

Opportunities and Challenges of Lockdown for Students and Teachers

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Abstract

Covid 19- outbreak created a lot of mess across sectors. Education sector also had its own share of suffering. This is an exploratory study to identify the challenges faced by teachers and students in India. The spread of the virus was increasing at an alarming speed that the government could not give prior notice about the lockdown, so that the people and industry could be prepared for the shock. The students, teachers could make use of digital teaching-learning and also they faced challenges at different dimensions.

Keywords:-online learning, lockdown challenges, students challenges, teachers work life challenges.

1. Introduction

Covid 19 – the novel corona virus hit the world in the end of 2019. The initial outbreak of the virus was reported in China, but very soon it was spread to all parts of the world. By the mid of February 2020, WHO declared it as a pandemic and the world stand still following the lockdown in many economies. The impact it created for many sectors around the world is huge and long standing.

In India 21 days lockdown was declared by the central government on March 28th, 2020, with the hope of repealing the same after 3 weeks. Unfortunately, we could not contain the situation by that. In fact, it was only the first phase of Lockdown, now we are at Lockdown 5.0!

During this crisis the power of internet was rightly used by many sectors to continue their business from home across the globe. Education sector also followed the lead. This transition of teaching learning from physical class rooms to online class rooms was a new experience

for many of the teachers and students. As the pandemic hit china in the Spring of 2020, Chinese universities were shut and the teaching learning process was shifted to online mode (Bao, 2020). The Chinese government through an emergency policy initiative “Suspending Classes Without Stopping Learning” continued the teaching learning activities(Zhang, et. al.,2020).

1.1 Problem Statement

Lockdown impacted many sectors. Education sector was one of these which was badly hit by the lockdown. There are many challenges faced by the universities, schools, colleges, teachers and students. The education system was challenged by the need to reschedule the entire academic calendar, cancelling various exams. The teachers and students of our country had to face challenges related to lockdown and also there were some new opportunity for them as a result of lockdown.

1.2 Objectives

- To study the opportunities of lockdown for students and teachers
- To study the challenges of lockdown for students and teachers

1.3 Research Methods

The present study was conducted among the teachers and students of higher education, in India. Its an exploratory research conducted with review and un-structured interview method.

2. Opportunities for Teachers

2.1 Work from Home in Education Sector

Academics is categorised under “remote” friendly job in the study done by Holgersen et. al(2020). The concept of telecommuting was not in popularity among the academic community. Now since we could make use of the facilities, WFH(work from home) policy could be made a part of the HR policy of the universities and colleges may be amended to include fixed number of work from home facility for teachers.

2.2 Exploration of e – learning

Government of India has shown a great deal of commitment to spread e- learning culture in the country, but in spite of these initiatives there was a high level of indifference, confusions and hesitations amongst the teachers towards e-

learning(Mishra, et. al., 2020). For many of the academicians and institutions in India, the Lockdown period, provided the opportunity to break the ice with the e-learning platforms.

2.3 Not limited by the constraints of working hours

E-learning offers the luxury of learning anytime- anywhere (Mishra, et. al., 2020), teachers could also teach any time from their home. This flexibility of the system enabled a better balancing of work- family for teachers during lockdown.

2.4 Upskilling opportunity

MOOC platforms like Coursera and Edx offered free courses during lockdown period. This was a great opportunity for teachers as well as students to upskill themselves. Universities and colleges across the country have organized webinars, faculty development programmes, workshops, symposiums and conferences online.

3. Opportunities for Students

3.1 Effective learning for visual learners

For visual learners, who need visual aids for better comprehension, the online platforms, especially asynchronous e-learning facilitates a better learning experience compared to traditional class room teaching.

3.2 Virtual internships

Many organizations have provided the opportunity for virtual internship for students. It was a great opportunity for many students, to understand the real – work environment and application of theoretical concepts that they learn in the class rooms. Studies predict the widespread adaption of workfrom home culture across industries, even after the pandemic period, so this opportunity to do internship remotely in effect prepares the students for developing the skills required for effectively carrying out work from home.

3.3 Flexibility in learning process

Many of the institutions were following a mix of synchronous and asynchronous mode of e-learning. Students got the flexibility to study on their own convenience and to watch videos uploaded by teachers any number of times.

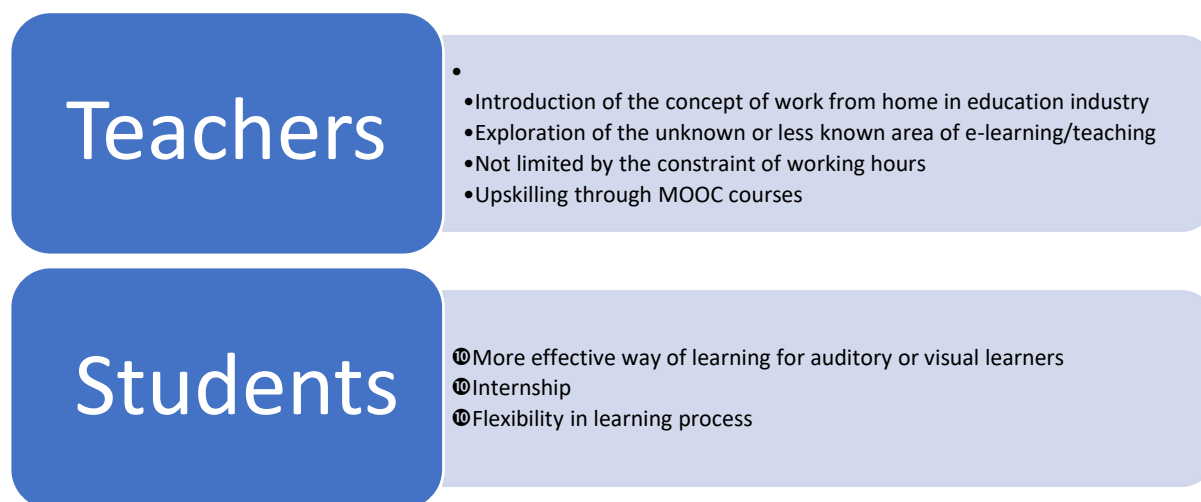


Figure 1 – Positive impact of Lockdown on teachers and students

4. Challenges faced by Students

Despite the popularity of online learning in many streams the quality of online education have been always a concern (Diaz, 2002; Islam, 2002), this is especially true in the case of lockdown where the students, teachers and the institutions were not really equipped to face the challenges of online learning.

The government of India declared the Lockdown 1.0 on 25th of March 2020. It was expected to last only 21 days. Primarily majority was not prepared for such a situation, the same in the case of students as well. Many students who went to their home for the weekend left their books and laptops at hostels, which was a limiting factor for them to effectively go through online classes, assignments and assessments.

Students are also under a lot of anxiety and stress due to various factors related to their education. The final year students of colleges are worried about the date of examinations, they are also concerned about the validity of job of they got from many companies before the pandemic hit the world. There are students who were stranded in hostels, trying different ways to reach back home. All this uncertainty creates an uneasy environment for many.

Among all this the students are expected to attend online classes, write assignments, projects and exams online. Accessibility and affordability of the devices and infrastructure for attending online classes. The students who are not tech savvy also faces the challenge of

learning to use these platforms all by themselves and these students will have a feel of being left behind. Final year projects and internships are also badly affected by the lockdown.

Students who used to do part time job to finance their own studies also find it a challenging time, since they doesn't have any income to pay next instalment of fee.

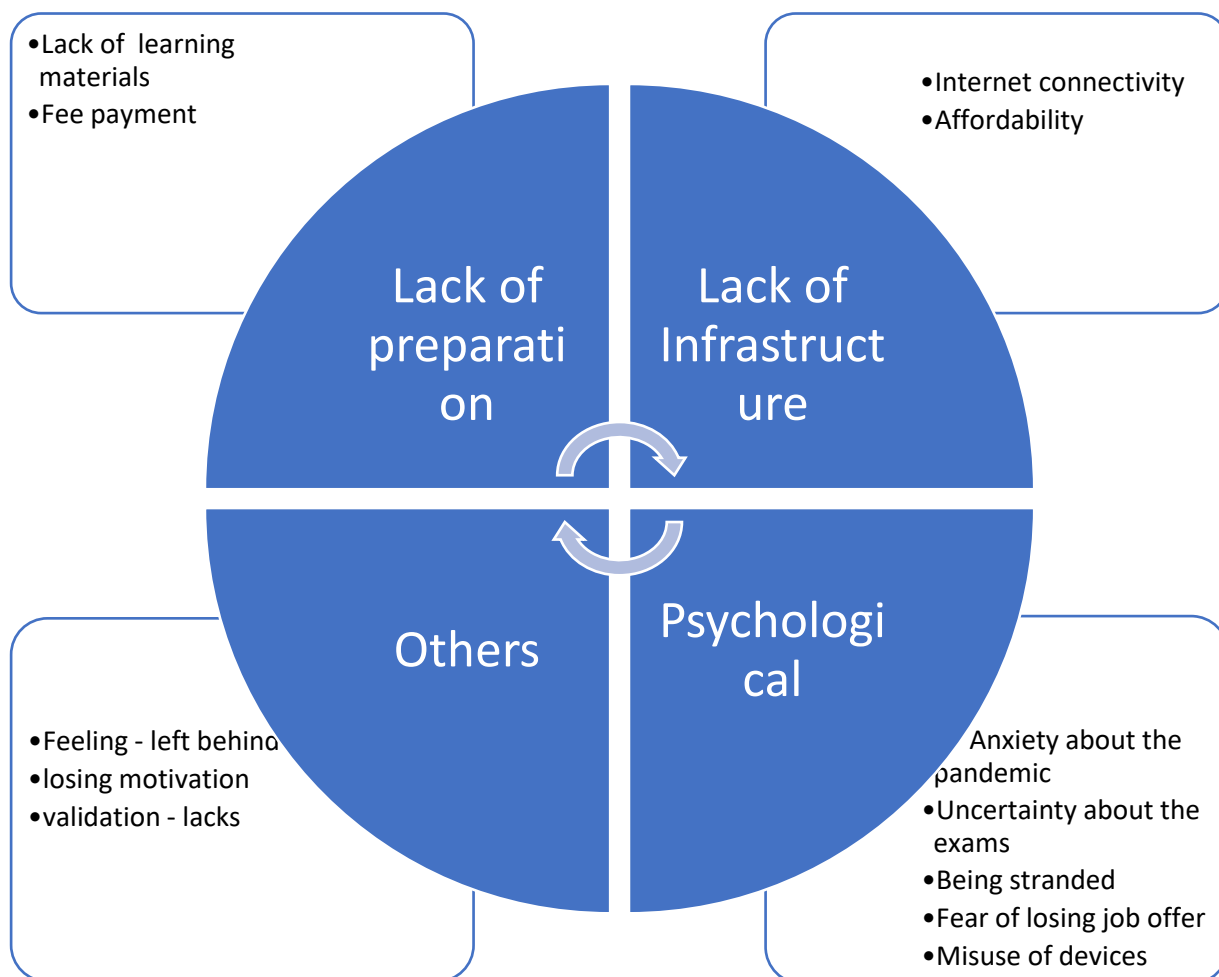


Figure 2. Negative Impact of Lockdown on students

5. Challenges faced by Teachers

In the context of developing countries, lack of essential IT infrastructure and lack of knowledge about the online teaching pedagogy are the main challenges for teachers to take up online teaching (Zamani, Esfijani, & Damaneh, 2016). Teachers of India were also facing similar challenge during the lockdown. Here online teaching was impeded by the lack of suitable infrastructure and network connections. Also a large number of teachers did not have any prior experience in using online teaching platforms and they were copying physical class

room teaching content to the online platforms without much of adaptations(Zhang, et. al.,2020). Some universities and organizations tried to give online training for teachers but many of these programmes were not systematic.

5.1 Teaching effectiveness refers to “how an instructor can best direct, facilitate, and support students toward certain academic ends, such as achievement and satisfaction” (Gorsky and Blau, 2009) .During lockdown the effectiveness of teaching process was hugely impacted by the network availability, attitude to technology and ability to learn technology.

5.2 Work Family Conflict

The conflict arising out of balancing the role at work and non-work scenario is an inevitable part of modern work culture (Wilson & Baumann, 2015).Many of the teachers were neither familiar nor ready for remote working. In those families where spouse and their children share same laptop/computer for work or studies, delivering classes according to their schedule is also a challenge. The teachers, working from home need to divert their attention to household works, take care of children and other dependents – this in fact creates a lot of distraction. Lack of suitable space, without noise and other distraction, at home for delivering classes is also a challenge. These troubles in managing work and family hugely effect the satisfaction level of teachers.

5.3 Job Satisfaction and life satisfaction are directly related and it can influence a person’s physical and mental health as well as attitude (Wilczyńska, Batorski, & Sellens, 2016).Many teachers who are working in private institutions or as contract or guest faculty is facing a threat of losing job. This insecurity regarding their job at the time of recession is a source of anxiety and stress. Salary cut is also a phenomenon happening across sectors, teachers are also facing this issue. The concern over effectiveness of teaching, work family conflict and the insecurities about job and salary lead to job dissatisfaction and anxiety and stress among teachers.

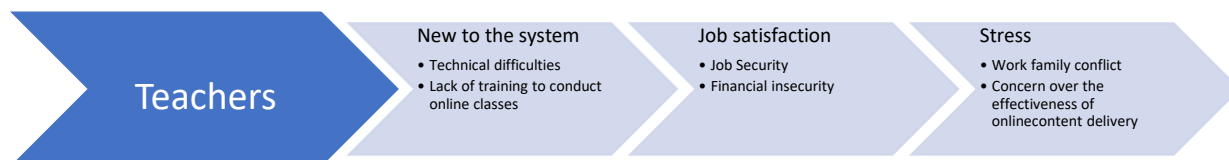


Figure 3 – Impact of Lockdown on teachers

6. Recommendations

To address the issues and challenges faced by the teachers and students the universities and the policy makers must make sure to adapt the syllabus to inclusive of contents related to disaster management, public safety and mental health, irrespective of the stream of study.

A training need analysis should be done by institutions and the teachers should be given a systematic training in online teaching pedagogy.

Many parents are concerned about the eyesight of their kids who are forced to spend hours in front of computers and about mis use of technology with the excuse of online learning. The institutions should make sure to schedule the online class timings considering the health impact it can create on students. And also try to share the class schedule and attendance with the parents as well.

Infrastructure facility is a common concern for teachers and students. Here the internet connectivity in different areas should be strengthened in a partnership of government-telecom-institutions. Various local self-government bodies may audit the infrastructure availability in their area. Through CSR funds of corporates or NGO's LSG should help the students who did not have computers and smart phones to have access to online class rooms by distributing tablets.

7. Conclusion

Now, due to lockdown Indian education sector in general followed emergency remote teaching which is in effect different from online teaching. This peculiar situation creates a chaos. Teachers, students and institutions needed to face a lot of challenges. Majority of the challenges were because of the lack of prior experience in online teaching – learning. The confusions created by Covid -19 is only a temporary one. It shall pass soon. But there can be similar challenges in future and to face such conditions our education system should be ready. Proper online learning strategies and platforms should be developed by organization and effective trainings should be provided to all the teachers.

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