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ONLINE + OFFLINE LEARNING: THE BLENDED LEARNING – NEED OF THE TIME**LALITKUMAR PREMCHANDRA PATIL, APARNA LALITKUMAR PATIL AND
HIRESH S. LUHAR****ABSTRACT**

Entire world has witnessed the challenges & difficulties faced by education system during Corona pandemic lockdown. 'Blended Learning', which is a perfect blend of online and offline, will be an important learning method of the future. Education Institutes were closed due to the global crisis in Corona. It is difficult to say today when the conditions for starting the education sector, as it was before lockdown, will be created. It is difficult to maintain the rules of social distance will be and whether it will be possible to adopt fully. The government has instructed education Institutes to start & continue teaching-learning process through an 'online' mode. Educational Institutes had started online activities in one form or another. What will be the next direction of the education system? This should be seriously considered. We do many things, using devices like mobiles, laptops, tabs etc. But running an education Institute or any kind of educational activity using these mediums is completely new to us. This online medium suddenly fell on deaf ears due to the forced vacation imposed by Corona. But what is the status of this online education today? What options are available for that? How are they being used today? What will be the future of all this? In answering these questions, the most important question is, what exactly do you want to achieve? When considering online or offline education system, one should consider the components like – i) Teaching, ii) Learning, iii) Evaluation.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Online Learning, Offline Learning, Education System, Lockdown, Corona

INTRODUCTION

Given the lockdown situation due to COVID-19 pandemic, majority of education Institutes or coaching classes were focusing only on 'teaching' online. The current majority of online classes seem to be about setting up video calls of teachers and students using technology like Zoom, WebEx, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams etc. Teaching the students online and them to speak as teachers speak in the classroom. Some ingenious teachers make PowerPoint presentations of their lectures, show them on an online class and explain the topics. It is as if some teachers are teaching in the classroom with the students seating in front of them. Some teachers just talk on video calls but of course, it's not the teacher's fault. When all the training of teachers is done in the classroom and they have the experience of teaching in the classroom then suddenly having to teach online is a big change for them. They are not trained for this (or they have to prepare in such a short time).

Considering the second factor, the study, the traditional tools and methods are being used for it today. The traditional means of study is the textbook and the method is to read the lessons in the book and solve the following questions and answers. There are huge resources available in today's online world for learning any subject. These resources contain videos on YouTube, to information collections like Wikipedia to infinite blogs and information gathering websites. However, relying solely on textbooks for study is tantamount to confining education to a limited cycle. Some teachers in some Institutes are encouraging children to use such resources, but in most places, effective use of online media is needed to take the study beyond the textbook.

Elements of Education System

There are generally three major components of an education system. The teaching process is implemented for the three components of teaching, learning and evaluation. Now let us see how these three elements will take shape in this new online method.

- i) Teaching:** What the teacher teaches in the classroom. This includes the teacher's personal skills, rhetoric, the art of presenting and explaining the subject.
- ii) Learning:** What students learn through their own efforts and perceptions. This includes reading the study material given by the teacher, seeing / experiencing the relevant learning resources, doing the given homework / assignments.
- iii) Evaluation:** Evaluation is the process of verifying how much a student has learned through teaching and learning. This includes checking homework, taking component tests, and taking exams.

The traditional method of assessment is the tests and examinations conducted from time to time. For small tests, online media can use techniques like Quiz, Survey or Polls or ask questions from children using Google Forms. At present, however, only the traditional tools of paper-pen are being used for evaluation. Most of the time, it is common for teachers to scan and send quizzes, take a printout of it and solve it and then scan it and send it back to the teachers or write the quiz in a notebook and send a photo of it to the teachers.

Overall, Teaching, Learning and Evaluation are the three components of education that is seen to be dominated by online teaching. But even there, the full potential of the online medium is not being exploited.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Naman Wadhwa et al (2019) discussed about the challenges faced by Indians to continue the education system through an online mode during COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers pointed out that even online teaching-learning has adopted during lockdown, it would be adopted as one of the blended method along with traditional offline education system in India. Besides traditional teaching pedagogies, online system can have more teaching tools to make teaching-learning process more effective.

Padmalini Singh et al (2021) conducted a survey to compare the effectiveness of offline versus online learning among students. It was observed by the researchers that students were more comfortable with online learning during lockdown period only. Students are more keen to visit the educational Institute personally to attend offline classes for learning purpose. The quality of online teaching-learning process is based on several important factors like – i) Speed of the internet connection, ii) Uninterrupted connectivity, iii) Teacher's adaptability to use the advanced technology to deliver session, iv) Attention level of students during online classes, v) Technology platform used to conduct an online session etc.

Maohua SUN (2020) discussed about the hybrid mode of teaching. Hybrid mode consist of both offline as well online teaching during the same time period even after the lockdown due to pandemic outbreak is over. He discussed about different ways of pre-class preparation by the teachers to conduct classes through an offline & online mode. Chances for a teacher to get the student's understanding of topic through eye-contact; drastically reduces during an online class.

Debasish Biswas & Chanchal Dey (2021) discussed the opportunities & challenges of online & offline teaching in India. Researchers found out that both the online & offline education systems have their own advantages as well as disadvantages. Whatever will the convenience or advanced technology have followed by online teaching-learning system, the traditional face-to-face classroom system cannot be replaced fully.

Benefits of online learning:

If the online education system is implemented very effectively, it can benefit many levels. The need of the industry was to impart knowledge or capacity building and to teach the students according to need of the industry is the responsibility of an education Institute. But it wasn't until Corona arrived. With this flick of the corona suddenly the system has to come up with the new methods of delivery of the contents.

In the future, this new online learning method will have a personal learning plan for everyone, a learning path. Learning paths can be flexible depending on age and individual abilities. It doesn't happen today, but it may happen tomorrow. Everyone can choose their education according to their abilities and preferences.

The infrastructure of school buildings and grounds is required to run the Institute. If you want an Institute close to every child's home, from cities to villages, you have to invest heavily in the infrastructure that can be applied. If the Institute is not close to home, transportation of learner and related infrastructure is required. Children's time spent in traffic and their safety in between is also a big issue. Highly effective online education can solve these problems. Education can be extended far and wide without investing heavily in school infrastructure.

LIMITATIONS OF ONLINE LEARNING

In some Institutes, learners are learning social skills along with traditional education. The environment, the association and the social skills of the place where he learns play a vital role in the formation of any person. In a completely online learning system, learners do not have to spend time with their peers in groups, befriending each other, playing together on the field, rioting, and so on. The rules of social behavior, social discipline and related social skills that are automatically learned from all this cannot be imparted through online education. This is the biggest limitation of online education.

Some activities by an education Institute have to be done in person and under the supervision of teachers. Experiments conducted in laboratories are a prime example of this. It is extremely difficult to impart education from such laboratories through online media. In addition, for online learning, both teachers and students need to

have sufficient technical equipment (smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.) and high speed internet with sufficient bandwidth and continuous operation.

Not all students and teachers have access to adequate technical equipment and even if they can afford it. Not everyone can afford to give their own smartphones or laptops to children in rural areas, except the urban lower and lower middle class, even the middle and upper middle class. The biggest problem we have is the adequate internet connectivity. Mobile 3G / 4G services are booming in some places but not available at all the places. Wired broadband and fiber optics work wonders where they are, but their reach is geographically limited. This means that the majority of students do not have access to the online learning tools and are not sure of the internet connectivity.

The Role, Initiatives and Policies of the Government

The Central Government has taken some significant initiatives in the last few years to promote e-learning. The government has set up an online learning platform called 'Swayam' and a large ecosystem behind it. In coordination with 9 national level institutes like AICTE, NCERT, UGC, their educational materials have been made available on a platform called 'Swayam'. It has been facilitated to create a syllabus and educational materials on the subject. All the courses and educational materials in 'Swayam' are available free of cost to any student in the country. This is a very ambitious project of the Human Resource Development Department of the Central Government for the promotion of e-learning. At the same time, the IT department of the Central Government has been conducting research projects on e-learning in a number of Institutes across the country for the last few years and many traditional or vocational education courses are being run online by the National Institute of Open Schooling.

However, in the education system, the government seems to be focusing on e-learning, one of the three aspects of teaching, learning and evaluation. There is no clarity in government policies and roles for existing schools and educational institutions on how to use online media for teaching. Policies or guidelines on how to make online teaching materials available to teachers in private and government Institutes and how to train them to use them, have not been made clear. The central government, various state governments and educational Institutions at their respective levels seem to be looking for different answers to the same problem. There is a need to coordinate efforts and implement a far-reaching, comprehensive program for online education at the national level.

CONCLUSION

Composite education is the direction of the future. Online education system is the need of the hour. It is really important that education can reach every student at very low cost, and that everyone can take it according to their interests and abilities. However, due to some important limitations of online education, it may not be a complete alternative to traditional education. Blended Learning will be an important learning method in the future. Online teaching of subjects that can be learned online. For those subjects which have to be learned by coming together, both methods will have to be used in the future, coming together in Institutions & discussing the same face-to-face. At the same time, by standardizing the assessment methods and implementing them online, it will be possible for anyone in the country to take the exam of the desired course from anywhere.

This is not something that will happen in another year. Over the years, many government and private organizations have to work together to create a completely modern and accessible new education system.

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