



E-Learning and Covid-19 Pandemic Advantages, Challenges and Recommendations: An overview

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Abstract: The emergence of the Corona Virus disease has created several emergencies in the world leading to the concerned departments face thousands of challenges to cope up this world-shaking event. The turning point of on campus and E-learning occurred soon after the lockdown was announced on global level and everything was forced to move online to reduce the spread of the virus. The world fought the battle of Corona Virus in every department, including the educational sector being hit the hardest. The people willingly and unwillingly moved to the process of E-Learning in order to remove the obstacle that Covid created in the way of education. This paper aims to talk about the pivotal relationship between Covid 19 and the important role that E-learning has played along with the challenges and recommendations for building a better relationship between the e-learning process and educational development.

Keywords: E-Learning, Covid-19, Challenges, Benefits, Global.

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1. Introduction

E-learning briefs the idea of formal teaching to provide information to students via electronic reservoirs. E-learning is the evolution of the education system in the contemporary world to eliminate conventional methods of education for the ease of students and faculty members. There has been a crucial connection between the recent pandemic (Covid-19) that the world has faced and E-learning. As Covid-19 approached and has spread its wings in every corner of the world, to be safe from the deadly disease E-learning has played its part in providing ease to educational institutions. The disease has proven to be a disaster for every department except education with a similar level of intensity.

The sudden outbreak of the viral disease known as Corona Virus created disturbance within the educational system on a global level, hence, the unexpected shut down of schools, colleges and the universities was announced as a preventive measure [1], and the governments across the countries announced to switch to electronic learning soon after the closure of the institutions

so that students may not suffer and lag in their studies. Egypt completely moved to the E-learning process in the first month as soon as the Covid outbreak occurred [2]. E-learning provided several benefits and proved to be a positive change pertinent to the educational system, but despite having several benefits, it did create some challenges for the students and the teachers.

2. Benefits Of E-Learning in the time of pandemic

Initiating with the benefits, E-learning fostered the opportunities to gain information about technology and have innovative learning techniques incompetence to the conventional world anytime, anywhere just with the connectivity to the system and the internet [3]. E-learning is being seen to play a vital role to be a helping hand to institutes in the Covid 19 pandemic. It proved to be an innovative and creative idea to provide education to students without any hindrance as many students can get registered and learn without actually attending the university, which also saved a lot of expenses that students have to bear otherwise, such as transportation cost. It is safe to say, that E-learning is the only benefit of the pandemic that led students to get their degrees on a remote basis from across the world as it is hard for a lot of students to travel around. The technologies and techniques driven by the E-learning process are appearing to be successful for the people living across the globe. Covid being the catalyst to several challenges granted the world the blessing of the online learning process. The flexibility, availability, affordability accessibility and gain of skills are known to be some major by-products of the E-learning process that made pandemic easier for the learners and the instructors [4]. Teachers stated that it was made easier and highly feasible for many students to retrieve the teaching material uploaded online, this helped them in the preparation of assessments and led to taking repetitive online-recorded lectures for practice and eventually led to better results. The margin of time was also given to the students as they were not bound to attend classes at a certain time and were able to join according to their availability. Many students claimed to be gaining a higher level of knowledge via online resources in comparison to the conventional methods as they were studying in the comfort of their own houses, the Research Institute of America reported that e-learners were able to gain 25% to 60% of knowledge whereas people learning from conventional methods retained around 8% to 10% of what was being thought [5]. Keeping the effectiveness and efficiency of learning apart, the biggest benefit that E-learning has provided in the times of pandemic was the factor of safety. It made the elimination of disruption in the education system easier by becoming a better alternative for in-person classes that assured a decrease in the spread of disease among students, teachers and the staff.

The triggering event that occurred in the world in the form of Covid-19 has altered a lot of departments being operated in every corner of the world and all of them have their respective pros and cons. Similarly, the challenges that e-learning came up with, are discussed in the paper ahead.

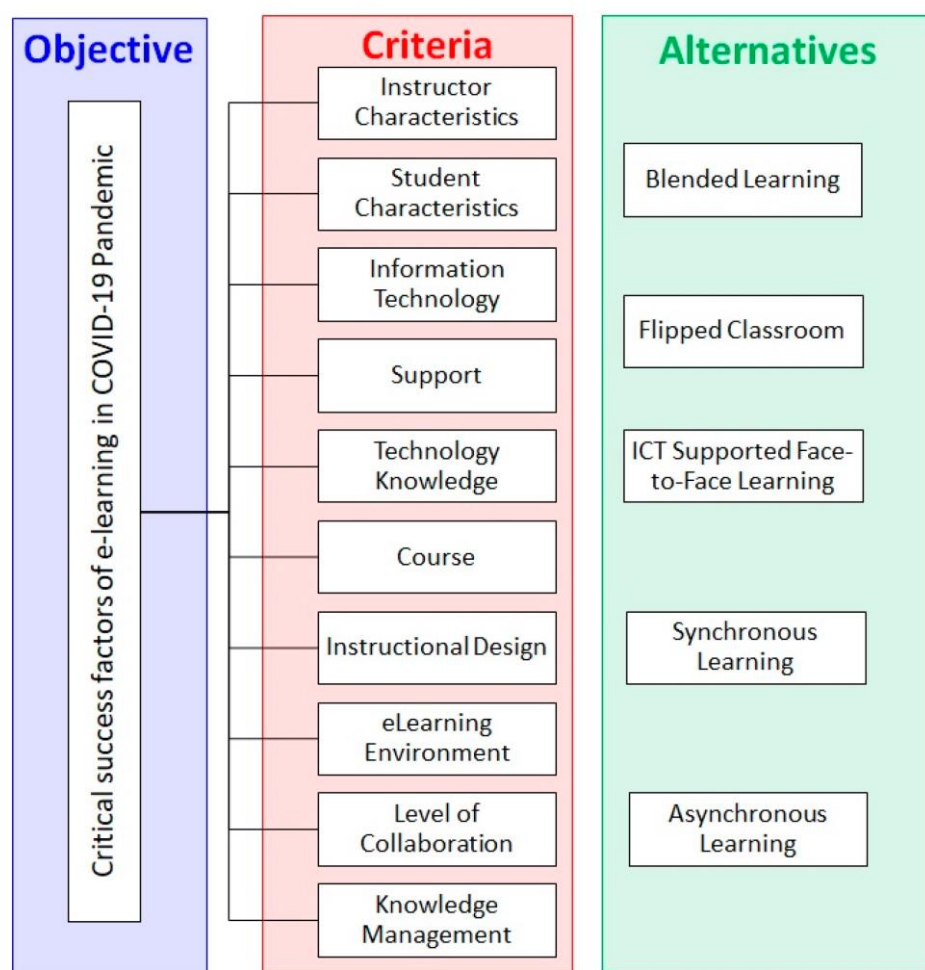


Figure 1. Critical Success Factors [4].

3. Challenges created by E-Learning

In contradiction to what the benefits explained, a lot of teachers and students were on the other side of the research as UNESCO also stated Covid to have a negative impact on the education of several students [6]. First and the foremost challenge that Covid-19 was a catalyst to, is the difficulty of focus level. Many students complained about not being able to focus in online classes as the proper class environment was not available to many students at home and they complained about being diverted by the social media and other things available on the internet during the lecture hours. Moreover, they complained about not being able to fully grasp the concept as the virtual learning was new to them and it was difficult to keep their focus on the screen for a longer period. In addition to this, people faced technical issues as it was a challenge for people living in smaller vicinities to have a stable internet connection that supports the online classes and the learning software, hence, they were frustrated to have this type of deleterious system of learning. The third issue that students tend to face was screen time. The increase in screen time and the disturbed balance between entertainment and educational screen time created a drastic impact on individuals. This is known to be the biggest and the worst drawback of the e-learning process as it is dangerous for health and causes several physical problems among students, such as cervical issues. Furthermore, the extrovert students complained of the factor of isolation adversely affecting their learning, because they found interaction methodologies in class a better process of gathering knowledge, hence, the e-learning system affected their academic status as they failed to have one on one discussions

with their course instructors. Keeping all this aside, the biggest challenge was faced by the students of engineering and medicine (basically all the sciences students) as they were not able to attend their practical classes in person which led them to have an inadequate amount of knowledge of the practicals due to insufficient briefing during the online learning process and the lack of practical implementation. This created a huge problem for these kinds of fields as they require a lot of practice that is only possible during in-person lectures, hence, the students from these departments suffered the most and worst from the process of E-learning making them less competitive in their fields.

All these challenges collectively made Covid 19 worse for the students of medicine and engineering sciences leading them to suffer and learn from this conventional education system without their will.

Along with the students being uncomfortable with E-learning, teachers also faced several issues while providing online classes. In the process of research, teachers were found to be reluctant toward the sudden change in the system they had to face from the starting point of their careers. The teachers with less technological knowledge were not able to handle the online systems very well, it is because the teachers are often found to have just the basic knowledge of technology. In addition to this, a lot of teachers faced a scarcity of resources as they did not have enough or compatible equipments to carry out online lectures. The teachers also complained about the problem of the proxy, many students did not attend the class and get their attendance marked by proxy methods leading to bad academic results. The academic code of conduct was also being violated by some students as plenty of them were getting their assessments and quizzes done by their peers which led to the detrimental experience and results. Teachers are also unable to assess the class participation of the students due to the inefficiency of online classes. It gets difficult for the professors to mark students on merit, hence, the non-deserving students also scored very well which showed that the drastic change in grades cannot be the result of a just and fair evaluation. Several teachers also complained about students acting informally and misbehaving during the classes and trying to join the classes with an unacceptable attitude, which disturbed the whole class and ruin the decorum of the class-leading every student to gain the confidence in acting informally in classes, eventually creating a mess out of the classroom. These kinds of activities needed to be stopped to have a proper learning process. Most of the challenges occurring to the instructors were from their end, as a little enhanced knowledge of e-learning and some techniques towards how to deal with it would be enough to eliminate the hurdles from the e-learning process making it smooth to run and providing all sorts of benefits with minimum challenges. Overall it is pivotal to address these issues and bring them towards the path of solutions, so that students and teachers may not suffer and get deprived of something as amazing and beneficial as e-learning.

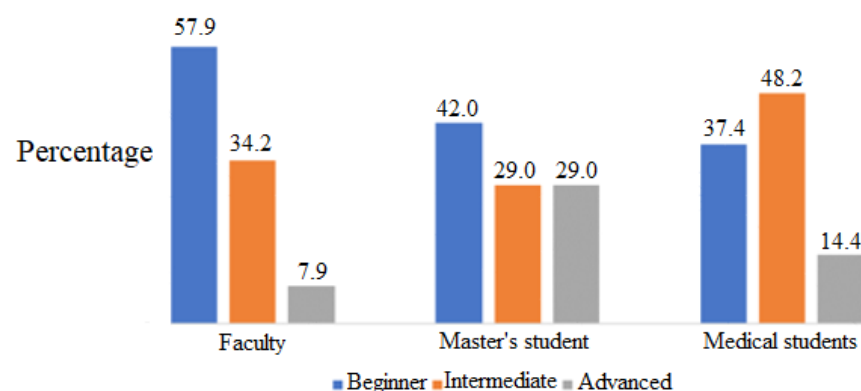


Figure 2. Challenges faced by individuals in medical education during Covid pandemic.

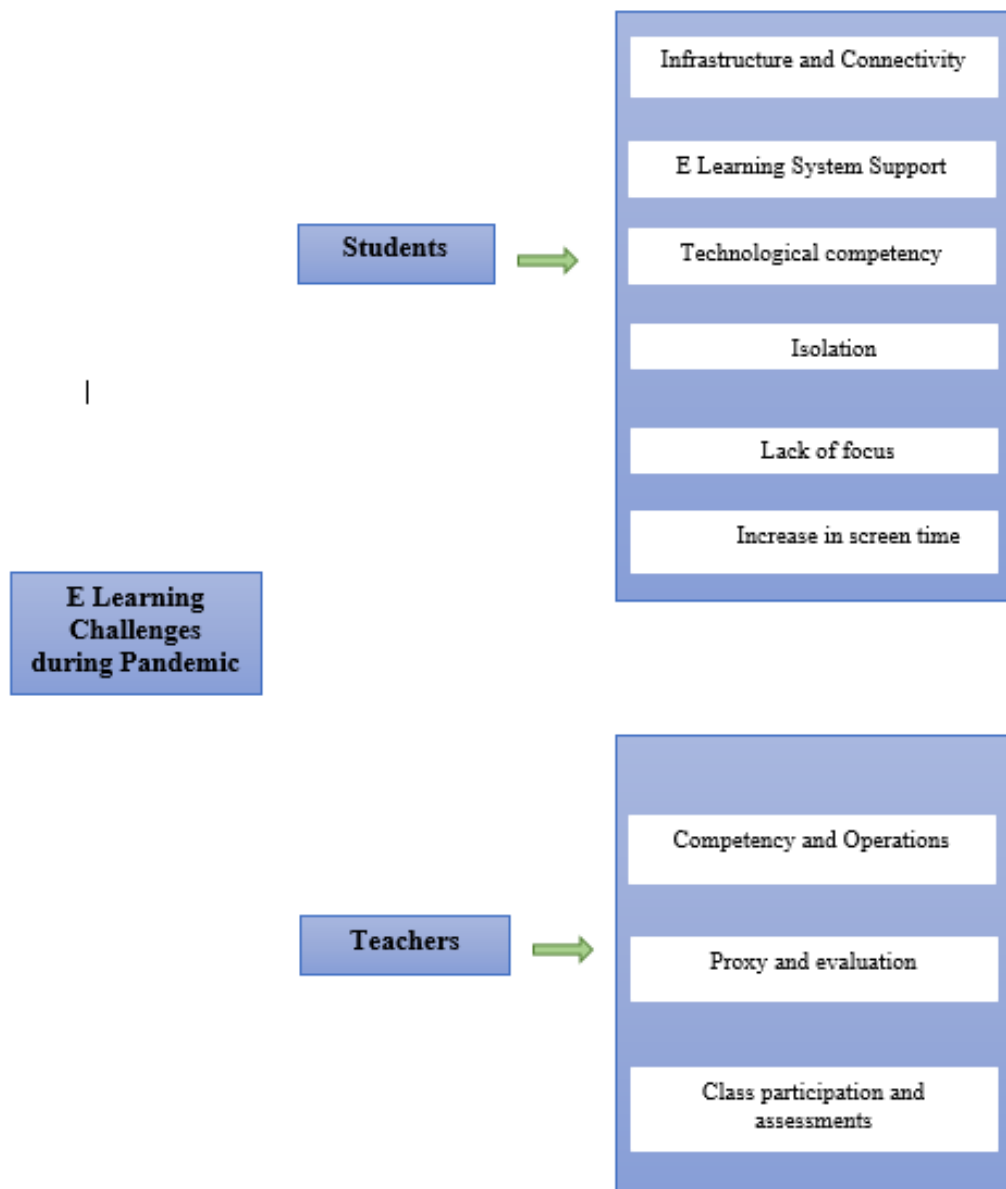


Figure3. Challenges during E-Learning Process

4. Recommendations

To mitigate the challenges that Covid has left in the name of E-learning, several recommendations are being provided to the students and teachers so that they can achieve what they demand from the online learning process.

The students and the teachers are suggested to take several courses to develop skills in the new learning process; every teacher needs these skills to have a proper insight into the e-learning process and its techniques [7]. Moreover, the teachers are suggested to have camera-based supervision over the class to maintain the decorum of the class, so they complain of misbehaving students are removed. The student interaction during the class should be increased to avoid proxy attendance [8] and to evaluate and judge the performance of the students on a fair and just basis. Moreover, the teachers are suggested to buy software that would help them have disturbance-free and easily accessible ways to conduct classes. This software in amalgamation with other techniques would help teachers and students to have a smooth process of E-learning without the enormous challenges occurring on daily basis.

5. Conclusion

This paper portrayed the challenges and the opportunities provided by the e-learning process in different fields including medical and engineering sciences. This paper does support the idea of e-learning but it proposed several recommendations to be considered by the students as well as the teachers to make this experience a better one. E-Learning has brought innovative and new technological enhancements to the world, developed several systems of education and provided a lot of better opportunities to the students, but on the flip side, it created challenges for several fields as it was not friendly for all the students. The volatility of the E-learning process creates challenges and opportunities side by side. The complaints made by students and teachers were justified to a high extent as the E-learning process was not able to fulfil the whole criteria of what a degree demands as it needs a whole new setup in the world so that the learners and the instructors can get their hands on the new technological methods of teaching without wasting time and money. To conclude, it would not be wrong to say that E-learning has opened new doors for the world in every aspect, hence, it is important to get command of this process to avail of the opportunities.

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