

Are we ready for Digital Teaching and Learning?

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ABSTRACT

India is one of the largest countries in the world. It stands next to China in population. Covid 19 left its worst impression on almost of all the fields. Educational sector was one of the fields which was badly affected by this pandemic. Schools, colleges, universities and the other educational institutes were closed in view of the safety of the students. The parents and the educationists have been worrying about the education of the students and the academic year 2020-21. There is a rumor about Zero Year. In this scenario, the very word Digital Teaching has come on the screen. There is a mixed opinion on digital teaching especially in India. No one can deny that chalk and talk cannot be replaced. There is no exact substitute for Face to Face or Conventional Teaching. But there is no other go in these Covid 19 Pandemic situations. We need to shift to online teaching and learning. But it is not as easy as we propose. There are many challenges in implementing the 100 % digital teaching and learning. It is almost like a Herculean Task. But we need to remember the wise saying, "Where there is a will, there is a way." Nothing is impossible if we change our mind set. There are many on line tools for teaching and learning English. This paper aims at studying the challenges and possibilities of digital teaching and learning in India.

KEY WORDS: Covid 19- Impact on Education- Traditional teaching- Teaching and Learning English through online-Scope for Digital Teaching and Learning- Challenges and Possibilities.

INTROUDCTION:

Face to face teaching has been an integral part of Indian Educational system from the ancient past. Our teaching is more conventional than technical. 21st century is the Age of Science and Technology. It is called the Age of Computer and Smart Phone. The prices of smart phones are handy even to below middle-class people. Due to Covid 19, the world has been deeply affected. All the expectations has become topsyturvy. The very word Corna has been making the entire globe shiver. Every thing has been under lock down. The shopping malls, cinema theatres, firms, schools, colleges, universities etc are closed for the past four months. The

students have been restricted to homes. The academic year 2020-21 is not started yet. The government is not certain when to start the educational institutions. The parents are very much worried about their children's career. At the same time, the government has to balance both the health of the students and the survival of the academic year. It is high time, we thought about the digital or online education in the scenario of Corona pandemic.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIGITAL EDUCATION:

The majority of the Indian teachers and the students got addicted to Chalk and Talk. The black board cannot be separated from the Indian teacher. It is an indispensable truth that Digital or Online teaching is only a supplement. It is not the perfect substitute for traditional teaching. But we need to shift to online teaching during this pandemic. We need to shift our teaching from traditional to Digital. Education is turning dynamic every year. The technological progress in the last decade paved novel methods in teaching and learning. Online education is gradually entering our Indian class rooms.

ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL EDUCATION:

It is high time we replaced digital education in India. It is not as easy as we propose. Majority of the reports revealed the difficulties of the teachers in incorporating the technology into Indian classrooms. Benefits of digital education are discussed below.

1) Flexibility:

Online teaching gives flexibility both to the teacher and the students. They can access to teaching learning process from anywhere. It has no geographical barriers. It saves the time of the teacher and the student. It limits the need to travel. The students can take help and use resources anytime.

2) Social distancing:

The word Social Distancing or Physical Distancing has become very popular due to Covid 19. Maintaining Physical distance especially in Indian tradition class rooms is almost difficult because of over crowd. Online teaching gives much scope for physical distancing.

3) Economical:

Digital education is not much expensive. There is no need of huge class rooms, furniture and large number of faculty. A few technical gadgets like laptop, tablet or smart phone and internet connection can serve the purpose.

4) Self-learning and Responsibility:

Digital teaching makes the students self-learn. It increases the responsibility. They themselves explore for the open educational resources. They will be able to identify what they have to learn by using digital resources. They evaluate themselves with the help of instant feedback. He himself finds the solutions. It gives rise to Student Centric Approach.

5) Holistic and productive learning:

There are individual differences among the students. It helps the students learn at their own pace and learning levels. In digital method of teaching, the designers of curriculum can prepare the curriculum according to speed and capability of the learners. as a result the teaching learning process becomes holistic and productive.

6) Abundant information:

In conventional method of learning, the learners have to depend on the limited availability of printed books. It limits their learning. But in modern era, we have internet with abundant information. Most of the information is available for free in Google. With this information, they can solve their own doubts on the spot without the help of the teachers. They can watch video lessons through You tube and other e resources. Everything is available in internet. only thing is, the students need to make use of it. The teachers have to motivate the students in this regard.

7) Scope for learning life skills:

Through online education, one can learn the needed life skills. Digital education gives an opportunity to improve life skills such as collaborative learning, problem solving skills, communication ability, soft skills, leadership qualities, presentation skills, self-motivation, etiquettes, netiquettes etc.

8) Flexible to teachers:

There are plenty of open educational resources available to the teachers to make the teaching easy and productive. There are many educational apps like Google Class Room, Kahoot, Edmodo, Socrative, Thinglink, ClassDojo, Storybird, eduClipper etc. The teacher can make the students interesting and engaged with these online teaching resources. There are innumerable readymade Virtual Class Room softwares. Some of them are Zoom, Google Meet, Cisca WebEx, Jio Meet etc. The teacher has to choose the right software according to the needs and the flexibility;

9) Possibility for Retention:

In traditional way of teaching, the students have the chance to understand the content only at the time of delivering the lecture. Once it is delivered, the students cannot access to it for revision and solving the doubts. But in Digital learning, the content of the course is created and distributed through different online platforms. It can be accessed at anytime and anywhere.

10) Possibility to teach large number of students at a time:

In a traditional class room, a teacher is able to teach a small number of students due to the constraints of space and time. But a teacher can teach even thousands of the students at a time through online teaching soft wares like ZOOM,GOOGLE MEET etc. For example, some of the corporate colleges in Andhra Pradesh have been teaching the students of all the branches in the state at a time through online softwares like Zoom. It saves time and energy of the teachers as well as the students.

11) Exciting way to educate students:

The traditional way of teaching seems bore most of the times. The teacher comes and delivers the lecture and goes. The students may not be attentive all the time. But in Digital teaching the students find lots of images, videos, text and other graphics on the computer, they get excited and show much interest in learning through their electronic gadgets. Slow learners also perform well as it seems interesting.

CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL EDUCATION:

Though there are many advantages of Digital teaching and learning, there are some limitations in implementing in Indian class room context. The challenges are discussed below.

1) Social Isolation:

In digital teaching, there is no direct relationship between the student and the teacher. The student has to learn alone. The class room interaction is not found. The student misses the company of his friends. It may lead to psychological problems as the natural teaching learning atmosphere is missing. There may not be a chance to acquire the social skills.

2) Lack of infrastructure:

Most of the educational institutions in India do not have much technical infrastructure for online education. They don't have computers with high configuration. Most of the educational institutions are located in remote areas. High speed internet is not available in all the areas. Even the managements are not ready to invest much money for establishing the high configured electronic gadgets. It is very expensive to maintain them. Most of the government institutes keep them aside once they get damaged due to lack of funds for maintenance. 50% of the computers and Virtual Class room equipment in educational institutions are out of use as there was no proper maintenance.

3) Lack of internet:

Around seventy percent of people live in rural and remote areas. Ninety percent of children in rural areas don't have internet access. They don't have needed bandwidth to support online education. The speed of internet is not the same in all the areas. The recent surveys reveal that many parents are not able to buy smart phones or tabs or laptops to their children. They are not able to afford money for recharging the internet due to poverty. The condition is worse if there are more than one school going child in the family.

4) Lack of readiness among the teachers:

It is not an exaggeration to say that more than half of the teachers in India do not know even to switch on the computer. In this situation, how can they conduct online classes to the students? Many reports pointed out the difficulties in integrating technology in teaching learning process. The Chronicle of Higher Education and Walden University survey reports reveal that 39% of teachers are able to integrate technology as a teaching learning tool. Only forty percent of the teachers told that technology is useful in achieving the learning objectives (McNeil 2016).

5) Digital illiteracy among the students:

The students who have no access to digital literacy are lagging behind in online education. The students who are very good in traditional class room have been struggling with online courses. Even the students who can master the material are backward in submitting the assignments and they fail in the assessments. It is all due to digital illiteracy.

6) Less supervision:

In a traditional class room, the teacher can supervise the students' performance closely. The students have no scope for cheating. The instant feedback can be given and the doubts of the students can be rectified on the spot. But in online teaching, the students can cheat the teacher by copying the answers while submitting the assignments. The instant feedback is not possible. The teacher has less possibility to monitor the students' activities during online teaching. Some students may mute their audio and video. They act as if they are listening to the content.

7) Technical issues:

Technical hinderances like network problems, battery issues with the gadgetsetc during the session may show impact on the effectiveness of online teaching.

8) Not suitable to all ages of the students:

Online teaching is effective but it is not suitable to all ages of the students. The elder students can access to online teaching on their own. But the primary and pre primary school children can not follow the online teaching. They need the support of their parents. Most of the parents are illiterates and some of them are employees. They cannot monitor the progress of online learning of their children.

9) Adverse impact on health:

As the students have to watch the electronic gadgets for long hours for online learning, it may show adverse impact on their mind and eyes. It may lead to psychological problems in near future.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLMES OF ONLINE TEACHING:**1) Blended learning:**

Hundred percent digital education is not possible overnight. We need to remember that Rome is not built in a day. It takes much time to replace the digital teaching. So, the digital teaching must be implemented step by step along with traditional teaching. The government and the NGOs must concentrate on creating the awareness among the parents, the teachers and the students regarding online teaching.

2) Training to the teachers:

Majority of the teachers are digital illiterates. Hence adequate hands on training must be given on online teaching to the teachers. It must be strictly monitored. The policy makers must conduct the Webinars, Workshops, Faculty Development Programmes and Refreshment programmes regarding online teaching.

3) Financial Assistance to the parents:

As we said earlier, the majority of the parents are not afford to buy electronic gadgets like laptops. Hence, the government must assist the parents financially or the government itself distribute the gadgets and free internet to the students.

4) **Limited hours of online teaching:**

During Covid 19, most of the educational institutions focused on online teaching. It is the need of the hour. But the parents are much worried about the health of the children due to long hours of online teaching. Hence the duration of online teaching must be reduced in view of students' health. Recently, the government of India issued the proceedings on conducting the online classes. According to its proceedings, the online class for Pre-Primary children must not exceed 30 minutes. For 1 to 8 classes, only two sessions have to be conducted in a day. For 9 to 12 classes, only four sessions have to be conducted. Each session should not exceed 45 minutes. (THE HINDU dated 14th July,2020)

TOOLS FOR ONLINE EDUCATION:

There are number of tools available for online teaching and learning. One has to explore the open educational resources for better out put. Some of the tools are mentioned below.

- Zoom
- Cisca WebEx
- Google Meet
- Jio Meet
- Google Class Room
- Kahoot
- Edmodo
- eduClipper
- Animoto
- Educlip
- Prezi
- Quizlet
- Mind mapping tool
- Khan Academy
- HotChalk
- GoClass

Conclusion: with all these, we can say that digital teaching and learning is the need of the hour especially in the situations like Covid 19 Pandemic. There may be challenges in implementing but we need strong will. Where there is a will, there is a way.

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