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Challenges in teaching and learning during the Pandemic

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1.0 Abstract:

India has a wide network of educational institutes in the country. A total of 1.2 billion learners were affected by the pandemic in the world. There are both positive and negative impacts of the pandemic on the teaching and learning process. The teachers and learners have faced a lot of challenges in this period. The use of appropriate and relevant pedagogy may depend on the expertise and exposure to ICT of learners and teachers. There are many new tools available to assist the teachers. The paper will try to highlight the challenges faced by the teachers and learners during the pandemic and provide strategies to reduce challenges imposed on teaching and learning during pandemic.

Keywords: Digital learning, emerging technology, virtual classroom, online education, blended teaching

1.1 Introduction:

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has presented an opportunity to rethink the deep-rooted classroom mode of education and underscored the significance of online learning. It has been a great leveler as it has enabled various stakeholders to collaborate and assess the gaps and shortcomings in the conventional model. The COVID-19 pandemic may be just the 'tipping point' for reform of the Indian education system.

The COVID-19 had resulted in schools and colleges to be shut all across the world. Globally, over 1.2 billion children are out of the classroom. 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, the overall market for online education projected to reach \$350 billion by 2025, Usage of virtual tutoring, video

conferencing, learning software's, language apps etc has increased.

1.2 Objectives of the paper:

The objectives of the paper are given below

1. To study the challenges faced by the teachers and learners during the pandemic in the last 2 years.
2. To suggest suitable strategies to reduce challenges imposed on teaching and learning during the pandemic.

The data for this paper has been collected from the secondary sources like articles, reports published by national and international agencies.

1.3 Impact of Covid 19 on the online teaching learning process:

The COVID-19 crisis has jolted the global economy with a pervasive impact on almost all sectors. Over the past few years, e-learning has witnessed an uptick due to ubiquitous Internet connectivity, the proliferation of smart phones and significant advances in technology. The ongoing crisis should be perceived as an opportunity in disguise for online education. The e-learning overcomes geographical barriers and ensures equitable access to education. It also facilitates convenient, quick, on -the- go and 24×7 access. Numerous edu-tech firms have leveraged this opportunity to offer lessons in an interesting and interactive way to students. E-learning seems a viable solution at the moment to fill the void created due to the absence of classroom learning.

Fortunately, the Indian government has taken cognizance of the untapped potential of e-learning. The one-nation-one platform facility through the PM E-Vidya platform and a dedicated channel for students from Class 1 to Class 12 will liberalize distance and online learning regulatory framework. Moreover, emphasis on community radio, podcasts, and customized content for differently-abled will enable more inclusivity into access to education.

However, certain challenges need to be addressed to bring online education into the mainstream in India. Firstly, uninterrupted access to the Internet is yet to become a reality in Tier 3 and remote cities in India. Secondly, the absence of a comprehensive policy regulation leads to ambiguity over the operational framework. Also, online education needs to take cognizance of different learning pace of students and develop customized solutions for them. Moreover, the concerns of increased screen time, anxiety and stress triggered due to the continuous use of electronic devices also need to be addressed.

Although online education cannot replace classroom education due to the personalized nature of attention and face to face interactions, it can be an effective supplement to the brick-and-mortar model of education. There is a need to revamp the current pedagogy to seamlessly integrate online learning into mainstream education. Equally significant is the need to devise a quality benchmark for

education providers. This will encourage the weaning away fly -by- the -night players in the field. So far, e-learning has proved a boon for urban areas. It should be further expanded to serve the rural and underserved hinterlands as well as differently-abled sections of society. New-age technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Virtual Reality among others can be instrumental in bridging the crucial gaps.

In response to significant demand, many online learning platforms are offering free access to their services, including platforms like Byjus, a Bangalore-based educational technology and online tutoring firm founded in 2011,

Tencent classroom, meanwhile, has been used extensively since mid-February after the Chinese government instructed students to resume their studies through online platforms. Other companies are bolstering capabilities to provide a one-stop shop for teachers and students. For example, Lark Singapore-based collaboration suite began offering teachers and students unlimited video conferencing time, auto-translation capabilities, real-time co-editing of project work, and smart calendar scheduling, amongst other features.

Over the past 24 months the education sector has transformed from traditional physical to virtual classroom. The students are witnessing a lower level of attention and concentration due to online learning. There is an increasing demand for immersive tools that help to enhance and enrich the education experience and also make it engaging and more interactive and enjoying for the students. Emerging technologies like Augmented Reality, which can help to create real world elements like sounds, images and text and Virtual Reality which creates a simulated three dimensional environment? These tools can be used for different subjects like history, science, engineering, architecture.

1.4 Challenges posed to the teachers by pandemic:

Covid 19 pandemic outbreak took place in March 2020 .for the educational institutes it was closing down the face to face teaching and learning and thinking of learning from home in a safe environment. Covid 19 has opened the doors of digital learning for all.

The major challenges posed to the teachers and students due to Covid 19 pandemic are listed below:

Teachers, experts in Blackboard, Chalk, books, and classroom teaching are new to digital teaching. Teachers have not been trained in online pedagogies.

Teachers do not know how to support hard-to-reach students who are also severely affected by the pandemic.

Ed-Tech solutions are not relevant for hard-to-reach students or teachers in schools that serve hard-to-reach communities

Mental health impact on teachers. Increased demands placed on teachers as they learned how to teach virtually were a key stressor. Chronic stress, combined with a lack of support and resources, had led to professional burnout of many teachers.

Loss of jobs of teachers due to decline in enrolment and cash flow challenges in the institutes, forced many teachers to look for an alternative job to support their families.

Changes in Education policy will also be a challenge to adjust for the teachers and learners in the future.

1.5 Challenges posed to the Students by pandemic:

In a recent survey, 50% students shelved their foreign education dream in this pandemic and decided to study in india.

Students from economically weaker sections of society became hard to reach as students had moved to remote accessible locations.

Placement opportunities are limited now due to slow down and geopolitical factors and there is a decline in employment opportunities as majority of the students lack the conceptual clarity and skills required by the employers. Lack of Campus experience, extra curricular activities, and skill development to the students due to the online learning.

Ergonomic and mental health issues in students have increased due to online education. There are instances of delay or cancellation of exams, which leads to anxiety among the students. There are a large number of students dropping out of the school/college due to the long period of the pandemic. The environment at home, financial condition of the family, availability of IT facilities is not the same for all the students.

1.6 Strategies to be adopted to overcome these challenges in online teaching and learning:

1. **Learning Recovery Programs:** These learning programs are to be done for revising and brushing up the contents learnt earlier and helps to learn better in the present course. It may include tutoring, extending learning hours, tracking and contacting the students and revising the basic concepts and important topics again.
2. **Blended teaching:** A student may attend the classes in real world situation and then supplement by completing online course work. It is an Instructional methodology, which combines digital learning tools with face to face teaching. Resources such as video lectures, podcasts, recording and articles would be provided by the teacher in advance before the lecture to have sufficient time in the class for discussion and student engagement.
3. **Invest in IT Infrastructure:** Most important infrastructure for online learning is a good learning management system. We require LMS with good trained personnel to manage LMS activities. Number of users are also important.

4. **Upskilling and reskilling of teaching and nonteaching staff:** Members will help the staff to take up new future assignments. free online training courses for teachers are available on Coursera and many other platforms.
5. **Multilingual teaching:** The teacher may use English along with the mother tongue of the learners for easy understanding of the learner.
6. **Extended ecosystem by using fellow institute facilities:** There has to be a sharing of the resources with fellow institutes.
7. **Team teaching:** Teaching can be done by more than one teacher in the class. It gives different dimensions to the subject, new teachers can be trained, team spirit is developed.
8. **Online certifications by external bodies:** Both the students and teachers should join on line courses available for the teachers and learners for their professional development in their respective fields.
9. **Online student engagement strategies:** The teacher can try to have a optimistic closure of the class. The use of emojis help to understand whether the students have understood or not. The teacher can give the summary of the concepts to the class together and then break the class into small groups to discuss various issues and do brain storming sessions.
10. **Use of recent tools for teaching pedagogy, interaction and content creation:**
The teacher must try to use various tools for interaction like Socrative, Kahoot, Synth. There are tools like Canvas, Slide Go and Slides Carnival which can be helpful for content creation.
11. **The teacher and the learner must familiarise themselves with the technology** used by them. Expect the unexpected at times, the teacher must have a backup plan for all assignments if technology fails. The teacher must tell the students how they will be graded in online education.
12. **The teacher will have different ways of interaction with the students.** The response time expected must be told to the learners.
13. **Online material must be made available** for the learners in the form of videos recordings, word files, recorded lectures,

1.7 Conclusions:

Covid 19 has impacted the teaching and learning immensely. Educational institutes should develop appropriate strategies so that all the teachers and students have access to learning after the return of normalcy. The government must ensure vaccination of teachers and students and allow for the reopening of the schools and colleges. There should be efforts done to minimize the learning losses, prevent dropouts of students, skill development programmes should be offered to the students for upgrading their knowledge. There should be mentoring done of the learners and barrier

of internet connectivity should be minimized.

We are now observing the return to class room teaching as the covid cases are reducing. We can have blended teaching and learning. Online education was convenient and affordable for the learner and would be preferred by working professionals in the future.

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