

INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR-CUM LECTURE SERIES ON OCTOBER 28-30, 2020

An International Webinar-cum Lecture Series on Educational Transformation in the Era of COVID'19: Challenges and Issues was organized by the All India Association for Educational Research (AIAER) and International Forum of Researchers in Education (IFORE) in collaboration with the Institute of Professional Studies College of Education, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh on 28-30 October at 5PM -8PM daily. On each day there were 3 speakers. The speakers from 9 different countries were: 1.Prof. Rossano André Dal-Farra, Brazil; 2. Dr. Bidyadhar Sa, Trinidad & Tobago, 3. Prof. (Ms.) Sandra Poirier, United States; 4.Prof. (Ms.) Beatrice Ávalos-Bevan, Chile; 5. Prof. V.M. Rajasekaran Pillai, India; 6.Prof. Izhar Oplatka, Israel; 7. Prof. Ananda Kumar Palaniappan, Malaysia; 8. Dr. (Mrs) Rekha B Koul, Australia and 9. Prof. John Benedicto Krejsler, Denmark. On the 1st day, the programme was inaugurated by Dr. Arun Kumar Tyagi, Director, IPS groups of Institutions. Dr.(Mrs.) Rama Tyagi, Principal of the College and co-host, introduced the guest. Prof. Rossano André Dal-Farra, Graduate Program in Teaching Sciences and Mathematics at Lutheran University of Brazil. in his lecture gave a vivid description of the challenges and strategies being implemented to tackle the situation, pointing out how the efforts being made by his nation would not be able to fill up the vacuum in learning spaces created by COVID-19, in near future. It may take a few years to normalize the teaching learning activities. Dr. D.K. Diwan from Haryana gave the concluding remarks and thanks. After introduction by Dr. Sunil Behari Mohanty, President, All India Association for Educational Research and Co-host of the programme, Dr. Bidyadhar Sa, an teaching technology expert in a medical university in West Indies spoke about Educational disruption caused by COVID 19, Challenges created by COVID 19 for Medical Education, Mitigation strategies for Medical Education during COVID 19, Impact of mitigation strategies and Strategies to deal with same and Futuristic of Medical Education. He discussed badly affected medical and paramedical education because this type of education is mainly practical based education, and it is very difficult to maintain the education level in this situation of pandemics. He emphasised on the increased involvement 21st century learning and teaching tools such as educational and web-conference software as well as simulation experimental software because medical research required clinical data, which is only collected by direct physical examinations. Concluding Remarks and thanks were given by Prof. Pradeep Chouhan of the IPS College of Pharmacy, Gwalior thanked Dr. Sa and in his concluding remarks the necessities of online education, online student evaluation methods and clinical studies to cope up the challenges generated due current pandemic. In the third and last lecture of the evening, after Dr. (Mrs.) Rama Tyagi's introduction, Prof. (Ms.) Sandra Poirier, [Nutrition and Food Science Program, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN](#), United States Discussing situation in her country said that a Harvard researcher added up the number of years that Americans who died from Covid-19 might have lived had they reached a typical life expectancy. A new paper estimates that over 2.5 million years of potential life have been lost to COVID-19 in the United States.spoke about huge loss in learning pathways and traumatic stress inflicted upon the learner community at different stages of education. Issues pointed out by her included exploring strategies to take common teaching strategies online, reaching out to families to check in on student wellbeing, having icebreakers for tackling socio-emotional blockages, making teachers to be real persons, not limiting themselves to assigners of task, creating a detailed study plan in the absence of or in reduced face to face teaching learning opportunities, making leaderships innovative in their approaches. Concluding Remarks and thanks were given by Prof. (Mrs.) K. Chellamani of Pondicherry University, who highlighted the salient points from the talk and underlined the element of inter-personal interactions out of equations. Evaluating each other's learning and exchanging feedback on performance help students to operate in a co-operative and active environment promoting accountability, kinship, interdependence, and deeper understanding of concepts.

On the second day in the first session of the evening, after Dr. (Mrs.) Rama Tyagi's introduction, Prof. (Ms.) Beatrice Ávalos-Bevan, from Centre for Advanced Research in Education, University of Chile, Santiago, Chile in her deliberation discussed findings of a study on the impact of COVID-19 over teachers' lives, their teaching and students. Majority of teachers spoke it was unfair to be required to teach in distance form. However, during previous week of reporting 60% teachers reported contacting students for matters related to the course they teach. About 70% of respondents, sent very week materials to students or to their parents and only 38% reported taking interactive classes once a day for a few

hours. As regards main difficulty in teaching at a distance, difficulties reported were: “I have neither the knowledge nor the expertise to handle the software”-67%, “I don’t have the required equipment (computer, tablet, etc.)”-77%, “I do not have good internet access”-67% and “I don’t have a quiet place to work”-55%. About 66% students said that there was a lot of distraction in their homes. It is a sign of progress that teachers have strived to defeat the pandemic in their own way as majority of teachers said “I have learnt new things that have helped me to teach”. Some of the sources of concern reported by teachers were: “My students’ emotional wellbeing”, “Learning level of my students”, Students’ family economic issues”, “My parent’s health”, My children’s emotional state”, “My children’s health”, “My emotional health”, “My partner’s health”. Majority of teachers reported help and support from colleagues. Teachers used WhatsApp groups and sent out learning capsules of no more than 3 and a half minutes long ... and also used face books. Prof Beatrice was of the opinion that in Chile, far from remaining aloof or complaining, teachers have been actively working to lower learning gaps among students, they have a professional discourse that includes socio-emotional support and confinement is producing pedagogic innovation and opening the way to change. The efforts provided new knowledge about students and their families and renewed appreciation of school’s community support. Concluding remarks and thanks were given by Prof. (Mrs.) Jahitha Begum of Gandhigram Rural Institute, Tamil Nadu. In the second session, after introduction by Dr. Sunil Behari Mohanty, Prof. V. N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice- Chancellor of Somaiya Vidyavihar University and Provost of Somaiya Vidyavihar and Somaiya Ayurvihar under the Somaiya Trust, Mumbai and Chancellor of ICAI University, Tripura and Ex-Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU, MG University, Kottayam, Kerala and Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kerala spoke at length about the disastrous consequences of COVID-19 on the Indian higher education system and discussed about various ongoing efforts and suggested certain strategies to be evolved for tackling the issues. According to him, technology cannot teach, only teachers can teach. Loss of face to face interaction of students with experts got reduced affecting quality of research deliberations. Tackling the pandemic in education system necessitates new norms related to approaches to teaching, definition of work space, working hours of institutions, and professional working groups. There was a greater need for networking among institutions and having cross border networks. Concluding remarks and thanks were given by Prof. Bhujendra Nath Panda, Dean, Research, Regional Institute of Education (NCERT) at Bhubaneswar, Odisha. In the third and last lecture of the evening, after Dr. (Mrs.) Rama Tyagi’s introduction, Prof. Izhar Oplatka, Professor of Educational Administration and Leadership at The School of Education, Tel Aviv University, Israel. In his talk, prof. Izhar cited various problems being faced by education systems in most of the nations, which have been seriously affected by COVID 19. He pointed out problems in his nation

- 30% of the first/second graders don’t participate in the lessons.
- 490,000 students can’t connect to the Net.
- Unprivileged families can’t cover the expenses of printing learning materials.
- 34% of the parents reported having insufficient computers at home.
- The effectiveness of learning via Zoom is very limited.
- Rich parents hire special tutors for their kids.
- A feeling of lost year in education.
- An increase in latent dropout, especially among disadvantaged population.

According to him, it is important to open schools, at least because each day in which the students out of school costs 800,000\$.

His solutions included

1. 2 meters between children, special equipment for teachers against Corona; alcohol gel in every class
2. Different solutions for different places (Special education, students at-risk, lower grades vs. upper grades)
 - a. Kindergarten: all kids in the same setting
 - b. 1-2 grades: half of the class in the school for 3 days.
 - c. 3-4 grades: only 18 kids in one classroom.
 - d. 5-6 grades: zoom, two days in the school (18 kids in class). If possible, they will attend school 3 days a week.
 - e. 7-12 grades: Zoom plus two days in school (half class each time).

A few initiatives that he proposed for his nation applicable to other affected nations were:

- 1.A massive purchase of new programs for e-teaching
- 2.The development of new digital contents.
- 3.In service training for instructional staff in digital teaching/learning.
- 4.Infrastructure – increasing internet Wi-Fi in schools, a purchase of more computers.
- 5.Lending lap-tops to unprivileged children.

He concluded by referring to confusion and uncertainty – main responses to the crisis in education and accompanied fears about the emotional development of young children/ the achievements of the graduates. Concluding remarks and thanks were given by Prof. (Ms.) Prof. Ms. Brinda Bazeley Kharbiryumbai, Dept. of Education, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya.

On the third day, after Dr. (Mrs.) Rama Tyagi's introduction, Prof. Ananda Kumar Palaniappan, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia and Ex-Professor of Education University of Malaysia Malaysia, started his talk with the history of conquest of COVID which had adverse impact on health including mental health, education, economy, social, political and even moral values and ethics. He said that although 90% of Malaysians are technology literate, but most were not prepared for 100% online education. Many rural areas were lacking internet access. Malaysia government provided 1GB free internet through selected telco companies throughout the Movement Control Order. Referring to global scenario, he said that most affected are those from under-privileged families / rural / special needs children. Prolonging the time to graduation places an additional burden on students' finances by increasing both the total cost of an education and the time for the student to begin working. COVID-19 has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. While wealthier communities use more demanding technologies (virtual and mixed reality, telepresence) poorer ones turn to tools with lower infrastructure demands (asynchronous video, audio, images and text). School closures tend to reinforce inequalities. Use of digital means such as Google Meet, Zoom, Webex, Teams and others are helpful to most students, but accessing these cost money. COVID-19 has widen the gap between the rich and the poor. ▪ While wealthier communities use more demanding technologies (virtual and mixed reality, telepresence) poorer ones turn to tools with lower infrastructure demands (asynchronous video, audio, images, and text). ▪ School closures tend to reinforce inequalities. ▪ Use of digital means such as Google Meet, Zoom, Webex, Teams and others are helpful to most students, but accessing these cost monies. To tackle the pandemic created learning loss, teachers explore many varied ways of delivering material and engaging students online by tapping into their own creativity and use break-out sessions in Online Teaching Platforms (OTP) - Organize thinking games / puzzle during on-line classes and points for winners. The pandemic has accelerated the process of digital transformation. Wider use of telephone, SMS, radio and television for broadcasting lessons and homework especially for rural areas with little or no internet access. Concluding remarks and thanks were given by Prof. V.M. Reghu, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

In the second session, after introduction by Dr. Sunil Behari Mohanty, Dr. (Mrs) Rekha B. Koul, Dean International, Faculty of Humanities, and Asso. Prof. at School of Education, Curtin University, Australia in her presentation, gave stress on improving learning environment led to development of tools such as Learning Environment Inventory, My class Inventory, Classroom environment scale, Individualized Classroom Environment Questionnaire, College & University Classroom Environment Inventory, Our Class and Its Work, Science Laboratory Environment Inventory, Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction, Computer Assisted Learning Environments, and Constructivist Learning Environment Survey. Dr. Koul concluded her talk with the final slide of her presentation that listed success of her university in becoming a leader in online teaching with more than two decades of experience, delivering most successful teacher training programme in fully online mode with up to 12K enrolments per year, remote labs in sciences to simulations in business and health sciences, partnership with EdX produced 30+ Mooc's and in development of Challenge a gamified project platform. Systems in use were: Akari, Blackboard, Challenge, Collaborate, Dixon, iLecture, IRIS, SoNIA, Turnitin, Unit Outline Builder. Strategic Projects were :Digital Learning, Teaching Excellence, Learning Analytics, Curriculum Transformation. Concluding remarks and thanks were given by Prof. Nil Rattan Roy, Tejpur University, Nappam, Assam.

As due to communication gap in timing, there was a delay in availability of the next speaker from Denmark, Dr. Sunil Behari Mohanty discussed about extent of damage caused by COVID-19 demon in different nations and pointed out the WorldOMeters statistics of 30th October listing India as a very listed death per million population among nations was highest in San Marino-1,237. Other severely affected nations having high death rates were: Peru -1,037, Belgium-962, Andorra-944, Spain - 762, Brazil -746, Bolivia-741, Chile-736, Ecuador-712, United States -706. Mexico-698, United Kingdom-676, Argentina-672, Italy-631, Panama-617, Colombia-606, Sweden-586, France-551..The nations having less than one death per million population were: 0.08-Burundi, 0.3 Taiwan, Tanzania, 0.4-Vietnam, 0.8 Papua New Guinea, Thailand, and 0.9 - Sri Lanka. India figure was 87. Dr. Mohanty suggested that in coming two years all institutions including Anganwadis to function throughout the year and central and state governments need to modify service rules for all categories of teachers to make them get leave as applicable to non-teaching employees of the institutions, etc.

In the last session of the evening, after Dr. (Mrs.) Rama Tyagi's introduction, Prof. John Benedicto Krejsler from the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark and current President of the Nordic Educational Research Association spoke about the scenario of Danish education system during current pandemic, especially when there has been another wave. He focused on problematization of consequences of disconnect from physical world in favor of digital life. Denmark, Sweden, and the EU reacted with national solutions first, but then afterwards coordinated big bail-out package. He wondered about answers to questions such as:

1. What are consequences of asking children (school and pre-school) not to touch, hug and come close to friends and caring adults?
2. What are the short, middle and long term consequences of lockdown for academic life at universities and in research?
3. How does it affect research that you do not meet colleagues physically in their contexts/ at conferences and so forth?
4. Do we develop 'ingrowing obesity' when our lives move online?
5. What happens to ability for empathy when you are deprived of physical encounters/presence?

He concluded with the statement that digital life although a wonderful and enriching supplement to physical life and encounters..... but, is a poor substitution when it takes over and becomes your overwhelming reality and the nations have to digest this truth.

Concluding remarks and thanks were given by Dr. Sunil Behari Mohanty, President of the AIAER and one of the founder members of IFORE. After Dr. (Mrs.) Rama Tyagi's thanks to all, the webinar cum lecture series ended with thanks by Prof.(Mrs.) Kalpana Kushwah of the host institution.