

CHALLENGES OF USING DIGITAL PEDAGOGY PRACTICES DURING COVID 19 OUTBREAK IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF SIVASAGAR DISTRICT OF ASSAM (INDIA)

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ABSTRACT

Digital pedagogy has been arising as a boon for the educational sphere in the modern age of scientific and technological developments. For every stage of education, digital pedagogy has been contributing immensely in the present era. However, the application of digital pedagogy practices is not an easy task during the pandemic period of Covid19 outbreak. The present study is concerned with studying the challenges that are faced in applying digital pedagogy practices to the elementary schools of Sivasagar district of Assam (India) during the pandemic situation of Covid 19. The study is based on primary as well as secondary sources of data. The researcher has collected the required data by using self prepared questionnaire and face to face interviews. The study has found out that there are enormous problems arising in the way of integrating digital pedagogy practices to the elementary schools of Sivasagar district of Assam during the critical period of Covid 19.

Key Words: Covid19, challenges, digital pedagogy, education, elementary school.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are blessed with the power of bringing change to their lives. They have enormous opportunities to discover, create, destroy and recreate their very own material possessions. The modern age of scientific and technological developments has also brought out immense change to the day to day activities of people. These changes have touched each and every part of their lives and hence changes can also be observed in the sphere of education as well. Amongst all the modifications and changes that have come across the field of education, the application of digital pedagogy practices is one of the most crucial aspects of teaching-learning process.

The use of digital pedagogy practices in teaching-learning process has been accelerated by the outbreak of Covid 19 disease worldwide. The disease has created such an atmosphere that people can not even think of stepping out from their respective homes and follow their daily routines. In such a critical condition of life, people started thinking of alternatives so that they can pursue such measures which can contribute to the better living of human beings without hampering the progress of mankind. And as a result of this kind of thinking, digital pedagogy has come to the light as the most effective alternative in the arena of education. Though digital pedagogy has got its popularity as an essential aspect of education in the early stages of 21st century, its application to the concerned field has become more acute during this pandemic period. In present days, most of the activities concerning the teaching-learning field have been conducting through the digital pedagogy practices by the concerned authority and hopefully it would be able to bring some desirable changes in the scenerio of education by achieving the pre determined goals.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Digital pedagogy: Digital Pedagogy is a new addition to the realm of education. It has its origin in the distance education courses where the instructors used to deliver learning materials through modern digital technological innovations. In simple terms, it can be said as the integration and application of scientific and up to date technological gadgets and techniques to the processs of teaching and learning. But, digital pedagogy is not limited to the use of technological equipments, rather it is more concerned with approaching all the digital tools and scientific innovations to the educational arena from a critical pedagogical perspective. So, it's also about knowing when to use, how to use and where to use digital tools in pedagogical aspects. From this perspective, it can be considered as a judicious application of technological gadgets to the educational field. Digital pedagogy covers a wide range of areas starting from using technology to present subject matter in a more interesting manner to blogging of assignments, use of social media platforms for making communication more effevtive with the students, MOOC's courses and so on. Hence, it is all about incorporating electronic technological equipments to the educational process for making students' learning experiences more vivid, clear and long lasting.

Covid 19: Covid 19 is a contagious disease which is caused by the Novel Coronavirus that emerged in Wuhan Province, China during December, 2019. The outbreak of this disease has taken place initially in the seafood and animal market of the region. The incubation period of the virus lasts from 2 to 14 days. The virus infects people

in different ways. The most common symptoms of the virus include high fever, dry cough, difficulty in breathing, chest pain, tiredness, sore throat, diarrhoea, headache, lost of taste and smell, aches and pains and discolouration of fingers or toes. As of now, the research studies have found out that the disease is transmitted from one person to another by coming into close contact with the sick individuals. The vaccine for the disease is not invented yet. However, we can prevent the disease by taking careful and hands on measures like wearing masks, frequent hand washing, staying home wherever possible, practice physical distance and so on.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Digital pedagogy has been creating a new dimension in the field of education. It constitutes an essential aspect of teaching-learning process in this age of digital technologies. The outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic situation has given birth to a lot of unexpected circumstances and as a result of this, we have been facing a lot of challenges in our day to day lives. As such, problems have also been arising in the domain of education and the integration of digital pedagogy practices is becoming new normal in every stage of education. In applying digital pedagogy practices to teaching-learning process, a lot of challenges have also been appearing in the concerned field. Hence, there comes the need of studying what kinds of challenges are coming to the light in using digital pedagogy at the elementary school stage in Sivasagar district of Assam (India), which is one of the most educationally advanced places of Assam and the positive cases of Covid19 is increasing day by day.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is concerned with identifying the challenges coming in the way of integrating digital pedagogy practices in the elementary school stage during the pandemic period of Covid 19. Hence it is further specified as

“Challenges of using digital pedagogy practices during Covid19 outbreak in the elementary schools of Sivasagar district of Assam (India)”

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the challenges faced by the elementary school teachers of Sivasagar district of Assam in using digital pedagogy practices during Covid19 outbreak.
- To describe the role playing by the elementary school teachers of Sivasagar district of Assam in continuing teaching-learning process during the pandemic period.

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the present study, the researcher has used descriptive survey method. Both the primary as well as secondary sources of data have been used for the present study, the primary data were collected by using self-prepared questionnaire and conducting open ended interviews with the respective sources of information. The secondary data for the present study has been collected from books, journals, research studies and internet sources. The data were gathered and then analysed by keeping in view the purpose of the study,

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is delimited on various grounds:

- Only the elementary schools of Sivasagar district of Assam is covered under the present study
- The study is conducted in the government aided elementary schools of Sivasagar district of Assam
- The data for the present study is collected from the elementary school teachers of Sivasagar district of Assam
- Only a limited number of questions are asked to the teachers for collecting the relevant information
- The finding of the present study can be generalised to the government aided elementary schools of Sivasagar district of Assam

POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The present study covers all the elementary school teachers who are engaging themselves at the elementary school stage in the Sivasagar district of Assam (India). For the purpose of the present study, the researcher has selected a sample of 110 teachers by using stratified random sampling technique and relevant data were collected from these samples.

COLLECTION OF DATA

The data for the present study has collected by the researcher herself. The data were collected from the elementary school teachers of government aided schools of Sivasagar district of Assam. The data were collected by using self-prepared questionnaire which was prepared by keeping in view the purpose of the study. Open ended interviews were also conducted for collecting the relevant data from the sampled teachers. The teachers were allowed to express their views regarding the concerned field and their sayings were taken into immense consideration during the present study.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The collected data are analysed as given below:

1. You have been connecting with your students through digital technology during Covid19 pandemic

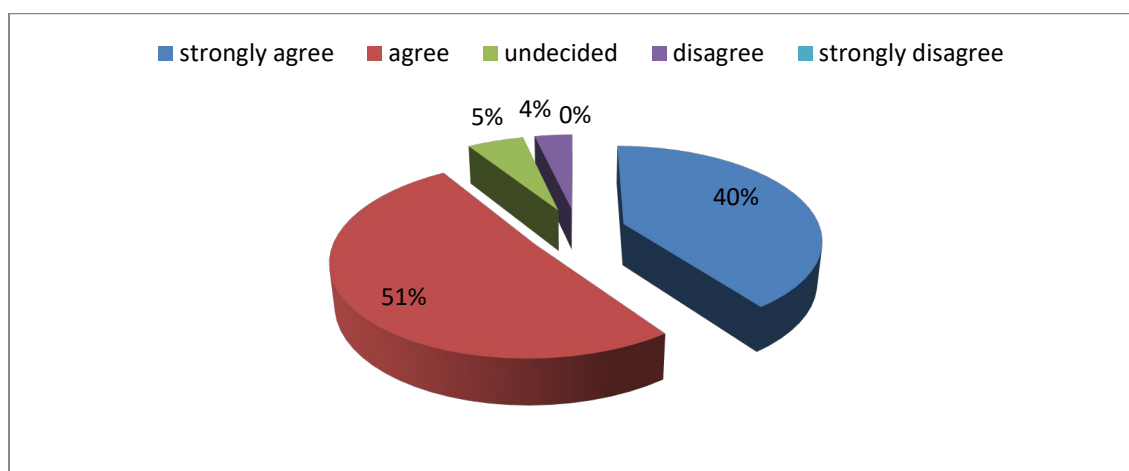
Table no. 1.1 (connecting with the students through digital technology)

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
44	56	6	4	0

From the above mentioned table 1.1, it can be observed that 44 persons are strongly agree, 56 are agree, 6 are undecided, 4 are disagree and 0 is strongly disagree with the statement. So, it is clear that a good number of teachers are connecting with their students during this pandemic period.

The responses are shown in percentages through the help of a diagram

Diagram no. 1.1 (connecting with the students through digital technology)



The above diagram shows that 40% responded as strongly agree, 51% agree, 5% undecided, 4% disagree and 0% strongly disagree with the statement. It is observed that most of the teachers are using digital pedagogy practices to connect with the students.

2. You are well equipped with the know how of digital technology

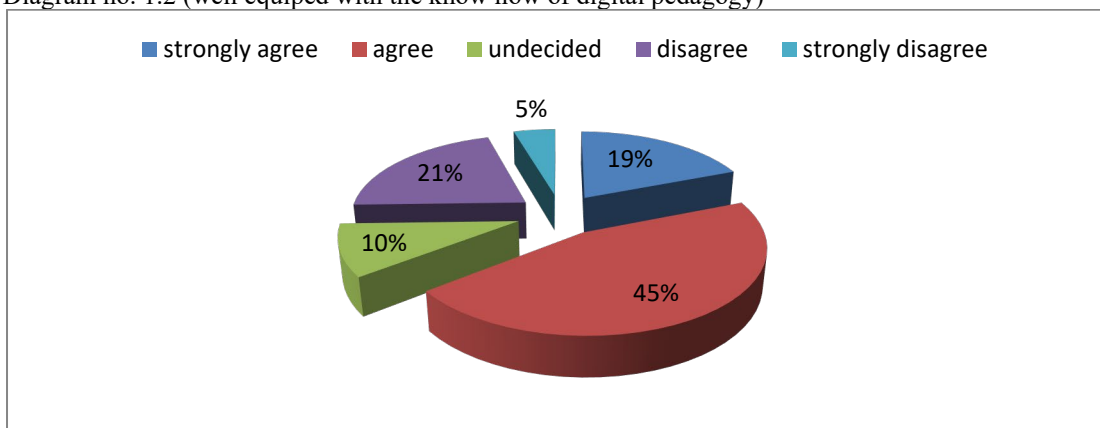
Table no.: 1.2 (well equipped with the know how of digital pedagogy)

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21	50	11	23	5

The table no. 1.2 shows that 21 are strongly agree, 50 are agree, 11 are undecided, 23 are disagree and 5 are strongly disagree with the statement.

These responses are shown in percentages through a diagram below:

Diagram no. 1.2 (well equipped with the know how of digital pedagogy)



From the above diagram it is observed that 19% are strongly agree, 45% are agree, 10% are undecided, 21% are disagree and 5% are strongly disagree with the statement. So, it is clear that teachers are well equipped with the know how of digital pedagogy.

3. The students have proper digital tools to continue learning during pandemic situation

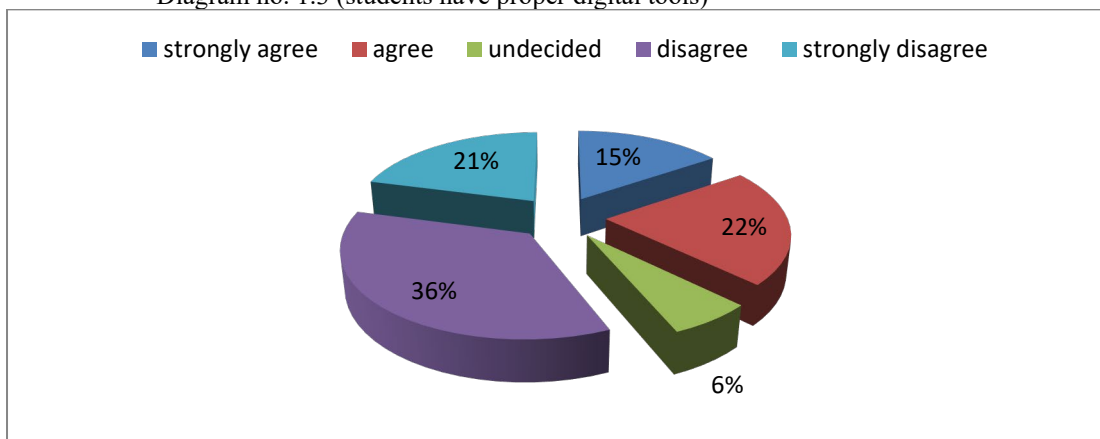
Table no. 1.3 (students have proper digital tools)

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17	24	7	39	23

The table no. 1.3 shows that 17 are strongly agree, 24 are agree, 7 are undecided, 39 are disagree and 23 are strongly disagree with the statement. So, it is evident that most of the students do not have access to the proper digital tools.

The percentages of responses are shown in a diagram below:

Diagram no. 1.3 (students have proper digital tools)



The above diagram 1.3 shows that 15% are strongly agree, 22% are agree, 6% are undecided, 36% are disagree and 21% are strongly disagree with the statement. It is clear from these responses that students do not have required access to the digital tools for continuing their learning process during this pandemic period.

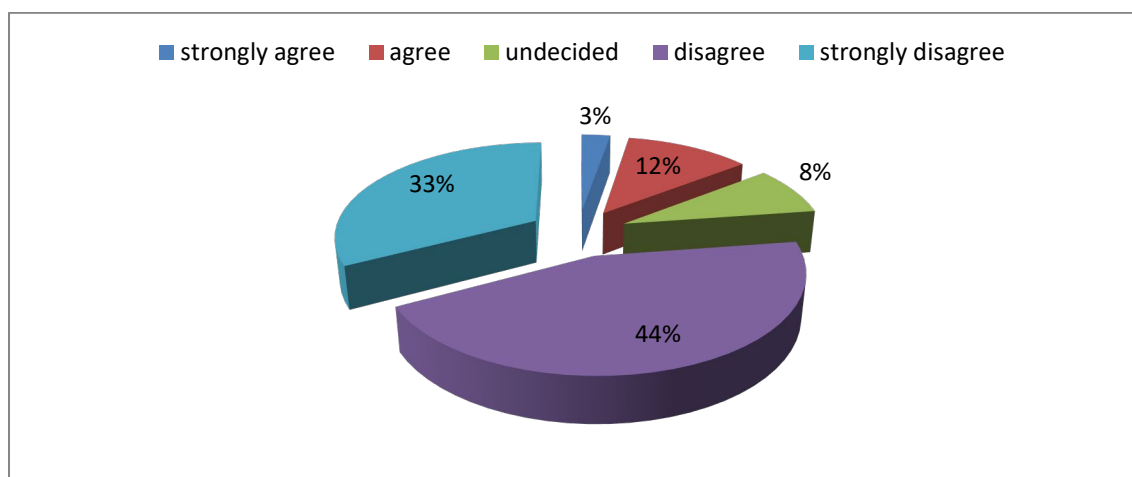
4. Teaching-learning process can be conducted without any kind of interruption through online classes
Table no. 1.4 (there is no interruption during online classes)

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	13	9	49	36

The table no. 1.4 shows that 3 are strongly agree, 13 are agree, 9 are undecided, 49 are disagree and 36 are strongly disagree with the statement that teaching-learning process can be conducted without any kind of interruption through online classes.

The responses are shown in percentages with the help of a diagram:

Diagram no. 1.4 (there is no interruption during online classes)



The diagram no. 1.4 shows that 3% are strongly agree, 12% are agree, 8% are undecided, 44% are disagree and 33% are strongly disagree with the statement. It is seen that most of the respondents are not supporting the statement and it is clear that teaching-learning process through online classes are facing a lot of interruption.

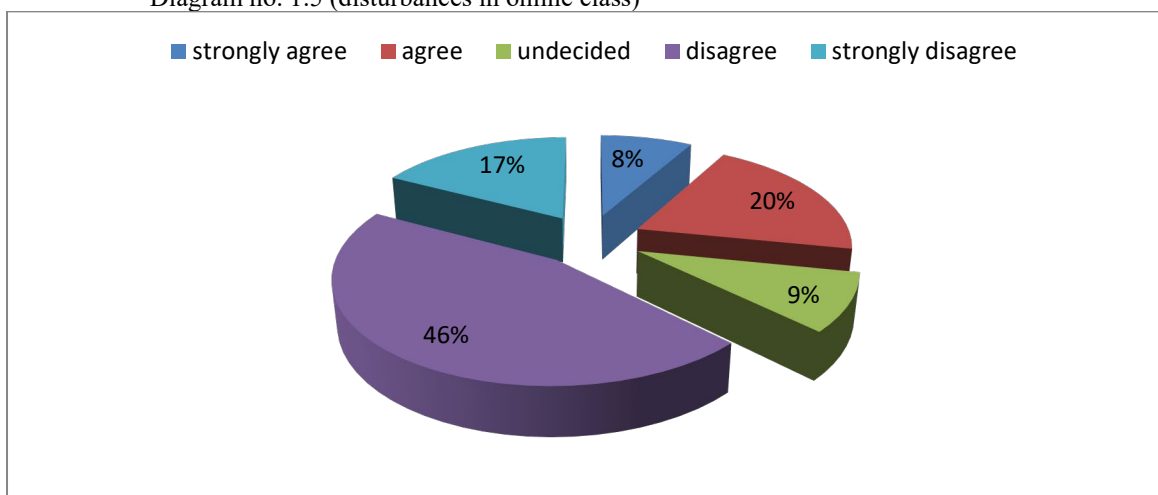
5. Students listen to you without creating any kind of disturbances during online class
Table no. 1.5 (disturbances in online class)

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9	22	10	50	19

The table no. 1.5 shows responses of the respondents as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree which is 9, 22, 10, 50 and 19 respectively. It is clear that students create disturbances during the online classes.

The responses are shown in percentages as given below:

Diagram no. 1.5 (disturbances in online class)



The diagram no. 1.5 shows that 8% are strongly agree, 20% are agree, 9% are undecided, 46% are disagree and 17% are strongly disagree with the statement. It is evident that during the online classes a lot of disturbances occur on the part of the students.

6. Home assignments are completed by the students at given time

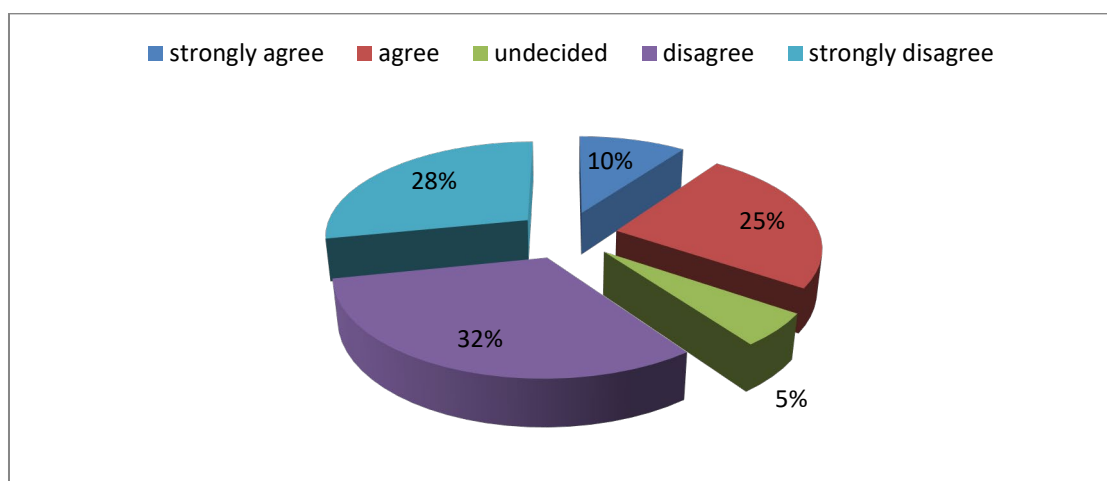
Table no. 1.6 (home assignment completed withing stipulated time)

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	27	6	35	31

The table no. 1.6 shows that 11 respondents are strongly agree, 27 are agree, 6 are undecided, 35 are disagree, 31 are strongly disagree with the statement that home assignments are completed by the students at given time.

Responses are shown with the help of a diagram below:

Diagram no. 1.6 (home assignment completed withing stipulated time)



The diagram no. 1.6 shows that 10% are strongly agree, 25% are agree, 5% are undecided, 32% are disagree and 28% are strongly disagree with the statement. Hence it is clear that most of the students donot complete the home assignments given by the teachers within the stipulated time period.

7. You can control the students' behaviour while having digital interaction with them

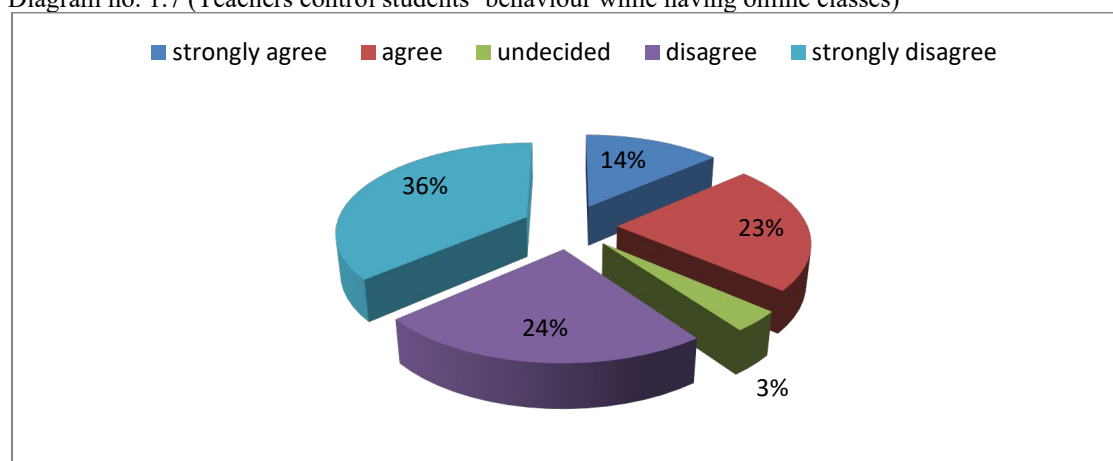
Table no. 1.7 (Teachers control students' behaviour while having online classes)

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15	25	4	26	40

From the table no.1.7, it is evident that 15 respondents are strongly agree, 25 are agree, 4 are undecided, 26 are disagree and 41 are strongly disagree with the statement. So it can be said that a large number of respondents are not being able to control students' behaviour while having digital interaction with them during the online classes.

The responses are shown in percentages as given below :

Diagram no. 1.7 (Teachers control students' behaviour while having online classes)



From the above diagram 1., it is evident that 14% responded as strongly agree, 23% agree, 3% undecided, 24% disagree and 36% strongly disagree with the statement. It can be said that teachers' control on students' behaviour while having digital interaction with them is very minimal.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From the analysis of all the gathered data, the researcher has found out the following:

- Most of the teachers belonging to the elementary schools of Sivasagar district of Assam (India) are interacting with their students through digital technologies during the pandemic period of Covid19
- The teachers are facing problems concerning the internet connectivity as some of them are teaching in the remote areas
- It has also found that some students do not even have the capability of buying digital tools like mobile phone or laptop for getting internet connectivity
- The teachers are trying their best to provide necessary information to all the students equally by asking the privileged one to help other students who are studying in the same school
- It is also found out that all the teachers are not digitally sound to have online interaction with their students. Still they are trying to use social media platforms like whatsapp and telegram to interact with the students
- During online classes, disturbances on the part of the students are also created which hampers in the teaching-learning process
- The problem of getting students involved with their studies has also emerged during the pandemic period and the teachers are expressing that regular interaction with the students through digital tools is not an easy task for the stakeholders of educational process
- Most of the teachers are trying to help students in solving their learning problems by engaging them in different educational activities and home assignments are playing an essential role in making students involved with the studies
- It is also got to know that the teachers are having interaction with the parents of their students for helping them to develop study habits in their wards on a daily basis.

SUGGESTIONS

- The teachers should try to make themselves digitally well equipped and master in using digital tools for having better interaction with the students
- Proper incentives can also be taken by the teachers for making students active during the online classes
- Interesting and innovative home assignments should be provided to the students for engaging students in the academic activities during the pandemic period
- Parents should also be made aware about the academic life of their wards so that they can also take right decisions when it comes to studies
- Helping each other during pandemic period is another way of living a healthy and harmonious life. Students must also be encouraged to help their fellow mates in different academic activities whenever required
- For improving the problem of internet connectivity, it is the responsibility of the government and concerned authority to make better connectivity in the remote areas
- Initiatives must also be taken to make the students well aware about the digital technological tools and train them to use those from a very young age.

CONCLUSION

The world is facing a very critical time due to the pandemic situation of Covid19. In such a condition, it's becoming difficult for us to live a normal life and engage ourselves in the daily activities. The pandemic situation is directly influencing our education system and due to that challenges are facing by the stakeholders of educational process in various ways. The teachers are trying their best to have interaction with their students and help them whenever possible. By applying digital pedagogy practices, the teachers are helping their students with the academic activities. In doing so, a lot of problems are coming in their way. Identification of those challenges and applying practical measures for mitigating those challenges to achieve the objectives of educational process is very essential for each and every one of us. Every stakeholder of educational process must work in collaboration with each other for reaching their goals. Thus, by doing so we would be able to make a better tomorrow for all the generations to come.

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