



E LEARNING DURING COVID TIMES: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES!!

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The deadly and infectious disease Corona Virus (Covid-19) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11th March 2020. In order to curtail the rapid global community transmission of Covid-19, various schools and colleges were forced to switch their traditional institutional learning activities to a remote learning digital platform. This is obviously a very unique time and finding motivation and structure can be challenging when staring at the same four walls during lockdown. At an institutional level e-learning thus provided a theoretical, cognitive approach along with socio-cultural and connectivism in this sector. Ease of accessibility from not only mobiles but also laptops, the immediate responses from the presenters during live lectures, real time student-teacher interaction, watching of already recorded videos whenever required presented synchronous learning on online platform.

Luckily the morning online academic activities motivated and helped me stick to the usual presentation timetables at the best of times. My personal experience consisted of watching recorded online presentations and attending live lectures which became possible because of various videoconferencing tools such as Google Meet, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams. The

best part about these platforms was that I could pause the recorded audio/video when needed and can re-listen to various parts as required, which we normally cannot do in real-time lectures. The other main learning was through seminar and journal club presentations through Zoom or Google Meet. This enabled all of my batchmates to have group discussions and interact with respective professors just like we normally do in a traditional classroom.

However, during Zoom presentations initially I felt a little awkward and different while I sat in my living room talking to batchmates and my tutors as opposed to professional-looking classroom. There were certain issues that I and my friends encountered with advanced online teaching and learning method such as, poor or unstable internet connection, extra financial burden for internet data, downloading errors, login problems, problems with audio/video and non-compatibility of outdated devices with the upgraded browsers. Also, the additional challenges that I faced during online learning programme were difficulty in maintaining the focus during lectures through longer period of time, distractions due to surrounding disturbances and lack of in-person interactions. Moreover, in my personal experience teaching and learning online activities does not provide clinical education which majority of us understand



only through practical sessions thus hampering and weakening the e-learning process. In spite of these challenges, it truly helped me learn, gather information and have an access to online lectures/presentations anytime, from anywhere through varied devices with an internet access.

This virtual platform also gave me an opportunity to participate in different online events, quizzes, CDE programmes and even conferences which I found really interesting. This not only kept me engaged during lockdown but also helped enhance knowledge. During one of the CDE programmes few of us couldn't attend the session because the number of participants in Zoom meeting already exceeded the limit but thanks to the prompt action taken by the organisers who took an initiative to provide us the link of meeting on Facebook and YouTube. This therefore enabled maximum students to attend and take the benefit of the programme which was

organised at National level. The immediate responses from the presenters during live lectures and real time student-teacher interactions made me to become a more active participant during the courses. These online resources definitely guided me to solidify previous learning.

Besides the difficulties and challenges faced, I think the online learning has emerged as a victor amidst Covid-19 crisis. As per the assessment of the researchers social distancing is preeminent at this stage and the institutions are left with no alternative but to adapt the modern technology and shift from offline mode to an online mode. Considering the scope of improvement, I can say that online education strategies is definitely a viable alternative in current circumstances. As per my viewpoint e-learning has become the new normal and a complete transition from physical classes to online classes is not far away.