



# Online teaching and learning process in Covid-19 Pandemic: Current Trends and Issues

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**Abstract**— In India, educational institutions primarily follow the traditional set up of face-to-face teaching and learning process. The sudden outbreak of covid-19 has compelled many academic institutions to adopt a blended learning system. The pandemic has created challenges for educational system to a great extent forcing the academicians to shift to an online mode of teaching and learning process as physical classroom activities seemed to be impossible. Earlier, academic units were stuck with old procedures but the present pandemic scenario has left no option but to adopt a pedagogical approach that can meet the learners' needs. The article includes an analysis of the current online teaching and learning process with an emphasis on the current trends and issues associated with the major responsibility of the education of future generation.

**Keywords**— Online learning, pedagogical approach, digital divide, virtual reality, educational imbalance.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The spread of covid-19 has forced educational institutions of all levels to remain closed temporarily. It has shaken up the education sector globally. In the absence of physical mode of classroom interactions, teachers as well as learners around the world are dependent on online learning through virtual classrooms. The need for adoption of new teaching approaches; technologies and teaching skills have been widely acknowledged. Various kinds of e-learning solutions are frequently suggested. There is a plethora of initiatives that aim at improving the situation through ICTs like different online platforms using mobiles, laptops, desktops, open content repositories; TV broadcast classes, recorded video and audio and so on. All kinds of best practices and guidelines for using ICT to support all levels of education are experimented by academicians as well as government initiatives. The struggles to find options to deal with the current situation make us realize that scenario planning is an urgent need for academic institutions (Rieley, 2020). Along with the concern for the safety of all the stake holders, attention is to be paid to

enhance effectiveness of teaching and learning process adopting a blended approach.

## II. IMPACT OF ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

The worldwide debate about online teaching and learning process and its impact on all concerned is now a scholarly matter. Despite its acceptance around the globe, there exists both positive and negative criticism so far as effects on our students, teachers, communities and societies as a whole are concerned. On the one hand, it has facilitated the teaching and learning process primarily based on online interactions and created a new way of substituting traditional methodologies though not completely, on the other hand, the increase in the use of internet for the purpose by all the stake holders is leading to social isolation, to a breakdown of social communication and minimizing personal relatedness in the absence of face-to-face interactions. Thus, online medium of instructions through internet has been accused of gradually enticing concerned population to leave their own fantasies online

and have developed a tendency to escape the real world, in a culture increasingly dominated by virtual reality.

### III. ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING AS A PANACEA IN THE TIME OF CRISIS

Online learning offers a wide range of benefits like accessibility, affordability, flexibility and reduces the overall cost of institution based learning. Some more interesting aspects of online learning are: technology mediated blended learning and flipped classrooms with a hope to increase the learning potential of the students making them lifelong independent. The increasing importance of online learning serves as a panacea in the pandemic situation, where life as well as learning process can continue simultaneously. Various kinds of e-learning solutions are frequently presented as panacea for all problems in education (Bork, 2003). The technology has enabled us to deal with the current pandemic situation and to some extent we are successful in our attempts to compensate the absence of traditional classroom teaching and learning.

Rapid developments in technology have made distance education easy (McBrien et al., 2009). This has become very relevant and indispensable in the present context of covid-19 as internet mediated learning offers the possibility to learn from anywhere, anytime, pace and with any means providing convenience and equal opportunities. Furthermore, interactive teaching and learning associated with traditional classroom setting can be paid attention to in the online mode through improved teaching and learning strategies. In this context, Moore's (1993) theory of transactional distance is one of most prominent theories according to which distance is considered a pedagogical phenomenon. The "sense of distance" means a learner transcends geography during the learning process and is concerned with student interaction and engagement in the learning experience.

### IV. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND THE ONLINE TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS

In the mid-1990s, the term 'digital divide' began to be used to describe the relative disadvantage of those who do not have access to or are not equipped to use computers and the Internet. The availability of information on the Internet provides a major learning resource for students of all age group, in terms of awareness of current affairs, training and remote learning. This could help reduce the divide in education and literacy levels between developed and developing regions as well as helping to narrow rural and urban divides. Valkenburg and Soeters (2001) report

that the children and the youth are generally enthusiastic adopters of the Internet for communication, entertainment and education. Certainly internet has become very popular among the learners in recent years. Keeping in view the spread of the novel corona virus, the lockdowns and shutdowns, there is a need to revisit the digital divide as Internet becomes a very prominent medium to compensate physical classes.

The educational imbalance happening in the present context relate to the digital divide at four levels. First, because educational institutes are territorially and institutionally (public/private) differentiated; there is a substantial gap in terms of technology adoption and usage among the institutions. Secondly, Internet access requires trained teachers, and yet the efficiency of the teachers in spite of their individual high motivation is unevenly distributed among institutions. Thirdly, the differential pedagogy adopted contrasts those systems that focus on the intellectual and personal development of the students with those essentially preoccupied with the ability to maintain discipline, warehouse them, and process them through their graduation. These opposing pedagogical styles tend to correlate with the institution's social status and with the cultural and economic ability of the parents to put pressure on them. Fourthly, in the absence of adequate training of teachers and pedagogic reform in the educational institutions, families take over much of the responsibility for instructing their children and helping them in the new technological world. Here the presence of Internet access at home and of relatively educated parents with the cultural capacity to guide their children makes a substantial difference. The cumulative result of these different layers of inequality will certainly impact educational performance of the students. In a context where the ability to process information on and with the Internet becomes crucial, learners from disadvantaged families fall farther behind their classmates with greater information-processing skills that they obtain from their exposure to a better-educated home environment. Differential learning capacities, under relatively similar intellectual and emotional conditions, are correlated with the cultural and educational level of the family. In the absence of corrective measures, the use of the Internet, in academic life, could amplify the social differences rooted in class, education, gender, and ethnicity. Bridging the digital divide inside and outside classrooms is necessarily and increasingly a must if we have to keep pace with the changing scenario in the whole world in the context of the present scenario.

## V. COVID-19 AND VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

The spread of Corona Virus (Covid-19) has resulted in temporary closure of educational institutes of all levels. In the absence of physical mode of classroom interactions; learners around the world are dependent on online learning through virtual classrooms. Teachers & facilitators have acknowledged the needs and are trying hard to adopt the new teaching approaches, technologies and teaching skills. Virtual classrooms are now considered as an alternate technology tool for learning methods and it began to grow on a fast rate. This virtual environment helped all education and corporate sectors even social media platforms like YouTube, twitter and obviously Zoom, Meet, Microsoft and Impartus with highest number of users. But still the virtual classrooms are not considered as a major substitute for the face to face learning.

## VI. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

Differences in geographical and economic conditions, different educational backgrounds and pedagogical views, language and content issues, usability and technical literacy issues, attitudes and prejudices and even differences in climate have posed challenges to implementation of online teaching and learning process. Internet-based and internet mediated learning are not only a matter of technological proficiency. It changes the kind of education that is required both to work on the Internet and to develop learning ability in an Internet-based education system. The critical matter is to shift from learning to learning-to-learn. Since most information is online, it is necessary to acquire the requisite skill to decide what to look for, how to retrieve it, how to process it, and how to use it for the specific task that prompted the search for information. In other words, the new learning is oriented towards the development of the educational capacity to transform information into knowledge and knowledge into action (Dutton, 1999). The education system as a whole is awfully inadequate in the use of this new learning methodology as there was no preparedness to face the crisis in the pandemic situation. Even if the technology was already there, it was supplementary to physical mode of teaching and learning. The system lacks teachers able to use it effectively, and it lacks the pedagogy and institutional organization to induce new learning skills as well as learner proficiency. The process of developing adequate online education facilities for all will definitely have success stories along with some challenges till each and every learner's needs are addressed.

## VII. IMPACT OF ONLINE EDUCATION ON TEACHER TAUGHT RELATIONSHIP

With its distinctive features of openness, sharing and interaction, online education facilitates and strengthens a new teacher-student relationship which is characterized by teacher-led and student-centred characteristics. Online education provides advantages that may not be found in traditional face-to-face classrooms. It has some disadvantages such as lack of emotional communication between the teacher and the taught in the absence of face to face interactions and ineffectiveness in supervision due to virtual platform. Therefore, attention should be paid to maintain a close and intimate teacher-taught relationship. In this connection, interactions between students and the teacher should be emphasized and an emotional connection between students and the teacher should be built.

Greater interactivity in online class will enhance the overall effectiveness of online teaching and learning process. Literature depicts that more student and teacher discussion can result in higher interactivity (Townsend et al., 2002). Online class participation can be one way of enhancing student involvement in virtual class. Moreover, discussing case studies and asking questions can result in higher student involvement (Smith & Diaz, 2004). Greater involvement will encourage student presence and improve learning abilities as well as motivate teachers. In this context both quality and quantity of teacher taught interactions matter for overall success of the whole process.

## VIII. ONLINE EDUCATION: A REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY AND NEW NORMAL IN CURRENT PANDEMIC SITUATION

Across the world, educational institutions are imparting education online. Education has changed dramatically, with the distinctive rise of e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. Even before COVID-19, there was already high growth and adoption in education technology. Whether it is language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools, or online learning software, there has been a significant surge in usage since COVID-19. In response to significant demand, many online learning platforms are offering free access to their services. Many companies are bolstering capabilities to provide a one-stop shop for teachers and students. There are, however, challenges to overcome. Some students without reliable internet access and/or technology struggle to participate in digital learning; this gap is seen across countries and between income brackets within

countries. To get the full benefit of online learning, there needs to be a concerted effort to provide this structure and go beyond replicating a physical class/lecture through video capabilities, instead, using a range of collaboration tools and engagement methods that promote inclusion, personalization and intelligence.

## IX. DEVELOPING STUDENT LEARNING ABILITIES IN ONLINE CLASSES

Online classes are completely different from the traditional classroom teaching. In traditional classroom, teacher has control over student behaviour. To deal with this concern, study shows that the teacher should devise different activities which can enhance student learning skills in online classes (Bao, 2020). Moreover, teachers should ask challenging questions to students during online classes (Smith & Diaz, 2004). These practices will help in developing learning abilities of the students and will ensure that students are more attentive in classes. In order to enhance the effectiveness of online classes, students should be encouraged to give feedback so that teachers can rethink of their strategies.

## X. CONCLUSION

This pandemic has utterly disrupted an education system that was prevailing globally. Without an Internet-based educational system, no country can generate resources necessary to cater to its learner's needs in the present context of the covid-19 situation. The success of online education certainly depends on knowledge and adoption of technology which depends on the extent of the digital divide in the country, on the ability to generate a process of social learning in parallel with the building of an information and communication technology infrastructure. The distinctive features of online education such as openness, sharing and interaction, facilitate and strengthen teacher-student relationship. Greater interactivity in online course will enhance the overall online class success rate. With this sudden shift away from the traditional classroom teaching learning process in many parts of the globe, some are wondering whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic and how such a shift would impact the worldwide education system.

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