

Impact Of Covid -19 On Education In Manipur

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic affects the education system all over the world. Schools, colleges, universities and centres of higher learning are shut down as a controlling measure against the spread of the coronavirus. The closure brings problems for students, teachers, and parents. The COVID crisis has impacted all the citizens of the world with no discrimination. However, the depth of the impact has been felt differently across different sections of society; Marginalised sections have been impacted worst. This study takes up education sector in order to explore and understand the impacts on learning process of students during the closure of schools in pandemic period. The vulnerability of poor students from the COVID crisis is well highlighted in many reports. The closures due to COVID-19 have brought significant disruptions to education across India. The evidence from some of the findings indicates that the pandemic is giving rise to learning losses and increases in inequality. To reduce and reverse the long-term negative effects, the government needs to take up number of learning recovery program. This paper aims to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education more particularly in Manipur.

Keywords: COVID-19, Budget, Lockdown, Online Learning, Manipur.

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID 19 pandemic affects the education system all over the world. Nearly 147 million children missed more than half of their in-person schooling between 2020 and 2022, (Available S<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/11/covid19-education-impact-legacy/>). And UNICEF warns that many, especially the most vulnerable, are at risk of dropping out of

education altogether. Schools, colleges, universities and centres of higher learning are shut down to as a controlling measure against the spread of the coronavirus. The closure brings problems for students, teachers, and parents. The COVID crisis has impacted all the citizens of the world with no discrimination. However, the depth of the impact has been felt differently across different sections of society; Marginalised sections have been impacted worst. This study takes up education sector in order to explore and understand the impacts on learning process of students during the closure of schools in pandemic period. The vulnerability of poor students from the COVID crisis is well highlighted in many reports. The closures due to COVID-19 have brought significant disruptions to education across India. The evidence from some of the findings indicates that the pandemic is giving rise to learning losses and increases in inequality. To reduce and reverse the long-term negative effects, the government needs to take up number of learning recovery program. This paper aims to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education more particularly in Manipur.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study

1. To analyse the COVID-19 and its impact on education.
2. To analyse the response of the govt including its fiscal support
3. To suggest policy measures

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary data. Data and information presented in the study are collected from various reports and articles published by national and international agencies. Material is also collected from various reliable websites.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on the education

COVID PANDEMIC AND EDUCATION

The economic, social and political shock associated with the COVID-19 pandemic is significantly larger than anything seen during last few decades. The spread of COVID-19 has already had a high human cost, and, with public education and health systems struggling to cope. The strategies put in place by many governments to slow the spread of COVID-19 have led, in many countries, to a huge demand and supply shock. This has led to substantial trade disturbances, drops in commodity prices, and the contraction of financial settings in many countries. These effects have already led to large increases in unemployment and underemployment rates and will continue to threaten the survival of many firms worldwide (Loayza and Pennings, 2020). There is also considerable uncertainty about the likely overall economic impact of the post-COVID-19 pandemic. Due to financial constraints, there has been cuts in government education spending which can have a detrimental impact on education outcomes. There is evidence on the impact of budget cuts on education outcomes, particularly in developing countries. The evidence suggests that cuts in public education budgets have many negative impacts both on learning and on college enrolment rates. Generally, when reductions in government spending result in reduced education services, this can prevent parents from returning to work because they have to stay home to take care of their children, which has the potential to slow the overall pace of economic recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a huge income and health shock for many households. The household income of many families is declining as rates of unemployment and underemployment rise. Drops in income and the need for larger health spending will make it difficult for some families to cover education costs. While schools, colleges and universities are closed, it is important to ensure that adequate resources are made available for remote learning and to maintain and expand student support programs. To ease the financial problem on households and ensure that students return to learning places, it will be imperative to ensure that they are adequately funded and that they are prevented from seeking additional fees or contributions from parents. The same is also true in our state Manipur. The covid pandemic has impacted Manipur in a significant way. The ever-increasing upsurge of COVID-19 in Manipur, had led to tremendously critical and challenging time in the state. (Maisnam, 2020).

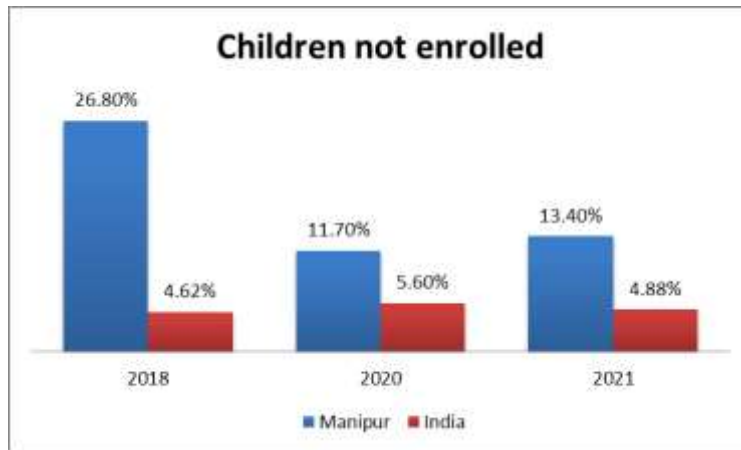


Figure 1: Trend of children not enrolled, Source: ASER 2021

The state was one of worst COVID-hit states in India. In primary standards (Class 1 to 5), the students' dropout rate in Manipur has been the highest among all the states in the country in 2021-22. The given figure also shows that there was a drastic decline in the enrolment of children in schools of Manipur from 2018 to 2020 which is not the case for all India level. However, the fall is impacted by COVID-19 to increase in its aftermath in 2021. This was resulted due to children supporting their families in survival employing themselves in street vending, brick farms, etc. Some other figures of the UDISE (Unified District Information for Education) plus data published by the Union education ministry (available at UDISE+<https://udiseplus.gov.in>) recently have also revealed that the dropout rate for Manipur deteriorated further from 8.6% and 7.4%, recorded in 2020-21 to 13.3% and 9.8% in 2021-22.

The case for higher education in the state also needs to be highlighted as this level of education is directly related to the innovation and adoption of sophisticated economic activities leading to the development of a country or a state. According to the AISHE report 2021, the gross enrolment ratio at all India level is 27% (for person 18-23 years) which is higher even for Manipur; more than 30%. The average enrolment per college is comparatively lower for Manipur in comparison to all India average. However the college density in the state is at par to the national average.

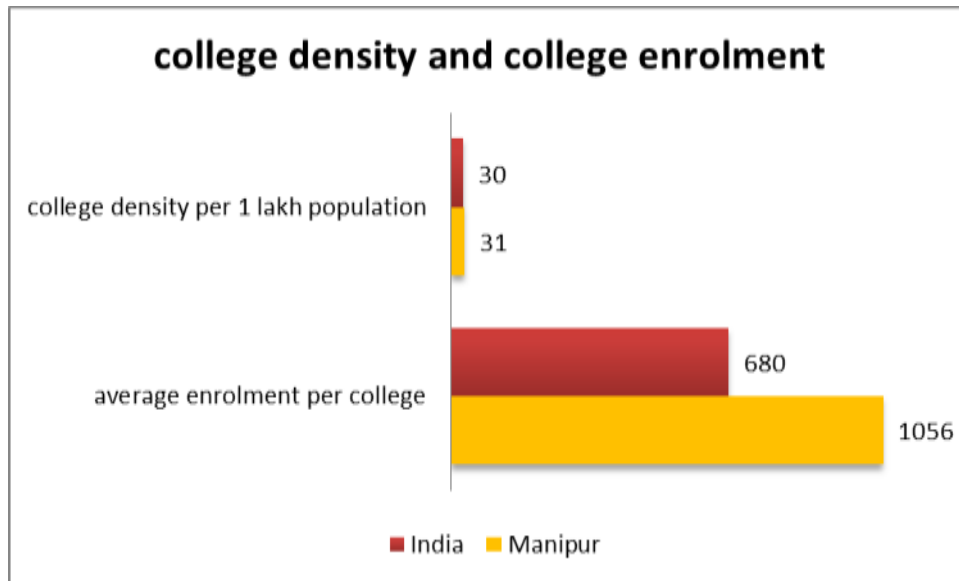


Figure 2: College density and college enrolment of Manipur and India Source: AISHE, 2020

	Enrolment by education level		
	Ph.D.	Postgraduate	Undergraduate
India	202550	4312245	30647287
Manipur	1045	9776	109290
State's share in %	0.52	0.23	0.36

Table 1: Enrolment by education level for Manipur and India, Source: AISHE, 2020

The above table shows that at all India levels nearly 86% drop education after reaching undergraduate and figure is even higher for Manipur at 91%. However, the percentage of students reaching PhD, the level is higher for Manipur in comparison to the national average. The table also highlighted the state's share of enrolment in higher education by levels. Among the three education levels share is minimal for postgraduate with just 0.23%. The scenario of higher education thus presented is the case for pandemic times and the figures are thus very much affected by the consequences resulted from the pandemic of COVID-19. The reconstruction of education is needed at all India level and also with differential treatment to different states taking into consideration of the depth of impact on state's

education.

RECENT GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND EDUCATION

Higher education is essential to a country's competitiveness in an increasingly innovation driven global knowledge economy. Cultivating a highly skilled workforce is crucial as India endeavours to transition to an innovation driven global knowledge economy. The officials are claiming that the underlying principle of NEP 2020 is to improve quality of Indian education system by promoting creativity & innovation. "Creativity & innovation remain at the heart of the NEP" they claim. The National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and replacing the 34-year-old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986. The New Education Policy 2020 is lauded by many as great opportunity. "Watershed moment", "momentous", and "transformative restructuring" have been some of the words used by the government to describe NEP, the first major change in education policy after 3 decades.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to increased awareness on innovation & research. The NEP 2020 provides a strong case for an increased emphasis on innovation & research in India. The NEP provides for a research ecosystem under the National Research Fund (NRF). It aims at providing the required push to create a research ecosystem comprising the government, universities, research institutes and industry. This calls for a concerted effort to make India's Higher education a more competitiveness in an increasingly innovation driven global knowledge economy. A cooperative and collaborative spirit will thus be crucial to plan for a future that puts innovation & research at the forefront. The new idea and new moves will make India a key player in the global research and innovation landscape. Our policymakers should target the higher education sector as a tool for innovation it must expand and transform its higher education sector in order to establish world-class research universities and make India a key player in the global research and innovation landscape. India must be converted into a competitive producer of „future knowledge workers“ The National Education Policy 2020 focuses on strategies needed to promote research and innovation across all disciplines, promote inter-disciplinary research and make India a global hub of R&D.

However, there is a drawback: The overall current public expenditure on education in India has never touched the 6%

of GDP. The expenditure on Research and Innovation (R&I) investment in India has also been only 0.69% of GDP which needs to be increased to compete with major global players in the field - US, China and South Korea etc. Expenditures on R&D are among the indicators used most often to assess a country's capacity for innovation. Indeed, according to the budget document, for the fiscal year 2023-24, the government has allocated INR 1,12,898.97 crores to the Ministry of Education Budget (GOI, 2023). The Higher Education Budget is allotted INR 44,094.62 crores for 2023-24. While the School Education budget for 2023-24 is INR 68,804.85. The budget has emphasised on new age technologies and skill-building programs like Make AI for India" and „Make AI work for India". Indisputably, the future of education is digitization, and NEP is also focussing on e-education in India. Some important allocations related to the Education sector including envisioning teachers" training, establishing 157 new nursing schools, introducing new programmes for training in medical equipment, setting up of three centres of excellence for artificial intelligence in top educational institutions and 100 labs in engineering institutions for developing applications using 5G services, recruiting 38,000 teachers and support staff in the next three years for 740 Eklaya Model Residential Schools and others. Much was expected from the budget around the issues of adequate funding to human infrastructure resources, reducing the digital divide, reintegrating students to school, etc. However, the resource allocation for the education sector is not at par to fulfil the expectations. While the budget continues to focus on digitisation, one cannot oversee the digital divide problem. According to the parliamentary standing committee on education, women, children, youth, and sports, in 2021, in the absence of a device, 77% of students were deprived of online classes during the pandemic. The closure of institutes and eventual shift to the virtual platforms has further alienated students from marginalised sections leading to high dropout rates. Moreover, much was expected regarding the financial roadmap for implementing the NEP in this budget. However, there is no substantial increase in the allocation for the effective implementation of the NEP. Thus an adequate budgetary provision for education in the post-COVID recovery period is a must to compete with major global players in the field. As the country is aiming to become self-reliant or "Atmanirbhar" the Budget 2023-24 needs to invest more in education. On education and health, there are small

increases in outlay in 2023-24 budget in nominal terms, but when inflation is taken into account these sectors would witness a decline in real terms. The most worrying trend in educational expenditure is the emphasis on digital education, non-restoration of Rajiv Gandhi and Maulana Azad Fellowships, and the emphasis on student loans as a financing model for education. All these will have an adverse impact on women/girls education. The Union government has not given much importance to the education sector in the Union Budget. In the last Budget, the govt had announced a digital university and 200 TV channels under the e-Vidya scheme, there was little mention of improving digital infrastructure to make up for the learning loss incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many challenges have emerged post-COVID-19, and the government should have focused on those. The education spending is only available with a significant delay. The ongoing crisis further highlights the need to address these gaps. The primary task before the 2023-24 budget consequently was to stimulate investment in social sector.

Manipur has also been under the shadow of COVID-19 with huge learning losses at all level of education. The policy makers are yet to come out with effective programmes to make up this learning loss. The covid crisis had led to online education. Online and offline education are now here to stay. Poor households of the state have increasingly been put into a risky state as far as the education of their children are concerned. The poor students are still not able to access online education or virtual classroom due to lack of proper electricity and internet connectivity and smartphones and computers. Huge digital divides are also seen between the urban and rural areas. This gap is also visible between girls and boy students. The fiscal support for the education sector is not adequate to enable and recover from the crisis. Public educational institutions are worsening particularly during covid crisis due to a range of issues including inadequate budget among others. Protective measures to address the digital divide, public expenditure on education and massive support for the students is the need of the hour

Conclusion

The pandemic has impacted every walks of life and no area was immune to the consequences of COVID-19. The education system following the great lockdown came to total standstill all over the world. The dropout rates rose drastically in almost all the regions of the world. Some

advanced countries however mitigated the situation with innovative online learning solutions. However, such an option was limited in the Indian case as the access to digital devices that enabled such learning solutions greatly varies across different regions and across different sections of society. The challenges and impacts on education that were posed by the pandemic have to be acted with a big push from the government injecting a huge share of the budget. It is seen that a new education policy has been charted to bring a change in the education system in India. However, the present budgetary allocation is almost not workable. The case for Manipur is presented with huge drop-out rates in comparison to the national average. The higher education for Manipur during pandemic times is also being presented in comparison to all India level. Such differentials among different states have to be acknowledged while allocating resources for reconstructing education in the aftermath of COVID 19 crisis. Also, marginalised sections have been impacted worst. The pandemic is giving rise to learning losses and increase in inequality. To reduce and reverse the long-term negative effects, the government needs to take up number of learning recovery program by increasing its budgetary allocation towards education sector.

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