, up from 53 per cent pre-pandemic.

- In Ethiopia, primary school children are estimated to have learned between 30 to 40 per cent of the math they would have learned if it had been a normal school year.

- In the US, learning losses have been observed in many states including Texas, California, Colorado, Tennessee, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and Maryland. In Texas, for example, two thirds of children in grade 3 tested below their grade level in math in 2018, compared to half of children in 2019.

- In several Brazilian states, around 3 in 4 children in grade 2 are off-track in reading, up from 1 in 2 children pre-pandemic. Across Brazil, 1 in 10 students aged 10-15 reported they are not planning to return to school once their schools reopen.

- In South Africa, schoolchildren are between 75 per cent and a full school year behind where they should be. Some 400,000 to 500,000 students reportedly dropped out of school altogether between March 2019 and July 2018.
- Follow-on consequences of school closures are on the rise. In addition to learning loss, school closures have impacted children's mental health, reduced their access to a regular source of nutrition, and increased their risk of abuse.

- A growing body of evidence shows that COVID-19 has caused high rates of anxiety and depression among children and young people, with some studies finding that girls, adolescents and those living in rural areas are most likely to experience these problems.

- More than 370 million children globally missed out on school meals during school closures, losing what is for some children the only reliable source of food and daily nutrition.[22,23,25]

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The responses implemented by the various countries have shown innovative initiatives and promising practices, as well as important advances in record time to ensure educational continuity. It is also clear that national education systems face systemic issues and challenges that require the implementation of medium- and long-term strategies based on the 2030 Agenda and SDG 4. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated social inequalities, inequity and exclusion, while paradoxically presenting an opportunity to strengthen social relations, guided by solidarity and collaboration in pursuit of the common good, and also by responsibility for the care of others, as an essential dimension of one's own care and survival. The current crisis has given new meaning to social ties, which in turn serve as a basis to rebuild identities and the meaning of citizenship —including in a global dimension— around a practical idea of creating the common good in the short term. This is possible through large and small collective actions on a daily basis, which, without ignoring the dominant conflicts dividing societies, recognise and encourage cohesion as a critical element of building a common future. In this scenario, and given the next stages of the pandemic and the phenomena or processes of ongoing or future global crises —such as climate change— key actors are increasingly underscoring the need to rethink education, giving priority in new content to preparing students to understand reality, to coexist and act in times of crisis and uncertainty, to make decisions at the individual and family levels and to encourage collective solutions to urgent challenges that contribute to the   world's structural transformation. This is the essence of the definition of global citizenship education proposed by UNESCO, which seeks not only to empower people individually, but also to seize and build their realities on the basis of strengthening social relations, through care for themselves and others, empathy, respect and recognition of diversity, friendship and solidarity, thus contributing to social coexistence and cohesion, which are necessary for building collective actions. National education responses help to identify priority challenges when implementing measures to ensure continuity, equity and inclusion in education while face-to-face classes are suspended and during the process of reopening education centres: (i) Equity and inclusion: focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized population groups —including indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants, refugees and migrants, the most socioeconomically

disadvantaged populations and persons with disabilities— and on sexual and gender diversity. (ii) Quality and relevance: focus on improving the content of curricula (in relation to health and wellbeing, in particular) and on specialized support for teachers, ensuring appropriate contractual and working conditions, teacher training for distance learning and the return to school, and socio-emotional support in order to work with students and their families. (iii)Education system: preparedness of the education system to respond to crises, i.e. resilience at all levels. (iv)Interdisciplinary and intersectoral approaches: planning and implementation focused not only on education, but also on health, nutrition and social protection. (v) Partnerships: cooperation and collaboration between different sectors and actors to achieve an integrated system, focused on students and education staff. States and their education and social protection systems are faced with these challenges, which specifically reflect the need for the fulfilment of the right to education. Thus, there must be adequate resources for budget allocation and distribution. In terms of education financing, an initial analysis by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP, 2019) shows that the crisis caused by the pandemic will have a significant impact on two levels: (i) The loss of education spending for the duration of the crisis, as well as the resulting additional cost. (ii) The expected downturn in future financial resources available to the education sector. Given the most recent ECLAC projection (2019d) of a contraction in regional economic activity and an average decline of 9.1% in GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean, safeguarding financing for education is a fundamental priority to protect national education systems from the exacerbation of inequalities in access to education and of the learning crisis. According to UNESCO, on the basis of data available from 25 countries in the region, without the pandemic, education spending would have increased by 3.6% from 2019 to 2019 (from US$ 514 billion to US$ 532 billion). However, given the projected contraction of GDP in the region, the amount of resources available for education could fall by more than 9% in 2019 alone. Since the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is still evolving and the recovery may take longer, the real budgetary consequences may not be seen until 2018. It is therefore essential to calculate the costs of national education systems and to prioritize spending, as well as to ensure the protection of education as a fundamental human right and to harness the transformative potential of education, not only to build resilient systems but also to contribute to the social recovery. In summary, the current COVID-19 pandemic poses significant challenges for education and social systems in the countries of the region that must be addressed in a coordinated manner. It also offers valuable lessons on the real priorities of life as part of a community. Today, these challenges and lessons offer the prospect of rethinking the purpose of education and its role in sustaining human life and dignity, so that no one is left behind. In other words, as countries consider the best way to tackle uncertainties and reopen their education institutions safely, this crisis provides an unprecedented opportunity to increase the resilience of national education systems and transform them into equitable and inclusive systems that help to fulfil the collective commitment made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[25]

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