

E-LEARNING AND BLENDED LEARNING AS AN EDUCATIONAL SOLUTION FOR THE PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The present research makes an exploratory investigation into what can be a feasible educational solution to the ongoing Covid-19 scenario which marks exclusion of physical proximity. In this absolute scenario of social distancing, the educational institutions have been compelled to look upon e-learning and blended learning as the future ahead. In view of this, this research paper illustrates categorically the two methods of learning as an education solution for educational institution globally. It has been found that the models of E-learning and blended learning are indeed a possible answer to alleviate the gaps on education. in this current situation. The two models of learning help push the ideal of distant learning as part of the educational solutions. Even the empirical evidences posit that the mode of online learning or E-learning helps increase the information of retention. Still, the problem on e-learning is that most of the schools lack the basic infrastructure on it. Arguably, the lack of infrastructure would expectedly create another round of trouble. The educational institutions can still make a probable shift towards acquiring the new method for providing online education in the face of present challenges. It is recommended that the technology is indeed beneficial and that e-learning must be encouraged for the future. Especially in context to India, where the dense population and a higher fraction of young students stand as major challenges, e-learning and blended learning can potentially ramp up the educational infrastructure and make learning possible without even coming to the school.

Introduction

The current situation of a pandemic has transformed each and every aspect of life. The entire world has been witnessing harrowing time with the global outbreak of COVID 19. The emergence of this pandemic has completely changed the way people live their lives. The impact of this pandemic cannot be seen as a deterioration of public health, but also its adverse impact can be seen in other aspects of life. Undoubtedly, the current global outbreak of pandemic has changed everything. One of the worst affected scopes thereof is education. Since its outbreak, educational institutions across the world are shut, and most of them have

become non-functional. However, a new trend of online education poured in since the outbreak of a pandemic. This method of learning is widely known as E-learning. Though the concept of E-learning has been envisaged much prior to the current situation, it is being emphasized largely as this is the only way by which education can be provided at this time of distress. Several educational institutions are adopting this method as part of E and Blended learning. With this passage of time, these methods of educational learning seem to have been quite effective in the field of education. Therefore, it has become a much-needed process for imparting knowledge and learning, and currently, almost all educational institutions have been utilizing this method. Hence, this can be said that E-learning and Blended learning are the best solutions for education at this time of the pandemic. This research paper will conceptualize these methods as an educational solution for the educational institution at the current time of the pandemic.

Background of the study

E-learning and Blended learning are necessary for the current situation. With the implementation of E-learning and blended learning, the educational sector has been witnessing digital transformation and innovation. The proposed concept of E-learning and blended learning have already been conceptualized but were never implemented completely. The current outbreak of global pandemic necessitated the process of these kinds of learning. It is evident that due to the current global pandemic, each and every educational institution has been shut (Iyer *et al.* 2020). Therefore, students studying in various disciplines are unable to attend physical classes. Keeping this in mind, blended learning has been prescribed as the best solution for education at this time of the pandemic.

Problem statement

Pandemic halted the process of learning. Classrooms are shut, and the physical classes in classroom learning cannot be made possible owing to the risk of a pandemic. Therefore, the issue associated with this is the sustainability of physical classroom learning for the students as most of the educational institutions do not have the required infrastructure for initiating the process of Blended learning and E-learning (Mohammadi, 2015). These two are major issues and compelled the educational institutions that lack infrastructure for e-learning to take required steps as deemed fit.

Analysis

Since the global outbreak of COVID - 19, the adverse impact of this pandemic can be seen everywhere. For the education sector, the pandemic has halted the process of learning. This is because children are more vulnerable to being infected. There is no way for the educational institution to resume. The only alternative way was transforming the educational processes with the means of digital technology. In a nutshell, the adoption of E-learning and blended learning has become essential (Rachmadtullah *et al.* 2020). This has become the only alternative solution by which educational learning can be imparted conveniently. It has been more than six months since the educational institutions such as school, college, and universities are offering online classes as part of the E-learning or blended learning for education. Most of the schools are

conducting online classes for kids. It is necessary as the disruption in education can cause major problems in the future of the students. Hence, the initiation of E-learning and Blended learning is becoming the need of the hour. Considering this concept of E-learning, it can be said that prior to this global outbreak, E-learning has been one of the important parts for the educational institutions. It has been seen that many of the educational institutions have already adopted this method (Tawafak *et al.* 2019). This innovation in educational learning has provided a new dimension. The application of modern technology in educational institutions has aggregated E-learning. E-learning and blended learning for education can be construed as the best innovation in this field. The use of technology for education will surely increase the productivity of learners and also enhance their skills. The same method has become the best solutions for education these days. This also helps students grow and sharpen their knowledge and skills. At this current state of the pandemic, students communities across the globe have been availing these opportunities for their learning in academic years. Blended learning or E-learning also helps to reduce the risk of disruption of classes (Mahaye, 2020). The advent of E-learning has certainly changed the ways and processes of imparting education. The models of E-learning and blended learning are necessary for this current situation. Both of these models of learning have major benefits. These forms of educational learning are widely preferred for the pandemic situation. Additionally, the situation of the pandemic has created this need when educational institutions need to emphasize more on these learning processes as part of the educational solutions. The reasons that can be cited in this regard are associated with some of the facts that since the global outbreak of the pandemic more than 1.2 billion children across the world are out of their classroom (Torda *et al.* 2020). This pandemic situation is so vulnerable for children that parents of children are advised not to venture out. For children, it has been strictly instructed to stay at home as children below the age of 15 years are more vulnerable for being infected with the virus. Therefore, as a result of such a complex situation where educational institutions can not conduct physical classes, this change is inevitable. Thus, with the rise of E-learning, the process of teaching is being undertaken remotely, thereby converting into the digital platforms. This has been revealed in many of the research that the mode of online learning or E-learning has been shown for increasing the information of retention. There are 1.2 billion children who have been affected by the shutdown of their school classes. Keeping this in mind, the shift from traditional learning methods to E-learning is the need of the hour for imparting the light of education (Hodges *et al.* 2020). Although the sudden shift from traditional to the non-traditional mode of teaching has challenges, however, sensing the situation deeply, there were no other alternative ways left. Therefore, the education sector across the globe has been responding to this tough time. For many educational institutions, it has become one of the challenging tasks for blending learning and E-learning, the required infrastructure needed, and most of the schools lack basic infrastructure. Hence, the lack of infrastructure will create another round of trouble (Soni, 2020). Nonetheless, many of the educational institutions have shifted this and adopted the new method for providing online education. This technology has so far, been proven to be much more beneficial. Therefore, it has been suggested that E-learning in each educational institution must be encouraged for the future. This will help the education sector.

The education sector has been witnessing major challenges since the outbreak of this pandemic. Studies conducted have revealed that at this critical juncture, the best solutions that can be implemented in the field of education is the use of the current technology for E-learning and blended learning (Masaviru, 2020). There have been some of the major statistical data that can be presented in this regard. Educationists and academicians are of the view that blended learning and E-learning will help cater to the needs of learners at this critical juncture.

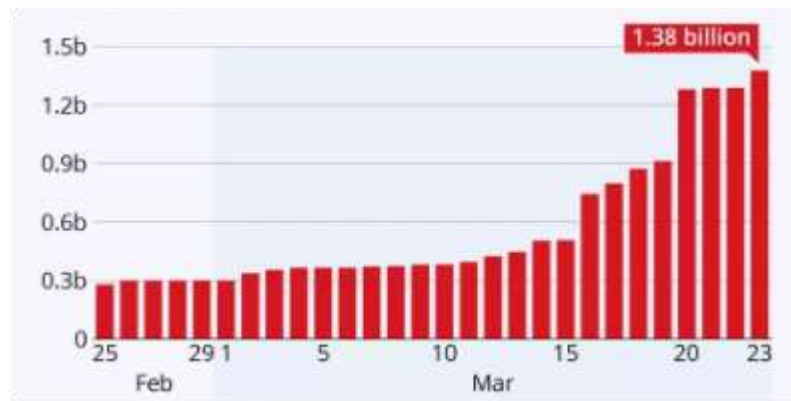


Figure 1: Staggering impact of a pandemic on global education

(“Source: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/>”)

The above statistical data has stated the current state of global education as an adverse impact of the current global outbreak of a pandemic. The above statistical data shows how global education since the outbreak of this pandemic has been affecting education. The number has been rising in terms of the learners who were deprived of education owing to the shutdown of schools and physical classes in the schools consequently (Nguyen & Huynh, 2020). This unequivocally states the peak in terms of learners. This accounts for 1.387 billion learners who have been impacted by the closure of educational institutions. This also depicts the need for resuming virtual classes as part of E-learning and blended learning in the schools. It is the need of the hour for initiation of virtual classes as a form of e-learning and blended learning.



Figure 2: E-learning and blended learning in different countries

(“Source: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200324005757/en/Online-Learning-Platform-Eurekly-Experiences-Surge-COVID-19>”)

The above statistical data has shown how the impact of the pandemic has forced the countries to amend the mechanism for education. The impact of this compelled many countries to adopt E-learning and blended learning for education. The graphical data reveals that the US, one of the worst-hit countries of the current pandemic has ramped up the mechanism for its education system and initiated a wide range of methods for perpetual process of learning as part of the E-learning. Thus, the US has completely transformed its education system with the process of initiating E-learning for learners (Gikandi, 2019). This adopted model of learning in the country has been working for the continuous growth of education and the learners. In addition, some of the other countries as well have adopted this model of education. Among some of the other countries, India shares the second position in terms of adopting this model of learning. The reasons that can be cited in this regard is that India is one of the largest democratic countries, and the population of the country is relatively high. The major chunk of population in the country is young (Kristanto, 2017). Therefore, this would be the utmost requirement before the country to ramp up the educational infrastructure and adopt this model of E-learning for learners. This must be the topmost priority for each nation at this time of the pandemic. Considering this more specifically, some of the other countries account for a good share in this regard as well.

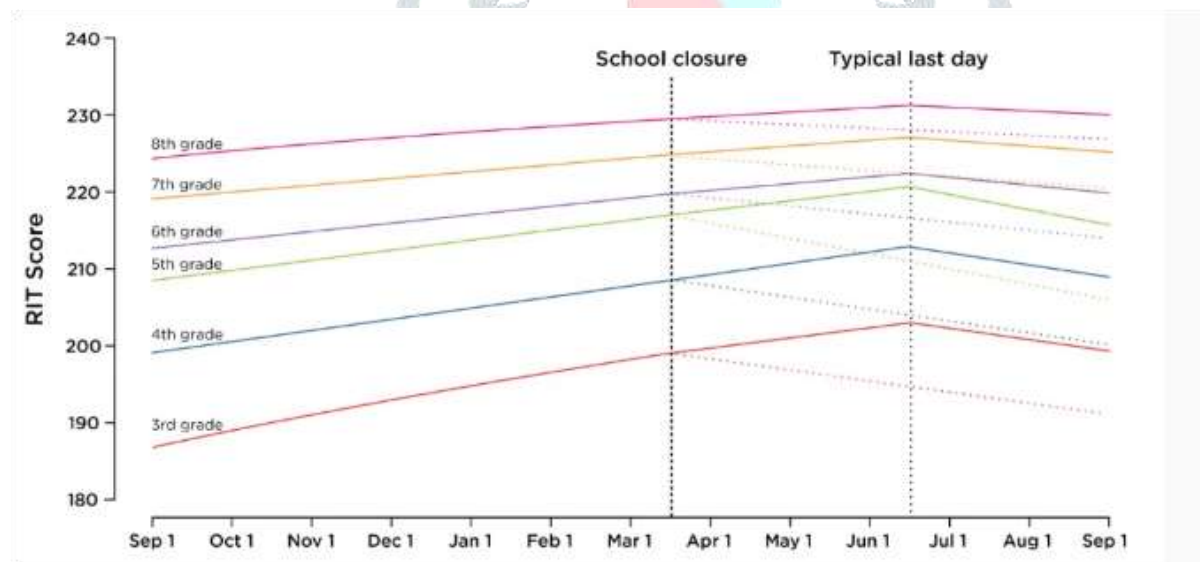


Figure 3: Learning loss mathematics forecast

(“Source: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/05/27/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-achievement-and-what-it-may-mean-for-educators/>”)

The above statistical data shows the loss of learning during this pandemic. The above statistical data has demonstrated the mathematics forecast of a loss of learning during the situation of this global pandemic. The above data shows how the closure of schools has impacted the education for students for different grades. It also shows why this has become the need of the hour for the schools to take into account the role of online classes as part of blended learning and E-learning that can be the best solution for the schools

during this situation. One of the worst impacts of this befalls upon the achievement of students. The students have not been able to score good marks at this time of pandemic (Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). Therefore, this indicator shows that there need to be profound structural changes in the education system so that the continuous learning of education and growth can be sustained forever.

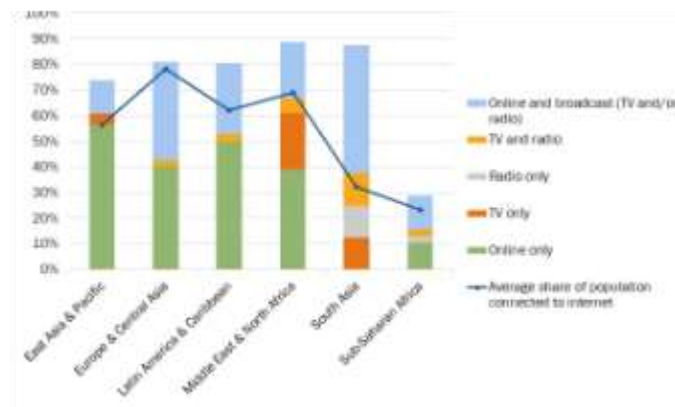


Figure 4: share of countries to responding to school closure

(“Source: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/school-closures-government-responses-and-learning-inequality-around-the-world-during-covid-19/>”)

The above statistical data shows how the different countries across the globe have been responding to the current situation of pandemic and its impact on education and learning. This statistical data also states how these countries have been responding to these unprecedented situations by introducing different kinds of remote learning. There have been a number of countries who have been using online courses for learning, and all of these are done on an online platform (Lencastre & Coutinho, 2015). The above statistical data states that approx 60 % of the learners have been using a different kind of online-based platform. In addition, this also shows that approx 35 % of the users have been distributing education online. All of these different types of processes can be construed as the essential and integral part of E-learning and blended learning. With the schools and various other higher educational institutions ramping up the infrastructure for this structural changes in classroom learning, this can be stated that the adverse impact of a pandemic can be reduced significantly with the help of these kinds of learning modes and therefore, the implementation of such learning processes have become the utmost importance these days.

With the consideration of all the statistical data that has been specified above, it can be acknowledged that E-learning and blended learning of education are best solutions for education at this critical juncture when the entire world has been witnessing the adverse impact of the ongoing pandemic. These critical evaluations of these statistical data have significantly revealed the need for introducing this model of learning largely. These have been catering to the needs of the student's communities largely who have been deprived of education during this pandemic. The model of E-learning includes the process of conducting classes on digital platforms (Tang & Chaw, 2016). This can also be termed as virtual classes. This trend has gripped its stronghold as this seems a more reliable and effective way to sustain the rhythm of continuous learning and growth. Although comparing these types of learning with physical learning class and activities, this can be stated that E-learning needs more modification with the time. The systematic

mechanisms are to be modified given some of the adverse impacts of E-learning as online learning also affects the health of children as per the incidents that have been reported. Therefore, with the changing time, this process should be modified as per the implications it has. In addition, the concept of blended learning has also been emphasized with this growing time of the pandemic. There was a history of the pandemic in the world. Given the current state of the pandemic, this can be stated that such a pandemic situation may again hit the world. Therefore, the educational institutions across the globe should conceptualize this model of blended learning as well.

Conclusion

The global outbreak of pandemic has forced the education Institution to frame up a strategic plan for devising the effective way of teaching. E-learning and blended learning in this current pandemic emerged as the best solution. E-learning and blended learning have paved the way for sustainable learning for learners. This research paper has categorically illustrated these two methods of learning as an education solution for educational institution globally. The research paper has significantly discussed the rationale behind introducing these methods of learning and the effectiveness of such forms of the learning process. The research paper has also cited certain statistical data for analysis of E-learning and blended learning in this current pandemic situation and the role of these learning methods for sustaining the light of education among learners.

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