
PROSPECTS OF ONLINE EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

Online education is an educational experience that has no physical boundary. It allows the students to take part in classes and interact with the teachers from any location. Online education is mode of education which is completely/partially based on the using of internet. For many non-traditional students, who want to continue working full time or have families to raise or have other challenges in their lives, online education (graduations and courses) have become popular in the last decade. Often online programs and courses are provided via the online learning portal of the host institution. Computer based training, internet based training, web based training, e learning, online learning – these are the names online education goes by. There are almost infinite numbers of ways to teach and learn outside of traditional classrooms and online education gives us just that. With online education, students can turn on their devices anywhere; can actually turn any space with internet connection and electricity into their own classroom. The online education tools are – audio, video, text, animations, virtual training environment and live chats with their teachers. It creates a rich learning environment with much more flexibility and accessibility. But for a developing country like India is it really possible to continue the studies with only the help of the internet. To get online education, electricity, a suitable device and internet is minimum criteria to be fulfilled. Is India fit to fulfil these criteria for all of the students?

KEY WORDS: *Online Education, Proper Infrastructure, Economic condition.*

INTRODUCTION:

In the last 20 years, the internet has really grown from being the non-existent into the most useful, largest and also most accessible database of information ever created. Starting from the 1G, now 5G is being normalized in our society. The internet has changed the way we, as a society communicate. But not just the communication, it has also changed our habits of shopping, socializing, doing business and most importantly gathering knowledge and learning. With this big database gaining knowledge or knowing about something is just a click away. Using this mode of education also started to change. Online schooling has become a real thing. It is more than just a twist on distance learning. Online education is now changing the face of traditional classrooms and making the education more accessible than ever before. Now what is exactly online education? Well online education is an educational experience that has no physical boundary. It allows the students to take part in classes and interact with the teachers from any location. Online education is mode of education which is completely/partially based on the using of internet. For many non-traditional students, who want to continue working full time or have families to raise or have other challenges in their

lives, online education (graduations and courses) have become popular in the last decade. Often online programs and courses are provided via the online learning portal of the host institution. Computer based training, internet based training, web based training, e learning, online learning – these are the names online education goes by. There are almost infinite numbers of ways to teach and learn outside of traditional classrooms and online education gives us just that. With online education, students can turn on their devices anywhere; can actually turn any space with internet connection and electricity into their own classroom. The online education tools are – audio, video, text, animations, virtual training environment and live chats with their teachers. It creates a rich learning environment with much more flexibility and accessibility.

Even though the use of online education was a more accepted and useful educational mode for the developed countries, due to lack of infrastructure online education was not a popular method of education in India. In India online classes were only used in the distant learning courses which only a few students used. Traditional way of learning was the most popular in India until recently. In the beginning of 2020 the world was suddenly hit by a deadly virus named COVID 19. It was soon declared as a pandemic. A large number of people were getting infected and started dying. The whole world became chaotic and the fact like returning to normalcy was just a mere obfuscation. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) COVID 19 is an infected disease caused by a newly found corona virus (SARS-Cov-2). What made it more deadly is that it transmitted through human-human interaction. So immediately the whole world shut down. Every country following one another has gone into complete lockdown to reduce the transmission. India, being the second largest populated country also had to follow this and on 24th march of 2020 India officially declared a nationwide lockdown. With the markets, offices, restaurants, education institutes were also forced to be completely closed. This is where online education stepped up its game in India, and Indian students were introduced to e-learning and its world.

Objective of the study:

Previously there was a very little concept of online education, and that too were only used in distant education. In distant studies, the students could not attend the regular classes and that's why they used to get the educational materials over the internet. But regular education happened only in the traditional matter. Online education only became regular when India went into lockdown. After getting many warnings about the virus from WHO , the health ministry of India and the honourable Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi imposed a nationwide lockdown on 24th march of 2020. Although many states had already been gone into partial lockdowns and centrally there was a one day lockdown on 22nd march as well, but it was on 23rd it was announced that from 24th the central was imposing a 21 day lockdown. Mr. Narendra Modi also warned **“if you can't handle these 21 days, the country will go back 21 years.”** What started as a 21 days lockdown soon became a longer thing. The whole country was shut down and none was allowed to leave their respective houses other than emergencies.

Since then the lockdown has been imposed and then taken out depending on the situation and number of growing cases and the markets, offices, crowd gathering has been allowed to open and close. But the educational institutes have been shut ever since. So the schools and colleges are forced to change their educational mode from traditional to online mode. **The objective of this research is to find out** that in a developing country like India, is it really

possible to continue the studies with only the help of the internet? To get online education, electricity, a suitable device and internet is minimum criteria to be fulfilled. Is India fit to fulfil these criteria for all of the students? Where the government has to give free meals and free uniforms just so the children from remote areas can come into schools rather than participating in child labour, will they use a smart phone let alone get an internet connection to continue their studies? In a country where poverty is still a drawback, is it really possible to buy devices to support this mode of education? The objective of this research is to answer to all of these questions.

Merits of online Education: -

1. **Accessibility of place** – One of the best advantage of online classes is that it allows the student to attend the class in a choice of their place. As the pandemic hit and students are mostly at home they can attend the classes in their comfort places.
2. **Choice of the time** – Even though the school/college class timing is fixed many teachers are giving out notes and assignments in forms of pdfs and pre recorded videos which gives the student the accessibility to study at their choice of time.
3. **Affordability** – The online classes reduced the total financial cost by cutting down the daily transportation and outdoor meals. It also cut down the institution maintenance, electricity cost overall.
4. **Attendance improvement** – Just because you don't have to go somewhere and you can conduct classes from your house itself made the student's and teacher's attendance improved.
5. **Government's initiative** – the Government of India has taken a bunch of initiatives to improve the online education sector. A list of the top Government e-learning platforms is mentioned below.
 - a. **SWAYAM [Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds]** – this platform has been designed to impart quality education to school students , undergraduate , as well as post-graduate students in India. The portal offers free printable and downloadable study materials, video lectures, online tests for over 1600 courses. After completing the course and giving the exam the students will be able to get the certificate in exchange of a token fee.
 - b. **DIKSHA** – this digital platform is mainly designed for the teachers education. They offer training courses, worksheets, lesson videos, assessment tests for teachers. It's also available for the students to want to connect to the teachers community.
 - c. **National Digital Library of India [NDLI]** – this online platform is available 24/7 in more than 70 Indian languages with a wide variety of eBooks, videos, thesis, manuscripts and other documents.

Other than that to boost the online education the Government also launched **Namo E-Tablet Yojana** which will provide to around 3 lakh meritorious students tablets of Acer and Lenovo companies for Rs. 1000.

Demerits of Online Education: -

In a developing country like India where there are lot of demerits when it comes to online education. A few is listed under.

1. **Number of Government and Private schools in India** – study shows that 54% of all 1.46 million K12 schools in India, falls under the Government (Central/State) managed institutions. Another 21% are managed by local bodies or municipal corporations, where the other 25% are private institutions in India. People who are not living under the rock can differentiate between the private and the government facilities and the same thing apply to educational process also. Private means more money and only a certain amount of people can actually get into these schools so it is very obvious that the private education is stepped up. But with India the majority of students go to public institutions which make their study mediocre basically because of the infrastructure, the placement options, connection to developed study materials.
2. **Internet users** – even though the number of internet user increased by 47 million in the last year, only 45% of the people in India actually uses the internet. So it's safe to say that many remote areas students are still unable to have a digital connection let alone use the digital platform to study. A recent survey done by Learning Spiral which was covered by the India Today group shows that even in 2021 more than 50% of Indian Students in both rural and urban areas don't even have access to internet. When 13% of the Indian household don't even have electricity in their houses it's still a dream for India to make online education accessible for all.
3. **Affordability** – According to Down To Earth magazine's report , after the pandemic hit India the number of poor people in the country is near about 364 million. Where people have cut back on basic food items like lentils in their food intake to actually buy internet or smart phones , let alone computers, laptops is unimaginable. The average monthly internet package costs around 350/- which is pricey for most of Indian students is also another reason stopping them from going digital with e-learning.
4. **Lacking Digital Skills** - even though many Indian people are familiar with the internet and social media many of them lack basic digital skills so it's rather hard for them to take classes on a digital platform.
5. **Mid-day meal and it's effect** – mid day meal is a governmental scheme to avoid classroom hunger and increase the school enrolment and attendance. In this scheme a freshly cooked meal is given to the students of government aided schools for free. Because of this many families are attempted to send their kids to schools instead of sending them to work. This has also reduced somewhat child labor. But when the pandemic caused the schools to shut down these needy families are not allowing their kids to pursue education because their poverty forces them to earn the bread than having education.
6. **Choice of basic needs** – the pandemic took away a lot of things and created a situation where there is a need to choose between basic human rights. People have lost their jobs, are unable to earn money and feed their families, to them giving a smart phone to their children, having internet connection count as a luxury, which is the bare minimum for

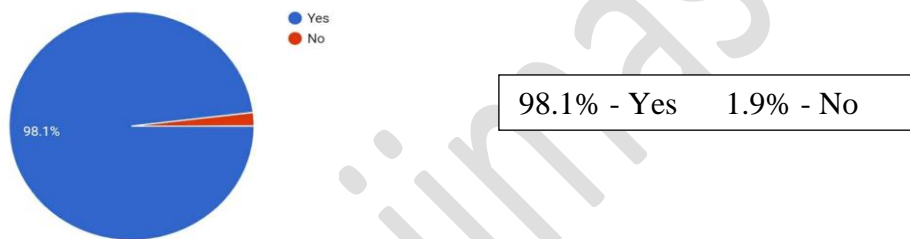
the online education. They prefer sending their sons to work so they can earn extra cash than giving them a device and chance to get education. Earlier they were sending their children to school because the children were getting meals for free. But now with the closing of them force the needy parents to drop their children off of school.

7. **Women’s issues** – India is far away when it comes to women’s education. In the rural areas where patriarchy is heavy it is still preferred for women to stay at home and learn house chores than go to school and learn basic education. But still with the government’s initiative and free meals parents were sending their daughters to schools but after the institutions shut down and changed the education mode, the girls are getting busy in doing the chores and other household works and making a distance with studies. Lack of initiative, poverty, lack of sensibility all plays a big role in this scenario. Some of them are also being married away because keeping them would only increase the number of feeders in a family.

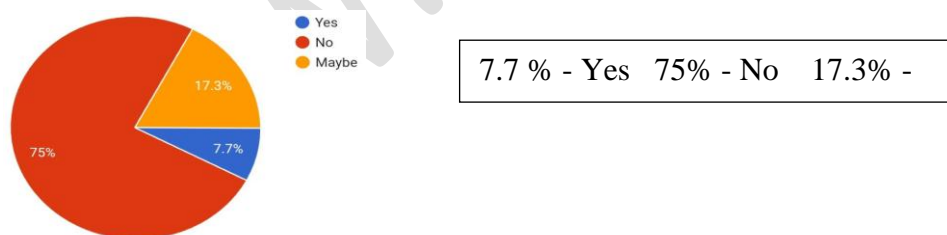
Survey:

A total number of 250 people have participated in this survey. The age group was between 15-25 yrs. Total 14 questions were asked to them with basic information in this survey.

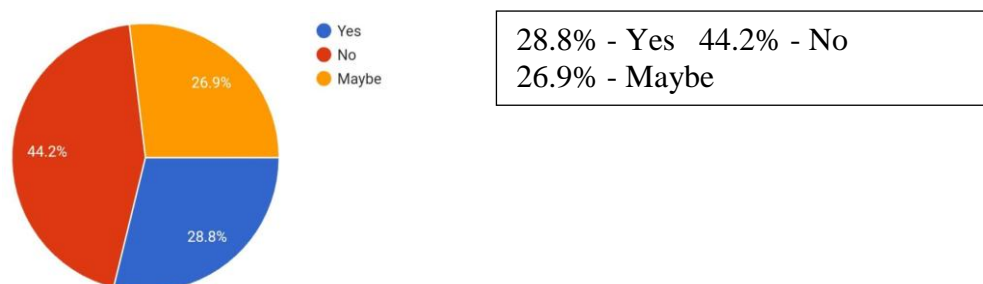
Q. 1) Have you ever attended any online class or seminar?



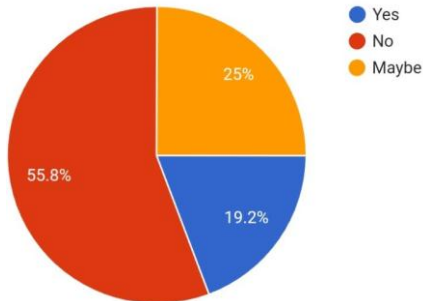
Q. 2) Can online classes provide the same benefit as offline classes?



Q. 3) Do you think the online class tools such as videos, podcasts and pdfs are as effective as offline tools?

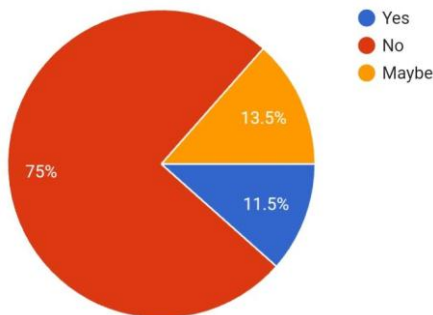


Q. 4) Do you think online education is effective in secondary or higher studies?



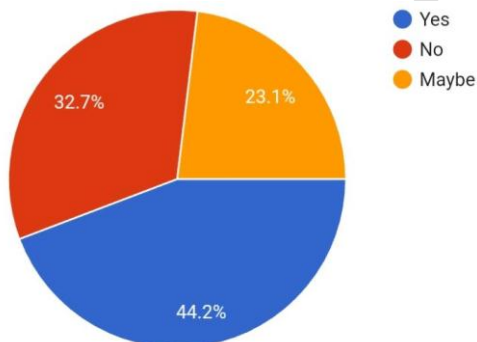
19.2% - Yes 55.8% - No
25% - Maybe

Q.5) Do you think online education is good for kids and lower grade students ?



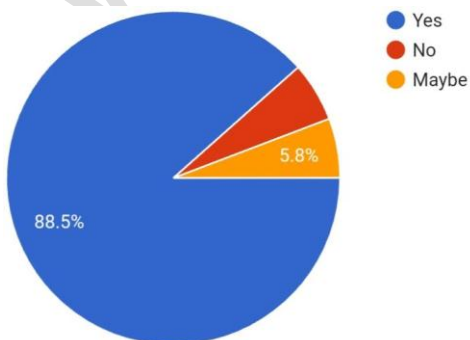
11.5% - Yes 75% - No
13.5% - Maybe

Q. 6) Is online education improving the student's attendance?



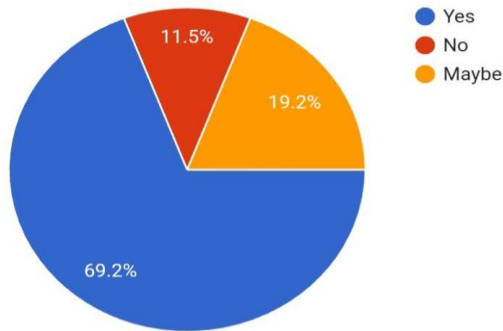
44.2% - Yes 32.7% - No
23.1% - Maybe

Q. 7) Do you think students are being less attentive during the online classes?



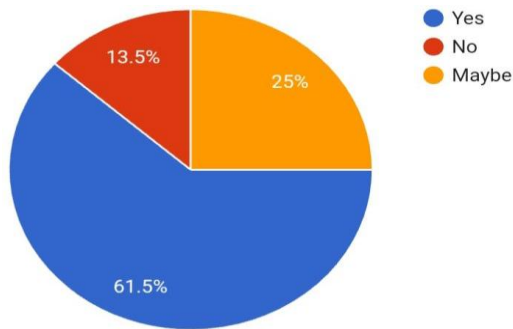
88.5% - Yes 5.7% - No 5.8% - Maybe

Q. 8) Have you felt any sense of isolation since the modes of education have been changed?



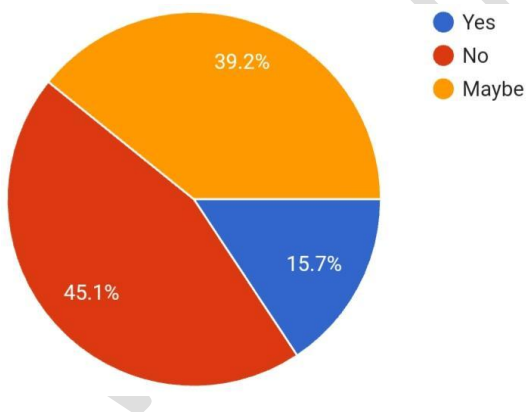
69.2% - Yes 11.5% - No
19.2% - Maybe

Q. 9) Are technological barriers placing a negative impact on online education?



61.5% - Yes 13.5% - No
25% - Maybe

Q. 10) Is a developing country like India fit to switch up the education mode? What do you think?



15.7% - Yes 45.1% - No
39.2% - Maybe

CONCLUSION :

Online education is such a beneficiary method of education if implemented correctly. It's the only choice for India right now as there's a pandemic going on where stepping out of the house can impose a deadly threat to human lives. But so far it's not the best choice for Indian education system. It's been a year since the institutions adapted the online mode but clearly it's difficult for the students as well as the teachers to actually accept and adapt. Although online education have so many advantages like one can literally have their classes from

anywhere. Any course and the knowledge is just a click away. People can save their time and money by not travelling to the institutes ; Learn anything, do multiple courses at one time ; continue their studies and do part/full time job at the same time. All together it seems like such a development way of learning.

But the real question is, is online education applicable for India? The answer is no, it is not the right structure for Indian education system. For a developing country like India, there are multiple drawbacks which is becoming a barrier for specially students to get the advantages of this development way of learning. From the student's interviews or the survey done of 50+ students one thing is crystal clear that for right now it is not welcomed in the right way into the education society. People have acknowledged the fact that there are some good points or advantages of online education that they are taking but they still want their old traditional offline education back. They have said learning depends on the environment, having face to face conversation, sitting in a comfortable situation among friends make a positive impact which leads to better learning. This is the reason most, if not all of the students have said that miss school and want the time to become normal as soon as possible. Now that the other studies have also shown that this making the students more isolated and creating several health issues like bad eyesight and headaches for looking at the screen for too long.

A large portion of India still belongs to rural area where having a smartphone and an internet connection is a form of luxury. In those areas it's nowhere close to reality where children are using smart phones or devices for educational purposes. Even if they do there are multiple siblings who use the same device so none of them can take all of their classes. There is also network issue which is stopping the students to get good quality.

The loading of the video is taking way more time, the connection is poor the video call is not being connected properly, there are so many problems that students are facing including this.

Recently the University Grant Commission (UGC) declared on 22nd may, 2021 that they are launching 'Blended Teaching and learning' where 40% of the course in higher education will be conducted via online mode and the rest of 60% will be via offline mode. This news broke out and the students from all over India were seen to be voicing against this. All India forums to Save Public Education, an umbrella organization representing the Indian students has made a petition against it which will be presented our Sri. Ram Nath Kovind, the President of India. In the petition it was said "without any evidence to vouch for the effectiveness of online classes, continuing in this mode affects the quality of academia as it cannot substitute the learning that takes place in classrooms."

By reviewing all the research work that has been done in this project, it is safe to say that India is still not ready to adapt online education as it's primary educational mode. The whole approach is unclear and unreachable to a large portion of students. If India wants its initiative to succeed the basic problems such as not having a device, not having electricity, not having network issues should be resolved immediately on a larger scale. A few more initiatives can be taken by the Indian education system are – launching courses on different native languages, innovative ways of teaching, giving the teachers proper training on how to use the apps and conduct classes, listening to students about their demands or suggestions on this new mode rather than just dumping on them and giving them no choice but to take the online classes. Only if these requirements are fulfilled a bridge will be built on the gap. To conclude this research it can be said that online education can be an effective way of learning and in

future it might be a primary mode of learning, but for now Indian education system needs development and it nowhere near to accept the online education mode as the only way of learning.

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