



SCHOOL TEACHERS TAKE ON THE CHANGE OF TEACHING MEDIUM IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

Harshita, Dr. Anajana Rani
Research Scholar, Professor (Retd.)
Department of Public Administration,
Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak

Abstract

This research paper studies the issue of change in the teaching medium due to the spread of COVID-19 and closure of school premises. It studies the effectiveness of the Alternative Teaching Mediums in comparison to classroom teaching model from the teachers' point of view. The area of study is the Rohtak division of the State of Haryana of India. The respondents are the teachers from the government schools as well as private schools.

Introduction

According to UNESCO, more than 320 million learners have been affected due to country wide school closures in India due to spread of COVID-19. Meanwhile, teachers as well as students have been pushed to adopt the alternative measures to ensure the continuance of learning in the new academic year. This paper studies the teachers' perspective about the effectiveness of these alternative teaching mediums adopted in these desperate times and participation of students thereof. It also highlights the concerns of teachers about opening of schools as well as proposes related suggestions.

Area of Study

The area of Rohtak Division of the state of Haryana is covered in this research work. The Rohtak Division comprises of 5 districts namely Bhiwani, Charkhi Dadri, Jhajjar, Rohtak and Sonapat.

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory cum descriptive and empirical in nature. The respondents comprise of 100 school teachers i.e. 50 teachers from government schools and 50 teachers from private schools. Online questionnaire was the main instrument of primary data collection, complimented and supplemented by the followed telephonic interviews in certain cases to get the required information from the respondents. The alternative teaching mediums here in the study refers to use of live online classes, recorded videos of lectures, reading lists, class emails, discussion on WhatsApp groups, Messaging etc. A 5 point Likert scale has been used to collect the qualitative data. In the study, the scope of effectiveness is viewed on the basis of following aspects-

- Accessibility to the Smartphone / laptop with internet access by both students and the teachers
- Comfort level and know-how of using these alternative teaching mediums by teachers for teaching and students for learning.
- Level of Students' participation in terms of-
Attendance when online sessions are scheduled.
Attentiveness during online sessions.
Completion of homework.
Follow up questions.
- Teacher-Student interaction

Results and Discussion**Table No.1: Effectiveness of Alternative Teaching Mediums in comparison to Classroom Teaching**

	Government School	Private School	Total	Percentage
Highly Effective	-	-	-	-
Better than Classroom Teaching	-	6	6	6%
At Par with Classroom Teaching	-	15	15	15%
Less Effective than Classroom Teaching	16	21	37	37%
Poor	34	8	42	42%
Total	50	50	100	100%

Source: Opinion Survey

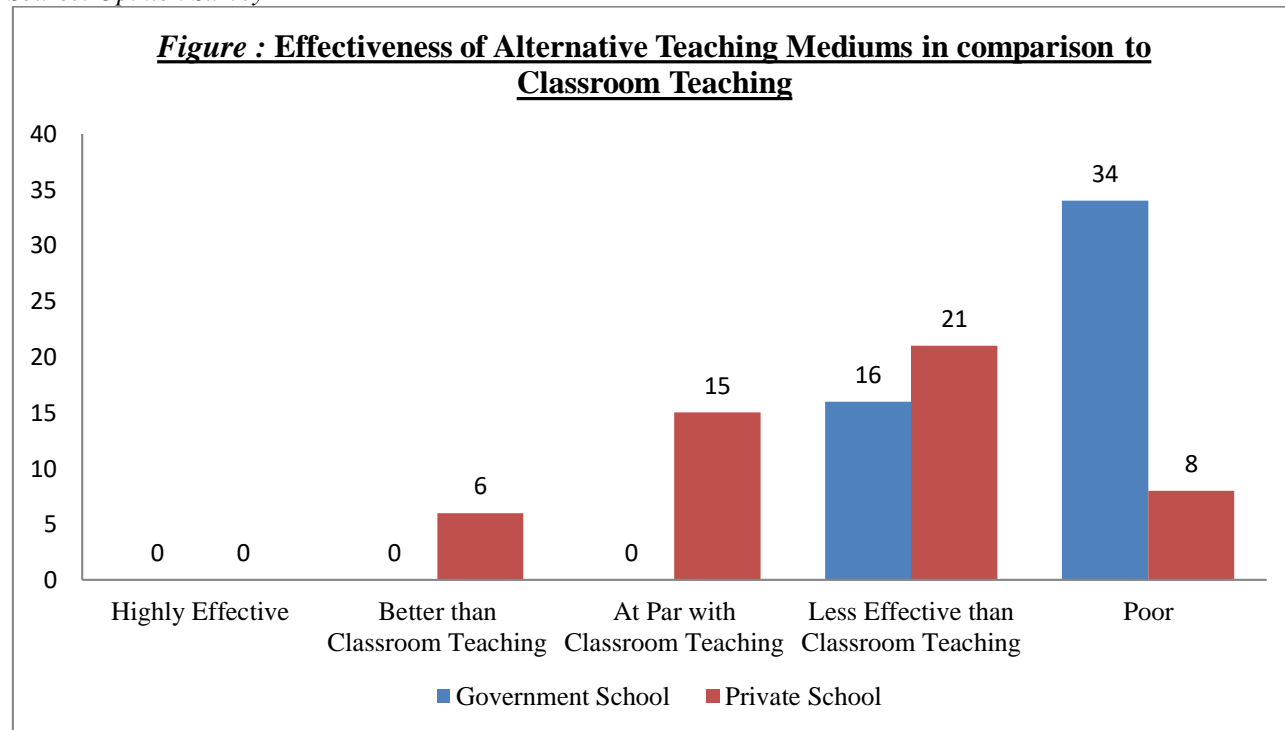


Table 1 show that according to 42% of respondents the new adopted mediums are poor. The majority i.e. 34 out of these 42 respondents (34% of total respondents) are from government schools whereas a noticeable percentage i.e. 8% of total respondents from private schools is also of the same opinion.

Moreover, according to 37% respondents, such mediums are less effective. Here respondents from private school are leading while a considerable percentage of respondents from government schools also hold the same opinion.

The above data shows that the percentage as high as (37% + 42%) 79% of total respondents find these desperate time measures not at all at par with classroom teaching.

The only 15% of the total respondents who found this medium at par with classroom teaching, all are from Private schools.

As low as 6% of the total respondents, all those are also from private schools who have found these mediums better than the classroom teaching in their effectiveness.

Not a single respondent have found these mediums highly effective in their experience.

Teachers have pointed out a number of reasons for poor and less effective delivery by these alternative teaching mediums.

According to the government school teachers, a kind of overnight jump has been made and various new means have been adopted in an abrupt manner. Firstly, not all teachers are tech-savvy. It took time for some to learn this new way of communication and they are still not comfortable enough in its use. However, the teachers tried to connect to the students through the WhatsApp group (or any other medium such as through Messaging). But many are beyond their reach and missing their new academic session. Thus, the receivers of this new form of communication (here in this case are the students) are facing challenges to get hold of the mobile (or laptop in few cases) to access the teachers' instructions. From certain families' point of view, the children's learning is not a priority in compared to other issues of the elders. Even if some consider it as one of the priorities, they still can't avail separate smartphone for the children because of financial constraints. Thus, parents are finding hard to spare their Smart phones (if they have any) for children's education.

Since, there is no provision of online classes for the students in government schools. The committed teachers were going through a lot of online material to send the links of the syllabus-related-videos to the students who have the accessibility. Later on, Education Department started sending topic related videos to the respective teachers to send to the students. Follow up Quizzes were arranged

for students to check their learning process. But some teachers were not sure whether students are actually developing an understanding of the concepts or just copying and pasting the answers in the quiz to get a favorable evaluation.

Initially, the homework was assigned on regular basis but only few were responding. Some students had weak Internet Connection and others were showing laid back attitude towards studies. Moreover, after getting the idea that only performance in quiz matters for their evaluation, the few who were regular with their homework, also started showing disinterest in it.

In case of private schools transition was not too comfortable. They also took time to adjust. Some teachers were sending the recorded videos and some were having online classes with the students. Here, teachers also complaint of technical issues during online interaction. In the classrooms teachers were able to read through the students' expressions to know whether they were able to understand or not. This face to face interaction is not possible on online platform and is the reason for teachers' concern.

Moreover, the teachers can't ensure the attention of students with the disturbance in the background at students' homes. Some students find themselves hesitant to ask questions to teachers during online classes because of that homely atmosphere.

Teachers have also noticed that the rate of asking questions regarding ongoing topic is very low/minimal (during online class or on WhatsApp group or through messaging) as compared to previous teaching model that involved physical presence.

The teachers feel somewhat uneasy while preparing the lessons, checking the work of students' online and suggesting follow up corrections for each student. These tasks have proved to be a daunting for the teachers as many complaint of headache and eyes problem due to continuous exposure to screen time.

Students were also facing the similar health issues. Some parents were complaining to teachers that the children are in grave stress because they have to access the whole set of videos and/or reading material online on daily basis resulting in use of laptops or other devices for long durations.

The 21% respondents find these alternative teaching mediums at par or better than classroom teaching. These all teachers were from private schools.

According to their opinion, the students are able to learn while being safe at home. There is also a live connection between student and teacher during online classes. Like classroom teaching, the student can understand the concepts and can clear his or her doubts during online classes. While the students are taught through online medium, their understanding and learning is evaluated through Class tests and Unit Tests.

Through watching teachers' videos and accessing online reading sources, students are even becoming technology friendly and developing their self learning skills day by day.

Moreover, teachers also put forth their opinion that teaching is not just bound within the school. It revolves around the interest of learner and mentor. Consequently, there were also cases of positive feedback and even increased students' interest because of introduction of new mediums of attending schools.

In comparison to classroom teaching, these alternative teaching mediums were scoring high in eyes of teachers in terms of saving valuable time, convenience and flexibility.

However, for the time being, the stakeholders (teachers, students, parents) can try to overcome the challenges presented by these alternative teaching mediums as a team and embrace the new possibilities. In the long run, this adaptation to technological environment can prove to be highly supportive to the classroom based learning.

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