



Strategies to Improve Basic Learning in the Post-Covid Educational Situation

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Abstract

The Covid-19 Pandemic is one of the worst disasters that the world has faced so far. Many lost their lives and livelihood. The impact is irreparable till today, predominantly in developing and poor countries. It has created a great lacuna in the development of various fields. This void is even greater in the field of education. All educational institutions, schools in particular were shut down completely for many days. Despite the efforts of online education to compensate the loss, the educational standards of students have come down alarmingly. Several methods of remedial teaching are planned after reopening the schools, perceiving that Covid will not have much effect as it did in the first and second waves. Hence this paper aims to explore the remedial measures and their effectiveness in improving the students' academic performance. Besides that, this paper also offers several suggestions to bridge the gap.

Keywords: Covid, academics, remedial measures, performance, reading and writing

Introduction

The effect of Covid virus and its consequence of nationwide shut down to minimize its impact has left education sector in a dilapidated state. Even though the governments have decided to reopen the schools for physical academic procedures, the sudden plunge in the basic skills such as reading, writing and calculating among students make the teachers and other educationalists apprehensive about students' readiness after the two year break. Hence, Jaime Saavendra, the global director for education at the World Bank expresses in his March statement that the pandemic had a greater impact on the children below the poverty line, as there is an increase in the percentage of number of dropouts. This could be due to their parents' displacement to their native places and the increase in poverty that forced the children of a family to take up some work in order to support financially. The March statement cautioned that children have forgotten how to read and write; some are unable to recognize letters. "Without urgent remedial action, this could carry serious lifelong consequences in terms of health and well-being, future learning and employment," the statement said. (Mint, 10th April 2022)

In a joint statement in March, World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) cautioned that Covid's impediment in learning could lead to the loss of a generation. "Less than half of countries are implementing learning recovery strategies at scale to help children catch up, the statement said.

Its data showed that combined 2 trillion hours of in-person schooling lost due to school closures since March 2020, students in more than 4 in 5 countries have fallen behind in their learning.

In its report-'The State of Global Education Crisis'-World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO charted out the global disruption to education during Covid. According to the report seen by Mint, in rural Karnataka (India) the share of grade three students in government schools able to perform simple subtraction fell from 24% in 2018 to only 16% in 2020.

From the above report published in Mint Article, it can be observed that Covid-19 pandemic has created havoc in education sector. Unless there are proper preparatory methods to make the students to be on the track, this academic year will be the biggest failure in terms of examinations. In this backdrop, Telangana state has come up with '100 day READ (Read, Enjoy, And Develop) program to instill interest in reading and improve reading abilities among students. This program is intended to improve the basic skills of education in any standard. As part of this, each class will have a library period every day and the teachers should make sure that they read appropriate reading content according to their age and report their progress in reading. This has to be done besides academics.

Though READ seems to be a good program to improve children's knowledge and hone their skills, initially, they should have access to libraries. It is a known fact that most schools do not have library facility. Thus, the lack of books has become an impediment to this remedial program. Even though Some NGOs have come forward in helping government to setup libraries in schools, it was done only in some selected schools where the number of students was high. Rather than going for something which is out of our reach, it must be planned considering the available resources. Remedial teaching or measures to bridge the gap are critical for a student's educational behavior in coming years.

Therefore, this paper offers a viable remedial instruction that can improve the basic standards of students.

Stories and Interesting Facts

The concept of introducing something interesting when students lose their continuity in academics is a good practice to retain a student's attention towards academics and improve his/her basic academic standards such as reading, building vocabulary, and conceptual understanding. These materials must be introduced exclusively as a preparatory curriculum rather than a supplementary one besides the main curricula. In the preparatory stage, focus on the learning material is mandatory both from teacher and a learner. Teacher must make sure that students read the material with comprehension. Small tests such as Quiz and comprehension tasks can be planned based on the level of students to give the students a sense of achievement and also to plan the future activities. The material can be upgraded in terms of difficulty level as per the achievement of students.

Handouts containing a collection of simple stories and some interesting facts can be handed over to students. It doesn't cost much and can be accessible everywhere. It would be better if it is done at the state level or district level offices and distribute the same to schools in the locality. The tests can be planned orally or in written at the school level.

Games and Competitions

Language games like, Spell bee, Sudoku and other quizzes held with a reward of appreciation will definitely bring a transformation in the performance of students. Games involving Mathematical calculations and concepts can also be planned. These kind of activities can be planned either by a teacher at school level or planned by an expert team and distribute them to various schools.

Role plays and Simulations

Role plays and Simulations which form experiential learning promote critical thinking and helps students understand real life situations and apply the concepts. (Caniglia, 2019) ^[1] These activities can be useful as motivational tools to improve the basic abilities if they are judiciously used with a well-directed goal.

Conclusion

Covid-19's impact on education made the students forget their basic skills such as reading. The reopening of schools makes it essential to improve their basic abilities before the start of syllabus. Hence, it is vital to follow some exclusive strategies to motivate the students and bring them back on the right track of education. The approaches discussed in this paper may have positive impact on the students' learning and fill the devoid created by the pandemic.

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