

Challenges of Online Teaching-Learning Process

Samrat Dawn
Student
Institute of Engineering and Management, Kolkata

Abstract

Down the abyss of time, the human society concentrated deeply on preserving, enriching and spreading knowledge of different streams and nature. In the process of extending the boundaries of the human knowledge, people have passed down their lifelong learnings and experiences to the next generation. This process was characterised with physical congregation of the tutor and the tutee, and was followed for over thousands of years until the twenty first century where due to technological advancement and outburst of a pandemic, the platform of learning and teaching was delocalised. This led to the fabrication of the online method of learning and teaching which although being highly effective carries its own bunch of loopholes. This paper focuses on the challenges of the online teaching and learning process with an intention to discuss their causes, effects and solution.

Keywords: Congregation, Advancement, Delocalised, Fabrication, Loopholes.

Introduction: The Traditional Method

The traditional method of learning and teaching is marked by the preparation of a condensed lecture of a specific course by a tutor followed by its delivery to a group of tutees with an interest to learn that subject. Although being too simple, this method is highly effective owing to the fact that a physical assembly forces a student to go beyond his tolerant boundaries and urges him to take keen interest into the subject matter. The student gets constantly monitor by his tutor, which assists the tutor to read his body language. Reading the body language of the students during a lecture gives the teacher an idea of how deeply a student has immersed himself into the vastness of the course. The traditional method of knowledge impartation is highly valued as it reduces the burden on the students. When a person starts learning something from a prescribed source of text, the pre-described and pre-discussed topics during the lectures helps the student to grasp the topic quickly. The lecturer can cater to the different needs of the student in an offline class and can devote his time to nourish the different weak spots of the different individuals. The tutor can segregate his time limit and can help individuals with different learning pace to understand a topic to the greatest extent possible. This method also promotes interaction through debates, quizzes, doubt-clearing sessions and other forms of formal communication which enhances and polishes the pre-learned concepts of the students. Doubt-clearing sessions followed by debates helps the students to get a clear idea of what they have understood and what sectors of their course needs a greater level of attention in the near future. Quizzes urges the students to work harder to polish their level of understanding as in a public interrogative competition, they have to rely solely on their own levels of understanding of the subject matter. A greater level of understanding harnesses the power to defend its validity in front of a resilient party. It improves self confidence and promotes rigidity to one's learnings and beliefs.

Background: The Online Method

The online method of learning and teaching is a result of advancement in the field of technology and resources. In this method, teachers and students do not meet physically but arrange for a virtual meeting. This type of meeting is arranged with the help of smart devices like computers and smartphones and it relies on the connectivity of the internet. This method of teaching is globally recognized as teachers from various parts of the globe can connect with students worldwide without any hassle for transportation or physical arrangement.

This method of teaching apart from live classes also have a different aspect in the form of recorded lectures. Teachers in this method record their teachings and emulsify them to form a lecture which can be played over and over again in a web-oriented platform. This method has proven out to be highly efficient as the lectures are available on the go and students can go over the same course over and over again without any extra effort from the tutor's side. This method is also widely accepted by some students as they can maintain their own pace and can overcome their worries of the courses being rushed beyond their speed of grasp. Although this method is a great alternative to the traditional method of learning, yet it carries several drawbacks which holds its own weightage.

Analysis: Online learning challenges encountered by the students**Adaptability**

Students who have been attending offline classes for a great amount of time find it difficult to suddenly switch to an online method of learning. Students who are predominantly from a rural or an underdeveloped part of the country find greater adaptability issues in this form of learning. The solution to this problem lies with the subject teachers who can guide the students in the initial stages of the switch. Artificial intelligence-based apps and webpages are also available which can contribute to this cause.

Technical Issues

The problem of a lagging and an unstable internet connection is the most important factor that contributes to the various forms of difficulties faced by a tutee in an online class. A slow internet connection would contribute to uneven transfer of data, leading to data loss. This problem is highly substantial as most of the students in the country are not well equipped with a high-speed internet connection. A solution to this problem lies in the purchase of a high-speed internet connection at a higher price rate.

Computer Knowledge

Many students lack technical knowledge like app handling. Essential apps like MS-Word, MS Excel, MS-PowerPoint, and so on are still out of the knowledge bounds of many students. This creates a problem for the tutees as they are not able to perform essential tasks like making projects, presentations, virtual letters and so on. A solution to this problem lies with watching tutorials that are available on online platforms like YouTube.

Self-motivation and Distraction

Due to the lack of physical interaction, students get demotivated and get reluctant in completing their daily chores. They start losing interest in the subject matter and miss out on essential homework and other formal works. Due to the monotonicity at their houses, they also become highly impatient and get distracted by small stuffs and factors. These two factors can be easily tackled by switching the environment and by being more interactive at the online platform of learning during the live classes.

Communication and Feedback

Students who are introverts in actual life, fail to communicate in the online classes out of the fear of being judged. In an offline platform, a tutor can read their body language and could cross-question them to get an idea about their doubts which cannot be done in an online class. The lack of communication creates a gap between the teacher and the students due to which the teacher is forced to rely solely on the performance of the students in the virtual exams and assessments. A solution to this problem can be found with the teacher constantly urging his/her students to interact in the online platform.

Learning Styles

Some students are good at adapting to changes while some are comparatively slow at grasping concepts. Students with a learning style characterised with comparatively low learning pace find it difficult to completely switch to the online method in a short period of time. This problem can be resolved if their teachers and mentors successfully furnish them with assistance about the online platform at a constant rate.

Analysis: Online teaching challenges encountered by the teachers

Engaging Students

Due to a shift in the platform of teaching, the students find it difficult to concentrate in the class and get easily distracted. This problem reduces the efficiency of the students and this creates a burden on the teachers to give constant efforts to engage the students into the subject matter. Teachers can overcome this problem by being more interactive and by using different tools like humour, videos and pictures to maintain the level of interest and concentration of the students..

Time Management

Due to the various platform related problems of the online method of teaching, teachers take more time to formulate a course structure along with creating a lecture emulsification that satisfies both the content requirements as well as the time constraints of the class. Various technical issues delay the working process, which in return effects the working time of the students. Hence, in an online method of teaching, teachers have to put extra effort and have to be more productive than usual to create online study materials and lectures for the students.

Assessment and Fear of Cheating

Due to the online form of assessment and submission, students are seen to have a greater amount of questions about the assessment for the teachers. The factor of reduced communication with the concerned faculty fuels to this cause and the students are observed to experience greater levels of difficulty with the methods and the format of the online assessment taking system. This puts the teacher under pressure to clear all the queries of the student and also forces the teacher to cater to those students who fail to appear for the assessment. With the method of online testing, the teacher gets horrified by the notion of the students taking unfair means for the sake of gaining extra marks in the class tests and exams. There is no permanent solution to this problem but a remedial solution can be to constantly monitor the students during the online exams via their device's webcams.

Course Content

Courses designed for the offline method of learning and teaching needs to get redesigned and reassembled for the online method of knowledge expansion. Lectures needs to be converted into videos, handwritten notes need to be converted into presentations and several books need to be converted into eBooks. This puts a lot of strain on the teachers and the support staff. There's no absolute remedy to this problem other than the teacher's endless and selfless hard work towards the completion of the structure for the online procedure of learning and teaching.

Feedback

Students can easily provide their feedback on the course through their tests and assessments but teachers find it difficult to provide their feedback to each and every individual student owing to the time constraints of the online platform. Hence it gets difficult for the student as their mistakes get less pinpointed by the concerned faculty. This puts more burden on the students to step up their work. Alternatively, if the students fail to provide their feedback to the teacher, it gets difficult for the teacher to pinpoint the areas of problem and misconceptions. This leads to miscommunication which further leads to a deep hole in the conceptual segment of the students.

Learning Management System

Teachers find it difficult to unleash their complete potential via the online method of teaching. Their efficiency gets reduced due to the platform restrictions and they find it difficult to traverse across the entire course that they designed for an offline class. They fail to furnish the students with the essential materials and sometimes due to the event of using a new platform, they fail to even understand the platform due to which they stand helpless. Even during assessments and tests, they find it difficult to manage concurrently the different components of the web. The only solution for the teachers, revolving this problem, remains with spending more time in the online environment to get accustomed with it.

Conclusion

The expansion and widespread of internet connectivity have made the online method of learning and teaching highly efficient, formal and convenient, yet it carries several flaws which cannot be ignored due to their significance at such a widescale extension. Although the online method of learning and teaching is attracting many students to adapt it due to its convenience, yet it is not completely full proof and needs to be nourished cautiously and hastily. Several plans formally drawn for the offline platform have to be re-oriented and has to be sketched for the online platform of knowledge sharing. Keeping in mind the variation of the students attending the classes, characterized with their mixed personality traits and learning pace, the blueprint of the course structure has to be set up carefully without having any exceptions for special cases. Though in the present time, when modernisation with the help of artificial intelligence is still in progress, yet it is surely a possibility that in the near future, when technology will become a day to day part of everyone's life, this process of knowledge enhancement will surely become flawless.

References

Journals and Papers

- “The Challenges of Online Learning Supporting and Engaging the Isolated Learner” by Jenna Gillett-Swan (Queensland University of Technology).
- “The Challenges of Effective Online Instruction and Student Learning” by Renee Wallace (College of Education Florida, A&M University Tallahassee, Florida).
- “Online teaching-learning in higher education during lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic” by Lokanath Mishra (Faculty Development Centre, Department of Education, Mizoram University, Aizawl, Mizoram, India), Tushar Gupta (Department of Education, Mizoram University, Aizawl, Mizoram, India), Abha Shree (Department of Education, Mizoram University, Aizawl, Mizoram, India).
- “Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis” by Shivangi Dhawan.

Websites

- <https://www.embibe.com/exams/online-learning-challenges-and-solutions>
- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/edutrends-india/challenges-of-quality-in-online-learning>
- <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-to-overcome-challenges-of-online-classes-due-to-coronavirus>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_learning_in_higher_education

