

Covid-19 impact: The shift from offline to online learning

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated a world-wide consciousness that the present way of lifestyle does not work. There are many areas need the revolutionary changes and it has become obvious, one among is educational sector. In India, educational institutes/universities remain closed since the mid of March-2020, because of the fast spread of COVID-19. This has caused almost all schools and colleges to reach out to the online route for running the day's scheduled classes via webcams and smart phones. This will create a new paradigm for teachers and professors as they will have to adapt to this changed situation to be more congruent while delivering their lectures and course content through the online route. In India, while this transition has been smooth for most private universities, the public ones are still adapting. There have also been debates on the nature of classes , and the future of examination and evaluation — whether they could be conducted online or not. While faculty grapples with new ways of managing this sudden transition to online education, students are left clinging on to their mobile phones and computer screens.

Keywords: COVID-19, lock down, Higher education, online learnings, traditional teaching

INTRODUCTION

In Wuhan, the pneumonia of unknown cause was first detected and reported to World Health Organization (WHO) Office on December 31, 2019. Since then, this epidemic spread all around the globe. In India, higher education system at present is at a transition stage. A stage where changes have taken place for good and more transformations in thoughts and processes are desired. Higher education system in any nation today seeks a relook. Higher education for

academic institution and students must cope up to online teaching aids still remains a big question in the emergency situation of COVID-19 . COVID-19 enforced the academic higher education universities across globe to cancel the traditional chalk and talk (in class face-to-face education) methodology and change to the online teaching/learning. The change originates the

The aim of the study is to investigate/identify the knowledge, practice and utilization of online courses and the quality of understanding amongst the students and faculties during lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic situation in India. The study also analyses the quality and outreach of the online classes with various stake holders of different higher education streams through online Questionnaire based survey. In addition, suggestions and recommendations are high-lightened to impart better teaching and learning experience viz. online mode.

Online Teaching Tools Majority of the online classes are based on the internet/network web based. Education technology has opened new avenues, enabling everyone to monetize their skills. As the world is living with digital technology, various online teaching aids are available and are very useful. The students and faculties must learn how to use online teaching aid tools effectively and quickly, many webbased software and apps are developed for this purpose. In the COVID-19 emergency situations, to teach online these digital resources make learning more conveniently and interactive with improved versions of tools. Online teaching tools offers significant benefits such as recording the classes/sessions, sharing voice/text messages, software's are available for both recording and editing audios, a tool for creating online spoken assignments (using images and videos), providing feedback to students, and so on. However, trial run version software's are limited to five voice threads such as the file once created cannot be deleted, zooming and other multi-rich presentations for content delivery options are not available, platform for creating websites, blogs and e-portfolios using drag-and-drop method. A question was framed to know the knowledge of the participants on which tool the online teaching and learning is carried out. Majority of the participants have responded that they are using the Zoom software application to teaching and learning online. 81.7% of participants were agreed to have best utilization of zoom application and rest of the participants were using other online teaching tools which is shown in Figure 8. From this question it is revealed that most of the institutions were aware of many teaching-and-learning tools. Some of them have expressed that which tool is more effective. Many universities/institutions have procured the software teaching

tool as academic licence and setup their own studios to teach online with no interruption. Setup of own studios for teaching online consumes more data memory and faces buffering problem due to low-speed internet access. Each student has been given a login and password, he must login as per the prescribed timetable with teaching tool.

Both online education and its traditional counterpart have pros and cons, so it's important for students to understand what to expect before they step foot—or log into—the classroom. We focused this side-by-side comparison on three key areas that make an impact on a student's experience. We'll also take a closer look at what a “blended learning” model has to offer.

Differences between Online Education and Traditional Education

Social Interaction

One of the major aspects that must be considered when planning to opt for either online or traditional education is Social interaction. Students should ask themselves before enrolling; whether they need one-on-one interaction with their instructors or peers?

Usually, online education provides lecturers and students with an opportunity to interact with one another through an online portal or video conferencing software. With such online meeting software, it is more comfortable to hold or attend classes from anywhere at any time. These platforms allow students to enjoy live streaming of full HD and crystal-clear audio classes. Teachers too can take advantage of the screen sharing feature to easily begin their lessons by using the software.

Contrarily, the traditional brick-and-mortar classroom is an excellent option for those looking for face-to-face communication. Traditional learning makes it possible for students to have direct engagements with instructors and students. Students can also have detailed discussions, ask lots of questions, and cover many concepts in one topic. In the long run, it will improve students' performance and competence in the field of specialization.

Flexibility

When comparing online education and traditional education, we cannot afford to leave one of the major aspects of education –flexibility. eLearning offers flexibility to students, particularly those who have family responsibilities or are already committed to work. With online-based courses, students can take classes in their free time, without being forced to attend lessons at any specific time.

While on the other hand, traditional education can be excellent for students who have time to attend classes. This option is ideal for students. Although it is not entirely as flexible as online education, some schools offer class schedules for mornings and evenings, as well, it might be a convenient option for working students. The only challenge might be the long distance between the student's home or workplace and the school campus.

Budget

Online courses and programs offer cheaper options for learning than traditional education options. According to reports, a degree course in a traditional university or college costs a total average of \$85,000. On the flip side, an online degree costs \$30,000. This means enrolling for a course online offers students the opportunity to save more tuition fees and boot camps while enjoying greater flexibility.

However, traditional education might be insanely expensive, but it does offer tangible learning programs and materials that match the amount paid. These institutions tend to offer real-time learning or study experience. Students get access to the library, sponsored school trips, or dining in school. In essence, it might end up saving a little time the student or parent has kept aside for studies.

Methodologies and Facilities of Teaching

Many students prefer online education because they believe today's online courses offer tailored experiences to meet each student's needs. It is often challenging to take practical classes online as easier it is to deliver on theory lessons. When practical lessons are carried out, they fail to provide the "one-on-one experience" as the traditional education system would.

The offline mode of education often provides a hands-on experience to all students who need to learn from practical lessons. Unlike online education, it has several necessary facilities and equipment for practical studies and activities. Whether a student takes Chemistry, Biology, Dentistry, or other practical based courses, they would enjoy plenty of lab lessons and/or field training. They cannot achieve the same in online education as most students often take classes while lying on the couch or in bed.

Time Management

Whether it is an online or traditional class, it requires the student to manage their time wisely. They can structure their time outside of the classroom to study, projects, and homework in a traditional class. However, the absence of regular class meetings in online education requires students to acquire and learn course materials on their own set time. This is what makes online classes attractive to non-traditional students who may have additional jobs or family responsibilities that may make attending regular classes a challenge state the "Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks."

Participation

Both online and traditional education also assesses student participation. In a traditional class, students voluntarily participate in discussions or question-answer session. However, as per the University of Connecticut's Instructional Design and Development Guide for Online Students, some students may be shy or unwilling to contribute, leading to a lopsided class dynamic where the same people tend to carry the weight. Students' participation is mandatory in online courses, usually through written discussions in chat rooms or message boards. Therefore, students have the opportunity to come across a wider range of perspectives, including those who may struggle with participating in a traditional learning environment.

Student and Teacher Relationships

Another major factor to check which is better is to assess the students' teacher bond. In a traditional class, face-to-face communication creates a different dynamic for every class. However, online classes lack these interactions. It requires teachers to use forums, chats, and

other online discussion media to build a community, creating complications. Similarly, students also lack the opportunity to know the instructor personally. However, traditional classrooms let students gain support and personal relationships from teachers.

Assignments and Tests

In a traditional classroom, instructors can offer almost every assessment type, from written work to tests to oral examinations and presentations. However, in online classes, there are more limitations in the types of assignments students can complete. Usually, online instructors grade students through papers, open-book examinations and student contributions to online discussions. Since online students must be self-directed, online instructors usually practical design assignments.

Retention Rates

The offline courses, often, struggle to retain students throughout the length of the course. However, the case is different with online education. The Research Institute of America has found that this is not the case with eLearning. Instead, online courses have increased student retention rates from 25% to 60%. It also suggests, the more engaging multimedia content, the more control over how they take in the material, and less likelihood of classes clashing with other commitments. Thus, making it more preferable.

Discipline & self-motivation

When planning to opt for any mode of learning, you need to weigh your level of self-discipline. Both pedagogies certainly require some discipline to succeed, but there can be significant differences in how the learning process is structured. Learner's ability to stay on track can have a significant impact by these structural differences.

Aforesaid, online learning is more flexible in comparison to traditional learning. It comes with a bit of a trade-off—require learners to be highly self-motivated. Also, students need to keep up their works like reading and assignments, but some students may struggle to stay motivated when learning from their home's comfort. In such cases, they can set aside time every week for studying and create a workspace with minimal distractions.

Coming to discipline and motivation, traditional education has several advantages. The structured schedule of attending classes as per the set schedule and having routine face-to-face interactions with instructors can help students stay on task. Also, on-campus settings provide more opportunities to be reminded of upcoming assignments, helping to procrastinate on time-consuming assignments.

Learning Pace

In online-based courses, students get complete control over their lessons. They are allowed to learn as per their "own pace" and "learning capacity." The reason behind is that each student learns differently. Few might be quick learners, while some might require a longer time to understand a certain topic.

On the other hand, a traditional classroom teacher explains the concepts and answers doubts, but there is only so much that they can do. There are possibilities that some students' doubts could remain unanswered. Some students might find the teacher's pace of teaching too fast. A teacher cannot pay attention to each student, and also students get dependent on teachers to disseminate information and get their questions answered.

Coming back to online education, it addresses this issue by offering additional information and explanations via eBooks and other forms of online resources. Students no longer need to wait for the teacher to start/finish a chapter; they can do it themselves. They do not need to depend on teachers. They can go through the content, read chapters, listen to audio-books or external links.

Barriers of online education:

1. Limited Tech Experience

Some online learners may be hesitant to leap into eLearning because they don't have much tech experience. They've heard that eLearning is only for tech savvy individuals, thus, they've avoided it up until now. This is one of the most challenging hurdles to jump over because it's a preexisting belief. Online learners have convinced themselves that they need advanced tech skills

to participate. However, you can alleviate their concerns by offering them online tutorials and personalized support. Create online demos that show them how to access and utilize the Learning Management System. Invite them to a new eLearning webinar where you'll walk them through the process. The secret is making them feel right at home in the eLearning environment.

2. Past Experience

Not everybody has great past experiences with eLearning. Which is why they're dreading it now. This is particularly true for online learners who have had to endure boring compliance online training courses. You can't erase the past, but you can get them excited about your current eLearning program. Stress the benefits in advance and let them know what's in store. Online learners who have had bad experiences don't need any more surprises, and especially negative ones. So, be clear about why they should take the eLearning course and how it will improve their lives. Additionally, carry out polls and questionnaires to identify problem areas you need to address. For instance, issues that arose with other eLearning courses.

3. Lack Of Motivation

You probably already knew that motivation was going to show up near the top of the list. After all, it is one of the most common challenges that eLearning professionals face. Any number of things can contribute to lack of motivation. But there is a way to get your online learners involved and actively engaged in the process: Badges, certificates, points, and leader boards give online learners the motivation they need to achieve the desired outcomes.

4. Personal Cognitions

Unfortunately, some of your online learners may be dealing with self-defeating beliefs and opinions. For example, they may feel as though they don't have the skills or abilities to enroll in your eLearning course. This prevents them from receiving the benefits of the eLearning experience you offer. One of the best ways to overcome personal cognitions is to acknowledge

and evaluate them. Ask online learners thought-provoking questions that prompt them to examine their beliefs and assumptions. They may not be aware that these negative cognitions exist in the first place.

5. Too Challenging eLearning Materials

Creating an effective eLearning experience is all about finding the perfect balance. If it's too easy, online learners may become bored and disengaged. If it's too difficult, they may become frustrated and simply give up. As such, you need to research your audience and conduct pre-assessments to find the ideal level of challenge. The goal is to give them a sense of accomplishment without making them struggle through the eLearning course. You can also divide more involved long-term goals into more manageable milestones to increase their motivation. Online learners have the opportunity to monitor their own progress and celebrate their accomplishments along the way.

6. Inadequate Support

Some of your online learners may breeze through the eLearning program on their own. They don't require any additional help and can navigate in the eLearning course with ease. Then there are others who require ongoing assistance throughout the entire eLearning experience. They may not be comfortable using the Learning Management System or find the topic challenging. Regardless of which category online learners fall into, they should ALWAYS have access to support. Provide them with a list of contact details and online resource links they can use to improve their comprehension.

7. Lack Of Community Involvement

Certain people associate eLearning with isolation and loneliness. They want to expand their knowledge, but they don't want to do it alone. For this reason, you should build an active online learning community for your eLearning course. Create social media groups and online forums

where online learners can ask question and interact with peers. Start an eLearning blog or website that features helpful articles and multimedia links. Another option is developing online group collaboration activities that allow them to practice problem solving with their peers. There are a variety of Project Management online platforms that can help them communicate, share documents, and assign tasks. eLearning webinars are yet another way to promote community involvement and prevent feelings of isolation.

8. Online Learner Boredom

This list just wouldn't be complete without boredom. When boredom sets in, online learners check out. Solving this quandary once and for all is one of the great pursuits for eLearning professionals. There's no secret recipe to make your eLearning course inspiring and engaging. But the best way to prevent boredom is knowing your online learners. Conduct surveys, interviews, and pre-assessments to identify their expectations, needs, and goals. Use this eLearning feedback to create relevant and relatable eLearning experiences that solve real world challenges. In addition, develop personal learning paths that allow online learners to choose their eLearning activities.

Key Strategies to be adopted for Enhancing Online Teaching/Learning Experience Online education has not been included in the curriculum by many institutions. Several institutions are now persuaded that online education has continued to stay, which will be part of future academic activities. Digital technologies to be included for learning management systems, enrolment and academic programs, faculty governance, assessment of students, etc. The roles of Teacher, student and Parents are equally important for adopting this, both should change their mind set toward adopting the same. The pandemic epidemic has definitely confirmed that reform is imminent, and a great combination of conventional teaching with online mode should be available. The secret to success in the online teaching learning process is that the system has to be accessible for both students and staff. • Sudden switching for online education mode may not be able to host large scale of new users. The platform may often shutdown because of overload.

Thus, gradual upload of classroom teaching videos in the online platform can be adopted such that the sessions can be viewed multiple times, as and when they are accessible. • Internet connectivity in rural areas should be addressed as the signal connectivity of various telecoms is the major issue. Government should take measures for developing infrastructural modifications like Open Wi-Fi areas with high speed internet access with at least 4GB data pack per day, should be made available in public places and villages. Government must provide un-interrupted power supply to facilitate ease of online teaching. • Delivery content for the teachers should be trained prior to initiate online teaching, which gives the clarity in communication and also helps to impart innovative techniques. • Teaching content should be framed such that the length of the video should not cross 30 minutes. This will not cause fatigue on the students who are seeing the uploaded videos to online platforms such as YouTube channel. • Government must ensure sufficient data network package with high speed internet access to conduct online sessions for minimum of 4 hours per day • The course materials should be made available to students before conducting online session. Students should be advised to read those contents prior to attending the online session. In online session, faculty should hold a discussion session on the topic of uploaded/delivered course materials, thus maintaining interactive sessions. • University / Institutions should support the developmental activities related to online teaching and learning for both Faculties and students. Inside University / Institution campus, there should be online workshops, trainings, conferences to be scheduled in frequent manner and also these should be included in calendar of events. • The universities / institutions may implement suitable strategies to encourage the completion of Projects / Dissertations by the UG / PG students. Universities has to recommend for assigning review-based / secondary data-based projects or software-driven projects to these students, rather than traditional laboratory-based studies or field / survey-based assignments, provided the prevailing circumstances. • The teachers will be properly prepared and trained to use ICT and electronic teaching resources to address these obstacles in the future. This helps in completing some percent of the syllabus through online teaching and remaining syllabus through classroom teaching.

CONCLUSION

India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. India's Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in

the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since independence. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the economic and educational health of India. The first decision, the Central government took in the field of education was to close schools and colleges, including higher education universities. The government and higher educational institutions quickly announced that online classes will be conducted by the institutions. Paradigm shift from traditional face to face teaching method to Online teaching poses technical difficulties that affects the efficacy of Teaching-Learning Process. The survey has been conducted with various stake holders of all higher education courses to know the efficacy of Teaching-Learning process. More than 60% of the students are not ready (due to lack of technical, infrastructural, and high-speed internet access, and power supply, limited network data per day) for the online classes. Survey indicated that the online sessions of problematic subjects are difficult, but theoretical subjects are easy to understand. Most of the students felt that Morning 8-12 time is effective for conducting the online teaching. Students felt selected portions which are covered during the emergency lockdown period via online, needs to be revised in face-to-face classes after reopening of institutions. The suggestions and recommendations are made to improve the efficacy of online teaching learning process. Further, the precautions to be taken by the universities to avoid rapid spread of COVID-19 cases are high lightened, if colleges/universities open before vaccinating the individuals (public, staff and students),

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