This editorial is based on “**Education in the post-pandemic world cannot be the same again**” which was published in The LiveMint on 25/06/2020. It talks about the status of education in the post-pandemic era.

**Covid-19 pandemic** has resulted in unprecedented upheaval across all industries, with the education sector being no exception. In such a difficult time society and industries have sought to counter the disruptions caused by the pandemic, through ‘great decentralization’ i.e. work-from-home or actually work-from-anywhere.

Similarly, online education by most of the colleges and universities has been becoming a norm. However, online education possesses some limitations pertaining to the **digital divide** in India.

In this context, the government and other stakeholders should see this disruption caused by pandemic as a good opportunity to improve the public education system and aim to make it more egalitarian.

**Associated Challenges with Online Education**

- **Digital Divide:** While e-education is a privilege for the students from an upper and middle class, it has proved to be a nuisance for students from the lower middle class and people living below the poverty line.
  
  Many poor students who don’t have access to e-resources (computers, laptops, internet connectivity) shall not be able to attend classes from home.

- **Commercialisation of Education:** With online education becoming a norm in the post-pandemic era, there is a significant possibility of corporate houses, technology firms and educational institutions working much more closely together. Though this may have a big positive effect on the education sector, it may further aggravate the ongoing commercialisation of the education sector and exclude the self-dependent tutors.
Steps To Be Taken

- **Online Education as a common good**: The Centre and the state governments should start making access to technology universal and more feasible in the public education system.
  
  Also, as part of **Corporate Social Responsibility**, private players can involve tech-based organisations to make e-resources accessible and available to students, especially in government and low-income private schools.

- **Expansion in the scope of Right to Education**: The definition of the right to education needs to expand and promote online education so that it addresses the importance of connectivity and access to knowledge and information.

- **Valuing teaching profession**: Digital innovation provides a remarkable opportunity for the democratisation of education.
  
  However, there is a need to encourage conditions that give frontline educators autonomy and flexibility to act collaboratively.

- **Protection of the social spaces provided by education institutions**: Traditional classroom organization must give way to online education. However, school or education as a social space (whereby a student not just learns the academic knowledge but many social skills also) is indispensable.

- **Ensuring scientific literacy within the curriculum**: This is the right time for deep reflection on curriculum, particularly as a society still struggles against superstitions and actively fights misinformation.

Conclusion

Covid-19 has shown the extent to which the Indian system of education exploits inequalities. Thus, there is a need for renewed commitments to the synergy between the private and public education sector. In this context, there is a need to make education as a common good and digital innovation can help in achieving the feat.
Drishti Mains Question

“Education is a bulwark against inequalities and digital innovation can lead to its democratisation”. Discuss.
This editorial is based on “Brief Reprieve” which was published in The Hindu on June 28th, 2020. Now watch this on our Youtube channel.