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EXPANDING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION THROUGH THE ONLINE MODE IN RURAL GOVERNMENT DEGREE COLLEGES IN THE MAHABUBABAD DISTRICT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

The paper focuses on improving the quality of Higher Education through online mode by identifying the practical issues faced by students and teachers working in Mahabubabad District's rural Government Degree colleges. Students and teachers' perceptions of online learning and teaching, their concentration, the LMS platforms they use, and the government's support for rural colleges to improve quality are all investigated. Both students and teachers are in the process of learning and are willing to progress to the online mode of education. We chose rural Mahabubabad colleges for our case study because they are going to experience a digital divide. The lack of technical skills resulting from a lack of interaction with teachers has become a problem in online learning. The paper also discusses the strategies to be used when going online and makes a few recommendations for improving the quality of online education after the paradigm shift from offline to online.

The study aims to determine how Mahabubabad rural degree colleges managed to provide knowledge during the omicron pandemic, when degree colleges were forced to adapt their educational processes to exclusively online teaching and learning in a short period of time. We began to look at students' perceptions forward into online learning, their ability to absorb information, and their use of E-learning platforms in this regard. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to conduct an online survey. From the 17th to the 30th of January 2022, data was collected including over 100 students and teachers at four degree colleges in the Mahabubabad District.

According to the research results, rural degree colleges in Mahabubabad were not prepared for purely online learning. Omicron has made it mandatory for students and teachers to finish all of their online activities. Student-centered activities are included in the online mode, which is flexible due to the use of emails and chats. Students are being reached out to by video chatting teachers. Time management is required in the online mode. Control over content, and teachers must research the best ways to deliver content that will result in a positive outcome.

Keywords: Online Classes, Digital divide, E learning Platforms, Perceptions. Students, Teachers Issues and challenges

Introduction:

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted the interaction between students in higher education institutions, causing a change in the teaching-learning process. Colleges were pressured to follow and obey with students exclusively online as a result of the pandemic (Sobaih *et.,al.* 2020). Many governments took steps to prevent the diseases from spreading and to ensure the educational process's continuity, and colleges all over the world accepted web - based teach (Ali, 2020).

Even as web learning viewed as an option, an alternative to traditional learning (Abou *et al.,* 2014), during the Coronavirus pandemic, it became an integral part for maintaining schools and colleges open. This paradigm shift could end up causing changes in students' preconceptions of this method of teaching, and their conceptions may differ from some of those found in previous studies previous to the pandemic. As a result, we tried to capture the existence of such changes in this paper.

Literature Review:

Though NEP gives importance to online mode the rural colleges are lagging behind in ICT infrastructure and band width is low and so conducting classes using laptops and virtual boards is herculean task for teachers. Teachers prefer using smart phones over laptops and Tabs. A more complex and inclusive definition of E learning can be considered as a particular form of teaching and learning that integrate electronic resources and medium whose role is to faster development and to make education and training more qualitative. E learning is a web based system. The installation of additional tools is required and once uploaded the content is available for users at any time. E learning is a shift towards a student center education (Raheem and Khan, M.A. (2020).

These days, the higher education is constantly undergoing change, with colleges required to keep up with students' needs, desires, and requirements. Thus, technological advances and E-learning systems are regarded as critical elements in the procedure of colleges, with all these institutions progressively investing in online systems and devices (Popovici, *et.al.,* 2015). However, in this day and maturity level, one of the most challenging problems for universities is to incorporate innovative E-learning systems which reinforce and support both teaching and learning (Fischer *et.al.,* 2014).

The quality of online mode depends on the quality of technical skills teachers have Cheung and Cable eight principles of online teaching talk about encouraging contact between faculty and students, collaborative

teaching, feed backs, active learning, task time encouraging students to allocate more than for completing tasks, high expectations from the teacher should communicate their expectations in order to encourage and motivate students, diversified learning and technology application. The respondents had curiously to learn and upgrade themselves through collaboration but most of the teachers and students preferred offline over online. The teachers did not develop their content through LMS platforms.

Analysis of the Teachers Survey:

1. Device/ Used for online mode

It is found Teachers that most of the regular teachers used laptops or tablets or desktops which the contract and guest faculty used smart phones

1. Teachers who used laptops 10%
2. Smart Phones 70%
3. Desktops 10%
4. Tablets 10%

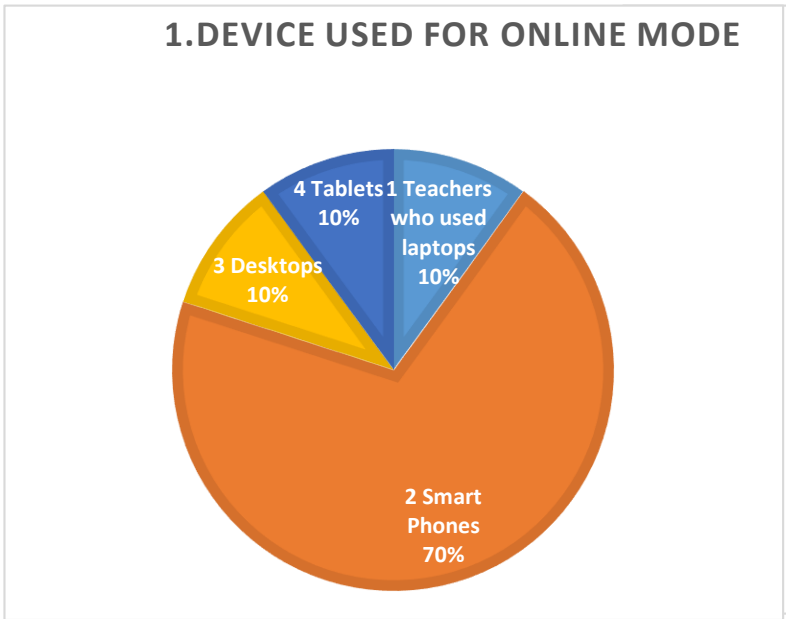
Which shows the economic status of the Teachers also reflect their online mode & teaching

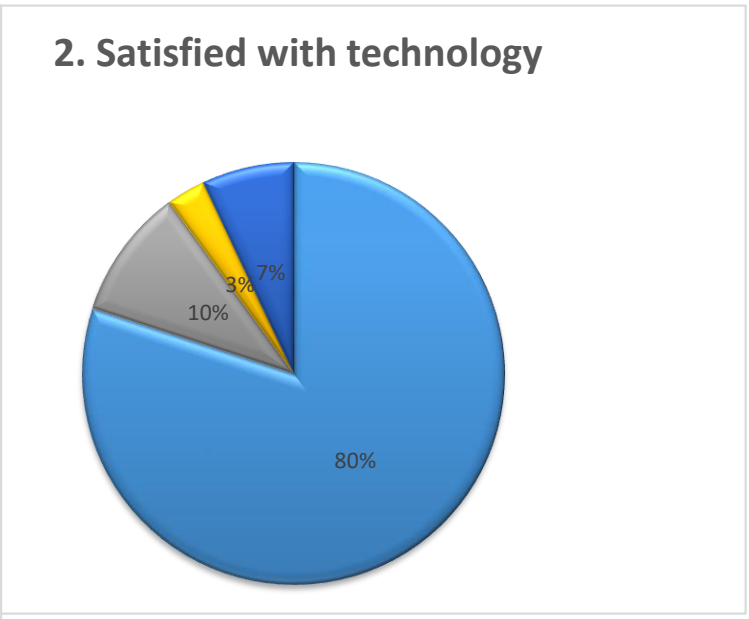
2. Satisfied with technology

It is exemplay mode of transition from offline to online and teachers were satisfied and were willing to upgrade themselves.

1) Total satisfied Teachers 80%
2) Not satisfied Teachers 10%
3) Satisfied to some extent 03%
4) Try to Research and learn teachers 7%

Government needs to conduct more workshops and conferences to upgrade teachers and motivate the teachers to learn new technology. The 7% teachers are doing research to learn itself shows their commitment.





3. How helpful your coworkers are

The teachers were helping each other in sharing in their technical knowledge is the important thing we need to realize. However as it is not multidisciplinary kind of education systems teachers could not collaborate. Important point to be discussed is education system must out throw away the borders and multidisciplinary approach must be followed to make the system more quality oriented.

1. Co-worker very help - 80%
2. Not cooperative 07%
3. To some extent 10%
4. Collaborate 03%

4. What mode do you prefer?

Most of the teachers felt offline is the best mode because there is personal interaction proper evaluation on and delivering their best of the knowledge to the students over 50% felt they could do justice to their profession by teaching offline. 12% were satisfied teaching the students online with all the technical knowledge they have.

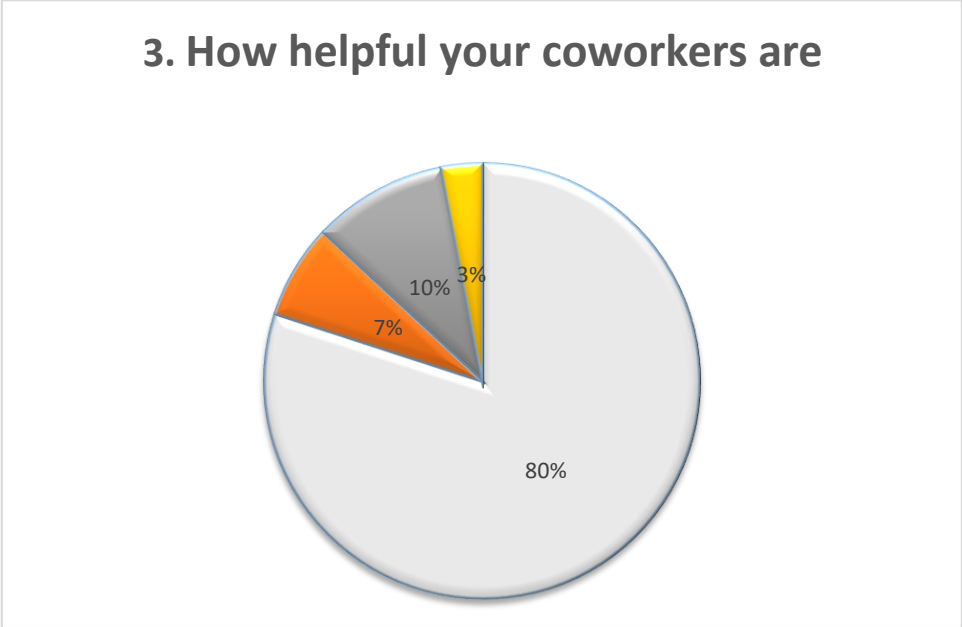
It is really wonderful to know that over 25% felt blended learning is good. The concepts of blended learning came up only during pandemic but are well received by teachers. The new concepts of flipping the classroom conducting offline and online as per the convenience of teacher and students was preferred by 5%

5. What extent do you think you are able to reach out to students

The teacher felt they were not able to give their 100% only 50%teachers

felt they could deliver 100% through online this shows teachers lacked upgraded technical skills to reach out to students.

1. 50% teachers felt they could convey100%
2. 10% teachers felt they could convey 80%.
3. 30% teachers felt they could convey 60%.
4. 5% teachers felt they could convey Below 50%
5. Not satisfied 05%



This happens because teachers get disturbed, they lose focus or miss deadlines, wifi interruption, system error, and mainly lack of physical interaction isolates both teachers from their colleagues and students.

6. Are you satisfied with online mode only
   1. 10% felt it is excellent 40% said they were not satisfied,
   2. 30% disliked online mode,
   3. 20% liked it to some extent the greatest drawback is spending hours together sitting before the screen. Online learners develop eyesight problems and backaches problems as there to no physical movement they are prone to few diseases also.

Students Perception

Covid-19 brought a dynamic shift in the Indian education system

Online Education mostly helps students who cannot enroll into traditional class room and teaches them the habit of self-discipline and time management. Students have a wide range access to various educational resources. Students can set their own pace of learning. One of the greatest advantage of online is accessibility from anywhere in the world.

The transportation expenditure is lowered in online classes and it also provides the distinct advantage of flexibility. Students have access to recorded videos and without any additional pressure they can learn. Non access to proper electronic equipment such as Web cameras, microphones, head phones, or lack of availability of proper technical infrastructure may interfere with their teaching activities. Students miss hands on experience which they get from practical and other offline experiments if they are on online mode.

1. What difficulties you find in online education. 45% students felt physical mode of interaction was missing, 10% complained in sufficient data , 25% said they would not concentrate more, 20% said It is a

good learning experience and 5% did not experience any difficulty in learning. These 5% had considerable knowledge in using computers .

Most of the Students prefer offline mode as there is personal touch and they don't suffer from isolation. There is practical experience which they miss if it is online.

2. Do you think your teacher are well trained to teach online
    1. 45% said they are satisfied by their teachers.
    2. 20% said they are not satisfied.
    3. 10% said they were satisfied to some extent
    4. 10% said their teachers still need training.
    5. 5% said cannot answer

    All this shows that students felt teachers still need training to make their lecturers more interesting. The backup approach was not followed.
3. What is the online mode used
    1. Zoom 60%.
    2. Webex 05%
    3. Google classroom 10%
    4. Google meet 20%
    5. Any other 15%

    This shows the most preferred app for online teaching was zoom which is very easy to use and less expensive.
4. Are you satisfied with online mode
    1. 60% Felt they were not satisfied
    2. 20% felt they were satisfied
    3. 10% felt they were satisfied to same extent
    4. 06% cannot give results
    5. 04% said it was excellent.

Students always loved offline because there is practical experience, emotional bondage above all a personal touch with their teacher and friends.

5. How do you think we can improve the quality of education through online
    1. 40% felts teachers must be upgraded.
    2. 10% felt by improving infrastructure like improving ICT Facilities.
    3. 20% felt both infrastructure and up gradation of teachers is essential.
    4. 25% felt Government must provide tabs
    5. 05% felt Government provide data cards.

This shows that rural college basically lacked infrastructure and students want the Government to help them providing Tabs and data cards to improve the quality of teaching. Some felt upgrading the teacher's knowledge is also essential.

6. Students felt teachers need upgrading, improving video and audio quality was essential they need a new time table for on line. Class teachers need to add visual effects to the online mode. Teaching student how to use best teaching apps was the need of the hour. Smart phones did not support the latest technology so few phones had to be updated. These were student Perceptions to improve quality
7. Can you concentrate if your classes exceed for more than three hours
    1. 5% said they could
    2. 50% No.
    3. 30% depends on the audio visuals used by teachers they get attracted.

This shows students cannot concentrate after unending three hours of claawork. Their eyes got affected due to screens. So breaks must be given for attaining their concentration. By teaching Yoga and meditation they can relax.

8. Do you support complete online education?
    1. 60% said they support offline.
    2. 10% said they support online totally.
    3. 10% said they do not support online.
    4. 5% said they supported blended mode.
    5. 15% said they supported online with better audio visual effects.

Discussion

Students are preferring traditional classroom method and 5% only suggested blended learning which, means the teachers have not truly started the blended learning. Training must be given to teachers to flip their class rooms and hybrid learning must be adopted in rural villages.

9. Are you trained to get online mode of education
    1. 50% said they were trained
    2. 10% said they did not receive any training
    3. 05% said they were trained to some extent
    4. 20% feel still they do not know anything properly
    5. 10% felt many features they are learning from teachers
    6. 5% said they self trained themselves to attend online classes.
    7. This shows along with teacher's students also need capacity building training workshops on online mode so that students attain proficiency. Unless students are trained properly quality of online education can never be achieved.

Difficulties faced by students

1. Signal and voice problem.
2. They were disturbances so few were not able to concentrate.
3. Few faced Broad band width problem.
4. Voice breaking problem.
5. Students missed their personal touch with their teachers.
6. They were not able to inter communicate with the other students properly.
7. The poor cannot have sufficient money to recharge their data.
8. Server problem.
9. They missed their blackboard teaching as teachers were not technically equipped to use white boards.

Discussion:

Recommendation to improve the quality of online education in rural government degree colleges. Every institution must have their own LMS, sufficient funding must be given by the government to improve online infrastructure at college level. Frequent students satisfactory survey regarding the outcome of online education must be done by teachers to know the impact of online learning process. Teacher's autonomy and flexibility in the institutional and frame work must be provided the learning objectives of the student must be mentioned after every lesson. There should be high level of accountability in the staff. All the staff members must have a professional and ethical training to teach online. Platform for discussions must be provided to improve quality flipping the classroom, blended modes must be introduced.

Teachers must be encouraged to update their technological skills now and then multidisciplinary mode of teaching must be encouraged to create more interest. New technology must be taught to students with almost care. If students are reluctant to learn we need to make the things interesting and motivating them we must teach them how to use new app. Teachers must collaborate with others teachers to learn new skills. They must be encouraged to purse highest education which will indulge them to improve their technical skills. Internal quality assurance mechanism must be strengthened. Colleges must collaborate with universities to strengthen their technical skills. Institutional must create a congenial environment to all the faculty members in such a way that it reduces their burden of leaning process and motivate then to teach their subject innovatively on online mode. Awards must be given to teachers who do more number of swayam and other online courses and who are helping students to get online course certificate. Every college must register for TASK, IIT Mumbai etc. and encourage students to do more online courses. Alumini feed backs, parent feedback must be taken to improve the course content. Every college must have an autonomy to design at least one online course that helps the students to suit to her/his needs whereby after pursuing the course the students can have his own employment. Faculty forum must be strengthened to learn new skills. Every institution must have their own action plan of online education. The challenges faced must be discussed by the university authority and sorted out

Innovative methodology of online teaching must be taught through workshops by understanding the environmental and other challenges they are facing to teach on online mode. Digital libraries must be strengthened. OERS must be used to imrove the quality. Government must provide tabs and data cards to students for educational purpose. There is a take of interpersonal touch to know the learning outcome frequent assignments, quizzes must be given. The technical support must be taken when there is disruption in the learning activity. Interactive e-learning modules must be developed special case must be taken on students with special needs so that they do not fall behind others. The online courses also need to get accreditation and in future it will be cheapest forms of education. Time management training must be given to all teachers who are teaching on online mode as teachers need to plan their lessons in advance, organize their ppts they need to capitalize on technical tools. The online classes must be recorded and they must be made available to students later so that when they have issues with wifi they can go back to their class again. Technical issues like poor and width, signal loss are common in rural areas. Lack of adequate digital device must be addressed to facilitate quality learning. Training programmes meant to help teachers to adapt to the online mode must be conducted by Government frequently. Even if it is offline few of the classes must be conducted online so that teachers don't lose their proficiency on the online mode. The resilient teachers must be motivated to use the online mode. Online mode need innovative creative thinking and designing the tasks that stimulate collaboration learning. Audio conferences, video conference, sharing pdf, PowerPoint, chat discussion, forum discussion, glossary of terms, you tube channels, Google class room etc. were used in this pandemic period.

However not much attempt was made to design their own E content. The students have to spend more time on electronic gadgets, programmes such yoga, meditation must be designed to improve the concentration of students. Teachers must be encouraged to develop their own evaluative mechanism to know how far student could understand their session.

Device Used for Online Mode

Perception of Teachers who were satisfied with online Technology

How helpful your Co wokers are

Conclusions;

Online Education has brought a positive vibe and impact in the lives of teachers and students. It is an opportunity to learn new courses as per their convenience. In this digital era the scope of online education will benefit the student to find jobs anywhere in the world. It helps in promoting research and improving quality of education. It facilitates teacher and student to become lifelong learners.

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