

ONLINE LEARNING in COVID 19 PANDEMIC - OPPURTUNITY and CHALLENGES (AN EXPLORATORY STUDY)

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ABSTRACT:

The COVID 19 pandemic has brought about far reaching changes in every aspect of society. Its consequences could not be neglected. The sudden closure of educational institutions in almost every part of the world has shaken the educative needs of the students. Therefore considering the necessity to continue the learning process, online system of education has been accepted. The present study is descriptive in nature. It tries to understand the opportunities and challenges of the ongoing online system of education amidst COVID 19.

Key words- COVID -19, online learning, pandemic, E-Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Today the whole world is experiencing the consequences of COVID-19. COVID -19 is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome CORonaVirus2 (SARS – CoV-2) . Wuhan in China is the first city to identify the first case of this disease in December, 2019. Normally people infected with COVID 19 experiences mild to moderate respiratory illness but this could lead to serious illness in elderly people and children. COVID 19 been declared as a global public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization on 30th January, 2020. It has been also declared as pandemic on 11th March 2020.

Online learning usually occurs over internet. Online learning is sometimes known as E- Learning. On-line learning is beneficial in many ways. . “E-learning is an on-line education defined as the self-paced or real –time delivery of training and education over the internet to an end-user device (Lee&Lee, 2006). “E-Learning is the delivery of a learning, training or education program by electronic means”(Li, Lau,& Dharmendran,2009)

The ongoing online system of education is no-doubt serving the learning purpose for engaging students in some way but the consequences of it is lesser known. We need to understand whether it is equitably accessible to all or it is accessible to some. The question also arises whether it would at par with the traditional face to face lecture method of learning.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

COVID 19 has brought turmoil in the lives of people. COVID 19 has affected every aspects of everyday life and education is not an exception to this. People are now spending their lives in fear and anxiety. Social distancing has been found as a preventive measure to fight the deadly disease. This social distancing is against social gathering. Educational institutions have been shut down temporarily to maintain social distancing and there is uncertainty of its re-opening to continue normal classes in educational institutions. Hence the educational institutions have switched on to online learning to educate the learners through the use of virtual platform. Some online learning platforms are also providing free access to its contents. The online mode of education which was considered as a medium of instruction in distance education has become necessity today in the wake of COVID pandemic. Although the younger generation is quite familiar to internet usage but they are less exposed to online medium of learning. Internet was used mostly for entertainment purposes and less for educational purposes for the young learners. This new mode of learning is paving our way into towards a more digitalized social world.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are as-

1. To understand the opportunities of online learning in COVID 19.
2. To identify the challenges of online learning in COVID 19

METHODOLOGY

The study is entirely based on secondary data sources, which include books, journals, internet sources etc.

RESULT

Mode of teaching in conventional educational institutions relied mostly on face to face lecture sessions. This form of teachings was accepted by the larger masses who could not accept the online mode of learning as suitable prior to pandemic. According to UNESCO report over 87% of all the world's students are affected by closure of schools, colleges and universities. It has disrupted normal life style of people.

With the abnormal increase in the number of positive cases of Covid 19, lockdown was imposed in all the affected countries. The imposition of lockdown continued day by day. Gradually fears began to rise in the minds of students as well as parents of losing degrees or a year for this lockdown. As such the Government as well as the educational institutions realized the necessity of continuing their teaching through online mode at all levels- primary, secondary, under graduate and post graduate levels. Along with classes, assessments on student's performance are also done through online mode

OPPORTUNITIES:

Online learning has now turned to be mainstreaming learning. Such engagements of students into learning during lockdown would boost the psychological health of the students.

This online learning was less popular in primary school levels. This turned to be unfamiliar in the initial days of its introduction for some learners, parents as well as for some teachers. But gradually they have become used to it. PM e- VIDYA, Bharat Padhe Online, VidyaDaan 2.0 are various platforms launched by the Central Government to ease the learning opportunities in India amidst pandemic situation. Besides these Diksha Portal, Swayam Prabha and NCERT's YouTube channels are also providing various e-contents to make learning easier in times of crises. Different apps like Google Meet, Google Classroom, WhatsApp etc. are used by teachers to deliver their e-content to the students.

The response to online learning in pandemic is pleasing. It has made learning easily accessible from anywhere at any time. It provides enriched e-contents, prepared using various graphic techniques that evoke not only a widened thought but promotes creative insights among learners (Sarif, 2020). Moreover the e-contents of virtual classroom are easily accessible to all.

Online mode of learning has given freedom to the learners to learn at their own pace and convenience. They are not under stress on completion of their task within the stipulated time. They are enjoying freedom in attending the classes without physically attending the educational institutions.

The teachers are also enjoying autonomy in context of preparing their course materials as well as taking classes according to their convenience.. This is in fact introducing novelty in the learning process where the learner and the teacher are being introduced to a new learning environment. Prior to pandemic the teaching aids used by teachers ranged from books, blackboards etc. But in present context both the learners as well as teachers has to depend much more on digital media for making teaching learning effective. Keeping in view of the seriousness of the present situation, online learning has turned to be best suitable to continue with the process of learning. Online learning is no longer available in higher education; it is being used in primary and high school levels also.

CHALLENGES:

- Online learning has been found to be effective especially for those who could access the internet. The effectiveness of this online learning is not same for all groups of students. Online learning necessitated digital devices like android mobiles, laptops etc. This also became problematic for economically downtrodden people to afford who are already suffering more due to lockdown. This has resulted in digital divide between rural and urban and rich and poor.
- Without online learning in this pandemic, the learning process would have been at stake. Although the learning outcome would not be similar with the face to face learning. Moreover too much dependence in internet has affected the socialization process of the students. Since education is also considered as a medium of socialization of the child, this on- going online learning has not contributed much in socializing students.
- Online learning relies on use of mobile phones, laptops etc. More use of such devices causes health problems in them. Moreover the unethical use of internet especially by the younger students while doing online classes might affect their developmental process.
- Online learning serves best in technologically advanced countries but for technologically less advanced countries, it becomes a problem to conduct online learning fruitfully.
- Poor electrification in some remote areas creates difficulty in accessing online learning. Prolonged and frequent power cuts in some areas disrupts in online classes.
- Giving instructions through online medium is something new for some primary school teachers. It has in a way increased the work load of the teachers in preparing online learning materials for students. Moreover for those who are totally new in this field has to get themselves trained for conducting online classes.
- Sometimes lack of physical space to conduct and undertake online classes stands as an obstacle in online education. This applies to both teachers and students.
- Social barriers also affect the fruitfulness of online- learning. In some families, girl child may not be permitted to use internet for online classes due to gender differences or they might not get enough time to attend classes due to household chores.

CONCLUSION

COVID 19 pandemic has brought about uncertainties in the lives of people. The importance of face to face classroom teaching cannot be denied. But in times of the crises of COVID 19, online learning or e-learning has emerged as best suitable means of learning. Even though the central and state governments are taking up various opportunities for the learners, it is a far cry for the some of the economically weaker section of society. Even though learning has been continuing, the effectiveness of the online learning is a matter of question. Thus online learning cannot be considered to be at par with regular face to face teaching and learning conducted in conventional classroom. Online learning is more effective in advanced countries but in developing or underdeveloped countries more needs to be done.

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