Kanpur Philosophers ,ISSN 2348-8301
International Journal of humanities, Law and Social Sciences
Published biannually by New Archaeological & Genological Society
Kanpur India

Vol. VIII, Issue I (summer) 2021
DOI:
https://sites.google.com/site/kanpurhistorian/

ONLINE CLASSES& COVID -19: EXPERIENCES OF REMOTE LEARNING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

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The purpose of this paper is to understand the technology adoption, teaching and learning process, student engagement and experience of faculty and students towards virtual classrooms during COVID-19 induced Lockdown.The research tries to find out the how far educators and academic institutes have been able to meet with sudden challenges thrown at them from the student's perspective. Also, educator's perception towards delivery of education and effectiveness has been measured through a questionnairecirculated to 12 educators. The results of structural analysis using 200 responses collected from the undergraduate student's supportthe hypotheses that academic and intellectual engagement constructs mediate the relationship between online engagement and affective learning. The findings of the study indicate that going forward it can be an opportunity in disguise as it can pinpoint the pain areas and overhaul the system which was being neglected from a long time. A blended model combining the offline and online delivery mode has also proved to be more effective. A more accessible,

less elitist and less carbon-intensive international education market may well be a good idea coming out of the corona virus crisis.

Keywords- Virtual Learning, Online Sessions, Coronavirus, Pandemic

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global public health emergency of international concern on 30th January 2020 as well as a pandemic on 11th March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020).The first case of COVID-19 in India was reported on January 30, 2020. By mid-March, there were just over 100 confirmed cases in the country. As the cases were on a rise in India, the Indian government also announce nation-wide complete lockdown on 24th March. It continued till 8th June 2020, and since then the lockdowns are being implementedaccording to local situations. events, closure of certain businesses and closure of educational institutions. The purpose of lockdown measures is to slow down the spread of the virus – an effort which has ubiquitously become known as 'flattening the curve'.

Sudden lockdown and shutting down of all academic institutes impacted all the stakeholders but students and teachers have borne the brunt most. The coronavirus pandemic affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the widespread closures of schools. These nationwide closures are impacting over 91% of world's student population (UNESCO 2020).

In India UGC & AICTE are main regulating bodies overlooking the sphere of higher education. The experiments with online and digital mode of learning are nothing new as India is experimenting with knowledge dissemination through Radio and dedicated TV channels since 1980s. Also, AICTE along with IITs have launched MOOC platform SWAYAM where students can enrollthemselves and get quality education at a fraction of the cost. In India online degrees or courses are seen as a vocational course or skill enhancement course, they have not yet replaced the traditional or brick or mortar format.

The research has been conducted in the light of unprecedented situation for academic institutes and students all over India created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Indian government at the center and state with all its ministries ensured that in a very time imparting education came back on track, our teachers also worked tirelessly to adapt and learn the new changes. EdTech industry is booming and is currently at its peak in India. The ed-tech firms have witnessed 10-fold rise in registration for trial or free coaching, in the last two months (Samantaray, 2020).

Literature Review- Online Learning E-learning or Mobile learning is a platform where students can enroll themselves in courses and receive course content through video and notes interact with teacher by participating in online discussion. During the course they submit assignments and at the end they appear for final exam and get a degree/certificate, which is equal to a degree received

through a traditional format. According to OECD (2005) is defined as the use of information and communication technologies in diverse processes of education to support and enhance learning in institutions of higher education and includes the usage of information and communication technology as a complement to traditional classrooms, online learning or mixing the two modes.

E-learning can help in providing inclusive education even at the time of crisis and it is not an option or a luxury but a necessity. (Dhawan, 2020). Students registering in online learning courses have been rising dramatically and this overall multiplying demand for online learning has been accelerated by various reasons which included cost effectiveness, the flexibility of time and place, opportunity to attend classes digitally, space for performing different wide and varied works of day to day lives of adults, a reduced amount of distraction in comparison to face-to-face learning (Hannay & Tracy, 2018).Despite of rise in the numbers of online learners, the online learning has always related to several risks like lack of teachers' presence, lack of interaction with peers in comparison to face-to face learning, poor motivation, unsuccessful management of time schedules, and lack of individual learning abilities (Cole et al., 2004)Although Any efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of online learning needs to understand the perception of the users. Studies have documented both favourable and unfavourable perceptions by students on online learning.In the present study, the researchers explore the impact of this inevitable transformation, from face-to-face learning to learning with the support of technology which enabled uninterrupted and structured online learning in this uncertain scenario of the countrywide lockdown.

Objective of the study-

- To study the perceptions of teachers and students on online teaching-learning during COVID-19 pandemic.
- To examine the challenges faced by the teachers and students in adapting to the online teaching-learning process during COVID-19 pandemic.
- To explore the scope for launching of blended courses in future by Institutes

Research Methodology An exploratory research design was found to be most appropriate to unveil the salient intricacies associated with online learning especially in wake of COVID-19, the worldwide lockdown and social distancing. Exploratory studies are a valuable means of asking questions to establish baseline information that could be later used as a launch pad for further research. A 13-item questionnaire was prepared for students which included some demographics question like name, course being pursed, whether they are attending online classes or not. One question was asked if given the opportunity to join a blended course (which is a combination of online as well as offline course), they would like to attend or not.Students' perception for online learning was recorded using 5 point

Likert scale questionnaire of 9 items, these questions were developed after a literature review done to find out the factors creating impact on students learning and engagement. Researcher has tried to analyze that the factor contributing to student's learning are present in online mode of education or not.

Educators'questionnaire consisted of 6 open ended questions to find out their perception and challenges about online learning.

Sample size & Sample Collection

For the Data Collection purposes, a sample of around 200 students, was taken through convenience sampling. The students were already enrolled in degree courses where they were getting education through traditional brick & mortar format and had suddenly moved towards online mode.

For getting responses from educators, we have taken a sample of 20 educators from Pune, Delhi who had to switch to online mode amid coronavirus pandemic through convenience sampling.

Since the use of technology facilities is a part of this study, respondents were contacted via email, and what's-app messages to participate in this study. All students provided with full information about the study and how to access the online link, which was created using google forms tool.

Data Analysis

Table 4 Profile of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Gender	Female	103	48.8	48.8	48.8
	Male	108	51.2	51.2	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	
Onlineclass Attendance	No	42	19.9	19.9	
	Yes	169	80.1	80.1	100.0
	Total	211	100	100	
CourseEnrolled	Postgraduate	67	31.7	31.7	
	Under-Graduate	144	68.2	68.2	100
Join Blended courses in Future	Yes	142	67.3	67.3	
	No	69	32.7	32.7	100

	211	100	100

The sample size is n=211, of which 48% are female and 51% are male. Regarding online class attendance around 20% don't have the basic required facilities to attend the online classes, while majority of students (around 80%) have the facilities' to attend the same. As per the sample 31% students enrolled in postgraduate programs while 68.2% are enrolled in Under-graduate programs. This statistic will help us further to explore the variations across groups. Students were also asked whether they would be willing to join a blended course (Combination of online as well as offline) in future. The response was very positive with 67.3% students reported that they can consider joining these types of courses in future.

Table No. 2 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Does this mode of learning offer you the advantage of studying in your time and your space?	207	1	5	3.50	1.028
2. Are you able to understand and solve problems being discussed in the class?	209	1	5	3.31	1.030
3. Do you feel that there is effective interaction between student & teacher?	208	1	5	3.20	1.144
4. Do you think that instructor / faculty is efficient in delivering lecture through this mode?	208	1	5	3.41	1.003
5. Do you feel that it can replace traditional format of delivering education?	209	1	5	3.25	1.239
6. Do you feel connected with other learners in a virtual classroom as you used to feel earlier in a classroom?	210	1	5	3.18	1.175

7. Do you feel that objective assessment is possible through this mode?	209	1	5	2.73	1.121
8. Do u feel that values of the degree will be same as earlier?	209	1	5	2.85	1.154
Valid N (listwise)	206				

The mean of question number 1 to 6 shows that students are inclined towards online learning and they are not finding any problems in terms of delivery and peer learning and discussions in the class. But the response rate shown in question number 7 and 8 points out towards some serious flaws or problem areas which are mainly assessment and perception as regards to the worth of the online degree, which is showing a mean value of 2.73 and 2.85.The standard deviation of the data set is very high as in question number 1, 2,3, and 4 the values of standard deviation are ranging between 1 to 1.14, while the mean values are 3.2 to 3.5. In question number 5,6,7 & 8 the values of standard deviation gets even higher and ranges between 1.12 to 1.17 while the mean values are in the range of 2.73 to 3.25. the respondents are heavily divided in terms of objective assessment and the worth of an online degree.

Table No. 3Correlation

		1)	2)	3)	4)	5)	6)	7)	8)	9)
1) Does this mode of learning offer you the advantage of studying in your time and your space?	Pearson Correlation	1								
2) Are you able to understand and solve problems being discussed in the class?	Pearson Correlation	.692**	1							

3) Do you feel that there is effective interaction between student & teacher?	Pearson Correlation	.640**	.670**	1					
4) Do you think that instructor / faculty is efficient in delivering lecture through this mode?	Pearson Correlation	.648**	.673**	.667**	1				
5) Do you feel that it can replace traditional format of delivering education?	Pearson Correlation	.497**	.325**	.452**	.408**	1			
6) Do you find it more convenient than the traditional mode of delivery?	Pearson Correlation	.492**	.365**	.488**	.517**	.696**	1		
7) Do you feel connected with other learners in a virtual classroom as you used to feel earlier in a classroom?	Pearson Correlation	.481**	.425**	.517**	.453**	.527**	.558**	1	
8) Do you feel that objective assessment is possible through this mode?	Pearson Correlation	.445**	.404**	.508**	.483**	.484**	.536**	.484**	1
9) Do u feel that values of the degree will be same as earlier?	Pearson Correlation	.339**	.399**	.447**	.388**	.406**	.442**	.568**	.411**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In the 5 point Likert scale questionnaire containing 8 variables related to online learning engagement and challenges, students have shown a positive response

towards few items, which have been highlighted. Students have shown a positive correlation between online learning and classroom discussion, faculty delivery and time and space convenience. Item number 2, 3 5 and 6 have shown a correlation value of more than 0.6. While when the students were asked about comparative faculty efficiency, objective assessment, worth of an online degree the responses are not showing a positive correlative with online learning. The correlation values in item number 5,7,8 and 9 are .408**, .558**, .484** and .411.

Findings from Educatorsa qualitative test of the questionnaire using NVIVO was performed. It is challenging for teachers to continuously engage students due to issues like attention span, multi-tasking while attending sessions, poor audio and video quality, internet issues etc. The main variables that got repeated is unavailability of digital infrastructure to take online class and student engagement. Educators also cited concerns regarding their readiness for the same as they had to move towards online learning quickly to save the education from disruption. Teachers need the training to use the available tools to deliver the lectures effectively. Educators also expressed concerns about lab practical as it is not possible to demonstrate it from home, also no control over students and open book examinations as introduced by many colleges may do more harm. While teachers found online learning suitable for theoreticalsubjects, but they found it to deliver practical subjects' mathematics and statistic. One interesting finding that came out of the survey was that in none of the college and universities delivering education stopped completely due to lack of resources and support. Institutes adapted very quickly to this new development.

As quoted by an educator "E-learning has a lot of advantages as it induces students to focus and saves time & money. It reduces student absenteeism and makes a student value both the type of education. It helps in faster learning as well."

Conclusion

The findings of Research from students indicate that students have a welcoming approach towards the online learning. Students have reported that they are able to raise questions, interact with faculty and other classmates and are able to understand the concepts. But when the students were asked questions like online learning should replace traditional model, they had a mixed response. Also, for the questions related to objective assessment and worth of the online degrees, students are not very confident in online mode. Educators have expressed various concerns regarding the increased work hours due to teaching material preparation, non-availability of resources. In many cases educators have reported about difficulty in teaching the numerical or practical oriented subjects. But teachers are also happy with the fact that student's education did not halt, and several new platforms and a wave of online education has started in the country.

Digital education is opening novel avenues for students and teachers to learn and interact together. COVIDhas created many challenges and opportunities for the educational institutes to strengthen their t infrastructure (Pravat, 2020). Every institution offering education has realized that only relying on traditional model is not going to work in contemporary world if they think of providing high quality education. In this regard, UGC has also constituted an expert committee to make recommendations on pooling of e-resources and enhancing the online education systems in the country. Govt. has allowed 100% FDI in this sector and the country received Institutes have also been asked to set up mental health helplines. Online learning is definitely a silver lining in the cloud as it is suitable for heavily populated India in terms of less cost involved and with minimum physical resources it can be easily conducted. Online learning or Blended learning system can also ease the burden of Institutions at the same time it can offer a lot of flexibility in terms of courses and it is encouraging as anyone can join.In essence, COVID-19 has provided us with the opportunity to adopt online learning as education systems need to be abreast with the rapid emergence of new technologies, thus making online, blended, and remote learning a necessity (Ali, 2020). In fact, currently also students can enroll themselves multiple online platforms like couresera, EDx etc. where world-wide renowned institutes are offering education free of cost. Students' knowledge supplemented through online instructions by world-renowned scholars would compel the ordinary teachers to be academically more challenging in their teaching (Gurukkal, 2020). We in India strongly believe in the notion that one closed door opensanother door of opportunity, and it is the crisis which forces us to utilize our capacities. As the students and educators were asked questions regarding if they would like to enroll or educate through blended learning mode, the responses are quite positive.

I am sure that with this digital disruption, Indian higher education system will improve in all aspects, and our institute will also get high recognition in international rankings.Digital technologies will continue to evolve fast, thus affording novel contexts both for educating learners and for collecting data of their (shared) affective learning processes (Gegefuther et al,). In post corona world where institutions would be searching for viability, online learning provides the way without putting much strain on their economic resources thereby creating an empowered institute. There can not a more perfect time for India to revamp its educational infrastructure and deliver to the world for which it was known as 'Vishwa Guru'.

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