Teachers' perception on Education and the Support of Digital resources to Facilitate Teaching/ Learning in Pakistani Schools

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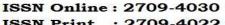
Abstract:
    The present study tries to find out the teachers' perception on education and how digital resources helped to continue teaching/learning process in Pakistani schools during pandemic, what challenges and issues were faced by the teachers during online classes. The qualitative data were collected through informal conversational interviews with three teachers 2 from public schools and 1 from private school. The teachers taught through different online resources. The interviews were coded, thematically analyzed and uncovered important aspects of teachers' point of views. The findings were analyzed using interpretative method. The study unfolded the teachers' online experiences, parents' involvement and understanding of the students after reopening of the schools. The study revealed that the teachers who had little exposure to online courses felt great problems in teaching online as they were not put to any training before conducting online teaching. They also complained of low motivational level of the students. The study findings presented thematic analysis with sub themes followed by recommendations.

Keywords: Perception, digital resources, parents' involvement, challenges, motivational level.

1. Introduction:

Teachers are called the change agent providing help in social, physical, emotional and educational development of students in educational institutions. During covid-19 pandemic, the sphere of life stopped. In order to maintain the continuity of education, educational professionals and policy makers felt the urge of introducing new methods and approaches to facilitate learning during pandemic. The covid-19 pandemic first started in China, stopped every sphere of life around the world creating a situation of uncertainty and horror (Tesini, 2020). It greatly affected the routine of teaching/learning environment. Innovative ways of teaching and learning emerged to mitigate the loss that hampered the daily life of educational activities in every school in every part of the world. The pandemic not only brought disaster into the global economy and health (WHO, 2020) but also changed the social and educational setup. New demands and trends encircled the educational environment and new challenges and issues crept globally in the field of education. Need of enhancing the soft skills resources was incorporated to promote self-education.

In order to bring teachers and students on one platform of digital world in the situation when the slogans of "stay at home, keep distance, no handshaking etc" (Apkinar & Ustun, 2020) were terrifying everyone in Pakistan was meant to introduce new approaches and methods in education system. In Pakistan like many other developing countries, the public educational institutions have little space for online learning. The pandemic compelled the government and policy makers to adopt digital resources to continue the educational process. The sudden switching

from face to face to online learning created many concerns from parents, students, teachers and stakeholders. The research focused on finding out to what extent digital resource proved helpful in promoting teaching/learning process and what barriers, challenges and issues were faced by the teachers.

2. Methods:

Using informal conversational interview method, the researcher tried to find out the teachers' concept of education during pandemic, their experiences during online teaching and what were the challenges and success of online learning and how parents were involved and what was the students' learning when the schools reopened.

3. Aim of the study:

The aim of the study was to find the teachers' concept of education and the support of digital resources to facilitate teaching/learning during Covid-19 pandemic in Pakistani schools. The informal questions were asked and re-asked differently where necessary to probe information. The following were the research questions asked by the researcher:

- How did you take the pandemic situation and shifting of face-to-face education to online teaching?
- What were the challenges and issues faced during online teaching?
- Which source of technology was proved helpful for both teachers and students?
- How teachers connect the students who did not have access to any type of online learning?

4. Methodology:

The study is qualitative in nature and informal conversational method was used to collect data from the participants.

Research Design:

The present study tried to describe the teachers' perception about education during pandemic and the support of digital resources to facilitate learning in Pakistani schools during that period. So, the aim is to provide facts and not generalization.

Participants:

Purposing sampling was used to select participants. The criteria were job as teacher both public and private sector in Islamabad.

No of the Participants from public school	No of the participant from private school
2	1

Figure: 1 The distribution of participants on the basis of schools

Only female teachers were selected. Figure 1 revealed that two teachers from public schools and one from private school were selected. The figure 2 revealed the subjects and level taught by the participants during online teaching.

Participant 1 (Public school)	Participant 2 (private school)	Participant 3 (public school)
Science discipline (High school)	Language Discipline (High school)	Mats Discipline (High school)

Figure: 2 The distribution of participant discipline

The participants were teaching in high schools whether public or private.

Instrument:

Informal conversational interview was used to get the teachers point of views regarding education and different resources of online learning for enhancing teaching/learning process. Open ended questions focusing the aim of the study were asked in a relaxed environment.

5. Thematic Analysis:

In thematic analysis patterns and themes from data are identified, scrutinized and reported. Data is defined in detail systematically. The researcher's involvement brings interpretation of data presenting implicit and explicit ideas within information named as themes (Knopf, 2020).

Theme 1 (Agreed):

Emerged Themes of Responses

Themes	Sub Themes	Responses
Point of views regarding school closure and sudden transition from face to face to online learning		Participant 1: "O' my God! In starting, sudden lock down astonished me. It was like a dream. I thought it would be over very soon but it continued for longer period… Teaching online proved hectic as it was my first exposure to online learning. In face to face the students are forced to complete assigned work and they are active but in online they could not be forced to complete their assignment". Participant 2: "Many teachers did not know even basic things about computer. So, it became a burden for those teachers as how to teach the students online. The students' concepts become clear in face-to-face teaching than online teaching. Their level of motivation also decreased in online learning".
	Teachers' training for teaching online	Participant 3: "Yes being teacher I am also reluctant to teach students online as I am not trained. If teachers were provided initial training, the result might be better". Participant 2: "It was shocking for me to find life had stopped. It was difficult to teach online as teachers were not trained".

Biggest challenges and issues during online teaching		Participant 1: "Students did not ready to attend online classes. In my first online class only 6 students were present out of 40………Both teachers and students are not motivated as it proved time consuming. Moreover, many of students and teachers did not have digital sources to attend online classes. Internet connectivity was a big challenge…….Students in public schools belonged to poor families having no internet packages". Participant 2: "Student made the attendance and then disappeared (laughing). I called their names again and again but no response. They do not take online classes seriously. It was found that they wasted mobile data on playing games. Mostly parents are illiterate and poor. They found it difficult to provide them mobiles/laptops or mobile data packages". Participant 3: "Most parents sent their children to their native towns where there was no internet availability. They thought it a part of recreation. They went to zero level of learning when came back. Poverty played an important role as majority of the students had no access to gadgets to take online classes".
	Parents Involvement regarding their students' online performance	Participant 1: "Most of the parents (both mother and father) worked as servants and maids. They have no time to show concern about their children. Only 10% of the parent remained in contact with me regarding their students' studies… Many teachers did not want parents involvement". Participant 3: "Many parents did not care for their children's online classes. They take it for granted. Some showed concerns and cooperated with me even they bought new smart mobiles in spite of their poverty in order to facilitate their children's learning".
Choosing the appropriate online media type (What's		Participant 1: "I found students felt comfortable and ease in joining through What's App. It was also convenient for me to upload videos and audios of different topics and it really worked for

app, Google meet, Zoom etc.)		students in lower grade. On Zoom and Google meet students faced the problems of log in and they needed rich data which most students did not have". Participant 2: "I think What's App was an easy accessible media for students as many students completed their work in the evening when they found the mobile after their father came back. Seeing this, I did not waste time on other media though I learnt to work on other medias as well". Participant 3: "In the beginning the students were interested in taking class on Zoom. But they faced problems of low internet signal, dis-connectivity, and no rich data packages; they lost interest as they got fatigue and no understanding of topics due to the problems." Participant 1: "I called the parents of the children who did not at all show their attendance
4.Access to engage the students having no access to any form of technology		in online learning. I handed over written H.W in school premises to the parents who had problems of providing gadgets. They submitted assigned work in the school on due date". Participant 2: "Being a teacher of private school, The teachers were asked by the head office to physically provide teaching facilitation to the students in the form of tuition at their homes. In villages it was easy as everyone knows one Another and houses are located at near places. But in city, it was a challenge and not feasible. Luckily in my school, maximum students were involved in online learning and provided feedback". Participant: 3 "I located them from their address and phone numbers. I called their parents, send sms and ask other students to give them verbal messages to attend the on line classes". Participant 1: "I was wonder when one of my students was unable to reproduce the answer of
	Impact of online learning after reopening of schools	a simple question from the unit 1 of science book. Everything was lost from their mind. They lost their concepts and are standing where they were in the beginning of the session".

		Participant 3: "They were on a "zero level" after the school reopened. I started from the beginning as time was no more".

Themes 2 (Conflicts/Disagreed):

Themes	Sub Themes	Responses
	Parents Involvement regarding their students' online performance	Participant 2: "Some parents arranged tutoring programs to compensate weak areas of their children".
Choosing the appropriate online media type (What's app, Google meet, Zoom etc.)	Impact of online learning after reopening of schools	Participant 1: "I sent periodically You Tube videos to make their concept clear. It really worked. Most children provided feedback about these videos. Though it was an unusual way for them but it facilitated their learning". Participant 2: "…..all was not lost. Not 100% but 80% students recalled and their concepts were also clear. It was big achievement as I never thought of it".

Theme 3 ((Unique/Others):

Themes	Sub Themes	Responses
Access to engage the students having no access to any form of technology		Participant 2: "The conveyance was provided to the teacher by the head office to visit the students having no access to online learning in order to facilitate them through home tuition".

6. Findings:

Informal conversational interview unfolded diverse point of views of the participants regarding teachers' concept of education and the support of digital resources to facilitate learning in Pakistani schools during COVID-19 pandemic during the period of March 2020 to May 2021. It is important to remember that during that period, schools were being passed

through the opening and reopening phases as instructed by the Ministry of education. The following were the findings of the study:

Agreed:

Point of views regarding school closure and sudden transition from face to face to online learning:

The finding analysis showed the similar views when they are asked "How did you take the pandemic situation and shifting of face-to-face education to online teaching"? The sudden lock down in the country proved a nightmare to them that prolonged unexpectedly for a longer period of time. When the teachers were exposed to online learning, it was a new phenomenon for most of the teachers in Pakistan as one of the participants 1 said:

"O' my God! In starting, sudden lock down astonished me. It was like a dream. I thought it would be over very soon but it continued for longer period".

The participants were not happy with the closure of schools. It disturbed their jobs and stopped the teaching/learning process at the time of final examination. There was uncertainty everywhere. Moreover, the call for online teaching created restlessness among teachers. The participant 1 said:

"In start, very few students joined the class as it was one month late after the closure of schools. E-learning failed as it was not planned by the authority".

Teachers' Training for Teaching Online (sub theme):

All the participants agreed that that it was not easy to teach online. It was hectic, time consuming and challenging. They agreed that online pandemic vacations have made students blunt and they are no more under the control of teachers and parents. Answering the sub theme regarding teachers' training, the participant agreed that sudden exposure to teach online did not feel good apparently as the participant 2 replied about teachers' training:

"Teachers were confused as I was one of them. Initial one month was quite calm. Nothing was clear. Then we were asked to take classes online. I did not know how I could teach them when they would not be physically present before me. The reason was teachers were not trained ………When I started, I made a video containing some important points, but it was too lengthy to upload on What's App (Laughter). My son helped me to upload it. Afterwards I learnt many things which helped me in my online classes as editing, to convert into PDF file etc. But I had to buy a latest smart phone (smiling)".

The participants agreed that proper planning and teachers' training could bring effective results. They agreed that broadcasting of tele school program on PTV was good initiative taken by the education ministry.

Biggest challenges and issues during online teaching:

Participants agreed that teachers, policy makers and parents were not at the same page. Challenges were from parents, students and technology. Students were not willing to learn online. Poverty, non-availability of gadgets and net, connectivity issues and non-motivational attitudes of both teachers and parents affect online learning. The participants 3 said:

"Many parents did not care for their children's online classes. They take it for granted. Some showed concerns and cooperated with me even they bought new smart mobiles in spite of their poverty in order to facilitate their children's learning. But such parents were rare".

They told net packages were costly for poor students and often parents complained against it. The parents wanted to send children again to schools due to such problems. The participant 3 further said:

"Most parents sent their children to their native towns where there was no internet availability. They thought it a part of recreation. They went to zero level of learning when came back. Poverty played an important role as majority of the students had no access to gadgets to take online classes".

Parents' Involvement (sub theme):

The public sectors teachers agreed that many parents did not take online teaching seriously. They tried to contact them but did not find positive response from parents. Participant 1 said:

"Students ratio for attending classes was a rare phenomenon. Both parents were full time workers and did not pay heed to their children… often told that their children had gone to native town. Most parents did not take pandemic serious Only 10 % of the parents remained in contact with me…….Many teacher did not want parents' involvement in order to hide their deficiencies".

The participants were of the view that students could be serious if parents' involvement was positive. They took it as part of their children's vacations and sent them to villages or native towns.

Choosing the appropriate online media type (What's App, Google meet, Zoom etc):

One public school teacher and other private school teacher were satisfied using what's app as a medium of online teaching arguing that it is easy to use and provide flexible time schedule for those who did not access mobile during day time as one of the participants said:

"I think What's app was an easily accessible media for students as many students completed their work in the evening when they found the mobile after their father came back".

They agreed that it was the medium that was also used by the teachers who had little know how about digital resources. They said that most teachers in their school were satisfied using What's app in order to engage maximum students.

Access to engage the students having no access to any form of technology:

The participants told that at home students did everything except studies. Accessing the students who were no more in contact with the teachers after the closure of schools became a mountainous work for the teachers. Different strategies were adopted as the participant 1 said:

"I called parents but they had a lot of excuses (bachey gaoon hen g. Apni dadi, nani ya chichi se milne gae hen) as they purely dependent on what their children said. For these children, we prepared assignments and asked parents to take them and submitted it in school after the child had done it. They submitted the written work but they did not learn it by heart".

The participants tried to contact the students through phone calling, messages and asking other students who lived near to them to join online classes.

Impact of online learning after reopening of schools (sub theme):

All the participants agreed that promotion without taking final exams made students relaxed. In this year they also will appear only in elective subjects with reduced syllabus wasting so much precious time. P Talking about the impact of online learning after reopening of schools the participant 3 replied:

"They were on a "zero level" after the school reopened. I started from the beginning as time was no more".

The participants found that the students forgot what they learnt before closure of the school. They had to teach them from the beginning but it was challenging. They had lost their tempo and motivation as the participant 1 said:

"I was wonder when one of my students was unable to reproduce the answer of a simple question from the unit 1 of science book. Everything was lost from their mind. They lost their concepts and are standing where they were in the beginning of the session".

They argued that in Pakistan education suffered a lot due to the pandemic.

Conflicts/Disagreed:
Parents' Involvement (sub theme):

Private school teacher (participant 2) shared a different experience. She said:

"If students did not take online classes or disappeared after attendance, the complaints were sent to both head office and parents. The parents showed great concerns regarding their online classes…….Not 100% but maximum students attended online classes…….Some parents arranged tutoring programmes to compensate weak areas of their children".

She told that though some parents had not sufficient resources, yet they bought smart phones or even laptops to facilitate their children. In her opinion it was a dilemma that many students wasted their time in playing games on these gadgets.

Choosing the appropriate online media type (What's App, Google meet, Zoom etc):

Participant 1 from public school also used What's app but she introduced her students of science subjects with You Tube lectures. She said:

"Though it was an unusual way for them but it facilitated their learning. Their science concept became clear as they often discussed it on What's app. In this way they came to know how they can make an attempt to self-learning. They were motivated to other types of media to use".

She said that by using You Tube lecture; students were motivated to self-learning. She gained positive feedback from students and parents. Some students took the advantage of finding some other useful sites for clarification of some concepts.

Impact of online Learning after Reopening of Schools (sub theme):

Participant 2 disagreed with the view that students forgot what they had exercised in classrooms before pandemic. She said:

"Though they did not outer perform but all was not lost. Not 100% but 80% students recalled and their concept were also clear.............It was great and amazing".

The private school teacher was satisfied with her students. She was of the view that though pandemic caused educational loss, private setup maintained to avoid the maximum loss. In this regard they compelled the parents to remain motivated to make their kids to keep motivated.

Others/Unique:
Access to engage the students having no access to any form of technology:

Participant 2 shared a unique strategy that the private school implemented to access the students who did not have any exposure to any form of media. The teachers were asked to provide home tuition to students who were living in remote areas. She said:

"The conveyance was provided to the teacher by the head office to visit the students having no access to online learning in order to facilitate them through home tuition".

She told that for female teachers it was not an easy task, but they did it. She mentioned that in village schools it was successful as people know each other. The task was difficult in cities although conveyance was provided to female staff, yet they were reluctant, but found no choice. They completed the task whether they liked it or not.

7. Discussion and Implications:

Teachers play a crucial role in making educational foundations strong. The Pakistani teachers had very rare exposure to online teaching/learning before COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher unrevealed the narratives of the participants in the form of informal interviews. The interview results exposed the issues and communication challenges that created an impact on the teachers and the students that online learning is not an easy task. All these problems are correlated with one another (Jawad, 2020). The study revealed that the public-school teachers and students were not ready to accept the change. The reason found was that most of the students in public schools belong to poor families caught in whirlpool of economic, financial and social problems. The parents are mostly illiterate and do not show serious concern regarding their children education. Many research studies were conducted and are being conducted attempting and focusing that online learning is going to become our future. Though being a developing country, Pakistan is lagging behind in updating its academic institutions in e-learning. Now educational scenario is changing. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced some aspects of e-learning but formal education needs solid foundations to stand firmly on the pillars of digital technology (Klein, 2018). The researcher did not face any problem during the interview as interviews were conducted in drawing rooms of participants' houses. The researcher made a schedule and took the permission from the participants. The Interview with each participant was the in form of informal discussion. They expressed their views freely as the topic was of their interest.

Limitations:

Time and resources constraints limited the study. It could be much better.

Only three female teachers as participants were included in the study.

One participant from private school and two participants from public school were selected.

Both the schools were located in Islamabad urban area.

Participants were teaching the students of vi to x grades.

Recommendations:

- Teacher training programs about e learning should be the part of pre-service and in-service teacher training.
- Assessment programs should be implemented to check the performance of the studentsand teachers.
- Blended learning should have space in elementary, secondary and higher secondarylevel.
- Parental involvement in public sector schools should be addressed at once.

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