Challenges and Opportunities for Start-Ups in the New Normal with Specific Reference to Education Technology Sector

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Abstract

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of educational institutions in India were based only on traditional methods of learning, that is, the setup of face-to-face lectures in a classroom. COVID-19 challenged the education system across the world and forced educators to shift to an online mode of teaching overnight. Many academic institutions that were earlier reluctant to change their traditional approach had no option but to shift entirelyto online teaching. The article includes the importance of online learning, opportunities, and challenges of e-learning modes in a time of crisis. This article strives to shed light upon the growth of Education Technology (EdTech) Start-ups during the time of pandemic and includes suggestions for institutions on how to deal with challenges associated with online learning.

Keywords - *Edtech, E-learning, Education System, Online Learning*

1. Introduction

The deadly Coronavirus has deeply affected the global economy and it has also shaken up the education sector. The pandemic forced many schools and colleges to remain closed temporarily. Various schools, colleges, and universities discontinued in-person teaching. As per the assessment of the researchers, they are unlikely to get back to normal teaching anytime soon and educational institutions are struggling to find options to deal with this challenging situation.

Several arguments are associated with e-learning. Firstly, it is said that the online mode of learning is easily accessible and can even reach rural and remote areas. Secondly, it is considered to be a cheaper model of education in terms of the overall cost of institution-based learning.

Further, flexibility is another interesting aspect of online learning; a student can schedule or plan their time for completion of their studies online. Students can learn anytime and anywhere, and can also develop new skills in the process leading to life-long learning.

2. Literature Review

Problems Associated with Online Teaching and Learning

There are innumerable technologies available for online education but sometimes they create a lot of difficulties. These difficulties and problems can range from downloading errors, issues with installation, login problems, problems with audio and video, and so on. Sometimes students find online teaching to be boring and unengaging. Personal attention is also a huge issue facing online learning. Students require two-way interaction which sometimes gets difficult to implement. The learning process cannot reach its full potential until students practice what they learn. Sometimes, online content is all theoretical and does not let students practice and learn effectively. Students face problems such as lack of social contact, technical problems, and difficulties in understanding instructional goals are some of the major barriers to online learning (Song et al., 2004).

Possible Solutions for Problems

A lot of issues are attached to online education but we cannot ignore the perks of it in times of such crisis.Technical difficulties can be solved through pre-recorded video lectures, testing the content, and always keeping a Plan B ready so that the teaching-learning process is hampered. Online courses should be made interesting, and interactive. Teachers should set time limits and reminders for students to make them alert and attentive. Personal attention should be provided to students so that they can easily adapt to this learning environment. Social media and various group channels can be used to communicate with students. Educators must spend a lot of time making effective strategies for giving online instructions. Effective online instructions facilitate feedback from learners, make learners ask questions, and broaden the learner horizon for the course content (Keeton, 2004).

The challenge to educational institutions is not only finding new technology and using it but also reimagining the education system, thereby helping students and academic staff who are seeking guidance for digital literacy.

3. Research Gap

The extant literature reviewed brings to the forefront the advent of novel educational technology and change in the teaching-learning paradigm but the researchers observe that there needs to be more research to understand the change in the perception of Indian teachers to teach in a modern way.

4. Objectivesofthe Study

1. To explore the growth of Ed-Tech start-ups and online learning.

2. To conduct an opportunities and challenges analysis of online learning during the coronavirus pandemic from student's perception.

3. To give suggestions and recommendations for the success of online mode of learning during a situation like this.

5. ResearchMethodology

This is an exploratory, qualitative and quantitative study. The problems associated with online learning and possible solutions are also identified based on previous studies. The research tool used for analysing the data is descriptive research. This study is based on primary as well as secondary data.

Primary source – survey of around 35 students was conducted who are currently attending online classes.

Secondary sources of data used are (a) journals, (b) reports, (c) search engines, (d) company websites and scholarly articles, (e) research papers, and other academic publications.

6. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

"Online Learning is the future and if there was no virus, that realization would have taken another few years but this has accelerated the process.

-Li Kang Executive Director, Ai English

EdTech in India began with the introduction of Educomp. In 2010 EdTechs start-ups arrived into the market intending to interrupt the education sector. In the year 2019 Byju's learning application emerged as one of the esteemed EdTech companies. And after that many other start-ups entered the market to give tough competition to Byjus's.

 These online educational applications are tapping all the opportunities by delivering and facilitating students with various free online courses to students in the middle of this crisis helping them in tough times. The pandemic outbreak is the best opportunity for the EdTech start-ups and they are attempting very hard to make maximum out of this condition by offering numerous free of cost online courses and several e-resources to the students. While the accessibility of electricity and constant internet connection especially in small citiestowns and villages is a challenge in their path as many towns and cities still face regular electricity shortages.

In this pandemic and lockdown where offline classes were next to impossible, online education applications gained extreme importance which improved their customer base.Although it might be for a short period or temporary duration, it can still retain somecustomers as it provides the service of attaining knowledge and learning without goinganywhere.

Online Educators are facing a lot of trouble while operating and teaching on these platforms such as difficulties in how to start such an application, how to keep students actively involved in the class without any distractions and how to enhance the skills of the students via EdTech. Teachers should focus on students' participation and must take possible steps and efforts to increase the active participation of the student in the classroom, asking them questions that will help the teachers in retaining the student's attention and will aid in building an effective knowledgeable environment.

EdTech cannot replace a teacher but during such tough times, when COVID-19 has forced schools and colleges to remain completely locked down for a few weeks due to the seriousness of the situation, EdTech companies can prove to be of great help to students (Brianna et al., 2019).

Even the government has launched a portal called the "SWAYAM" portal, an educational program initiated to accomplish the three vital objects of educational policy- first is access, second equity, and third quality. The foremost objective of this portal is to offer online education and learning and diminish the digital gap by providing a huge number of courses free of cost for school students, students of distance learning, undergraduate and postgraduate students. And in such times this portal SWAYAM is of great support for almost every student.

Following results were drawn from the survey conducted among the students – *Figure 1 pie chart showing the percentage of students willing with the method of online learning to continue further*

Do you want this method of teaching to continue?

36 respondents

36.10%

63.90%

■Yes □No
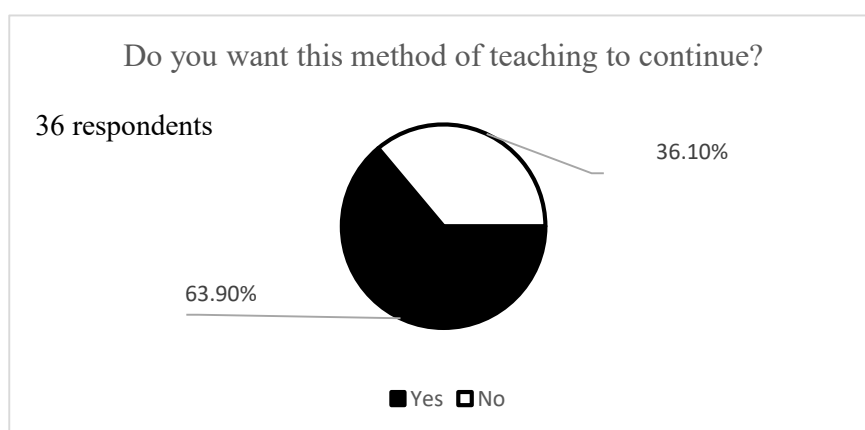
From the above figure 1, it can be seen that around 63.9% of the respondents want this system of learning online not to be continued further, which shows that they are not satisfied or happy with this mode of teaching and they wanted to get back to the old or traditional system of learning. There are many reasons behind this percentage of students who don'twant this system to continue any more reasons can be technical issue lack of two-way

interaction, time adjustment and or time issue or problems with connectivity all these reasons made students unsatisfied with this learning mode.

Figure 2 pie chart percentage of how many students think online learning is taking India to a modern approach

Do you think this change in method of teaching is taking India to a modern approach?
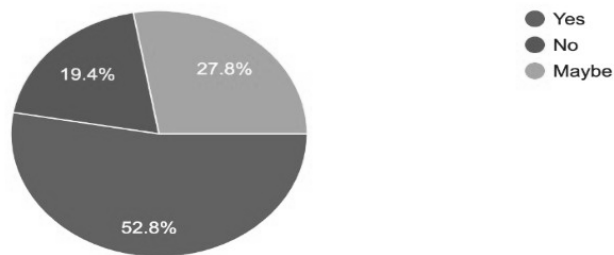36 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

27.8%
19.4%
52.8%

Figure 2 depicts that 52.8% percentage of students is of think that the online mode of learning and teaching is taking is being adopted by Indian education system. Some students feel that this can be a useful learning method for sharpening skills or learning a new skill as well.

Online learning is independent and does not require you to be in a certain place at a specific time. This flexibility makes education more accessible to people that may not necessarily be able to commit a large amount of time to attend classes and modern way of teaching and learning Online prove to be best for both teachers and the students in hard times and taking India to a new and modern approach of learning

Figure 3 shows how satisfied are students with online method of teaching

On a scale of 1 to 10 how satisfied are you with online method of teaching?
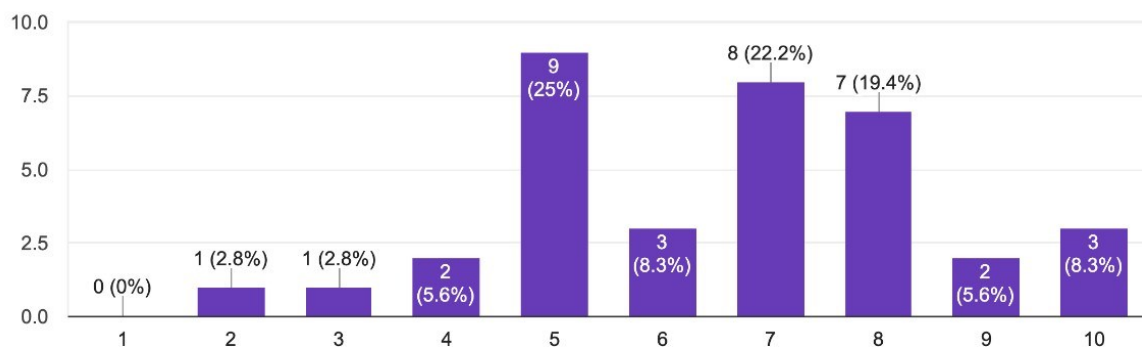36 responses

Figure 3 depicts how 25% of students are not that satisfied with the online mode of teaching, these are those students who are facing certain difficulties with this mode and are not able to cope up with this method of teaching. But apart from this 25%, students are satisfied with this method, maybe because they can manage more work in this method and it is any day more

convenient than offline mode. The conclusion would be that students should make this their habit as this will be the new normal for some time now and students should accept that fact and make necessary changes if they are still facing difficulties.

Opportunities and Challenges Analysis

This disaster of Covid-19 is scattering like a bushfire in all spheres. Every school, university and colleges are shut down due to coronavirus and lockdowns in the most affected areas to control the spread of the virus. Therefore, institutions are seeking the assistance of online teaching platforms so that student's studies cannot be hindered.

Opportunities

Online learning generally has a lot of opportunities available but this type of crisis will allow online learning to boom as most academic institutions have switched to this model. Online Learning, remote working, and e-collaborations exploded during the outbreak of the Coronavirus crisis (Favel et al., 2020). At this moment, educational organizations have seized this opportunity by bringing education online where teachers teach and students learn online. Individuals have been continuously unwilling and hesitant to try new modes of teaching andlearning. Though this crisis made people realize and allowed them to look at the productiveside of learning online and brought scope to digital developments and innovations. Already,Ed-Tech corporations are doing their best to help in tackling this pandemic and stoppingeducation to come to halt.

The online education system will prove best for both teachers and the students. It will augment acute thinking capabilities, problem-solving abilities and malleability among the students. In this serious condition, operators and users of any age can access and use the toolsof online teaching and education and acquire the advantages of site & location and time flexibility linked with online education.

Ed-Tech start-ups have ample opportunities to bring about fundamental alterations in almost all the parts supplementary with education such as teaching, learning, assessment, assessment, outcomes, certification, and so on. Also, the cumulative market demand for online education is an incredible opening for online teaching start-ups to bring technical disturbance in the education sector.

Challenges

Online learning can face many challenges ranging from learners' issues to educators' issues and content issues. It is a challenge for institutions to engage students and make them participate in such a teaching-learning process. It is a challenge for teachers to move from offline mode to online mode, changing their teaching methodologies, and managing their

time. It is challenging to develop content which not only covers the curriculum but also engages the students.

Despite various advantages of Ed-Tech, online education lacks quality standards, quality control, a lack of standards for quality, delivery of e-content, e-resource development. E-learning involves a lot of time and cost of operating it, it requires an investment of significant amount for acquiring the equipment's, operating cost, maintaining cost, knowledge andtraining etc. Therefore, an actual and well-organized educational system needs to be improved to impart learning through an online way.

Ensuring digital parity is vital in the rough time. Every teacher or student does not have access to internet connectivity and some even face electricity shortages. Inaccessibility of digital tools and internet connectivity can lead to distress for students and they might be deprived of the opportunity to learn. Thus, institutions should make efforts to ensure technology equity and check on every student and faculty that they have access to all the needed resources for online education.

7. ConclusionandContribution

According to the world economic forum, the pandemic has altered the way of education and to solve the new problems arising as such, considerable modernisations and modifications are required. Teachers are reluctant to change and to adopt a new way to teach on online mode as they are habitual to the old-fashioned model of teaching i.e., face-to-face classes. However, amidst the pandemic, there is no other option left but to move on to a new style and accept the change. Adapting to the new model will be advantageous for the education sector and could bring astonishing improvements.

Less wealthy students belong to less tech-understanding families, find it difficult to attend lectures online and hence lose out on their classes and this technological division maybroaden the inequality gaps. Another learning is that planning is very vital to bring about change in uncertainty. Educational institutions must form flexibility in their structures of education to safeguard and implement the change as and when required to prevent halt in teaching –learning process.

COVID -19 created has disrupted the way education happens and therefore, it is very essential to study the technology in-depth and that too due to persistence to equilibrium between fears and strains in such times of crisis.

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