An Exploratory Study on the Challenges Faced by Teachers in Online Classes During Pandemic – COVID-19

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Abstract: **The COVID-19 infection and recovery stages are at different points globally there are around 1.2 billion children in 186 countries being affected by the closure of schools. Due to this pandemic education system has drastically changed the normal way of functioning. Teachers being one of the main stakeholders in educating children have faced new challenges during this time. Even before COVID-19, there has been high growth and adoption in education technology but the pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology to a high level. Teachers who have been traditionally teaching in the classroom were forced to adopt the new age teaching technology with minimum resources. This paper aims to understand the challenges faced by the teachers in adopting online classes.**

Keywords: **Online classes, pandemic, COVID-19, teaching, students, teachers, teaching techniques.**

1. Introduction

The outburst of Corona Virus in year 2020 has led to the pandemic COVID-19 been stated a nationwide emergency in most nations. No country was spared with the attack of the virus. All countries over the world had to accept a system of emergency managing mechanisms [1]. Most countries introduced actions such as lockdown of cities, closing of academic institutions and execution of strict social distancing measures. The pandemic resulted in closure of schools and about 1.725 billion students were affected owing to the pandemic. As reported by UNESCO, 192 countries had executed closure of educational institutions including schools and colleges, affecting 99.9% of world's student community [2]. This closure obligated the teaching fraternity to find alternative means of teaching and to engage the students. The emergency was coupled with opportunities and led to the realization of understanding the use of technology in learning. Focusing on the students' wellbeing and other stakeholders of academic community, online learning grew and gained importance during the pandemic crisis.

Online teaching in response to pandemic, commenced in Chinese schools adopted "school's out, class's in" to lessen the academic harm due to COVID-19 [3]. In India, educational institutions begin in April and as a result, schools feared loss of teaching hours. Therefore, schools followed the rules of government and initiated online classes to bridge the gap. Majority schools made the online classes mandatory. The lessons are shared over apps such as Zoom, Skype, Google hangouts, Microsoft teams and other virtual class options.

COVID-19 pandemic is a severe respiratory condition triggered by a coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 is a current international pandemic, revealed in Wuhan, China during December 2019. With the WHO – World Health Organization declared it as a pandemic in March 2020. The results of social distancing have impacted all aspects of society, together with the education sector being the majorly affected. The education industry has been obligated to adapt the online teaching techniques through different video conferencing platforms. These educational institutes, in spite of having the limited know-hows and facilities available, faced an aggregated ultimatum for higher teaching and upgrade to the new heights of competence, efficacy, and quality in teaching with usage of the new age technology.

Organizations like World Bank, UNESCO, have been encouraging the adoption of virtual and distance education since the 1990s to increase educational openings for marginalized people: India is developing online education initiatives to enlarge access to teaching. By 2025, India will be the second major working-age people in the world, accounting for 25% of the global work force. Distance education and e-learning models are used to make teaching accessible, to make a labor force of 250 million individuals by 2030 (Ernst and Young, 2013).

Coronaviruses are a variety of viruses that cause sickness in animals and humans. It is found that a number of coronaviruses cause human respirational diseases, the severity ranges from cold to more severe diseases, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and afresh revealed Coronavirus. The imposing of countrywide lock-down, in anticipation of subduing the virus, submitted in the closure of colleges, schools, and institutions all over the nation affecting more than 500 million students' educations. COVID-19 mandated campuses across India, and

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actually the world, to shift the physical classes to virtual classes. The acceptance and advancement of internet access with JIO launch with affordable prices led to an increased number of smartphone users contributing to accelerating the online education in India.

Although old-style academic technologies such as Chalk and Talk, Smartboard or PowerPoint are still accepted and used, the real incorporation of technology-supported teaching for pedagogical purposes is yet another achievement. It has become an integral part of the innovative teaching techniques [4], Academicians have integrated and used technological systems for making teaching learning more effective than ever before [5].

A. Purpose

With the declaration of COVID 19 as pandemic most of the countries immediately declared lockdown. India too announced its first lockdown on 25th March 2020, bringing to a standstill all the operations. Normally March – May are the final exam time to most of the courses in India. With the announcement of lockdown, the Education Institutes were affected the most.

Academicians had to quickly adopt to the new technological tools to reach out to the students for completion of the academic year. The lockdown period changed the traditional education process to new technological based process. The traditional exam patterns had to be amended to online exams and assessments had to be modified to online technology-based systems. This research paper intends to recognize the obstacles confronted by academicians during online teaching learning process with work from home scenarios.

2. Review of Literature

The research conducted on the technological tools that can be adopted during the teaching learning process included web-based learning, blended learning, computer mediated learning, online learning, etc., their research concluded that multiple techniques have been adopted with the usage of technology to ease and improve the teaching learning process [6]. The challenges of lack of quality standards, for development of electronic resources and content delivery adopting the e-learning technique will improve the quality of teaching and learning [7]. The paper concludes the adoption of the online learning to increase the quality of delivery. The paper concluded that "Most of the words (online learning, open learning, web-based learning, computer-mediated learning, mixed learning, m-learning, for example) have in common the ability to use a networked computer which offers the possibility of learning from anywhere, at any time, at any rhythm, by any means."

Teachers sets the attitude of their classrooms, and are actively involved in building an acceptable surrounding, be the mentors and nurtures the students, becomes a role model, and continuously monitors any signs of trouble. The teachers have to be careful during their interactions with the students and make sure the communication is effective and the interactions should assist the students to be motivated to interact and learn the concepts that is being taught in the class. The teachers have

to be careful during the communication with the learners and all aids should enhance the process, maximum care need to be taken to make sure the unintentional communication sent to students may cause negative impact. Further the tools used, the body language, the atmosphere should accelerate the teaching learning process [8].

However, some studies highlights that the process of teaching learning cannot take place without effective communication [9]. The teachers and academicians who have good skills in communicating with students can create a constructive teaching learning environment for the learners. In the study some have inferred that excellent communicating skill has the talent to outreach audience in more impactful way with positive communicating strategies [10].

Instructor or teachers have always played a prominent role in student's education system. The role of a teacher in enhancing the academic performance of a student [11]. The book brings out the teachers teaching techniques and strategies having a positive role on the academic performance of the students. The collaborative two- way communication methods have the highest influence on the academic performance when compared to other teaching techniques adopted by the teachers. Periodical feedback mechanism and constructive evaluation of the teaching techniques has proved to have major influence on the academic performance of the students. The students' self-learning ability and interest also plays a prominent role in the learning progression. In the book the author also highlights the importance of self-controlled learning among students has a positive impact on their academic performance. Students' ability to learn by themselves and their inclination towards learning has a major play in increasing the progress card results. Though in the book the author explains the importance of communication and its impact on the academic performance, it does not include if the same is applicable during the online learning process. With the advent of technology in the education field especially usage of technology in imparting the education the teachers' role in adopting the new technology in the classroom environment is revealed in the recent studies.

The studies in last few years have mentioned that online teaching played a significative role in the performance of the students. The study confirms the role of online teaching in increasing the grades of the students [6]. The study concluded showing the evidences of methodical assessment and meta-analysis revealing that usage of technology played a prominent role in increasing the performance of the students. The same was confirmed in another study concluding the importance of role of technology in enhancing the academic performance of the students [12]. The study also revealed the two techniques adopted by teachers in most of the schools, during the pandemic in China, were one providing the students a recorded video of their lectures and two by presenting themselves live on different platforms for imparting the knowledge and completion of the pending syllabus. Teachers and schools had quickly adopted to online learning platform during the lockdown period.

The sudden transition from physical classroom to online classroom brought in blockages and obstacles to the unprepared teachers and educational institutions. With less time to equip

themselves with the shift the teachers were facing the challenges with less or no resources and were left to themselves to find solutions. Many teachers have experimented in their own way to find solutions to the unprecedented problems they were suddenly facing. Getting used to the technology was one side engaging students in the online classes was another challenge. To enhance quality of teaching Institutes have provided immediate training and few provided internet facilities to the teachers facing the problems. Though online teaching was part of few curricula it was restricted to largely the computer labs or assignments. Teachers have transformed themselves to the new technological requirement and adopted themselves quickly to bridge the gap and keep the students engaged during this pandemic. The common issues faced were internet connectivity, power cuts, downloading issues, installation of applications, internet speed issues, computer and laptops related problems. Though the teachers were trying their best to bring in interactive classroom environment the students were less interactive and felt online classes boring as investigated by the study of identifying the factors influencing online teaching [13]. A system that can be made compulsory to deliver classes online can be included in the regular curriculum to encourage the online teaching learning process.

During this pandemic in Covid 19 period online teaching was only savior to continue the education and complete the academic year. Individual – teachers and academicians and the institutes providing the educational services were left to innovate their online teaching processes and bring in supplementary teaching to the physical classroom. The adoption of the innovated process was another challenge faced by this segment of society [14]. Organizations providing the online facility of interaction quickly grabbed the opportunity and pitched in to aid the process. "Resilience must be built into our educational systems" [15].

Few studies specified the three tendencies like increase in educational innovation, reduction in the digital divide gap, partnership among the public and private education [16], [17].

3. Methodology

This research study is grounded with the secondary data on the concept of virtual teaching and challenges faced by the teaching community. The secondary data includes newspaper articles, journal articles, and internet data. This paper examines the studies conducted on online teaching during the period - 2020 March to Feb 2021 it includes the research done the challenges faced, and overall view on the set topic has been gathered.

4. Findings and Suggestions

- The education system faced a new challenge of incorporating the new technology in the curriculum and rediscover the teaching techniques adopted by the traditional teachers. The new technology should not only enhance the teaching learning process but should also take in to consideration the challenges faced by the students. Teachers can incorporate the new age technological features like using PowerPoint presentation, show videos, have virtual or video conference meeting or give assignments related to adoption of the new technology. The new curriculum should consider the students prospective also.

- Understanding the student teacher relationships plays a vital role in the academic performance of the students, blended learning methods can be included in the online classes. Organizations should provide training to both the students and teachers in getting used to and understanding the technology. Online classes can be made interactive by using the different features provided by the online class platforms. A manual can be developed with simple steps and provided to the teachers and students. The training can include how to use the gadgets and hence reduce the digital illiteracy.

- There is a negative impact on the communication between the teachers and students during the process on online teaching learning. The students' performance level has reduced due to the online classes and has affected negatively the relationship between the teacher and student. The personal monitoring and physical observation of the students during the class hours is practically not possible in online classes. The gap between the student and teacher has increased and students are not able to follow the instructions during the online classes. In the physical classroom teachers were able to observe the different students learning ability and customize the teaching accordingly. The online classes have hindered this process as the teacher is not able to see the students simultaneously. The study highlights the negative influence on the communication between the teacher and students and reduction in their relationship [18].

- The teachers' ability to adopt the new technological techniques categorized the teachers as quick to implement the technology and slow in implementing the technology. The experience of the teachers had negative and positive impact on the implementation of the online teaching technology.

- The set of teachers who were equipped with the ICT based teaching techniques had no or little impact on the change from physical to online teaching. This group of teachers were neither effected positively or negatively as they were well versed with the technology [19], [20].

- The self-study mode of learning encourages the students to explore their competence in isolation and learn thing by themselves. The online interactive sessions give scope to teacher-student interaction with more favorable chances to increase the students' academic performance. The teacher note only plays the role of imparting the knowledge by also acts like mentor, coach or companion to transmit the knowledge.

- Teachers should be provided with training and skills in handling the students in online classes and how the online classes can be made more interactive among the students. The live training and continuous evaluation during the online classes can enable the teacher to understand the areas of improvements.

- The teachers teaching in the online classes have to give more

attention and get regular feedback to have an effective communication system. The feedback mechanism could help in achieving the teaching goals more efficiently.

- The challenges encountered by the teachers during the pandemic while delivering the online classes were – the primary facilities like computer, camera etc., required to deliver the classes, the home environment like separate room without any disturbances, the external and family disturbances during the classes and lack of internet connectivity were reported the majorly. There were obstacles like financial support in procuring the technological equipment's required to deliver the online classes are also reported in studies. Lack of knowledge of using the new technology were faced by the traditional teachers. The subjects like mathematics, accounts and problem-solving subjects which requires teachers monitoring the students while solving the problems were largely affected when compared to theory based subject delivery.

- The teachers' attitude and motivation level towards learning and adapting to the new demand of online teaching also had an impact on the teaching learning process.

5. Practical Implications and Conclusion

The research findings of the study are useful to the government bodies handling education policies, the management of education institutes and the academicians working in the different levels of education for developing systems and policies during the development of technology-based learning programs. The finding of the research comprehends to relook at the education delivery systems and policies in the academics and assists in development of new framework including the blend of physical and online classes. The study concludes that there is a negative influence between the academicians and the students during the online learning platform in reference to the communication and its effectiveness.

The government of India started thinking gravely on this matter with emphasizing on ICT and use of online education as the part of compulsory teaching-learning process at tertiary level. Moreover, it is reflected on preparing draft new education policy 2019 that has been regarded as a proactive and highly techno-efficient step in the time of this pandemic. Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) is a programme or Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) platform initiated by the government of India hosted online courses in different quadrants.

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