STATUS OF ONLINE EDUCATION DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK AND PROSPECTS OF NEP-2020: TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This study aims to narrate the present status of the online education system during the COVID-19 outbreak from the point of view of teachers engaged in higher educational institutions and to explore their perception about the successful implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) - 2020. This study considers primary data collected through a structured questionnaire circulated among the respondents through Email, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The study considered 127 responses received from teachers of 57 higher educational institutions spread over 16 states of India. The study observed that the teachers faced difficulties while imparting education in the online mode because of several factors. Some of the significant factors include an infrastructural facility (lack of uninterrupted internet connectivity, frequent power-cut, no support from the institute), psychological pressure, work-life balance etc. The study observed that the majority of respondents from different higher Education institutions exercised the teaching-learning process by using Laptop in the Google form platform and circulating study materials through WhatsApp, Email etc. mostly during pandemics. The analysis of responses reveals that the majority of the teachers of higher education institutions are not satisfied with the ongoing online education practices, examination, and evaluation system adopted during the COVID-19 outbreak. However, teachers are optimistic about the role of the online education system in the process of implementating NEP-2020 and most of the respondents are in favour of the parameters like flexibility in subject choice, education in the mother tongue, multidisciplinary approach, the proposed change of schooling structure and online mode etc.

Keywords: Online Education, COVID-19, National Education Policy-2020, Higher Education.

Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic altered education in profound ways. The teaching-learning process has been totally switched to online mode to maintain social

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distance, and artificial distance has been created between teachers and students. As a result, teachers and students are finding it difficult to adjust to the "new normal." Face-to-face interaction between students and teachers is forbidden. Teachers and students are obliged to adopt a virtual way of teaching that is highly technological and reliant on the internet and other Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capable gadgets in the new normal circumstance. However, neither teachers nor students are accustomed to the new ICT-enabled, internet-dependent environment.

On top of that, India, as a developing country with a large population of poor people living in rural regions, is struggling to cope with the new virtual education system due to a lack of financial resources and infrastructural facilities. While there is widespread disdain for remote learning and work environments, people have little choice but to accept the changes imposed by the COVID-19 situation. According to a recent report[1] published by INDIA TODAY, 84 per cent of teachers reported that they are facing difficulties while delivering education through digital media. The report also revealed that every two out of five teachers lack the necessary devices to deliver the education in online mode and less than 20 per cent of teachers reported getting access to training facilities to cope with the new system of the teaching-learning process to substitute the physical classroom. Therefore, it is expected that the teachers

feel comfortable and content while doing their work to thrive in the online method of imparting and discriminating knowledge. As a result of the paradigm shift in the teaching and learning process, it is crucial to understand the current issues teachers are facing and track progress to ensure that we are on the right track. In this context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has emerged to address the current problem of India's education system.

The National Education Policy (NEP) - 2020 is the twenty-first century's first education policy. The government has replaced the 34 year old 1986 National Policy on Education with the 2020 National Education Policy. The 2020 policy envisions the vision of the Indian education system and focuses on five fundamental issues:

Affordability: states that citizens should be able to obtain an education at a reasonable cost. Accessibility criteria are proposed to ensure that all citizens of the country have equal access to education. The policy's equity parameter, once again, indicates that education will be provided to all, taking into account their economic, social, and other backgrounds, in order to ensure education to all in true later and spirit for the country's holistic development. Quality criteria have been imposed in the policy to provide quality education in order to lead the country and prepare the country for global leadership, and finally, accountability criteria have been incorporated in the new education

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[1] INDIA TODAY Web Desk report published on March 18, 2021.

policy to hold institutions accountable for providing education in order to ensure the maintenance of all four parameters mentioned above.

As a result, the NEP 2020 has introduced several reforms to transform India's elementary and higher education systems by 2040. Taking the foregoing into account, this study is a modest attempt to analyze teachers' perceptions of potential problems in the virtual teaching and learning process using primary data collected via a structured questionnaire. This study also aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions of the role of online teaching mechanisms in the successful implementation of the National Education Policy-2020. This study is the first of its kind, which exclusively focuses on revealing the status of online education during the COVID-19 outbreak applicable to teachers of higher educational institutions. The present study is important from many points of view. Firstly, this study enriched the existing body of literature by shading light on the present status of the online teaching-learning system. Secondly, the study also highlights the potential challenges and prospects of fulfilling the vision of the NEP-2020 and its role in the development of the education system in India. Thus, the findings of this study will be beneficial for policymakers and implementing agencies to get a prior idea about the possible hindrance in the implementation of the NEP-2020.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 examines relevant contemporary literature focusing on investigating potential issues with the online teaching-learning process. The research methodology is presented in Section 3. The fourth section discusses the data analysis and findings. Section 5 concludes with a summary and conclusion, as well as limitations and potential implications.

Literature Review

For this study, I reviewed the following research papers that were published in open access journals in English in the years 2020 and 2021, only taking the study's goal into account.

Belgica et al. (2020) conducted an online distance learning study titled Thematic Study on the Challenges Facing Educare College Inc. Primary Pupils. Their research attempted to discover the challenges for primary students at Educare College, Inc. in the Online Distance Learning modality. To synthesize and identify the challenges during online classes, they used a phenomenological approach and thematic analysis, which included face-to-face and online interviews, watching recorded Zoom classes, and observations.

Dhawan (2020) conducted research on the Online Learning scenario during the COVID-19 crisis. In this paper, he considers the significance of online learning as well as the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) analysis of e-learning modes during a crisis. Dhawan has also shed light on the growth of EdTech startups during pandemics and natural disasters, as well as recommendations for

academic institutions on how to deal with the challenges of online learning.

Mohammad (2020) sought to identify the challenges and obstacles English language learners (EFL) encountered at Science and Arts College, Alula, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia, during the transition to online learning in the second semester of 2020 a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey-based questionnaire responses of 184 students were analyzed in the study. The study's validity was tested using a descriptive statistical method. The main issues influencing and impacting online EFL learning during COVID-19 are technical, academic, and communication challenges. According to the study findings, most EFL learners are dissatisfied with continuing online learning because they have not made the expected progress in language learning performance.

Ullah et al. (2021) sought to identify the challenges encountered by Pakistani students in online learning environments, ascertain whether a difference exists between male and female students in terms of challenges encountered during online learning, and assess the effectiveness of online learning in Pakistan from students' perspectives. The findings revealed that all students, whether at the high school or university level, were dealing with the same issues. In online classes, both male and female students faced the same difficulties. Online learning cannot produce good results in developing countries such as Pakistan, where most students lack access to a good internet facility due to technical and financial constraints.

Barrot et al. (2021) investigated students' online learning challenges during the pandemic and how they coped with them in the Philippines. The study's findings revealed that college students' online learning challenges varied in terms of type and extent. Their most difficult challenge was related to their home learning environment, while their slightest difficult challenge was technological literacy and competency. According to the findings, the COVID-19 pandemic had the most significant impact on the quality of the learning experience and students' mental health. The most frequently used strategies by students were resource management and utilization, help-seeking, technical aptitude enhancement, time management, and learning environment control. The implications for classroom practice, policy development, and future research are discussed.

Das et al. (2021) investigated the barriers to online learning in rural areas for all stakeholders. This qualitative study included two students, two parents, and two teachers from rural areas. The study is notable for examining the challenges of online learning from the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents. According to the study, online teaching-learning is difficult due to a variety of factors such as a lack of technical gadgets, poor network connectivity, and power outages. Teachers' lack of prior experience in online teaching is a significant shortcoming. Other barriers

include parental literacy and student interest. The transition from traditional to online learning has caused parents, students, and teachers stress.

Muthuprasad (2021) used an online survey of 307 students to learn about Agricultural Students' perceptions and preferences for online learning. According to the study, most respondents (70 per cent) are willing to use smartphones for online learning to manage the curriculum during the pandemic. According to the study, the flexibility and convenience of online classes make it an appealing option, whereas broadband connectivity issues in rural areas make it difficult for students to take advantage of online learning initiatives. As a result of the study's findings, the agricultural education system, where many courses are practical in nature, may not be able to transition entirely to online mode, necessitating the development of a hybrid model.

Carrillo et al., (2020) have done an extensive review of studies related to online teaching-learning practices and highlighted the need for a comprehensive view of the pedagogy of online education, which integrates technology to support teaching and learning. Venkataraman (2020) highlighted the problems encountered by teachers and students while attending the online classes during the COVID-19 outbreak. Kavaric et al. (2021) also concluded that teachers faced problems during the COVID-19 situation while delivering the online lecture.

So far, the limited literature review is freely available, I have noticed that much

research has been recently carried out exploring the problem and challenges of online education during the current pandemic situation from the learner perspective.

However, there is inadequate literature that explored the problem of online education during the COVID-19 outbreak from the teachers' perspective in general and higher educational institutions in particular. Therefore, the present study is a modest attempt to bridge the gap in the existing literature by analyzing the problem of teachers in the online education system during the pandemic period.

Objectives of the Study

✓ To assess the status of online education in the higher educational institutions during the COVID-19 outbreak from teachers' perspectives.

✓ To study the perception of the teachers of higher educational institutions about the National Education Policy-2020.

Data and Methodology

Data Collection

For this study, I used a structured questionnaire to collect primary data. The questionnaire had a total of 19 questions, all of which fell into the required category. The respondents had submitted their responses to all of the questionnaire's questions. The questionnaire was created in Google Form and distributed to teachers at higher education institutions across the country via WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Respondents were

conveniently selected based on personal contact.

Respondents Profile

The study received responses from 127 respondents, out of which 69.3 per cent are Assistant Professors, 19.7 per cent are Associate Professors, and 11 per cent are Professors, representing 57 higher educational institutions (college and university) spread across 16 states, ranging from Assam in the northeast to Gujarat in the west, Tamilnadu in the south, and Jammu & Kashmir in the north (Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Asaam, Delhi, Gujarat, J & K, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal) .

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include the fact that it was limited to a few respondents from various colleges and universities in India and did not consider the opinions of school teachers. The study is also limited to exploring and analyzing teacher problems only; students' problems are not addressed in this endeavour. Personal biases and prejudices persisted in selecting respondents, which was based on convenience sampling methods. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire country and are inapplicable to elementary education.
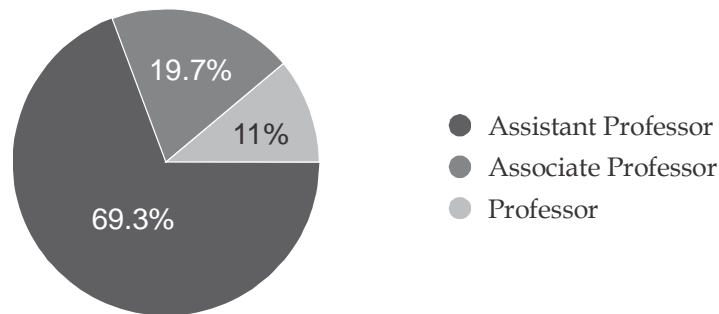
Discussion and Analysis

To make a meaningful conclusion, the collected data has been analyzed through an appropriate pie chart and bar chart.

This section reports the results of the study and deliberates the meaning and implication of the analysis of the results.

Figure 1: Designations of Respondents

Present Designation

127 responses

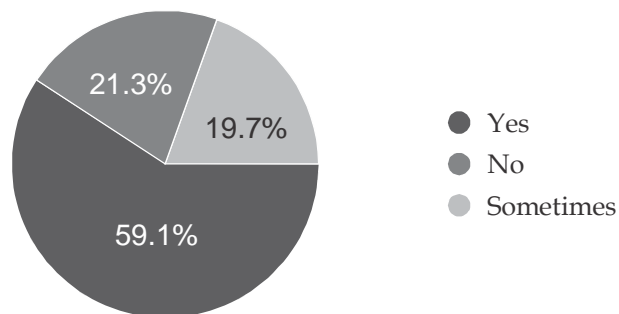*Source: Google form responses*

Figure 1 summarizes the distribution of respondents according to the designation. Figure 1 depicts that out of 127 responses, 69.3 per cent are assistant professors, 19.7 per cent are associate professors and only 11 per cent are professors.

Figure 2: High-speed Internet Connectivity

Do you have high-speed internet at home?
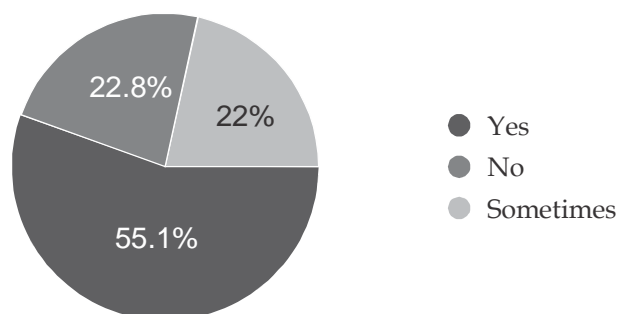
127 responses

Source: Google form responses

Figure 2 shows that 59.1 per cent of respondents have high-speed internet connectivity at home, with 19.7 per cent having had it for some time. However, 21.3 per cent of respondents stated that they do not have high-speed internet connectivity for online teaching and learning.

Figure 3: Electricity Connection Status

Do you have uninterrupted electricity supply at home?

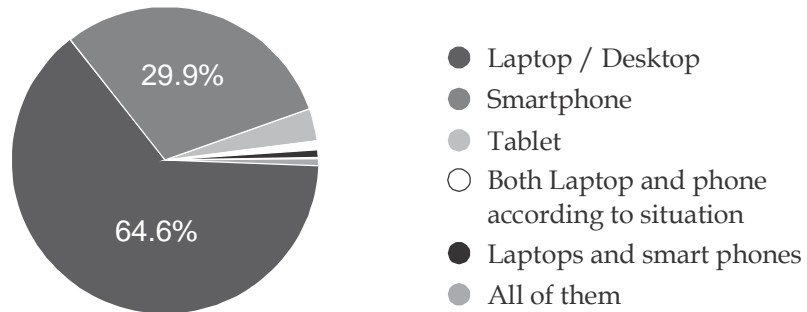127 responses

Source: Google form responses

Figure 3 depicts the response statistics in comparison to a continuous electrical supply at home. Figure 3 shows that while 55.1 per cent of respondents stated that they have an uninterrupted electrical supply at home, 22.8 per cent stated that they do not, and 22 per cent stated that they do have but not always.

Figure 4: Devices used for Online Classes

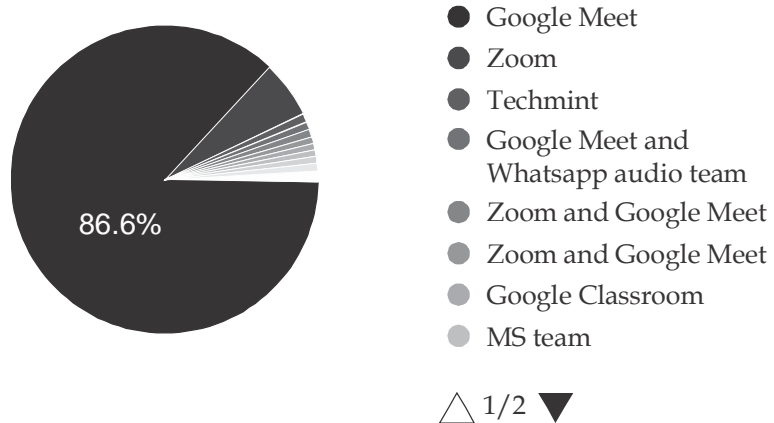**What device do you use for Online teaching learning process?**

127 responses

- Laptop / Desktop
- Smartphone
- Tablet
- Both Laptop and phone according to situation
- Laptops and smart phones
- All of them

Source: Google form responses

Figure 4 shows a summary of the responses regarding the usage of devices for online classes. Figure 4 shows that 64.6 per cent of respondents use a laptop or PC to take classes, while 29.9 per cent use their smartphone. Other devices are used by the remaining 25 per cent of teachers.

Figure 5: Platform used for Online Classes

What platform do you use for Online teaching learning process?

127 responses

- Google Meet
- Zoom
- Techmint
- Google Meet and Whatsapp audio team
- Zoom and Google Meet
- Zoom and Google Meet
- Google Classroom
- MS team

△ 1/2 ▼

Source: Google form responses

Figure 5 depicts the teachers' reactions to the use of online learning platforms. According to Figure 5, Google Meet is the most reliable and user-friendly platform, with 86.6 per cent of teachers using it and the remaining 13.4 per cent using other platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and so on.

Figure 6: Platform used for Circulation of Study Materials

**What platform do you use for providing study materials?**

127 responses

- WhatsApp
- Email
- Google Classroom
- Google Classroom
- LMS
- Google Classroom
- Google Classroom
- Tripura University LMS

△ 1/3 ▼
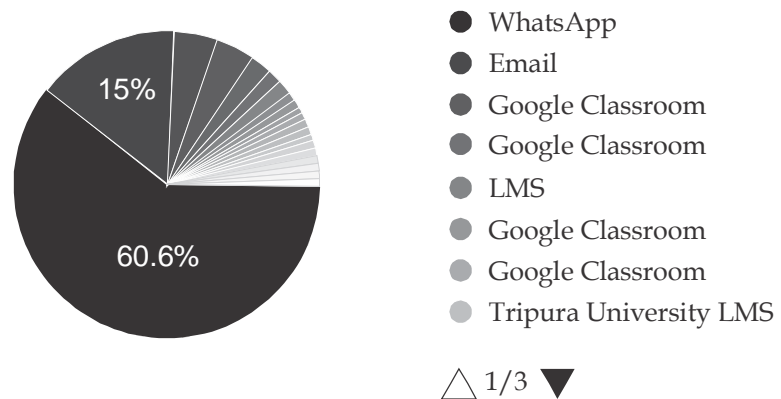
Source: Google form responses

Figure 6 shows that 60.6 per cent of respondents rely on WhatsApp communication for the distribution of study materials, while 15 per cent rely on email. The remaining 24 per cent of respondents are using Google Classroom, LMS, and other modes of communication to distribute study materials.

Figure 7: Satisfaction with the use of Technology and Software for Online Teaching

Are you satisfied with the technology and software you are using for online teaching?

127 responses

- Yes
- No
- Can't say
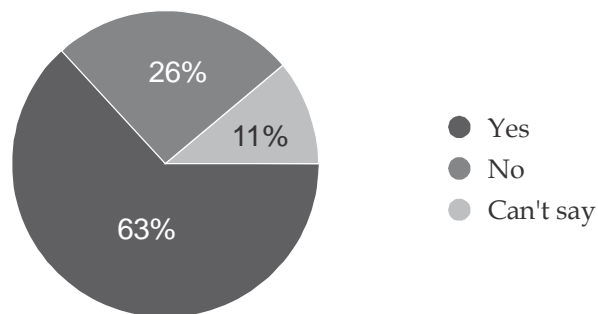
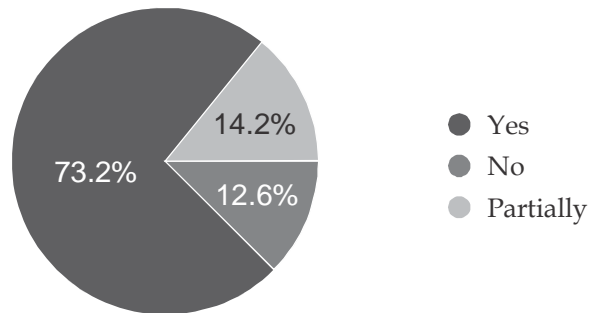*Source: Google form responses*

Figure 7 shows that 63 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the use of technology and software for online instruction, while 26 per cent are not. On the other side, 11 per cent of respondents are undecided about their level of satisfaction with the use of technology in online education.

Figure 8: Financial Support for Online Classes

Are you getting any support (resources like ICT device/internet package/monetary package) from the University / College to teach from home?

127 responses
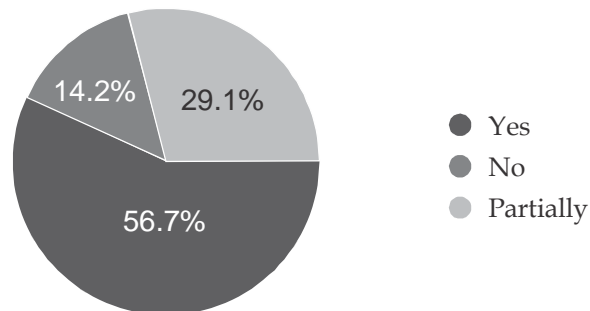

Source: Google form responses

Figure 8 summarized that 73.2 per cent of respondents said they do not receive any financial support from the institute for continuing online classes, while only 12.6 per cent said they do, and 14.2 per cent said they do receive partial support. So from the response, it is clear that teachers have delivered the education without institutional infrastructure and financial support from the employers.

Figure 9: Cooperation from the Colleagues

Are you satisfied with the cooperation of colleagues and support staff for online teaching learning process?
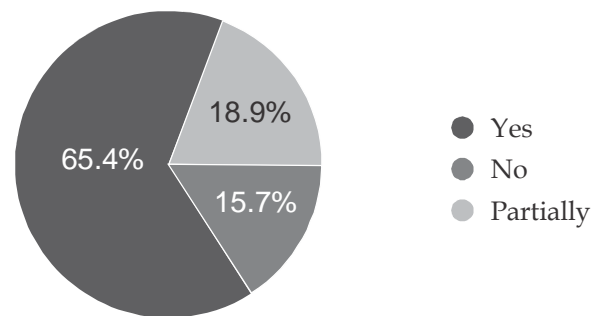
127 responses

Source: Google form responses

Support and cooperation from colleagues and support staff play an important role in the effective delivery of education in higher educational institutions. Figure 9 summarised that 56.7 per cent of respondents receive cooperation from their coworkers, while 29.1 per cent receive only partial cooperation. 14.2 per cent, on the other hand, reported a lack of cooperation from their coworkers.

Figure 10: Classroom Interaction with the Students

Do you think online classroom interaction with students is effective as it is in physical classroom?

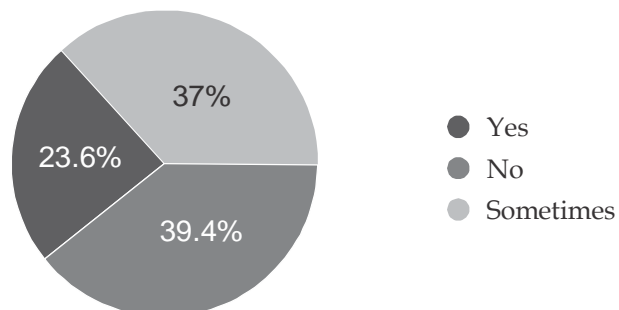127 responses

Source: Google form responses

Figure 10 presents the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interaction in online classes. Figure 10 shows that 65.4 per cent of teachers believe that online classroom interaction is less effective than in-person interaction. However, 15.7 per cent of teachers responded positively, believing that interaction with students during online classes is effective, while 18.9 per cent said it is only partially effective.

Figure 11: Designations of Respondents

Do you feel disturbance in work-life balance while teaching in virtual platform?
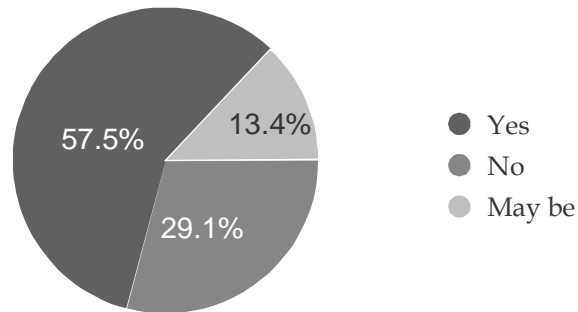
127 responses

Source: Google form responses

Figure 11 shows that 39.4 per cent of respondents had a problem with work-life balance, while 37 per cent had a problem with work-life balance occasionally. However, 23.6 per cent said they have no trouble balancing work and life.

Figure 12: Examination and Evaluation System

Are you satisfied with the examination and evaluation system which has been adopted in your institute during COVID-19 pandemic?
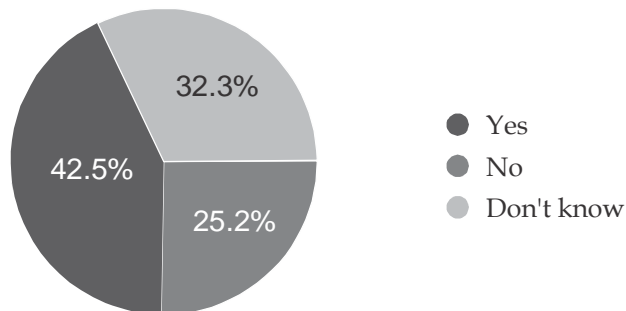
127 responses

Source: Google form responses

Performance assessment of students is an integral part of the education system. The satisfaction of teachers with the examination and evaluation procedure used in their institute was summarised in Figure 12. Figure 12 shows that 57.5 per cent of teachers are unhappy with the online assessment and evaluation system that was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 29.1 per cent of teachers are satisfied with the situation, while 13.4 per cent are unsure.

Figure 13: Education Quality Under NEP-2020

Do you think Online teaching learning process will increase the standard of education in the country like India under NEP-2020?

127 responses
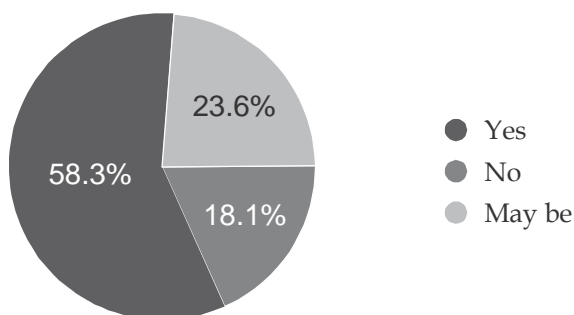

Source: Google form responses

Figure 13 depicts teachers' responses to the quality of online education under the NEP-2020. Under the NEP-2020, just 25.2 per cent of respondents believe that online teaching-learning will improve educational quality. However, 42.5 per cent of respondents said no, and 32.3 per cent said they were unsure about the problem.

Figure 13: Substitution of the Offline Teaching-learning Process

Do you think online education process can substitute the normal education system under NEP-2020?

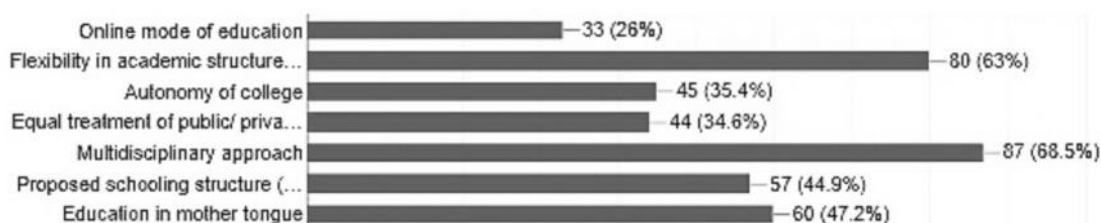127 responses

Source: Google form responses

Figure 13 shows that 58.3 per cent of respondents believe that the online teaching-learning process cannot replace the traditional educational system under the NEP-2020. However, 18.1 per cent of respondents believe that online education can completely replace traditional education, while 23.6 per cent are unsure.

Figure 14: Different Significant Parameters of NEP-2020

Which of the following do you like under NEP-2020? (You can choose all or few)

127 responses

Source: Google form responses

Figure 14 summarizes respondents' preferences for the various NEP-2020 indicators. Figure 14 reveals that the NEP-2020's interdisciplinary approach is the most popular parameter, with 68.5 per cent in favour, followed by the flexible approach and education in the mother tongue, with 63 per cent and 47.2 per cent in favour, respectively. Online education, on the other hand, is the least popular characteristic, with only 26 per cent of respondents favouring it.

Conclusion

The study discovered that teachers are faced many difficulties while imparting education through online mode due to a variety of factors. Significant factors include lack of infrastructure (lack of uninterrupted internet connectivity, frequent power outages, and no support from the institute), psychological stress, work-life balance. During pandemic, most respondents from various higher education institutions continued the teaching-learning process by using a laptop, Google meet platform and circulating study materials via WhatsApp and email. According to the analysis of the responses, most higher education teachers are dissatisfied with the online examination practices and evaluation system implemented during the COVID-19 outbreak. Teachers, on the other hand, are optimistic about the role of the online education system in the implementation of the NEP-2020, and the majority of respondents liked the various parameters such as subject flexibility, education in mother tongue, multidisciplinary approach, proposed change in schooling structure and online mode, and so on.

This paper highlights the challenges of the new dimension of the higher education system, as well as teachers' perceptions or the role of online education system in the implementation and success of the New Education Policy-2020. Policymakers can use this finding to take corrective action to make online education more effective in light of the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic across the globe.

This study is a unique, comprehensive work based on primary data gathered from university and college teachers across the country. This study reflects the potential difficulties of the online mode of the teaching-learning process due to insufficient infrastructure, orientation, and other issues. The study also highlighted NEP-2020's potential issues and opportunities.

The limitation of this study is that it is based on a small number of respondents who belong to different colleges and universities in India only and did not consider the school teachers' views. The study is further limited in exploring and analyzing the problems of teachers only and students' problems are not addressed in the present endeavour. The respondents were selected based on convenience sampling methods based on personal contact with the researcher, for which personal biases and prejudices persisted while selecting the sample. Therefore, the findings are relevant to the higher education system only and cannot be generalized to the entire education system.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interests that are directly or indirectly related to this research work.

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