



AN ANALYSIS ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LEGAL EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Even though it is difficult to believe that, pandemic can change entire scenario within few days of its outbreak, the world has witnessed severity of the spread of COVID-19 which has had devastating effect on every sector in the whole world. Education sector is not an exception to it. Education is the fundamental right not to be denied but covid-19 has put constraints on both teaching and learning. Legal education also faced lot many issues and challenges especially in the field of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning during these days, dependent upon the availability of technical tools and gadgets with proficiency in utilizing them rather than the knowledge or enthusiasm in study. Along with legal knowledge through theoretical classes, practical exposure to the students is required for budding Lawyers. In this paper, we can look on analysis of impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning.

Keywords: - COVID-19, Legal education, Teaching and learning, technical tools, practical exposure.

Introduction

As we know, novel coronavirus (*COVID-19*) was declared as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11th March, 2020 and its impact is very severe and shaken even the developed economies of the world. It has changed the orderly life of the people and restrictions are put on the free movement in the form of lockdown which was inevitable to control the pandemic. Functioning of almost all trade and businesses, manufacturing units, professions, transportation, services and many more sectors, effected by this pandemic. Education sector was made to open the new horizon for its continuation during these tough times and it was the online mode where assistance of technology became fundamental to run the show.

Pandemic and its impact

The sudden emergence of COVID-19 forced to go for considerable changes in many aspects of life, use of information technology staffers, transition to the virtual instruction mode and so on. On the one hand people at home are struggling to battle against this pandemic, like loss of job, financial crisis, fear of spread of vires etc., and on the other hand worried about the future of their children

which is jeopardised as a result of the outbreak of covid-19 worldwide.

There are two arguments which we can find during this pandemic. One is, education of children is under trouble, exams are not yet done, course is not completed, campus selections are not taking place etc. but other argument is, lets first fight against this pandemic, surviving from this situation should be given with the priority than that of future of our children.

Impact of pandemic on education sector

Apart from the substantial livelihood destruction, the ongoing crisis resulted from COVID-19 has had an unparalleled effect on the education sector around the world. Due to the global health emergency the movement of people have been confined, which has resulted in the closing of teaching centres and there was a shift from physical interactive education to online monologues education everywhere. Impact and result of teaching may not be so great in online mode. According to UNICEF reporting, it was estimated that the pandemic has hampered progression against international education targets by adversely affecting around 1.6 billion learners across 190 countries and continents in the whole world. The first to be impacted by these closures was the system of education



and learning, particularly teaching learning and evaluation methodologies.

Challenges faced by Law Schools, law teachers in imparting knowledge and skills to the students

By the numerous surveys conducted and studies made, it has come to the lime light that, home environment settings, a lack of basic facilities, external distraction and family interruption during teaching and conducting assessments were major issues reported. These will have lot of impact on teaching and learning process. Both home environment setup of teachers and students count a lot. Institutional support barriers such as the budget for purchasing advanced technologies, lack of training, lack of technical support and lack of clarity and direction were also reported.

Even though the subject law formulates a part of social sciences, teaching and learning process of law requires lot of analysis, interpretations and research which is very difficult in a digital platform. There are practical training aspects which demands field visits and live observations from the part of students to complete their law graduation. Because of pandemic situation, those ways of practical exposures for law students are almost closed. One more challenge the law students are facing is internships they used to take up as a part of the course and for practical experience for future career has become virtual now. Students used to visit Courts and law chambers regularly and they also often visit, Banks and Financial Institutions, police stations, chambers of high profiled law officers, judiciary, Parliament houses etc became impossible for these batches now.

This has become a challenge for the teachers now, as to how to give them this practical exposure which are required for the students to seek knowledge on different segments of legal study.

Providing practical exposure to the students is must for the budding lawyers and it is foundation, what they are getting in the law colleges for their future career. Even though the classes are conducted through online mode, it may give only theoretical interpretations and cannot be equated with practical knowledge. Conducting moot courts through online can be done but conducting mock trial may not be effective. Court manners, appearing for the client, and other attitude required for the lawyers in future, requires lot of learning by practice, which became

tough task during pandemic. Court proceedings of different stages must be observed by the students, as how Advocates are arguing the case, and how the Judges are delivering judgements and so on. Students have Court Diaries and Chamber Diaries to write. This can be made possible only by visiting the Courts and by watching the proceedings over there. The law students were also denied from learning through advocate chambers. How to interact with the clients, seeking adjournments must be learnt as a part of practical training, but hardly possible during pandemic.

Legal aid is also one of the prominent elements which creates legal awareness to the general public, in which the final year batch of law graduation, used to participate and get sensitised towards societal issues, by involving in the legal aid activities. But as a result of outbreak of COVID-19, they are drastically affected. As the social distance is the main requirement of this pandemic, legal awareness cannot be created effectively by reaching the public who are in need of it.

Interpretation made by the teachers and the analysis made by the students on legal discipline may not be so effective through virtual platform in comparison with the offline mode. Effect of COVID-19 is not only teaching of practical papers, impact can be seen with regard to teaching even other subjects of law as well. Law subjects are taught by doing certain simulation exercises, for example, Law of contract is not only taught in theoretical manner but also engaging students by dividing them in to groups to enter in to a contract. Even subjects, like ADR, Professional Ethics, also taught in the same manner. How arbitration takes place, the procedures of conducting mediation and negotiations, presentation of arguments etc, can be demonstrated in the class with the involvement of students. This cannot be done through online mode. Hence, pandemic has not only affected on clinical courses, even on theory papers, where we can develop analytical skill among the students. Clinical courses bridge the gap between theory and practice in legal learning. Study of law includes, reasoning, analysis and interpretation, which can be better equipped to the students through simulative exercises in the physical classrooms.

Course curriculum of legal education includes, internal assessment components. Forexample, project writing and seminar presentation. In the first phase itself, students face lot of difficulties as they cannot access to commentaries



and treatises in law which will authenticate their write up and for authoritative discourse of their presentations. No doubt, there are plenty number of materials are available online, but whatever available through online are text books and some articles which are uploaded in the google data base.

At the second instance, presentation of projects is made in presence of teachers and fellow students in the class, which boosts confidence among the students to present before the gathering tomorrow, it improves oral skills by rising questions at the time of presentations, students are made to spontaneously think and respond to the questions.

Because of the COVID-19, seminar presentations got drastically affected as the students are not made to present before the class and its challenging task for the law teachers to conduct seminar presentation for the students of remote areas those having no bandwidth. Dedicated and academic oriented students are deprived from learning only because of not having required electronic gadgets and equipment to attend the classes. It has become equally challenging for the teachers to involve the students of these categories. COVID-19 has widened the disparity among the students in terms of those who are having infrastructural facilities, uninterrupted power supply and other requirements. Those who are staying countryside are suffering from powercuts and low internet connections. The ultimate purpose of teaching is to ensure that the last student with the least securing mark should be involved in learning process. The pandemic has defeated this purpose. Because, many students cannot involve in the learning as they have no facility for this equipment required for online.

It is very difficult to strike a balance between two conflicting interests, that is an academic autonomy of a teacher with that of regulation interms of ensuring regular teaching by educational institutions. One more challenge for the teachers is, due to rigid cumbersome technical requirements, teachers are not finding time to devote to upgradethemselvesby doing required research by reading qualitative literature and incorporating emerging trends with regard to the subject they are teaching. The time of teachers gets consumed to comply technical requirements than that of getting themselves involved in updating the knowledge by incorporating recent developments.

In teaching physical classes expressions and eye contact of both teachers and students, will express the

process of teaching and learning. During online, we have to concentrate even on electronic gadgets as how they work and at what extent. It becomes like instead of giving Award to a valour soldier who fought in the war, to that of phirangi or arms used for. During online lectures, those students who are not having computers or laptops should completely depend on the mobile phones, which may get heated after 4 to 5 hours of continuous classes. Problem of power supply throughout the class also a great challenge for both the teachers and students.

Changes taken place in Law Teaching

Law teaching is not confined to the class lectures, it includes clinical courses and practical papers, it is these clinical courses which constitutes the core of law teaching, and its having learner centric approach. To meet the requirements of teaching and learning, lot of changes are made in this process and it requires to answer the challenges faced by us during pandemic by adopting new methods in this sector. Teaching should continue and even learning process, but to find the best way of imparting knowledge and academic delivery became inevitable. It is fascinating that the system has quickly adopted online mode of teaching, through various platforms be it G-suite, or Zoom or whatever. Creating google classrooms, scheduling the classes through google calendar, uploading contents, notes and other study materials, utilization of inflibnet online, to access the sources are became routine for the teachers and students.

If technology doesn't support, nothing can be made possible so, education sector and technology are closely connected and linked together now. Law teachers are suggesting for online lectures and internships, which can give some practical exposure to the students, but itcannot replace physical classes or clinical legal education.



Conclusion

For the purpose of managing the crisis and to develop a long-term sustainable Indian education system, all stakeholders including the Governments and the organisations strive hard by developing a policy which can bring back the system with lot many improvements. As a result of COVID-19 outbreak, the process of teaching is not getting converted in to learning. When teaching does not convert in to learning, the prime purpose of teaching gets defeated. Now, it is the high time to fight against the pandemic and to bring the education system up with strong base of policy framework prepared by the Government for future development.

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