



Blended education during Covid-19 for Gen-Z: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

The global epidemic called COVID-19 has affected every aspect of human life. This epidemic has not only affected developing countries but also largely disrupted economy of developed countries. Undoubtedly, they will have to strive vigorously to revive their economy. While Corona virus has destroyed the lives of millions of people, it has also greatly affected the social, political, cultural and educational aspects of humans. As the outbreak of the epidemic escalated, schools, colleges and universities had to be closed and they had to do teaching and learning online. However, teachers and students were not prepared for this. But the epidemic has not only taught everyone to use computer, smart phone and the Internet, but has also forced educators and teachers to think that online education can also be a strong alternative for teaching and learning. Most of the students are from generation Z who have grown up in globalised world, got rays of hope from online classes. Indeed, it is time to redefine and restructure our education system for generation Z students. This research paper is a discussion of these various issues.

Keywords: Education, online, Covid, Corona, student, blended

Introduction:

The Union Minister of Education Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said that Central Universities, Central Grants Commission, Autonomous Universities, Deemed Universities, Private Universities, Government and Private-Government Schools, degree colleges also tried their best to encourage online education during the Lockdown period in India (Jena, 2020; Mishra, Gupta, & Shree, 2020; Nachimuthu, et.al 2020). This was done because it was said to be a mandatory condition to follow the Social Distancing to prevent the covid-19 pandemic. The fact is that the teachers and students of the country were not quite ready to read through online medium, but this method made us all



aware of the benefits of online medium. Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi himself said in a message issued to the nation that the Corona epidemic has given a huge lesson to all of us and from this crisis time we not only need to learn but also need to turn challenge into opportunity (Mukherji, 2020; Harriss, 2020). His statement clearly indicates that after the pandemic there is bound to be a major change in our educational system and teaching method.

After the speedy spread of COVID-19 risk-control decisions of different countries locked millions of people temporarily in their homes. Countries, like USA, Brazil, Italy, South Korea, China, India and Iran were badly impacted due to unexpected situation (Chowell & Mizumoto, 2020; Lancet, 2020; Remuzzi & Remuzzi, 2020). This certainly created major inconvenience to every aspect of life, but it provided also new opportunities and examples of educational innovation. Before discussing on online teaching pedagogy, It is essential to discuss about ancient education system of India.

Aim and objective

- To study the disadvantages and benefits of blended education for Gen-Z.
- To analyze technical changes in blended education during COVID for Gen-Z.

Research Methodology

Analytical method has been used for this study. In this method, the facts obtained from secondary sources have been analyzed and interpreted during Covid 19 peak situation.

Analysis and interpretation

As we know that India had very glorious and strong education system in ancient India (Kosambi, 1965). Students used to study in Gurukuls. Education and knowledge were imparted to students in Gurukul, a residential schooling area. Gurukuls were Gyan Mandir (Knowledge temples) where parents sent their children to receive education and returned only after the completion of their education. There was the tradition of Guru (teacher) and Shishya (student). Teacher imparted education to students (Kashalkar-Karve, 2013). These Gurukuls taught not only politics, economy, history, and geography but taught moral values & ethics, love, humanity, basic manners,



disciplines and principles of life also. People used to learn here the theoretical and practical knowledge of subject and life as well. After that there were developed major universities like Takshshila and Nalanda where higher education based on moral values and ethics was imparted. (Joshi & Gupta, 2017; Frederick,2016)

Today things have changed. During medieval period many foreign invaders destroyed the old traditions and education system (Ahmed, 2011). Later, Britishers ruled over Indian for 200 years. After 73 years of independence, India could not formulate strong and unprecedented national education policy. Our education policy is still filled with several loopholes (Tilak, 2016). After privatization of education system, educational institutes are costing the Indian students huge amounts of fee. Another big loophole in our education system is the traditional method of teaching. Indian education system is not compatible with the present global scenario. The main focus of education in India remains on textbooks. Students are asked to cram answers and copy in sheets during written examinations. Due to lack of practical knowledge graduate students do not have knowledge of real world (Agarwal, 2006).

Other loopholes in our current education system are that students have to run behind marks. They are compelled to study such concepts that have become obsolete. The adopted approach of teachers towards the particular topic or subject is not practical oriented. Due to this approach of teaching and learning, students become failure in real world. In fact, students start to follow the concept of securing the highest grade is the utmost important motto of their education (Agarwal, 2006).

In addition to this, course curriculums of schools and colleges have been designed in such way that values, ethics, principles and morals are not given priority in academics, they have secondary importance (Shrivastava, 2017; Kaur, 2015). Even in some schools, colleges and universities these aspects of education are not addressed. Students learn moral values and basic ethics from their parents at homes. Secondly, our education system is not compatible and fulfilling the expectations of generation Z students. It is a right time to reflect on how this disruptive crisis can help these students.

COVID 19 pandemic has given major threat to incompatible education system (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Challenges have created many opportunities too. So many educational institutions have now started adopting ways to improve the learning and teaching process of students by changing the old pedagogy and integrating various student-friendly learning methods



(Ali,2020). They have started to assign on-field projects, experiments, open classroom discussions, participation in events, and other personality developing co-curricular activities. Activities like debates, seminars, workshops, etc. develop the personality of students. Apart from this, they have to adopt online learning and teaching. It is fact that outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic made worldwide change in the education system. Now all the Educational institutes and students have become completely dependent on technology (Shenoy, Mahendra & Vijay,2020).

Although, online teaching is not newest form of teaching pedagogy, it began in distance education after the spread of the internet in 1990s (Bates & Bates, 2005). Various educational institutes have been utilizing E-Learning Management System (LMS)for administering online virtual classrooms (Chung, Pasquini, & Koh,2013). LMS is basically a software application for teaching, learning, tracing and maintaining the resources (Rapuano & Zoino, 2006). Western Behavioral Sciences Institute in La Jolla, California began to deliver online content for the very first time in 1982.The School opted computer conferencing mode to deliver a distance education program to business executives. On the same way online education in India has come a long way with the advent of new technology (Sarkar, 2012).

It is true that due to outbreak of Corona virus pandemic,there was quick closure of universities, schools and colleges around the world (Sahu,2020).There was hope that public health officials' advice of social distancing would help to flatten the infection curve and reduce spread of the disease. Educational institutes, organizations and faculty members were not prepared to change the modus operandi of delivering lectures. They were very familiar and comfortable on traditional way-face to face classroom teaching. But apart from other sectors COVID 19 led to drastic changes in the education sector also. There was common trend in education systems around the world. It has to respond to the pandemic with emergency e-Learning protocols, marking the rapid transition of face-to-face classes to online learning systems (Murphy, 2020).

Due to emergence of COVID 19 as global phenomenon, we should not hesitate to acknowledge some bitter facts that at this point of time, educational sector is under acute crisis. It may cause closure or merger of some proportion of private colleges and universities. I would like to share here that only those colleges and universities will survive who will be capable enough or will be ready to turn this challenge into opportunityafter the pandemic. There will be vast decline in revenue of colleges and universities and the cost of maintenance will increase. Educational institutes will have to prioritize their people as budgets are reduced. We have already learned a



lesson from the recession of year 2008 that universities had to layoffs to balance university budgets (Kim, 2020). There are positive and negative aspects of online education.

Advantages

First, I would like to describe its advantages. Major advantage of this education is that one can learn from anywhere, at any time. As we know that online education only requires a desktop, tablet laptop or a smart phone enabled with an internet connection. During the lockdown period due to COVID 19 pandemic, most of the universities, colleges and schools delivered online lectures, conducted online viva and even online written exams also. In fact, this flexibility provides opportunities to working professionals to pursue new courses without giving up their jobs. They are able to learn in their free time. Study material of complete course is readily available to students (Dumford, & Miller, 2018).

Online education saves time and is much more cost effective. On the other hand doing a regular on-campus degree is more expensive. It is very helpful for those students who cannot afford a regular classes or degree to accomplish their dream without spending a fortune on college education.

There is major advantage of online classes that everyone can learn at his or her own place while there is a serious disadvantage of traditional face to face classroom education where everyone taught together, many students find it difficult to follow the lessons. Online teaching solves this problem. The course material is provided beforehand in online education, students learn it by taking their own time. They can ask and discuss their doubts by live chats or other forums as well. There is one very positive news that Online degrees recognized and accepted by many companies and employers in India as long as it is approved by Distance Education Council (DEC) of India. Many of companies are encouraging their employees for getting online degrees, diploma or certificates as well (O'Donoghue, Singh, & Green, 2004; Arkorful, & Abaidoo, 2015).

Disadvantages:

Undoubtedly, there are many advantages of online education but it has many disadvantages also (O'Donoghue, Singh, & Green, 2004; Arkorful, & Abaidoo, 2015). There are Chances of distraction at different levels. Courses like mass communication, engineering, music, dancing, acting, art, visual arts, fashion designing etc. require studios, labs and workshops for practical



training. Courses like MBA need professional networking, overseas experience etc. but it is missing in online education. Apart from this students distract from studies as there are no face-to-face classes and classmates to remind you about assignments. Students will require self motivation to complete their courses.

As we are already aware of fraudulent online courses offered by many websites without the accreditation of any educational authority or university or in the name of fake authorities. Such courses never ever help anyone to get any job. So everyone must be aware of such fraudulent courses and it has become very challenging to choose an accredited online program before investing money on it. One thing more, digital tools are complements for teachers and students. They can never be substitutes of online classes. There generates the real intimacy and immediacy during face-to-face learning.

There is one more disadvantage that a large number of underprivileged or backward family students who are living in remote areas don't have access to the internet. Even many of our teachers and students are not equipped to configure the online class model to teach and learn. There are various social and economic disparities among the people. The structural inequalities are compounded in Indian society. Gap between the haves and the have nots will grow considerably due to Corona virus infection. Children of poor families will have limited opportunities to learn during the pandemic than rich people and their lives will be significantly more disrupted by the pandemic (O'Donoghue, Singh, & Green, 2004; Arkorful, & Abaidoo, 2015).

There is a big challenge of digital divide worldwide (Norris, 2001; Molina, 2003). It is fact that only around 60 percent of the world population is online while in India only 50 percent Indians are internet users (Davey, & Davey, 2014). According to the 2011 census of India, 68.84 percent people live in villages. The connectivity of internet is very poor in rural areas of India. For online classes, every student requires a smart phone or tablet or desktop or laptop. Even all Indians do not have smart phones (Kumar, 2011). This is why it is also major barrier in delivering online classes in India. But on the other side we cannot deny the fact that the notion of a teacher as the knowledge-holder who imparts knowledge to students is no longer fit for Gen Z students. Today students are able to gain knowledge, and even learn a technical skill, through a few clicks on their smart phones, tablets and computers, we will require to redefine the role of the teacher in the classroom.

**Conclusion:**

It is not easy to predict what the educational panorama will look like after COVID-19 pandemic passes. Indeed, there are open discussions & debates being organized at many universities, colleges, institutions & other platforms. Indeed, very few colleges and universities were doing something with online education before COVID-19 pandemic. There was wide variation, however, in the degree to which online education was central to an institution's strategic planning. The scenario will change after COVID-19. In the future, every educationist and institution will understand the importance of online education. They will consider that it is big potential source for new revenues. There will be recognition of online education and it will be core & key feature of every school's plan for institutional resilience and academic continuity.

This post-pandemic understanding will make a lot of changes in the strategy of planning, managing and funding online education. Individual schools within a university will be able to go their own way with online education. Online course content and course development which was decentralized will be centralized at management level and management of online learning will be integrated into existing academic leadership structures and processes.

Academicians and governance will have to take speedy steps to develop the course content and protocol of online delivery. Since there will be dramatic increase in blended education of online and offline classes, they will have to develop and design modules, pedagogy and paradigm of the education accordingly. And all this should be done keeping in mind the requirements of Gen Z students. Indeed, we have shifted our traditional face to face classes into online teaching due to pandemic but this is not suitable for blended education. We need to rethink and worry about it that the rapid shift to remote learning may hamper the reputation of online education. It does not mean that there will be end of face to face classes. Our teachers, professors and students will return to their physical classrooms after pandemic but this pandemic crisis has given a lesson to whole fraternity of education to prepare themselves for future blended education of Gen Z students.

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