Best Practices For Online Teaching: Classrooms, Educational Resources And Tools

Sreejaya Ke
Research Scholar,
Department of Education,
Annamalai University
Tamil Nadu

Dr. V. Ambedkar
Prof. & Head
Department of Education,
Annamalai University
Tamil Nadu

Abstract

Covid-19 has forced us to keep ourselves away from the normal life for a whole year. The cyber world has proved to be the alternative to many social interactions. The pandemic has severely impacted the Economy as well as the Educational sector of the nation.

Educational institutions have been shut down rapidly to protect the students from being infected as schools and colleges are places where children socialize the most. Educational institutions suddenly shifted their face-to-face classes to online classes in order to save quality time of students and with the view to attain the objectives in stipulated time as mentioned in the syllabus. The government also announced various Television channels for students from classes 1 to 12 to learn from home without difficulty. Universities across India introduced various learning platforms for higher education. Though the transition was very useful, it comes with various challenges and problems to both teachers and students. The objective of this paper is to find out the best practices for online class with respect to classroom educational resources and tool. This was done with a strong perception that educational institutions are essential for society to function as it is now.

Key Words- Covid-19, online class, educational resources, learning platforms.

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SREEJAYA KE
Research Scholar,
Department of Education,
Annamalai University
Tamil Nadu

Dr. V. AMBEDKAR
Prof. & Head
Department of Education,
Annamalai University
Tamil Nadu

Introduction

Education is the backbone of the growth and development of the country and society. A country cannot develop unless it promote quality education and imparts it in all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, race, sex etc. education helps and prepares new generation for successful future. Education makes an individual efficient and train them to lead as productive individuals. Teaching is one of the noblest and challenging professions.

Nowadays, large number of individuals are coming forward to take the role of teacher as teaching is one of the instruments of education. Teachers play a key role in the process of learning and they have to work as per the expectations of the society. According to H. C. Morrison, 'Teaching is an intimate contact between the more matured personality and a less mature one'.

Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown has badly shaken the entire world. Our country also faces multiple challenges to deal with the harsh situation created by novel corona virus.

Educational institutions stopped face-to-face classes and shifted to online digital platforms for conducting classes which support the education not to come to a screeching halt. Almost all educational agencies were in search of alternate ways to manage this difficult circumstance. This shutdown stimulated the growth of online educational activities so that there would be no interruption to education. Many faculties have been involved in search of best online course material, ways to ensure student involvement and to perform evaluation. This crisis would have forced different educational organisations to accept new technology who were previously resistant to adapt. The sudden transition to synchronised online learning was well

received by teachers and students. Online classes provides learning experiences using electronic devices like computers, smart phones, laptops etc. with internet availability in synchronous and asynchronous mode.

Need and significance of online classes

Online classes provides opportunity for schools and higher education to deliver services for people to continue their education, to leverage technology to reduce burden on teachers and to improve pedagogies better suited to maintain student engagement. Social distancing is an important preventive measure compelling Government to enforce lockdown leading to the shutdown of educational institutions and forced all the teaching and learning activities to shift to online platforms. Online classes were essential in completing the syllabus within the stipulated time while keeping the student free of infection. Online learning made the process of education more student centered, creative, feasible and flexible. Online classes enable students to take up their leaning materials anywhere at anytime. The learners can benefit from flexible learning schedules. Online delivery of courses is cost effective and easily accessible especially when delivering curriculum to students in rural and remote areas. United Nations and WHO has seen that this is helpful tool for meeting the educational needs. As students progress through classes they seek more autonomy and intellectual freedom and online learning can help them pursue highly personalized learning programmes, even college level courses. If the online classes become more interactive and collaborative, the students and instructors can make the learning process more interesting and motivating. The schools and colleges have implemented numerous creative strategies to cope up with the crisis using different software and apps such as Google classroom, Zoom to take online courses. Not only to complete the course but also to stay in constant contact with the learners, the online classes initiated to grow the certainty and confidence of the students during Covid-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that with the implementation of online classes, the role of faculty members will be transformed from the traditional teacher centric to learner centric model.

Challenges of online classes

This chapter explains the problem and conflicts that students face during online education. One of the most important questions that the teacher or instructor asks themselves regarding online class is "How can I ensure the participation of my students and motivation in online class and how can I enhance my students experience?'. Both teachers and students were in the state of dilemma as often the classes become the replicate activities of face-to-face classes. It has been acknowledged that online instructional methods are an effective tool for learning.

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However, learning can be challenging for students because of the limited non-verbal communication. There has been a lot of discussion about the possibilities and crisis that digital education created by Covid-19 in modern society. Today our students are flooded with misinformation, much of which propagate through social media. To combat this misinformation crisis it is crucial to educate the students how to process and analyse data and how to check and evaluate sources. What is the data really saying? Is the source valid and reliable?

The students themselves talk about the pressure they face during online classes which highlights the crisis experienced by them from variety of social background over a one year period of online study. Many students reported slow internet connectivity and difficulty in using computer applications in online classes. Most of the students come from lower income families and are unable for their parents to afford them smart phones, computers and high speed network connectivity especially in case of those students from rural areas. Online classes are not feasible in case of practical oriented syllabus. Some points out that most of their teachers are not completely trained in taking online class which force the teachers to stick to traditional ways of teaching. Potential barriers like lapses between interaction and absence of audio visual conversation makes students feel frustrated. Further, students complained that online classes reduces opportunity to socialize and when not properly handled promotes social isolation. Most students who are not efficient in using computer applications feel stressed when teacher asks them to use different learning management system in online classes.

Best practices for online teaching

Online teaching is not going to end totally after the pandemic. A blend of offline and online classes are growing in popularity and is necessary for the new age of education in India. The best thing about online education is that the learners can study at their own pace. Online education is very flexible as it grants students the freedom to learn from anywhere anytime. But to address the question of ensuring student participation and to solve the challenges mentioned above some necessary steps can be taken with regard to classroom, educational resources and online teaching tools.

1. **At classroom level,** the teacher or instructor must ensure their presence by appearing on video, promoting discussion, asking students to open video while answering questions.

- Clear expectations without ambiguity by providing detailed syllabus, due dates of submission, proper direction for submission of seminars and assignments.
- Predetermine objectives to be aligned with course content.
- Real world application: make students sure that it is worth learning to gain their attention otherwise there will be a tendency to leave off.
- Break the content into small teaching points and promote activities by giving proper learning experience.
- Scaffolding is done wherever necessary.
- Provide technical support information.
- Proper evaluation and feedback should be given to improve students' outcome. Proper feedback at regular interval surely enhances the outcome.
- Reinforcements can be provided wherever necessary which will surely increase the frequency of right answers.
- Elicit student participation and engage them with quality interaction between student-student and teacher-student.
- Thought provoking questions and creating rich and challenging educational experience enrich the learners' academic abilities.

2. **Online Educational resources** expand the access to learning. Students anywhere in the world can access OERs at anytime and they can access the materials repeatedly.

They are easy to distribute widely with little or no cost. OERs better align with learning outcomes. Some of the popular Online educational resources initiated by Ministry of Human Resource Development(MHRD) as a part of their project to assist students, scholars, teachers in their studies which covers educational requirement of learners ranging from school to post graduate are:

SWAYAM(https://swayam.gov.in/) provides Massive Open Online Courses with 140 universities approved credit transfer feature.

SWAYAMPRABHA(https://www.swayamprabha.gov.in/) provides high quality educational programs 24*7 through 32 DTH channels. Around 56,000 total videos have been telecasted covering school & higher education. It has 3+ crores total views on Youtube since inception.

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National Digital Library (NDL) (https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/) is a repository of e-content on multiple disciplines from primary to PG levels. It has 4.3 crores content (Text /Audio / Video / Simulation /Graphics), harvested from 250 sources; in 300+ languages. NDL has 55 Lakhs + registered users.

e-Yantra (https://www.e-yantra.org/) provides hands on experience on embedded systems. It has about 380 Lab and made 2300+ colleges benefited.

FOSSEE (https://fossee.in/) is acronym for Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education, which developed, promote open source softwares for education as well as professional use.

Virtual Labs (http://www.vlab.co.in/) has developed Web-enabled curriculum based experiments designed for remote – operation. Its 275 labs with 2200+ experiments made 18+ Lakhs students benefitted.

e-Gyankosh (http://egyankosh.ac.in/) is a National Digital Repository to store and share the digital learning resources. Its content developed by the Open and Distance Learning Institutions in the country.

Gyan Darshan (http://www.ignouonline.ac.in/gyandarshan/) is a web based TV channel devoted to educational and developmental needs for Open and Distance Learner.0

3. Popular online teaching tools

- **Google classroom** – is a powerful community based social tool for learning. It allows students to post questions and receive answers from their teachers and fellow students. Furthermore, teachers can post questions and lesson materials for review at home.

- **Edmodo** – Edmodo's series of tools enables teachers to share course content, inspire collaboration and build an energetic and positive classroom.

- **Moodle** - is a learning platform that provides administrators, learners, and educators with a single, robust, secure and integrated online classes tools.

- **Kahoot!** – Kahoot!s online game quizzes gained popularity with students and teachers during the pandemic.

- **Coursera** – Coursera is an online educational platform with 23 million users, that is dedicated to offering high-quality online training courses worldwide.

Conclusion

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Covid-19 has led to the question of necessity of educational institutions as centres of knowledge and recognition of their values as centre of socialisation. It would not be surprising if educational institutions were envisioned in the future as specialist centres with no syllabus and textbooks aiming only at socialisation. Despite all this, educational institutions have a huge place in our accumulative consciousness. The non- institutionalised educational process is beyond our comprehension. The students and teachers are optimistic that it will be possible. In this context, reviewing of educational experiences of past one year is important in determining our future direction. What are the experiences of a year-long online study given to students? This inquires seek to collect and analyze information from teachers, students and other stake holders.

Although personal interests such as higher work and living standards are considered to be the goals of education, a cohesive social system is a pre-condition for realisation of these goals. Numerous intensive studies has been taking place at this present situation on different aspects of our society and education being an integral part of our society, the present trends in education including online classes need to be subjected to careful study and discussion about how the teachers and students experience online learning and what values and perspectives it leaves in them. Because these children are the future citizens who are going to indulge in the process of shaping future generation as envisioned in the National Educational Policy(NEP).

To conclude,

'The teacher must adjust to new developments in educational technology, the growth of human knowledge and the problem of creating

a relevant and appropriate curriculum from enormous range of material available…..'

- William Taylor

In-service training Britannica

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