

Re-inventing the Teaching-Learning Process Post-Covid:

Philosophical and Pragmatic Dimensions

Monica Prabhakar and Soma Sengupta

Abstract

Covid-19 has impacted all sectors of the country including the education sector. In this new normal situation, though online teaching has become the order of the day, it has led to a digital divide among students. The study explores the possibilities of effective online methods of teaching and learning taking cues from the ancient Indian philosophy of education and the modern technologies developed to smoothen the process of learning. The objectives of the study are to re-invent the modern online teaching and teaching-learning process in the context of the ancient education system; and to analyse the pros and cons of online education with special reference to India. The study pointed out that there is an opportunity to build-up the current, on our ancient education system, on the three pillars of learning, i.e., shravana (listening), manana (reflecting) and nididhyāsana (internalizing). Implementing a total online education system will be a real challenge in a diverse country like India, with inequalities of income, leading to poor infrastructure and limited access to technology; coupled with poor training and content development; and political opposition and blame games. But all the

stakeholders have to work towards making the system work. A common syllabus; development of high quality e-resource; newer and user friendly technologies which can be accessed by everyone; and a course fee suitable for individual pocket, are all imperative to make this system of teaching work. The learners should get the feeling that their mentor and peers are always with them in the process of learning. The emphasis should be on developing a quest for knowledge among the learners and improving their listening, reflecting, and internalising skills.

Keywords: *Teaching and Learning, COVID-19, Pedagogy, Education System*

Introduction

How a learner receives, processes and retains the knowledge has been a pertinent question ever since psychologists started dwelling on it and this has led to the development of different learning theories. Since the birth of a child during his entire journey and finally, till his death, learning takes its course, and hence, it is now-a-days also called “Life Long Learning”. Learning is therefore not restricted to the teaching-learning process that takes place within the boundaries of some institution, such as, school or college. Cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences, as well as prior experience, all play a part in how understanding, or a world view, is acquired or changed and knowledge and skills retained (Illeris, 2004; Ormrod, 2012).

The world has suffered and survived several pandemics in the past like bubonic plagues, influenza, and virus spreads. We had only read in history books, of calamities and pandemics befalling on the world. Now we get its first-hand experience. Covid-19 pandemic has shaken the world, and even the mightiest countries or economies. We can now, very well empathise with those who witnessed and suffered the

previous similar major pandemics, the Spanish Flu of 1918-20, which killed 50 million people across the world. Our situation is not quite different perhaps. But as the statement is doing the rounds that we must learn to live with Corona, the knowledge providers, that is, the academicians must stand up and share their set of responsibility, and look for solutions so that the teaching-learning process is not halted due to this pandemic.

Significance of the Study

Covid-19 has impacted all sectors of the country including the education sector, as it is under complete lockdown with universities and colleges physically shut. There are lakhs of students studying in our universities and many come from their hometowns located in remote places of our country. Students are depressed and in trauma as the situation is uncertain. But in critical times like these, we need to adapt to new situations so that the purpose of education remains intact. Is it possible in these times? Yes indeed! As the Prime Minister in his address to the nation said we should transform crises into opportunities.

There is no substitute for classes in college, lectures and discussions. However, in this new normal situation, the concept of online teaching has become the order of the day. This has led to a digital divide among students and has become a matter of extensive debate in the academic community.

The study explores the possibilities of effective online methods of teaching and learning taking cues from the ancient Indian philosophy of education and the modern technologies developed to smoothen the process of learning.

Research Methodology

The methodology used for the purposes of this paper is exploratory in nature with reviewing available literature and exploring informal qualitative approaches, such as un-structured open-ended discussions with students and academicians. The paper is in the form of a philosophical discussion, theoretical and critical commentaries; and a pragmatic analysis of the teaching-learning methods in the current pandemic situation.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1.To re-invent the modern online teaching and teaching-learning process in the context of the ancient education system.
- 2.To analyse the pros and cons of online education with special reference to India.

The Philosophical View of Imparting Knowledge in a New Normal Education System

In philosophy of education circles around the world, in the context of elementary and secondary education, there are a lot of buzz words and expressions in the philosophy of education such as ‘pragmatic’, ‘learner centric’, ‘one-on-one teaching-learning’, ‘quality time of teacher to student’, ‘value education’, ‘character building’ and so on. All of these today have to be put into action in a dynamic manner not just at the school level but at the level of higher education as well, since they are not part and parcel of the existing education systems.

We are at the threshold of change. The whole pedagogy of teaching-learning has been remodelled in these Covid times. Teachers and

students have in no time switched to the online mode. There are hiccups but there is also a blessing in disguise. A holistic approach of teaching the whole student not just teaching each subject to a student should be incorporated. This means counselling – academic, career, and personal, if required, and simple encouragement and empathy on the part of the teachers. Also, the whole would include, especially in the case of the economically deprived students, education in the context of their families and communities. A continuous feedback has to be given to them on how education is not only going to benefit them personally but how it will be a benefit for their larger community and for nation building.

In order to resolve the whole debate around the utility of online-education during this pandemic, maybe we can take a cue from our ancient Vedic education system. In the very fabric of the education system were woven the pragmatic as well as qualitative aspects of teaching and learning. It would not be misplaced to say therefore, that the ancient education system was a comprehensive education system in terms of content, pedagogy and applications.

A look at the structure of Vedic education is imperative to demonstrate this comprehensiveness. In order to accomplish this task, we need to go behind some of the common misconceptions of Vedic education and unravel the virtues of Vedic education.

One common misconception is that Vedic education was only for the *Brahmins*. In the Vedic age of 1800–1000 BCE the caste system was non-existent. Though the terms '*brahmin*' and '*kshatriya*' had emerged, they were not used as part of a *varna* system. The terms '*vaishya*' and '*shudra*' were not used at that time, accentuating the fact that there was no caste system then. The *varna* system with its hierarchies appeared in the later Vedic age.

Another misconception is that women were barred from education

during that period. While, in fact, just as the boys had to be *brahmacharis*, the girls had to be *brahmacharinis* and went through the same type of education including studying the Vedic literature and that is why Lopamudra, Ghosha and Sikata-Nivavari emerged as authors of Vedic hymns. Women were equals of their husbands and were teachers as well as took part in public debates, like Gargi. In the later Vedic period, however, the participation of women in decision making bodies and in public debates diminished. In contrast, in Plato's Republic, which was a proposal of an ideal utopian state, women were to receive equal education as men. In contrast to that, in the Greek culture of the time, women were for the most part not receiving the education, rather they were educated at home by mothers in household chores.

During that period, though primary education was compulsory for all, higher education was optional. The Vedic dictum '*svadhyayo adhyetavyah*' meant that all were to study the Vedas. Hence, the idea that only *Brahmins* could perform the Vedic rituals was a later development.

The students lived in the *ashramas* of the gurus who were *rishis*. Though there were some teachers who were not *rishis*, and often rather than in the *ashramas*, students lived in the households of other teachers and scholars. These *ashramas* were easily accessible to all and were supported by the community and the king, and hence, there were no financial difficulties in sustaining them. After leaving school and becoming working citizens the students would also contribute financially to the schools.

All the students lived together regardless of *varna* or economic status. By living with their *gurus*, the students could emulate the *guru* as an example. A feature that needs discussion in modern education is how a teacher should lead by example. Also, living with the *guru* the students had to perform the household chores for the *guru*, hence they

learned the notion of selflessness.

The *guru's* role was not restricted to imparting knowledge of the Vedas to the students, but also to help build and mould their character. For this purpose, the guru her/ himself was a man of high character, an exemplary, who was totally devoted to his students. Part of the problem with modern education is that the teacher is a professional and after eight hours in the school must return to her/ his home to fulfil the family obligations and not a 24x7 caretaker of the students. Vedic education then was more ideal than present day education in terms of dedication and devotion of the teachers.

The celibacy requirement was there for students to create physical and spiritual discipline so that the student could stay devoted sincerely to being a student without distractions. In order to develop his character, the student had to be calm, patient, self-restrained, and self-denying. These fundamental character traits were developed by following a four-fold process of *shaucha* (purity), *santosha* (contentment), *tapas* (penance) and *svadhyaya* (self-study). The purpose of the education system was to train the mind and not to stock it up with the unnecessary material stuff. Because the material world obstructs the mind from realizing its innate potentialities. “The individual is the *ādhāra* (base) which is vitalized by the cosmic energy (*prakṛti*, *māyā*, or *śakti*) pervading the world and pouring itself into every name and form, the clod, the plant, the insect, the animal, or man. When the *ādhāra* is fully fitted to bear the inrush and impact of this divine energy, its evolution is completed, and the man becomes *siddha*, ‘the fulfilled or perfect soul’” (Mookerji, 2001).

The education system was comprehensive. It included the proper pronunciation and recitation of the Vedas including the *sapta vanih* (seven meters) – *Gayatri*, *Pankti*, *Anushtup*, *Brihati*, *Viraj*, *Trishtup* and *Jagati*. This signifies the rules of sacrifice; grammar;

understanding the secrets of nature; reasoning including logic; mathematics and science; and the vocational skills necessary for an occupation. Besides these fundamental components there was an aim of higher knowledge of the universal soul that permeates all being and of which individual souls are parts.

Needless to say, with the virtual absence of written literature, the education was only through the oral medium. The pedagogy was essentially of three stages – recitation, dialogue, and self-study. Recitation had three further stages – *shravana* (listening), *manana* (reflecting), and *nididdhyasana* (contemplation/ internalizing). In higher education a student had to pass through several *shastrarthas* which were learned debates that the student was expected to formulate and defend his own position and attack the position of opponents in a heated and lively debate. With this, the student was well developed in the power of debate and was ready to become a teacher.

The final aim of education was pragmatic as well as spiritual. On the one hand, it was to prepare the student to become a good and honoured citizen, not to attain *moksha* or salvation. As Chidambara Kulkarni (1973) puts it: “The ancient Indian system of education was... a comprehensive scheme of perfecting the individual personality in all its facets—physical, moral, intellectual, religious and spiritual.” On the other hand, it was to expand the potency of the mind. As Mookerji (2001) puts it, “the aim of education is thus *citta-vrtti-nirodha* (control of the mental waves), by which the individual merges in the universal. It is the union (yoga) of the individual soul with the over-soul.”

The four parts of the Vedas were taught and practiced at different stages of life: *Mantras* and *Bhrahmanas* were taught and practiced at the *brahmacharya* state, which was also the student stage in the

ashramas. The *Brahmanas* were also operative in the *grihastha* stage. The *Aranyakas* were studied at the *Vanprastha* stage and the *Upanishads* were studied at the *sanyasa* stage. Furthermore, the students who wished to go on with higher education could study each of the Vedas in detail. This required the complete study of one Veda at a time, and this took twelve years. So, if someone wanted to study all four Vedas, he would have to devote forty-eight years after school. There could not be a better example of permanent education. This of course was not for everyone but only for those who were capable or wanted to become teachers.

In the whole history of India, the Vedic age has been recognised as the ideal. The attempt in all subsequent ages has been to approximate the life of man to the conditions of the Vedic age. “To understand this civilization, the present times are not quite suited. Modern ideas are in conflict with those of ancient India.... [But] no one can deny that Vedas satisfied the needs of the intellect, of the imagination and of the emotion of a great nation for a long period extending over at least 3000 years” (Raja, 2001).

The question is can we adopt the whole pedagogy considering the changes that have happened over centuries? The answer is affirmative, at least the form and structure of it. Reforms are required as primary education is yet not available to everyone with the same quality. Egalitarianism in this regard was the starting point in ancient Vedic education. That is why Swami Vivekananda argued for egalitarianism and social justice as the foundation of a spiritual society.

Our ancient education system has propagated the virtues of *shravana* (listening), *manana* (reflecting) and *nididhyasana* (internalizing) under the category of recitation. In the present times there is an opportunity to set out on this threefold path and realise the whole purpose of learning. If we replace ‘recitation’ with ‘reading and

retention’, these would also be the ideals of modern education. Also, more emphasis on research will ensure self-study among the students.

Shravana is achieved when the students carefully read or listen to what the teacher conveys to them even on online mode. This may include learning to engage in a healthy dialogue. And this will be very well in tune with the Socratic Method. *Manana* or reflection is the execution on their part – How they grasped the content of the lecture and the idea behind it? And third which is *nididhyasana* is perhaps what students mostly bypass in the normal times in the hullabaloo of college society works, outing with friends, preparing assignments etc. So, more emphasis can be laid on applications.

But in the event of total lockdown students get the opportunity to internalize the concepts by thinking about the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ more and more until total clarity is accomplished. With more free time in their hand, the students can very well dwell with these questions. There is no denying the fact that not every student is fortunate enough to get a conducive environment to bring about their full potential. But this, nevertheless, is an essential part of learning which is not given much attention in the normal times. This is also the time of reflecting on our pedagogy as we continue to talk about the Socratic Method, but do not apply it in practice. Teachers stick to the old fashioned and ineffective mode of lecturing, where students might not be even listening.

In the *Theaetetus*, Plato considers the question of what is ‘knowledge’. The dialogue is a search for the definition of ‘knowledge’. All of Plato’s dialogues are in the form of elenchus that is of teacher Socrates, asking questions and the students responding. So is the case with the *Theaetetus*.

In the *Theaetetus* we find the use of the famous midwife metaphor.

Socrates is trying to get *Theaetetus* to come up with the definition of 'knowledge'. He asks *Theaetetus* whether he knows who Socrates' mother is. She is a midwife. The role of a midwife is to help other women give aid in giving birth to a child. Then he says that he (as a teacher) is also a midwife, he helps those who are pregnant with knowledge give birth to knowledge. *Theaetetus* is pregnant with the definition of knowledge and Socrates is aiding him to give birth to it. At that time in Athens there were two requirements for a midwife. First, she had to have given birth to a child at some time. Second, at the time of being a midwife she was incapable of giving birth. Why the second requirement? The purpose of the midwife is to give total attention to the pregnant woman she is helping in giving birth to a child and not arouse any desires of her own. If she were still capable of giving birth her own desires may get aroused.

Dire are the pangs which my art is able to arouse and to allay in those who consort with me, just like the pangs of women in childbirth; night and day they are full of perplexity and travail which is even worse than that of the women. So much for them. And there are – others, *Theaetetus*, who come to me apparently having nothing in them; and as I know that they have no need of my art, I coax them into marrying someone, and by the grace of God I can generally tell who is likely to do them good. Many of them I have given away to Prodicus, and many to other inspired sages. I tell you this long story, friend *Theaetetus*, because I suspect, as indeed you seem to think yourself that you are in labour-great with some conception. Come then to me, who am a midwife's son and myself a midwife, and do your best to answer the questions which I will ask you. And if I abstract and expose your first-born, because I discover upon inspection that the conception which you have formed is a vain shadow, do not quarrel with me on that account, as the manner of women is when their first children are taken from them. For I have actually known some who were ready to bite me when I deprived them of a darling folly; they

did not perceive that I acted from good will, not knowing that no god is the enemy of man-that was not within the range of their ideas; neither am I their enemy in all this, but it would be wrong for me to admit falsehood, or to stifle the truth.” [Theaetetus trans. Jowett Benjamin available at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html>]

A teacher then also, like a midwife, has two requirements: First, she/he should have given birth to knowledge. Second, at the time of being a teacher she/he is incapable of giving birth to knowledge. Because if she/he were capable of giving birth to knowledge then she/he would get selfish and look out for gaining knowledge for her/ his own self rather than looking for the welfare of the students and helping them in gaining knowledge.

Hence, mere lecturing will not ensure that the knowledge will pass-on to the students. Knowledge can only come about through self-discovery of oneself, giving birth to knowledge. The teacher can only aid the students in the giving of this birth. The teacher her/himself is incapable of giving birth to knowledge anymore, and must concentrate all her/his efforts in helping the students give birth to knowledge. The mark of a good teacher will be how successfully she/he performs this task and enables the student to bring forth the correct perspective of things.

The greatest deficiency in the present prevalent pedagogy in India is the lack of one-on-one interaction with the students. This is an excellent opportunity to make up for that deficiency. Teachers and students can exchange emails endlessly. If Noam Chomsky, the famous American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historian, social critic, and political activist can answer everyone’s email even in his 80s and 90s surely, we, the teachers can also answer fifty emails every day. This type of interaction should be continued post-Covid pandemic. Rather than spending hours on social media, teachers and students should indulge in debates and carry on philosophical

question-answer sessions on online mode. Information technology and online mode can be further utilised to enhance the writing and researching skills of students, as these skills are equally important as the oral skills, for understanding and gaining expertise in every area of learning.

We must focus on these issues so that the process of giving and receiving education never gets disrupted, and the whole purpose of a teacher should be to impart education to students to the best of their ability during these testing times. Online mediums like Google meet, Zoom, Cisco WebEx, Microsoft Teams have prevented any disruption in the teaching-learning process; and facilitated the teachers in bridging this distance between education and students.

The Pragmatic Analysis of Online Education

The success of online learning also depends upon the way a particular discipline is taught. The scope of online teaching widens as the lectures can be supplemented with PowerPoint Presentations, diagrams, pictures, graphical presentations, short films, documentaries, feature films, advertisements, interviews, and several other innovative techniques. The quality and richness of material presented depends upon the creativity and knowledge of the instructor. This is all the more necessary in such a mode of presentation in order to hold the attention of the students, and also to generate interest in them so that they attend the classes regularly out of sheer interest and quest for knowledge rather than some external reinforcements like, attendance and internal assessment marks.

Online courses and tutorials are not a new thing worldwide and in India. But the pandemic Covid-19 has majorly forced the education sector at every level to go online. This has opened up a whole new world of imparting knowledge. The advantages are unlimited:

Convenience and flexibility – Theoretically, the ‘classroom never sleeps’, as the courses, library, instructors, notes, quizzes, assignment submissions and getting the reviews, announcements, chatting with classmates, everything is available 24 x 7 (i.e., 24 hours a day, seven days a week).

The flexi-timing allows you to learn at your own pace, with practically no issues regarding maintenance of note-books, uniforms or wearing formals, sitting arrangements. Beside that the learners can maintain a balance between their learning time and the family or friends and recreation time. They can learn while working and travelling too. They can pursue more than one course also.

Individual attention – In a class of fifty students, paying individual attention to the students by a teacher is next to impossible. Moreover, the capabilities and social skills of pupils differ widely. Hence, the introverts’ voices are never heard in the class, and the classroom discussions are always won-over by the extroverts. Through online mode a teacher can pay individual attention; direct communication through emailing between the teacher and individual student is possible; and the introverts can open up without their inhibitions and fear of being ridiculed in the class.

Some carry their introverted behaviour and shyness to the online class. This is why it is important not only to share class notes on an email group but also individually with the teacher. The teacher can then break the ice and get this student to open up to the class as well. Additionally, the teacher can assign some student each time to be the moderator for the particular class, and rotate that in every class, this would go a long way of treating each student equally instead of the class monitor or teacher’s pet memories from our early years of education. That will also help tremendously in the learning process. Also, there is an option for students to send messages during the class, so the introverted or shy can also use this mechanism to break the ice.

The teacher can be alert to pick up on these messages and say ‘good comment’ and say what the teacher likes about it and ask the student to expand on it orally for the rest. This is surely something that is difficult to do in a regular classroom style teaching. Making recordings available immediately is another advantage that the students and teachers have.

Technological advances – The technological advances are making the ‘whole world one’ in real sense. Earlier Skype was the only recourse for a face-to-face interaction. Within a short duration the options have multiplied, with zoom, google meet and suite, Microsoft Team, CISCO Webex, Live Streaming Software, StreamYard, GoToMeeting, and so on. The innovators are taking this pandemic as a challenge and opportunity. The technology for teaching and course development is not restricted to powerpoint presentation. Now we have Canvas, edpuzzle, peardeck, kahoot, HotPotatoes, and it is multiplying every moment.

Moreover, advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) offer hope that future online courses can respond to the needs of students, meeting them where they are in their learning and engaging them in higher education even better than in-person courses are currently able to do (Bettinger and Loeb, 2017).

‘Right to education’ – Can it be realized through online teaching?
– India with its vast population and income disparity has envisaged ‘right to education’ through its constitution and made a considerable effort in this direction. Though education is highly subsidised, extreme poverty and absence of good educational institutions mars the possibility of ‘right to good education’ becoming a reality in our country. Where online teaching has opened up new vistas for students to get quality education with a click residing in far-flung areas, even while doing work, at any time of the day (Joshua, *et al.*, 2016), it has also highlighted a digital divide among students. Consider the recent

case of suicide committed by a Delhi University student who could not afford a laptop. Here, the role of the State and the institutions to ensure that the needy students get free access to such amenities, so that the teaching-learning process is not hampered.

Widening the vision of students – Online courses and teaching opens up a whole vista for the students to learn new things, new theories, listening to experts in a particular, virtual tours and experiments, making new friends, accessing the e-resource from different e-libraries, and updating their knowledge every now and then.

Inculcates self-discipline among learners – In an online active learning mode, the students are put on toes. Time management is the essence of succeeding in such a mode of education, especially, when the whole thing is literally managed mechanically with less emotions. Hence, the students will shun the delay tactics in submitting assignments and appearing for tests. Rather this mode will inculcate self-discipline and time-management among the learners.

Getting the real world skill and a Life-Long-Learning – In order to survive in this competitive world, mere bookish knowledge is not enough. Learning should go beyond classrooms to see the realities of the world and how it works? Online education makes it possible by enhancing the personal and professional skills of the learners and widening their vision. One tends to forget whatever he or she learns in the classroom or from books, but their inquisitive mind and quest for knowledge can be fulfilled by the plethora of material available online and that too with a click and with minimum expenditure. This definitely promotes the concept of Life-Long-Learning.

However, while designing an online education programme, the administrator and the educator should take adequate care about the perils of such a mode, especially in a country like, India, where, there are multiple problems of poverty, inequality, poor infrastructure, lack

of will among the educators, politicising of education, and rampant corruption. The most prominent problems of online teaching are as follows:

‘All work and no play’ having an impact on the overall growth of learners – In their over-enthusiasm to shift to online mode, the institutes and educators are overloading the learners with information, continuous classes without an breaks, no re-creation, sports, exercise or physical activities at all. Students have to spend hours glued to the blue screens continuously sitting at a position. This will have an impact on their physical strength, posture, eyes, as well as on their mental abilities. Monotonous environment, less interaction, absence of re-creation and socialising (which was possible in real schools) is leading to a feeling of depression and loneliness among the students.

But some people believe that online classes have actually not increased the screen time. Children have been addicted to screens even before the COVID-19 pandemic began. They were anyways hooked to screens whether it is in the form of television, mobile or computer. When it comes to online lessons, most schools are not depending only on screens. They are giving students a blended approach by including various activities in their lessons (Pednakar, 2020).

‘Be on your toes’ environment is killing the joy of learning – The back to back classes, submission of assignments, tests, presentations, all is keeping the pupils on toes. In their overenthusiasm with the new mode of teaching, the teachers are imparting more knowledge than what the students can grasp. Gone are days to procrastinate, where the students could delay submission of assignments, get the test postponed, no one pleading them to submit assignments or just to be attentive. It is like, you blink and you will miss the opportunity. The

technology is harsh without an iota of emotion, programmed, heartless, not giving a second chance to the learners. All this is killing the joy of learning, and making them anxious and nervous all the time.

‘You are living on an island all alone’ – Online teaching is creating a sense of solitude or isolation among the students as well as among the teachers. Teachers are feeling as if they are talking to a wall with no real feel of a classroom, no interaction, no giggles, all mechanised. Students on their part are missing out on interacting with their classmates in the real world. Confined to their rooms or home, sitting continuously for hours in front of some mechanical device, without sharing of lunchboxes or a quick bite of their favourite snacks in the canteen, playing on the field, dancing, gossiping, and running in the corridors, all that has made their lives miserable at this young age. Educators will have to think out of ways to relieve the students of their boredom and anxiety caused due to no social-interaction.

‘With greater freedom, comes greater responsibility’ – At this young tender age, students are given absolute freedom, which they probably are not capable of handling. And hence, we could see thousands of jokes doing rounds on social media ridiculing the online education system. The students have all lost the seriousness of the learning process. They have a much fertile mind to devise ways to fool the machine and the teacher. There is a chance that the teacher will also become more casual in that process of learning. Open-book tests and evaluation are promoting more cheating and the real objective of such exams, that is to see the broader understanding of students, is somewhere lost. The fault lies in the method of conducting open book tests, and not with the tests themselves. In order to increase the authenticity of such tests, the analytical power of students has to be enhanced by giving each student a different set of questions and making them search different sources of information to present an

analytical perspective. Use of plagiarism software ensures catching the miscreants who resort to blatant copying. This way open book tests will open a new vista of evaluation process.

‘Blame games, and shrugging of responsibility’ – Students blame that the teachers are going too fast or there is a network issue or mechanical failure or unconducive environment at home. The teachers blame the students and their parents for not taking the online teaching seriously. The parents observe the teachers teaching online and ridicule their methods. Imagine how the teacher feels for being always under the scanner. The politicians (majorly, the opposition) playing the blame games regarding how the downtrodden will cope-up with this situation rather than looking for practical solutions. In the end, it becomes the responsibility of the student to learn as no one can force him to do so, and learning goals get displaced into scoring well in examinations.

‘Technological constraints, and poor content and resource development’ – In addition to all the above-mentioned issues, a country like India faces many more challenges in their move towards online education. The telecommunication infrastructure is not well-developed or uniformly developed in all the parts of our country. In a poverty-stricken country, owning a smartphone or personal computer or laptop is considered as a luxury. On top of that expecting everybody to have the required support of connectivity and bandwidth is one overambitious move on the part of proponents of online education.

Besides, are the teachers equipped and trained well for content and resource development? While the privately owned institutions are spending a lot towards that end, the government run institutions have hardly any money to spend on training the teachers and buying expensive technology. This further leads to disparities in opportunity of learning in our country.

Conclusions and Implications

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected our everyday lives, especially the education system and the teaching-learning process, as students are perceived as among the most vulnerable section of the society. There is an opportunity to build-up the current, on our ancient education system, on the three pillars of learning, i.e., *shravana* (listening), *manana* (reflecting) and *nididhyāsana* (internalizing). Implementing a total online education system will be a real challenge in a diverse country like India, with inequalities of income, leading to poor infrastructure and limited access to technology; coupled with poor training and content development; and political opposition and blame games.

But all the stakeholders have to work towards making the system work and open up avenues for the future too. It is important to generate quality assurance to ensure authenticity of online education. A common syllabus and development of e-resource; accreditation management systems or a centralised solution for the accreditation process for the resources developed for the entire country; maintaining high quality in resource development; use of newer and user friendly technologies which can be accessed by everyone; and a course fee suitable for individual pocket, are all imperative to make this system of teaching work. The emphasis should be on developing a quest for knowledge among the learners and improving their listening, reflecting, and internalising skills.

Another important aspect of online education is the growing feeling of isolation, anxiety, depression due to extreme mechanisation and absence of socialising and emotional interactions. The systems should be so developed that the learners should get the feeling that their mentor and peers are always with them in the process of learning as well as beyond the classroom.

References

- Goodman, Joshua, Julia Melkers, and Amanda Pallais. 2016. 'Can Online Delivery Increase Access to Education?' *National Bureau of Economic Research working paper*.
<https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/joshuagoodman/files/w22754.pdf>.
- Illeris, Knud. 2004. *The Three Dimensions of Learning*. Malabar, Fla: Krieger Pub. Co.
- Ormrod, Jeanne E. 2012. *Human Learning*. 6th ed. Boston: Pearson
- Mookerji, Radha K. 2001. *Ancient Indian Education in the Cultural Heritage of India*, Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission 2: 640.
- Kulkarni, Chidambara. 1973. *Vedic Foundations of Indian Culture*. Bombay: Shri Dvaipayana Trust: 107.
- Raja, Kunhan C. 2001. 'Vedic Culture': *The Cultural Heritage of India*. Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture 1: 220.
- Benjamin, Jowett. 2014. *Theaetetus (translation)*.
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html>.
- Bettinger, Eric, and Susanna Loeb. 2017. 'Promises and Pitfalls of Online Education.' *Brookings*. June 9, 2017.
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/promises-and-pitfalls-of-online-education/>.

Re-inventing the Teaching-Learning Process Post-Covid

Pednekar, Puja. 2020. 'Can Online Learning Replace the School Classroom?' *The Hindu*. June 26, 2020. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/can-online-learning-replace-the-school-classroom/article31917964.ece>.

Dr. Monica Prabhakar is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi.

Dr. Soma Sengupta is an Associate Professor in the Department of Commerce, Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi.