

# Report

## Online Book Launch and Book Discussion

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

11:00 AM - 12:40 PM EDT

The online book launch and discussion on the book titled "**COVID-19 Impact on Education and Beyond**" were organized jointly by Bharat Centre of Canada-the policy think tank and University Canada West in Association with the Consulate General of India (CGI) in Toronto. The book Launch/discussion programme started with the formal welcome remarks by the moderator **Mr. Prashant Srivastava, Director-academic outreach and operations, Bharat Centre of Canada & Director, South Asia, Seneca College.**

Mr. Srivastava introduced the book, which is on a very relevant topic and timely publication looking into the current pandemic situation worldwide. Mr. Prashant introduced Mr. Brock Dykeman, the event's keynote speaker and the special guest for launching the book. Mr. Prashant also introduced eminent panellists and special guests for the event.

**Mr. Brock Dykeman President and Vice-Chancellor, University Canada West, Advisor, Bharat Centre of Canada**

Mr. Brock Dykeman launched the book "Covid-19: Impact on Education and Beyond". Mr. Prashant requested the eminent panellists to bring the book in front of the camera during the online book launch to mark the book's formal release.

After the book launch, Mr. Brock congratulated the editors and authors of the book. Mr. Brock, in his key remark, briefly described the pandemic's challenges and how the University Canada West acted to tackle the difficulties associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and the teaching and learning process. Mr. Brock explained how the World Health Organization declared precisely one year ago the pandemic on March 11th, 2020, and since that time, people are suffering from this epidemic. Mr. Dykeman mentioned how few UCW students tested positive at a very

early stage of the Covid-19 pandemic. Fortunately, UCW could close the campus on short notice and do the deep cleaning of the campus before re-opening the campus. Also, Mr. Brock mentioned that UCW could move quite rapidly to the online teaching mode as all the courses were set up to be offered online with the study materials uploaded into the online learning management system. However, international students faced lot more challenges as they had to continue with the online classes from their home country. For new international students, it was impossible to join a university in person because visa offices were closed in different countries, which also became difficult for the international students to travel during the pandemic time.

Mr. Brock appreciated the book editors and authors' timely initiative about the Covid-19 pandemic and its implications on education. He said It was especially difficult for the post-secondary institutes. Teaching and learning had to switch to online education, changing the instruction modes and the learning management system.

Mr. Dykeman concluded by expressing concern about significant policy impact, mainly about government organizations' considerable cost with the economic shut-down and the economic subsidies given to all sorts of industries, institutes, etc. He also shared his concern on the Covid-19 pandemic impact because of its long-lasting factor.

**Dr. Nivedita Das Kundu, President-Bharat Centre of Canada (BCC), Faculty, York University**

Dr. Nivedita is an editor and also chapter author of the book. In her remarks, she thanked everyone for sparing their time to participate in this book launch programme. She acknowledged the joint efforts to organize this book launch event by BCC and UCW team. Dr. Kundu briefly introduced the book, which is on a critical topic of present-day relevance and deals with teaching and learning methods used by the educational institutions during the lockdown. She added that this book provides information and knowledge on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic based on various parameters and how different nations are tackling this challenging situation. Dr. Nivedita explained that the chapters are based on practical experiences, assessing the situation by prominent academics, practitioners and university teachers from other countries.

Dr. Kundu mentioned that education is not only a fundamental human right, but it is also a key to sustainable development and progress. When the education system breaks down, growth and peace cannot be sustained in any society. According to Dr. Kundu, this book also depicts the impact on the social and economic sectors along with the education sector. The chapters include the case studies from different countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, which depicted how other nations responded to these pandemic surprises. She mentioned that the book is divided into three sections: the first section of the book gives a broad overview of the "teaching and learning experiences during the pandemic," the second section presents "societal effect and schooling during the pandemic," and the third section attempts to analyze "e-learning and community concerns during a pandemic." Dr. Kundu also mentioned about her two specific chapters in the book are on "Covid-19 Pandemic and its Impact on Canadian Society and Teaching and Learning," and the second one is on "Impact of Covid-19 on the Russian society and the education system".

Dr. Nivedita acknowledged that the book could provide a broad idea and clarity on the crucial topic. The readers will find important information and understanding of how different countries tackled this pandemic and how social life and mental health situations were impacted. The book will provide readers with different viewpoints. It is expected that this book will fill the literature gap on this subject and provide valuable inputs to policy planners. Dr. Kundu informed the audience that the book is available online through Amazon.

**Dr. Ajey Lele, Distinguished Expert, Bharat Centre of Canada, Senior Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses**

Dr. Ajey started his remarks by explaining the book's uniqueness as it has outlined the impact of Covid-19 on the education system. He mentioned that this book is the outcome of an international online conference that was conducted on the "Methods of teaching and learning during the lockdown and post lockdown period," and the debates and discussions on this relevant topic led the editors to pursue the idea and take it to a logical conclusion in the form of a book. Dr. Lele briefed about the sections of the book, where the first section gives a whole thematic idea about pandemic problems and how in the education sector, everyone is trying to overcome the difficulties posed by pandemic situation and restrictions. The second section of the book looks into the issue from a societal point

of view and how educational institutions have looked into all those aspects and tackled this problematic situation. The third section is dealt with case-specific studies from different countries.

Dr. Lele discussed his contribution to the book, about education in India and how India handled this pandemic situation quite well, as per him, education not imparted into the classrooms is nothing new to India as India got a long history and experience of distance learning programmes or conducting education by correspondence. Dr. Ajey explained that online education started in India for people staying far away from the universities and for those who are not in a financial position to afford the education imparted in universities.

Dr. Lele reminded that classroom education could not be compared with any form of digital education. Still, to deal with the Covid-19 situation, it was pertinent to impart education remotely, and India picked up on the same idea. However, some challenges were there in the beginning.

Dr. Lele shared data stating that in 2020, 50% of India was connected to the internet. Still, only 34% of India was tied on a mobile platform and the internet together, so there were challenges. Teachers also faced many problems and the students too, as all the work was conducted from home, which posed quite a task. Dr. Ajey closed his observations stating that though the teachers and students' community had ensured that the spread of disease would not impact their education, however, on a positive note, offline education will start again post Covid-19 period as soon as, things get back to the normal.

**Dr. Sandeep Poddar, Deputy-Vice Chancellor(Research and Innovation), Lincoln University College, Malaysia**

Dr. Poddar showed his concern that it has already been one year with Covid-19, but still, the cases are increasing rapidly; therefore, many countries are struggling to deal with this pandemic. Dr. Poddar explained how United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UNSDG) for quality education is the central pillar of the society as it supports all the 17 SDGs of the United Nations.

During his remarks, Dr. Sandeep shared that in the chapter he has mentioned some of his findings of those children and youth who all are

affected most, those who cannot go to school and do not have access to internet facilities in Southeast Asian countries. Dr. Poddar emphasized that many countries in Southeast Asian nations, including Indonesia and Malaysia, face similar technical challenges. Dr. Sandeep also discussed the practical aspects of teaching that cannot be given through online education, such as laboratory experiments etc. Also, he showed concern about mental health issues. Dr. Poddar stressed that as social media usage has increased during the pandemic time, which is good but also causing depression among youngsters. He added, for instance, Instagram or Facebook is creating stress among youth.

As per Dr. Sandeep, in this current situation, where problems are persisting, everyone is bound to change oneself, as there is no option to go and meet with each other; one has to do that online. Therefore, everyone is changing their lifestyles and trying their best to adapt to this new situation. Dr. Poddar also gave the example of Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence comparing with the present situation.

**Dr. Jayanta Das, Faculty, Bharat Centre of Canada, Peripheral Vascular Surgeon, AMRI Hospital**

Dr. Das thanked everyone who was spending time to attend the online book launch session and congratulated Dr. Kundu especially for doing an excellent job in compiling all the chapters and editing the volume. Dr. Jayant discussed two aspects of the book one is the impact of Covid -19 on the educational system, and another is the impact in various societies as it has affected everybody in every corner of the world.

Dr. Das was feeling proud as an Indian as India has supplied Covid vaccines in more than eighty-four countries to date, including to the countries like the UK, Canada and Argentina, to name a few. According to Dr. Das, Covid-19 has fundamentally changed everyone in every field. He mentioned that Covid-19 changed the educational patterns. He emphasized that almost all the countries' governments are struggling, and the scholarly world and academic institutions are not any exceptions. They chose online education as a mode to manage a crisis that was not previously known to many.

Dr. Jayant stressed that World Health Organization defines health with three parameters as physical, mental and social well-being, where health

is a state of physical, psychological and social well-being and not just the absence of any disease. Dr. Das informed that the idea of education in Swami Vivekananda's words states that "Education is the manifestation of the all perfection in man," so through the online education systems, knowledge can be given. Still, the parameters for physical activity and social activity cannot be fulfilled. Dr. Das ended on a note that at this juncture, we do not have any other avenue which is sustainable to impart knowledge and education to the students, so this is the reason why we have to adjust our-self's with the online teaching method.

### **Ms. Apoorva Srivastava, Consul General of India in Toronto**

Ms. Apoorva Srivastava gave special remarks; she first congratulated the authors who all have contributed chapters to the book and explained how the covid-19 pandemic had brought massive changes to do everything, including education. Ms. Srivastava explained that the entire global education system came to a standstill due to the covid-19 pandemic; However, online studies have emerged as an alternative to in-person learning because of the digital platforms. Ms. Apoorva expressed her concern as children during online lessons and distance learning face specific problems, such as rising mental health issues because of a lack of social connection.

Ms. Apoorva acknowledged that the book is very timely and will help understand the pandemic's impact on education and beyond. She also applauded India's effort to launch the world's largest vaccination drive. Under India's philosophy of "Vasudeva Kutumbakam," which means the "world is one family" and "Survey Bhavantu Sukhinam Sarve Bhavantu Niramaya," i.e. "everybody should be happy and healthy." She added that India could serve the world population by sending vaccines to countries in their need.

Ms. Srivastava mentioned that India has successfully scaled some of the mammoth challenges to limit the spread of pandemics and became self-sufficient in Covid-19 Vaccine for their citizens and also could export to other countries. She also emphasized that India has become the second-largest producer of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) Kits in the world.

Ms. Apoorva also recognized that the India-Canada education partnership has many note-worthy accomplishments, with over 230,000

Indian students present in Canada. She added that India is the largest source for incoming international students to Canadian universities and colleges. Ms. Srivastava ended her special remarks congratulating Bharat Centre of Canada and University Canada West for taking up this initiative.

The Book Launch/Book discussion programme moderator **Mr. Prashant Srivastava**, in his closing remarks, appreciated all the students and participants from different parts of the world for being a part of this unique Book Launch/ Book Discussion event. Mr. Srivastava thanked every member of the BCC & UCW team. He acknowledged all the distinguished panellists and speakers for sharing their enriching views explaining the Covid-19 situation in their respective places and how they tackle the pandemic situation. He concluded the event on a positive note with the hope to continue with such educational and policy-oriented activities and programme jointly with BCC-UCW in association with CGI-Toronto.



**Prepared by Team BCC**

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