

Alternative Teaching Method Policies during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Effectiveness

Jibnaryan Adhikari

ABSTRACT

Alternative teaching methods is a planned and organized activity which operates for alternative teaching and learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, the education system was highly affected and students were unable to acquire education in schools. To cope with this situation, the Nepal government released the Student Learning Facilitation Guide, 2077 to support on education system and help student getting education from home. Hence, the paper aims to examine the challenges and effectiveness of alternative teaching methods in Nepal. For this purpose, the research has been carried out with explanatory and descriptive research design. The necessary information for this study was accumulated mainly from secondary sources.

Key words: Education, Teaching Method, COVID 19, Pandemic

Introduction

At the end of December 2019, Wuhan city, in the province of Huaihe, China, an unknown disease with peculiar symptoms and signs was observed. Gradually, the disease spread to other parts of China but its exact cause could not be diagnosed. After the disease spread to different parts of the country, China notified the World Health Organization about the disease. Within a short period, the disease spread to other countries of the world. On February 11, 2020, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) declared that it is caused by the SARS-COV-2 virus (UNICEF, 2020). Now I refer to it as Coronavirus. Coronavirus is a new species that has been identified in humans for the first time. The World Health Organization named the COVID-19 pandemic for the spread of disease and declared the situation as a worldwide pandemic on March 11, 2020. In Nepal coronavirus was seen for the first time in a 32-year student studying in China who returned from Wuhan to Nepal on Magh 9, 2076. After that, no new infections were seen in Nepal for three months. However, the infection spread rapidly to neighboring countries India, China and many other countries of the world. After one more infected person was seen in Nepal on March 23, 2020 (Chaitra 11, 2076), National and international flights were cancelled for a short time by the government of Nepal to stop spreading the pandemic. The border crossings were also completely closed. Likewise, all the

educational institutions in the country and public areas were shut down (Aryal, 2077).

Overall human life like health, education, industry, trade, tourism, and transportation are found to be badly affected by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. A global pandemic has presented an unprecedented challenge even in basic needs. The COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to causing economic and social disruption, millions of people were at extreme risk of falling into poverty. Workers in the informal economy were in a vulnerable position because the majority did not have access to social security, quality healthcare and lost access to productive assets. Due to disruptions in means of earning during lockdown, many are unable to meet even basic needs for themselves and their families. Border closures, trade restrictions and restrictive measures prevent farmers from accessing markets. There is a problem and millions of livelihoods are at risk in addition to the loss of jobs due to the epidemic (World Health Organization, 2020). In the course of the impact of Covid-19 like various areas of social life, the education sector was also highly affected. Due to this pandemic, students from all regions, classes, genders and communities of Nepal were getting rid of attending schools and studying. So, the Nepal Government managed alternative education during the Corona period and conducted teaching and learning using online, telecommunication, TV, radio and open education. However, this alternative education approach couldn't include backward and marginalized communities because of their inaccessibility to internet facilities, modern gadgets and them being unaware of the digital world. Geographical difficulties were another cause behind their exclusion from the alternative education approach. Alternative teaching methods were more effective in places with access to Internet facilities. As a result, the educational gap in the society increased. Moreover, the 'digital inequality' in digital classes caused problems in the effective running of education. Therefore, when the government makes educational policies and programs, this varies. Even though there are some issues for alternative education, the governments are highly dedicated to providing quality education throughout the country (Moktan, 2079).

Problem Statement

Education is an important indicator of social development. Every nation is responsible for educating its people. Education is also the job of producing qualified, skilled and capable citizens. Due to the imposed lockdown, thousands of students were staying home. City and Private schools in the market were conducting online classes. All the governments have advanced the concept of distance and open learning for students but there is a concern that inequality in education will increase among students. It is found that students studying in rural areas are weak. It is also not possible to use such alternative educational methods for all ecological regions equally. In this study, the following research questions were raised on alternative education methods and its challenges. Hence, this paper

tries to explore challenges and effectiveness of alternative education methods in the context of Nepal.

Methods and Materials

Research methodology is very important to achieve the main objectives of the study. In this paper, the literature through various sources such as library archives, online access and textual forms was also reviewed. The research has been carried out with explanatory and descriptive research design. The necessary information for this study was accumulated mainly from secondary sources. Therefore, this study method is secondary.

Result and discussion

Many teachers teach students about their individual needs and seek to provide a personalized and flexible learning experience that meets their interests because of which alternative teaching and learning practices have become increasingly popular in recent years. Practices like project-based learning, student-centered learning, flipped classrooms, and online classes cover a wide range of approaches including blended learning. These exercises offer many benefits and also present many challenges (Education and Human Resources Vikas Kendra, 2077). One of the major challenges of alternative teaching and learning practice is the problem with access to technology and resources which students need to support their learning. Many alternative approaches use technology and online resources, which may be difficult for students who do not have access to reliable internet or technology. Proper preparation and work must be done to ensure access to resources, tools and the internet are available for alternative methods of delivery. The biggest challenge of it all is to ensure that students are engaged and motivated in their learning.

Providing assessment and evaluation to students is also challenging in alternative teaching and learning practices. Teachers are also responsible for developing new and innovative methods of assessment for students. Alternative teaching and learning practices must align to provide benefits to students by increasing their engagement, personalization and flexibility. However, these practices also provide many challenges. By addressing these challenges, schools and teachers become more inclusive and effective in meeting the needs and interests of all students and can create a better learning environment. Teaching skills means that the teacher knows which lesson in which level of class is suitable. For what purpose, what teaching method and what educational materials are required for the courses. Teachers are also responsible for time allocation for the completion of the theoretical and practical courses that can help achieve the set goals. Teachers are equally responsible for providing reference-reading materials such as books, articles, and audio-video materials that can help achieve the set goals. Knowledgeable in modern pedagogy, emotional, functional and practical aspects are also important aspects of the teaching and learning process.

Newspapers, slides, charts, maps, globes etc are also important in the learning process according to the discipline and subjects. Teaching and learning using flashcards and vocabulary-related materials can make the class even more impressive since the teaching process is a technical job. (Acharya, 2021).

A virtual classroom is an online learning environment in which teachers and students participate in learning activities and create direct interaction between them. The virtual classroom is that 'online space' where both learner and teacher work together. Most of these interactions are audio-visual. They are held through discussion (video conference). There should be different formats of learning material for presentation. In this kind of interaction, the teacher's role remains as a facilitator, who leads the learning process for support activities and discussions (Sigdel, 2077). Open and distance learning is a method in which anyone can get the opportunity to improve abilities by acquiring education anytime and anywhere.

Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology operate the learning system that was disrupted due to the Covid 19. Children of school-going age were unable to get the regular education in school. Alternative methods including distance and open learning were used to create an environment-friendly learning environment. An alternative method is to facilitate learning effectively and systematically through the system. To facilitate for education system, Student Learning Facilitation Guide, 2077 was released for continuing education. The education and human resource development center started education for classes 1-10 and broadcast on radio and television. (Educational Information, 2077). As per the Student Learning Facilitation Guide, 2077, this study proceed to discuss about 5 different measures of alternative teaching.

For groups of students who do not have access to any kinds of technology:

The technology is the major source of alternative teaching and learning. The Student Learning Facilitation Guide, 2077 classified a group of students who do not have access to any kinds of technology and assign the methods of teaching and learning. Regarding this, the Province, local level body or school should develop and print exercise booklets or other educational materials and make them easily available to the students. Further, they should ensure that all students study in the current academic session and provide textbooks with records. Likewise, prepare an electronic copy of the self-study or material from the center and post it on the website, print such material in coordination with the Province and local level, and make it available to the school and print and distribute exercise manuals at the local level. In the absence of teachers and educators in the local community, volunteers assigned by the local level or school should provide direct learning support to students. Lack of technology, maintaining physical distance, arranging accommodation in the learning center or school are highly challenging for the students without access to technology. The government's effort is highly

appreciating but lockdown in the country made it difficult to proceed effectively. Even though the student learning was continuous.

For groups of students who have access to radio, FM radio:

The guideline classified another groups of students who have access to radio and FM radio. For this type of category, central level prepared the content to broadcast from the central radio and made such material available free of cost to the local FM radios. The guideline suggested Province and local level to broadcast the educational materials on local radio FM for free or minimal transmission. The local level responsibilities were to mobilize the teachers available in its area to develop and broadcast community radio lessons, make necessary arrangements to make the broadcasts interactive, and give the responsibility of supervising the students to the teachers residing in the community, make sure that all students have a classroom in the current academic session and keep a record of it and provide textbooks, arrange for monitoring by teachers and parents living in the local community, as well as physical discussions at groups of four to five people, by listening to the radio and allowing students to practice on their own. Further, the local level should make public the schedule of class and thematic lessons to be broadcast on radio and FM radio from central, Province and local level.

The students who have access to radio and FM radio can learn through the educational broadcast. Because of the geographical diversity of the country, there was the connectivity problem which created disturbance for the students. Most of the students were in access of radio and FM. So students could learn through listening.

For groups of students with access to television:

The group of students with access of television for learning is more effective in which the students can learn visually. The students show interest because they can also study from their own residence. For this type of category the educational materials are developed and coordinated by the Center and broadcast Central Television. The materials produced through and broadcast from the center will be made available to all television channels free of charge. The guideline ensure the mobilization of expert teachers at the Province level and at the local level to develop learning materials and make arrangements for broadcasting on television. The responsibility of central, province and local levels was to organize and make public the schedule of class and thematic lessons to be broadcast on television. The group of students without access of television is getting rid of education visually. Those students have to manage other option of learning. The preparation of visual educational material is so challenging during the pandemic period. But the government had provided the facilities to learn from television which were appreciated.

For groups of students with the computer but no online connectivity:

The groups of students with computer can learn through the recorded educational material. The students can study the academic textbooks through CD or pen drive. This was much effective for learning because students can use the computer on their requirements. The responsibilities of the related bodies were to provide educational materials within the approved list of curriculum development centers available in the market by private vendors to the students at concessional or discount rates, making online content available to students in offline mode (CD or pen drive, hard disk, etc.) through school and local level, provide facilitation from teachers in the community for students to study using learning materials provided in offline mode, to monitor if they have not, have difficulty understanding the text and the concern body should make sure that all students have a classroom in the current academic session and keep a record of it and provide textbooks.

Students did not have computers; were deprived from the education. The parents have great role to make sure that their children have access to computer. Computer education system was effective for those who have access to it.

For the group of students who have access to the means of the internet and information communication technology:

This category of students who have access to the means of the internet and information communication technology was highly effective for education. The students learning and teaching was possible through virtual method. Central, province, and local levels prepare online learning materials and make them available online. Schools teach online using materials produced by the central, Province government, and local levels. The center uploads audio-visual materials broadcast online to the learning portal or YouTube. The arrangements for the development and downloading of mobile applications developed and approved by the Curriculum Development Center for all school level classroom curricula, textbooks, and other textbooks and other audio-visual materials subject to the Cyber Security Guidelines were proceeded. The Schools taught online using materials produced by the central, Province government, and local levels. Different online application was developed for group study such as zoom application. The teachers can prepare the live session and share the study materials to groups at once. The recorded material was uploaded through YouTube channels. The students can use the materials online and offline too. In Nepal, most of the regions were connected with internet and get online facilities. So, this group of students received effective education.

Nepal government had assigned the responsibilities from the central level, province level, and local level as well as responsibilities of school teacher and parents to ensure the education system be highly effective and students acquire proper education in the pandemic period. There was challenge to conduct, and

utilize all the related bodies at once but the government operates the system as much as possible.

Conclusion

Through the present study, it is concluded that, as per the alternative teaching methods during the Covid 19 period, in the regions where the internet facilities, electricity and devices are available with good infrastructure, the teaching and learning process are satisfactory. Likewise, in case of less availability of those resources, the teaching and learning process faces challenges and difficulties. Lack of required computer items in the schools and families, training to teachers and low technically skilled manpower create problems in study purposes during the pandemic period. On the other hand, the internet facilities are also limited. Eventhough, it was possible to participate in alternative education through online where facilities of system are available. The teaching methods through radio and television are also effective in most of the regions. The challenges are to prepare the students mentally and physically during the study period. Literate parents provide good support for their children on learning. The requirements of welfare support are needed differently due to which alternative teaching methods are effective. Some low-income community school students struggle to establish access to resources and means. The eagerness of government of Nepal to operate the alternative teaching methods was effective and satisfactory with the challenges of resources and there was a good support of citizens of Nepal.

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Mr. Jib Narayan Adhhkari is an Assistant Professor Department of Sociology at Butwal Multiple Campus Rupandehi. He is currently a Ph.D. scholar in Sociology Faculty of Humanities. Tribhuvan University. His areas of interest include public Sociology, Environment justice, Development Sociology, policy analysis, Cooperative issues etc.
