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A Research Study on Online Studies: A Mirage or an Oasis for Indian Educational Development

Pyar Singh

Assistant Prof. Shimla University, H.P, India

A B S T R A C T

We live in a digital world where communication influences our thought process. Be it a teacher, a leader, a politician or a movie director, a good communicator always dispels ignorance. The greatest challenge however is reaching out to the not so easily reachable, who live in remote areas, to build a resounding community which can thrive and continually make progress (does not matter how small it is), even during challenging situations of COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Online classes, digital world, Indian education, COVID-19 Pandemic, communication influence, education reach to urban and rural areas, access to digital communication and techniques

1 INTRODUCTION

In densely populated urban cities, if some online classes appear in smart phones or laptop of the students shows some visuals of classes, notes, the message reaches the intended students because most of them are literate and well connected. On the other hand, online classes do not reach the remote and rural areas in a proper manner.[1] Percolation of online classes takes longer time in rural areas due to poor connectivity and lack of networking. Internet signal is another barrier while communicating. The widely accepted languages like English and Hindi are not spoken by majority of the rural population and small children and their parents are not able to handle computer based online/digital platform to provide their kids as parents of small children cannot support their small children, as the literacy rate is also remarkably low in rural India. Although the big students in rural areas are able to handle and attend online classes but there is also lack of convenient of smart phones which cannot be provided by poor parents to each household children separately to attend separate online classes. In this crisis of pandemic time where people have gone jobless and facing economic problem cannot afford smart phones and bear the cost of recharge of smart phones every month. These challenges necessitate a targeted approach. Although offline classes are the most important medium of teaching-learning communication to reach out to the students of each standard, online class's popularity is lower than that of offline

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[1] *However online learning efforts are being done in India but local authorities are finding it tough to integrate high speed internet facilities and teaching lobby is also not trained in online learning. Moreover, masses or students in rural areas have to also deal with intermittent power supply and Internet and older electronic devices of the poor, which are often a hindrance to seamless access to online classes.*

classes and face to face interaction between teacher and students to gain knowledge better.[2] Having complicated for kids, illiterates, rural masses and masses living in remote areas, as online classes are not effective through online way and smart phones is not viewed as user friendly and appealing to the rural children mostly and rural parents of the children. Online classes are one failure attempt to reach the rural children. Reaching out through grassroots advocacy to inform, interact, create awareness, lesson delivery, assignments, exercise, check home work, internship, practical affairs, feedback, successful conducting examinations and access to results is very essential for the success of the governments, administration, management, educational institutions, welfare and development schemes. But under pandemic time or emergency time, online classes are not important for educational development; both urban and rural students as well as population cannot also reap the rewards equally as there is a big digital divide, media literacy and computer literacy in India and developing/poor countries in comparison to developed countries of the world even our teaching fraternity mostly at school level, college level and university level are not trained in this genre of online process. At school level, it is more worsen where school-teachers are not so perfect to conduct online classes neither they are media literate, computer literate and digital literate. This thing shows the failure of education sector at school and college level and government universities as many more faculties are tenuous in digital literacy. Most of government teachers have no basic knowledge of computer and digital media is not under their command of knowledge. It shows the genuflecting of Indian teachers before modern information technology and digital techniques. Most of government teachers procrastinated behaviour to take online classes by saying internet signal obstruction and most of them use the formula of Cut, Copy and Paste from Google or send the teaching topics of others to send the targeted students, they are not even able to interact with the students through Zoom App or Google Meet App facilities in the smart phones, and some are those who send study material by photo copying from help books and showed their technophile to teach students and performing their duties with honesty. For government teachers, corona curfew and the words lockdown has become a cash cow and a boon to muster big amount of salary each months without regardless of the students and without their travail at their homes. These government school administration could not formulate their media cell to teach the students very well neither they sought for maintain their techno based mini office at their office to conduct online classes cogently and reachable to each student. The slogan 'Har Ghar Pathshala'[3] produced as a recourse to the teachers not for working themselves and they leave their onus on this governmental education platform even they do nothing from their sides and send the ready-made link to the students and sometimes send YouTube-link to the students, how a normal student or student from rural back ground be able to understand the lessons on various courses without the interaction of the teacher. This failure indicts the failure of Indian education system. At rural level, it is in dire straits as teachers in government schools are not appointed on the basis of their practical knowledge and professional prowess, like in Himachal Pradesh and in other States of India, teachers come through ready-made policy of the governments as from PTA Policy, Para teachers, Vidya Upasak, Shiksha Mitr, volunteer teachers and some teachers who are selected through public service commission or staff selection commission are also not so intelligent as their selection is done on the basis of attaining more bookish marks in the commission to be in marks attaining merit not on the basis of professional skills and practical skills to make more vote banks.

2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the field of education, the online classes have been criticized in the case of India as online classes are not so impactful to teaching-learning because Indian education system is not advanced trained neither the reach of online classes to the common students mostly rural students where public wi-Fi is not available neither Internet signal is properly. The teachers at school level and college level in rural areas are still away from the online technique and moreover students and parents are also not affordable to this digital world and some are so poor that they cannot afford to buying smart mobile phones or laptops. The present online classes or virtual classes tools being provided by the government are not easy neither they are online delivery tools as the other online tools for conducting public services or like the digital tools of communication in the developed nations. But it is difficult to reach the right results of online classes as the Central Government of India and State Governments of India could not conduct students' board examination or end term examination on online mode neither these boards have a separate online examination agencies to conduct exam successfully nor the teachers are literate in digital techniques as teachers' requited are done on the basis of highest marks obtained in commission not on the basis of their skillness in required areas, while on the other hand teachers are requited without their test and skillness mostly in rural areas and remote or tribal areas. The present research study found this problem even in the age of information technology and digital revolution for which all braggarts its access cogently to all people but one section which hails from rural background is behind the leg.

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[2] The chief leverage of the offline classes is that learners are needed to travel to the school, colleges, universities, a lecture hall or class room, etc. and learning is also understandable perfectly when learners interact face to face with their teachers and clear their every doubt on the study topic. By online learning, on the other hand, the teaching –learning can be handled from almost anywhere in the world as participants need to log into the internet from their homes, work place or even their local market or village. But it needs proper training and skills from both sides of communicators and quality communication infrastructure.

[3] The main motive of 'Har Ghar Pathshala' campaign is to engage students (Primary/Upper Primary Higher Secondary and Senior Secondary) in learning activities during COVID-19 in Himachal Pradesh. In this situation, Himachal Pradesh Government launched an e-learning programme to ensure continuity of the students learning from home. The programme has been launched as an online mode of education. This is a WhatsApp based initiative where the HP State Project Office Samagra Shiksha disseminates the e-content to the children through BRCCs (Block Resource Centre Co.) and further by teachers. Students go through the e-contents-videos and solve the worksheets in their notebooks and send back the photograph of the solved worksheet to their teachers. Teachers in turn provide feedback to the students.

3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The basic objective of this study is to examine the relevance of Online Classes in the context of Indian education system in the social media age and digital media.

- Examine the relevance and capacity of the Online Classes in the context of present Indian education system in the age of ICT, which is claimed general by Indian governments with the slogan of Digital India.
- Next, examine the education standard to afford such knowledge and digital techniques among Indian education industry and teaching lobby and students of all levels.
- Analyze the arguments against Online Classes being taken by teachers and not taken by teachers and parent-students' review on online classes.
- Examine the Indian Education management to convenience the students with online training and public internet access equally to rural and urban people and students as well.

4 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Online classes or digital knowledge is not developed in India. The claims of number one in education made by the Indian States like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh produced tenuous in COVID pandemic and the most of government teachers' lobby is badgering Indian education system as they have failed themselves in the ordeal of imparting education to the students both in offline and online education mode. Indian education system began to follow online or virtual classes when HRD (Human Resource Development) Ministry and UGC (University Grants Commission) instructed school, colleges and universities to go through online education to the students living at home due to corona pandemic and then lockdown situation imposed by the government to save from pandemic, and also provided virtual tools/platforms of online education but Indian education system was not concoct to online education neither had experience of online classes nor the students were ever acquainted with online education. This depicts that Indian education system is still leading traditional way of education while in the same time we moot of new education policy, where new education policy of the government stands with the failure of Indian education system. This decision of the Government led to the genesis of several advocacies regarding online classes and so on which essentially catalyzed the discussion regarding online classes in India.

Consequently, a few educational institutions mostly private institutions gave assent and permission to conduct online classes. However, private educational institutions are succeeding in taking online classes to some extent but governmental educational institutions could not succeed in taking online classes as teaching staff is not fit for taking virtual classes neither they showed their upmost care of career of the students, while government paid full payment to the staff. In comparison this event, the management of private educational institutions reduced the salary amount of their faculty members, while students paid full fee of their semesters study. This activity or decision from the side of private institutions was not fair and square as their travails on online classes, making notes or deliver lectures to the students put into no remuneration or half salary. It means the modern education system of India is still kaput and outdated and need to overhaul all including governmental and private institutions if India wants real development of India. Later on Central Government and State Governments implemented reformed guidelines for online classes and Corona protocol.

Virtual classes in basic sense are a new medium of mass communication and most of people in India and teaching lobby are not advanced educated in these phenomena. That is why it does not provide fast and inexpensive means to educate students through online mode. The online classes are not able to study delivery and other academic information that might be essential to each student belong to particular region, information such as online classes link, exam date sheet, urgent educational documents and many more. In COVID period, virtual classes has been introduced in hopes of continuing the study of the students and conducting successful classes and examinations to promote them to the next level of their study but governmental educational institutions could not succeed in this aspects and government promoted the students without evaluate their performance in online study.

On the other hand, online classes do not focus on the overall educational benefits because they are mostly run by teachers and teachers are not trained in online pursuits as trained in advanced nations, and internet signal is also poor mostly in rural areas. The public wi-Fi connection facilities on behalf of government are able in urban areas but it is not so sound but rural areas are being ignored and study of the rural students and rural masses also ignored, while India needs to connect rural areas with wi-Fi facilities.[4]

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced students and teachers to switch to e-learning. Most universities and institutes come up with their own-e-learning portals during lockdown. However, several initiatives of MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) can help students benefit from online learning. SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) Online Courses offer access to teaching-learning resources. Students or learners who have already registered on platform in January, 2020 semester can continue their learning but teaching lobby is far from it. E-PG Pathashala platform hosts high quality and interactive e-learning content. SWAYAMPRABHA platform is a group of 32 DTH (Direct to Home) channels providing educational curriculum-based course content. The channels focus on diverse disciplines such as arts, commerce, science, performing arts, social sciences, and engineering, technology, law, medicine, and humanities subjects. The channels are free to air and can be accessed through the cable operators and content and lectures are available as archived videos on this platform but most of cable operators do not switch to show these facilities properly. The Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC) is one of the inter-university centers set up by University Grants Commission of India, and other

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[4] *Public Wi-Fi can be experienced in popular public places like airports, coffee shops, malls, restaurants, bus stands, railway stations and hotels and it allows the public to access the internet for free. These 'Hotspots' are so widespread and common that public frequently connects to them through their smart mobile phones without thinking. But this free facility is not available in rural areas of India where seventy percent people including students of all standards live and study.*

National Digital Library and Shodhganga. The YouTube channel offers free and unlimited lectures to students. Here is also the same fault as teachers make formalities by supplying link of the platform over this, while they should study on them and make own lectures as per the parlance of the students.

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

(a) Research Design:
For present research study design, online classes of all standards of the students of district Mandi of Himachal Pradesh to reveal India's education status in online classes and media report on online classes and responding of students and their parents on online classes have been inducted and data collected. This is comparative study over rural students and urban students of all standards.

(b) Population and Sample:
For population and sampling, four villages and four towns with population of fifty students from rural areas and fifty students of all standards from urban areas of district Mandi of Himachal Pradesh have been roped in the present research study.

(c) Tools and Techniques:
News coverage by different media channels of print media and electronic media and new media/social media channels regarding the problem being faced by the students on online classes due to COVID-19 pandemic and then lockdown imposed and then online study from home. Different data of the media coverage in this regard collected and interviewed the hundred students from rural and urban areas of all standards.

(d) Primary Research and Secondary Research Data:
For Primary Research data collection regarding the present research, the interview method has been conducted to prove the present status of Indian education system on Online Classes including digital India claims generally made by the governments as well, in which both rural and urban students have been interviewed and the parents of the small children students. For Secondary Research data five local newspapers, two TV channels, one radios, five national newspapers, two TV channels, one radios, and five primary schools, five higher secondary school, five colleges and teachers involved there in online study to their students interviewed in person and telephonic interviewed and reviewed their online study material and online classes over smart mobile phone zoom App, Google Meet App and the Whats-App groups of the students.

(e) Analysis of Data:
After collecting data, the comparative analysis has been inducted to prove the leverage of online classes and access to online classes perfectly to the students and teachers' skillness, prowess in conducting online classes, facilitation of the governments towards online classes and other tools of online classes as well. Next, prove the claims of Indian government on successful digital India even in the age of social media and digital media. So in the present research study, ninety percent students are not satisfied with the present method of online classes and teachers are also not perfect in using information technology and use of digital techniques to provide the students the feeling of offline classes as most of teachers are not skilled in this arena neither they have a special training and tools of online classes to conduct classes successfully. The study found that poor parents cannot afford to smart communication tools and smart mobile phones and laptop, etc. to their children. The study also found that most of the educational institutions could not take even online exams that is why even board classes exams had to ignored and promoted the students in the next level neither the institutions have a right method of evaluate the performance of the students in the classes to pass or fail them.

(f) Testing of Variables
For testing and analysis the research collected data, independent variables and dependent variables have been tested which prove the failure of the online classes even in the age of information technology. Through variables' study proved that this present online classes' pedagogy in the context of Indian education system is not result-oriented on the part of students and teachers as well. So in this context, independent variables, dependent variables and external variables also influence the positive results of the online classes.

(g) Validity
The present research study depicts that in the age of social media and digital media, Indian education system is accustomed to traditional way of teaching as most of the teachers and educational institutions are not skilled in digital pedagogy and people or parents of the students are not enough affluent to provide the advanced tools of communication to their children and Internet signal is far away from the hands of most of rural people in India.

(h) Reliability
After testing the research data and re-tested data, it is found that the positive effects of the digital classes are still far away from the access of the students and teachers are also not perfect in this phenomenon of digital or online classes.

6 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The research study has adopted the qualitative research approach is exploring the following objectives of online classes, and examining the online tools and their tenets or teachers and educational institutions and governments as well that online classes are not fruitful due to poor efforts and negligence of the teachers. The research study found that Indian education system is facing the problem of digital communication and people are also still not updated after a long time of the advent of information technology and digital revolution in India and across the world. One section of the teachers is living in the age of traditional age of education and younger teachers also tried to adopt the new information technology and digital techniques but they are also failure in this technology in some way as their professional skills is needed to boost up to mark for the sake of both education and students and students are helpless.

7 CONCLUSION

Deriving from the afore-discussed, the research study concludes that Online Classes in the context of Indian education system still hold no significance even in the digital age or information technology as a large section of education industry is not fully prepared to adopt this technology in contrast to advanced countries of the world; it needs more training and communication infrastructure and digital literacy and reduce digital divide so that teaching-learning can be accessible to all in a easy way and understandable.

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