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Shifting Paradigm of Off-line Education to Online Education

Dr. Rekha Chaubey,

Department of Sociology,

S.N. Sen. Balika PG College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

ABSTRACT

The pandemic has brought a drastic shift in the world of education system. Due to the sudden shutdown of physical classrooms, the immediate emergence of online education became the new normal. The present paper attempts to analyze the paradigm shift from traditional education to online education system. It deals with the benefits and drawbacks of online education network. Further the analysis leads to the conclusion that online and offline education system both prove to be useful medium of learning but due to the pandemic and adoption of new technology the current education system requires a blended form of education.

KEYWORDS

Shifting Paradigm, Offline/Traditional Education System, Blended Education System, Online/e-learning Education System.

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has resulted in a huge loss of life and economy globally and has also shaken the world tremendously. The disease has not only caused a lot of destruction in the developed nations but has also pulled down the developing nations. The pandemic has globally impacted all the sectors of life, with education being one of the most affected ones.

The temporary shutdown of educational sector, to follow the covid protocols, led to the adoption of online educational approach. This compelled us to re-think and re-structure our pattern of educational system therefore, the need of an hour is to ensure that the process of teaching-learning remains incessant.

In a move to not let the crisis hamper, a 'digital transformation' has become the new normal along with the existing traditional educational system, across the country. As a result, education network has changed drastically due to the distinctive rise of e-learning and virtual classrooms.

This paper intends to focus on the paradigm shift from offline education to online education.

Now, we will briefly deal with the traditional education system and further discuss the shift to e-learning or online education network.

The shift from Traditional Education System to e-Learning

The Traditional/Offline model of learning is commonly accepted as the mode of formal education across the world. The teaching and learning method of this system still constitutes the usage of traditional model classrooms, not only in India but in many other countries around the globe. The traditional education system incorporates the process of imparting education in a curriculum-centered delivery of instructions to the students. In traditional system of imparting knowledge, students have to attend schools and colleges to ensure regular attendance and the completion of their education. This kind of

system is built upon long-established customs that the society traditionally follows in educational institutions.

Due to the pandemic, when all schools and educational institutions were closed, a need for an alternative education system evolved. Thereafter, education pattern rapidly shifted from traditional classroom teaching to online/virtual classroom teaching. Virtual classrooms and various online tools are helping educational institutions to cope up with this new alternative method; the paradigm shifted dramatically towards online teaching network.

Online Education Network

Online education, on the other hand, is a more unique method, a learning system based on formalized teaching but with the help of electronic sources. Use of computer and internet are the major components of e-learning. A very fast growth in technology and advancement in learning system made it possible for this network to succeed worldwide. The student is free to learn anything he/she wants. Private institutions played a major role in promoting online education and providing e-content to many students digitally. The results being tremendous proved their success.

The ruling Government has taken several initiatives and launched various programs such as 'Digital India' and 'Skill India' to spread digital literacy among people and create a knowledge-based society in India. It has also successfully implemented the three principles of the education policy- 'access, equity and quality'.

- e-Basta (school books in digital form), e-Education (all schools connected with broadband and free wi-fi in all schools and developed MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses), Nand Ghars (digital tools as teaching aids), SWAYAM (MOOCs based on curriculum taught in classrooms from 9th class till post-graduation), India Skills Online (learning portal for skill training). Swayam Prabha and many more.
- In order to establish digital infrastructure, the Government has also launched National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) which aims to expand broadband connectivity and faster network. There are many platforms available which offer both paid and free courses to their students.

Demerits of E-Learning

Online education has seemingly gathered a large number of users in India however, the challenges it comes with cannot be overlooked.

Some of them are as follows:

- There is insufficient digital infrastructure in India. While the Government has been making efforts to create and improve the digital infrastructure across the country, there hasn't been any noteworthy progress. According to World Economic Forum, only 15 out of 100 households have access to the internet, and mobile broadband remains for a few privileged ones, with only 5.5 subscriptions for every 100 people. Further, broadband reaches just about 600 corridors, largely in and around the top 50-100 Indian cities, leaving rural areas with poor connectivity.
- Learning engagement in online education is quite poor whereas, in traditional classrooms, the student-teacher and peer-to-peer engagement is very high. Learners can approach the instructors and fellow students for feedback or discussions, and get their concerns addressed on-the-spot. E-learning is yet not developed to a level to stimulate open-ended or crowd learning, unless the courses are imparted live with the help of an online instructor.
- The lack of standardization, credibility and quality of online programs and their formal acceptability still remains a concern. The e-learning players offer multiple courses on the same subjects with different levels of certifications, methodology and assessment parameters. Online

courses are designed and imparted by different instructors, who may be given autonomy to design the curriculum. So, the quality of courses may differ across different e-learning platforms. Most online courses do not get academic credits, credibility and recognition in the traditional educational eco-system.

- The language used in these online courses pose major problems among learners. India is a multi-linguistic country, and a majority of its population comes from rural areas. The online courses mostly focus on English content. Hence, non-English speaking student and teachers struggle with the availability of vernacular content.
- Online courses are based on self-paced learning pattern so it is found that there is a low completion rates of these courses. There is minimum or negligible motivation due to lack of face-to-face interaction.
- Due to lack of proper internet connectivity and inadequate availability of electronic devices in remote and rural areas, maximum students are devoid of the access of online education whereas students of private schools and those from urban areas can access high quality digital education.
- Insufficient orientation of students and teachers with the new technology is becoming a reason for the poor-quality education transmission from teachers to students. It's very hard to conduct assessments online because monitoring students simultaneously is not possible and this allows students to use unfair means. Chances of cheating is much higher in online education because answers can be easily googled.
- Self-discipline is an indispensable skill for online education but lack of sense of restraint and diligence among students these days makes them prone to malicious and detrimental distractions. In traditional teaching method students have to maintain a disciplined decorum such as, they have to follow regular attendance and schedule and adhere to the timings. Online schooling, however, fails in following this propriety and hence students become more vulnerable to self-indulgence. A big challenge for students as well as teachers is the need of realization to stay determined and honest while performing their duties.
- Comparing face to face learning with virtual learning brings significant deficiencies in the digital mode of learning such as the lack of human connection (as we all know that touch therapy works wonders in student) and the absence of opportunities of partnership learning.
- Teacher's supervision especially in various subjects like science, where hands on experience is of utmost importance, becomes challenging.
- Physical health of students as well as teachers is put at higher risk due to increased screen time as online education has now become inevitable.
- In online mode of education to follow the norms of social distancing, students are deprived of the healthy classroom environment, which is essential for the holistic development of students. Schooling is supposed to look after the emotional, social, and behavioral health of students however online schooling network has failed in doing so.

Merits of e-Learning

There are many loopholes which cause problems in e-learning but the fact cannot be denied that e-learning has its own benefits, like:

- It is time saving because people who live in remote areas need not cover far distances and waste their time and funds in transportation and a byproduct benefit is that it helps in reducing pollution.
- e-learning proves to be cost efficient as the study material is cheap and easily available. Online education providers can reach out to the masses without setting up a physical infrastructure or incurring administrative costs such as staff salaries, stationery, books, etc.

- Convenience and flexibility are important aspects of online education. Students can sit anywhere and feel comfortable while studying. This enhances their learning experience. Each learner has unique preferences and learning goals. e-learning makes it possible to cater to individual needs. It allows learners to choose their learning path and navigate at their own pace. e-learning leads to better retention. Modern learners prefer bite-sized, interactive content and would rather watch a video or listen to a podcast than read through pages of a manual. e-learning tools enable designers to make content interactive.
- Internet provides us with a vast amount of information in a small span of time. This efficiency makes it user friendly.
- Easy accessibility of e-content to students reduces dependency on teachers. Students do not have to wait for the teacher to start or finish a chapter, they can now do it themselves more effectively. They can go through e-content, read chapters, listen audio video or take help from any external links, this way students can learn without putting their convenience at stake. Access to new technology helps students to learn and retain information in a far better manner.
- e-learning can supplement the conventional model, and bridge the gap of the gross enrolment ratio to a considerable extent.

Future trends

In India, students and teachers in most of the educational institutions are trying their best in bringing out the best from e-learning technology. But they need sheer determination and orientation to make optimum use of latest technologies and adapt to this new normal. This will help the education system to develop and if in future, any such situation prevails our education system won't stop. Online education network needs to maintain balance and coordination among course contents, educationist-technologies, students and parents. It can be successfully implemented only if there is proper availability of technology, access to the internet and affordability of online system. But the economically weaker sections, students from remote areas, Government institutes and some private institutes are deprived of online education. However, if the softwares are developed accordingly, e-learning would successfully provide a platform to students who are far away or are economically weak.

e-learning sector in India may witness the following trends in the next few years

- The right mix or hybrid of traditional classroom learning model and online learning model will be a better step for improving students' learning. Online course providers will work actively on providing supplementary education, such as after-school coaching, e-tutorials, internships and live projects. They will also reach out to students at offline touch points like group discussions and labs. There will be virtual classrooms where traditional offline pedagogy will be aided by digital courses on practical knowledge and soft skills.
- The e-learning curriculum may offer courses in new, unexpected or off beat subjects such as culinary management, forensic science, cyber law, etc.
- e-learning providers will develop peer-to-peer model to establish collaborative learning between students through notes and idea sharing on a common platform. Technology such as artificial intelligence, big data, data analytics, facial recognition, etc., will be used to offer profile-based customized courses.
- Investor interest will grow. Over the last three years, there have been several high-ticket deals in the Indian e-learning sector. The Chang Zuckerberg Initiative has invested US\$ 50 million in Byjus; Bertelsmann India has put in \$8.2 million in Erudite; and Kaizen Management Advisors and DeVry Inc. have invested US\$ 10 million in Edu Pristine. Not to forget, Khan Academy, which has so far received financial aid to the tunes of billions of rupees from Bill and Melinda

Gates Foundation, Google and Netflix founder Reed Hastings are among a few others. So, the sector will continue to spark more interest among the investors and attract funding.

Structural imbalances between rural and urban areas, males and females and rich and poor is a major challenge in coping up with the current pandemic situation as well as with our new e-learning technology. Moreover, in the absence of accessibility of proper digital infrastructure teachers, students, parents, educational institutions and the Government are facing multiple unexpected challenges.

Due to so much diversity in India eliminating education is not a sustainable solution, so it's necessary to rethink and re-strategize our education system. Online learning has a promising future worldwide, it could be on its way to become the next sunrise industry. Online education network not only has its own invincible merits but also proves to be successful in concealing the drawbacks of traditional education system however, it is highly unlikely that it will replace traditional learning; rather both models will work in tandem. The trio of content, delivery and access will act as a change agent in shaping up online education.

CONCLUSION

In what preceded, an attempt has been made to focus on the sudden paradigm shift and merits and drawbacks of e-learning. The society, along with the help of Government, should work together and focus on quality education transmission from teachers to students and we must make sure that no child is deprived of education because of any reason and should use both classroom and e-learning to maximum efficiency without being biased. Hence, a blended form of education would succeed in bringing out best results in the education sector.

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