

कोरोना महामारी व संभावना



- संपादक -
प्रा. देवराये एस. एम.
डॉ. वाकणकर जी. बी.
डॉ. टेंगसे एस. ए.

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NOTION PRESS



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NOTION PRESS

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India, Singapore, Malaysia.

Published by Notion Press 2021

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ISBN 9781685540197

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COVID-19 AND ONLINE EDUCATION

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Introduction:

The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, affecting almost all countries. The outbreak was first observed in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The countries around the world take responsive care. The public care strategies have included hand washing, wearing face masks, physical distancing, and avoiding mass gathering and assemblies. Lockdown and staying home strategies have been put in place as the needed action to flatten the curve and control the transmission of the disease.

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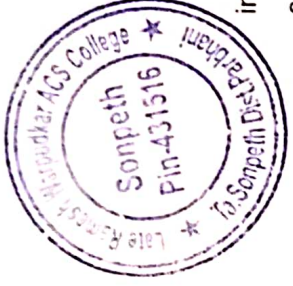
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India declared closing of schools and institutions and reduction of business hours during 2020. The complete nationwide lockdown was implemented. The impact is far reaching and has affected learning during this academic year or even more in the coming days. Several schools, colleges and universities have discontinued face-to-face teaching. There is a pressing need to innovate and implement alternative educational and assessment strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity for introducing digital learning.

Online learning and classes are becoming part of the education system worldwide. Online channel has made education convenient and easily accessible by all. In India has been an ever-growing entity. India has been one of the largest sectors in the world when it comes to higher education. Though online and distance courses have been there from a long time, introduction of the online mode of taking classes in comparison to the traditional face to face classroom approach in universities and colleges have been considered

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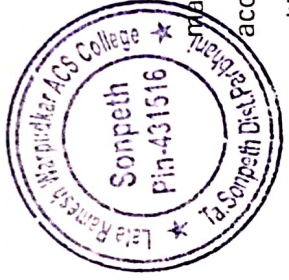
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only in the last few years in India. When it comes to the Indian educational system, face to face classroom approach has always been the most prominently used. Familiarity and ease of using offline methods and lack of requirement for online channels of teaching has been the major barriers for adoption of online channels of education. However, in the wake of current COVID-19 pandemic situation conduction of online classes at college and university level has been made mandatory by the educational boards. Covid-19 has brought out a drastic change in the educational system not only in India but rather the entire world. Universities across India as well as around the globe have moved to the virtual classes suspending physical classrooms. Online education in India is at an early stage of development. In India, while this transition has been a mixture of both positives and negatives for most private universities, the government colleges and universities are still adapting. While technology makes things accessible and easier, it can also be limiting, especially in India, where

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many students face a challenge in terms of access to the internet. This in turn leads to issues with attendance and participation in online sessions, thereby making the adaptation of online channels of education a challenge.

When it comes to the Indian educational setup, online classes are a newly introduced mode of teaching and not something that has been a part of regular classes. Investigating and analyzing how online classes are being perceived and experienced by students and faculties across different colleges and universities in India will help educational experts to understand and make modifications to suit the needs of both, teachers and students. Consequently, educational institutions and management who would be the future deliverers of online learning need more understanding of how students as well as teachers perceive and react to online classes as a learning mode to apply these approaches most effectively. Another important thing noticed that when evaluating online mode of education, student's perspective has been given importance and taken



into consideration over teacher's perspective. Teacher's perspective is equally important because if they as provider of education are not satisfied and find the online mode unsatisfactory then the educational base itself becomes weaker. This new introduction of online classes has been equally challenging for teachers, who are also struggling to learn this new way or methodology of teaching.

Pedagogy for Online Education:

Due to COVID-19 pandemic Lockdown have led to closures of schools, training institutes and higher education facilities in most countries. There is a paradigm shift in the way educators deliver quality education—through various online platforms. The online learning, distance and continuing education have become a panacea for this unprecedented global pandemic, despite the challenges posed to both educators and the learners. Transitioning from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning can be an entirely different experience for the learners and the educators, which they must adapt to with little or no other alternatives available. The

education system and the educators have adopted "Education in Emergency" through various online platforms and are compelled to adopt a system that they are not prepared for.

E-learning tools have played important role during this pandemic, helping schools and universities facilitate student learning during the closure of universities and schools. While it is necessary to adopt the new changes by staff and student, whereas the learners with a growth mindset quickly adapt to a new learning environment. There is no one-size-fits-all pedagogy for online learning. There are a variety of subjects with varying needs. Different subjects and age groups require different approaches to online learning. Online learning also allows physically challenged students with more freedom to participate in learning in the virtual environment, requiring limited movement. While governments, frontline workers and health officials are doing their best slowing down the outbreak, education systems are trying to continue imparting quality education for all during these difficult times. Many



students at home/living space have undergone psychological and emotional distress and have been unable to engage productively. The best practices for online homeschooling are yet to be explored.

The use of suitable and relevant pedagogy for online education may depend on the expertise and exposure to information and communications technology (ICT) for both teachers and students. Some of the online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google meet, Zoom, Google Classroom, Canvas and Blackboard, which allow the teachers to create educational courses, training and skill development programmes. They include options of workplace chat, video meeting and file storage that keep classes organized and easy to work. They usually support the sharing of a variety of content like Word, PDF, Excel file, audio, videos and many more. These also allow the tracking of student learning and assessment by using quizzes and the rubric-based assessment of submitted assignments. The flipped classroom is a simple strategy for providing learning resources such as

articles, pre-recorded videos and YouTube links before the class. The online classroom time is then used to deepen understanding through discussion. This is a very effective way of encouraging skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and self-directed learning. The virtual classroom platforms like videoconferencing (Google Hangouts Meet, Zoom, Cisco, WebEx) and customizable cloud-based learning management platforms such as Moodle and Skype are increasingly being used.

Challenges in Online Education:

With the availability of online educational tools, the users both teachers and students have challenges summarized as follows:

1. Broadly identified challenges with e-learning are accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning and educational policy. Many countries have substantial issues with a reliable Internet connection and access to digital devices. While, in many developing countries, the

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economically backward children are unable to afford online learning devices, the online education poses a risk of exposure to increased screen time for the learner. Therefore, it has become essential for students to engage in offline activities and self-exploratory learning. Lack of parental guidance, especially for young learners, is another challenge, as both parents are working. There are practical issues around physical workspaces conducive to different ways of learning.

2. The innately motivated learners are relatively unaffected in their learning as they need minimum supervision and guidance, while the vulnerable group consisting of students who are weak in learning face difficulties. Some academically competent learners from economically disadvantaged background are unable to access and afford online learning.
3. The level of academic performance of the students is likely to drop for the classes held for both year-end examination and internal examination due to reduced contact hour for learners and lack of

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consultation with teachers when facing difficulties in learning/understanding.

4. Student assessments are carried out online, with a lot of trial and error, uncertainty and confusion among the teachers, students and parents. The approach adopted to conduct online examination varies as per the convenience and expertise among the educators and the compatibility of the learners. The education system in schools, colleges and universities across the country has been severely impacted due to the ongoing situation.
5. School time also raises social skills and awareness besides being fun for the children. There are economic, social and psychological effect on the life of students while they are away from the normal schedule of schools.
6. In the case of online learning in India, majority of the learners are from rural area. Students are engaged in assisting parents in farm activities.
7. Majority of students do not have access to smartphones or TV at home in addition to poor Internet connectivity. There is no or less income

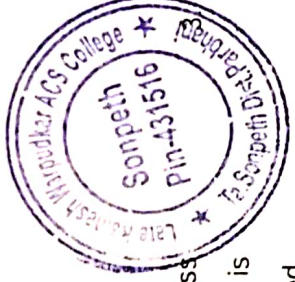


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for huge population due to closure of business and offices. The data package (costs) is comparatively high against average income earned, and continuous access to Internet is a costly business for the farming community. Some think pre-recorded videos could help; however, this would restrict interactions. It is difficult to design a proper system to fit the learning needs and convenience of all students.

Opportunities in Online Education:

1. Although there have been overwhelming challenges for educators, schools, institutes and the government regarding online education from a different angle, there are several opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic for implementing e-learning system.
2. It has forged a strong connection between teachers and parents than ever before. The homeschooling requires parents to support the students' learning academically and economically. Children with disabilities need additional and special support during this ongoing emergency.



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The use of online platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, virtual learning environment and social media and various group forums like Telegram, Messenger, WhatsApp and WeChat are explored and tried for teaching and learning for the first time ever to continue education. This can be explored further even after face-to-face teaching resumes, and these platforms can provide additional resources and coaching to the learners.

4. Teachers are obliged to develop creative initiatives that assist to overcome the limitations of virtual teaching. Teachers are actively collaborating with one another at a local level to improve online teaching methods.
5. Many educational organizations are offering their tools and solutions for free to help and support teaching and learning in a more interactive and engaging environment. Online learning has provided the opportunity to teach and learn in innovative ways unlike the teaching and learning experiences in the normal classroom setting.



Discussion:

As of July 2020, learners from worldwide were affected by the pandemic, from pre-primary to higher education, in the World. Therefore, making learning possible and available from homeschooling has been the today's need. Pedagogy available and used for face-to-face learning is not feasible for online learning. Though a range of pedagogy has been devised for online and distance learning, teachers who are technologically backward require proper professional development and training in order to orient themselves towards their students. Authentic assessments and timely feedback are essential components of learning. A very crucial part of online distance learning is the availability of helpful formative assessments and timely feedback to the online learners. It is important mission for online learning for the continuation of education during the present pandemic. The phrase is typically used to ensure that our students are safe and have their basic needs met before online learning commences. Students now experiencing

homeschooling during this COVID-19 pandemic, conducive environment at home for all standards and socio-economic conditions is not uniform.

There are varieties of online infrastructure that have been prepared by many educational firms and made free for learning during this pandemic. The affordability and accessibility to these online infrastructures for all the learners of varied economic backgrounds are still a challenge. As all students' assignments and examinations are carried out from home, it is challenging for educators to find the authenticity of the work and the actual learning taking place. Moreover, many parents guide and support their children during their learning process, and the extent and degree of support varies greatly. Grading of students is another area of study as no proper criteria are developed and effectively used.

Conclusion:

The study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning across the

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world concludes that although various studies have been carried out, in the case of developing countries, suitable pedagogy and platform for different class levels of higher secondary, middle and primary education need to be explored further. Internet connectivity and its cost in comparison to the income of the people in many developing countries, thus making accessibility and affordability inadequate. Policy-level intervention is required to improve this situation. Need to develop tools for assessments and timely feedback is found to be another area of study. The affordability and accessibility for all the learners of varied economic background is identified as a challenge, for which the educational tools developer could focus on customization. The policy level intervention is also vital.

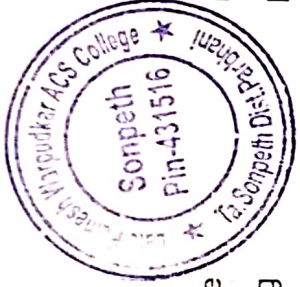
Education system across the world needs to invest on the professional development of teachers, especially on ICT and effective pedagogy, considering the present scenario. Making online teaching creative, innovative and interactive through user-friendly tools is the other area of

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research and development. This would assist and prepare the education system for such uncertainties in the future. The lesson learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic is that teachers and students/learners should be oriented on use of different online educational tools. After the COVID-19 pandemic when the normal classes resume, teachers and learners should be encouraged to continue using such online tools to enhance teaching and learning.

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