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# Sustaining Learning Through Hybrid Pedagogy During Covid-19

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 Pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems at all levels of learning. The crisis is exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth and adults those living in poor or rural areas girls, refugees, person with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons to continue their learning. In order to mitigate the potentially devastating consequences of COVID-19 Pandemic, Governments and Stakeholders immediately took some policy responses which include Flipped classroom, Blended learning, Video-conferencing, e-learning, vast use of Google and You tube platforms. And in Odisha as most of the schools belong to rural areas, it has become a new challenge for the Government as well as the educators to make e-learning accessible for all. This emerging shift to technology based learning divided Odisha into two parts; one is literate Odisha and another is illiterate Odisha. Number of schemes and policies are of no work as there are students for whom getting internet access is a dream. Hence there is a need to bridge this gap by limiting online duration of learning in a sustainable way. The paper highlights Hybrid Pedagogy accessible to all in this COVID-19 outbreak. This gives us an opportunity to refine existing classroom for post pandemic situations.

**Keywords:** Sustaining learning, Hybrid Pedagogy and COVID-19.

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic also known as the Corona Virus pandemic is an ongoing global pandemic which was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (WHO, 2020). The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International concern on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 and a Pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the normal life style of people across the globe, the virtual world has come to the rescue.

Education is a global common good and primary driver of progress across 17 SDGs as a bed rock of just equal, inclusive, peaceful societies. When education systems collapse,

peace, prosperous and productive societies can't be sustained. Lockdowns and shutdowns to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have posed many challenges for school educations globally, and India is no exception. The first case of COVID-19 pandemic was confirmed in the Indian state of Odisha on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 and the state has confirmed 87,602 cases as of August. So the reopening of Schools in Odisha in near future is of less hope. Since this pandemic has disrupted the normal life style of people across the globe, the virtual world has come to the rescue; but not a solution. Amongst many institutions schools have also shifted their base to virtual platforms to conduct classes online. Consequently, catering to the needs of all stages of education from pre-primary to university level, online education has emerged as an alternative to ordinary face to face classes. Moreover, efforts are being made by both government and non-government organizations and edtech companies to support the School system to make a smooth transition to the virtual world.

### **SCHOOL EDUCATION DURING COVID-19**

Every problem opens up a new opportunity! The COVID-19 pandemic quickly led to the closure of Schools, Colleges and Universities around the world, in hopes that social distancing could help to flatten the infection curve and reduce total fatalities from the disease. And the immediate shift in learning to virtual platforms emerged as an alternative to ordinary face to face classes. Upskilling and motivating teachers, parents and students are some of the important measures taken by the administration in recent past. Making a continuous effort to provide customized teaching-learning material suitable for online classes is another way of facilitating the schooling of children. The Central government has recently launched the PM e-VIDYA platform, with 12 new DTH channels, one for each class to reach out to all stratas of society. These efforts have proved to be beneficial to a sizable chunk of the school going children. In context of Odisha, number of schemes like SIKSHYA SANJOG, DIKSHA, MOODLE, NISHTHA, SWAYAM, KSSY are working at a remarkable pace as a catalyst for students as well as teachers to take advantage of the e-teaching learning process.

However, this alternative medium has also brought to the fore some persistent realities of Indian society characterized by social inequalities in terms of availability of resources, essential to access these online platforms. These digital initiatives are perpetuating the digital divide between rural and urban and rich and poor. This digital divide is also affecting the work and role of government as well as non-government organizations across states as they are facing challenges due to recent migration of millions of labourers to their native places.

### **CHALLENGES IN PROVIDING A VIRTUAL LEARNING ACCESSIBLE TO ALL**

It's been more than a year to this pandemic. Till now it's quite unpredictable that when the curve will be flattened. Closure of schools and other educational institutions was the

only option to break the chain of COVID-19. As a result, over 1.2 billion children in 186 countries are out of classroom now.

Technology has been considered central to the reform of school education and has gained unprecedented momentum during this pandemic. Teachers and administrators are now working very hard trying to keep students on track, shifting to online learning within the shortest time.

But the shift to e- learning doesn't go as smoothly as we want it to be. Facing the pitfalls of digital learning may be discouraging and frustrating both for teachers as well as students.

Students and teachers also have their own struggles while accessing these online platforms. Due to financial constraints, students are not able to access the internet, and are devoid of electronic gadgets and laptop, phone or computer or even radio and TV. Those students who have facilities to attend online classes face barriers in terms of unavailability of physical space, which is equally applicable to teachers who are supposed to conduct online classes from their home. There are also social discriminations against girls as they are expected to do household chores instead of attending classes in the mornings. In homes where TV and radio are available, the question of who has control over these gadgets is important. Even people from disadvantaged communities- be it teachers, students or parents have been left to fend for themselves while Government is making provisions for online learning or planning to resume offline on-campus school post-COVID. Alarming is the fact that the government is oblivious to the stark realities of social inequalities which are proving to be the greatest barrier to access online education for all. On the contrary, all are concerned with completing the syllabus, assessing students and conducting entrance tests through online mode in a haste, ignoring the issues and concerns of the students.

## **HYBRID PEDAGOGY**

In general by the word "Hybrid", we mean an innovative thing by the combination of two or more things. And Hybrid pedagogy is a critical pedagogy. It is the blend of theory and practice that develops with experience and reflection. Hybrid pedagogy was launched in 2011 by Jesse Stommel and Pete Rorabaugh and offers a new academic publishing model influenced by digital culture.

At most basic level, it refers to learning that happens both in classroom or other physical spaces and online with another concept that is often used synonymously as 'Blended learning'. But Hybrid pedagogy doesn't just describe an easy mixing of on-ground and online learning, but bringing the sorts of learning that happen in a virtual place into a more engaged and dynamic conversation. And this pedagogy will help to tackle emerging problems due to the hurry in adopting virtual learning to some extent surely.

Hybrid learning and Blended learning can be sometimes confused to be the same method as both consists of some similar instructional elements. However, both are two distinct

models. Blended learning combines classroom teaching with online teaching methods. Here the students can watch the instructional videos and work it on during their own time. But in Hybrid learning, teachers instruct in-person and remote students at the same time. The asynchronous methods here are just supplementary methods of instruction.

Learning in a hybrid method is quite interesting and effective. It includes some asynchronous teaching- learning practices viz;

- Online Classes
- Face to face classes
- Pre-recorded video instruction

### **BENEFITS OF HYBRID PEDAGOGY**

Adopting hybrid pedagogy as an instructional strategy is the need of the hour. It has following benefits.

#### 1) Flexible learning experience:

The students who can't attend the classes conducted in classroom, it allows them to learn remotely from home. Hybrid pedagogy gives flexibility in: Learning Schedule, teaching methods, student engagement, learning materials, communication between peers and instructors.

#### 2) Synchronous communication opportunities

All learning experiences can't fill the void of intimacy and genuineness of academic discussions. Learning in hybrid pedagogy is best for synchronous team work, presentations and deep conversations.

#### 3) Independent academic exploration

As compared to physical classes, online classes provide learners freedom. Enthusiastic learners start exploring innovative things in this platform. This pedagogy provides learners the freedom to revisit any place, repeated watching of instructional videos, in-depth discussion and discourse with instructors and peers.

#### 4) Efficient use of resources

Since the shift to online learning has now become the new normal, the traditional class rooms, libraries, staffrooms are of no use at present. Initially it was hard to accept the shift, but now it will be hard to accept the traditional classroom again. Teachers are not in favor of teaching in classrooms again as before. But the fact is that in between these, resources including offline assets to online assets are not being used efficiently. But

hybrid pedagogy shows the way where all resources can be utilized in a proper way since it comprises of an easy mixing of on-ground and online learning.

## **SUSTAINING LEARNING DURING THIS PANDEMIC COVID-19**

Sustaining refers to make something continue for a long period of time. And when the word

'learning' comes along with 'sustaining', it reminds us the 4<sup>th</sup> goal of 17SDGs i.e. "Access of Quality Education". The most challenging issue of the hour is to ensure quality education through online mode in a flexible manner. The pandemic has transformed the centuries-old, chalk-talk teaching model to one driven by technology. Hence there is a need of multi-pronged strategy to manage the crisis and build a resilient education system for long term and tackling the digital divide.

Immediate measures are essential to ensure continuity of learning in government schools. Open-source digital learning solutions and Learning Management Software should be adopted so that the teachers can conduct teaching online. The DIKSHA platform, which reaches across all states in India, can be further strengthened to ensure accessibility of learning to the students.

Inclusive learning solutions, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized, need to be developed. With a rapid increase of mobile internet users in India, technology is enabling ubiquitous access and personalization of education. This can change the schooling system and increase effectiveness of learning and teaching, giving students and teachers multiple options to choose from. It is important to reconsider the current content delivery and pedagogical approaches in schools by integrating classroom learning with e - learning modes to build a unified learning system. Further, it is also important to establish quality assurance mechanisms and quality benchmark for online learning.

## **STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT HYBRID PEDAGOGY IN A FLEXIBLE MANNER TO SUSTAIN LEARNING**

### **1. Limiting online duration of classes**

Instead of long duration online classes, the classes should be shorter and more interactive with the help of following:

**POP QUIZES:** These are short tests conducted without any warning. This increases students' preparedness for the classes. It is an interesting and resourceful way to connect students with learning. It boosts the acquisition of knowledge, facts and skills. It fosters regular interaction with study materials. It allows students to learn on prior knowledge and clear their doubts. Students also stay in touch with recent classes/ notes to perform better. It has following advantages over students' learning:

- Increase participation
- Build teamwork
- Students always remain prepared
- Students gain confidence for discussion
- Students raise their grades

**POLLS:** Polls can be used for MCQs in Zoom app, where answers can be recorded with identification of each student. Here the host can add polls to ask the students questions. It records the opinions/ answers/ votes. It enables the student engagement in the virtual classroom. It also helps to maintain student interest in sharing their opinions. It provides the students the opportunity to integrate ideas.

**REFLECTIONS:** Reflections are used to enhance and explore motivation, thought process, feelings and emotions of learners bringing them on track to learn. Students gain insight and get actively engaged in learning. It is a systematic process of reviewing what is done till now and what is to be done onwards. It facilitates learning along with experiencing and experimenting.

**VIRTUAL BOARDS:** Virtual board provides more collaborative interaction, instead of just relying on voice of the teacher. It allows the instructors for quick and easy visual evaluation.

## **2. Fostering Peer interaction during online classes**

Peer interaction is immensely beneficial in fostering students' active engagement. It is a way of moving beyond independent to interdependent or mutual learning. In traditional classroom setting, peer learning is lot more straightforward. But the same can't be said for online classes due to absence of face to face interaction. Hence the teachers should follow some strategy as following to make peer interaction work to some extent during online classes:

**ONLINE GROUP COLLABORATIONS:** Similar to projects in traditional classrooms, the same can be applied to online classes where the teacher will divide the students into smaller groups and have them collaborate with each other on mini projects. This will give them a chance to interact with each other and build a sense of community. With this strategy, when a student getting access to online classes can help another student who can't afford it with his study materials, we can eliminate the digital divide to some extent also.

**PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS:** The teachers should engage the students in reviewing assignments of each other and giving feedback sometimes. It will foster engagement and high competition levels among the students.

### **3. Lessons of health, hygiene and civic responsibility**

COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lifestyles of the world's population a lot. Besides learning the lessons of courses there is an emerging need to make the students aware about their health, hygiene, civic responsibility and vital roles for public health from the very beginning. They need to be trained on yoga practices, taking healthy meals, maintaining healthy lifestyles along with their course contents.

### **4. Up skilling and motivating teachers for online classes**

As the digital shift in education sector happened all of a sudden, there is a lack in both mentality and ability to do the same for the teachers. Many teachers are not pro in using android phones or laptops and many times whole content delivery through online classes from home is not quite possible. Hence there is a gap between the plan and implementation of online classes. Hence the teachers need to be provided with necessary resources whether that is physical resources or technological resources and training programs should be there to up skill them in order to adopt the new normal.

### **5. Using moderate technology for school students**

Technology has been considered as central to the reform of school education during this pandemic. The hurry to transfer classrooms into the virtual world without taking into consideration the reach to all learners has been affected students' learning a lot. It has created a digital divide. Hence for children belonging to disadvantaged groups, low tech mediums such as radio, television are useful. In circumstances where even these two are also out of reach, the distribution of paper-based learning materials will also be helpful.

## **CONCLUSION**

Needless to say, the pandemic has transformed the century's traditional classroom to virtual classroom. This disruption in the delivery of education is pushing policy makers to figure out how to drive engagement at scale while ensuring inclusive e-learning solutions and tackling the digital divide. No matter how simple a technology or plan is being used to provide education to all, some of the children will remain left out during critical situations due to multiple causes such as poverty, migration, family problems and so on. In this time of crisis, a well-rounded and effective educational practice is what is need for the capacity-building of young minds. It will drive their employability, productivity, health and well-being in decades to come and ensure overall progress.

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