Government Initiatives For Continuing School Education During Lockdown: A Study Of Government Schools In Pratapgarh District Of Rajasthan.

Karishma Sharma,
Research Scholar
Govind Guru Tribal University, Banswara (Raj.)

Dr. Rajiv Gandhi,
Associate Professor Department of Business Management & Commerce,
New Look Girls' PG College, Banswara (Raj.)

Dr. Mukesh Sharma,
Associate Professor Department of Business Management & Commerce,
Mandsaur University, Mandsaur, (M.P.), India.

ABSTRACT

Technology has always given a new look to every situation and online education always changes the era of learning because of its easiness. Among the global pandemic situation a big amount of Indian population "school" is also affecting by Covid-19. Recently Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India took initiative to keep learning of school students by making full use of the available e-Learning Platforms during the lockdown period. Rajasthan state also launched SMILE project in April 2020 for ensuring the continuity of school education via sending online link material through WhatsApp. The purpose of this paper is to assess the extent to which government initiatives has been able to achieve the plan and find out the constraints in implementation as well as awareness of teachers and students towards provided e-learning platforms. Descriptive analysis was used and data were collected from 50 teachers and 50 students of government schools of the district. The results obtained from the study reflect that the scheme of WhatsApp online link material is effectively implementing in the district for keep students learning in the lockdown period. Lack of Smartphone in students' family, lack of internet connection in tribal belt area, network problem and limited mobile data are some constraints. At the end suggestive framework is also given.
Keywords – Covid 19, Lockdown school education, Online learning, MHRD

INTRODUCTION AND GOVERNMENT' INITIATIVES

Future is uncertain nobody knows what will the next move and nobody had known about CORONA LOCKDOWN. Every sector have been closed as a precautionary measure to fight COVID-19 and among this a big amount of Indian population "school" is also facing terrible situation. In present lockdown phase Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India took initiative to continue school students' learning by making full use of the available Digital / e-Learning Platforms during the closed period.

A list of key Digital / e-Learning Platforms which are provided by MHRD for online education is as under:

1. SCHOOL EDUCATION
   I. DIKSHA:
   Diksha has more than 80,000 e-Books for classes I to XII created by CBSE, NCERT and States / UT which are available in multiple languages. The contents can also be viewed through QR codes on textbooks. The app can be downloaded from IOS and Google Play Store.
   Website: https://diksha.gov.in or https://seshagun.gov.in/shagun

   II. E-PATHSHALA:
   In this web portal NCERT has deployed 1886 audios, 2000 videos, 696 e-Books (e- Pubs) and 504 Flip Books for classes I to XII in different languages. Mobile Apps is available.
   Website: http://epathshala.nic.in or http://epathshala.gov.in.

   III. National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER):
   NROER portal has a total of 14527 files including 401 collections, 2779 documents, 1345 interactive, 1664 audios, 2586 images and 6153 videos on different languages.
   Website: http://nroer.gov.in/welcome

2. HIGHER EDUCATION
   i. SWAYAM:
   SWAYAM is the national online education platform hosting 1900 courses covering both school (classes IX to XII) and higher education (under graduate, post graduate programs) in all subjects including engineering, humanities and social sciences, law and management courses. A unique feature of SWAYAM is that, it is integrated with the conventional education.
   Website: swavam.gov.in

   ii. SWAYAM PRABHA:
   SWAYAM Prabha has 32 DTH TV channels transmitting educational contents on 24 x 7 basis. These channels are available for viewing all across the country using DD Free Dish Set Top Box and Antenna. The channel schedule and other details are available in the portal. The channels cover both school education (classes IX to XII) and higher education (undergraduate, postgraduate, engineering Out-of-school children, vocational courses and teacher training) in arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities subjects, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture.
   Website: swavamprabha.gov.in

SMILE(Social Media Interface for Learning Engagement) :

Rajasthan state' education department has launched the project "SMILE" in April 2020 to ensure that the continuity of teaching and learning will not hamper due to the nation-wide covid-19 lockdown. IT is a digital platform to provide online courses and classes through various platforms of social media in all the government schools of the state.

For the accomplishment the plan Over 20,000 WhatsApp groups have been created in order to send the online study link materials to the students/parents and teachers from class 1 to 12 every day (**with slogan – Roz subah 9 baje, har ghar school ghanti baje**). These link materials are selected by Top Level Officers of RSCERT (Rajasthan State Council of Educational Research and Training) and then circulated by various officers of Division/District to Gram Panchayat via WhatsApp group.

Apart from this, an Youtube channel, official website and a Facebook page have also been developed where all the study materials can be uploaded so students and parents, can access the contents through these social media platforms. According to the programme the students should be taught online and will be assigned assessment work via a digital platform.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Burgess and Sievertsen (2020**) enlightened the impact of COVID -19 on education in regarding school, skills and learning in their column and described that home schooling is not only a massive shock to parents' productivity, but also to children's social life and learning. Online teaching and assessment will raise many interruption in quality of education and these interruptions will not just be a short-term issue, but can also have long-term consequences for the affected cohorts and are likely to increase inequality.

2. **Rose (2018)** explores some key attributes of effective online teachers by the used of qualitative research methods, data were collected via semi-structured interviews which were conducted with a small sample of university academics in New Zealand and Australia, and found following five attributes - effective online teachers avoid a didactic approach, vary their pedagogy, use productive failure, facilitate the learning process and provide a seamless structure.

3. **Cetinkaya (2017)** conducted a research to explore the effects of WhatsApp use for education and education students. The study was designed in mixed research model. In the quantitative aspect of the study, quasi-experimental design, with a pretest-posttest control group was used and the analysis indicated that both learning environments have different effects on the success of students and supporting the traditional environment by using WhatsApp is more effective for the increase of success. For the qualitative aspect of the study, content analysis techniques were employed and the analysis showed that students developed positive opinions towards the use of WhatsApp in their courses. In overall, it is suggested that use of WhatsApp in education process be encouraged as a supportive technology in education.

4. **Balbay and Kilis (2017)** researched to investigate students' experiences and insights on the drawbacks and benefits of YouTube videos in the Academic Speaking Skills course at Middle East Technical University, conducted with 70 students enrolled in the compulsory Academic Presentation Skills course offered by the Department. The results indicated that the majority of the students benefited to a large extent from the videos of specifically-designed supplementary material YouTube channel.

5. **Gon and Rawekar (2017)** Studied on effectivity of e-learning through whatsapp as a teaching learning tool and study concluded that Constant availability of facilitator and learning anytime anywhere has made WhatsApp a new and convenient tool for teaching

learning activity. And there is no significant difference between gain of knowledge from whatsapp or didactic lectures. Researcher also found few disadvantages like message flooding, eyestrain and usling mobile with bigger screen.

6. **Fine, Karen (2016)** studied on the Relationship between the Perceptions of Online High School Teachers Compared to Traditional Classroom Teachers Regarding the Visual Arts in the southeastern United States. Data were collected through a survey of 490 participants with a 6-point Likert-type scale and Data were analyzed through a nonexperimental quantitative methodology on 5 dimensions (mentor, delivery method, satisfaction, student learning, and curriculum). In faculty members age differences, gender, years of teaching, and subject area taught were investigated to see if there were any significant differences.
This study revealed that there was statistical significance difference
   ➢ In several age groups & years worked in the delivery dimension.
   ➢ In satisfaction and curriculum dimensions in the academic discipline .
   ➢ Curriculum dimension was also found to be significant in the online delivery method.
   ➢ The dimension of student learning was statistically significant in age groups.
   ➢ Findings also revealed that there was significance found in the mentor dimension in the delivery method of the traditional group. There was no significance difference found in gender with any of the dimensions.

7. **Bouhnik and Deshen (2014)** indicated challenges and problems in the study of whatsapp instatnt messaging between teachers and students of higher schools and revealed that,
   ➢ Not all high school students possess a Smartphone.
   ➢ Teachers are apt to be annoyed by the flood of irrelevant and nonsensical messages.
   ➢ Incompatibility of language between students and the students' assumptions that their teachers should be available on a 24/7 basis.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Online learning is very useful to make education qualitative because of its easiness and accessibility. It has been observed from the reviews that online platform have very beneficial impact on learners and along with the lockdown period it can be turn into a golden opportunity to enhance the effectivity of Indian government school education and can make it valuable and qualitative also. Today every teacher and student have a lot of time to learn something and it can make help for learners to be more skillful and knowledgeable. Keeping in mind the theme study undertook to assess the effectiveness of government' initiative for continuing school education in Pratapgarh district Rajasthan.

It is believed that the findings and suggestions made in the current study will be useful to the large spectrum of analysts, researchers, academicians and experts in drawing and understanding the functional feasibility in the general region as well as in the Tribal Sub Plan region like Pratapgarh district also.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Primary objective: To assess the extent to which government initiatives has been able to achieve its plan regarding temporary lockdown period in the district.

Secondary objective :

   I.   To identify constraints in the WhatsApp online learning process and suggestive measures to remove them.

  II. To identify awareness of teachers and students for the plan as well as provided e-learning platform.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research Design- The research study is based on descriptive research design.

Sample Design- A combination of Judgement and Convenience sampling were used.

Sample Size- Total 100 participants for data collection were considered which include 50 government school teachers and 50 government school students. The sample were taken across 5 blocks of Pratapgarh district - Chhotisadri, Arnod, Pipalkhunt, Dhariyawad and Pratapgarh (Ten teachers and students from each block).

Sources of Data and Information-

Primary data : The data were collected (from 14th May to 19thth May) through google form via link send on both teachers and students WhatsApp number or by asking on telephone. A structured interview is also taken with District Education Office' executive members on telecom at Pratapgarh (Raj.).

Secondary data : The secondary data were collected from research papers, research journals, articles, MHRD circulars, and published data of Department of School Education & Literacy and from Rajasthan Council for School Education(**RCSCE**) websites.

Analysis of data- Collected data from the survey were tabulated category wise then Descriptive analysis was used for the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table – 1: Responses about forming WhatsApp group and daily WhatsApp online link contents.

Questions	Responses of teachers		
	Yes	**No**	**Total**
Have you formed a WhatsApp group to continue education of children at home according to state instructions?	48(96%)	02(04%)	50
Do you keep Whatsapp group as only admin?	33(66%)	17(34%)	50
Is there a serialization in a daily sent course?	45(90%)	05(10%)	50
Apart from sending the incoming link, are you making videos yourself, teaching children through zoom, online google class and any etc.?	19(38%)	31(62%)	50
Are these days your duty to take corona data in the surrounding area, so you have not formed a Whatsapp group, nor are you still teaching children?	17(34%)	33(66%)	50

Questions	Responses of students		
Are you trying to hone your skills in this free time period?	45(90%)	05(10%)	50
	Yes	**No**	**Total**
Have your Sir / Madam added you to the Whatsapp group?	42(84%)	08(16%)	50
Are all your class friends on that Whatsapp group?	27(54%)	23(46%)	50
Does your sir / madam send you online links daily in that whatsapp group?	41(82%)	09(18%)	50
Do you write anything in that group like OK Sir Madam or ask any questions?	31(62%)	19(38%)	50
Apart from sending the link, are your sir / madam making video related to class lesson, teaching on any app like zoom, online google or meet etc.?	26(52%)	24(48%)	50
Do you get homework also ?	38(76%)	12(24%)	50
And that homework is also checked by your teacher?	34(68%)	16(32%)	50
Are you searching and studying from YouTube and Google yourself?	38(76%)	12(24%)	50
If you have trouble understanding something in the lesson, do you ask your sir / madam?	39(78%)	11(22%)	50
And does your teacher explain you the solution of the problem?	44(88%)	06(12%)	50

Interpretation

The table -1 shows all the yes /no responses of teachers and students about the SMILE scheme of the State Govt and its WhatsApp online link contents but the figures also show constraints and problems in implementation of the scheme.

96% teachers are following the state instruction and made group for continuing school education but 04% teachers did not because of not having smart phone in students' family. 34% teachers keep that group as only admin and reply students individually if they have query and 66% teachers not do that so students can directly put their questions among their class fallow and send their responses. 90 % teachers like the online link material and its serialization. 38% teachers make their own efforts in teaching by making videos related to subject contents and teach students via zoom or Meet App. They were mostly Mathematics and science teachers.

While all the same questions ask from sample of students in the district, 46% students declined to involve all the class fallow in that group because of network problem & not having smartphone. 52 % students are learning from their teachers' own made videos and via zoom & Meet App apart from sended link of SMILE mission. In this free time 76% of students are also searching and studying from YouTube and google. 68% students responded on getting homework and also checked by teachers. Thus we can say that the overall, students are learning but not having smartphone and network problem make constraints in governments as well as teachers efforts.

Table – 2: Responses about awareness and opinion of government initiatives on lockdown school education.

Questions	Teachers response on Likert scale					Total
	Not at all	Little	Partially	More	very much	
Despite reading online, are children's studies affected by this lockdown?	01(02%)	21(42%)	12(24%)	11(22%)	05	50
In your opinion, is the link sent to students are easiest and understandable so that they can learn for the current class?	01(02%)	18(36%)	24(48%)	07(14%)	0	50
Is the spread of corona virus high in school or town area?	35(70%)	09(18%)	01(02%)	05(10%)	0	50
Are children showing interest in reading, they are learning well?	04(08%)	26(52%)	18(36%)	01(02%)	01(02%)	50
Is the online platform (DIKSHA, E-PATHSHALA, NROER, SWAYAM, SWAYAM PRABHA) provided by MHRD being used by the students	11(22%)	18(36%)	18(36%)	03(06%)	0	50
Questions	Students response on Likert scale					Total
	Not at all	Little	Partially	More	very much	
You are being taught online even while at home, because of this are you studying and learning?	02(04%)	24(48%)	17(34%)	04(08%)	01(02%)	50
Are the links that your teachers send to you understandable?	01(02%)	28(56%)	14(28%)	05(10%)	0	50
Is the spread of corona virus high in school or town area?	34(68%)	06(12%)	08(16%)	0	0	50
Are you also using online platforms (DIKSHA, E-PATHSHALA, NROER, SWAYAM, SWAYAM PRABHA) provided by MHRD?	17(34%)	17(34%)	11(22%)	02(04%)	0	50
Do you like reading online more than going to school?	22(44%)	15(30%)	10(20%)	01(02%)	01(02%)	50

Interpretation

The above Table -2 is related to responses of both teachers and students about awareness and opinions of government initiatives for continuing school education on the basis of five rating Likert scale.

48% of teachers responded on the online link material is little easy and understandable for students. And 48% students showed their response a little in good online learning even at home. The majority of 70% teachers and 68 % students responded on not having spread of corona virus in school and town as Pratapgarh district is involved in green zone in all over India. The majority of total 68 % students are little unaware about online platforms (DIKSHA, E-PATHSHALA,

NROER, SWAYAM, SWAYAM PRABHA) provided by MHRD. 44 % students like reading in classroom with their class fallows, they do not like this type of lockdown school education.

Table – 3: Teachers' response for the participation of students in the online course

Students'quantity of participation	Not at all	Less than 50%	50%	More than 50%	100%	Total
Teachers'response	06(12%)	24(48%)	14(28%)	06(12%)	0	50
Teachers' response about getting daily whatsapp online material via SMILE project.						
Various routine	Daily	Sometimes		Weekly	Never	Total
Teachers'response	29(58%)	12(24%)		04()8%)	05(10%)	50
Teachers' response about giving homework to students and its evaluation.						
Various routine	Daily	Sometimes		Weekly	Never	Total
Teachers'response	12(24%)	21(42%)		11(22%)	06(12%)	50

Interpretation

The above Table -3 is related to teachers responses for daily students participation and getting daily online link and giving homework to students. As the slogan of SMILE mission is **"Roz subah 9 baje, Har ghar school ghanti baje"** 28 % and 48% of teachers responded for students participation is equal to 50 and less than 50 percent. 58 % teachers responded that they are getting daily whatsapp online link material provided through SMILE mission while 24 % are getting sometimes. 42 % of teachers are giving homework sometimes in week to their students and check that homework also.

Table – 4: Activities to be done by students other than studies in lockdown.

Various activities	Responses	Total
watching television	34(68%)	50
Reading good books or novels	31(62%)	50
playing video games	05(10%)	50
Playing PUBG	05(10%)	50
Helping in house cleaning	21(42%)	50
Learn to cook	16(32%)	50
Farming work	23(46%)	50
Social Media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram)	20(40%)	50
Sleeping	18(36%)	50
Students' response on best resourse for online learning in lockdown period.		
Various resourses	Responses	Total
From the link sent to whatsapp	29(58%)	50
On TV	02(04%)	50
On the radio	02(04%)	50
on Youtube	25(50%)	50
On video classes like Zoom, Meet or google class	03(06%)	50
By the videos made by your teacher.	20(40%)	50

Interpretation

The above table - 4 is related to responses of students for various activities done by them apart from the study and best resource for their online learning in the lockdown period. The highest percentage covered in watching TV and reading books or novels and the lowest figures covered in playing PUBG and Video games. When they were asked about the best online learning resources they gave highest responses to online WhatsApp link, Youtube and own made teachers' videos and lowest responded to TV and Radio.

Table – 5: Description of problems faced in lockdown school education

Problems	Teachers' response on Likert scale					Total
	Not at all	Little	Partially	More	very much	
Lack of smartphone for student or in family	01(02%)	06(12%)	4(08%)	27(54%)	12(24%)	50
Not installed whatsapp in students' or family phone	01(02%)	10(20%)	10(20%)	24(48%)	05(10%)	50
Lack of Network	01(02%)	10(20%)	18(36%)	14(28%)	07(14%)	50
Lack of mobile data / internet recharge for internet	02(04%)	13(26%)	07(14%)	20(40%)	08(16%)	50
Lack of interest in students	10(20%)	16(32%)	18(36%)	06(12%)	0	50
Complex language of online whatsapp material	16(32%)	17(34%)	13(26%)	04(08%)	0	50
Lack of serialization in study material content.	11(22%)	23(46%)	12(24%)	04(08%)	0	50
Due to Covid 19, lack of time from your daily duty	09(18%)	09(18%)	16(32%)	12(24%)	04(08%)	50
Parents' complaints about the education of children	13(26%)	19(38%)	10(20%)	05(10%)	03(06%)	50
Problems	Students' response on Likert scale					Total
	Not at all	Little	Partially	More	very much	
You or your family don't have a smartphone	10(20%)	15(30%)	14(28%)	10(20%)	01(02%)	50
WhatsApp not installed in mobile	19(38%)	11(22%)	09(18%)	10(20%)	01(02%)	50
Lack of network	05(10%)	15(30%)	11(22%)	15(30%)	05(10%)	50
Lack of mobile data / internet recharge for internet connection	07(14%)	13(26%)	13(26%)	13(26%)	04(08%)	50
Do not reply by teachers even if you ask	25(50%)	06(12%)	08(16%)	10(20%)	01(02%)	50
Complex language of whatsapp link material	15(30%)	08(16%)	15(30%)	11(22%)	01(02%)	50
Complaining to your teachers by parents	23(46%)	06(12%)	08(16%)	11(22%)	02(04%)	50

Interpretation

The above table is related to current problems facing by both teachers and students of the district in teaching learning process through the provided online platform.

Majorly responded for lack of smartphones in students family, lack of internet connection in tribal belt village, network problem and limited mobile data. Mostly students are from tribal area their parents have poor condition for afford smart phone and also they are not aware for study via the online classes App like Zoom or Meet and teachers' own made long videos consume data very rapidly that's why parents complain to teachers for their limited data and they do not share their mobile with children.

Along with this, both teachers and students also described problems like lack of awareness for online learning in tribal area, lack of timing for teachers due to Covid 19 duty, The parents of rural areas do not have technology friendly etc.

FINDINGS

From the above data analysis and keeping in mind the objectives, the study arrives at the following findings.

- The government initiatives of SMILE project are effectively implementing in government schools for lockdown period in Pratapgarh district. 96 % teachers made WhatsApp group and keeping their students motivated and learning via sending SMILE projects' online link material. The link materials are easy and understandable for students learning. 88 % students responded they are getting solution from their teachers if they have any query in understanding.

- Apart from the sending link material 38 % teachers mostly from class 8 to 12 are also making videos related to class subject contents their selves and teaching children through App like Zoom, Meet or online google class. They are mostly Mathematics and Science subject teachers.

- The study found some constraints like lack of Smartphone in students of tribal belt family, lack of internet connection in tribal belt village, Network problem and limited mobile data, lack of awareness for online learning in tribal area, lack of timing for teachers due to Covid 19 duty, lack of parents' awareness for online learning.

- The majority of total 68 % students are little unaware about online platforms (DIKSHA, E-PATHSHALA, NROER, SWAYAM, SWAYAM PRABHA) provided by MHRD.

- When students were asked about the best online learning resources for this lock down period they gave highest responses to online WhatsApp link, Youtube and own made teachers' videos and lowest responded to TV and Radio.

- From discussing with District education officer and executive Incharge of SMILE project in Pratapgarh district it is found that according to new guidelines of the scheme every teacher is taking feedback of his/her 5 students/parents about the available content and send it to the higher authority. "Shikshavani Program" a daily 55-minute radio program through Akashvani is also launched from 11th May 2020, in this learning program Quality

teaching material is being produced by various institutes and highly trained teachers under the leadership of SCERT and DIET for broadcasting.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

From the all above data analysis and findings the study concluded that the initiative taken by MHRD and Rajasthan Government' SMILE project are playing a key role in keep online learning of government schools at Pratapgarh district in present pandemic situation. Efforts are unsuccessful unless the means are feasible to complete them, from the view of both teachers & students of the district and on the basis of observed constraints following suggestions can be made.

➢ Digital education should be added to the curriculum from the primary level of education. It should not be merely a nominal subject. Based on the experience of the children at the grassroots level in school, students can be habitual for online learning platform.

➢ The parents of the tribal belt and whole society should be aware for online learning and they should have provided smart phones or gazets and its knowledge for being habitual for it.

➢ Backward areas should have network and internet connectivity.

➢ With the coming July session, schools should be open in little affected area in even - odd class mode with proper mask and senitising. Teachers should motivate and keep students learning via online platform as giving & checking assignment or homework them online.

➢ The best videos of made by teachers in their subject content should also be added and appreciated in the SMILE project' online link content so teachers can be innovative also in their subject area.

➢ Free internet and data should be given in all over the country till lockdown period.

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