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TEACHING LEARNING MECHANICS DURING PANDEMIC

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Abstract: Due to Covid-19 outbreak, Online Teaching and learning got established to a great extent all over the world. But, due to sudden implementation and due to continuous adaptation of online classes without face to face classes, the online classes are losing its attraction and reverting back in the same speed as it got established. Making a shift from traditional to online teaching was a challenge to the educators as the suddenness with which they were plunged into this new mode of teaching meant that they went into it with little preparation. Even so, the valiant teachers tackled the situation with unmatched dedication and dexterity.

Keywords: Pandemic, Online Teaching, Learning Platforms, Lockdown, Traditional.

Introduction

The pandemic threw life out of gear for everyone, including school children. Their happy world within the safe confines of their schools came to an abrupt halt with the announcement of a total lockdown in March 2020. After the initial jolt, schools brought in a new era of online teaching to tackle the situation, though the move came with its own issues. Making a shift from traditional to online teaching was a challenge to the educators as the suddenness with which they were plunged into this new mode of teaching meant that they went into it with little preparation. Even so, the valiant teachers tackled the situation with unmatched dedication and dexterity.

The current COVID-19 crisis has obliged most education systems to adopt alternatives to face-to-face teaching and learning. Many education systems moved activities online, to allow instruction to continue despite school closures. The sudden closure of schools meant that education policy makers, school principals and teachers had to find alternatives to face-to-face instruction in order to guarantee children's right to education. In the beginning of February 2020, schools only in China and a few other affected countries were closed due to the proliferating contamination. However, by mid-March, nearly 75 countries have implemented or announced closure of educational institutions. As on 10th March, school and university closures globally due to the COVID-19 has left one in five students out of school.

As the schools and colleges are shut for an indefinite period, both educational institutions and students are experimenting with ways to complete their prescribed syllabi in the stipulated time frame in line with the academic calendar. These measures have certainly caused a degree of inconvenience, but they have also prompted new examples of educational innovation using digital interventions. This is a silver lining on a dark cloud considering the sluggish pace of reforms in academic institutions, which continues with millennia-old lecture-based approaches in teaching, ingrained institutional biases and obsolete classrooms. Nevertheless, COVID-19 has been a trigger for educational institutions worldwide to pursue creative approaches in a relatively short notice. During this time, most of the universities have shifted to online mode using Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or other online platforms. Educational institutions in India have also made a transition to online teaching environment soon after Union Government's decision to impose nation-wide lock-down for 21 days from 25th March, 2020 which was later extended for 19 more days. However, the major concern is about the quality of learning which is closely related with how well the content is designed and executed. Effectiveness of learning also depends on how the content is curated to online environment and also in understanding and addressing the constraints faced by students. The study is even more relevant considering that in India the system of online education has never been tried at this scale and this is like a massive social experiment.

Universities and Colleges for expansion of their knowledge. To ensure that there is no break in the education and students get full-access to classes, like before, MHRD advises students to carry on with their studies using the online learning platforms. The online learning platforms help the students not only get full access to the study material but also allow them to engage in online classes and interact with the teachers like the physical classroom setting. Following is the list of some of the digital initiatives of MHRD & UGC along with their access links for school students as well as UG and PG level education:

1. SWAYAM online courses: provides access to best teaching learning resources which were earlier delivered on the SWAYAM Platform may be now viewed by any learner free of cost without any registration. Students/learners who registered on SWAYAM (swayam.gov.in) in the January 2020 semester can continue their learning as usual. Link- <https://storage.googleapis.com/uniquecourses/online.html>



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2. UG/PG MOOCs: hosts learning material of the SWAYAM UG and PG (Non-Technology) archived courses. Link- https://ugcmoocs.inflibnet.ac.in/ugcmoocs/moocs_courses.php.
3. e-PG Pathshala: hosts high quality, curriculum-based, interactive e-content containing 23,000 modules (e-text and video) in 70 Post Graduate disciplines of social sciences, arts, fine arts and humanities, natural & mathematical sciences. Link- epgp.inflibnet.ac.in
4. e-Content courseware in UG subjects: e-content courseware in 87 Undergraduate courses with about 24,110 e-content modules is available on the CEC website at <http://cec.nic.in/>.
5. 5. SWAYAMPBHA: is a group of 32 DTH channels providing high quality educational curriculum based course contents covering diverse disciplines such as arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities subjects, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture etc to all teachers, students and citizens across the country interested in lifelong learning. These channels are free to air and can also be accessed through your cable operator. The telecasted videos/lectures are also as archived videos on the Swayamprabha portal. Link- <https://www.swayamprabha.gov.in/>
6. 6. CEC-UGC YouTube channel: provides access to unlimited educational curriculum based lectures absolutely free. Link- <http://www.youtube.com/user/cecedusat>
7. National Digital Library: is a digital repository of a vast amount of academic content in different formats and provides interface support for leading Indian languages for all academic levels including researchers and life-long learners, all disciplines, all popular form of access devices and differently-abled learners. Link- <https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/>
8. Shodhganga: is a digital repository platform of 2,60,000 Indian Electronic Theses and Dissertations for research students to deposit their Ph.D. theses and make it available to the entire scholarly community in open access. Link- <https://shodhganaa.inflibnet.ac.in>
9. e-Shodh Sindhu: provides current as well as archival access to more than 15,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and a number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines from a large number of publishers and aggregators to its member institutions including centrally-funded technical institutions, universities and colleges that are covered under I2(B) and 2(f) Sections of the UGC Act. Link- <https://ess.inflibnet.ac.in/>
10. Vidwan: is a database of experts which provides information about experts to peers, prospective collaborators, funding agencies policy makers and research scholar in the country. "It is hoped, that these ICT initiatives, which cover a broad range of subjects and courses and have been prepared by experts, will provide an excellent learning experience to all. Link- <https://vidwan.inflibnet.ac.in/>

Resistance to change will not help any educational unit across the world. They will be judged on their pace to adapt to the changes in such a short period and their ability to maintain the quality. The reputation of educational units is on stake and under scrutiny. How well they behave and how well they maintain their quality of education amidst this crisis shows their adapting capabilities. The shift from face-to-face lectures to online classes is the only possible solution. Indeed, academic institutions would not be able to transform all of their college curricula into and online resource overnight. Distance, scale, and personalized teaching and learning are the three biggest challenges for online teaching. Innovative solutions by institutions can only help us deal with this pandemic (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). There is a requirement of a quick shift to online learning mode; therefore, the products by Google can be really useful under such problematic situations; they are (a) Gmail, (b) Google Forms, (c) Calendars, (d) G-Drive, (e) Google Hangouts, (f) Google Jam board and Drawings, (g) Google Classroom, and (h) Open Board Software (not a Google product, helps in recording meetings in the form of files). These tools can successfully be used as an alternative for face-to-face classes (Basilaia et al., 2020).

There are number of technologies available for online education but sometimes they create a lot of difficulties. These difficulties and problems associated with modern technology range from downloading errors, issues with installation, login problems, problems with audio and video, and so on. Sometimes student finds online teaching to be boring and unengaging. Online learning has so much of time and flexibility that students never find time to do it. Personal attention is also a huge issue facing online learning. Students want two-way interaction which sometimes gets difficult to implement. The learning process cannot reach its full potential until students practice what they learn. Sometimes, online content is all theoretical and does not let students practice and learn effectively. Mediocre course content is also a major issue. Students feel that lack of community, technical problems, and difficulties in understanding instructional goals are the major barriers for online learning (Song et al., 2004). In a study, students were found to be not sufficiently prepared for balancing their work, family, and social lives with their study lives in an online learning environment. Students were also found to be poorly prepared for several e-learning competencies and academic-type competencies. Also, there is a low-level preparedness among the students concerning the usage of Learning Management Systems (Parkes et al., 2014)



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Lack of appropriate materials and resources, technical problems, and lack of internet facilities and constant power cuts were some of the challenges that teachers faced during their virtual classes. Thus, they went ahead to invest in upgraded systems, high-speed internet, and power backup to ensure uninterrupted power during online classes. All this cost money but resolved the problem. Schools upgraded their own systems and permitted teachers to use their facilities as convenient. Teachers who were unfamiliar with the use of technology had to struggle with tools such as videoconferencing, prepare presentations and learn to be tech-savvy together with their regular teaching job. It was a monumental haul up, but teachers pulled together as schools organized online courses to aid their staff in handling the situation. It is not technology and training alone that posed a roadblock. Many teachers discovered that students don't actively engage as much as they do in a real classroom. Students turn off mics and teachers are met with an uncomfortable lull in class when no one answers a question or responds.

Owing to the lack of human interaction, the absence of a teacher and an inability to discuss it with their peers, students may often get upset. This part is ignored by many online courses and focuses primarily on theoretical material and external lessons. After conventional classroom learning, students find it hard to adapt to an online learning world immediately. They are unable to adapt to commuter-based learning due to the sudden transition. Once they encounter difficulties in online learning, students start losing hope. An incredible experience is learning from home, Things are different at home. But with online learning, even small disturbances at home can easily confuse students. During online learning, learners lack productive communication skills. Compared to a conventional one, some students do not find commitment. Many educators are grappling with technological difficulties which are inevitable and cause stress. If there are any technical mistakes in the middle of the live session or interacting with students, they become powerless.

Conclusion

Due to Covid-19 outbreak, Online Teaching and learning got established to a great extent all over the world. But, due to sudden implementation and due to continuous adaptation of online classes without face to face classes, the online classes are losing its attraction and reverting back in the same speed as it got established. Too much of anything is toxic, this become reality for online classes also. Parents also dislike using the internet by their children for extended period of time. On the other hand, students faced fewer problems related to knowledge and skills of using the internet. The present research signaled that students faced problems of submitting assignments due to less knowledge about the technology.

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