InterViews: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Social Sciences
2022, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 111-118

ISSN: 2349-400X ©Saint Claret College, Ziro
https://doi.org/10.36061/IV.9.1.22.111.118

ARTICLE REVIEW

Title: Exploring Challenges of Online Education in COVID Times
Author(s): Deepak Pandit and Swati Agrawal
Journal: FIIB Business Review, vol. 11 no. 3, pp. 263–270.
DOI: 10.1177/2319714520986254

Reviewed by Ritwik Dutta[1]

Pandit and Agarwal (2022), in their article entitled "Exploring Challenges of Online Education in COVID Times", discussed the various requirements and preconditions of effective and widespread online education implementation in India and its main adversities. The concerned article was published in 2021 with a major focus on the effectiveness of online education in India and further areas of improvement in this regard. The article mainly covers the different accomplishments already achieved and challenges faced by the students, faculty members, and the organizational administration or management in implementing online education in the country during the COVID period.

This review intends to summarize the concerned article, offer certain feedback or comments regarding some selected aspects, and suggest a few areas that indicate future implications of the article's main topic. It ideally incorporates an effort to better understand online education's current and potential state in India, focusing on specific areas of future modification.

Summary

Different modes of online or digital education are prevalent in the education industry in the country, divided between the urban-rural segment based on the accessibility of online education and the perspectives of the stu-

1 *Ritwik Dutta* is a lecturer at the IQ City Unitedworld School of Business, Kolkata. Correspondence concerning this review must be sent to: *duttaritwik9@gmail.com*

dents, faculty members, and institutional management or administration. As an extension of the various individual perspectives on online education, the authors also highlighted the roles and responsibilities of these individual entities in further advancing the application of digital education in India with a concentration on the all-round development of the students.

With regards to the faculty perspective on digital education in the country, the major responsibilities of the faculty members can be majorly divided into academic and non-academic commitments, including monitoring student learning and motivation, evaluating the learning outcomes of the students, and evaluating student academic performance as part of the academic responsibilities, and ensuring student class engagement through online mode, class notes and material preparation in digital mode, academic documentations, etc. as crucial non-academic commitments. As observed, the faculty members of various academic institutions need to adapt to the digital modes of education and e-learning methods to adjust to the increasing digitalization of the entire education system. It has become a notable challenge for many of them to cope with the new and revised teaching methods in this post-COVID era, which is critical to the future effectiveness of online education in the country.

From the perspective of the current student generation, much like the faculty members (p. 265), it is highly critical for the students to effectively learn the various technical aspects of online education, such as operating electronic devices equipped with the online modes of conducting virtual digital classrooms, and deal with the technical complications while attending online classes. Additionally, as contended by the authors, the students also need to deal with the technical impediments to effective learning, such as lack of internet connectivity, inability to operate the electronic devices used for e-learning, insufficient infrastructural support required for digital education, and so forth (p. 265). They further observe that prolonged school closure and online classes during the COVID period have impacted the students' mental and physical health, hindered their all-around development and affecting their learning abilities (p. 266).

As far as the institutional roles and challenges are concerned, the management of the educational institutions must provide proper infrastructural support to the faculty members to facilitate the process of online or digi-

tal education (p.266). This includes conversion of essential documents into digital format, better and more effective delivery of class notes/worksheets/handouts, etc. In this respect, the institutions must also ensure an adequate support team to assist the faculty in establishing a convenient and productive digital learning environment. This would ascertain the optimum use of the available technology in enhancing the effectiveness of online education in the country (p. 267).

The authors contend that the divide between the urban and rural segments has historically diminished as internet penetration in India has increased from 4% in 2007 to 50% in 2020 (p. 267). Moreover, the article reported that based on secondary data collection, the online education system in India is currently valued at $247 million, and the number of users is expected to increase by nearly 1.6 million. Based on a survey conducted by the authors, out of 88% of students who had taken online class, approximately 43.2% preferred traditional offline classroom, and the remaining 45% was inclined toward mixed or hybrid classroom.

Critical Analysis

The central objective of the article is to reflect on the current condition of online or digital education in India and implicate the potential direction of online learning in the country. First, the authors claim to have collected the primary data on the student preference regarding the traditional offline and virtual online classes. However, the article notably fails to mention the source(s) of the primary data and the research methodology associated with the survey method. In this context, Koli and Saxena (2020) conducted a similar study and collected samples across 25 states in the country, mostly from various schools, and found online education as one of the strongly preferred learning modes in the country, especially during the post-COVID era. Jena (2020) conducted a study on the effect of COVID-19 on higher education across India and concluded that most educational institutions now prefer to conduct classes completely online.

Furthermore, the article mentions the major factors contributing to the rise of internet usage in the country but does not elaborate on these contributions for a better analysis or interpretation. It would have been useful and relevant to provide a detailed analysis of the individual attributes of the rapid growth of internet usage in India across both urban and rural segments

and then focus on its consequent impact on online education and learning growth in the country. Kansal et al. (2021) looked into the major factors responsible for the rapid spread of internet usage and internet penetration across the country and the effective use of various online teaching tools such as Microsoft Team, Zoom, Google Meet, and Webex. It represents a more holistic explanation of the major changes that took place in the country's education sector, especially during the post-COVID period. It is imperative to investigate in sufficient detail the factors responsible for the rise of internet usage and penetration across the whole country, as these can also be crucial in explaining the present state of online education and projecting the future prospect of the same.

A major challenge to the comprehensive growth of online education provides a more general or overall situation of online education in India without any demarcation between school level and higher education. Considering the central objective of the article, it is relevant to examine the difference in the impact of online education between schools and perhaps including Montessori and higher education. Pokhrel and Chetri (2021) conducted an empirical study on the adoption of various online education apps at both the school level as well as for UG and PG level courses in different colleges and universities across the country during the COVID period. The study contends that the adoption and challenges associated with online educational apps are relatively more for school-level students than their UG and PG-level counterparts.

Joshi et al. (2020) found that among the online educational apps, Udemy has become one of the leading ones over the last couple of years, especially among the country's UG and PG level students. These studies can possibly be some useful extension or contribution to the findings of Pandit and Agarwal (2022) regarding the differential impact of online education for the school level and the UG or PG level students and the associated challenges with it. Furthermore, from a policy framework, it would be useful to identify at which educational level the infrastructural support needs to be strengthened to enhance online education's effectiveness.

As an important implication of the findings of Pandit and Agarwal (2022), the socio-economic impact of the new normal educational culture or system also needs to be examined in the post-COVID period. The use

of modern technological tools and digital teaching methods have increased staggering with the advent of online classes and learning during the COVID times (Arora Goyal, Chintalapudi, and Mittal, 2020). The incorporation of digital education apps such as Udemy, UpGrad, Vedantu, Toppr, Unacademy, Byju's, etc. have increased remarkably over the last two to three years as digital education in the country is increasingly gaining momentum at both school and higher educational level. Therefore, the comprehensive growth of digital education in the country has evidently led to the increasing application of modern and advanced technological tools and methods in the education system, thereby becoming a prime reason for the further development of technologically competent and economically strong India (Wang, 2021). This can essentially impel the country's economic development by inducing new ideas of digital entrepreneurship in the educational sector and promoting economic progress to an individual level by opening up new sources of employment.

Future Research

The article broadly explores the challenges associated with the widespread implementation of online education in the country and the prospect for all levels of education. In this context, the authors discussed the various limitations of online learning and teaching faced by the students, faculty members of various institutions, and institution management. Kansal, Gautam, Chintalapudi, Jain, and Battineni (2021) looked into online education's managerial and policy-making implications in light of these challenges highlighted by Pandit and Agarwal (2022). The social and economic implications of online education in the country are convincingly evident and can be quite a strong means of ensuring sustainable economic development. It is also a strong tool for ascertaining technological progress in the education sector as the various tools of e-learning are being increasingly used at all levels of education (Chatterjee and Chakraborty, 2021). Hence, based on similar studies or research, it is a highly conducive platform or foundation to explore the future implications of online education along these abovementioned aspects. It is also crucial to look into the potential modifications that such digitalization of the education industry can induce in the teaching methods and infrastructural facilities of the institutions that can possibly change the entire structure and system of the education sector in the country. Based on this perspective, the authors have examined how the increasing use of various educational and e-learning applications can potentially change the teaching methods and the

learning capacities of students from all levels of education, and the effects of such changes are expected to vary across different educational levels. Therefore, in view of the challenges of online education for students, faculty members, and educational institutes and their proposed resolution, as highlighted in the paper, it can be recommended that future researchers consider and evaluate these critical points and incorporate them into their studies.

Furthermore, another major impact of the widespread implementation of online education could be the impact on the mental health and academic performance of the students. With increasing focus on digital learning methods and online classes by the institutions, the students are deprived of direct and open communication between the students and faculty members, which can facilitate effective learning and much better resolution of the topic and subject-related doubts and clarifications (Brooks et al., 2020). In such circumstances, prolonged periods of staying at home and deprivation from direct faculty mentorship and attention can cause negative repercussions on the mental health of the students, possibly because of irregular physical routine, sleep patterns, unhealthy and untimely dietary patterns, and so forth can cause stress and severe depression among the students (Brazendale et al., 2017). Hence, policymakers and educators need to consider especially the mental health impacts of widespread digitalization of online education in the country before implementing any kind of policy support for online education.

Concluding Remarks

The future of the education sector in the country is heading rapidly towards absolute digitalization especially following the recent pandemic times. As implied by the research conducted by the authors, there are several important implications, including technology-oriented learning and teaching environment, overall economic development, higher employment generation, and entrepreneurial growth, especially in the digital space. The future of the education industry in India is certainly heading towards widespread digitalization and intensive mechanization. In this context, it is highly necessary to enhance the infrastructural facilities and support to the student community, faculty members, and the institutional support staff to facilitate the adaptability process and the effectiveness of the digital learning environment. However, the shortcomings of the comprehensive digitalization of the education industry

need to be considered while framing policies related to the implementation of digital education in India. Therefore, the policy considerations pertaining to online classes or the overall digitalization process must encompass the various pros and cons of online education in the country, thereby emphasizing maximizing the overall effectiveness of this process, especially during the post-COVID period.

References:

Arora, M., Goyal, L.M., Chintalapudi, N., & Mittal, M. (2020). Factors affecting digital education during COVID-19: A statistical modeling approach. *2020 5th International Conference on Computing, Communication and Security (ICCCS)*. doi: 10.1109/icccs49678.2020.9277370

Brazendale, K., Beets, M. W., Weaver, R. G., Pate, R. R., Turner-McGrievy, G. M., Kaczynski, A. T., Chandler, J. L., Bohnert, A., & von Hippel, P. T. (2017, July 26). Understanding differences between summer vs. school obesogenic behaviors of children: The structured days hypothesis. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and physical activity,* 14, 100. doi: 10.1186/s12966-017-0555-2

Brooks, S.K., Webster, R.K., Smith, L.E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G.J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: Rapid review of the evidence. *Lancet,* 395, 912-920. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3532534

Chatterjee, I., & Chakraborty, P. (2021). Use of information communication technology by medical educators amid COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems,* 49(3), 310-324. doi:10.1177/0047239520966996

Jena, P. K. (2020). Impact of pandemic COVID-19 on education in India. *International Journal of Current Research (IJCR),* 12(7), 12582-12586. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3691506

Kansal, A. K., Gautam, J., Chintalapudi, N., Jain, S., & Battineni, G. (2021). Google trend analysis and paradigm shift of online education platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Infectious Disease Reports,* 13(2), 418–428. doi: 10.3390/idr13020040

Koli, M., & Saxena, S. (2020). Education System Post COVID-19 in India. *International Journal of Advance Research and Innovation,* 8(4), 302-305. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3743341

Pandit, D., & Agrawal, S. (2022). Exploring challenges of online education in COVID times. *FIIB Business Review,* 11(3), 263-270. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2319714520986254

Pokhrel, S., & Chhetri, R. (2021). A literature review on impact of COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning. *Higher Education for the Future,* 8(1), 133–141. doi: 10.1177/2347631120983481