

# E-Learning: Novel Strategies and Challenges

Pooja Balagangadharan

Assistant Professor,  
Department of English  
R Sankar College of Arts and Science, Chathanoor

**Abstract:** In the year 2020, the human world went under a complete alteration, shutting down all the public and private realms of the human existence. This change was triggered by a microscopic being, corona virus, which was powerful enough to change the world head over heels. This microscopic being has affected each and every sector in every nook and corner. This toppled down situation was balanced by the digital world as it was the only panacea. The academics and all schooling have got adopted into the new realm of online learning. The paper scrupulously details setbacks of the new mode of pandemic pedagogy and meticulously deciphers the drawbacks of the E-learning as well. The aim of this paper is to bring into the limelight the problems confronted by students with the acceptance of new pedagogy enhancement with E-learning and discusses the negative impacts caused due to the same. The paper extends its study to the psychological and physical constraints of the students as well. The paper also stipulates the challenges the students encounter with the new mode of learning with respect to the technological side as well. The paper then provides the solutions and suggestions to the drawbacks of the new pandemic pedagogy and also highlights how the E-learning strategy could be made more student friendly, thereby providing commendable improvements that could be incorporated into the new mode of teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** Digital world, e-learning, pedagogy

The infectious and the deadly disease Corona virus has deeply affected and shaken the global economy. Every section of the society went on a complete alteration with the breakout of the virus. The situation has reached so worse that one could differentiate the life as a life before Corona virus and a life after the Corona virus. Before the advent of this pandemic corona virus, humans were flying around freely and limitlessly. But the situation went to a toppled down scenario when the world became attacked under the virus. People were not even allowed to step out of their home and they were jailed inside. People got stuck within the four walls of their house and the social sphere of the interaction was jammed into a silence.

This silence was broken by the digital world; social conversation got flipped to digital conversation. Every aspect of the human, from tip to toe, began to dance to the tunes of the digital equipments. Everything was handled and controlled by some remote controlled digital world. This microscopic agent has made the impossible possible and the clear evidence of this is this is the shifting of every nuances of our life into digitalized world.

The academic sector, job sector, medical field, social gatherings, family meet ups, functions, discussions, interviews, movies etc got itself totally immersed in the digital world. Consider the case of the academic sector, beginning from the kindergarten sections, the little kids are literally trapped into this techno-world. These little kids are unaware of what is happening to them and they began to create a hyper real world shutting to them the real doors of social interaction. From a very young age itself, they are seeing their teachers and students in a screen, much distant from the real world. Such kind of classes and interaction via the digital media can harm the kids blooming mental capacity and potential.

The fear of the widespread pandemic resulted in the temporary closing of the schools, colleges and universities. As a result of this, the education strategy has changed profoundly, with the increasing usage of the E-learning (electronic learning), wherein the mode of teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. E-learning is a system that is truly confirmed to the formalized teaching but with the help of electronic resources. The use of the Internet, smart phones and the computers are the major components of the E-learning. It could be simply defined as a network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge, disseminated to a large number of recipients at the same time or at different times. At the beginning, the mode of E-learning was confined to computers and later on it got hooked with laptops, tablets, smart phones etc. Moreover, E-learning helps the learners to learn anytime and anywhere. E-learning enables the process of learning ranging from the YouTube videos to E-learning platforms of universities, online study programs, digital master classes etc.

The Information and Communication Technology supports, enhances and optimizes the delivery of information. The complete online mode of teaching can never be a substitute for the offline live face to face interactive classes. But then the virtual platforms through its open access resources, online courses, virtual classrooms and social networks have radically redefined the traditional mode of teaching i.e., offline teaching with teacher-student interaction. Multimedia combines text, graphics, animation, audio and video as the supporting aids for a better and improvised learning.

There are different methods of learning in the online and virtual platforms. One such type is the blended learning. Blended learning combines online resources and technology along with face to face interaction. It is a blending of both the traditional method of teaching and the Information and Communication Technology). Another type is the flipped classrooms. It is an instructional strategy in which there is a reversal of learning environment by delivering the instructional content outside of the classroom (i.e., often online) and moving the activities into the classroom. It could be simply said that the classes are done in the online mode and the activities or the assignments are done in the offline mode

Be it any form of learning, it is always accompanied by both welcoming as well as unwelcoming changes. The E-learning is flexible, in terms of the time and place. The content to be learned is usually divided into short modules, lessening the

burden of the students with an extra advantage of pausing the video at any time. The materials are available and can be accessed at anytime. The sudden infusing of the E-learning strategy into the learning pedagogy wasn't smooth. The shift from the traditionally practiced face to face classroom learning to virtual classrooms was quite difficult to accept.

The pandemic situation has completely altered the classroom pedagogy. New technological advancements occupied seats in the teaching strategy. Students found it difficult to adapt into the new system of learning. Not only there was a difficulty in the acceptance, it did affect the physical and psychological aspects of the learner. The active and vibrant atmosphere of the classroom got replaced with a screen confined to a room. The fear of the wide spread pandemic along with the difficulty in adapting to the new online class has shaken the students.

The E-learning pedagogy has opened windows to a broader and wider world. But it cannot stand as a substitute for the real live interactive class. There are different types of problems associated with newly introduced pandemic pedagogy. There are difficulties faced by the both the students as well as teachers. Not only the students, even their families can find it difficult to cope with the new mode of online teaching that took birth from the pandemic situation. Some of the difficulties faced by the parents include:

- Concern and worries regarding the standard of education

Most parents have doubt regarding the new mode of teaching. Parents are not at all satisfied with online teaching. They doubt the standard of the education. Parents worry about the online mode and lack confidence in it too. They often steadfastly believe that the traditional face to face interactive type of teaching is effective.

- Economic instability

Different students come from different economical background. And hence, some of them may find it difficult to afford the economic budgets. Sudden announcement of the lockdown had made some of the families to meet the two ends of their livelihood. With the commencement of the online classes, the children began to demand smart phones and laptops. Financially struggling parents (especially those parents who have lost job due to the lockdown) find it pretty hard to fulfill the demands of their children.

- Worries about the continued use of technical devices and gadgets

The online learning demanded the need of smart phones and the laptops. Children use these devices daily approximately equal to the time they spent in school. The parents fear that the continued use of these devices may cause them to get addicted to these and they also worry if the use of these would affect the studies of their children as well.

- Lack of social interaction

Continued exposure and use of the virtual world may cause the students to get detached from the real world. The parents fear that their children would drown in the sea of the technological advancements and are stepping closer to a hyper real world devoid of all the lively connections among the fellow beings. Technological developments has become so advanced that they began controlling our lives. Now a day's people are living not for themselves but for hyper real world around them. Technological advancements snatch away the domestic and real life from the people and drag them into a room with a monitor screen with unknown faces.

It is the students who have got affected to the peak with the advent of the new mode of online teaching during the pandemic. Students face multi-faceted problems from different arenas. They are faced with physical and psychological problems as well. Some of the problems confronted by the students with the new pandemic pedagogy are the following:

- Difficulty in accepting the new reality

Ever since the beginning of a students' life, he was used to the traditional face to face live classroom and the sudden change in the mode of the teaching was not at all easy for the students to accept. Students were bewildered at seeing the new unacceptable changes occurring around them and this change in mode of learning has shaken the stability of the students mind. They find it hard to accept the virtual world as their new reality. Coping up with anything requires some time, but in this case the students were not given ample time. So, it was hard for the students to accept the new world of 'virtual reality' in front of them.

- Technical and network issues

An uninterrupted network connection and a good smart phone are a prerequisite for the proper functioning of any online classes. But most often, students face issues with the network connection and miss the classes. They may not be equipped with a good internet connection and faces problems in going for live online class sessions. The poor internet connections can results in poor performance of the students and may find difficulty in downloading information related to the subject. Not only the network issues, but also the lack of knowledge about the technology and the computer applications results in students facing technical issues.

- Lack of acquaintance with computers

There are many students who find it difficult to use computer and its applications. Adequate knowledge about the computer is a must for getting equipped with the online classes. Still one can find students struggling with using the basic computer applications including the MS Word and Power Point. Such lack of knowledge about computers can cause the students difficulty in attending the live classes, browsing study materials, usage of the appropriate icons, websites etc.

- Time management

Time and tide waits for no man. Managing diligent use of time during online is a compulsory requirement and hence the students find it difficult to adjust with timing of the online classes. Online mode of learning is a new arena for them and requires much effort and time to get into the proper track of the classes. Unlike the traditional classes, the online class offers a much flexible schedule of classes and then still some students find it difficult to adjust with the time required for the online classes.

- Self confidence

There is not at all a totally support system for the students in the online classes. In the traditional mode of classroom, the teacher can have direct and face to face interaction with the student. Unfortunately, this facility is not available in the online mode.

A single teacher cannot manage the whole class with a mobile screen. So it is the only the student himself who can help himself. He should be the powerhouse and the ultimate motivator for himself. The effort from the part of the students must be initiated from within the student itself. The student must motivate and encourage themselves to manage the tasks.

- **Distraction**

Home is the comfort zone of any individual. So learning from one's comfort area cannot fully help in concentrating the classes. Home can never replace the classroom and vice versa. Learning from home can create number of distractions. The familial interactions and lack of the real classroom atmosphere can stand as a hindrance to the proper learning of the students.

- **Lack of effective communication**

Online class can never be a substitute for the real classroom interactive classes. It is totally impossible for the communication of all of the students during live classes. Lack of proper communication is a major drawback of the online classes. All of the students may not get the opportunity to speak in a live class as they have done in a real classroom. Most often teachers give assignments to the students as it is the only way to ensure the effectiveness of the live classes. Asking to each student in individually during online class is practically impossible. Some students lack the courage to communicate to teachers due to the unfamiliarity of the new mode of learning.

- **Virtual engagement**

Teachers conducts online classes and provides reading material, assignments and may conduct live sessions, presentations, link to videos etc and still some students cannot manage with these activities performed online. Some students struggle to understand the concepts delivered via the online medium and prevent them from comprehending the classes.

The teachers too encounter a lot of problems.

- Like the students finding difficulty in coping with the new mode of learning, the teachers too find it difficult to get acquainted with the new mode of teaching. The teachers too find it difficult to convert the offline learning hours into the online format.
- Teachers can get satisfied only by getting direct feedback and response from the students. The online feedback received from the students cannot help the teacher for taking the classes effectively.
- Teachers also face the technical and the network issues.
- There is lack of communication between the teachers and the students and so the expectation from the students in the academic performance differs.
- Teachers find it extremely difficult to express and convey the content to the students. This is also the case with the assessments and the assignments.
- Different teachers follow different teaching methods and they have their own teaching styles. But such kinds of teaching style cannot be implemented by using the online virtual platforms (blackboards, books).

To every problem, there is a solution. So considering all the drawbacks of the online mode, the students as well as the teachers have began to adapt into the new mode of online learning. Time is the best teacher and experience makes a man perfect. The drawbacks and limitations of the online learning can be solved using the following ways:

- Diligent use of time.
- Using good internet connection.
- Students must be given basic knowledge about the computer and its applications prior to the beginning of the online classes.
- Always communicate with parents and teachers.
- Doubts can be cleared in class groups.
- Separate classes must be given for clearing doubts and solving problems.
- Teachers must use different teaching tools including videos, podcasts, articles, blogs, different assessment methods etc.
- Ask for feedback from the students.
- Teachers must ensure that every student is listening by calling his/her name in between the classes.
- Include only two to three hours for live sessions.
- Providing recorded voice clips and videos.
- Giving daily assignments and assessments.

Now both the teachers and the students are gradually getting equipped with the new mode of teaching. Online mode of leaning has made the students to get familiarized with the new technological developments and also instilled in the students the seed of self motivation. Whatever be the online mode of teaching, it can never replace the traditional mode of live face to face interactive classes.

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