IMPACT OF COVID -19 ON VIRTUAL TEACHING - LEARNING SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

The Covid -19 Pandemic has had a bad influence on the lives of people across the world and in all sectors of the economy including education. The Government issued guidelines to stay inside home and stay safe and so a very large number of enrolled learners as well as active teachers all over the world were forced to stay at home.There was complete lockdown to avoid

educational institutions had to adapt themselves to Online Teaching -Learning system.

The whole world had to shift to online teaching- learning practices inorder to avoid the interruptions in Education of students across the world. Online teaching and learning takes place through electronic devices such as smart phones, tablets and Laptops and through the Internet and on virtual platforms such as Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet, Cisco Webex , Google Classroom,etc.All these were new to the Digital Immigrants i.e. the teachers although , the new generation of students belong to the category of Digital Natives. In the present study, data collection was done through two different questionnaires, one for school students and the other for school teachers.Collection of data was done through Google forms between April 15, 2021 and July 26, 2021 in Gwalior from different school teachers and students.The challenges faced by school students and teachers in online teaching -learning were studied and the opportunities and future of online teaching-learning was also studied.The present study is the unique of its kind as it addesses the advantages and disadvantages of the online education system which has now become the new normal in India.

Keywords: Online teaching-learning, Covid -19,Digital Natives , Digital Immigrants.

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is caused by the coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2.It was first reported in Wuhan, China when a number of cases of viral pneumonia were reported It was first discovered by WHO on December 31, 2019. As Coronavirus is highly contagious, people across the world were forced to stay at home and stay safe. As per the information given by UNESCO, 186 countries implemented countrywide lockdown by the end of April 2020.This badly impacted about 73.3% of total enrolled students(Education: From Disruption to Recovery, 2020).Due to lockdown across the country, the educational institutions were forced to switch to online teaching – learning methods as face -to – face was no longer possible.

In India, the traditional method of teaching was widely accepted before the spread of Covid-19.Because of the closure of schools and colleges and pressure on educational institutions to complete the syllabus on time as per the academic calendar compelled the academic institutions to adopt online teaching-learning system.On March 2020,the Government of India declared that all the educational institutions will remain closed due to the spread of corona virus and th guidelines were given by the Indian Government that all the educational institutions had to switch to online education so as to prevent the loss to students.Therefore, within a few weeks time and by May30, 2020, almost all educational institutions adopted online education system.(Mishra et al., 2020; MHRD, 2020)

In India, online classes were conducted for such a large number of students across India for the first time.In the beginning, it was a herculian task both for the teachers as well as students to adapt to online learning methods but later on things normalized and it became the new normal.. It was found in a study in Nepal in which 385 college students were asked about their experience of online classes. They said that online learning environment is extremely different from traditional learning environment in terms of learner's satisfaction and motivation(Aditya and Jha,2020).The present study focuses on school students' viewpoint and school teachers' viewpoint on online teaching -learning.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY: To assess teachers' and learners' outlook on online education.

To study the impact of online education on students'and teachers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to study the impact of online education on school students' and school teachers',two questionnaires were designed. One of them was circulated in the form of google forms to students in schools and the other questionnaire was circulated amongst the teachers in schools through google forms on Email or WhatsApp. Questions were asked about various aspects of online learning system. The parameters discussed in the questionnaire were setting up of online classes, evaluation and comfort in online classes as well as future aspects. Two different sets of questions were prepared on the above parameters and some questions were Yes/No form of questions where as some of the questions were in the form of Multiple choice questions(MCQs). In MCQs, the respondents had to choose the most appropriate option. Some open ended questions were sked to collect the opinion of students as well as teachers. There were 18 questions in students questionnaire and 20 questions in teachers questionnaire. Apart from these questions, some demographic data was also collected from school teachers as well as students.Google forms were circulated amongst students and teachers between April 2021 and July 2021.All responses were collected in excel sheet. The questionnaires were analysed in two groups, one group comprised of school students and the other was of school teachers in Gwalior. The opinions and responses of school students and school teachers were analysed and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initial observation and discussion started from the point of view of students and then the focus shifted to teachers perspective.

Discussion from students' perspective:

Data collection was done through google forms from students in different private schools in Gwalior in Standard VI to X from 169 students. Students from VI to X were from CBSE Board. About 21 % of students were from VI standard and 5% from VII , 24 % were from Class VIII and 38% were from IX and remaining 12% were from X standard.

Online teaching and arrangement of online classes at home

Multiple choice questions were asked from school students about the online platform on which they were being taught as well as the method of online teaching such as Live Classes, Recorded broadcasts, SWAYAM assignments/study materials.About 65% of school students said that they attended live classes of their teachers either on Google Meet, Zoom , Microsoft Teams, You Tube , WhatsApp. Assignment and homework (8%) were also used in addition to lectures. Most of the learners learnt from the live classes of their teachers.The questions also included were related to how students managed to arrange the electronic devices required for studying such as laptop, mobile phones, smart television, tablets ,etc.. They replied that almost 86% of students already had these devices at home, 8% purchased new devices and 6% borrowed from others.In some cases there were three children at home and only one electronic device was available to them Very few students responded by writing that they had to take the help of their parents or elders in using electronic devices as beginners. Students were asked Multiple Choice Questions related to the problems that they were facing during online classes. 82% of the students said that there were connectivity issues and network problems from time to time. Problems related to electricity issues and no inverter facility at home was responded by 11% of students. 7% of students replied that they faced no problems.

Comfort level in online classes

Comfort level for students was measured using the criteria such as the time available for refreshments, tightness of schedule, mental stress and physical exertion. Only 8% of the students were not getting enough time for refreshment and most of the students were happy with less class hours.13% of students reported having mental stress, tiredness, irritation in eyes and headache and lack of concentration as their number of screen hours increased. 7% of students responded by writing that online classes were more comfortable in comparison to regular classes.93% of students found regular classes more comfortable than online classes.When asked about the number of screen hours spent during each day, students in Class VI, VII and VII spent between 2-3 hours per day where as students in class IX and X spent a maximum of 3-4 hours per day. The screen time of students is one of the major disadvantages of online education system. HRD Ministry Launched "Pragyata" with Digital Education Guidelines related to Screen-Time and Mental Health Tips for Children, 2020.

Attention of students

It is challenging for the teachers to gain attention of students in online education system as there is no direct interaction between them. 93% of the students responded by saying yes to the question that they wanted face to face interaction with their teachers for proper learning to take place.68% of students were more attentive in online classes than regular classes.Online classes were not supposed to be helpful incase of Languages and Mathematics.

Evaluation

84% of the students responded that home assignments was a better method of evaluation and only 3% said that online exams should be taken.

From the perspective of School teachers

Teaching methods and arrangement of online classes at home

84% of the teachers taught on Zoom, Microsoft teams and Google Meet. Classes were conducted easily and without any expenses as these platforms are free of cost.93% of the teachers replied that they used to teach the students from home and 4% of teachers taught from school and remaining 3% taught from both home and school.91% of the school teachers had the electronic devices for taking online classes and 7% purchased new electronic devices like laptop for teaching online and only2% teachers got them sponsored by their

schools.88% of teachers faced network connectivity issues , 28% faced electricity issues and 8% faced limited data problems.

Comfort level in online classes

The school teachers were asked about the number of online teaching hours per day. 66% said that they taught for an average of 3 hours per day. 24% said that they taught for 4-5 hrs per day.10% reported that they taught about 2 hrs per day.But they faced several discomforts such as headache, neck pain, strain in eyes. They required more time and energy while preparing for online classes.87% of the teachers replied that regular classes are better than online classes and are more comfortable.The teachers did not get mental satisfaction as there was no face to face interaction with the students.

Attention in classes and Quality of teaching

98.7% of the teachers responded that direct interaction between the teachers and the students is necessary for good learning to take place.87% of the school teachers replied that quality of teaching is better in regular classes as compared to online classes. 94% of the teachers said that the attentiveness of students is more in regular classes and 3.2% said that both are same.77% of the teachers could not clarify the doubts of the students as properly as they did in regular classes. Only 14% of teachers felt that online platforms are good for clearing students doubts.

Evaluation

89% of the teachers were not in support of any examination during the pandemic. Only assignments and home work were considered appropriate for grading and giving marks to students as availability of internet could be a problem for students during online exams.Multiple Choice Questions were considered a good option in such circumstances.

Challenges and Opportunities

Virtual classes have a great potential in future for both school teachers and school students. There are a lot of benefits of virtual classes because of their remote access. Most of the researches show that it is feasible to provide the same quality of education to students through virtual teaching . Virtual learning also helps in the development of decision making skills among students and in time management skills. Teaching quality as well as quality of interaction will improve in online classes as soon as the teachers gain familiarity with the technology and educational institutions will provide them with better technological infrastructure. Students must learn to take advantage of the online learning facilities available to them. Proper channels of communication must be established so that students can clear their doubts as and when they arise. Online classes are more challenging from the teachers viewpoint as they require more time to prepare lectures for online teaching and have to change their pedagogy for it. Since students are digital natives and teachers are digital immigrants so the teachers need to better learn the technologies and to use them efficiently.

Conclusion

The Covid -19 Pandemic affected all the sectors of economy and brought the whole country to the situation of lockdown, the Education industry in India very soon adapted the online teaching-learning systems. It did so even without having a preplanned course structure and without giving any training to teachers and

students. Teachers and students were both in favour of regular classes but some teachers and students who are in favour of online teaching -learning because the future is in online education system.Online education will dominate in the teaching -learning system if proper steps are taken by the government and administrative authorities of educational institutions.Online education saves time,reduces the travel cost and provides education to people located in remote areas.

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