



## **Initiatives towards Education: A Case Study in the Karimganj District of Assam During Covid-19 Pandemic**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Education is a country's most important human capital, and the nation always tries to enhance it. Education improves labour and physical capital through knowledge application. The main objectives of this study are to know the educational status of the students during 2020-2021 session and to know the mode of classes conducted by the educational institutions during pandemic in the Karimganj district. The study is based on primary data collected through simple random sampling and the analysis are done by employing basic descriptive statistics. It has been observed from the study that despite being one of India's smallest and most backward districts, the Karimganj district did not remain aloof or lag behind during the pandemic to keep educational institutions and teaching-learning healthy.

**Key Words:** Covid-19, education, Karimganj, pandemic

### **Introduction:**

A society can prosper only if it is comprised of educated population. Lot of studies found that less developed economy suffers mostly from adequate educational sector and it is one of the most important reasons for their less development. While people of developed nations are much literate and this helps their countries to grow and prosper. As Prof. Singer pointed out 'Investment in education is not only highly productive but also yields increasing returns in so far as cooperating teams of skilled and educated people are worth more than the sums of the individuals of which they are composed, whenever we look in this area of human investment, we find increasing returns to play'. Education enhances the productivity of workforce. The greater progress will occur in those countries where education is widespread and where it encourages experimental outlook. To prosper in any sphere- be socially, be economically, be politically, be psychologically one need to be educated 'properly'. The word 'properly' is quoted to mention the way of learning or understanding the facts and lessons or to get formal

education like class-room education. The expansion of education can contribute much towards economic development of the nation. But the brake or the deadlock in this expansion path can really bring a backlash or hindrances in the economic development of the nation. This is evident from the recent noble corona virus that devastated the whole world. Covid-19 pandemic has shattered the educational sector. It has brought a lot of changes in the academic calendar. It largely affected the educational sector and other important economic sectors. But as mentioned earlier education encourages experimental outlook, it has chosen a new path to enlighten the people of today's world. It is not denying the fact that the people of today's world found a new way of teaching and reaching out to the students via e-learning process or through digital platform. It emerged as a blessing for the learners. Although digital platform was there before recent pandemic but the accessibility gained its momentum during pandemic period. People from various parts of the world, irrespective of the level of development started to use digital platform as much as they could. The digital platforms not only helped the learners but also the teachers or the educational institutions in this challenging phase.

Due to the pandemic, schools are closed. Offline-to-online teaching occurs. Students, teachers, and parents are having trouble with the new teaching methods (Tarkar, 2020). The study conducted by Gupta and Gupta (2020) on e-learning in covid-19 lockdown revealed that the students have been very much responsive towards positive adoption of e-learning technology or online methods of learning in Moradabad city of India. At the same time teachers are also putting their efforts to make the learning process easier and understandable for the students. While another study stated that the impact of covid-19 pandemic on human behaviour towards education has been a major challenge (Hussain et al., 2020). The study of Muthuprasad et al. (2021) found that majority of the students of higher education preferred online learning method during pandemic. It was found to be benefitting for the students as it provided flexibility and convenience for the learners. Students preferred high quality recorded videos uploaded along with quiz questions at the end of those uploaded videos. But at the same time this online learning found to be quite challenging for the rural students because of poor digital infrastructure. The impact of pandemic badly affected the educational sectors of India as well as the countries worldwide. It has brought major challenges to fight with different approaches of methods of teaching and learning worldwide and specifically in India. The digital platform in India is gaining as a best solution to provide education during pandemic as technology-based education is more transparent with all respects during pandemic (Jena, 2020). A study in the West Bengal reported about 70% of learners were involved in e-learning during the lockdown (Kapasias et al., 2020). Another study stated that Higher education institutions and universities were compelled to close owing to COVID-19 and resumed teaching-learning via digital mode (Gope et al., 2021)

In the above background, this study aims to know the educational status of the students during 2020-2021 session and to know the mode of classes conducted by the educational institutions during pandemic in the Karimganj district.

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### **Data Source and Methodology:**

The study is based on primary data collected in 2021 through simple random sampling technique. Since the study focuses on educational status during pandemic and the mode of class conducted during that period, 300 households have been selected randomly and information collected from that household which comprises at least 1 student. Interestingly, in every random selection, at least 1 student has been found in the random household selection. Information was collected through interview cum questionnaire method from the head of the household related to household size, age, religion, educational status, working status, COVID-19 vaccination, government aid recipients in the family. After that, students prevailing in that family were interviewed related to the mode of class being conducted by their respective school authority or the educational institutions or their teachers. They were also asked about the experiences they faced during classes and also their opinion towards education during pandemic. Basic descriptive statistics were employed to find out the results. Results were analyzed descriptively in details.

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### **Results and discussion:**

Education has been one of the important necessities of human lives in today's world. Education cannot be ignored even in the worst-case scenario, as education enlightens us morally, socially, economically, politically, and many other ways. Education and educational institutions are always being prioritized by the people of today's world, even during recent COVID-19 pandemic period. Therefore, the first objective of the study is to know the educational status of students in the study area during 2020-2021 sessions. The result shows the different level of educational status of the students enrolled in the session 2020-21 in Karimganj district of Assam. The educational status shows the level of enrollment of students in primary class, secondary class, senior secondary class and students enrolled in tertiary sectors. The students enrolled from class nursery to class 4 come into the category of primary class. The secondary class includes class 5 to class class7. The senior secondary class includes students of class 8 to class 12. And the last category includes students of class graduation and above courses, implying students enrolled in BA program, BSC program, B.Ed. program integrated course and any master's program. It has been found in the study area that out of 350 enrolled students in different standards, 80 students are studying in primary school, 110 students are studying in secondary school, and 30 students enrolled their names in tertiary sectors. Therefore, maximum students are enrolled in senior secondary students while minimum students are enrolled in tertiary classes. The second largest students are found to be in secondary classes, followed by primary classes.

The result of the second objective reveals the different modes of teaching used by the teachers or the educational institutions according to the convenience of the learners and the situations faced off. It is to be noted that the mode of classes has been classified into offline mode and online mode. Offline mode considers either direct physical teaching or home assignment given to the students and after completion, they are required to submit the same to the respective teachers in the school and the students are also asked to appear classes in alternate days although maintaining COVID protocols. The offline mode classes also include that class where students are to collect different materials of respective subjects from the school office and after one or two weeks, they need to return back those materials and collect question papers of different subjects. On the specified date, they are asked to submit the answer scripts in the school itself. Moreover, online classes include no physical involvement in the teaching-learning process. The students are always asked to meet virtually either in Google meet or Zoom classes or WhatsApp and also to appear different examinations in those virtual classes, where the concerned authority or the teacher will provide the question papers.

The assessment of the students will also be done virtually, i.e., answer scripts were checked in the softcopy itself. Out of 350 enrolled students in different standards, 171 students adopted offline mode of learning and 179 students have gone for online classes. It has been observed in the study that out of 80 students of primary standards, 48 students got offline mode of learning classes and 32 students got online mode of learning. Those offline learning students were mostly given home assignment and submit the same within certain specified time. They were also given materials of different subjects of concerned classes. While in some of the educational institutions didn't make any physical involvement with the students of primary standards. They made different WhatsApp group of different classes which included subject teachers and guardian of those students only. It has been found that during pandemic, guardians became more active for their wards to get all the materials and also, they (especially mother) prepared their children accordingly. But it became very much difficult for those mothers whose education level is very low, specifically for the mothers of English medium school. With regard to secondary schools, out of 110 students, 80 students did offline classes and 30 students got online classes. Out of 130 enrolled students of senior secondary schools, 87 students got online classes. But most of these students didn't properly attend their classes and even if attended, faced lot of technical difficulties. The students who joined offline classes during pandemic, they were given different materials and also after certain days, they were given question papers to write the answers of those questions in separate sheets and submit the same after one or two weeks. Some of them got project to prepare some models and submit the same in their school within certain specific date. The students of class 12 mostly got distraction from their studies when they received news from social media that their exams might be conducted online or else, they might be promoted without exams.

As per the mode of examination is concerned, some students preferred online mode of examination whereas some students preferred offline mode of examination. Except the students of final year batch in higher studies got promotion based on the marks they got in their previous examinations because of some sort of difficulties that might appear in academic calendar. However, only students of final year students were asked to appear offline mode of examination.

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**Conclusion:**

Education is the backbone of society. No society can prosper without education. Education enlightens the society. It expands and exaggerates the society with knowledge, wisdom, and experiments. It teaches us to lead civilized life. It teaches us to find a way out to lead better life for the better world. Although most of the educational sectors have been working hard to reduce the losses by using digital platform but the effectiveness was not that much as it needs to be in a developing country like India because of the lack of digital literacy of the teachers, lack of training or the tools or teaching and learning process. If we take the recent example of COVID-19 pandemic, we get to know in its true sense how education could help us to cope up with the situation. The educational field no matter what about- may it be formal education, cultural education, environmental education, moral education, theological education or psychological education or any other like, it always enlightens us with the expansion of knowledge, wisdom and experiences. From this study, we have learned that being one of the smallest and backward districts of India, the district has not remained aloof or lagged behind during pandemic session to cope up with the situation while moving the wheel of educational institutions and teaching-learning healthy environment.

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