

Draft

Best Practice

Ghar Se Padhao Abhiyan:

The State Disseminates e- Learning During COVID-19

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In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the world is struck in a complete void. As a result of lockdown students have suffered a lot in their academic pursuit. This constraint needs to be overcome by adopting unconventional techniques and methodologies of reaching out to the students. This is the time when systems and procedures for e-delivery of courseware are embraced with the extensive use of e-learning and other modes of digital outreach. With the changes corona virus has forced us to bring in various aspects of life, on-line seems to be the imminent mode of education, at least in the immediate future.

With this sudden shift away from the classrooms in many parts of the globe, some are wondering whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic, and how this shift would impact the worldwide education scenario. Studies have shown that children extensively use their senses to learn, hence, it is very crucial to make it fun and effective through the use of technology.

The Context

There are 8,686 government-run primary, 2,423 middle and 1,154 high schools spread across 22 districts of Haryana. Department of School Education, Haryana took an innovative approach to confront the academic and organisational challenges faced by the education sector. Even before the national closedown, in the third week of March, the Government of Haryana shut down the schools as a temporary measure to contain the spread of Coronavirus. As the crisis deepened further students were advised to stay indoors for their safety and protection. There was no clarity as to when the schools will re-open. The assumption was that the scary phase of this deadly virus would pass away soon which unfortunately did not happen. That rendered lakhs of students sitting in their homes having no access to education, it became essential to take immediate measures to ensure continuity of learning for all the school students of Haryana.

e-Learning Initiative

In these circumstances the Chief Minister of Haryana Shri Manohar Lal Khattar gave a visionary 3S Mantra 'Stay at home, study at home and school at home' for home-bound students. To support this initiative, the department of education department and State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) launched Ghar Se PadhaoAbhiyan, an e-learning campaign to connect parents and students with over 50,000 teachers through WhatsApp, SMS and phone calls across the state to start academic activities. It was a big challenge to prevent academic loss of students during lockdown period, e-learning platforms for 52 lakh students of class I to XII across the state.

It was realized that not all the students are equipped to avail e-learning platforms and this practice might benefit only 20 percent of the students. Efforts are made to make these modules available in both Hindi and English. Haryana became the first state in the country to

use TV for providing distance education during lockdown period. Almost all the DTH providers and local cable services were roped in for this purpose.

Collaborators

In this time of crisis, a well-crafted educational practice was the need of the hour. With this realization, the Department of School Education, Haryana with the joint efforts of various educationists in the state formed various strategies to provide access to students to various e-learning platforms without causing any financial burden. Steps were taken so that the learning- process of the student is not hindered during the lockdown. It is ensured that they stay connected to their syllabus as well as the teachers so that they can resume learning without much gap once the crisis gets over.

The contribution of SCERT has been valuable for the Saksham Haryana initiative. Rigorous efforts were made to make these learning platforms accessible to maximum number of students.

Guidelines

Student-oriented guidelines have been prepared for the new system:

- EduSAT content to be re-telecast to compensate for possible disruption in electricity supply in rural areas.
- Class, subject and topic-wise time table to be shared daily through 200+ teacher WhatsApp groups.
- Teachers to create class-wise WhatsApp groups with parents to clear students' doubts and provide additional learning material and practice questions.
- Dedicated helpline for student to provide information about e-learning initiatives.
- Academic topics covered in EduSAT may be revised in class again as per the feedback from students/parents.
- Parents may report via Google Form if they do not have teacher's contact details for CMGGA to resolve the request.

The Challenges and Solutions of Online Learning

There were, however, challenges to overcome. First and the foremost challenge is to create and source course material according to the prescribed syllabus. Some students without reliable internet access or technology or both, struggled to participate in digital learning; this gap was seen across the state. The proposal of e-learning brought with its certain limitations of digital amenities, particularly in the rural areas of Haryana where children could not get internet access so easily. Taking this initiative to national television was a way forward. Steps are afoot to prepare the content that can be transferred via text messages also.

Another hindrance was non-availability of text-books. The age-old tradition of sharing books from the elder students covered up the issue in this era of digitalization. The department has left no stone unturned in making learning possible despite the hardships the whole country is going through during the lockdown.

Outcome

According to Saksham, the monitoring cell for this campaign, 8.5 lakh students from Classes I to XII are being engaged daily. At the end of a week, 1800 mentors call 15 parents each for feedback. The report on 26th April 2020 showed that the distance/e-learning initiative had reached the households of more than 85% of the school-students of Haryana. A user feedback was provided by Kiran, a student of Class VIII of GGSSS, Naraingarh, Ambala who just opens her WhatsApp, downloads the notes provided by her teacher, listens to the audio-lecture, watches videos on the link provided to comprehend the lesson better and then chats with the teacher to clear her doubts daily. She also watches television to learn, understand and attend the classes being arranged by the Education Department, Haryana through Utkarsh Society and EDUSAT in collaboration with the DTH providers and local cable TV operators.

Lakhs of students are availing this distance/ e-learning platform from the confines of their homes, safe and secure. A dedicated website www.haryanaedusat.com has also been created to support e-learning. A daily timetable is prepared by the Academic Cell of the department and circulated via e-communication modes. The teachers and the Heads of the schools further share it with the students either by calling them telephonically or by sending it on the WhatsApp. The issues like regular power cuts especially in the rural parts of the state, were also taken into consideration and, hence, the lessons are re-telecasted on TV for the convenience of the students. It is ensured that if a lesson is missed by a student due to any type of interruption, it can be watched in a slot on television.

Feedback

To strengthen this further and ensure that the students utilize this platform in the best possible manner, feedback forms have been created. The teachers and the educationists, involved in the process are regularly filling these forms and the district level offices redirect them to the Directorate in compiled formats. A keen interpretation is done to carefully analyse and prepare remedial strategies for any shortcoming and also to increase the number of students attending these virtual classrooms.

While Maths and Hindi lessons are being taught to primary school students, the focus is on Science and Maths of middle and high schools. Teachers contact parents over phone also to share homework every day and students are maintaining a dedicated notebook to record their activities at home. "The content is coming from multiple sources and it is being evaluated and monitored at the state level before being sent to the teachers," an official said.

Some mobile based applications for effective delivery of education have also been initiated. The recently launched 'SamparkBaithak' for classes I to V have been well received and appreciated by all the stakeholders in the state. The 'ChalkLit' and 'Diksha' apps are also being widely used for the convenience of providing e-learning platforms to the students.

Some Other Student-Welfare-Steps

- All the students from classes 1st to 8th have been promoted to the next classes without any examination. The results of class 11 students were declared despite their inability to appear for Maths exam. The Board results of class 10 are being prepared from home by the teachers so that no delay happens in the process.

- The text books which used to be given to students without any cost got disturbed due to the lockdown, so the books are now being exchanged from seniors to juniors with the help of school managements, panchayats and parents.
- The department is strictly observing the private schools so that they charge the fees monthly and not semester-wise and no extra burden is put on the parents.
- Nutritious dry food has been distributed to students at their homes, under the guidelines of honourable Supreme Court, so that no child is malnourished during these times of crisis.

Conclusion

Corona Pandemic has transformed the age old chalk-talk teaching model in the state giving place to a technology-driven teaching model without weakening the pivot role of a teacher. There was a ground-breaking initiative by the state government which proved very important and useful for the students during lockdown. The state government created e-learning platform for the students of government schools almost in line with the ones being carried out by private schools. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of disseminating knowledge to all parts of society under all circumstances. Full potential of online learning and teaching technology needs to be explored for this purpose.

It has been decided by the government that until the schools re-open in July, teachers will not only continue to engage the students in academic activities but they are also expected to help students who are weak in Mathematics and Science and need hand-holding.