



## ACCESS, EQUITY AND INCLUSION OF HINDI MEDIUM STUDENTS IN EDUCATION AT THE TIME OF COVID-19

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### ABSTRACT

This is the time when the whole world is locked down with a fear of his/her own life because of ongoing pandemic of corona virus disease 2019(COVID-19). All activities are stopped for an uncertain period.

Students from K-12 or from higher education, all are stuck in home and their studies are stopped. This environment has affected their physical and mental health. For well being of all- schools, colleges and universities have taken an initiative of 'Online Learning' to educate them and lessen the loss of their studies for these academic sessions. This is a very good decision and demand of the hour as well. It is available for anyone, anytime and anywhere which is the main characteristic of Distance education itself. It gives accessibility, flexibility and equity to all the learners.

Now all the institutions are using online teaching learning method with their own made teaching materials, some are using OER and some are providing to the students the ready made contents to the students that are available in the market by educational content developers which are available in English medium. In this situation, Hindi medium students are facing problems related to the language of medium of instruction, lack of knowledge of handling the computers and all the latest apps suggested by the institution and also feel inferiority complex because of not being able to do the proposed work. Wittgen Ludwig said- "The limit of my language is the limit of my world" (Bialystok, 2001).

In this scenario, somehow the students are trying to operate computers and latest apps but they are not getting their course content in their own language. That's why they wouldn't understand the content properly.

According to Pal (2016), who study through vernacular medium, face difficulty in acquiring programming knowledge in English medium of instruction and it became very difficult to cope up in international front.

For progress, English is in demand. It is in use for centuries but yet it is not in reach for most of the people and perceived as a killer of native and indigenous languages... GOI, 2007 (Ramanujam, 2011)

Here the researchers wants to emphasize on distance learners who are studying through Hindi medium and who have completed their schooling from Hindi medium government school. Mostly they belong to low or lower middle income groups who can't afford costly computers at home nor they have proper computer training. That's why they are not technically proficient to handle all the apps and understand the course content. In this study the researchers wanted to bring in notice the problems of Hindi medium students who also want to study at home in this crucial time but due to many constraints they are unable to do the same. In this study narrative review method will be used to examine the socio economic, psychological and language related problems of those students and try to find out possible solution of the problem. Although this study is focusing on Hindi Medium Students but covers broader arena and relates to all the students who are studying or studied in mother tongue/ vernacular/ regional languages.

**KEYWORDS :** Online Learning, Equity, Access, Inclusion, Hindi Medium Students, Distance learners, Vernacular/ regional languages

### Literature Review

Pal and Iyer (2012) conducted a study on acquisition on programming skills and reveal that students who did their schooling in their local languages have higher difficulty level in acquiring programming skills and as a result, they get low achievement in university exams.

In their study they took 1 hour video lecture on introductory programming in an engineering college with three groups of 31 students each.

- 1) The control group had Hindi medium students who took lectures in English.
- 2) The experimental group had Hindi medium students watching the corresponding Hindi videos.
- 3) As a base line, they had English medium students who watched the English medium videos.

Researchers did survey to collect data about student's prior knowledge on which they divided three groups. After lectures, post test was given based on thirty minutes quantitative analysis. Although the results are not very significant because of programming which was of introductory level and more time is required in this kind of researches but they strongly recommend after doing comparative study on English and Korean medium instruction in Korea and found that Korean MOI gives better understanding.

Sunil Kumar (2015) "5 common problems faced by students in E-learning and how to overcome them" ([https:// elearning](https://elearning)

[industry.com/ 5-common-problems-faced-by-students-in-elearning-overcome](https://elearningindustry.com/5-common-problems-faced-by-students-in-elearning-overcome)), The paper says that although E-learning is flexible in terms of time and place but some factors stopped students to complete their work for the reasons-

1. Adaptability struggle
2. Technical issues
3. Computer Literacy
4. Time management
5. Self motivation

Attitude change and technological literacy are the solutions which would help them gain confidence and success.

### There are many strengths and weaknesses of online learning.

**Strengths are-** Anywhere and anytime availability, synergy between teachers and students, high quality dialog, students centered, according to level of students, access to resources, creative teaching are included in them.

**Weaknesses-** Problems of equity and accessibility to technology for all, computer competency, limitations of technology, non motivated student's attitude, improper quality of online course, incompatible staff and administration towards the change of traditional teaching to technological teaching, improper content and curriculum are the weaknesses of online learning ([https:// elearningindustry.com/5-common-problems-faced-by-students-in-elearning-overcome](https://elearningindustry.com/5-common-problems-faced-by-students-in-elearning-overcome)).

The education trust- New York released 6 specific steps to

educational institution to promote institutional equity and preserve student's well being in this pandemic period using transparency and protection of public health, reduce panic and confusion and ordered to remove educational inequalities with following steps-

- 1) Access to learning material with equity
- 2) Working with teaching staff to provide support
- 3) Special arrangements for disabled students, English learners and students who are living in temporary house
- 4) Provide food to the students who rely on school meals
- 5) Co-ordination with trusted community partners
- 6) Connect families to other services that they need

(<https://newyork.edtrust.org/press-release/ed-trust-ny-highlights-6-steps-schools-can-take-to-address-educational-equity-if-required-to-close-due-to-coronavirus/>)

Teja (2020) mentioned In this pandemic period ,in all the universities and other educational institutions, academic activities are stilled .The University Grants Commission (UGC), Higher Education Councils have directed universities for virtual or online education using apps such as Zoom, What's App or YouTube, Discord, Slack and Proficonf. Due to the lockdown, students have been asked to go back to their hometowns (mainly in rural areas) where the internet connectivity is not good. They have to depend on data plans on mobile phones, which is also not very fast. Teja(2020) further said based on interviews of some university students, these challenge are seen e.g. technical knowhow and uneasiness in attending an online learning, worry about attendance, which is mandatory to appear for exams are the problems which students are facing. Even faculty members don't have technical knowledge about administration of online classes. S Chandraiah, Assistant Professor in the Telugu Department of AV Post Graduate College (Osmania University), said, "We are seeking less complicated, alternatives and user-friendly platforms to give lectures and engage with students."

## METHODOLOGY

In this study narrative review method is used to examine the socio economic, psychological and language related problems of Hindi medium students and try to find out possible solutions of the problems. For this purpose thorough review of related literature is done.

### Access, Equity and Inclusion in Education

Access to education means to get approach to the means of education in every manner (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/access>). Online education gives this access to every student from its own side. No doubt many students are taking advantage of it but many people do not have access to this facility. Reasons are –

#### 1) Socio-economic reasons:

It is necessary to have computers and internet to get access of these online learning facilities. According to ericsson.com (2020) "We're committed to improving educational opportunities for children around the world through technology. This investment is essential for increasing access to education and developing the digital skills of our future workforce. The Connect to Learn initiative has reached over 200,000 students located across 25 countries to date". In this period of lockdown it is the only hope for education to get access of technology to move further but the socio economic condition does not allow many learners to have computers and internet facilities. Sometimes electricity problems also occur and disturb the ongoing online classes especially in rural areas. Sometimes academic staff members are not competent to organize these classes properly. For distance education students, it is more important to have these facilities

as they don't have face to face classes in regular way. For that they must have computer literacy But the Data shows that before joining higher education, they are not provided computer training properly as there were shortage of computers in their respective schools.

"Nearly 78 per cent of schools in India still don't have internet facilities and more than 61 per cent do not have computers, the latest UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education) data released by the central government for 2019-20 shows. This UDISE data covers both government and private schools"( <https://theprint.in/india/education/only-39-schools-in-india-had-computers-22-had-internet-access-in-2019-20-govt-data-shows/68>)

#### 2) Psychological reasons:

Non availability of means of online classes puts bad effects on the learner's psychology when they do not find the proper environment and means for the classes. Gradually they lose interest in studies. Sometimes when electricity doesn't work or not provided on time, they miss the class and never try to see it later. The distance learners who can't see or meet their DE counselors, Online classes are the only mean to continue their studies .So, Proper access and motivation both are very essential for them.

#### 3) Language related reasons:

Language plays a vital role in comprehension. Education given in the second language always hinders the quality of education but education faculties never accept this fact(Rathore and Pancholi,2013). In online classes, learners find content in English medium which is not understandable completely. Learners join the course half heartedly and gain improper knowledge like half cooked broth. In this way they don't get proper access to the education especially in the DE system.

#### Equity

According to teacher magazine "Equity in education is often viewed as equivalence or sameness". The Cambridge dictionary defines equity as "the situation in which everyone is treated fairly and equally." The implication is that equity depends on equality of treatment. Online Learning gives equity to all the learners without restriction of age, gender, race, religion, etc. In this way it's a very generous kind of teaching but the background of all learners are not same then how equal treatment is logical? These are some constraints in this field-

#### 1) Socio-economic problems:

Although the institutions are providing facility of online learning to all but when the learners do not have access to the technology, equity will be a dream only. For example, govt. says everybody can go on the top of Qutub Minar without any ticket. It is free for all. Can everybody go there? They must have courage, stamina, time and willingness to go there. Same in this position, online learning is available for all but availability of appropriate means of technology, willingness, time, same level of competence, etc. should be there in the learner's attitude. Then only the target of providing equity will be fulfilled.

#### Psychological problems:

In face to face teaching-learning process, the academic counselors know their students and their academic status. They can help them if there is any difficulty in understanding of content, but in distance education with online learning it is very difficult to find out the difficulty level of the learners. So, neither the equity in instructions and assignments will be fit for everyone nor public school English medium students are equal to govt. school Hindi medium students in terms of academic performance, level of competency/comprehension,

availability of facilities and so on.

### 1) Language related problems:

In online classes, all the languages are not available. So learners who are not from English medium background can't be treated the same. Their level of understanding must meet the level of course and language competency proficiency; otherwise equity issue will not be solved.

The 7th Survey's Media of Instruction In primary schools, 92.07 percent of students are taught in their mother tongue. In a comparison of rural and urban schools, 92.39 percent of rural schools and 90.39 percent of urban schools educate in the mother tongue. In 46.79 percent of primary schools, 47.41 percent of upper primary schools, 41.32 percent of secondary schools, and 48.11 percent of higher secondary schools, Hindi is being used as the language of instruction.

English is utilized as a medium of instruction in 12.98 percent of primary schools, 18.25 percent of upper primary schools, 25.84 percent of secondary schools, and 33.59 percent of higher secondary schools. ([https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/programmes/7thSurvey%20Reports/Mediaof\\_intruction.pdf](https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/programmes/7thSurvey%20Reports/Mediaof_intruction.pdf))

### Inclusion

Inclusion is an educational philosophy which says that learners should be included in the mainstream in spite of having any special educational needs (Wang, 2009) It depends on the resources of the institution. This inclusion is not meant only for challenged learners but all the learners who are having difficulty in being adjusted in mainstream due to any reason.

Social inclusion gives value to all individuals and recognize their diverse contributions to societies. All the children have a right to get good education, to be socially included in the educational setting, to feel valued, have the opportunity to fulfill their academic aspirations with their peers (<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/value-inclusive-education>). Here we are discussing about the learners who are from Hindi medium background and facing problems in inclusion like-

**1) Socio-economic problems-** Socio economic conditions of the learners deny to give the opportunity which they deserve for social inclusion (Klasen, 1999). Online learning is not possible for all in the situation of pandemic as no cyber café is open nor the learners can use the institutional facilities. Even university libraries are closed. Students can't take the translated version of books in their mother languages from there. They don't have any choice to avail these educational opportunities to educate themselves.

### 2) Psychological problems:

Learners from Hindi medium background always feel inferior in comparison to English medium learners. This is a global phenomenon that a person who speaks English is called literate and others are called illiterate. Knowledge is judged by the language. In India we still have a colonial mindset and don't want to give importance to our own rich culture, language, traditions, customs and so on. "India is still in mind set that English, the Colonial supremacy language is better than its vernacular languages. Number of languages as media of instruction dropped 60 per cent to 47 per cent in last two decade because of demand of English language" (Rao, 2008, quoted by Mohanty, p.173).

Inferiority complex of Hindi medium students and superiority complex of English medium students are both the reasons for non inclusion or anti-inclusion of these learners. Secondly Hindi medium students always give preference to study by books instead of Online teaching learning process, specially

distance learners. They don't feel comfortable in learning without books, pens and making notes.

### 3) Language related Problems:

For inclusion in educational system, all the doors should be open through given facilities. Secondly all the barriers should be removed, even the language barriers as well. In any medium of instruction, the learners should get the education and should be provided content in their own languages. According to three language formula, every regional language has equal importance and they should be well practiced in higher education. They all should get inclusion in every educational field. But in reality, the situation is not like that. Students have to take help from Google translate app which gives only the word meaning not the essence of the sentences. In this manner, students are getting sub standard knowledge acquisition.

### RECOMMENDATION-

In India there are 22 official languages, 122 major languages and 1599 other languages (Census of India of 2001). Three language formula was adopted in 1968, NCF 2005 and 2016 and emphasis on mother tongue education (Vennela, 2017, p-3) This is the matter of thinking that 70 percent of Indian population live in rural areas (Akoijam, 2013) and they are neither proficient in English language nor in computer literacy. In this scenario, only English medium online classes are not the solution for everyone. In this pandemic all the people are closed in their home. Students can't take help from outside. Their parents can't help them as they are not well educated to guide them.

So, on the urgent bases, some translation apps should be developed for the time being. For permanent solution, all the online programs should be developed in all the languages, especially in Hindi which is the language of 43.63 percent of Indian population (censusindia.gov.in/2011). Content should also be prepared accordingly. Simultaneously computer literacy must be provided to the Hindi medium students in their own language. Worldwide many countries like Germany, Japan, Korea, China and so on are providing education in their own languages and they have already developed software in their own languages. We must learn lesson from these countries and should be proud of on our own languages which have very rich and old history.

In this way, access, equity and inclusion would be possible.

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