



# Online Learning In Pandemic Time And Its Impact- Pros And Cons

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## ABSTRACT

With the COVID-19 pandemic bringing the entire world down to its knees, education sector was also disrupted in a major way. Pedagogy and students alike had to adjust and adapt to the new ways of teaching and learning with the IoT being the backbone of the online classes. Smart phones, laptops, tablets etc. have replaced notebooks and collaborative tools like Webex, Zoom, Teams, Hangouts etc. are the new blackboards. After nearly two years in the new normal, we have tried to weigh the benefits and issues with this system. Evident gains are sustained continuity of education for all while infrastructural along with access issues have stressed the less privileged students. With the pandemic not going away anytime soon, we do hope that the systemic issues would be resolved and there is definitely a light at the end of tunnel for the students in the online learning system.

**Keywords** : Lockdown, Education, Online Learning, Technology

## INTRODUCTION

It has been almost 18 months since the entire world is dealing with COVID-19 pandemic which has brought lives to a standstill and crumpled the future plans of every individual as of now. With its impact on every sector of economy, the education sector has also taken a hit, schools and universities are shut for a long time now. The enforced lockdown and scare of the deadly COVID disease has put a restriction on teaching in classrooms and moved the entire learning process to an online methodology which has its own advantages and disadvantages. In the area of formal education, computer and technology instruments are increasingly being used as tools to enhance the perceiving capacity of the student along with understanding and communication through online learning programs and the use of the computer and internet as a learning support tool in the class has increased drastically.

A lot of teachers who were not technology friendly have been forced to learn and get acquainted with computers for their career to continue whereas the students are lacking physical interaction with faculty and peers which is must for a healthy learning and growth. The grownups can still manage studying online since they are aware what schools and colleges are but for toddlers who are yet to start their schooling, are the most affected. Going to school does not only mean studying the designed curriculum, instead it is the complete learning which includes peer interaction, learning how to behave, managing themselves in the absence of parental care the toddlers were in, since the beginning of time.

Though there are lot of negatives in our mind about the online learning process, a silver lining follows too. To mention a few, a big cost of maintaining an infrastructure is saved and most importantly, the flexibility of the learning or teaching at the comfort of home along with ease of access of study material to refer at own pace is also possible. The possible pros and cons have been discussed in sections below.

### **POSITIVE IMPACTS OF ONLINE LEARNING DURING COVID-19**

#### **a) Cost Effectiveness**

Nowadays, everybody uses smart phones and e-learning only demands an internet connection and a device thereby saving a huge cost in developing infrastructure in schools and colleges. With the modernization, the held devices have become cheaper and learning the technology has become simpler through YouTube videos etc.

#### **b) Eco-friendly**

Online teaching methods in my view, is an eco-friendly method too as it helps us in conserving natural resources. For example, students and faculty travelling to colleges in vehicles leads to consumption of petrol, emission of pollution, load on infrastructure of colleges, waste creation and many more. Staying home though puts a load on the house resources e.g. electricity but its lesser as compared to travelling to institutions.

#### **c) Saves Time**

Online learning enables a student to save a lot of time which is spent while travelling to schools/colleges or may be changing classrooms for different subjects. The saved time can be used for multiple personal activities including health improvement, home errands etc. E-learning has now become an alternative which is faster, cheaper and better.

#### **d) Ease of learning**

Physical classroom teaching creates a need for students to make notes to refer to at the time of self-study and there are good chances to miss out a few important points from the lecture. With the advancement of technology, the computer platforms which are being used for delivering lectures such as Zoom, MS Teams, Google meet etc. come with an inbuilt feature to record sessions, make notes, raise queries and many more. Recording of sessions make it easier for students to refer to the content whenever needed. E-learning, so far, has proved to be the best platform in providing study material at one's door step. It helps in building a knowledge base, expansion of skill set and enriching lives through vast knowledge.

One of major hurdles which online learning has overcame, is the language barrier. Students coming from different backgrounds and different financial backgrounds because of which they face language troubles with the teaching medium. Online learning helps overcome this challenge as study material is and can be made available in different regional languages whenever required.

#### **e) Meeting the behavioral aspects of students**

Each student is different and so is his learning style. Some being introverts don't like being pointed out in class during a lecture to speak up, though it doesn't mean that the student doesn't learn. Online learning helps the introverts to

be in their comfort zone and learn. E-learning provides a lot of audio study material which engages the learners far more than reading a text book. With the help of e-learning, extroverts who enjoy interacting while learning can communicate through email, chats etc to gain knowledge in just one click.

## **NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ONLINE LEARNING DURING COVID-19**

Though online learning programmes play a very significant role in education, on the contrary these have certain limitations and challenges as well, few of which have been discussed below:

### **a) Increased Screen time**

The online teaching methodology has forcibly increased the screen time for all age groups whether it be teacher's or students, thereby causing ailments especially related to vision.

### **b) Not a substitute for Practical sessions**

Experiential based learning is very essential for many subjects, for example science stream subjects like Chemistry, Biology etc. Online learning deprives the students from having hands on experience which is must to learn few concepts and draw conclusions.

### **c) Basic Computer Literacy**

Online learning programmes require a basic level of computer knowledge both for teachers and students for the process to run smoothly. Familiarity with basic tools in which the classes are conducted is essential but sometimes both teacher and student background doesn't allow them to have the necessary exposure.

### **d) Technical Glitches**

Our country being a developing country still faces a lot of internet and electricity issues both in urban and rural areas, though its majorly in rural areas, not allowing a seamless online learning process.

Apart from these, technology can fail at any point in time and data stored in computers or devices can be lost completely impacting the learning process, while in the physical teaching method, text books, notes come very handy all the time.

### **e) Financial Background**

Since online learning is purely technology based and needs some electronic device like a smart phone, a tablet or a laptop. The financial background of various students especially for those coming from remote areas, doesn't allow them to buy these expensive devices to participate in the learning process. This is one of the major hurdles in the implementation of the online method of learning.

### **f) Lack of proper online teaching qualities**

If teachers are not well trained for delivering online lectures and methodologies, the success of the online program will not be as was desired. A teacher should be able to communicate well with the student during the lecture. An online instructor must be able to replace the physical presence by creating an interactive and supportive environment in the online classroom where students feel comfortable while putting up their questions.

## CONCLUSION

Online learning has enabled the process of learning to continue even during these tough pandemic times. It plays a very significant role in the education sector as of now and holds a very bright future. Though this method of online teaching and learning is facing multiple challenges as discussed above, but with advancement of technology and the new normal which COVID-19 has set, online learning will become the standard method of learning. For the online programmes to be a success, the teacher, the course, technology and the students must be carefully taken into consideration and balance needs to be created for utilising the strengths of this methodology and at the same time, avoid snags that could result from its disadvantages. Possibly, in the times to come, online learning can prove to be the game changer in the education system.

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