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Students' Perspective on Online Teaching-Learning System: A Case Study of Dimapur Government College

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted the educational sector, where schools, colleges and universities had to adapt to an alternative mode of teaching-learning system. This shift in teaching-learning method posed new challenges to those involved in the educational field where both teachers and learners had to acquaint and familiarise themselves with digital and online teaching-learning system. Hence, this study was carried out with the objective to assess the overall experience of students with online teaching-learning system. The study was carried out in Dimapur Government College (DGC) amongst 4th and 6th semester students. The common platform used for the online classes in DGC was Google classroom, Google meet and WhatsApp. The study found that online classes played a crucial role during the pandemic and it also gave them the advantage of a more casual and flexible approach to learning. However, its potency is less effective

than the conventional mode of classroom teaching-learning. The survey also found out that the major challenges faced during the online classes was poor network connectivity, lack of face-to-face interaction, reduced motivation to learn and inability to focus.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, online classes, connectivity.

Introduction

The Covid-19 has seen the closure of schools and colleges globally. It has created the largest disruption of education in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion students across the world (Guterres, 2020). The impact of the Covid-19 has brought about huge changes, affecting all aspects of life and forcing people to accept and adapt to a new mode of functioning in their daily lives and a new mode of learning.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a sudden change took place from the classroom setting to online learning and this brings up the possibility that the global education system will be permanently impacted by the pandemic (Li and Lalani, 2020).

Conversely, this new mode of learning with advancement in technology has also made learning more simple, interesting and engaging besides making it more convenient for the exchange of views and communication between teachers and students.

Teachers have been able to keep a tab on students' submission of assignments. Students have had the opportunity to become more independent learners besides giving them the

opportunity to learn new apps and platforms and develop their technological skills through the use of online platforms like Zoom, Google meet, Google classrooms, Microsoft teams, etc.

Some other advantages of online education are that the students can watch videos or go through materials as per their requirements. Students have the advantage of being able to take class wherever they are, and even in inclement weather, they can stay in the comfort of their homes. Learning new technology has made lessons fun and interesting whereas it would have been tedious in a physical classroom setting. Students can learn the latest technology and access learning.

Online learning has played a very important role during the lockdown but there are various setbacks such as the difficulty of availing smart phones and laptops especially by the underprivileged. In Bhutan, many learners are from villages and the students were occupied with helping with household chores and in fieldwork and as a result it was found to be difficult to keep up with the lessons. With the lockdown many families were economically affected and this made it difficult to acquire the needed devices and it was also difficult to acquire the needed data packs due to inflated prices (Pokhrel and Chetri, 2021).

Internet connectivity, particularly in less developed and remote regions, is one major issue which hampers online learning as many do not have access to adequate internet connections. Besides, there is also the problem of retention of student's attention as many students get distracted by the numerous activities available on screen. To avoid this lack of focus, teachers have also made immense efforts to design their online classes in a way as to be able to engage the attention of the students and make it interesting as there

are many distractions. Face to face classroom interaction offers the advantages of providing a stable environment and helping students, especially those in their formative years, with developing social skills and qualities of empathy and cooperation, helping them to develop the ability to handle real-life situations (Prakash, 2021).

However, there are also negative factors such as abuse of the internet whereby the students can access wrong things on the net instead of studying. Moreover, due to the lack of physical contact between the teacher and student, there arises a gap in communication and also doubts cannot be immediately clarified by the teacher. Online education also affects the physical health to some extent as students have to sit for six to eight hours in front of their mobiles and laptops and this can especially affect their eyesight. Furthermore, the freedom to access the numerous activities on the internet becomes a source of distraction for them (Devi, 2021).

The role of parents and teachers is important in this situation and both offline classes and online learning work together. Ultimately education will become hybrid technology as it has blended in with academics. This new system of education has helped teachers and students to develop new abilities and skills but it cannot take the place of offline learning (Prakash, 2021).

In India, educational institutions also made a shift to online teaching soon after the Government imposed nation-wide lockdown from 25th March, 2020. However, since online learning has never been taken up on such a large scale in India, it is like a massive social experiment (Muthuprasad, et. al., 2020).

When it comes to being motivation, satisfaction and having interaction, there is no comparison between the

online mode and offline mode of learning because there is a huge difference in the environment of learning in a physical classroom situation as compared to an online class (Bignoux and Sund, 2018). How students perceive online learning is of great importance because if they have a negative attitude towards online learning then it leads to loss of motivation and lack of persistence (Kauffman, 2015).

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to assess the experience and response of students to online teaching-learning system.

Study Area

This study has been conducted in Dimapur Government College, Dimapur, Nagaland covering the 4th and 6th semester students. It is affiliated to the Nagaland University and follows the curriculum prescribed by the University. Dimapur Government College offers three-year Degree Honours and General courses in Arts and Commerce. Under Arts Stream, Honours courses in Economics, Education, English, History, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology are offered. Under Commerce Stream, Honours in Accountancy & Finance and Management are offered.

The College is Accredited as 'B' grade by NAAC on 15.11.2015 and is recognized under section 2 (f) and 12 (B) of the UGC Act, 1956. Located in Oriental Colony under the Dimapur Municipal Council area sprawling over a campus area of 44,154 sq. mtrs. The College has 57 teaching faculty, 58 non-teaching staff and 1 technical staff with 1403 students enrolled in the current semester, i.e., 2021-22 even semester.

Methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected using structured questionnaires during 2022. For the survey, 370 undergraduate students of 4th and 6th semester of Dimapur Government College were randomly selected without replacement using convenient sampling technique. The universe consists of 891 students with 326 males and 565 females. The reason for selecting the 4th and 6th semester students is because they were the students who had first been introduced to online classes and continued in the online mode of learning for two consecutive semesters.

The data collected are tabulated showing percentage distributions of the respondents and appropriate diagrams are used to portray the results.

Findings and discussions

i) Students' response to whether they enjoyed/liked online classes

It was found that the overall response of the students as to whether they enjoyed online classes was that 33.25 per cent enjoyed/liked while 65 per cent did not enjoy and 1.76 per cent could not decide.

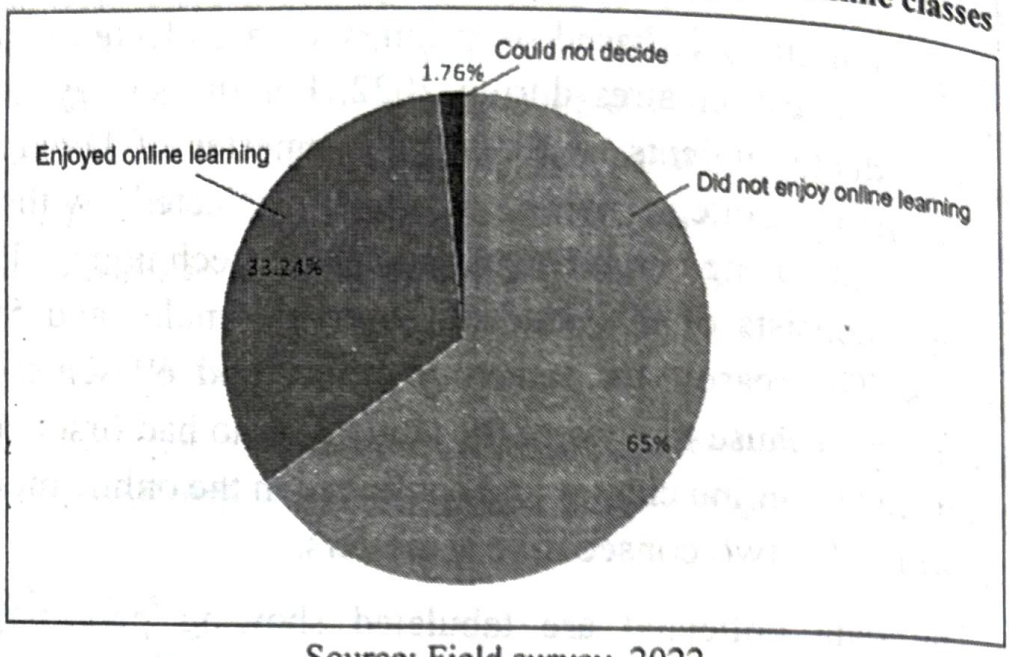
Table 1: Distribution of respondents on response to online learning

Questions	No. of response
Enjoyed online learning	123 (33.24%)
Did not enjoy online learning	240 (65%)
Could not decide	7 (1.76%)

Source: Field survey, 2022

Note: The figure in the brackets indicate percentage.

Fig. 1: Students response to whether they enjoyed online classes



Source: Field survey, 2022

ii) Reasons for not enjoying online learning

Based on the data collected from the respondents who did not enjoy online learning (65 per cent of the total respondents), a large majority (73 per cent) cited due to poor network as the main reason, while 19 per cent opined that it was due to lack of proper gadgets (phone/laptop) and 8 per cent due to both poor network and lack of proper gadgets.

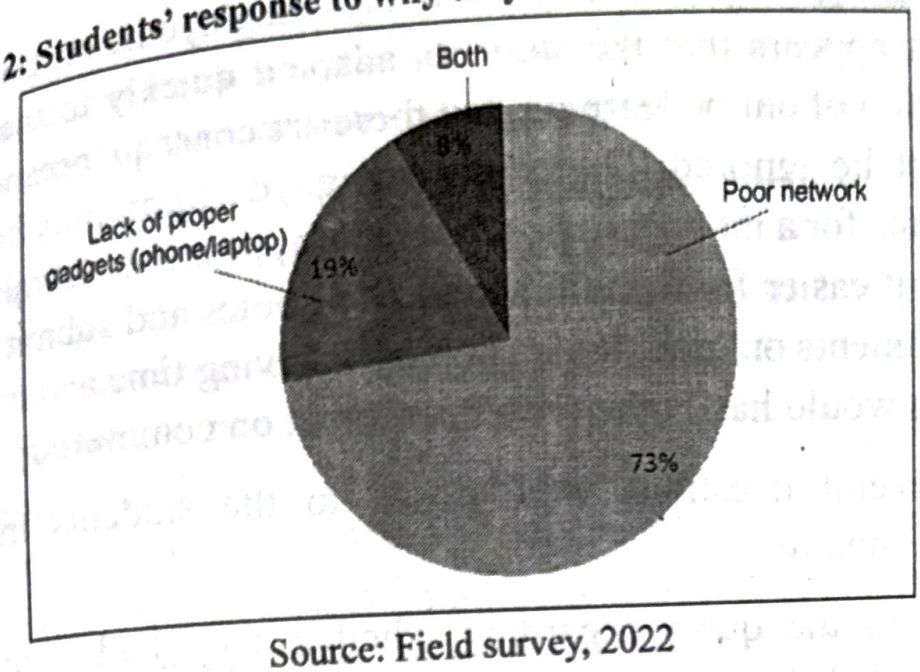
Table No 2: Reasons for not enjoying online class

Reasons	No. of response
Poor network	270 (73%)
Lack of proper gadgets	70 (19%)
Both	30 (8%)

Source: Field survey, 2022

Note: The figure in the brackets indicate percentage.

Fig. 2: Students' response to why they did not enjoy online learning



Source: Field survey, 2022

iii) Students' response to whether online classes were effective in their learning process.

The following table summarizes the response of the students to various questions which give an overall picture of their assessment of the online learning experience.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents on various Questions

Questions	Response in percentage	
	Yes	No
1. Did you regularly attend class	62.16%	37.84%
2. Did you feel motivated to learn	11.08%	88.91%
3. Face-to-face interaction is necessary in the learning process	82.97%	17.03%
4. Do you think ability to focus attention was affected	73.95%	26.05%
5. Online class helped in saving time to study	57.57%	42.43%
6.Were you able to complete assignments on time	82.43%	17.57%
7. Online class affected home/family life	21.35%	78.65%
8. Home environment affected online class	32.97%	67.03%
9. Parents/ guardians were comfortable with online classes	36.22%	63.78%
10. Do you prefer online classes	24.06%	75.94%

Source: Field survey, 2022

During the pandemic, online classes played a crucial role and it appears that the students adapted quickly to the new situation of online learning, but there are consequences which cannot be ignored. Online classes gave opportunity to the students for a more casual and flexible approach to learning. It made it easier for them to access their notes and submit their assignments on time. It also helped in saving time and money which would have otherwise been spent on commuting.

Several questions were posed to the students in the questionnaire.

i) As to the query regarding whether they had regularly attended classes, 62.16 per cent answered in the affirmative.

ii) Regarding the motivation to learn and whether classroom interaction was important for learning, students felt less motivation to learn unlike in a classroom setting, where they are under the direct supervision of the teachers and are able to interact with their classmates. Classroom interaction was mentioned as a key element in helping them in their learning process as they were able to clear up their doubts and enhance their knowledge.

iii) When stating about their ability to focus, 73.95 per cent of the students mentioned that their ability to focus during the online class was affected due to the plethora of activities that are abundantly available online such as chatting with friends, playing games, watching videos, etc.

iv) With regards to managing time for academics, 57.57 per cent stated that online classes gave them more time to study and 82.43 per cent said they were able to complete their assignments in time.

v) Regarding the impact of family environment on online classes and vice versa, 32.97 per cent stated that the home

environment negatively affected online classes. Students stated that home and family situation affected their online classes because of family expectation to carry out and fulfill domestic responsibilities as well as distractions from neighbours, guests and other surrounding noises, 21.35 per cent stated that the online classes affected family life because online teaching-learning system requires digital devices which are a source of stress on students with limited financial resources. There is pressing need for digital resources in order to access academic and educational information. Out of total respondents, 63.78 per cent students mentioned that the parents/guardians were not comfortable with online classes because for online classes since digital devices are imperative and sometimes in one particular family, if all the children have online classes simultaneously, then gadgets have to be provided to each child. Besides that, the home environment gets affected because favorable environment has to be maintained at home during the online classes.

Online education also affects the physical health to some extent as students have to sit for six to eight hours in front of their mobile phones and laptops and this can especially affect their eyesight. This was mentioned by a handful of students.

Students also felt that online assessments did not give a true picture of a student's performance and ability because online classes opened up a lot of avenues for unfair means especially during the exams. This was one point in particular where some students felt that they were cheated of a fair assessment and so felt greatly de-motivated to perform to the best of their ability.

Overall, the main issues that cause problems in online learning are access to information (network) and affordable digital devices.

The NEP 2020 envisages 40 per cent of enrollment in Higher Education through ODL (Open Distance Learning) by the year 2030. At present, the current mode of conducting online classes is limited to platforms like Google meet, Google classroom and WhatsApp. Especially in the hilly areas, network is not only poor but is very unstable and unpredictable due to fluctuations and this greatly hampers the online teaching-learning process. In keeping with the need for innovative teaching methods due to the onset of the pandemic, the educational system is being revamped to suit the online learning experience with the creation and introduction of MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses). This is a pressing need of the hour so that institutions, such as Dimapur Government College, are equipped to provide teachers and students with the right training and system/infrastructure in order to provide quality education via such teaching-learning systems.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it may be concluded that online classes play a limited role in the teaching learning process and with respect to Dimapur Government College, the main problems being the network connectivity and the lack of interaction with teachers and others in a classroom setting which leads to lack of focus and decreased motivation. In the future, online learning may become as or more effective than offline classes depending on the infrastructure developed in the college to equip and support teachers and students in the teaching learning process.

Learning effectively depends on organizing and selecting the content with expertise and in understanding the problems and limitations faced by the students and addressing the issues

which place a constraint on their learning capacity. Usage of digital devices and internet is a key factor which requires technical proficiency in the teaching-learning process which ultimately determines the effectiveness of online classes. In view of the fact that the online mode of learning has now assumed as an important aspect in teaching-learning system. Hence, both students and teachers need to prepare themselves with the new methods of online learning mechanism. Also, it is imperative that the institution should take all necessary and possible steps to develop the infrastructure to equip and support teachers and students for online teaching-learning process in future.

Suggestions

1. Adequate preparation/training for teachers and students on the use of Interactive Communication Tools (ICT).
2. Infrastructural expansion, both hardware and software are needed to facilitate online teaching-learning.
3. Selection of syllabus or content adequate to and feasible for online teaching-learning and deploying engaging features of virtual learning.
4. Dedicated approach between students and teachers and development of self-regulated learning among students.
5. Promote institutional and parental co-operation in order to encourage parents to provide the needed parental-emotional support to maximize learning outcomes.
6. Efforts to be made by the government and universities to incorporate online tools effectively and come up with effective policy interventions.

Limitations of the study

The present study has certain limitations:

1. The survey has been conducted in only 1 college and so it has limited data. A similar cross-sectional study covering more colleges might be able to give more comprehensive results.
2. The survey conducted could examine only limited issues on the subject. A more detailed survey covering other related issues could provide a better understanding of the online system.
3. With regard to analysis, the present study employs only simple statistical tools such as tables and diagrams, and calculation of percentages. Use of other statistical tools like correlation, regression, T-test, etc. would provide a more in-depth analysis and understanding.

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