

Challenges faced by Teacher Educators of B.Ed. Colleges in Nagaland during the COVID -19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The paper focused on the challenges faced by the Teacher Educators of B.Ed. colleges in Nagaland during the Covid-19 pandemic. It attempts to understand the kind of difficulty faced while using digital platforms, the support that was provided to them and how they handled the challenges, from curating resources to creating E resources for the students. The perception of teachers on Micro teaching, Block teaching and demonstration of the 5 E lesson plan is also an important area of focus. It was found that students had difficulty in demonstrating phases like explore, elaborate and evaluate. Class interaction has also seen a decrease during online class. As all data were systematically stored it was easier to study the academic progression of the students. The current evaluation strategy of students was also an area of concern. Based on the findings from the study, suggestions and research implications are discussed.

Keywords: *Creating E-resources; technological challenges; class interaction; demonstration of lesson plan; problems in evaluation.*

INTRODUCTION

The education system in India was eagerly awaiting the implementation of the NEP 2020. But before any work was done, the whole concept of teaching and learning was hit with an unforeseen task. The very concept of learning inside the classroom was challenged. Although B.Ed. colleges were making use of ICT aided teaching in classroom. Online learning platform was entirely new territory for many, majority of the institutes have to start from scratch. The advantage that B.Ed. colleges had was that the time was ripe to introduce online teaching and interaction as all teaching faculties and trainee teachers were adept with basics like PowerPoint presentation and usage of smart Phone which is a baseline for online learning. Online interaction which began with the humble step of exchanging whatsapp text has now evolved into a strong movement to reckon with. The pandemic despite the problem it poses has also enabled the quick shift from face to face mode of teaching and learning to the online platform which also has seen some positive development. Coman et al in their study highlighted that 39.1% of student respondent were happy with online learning experience 29% of the respondent were dissatisfied with it. 71.4% of the students also are of the view that the courses content of theory and practical task are not properly balanced. As the mode of teaching learning activities shift, it also brought about a range of challenges. Although a pocket of urban areas had good internet connectivity the



same cannot be said for the students who were spread across the length and breadth of the state and beyond where often internet coverage was very poor and in some cases even absent. (Gurung, 2021) in his paper also highlighted that 75.4% of the respondent faced problems because of poor network coverage and weak electricity supply in their area. The situation also brought about the need to quickly ramp up the process of online delivery system by conducting familiarity workshop on management of online classes. Nagaland University took the initiative of conducting faculty development program on learning management system and open educational resources (NU, FDP 8-14 July 2020). Conducting a meaningful online class with the decorum of an offline classroom was a difficult one at first. (Ranjan, n.d.) In his study on Blended mode had noted that interaction was a critical factor for the better performance of blended learning. It was highlighted in the study: (*Problems and Challenges in Online Internship in B. Ed during Covid-19 International Journal of Research*, 2021) that teacher educators also needed to upgrade their skill to be effective in providing the right guidance to students under their care the practical component of the program requires them to be very efficient and diligent while providing feedback to the students. As academic activity shifts to a virtual platform there arises the need for a safe system to share information and data between students and teachers. (Almaiah et al., 2020) strongly recommend the need for the university to keep their system up to date so that the students can safely share their details. (Dubey & Pandey, 2020) opined that there is a paradigm shift in accepting in the thinking of educators and students alike in the need and reality that digital learning is a must to accelerate its growth. In this era of technology where the youngsters are easily surpassing the adult both in acceptance, adaptation, up gradation and implementation of latest developments in the field. Many a time the teacher themselves are slow in making full usage of the product platform at hand. Coman et al in their study reveals that 86.4% of the students felt that their teacher frequently use a limited number of tool provided by the E platforms. (Coman et al., 2020). Despite it dynamic challenges the pandemic also open a host of opportunity to both teacher and learners alike, In their study Zu-Yu Liu et al also noted that there is an overall increase of 0.15 % in the grade point average of the students (Liu et al., 2020). (Almaiah et al., 2020) found that the teachers had to face multiple challenges in all sectors like management issues, technical issues and e learning support. (Mishra et al., 2020) also detailed the usage of different platform by the faculties and the students. It is also interesting to note that the platform usage by teachers may not necessarily be the preferred platform taken by the students to learn.

The present study attempts to identify and analyze the variety of challenges B.Ed. teacher educators of Nagaland faced during the Pandemic. It endeavors to critically study ICT usage, training provides and competencies attained. It is also interested in the difficulties encountered during usage of digital platform to interact and monitor the academic progress of students. The conduct of the practical component of B.Ed. curriculum is also an area of investigation. Teacher's perception and problem faced in the area of evaluation was also studied at length. This research can add to our understanding of how teachers in B.Ed. colleges fared during the pandemic. It can also shed light on the different varieties of difficulties faced by them and suggestions to overcome such challenges.



STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The shift from classroom teaching to complete online teaching was forced upon us by the devastating Covid -19 Pandemic. The effect was felt and faced differently across different academic level. The usage of ICT is a common topic of discussion in B.Ed. Curriculum. But none could foresee the quick and total application of digital learning in academic sector. Therefore in this study the researcher aims to find out the Challenges faced by Teacher Educators of B.Ed. Colleges in Nagaland during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the technological, physical and financial challenges faced during the usage of digital platform in education.
2. To understand the difficulties in application of learning management system by teachers in academics.
3. To analyze teacher's perception on online delivery of workshop, micro teaching, block teaching and 5 E lesson plan.
4. To study difficulties faced by teachers during evaluation of students.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the different challenges faced by teachers in regard to usage of digital platforms?
2. How did teachers fared in the usage of learning management systems in academics?
3. What is the perception of teacher's on student's performance with regards to block teaching, workshops and microteaching?
4. What are the challenges faced during online evaluation?

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consist of all teacher educators in the nine B.Ed. colleges of Nagaland. A Google form questionnaire comprising of 28 items was developed to collect data from the respondents. Sample comprising a total of 68 respondents were selected using convenience sampling technique. The data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Social profile of the respondents:

The population for the study was randomly selected and comprises of Teacher Educators all the Nine B.Ed. colleges of Nagaland. Majority of the respondents were female (85.3%). Most of the respondents have already acquired M.Ed. degree (55.88%). Not many of the respondents have cleared NET (20.58%) and only 2.9 % of the respondents have attained a Ph.D. degree. 57% of the respondent had already served for more than 5 years in B.Ed colleges.

Table 1: Most preferred mode of online interaction with pupils

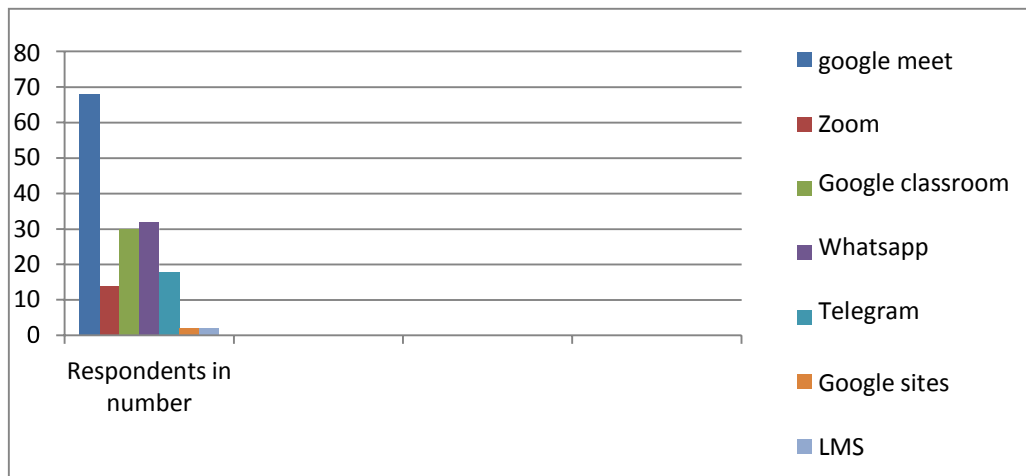


Table 1 shows that the most preferred mode of online interaction with pupil. It reveals that google meet (100%) is the most preferred mode of online interaction followed by Zoom (20.6%), Google classroom (44.1%), Whatsapp (47.1%), telegram (26.5%), Google sites (2.9%) and LMS (2.9%).

Table 2: Challenges faced while using digital platforms

Variables	Institute have provided sufficient training to the faculty to deal with technological demand of online classes.	Shifting from offline to online classes was easy as we were already practicing blended mode of teaching.	Transaction of online classes was difficult due to constant fluctuations of electricity and weak network coverage.
Median	2.0000	2.0000	4.0000
Percentage of respondent	47.1%	58.8%	94.2%
Number of respondent	68	68	68

Table 2, shows that 47.7% of the respondents were of the opinion that the Institute had not provided sufficient training to the faculty. 58.8 % of the respondent also disagreed to the fact that shifting from offline to online mode was easy. 94.2 % of the respondents expressed on the fact that weak network coverage and poor electricity was the biggest challenge they faced in the usage of digital platforms for curriculum transaction.



Table 3: Financial support from institution

Dimensions	Respondents (in percentage)
Free wifi connection	47.1 %
Internet data Packages	14.7 %
Free software packages	8.8%
None	29.4 %

Table 3, shows that 70.6 % of the respondents had received financial support from the institution which shows that the institute understand the plights and challenges of the faculty in conducting online classes and usage of online resources. But the support provided was limited and confined to few areas.

Table 4: Physical challenges due to long screen time usage by the faculty

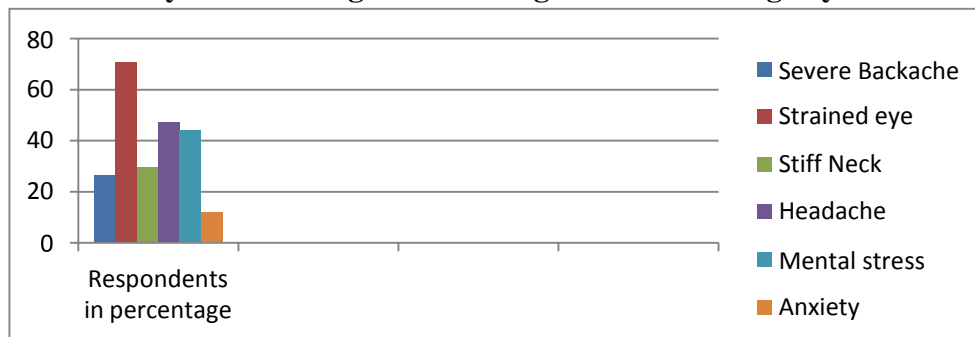


Table 4, shows a variety of physical difficulties encountered by the teachers due to long working hours, 70.6 % of them have suffered from strained eye due to excessive screen time. The myriads of problems also require the authority to further do medical study and provide intervention and assistance so that such challenges can be reduced.

Table 5: Usage of learning management system by Teachers in academics (N=68)

Dimensions	Median	Respondents (Percentage)
Multiple media platform platforms had allowed more efficient interaction	3	76.5 %
Challenging to come up with concrete plan as students were spread across the state and beyond and often in remote areas	4	100%
Absence of definite semester calendar was a hindrance	3	91.1%
Class routine was flexible for teachers	3	55.9%
Curated online resources were provided to the students	3	91.2 %
Students interact more during online classes	2*	85.3 %
E resources created by faculty	3	82.4%
Tracking of Individual learner academic progress	3	55.9%
Satisfactorily catered to all the learning preferences	2*	40 %



of students		
Qualities of assignment and project works have improved	3	52.9 %
Students were overwhelmed with assignment as faculties do not correspond well with class activities	3	76.5%

Table 5, represents the range of opportunities and difficulties encountered by the teaching community. 76.5 % of teachers opined that the usage of multimedia has led to efficiency in interaction between student and teachers. 100 % of the respondent also expressed the difficulty in conducting and managing of classes due to scattered habitation of the learners, as it they have to acknowledge the unique difficulties faced by each learner. Because of the sudden pandemic and the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, University could not provide a concrete time frame for the semester 91.1 % opined that it was a big hurdle for the smooth progress of the course. 55.9 % opined that the online class offers lots of flexibility to teachers to take their classes. The change in teaching approach has also yielded lots of positive results as 91.2 % of teacher educators had curated online resources for their students. However there was also noticeable decrease in student's interaction as 85.3 % opined that interaction had drastically reduced. Along with the conduct of classes there was an increase in creation of E resources among the teaching community 82.4% of respondents have created E resources for the students. Keeping track of individual academic progression was also made more robust because of the systematic collection of data for each learner 55.9%. Online interaction also reduced the scope for teachers to provide multitude learning experiences to the students.

60% of respondent were not able to satisfactorily cater to the learning preferences of the student. 52.9% agrees to the condition that there is improvement in quality of assignment and project works carried out by the students. As the routine allows for flexibility of working hours, 76.5 % of respondent felt that decrease in contact hours among the teachers have also led to traffic in home assignments for the students which often overwhelmed the already stressed learner.

Table 6: Teacher's perception on online delivery of practical components in B.Ed. curriculum

Variable	Median	Respondents (percentage)
Micro-teaching sessions were satisfactorily conducted and follow up were meaningfully given.	3	58.9%
Block teaching was extensively carried out.	3	70.6%
Feedback from faculty was promptly received and acted on by the pupils.	3	79.5%

Table 6 , indicates that there is positive opinion about the practical components of the curriculum. The usage of electronic media has provided opportunity to both teacher and students to critically observe comment and learn within a short time frame. 58.9 % of respondents were satisfied with the conduct of the microteaching sessions. As the pandemic forced the institutes to



reduce the internship days for the students, some batch of students were unable to take even a single offline class as practicing schools were not able to accommodate them due to disruption of the academic calendar. Each institutes have pinned their hope on a robust Block teaching and 70.6% of respondent were satisfied with the extensive Block teaching conducted by their institute. 79.5% opined that feedbacks were promptly received and acted upon by the students.

Table 7: Components of the 5E lesson plan which were practiced efficiently by the students

Dimensions	Engage	Explore	Explain	Elaborate	Evaluate
Respondents (In percentage)	64.7 %	50%	76.5 %	44.1 %	52.9%

Table 7, indicates the range of perceived view of mastery and efficiency demonstrated by the learners with regards to implementation of the 5 E lesson plan. The first stage, Engage is well demonstrated by the teacher trainee assisted by different platforms and E resources wherein 64.7 % of the respondent opined that it was executed well by the students. The Explore stage is an activity laden phase with multitudes of group work and interaction thus only 50% of the teachers felt that students did reasonably well in this area. Online classes tend to be teacher oriented and therefore similar degree of ease in execution was noticed as 76.5% of respondent opined that the students explained well. The Elaborate stage appears to be a challenging phase as only 44.1 % of respondent were satisfied with the students' performance. Only 52.9% of the teachers felt that the students were able to efficiently carry out Evaluation during their demonstration classes.

Table 8: Difficulties faced during evaluation of students

Variables	Median	Respondents (In percentage)
Evaluation and monitoring need to be strengthened for Online Evaluations.	4	97.1 %
Suspicious cases of students resorting to unfair means were noticed.	3	88.2%
Current exam pattern needs to be rectified to bring about fair and robust online examination	4	94.2 %

Table 8 shows the scenario with regards to the evaluation system for online examination. With the sudden change of all activities to online platform, and having little time to prepare, study and modify the evaluation technique to suit the online form of exam. The existing evaluation strategy was employed, and the system had its share of weakness which is evidently pointed out by the respondents. 97.1 % of respondent strongly feels that evaluation and monitoring needs to be strengthened for online exams. 88.2 % of them also opined that suspicious cases of students resorting to unfair means were clearly noticed during the process of evaluation. 94.2 % opined that, evaluation system needs a total revamp starting from which area to evaluate, how to evaluate and how to analyze and grade students needs to be in focus as the system adapt to this new challenges.

Table 9: Techniques used to evaluate the students

Dimensions	Percentage of respondent
Assignments	91.2 %
Paper Presentation	82.4 %
Projects	32.4 %
Class test	58.8 %
Class interaction	88.2 %
Group activity	2.9%

Table 9, provides the different techniques employed by the respondent teachers to evaluate their students. Majority of them favors assignments 91.2 %. Paper presentation by students was also a favored method 82.4 %. Class interaction was also vastly employed by the teachers to evaluate the students 88.2 %. Group activity contribution was hardly used to evaluate the learner 2.9 %.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Most preferred mode of interaction used by B.Ed. teachers was Google meet (100%) followed by Whatsapp (47.1 %).
2. The College had not conducted sufficient trainings for faculties to meet the technological demands of conducting online activities for students.
3. Smooth transaction of online classes was difficult due to poor network coverage and irregular power supply, 94.2%.
4. Financial support provided to teaching faculties was limited to free Wi-Fi connection in institutes and internet data packages.
5. Lengthy screen time usage had resulted in physical problems like strained eye 70.6 % , head ache 47.1% , mental stress 44.1% and severe back ache to the teachers.
6. Teachers were able to curate online resources and also create E resources for the students 91.2%.
7. The teachers were not able to satisfactorily cater to all the learning preferences of the students 60%.
8. Microteaching workshop were satisfactorily conducted,
9. Components of the 5 E like Engage and Explain was executed well whereas, Explore, Evaluate and Elaborate phases were not efficiently demonstrated by the student trainees.
10. Present evaluation system for degree online exams was weak and has many loopholes.

DISCUSSION

There was the need to understand and analyze the different challenges faced by teacher educators during the pandemic with regard to their activities. The sample population for the survey was selected by snowball technique, and 68 respondents from about 100 teacher educators from all the nine B.Ed. Colleges of Nagaland. The survey reveals that 100 % of the teaching population prefers the usage of Google meet for academic transaction Gurung in his study also portray similar trend as his finding shows that 86.6% of the teachers used major learning app like Google meet, Zoom and whatsapp(Gurung, 2021). (Anbuselvan & Kumar, 2020).study shows that 61.68% of professors in Madurai prefers the usage of Google meet. The



survey also pointed to the fact that help provided to the teachers were confined to financial aid for buying data packages only; therefore there is urgent need for the institutes to conduct more workshops for the faculty so that each individual will be able to use all existing platforms and learning management systems. The pandemic had forced both teachers and students alike to scramble for E Resources as physical library stay closed. Which is also a boon as majority of the teachers were able to develop e resources for their usage. (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020) also highlighted the fact that the entire college became a community of learners. (Kidd & Murray, 2020) also found out that many participants also reported sense of innovation during the trying time of the pandemic. Many physical problems like strained eye and back ache a result of excessive screen usage was reported among the teachers, mental stress also became a burden due to multiple factors like uncertainty in workplace, family and inability to access institutional journals. (Gautam & Sharma, 2020) also commented that the teachers who were specialized in conventional teaching found it more difficult to cope with online methods. The survey also found out that the trainees were not able to satisfactorily demonstrate phases like explore, elaborate and evaluate of the 5 E Constructivist approach. Evaluation and assessment of the students need a more robust and comprehensive approach, as the existing method of distance online exam alone does not provide the right picture anymore, due to lack of monitoring capability of the institutes which also resulted in rampant cheating. Evaluation process needs to be strengthened and diversified. Factual reproduction of answers should be minimised and more of application and analysis type questions should be asked. (Rapanta et al., 2021) also suggested a holistic and competency based evaluation process. There should develop among the faculty a desire to create and share E Resources.

CONCLUSION

The challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic had greatly affected all sectors of education. As there was regular usage of ICT tools in classrooms and mobile interaction platform, the shift from offline interaction to complete online and distant interaction was bearable. However the unpredictable nature of the pandemic progression has completely disturbed the academic timelines. B.Ed course is a practical and activity laden course often carried out both in classroom and practicing schools. When all form of activity shifted online it provided a challenge and an opportunity for teaching community to innovate, equip and adapt. There is a felt need to conduct more workshops in this area. Colleges should also invest more in providing online resources for its faculty. Physical and mental wellbeing of teachers and students should be ensured as we move to this new practice. Many have attended trainings to enhance their capabilities. The system will evolve into a more efficient one, but we cannot afford to wait too long. It is of paramount importance that we continue to identify and strengthen the weak areas in the system. Internship activity has to be re-strategized, Lesson plan model need to be studied closely and there is immediate need for strengthening the evaluation system.

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