



REMOTE LEARNING DURING COVID – 19 IN HIGHER EDUCATION – STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

Remote Learning as a concept has been around since a long time. But the current pandemic has brought it to the forefront. We hear terms like online learning, video recording, webinars used predominantly in the current scenario. Education has shifted from the classroom to online platforms.

Teachers have to now compulsorily take live lectures online, go live on YouTube and many other platforms (synchronous teaching) or by uploading recorded lectures and also giving online assignments, homework (asynchronous teaching), to provide continuity in education to the student community.

However, the perspective of student community needs to be taken into consideration. Students are the main beneficiaries of the teaching process – be it in classroom or online (synchronous or asynchronous). There is a need to identify whether online teaching learning is actually benefitting the students.

This study is an attempt to find out the perspective of students pursuing Higher Education towards Remote Learning especially during this pandemic and whether it would be acceptable to them in the future as well. It also attempts to find out whether Remote Learning is set to become the new norm. The study would try to find out the issues relevant to Remote Learning and whether there exists an Urban – Suburban divide in the comfort with Remote Learning process amongst students.

A survey of around 100 Commerce Students would be conducted to find out their perspective about Remote Learning. Statistical tools would be used to find out whether an Urban and Suburban divide exists in the way students are comfortable with Remote Learning.

Key words: *Remote learning, Higher Education, synchronous, asynchronous, pandemic*



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Introduction:

Since ancient times, education has been considered important. Traditionally, classroom teaching learning has been the mode of teaching learning. The current pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented need for adapting



to remote teaching learning.

According to Merriam Webster Distance Learning(Remote Learning): " method of study where teachers and students do not meet in a classroom but use the Internet, e-mail, mail, etc., to have classes".

Remote Learning is a learning which basically happens when the teacher or instructor and learner do not come face to face in a classroom lecture. The teaching learning happens remotely i.e. lectures through online platforms/applications, recorded lectures, online presentations and so on.

Due to this pandemic many colleges and institutions affiliated to various Universities have resorted to remote teaching to provide continuity to students in their learning. It must be said that this has led to a tremendous need for the teachers and students to adapt to this new reality. This study focuses on the Commerce students' perspective from Thane and Mumbai on Remote Learning.

Objectives of the Study:

- To study the perspective of students during covid.
- To draw the conclusion

Research Design:

This research follows the Convenience sampling. The data is collected from 96 Commerce Students from Suburban and Urban Areas – Thane and Mumbai.

The study is titled as :

“Remote Learning during Covid – 19 in Higher Education – Student’s Perspective”

Hypothesis:

H0 : There is no difference in the comfort level of Suburban and Urban Students with Remote Learning

H1: There is a difference in the comfort level of Suburban and Urban Students with Remote Learning

Review of Literature:

There are many definitions and versions of definitions of synchronous and asynchronous type of learnings. The important components for understanding the definition of synchronous learning are time and media. (Shahabadi &Uplane).

Khan (2005, 2006) defines synchronous and asynchronous based on these components.Synchronous learning is when the interaction between learners and teachers is through Web on real time. Whereas asynchronous learning is when the learning happens anytime, anywhere ie. No time and geographical constraints.

Stefen Hrastanski (2008) suggested that the synchronous e-learning be used for reflecting upon complex issues whereas asynchronous e-learning can be used when the topic is comparatively lesser complex, or when the tasks need to be planned or participants need to get acquainted to a topic or group.

Adekunle I Obesa (2013) were of opinion that e-learning is going to replace the traditional type of teaching and learning methods slowly and steadily.

Online learning is not new to India. Coursera founded in 2012 founded in USA has 2nd highest number of learners from India preceded by America. Unfortunately, the urban, suburban and rural segregation to this



number is unavailable.

This pandemic has opened up opportunities for learners to learn from not only from portals like Coursera, Udemy, MOOCs but even the colleges where they have enrolled into.

Many individuals as well as libraries and websites have opened up their portals for individuals to surf through the books available online on their websites. This would certainly help learners not only to gain knowledge but also to complete assignments and get more information on the topic discussed in online lecture by teacher. The advantages of e-learning can be understood better in today's situation where due to pandemic Covid-19 teachers and learners are not coming face to face and still the process of teaching & learning has not stopped. One more advantage of e-learning is reaching many learners without any extra cost. E-learning also enables the learners to complete assignments and tasks easily and effectively. Also, it helps teachers to share data and learning material available on internet easily with the learners. Synchronous tools like video conferencing and web conferencing help learners to interact with the teachers and get their doubts cleared. Learner can ask question through chat which can be answered by the teacher later in case the time is a constraint at that particular time. Online quizzes as a tool for synchronous e-learning gives feedback to the teacher related to the learning level of the learner. Asynchronous eLearning tools like video streaming and narrated slide shows help learners to learn the concept at their convenient time.

The access to internet and computers is quite low in India, especially in Sub-urban and Rural areas. Due to the advancements like smartphones the percentage of learners having access to internet and e-learning would be comparatively more. But the completion of assignments and tasks would certainly be difficult. The bandwidth as well as the connectivity to internet could have technical issues which may disturb the process of learning. The synchronous e-learning tools like web conferencing and video conferencing could be expensive as well as bandwidth quality dependent as suggested by Adekunle I Obasa (2013).

Whereas the asynchronous methods of e-learning like video streaming, narrated slide shows, ebook sharing could be static and do not give opportunity for the learners as well as teachers to interact. Bandwidth quality and financial burden on learners is still a concern for the country like India. Hence, these factors need to be considered while using both kind of e-learning. Covid-19 came up as a surprise for both Indian learners as well as teachers. So, both the parties were not trained enough for e-learning. In case of colleges, the chances of the learners getting distracted during their e-learning would be more since there is no control over the learners.

An article in The Hindu, Shyam Menon, Professor at the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi and former Vice Chancellor, Ambedkar University, Delhi), mentioned that learning at Higher classes is more than just sharing information. It has more to do with exploring, practical learning and 'seek solutions to complex problems'. It is also to enable learn and 'deconstruct and evaluate given knowledge'. This is possible only when teacher learners and peers are in social settings.

In an article in ET Government.com, Richa Choudhary mentions that in face of Covid-19 India needs 'open



source digital learning and Learning Management Software” like Diksha platform which may help learners to get access to information for learning.

Dr. Fernandes (2020) expressed during a webinar at ORF, Mumbai that during Pandemic the overloading of network connections had poor connectivity loss during learning process.

Dr. Rajbans Singh Gill, Professor & Director Centre for Public Policy & Governance pointed out that limitations with regards to connectivity and electricity is a challenge for online but the immediate need for online learning today in times of Pandemic is that learning should not be hampered to lessen the effect of pandemic on learning and teaching.

Data Analysis:

Summary of Findings:

From the remote learning questionnaire which had questions ranging from types of remote learning, comfort with remote learning, orientation about remote learning, challenges faced in remote learning and so on, following were the findings:

Testing of Hypothesis:

Hypothesis:

H₀ : There is no difference in the comfort level of Suburban and Urban Students with Remote Learning

H₁: There is a difference in the comfort level of Suburban and Urban Students with Remote Learning

Chi Square Test based on the responses:

Comfort Level with Remote Learning

Observed

| | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Total |
|----------|--------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|-------|
| Suburban | 3 | 11 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 32 |
| Urban | 13 | 19 | 21 | 8 | 3 | 64 |
| Total | 16 | 30 | 33 | 11 | 6 | 96 |

The chi square of the above data gave a df 4 at 0.05 level of significance and the critical value (CV) arrived at was 9.488 whereas the $\chi^2 = 2.59$. Since, $\chi^2 < CV$ we fail to reject the null hypothesis and we can conclude that there is no difference in the comfort level of Suburban and Urban Students with Remote Learning.

- Students were given orientation and had training sessions from their college to increase their comfort with Remote Learning.
- Most of the colleges resorted to Zoom App or Microsoft Teams and some even resorted to recorded lectures
- The problems faced by students were: they couldn't get the same personal touch and couldn't get feedback from their teachers immediately.



- There are a lot of distractions in Remote Learning and technical issues crop up regularly with teachers struggling to handle the new technology at times.
- It is however interesting to note that students felt they were likely to go for blending learning courses in the future

Conclusion:

Remote Learning is here to stay. However, the consideration towards the comfort level of student and technical issues need to be sorted out to make it a more comfortable and a pleasant learning experience.

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