ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

- Paper / Proposal Title:
Making Sense of the Present Moment of Onlinisation of Teaching

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- Abstract (300 words):
In recent times ‘online class’ has become a new normal, from the most elementary like teaching/learning nursery rhymes to the most advanced level courses offered to graduate students. Some think that though the pandemic forced it upon us, it opens up new possibilities and realm for education, others consider this as a temporary phase and things would go back to ‘normal’ as before. How do we make sense of this moment of rampant online teaching? Based on the experience of rampant onlinisation of teaching in India during the pandemic and severe lockdown, here we first examine the vision that its proponents have to offer, then critically examine it against the basic idea of education and finally consider the possible consequences and the contested terrain that this online turn to teaching opens up for anybody who is associated in some way or the other with education.

The present pandemic has offered a big time opportunity to the edtech as well as finance capital to move into the absent spaces of locked down colleges and class rooms and yet the actual experience of educators as well as educated is far from the promise of better access and quality of learning and education through online. Still, the
for profit forces that have moved into this moment in a big way would try to leverage the pandemic moment to muscle their way and supplant the conventional class room. It also offers an opportunity for the administrators and their finance and technology backers to better control and monitor the ‘performance’ through digital technology of both the educators and educated. Given that this online moment is very far from the promise and its own rhetoric, in spite of all the hype regarding online teaching, the turn that classroom will take remains fraught with multiple possibilities.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Rahul Varman

Is presently a professor at the Department of Industrial Management & Engineering in the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, India. He primarily teaches about organisations, especially large corporate organisations, and its effect on developing societies. His research interests also relate to large corporations and the debate around them. He has been teaching for more than 25 years. On the present online turn of education, what has interested him is on the one hand movement of big finance and edTech for profit startups and corporations into education and its long-term implications. Additionally, how the technology will be deployed as a tool of surveillance and control.