



THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN THE COVID-19 TIMES: EDUCATION'S FRONTLINE WORKERS

Shazia Fatma

Assistant Teacher- Deptt. Of Education B.N.R. Training College, Patna (Bihar), India

Received- 28.04.2020, Revised- 03.05.2020, Accepted - 07.05.2020 Email Id: shaziafatma10@gmail.com

Abstract: *As a result of globalization today's world is way more connected than it ever was. So, any event on one part of the world may have impact on the rest part of the world. But, there is a flip side to it, as it also helps percolate the effects of wars, environmental degradation, downward trend in economy or even epidemics/pandemic. The same is true in case of pandemic like Covid19 and this is how it has landed up in most part of the world including our country, India. It is a pandemic that clearly illustrates how interconnected we are and the fact that there is virtually nothing such as isolated issues or actions. So, the most important challenge before the present age teachers is to sustain the cycle of learning among their students besides ensuring their well-being amidst this deadly pandemic Covid-19. The school needs them as individuals, who can take learning to next level and help their students' cope with the stress of this pandemic.*

The main objective of the study is to explore the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the time of Covid-19. The methodology employed in this paper is based on the use of the body of literature on teacher roles, teachers' work, and the change needed. The study clearly indicated that the teaching profession needs a diversified set of skills. Teachers need to have broad horizons to cope up with the newer problems that are emerging in the wake of this pandemic.

Key Words: Globalization, Percolate, Enviromental, Degradation, Downward, Economy, Covid-19.

INTRODUCTION- There have been a great number of changes in education systems worldwide recently. Together with these changes, new expectations have also appeared towards our system of education. Nowadays our schools need to teach their learners how to gain or access information and how to select and use them. These multitude of changes that are taking place in our schools or our education system, have also changed the roles of teachers.

In earlier times teachers used to be the major source of knowledge, the leader and educator of their students' life. They used to be the authority in the class and often took over the role of parents. Teachers would also organize after-school activities of their students. On the other hand the task of the teacher in today's globalised world is a different deal altogether. We all know that globalization means growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures and populations brought about by cross-border trade in services and goods, technology, and

flows of investment, information and human resources. With globalization, there have been major technological advances in the field of teaching / learning. In order to meet the demands made upon him, the teacher of the day needs multitude of skills. Nowadays, they need to be able to use and handle effectively variety of gadgets or machines such as computer, photocopier, power point, projectors, etc. Instead of sticking to their chalk n talk avatar, they need to be an information technology expert. So the image of the teacher no longer remains the traditional one, it is quite transformational. The major difference between the past and present tasks of teachers is characterized by the technical background of the teachers

Also, as a result of globalization today's world is way more connected than it ever was. So, any event on one part of the world has impact on the rest part of the world. But, there is a flip side to it, as it also percolates the effects of wars, environmental degradation, downward trend in



economy or even epidemics/pandemic. The same is true in case of pandemic like Covid-19 and this is how it has landed up in most part of the world including our country, India. To compound matters, this havoc arrives at a time when we face existential threats of climate change, economic dislocations, terrorism, wars and global famines. It is a pandemic that clearly illustrates how interconnected we are and the fact that there is virtually nothing such as isolated issues or actions. So, yet another challenge for the present age teachers is that, they have to sustain the cycle of learning among their students amidst the deadly pandemic Covid19. The school needs them as individuals, who can take learning to next level and help their students' cope with the stress of this pandemic. At the same time, teachers are also required to work in teams, co-operate with colleagues as well as parents in the virtual space. They are also required to write projects/ programmes to cater to the needs of their diverse learners .

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY-

1. To understand the roles and responsibilities of the teachers with regard to their students' well being (mental as well as physical).
2. To understand the roles and responsibilities of the teachers with regard to their students' learning.

METHODOLOGY- The methodology employed in this paper is based on the use of the body of literature on teacher roles, teachers' work, and the change needed. The study clearly indicated that the teaching profession needs a diversified set of skills.

To understand the roles and responsibilities of the teachers with regard to their students' well being(mental as well as physical)

In such unprecedented times, it is quite normal for individuals to experience higher levels of anxiety and stress. This pandemic Covid-19 has virtually disrupted every aspect of our daily living by pushing all of us into social exclusion which is against our very instinct. Undoubtedly, teachers have to face the additional pressure put on them to not only deliver learning but also support their students'

emotional and physical well being at a time of crisis like Covid-19. Amidst the call for resources to help learners with their diversified needs of learning, there lies an overwhelming need for hope in order to combat this pandemic. Such tough times warrant our collective resilience so as to cope up with the intersecting anxieties our students are facing. So, teachers have to play a very pivotal role in such difficult times.

The following are some suggestions with regard to the new roles and responsibilities that our teachers must assume to ensure the well being of our future generation :

- * Making sure to listen to students' concerns and answer their queries.
- * Introducing the concept of social distancing so as to keep themselves as well as others safe.
- * Focusing on good health behaviours, such as washing hands and covering cough and sneezes.
- * Incorporating relevant health education into other subjects such as Biology or environmental education.
- * Empowering students through media literacy lessons so as to make them critical thinkers. This will help them become effective communicators and active citizens who can detect any misinformation that comes their way and safeguard themselves against rumours and fake news.
- * Reminding students to share healthy behaviours with their families so that the effect of healthy living percolates to the community.
- * Building positive psychology in the students so that they do not fall into the clutches of anxiety and depression.
- * Making them accept reality. It is equally important to make them recognize that there are things which are beyond our control. However, we can turn to healthy coping methods like yoga, exercises, meditation and so on.
- * Exercising purposeful and mindful attention in order to move away from negative thoughts and bring focus to positive ones.



* Encouraging creativity so as to provide catharsis to them.

* Making students keep a diary of daily events, goals and lessons learnt in the wake of this adversity can be helpful. Studies have shown that expressive writing and disclosure of emotional experiences have physical as well as psychological benefits(Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999)

* Long term goals act as a counteracting force to combat fear and anxiety. These goals help substitute the rumination with reflection thereby preparing students for the potential future. This provides to build a connection of the present with the future and with specific ideas regarding how the future will unfold. With regard to this there are various online portals which are disseminating knowledge about various career options at hand such as National Career Service, Bihar Career Portal, National Portal of India and so on.

To understand the roles and responsibilities of the teachers with regard to their students' learning We all know that necessity is the mother of invention. This dire situation may be seen as an opportunity for teachers as well as learners, across the board, to become more advanced, creative, empowered and innovative. We all know that online education has been around for more than a decade now but unfortunately it did not take over the conventional system in the Pre Covid era. So the present times may be seen as an opportunity to make it a norm. In fact, it can help us a great deal to come out of the inertia with regard to the online learning. Institutions are under pressure to not lose academic time. And this can be made possible only by reinventing their teaching /learning. So, it is rather clear that online learning is the need of the hour. Hence it is the most important role of the teacher to prepare students to encounter the challenges of the present era. On one hand the teacher has to equip the students in order to keep pace with the technological innovations and scientific knowledge but on the other hand he/she has to bring awareness in the students about the multitude of challenges

that the world is facing with the advent of science and technology. Thus, managing teaching - learning in today's world is a challenging task for the teachers. The knowledge with which they once graduated to become a teacher has become insufficient now. Therefore, they need to keep themselves updated with the fast growing teaching and information technology. In order to meet the demands of the globalized world, teachers need a diversified set of skills. Teachers nowadays are required to have broad horizons to cope up with tremendous era of science and technology. Such extraordinary times warrant a transition on the part of teacher so as to switch to online teaching. There are various tools tailored for them to make their work easy, such as video chat, virtual white board, document collaboration, screen recording and video production etc. Among these certain tools might be a bit sophisticated with regard to the majority of our student population but there are others, that are quite simple and can reach even the underprivileged section of the students. Besides these tools, there are government run online junctions, mobile apps and television channels/ programmes which can come to the aid of teachers. One of such app working in Bihar is Unnayan Mera Mobile Mera Vidyalaya app for classes 6th to 12th. Some other junctions working across the country are :

- * SHAGUN Online junction- three learning platform which comes under the purview of SHAGUN are- NREOE, DIKSHA, e-Pathshala
- * SWAYAM
- * SWAYAM PRABHA
- * NAD
- * NDLI
- * VIRTUAL LABS

CONCLUSION- The lockdown of educational institutions in our country is going to cause major interruption in students' learning. In order to mitigate the negative impacts of this, our teachers have to be very innovative in terms of the use of resources. Given the fact, that we already



have very limited resources at hand, the teachers of the day have to judiciously use the resources to make up for the loss that has been done by this pandemic. They have to not only think of students' learning but at the same time ensure their physical and mental well-being. During these uncertain times they have to be committed to continue the learning experiences of their students by adapting themselves to an alternate model of online classes and learning resources. Online education appears to be the most viable alternative to classroom education for a time span of at-least three to four months until situation starts to normalize. Although online learning can never substitute classroom interactions or field trips yet it is the only possible way by which the learning cycle can move ahead.

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