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**THE BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

***One of the terms used after the pandemic is the term “New Normal.”***

The new normal in education is increased use of online learning tools. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered new ways of learning. All around the world, educational institutions, are looking towards online learning platforms, to continue with the process of educating the students.

The **New Normal now is a transformed concept of education** with online learning at the core of this transformation. Today, digital learning has emerged as a necessary resource for students and schools all over the world. Not just school and classes but even for many education institutes, this is an entirely new way of education that they have had to adopt. Online learning is now applicable not just to learn academics but it also extends to learning extra-curricular activities for students. In recent months, the demand for online learning has risen significantly, and it will continue doing so in the future.

As with most teaching methods, online learning also has its own set of positives and negatives. Decoding and understanding these positives and negatives will help institutes in creating strategies for more efficient delivery of the lessons, ensuring an uninterrupted learning journey for the students.

**Definitions of online teaching and learning**

**Online teaching and learning are forms of distance learning and teaching that take place over the internet. The two terms are interchangeable with the terms e-learning and e-teaching.**

**What are the advantages of online learning?**

1. **Efficiency**

Online learning offers teachers an efficient way to deliver lessons to the students. Online learning has a number of tools such as videos, pdfs, podcasts, and teachers can use all these tools as part of their lesson plans. By extending the lesson plan beyond traditional textbooks to include online resources, the teachers are able to become more efficient educators.

2. **Accessibility of time and place**

Another advantage of online education is that it allows students to attend classes from any location of their choice. It also allows the schools to reach out to a more extensive network of students, instead of staying restricted by the geographical boundaries. Additionally, online lectures can be recorded, archived, and shared for future reference. This allows the students to access the learning material at a time of their comfort.

Thus, online learning offers the students accessibility of time and place in education.

3. **Affordability**

Another advantage of online learning is reduced financial costs. Online education is far more affordable as compared to physical learning. This is because online learning eliminates the cost points of student transportation, student meals, and most importantly, real estate. Additionally, all the course or study material is all available online, thus creating a paperless learning environment which is more affordable, while also being beneficial to the environment.

4. **Improved student attendance**

With online classes, since the classes can be taken from home or location of choice, there are fewer chances of students missing out on lessons.

5. **Suits a variety of learning styles**

Every student has a different learning journey and a different learning style. Some students are visual learners, while some students prefer to learn through audio. Similarly, some students thrive in the classroom, and other students are solo learners who get distracted by large groups.

The online learning system, with its range of options and resources, can be personalized in many ways. It is the best way to create a perfect learning environment suited to the needs of each student.

**What are the disadvantages of online learning?**

1. **Inability to focus on screens**

For many students, one of the biggest challenges of online learning is the struggle with focusing on the screen for long periods of time. With online learning, there is also a greater chance for the students to get distracted easily with social media or other sites. Therefore it is  imperative for the teachers to keep their online classes crisp, engaging and interactive to help students stay focused on the lesson.

2. **Technology issues**

Another key challenge of online classes is internet connectivity. While internet penetration has grown in leaps and bounds over the past few years, however in smaller cities and town, a consistent connection with a decent speed is a problem. Without a consistent internet connection for students or teachers there can be a lack of continuity in the learning for the child. This is detrimental to the education process.

3. **Sense of isolation**

Students can learn a lot from being in the company of their peers. This often results in a sense of isolation for the students. In this situation, it is imperative that the schools allow for other forms of communication between the students, peers and teachers. This can include online messages, emails and video conferencing that will allow for face-to-face interaction and reduce the sense of isolation.

4. **Teacher training**

Online learning demands the teachers to be technology-friendly and have a basic understanding of using digital forms of learning. However, this is not the case always. Very often, the teachers have a very basic understanding of technology. Sometimes, they don’t even have the necessary resources and tools to conducts online classes.

To combat this, it is important for schools to invest in training the teachers with the latest technology updates so that they can conduct their online classes.

**5. Manage screen time**

Many parents are concerned about the health hazards of having their children spend so many hours staring at a screen. This increase in screen time is one of the biggest concerns and disadvantages of online learning, Sometimes the students also develop a bad posture , and other physical problems due to staying in front of a screen.

A good solution to this would be to give the student’s plenty of breaks from the screen to refresh their mind and their body.

**CONCLUSION**

**We cannot say that online learning is more effective than traditional learning and vice versa. It certainly depends on the learning topic and how its effectiveness has been measured. But overall, the online teaching could never replace the traditional face-to –face teaching.**