

Problems and Challenges of online Teaching in Rural Schools during COVID-19 lockdown

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to find out the problems faced by students and teachers about teaching-learning process in online classes. The qualitative research approach was used in this study. Also, the criterion sampling method, which is a purposive sampling method, was used in the study. The study found that the students from remote areas and backward sections having poor socioeconomic status and financial strain facing several problems. Teachers also revealed that they had several problems with the online teaching process, which had a negative effect on the productivity of teaching-learning process.

Key Words: online teaching, Rural Schools, secondary students, COVID 19 etc

Introduction

Education today is in crisis. Novel corona virus COVID-19) pandemic has significantly disrupted every aspect of human life. As the COVID 19 spread across the globe, alarm bells are sounding in the education sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced schools, colleges and universities to shut down temporarily and is causing havoc in the education system, leading to enormous anxiety and uncertainty. The issue of the Covid 19 and its impact on education is an emergence focus of debate worldwide. According to UNESCO report more than 157 crore students across 191 countries severely impacted by closure of educational institutions due to corona virus. The main sufferers are the students who are unable to follow their regular academic routines. The impact is more severe among the school students of rural places and from disadvantaged families. The only teaching learning tool which will help to overcome the situation is to use online learning platforms. But we know when we adopt a new strategy in the field of education we have to face several challenges. Indian students are not trained to be taught online. Many don't own a smart phone, especially those from economically poor backgrounds. Buying an Internet pack is a common hassle.

Therefore the purpose of this paper is to investigate the problems and Challenges of online Teaching during COVID 19 lockdown among the rural secondary school students of Murshidabad district of west Bengal.

Suggestions for Alternative Mode of learning

Several commissions like National Education Commission (1964-66), study webs of Active-learning for youth for Aspiring Minds (2017), New Education policy (NEP 2019) suggested for Alternative Mode of learning for students in higher learning institutions, teachers in HEI, school teachers, school principals.

Status of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Infrastructure readiness: A call to arms

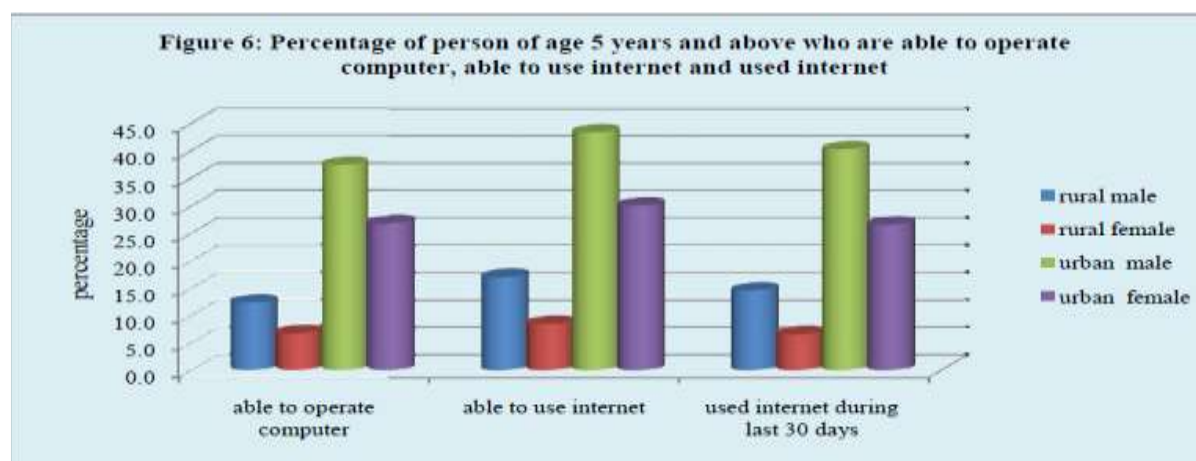
Meanwhile, millions from Government schools and colleges, especially in rural areas, will not even have access to education due to the lockdown. According to the Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India report, based on the 2017-18 National Sample Survey, less than 15% of rural Indian households have Internet (as opposed to 42% urban Indian households). A mere 13% of people surveyed (aged above five) in rural areas — just 8.5% of females — could use the Internet. The poorest households cannot afford a smartphone or a computer.

Percentage of households with computer and internet facility			
all-India			
Indicator	percentage		
	rural	urban	rural+urban
households having computer	4.4	23.4	10.7
households having internet facility	14.9	42.0	23.8

Source: NSS KI (75/25.2): Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India

Statement 33: Percentage of persons of age 5 years and above with ability to operate computer, ability to use internet and used internet			
all-India			
persons of age 5 years and above	percentage		
	male	female	person
rural			
able to operate a computer	12.6	7.0	9.9
able to use internet	17.1	8.5	13.0
used internet during last 30 days	14.6	6.6	10.8
urban			
able to operate a computer	37.5	26.9	32.4
able to use internet	43.5	30.1	37.1
used internet during last 30 days	40.4	26.6	33.8
rural+urban			
able to operate a computer	20.0	12.8	16.5
able to use internet	25.0	14.9	20.1
used internet during last 30 days	22.3	12.5	17.6

Note: 1. Percentage of persons of age 5 years and above with ability to operate computer for different States is given in Table 33.1.
2. Percentage of persons of age 5 years and above with ability to use internet for different States is given in Table 33.2
3. Percentage of persons of age 5 years and above who used internet during last 30 days for different States is given in Table 33.3



Source: NSS KI (75/25.2): Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India

Objectives of the study

1. To analyse the views of students towards online learning
2. To analyze the perception of teachers toward online teaching.
3. To identify the challenges coming in the path of online learning.

Methodology

The study used a small sample size of only 50 rural secondary school students purposively selected of Murshidabad district of west Bengal to examine the perception of students towards problems of online teaching in this lockdown period. A self made questionnaire and check list was made to take the perceptions online of few secondary school students and teachers towards problems faced by them in online teaching during this lockdown period.

Findings of the Study:

Problems faced by Students

COVID 19 lockdown brings severe short-term disruption felt by many families around the world: home schooling is not only a massive shock to parents' productivity, but also to children's social life and learning. Teaching is moving online, on an untested and unprecedented scale. Both teachers as well as students were not prepared but are asked to do online classes. A large section of students coming from remote areas and backward sections having poor socioeconomic status and having financial strain were the main sufferers.

Students face several problems that can include no internet facility, no computers, poor internet speed and are mostly unable to attend, connectivity problems, no android phones, network problem, limited data access, financial strain, no discussion or feedback session, no checking of answers, no concept development, no motivation and support, some cannot make proper use of e learning resources, negative attitude of students. A lot of students also worry about spending money on data plans, and heavy files take time to download due to poor connectivity.

Problems faced by Teachers: -

Teachers are called as nation builder's .In this pandemic situation where the whole world is forced to shut down but education knows no lockdown. The voice of knowledge booming through online classrooms. From blackboard to computer screens, pick up chalks by picking up video classes and to shape the future steadfastly the teachers continues to teach every day. But online teaching which is the only solution to cope with the present situation brings several problems in front of teachers in their teaching learning process.

Teachers are facing different problems which are as follows. They said they have to Deal with a more diverse group of learners which is difficult for them in online classes, most of the online teachers feel that there might be less stability in terms of student flow, problems with internet connectivity, sound issues, etc. Turning teaching materials into digital format at short notice has been a challenge as few teachers have strong digital and ICT skills. Some teachers said online tutoring is very boring; Students fail to manage time for online teaching, In online classes student don't get the time and place to practice the lesson. Online learning is not that interactive like in traditional classes. They said one more problem of online teaching is that the teacher can't know whether student is doing Homework properly and without cheating or not.

Challenges of Online teaching

Rural Environment: In the total population of west Bengal .around 68.3 percent people live in the rural areas. Being inhabitant of rural areas most of the students are deprived of modern gadgets and different facilities. Students of madhyamik level especially village areas are not well adapted in the art of e learning process.

NET Problem: There are lots of problems related to net in rural areas like mobile network connectivity, availability, lack of facility, and high costing. It makes the village/rural students remote and backward.

Lack of infrastructure: Although Government of India is taking initiative to develop digital infrastructure but a lot need to be done in this direction. High speed internet, poor connectivity and stable power supply are the biggest problem rural areas .online teaching in rural areas is influenced by poor infrastructure that hinders the development and prosperity of education. Most of the families cannot afford and use smart phones properly.

The students of madhyamik level in rural areas do not use personal phones as a result they are dependent on their family phone which is not always available to them.

Need Training: Education as an industry is not exempted from the impact of technology and digital connection. Teachers need training for friendly using modern technology. But it was found that some teachers were not fully trained and know the application of modern technology in the field of teaching learning process. Many teachers are not tech-savvy, and the teacher-training courses never really prepare them to handle digital aids in classrooms.

Not proper way of concept development: Teachers not know how to develop concept through online teaching. What teachers teach in their online teaching process is not the proper way of concept development of students.

Difficult for teaching few subjects and topics: Some subjects like mathematics, science which needs blackboard and practical space which is not possible through this online teaching. Not all the topics might be taught using e learning tools that require hands on training and field trips. It was found that most of the teachers of schools were using whats app for teaching but this app is not appropriate to teach effectively.

Not properly use of e-learning resources: Most of the village/rural students were unaware and cannot make proper use of e learning resources. They spent their maximum time by enjoying face book, free fire, pubg, etc. They do not follow educational websites.

Lack of motivation in learners

As hard as distance teaching might be for us, it's likely even harder for our students. Some students have no good facility at home and distractions are plentiful and less support from family. Here student engagement is in independent environment therefore they did not able to concentrate and motivated to learn.

Lack of contact: Education is a two way process where the students are active and teachers facilitate their activity, but through online teaching process, especially in rural areas students remains passive listeners. Eye to eye contact between teachers and students cannot be made. One-to-one interactions among peers and teachers are very important for learning. On a digital platform, how students learn and communicate with others is largely dependent on the readiness of both teachers and students to accept digital learning. In the case of online education, the onus of learning is more on students, which requires discipline.

Negative attitude of both teachers and students: As it is not a compulsory work/duty both the teachers and students show their negative attitude towards e learning process. They are not interested and feel lack of

motivation, positive energy to habituate modern e learning process, removing the old conventional method of teaching.

Lack of proper monitoring and supervision of teaching: with the onset of online teaching there is no provision of supervision and monitoring of the online classes taken by teachers and student's participation and this in turn hampers the teaching learning process a lot.

Learning becomes tiresome: learning through online mode requires a lot of mental effort and students feel physical stress after online classes' .sometimes learning becomes tiresome for them.

Online learning can generate different eye problems: continuous watching the mobile screens can generate eye problems in students.

No readiness of learners to participate in online teaching: Necessary technical skills, time management skills that are required (use computer, Internet, Google Drive, Word etc) for participating in online teaching learning process is also a big challenge for learners to handle the situation.

Learners may feel isolated and disconnected: with the onset of online teaching learners feels isolated and disconnected as they didn't get enough chance to connect with peers. Interacting with learners on a human level—by establishing a relationship with students, forming a classroom community, and connecting with them in various ways—can help them feel connected, and drive their engagement in class.

Learners need to be actively engaged: Teachers need to use multiple types of learning approaches, such as: Audio (e.g., podcasts), Videos (e.g., Teaching channel, your own videos), and Discussions etc in order to engage the learners actively in the classes. To prevent students from getting bored, online classes should be dynamic, fun and interactive

Students didn't get chance to practice: Practice makes our learning permanent. It is only by practicing the things we do and experience (experiential learning) that we are able to internalize and recall the content and skills we learn. However in online teaching teachers overlook this part and focus solely on theoretical content and external lessons. As a result, students cannot practice and the learning process does not reach its full potential. Students often get bored with online teaching, and this lack of engagement and motivation is one of the main reasons for the failure of e-learning.

Conclusion:

The corona virus pandemic has upended our world. We can't ignore that at this time of crisis effective educational practice is needed for the capacity-building of young minds. The possible alternatives or a solution for interrupted education during COVID-19 is online education. The academic calendar all over the world has been disturbed. Our education system has turned towards delivery of education via the internet — or online education. In the current situation, online education is turning out to be a substitute to traditional modes. But the question arises are we ready for this switch in terms of its infrastructure and digital readiness of children and teachers specially the rural school children's who are mainly from disadvantaged sections of our society. With the help of power supply, digital skills of teachers and students, internet connectivity it is necessary to explore digital learning, high and low technology solutions, etc. Therefore Central Government and State need to take some measures and necessary steps to ensure the overall progress in the field of education in the country in this pandemic situation.

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