





A Study on the Challenges and Opportunities of Online Education in India, During Lockdown Period with Special Reference to Professional Education

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ABSTRACT

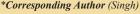
Purpose: Education has been considered as the important parameter for fathoming the developmental health of a nation. For the past few years the online education has seen spiral growth. In this growth of online education, especially in higher education segment, the effect of Covid -19 cannot be ignored. It was therefore considered to study the reasons for the growth of online education. In this study the pros and cons of online education system have been discussed.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach: This study investigates the factors responsible for higher growth of online education system. For this a structured questionnaire was served to the graduate and post graduate students of an institute. The students not only highlighted the factors but also offered certain valuable suggestion for the improvement of online education

Findings: Online education in India is not in the advanced stage rather it is at introduction level. If current trends are to be extrapolated, we may expect swelling in overall enrollments in online education. Online education system will evolve through the consistent and continuous learning process.

Paper Type: Case Based Study

KEYWORDS Online | lockdown | Education | Opportunities | Challenges | Covid-19



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Introduction

Education, especially higher education, plays very crucial role in accelerating growth, eliminating poverty and ensuring common prosperity. At present, approximately 200 million students are enrolled in different courses in various institutions of higher education across the globe. As the population of young swells, a consistent and continuous growth in demand is expected for higher education. However, it will not be out of place to mention that many students still do not have the appropriate skills required for application to industry. With the growth and development of technology, India as a country has experienced an increased acceptance of online education for the past few years. In order to enhance the knowledge base most of the knowledge seekers and working professionals have enrolled themselves in different online courses. Going by the trends, the volume of people showing interest in online education system is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. It will be pleasant to see that presently, there are 290 million users of smart phone in India and this user base is expected to grow with another 180 million new users by 2021, making it to be 470 Million users. It is equally interesting to understand that the Internet penetration rate in India is 31% presently with approximately 409 Million internet users, and nearly 735 Million new users are predicted by 2021. These two (Smart phones and Internet penetration put together) reflect us the huge canvas and can be considered as the key factors responsible for the exponential growth in online education (Gond, Ramprakash, and Gupta, Rashi. 2017).

According to report on Online Education in India: 2021, it can be held that the market for online education in India is all set to register a high growth of 800%. The extremely high growth in the online education market can be attributed as the outcome of very high number of users of online education services. Thus it can be said that the e-learning market is all set to register growth in multi folds in the coming years, let us see some emerging trends in Indian online higher education system. The e-learning market in the country is estimated to be worth more than \$3 billion (Online Education in India: 2021, A Study of KPMG India and Google).

With the growth of technological advancements at the zenith, there had been several changes and amendments in Indian Education System in the recent past. On Line Education system and its introduction could be considered as one of such novel changes. The learners and knowledge seekers have got the opportunity to acquire additional skills and knowledge with profound ease and it has therefore enhanced the further scope of online education. As per a study in a world level online education program, India has been reported to secure the second place in terms of the online enrollments. United States of America that tops the list has got 1,55,000 enrolments, but of these 15% students are Indian. 1.2 Million students worldwide have been included in this report.

Why Online Education is Preferred to Offline Education?

We are quite aware that the learning in the typical traditional manner especially in the context of Higher Education is not truly associated with the need of Industry. However there had been many attempts to bridge this gap but because of certain factors this gap could not be bridged. Because of this bottleneck there has been an innate and unquenched need of education have prevailed among the youths that could link them to the needs of Industry. However, the importance of the traditional class room teaching is still there yet, we would appreciate that online education has got more convenience to the learners. There are certain benefits of online education which can be listed as below (Angela Paljor 2020):

- E education is 53% economical in comparison to regular class room teaching.
- 2. It saves time, money, and energy.
- 3. Through it, one can gain a proliferation of effective information while sitting at home.
- 4. The persons who are differently abled (*Divyaang*) can find it to be more suitable as the movements are not required to some extent and therefore may build their career through E learning in effortless manner.
- 5. E Learning offers live queries and the solutions thereof such as chat rooms, discussion forums etc.
- 6. Through online diploma courses, students can increase their qualifications and enhance their career opportunities without disturbances of their routine classes.

Drivers of Growth of Online Education in India:

Flexibility and Comfortable Environment

Online education provides one with a comfortable environment where one can study wearing informal attire. One can also track his / her performance over time and can prepare more efficiently for the exams. One has flexible hours for study while being involved with the home work and other responsibilities (Agarwal, Rajiv 2020.

Time and Cost-Effective

As we understand that in E Learning or in online education system there is a number of opportunities for the learners and knowledge seekers. It enhances the efficiency of learning and in this way it promotes them to devote their time to undertake some other curricular activities which may not be possible because of intricacies of the regular classroom learning system (Sharma, Shailendra, 2020).

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Efficient Accessibility

There is no age bar for the learning. Anyone of any age group can be enrolled in any course of his or her choice. Since this is driven by the technology and technology is biggest equalizer that is everyone is equal in the eyes of technology. Only two things are required, firstly the electronic gadget and secondly the proper Internet connection with good speed. One doesn't need to commute from anywhere or live far away from family and friends to pursue an education in order to achieve success in career. The homemakers may get enrolled in it after their routine schedule. Similarly, not so well off people and the deprived class too may attain education (Gupta, Isha, 2020).

Opportunity to Explore Diverse Cultures

On line education provides an opportunity to the instructor to interact with the people of various and diverse cultures. Thus one can develop and enhance the cross cultural values and knowledge and eventually may comprehend the emotions and value system of the people from different cultures. In the similar manner the knowledge seekers can also attain the knowledge shared by various instructors across the world that could not have been learned from tradition way of learning.

Preferred Courses

In E-learning, anyone can choose the course of study of his/her choice. In India, there are many online certificates available which the learners can be enrolled in. The professional and traditional both types of courses are available online in India. Institutes like IITs, IIMs, and many leading institutes offer online courses in India. Many Employers have also recruited employees graduated through online-education courses. The online education certification courses currently account for a share of 38% of total online education market (Imran, Sheikh Mohammad. 2012).

E-learning is Greener

There are certain obvious advantages for online mode of education but the most prominent among them being 'Environment Friendliness'. Incidentally in a survey it has been found that there is much more energy consumption and CO_2 emissions in regular classes in comparison to online classes. It has been found that online courses may consume 90% less energy and 85% less CO_2 emissions per student in comparison to classroom teaching (Sharma, Shailendra, 2020).

About the Present Survey

In the light of above mentioned facts, surveys and secondary data sources, it became imperative for me to conduct a survey among the undergraduate and postgraduate students of Rajarshi School of Management and Technology,

hereinafter called as RSMT. As the head of Institute, I wanted to understand and fathom the depth of the problem. I chose Google Form and online mode to conduct this survey. Needless to say, the responses of the students seemed to be unbiased as they responded in an open environment from their home. Both open ended and close ended questions were included in the structured questionnaire. It was filled by those students who were regularly attending online classes and thus had ample experience and exposure of online education system. The total number of respondents who participated in this survey is 347. RSMT has total number of 950 students enrolled in different programs such as BBA, BCA, MBA and MCA. Thus approximately 37% students have been taking classes in online mode. The number of males (188) and females (159) who participated in the survey is given below:

Gender

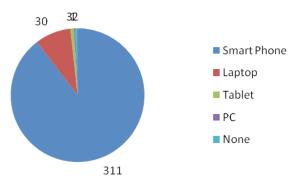


The Questions covered in the Survey

What gadget the students have been using for online classes.

They were asked specifically as to what electronic gadget they are currently using for online classes. And the options for this were Smart Phone (311), Laptop (30), Tablet (3), PC (1) and None (2). Their responses were as below:

Gadgets

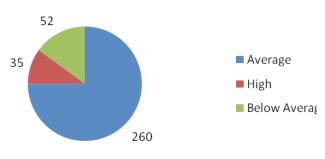


What is the Speed of Internet Connection

Since the effectiveness and success of online education depends on Internet speed, logically. It was therefore quite relevant question that was addressed to the respondents. They answered it quite well. The Choices were also given to them. The options in this cases were High (35), Average (260) Below Average (52)

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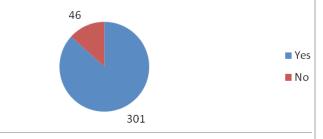
Internet Speed



Do the students have uninterrupted power supply (regular power supply by grid) so that their gadgets remain charged

The students were given only two choices Yes and No. The no of respondents who said that they have charging facility at their place were 301 and the number of respondents who said that there was no charging facilities during the need were 46.

Charging Facilities Available



Whether Online Classes Helped the Students in anyway

The students were asked specifically as to Online course and the endevours dedicated for this cause helped them or not. The responses were specific like whether it helped them to learn the course and they were supposed to say Yes. Similarly if the online courses that were conducted have helped them to some extent then they were asked to respond accordingly. And if the online education system has not helped them at all then they would have to say No. Thus the response that we got comes out to be Yes (213) To some Extent (104) and No (30)

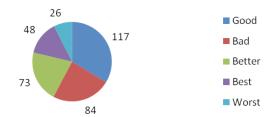
Whether Online Courses Helped



What was the Satisfaction Level in Online Courses

The students were asked to rate their online classes experience in comparison to Class room teaching experience. They were asked to rate is on a 5 Point Likert scale. They were asked to give 5 for the best, 4 For Better, 3 For Good, 2 Bad and 1 for Worst. The data collected in this respect revealed the following. 47 respondents said that it was best experience, 73 rated it to be better experience, 117 said that it was good, 84 said that it was bad and 26 responded it to be worst. This can be depicted in pie chart as below:

Rating of Online Education in Comparison to Classroom Teaching



The Suggestions given by the Respondents

The students included in this survey were asked to give their suggestions to strengthen the online education system. A large number of suggestions were offered by them which were grouped in different classes. However 170 (around 49%) respondents offered their suggestions. But these suggestions are worthwhile.

Proper Class Schedules Must be Made Before the Online Classes are Announced

It was suggested that teachers must make it sure that each and every student is aware of the classes. Before a lecture is commenced, every student should get a joining link for online class. If possible the teachers must make it sure that too many students are not there in a single online session so that there should be proper communication mechanism. If need be two batches could be made. One batch should be there in the morning and the other one in the evening. In this context it was suggested that the course objectives should be clarified and expectations therein must be pronounced. In this way rich opportunities for students to interact with the course material, with the teacher and with one another may be created. The respondents have laid very high emphasis on regular classes and properly scheduled classes. They have also mentioned that classes should not be scheduled for more than 40 -50 minutes. If it goes beyond 50 minutes then the interest level goes down rapidly and the very purpose of the class gets defeated.



Internet Connectivity and the Speed is a Real Issue

The respondents mentioned that the Internet connection raised a number of problems. This, according to them is a problem both at the source and at the destination. They mentioned that the network connection at the teacher's end is really pathetic and therefore they are not able to understand, what is being taught. They have suggested that everyone should have their own laptop provided by college (for which college can charge as well) with effective data connection. Most of the respondents felt that the Internet connection in the morning is very supportive; therefore the classes must be conducted in the morning. Because of poor connectivity of internet, the voice of the teachers often gets echoed.

Better On Line App or Some Official App to be used

There should be a fixed app through which teachers may take online classes. It is really difficult for students to download as many software so many classes. There should be proper guidelines which all the students have to follow during classes. Such as - Mute the Mike, Not to chat with others during class. Etc. There was some news in the media regarding the breach of data security in case of certain Apps such as Zoom. There was a suggestion from students that RSMT should purchase a particular app on which the host could control all actions and only the registered students of any particular class could be allowed to attend not any other unauthorized persons.

Use of White Boards / Black Boards in the Online Classes

It was suggested by the students that the use of White Boards could be there in the online classes. This would give them the feel of regular class room. The teacher may explain the doubts especially in Maths and Accounts on the white board with the help of a Marker as they do in the class room.

Sharing Video and Class Notes after Online Classes

Teachers should provide the students the recording of online classes or they should provide videos regarding important topics. They may provide PDF of study material and the topics what they have taught in the classes. The students further suggested that videos could be uploaded on YouTube so that content are clear and the students could refer to it whenever they want to. Post and pre recorded video lectures should be uploaded on the website of the institute so that we could access them at anytime from anywhere.

Awareness about the Online Classes to be enhanced through Webinar

The students wanted that some webinar could be arranged on the online education system so that they could understand the tricky concept of online study. This also opens up new interactive opportunities between teachers and the students.

Issues Related to Clearance of Doubts

The students suggested that the online classes should be run as professional classes. As a student if they had any doubts related to topics, the teachers must have cleared it. A proper communication should be practiced so that no student would have any doubts after the classes. Question and Answer session may be conducted online but only through message box. Conference calls could also be better for doubt clearing session. Students may note down their respective doubts during teaching session and get them cleared in Doubt clearing session which could be placed in the end. Questions and doubts can be cleared after class either in comment section or official Whatsapp Group. Some of the teachers had used pen and paper for explaining some topics which proved to be quite difficult to understand.

Issues Related to Discipline

The students suggested that teachers must make sure that student with their correct identity joins the class. Discipline and proper communication should be there between students and teachers. They further suggested that students with fake identity should not be allowed to enter in online class. Some of the female respondents felt that some of the boys of the class create problems and at times use abusive language. Some students could not be interested in the classes or eventually they disturbed the whole class. Students want that some strict rule of participation in the classes should be made. RSMT should allow only those students in online classes who registered themselves with their right credentials because of this the discipline will be maintained in the class. Because of the absurd behavior of some of the students in the digital class room (abusing in lectures and disturbing in mid-way) teachers lose their temper as well as concentration. And because of such students the classes gets affected and the efforts for online lecture goes in waste.

Pedagogy and Related Issues

The students in this respect have these suggestions:

- Online learning should be seen as a complimentary part and an extension of classical form of learning.
- Study contents should be increased and lecture duration should be more than 1 hour so that the efficiency of learning increases
- The online system is good only for theory subjects not for practical subjects. We cannot pass any exam without doing class

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- The teachers must broaden the learning resources
- The course / subject taught in online classes to be integrated with class room teaching
- The teachers can collect the attendance sheet of particular class and allow entry only to those students whose names match with the attendance list
- RSMT should have to provide proper online learning material
- Explanation of any topic must be made in shortest possible time with the help of examples. Since it is monotonous and boring at times
- The course design must be there to make students understand.
- Teacher should have to focus on core point rather than its peripheral points
- Every topic should be covered in elaborated way and test should be conducted after it on pen & paper. The scanned copy should be submitted so that learning & writing pattern both can be covered simultaneously.

Other Important Suggestions

Mike of all students should be strictly prohibited and if anyone wants to ask questions then one may type it in the message box. The teachers must work on voice quality; at times it is not audible. They should teach in the manner as they teach in class. The teachers must be humble to the students so that they express their words to the teachers. Online education has really helped the students to increase their knowledge base and ideas, but the camera and sound quality must be better. RSMT may Start online education for other prospective students. For this all students should have electronic gadget for online classes, & and there should be good internet. RSMT can issue electronic gadgets to all students according to its own schedule for a particular time.

The Future Directions in the Era of Covid 19 and Lockdown

Present Covid-19 and thereafter the lockdown have badly affected the educational institutions across the globe. All of a sudden, the institutes were compelled to offer their courses online or for temporarily closure. Prior to this, online education had not been considered as a serious endeavour by most of the institutions, and it was greatly restricted to the distance learning or correspondence courses (Kumari, Umesh. 2019)

As we know that the typical traditional education model needed the students or learners to attend the classes physically. Learning whatsoever was made available through a lecture (Class centric scenario where one teacher lectured to many students we may call it one-to-many), or case discussions (many-to-many) where the students or learners debated, discussed and eventually contributed to such a discussion while learning from each other (Singh, Dharm Bir. 2007). This class – centric model is typically used in technical and managerial subjects where the concerned faculty may explain the concepts. Online education in India is not in the advanced stage rather it is at introduction level. Despite this, India has a potent reservoir of passionate youth who are all set to metamorphose the online education in India. If current trends are to be extrapolated, we may expect swelling in overall enrollments in online education. Online education system will evolve through the consistent and continuous learning process.

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The Editorial Board had used the Ouriginal – a Swedish anti-plagiarism software tool which is a fully-automatic machine learning text-recognition system made for detecting, preventing and handling plagiarism and trusted by thousands of institutions across worldwide. Urkund is GDPR compliant with privacy by design and an uptime of 99.9% and have trust to be the partner in academic integrity. https://www.urkund.com] tool to check the originality and further affixed the similarity index which is {3%} in this case (See Above Annexure-I). Thus, the reviewers and editors are of view to find it suitable to publish in this Volume-13, Issue-3, July-Sep 2021

Annexure 1

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Reviewers Memorandum

Reviewer's Comment 1: The author has focused on online education in India with special reference during the pandemic. The paper is short and crisp. The use of advanced research tools to analyze the data would have improved the quality of study. Overall it is a satisfactory study.

Reviewer's Comment 2: The study focuses only on one university hence the results cannot be generalised to the entire country. However the author leaves scope for extensive research on the same topic. The style of writing and data presentation can be improved further.

Reviewer's Comment 3: The research methodology adopted by the author is good but can further be improved for more reliable results. The author has made good efforts to meet the objectives of the study. Since the scope of the study is limited the results cannot be applied in a general manner.



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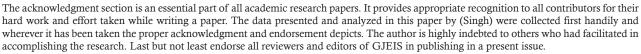


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The article has 3% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for the publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (D B Singh) and accordingly all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the theme "A Study on the Challenges and Opportunities of Online Education in India, During Lockdown Period with Special Reference to Professional Education" both subject-wise and research-wise. This study investigates the factors responsible for higher growth of online education system in India. The author has presented how pandemic had given the push to online education. The findings of the author will be of immense importance to higher education institutions to reframe their teaching practices. After comprehensive reviews and editorial board's remarks the manuscript has been categorised and decided to publish under the "Case Based Study" category

Acknowledgement



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