Dr. Neetu Singh
Assistant professor
Department of Commerce,
Sunbeam College for
Women, Varanasi,

Rising Online Learning has Transformed the Affordability of Higher Education

Dr. Neetu Singh

Assistant professor

Department of Commerce, Sunbeam College for Women, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

Email:neetusinghvns@gmail.com

Abstract

Since it eliminates the time and location constraints that have remained in traditional education, it is now more flexible, accessible, and reasonably priced than ever before. During the pandemic, this element not only became more prevalent but also helped highlight the advantages and disadvantages of online education. because there is less physical infrastructure involved, online education has the advantage of being inexpensive. Another is the flexibility of learning that students like since it strikes a balance between their academic requirements and personal obligations. Additionally, assistive technology provide access for students with disabilities. Numerous educational institutions have adopted this hybrid model, which allows for tailored learning experiences through both online and traditional learning methods. Because they feel considerably more comfortable in a face-to-face learning environment, online learners become more isolated and disengaged as a result. The problem of academic integrity in an online virtual learning environment, where there are no assurances that students would be self-regulatory, is another disadvantage. The study looks at how these issues impact higher education's accessibility and investigates areas where there is a lack of current research, including the digital divide, including under represented students, and the social and emotional effects of online learning. Higher education

is becoming more accessible thanks to online learning, but all obstacles must be removed to give every student fair access to excellent educational possibilities and gain maximum through this technology.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic was a game Changer because it accelerated the transition to online learning as most institutions rushed to capitalize on its potential. This has opened our eyes to the potential of online learning, especially in terms of allowing students to study at their own pace and in different places. However, it also revealed shortcomings, such as the lack of social engagement strategies, inconsistent online service quality, and internet access, where certain students were unable to use certain devices and networks. it has been acknowledged that these disparities make online learning extremely important because it is also requirement of today's generation and to reach maximum.

In addition to e-learning's economic and convenience benefits, it has somewhat altered both teachers' and students' attitudes and behaviour's. Traditional teaching methods are being augmented by online learning platforms because of the role that online education plays in supporting non-traditional learning styles. Learning Management Systems (LMS) have been adopted by numerous higher education institutions in an effort to control course content, student interaction, and performance evaluation. Even in the midst of the pandemic, when students were compelled to attend classes remotely, online learning became common in contact-based courses.

The advent of technology and the internet changed the dynamics of competitiveness in the classroom, which has some repercussions for higher education institutions' approaches to student recruitment. Compared to 'experiments' institutions, certain 'established elite' institutions take longer to

get online. Many traditional universities have, however, been forced by this need to offer hybrid or even totally online degrees, sometimes in collaboration with OPMs (Online Program Managers). This is in keeping with the general patterns observed in the majority of nations, where institutions are beginning to believe that online education is a viable commodity that is a part of the larger higher education system.

Problem Statement

The way students can now access higher education has been fundamentally changed by online learning; there are no longer any physical, temporal, or geographic restrictions. Digital technologies enable students to participate in academic programs from anywhere in the world, making education accessible to everyone, including those who live in remote places or have work or family obligations. Additionally, online education offered widely accessible options for non-traditional learners, such as working professionals and adult learners. People could pursue higher education at their own pace with online learning.

Despite its potential, online education also presents new difficulties that restrict equitable access. Low-income students and those who live in remote or underdeveloped areas will be disproportionately impacted by the digital divide, which is defined by unequal access to dependable internet and technology. These students will never be able to take advantage of online courses. Additionally, the majority of online platforms can let students with special needs use assistive technology, but most classes could not have enough accessibility features, making it difficult for those who are visually or auditorily impaired or the rest of the cognitive ones to follow.

Additionally, socializing and community participation are typically diminished in online learning, which might cause a student to feel disinterested and alone for a while. This would pose significant challenges for students who find value in online education.

The purpose of this study is to determine how access to higher education is altered by online learning. In the process, it emphasizes growth and strategies that must be addressed in order to make the process more inclusive.

Research Gap:

Online learning typically entails less community involvement and sociability, which might cause learners to feel disengaged and alone for a while. For students who appreciate such in-class engagement and feel a need for community, this would be quite troublesome.

The purpose of this study is to determine how access to higher education is altered by online learning. In the process, it emphasizes growth and strategies that must be addressed in order to make the process more inclusive.

The absence of thorough research on the digital divide and how it affects fair access to online education is the biggest gap. Many students, particularly those from low-income families or those living in rural areas, struggle with poor technology and limited internet access, although this problem is frequently just briefly mentioned in study. Furthermore, despite the fact that a number of technologies were created to assist students with disabilities, not much research has been done on how accessible a particular online platform or system is in terms of offering services that best suit their needs.

The absence of conversation about the social and emotional components of learning is another gap in the study of online education. The majority of research studies don't fully examine how students' engagement, collaboration, and retention may be impacted by the lack of in-person interactions, particularly for those who depend on social dynamics to perform well academically.

By addressing these research gaps, further studies will be able to explain how online learning changed accessibility in higher education and possibly offer recommendations for how to make it better.

Result Analysis:

1. Reduced Physical Infrastructure Lowers Costs

 The main factor that makes virtual learning systems frequently less expensive than traditional educational systems is the reduction in overhead costs associated with physical infrastructure. In the context of traditional education, overheads primarily refer to the costs associated with maintaining such facilities, such as classrooms, libraries, and dormitories, which have extremely high maintenance costs. The majority of these costs are covered by the students through increased tuition, on-campus housing costs, and, of course, maintenance costs. In actuality, online learning eliminates a large portion of these expenses, allowing colleges to provide more Students save a lot more money when they don't have to move to school or make travel arrangements. By avoiding travel costs, lodging, and even food arrangements, such a concept relieves students of additional financial burdens. Additionally, the majority of online courses use digitalized texts and references for their course content, which is far less expensive than paper materials.

Technology advancements may also result in lower costs for the delivery of online education. Although the online platform is costly to set up initially, it is far less expensive to scale and maintain than traditional educational systems. One of the main benefits of online learning is that it increases access to higher education for a larger group of people, particularly those with lower incomes.

2. Flexibility in Balancing Education and Personal Commitments

Because online learning is more convenient and flexible, students may juggle their studies, jobs, families, and other commitments. Because online courses primarily offer asynchronous learning modalities, traditional campus-based programs do not have the aspect of rigid scheduling. For instance, students can participate in a course, view lectures, and turn in homework whenever it is convenient for them.

Non-traditional students, who are typically parents, working professionals, or those with caregiving duties, especially benefit from this flexibility. It is just not

possible for the majority of these kids to attend a typical college or university with set class schedules. They can pursue higher education through online learning without having to make significant sacrifices in their personal or professional lives. By eliminating the need to commute to a physical location, online learning will save time and alleviate stress. Online learning will not only aid students who live in rural or isolated places, but it will also enable them to study at unusual hours, such as at night or in the morning. An inclusive educational system would give people from all backgrounds the chance to flourish in part because of this flexibility.

Complementing Traditional Education with Online Learning

Online learning has enhanced established teaching methods rather than rendered them obsolete. These days, a lot of educational institutions use hybrid models, which blend on-campus and online learning for the students' advantage. For individuals who must take their classes online but still require in-person contacts in a classroom, blended learning approaches offer more flexibility.

As new methods of instruction and learning are implemented in the classroom, this has an additional effect on conventional education. Digital resources, such as interactive simulations, video lectures, and discussion boards, can now be readily incorporated into a course. This pushes educational institutions to adopt more creative teaching strategies to accommodate a wider range of learning requirements and preferences.

Increasing rivalry in the field of higher education due to the internet's always rising need learning field, compelled traditional schools to update their course offerings once more in order to maintain their standing in the cut throat and prestigious market. On the other hand, incorporating web-based learning components with contemporary technology will make the process even more engaging and effective for pupils. By integrating the most effective aspects of online education into conventional classroom settings, a contemporary

educational system can be created that meets the diverse needs of today's student body.

Promoting Educational Equity and Diverse Learning Styles

In terms of educational equity, online learning may have changed how easily available higher education is now. Online education makes it feasible to provide higher education to students who might not otherwise be able to because of their socioeconomic situation, geographic location, or other factors. Online university courses can be taken from anywhere in the world by students from underserved regions, rural locations, or nations with inadequate infrastructure for higher education.

Accessibility for different learning styles is made possible by the diversity of online multimedia and interactive content. While some students might value the simulation and textual content, others would prefer to be taught by video and infographics. Online learning gives students the freedom to use the content anyway they see fit, which helps them understand and remember it better.

In online education, self-paced learning enables students to learn at their own pace, whether that means accelerating the learning process or better understanding the complex subject. For students who struggle for a variety of reasons, such as learning challenges, language hurdles, or personal obligations, this flexibility levels the playing field. As a result, it made higher education a structure that was very accessible for all kind of learners.

Discussion on Result

Education doesn't have to conflict with one's obligations, either personal or professional. An asynchronous course allows students to access it whenever it is most convenient for them, which is ideal for parents, working professionals, and anybody else with other obligations. Another feature of flexibility is geographic inclusivity, which allows students in isolated or rural locations to pursue higher education without having to relocate.

Traditional education is enhanced by hybrid models, which combine online and in-person instruction to open up new possibilities for teaching approaches. Because of the competition that online learning presents, traditional schools are under more pressure to enhance quality and accessibility by obtaining higher education.

Therefore, web-based platforms give students with disabilities access to customized accessibility tools like closed captioning and screen readers, which assist lower the physical barriers to learning and make it more accessible. Additionally, a greater number of diverse students can be reached because to the variety of online multimedia options that better suit various learning styles. Online learning has transformed access to college education and is essential in today's environments due to its educational equity and adaptability.

Unexpected Findings

However, it offers some unwelcome results that cast doubt on the notion that everyone gains from online education.

Another startling discovery is that, even if the cost of tearing down the physical infrastructure has decreased, not all students can afford it because the savings are lower. For people from lower socioeconomic classes or those living in distant areas, the digital divide is a major obstacle because there is limited access to high-speed internet and technology, which prevents them from saving money. Online learning, which would ordinarily be as accessible as possible to everybody, is hampered by the same problem.

Another unexpected aspect that has been found here is that students may have increased emotions of loneliness and alienation as a result of flexibility in online learning. Student involvement may suffer from less connection and an unstructured social environment, particularly for those who rely on these relationships to succeed academically. Reduced retention rates and a greater dependence on the in-learned interaction would result from this

Few are set up to fully utilize assistive technologies, even though the term "easy accessibility" is frequently used to describe online learning for students with impairments. Even the promise of an online learning environment is inaccessible to students with disabilities due to incompatibilities in learning management systems and adaptive aids like screen readers.

In summary, the findings highlight the benefits of online learning while pointing out issues that disproportionately impact vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Scope For Further Research

Blended learning methods, in which online learning complements in-person training, are a significant supplementary domain. Although the paradigm does offer certain advantages in the classroom and online learning, there hasn't been much published about how demographics relate to this model. In order to better understand how a combination of online and conventional learning might improve educational outcomes, additional research on blended learning must be conducted with different student demographics and look at best practices.

Finally, further study is needed to determine the precise ways in which online learning impacts educational equity. Even while online education makes educational services available to the most isolated and inaccessible segments of society, their relative quality is still up for debate. Therefore, one area of study might ask whether e-learning websites have been successful in helping underprivileged students maintain better academic and professional prospects in life when compared to traditional institutions, or if the disparities are exacerbated on those sites.

Conclusion

Through hybrid models that combine the advantages of in-person and online interactions, online learning enhances classical education rather than completely replacing it. It promotes creativity in teaching strategies, which leads to competition and improves quality overall.

By providing them with tools that suit their needs, it has also made access simple for students with impairments. By giving students from all backgrounds and places opportunity, it also aids in the advancement of educational equity. For every student, it creates an even playing field.

It altered the character of higher education, reduced some expenses, and made it more flexible, accessible, and inclusive. It has been shown to be accommodating to a person's preferred method of learning and unique circumstances, which in many respects necessitate more flexibility in both learning and life. This is especially advantageous for expanding access to educational programs and improved learning.

Refrences:

- Anh, D.H.M. (2022). Factors affecting satisfaction on online education on students digital teaching page in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Indonesian Journal of Multidiciplinary Research, 2(1), 179-186.

- Knightley, W. M. (2007). Adult learners online: Students' experiences of learning online. Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 47(2), 264-288.

- Llupar, M.L., Malones, L.J.L., Sombria, A.J.F., and Calixtro, V.L. (2022). Development of folkdance videos for e-learning. Indonesian Journal of Teaching in Science, 2(1), 1-6

- Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., and Baki, M. (2013). The effectiveness of online and blended learning: A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. Teachers College Record, 115(3), 1-47.

- Morze, N., Varchenko-Trotsenko, L., Terletska, T., and Smyrnova-Trybulska, E. (2021). Implementation of adaptive learning at higher education institutions by means of Moodle LMS. Journal of Physics: Conference Series, 1840(1), 012062.

- Phanse, S. (2021). The online education impact on students during covid- 19 pandemic. Indonesian Journal of Teaching in Science, 1(2), 137-140.

- Adams, J. (2007). Then and now: Lessons from history concerning the merits and problems of distance education. Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education, 7(1), 1–14. doi:10.3138/sim.7.1.002

- Agassiz, E. C. (1971). Society to encourage studies at home. In O. Mackenzie & E. L. Christensen (Eds.), The changing world of correspondence study (pp. 27–30). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

- Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2013). Changing course: Ten years of tracking online education in the United States. Oakland, CA: Babson Survey Research Group and Quahog Research Group.

- Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2014). Grade change: Tracking online learning in the United States. Babson Park, MA: Sloan-C™.

- Asunka, S. (2008). Online learning in higher education in sub-Saharan Africa: Ghanaian university students' experiences and perceptions. International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 9(3), 1-23.

- Athabasca University (2015). Mission & Mandate. Retrieved from http://www.athabascau.ca/aboutau/mission/

- Bates, A. W. (2005). Technology, e-learning and distance education (2nd ed.). London, UK: Routledge.

- Bates, T. (2008). Transforming distance education through new technologies. In T. Evans, M. Haughey, & D. Murphy (Eds.), International handbook of distance education (pp. 217–236). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

- Baggaley, J. (2008). Where did distance education go wrong? Distance Education, 29, 39–51. doi:10.1080/01587910802004837

- Baggaley, J. (2013). MOOC rampant. Distance Education, 34, 368–378. doi:10.1080/01587919.2013.835768

- Bayne, S. (2015). What's the Matter with "Technology-Enhanced Learning"?. Learning, Media and Technology, 40(1), 5-20. Bayne, S., Knox, S., & Ross, J. (2015). Open education: The need for a critical approach. Learning, Media and Technology, 40(3), 247-250.

- Battalio, J. (2007). Interaction online: A reevaluation. The Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 8, 339–352.

- Beldarrain, Y. (2006). Distance education trends: Integrating new technologies to foster student interaction and collaboration. Distance Education, 27, 139–153. doi:10.1080/01587910600789498

- Bergmann, H. F. (2001). The silent university: The society to encourage studies at home, 1873-1897. New England Quarterly, 74, 447–477.