

EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE EDUCATION IN NEPALESE CONTEXT

A STUDY OF BACHELOR LEVEL STUDENTS

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PURPOSE

ALMOST a year back, online education was limited in research documents although it was a catch word in the writing of authors and researchers. Similarly, some government documents and policies had also supported about online education but they were in confusion for implementing the policies. But after the transmission of COVID-19 in December of 2019, in Wuhan, China, the world has taken a new transformation in the sector of education. Since the schools and colleges came to be completely closed and the world imposed a lockdown to save people and their business, online education became an inevitable part of education. New classrooms were introduced in ZOOM and Microsoft Teams which had not been known by almost all students and teachers in Nepalese context. On the contrary to this situation, government authorities and universities forced to conduct online classes in all parts of the nation. So, in this context, the purpose of this research article is to study about the effectiveness of this online class in Bachelor Level in Nepalese context.

Methodology/Design/Approach: *The methodological approach of this research study is qualitative and the data obtained from interview are interpreted in thematic form.*

Findings: *The findings of this study present that online classes have got both advantages and disadvantages. Every student and teacher is separated from his/her group and feels loneliness. Similarly, this research study finds different kinds of technological obstacles and barriers for both students and teachers.*

Delimitations: *This research study is qualitative in nature and data are collected through online interview from students and teachers. The effectiveness covers the aspects of academic, economic and access to online education.*

Limitations: *Due to the fear of continuous lockdown all over the country, the researcher has not visited himself physically to places for conducting interviews.*

Practical Implications: *This research study has got practical significance because it has addressed the most essential aspects of online education systems at the present scenarios and future possibilities.*

Originality/Value: *This research paper has described effectiveness of online education in Nepal independently in original form. The analysis has been made on the basis of responses of the respondents along with support from literature.*

Key Words: *Globalization, Technology, Online Education, Obstacle and Barriers, Effectiveness.*

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Introduction

Today in the era of globalization, flexibility in every activity is preferred by people. Furthermore, people become happy to follow modern changes rather than the traditional activities. As a result of social change and human evolutionary process, system of education has also changed in developed countries and the people of other developing countries also have to follow the trends. Moreover, we are living in the global age and globalization is omnipresent (Albrow, 1996; as cited in Ritzer, 2010:2). Similarly this situation shows that people today cannot hide from the sight of globalization. Similarly globalization is known as “a very important change” (Albrow, 1996; as cited in Ritzer, 2010: 2). So, everybody has to accept that global changes are inevitable which have also brought changes in people and society. Furthermore, online education is also a result of the process of globalization which has come into existence through the use of modern technology.

Although, in Nepalese context, online education was mentioned in policy documents, it was not made compulsory. But after pandemic threat, COVID-19, and the imposed lockdown, all educational institutions were closed. In one hand, there was matter of safety but on the other hand, there was need of continuing educational activities for the growing population of students. To facilitate this situation, Ritzer (2010: 6-7) has mentioned the use of technology such as Facebook and the Internet in the form of liquid and gas. On the contrary, liquid and gas flow more easily than the solid objects and the main technology is known as Internet.

Similarly, people also need quality in education so that the learners get employment easily. Regarding this situation, University Grants Commission [UGC] (2018) has written about expansion of higher education with increasing aspiration of people for quality higher education. In addition, UGC (2018: 11) has also focused on the issues of academic flexibility and application of Information and Communication Technology [ICT] in higher education. Although these terms were used in government documents, they were not applied compulsorily in real practice. But COVID-19 made Nepalese higher education institutions use the technology in a compulsory way for educational inclusion. Furthermore, for such type of pandemic, COVID-19 disease, Ritzer (2010:366&370) has argued on the idea of negative globalization and borderless diseases because of increasing global liquidity. So, increasingly spread of COVID -19 and the beginning of online classrooms are the result of globalization.

Literature Review

Literature review is a very important section for the further work of a research study to direct in the right path. Similarly, regarding literature review, Koul (1998: 89) has stated review taken from different sources enables a researcher to define the limits of the research field. This research study is a qualitative study and review is made accordingly.

With respect to online education, it can be said that it has been as a demand of present era of globalization. Regarding globalization, Schaeffer (2003:1) has mentioned that globalization is inevitable and unstoppable process which has introduced new technology. Similarly, among previous learning technologies, present world has found Internet and it has facilitated the Apps such as ZOOM and Microsoft Teams which have been used by many teachers and students around the world. Regarding this situation, Schaeffer (2003:2) has further added that the invention and diffusion of new technologies are known as contemporary feature of globalization. Also, these technologies are purchased by educational and business sectors as well.

Specifically, online education is related to distance education mode which is made successful through the use of technology. Regarding the value and importance of distance education, Sahoo (2012: 321) has argued, “Various kinds of professional education programmes are promoted through distance education mode covering the areas of Management Education, Teacher Education, Education concerned with Engineering and Technology, Medical Education etc.” This argument of Sahoo reveals that distance

education programme covers many fields of study just like that of classroom education. Moreover, this review highlights that online education is of great value for inclusion and social justice in higher education sector in all universities and higher education institutions.

Actually, open education has got priority at present all over the world and policy makers of Nepalese higher education have also realized its need and importance. Regarding this type of situation, UGC Nepal (2015:4) has stated, “Higher education providing institutions have not been competitive as needed in international standard and the use of technology has not been used according to global trends and open education has been restricted from being expanded.” This reality in Nepalese higher education reveals that there is need of online education but proper implementation for its policy has not been into practice so far.

Consequently, there are differences in the availability of facilities between the students of rural and urban areas. And similar situation is in the availability of internet facility. The students of urban areas get more access to online facility of Internet than the students of rural areas. This situation is justified by Government of Nepal (2019:70-71) and has stated, “Efforts will be made to minimize the differences in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) found between the students of rural and urban areas by making coordination among Federal Government, Provincial Government and Local Level Government.” This decision has also clarified that students who are in rural areas have certainly got difficulties in the availability and access to Internet facilities to continue online education. So, online education also needs more precaution before its commencement.

Similarly, empirical researches have been done in the field of effectiveness of online education / e-learning situation. Regarding e-learning, Ali, Hossain and Ahmed (2018: 352) have stated, “E-learning is faster, time and cost friendly, appropriate to work independently, add value to the learning of the students, usable for the purpose of active learning, faster, quick response, applicable outside the class room, satisfactory quality and effective.” In this way researches have supported online education as a reliable process of delivery of education.

Regarding effectiveness of e-learning, Noesgaard, & Ørngreen (2015: 286) have stated, “Motivation to learn and engage with the e-learning solution is key to effectiveness and the importance of motivation to learn and workload in determining aggregate time spent in e-learning courses are taken effectively” (Brown, 2005: 465). In this way, as mentioned here, motivation plays important role in the process of e-learning. Likewise, if used with proper motivation, e-learning becomes beneficial and effective. So e-learning has got some aspects in use.

Similarly Panyajamorn, T. et al. (2018:8) have discussed about e-learning. Students’ perception of learning experience can influence their decisions to continue learning (Carr, 2000; Barreto et al., 2017), which affects their satisfaction (Kenny, 2003). Moreover, Drennan et al. (2005) found that positive perception of technology and an innovative learning style are also positive attributes of students’ satisfaction. There is a significant relationship between cultures and learning that is reflected in learning references. Students’ satisfaction levels are related to individual characteristics and students’ ages (So, 2009). In addition, the views of these authors show that experience in e-learning plays major roles. It is also mentioned that e-learning has got positive attitude for students’ satisfaction. But on the other hand, students’ individual characteristics also play role in learning online.

Sun, A., & Chen, X. (2016: 157) have mentioned, Effective online instruction is dependent upon (1) well-designed course content, motivated interaction between the instructor and learners, well-prepared and fully-supported instructors;(2) creation of a sense of online learning community; and (3) rapid advancement of technology.

With regards to the benefits and uses of online learning Nguyen (2015: 310) has stated, “One reason why there is so much discussion around online learning is that there are many purported benefits and

uses of online learning.” Similarly, on the benefits of online learning, Bartley and Golek (2004) have argued, “Most important ones are: its effectiveness in educating students, its use as professional development, its cost-effectiveness of postsecondary education, credit equivalency at postsecondary level, and the possibility of providing a world class education to anyone with a broadband connection (Bartley & Golek (2004, as cited in Nguyen 2015: 310). In this way there are benefits of the use of online education in the same way as classroom education. On the other hand, online learning has provided more flexibility in the process of delivery of education in college level.

Methodology

This research study is qualitative and methodology used in this research study is to believe the responses of respondents in the sense of knowledge. About knowledge, Royce (1964) has stated four processes such as believing, thinking, sensing and feeling (as cited in Merriam and Simpson, 1984: 2). Similarly, problems will be solved and knowledge will be produced.

The respondents of this research study are students studying in First and Second Year Bachelor Level in Nepal. To select the students, purposive sampling was used deliberately. Moreover, the selection process was that the students who were accessible for online contact were selected and they were interviewed according to a prepared open-ended interview schedule. The process of content analysis is used for analysis of data as applied in qualitative study.

Objective

The general objective of this is to find effectiveness of online education. More specifically, the objectives of this study are: to know students’ views on traditional and online education, facilities and difficulties faced by them and other different online education related day to day dimensions.

Research Questions

To meet the above mentioned objectives, the following open- ended research questions are administered to the selected respondents (the students of Bachelor Level). (1) What are your views on traditional classroom education and online education in the globalized context? (2) Why is online education approved all over the world? (3) What differences and similarities do you find between online and classroom delivery of courses? (4) What difficulties do you face while managing online classes? (5) What are the ways forward?

Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, analysis and interpretation are made according to themes as found from the responses of the respondents through the process of open- ended interview as follows:

Traditional and Online Education in Globalized Context

These days due to the development of science and technology, the trend of higher education delivery has been changed. Today, education system is divided into two processes ‘traditional and online’. In traditional system, classes are taken face to face and in online system classes are taken through the use of technology and internet. In Nepalese context, students are habituated to take face to face classes but COVID-19, the pandemic, made students and teachers take online classes due to lockdown for a long time. Yen et al. (2018: 2) have stated, “In the last two decades, educators have begun to explore utilizing digital media and technology in teaching.” Similarly, Allen et al. (2016) reported that approximately 5.8 million American students are currently engaged in some form of online learning (as cited in Yen et al. 2016:2). In this globalized context, online education has got priority because of the need of flexibility in education.

Similarly, the respondents of this research study also showed their views that online education is related to globalized context. Furthermore they added that online education has linked the world

and students can contact at any place through online system but traditional classroom education has kept them within a narrow space along with noise. In addition, the students are aware of the forces of globalization because they want to study abroad after completing their certain education in Nepal which indicates globalization of education is in increasing order. Regarding globalization of education, Srivastava (2012 :208) has written, “Globalization of education should help in improving the quality of education in participating countries.” Consequently, the system of online education is also growing for quality of education as developing in global trends.

Importance of Online Education

Contrary to traditional classroom education, online education system is growing faster and faster than ever before. The importance of online education cannot be neglected because it is approved by almost all universities and higher education providing institutions. Similarly, with regards to the importance of online education the respondents of this study also supported the online system of education. They further said that if online system in education was not brought into practice, their study would be in great loss but online education system saved their yearly loss. They also emphasized that online education provided more knowledge and skills in a silent mode and they had also got chance to interact with teachers more efficiently. Likewise, Donnelly (2010; and Nguyen 2015) have mentioned, “Research has consistently demonstrated that positive student learning outcomes are associated with online teaching modalities” (as cited in Yen et al. (2018). Furthermore, it can be interpreted that students’ outcomes are satisfactory through online education system. In addition, the importance of online education is that it has joined students, teachers, parents, higher education providing institutions and global economy in a digital platform.

Differences and Similarities between Online and Offline Education

Although online education started in developed countries long ago, it is still young in Nepalese context. Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu started open and distance learning system a few years back and an Open University has been established in Kathmandu within a few years and the evaluation of progress is yet to come. But mostly, students hesitated to join online learning system in the past. On the contrary to it, online education has been inevitable part to continue at present from lower class to higher education. Similarly, introducing online education, Sahoo and Kumar (2012: 213) have written, “Networking is the basic feature of Open Learning System. The networking system aims at promoting sharing of information, resources, exchanging expertise at institutional level as well as at individual level.” This review has made it clear that online education is out of the touch of the concerned group.

Similarly, regarding similarities and differences between online and offline education, the students have given clear experiences as gained by them. The differences are that they cannot contact with their friends and teachers being closely and feel loneliness in their life. They further added that they get little chance to discuss with their group and get less romance through online system. On the other hand, the similarities are that classes are taken regularly so that loss of time is saved during the time of lockdown due to Covid-19, pandemic. As the teachers were supportive, they found reading materials although they could not consult physical library. Regarding this situation, Dumford and Miller (2018: 2) have stated, “It is crucial to explore the current situations and issues with higher education online learning to provide a better context for ways in which the student experience might be improved.” This view shows that similarities and differences have got some impacts. Moreover, online learning has got its own types of characteristics.

Difficulties Faced in Managing Online Education in Nepalese Context

Although online education is said to be supportive to students, it has got some problems of its own accessibility. Likewise, Chen et al. (2010) reported, “A few studies have suggested that technology can have positive effects on student engagement” (as cited in Dumford and Miller, 2018:4). This

situation suggests that online education is not all in all without any problems. Regarding difficulties faced by students, the respondents mentioned that they faced different kinds of difficulties to manage online education.

They mentioned that they had faced the difficulties related to the availability of internet, electricity and money. Their story reports that they were in different places of Nepal during Covid-19 lockdown. Furthermore, internet would not be provided in remote places and electricity was also the cause of problem for online education. Also, they had to pay for data when net was not available which was very costly for students. In this way online education affected the students and parents/guardians with increasing additional financial burden. In such situation, they had to quit classes more often which restricted them from being engaged in study. Regarding online education, Liguori and Winkler (2020:4) argued “We have not yet developed the tools and capacity necessary to teach all that we do effectively in an online format, despite there is likely being much more capability to do so, than we have let ourselves believe.” This argument has justified that online learning is not so much easy although it continues education. Similarly, there are also debates on inclusion, exclusion and social justice through college education.

Discussion of Findings

From the previous section of analysis and interpretation, some related findings are derived. Today, due to the development of science and technology this world has been linked with global networks and it has affected education sector, too. So, although not completely replaced, online education has been used as alternate model of course delivery of traditional classroom - based face to face education. Regarding this situation, Meejarleurn and Yampinij (2011: 254) have stated, “At the present time, the world becomes an information technology society known as ‘global network’. Internet is the main source of information in various fields, especially in the fields of education. Online lessons are widely used in education.” Moreover, online education in colleges has been an inevitable process.

Similarly, online education has been approved all over the world which shows its importance. In the process of online class, classes can be taken in a flexible way. Students can take classes staying at home. Moreover, online education has made an online platform in global village. In addition, it is also found that students felt some differences and similarities such as same thing face to face base and online base. Also they had to be literate in computing for online classes but it was not necessary for learning in classroom.

Also, they had faced difficulties for online classes. The problems were related to internet and electricity. First of all they faced the problems of device because they needed mobile, laptop, desktop computer which would open Wi-Fi. It was costly for them to manage online classes. Moreover, they felt loneliness in online classes and felt frustrated. With regards to such type of situation, UNESCO (2015: 20) has mentioned technological progress, economic and social changes as forces of the expansion of knowledge, which have also created tensions, complexity, vulnerability and inequality at the present world. Although online classes help the students, they face problems because they have to be more capable for online classes. The findings relate to inclusion, social justice as well as exclusion and inequality of students through online education.

Ways Forward

Similarly, the students have faced some problems which are common for many of them. In this situation, students alone cannot solve their problems automatically but government, universities and higher education providing institutions should draw their attentions towards students’ concerns with vision. Regarding this situation, UNESCO (2015:31) has mentioned, “The purpose of education must therefore be revisited in light of a renewed vision of sustainable human and social development that is both equitable and viable.” To meet this need of online education, some online internet

package programmes should be managed to teachers and students. Government authorities need to take account of the problems of the provision of internet in all places within a country. In addition, students and teachers have to be technology friendly among themselves.

Conclusion and Implications

This research study has brought some important aspects of online education being practiced at the present world. Moreover, the comment is that policy forming body should consider different issues, challenges and difficulties before implementation of programmes. In this way, the process of online education has been a buzz word in academic sector today. Although it is applied, in Nepalese context, very few students have been able to join the classes in their respective subjects. But on the other hand, universities and colleges have announced that they have managed online classes during the time of lockdown due to COVID-19, the pandemic. But in reality, very few students have got opportunity to join online classes.

Similarly, this research study has got practical implication. It has revealed and justified that programmes should not be applied haphazardly before analyzing the factors that affect afterwards. When people speak of globalization, policies also should focus on global trends and local difficulties. Likewise, the implication of this study is to be critical in policy formation and implementation. Moreover, about global landscape, The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (2009: 28) has reported, “The global higher education landscape is a relational landscape. Continually moving, it is constituted by the pattern of similarities and differences between nations and institutions; and by the cross-border flows of people, messages, knowledge, ideas, technologies and capital between them.” So, the implication of this study should be taken as providing practical evidence of how policies and programmes are linked to practices in the globalized context.

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