

Sociological Analysis of Teaching in India and Persisting Digital Divides in the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

With the pandemic there have been various transitions and shifts in the pedagogy of education in India, with teaching and learning methods witnessing metamorphosis. Sociology as a discipline teaches to be adaptable with the society in changing circumstances. The subject and the forms of teaching by addressing the existing divides and inequalities and by arriving at a balanced world in this crisis was a major challenge. The difficulties arising with pandemic teaching and learning, specifically people residing in remote locations, was a major issue. This paper evaluates how teaching sociology in Covid-19 times is connected to new forms of pedagogy, within the context of the importance of education for the growth and development of nation. Sociology can address the social changes brought on by the transformation of India's education system with the NEP (New Education Policy) 2020. Teachers and students reshaped themselves with new forms of online learning and teaching under the NEP's timing and meaningful approach to education. The discipline of sociology embraces all vital aspects of social life, especially to mould oneself with the situation and times. Empowering the students remains an utmost priority.

KEYWORDS

Teaching, learning, sociology, education, digital divide

The advent and repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, the universal lockdown, and staying at home among students to prevent the virus has led to the birth, growth and development of online teaching in India. The rise of the virtual classroom and technological adaptation via Google meet and Zoom has become the norm of the day. The New Education Policy (2020) introduced in times of the pandemic was intended as a transformational policy and a permanent cure to the educational problems in India with the aim to blend the Indian knowledge system with modern education. It was a visionary policy in this distressing time. The pandemic has brought innovation in teaching and learning policies the NEP has brought innovative ways of learning as a major step of educational reform, addressing the rural urban divide that caused great damage to the marginalized with multimodel ways of learning also with the use of technology. Viewing these shifts from the sociological lens – sociology being an important discipline theorizing and charting changes in the social order and the interplay of social forces – enables sociologists to provide solutions to social problems especially in policy formulations and practice. Geoff Whitley (1985) in *Sociology and School Knowledge* analyses the connections of sociology, curriculum studies, educational policy and practice. The objective of education being transmitting knowledge, with each society having social arrangements for cohesion and survival. With Durkheim and Manheim highlighting the social role of education, the aspects of gender sensitization in education system is a remarkable venture. Teaching Sociology in India with the subject being very vast and

all encompassing to several social dimensions helps to understand the pandemic much better by proposing betterment to educators and learners by moving ahead in the social sphere.

Sociology and Social Phenomena in Teaching

The teacher and the social subjects are united by the social world who receive social lessons throughout their everyday life. The fundamentals of social construction imply transformations of knowledge in production and reproduction of the mental structure of the society which discloses new sociological understandings in the phenomenon of teaching. This teaching dominates the educational perspective of the society with social reproduction of knowledge. The modern sociological theories emphasize the communicational realities of society, which the discipline makes it feasible to understand the underlying social occurrences or phenomena. Hence, the phenomena of teaching are the important element in the sociological analysis of education, communication and social transformation of important knowledge. When we try to understand that how sociology helps in the existence and co-existence of individuals, sociological analysis is required for the understandings of social reality within the learners and the conditions that affect their mental structures. As Anthony Giddens argues that social institutions like school, colleges and universities are the result of social practices rooted within social space and time, social, values, norms and rules influence communication including teaching

communication. Sociologists have different specificities with mobilizing sociological imagination, fostering reflexivity at different levels with unlearning and relearning during the COVID-19 pandemic (much of which we take for granted about society).

The Remembered Class Room with Digital divides

The pandemic has made a seismic shift in the world education system with virtual education being the new normal alongside new ways of discovery and engagement. The role of C.W. Mills' sociological imagination (1959) is to understand the biographies in the historical moment. The Covid-19 pandemic affecting India's social, economic and political crisis is having an impact on students and educators. For example, the classroom involves students from different backgrounds, specifically students from the remote areas who had difficulties in accessing internet and learning during the pandemic. This has to a great extent affected the mental and physical health of the students who cannot study due to the challenges. Specifically, the students with special needs are more swayed with the global catastrophe which becomes a major threat to their well-being.

Using a sociological lens allows for recognition of the sociological passages of change causing disruptions in students' daily lives. The discipline gives in-depth knowledge about the consequences of human systems and social relationships in times of heightened insecurity and uncertainty. The COVID-19 outbreak impacted the feelings, motives, behaviors

and thoughts of educators and learners in the virtual learning space.

The rapid shift in the Indian education system under NEP (2020), with e-learning resurfacing, exacerbated numerous issues of inequality and digital divides. There are huge **regional disparities and gender biases**. Girls in vulnerable households are already loaded with substantial domestic duties and male learning is given priority. This is compounded by the unavailability of technological gadgets and internet in these remote homes and regions, preventing online learning for girls under the pandemic. There has been also silent exclusion of girls from the educational access, ties to social menaces like early marriage and gendered trafficking. The pandemic has only further silenced these processes and created havoc in the lives of the children.

According to UNICEF (2020) the report in India estimates that school closures have created major problems for 247 million students in elementary and secondary education, with 28 million in pre-schools and the Anganwadis. This is a violation of young people's educational rights.

Sociology enables students and educators alike to understand the issues affecting the real world under Covid-19, including reflecting on major deepening issues like gender inequalities, divides of technology and major adaptation strategies. The glaring digital divides in teaching and learning with the pandemic gives an opportunity for digital inclusion and a boost to digital education. The launch of *National Mission for Digital Inclusion* aiming to provide access, availability and affordability to digital device was a great step. This

National Broadband Mission aims to provide internet services to all the remote villages by 2022 for accessing and connecting to learning.

Using Sociology as a Key Component to Survive

Sociology educators have often been effective in exploring the merits and demerits of teaching and learning, with a major analysis of policy perspectives that evolves out of the depriving conditions and crisis situations. The lives of India's diverse students are widely understood through the sociological discourses, particularly through teaching about the gender impacts of Covid-19 while evaluating the outcomes of the belief that education is a tool for empowering and enabling women. Sociology as a discipline is all inclusive which gives coverage to all facets of an individual's life. Making best use of the pandemic social lens to make the process of teaching and creating a better learning environment for the students remains a goal of sociology.

The ambitions of Indian education are captured in the *Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4)* which ensures equitable and quality education for all by 2030. Teaching the discipline not only requires an understanding of students' perspectives but also ways for forming policies and programmes.

This process has made me rethink the value of education, the classroom and many other social aspects. Sociology embraces also the need to support students emotionally during the times of catastrophe by addressing their fears and anxieties in the distress, alongside

the society-individual relationship. Students represent a community who are affected by various factors and are making a shift from the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic, which remains a very strenuous task. Erving Goffman (1956) depicts that interactions between individuals depend on their environment, which drives them to seek meaning of the situation and control over it. In these times of vulnerabilities those learners affected try to devise ways to deal with anxieties and fears. The rise in virtual classrooms all of a sudden highly impacted their mental health. The rise in coping methods was also widespread. Therefore as a discipline, sociology addressed the social realities and teaching in itself was developing resilience and protecting the well-being of the students in these times.

Conclusions

The educational crisis, deprivation, as well as the policy perspectives addressing these has led to a rebuilding of India's education system in the Covid-19 era. Sociology has played a role in assessing processes of learning and teaching, as various social constraints and pandemic divides being the hindered yet contributed to reforming the society. The lessons from the pandemic like social distancing, virtual teaching, gender equations, and many social media aspects have promoted a new social consciousness. Sociology shows how the pandemic is reshaping new roles and redefining them.

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