
Online Education in India: A Panacea in the time of Covid 19

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Abstract

The covid -19 pandemic has affected every aspect of life including education. Since the whole world is going through a pandemic, it has become imperative that we should be ready with some alternative mode of education and this is where online education has come into the picture. Although face to face education is still considered the norm but acceptance of online courses is increasing in the field of higher education . This pandemic has forcefully shifted the mode of teaching and learning from only face to face to online in the higher education which is new experiences and practices for many of the teachers and students. Even the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has emphasised on the growing need of online education in india . NEP 2020 focuses on digital learning as a substitute to the traditional classroom model for interaction between teachers and student . While there are numerous benefits of digital education, the barriers are still manifold to make education a complete online phenomenon in rural areas. The present Covid -19 crisis has had a major impact on the digital divide in the country, particularly from the perspective of education with digital access. It has also brought into the sharp focus the challengers that exist for digital representaion of education. In this context, this paper investigated teachers' and learners' perspective on online education in relation to its benefits and major challenges.

Key words- Covid- 19, NEP, Pandemic , Digital education.

Introduction

The Corona Virus also known as Covid-19 has deeply affected the global as well as Indian economy. This virus has affected every sector of life and also shaken up the education sector, and this fear is likely to resonate across the education sector globally Various schools, colleges, and universities have discontinued face to face teaching.. As social distancing is preeminent at this stage, this will have negative effects on learning opportunities. Educational institutes are struggling to find options to deal with this challenging situation. These circumstances make us realize that scenario planning is an urgent need for academic institutions. This is a situation that demands humanity and unity. There is an urgent need to protect and save our students, faculty, academic staff, communities, societies, and the nation as a whole. Educational institutions as schools, colleges, and universities in India are basically based only on traditional methods of learning. In this method they follow the traditional set up of face-to-face lectures in a classroom. The sudden outbreak of Covid-19 caused by a Corona Virus (SARS-CoV-2) shook the entire world. The World Health Organization declared it as a pandemic. This situation challenged the education system across the world and forced educators to shift to an online mode overnight.

Several arguments are associated with e-learning. Accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning, and policy are some of the arguments related to online learning. It is said that online mode of learning is easily accessible and can even reach to remote

areas. It is said to be a relatively cheaper mode of education. Flexibility is another interesting aspect of online learning; a learner can schedule or plan their time for completion of courses available online. This type of learning environment can increase the learning potential of the students. Students can learn anytime and anywhere, thereby developing new skills in the process leading to life-long learning. The government also recognizes the increasing importance of online learning in this dynamic world and promoting online education as a new tool of education. The severe explosion of Corona Virus disease can make us add one more argument in terms of online learning, that is, online learning serves as a panacea in the time of crisis.

Online Learning or E-Learning- Rapid growth in technology have made distance education easy. Online learning can be termed as a tool that can make the teaching–learning process more centered, innovative, and even more flexible. Online learning is defined as learning experiences using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere to learn and interact with instructors and other students. In such a learning environment, learning content is not available in the form of live lectures or classes. Amidst this deadly virus spread such online platforms are needed where (a) video conferencing with at least 30 to 40 students is possible, (b) discussions with students can be done, (c) internet access are good, (d) lectures are accessible in mobile phones also (e) availability of watching already recorded lectures, and (f) instant feedback from students can be achieved

Online Teaching- As a urgent Necessity- Due to global pandemic Covid-19 and therefore its effects can be seen in schools, colleges, and universities too then all this online teaching and online learning can be termed as the panacea for the crisis. The Corona Virus has made educational institutions to go from offline mode to online mode. This crisis will make the institutions, which were earlier unwillingly to change, to accept modern technology. This catastrophe will show us the lucrative side of online teaching and learning. With the help of online teaching modes, we can sermonize a large number of students at any time and in any part of the world. Online learning is emerging as a victor change amidst this chaos. Therefore, the quality enhancement of online teaching–learning is crucial at this stage. There was an overnight shift of normal classrooms into e-classrooms, that is, educators have change their teaching pattern accordingly circumstances. During this tough time, the concern is not about whether online teaching–learning methods can provide quality education, it is rather how academic institutions will be able to adopt online learning in such a massive manner.

Problems With Online Teaching and Learning- There are number of online teaching platform 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 uninteresting 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 in online learning. Two-way interaction is not easy in online education. 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. Students feel that lack of

community, technical problems, and difficulties in understanding instructional goals are the major barriers for online learning.

Possible Solutions for Problems- There are a number of issues attached to online education but we cannot ignore the importance of it in times of such crisis. We can solve all these problem as online education is the urgent demand of education world. Technical difficulties can be solved through prerecording video lectures, testing the content, and always keeping Plan B ready so that the teaching–learning process cannot be hindered. Online courses should be made dynamic, interesting, and interactive. Teachers should set time limits and reminders for students to make them alert and attentive.

Strengths- E-learning methods and processes are really strong enough. These strengths of the online learning modes can rescue us from these hard time of this pandemic. It is student-oriented and flexible in terms of time and place. The e-learning methods enable us to customize our procedures and processes based on the needs of the learners. There are number of online tools available which is important for an effective and efficient learning environment. Educators can use a combo of audio, videos, and text to reach out to their students in this tough time of crisis to provide a human touch to their lectures. This can be helpful in interactive learning environment where students can give their immediate feedback, ask queries, and learn with interest. The Anywhere-Anytime feature of e-learning is beneficial in the time of crisis Covid-19.

Weaknesses- E-learning has some weaknesses that can obstruct the communication between the learner and the teacher. Direct communication and human touch are lost. Users can face many technical difficulties that hinder and slow-down the teaching–learning process. Though time and location flexibility are the benefit of online learning but these aspects are fragile and create problems. Student’s nonserious behavior can create a lot of problems. All students and learners are not the same, they vary from each other in capabilities and confidence level. Some do not feel comfortable while learning online that can led to increase frustration and confusion.

Opportunities- Online learning generally has a lot of opportunities available. This crisis will be a new phase for online learning and will allow people to look at the productive side of e-learning technologies. Teachers can practice technology and can design various flexible programs for students’ better understanding. The usage of online learning will test both the educator and learners. It will enhance problem-solving skills, critical thinking abilities, and adaptability among the students.

Challenges- Online learning faces many challenges from learners’ side, educators’ side, and content side. It is a challenge for institutions to engage students and make them participate in the teaching–learning process. It is a big challenge for teachers to shift from offline mode to online mode, changing their teaching pattern, and managing their time. The quality of e-learning programs is a real challenge. There is no clear stipulation by the government in their educational policies about e-learning programs. There is a lack of standards for quality, quality control, development of e-resources, and e-content delivery. This problem needs to be tackled immediately so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of quality education via e-learning. One

should not merely focus on the pros attached to the adoption of online learning during the crises but should also take account of developing and enhancing the quality of virtual courses delivered in such emergencies. A lot of time and cost is involved in e-learning. It is not as easy as it seems, a considerable amount of investment is needed for getting the devices and equipment, maintaining the equipment, training the human resources, and developing the online content. Therefore, an effective and efficient educational system needs to be developed to impart education via online mode.

Practice makes a man perfect is a famous and very true proverb. Students and teachers across the world have never really practiced e-learning. The Corona Virus outbreak is the chance to make out the best from the current situation. We can learn a lot in this challenging situation. A lot of tools are available, teachers are required to choose the best tool and implement it to impart education to their students.

Conclusions - As per the World Economic Forum, the Covid-19 pandemic also has changed the traditional pattern of education. To find new solutions for our problems, we might bring in some much-needed changes. Teachers have become habitual to traditional methods of teaching in the form of face-to-face lectures so they are hesitating in accepting the change. It will be beneficial for the education sector and could bring a lot of surprising innovations. Now this is the time of changing in teaching learning process and we should accept the demand of this time. Although online education has many problems and challenges but we know that every changes take time and after that a new pattern invented.

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