

Survey on Online Education in Rajasthan

Executive Summary

Covid 19 effected the Education sector the most, as due to announcement of all-India complete lockdown by the PM on just four-hours' notice, no stake-holder got time to visualize and prepare for the adverse impact it could inflict on aspects of life including the education of children. As it now turns out, the children in general and of poor and vulnerable groups of households in particular suffered the most due to suspended in-school teaching for months together. This happened for several reasons like resumption of classes by alternate mode of online but major section of the society in general and poor and deprived sections in particular did not have means to attend the classes, the teachers not being trained to conduct online classes, job losses and related struggle for survival.

Also, reports suggest that the sudden closure of schools for long time without proper preparations has reversed the efforts of past 20-25 years through various schemes in Rajasthan like Shiksha Karmi, Lok Jumbish, DPEP which innovatively worked in making schools available and accessible to each child in the neighborhood. These gains of effective implementation of provisions of the Right to Education Act, 2009 seems to have been lost to some extent.

The Survey

Under such situation, BGVS along with partner organization Doora Dashak, Urmul Trust, Jan Chetna conducted a 'school education survey' to understand the status and impact of online education in Rajasthan during August 28 to Sept 30, 2021. It was conducted by the volunteers of BGVS, Doora Dashak, Urmul trust, Jan chetna and included 1404 randomly selected households from eight districts, namely, Alwar, Ajmer, Baran Bikaner Pali, Jodhpur and Sirohi. Data were gathered using a questionnaire designed for the purposes and related to family details, details of student, studying patterns, online and offline education, views of parents on online education and knowledge level of the children.

Survey Results:

Family related data show that the majority of household belong to SC (25%), ST (34%) and OBC (34%) and rest to upper castes and others. Two-third of the sample households (68%) earned living through wage labour, mere 12% were agriculturist, about nine percent were involved in non-farm work and mere two percent had ensured income through jobs.

Of the total children covered 53% were boys and rest 47 percent girls. In conformity with the social profile it was reported that 80 percent children studied in government schools and mere 19 percent in private schools and rest in other institutions. Class-wise, 70 percent were in 5th to 8th class. With regard to physical interaction with children, 40% never met teachers, other 46% met occasionally and only 12 % reported multiple interactions.

Data regarding study pattern suggest that only 15% children are studying regularly, 50% children are studying sometimes, and one-third have left studies. With respect to online

classes 70% stand totally deprived as they don't have access to smart phones to join classes. Only 7% of the children reportedly study through Online and Video mode. 23 % reported study occasionally and mere five percent regularly. About 21% children reported taking private tuition and studying at home with or without help.

Other articulated problems related to quality of internet, lack of monetary resource to buy data packs, non-availability of teaching and difficulty in understanding online classes. Half the children reported working, of which 20% reported doing household work, 6% farm work and 2% doing paid work. 46% children were not working.

The access to laptop/mobile being crucial, data gathered on this aspect suggest that 96% of children don't have own mobile, only 3% children reported smart phone which they used for online classes. 16% use their parents and 4% use siblings smart phone. However, only 11% children watch videos.

Data further suggest that among those who have access to phones, 11% children could not study online because the family did not have money to buy data, 12% children often or sometimes could not buy data, another 12 % children could not study online because the family did not have money to buy data. Only 11% children could buy data for studying. To sum up, survey shows that only six percent children find online classes easy.

For offline study purposes, in case of 68% children schools provided textbooks or other learning material during lockdown. About 6% got special learning material while 23% students' denied having received any material for learning. In answer to a specific question, 74 % students claimed that no help was given by the school and only 18% got some help

Response of the parents suggest that before lockdown 80% children were going to Govt school out of which 4% were taking tuitions. 19% of children were going to private schools out of which 4% were taking tuitions. 81% parents felt that the learning level of children have declined. However, 2% felt that the leaning level has improved. Only 5% parents reported having smart phones. Overall, 4% were satisfied and 31% reported dis-satisfaction. Almost all-96% parents want the schools to be opened.

Reading test done during the survey reveal that only 27% children were able to read properly while 32 % could not read at all and 39% found it difficult as could to read just few words.

With regard to Mid-Day Meals, mere 67% children got food grains in lieu of meals.

Conclusions

The majority of children belong to socio-economically backward families -SC, ST and OBC who earn livelihood as wage labourers and the children study predominantly in Govt schools. There was severe adverse impact on the education of children which is obvious from the fact as almost 70 percent were deprived access to classes due to lack of device for online classes and among rest many encountered other difficulties like quality of internet, lack of money to buy data packs, problem in understanding etc. Overall only 15% could study regularly and some others occasionally. The survey underlines the importance of physical classes in education of children belonging to socio-economically weaker sections. The text books were

made available to 68% but got no but due to lack of school support the outcome was that 71% of the children could not read or found it very difficult to read. The parents are aware about this as 81% of them accepted that the learning levels of the children have gone down and almost all want the schools to be opened. The sad reality is that most of the children have been out of education and have forgotten whatever they learnt in the past. This can have very serious consequences for the development of the child. In terms of social implications gap between rich and poor will widen and nutrition and health of children too are adversely affected. Immediate corrective actions are needed.

Recommendations

To control the damages, avoid future damages and restore the ground lost by the children we recommend that the following steps should be taken immediately:

- (1) For about 70 percent children who could not attend classes, special bridge courses should be started. For this appropriate platforms and structures should be created, required staff should be arranged and additional funds should be allotted in the forthcoming budget for.
- (2) Special enrolment drive for girls, Dalit, tribal, minority and other vulnerable children should be started.
- (3) Teachers should not be given any other work except teaching activities like National assessment survey etc should not be conducted
- (4) In case any other emergency situation emerges like third wave Corona, the educational activities should be suspended in the affected areas only.