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A Critical Perspective on Online Classes during Covid-19 Pandemic

• Sunil Kumar & Ranbir Singh & Dr. Sukhbir Singh

Abstract - Every pandemic poses a threat to humanity and also poses various challenges to different professions. The teaching of students has been greatly affected by covid-19 pandemic. The most affected are from lowest strata of the society who do not have access to the best of Technology. Now to continue the study of students have become a challenge for the teaching fraternity and society as a whole. The teachers themselves have to hone their technological skills to impart education through virtual mode. Covid-19 is forcing us to learn many new things for the first time in our life. The society presently is in influx state it is going through various changes. Many of these changes may be irreversible.

Key Words: Online classes, teaching learning material, audio-visual aid, covid-19

The technology always comes to our help in wrestling from natural disasters and pandemic covid-19. As it is said necessity is the mother of invention. The covid-19 challenge has brainstormed the innovative minds and our society is benefited by various innovations especially in the field of Health Sciences. The teaching profession also has to undergo various changes to cope up with the challenge of containing education during 19 pandemic. Many of the traditional ways of teaching have to be discontinued and many new ways of transacting learning have to be adopted so that the damage done by covid-19 pandemic is minimized on the education of students. The need today is to understand not only the technological aspect of virtual teaching but also social and behavioural aspect. There is need to analyze online classes not only from technological aspect but also from social and behavioural aspect. Initially the online classes were considered as a medium of stop gap arrangement to continue the study of students. Now the online classes have been accepted as a new normal to continue the study of students due to the prolonged effect of covid-19.

Many educationists are of the view that online classes cannot replace the need for face to face teaching as the teacher not only transacts the curriculum but also helps students shape their personality. This need of human touch cannot be fully replaced even by artificial intelligence. There is no doubt the technological intervention has come to our rescue in continuing education of students. The online classes certainly have many advantages over normal blackboard classroom setup. The technology such as smart classroom can help us improve the teaching learning process but total replacement of teachers with technology seems to be a far distant dream. First advantage of online classes is time saving. The teacher usually prepares in advance the teaching material in form of Power Point Presentation, documents, audios, videos etc. This saves the time and efforts of teacher who used to write the same thing on blackboard. The clarity of screen is better than black board. The same teaching learning material can be used several times without any extra effort. The teaching learning material can further be enriched with addition and edition whenever required.

There are various applications which have been developed for smart phones and personal computer for conducting online classes such as Google Meet, Zoom App, WebEx etc. The disturbance from noise of students is less as the students have to keep their microphone off during online class. The students usually attend online classes alone at home so they are not affected by the visual disturbance of other students which happens in normal classroom. There are many applications to record the online classes. These students have the advantage to listen these recorded lectures in future to revise or further clarify the topics. Hence this can enhance the learning level of students. The students are more interested in online classes since it is a novel mode of transacting learning.

The atmosphere of online classes is more formal than that of normal classes. This has led to the

- Assistant Professor in English RGGC Saha (Ambala)
&
- Assistant Professor in English RGGC Saha (Ambala)
&
- Assistant Professor in Sanskrit RGGC Saha (Ambala)

standardization of the teaching learning material as well as style of presentation. The teachers meticulously prepare teaching learning aids. They take help of web resources to prepare the best teaching learning material to suit the learning level of the students. The online classes have certain disadvantages apart from many advantages. The first broad category of disadvantages is related to technological aspect. The students residing in rural areas face the problem of internet connectivity which results into the lower quality of transaction of online classes. Many a times the students have to reconnect to the online classes as they are logged off due to fluctuation in internet data. Another big issue is availability of smart phones. Many students do not have smart phones with them. Other students do not have smart phones singly available to them. As they have to skip some of online classes at their home due to others siblings attending online classes at the same time. The students have to do many household chores due to which they are not punctual in online classes. When the students are in educational institute they are exclusively available for teaching learning process. The attention towards household work disturbs the flow of teaching learning process at home. A lot of students do not have adequate space at home to give them the opportunity of having separate room to attend online classes. They are disturbance by other members at home in this shared space. The Other disadvantage is that the screen of mobile is very small compared to blackboard. The students have advantages to look at broad picture in conventional classroom while learning a topic as compared to small bits on mobile screen. Face to face teaching has advantage of instant feedback. Teacher can get immediate feedback by just looking at the faces of students whether they have learnt the topic well or some other clarification is required. Most of the students in rural background hesitate to ask their doubts in online classes. Many students' families face even survival issues because their parents have been rendered jobless due to covid-19 pandemic.

Online classes have modified the role of teacher to a great extent from just transacting curriculum to facilitating learning. The teacher has to strive now to develop self study skills in the students. Now the teacher acts as guide for his students to make student learn how to utilize web resources and other self learning materials to enhance their learning. This will help students in long way in their self development. Online classes have deprived teachers from having face to face communication with students. Hence there is little or no socialization among the students. The online classes have lack of bond between teacher and student. The attention of students is also divided as they find themselves busy in other activities while attending online classes.

There are certain advantages of YouTube videos or audio-visual contents available on internet as compared to online classes. Students can watch or listen YouTube videos and audio-visual contents at their own suitable time. The connectivity issues haunt less when watching YouTube videos. YouTube videos are prepared and edited carefully so these are more interesting compared to online classes. The advantage of online classes over YouTube videos is that the students who are attending the class can clarify their doubts then and there. They need not carry forward them for clarification at later point of time. It gives a platform to teachers and students to discuss a topic in real time. The students can get the best of ideas of teacher as well as of their classmates. Usually online classes are scheduled as per time table hence these inculcate regularity among the students. While watching YouTube videos they are at liberty to watch the lectures at any point of time. But in online classes the students cannot keep their teaching learning task pending. The quality of audio and video comes down when there are connectivity issues. While the quality of audio and video is consistent in YouTube videos. These YouTube videos may be used to clarify doubts of the topics which students find difficult. As they can watch these videos as many times as they require. The major disadvantage of YouTube videos is quality of content. Any person can make and share videos even though he or she is competent or not. You Tube is filled with plenty of educational videos. Students have confusion in choosing the appropriate teaching learning material according to their learning needs. There is such confusion of choice in online classes.

Conventional classroom teaching provides opportunity to the students to observe and imitate the teacher while acquiring language skills. They can clearly focus on teacher's facial expression and body language. In online classes the teachers endeavour to improve their learning methods to hone language skills of their students. Teachers mostly transact in proper pronunciation which help the students improve their own pronunciation. The students can record online lectures and can develop their listening skills by listening them multiple times. The foundation of listening skills then forms a base for honing the speaking

skills. The teachers make power point presentations and notes in word document or PDF format according to learning level of students. The students can develop their reading skills with learning support material. This also helps in standardizing the grammar patterns as well as providing the appropriate format of compositions such as official letter, memo, RTI application etc. This leads to minimizing the spelling and punctuation errors which may creep inadvertently while writing on blackboard in normal classroom teaching learning process. The teachers can develop modules as per the learning needs of students which can help students in developing their writing skills.

Online classes have many advantages but there are various disadvantages also. The most common disadvantage of online classes is health hazards. The adverse effect of mobile radiations is more on children. Internet usage at fast rate puts teacher and students at high level risk of radiations. When a person keeps eyes on computer or mobile screen for long duration it creates many problems such as itchiness in eyes, watery eyes which subsequently weakens the eye sight. The use of headphones and earphones continuously lowers the hearing capacity. This increases uneasiness, anxiety, headache etc. which culminates in sleep disorders. The students do not pay proper attention on correct sitting postures during long schedule classes. They take classes on sofa or even bed which leads to muscle pain, back pain and restlessness. In normal classroom students interact among themselves during change over between two lectures. They also do some physical activities. The students are not able to play games and do other physical activities during covid-19. Long sitting at one place during online classes is increasing obesity among students. Decrease in exposure to sunlight is also increasing deficiency of vitamin D. The radiation of mobile phones also disturbs the brain waves which adversely affect the sleeping pattern. This brings down the capacity of mind to concentrate which interferes in cognitive development.

The impact of online classes also needs to be analyzed from social aspect. Normal classroom teaching not only enables teaching learning but also plays important role in socialization of students. The natural socialization process of students is hampered in online modes of learning. The development of affective domain is adversely affected. The students are irritated and get bored due to online classes. They have to miss face to face peer group interaction which also involves fun or entertainment. The social bonding is also weakening. The students also not properly able to harness benefits of peer group learning that is an effective way to fill the learning gaps. The teachers and students collaborate in teaching learning process which has been fragmented and online classes seems not fathoming the whole gap. Although online class provide a platform for social interaction but that cannot replace social needs of human beings. The students have stopped playing outdoor team games due to covid-19 which is hindering their psychomotor development. The students are growing introvert and self centered. Although one major positive impact of online classes is that it gives chances of inclusion to neglected students who are not able to participate actively.

Covid-19 pandemic has left humanity with no choice but adapt to online classes. Although teachers and students have to face many disadvantages of online classes, we can minimize ill effects by taking some precautions. Teachers and students should use mobile phone or desktop with headphones and keep screen of mobile phone or desktop at safe distance can lower the impact of radiation on eyes and other body organs. The persons attending online classes must wash eyes and face during the breaks between online classes. The closing of eyes for a few minutes can rejuvenate the tired eyes. A person can achieve normal state of body as well mind and can get ready for next online class by doing relaxation techniques. Teachers and students can normalize the impact radiation by doing pranayams and meditation exercises. Regular physical exercises and adopting correct physical posture while attending online classes can help in maintaining good health and lowering its hazards.

Covid-19 has transformed our society in various aspects. It has compelled us to shed some of our old ways and adapt to new ways. Adapting to any change is a sociological process. Any new thing imposed in our society invokes natural tendency to resist initially. Slowly we have to compromise with the circumstances and then we assimilate the change. Online classes give hope of continuing education of students in these odd times. Online mode of education has led to some innovations like open book test as online revaluation process. This mode of evaluations make the students use their analytical skills to prepare answers which are not readily available to them. Positive aspect of online classes is that the students have to

learn to adjust them self with the changing technology. They can develop habit of using web resources to enhance their learning apart from solely depending on traditional methods.

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