PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER TRAINEES TOWARDS ONLINE CLASSES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

An attempt is made by virtue of this study to ascertain the perceptions of teacher trainees towards online classes during COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher trainees studying during the academic year 2020-21 in Chandragiri College of Education for Women (B.Ed), Shivabasav Nagar, Belagavi were chosen as the sample of the study and about 100 teacher trainees of both first and third semesters were drawn by using purposive sampling technique. The data were collected using the questionnaire constructed by Dr.Shivakumar G.M (2021). The data was collected using google forms. The collected data were analyzed using percentiles.
Key words: *Online learning, teacher trainees, COVID-19 pandemic etc.*

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions whether they be schools, colleges, and universities everywhere are currently based only on traditional methods of learning, that is, they follow the traditional set up of face-to-face lectures in a classroom. Although many academic units have also started blended learning, still a lot of them are stuck with old procedures. But due to sudden outbreak of a deadly disease called COVID-19 caused by a Corona Virus (SARS-CoV-2) shook the entire world. The World Health Organization declared it as a pandemic. This situation challenged the education system across the world and forced educators to shift to an online mode of teaching overnight. Many academic institutions that were earlier reluctant to change their traditional pedagogical approach had no option but to shift entirely to online teaching–learning. In this study the perceptions of teacher trainees towards online classes was ascertained in the time of crisis and thereby give suggestions for academic institutions the manner of dealing with challenges associated with online learning.

The deadly and infectious disease Corona Virus also known as Covid-19 has deeply affected the global economy. This tragedy has also shaken up the education sector, and this fear is likely to resonate across the education sector globally. The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak forced many schools and colleges to remain closed temporarily. Several areas are affected worldwide and there is a fear of losing this whole ongoing semester or even more in the coming future. Various schools, colleges, and universities have discontinued in-person teaching. As per the assessment of the researchers, it is uncertain to get back to normal teaching anytime soon. As social distancing is preeminent at this stage, this will have negative effects on learning opportunities. Educational units are struggling to find options to deal with this challenging situation. These circumstances make us realize that scenario planning is an urgent need for academic institutions. This is a situation that demands humanity and unity. There is an urgent need to protect and save our students, faculty, academic staff, communities, societies, and the nation as a whole.

Several arguments are associated with e-learning. Accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning, and policy are some of the arguments related to online pedagogy. It is said that online mode of learning is easily accessible and can even reach to rural and remote areas. It is considered to be a relatively cheaper mode of education in terms of the lower cost of transportation, accommodation, and the overall cost of institution-based learning. Flexibility is another interesting aspect of online learning; a learner can schedule or plan their time for completion of courses available online. Combining face-to-face lectures with technology gives rise to blended learning and flipped classrooms; this type of learning environment can increase the learning potential of the students. Students can learn anytime and anywhere, thereby developing new skills in the process leading to life-long learning. The government also recognizes the increasing importance of online learning in this dynamic world.

The severe explosion of Corona Virus disease can make us add one more argument in terms of online learning, that is, online learning serves as a panacea in the time of crisis.

Literature Review

Rapid developments in technology have made distance education easy (McBrien et al., 2009). "Most of the terms (online learning, open learning, web-based learning, computer-mediated learning, blended learning, m-learning, for ex.) have in common the ability to use a computer connected to a network, that offers the possibility to learn from anywhere, anytime, in any rhythm, with any means" (Cojocariu et al., 2014).Online learning can be termed as a tool that can make the teaching–learning process more student-centered, more innovative, and even more flexible. Online learning is defined as "learning experiences in synchronous or

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asynchronous environments using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere (independent) to learn and interact with instructors and other students" (Singh & Thurman, 2019). The synchronous learning environment is structured in the sense that students attend live lectures, there are real-time interactions between educators and learners, and there is a possibility of instant feedback, whereas asynchronous learning environments are not properly structured. In such a learning environment, learning content is not available in the form of live lectures or classes; it is available at different learning systems and forums. Instant feedback and immediate response are not possible under such an environment (Littlefield, 2018). Synchronous learning can provide a lot of opportunities for social interaction (McBrien et al., 2009). Amidst this deadly virus spread such online platforms are needed where (a) video conferencing with at least 40 to 50 students is possible, (b) discussions with students can be done to keep classes organic, (c) internet connections are good, (d) lectures are accessible in mobile phones also and not just laptops, (e) possibility of watching already recorded lectures, and (f) instant feedback from students can be achieved and assignments can be taken (Basilaia et al., 2020).

Online Teaching Is No More an Option, It Is a Necessity

The major part of the world is on quarantine due to the serious outbreak of this global pandemic Covid-19 and therefore many cities have turned into phantom cities and its effects can be seen in schools, colleges, and universities too. Betwixt all this online teaching and online learning can be termed as the *panacea for the crisis*. The Corona Virus has made institutions to go from offline mode to online mode of pedagogy. This crisis will make the institutions, which were earlier reluctant to change, to accept modern technology. This catastrophe will show us the lucrative side of online teaching and learning. With the help of online teaching modes, we can sermonize a large number of students at any time and in any part of the world. All institutions must scramble different options of online pedagogical approaches and try to use technology more aptly. Many universities around the world have fully digitalized their operations understanding the dire need of this current situation. Online learning is emerging as a victor ludorum amidst this chaos. Therefore, the quality enhancement of online teaching–learning is crucial at this stage. Online education in Chinese universities has increased exponentially after the Covid-19 outbreak. There was an overnight shift of normal classrooms into e-classrooms, that is, educators have shifted their entire pedagogical approach to tackle new market conditions and adapt to the changing situations. During this tough time, the concern is not about whether online teaching–learning methods can provide quality education, it is rather how academic institutions will be able to adopt online learning in such a massive manner (Carey, 2020).

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Resistance to change will not help any educational unit across the world. They will be judged on their pace to adapt to the changes in such a short period and their ability to maintain the quality. The reputation of educational units is on stake and under scrutiny. How well they behave and how well they maintain their quality of education amidst this crisis shows their adapting capabilities. The shift from face-to-face lectures to online classes is the only possible solution. Indeed, academic institutions would not be able to transform all of their college curricula into and online resource overnight. Distance, scale, and personalized teaching and learning are the three biggest challenges for online teaching. Innovative solutions by institutions can only help us deal with this pandemic (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). There is a requirement of a quick shift to online learning mode; therefore, the products by Google can be really useful under such problematic situations; they are (a) Gmail, (b) Google Forms, (c) Calendars, (d) G-Drive, (e) Google Hangouts, (f) Google Jam board and Drawings, (g) Google Classroom, and (h) Open Board Software (not a Google product, helps in recording meetings in the form of files). These tools can successfully be used as an alternative for face-to-face classes (Basilaia et al., 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The present research is entitled: 'Perceptions of Teacher Trainees Towards Online Classes During COVID-19 Pandemic'.

Objectives of the Study

To ascertain the perceptions of teacher trainees towards online classes during COVID-19 pandemic.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited only to ascertaining perceptions of teacher trainees of first and third semesters of Chandragiri College of Education for Women (B.Ed), Shivabasav Nagar, Belagavi.

Methodology and Design of the Study

This study has been conducted by employing descriptive survey method.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

All the teacher trainees studying during the academic year 2020-21 are the population of the study. Whereas the 100 teacher trainees studying in first and third semesters of Chandragiri

College of Education for Women (B.Ed), Shivabasav Nagar, Belagavi were chosen as the sample of this study by using purposive sampling technique.

Tools Used for Collection of Data

The questionnaire for assessing perceptions of teacher trainees towards online classes during COVID-19 pandemic constructed by Dr.Shivakumar G.M (2021) was used for collecting the data from the respondents.

Procedure of Data Collection

The data was collected using google forms by sending the link of the questionnaire to the respondents.

Statistical Techniques Employed

The collected data were analyzed using percentiles.

Findings of the study

- About 95.5% of teacher trainees opined that, online classes allow them to attend classes irrespective of geographical barriers, whereas 4.5% did not agree with the statement.
- About 86.4% of teacher trainees regarded that, the course is not paused due to COVID-19 pandemic because of online classes, whereas 13.6% disregarded the statement.
- About 86.4% of teacher trainees agree that, online classes avoided the situation 'Academic zero year', whereas 13.6% disagreed with the statement.
- About 72.7% of teacher trainees were in agreement with the statement that, time and class size limit offered by various free online class apps is a constraint to online education, whereas 27.3% were in disagreement with the statement.
- About 72.7% of teacher trainees believed that, online classes improved students attendance, whereas 27.3% disbelieved the statement.
- About 95.5% of teacher trainees considered network and connectivity issues are the barriers to online classes, whereas 4.5% did not consider the same.
- A sense of isolation is felt in online classes by 54.5% of teacher trainees, whereas it is not felt by 45.5% of teacher trainees.

- About 81.8% of the teacher trainees agreed that, online learning provides a greater chance for students to be easily distracted by social media or other promotional sites, whereas 18.2% of teacher trainees disagreed with the statement.

- Online classes are engaging and interactive and help student sto stay focuses on the lesson is felt by 54.5% of teacher trainees, whereas the same is not felt by 45.5% of teacher trainees.

- About 68.2% of teacher trainees consider battery backup of smart phones limits the number of classes per day, whereas 31.8% of teacher trainees did not consider the same.

- Least/minimum knowledge of technology of students and teachers was felt enough for online classes by 72.7% of teacher trainees, whereas 27.3% of teacher trainees did not agree with the same.

- 90.9% of teacher trainees feel that, real learning experiences arising out of practical activities like field trips, excursions etc are not possible with online learning, whereas 9.1% of teacher trainees did not agree with the statement.

- About 68.2% of teacher trainees opine that, class control is not possible with online classes, whereas 31.8% of teacher trainees opined against the statement.

- About 50% of teacher trainees opine that, students may take excuse for not attending the classes by assigning 'all the possible reasons', about 12.5% of teacher trainees take excuse by saying 'don't have smart phone and internet facilities', about 12.5% of teacher trainees take excuse by 'assigning any other reason', about 12.5% of teacher trainees take excuse by saying 'don't have internet facilities', 8.3% assign reason as 'have only one smart phone at home and there are more than one student in our family who have to attend online classes simultaneously' and about 4.2% of teacher trainees responded to the option 'none of the above'.

- About 79.2% of teacher trainees agree that, voluntariness is needed for attending online classes, whereas 20.8% of teacher trainees did not agree with the statement.

- About 91.7% of teacher trainees consider that, sharing of reference books, assignments etc is possible with online apps of social media like google classroom/whatsapp groups etc, whereas 8.3% of teacher trainees expressed their disagreement with the statement.

- About 83.3% of the teacher trainees consider online classes as a substitute for offline classes, whereas remaining 16.7% of teacher trainees do not consider the same.

- About 87.5% of teacher trainees regard that, online classes require good time management skills, whereas 12.5% disregard the statement.

- About 70.8% of teacher trainees opine that, online classes don't have an instructor hounding you to stay on task, whereas 29.2% of teacher trainees opined contradictorily.

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- About 45.8% of teacher trainees agree that, online classes promote life-long learning, whereas 54.2% of teacher trainees were in disagreement with the statement.
- About 75% of the teacher trainees feel that, online classes are successful in redressing this pandemic situation, whereas 25% of teacher trainees felt otherwise.
- About 66.7% of teacher trainees consider that, online classes make it easier to procrastinate, whereas 33.3% of teacher trainees opined contradictorily.
- About 79.2% of teacher trainees agreed that, online classes unlock more learning opportunities, whereas 20.8% of teacher trainees disagreed with the statement.
- About 83.3% of teacher trainees consider that, online classes make students less attentive, less responsive and less serious towards learning, whereas remaining 16.7% of teacher trainees expressed their dissent to the statement.
- About 95.8% of teacher trainees consider that, online classes aa the whole and sole way to avoid academic loss during this pandemic situation, whereas 4.2% of teacher trainees did not consider the same.

CONCLUSION

Educational institutes across the world have closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic jeopardizing the academic calendars. Most educational institutes have shifted to online learning platforms to keep the academic activities going.

However, the questions about the preparedness, designing and effectiveness of e-learning is still not clearly understood, particularly for a developing country like India, where the technical constraints like suitability of devices and bandwidth availability poses a serious challenge.

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