

## NAVIGATING CHALLENGES: THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN DIGITAL EDUCATION AMIDST THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

**Arshpreet Kaur**

Research Scholar (Political Science) Guru Kashi University Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda  
(Punjab)

**Dr. Sukhdev Singh**

Assistant Professor Guru Kashi University Department of Political Science Talwandi Sabo,  
Bathinda (Punjab)

### **Abstract**

The paper addresses the key roles expected of teachers in the new digital era. The role of teachers in the 21st century has become increasingly complex in today's information-rich world, where knowledge is virtually limitless. Teachers are required to be digitally literate and responsible not only for their teaching but also for their students' learning. They are expected to act as facilitators, helping students make decisions about the quality and validity of new information, while also being open-minded and critical independent professionals. Additionally, they must serve as active co-managers, collaborators, and mediators between students and the information they need to comprehend, as well as providers of contextual understanding. In this digital age, the role of teachers has evolved from mere instructors to managers of students' social and emotional behaviours, guiding their learning and overall development as responsible citizens. They must motivate both slow and fast learners in a diverse learning environment. Teachers need to monitor students' time usage to ensure they utilize the best e-resources effectively. They also need to address any issues that may affect students' learning and be prepared to make adjustments if their learning progress stalls.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Digital Education, Teachers, Epidemic, Online Teaching, Difficulties.

### **Objectives**

- To study the online education benefits the teachers.
- To analyse whether teachers face difficulties in online education.

### **Introduction**

Digital India is certainly not a new buzzword for anyone. India has digitized many of its operations. Technology-based education is the new frontier. The new normal has compelled educators to adapt to newer methods of providing education and enabling it to reach students across the globe. Teachers have always strived to incorporate innovative teaching methods to simplify concepts. Now, the same teachers are facing a new challenge: how to be more creative in online teaching. The education system is increasingly demanding better and more from teachers. With the changing expectations of the world, the roles of teachers are becoming more complex and stressful.<sup>1</sup> Expectations from teachers are evolving as the world moves towards a digital direction and with younger generations. Whether it's online classes or offline classes, teachers are expected to be digitally literate. There are numerous perspectives to consider

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<sup>1</sup> Habib K. (2020) *The Impact of Covid-19 on Education Systems in the Common Wealth*, London.

regarding the changing role of teachers in the technology-driven world.

Different challenges faced by educators due to diverse student groups and their demands, digitization have opened up opportunities for teachers to assume various roles. Technology-based education has provided a platform for teachers to enhance the skills needed to afford quality education to students. The internet has given them wide exposure to reach a large group of students as well as experts.<sup>2</sup> The challenges and valuable opportunities have also paved the way for teachers to experiment with the curriculum in terms of its planning and delivery.

Education has largely shifted online with the onset of the Coronavirus lockdown. With a digital push for education during the lockdown, classes on Zoom, WhatsApp, and Google Classrooms are becoming the norm for students, helping them keep up with the curriculum from the comfort of their homes. Some teachers were unfamiliar with the various virtual platforms for e-learning.<sup>3</sup> However, dedicated to the passion of teaching, regardless of their age, they prepared themselves for the digital classroom and tried to familiarize themselves with all the necessary tools to become internet savvy.

Digital classrooms pose several challenges, such as capturing students' attention, which is not an easy task. Students may lose interest in online classes if the teaching style is dull and lacks creativity. To engage students in a digital classroom, the classroom environment must be highly interactive. Sometimes, connectivity is a significant issue for both teachers and students. Despite these challenges, there is no option but to turn to digital learning. E-learning is the ideal learning tool if used correctly. Under the policy, a new autonomous body called the Public Education Technology Forum will be established to promote the adoption of digital practices at all levels of education, including integrating classroom methods and teachers, providing professional development material for institutions, and technological advancements in the classroom.<sup>4</sup> Teachers have shown perseverance in adapting to the new digital patterns and adjusting to every situation. To the world, we may be just teachers, but to our students, we are heroes.

### **How does digital education benefit the teachers?**

Flexibility is absolutely, flexibility in acquiring knowledge and skills is crucial for instructors to enhance their effectiveness in their roles.

- **Continuous reinforcement of content and skills:** Unlike one-day workshops, online courses provide ongoing opportunities to acquire new content and skills.
- **Real world applications:** By utilizing mixed media, including discussion boards, videos, and interactivity, teachers can begin to see how specific educational theories can come fully alive in the classroom.
- **Save time:** Time is one of the most valuable resources for educators. By eliminating the need to commute to a school during the weekend, educators can invest more time in learning concepts that can be beneficial in the classroom

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<sup>2</sup> Kaur, J. and Kaur, B. (2020) *Social Education through self-actualization in self-Education*, Authors Press, Delhi

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad, S., and Naseer, A. (2021), Impact of COVID-19 on Education in India, *Madhya Bharti*, Vol. 7 (6)

<sup>4</sup> Augustus, J. (2021). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Working Women in Higher Education, *Krishnamurthy Institute of Christian*, Vol. No. 53 (3)

- **Institutes credit:** Numerous online learning tools can help educators "level up" their progress in a convenient way.<sup>5</sup>

### **Challenges Faced by Teachers in Online Teaching during the covid-19 Epidemic**

- Difficulty reaching students in remote areas.
- Challenges in motivating students.
- Difficulty in keeping track of student progress.
- Issues with power and internet connectivity.
- Lack of technical/software knowledge.
- Increased demand for investment in planning course content.
- Lack of motivation and support for online students.
- Lack of enthusiasm to teach mathematical subjects through online mode.
- Challenges in monitoring class discipline.<sup>6</sup>

### **Teachers can do improve online teaching**

Utilize a variety of technology options are probably the most effective ways educators can involve innovation to assist with establishing incredible learning conditions for their understudies include:

- **Utilizing a Variety of Technology Options:** Video Conferencing: Platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Classroom allow teachers to schedule live sessions for lectures or classes.
- **Pre-recorded Videos:** Teachers can create pre-recorded videos using their webcam or video recorder and upload them to platforms like YouTube, Vimeo, or Microsoft Teams for students to access.
- **Screen Capture:** Tools like Screen-O-Matic, Loom, and Camtasia enable teachers to share their screen with students, making it easier to explain concepts.
- **Classroom Management System:** Platforms like Google Classroom, Canvas, and Blackboard provide tools for organizing class materials, communicating with students, and managing assignments.
- **Assisting Tools:** Incorporating tools like YouTube, PowerPoint, Prezi, and learning games can enhance interactivity and visual engagement in the online classroom.<sup>7</sup>

### **Connect with Students Individually**

Establish virtual office hours or online forums where students can ask questions or seek assistance. Provide opportunities for one-on-one virtual meetings to address individual concerns and monitor student progress.<sup>8</sup> Encourage communication through email, messaging apps, or discussion boards to maintain a connection with students.

### **Collaborate with Parents**

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<sup>5</sup> Adnan, Muhammad, and Kainat A. (2020) *Online Learning the Covid-19 Pandemic: Students Perspectives, A Journal of Administrative, Vol. No. 4 (5)*

<sup>6</sup> Bao, W. (2020) *Covid-19 and Online Teaching in Higher Education*, Natural Sciences Journal, Vol. No.11 (3)

<sup>7</sup> Crawford, J. (2020) *Higher Education Intra-period Digital Pedagogy Responses*, Maheshwari Journal, Vol. No. 3(1)

<sup>8</sup> Costley, K.C. (2021) *The Positive Effects of Technology on Teaching and Student Learning*, Indian Council of Research, Vol. No. 5 (7)

Maintain open communication with parents regarding the school year's plans, expectations, and technical requirements.<sup>9</sup> Provide resources and support to parents to ensure they can assist their children with online learning. Address parents' questions and concerns regarding online courses, assignments, and student progress.

### **Explore New Learning Methods**

Evaluate and adapt teaching strategies to accommodate different learning styles and preferences. Consider innovative approaches such as flipped classrooms, where students review lectures and instructions independently before class sessions focus on problem-solving and application.

### **Foster Collaboration and Socialization Opportunities**

Organize virtual group projects, discussions, or collaborative assignments to promote teamwork and interaction among students. Facilitate online forums or discussion boards where students can exchange ideas, ask questions, and engage in peer learning.<sup>10</sup> Encourage participation in virtual extracurricular activities or clubs to promote socialization and community-building.

### **Conclusion**

In the era of online learning, when utilized effectively, it has been shown to increase retention of information and reduce instructional time. Implementing digital practices at all levels of education, including classroom strategies and professional development for teachers, is essential. Teachers have demonstrated resilience by adapting to new digital trends and overcoming challenges. While to the world we may be just teachers, to our students, we are heroes.

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<sup>9</sup> Deepti and Ayush (2020) *Problems Faced by Students and Teachers during Online Education Due to Covid-19*, Association of Research Workers, Vol. No. 5 (6)

<sup>10</sup> Gurung, S. (2021). Challenges Faced by Teachers in Online Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic, *Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 9 (1)