

# Digital learning platform adoption by Bangalore Private Universities and Colleges during lock down

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**Abstract** - The Covid -19 pandemic has affected the lives of everyone, health experts are expressing that it is not possible to completely eradicate Covid -19 as of now. So we have to learn to live with it until vaccine comes, by taking necessary precautions at individual and community level and unruffled we can take the nation forward. Throughout Covid -19 periods, amid other sectors educational institutions are the most affected. Since the health and safety of our students is of paramount importance, we in Bangalore, along with the other parts of the country, have shut down universities, colleges and schools ever since the pandemic broke. Nevertheless, both teachers and students of these educational institutions have quickly adapted to digital platforms and have shown an extraordinarily flexibility and kept the teaching – learning process going on. The education ministry along with the higher education department has taken various measures to make the digital content available to the students through various online portals, Doordarshan TV channels, and Aakashvani radio stations. It is in this context the authors want to bring to light how use of technology has saved the academic year of the students and could complete the academic year on time and also have started the online sessions for higher classes across the various educational institutions in and thus are providing the psychological support and confidence needed to the future nation builders, which has become possible with the support, commitment, dedication and effort of the teachers. The article also examines the blended mode of learning to be adopted and the ways to do it, and throw some light on how the higher educational institutions are trying to conduct the coming academic sessions in shifts for the safety of all the stakeholders. Further it also throws some light on how teachers, are coping with the stress factor working from home and how students are adopting to the online learning with frequent distractions at home.

**Key Words:** Digital platform, education, students, teachers, learning.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Did we ever presume that a day arrives wherein School Teachers, Lecturers and Professors would take up classes online? Forget about being it in reality but it was far from imagination. Though there is a concept of Online courses which is facilitated through Swayam, Coursera, NPTEL etc which is a part of curriculum but not the entire syllabus of any course for that matter to be completed through digital mode. Should we give the Credit to Covid 19 for this concept of bringing in the culture of Work from home to the facilitators, which was once limited to only IT industries?

The Novel coronavirus outbreak came into light on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2019 when China informed the World Health Organization of a cluster of cases of pneumonia and sudden deaths of an unknown cause in Wuhan City Province. Subsequently the disease spread like a wildfire to more Provinces in China, and unfortunately to the rest of the world in no time. The WHO has declared it as a Pandemic which has become a severe threat to the entire global economy and has put several sectors across the globe

upside down, paving as a most complicated challenge to a wide majority.

As the black mark of the pandemic kept on accelerating most of the countries across the world decided to go for lockdown and for India it was a huge challenge because of its 1.3 Billion population. In order to avoid community transmission, the initial lockdown was first announced on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

The most significant area being the Educational sector which also involves lot of allied activities along with the learning process, was not an exemption to this Virus. In fact, nobody wishes to lose a precious academic year as a vast population of young generation comes under the umbrella of getting progressed to next levels. It was then where the Government decided to promote the primary school students to next academic year followed by higher classes, Degree students excluding final year without examinations.

As the spread of cases increased day by day, the lockdowns too got extended. Therefore a bold step was taken i.e Virtual Classes which became the new reality. No doubt it

was a great boon to the students as well as the teaching fraternity, as they were in the verge of losing jobs because of no workload and classes. All most all the educational institutions engaged themselves in developing their own study modules incorporating their subjects, arts, physical education, parents teacher meetings and mentoring too.

Gradually, the teachers, students and parents too got themselves adapted to radical transition from typical classroom teaching to Virtual Classes. Indeed these online classes mimicked the real classrooms where in teachers provided the amplified learning experience to the wards by having interactions, shared videos related to the subjects, provided them worksheets for practical problems followed by assignments and even the assessments were made online. Though it is a great opportunity but had its own challenges like connectivity issues, cost of recharging the internet pack, some users were not able to follow the instructions given, poor broadband and also training the teachers online on updating their skills for the usage of different apps etc.

No matter what, it's the gratification to look at the teaching faculties as how they have inculcated to the new thought process of teaching digitally by exploring the new methods of teaching online and as they are ensuring that the learning continues and a precious academic year of the students is not tossed.

### **Tough times of Pandemic: Classes go Online**

The sudden outbreak of Corona virus made people familiar with the new terminologies like pandemic, lockdowns, seal downs, quarantine etc. In response to the nationwide lockdown announced by the central government entire economy became stand still and most affected area was Educational institutions and they are not accessible to the students even to today for the classes. The offline mode of education swiftly turned out to be online education and with lots of trial and errors methods adopted by various schools colleges and private universities have developed their own methodologies and platforms in order to reach out to the students and to ensure for their continuous process of learning.

The digital mode of teaching became the real blessing to all the stakeholders as on one side students' academic year was saved and progressed and on the other side even teachers jobs were not lost which resulted as a Win-Win situation to both. A big thanks to Digital learning and various methods of teaching online as the ultimate result expected was to reach out to the students the current curriculum. Therefore, an urgent need emerged to offer online classes, may be even for the next semester if the number of Covid-19 cases continue to raise in the same manner. On a generic note Swayam which stands for Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds, an online learning platform initiated and run by Ministry of Human Resource Development, around 50,000 new

subscribers registered since the announcement of lockdown period in India, effective from March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020.

### **Unrehearsed online shifts**

Lockdown stress was the new worry among the students, which lead to depression, anxiety and some extreme cases propped even to suicidal thoughts. Students were worried about their future and of course a big question of what next especially those in the final year of their studies. The stressors for students are different for distinct students-Kindergarteners and Montessori miss freedom and they also feel claustrophobic which is stressful as well because parents cannot take the students out because of the risk. Whereas higher grade students miss their classroom ambience, pals and certain mischiefs.

On the other hand, the Covid 19 crisis has bought huge mental health issues for Women in specific, especially the Teachers. Multiple reasons team up in the background like lack of domestic help at home during lockdown times, demanding family, acquainting themselves to the new shift of taking classes from home, job security, distractions at home and so on, in short work life balance, which leads to lot of stress anxiety and frustration.

### **Various digital platforms adopted:**

Virtual learning was not on cards for sure but now it's a great boon to all the stakeholders. A well designed online courses which are based on instructional design principles along with features of medium like replay of audio and video clips, uploading of pre-recorded videos have made digital learning a valuable addition to regular university education in Bangalore. Online courses is less expensive as it saves infrastructural costs and these platforms can have many times more students than that of any college or university. So in one way it proved that pandemic situations can be handled through various digital modes, which increased the awareness about online education and provided a great opportunity and assurance that studies will not be discontinued because of the lockdown. Government of India launched "Bharat Padhe Online" campaign and the suggestions are so welcoming.

Most of the Bangalore private universities and colleges have adopted several methods of providing online education, through digital platforms like, Zoom meeting, Microsoft teams, Google meet, Google classroom, G suit, Ipomo Bimba App, Skype, Editch, Whatsapp etc. And in the view of the lockdown Coursera platform is providing free access to Bangalore private universities and colleges to establish and deliver high quality job-relevant courses through its "Coursera for Campus".

### **Paradigm shift in the teaching mode by the Teachers and Professors**

Just like 'work from home', 'learn from home' was not really familiar and none of us dreamt wherein the learning process happens from home, rather being it as a surprise it was a big shock for both students as well as teaching

faculties. The key aspect was to deliver the quality education to the students without any compromise. It was a major transition because teachers, professors and students were made to sit in front of the laptops, tabs or the smart phones for running the classes. The typical classroom environment was missing and also the interaction was supposed to happen through Virtual platforms.

It was a matter of ensuring classes are not suspended without any obstacles and most importantly job security for which the faculties were mandated to adopt to the technology and make the e-learning possible. Besides most of them were not well equipped with the technology and its tools utilization, seeking the help of either their spouse or children commenced the classes and eventually as the colleges came out with their own idea of delivering the lectures, the training was provided online. With the available resources at home managing the household, family and other distractions they run the show successfully.

Though initially it was stressful as the faculties were not ready for this new transition also some technical glitches and resistance to the new method of teaching persisted but gradually faculties fixed themselves into the online mode of teaching. Indeed it was an ideal time to experiment and deploy the new digital tools to ensure thoughtful learning to students without going to campus. In fact it was a chance to be more efficient and productive along with improving their own skills and uplifting the knowledge through online teaching and assessments.

In the coming days we need to learn to live with the virus by adopting ICT teaching techniques, familiarise with the latest digital technology, build the required IT infrastructure as these will be the most important parameters to enable e-teaching. No doubt, these digital learning tools and quick adoption of new methods of teaching digitally by the faculties has given a positive ray of hope to the students and also to the entire education system. A new digital/virtual era of teaching, learning, accrediting and getting certified could be witnessed in the coming days reaching out to the greater horizons.

#### Statement of the Problem:

Online learning platforms are not properly laid down as e-teaching on a regular basis is still in a novice stage and needs further understanding of the system.

#### Objectives of the study:

1. To understand the e-learning process adopted by various educational institutions in Bangalore.
2. To understand how teachers and professors have quickly shifted to digital mode.

#### Hypothesis:

**H1:** Adoption to digital learning is significantly helpful to the stakeholders.

**H0:** Digital learning is not so helpful to the stakeholders.

#### Scope of the study:

The scope of the study is confined to examine the online teaching- learning practices prevailing in schools, colleges and private universities in Bangalore.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Data Collection Method

- The data is collected through random sampling method.
- The sample size is 500.
- An online questionnaire is circulated for collecting required data for analysis.
- Here the sampling units are educational institutions in Bangalore. The tool used for data analysis is open ended and simple random techniques.

#### Limitations of the study:

1. The respondents are only from few educational institutions of Bangalore.
2. Primary data could not be collected personally due to lockdown.
3. Sample size is very small.

## III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Here the data analysis is based on the qualitative and quantitative data derived from the online questionnaire which is circulated to the respondents of educational institutions. There are 500 respondents for the research who are mainly teaching fraternity and students of schools, colleges and private universities of Bangalore. For the best results, the questionnaire is sent to stakeholders of different educational institutions. This data can help in gathering ongoing digital trends in private educational institutions.

**Figure 1.1 Online portals using for teaching-learning process**

Online portals	No.respondents	Percentage
Zoom Meeting	62	62%
Microsoft teams	18	18%
Google Meet	4	4%
Others	16	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Interpretation:** In the survey we got to know which the most used online platforms are for Teaching –learning process. In which Zoom Meetings had topped the preference of the educational institutions by 62% respondents, it was the most preferred platform in the initial days of lockdown for most of the private universities and colleges. It's a cloud based peer to peer technology which is used for video conferencing, teleconferencing which facilitates distance education. Classes were conducted for up to 45 minutes which has an option wherein the host can mute & unmute the participants and at the discretion of the host, that is the teacher can deliver the session with the help

of power point presentation or playing of a video. As there was extension of lockdowns most of the colleges did not continue using zoom because of its security issues, and shifted other modes of e-learning. Even Government has advised to ban the app or restrict the usage due to poor encryption practices.

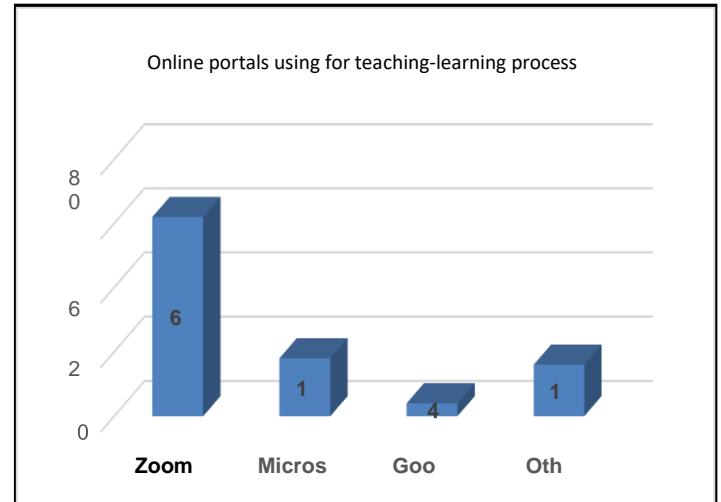
The next most used platform was Microsoft teams with 18% respondents. Another popular e-learning platform adopted by most of the colleges and private universities in Bangalore to continue the education process was by adopting Microsoft teams. Teams allow communication through a specific URL or invitation which can be sent by the teachers to set up specific teams for classes, it is beneficial even for professional learning communities. It helps teachers to distribute the assignments, provide feedback to the students on further correction and also grade student assignments via teams using the assignments tab which is available on Office 365 for education subscribers. Special feature of Teams is Quizzes can be assigned to students through integration with Office Forms from Microsoft for free of cost.

As per the survey, the least preferred digital platform is Google meet being preferred only by 4% of respondents, which is the other popular digital mode adopted by the universities and colleges for conducting classes. Anybody with Google account can create a video meeting by inviting up to 100 participants and meet up for 60 minute which was of great help to the teachers and professors as it facilitates to join classes from the web or through the Android or iOS app installed in phone which has the special features like screen-sharing to present documents, power point presentations and also spreadsheet. The access is free and will have a single host.

The other online teaching modes like Google classroom, Ipomo Bimba App, Skype, G-suite and Editch platform constituted usage by 16% of the respondents, and was

mainly used by universities and colleges to conduct online examinations apart from using as a teaching platform.

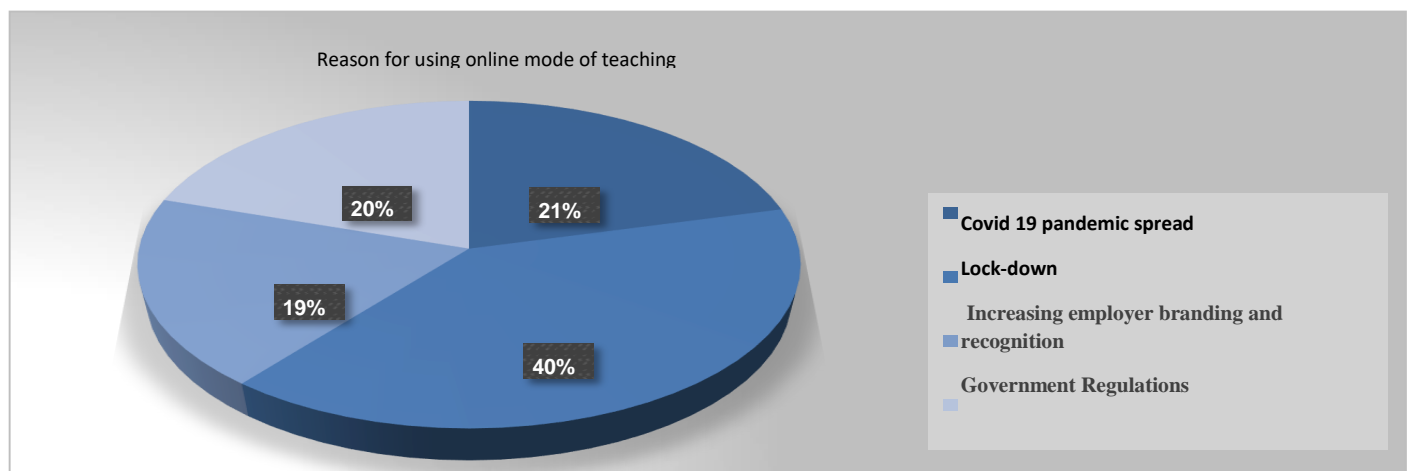
**Figure 1.2 Online portals using for teaching-learning process**



**Inferences:** The above graphical representation shows that about 62% of the respondents prefer Zoom app for teaching-learning process. For about 18% using Microsoft teams, 16% of the respondents opted other online portals. While only 4% of the respondents never used online portals for teaching learning process.

**Table 2.1 Reason for using online mode of teaching**

Reasons	No.respondents	Percentage
Covid 19 pandemic spread	21	21%
Lock-down	40	40%
Increasing employer branding and recognition	19	19%
Government Regulations	20	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Figure2.2 Reason for using online mode of teaching**

**Interpretation:** While Online portals are being used for teaching- learning, the survey helps to identify the reason for using online portals for teaching. Out of 100 respondents 40% respondents switched on to online mode due to Lock down announced everywhere and they did not want to hamper the academic year of the students. About 21% of the respondents had the fear of

Covid -19 spread and 20 % of the respondents strictly wanted to follow government regulations and 19% of the respondents said employer branding and recognition will happen.

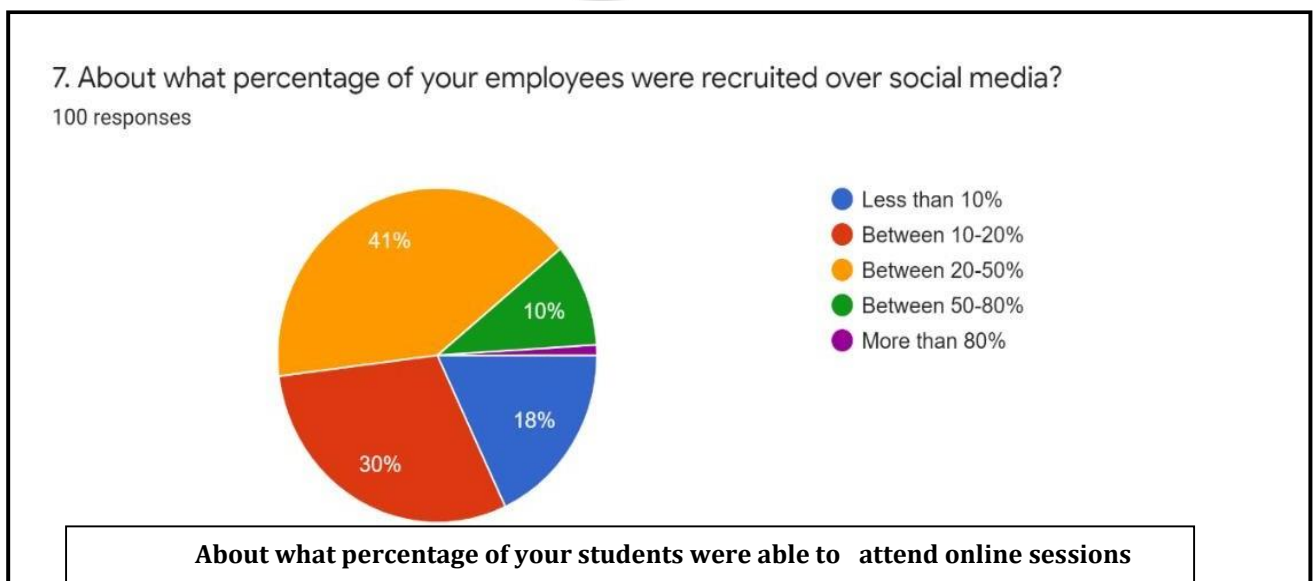
**Inference:** This graphically representation indicates the reasons for educational institutions using online platforms for teaching – learning process. About 40% of respondents use zoom app for teaching as Lock down was announced everywhere. About 21% had the fear of Covid -19 spread and 20% respondents strictly wanted to follow government regulations and 19% of them said employer branding and recognition will happen.

**Table3.1 About what percentage of your students were able to attend online sessions**

Employees recruited	No.respondents	Percentage
Less than 10%	18	18%
Between 10-20%	30	30%
Between 20-50%	41	41%
Between 50-80%	10	10%
More than 80%	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Interpretation:** The Percentage of students who are able to attend online sessions are found in this analysis. 41 respondents out of 100 are attending between 20-50% of students through this method. While 30 respondents feel its only between 10-20% , whereas 18 respondents think it’s less than 10% followed by 10 respondents stating it to be 50- 80 % , while only 1 respondent feels it to be more than 80%. Only 20- 50% of the students had complete access to internet facility and also they had the required electronic gadgets to attend the sessions online and most of them lived in urban Bangalore. However the students from Bangalore Rural areas had a huge network issues.

**Figure 3.2 About what percentage of your students were able to attend online sessions**



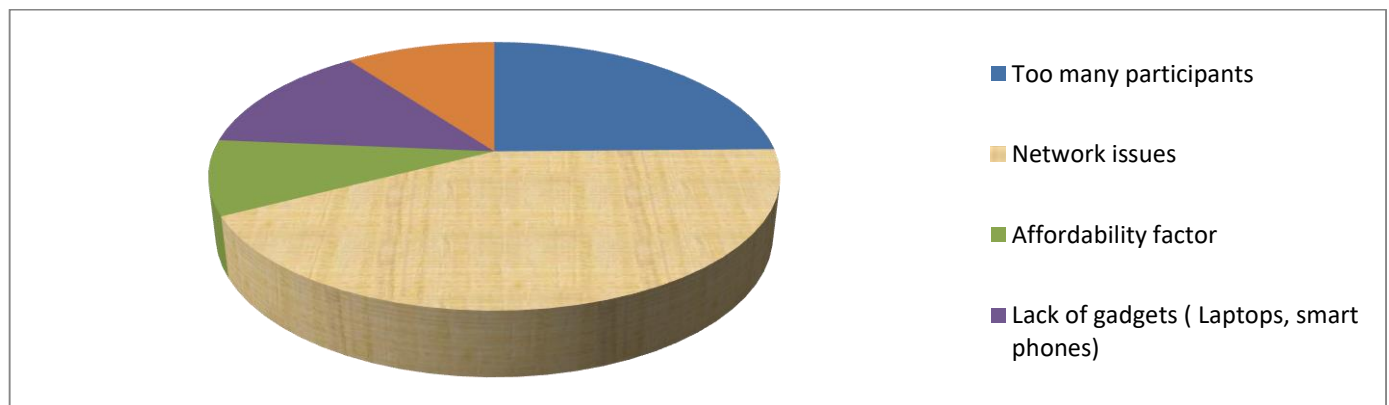
**Inference:** The above graph indicates that 41% respondents that is between 20-50% of their students attend through online sessions. The second highest being between 10-20% students by 30% of the respondents. While the least being 1 respondent selected more than 80% of the students attend through online sessions.

**Table4.1 What is a drawback in online education?**

Drawback	No.respondents	Percentage
Too many participants	22	22%
Network issues	38	38%
Affordability factor	8	8%
Lack of gadgets ( Laptops, smart phones)	12	12%
No issues	0	0%
Technical glitches	9	9%
Lacking personal communication	8	8%
Other Distractions at home	3	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Interpretation:** Online learning has many advantages and also has many drawbacks. About 38% respondents out of 100 feel network issues are the major drawback of online sessions as it is not reachable to people living in rural Bangalore, they had to walk a lot of kilometers to get the network so that they can attend the classes and it was difficult for them to travel every day to attend classes. And 22% respondents feel too many participants is a drawback .The apps can allow up to 250 participants at one time, so colleges were clubbing two or three sections at one go to conduct the session in the process there is no one- on-one interaction with the students and all doubts cannot be solved in a single classroom, added to this concerns were raised by students regarding online bullying which prevented them from attend and being participative in the session. About 12 % of them do not have proper gadgets to attend sessions, many students do not have a laptop or they have only one or two smart phones for the entire family, so usage of the gadget was a problem. 9% of the respondents face technical glitches, even if the student had the gadget due to the network issue there were glitches and some students do not understand the technicalities involved in usage if the gadget. 8% of them feel there is no one on one communication as most of the time the students will switch off their camera and 3% of them expressed that other distractions at home is a problem to concentrate.

**Table4.2 What is a drawback in online education?**



**Inference:** The above graph indicates too many participants is a major drawback while using online platform About 38% feel network issues are the major drawback of online sessions and 22% feel too many participants is a drawback. About 12% of them do not

have proper gadgets to attend sessions, 9% of the respondents face technical glitches, 8% of them feel there is no one on one communication and 3% of them expressed that other distractions at home is a problem to concentrate.

### Challenges of the study:

- It's quite difficult to expect the same amount of concentration and participation by the students unlike classrooms, could be because of distractions at home.
- Teachers need to have a structured plan for all the subjects which should not over burden the students.
- Teachers too might be prone to the technical constraints.
- It's pretty unfair to assume that all the students might have their own computers, laptop or tabs, since the entire family is at home and parents would need it as well for those who are working from home.
- Though the smart phones are the next good option, most of the teachers are agitated about students usage because of diverting apps.
- Unlike classrooms difficult to expect 100% attendance due to various reasons like connectivity issues or affordability.
- Other kind of challenges include where in degree students distracted the ongoing classes by playing music, ran an audio clips of sports during the lectures.

### Recommendations of the study:

- Universities and colleges need to consider blended mode of learning.
- Teachers need to divide the syllabus into portions and depending on the difficulty level, decide on the mode of teaching.
- In case of on campus teaching along with safety and sanitary precautions, classes have to be run on shift system.
- A classroom cannot consist of more than 30 students and on campus doctor availability is must.
- Flip class room is a good method to conduct the classes during this pandemic period, though it is bit taxing for the faculty members.

## IV. CONCLUSION

School Teachers, Lecturers and Professors quickly adopted themselves to online digital platform mode across the universities and colleges in Bangalore. They faced many challenges too in the process, as most of the teaching community is not tech savvy and they were not given proper training to teach on an online platform and usage of the tools was a hard task for them to understand. Though initially it was stressful as the faculties were not ready for this new transition but they have swiftly accepted the new normal situation and very well took care of their students and their academic career. Online sessions were taken,

internal assessments were conducted and mid-term and end-term exams too were successfully conducted and results also were declared and thus saved the precious academic year of the student community. Various digital platforms like Zoom meeting, Microsoft teams, Google meet, Google classroom, G suit, Ipomo Bimba App, Skype, Editch, Whatsapp, which ever platform was given by their institutions, both the faculty and students accepted to be part of it for enabling teaching –learning process. Work from home and learn from home became the new normal. However, there was no compromise with regard to quality of education and universities, colleges and faculty were able to provide their best to the students as per the standard operating procedures. Digital learning though is very helpful during these pandemic situations, and made us technologically advanced, still educational institutions and in specific teachers are looking forward to have students on campuses as they believe campus experience is important in the learning and development of the students.

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