STAKEHOLDERS CHALLENGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

Skill could be defined as the ability to develop an expertise in a particular task. This holds true for teachers as well as the teacher trainees, for whom skill development is an essential component during the teaching –learning process. Individuals engaged in teaching profession needs to hone new skills as well as maintain the already learnt skills. The expected skills to be developed by teacher trainee are critical thinking skills, patience, communication skill, organizational skill etc. This is possible to exhibit when the teacher trainees are given the opportunity to teach in the classroom. However, the recent pandemic, turned the education system towards the online mode, thus putting the aspirant teacher trainees in a challenging situation. The present study highlights the challenges faced by the teacher trainees as well as in-service teachers while providing the online class it also aimed at understanding and assessing the opportunities and challenges the teacher trainees' as well as the in-service teachers encounters while teaching children through the online mode or recorded class. 45 participants (21 in-service teachers and 24 teacher trainees) were approached to participate in the study. A likert type of rating scale was prepared to assess the frequency of technology usage as well as their opinion regarding the current situation. A google form consisting of 18 questions were prepared and sent to the participants. Qualitative analysis was done to assess the challenges and opportunities the teacher trainees faced in the current pandemic situation will be highlighted. The paper discusses the pros and cons of online and recorded classes.

***Keywords**: Teacher-trainees, in-service teachers, COVID-19, technology, online classes, recorded classes, challenges and opportunities.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a skillful job. It requires good training and experience, so that the stakeholders involved in the teaching-learning process (like the teachers as well as the teacher trainees) does a justified job. The COVID-19 pandemic projected those teachers who were well trained and had affinity toward technology were able to stay connected. The teachers as well as the teacher-trainees were the professionals who were affected the most due to the pandemic, however, the technology

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helped them. Technology is a boon as well as a bane. Boon to those who know it and use it well and bane to those who are not acquainted with its usage. In the current pandemic COVID-19 situation, technology has helped people in various ways which being getting and staying connected with our near and dear ones, carrying out with our usual work by staying safe at home and also providing online classes to the children. Teachers played a crucial role in helping children by helping them learn and stay connected to their learning environment. However, teachers had their share of challenges and opportunities while teaching children through the online or the recorded mode. Similarly, the recent pandemic, turned the education system towards the online mode, thus putting the aspirant teacher trainees as well as established teachers in a challenging situation. The established teachers teaching in schools have already acquired the necessary skills due to the hands-on experience. However, skills development among the teacher education program requires a large vision, systematic approach as well as good planning for accomplishment of desired outcome (Dahiya et.al, 2017). Teacher trainees need to know about different teaching skills before entering into the classroom. These skills will help the teacher trainees to integrate the concept in day-to-day living, facilitate learning, upgrade information as well as enhance existing and futuristic learning skill for obtaining educational outcomes and professional growth.

Challenges faced by teachers and teacher trainees during the pandemic time

The recent pandemic disrupted as well as changed the educational scenario. The major aspect which got affected in this pandemic is the structure of learning and assessment as well as methodologies and the environment for teaching and learning. Since the onset of the pandemic, many new ways of working have arisen for trainee and newly qualified teachers which being practice teaching through the online-mode, dealing with the uncertainty and experiencing changes to their pattern of training caused by the after effect of pandemic. [Research report of School of Education, Communication and Society, 2021].

The challenging task for teacher as well as teacher trainees at all levels starting from pre-primary to senior school was to prepare and engage in digital lesson plans moreover a lot of efforts also went into gathering and preparing the teaching-learning items and props. The teacher trainees didn't get an opportunity to observe the classes of the established teachers due to the pandemic. The lack of classroom observation, limited exposure in orientation items and props made the training program challenging. The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic followed by the imposed lockdown in the country brought multiple challenges and concern to the student as well as the teacher fraternity. Like any other students, teacher-trainees too faced problems and difficulties to pursue their studies. Students residing in rural areas faced more challenges as compared to their urban counterparts. The teacher trainees also encountered technological as well as infrastructural challenges which being lack of space, non-availability of computer/laptops, connectivity from both the teachers' side as well as the students' side. The teacher trainees are also not able to access schools for their practice

teaching. However, after the school reopens, the teacher–trainees who were trained through the online mode will face countless challenges at the time of their entry and the beginning of their teaching career. These teacher trainees will miss out on important components like action research, case studies, conducting achievement test and diagnostic test etc. The teacher trainees also missed out on components like community works, field engagements in the way they are supposed to be done in the normal situation (Alam, A. 2021). The in-service teachers also faced challenges like lack of connectivity, difficulty in supervision, controlling malpractices during

NEED AND SCOPE FOR THE STUDY

The current pandemic situation has taught us that life is very unpredictable and ever changing. We have to accept change and adapt ourselves according to the situation. Every aspect of life should be looked at with different perspectives. Even education has changed a lot. Even though technology was an integral part of the education system, it has occupied a forefront in the current learning situation. The place of the teacher cannot be replaced; however, technology has become a great support tool as well as the connecting medium between the teacher and the students. Technology has proved it worth in this testing time of pandemic. It has made the process of teaching learning possibility; students are able to learn and stay connected while staying safe in their home. Indeed, technology has turned out to be a boom at this time. However, like everything it has got its due drawbacks also. Teachers using the traditional way of teaching are now compelled to learn and use technology so as to teach children. Few might have learnt, adapted themselves according to the needs, others might still be struggling to accept the new demands and changes. Not only had the in-service teachers faced the challenges, but also the teacher-trainees for whom getting a chance to teach the children in the school was essential to develop their teaching skills. Hence a need was felt to understand the attitude of in-service teachers as well as the teacher-trainees in usage of technology, its challenges and opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will also highlight the requirements or needs of the teacher as well as the areas of technology in which they need to improve. It will further highlight the challenges the teacher trainees encountered and what problems were posed during the online teaching mode that they were subjected to during teacher training period

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was taken up with the aim of assessing the challenges and opportunities faced by the in-service teachers as well as the teacher-trainees while teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify areas of concern encountered by B.S.Ed (HI) trainees as well as in-service teachers during the pandemic time.
2. To develop a questionnaire based on the selected areas of concern.
3. To digitize the tool using google form

4. To administer the developed questionnaire on the in-service teachers as well as teacher trainees pursuing the B.S.Ed(HI) 2 year program.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is on effort to conduct a survey to study the challenges and opportunities in teaching during the COVID-19 period. The sampling technique employed was purposive in nature seeking in-service teachers who were already teaching children using technology or providing classes either through online mode or recorded mode.

Participants

A total of 45 participants (21 –In-service teachers and 24- teacher-trainees) who were rendering their teaching service either through the recorded mode or through the online mode were selected as participants.

Research Tool

A questionnaire was prepared in the digital form [using Google Docs forms] as it was difficult for the researcher to personally go and administer it on the selected group of in-service teachers as well as teacher trainees. The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions. A five-point Likert scale was used to asses both the level of difficulty as well as the opinion of the in-service teachers as well as teacher-trainees about the usage of technology. The questions were aimed at getting information from both the group of teachers who offered either online classes or video recorded classes.

The areas selected for the questions for both the group of participants were the frequency of taking the class, connectivity issues, availability of equipment's, power point presentation, availability of technical support for editing the recorded video time might aspect etc. the opinions of the teachers on components like accessibility, constraints in teaching, assessing the students, supervision, immediate feedback etc. were also covered in the questionnaire.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study was carried out to find out the challenges faced by in-service teachers as well as teacher trainees during the practice teaching problems they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The areas which were assessed are hereby as follows:

1. Challenges faced by the in-service teachers as well as teacher-trainees during the online classes
2. Challenges during the video-recorded classes by the selected participants
3. Time management for online classes during COVID- 19 pandemic

4. Difficulties and opportunities in teaching during COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, few sub-criteria were also selected under each challenge which is given in the tabular column below. However, for the ease of reporting the actual findings, the most difficult and the least difficult criteria will be discussed.

Table 1. Details of Challenges and the Criteria Faced by In-service Teachers as well as the Teacher-trainees during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Sl. No.	Challenges	Criteria
1	Challenges during live On-line classes	• Connecting to children • Availability of Software • Equipments • Usage of Software • Projecting ppt and resources
2	Challenges during video recorded classes	• Availability of resources • Technical Support • Availability of Space
3	Time management for online class during this COVID-19 pandemic	• Work from home • Maintaining time for each class • Timely Completion of Syllabus
4	Difficulties and Opportunities for teaching Science subject during COVID-19 pandemic	• Easy use of technology and software • Constraint in resource availability • Supervising the students during test • Lack of clarification of doubts

The results obtained are discussed in the table given below. The result will highlight the most difficult criteria and the least difficult criteria for both the in-service teachers as well as the teacher-trainees across the main domain selected.

Table 2. Challenges and the Level of Difficulty Encountered by In-service as well as Teacher-trainees during the Pandemic Time

Sl.No	Challenges	Level of Difficulty	Criteria	In-Service teachers	Teacher-Trainee
1	Challenges during live-on classes	Very Difficult	Connecting to children	52%	45.83%
		Less difficult	Availability of software	29%	25%
2	Challenges during video recorded classes	Very Difficult	Availability of resources and space	75%	54%
		Less difficult	Technical support	14%	25%
3	Time-management during the online class	Very difficult	Maintaining time for each class and timely completion of syllabus	76%	50%
		Less difficult	Work from home	30%	5%
4	Difficulties and Opportunities in teaching during COVID-19 pandemic	Very Difficult	Difficulty in ascertaining the understanding of learnt concept and immediate response and clarification of doubts	70%	67%

The above table clearly shows criteria which were challenging to the in-service teachers as well as the teacher-trainees during the pandemic time. However, the data also clearly reveals that among all the challenges, maintaining time for each class and timely completion of the syllabus was the most challenging during the pandemic for both groups of participants. Along with the above, the availability of resources as well as difficulty in ascertaining the understanding of learnt concept, immediate response and clarification of doubts were the challenges faced by participants.

Thus, it could be concluded that due to the Covid-19 situation, country and citizens faced multiple challenges. These challenges included closure of educational institutes as well as closure of economic activities. Thus, this study highlighted the challenges encountered by the in-service-teachers as well as the teacher trainees during the pandemic. It must be understood that, coming few years the teacher trainees who got trained during the pandemic time will be hired by schools. The teacher trainee could not get the opportunity of face-to-face teaching practice in the actual classroom and other components of internship in the actual situation. This might be reflected during the teaching learning process post pandemic. Since the trainees cannot be again subjected to practice–teaching, due to lack of time and the course completion period, the solution lies in comprehensive induction and mentoring courses etc. to bridge this gap and to compensate for the loss occurred

during the pandemic. The same process could also be implemented for the in-service teachers. This measure will ensure that the teachers will be able to enhance their teaching skills as well as the students are also not subjected to an un-experienced teacher. [Alam, 2021].

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