Redefining Education : Post Corona

With the nationwide lockdown imposed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic ,worldwide learners across the globe including our own country India are hit due to closure of schools and colleges for an indefinite period. The stay at home period for students carries high social and economic costs for all the stakeholders involved in the domain of education. With interrupted learning, a huge impact is expected in form of surging numbers in dropout rates from schools and colleges. Educators on the other hand are facing a paradigm shift from traditional chalk and talk methods to the e-learning model. Work from home and online teaching methodology are taking a toll on their mindsets as well as blurring the personal professional boundary.

The challenges amidst the pandemic are daunting to mention a few local power supply, device ownership, digital skills of both teachers and students. Schools and colleges of Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities are well adapted to online teaching methods whereas Tier 3 and Tier 4 guardians have raised the issue of not even having a smart phone which may devoid their ward from the learning content available online.

Radio and television are also powerful tools of communication. *Swayamprabha* initiative tends to address the problem of non uniform internet penetration by offering 32 high quality educational channels through DTH services across the nation 24*7. Lately many local private news channels have also forayed in this domain by dedicating certain hours of afternoon telecast to discuss various subjects and their syllabi under experienced guidance of subject experts from various schools across the city and state. MHRD has ensured the provision of virtual labs that stimulate an environment to perform experiments. The National Digital Library of India (NLDI) is a platform which provides digital repository of journals and books.

Starting the school or college semester late or interrupting it completely disrupts the lives of children, parents as well as teachers. Richer countries are better prepared to deal with this emergency situation to some extent and move on to online teaching learning strategies although with a lot of challenges. On the hand, considering middle income and poorer countries, the situation betrays lack of proper infrastructure and planning as major drawbacks. If we do not act appropriately and promptly the vast inequality of opportunities will only amplify.

Considering India where the situation is such that many children do not even have a proper desk, text books and basic amenities expecting the availability of a laptop, smart phones or for that matter even proper internet connectivity seems too far fetched at the moment be it school or college. So what we need primarily is to try and bridge the gap of uneven opportunity so that children from poor strata of the society are not deprived. Relying exclusively on online strategies will imply reaching out only to children from better off families and depriving the poor of their basic right to education. It is appropriate to use all possible modes of delivery of lesson plans, audio, video, tutorials and other resource materials. Tie-ups should be made with leading telecommunication companies to apply zero rate facilities for students to facilitate learning material to be downloaded on a smart phone which is more likely to have a widespread presence.

Each faculty needs to be trained for online teaching learning mode. It is not necessary that a content expert or a great or a great classroom teacher will know the nitty gritties of the sciences involved in digital media. Hence educators need to educate themselves to keep up with the "new normal" of the changing education model. The higher education system is undergoing a tectonic shift. Online education which was long being conceptualized and predicted for long calls for immediate application but of course with proper planning so as to reach out to a student sitting even in the remotest of the village.

The online education system has to be perceived in its true sense. Online mere delivery of lectures should not be mixed with online learning .Former is teacher centric whereas latter is learner centric. Focus is to be made in order to simplify the process because learning is a gradually inducing procedure. It includes deep understanding and concept building. Mere transposition of classroom to the digital medium is not going to help. Educators need to understand that this blind replication will prove fatal.

Summing up even in the post covid-19 era offline or conventional models of teaching won't become completely obsolete. Of course they are going to be there but with a new flavor and fervor. The concept of blended learning shall be the new normal combining best of both the worlds i.e. conventional and online teaching.

Dr. Archana Dwivedi
Department of Hindi (Day)