Impact of COVID-19 on Pedagogy in a Multicultural Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The world is going through a critical phase in the fight against COVID-19 (Corona Virus). The pandemic has disturbed the life of individuals directly or indirectly since the initial lockdown, when schools, colleges, universities, businesses, industries, organisations, and shopping centres were closed. A few services were partially open and only essential services, like hospitals, worked 24x7. This crucial period has affected the teaching and learning process of students drastically. Normally, teaching and assessment are done physically. However, due to the pandemic, education has been interrupted. This article suggests innovative, trouble-free methods of teaching online.

Keywords: Impact of Covid19 on Teaching; Multicultural Classroom.

Introduction

Today, the whole world is facing a challenging situation under the threat of COVID-19. More than 3.5 million cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed to date. The word 'pandemic' is derived from two Greek words, i.e. pan and demos, which mean all and people respectively. COVID-19 is a virus that has shaken the world's health services and research, including the economy of the highly developed countries. According to a report from WHO, SARS (January 29, 2020), COVID-19, also known as the 'novel corona virus (2019-nCoV)' started in Wuhan, China, and within a short period of time infected people all over the world. In just one day, the number of novel corona virus cases crossed more than 8,000 worldwide, which was similar to the spread of SARS in 2003. COVID-19 is more dangerous than SARS; this pandemic has not only affected China, but also continents and countries like Italy, Europe, Hong Kong, the U.A.E., and India. This, in turn, has adversely affected the economy of the whole world. The governments of these respective countries had initiated lockdown procedures to control and stop the spreading of COVID-19. Due to the sudden lockdown, different sectors, like the stock market, gold market, production and services, and teaching and learning, were affected. COVID-19 has almost ruined and created a global crisis that is affecting humanity, the economy, social opinions, and also the daily lives of people.

Normal life has been disrupted. With the guidelines for social distancing in place, people were unable to move about freely. They were unable to run businesses and organisations. Corporates initiated the work-from-home solution. The length of the lockdown period was unpredictable and

depended on the number of cases. During this critical situation, almost all sectors faced challenges in adopting innovative methods of technology and acquiring the expertise in using new approaches that would help them accomplish their goals.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Education System

The pandemic novel coronavirus has shaken all the sectors of the world's economy. The education sector has not been untouched. Teaching contributes to creating better, responsible citizens who help in the growth and development of society as a whole. A school is a place that imbibes ethics, moral values, and etiquette in a child. It also helps students to become social and skilled. One of the consequences of this pandemic is the closing down of schools, colleges, and universities. As a result, examination and the evaluation system have been affected. There are alternative ways of assessing students, such as 'predicted grades' and substituting 'blind exams' with teacher evaluation. However, these methods are not satisfactory and can be biased. With these methods of assessing, the result graph of many students may go up or down.

New Approaches and Initiatives in Pedagogy

There is a turning point in the pedagogy of teaching, as it is shifting from face-to-face teaching to online teaching through virtual classes. Schools and colleges are taking major initiatives in teaching online so as not to interrupt the education of students. Education was a matter of concern during the lockdown in most of the countries. India also

faced challenges in the field of education. The Government of India initiated new approaches to teaching pedagogy by starting online classes for students in schools, colleges, and universities. Teaching through virtual classes is new to teachers as well as students. It is expensive and complicated as teachers are not used to teaching classes online; it is not an easy task for students as well. Teachers have to go through a huge transformation in their approach to teaching online.

Online learning is also new and quite different from face-to-face teaching. It requires much more effort from the instructors, involving innovation and preparing sessions. Online teaching is a kind of art, which, if mastered, can provide a more effective teaching-learning experience. The ability to communicate well and design sessions methodically are keys to successful online teaching-learning. Face-to-face learning is likely to become obsolete in the foreseeable future, unless innovative ideas are infused and the exclusivity of roles is given to faculty members while teaching in the classrooms. We can learn from human psychology and find ways to keep students engaged during a session. Sharing videos and stories adds to the richness of a session. It is a good idea to encourage students to ask questions and consider each question thoughtfully when we reply. One negative comment can kill the class and no one would ask a question in the future.

In addition, using visuals helps to make the class interesting. Adding current news or topics shared in social media is another way of engaging students as they respond to such

topics quickly and with interest. It requires practice to blend all these into the topic of the lecture we are teaching.

Various online teaching and learning modes in India include SHAGUN, launched by the Department of School Education. It comprises three e-learning platforms. Online Junction comprises National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER). The Ministry of HRD has launched National Digital Infrastructure for Teachers (DIKSHA). e-Pathshala is available in several languages though which students from class I to XII can access around 1,886 audios, 2,000 videos, 696 e-books (e-Pubs), and 504 Flip Books. There are other platforms like Swayam, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or Google Hangout, Skype, and Zoom App, which are commonly used for virtual teaching and learning in India.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Virtual/Online Classes

Advantages

Virtual classes have certain advantages in terms of convenience, from the point of view of both time and place. They save a lot of commuting and waiting time. In addition, it is possible to keep track of attendance, answer questions, and solve problems. It is very cost-effective, scalable, and can be recorded for playback multiple times as per convenience.

From the teacher's perspective, there are advantages like unhindered teaching without disturbance, as is the case in face-to-face interactions. There is a possibility of recording the sessions for future reference.

The recordings can be used for other classes, and there is potential for improvement in subsequent sessions, based on the previous recordings. It is more comfortable to use online resources.

From the student's perspective, it is convenient to learn according to one's pace, potentially skipping non-relevant parts. There is the possibility of recording the sessions and revisiting them at their convenience. There is more freedom of participation in the class without peer disturbance. Students might learn better in a comfortable atmosphere.

Teaching or learning is possible anywhere and anytime. Online classes may lead to reduction in the cost of education and wastage of resources. There is a possibility of pooling teaching by professors from across the nation and world. Innovative evaluation procedures are also possible.

Disadvantages

1. Lack of emotions and expression during the process of teaching and learning; virtual classes skip the face-to-face interactions that are available in a classroom setting. It overlooks the synergy of a group and sharing and discussing in real time. In spite of the many advantages of virtual classes, the connection between the instructor and students is missing.

2. It is possible for students to take virtual lectures rather carelessly, as they know that the sessions are being recorded and they can listen to them later, which they may not do. Students miss learning from other students through role play, group exercises, and many other activities,

which are only possible in live classrooms.

3. Lack of non-verbal (body language) communication, which plays a very crucial role in teaching.

4. Lack of peer-to-peer learning; group networking will be lacking, which develops naturally in face-to-face classes.

5. Lack of face-to-face interaction with the instructor, which helps the students gain more than the contextual knowledge.

6. Potentially low mentoring.

7. Potentially wrong evaluation of the learners by the instructors.

Conclusion

Virtual teaching is essential in the field of education to provide a solution to the current situation, as well as in the future, where a combination of face-to-face and online teaching will improve the teaching and learning experience. Training is required to make optimum use of the tools for online teaching. Workshops need to be organised to train the teachers, as it is sometimes difficult for the teachers to upload or use all the features available in the tools. Online teaching pedagogy has brought a great reform in the education world in India. From primary schools to colleges or universities, private or public sector, each individual has started using online applications in their day-to-day life. This has provided a significant learning in the amalgamation of technology while teaching in the current scenario.

Although it is not easy to practise, online teaching reveals some problems. For instance, the teacher-student relationship is missing. The teacher needs to be very careful while planning lectures as online sessions lack supervision. Evaluation methods also need to be objective-based, keeping in mind the time constraints. Sometimes, network issues pose a challenge and cannot be overlooked.

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