

A Case Study Approach on Challenges Faced in Digital Learning

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Abstract

*COVID-19 lockdown in India introduced us to many changes in way of living. Digital learning was something most of us had heard but never tried and we were forced to use it. Once the lockdown started extending, education institutions realized that making students sit idle at home can affect them and their parents, as students will be away from books until colleges are reopened. To avoid this disaster, online classes were introduced all over India to keep students in the track of education. There were both positive and negative effects because of the online classes especially in rural part of India. This paper deals with those cases where faculty and students had to face trouble because of online classes. **Objective:** To know the challenges faced by parents, teachers and students because of digital learning. **Method:** Primary data was collected in the form of case studies from the students, teachers and parents based on convenient sampling method. Secondary data was collected from newspapers and research articles on the topic.*

Keywords: Digital learning, COVID-19 lockdown, education, online learning

INTRODUCTION

Digital learning is something new for most of Indians. There was a significant rise in online teaching and learning because of pandemic shutting more than 1 billion students losing their access to offline class. COVID-19 was one of the largest pandemics, which led to the interruption in economic and major issues on children's education. It was a big leap for the students, parents as well as teachers because Indian education system is still evolving with respect to digital learning. Many of the teachers still use chalk-and-board method; few do their classes using PowerPoint presentation and online classes were something new to most of the teachers [1]. In India, parents were against giving mobile phones to their children and when government and education institutions announced that classes must be conducted online, it came as shocking and confusing news to many. An attempt has been made in this paper to

understand the challenges faced by the teachers, students as well as parents at the time of introduction of digital learning, that is online classes, in India. The main mode of online class is via mobile phones in India and there are more than 100 billion mobile users in India [2, 3].

METHODOLOGY

A case study method was used, which involved 10 parents, 10 students and 10 teachers who had direct and indirect experience of online class as per the convenience of the researcher. Unstructured interview was used to learn their opinion on online classes. Results are shown in Table 1 [4].

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Table 1. Students' opinion on online class in Kodagu district.

Objective	To know the students' opinion on online class in Kodagu district.
Study design	Instrumental case studies
Data collection	Unstructured interviews were conducted with the students.
Key findings	01 It was difficult to sit for an hour in the beginning when online classes were introduced. Later when it was reduced to 20 minutes it was manageable.
	02 Network issues were the major concern since most of the students are from remote areas with poor network.
	03 Not able to do online test and assignments since many of the mobile phones did not have needed facilities in them.
	04 More mobile viewing resulted in health issues related to eyes and headache.
	05 Not able to clear doubts like offline class due to technical issues with the mobile app.
	06 It was convenient to attend online class at home in a comfortable environment.
	07 Information could be accessed through internet as per the guidance of teachers.
	08 Most of the time parents was forcing to do chores because of which unable to concentrate on class

Data was collected on the basis of students' experience on online class at the time of COVID-19 pandemic. To collect honest opinion from the students, unstructured interviews were conducted. All 10 students were studying post-graduation and many also shared an opinion that since they heard about students being promoted without examination, they did not give much importance towards online classes. They also shared that many of them/their friends used to keep audio in mute and turn off the video and used to sleep while online class was in progress. Importantly, students were not having any socialization among their friends which affected their mental status a lot [5, 6].

The researcher contacted the parents of the students with whom the data was collected in the beginning. Since students were from remote areas, collecting data over phone was more convenient (Table 2). Most of parents belonged to middle class background and did not have much digital education; they agreed they couldn't understand the importance of online classes. They also said the student/child used to sit in front of mobile all the time by giving an excuse of attending online class. Many also felt difficulty because at the time of lockdown it was not an easy task to go outside. If their son/daughter had health issues like headache, migraine of eye pain for which visiting the doctor was a difficult task. Parents were made to pay full fees even though there were no physical classes [7].

Table 2. Parents opinion on online class in Kodagu district.

Objective	To know the parents' opinion on online class in Kodagu district.
Data collection	Unstructured interviews were conducted with the parents of the students over telephone
Key findings	01. It was expensive, which included buying mobile phone as well as data packs
	02 Many of the parents had to drop students to the places where network was available
	03 Many complained that usage of mobile was more and when asked the usual answer was "for online class"
	04 Many students were introduced to online games like PUBG and others
	05 Students did not involve in house chores by stating the reason that they had to attend online class
	06 Parents were able to witness the academic activities of their son/daughter
	07 Parents felt offline classes are better than online class since their son/daughter will be under the supervision of the teacher.
	08 Parents also felt since their son/daughter was at home, education institutions asking for fees was not fair.

Teachers involved in the data collection underwent an unstructured interview (Table 3). The major challenge with the teacher was to handle both personal and professional life. Time management was difficult. They were allowed to go to town only twice in a week only for half a day and in this situation they had to walk a lot since for few days vehicles were not allowed and in addition, they were also instructed to take classes without fail. This was a real burden and for those who did not have laptops and depended on the printed source from library of the educational institution. Since many of them were newly introduced to online teaching, it posed difficulties. Communication gap between the students and teacher was a real challenge and it was very difficult to make students respond to the questions asked. Teachers also felt that there was lack of resources/study material availability over internet for few subjects and teaching practical topics like accountancy and statistics was a highly stressful task [8].

Table 3. Opinion of teacher on online class in Kodagu district.

Objective	To know the opinion of teacher on online class in Kodagu district.
Data collection	Unstructured interviews were conducted with the teacher of the students over telephone
Key findings	01. This was something new and felt difficult in the beginning to understand in the beginning and make student also understand how to set up online class.
	02. Mobile network was major issue and also technical issues
	03. Many teachers had their own son/daughters at home so preparing them for online class, doing chores and also conducting class was much more difficult than usual.
	04. Taking class for hours also resulted in migraine and eye-related issues to many.
	05. Making all the students to attend class by calling each one of them was a challenging task.
	06. Informing college management with supported document was troublesome
	07. Some education institution offered half salary for the teaching staff, which was more shocking.
	08. Access to more education material was achieved.

CONCLUSION

Online classes can never be replaced by in-person teaching. We can't say if the online classes were a successful idea or a failure but it is a fact that students had a grip over education because of online classes. Many students also had issues with broadband, data plan and other technical issues since India is still developing in digital platform and internet access is still an issue. By the introduction of mobile data packs for students it is possible to lessen the burden on parents. At the same time teachers also can use puzzles, quizzes and few other means to maintain students' concentration in the class. It is also very important that students should be given proper break in order to prevent any health-related problems. Digital learning may be new to many of us but online education by companies like BYJU's or UnAcademy and many other ventures are quite successful and this is changing many students' view on gathering knowledge. So by introducing simultaneous online and offline classes in non-pandemic times can keep us in touch with usage of digital platforms and we can also face any upcoming challenges.

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