

THE BENEFITS, PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF ONLINE LEARNING IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In the last twenty years, technology has developed in almost all sectors worldwide. After COVID-19, online learning plays an important role in the educational field. Today, with the help of technology, online education has become one of the most popular forms of education. Online learning is a form of electronically supported learning that depends on the internet. Online learning applications are a good medium for delivering lectures and notes easily, even without face-to-face communication between the teachers and students, through audios, videos, text, animation, and many more, which makes learning more interesting and exciting. There has been a lot of research done to understand the pros and cons of online education in comparison to face-to-face education. Specifically speaking in the Indian context, there are a lot of benefits and also a few obstacles to the smooth conduct of online education, like poor internet access. At some educational institutions, self-developed applications are provided to facilitate the teaching of lecturers and provide students with study material. Some of the teachers use applications from online learning service providers or third parties, which may include YouTube, Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, etc. Still, efforts are required to further develop, train, and improve infrastructural facilities to support online learning in the future. Online learning has high prospects and potential in these ever-changing times. And so, it's very important to know how it can be more beneficial by investigating its challenges and scope. In this paper, there is an attempt to identify key factors that will boost online education in India, and this study aims to investigate the benefits, prospects, and challenges of online education in India.

Keywords: Online Education, Research, Prospects, Challenges.

Introduction

Online learning is a form of learning backed by electronics that depends on the internet. In Online Education the educators can interact with his/her students and help them to understand the topics or the subjects under study. It is a form of teaching which offers numerous new methods to teach, learn, understand and analyse which are outside the preview of the traditional classroom methods or school's /college's campuses. This type of teaching includes the use of audios, videos, textual data, animations etc. along with the element of flexibility. It is basically imparting or receiving of education electronically with any medium or device which has internet connection. Online learning is defined as using online platform technologies and the Internet to enhance learning and provide users with access to online services and services (Ehlers and Pawlowski, 2006).¹ The online education is delivering course content online.

Corona virus has brought in many changes in education sector. Origin of computers, internet and development in ICT has transformed the education system. After COVID-19, online learning has been playing a significant role in the field of educational. In today's times, with the support of technology, online education has become one of the most popular forms of education. Online education is very easy

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for students as they can access the online materials very comfortably for 24 hours (**Stern, 2020**)². Online learning applications are a good way for deliverance of lectures and notes easily, even without face-to-face communication between the teachers and students, through audios, videos, text, animation, and many more, which makes the process of learning quiet interesting and exciting. Online education turns education to be student-centered, where students take part in the learning process, and teachers work as supervisors and guides for students (**Al-Salman et al., 2021**)³. Online education has brought education at each and every person's computer, laptop, tablet and smartphones.

So, online education can be taken as a precautionary measure by providing a flexible environment for learning from any location. The investment in terms of transportation cost, infrastructural expenses and maintenance cost required for conduction of online education is very much less as compared to the offline method of teaching. Specifically speaking in the Indian context, there are a lot of benefits and also a few obstacles to the smooth conduct of online education, like poor internet access, poor digital infrastructure, poor motivation, background unwanted noises, careless and inattentive students.

Online learning has high prospects and potential in these ever-changing times. And so it's very important to know how it can be more beneficial by investigating its challenges and scope. In this paper, there is an attempt to identify key factors that will boost online education in India, and this study aims to investigate the benefits, prospects, and challenges of online education in India.

Review of Literature

There has been a lot of research done to understand the pros and cons of online education in comparison to face-to-face education. Few have been mentioned below-

Mohd. Imran Siddiquei and Shashank Kathpal (2021)⁴ in their research article titled "**Challenges of Online Teaching During Covid-19: An Exploratory Factor Analysis**" tried to study the significant hurdles faced due to COVID-19 in educational filed in terms of imparting knowledge online from home which were transformation to online mode from offline mode, communication barriers, teaching, preparations needed and different teaching styles, training for teachers and students, multimedia help, technological problems, readiness from the student's side, lack of technical knowledge among students to learn through online mode, problem of network connectivity and speed related matters lack of student's interaction and participation, development of new content, checking of assignments, problem in feedback from student, lack of device suitability, ease of use, and tools of conferencing software for online teaching.

Chavan, A. S., & Ghaisas, S. V. (2021)⁵ in their study on "**Online teaching in higher education: Challenges and opportunities**". Education and Information Technologies stated corona has impacted the field of education as the focus shifted from traditional teaching way to the new Online method of teaching like lack of technical knowledge, infrastructural conditions, internet connection, power supply etc.

Bhatnagar, A. (2020)⁶ in the study on "**Online education in India during and after COVID-19**" emphasized that the origin of Covid-19 has increased the significance of technology in every sector and education as well. The transition from traditional way of classroom to virtual form of classroom was not expected at all and very challenging because with issues of Internet connections, improper digital infrastructure, lack of technological, lack of support and motivation and so on. At the same time, it has the benefits of convenience, flexibility and has paved ways to learn more.

Aman Jindal and Bhupinder Pal Singh Chahal (2020)⁷ in their work on "**Challenges and Opportunities for Online Education in India**" enquired the measures used by educational institutions to impart education during the lockdown times. It also studied the the challenges faced by teachers and students in online teaching like lack of technical facilities, family work and pressure, lack of training, absence of clarity & direction, less technical knowledge and so on.

Overall, the literature suggests that online learning has the potential to transform education sector of our country. However, it does have some challenges but if handled and managed properly online teaching can meet the new needs of learners and educators.

Benefits of Online Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant shift in education, with the adoption of online learning becoming more widespread in India. While online learning has been around for some time, the pandemic has accelerated its adoption and highlighted its benefits which are as follows:

- **Accessibility**

Online learning provides accessibility to education for those who might not be able to attend traditional schools or universities due to geographical, financial, or physical constraints. Online teaching reduces carbon emissions, which has positive influence on the environment. (Agarwal, A., Sharma, S., Kumar, V., & Kaur, M. (2021)⁸

- **Flexibility**

Online learning allows learners to study at their own pace and in their own time, which enables them to balance their studies with work or other commitments. (Muthuprasad, T., Aiswarya, S., Aditya, K. S., & Jha, G. K. (2021)⁹

- **Cost-effectiveness**

Online learning can be more cost-effective than traditional education as it eliminates the need for travel and accommodation expenses. (Kapilan, N., Vidhya, P., & Gao, X. Z. (2021)¹⁰

- **Customization**

Online learning can be customized to meet the needs of individual learners, allowing them to choose courses that align with their interests and career aspirations.

Challenges of Online Learning

There are a lot of benefits and also a few obstacles to the smooth conduct of online education which are as follows:

- **Technical Challenges**

Online learning requires access to reliable internet and technology, which can be a challenge for students from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The old chalk and talk methods was often regarded better than online sessions as they have Drawbacks like improper facilities, infrastructure, technology, and internet connection. (Naik, G. L., Deshpande, M., Shivananda, D. C., Ajey, C. P., & Manjunath Patel, G. C. (2021)¹¹

- **Health Concern**

Online mode of teaching causes anxiety issues, changes in the sleeping patterns of the students etc. Most of the parent are worried if their children are studying or learning at home or not. (Harjule, P., Rahman, A. & Agarwal, B. (2021)¹²

- **Social Isolation**

Online learning can be a solitary experience, which may lead to feelings of social isolation and a lack of interaction with peers and teachers.

- **Assessment and Evaluation**

Online learning presents challenges for assessment and evaluation, with concerns over academic integrity and the validity and reliability of online assessments. Online learning can cause dishonesty and misbehaviour like cheating, fabrication, facilitation and plagiarism. (Shakeel, A., Shazli, T., Salman, M. S., Naqvi, H. R., Ahmad, N., & Ali, N., 2021)¹³

- **Quality of Education**

There is a concern that online learning may compromise the quality of education, with a lack of oversight and accountability leading to sub-standard courses and qualifications. Quality assurance is another challenge of online learning, with a lack of oversight and accountability leading to sub-standard courses and qualifications. Altbach and De Wit (2017)¹⁴ suggest that online learning needs to be designed to ensure that quality education is provided to learners, regardless of the mode of delivery

Prospects of Online Learning

Online learning also has the potential to enhance learning outcomes. The following points highlights the prospects of online learning:

- **Enhanced Learning Outcomes**

Online learning has the potential to enhance learning outcomes as it provides access to a vast range of learning materials and enables learners to study at their own pace.

- **Improved Teacher-Student Interaction**

Online learning provides a platform for students to interact with teachers and ask questions, which can lead to a better understanding of the subject matter.

- **Increased Collaboration**

Online learning can facilitate collaboration between learners from different regions and backgrounds, which can lead to a more diverse and enriching learning experience.

- **Technology-Driven Innovation**

Online learning has the potential to drive innovation in education, with the use of technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence enhancing the learning experience.

Conclusion

Online learning has the potential to revolutionize education in India, providing access to education for all and enhancing the learning experience. However, there are also challenges that need to be addressed, including technical challenges, quality assurance, social isolation, and assessment and evaluation. It is essential to ensure that online learning is designed to meet the needs of learners and educators, providing a quality education that prepares learners for the challenges of the 21st century.

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