

CHALLENGES OF ONLINE TEACHING OVER FACE-TO-FACE TEACHING DURING COVID-19: PERCEPTION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted on 40 primary school teachers of Delhi and U.P. to study the challenges of online teaching that occurs during the situation like COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected through google forms. The findings disclosed various pedagogical, financial, socio-psychological, in assessment and evaluation and technological challenges of online teaching faced by teachers like not being able to manage online classes, spending money on basic infrastructure like internet connectivity, devices and, power source and equipments, finding online examinations less effective than physical face-to-face examinations. Furthermore, the data also yielded several inputs to overcome difficulties that a teacher faces in the online classroom, such as ICT skills training, stable internet connection and students' seriousness about studying etc.

Keywords: Online Teaching, Face to Face Teaching, Challenges, COVID-19, Primary School Teachers, Perception

Introduction

Novel Corona virus pandemic started proving to be serious for education. It struck at a point when educational institutions in India were not prepared for online education. So, to maintain the continuity of teaching-learning government took step for online education. Though this step was the most apt to address the need of the time it has created a difficult routine for teachers who are working from home while simultaneously assuming responsibility for ensuring that their students' learning continues in a consistent manner during pandemics. One of the most significant challenges of online education is the changing role of teacher from a face-to-face instructor to an online instructor. So, effectively transfer of teaching from the face-to-face classroom to online is a problem. Furthermore, communication challenges may also exist like the effectiveness of communication due to language barriers and communication through various technological modes can be dealt under pedagogical problems. Moreover, teachers in a physical classroom can draw cues from non-verbal communication with their students which might be difficult to take when the teacher is unable to see their students' faces. Additionally, teachers have been teaching face-to-face for a long time and are hesitant to teach in an online mode. So, comfort level of teachers with technology, as well as their internal opinions of towards online education influences their teaching in online environment (Kebritchi et al., 2017).

Therefore, the purpose of this research study is to study the challenges face by teachers due to sudden shift from face-to-face teaching to online teaching during COVID times. Many studies have identified and examined important issues like communication, technology, time management, pedagogy, and assessment which are affecting quality of online education. But, in this study, six different areas were taken into account to identify challenges associated with the change from face-to-face to online teaching:

- 1) **Pedagogical area:** It refers to the way content is developed and provided to the students, as well as change in teaching, engaging students in different activities, classroom control and management, etc.
- 2) **Financial area:** It deals with effects and side-effects of shifting to online teaching due to Covid-19.
- 3) **Socio-psychological area:** It includes the social relationships a teacher establishes with the students, and social as well as psychological effect of face to face to online shifting on him/her.

- 4) **Assessment and Evaluation area:** It comprises of changing ways of assessment and evaluation of students' progress and its effects on learning.
- 5) **Readiness area:** It relates to preparedness of teachers for online classroom environment, which includes teaching, teachers' comfortability, and ability with technology, as well as administrative and organizational responsibilities.
- 6) **Technological area:** It includes the technological glitches and problems a teacher has to face while teaching online.

Context Of The Study

The study looked at primary school teachers of Delhi and U.P. These are two Indian states located in north central part of the country. A primary teacher normally teaches students studying in grades one through five.

Need For The Study

Due to COVID-19 situation, education institutions were quick to exchange face-to-face lectures with online teaching to restore continuity of teaching and learning, and communication between teachers and students as far as possible (Karalis, 2020). So, teachers also had to adapt to latest modes of delivery of teaching and also pedagogical concepts, for which they may not have been trained. Murzello (2020) described a 54-year-old government-aided school teacher in Mumbai who had a few classes on Zoom and now Google Meet and is having trouble sending invites. She feels terrified, nervous, and has a restless sleep. The other key challenge pointed out in the study of Jain et al. (2020) was that online education necessitates a unique type of pedagogy that most instructors are unfamiliar with. The researchers also pointed out that school teachers believed they are digitally skilled but knowing how to use technology is not the same as having the pedagogical expertise required to teach online. Rasmitadila et al. (2020) found the challenge that students' participation in learning activities is not optimal and as much as in face-to-face learning. Furthermore, the application of SFH that was school from home has posed obstacles in terms of establishing online learning systems, particularly in terms of facility use and infrastructure availability, which has been minimal till now. Various problems included the provision of school infrastructure like the cost of obtaining expensive data packages, as well as the internet network that not all schools have previously had access to, especially in villages. Student involvement in educational activities was hampered by data packages, ownership of cellular phones or laptops, and students' eagerness to study. According to Kebritchi et al. (2017), 45% of the respondents have prior knowledge about online teaching and do not face any challenges. However, only a few have insufficient digital training, expertise, and awareness of digital tools and applications. Karalis and Raikou (2020) clearly stated that at students were filled with intense negative feelings and, to a lesser extent, fleeting joy as universities closed. Bhamani et al. (2020) found that majority of teachers felt negative emotions which mainly included stress, anxiety and sadness. Izhar et al. (2021) stated that teachers lacked the knowledge and abilities needed to transform offline (hardcopy) materials to online (softcopy) materials and disseminate them on social media platforms. So, due to a lack of experience in online teaching, teachers lacked online teaching skills.

Thus, the studies and documents on challenges of sudden shift from teaching face to face to online that have been reviewed above brings out varied findings. It was also felt that it is a relatively new, recent, and relevant topic. Although researches are done on it at a very fast pace in other countries and international level but not much has been done in Indian scenario; especially on primary school teachers. Hence, it seemed of great importance to conduct present research by taking following objectives into consideration:

1. To study the challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom
2. To collate suggestions of teachers for overcoming the difficulties faced during online teaching

Research Methodology

This study comprised of total 40 primary school teachers that were chosen on the basis of convenience sampling. Out of which 20 teachers were selected from Delhi Schools (5 teachers × 4 schools) and 20 teachers were selected from U.P. (5 teachers × 4 schools). Furthermore, to achieve the objectives of this study questionnaire was developed by the researchers by selecting items from the studies of Gupta (2018), Karalis (2020), Rasmitadila et al. (2020), Kim (2020), Jain et al. (2020), Deka & Anand (2021), and McCurdy et al. (2020). The questionnaire consisted of 33 close-ended questions related to challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom. 5-point Likert scale was used for close ended questions. These questions were further divided into 6 dimensions namely: Pedagogical, Financial, Socio-Psychological, Assessment and Evaluation, Readiness, and Technological. In addition, teachers were also asked one open-ended question. Data of close-ended questions was analysed through online spreadsheets and MS Excel using percentages once it was collected online. For the analysis of open-ended question, themes were identified by the researchers. Analysed data was presented in the form of tables and chart.

Findings

Here, objective wise results of the study are given below.

Objective 1: To study the challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom

This objective is categorised into pedagogical, financial, socio-psychological, assessment and evaluation, readiness, and technical dimensions by the researchers. Teachers’ responses were gathered on a 5-point Likert scale.

a) Pedagogical challenges

Table 1: Responses of primary teachers about pedagogical challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom

S. No.	Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	You have more control in face-to-face class than online classroom.	50%	20%	25%	0%	5%
2	You have a feeling of alienation from the entire class due to one way communication happening most of the time in online class.	30%	27.5%	40%	2.5%	0%
3	You think learning process is not carried out optimally in online teaching.	17.5%	25%	37.5%	17.5%	2.5%
4	You need experience to engage children in online classes from various backgrounds.	27.5%	22.5%	40%	5%	5%
5	You find ineffectiveness in brainstorming activities and group discussions in online classes.	17.5%	22.5%	52.5%	5%	2.5%
6	You face difficulty in concentrating on individual learner in online classes.	20%	45%	15%	17.5%	2.5%
7	You face difficulty in participating and engaging students in online classes.	15%	25%	45%	12.5%	2.5%
8	You think lack of effective communication skills leads to total failure of online classes.	17.5%	25%	35%	12.5%	10%

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (50 %) stated that they always have more control in face-to-face class than online classroom, whereas 17.5% of them reported that learning process is not carried out optimally in online teaching rarely. 45% of the teachers stated that they often face difficulty in concentrating on individual learner in online classes. More than half of the teachers (52.5%) answered that they sometimes found ineffectiveness in brainstorming activities and group discussions in online classes. Meanwhile, 40% of the participants sometimes have a feeling of alienation from the entire class due to one way communication. 15% of the total number of teachers always faced difficulty in participating and engaging students in online classes. However, there were only 3% participants who mentioned that they never faced difficulty in participating and engaging students in online classes.

b) Financial challenges

Table 2: Responses of primary teachers about financial challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom

S. No.	Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	You require investing money to access necessary devices like cell phones/laptops/computers.	25%	32.5%	25%	5%	12.5%
2	You require investing money to get reliable power source.	22.5%	37.5%	17.5%	12.5%	10%
3	You require investing money to access resources like Wi-Fi for internet connectivity.	30%	30%	25%	7.5%	7.5%
4	You require purchasing expensive data packages for the purpose of conducting online classes.	27.5%	37.5%	20%	7.5%	7.5%

Table 2 indicates that 25% of the teachers always require investing money to access necessary devices, while only 5% teachers rarely have to invest money to access necessary devices. Whereas 30% of the respondents always require to invest money to access resources like Wi-Fi, and 37.5% of the respondents often have to purchase expensive data packages for the purpose of conducting online classes. However, 10% teachers mentioned that they never require investing money to get reliable power source.

c) Socio-psychological challenges

Table 3: Responses of primary teachers about socio-psychological challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom

S. No.	Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Face to face class brings in more interaction between student and you than online classroom.	57.5%	12.5%	20%	5%	5%
2	Lack of hands-on experience leads to anxiety and confidence losing.	25%	20%	40%	10%	5%
3	You have anxiety about when and how syllabus will be completed.	17.5%	32.5%	22.5%	10%	17.5%
4	Online teaching evokes negative emotions like fear, nervousness, scariness, distress in you.	10%	22.5%	42.5%	0%	25%
5	Continuously looking at screen leads to headache and eye pain.	32.5%	35%	17.5%	2.5%	12.5%
6	You are less enthusiastic with SFH (school from home) than with face-to-face learning.	37.5%	15%	32.5%	10%	5%

Table 3 reveals that majority of the teachers (57.5%) answered that face-to-face class always brings in more interaction between student and them than online classroom, while only 5% reported that face to face class never brings in more interaction than online classroom. Moreover, 22.5% teachers sometimes underwent anxiety about when and how syllabus will be completed. Of all the respondents, only 10% participants stated that online teaching always evokes negative emotions like fear, nervousness, scariness, distress in them, but 25% of the respondents never felt such negative emotions. Additionally, 37.5% of the participants mentioned that they are always less enthusiastic with SFH (school from home) than with face-to-face learning. Some teachers (35%) often felt continuously looking at screen leads to headache and eye pain, whereas only 2.5% of the teachers rarely felt this problem.

d) Assessment and evaluation challenges

Table 4: Responses of primary teachers about assessment and evaluation challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom

S. No.	Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	You find it easy to conduct presentation, case study, role play, group discussion in face-to-face class than online teaching.	27.5%	37.5%	30%	2.5%	2.5%
2	You feel mode of submission of assignments is more effective in face-to-face teaching than online teaching.	37.5%	20%	32.5%	5%	5%
3	Checking homework of entire class sent through photographs/pdf is cumbersome and time consuming.	50%	20%	22.5%	2.5%	5%
4	Checking assignments of entire class sent through photographs/pdf is cumbersome and time consuming.	47.5%	20%	25%	2.5%	5%
5	Since you cannot interact physically with students, so you cannot gauge students' understanding when teaching online.	27.5%	27.5%	37.5%	2.5%	5%
6	Mode of examinations is more effective in face-to-face teaching than online teaching.	45%	20%	25%	5%	5%

Table 4 shows that 37.5% of the teachers often found it easy to conduct presentation, case study, role play, group discussion in face-to-face class than online teaching, while only 2.5% of them rarely found it easier to conduct

presentation, case study, role play, group discussion in face to face class than online teaching. Half of the teachers (50%) reported that checking homework of entire class sent through photographs/PDF is always cumbersome and time consuming, whereas only 5% teachers reported that checking homework of entire class sent through photographs/pdf is never cumbersome and time consuming. Moreover, 37.5% of the respondents reported that since they cannot interact physically with students, so sometimes they cannot gauge students' understanding when teaching online. However, 45% of the participants mentioned that mode of examinations is always more effective in face-to-face teaching than online teaching.

e) Readiness challenges

Table 5: Responses of primary teachers about readiness challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom

S. No.	Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Lack of prior exposure to skills related to online teaching.	17.5%	22.5%	47.5%	10%	2.5%
2	You are not familiar with knowledge of new and latest technology as well as teaching methods to deliver effective online classes.	12.5%	27.5%	37.5%	12.5%	10%
3	Online classes are inconvenient in-home setup.	35%	17.5%	27.5%	12.5%	7.5%
4	Due to the lack of specialized training, you are mostly unfamiliar with particular issues of online pedagogy and struggle to teach online.	20%	20%	30%	20%	10%

Table 5 reveals that 47.5% of the teachers answered that sometimes they feel lack prior exposure to skills related to online teaching. Furthermore, 27.5% of the respondents stated that they are often not familiar with knowledge of new and latest technology as well as teaching methods to deliver effective online classes. Whereas, due to the lack of specialized training, 30% of the participants sometimes feel unfamiliar with particular issues of online pedagogy and struggle to teach online, however, only 10% of the participants never feel that they are not familiar with knowledge of new and latest technology to deliver effective online classes. Moreover, 35% of the total teachers reported that online classes always inconvenient in-home setup, while 12.5% reported that online classes are inconvenient in home setting rarely.

f) Technological challenges

Table 6: Responses of primary teachers about technological challenges faced by teachers due to sudden shift from traditional classroom to online classroom

S. No.	Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	You face lack of required technology to show and explain topics to students in online classroom.	15%	35%	35%	5%	10%
2	Wastage of time and classes owing to network and technical glitches and power problems are quite common.	17.5%	45%	25%	7.5%	5%
3	You face difficulties in using ICT may come from the gap between skills you learn in your educational programs and ICT that you are expected to use in teaching now.	17.5%	22.5%	47.5%	5%	7.5%
4	Lack of sufficient ICT knowledge and skills to teach primary classes.	12.5%	32.5%	32.5%	15%	7.5%
5	Lack of proper internet connectivity.	22.5%	30%	30%	10%	7.5%

Table 6 reveals that 35% of the total number of teachers often faced lack of required technology to show and explain topics in online classroom; meanwhile only 5% respondents had to deal with a shortage of needed technology in the classroom on a rarely basis. Only 5% participants reported that they never face time and class disruptions due to network and technical issues, as well as power outages. However, 47.5% teachers said they have difficulty utilising ICT because there is a gap between the skills they learn in school and the ICT they are required to use in the classroom now. Further, 15% of the teachers mentioned that they rarely feel lack of

sufficient ICT knowledge and skills to teach primary classes. In addition, lack of proper internet connectivity always experienced by 22.5% of the participants but only 7.5% of the participants never experienced lack of proper internet connectivity.

Objective 2: To collate suggestions of teachers for overcoming the difficulties faced during online teaching

In the first open ended questions, participants were asked to suggest ways of overcoming the difficulties faced during online teaching. Following are the responses provided by them.

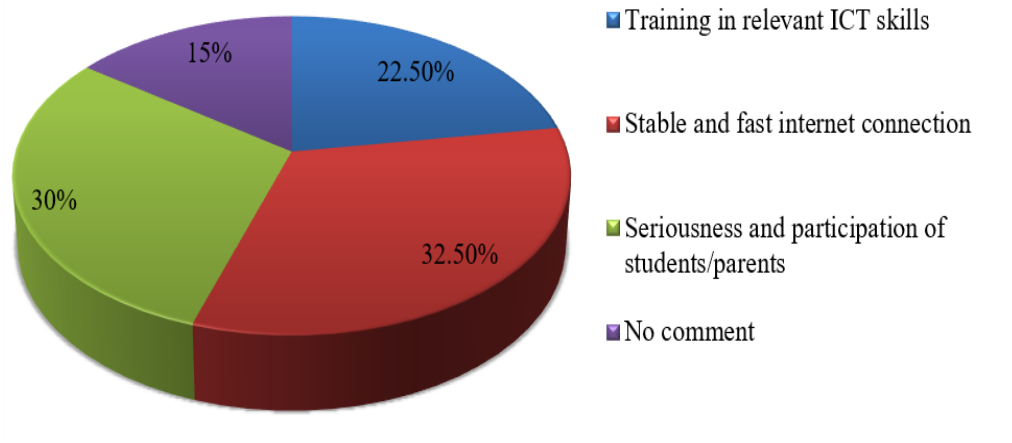


Figure 1: Responses of teachers suggesting ways of overcoming difficulties faced by them during online teaching

The findings given in figure 1 show that, 32.50% teachers said stable and fast internet connection will lead to overcoming the difficulties they face during online classes. However, 30% of the teachers suggested that seriousness and participation of students and parents in online classes can lead the effectiveness of online teaching. While 22.50% of the teachers claimed that they require hands on training in relevant ICT skills to meet the current needs of online teaching. 15 % participants did not give any suggestion.

Discussion

Findings of the current study’s **Pedagogical dimension** reveal that most of the teachers stated that they have difficulty in concentrating on individual student as well as learning process is not carried out optimally in online teaching. So, this finding shows congruence with those of Rasmitadila et al. (2020) who also mentioned that students’ participation in online learning activities is not as high as it is in face-to-face learning. As per the results of **Financial dimension**, online teaching requires to spend money on basic infrastructure like internet connectivity, devices, and power source by majority of teachers. This finding of the present study show similarity with by Jain et al. (2020), where the results showed teachers that offer online classes need to invest money in order to have access to technology, which includes having the appropriate gadgets, internet access, and a reliable power source. So, providing appropriate funding to assist online teaching expenditures for teachers in need should be a top priority. The **Socio-psychological dimension** reflects that online teaching have a grave impact on teacher’s socio psychological condition. Majority of teachers reported that face to face classes bring in more interaction with the students. They also stated that online teaching led to headache and eye pain due to continuously looking at screen. As well, online teaching develops negative emotions and anxiety among them. The finding is consistent with Bhamani et al. (2020) who also found negative emotions among teachers which mainly included stress, anxiety and sadness that arose due to the closure of institutions as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. Therefore, teachers should be provided with emotional and psychological distressing support and activities by school. Furthermore, results of the **Assessment and evaluation dimension** disclose that most teachers found it tougher to conduct presentation, case study, role play, group discussion in online classes than in face-to-face classes. Whereas only a very small number of teachers did not found checking homework of entire class sent through photographs/PDF cumbersome and time consuming while the rest of them did. Teachers also reported their failure in gauging the level of understanding of students when teaching online. Therefore, professional development and guidance should be offered with training to identify and help pupils that require particular attention. The findings emerged from **Readiness dimension** of this research uncovered that even if teachers are digitally proficient, but this does not guarantee that they have expertise to teach in online settings. They were not skilled to take online classes prior to change from face-to-face to online schooling. This finding is in coherence with Izhar et al. (2021) found in his study that teachers had little actual experience of teaching

online before the school closed. So, it was difficult to them to take an online class which was also found in the present study. Findings also contradict with Kebritchi et al. (2017) which found that 45 percent of participants had prior knowledge and are not facing any difficulties. Only few respondents, however, have stated that they had insufficient digital training, expertise, or awareness of digital tools and applications. Hence, in service teachers should be provided skills to deal with an unseen situation like COVID pandemic. Findings of the **Technological Dimension** points out that majority of teachers face technological difficulties in online classes, such as lack of sufficient ICT knowledge and skills, power cut offs, and wastage of time and classes due to network and technical issues. So, the government should ensure proper towers and provision for free and stable internet connections.

Conclusion

It is concluded that teachers had little time to prepare for an alternative method of instruction due to the abrupt and unforeseen changeover from face-to-face to online teaching. Therefore, their skills are not matched with online educational settings. It is also found that even if teachers are digitally savvy, this does not guarantee that they are able to teach online classes or produce materials that are suitable for online environment. Moreover, it implies that teachers have not been given with any supportive infrastructure like devices or internet facilities from school. So, they have to invest money on it themselves. Other challenges that arise as a result of the move from face-to-face to online teaching are spending money on basic infrastructure such as internet connectivity, devices, power sources, and equipment, considering online assessments to be less effective than physical face-to-face examinations, not being able to manage online classes, not having prior experience in online teaching, as well as unpleasant feelings and anxiety. In such a situation, grading and evaluating kids' learning becomes rather hazy, as there is always the possibility of students receiving family support in order to achieve good grades. It is also found that majority of the teachers think that training in relevant ICT skills, stable and fast internet connection along with seriousness and participation of students/parents can overcome these difficulties.

Suggestions For Future Studies

At the end, the study suggested areas on which future studies can be done:

- A similar study can be conducted by keeping school as well as university students.
- A study can be conducted on similar lines by keeping role of school and parents of students.
- A similar study can be conducted on different educational institutions, areas, rural and urban regions other than Delhi and U.P.

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