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Online Learning Best Practices and Possibilities

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ABSTRACT

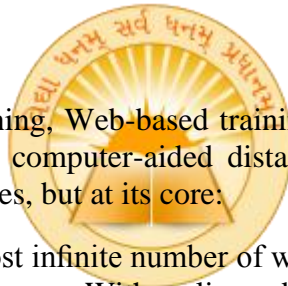
It is 21st century the century of science and technology new inventions are made daily The expansive nature of the Internet and the accessibility of technology have generated a surge in the demand for web based teaching and learning. Online education is quickly progressing into school districts and colleges across the nation. This paper tries to reflect how online education can be made more effective what are its advantages and disadvantages. Educational institutions (schools, colleges, and universities) in India are currently based only on traditional methods of learning, that is, they follow the traditional set up of face-to-face lectures in a classroom. Although many academic units have also started blended learning, still a lot of them are stuck with old procedures. The sudden outbreak of a deadly disease called Covid-19 caused by a Corona Virus shook the entire world. The World Health Organization declared it as a *pandemic*. This situation challenged the education system across the world and forced educators to shift to an online mode of teaching overnight. The article includes the importance of online learning and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Challenges analysis of e-learning modes in the time of crisis.

Keywords- Coronavirus, COVID-19, education, online learning, technology, EdTech

INTRODUCTION ONLINE LEARNING

What is online education?

Online Education is Computer-based training, Web-based training, Internet based training, online training, e-learning, m-learning (mobile learning), computer-aided distance education - online education goes by many names and comes in a variety of styles, but at its core:



From this simple definition comes an almost infinite number of ways to teach and learn outside of traditional classrooms and away from college campuses. With online education, students can turn anywhere with Internet access and electricity into a classroom. It can include audio, video, text, animations, virtual training environments and live chats professors.

ADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING

1. YOU CAN LEARN WHAT EVER YOU WANT

You can pick the program of your dreams in traditional education, too, but that would involve traveling away from home, living in a completely unknown city, and struggling in an extremely competitive learning environment. With online education, you can take any program or course present in traditional four-year universities.

2. COMFORT

Forget about attending classes for hours, sitting in an uncomfortable chair, and suffering from back pain by the end of the day. You will not be bound to physical class session when you opt for online education.

All lectures and needed materials are provided via online platforms, so you'll easily access them from the comfort of your home. You will not take public transport to get to campus, you won't have to spend money on gas for your car, you won't have to get up early to get dressed for class... the list of conveniences



goes on and on.

3. SELF PACED LEARNING

When you start browsing through interesting online courses and programs, you'll notice the Self-Paced label on most of them. What does this mean? Self-paced learning means that the students can start completing the targets at any time, and he can arrange a learning schedule that meets his individual needs.

When you enroll in a traditional college program, you'll have to forget about work, hobbies, and even family. In such setting, studying has to be a priority. That's why many single parents and people who work decide to forget all about their dreams to get a higher degree.

4.. LOWER COST

The fact that online programs are cheaper when compared to the ones held in a traditional campus setting is enough to convince you to consider them. The average tuition for online courses depends on multiple factors, so it varies from one program to another.

DISADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING

1. INABILITY TO FOCUS ON SCREENS

For many students, one of the biggest challenges of online learning is the struggle with focusing on the screen for long periods of time. With online learning, there is also a greater chance for students to be easily distracted by social media or other sites.

2. TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

Another key challenge of online classes is internet connectivity. While internet penetration has grown in leaps and bounds over the past few years, in smaller cities and towns, a consistent connection with decent speed is a problem.

3. SENSE OF ISOLATION

Students can learn a lot from being in the company of their peers. However, in an online class, there are minimal physical interactions between students and teachers. This often results in a sense of isolation for the students.

4. TEACHER TRAINING

Online learning requires teachers to have a basic understanding of using digital forms of learning. However, this is not the case always. Very often, teachers have a very basic understanding of technology. Sometimes, they don't even have the necessary resources and tools to conducts online classes.

Literature Review

ONLINE TEACHING IS NO MORE AN OPTION, IT IS A NECESSITY

The major part of the world is on quarantine due to the serious outbreak of this global pandemic Covid-19 and therefore many cities have turned into phantom cities and its effects can be seen in schools,



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colleges, and universities too. The Corona Virus has made institutions to go from offline mode Teaching to online mode of Teaching.. This crisis will make the institutions, to accept modern technology of teaching. Many universities around the world have fully digitalized their operations understanding the dire need of this current situation. Online learning is crucial during this pandemic situation.. Online education in Chinese universities has increased exponentially after the Covid-19 outbreak. There was an overnight shift of normal classrooms into e-classrooms, that is, educators have shifted their entire pedagogical approach to tackle new market conditions and adapt to the changing situations. During this tough time, the concern is not about whether online teaching–learning methods can provide quality education, it is rather how academic institutions will be able to adopt online learning in such a massive manner.

Problems Associated With Online Teaching and Learning

There are number of technologies available for online education but sometimes they create a lot of difficulties. These difficulties and problems associated with modern technology range from downloading errors, issues with installation, login problems, problems with audio and video, and so on. Sometimes student finds online teaching to be boring and unengaging. Online learning has so much of time and flexibility that students never find time to do it. Personal attention is also a huge issue facing online learning. Students want two-way interaction which sometimes gets difficult to implement. The learning process cannot reach its full potential until students practice what they learn. Sometimes, online content is all theoretical and does not let students practice and learn effectively.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the growth of EdTech Start-ups and online learning.
2. To conduct an Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Challenges analysis of online learning during the Corona Virus pandemic and natural disasters.
3. To give some suggestions and recommendations for the success of online mode of learning during a crisis-like situation.



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Research Methodology

The study is descriptive and tries to understand the importance of online learning in the period of a crisis and pandemics such as the Covid-19. The problems associated with online learning and possible solutions were also identified based on previous studies. The research tool used for analyzing the data which amassed from different sources for this study is a content analysis and the research method is descriptive research. We have taken into consideration the qualitative aspects of the research study. This study is completely based on the secondary data. A systematic review was done in detail for the collected literature.

Secondary sources of data used are (a) journals, (b) reports, (c) search engines,

Challenges

Online learning faces many challenges ranging from learners' issues, educators' issues, and content issues. It is a challenge for institutions to engage students and make them participate in the teaching-learning process. It is a challenge for teachers to move from offline mode to online mode, changing their teaching methodologies, and managing their time. The quality of e-learning programs is a real challenge. There is no clear stipulation by the government in their educational policies about e-learning programs. There is a lack of standards for quality, quality control, development of e-resources, and e-content delivery. This problem needs to be tackled immediately so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of quality education via e-learning. It is not as easy as it seems, a considerable amount of investment is needed for getting the devices and equipment, maintaining the equipment, training the human resources, and developing the online content. Therefore, an effective and efficient educational system needs to be developed to impart education via online mode.

Possible Solutions for Problems

A lot of issues are attached to online education but we cannot ignore the perks of it in times of such crisis. We can always have solutions to fix these difficulties. Technical difficulties can be solved through prerecording video lectures, testing the content, and always keeping Plan B ready so that the teaching-



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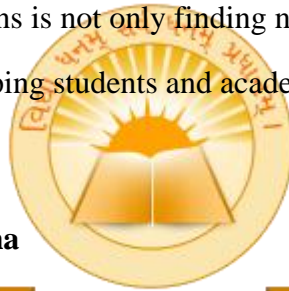
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learning process cannot be hampered. Online courses should be made dynamic, interesting, and interactive. Teachers should set time limits and reminders for students to make them alert and attentive. Efforts should be made to humanize the learning process to the best extent possible. Personal attention should be provided to students so that they can easily adapt to this learning environment. Social media and various group forums can be used to communicate with students. Communication is the key when it gets difficult to try reaching out to students via texts, various messaging apps, video calls, and so on—content should be such that enable students for practice and also hone their skills. The quality of the courses should be improved continuously and teachers must try to give their best. Online programs should be designed in such a way that they are creative, interactive, relevant, student-centered, and group-based .

The challenge to educational institutions is not only finding new technology and using it but also reimagining its education, thereby helping students and academic staff who are seeking guidance for digital literacy.



EdTech Start-ups in the Times of Corona

EdTech Start-ups are tapping all the right opportunities by providing free online courses to students amidst this crisis. EdTech start-ups are trying hard to make most out of this situation by providing several free courses and e-resources to the students. Although the availability of electricity and a stable internet connection is still a bigger challenge in their way as a lot of Indian cities especially small cities still face frequent electricity shortages. During such tough times, when Covid-19 has forced schools and colleges to remain completely lockdown for few weeks due to the seriousness of the situation, EdTech companies can prove to be of great help to students . According to the reports by KPMG and Google, the EdTech sector will boom and is likely to reach around 2 Billion Dollars by 2021. Some of the famous EdTech start-ups include Byju's, Adda247, Alolearning, AptusLearn, Asmakam, Board Infinity, ClassPlus, CyberVie, Egnify, Embibe, ExtraaEdge, iStar, Jungroo Learning, GlobalGyan, Lido Learning, Pesto, Vedantu, Edubrisk, ZOOM Classroom, ZOOM Business, Toppr, Unacademy, Coursera, Kahoot, Seesaw, Khan Academy, e-pathshala, GuruQ, and the list is long. SWAYAM portal is an interesting educational program that is



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initiated by the government of India to achieve three important objectives of our educational policy, that is, access, equity, and quality. The main objective of SWAYAM is to provide online learning and reduce the digital divide. It provides a large number of free courses for school, distance, graduate, and postgraduate education. During the Covid-19 crisis, SWAYAM is of great help for students across the country.

Strengths

E-learning methods and processes are really strong. These strengths of the online learning modes can rescue us from these hard times. It is student-centered and offers a great deal of flexibility in terms of time and location. The e-learning methods enable us to customize our procedures and processes based on the needs of the learners. There are plenty of online tools available which is important for an effective and efficient learning environment. Educators can use a combo of audio, videos, and text to reach out to their students in this time of crisis to maintain a human touch to their lectures. This can help in creating a collaborative and interactive learning environment where students can give their immediate feedback, ask queries, and learn interestingly. The *Anywhere-Anytime* feature of e-learning is beneficial in the times of crisis-like situation, for instance, man-made disasters, natural disasters, or pandemics such as Covid-19. Technology provides innovative and resilient solutions at times of crisis to combat disruption and helps people to communicate and even work virtually without the need of face-to-face interaction.

Weaknesses

E-learning has certain weaknesses in the form that it can hamper the communication between the learner and the educator, that is, direct communication and human touch are lost. Users can face many technical difficulties that hinder and slow-down the teaching-learning process. Time and location flexibility, though it is the strength of online learning these aspects are fragile and create problems. Student's nonserious behavior in terms of time and flexibility can cause a lot of problems. All students and learners are not the same, they vary in degrees of their capabilities and confidence level



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Opportunities

Online learning generally has a lot of opportunities available but this time of crisis will allow online learning to boom as most academic institutions have switched to this model. Online Learning, Remote Working, and e-collaborations exploded during the outbreak of Corona Virus crisis .Now, academic institutions can grab this opportunity by making their teachers teach and students learn via online methodology. The people have always been complacent and never tried some new modes of learning. This crisis will be a new phase for online learning and will allow people to look at the fruitful side of e-learning technologies. This is the time when there is a lot of scope in bringing out surprising innovations and digital developments. Already, EdTech companies are doing their bit by helping us fighting the pandemic and not letting learning to be put at a halt.

Conclusions and Suggestions

As per the World Economic Forum, the Covid-19 pandemic also has changed the way how several people receive and impart education. To find new solutions for our problems, we might bring in some much-needed innovations and change. Teachers have become habitual to traditional methods of teaching in the form of face-to-face lectures, and therefore, they hesitate in accepting any change. It will be beneficial for the education sector and could bring a lot of surprising innovations. We cannot ignore and forget the students who do not have access to all online technology. These students are less affluent and belong to less tech-savvy families with financial resources restrictions; therefore, they may lose out when classes occur online. They may lose out because of the heavy costs associated with digital devices and internet data plans. This digital divide may widen the gaps of inequality.



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