

## **A Study on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning**

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### **ABSTRACT**

With approximately 1.6 billion students affected in more than 200 nations, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the greatest disruption of educational systems in recorded human history. School, institution, and other learning facility closures have affected more than 94% of students worldwide. Because of this, many facets of our lives have undergone profound alteration. Social distancing and restrictive movement laws have seriously impacted traditional educational techniques. Reopening of schools once a limitation is lifted presents another problem due to the numerous new SOPs that have been implemented. Following the COVID-19 epidemic, other researchers have published studies on various methods of teaching and learning. Several colleges, universities, and schools had stopped offering in-person teaching. There was a concern that students will be lost academically or that even more may be lost in the future. Innovation and the use of alternative educational systems and assessment techniques are urgently needed. We now have introduced digital learning as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. The present research paper seeks to provide a thorough analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on online teaching and learning of different papers as well as to suggest future directions.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Pandemic, Use of the internet, Learning, Pedagogy, Teaching

## **Introduction**

Nearly all nations and territories were impacted by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. In Wuhan, China, the epidemic was first discovered in December 2019. Nations all over the world issued warnings urging the public to exercise caution. The public health measures included frequently washing hands, donning face masks, keeping a physical distance, and avoiding large crowds and meetings.[4] To flatten the curve and stop the spread of sickness, lockdowns and homebound policies had been implemented. [11]

In the second week of March 2020, Bhutan first announced the reduction in business hours and the closing of schools and institutions.[5] Beginning on August 01, 2020, there was a complete national lockdown.[8] The movement was permitted in the meantime, offices started operating, some levels of schools and colleges reopened, and other levels continued their online courses. The school closure today had an impact on more than 170,000 Bhutanese students in grades PP through XII. The effects are widespread and will likely continue to have an impact on learning in the days to come. Several institutions of higher learning had stopped offering in-person teaching. Innovation and the use of new educational and assessment methods were urgently needed. The COVID-19 epidemic gave us the chance to set the stage for the introduction of digital learning.[2]

The information gap, the unfavourable environment for learning at home, equity, and academic excellence in higher education were just a few of the deficiencies highlighted by

the research. Other deficiencies include the weak infrastructure for online teaching, the limited exposure of teachers to online teaching, and the infrastructure for online teaching itself. This study assesses how the COVID-19 epidemic had affected teaching and learning around the globe. The difficulties and possibilities of online and continuing education during the COVID-19 epidemic are compiled, and recommendations for the future are made.

### **Teaching Methods for Online Continuing Education**

Schools, Universities, training centres, and higher education institutions were forced to close in the majority of countries because of lockdown and social isolation measures brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic. The way educators deliver high-quality instruction—through a variety of online platforms—has undergone a paradigm shift. Despite the difficulties faced by both educators and students, online learning, distance learning, and continuing education had emerged as the cure for this unparalleled worldwide pandemic. Both learners and teachers experienced a completely different learning environment when switching from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning, yet they were forced to adjust because there was no other option left. Using a variety of online channels, the educational system and instructors had accepted "Education in Emergency," forcing them to use a system for which they were not ready.

E-learning resources played an essential role in facilitating student learning while universities and schools were closed due to the pandemic. [12] Staff and student preparation for the new changes were assessed, and appropriate support was provided. While the learners with a growth mentality readily adapted to a new learning environment, those with a fixed mindset

found it challenging to adapt and change. Online learning does not have a single pedagogy that works for everyone. There are yet numerous topics with various requirements. Various ways of online learning are necessary for different disciplines and age groups.[3] Online education also gives students who are physically limited more opportunities to engage in learning in a virtual setting with little physical activity required.[1]

Students, parents, and educators all over the world had been affected by the unforeseen ripple effect of the COVID-19 epidemic as schools had been closed to deal with the global pandemic. Governments, first responders, and health officials were working hard to contain the spread, but education systems were still making an effort to provide everyone with a high-quality education. Many students were experiencing psychological and emotional hardship at home or in their living environment, making it difficult for them to work well. The ideal methods of homeschooling had not yet been discovered. [9]

The knowledge and experience both educators and students had with information and communications technology (ICT) influenced the implementation of appropriate and pertinent pedagogy for online education. Unified communication and collaboration systems like Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Canvas, and Blackboard are a few of the online tools used for teaching. These tools allowed teachers to build educational courses, training programmes, and skill development initiatives. [9] These tools have features like workplace chat, video conferencing, and file storage that make classes simple to manage. They typically enable the exchange of a wide range of content, including Word, PDF, Excel, audio, and

video files, among others. Using quizzes and the evaluation of submitted tasks using a rubric, also enable the tracking of student learning and assessment.

The flipped classroom is a straightforward method for distributing learning materials before a class, such as articles, recorded videos, and YouTube links. The following step in the online classroom process is to use the interaction with peers and professors to further understanding.[3] The development of abilities like problem-solving, critical thinking, and self-directed learning can be encouraged quite well in this way. More and more people were using virtual classroom tools including videoconferencing (Google Hangouts Meet, Zoom, Slack, Cisco, WebEx), as well as adaptable cloud-based learning management systems like Elias, Moodle, Big Blue Button, and Skype.

### **Challenges in Teaching and Learning**

Because there were so many platforms and online learning resources available, both educators and students frequently ran into problems when using or referring to these resources. The following is a summary of some of the issues that numerous researchers have noticed and raised:

Accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning methodology, lifelong learning, and educational policy are all generally acknowledged as issues with e-learning.[7] Access to digital gadgets and dependable Internet connections were major problems in many nations. While economically disadvantaged children in many developing nations could not afford online learning tools, online schooling caused the risk of subjecting students to more screen

time. It is now crucial for students to participate in offline activities and self-directed learning. Another issue was a lack of parental supervision, especially for younger students because both parents were employed. There were practical concerns about physical workstations supportive of various learning styles.

In contrast to pupils who were weak learners, the vulnerable group of students was relatively unaffected by their learning since they required little monitoring and direction. Several academically gifted students from underprivileged families could not access or afford online education.

Due to fewer contact hours for students and lack of instructor's interaction when encountering learning/understanding issues, students' academic performance was likely to decline in classes held for both the year-end assessment and internal examination.[11]

Online tests were used to evaluate students, and this involved a lot of trial-and-error, ambiguity, and confusion among teachers, students, and parents. Depending on the comfort, knowledge, and compatibility of the instructors and the students, different strategies were used to give online exams. Due to the student population, appropriate procedures to check for plagiarism were not implemented in many schools and institutions. In addition to affecting internal evaluations and exams for important public certifications like the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the lockdown of schools and colleges had also resulted in the cancellation of A levels for the entire cohort in the UK. Due to the COVID-19 epidemic and nationwide lockdown, numerous state-level board exams, recruitment exams, university-level exams, and entrance exams were postponed across India.[13] Also, there had been

several admission exams postponed or rescheduled, including BITSAT 2020, NATA 2020, CLAT 2020, MAT 2020, and ATMA 2020. The ongoing situation had a significant impact on the educational system in schools, colleges, and institutions all around the nation. However, the pauses likely helped certain students' careers. For instance, it was determined that all Norwegian 10<sup>th</sup> graders would receive a high school diploma. According to a French study, the 1968 abandonment of standard test processes in France in the wake of student riots had favourable long-term effects on the impacted cohort's labour market.

Besides being enjoyable for the kids, school time helps them develop their social skills and awareness. Although pupils were away from the typical academic schedule, there were financial, social, and psychological effects on their lives. Since many of the students were enrolled in online courses and spent more time online, young people were more susceptible to online exploitation. Children were spending more free time viewing possibly hazardous and violent stuff online, which increased their risk of cyberbullying and cybercrime. To keep kids interested in learning, entertained, and connected to the outside world, more families were relying on technology and digital solutions. Yet, not all kids had the information, skills, and resources necessary to keep themselves safe online.[6]

Many students taking online courses in Bhutan were from remote regions where the parents were generally uneducated farmers. Students helped parents with farming, agriculture, caring for cattle, and other home duties. Some students even asked for the exam to be moved from the morning to the afternoon since they had to work in the fields in the morning.

Some students mentioned that they had to visit hospitals and care for their sick parents, grandparents, or other family members. By the time, they come back home in the evening, it is challenging for them to stay up with the lessons. Lower-grade parents believed it would be preferable to let their kids repeat the course the following academic year. In addition to having poor Internet connectivity, the majority of pupils could not access smartphones or televisions at home. Due to the closing of businesses and offices, a large population had no or a very low income. Continuous access to the Internet was an expensive business for the farming community, and the data package (costs) was considerable in comparison to the average revenue received. Most people supported online face-to-face classes using video, however, some students, particularly those from economically poor backgrounds, complained that those sessions caught up with more data than other types of online seminars. The teachers were unsure of who to believe and what resources to use. Some believed that pre-recorded videos could be helpful, but this would limit interactions. A suitable system that met the needs of all students in terms of convenience and learning was challenging to build.

### **Opportunities for Teaching and Learning**

The COVID-19 epidemic provided several chances for the unprepared and distant goals of establishing an e-learning system, despite the huge problems that were faced by educators, schools, institutes, and the government about online education from many angles.

More so than ever before, it built a solid bond between educators and parents. Parents assisted their children's intellectual and financial learning while homeschooling. During the continuing disaster, children with disabilities required additional and particular support.



For the first time, teaching and learning were examined and tested using online platforms like Google Classroom, and Zoom, virtual learning environments, social media, and numerous group forums like Telegram, Messenger, WhatsApp, and WeChat. Even after face-to-face instruction resumes, this can be investigated further, and these platforms can offer the students more resources and coaching.

Instructors must develop original ideas to help get around the drawbacks of online instruction. To enhance online teaching strategies, teachers are actively working together locally. Due to the shared experiences of educators, parents, and kids, there is unmatched potential for collaboration, innovative solutions, and a desire to pick up new skills and technologies.[3] To aid in and promote teaching and learning in a more interactive and engaging setting, several educational organizations make their tools and solutions available without charge. Unlike the teaching and learning experiences in the typical classroom setting, online learning has given everyone the chance to teach and learn in creative ways.

## **Discussion**

In 200 countries from pre-primary to higher education, 1.725 billion children and youth, or 98.6% of all students, were affected by the pandemic as of July 2020.[13] Making learning possible and accessible through homeschooling has thus been crucial.

Online learning is not practicable using face-to-face pedagogy currently accessible and in use. Although a variety of pedagogies have been developed for online and remote learning,

teachers who are technologically unprepared to relate to their students, need suitable professional development and training.

Genuine evaluations and appropriate criticism are crucial to learning. The capacity to provide online learners with timely feedback and effective formative evaluations is a key component of online distance learning.[3] The educational system and educators are reported to find this difficult. The bigger class sizes, lack of professional development and infrastructure for online teaching, and the student's lack of participation make it more difficult in the Bhutanese environment.

The expression "Maslow before Bloom" is frequently used in educational contexts. For education to continue throughout the current pandemic, this must be the goal of online learning. Before beginning online learning, the phrase is often used to make sure that our students are safe and that their basic needs are being satisfied. Because the culprits are frequently found at home or in the community, domestic violence and child abuse are on the rise, which poses a threat to the student's mental health.[10] Since pupils are now attending school from home due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the home environment is not consistently favourable for all standards and socioeconomic circumstances. It is important to conduct studies to aid the economically disadvantaged people who have been affected the hardest. There have been stories of students quitting school or choosing to stop in Bhutan. This has happened as a result of the extended holiday that the school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic required. Although no studies have been done to determine the direct effects of the pandemic on dropout rates, a study in this area would provide relevant facts.

Many online learning resources have been developed by numerous educational companies and made available for free throughout this pandemic. It is still difficult to make these online infrastructures affordable and accessible for all students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Children with learning disabilities who have particular needs, such as hearing loss, vision impairment, or mobility issues, need extra instruction as well as support and direction. The learning of this group of learners is hampered by the fact that many parents and carers at home are unable to meet these needs. The best choices for these students' special educational needs (SEN) must therefore be explored and researched, which will need time and money.

As every student completes their homework at home and takes their exams there, it can be difficult for teachers to determine whether or not real learning is occurring. Also, a lot of parents mentor and assist their kids as they learn, although the volume and quality of that assistance vary tremendously. Another area that needs research is student grading because no appropriate standards have been established or are being applied.

## **Conclusion**

The study on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning around the world finds that, even though numerous studies have been conducted, more research into appropriate pedagogy and platforms for different class levels of higher secondary, middle, and primary education is still needed.

Because data packages are expensive compared to people's income in many developing nations and the internet capacity is relatively low with fewer connection points, it is insufficiently accessible and affordable. To change this, policy-level intervention is necessary. The use of good pedagogy for online teaching and learning needs more study and investigation. Another area of research shows a need for the creation of tools for accurate assessments and prompt feedback. The creator of educational tools may choose to concentrate on customization to address the difficulty of affordability and accessibility for all students from different economic backgrounds. Intervention at the policy level is also essential. Considering the current situation, educational systems all over the world, including Bhutan, need to invest in the professional development of teachers, particularly in ICT and effective pedagogy. The other area of research and development focuses on creating user-friendly technologies that make online instruction creative, inventive, and participatory. This would support and equip the educational system for such future uncertainty.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that teachers and students/learners need to be trained on how to use a variety of online educational resources. Teachers and students should be encouraged to continue using such online tools to improve teaching and learning after the COVID-19 epidemic when regular classes begin.

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