COVER PAGE

Research Paper Title:

The Educators Perspective on Student's Participation in ODL Systems

Theme of the Paper:

Facilitating Students to Achieve Learning Outcomes in ODL

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby would like to explicitly state that the research article titled "*The Educators Perspective on Student's Participation in ODL Systems*" is original and has not been published earlier, or that it is not under consideration for possible publication elsewhere.

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The Educators Perspective on Student's Participation in ODL Systems

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In world of 2021, where pandemic played havoc in our lives, a sector that was affected the most was education which has a direct relationship with the social weave of every country. Education should not be a privilege, hence we have the online and distance learning system which has taken its new position as one of the most popular ways of receiving knowledge.

It has been seen in the history of online distance learning that innovation in technology brought more students the opportunity to educate themselves. It has brought a life transforming change in the lives of people. Our modern world demands latest know-how's which can be disseminated through larger mediums such as online education. Our educational institution are gated the entry as well as if required continuation of education is a difficult task. However, the opening up of online education due to Covid-19 situation has brought about new possibilities. If utilised in the right way, it can bring a revolution in the world of literacy and knowledge.

It was seen in 1950 that online distance education was a possibility through slide projectors and television based classes. This was the first setting stone in imbibing technology with education and training. One of the first instances of online learning in the world can be traced back to The University of Illinois USA in year 1960 where students began learning from computer terminals that were interlinked to form a network. The first-ever completely online course was offered in 1984 by the University of Toronto. In 1986, the Electronic University Network was

established for being used in DOS and Commodore 64 computers. In 1990, the Open University in Britain started their rather ambitious project of online distance learning. The following Figure 1 shows a brief history of online education.
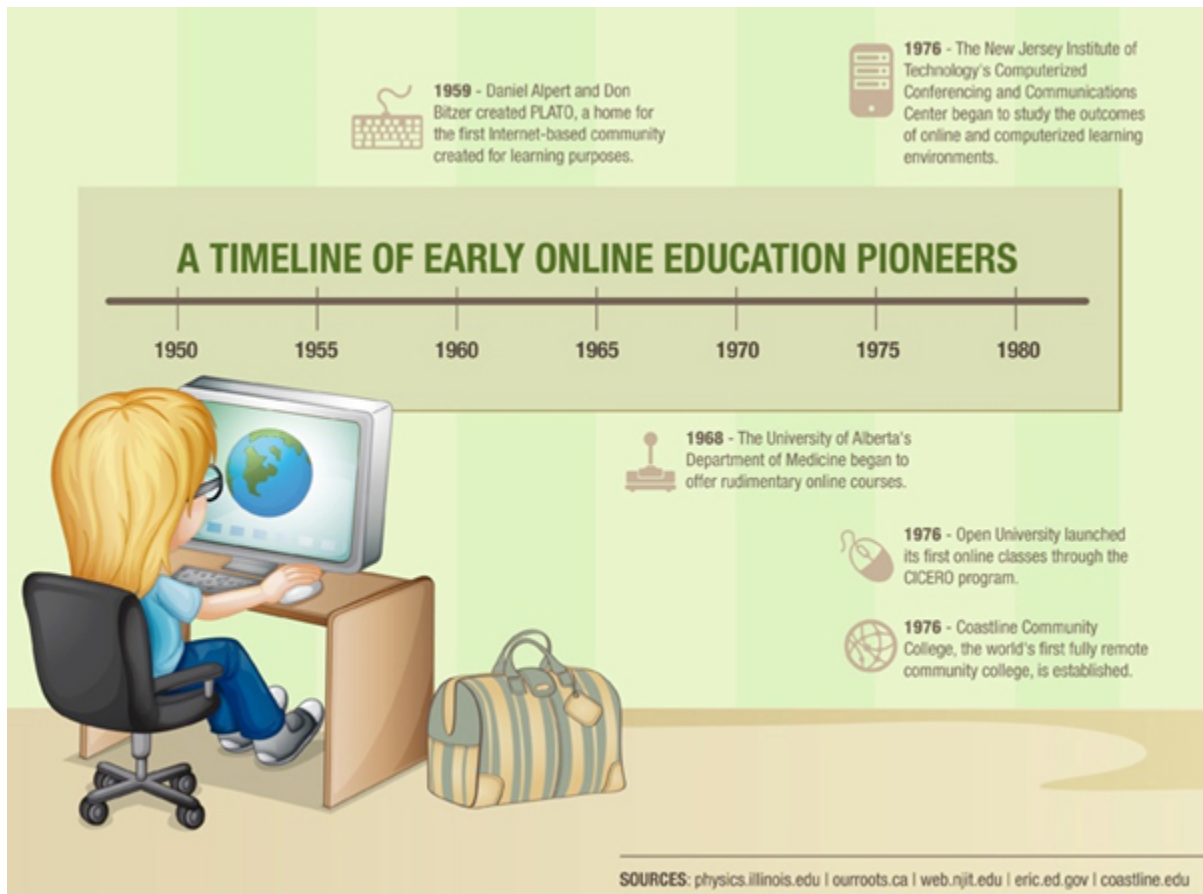

Fig. 1: A brief history of online education (https://adamasuniversity.ac.in/a-brief-history-of-online-education/)

Currently, the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India is the largest university in the world with around 4 million students enrolled, most of whom currently receive education via online methods.

During 2020, we all witnessed the catastrophe that was borne by Covid. It was a beginning of new learning through bad examples of death and suffering, we lost the control of our lives and our learner's future.

Expert in Fast Education, the future of online learning may include artificial intelligence, cloud based solution, virtual reality technology, internet of things.

Literature review:

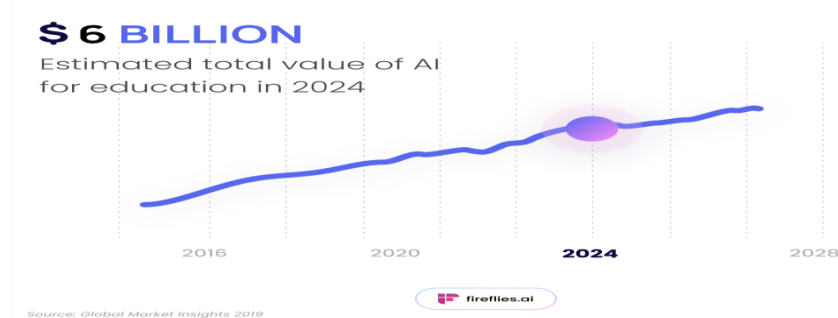1. **As per Forbes'** Mila Semeshkina, who is Founder and CEO @ Lectera.com,

Fig. 2 Estimated total value of artificial intelligence for education in 2024

As evident from the above graph, there is going to be a steady progress in the value of AI for education in 2024. The online teaching learning system is going through change, hence technology will play a major role in lecture delivery and evaluation.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/02/02/five-major-trends-in-online-education-to-watch-out-for-in-2021/?sh=709942bf21eb

2. Research conducted by Shih, T. K. et al. of the Tamkang University, Taiwan; Northern Taiwan Institute of Science and Technology, Taiwan; Hosei University, Japan; University of Aizu, Japan: They submitted a research paper - A Survey of Distance Education Challenges and Technologies. The authors have mentioned in the summary that there is still a gap where great success in distance learning and the virtual university is talked about. Though people have accepted to embed technology, there is a shortcoming in sociological and methodical ways of using the technology. They believe that distance learning is a lifelong education as a mission based instruction.

3. Research conducted by Musingafi, M.C. et al. from Zimbabwe Open University: In a research paper 'Challenges for Open and Distance learning (ODL) Students: Experiences from Students of the Zimbabwe Open University,' challenges faced by the students such as instructional related are discussed. The research exhibits that resource deficiency about internet and tools for their use, the motivational support issues for adult or distance learning are reasons for less interest in online learning system.
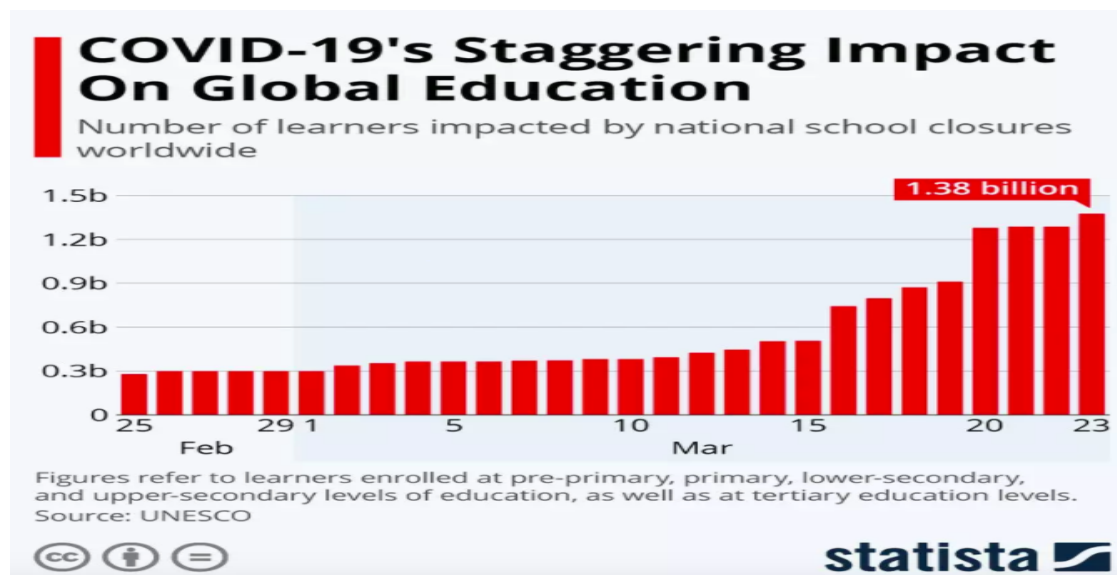

Fig. 3 Covid-19's staggering impact on global education

As we can see, huge number of learners got impacted by national school closures worldwide. This created a panic situation. However, our resourceful teachers and the technology were resilient. The Covid -19 happenings in the education system started getting technology into the system to counteract the impairment of being in our own houses had brought about. The whole chaos was silenced by adaptation of the digital ways of teaching. The teaching fraternity was forced to add innovative ways to bridge the gap of education. All efforts were taken but the learning outcomes may differ as the problems faced by teachers were somewhat not shown that seriously. The teacher was in a different environment than his student, hence the

control was minimum. Even though the medium has changed, the way of teaching did not change the technique to a large extent and so it led to more dropouts.

We were forced to realise that online education was an option wherein the gated education system came to standstill. ODL gives the benefit of cost. It may not be seen at par as people were not aware of the system the distance learning works, and not everyone can afford the price of education which is available through traditional institutions. Students need knowledge or certification of having the right level of expertise of a subject due to many reasons such as lack of money, and because they are earners so the time, as well as the remoteness of the institution with reference to distance away from the student.

Education is not readily available in all institutions for all. Here the distance learning comes into action wherein all strata of society are given an equal opportunity to educate themselves, rather than being left out of the prospects of being educated. Online distance education make learning affordable and achievable. The best part of the courses is that they are now blended wherein quality education is provided at low cost. Online Education is good for students because it considers the

student's level as per his last educational qualification and a student can continue education from anywhere at any time. If the course is pursued sincerely, a student gets knowledge and guidance and the student can do all his study as per his convenience. The range of courses and their availability is the niche that ODL gives to the world of education. It brings education literally in the hands of the students, rather on their fingertips with use of mobile or laptop supported by internet. The student can complete as many courses and gain as much knowledge as he desires to have. It can act as a catalyst to progress in jobs, change of profession or upgradation. Students become aware of other allied courses when they are online, they may learn from leaders of the field, content that can be compared and taken from the best in the sense that education is actually globalised. Foreign universities also have opened their doors to the students to achieve their dreams of studying a different curriculum. The fact that students are achieving their academic goals through online distance learning is because of the flexibility and the hands on availability of courses.

The courses provided online are in line with institutions with many criterion for admission. However, this balance of

convenience and quality in education has brought success to the online educators. In response to requirement from the society towards education, this agile system of ODL had been invented.

The flipped classroom is a simple strategy for providing learning resources such as articles, pre-recorded videos and YouTube links before the class. The online classroom time is then used to deepen understanding through discussion with faculty and peers (Doucet et al., 2020). This is a very effective way of encouraging skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and self-directed learning. The virtual classroom platforms such as videoconferencing (Google Hangouts Meet, Zoom, Slack,

Cisco, WebEx) and customizable cloud-based learning management platforms such as Elias, Moodle, BigBlueButton and Skype are increasingly being used.

Trends in online education show that this flexibility is the primary reason for more people preferring to learn over the internet. As per EducationData.org, '*between 25-50% of instructions, assignments, and discussion takes place online.*'

Further, students study course material outside class and utilize classroom time to reinforce learning, clear doubts, and engage in discussion with their instructor. This hybrid model of e-learning brings the best of two worlds: classroom and virtual room.
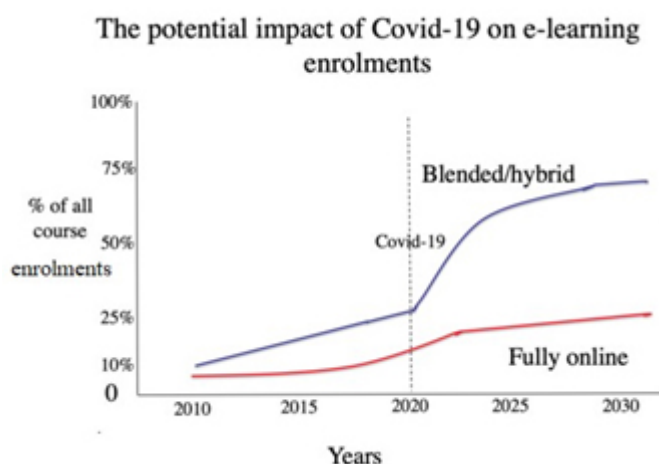

Fig. 4 The potential impact of Covid-19 on e-learning enrolments (Source: University Affairs Magazine)

Data Analysis:

The researcher asked the ODL faculties about the difficulties and problems they face during online teaching. A questionnaire was designed to understand the effect of online teaching and to suggest some improvements. The analysis is as follows:

1. Are you an educator teaching on ODL platform?
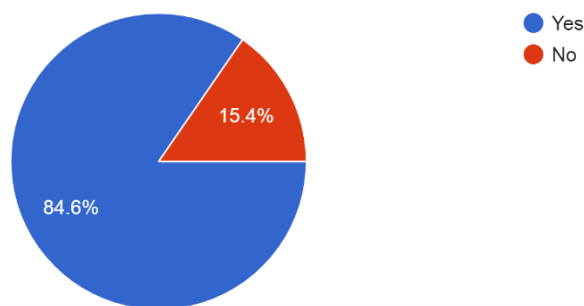
85 percent of the faculties from ODL gave their opinion about their experience with online learning and the student's behaviour online and its impact on learning.

2. Do you think the faculty interaction is beneficial in the online mode of learning where recorded session is available?
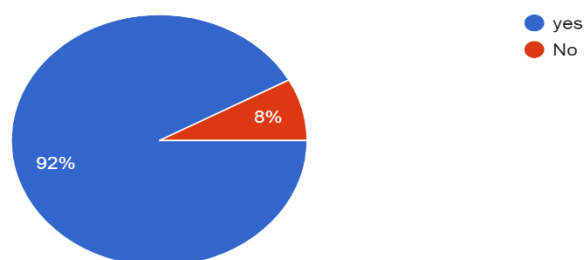

It was observed that the faculty felt that even when the recorded sessions are available for the students, it is also seen that students want to have live sessions. The reason being that concept can be discussed as per the difficulty faced by the student.

3. How many subjects do you teach online in a semester?
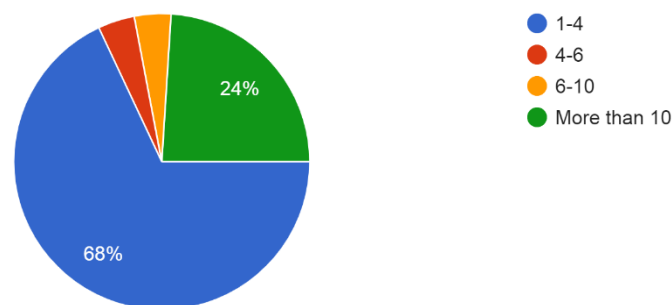
As per the graph 68% faculties teach one to four subjects, 24% faculties teach more than 10 subjects. This reveals the teaching load and the responsibility of the faculty towards variety of subject with respect to virtual classes, developing learning material, and evaluation.

4. Which medium of instruction do you use for teaching?
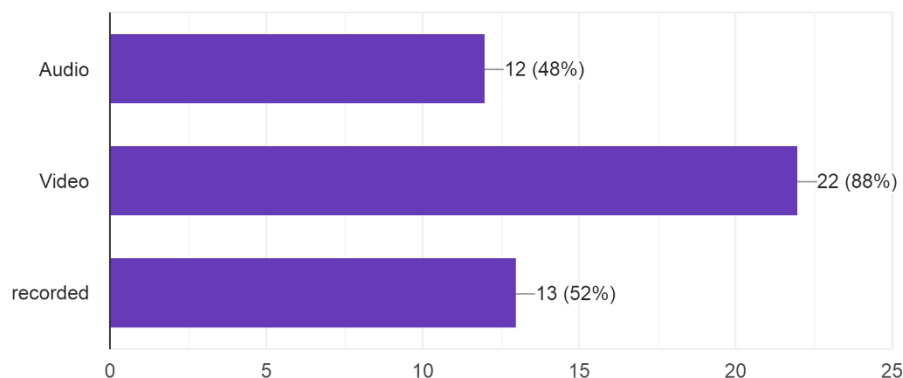
Mostly faculties are using video lectures than recorded because it the faculties feel an interactive class is more preferred for learning by faculties, so that the student can understand and apply concept rather than just hear them in the recorded sessions.

5. How many students attend your live class?
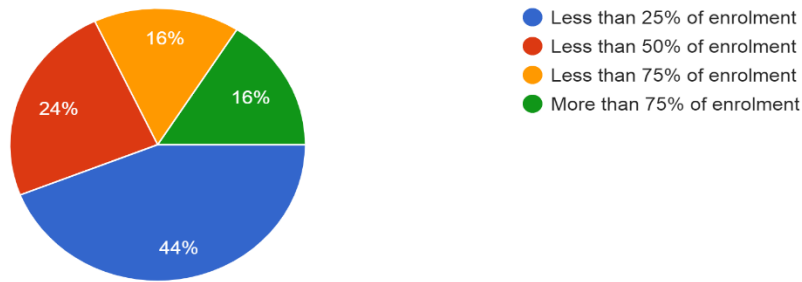
As seen in the graph most faculties felt that less than 25% of the enrolment were attending live class for which faculties though the faculties do their best in reach the students.

6. How is the student's response (attention span/participation in class)?
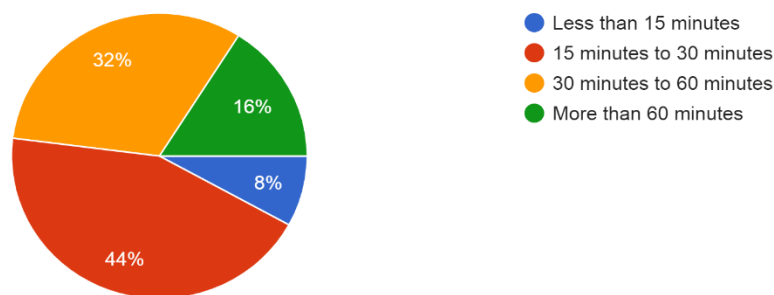
As per the graph, 44% of students of the students have attention span of 15 to 30 minutes and 32% have attention span of 30 of 60 minutes. This shows student's attention span for each session.

7.   Do   you   experience   student's   active   participation?
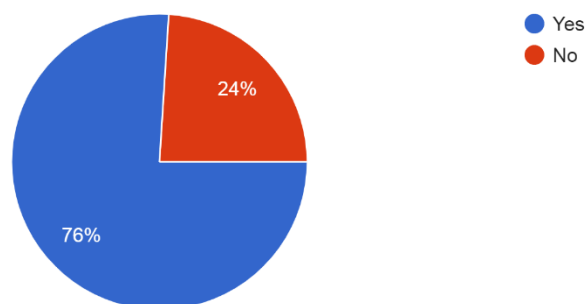
The faculties observed that those students who attend the sessions online are actively participating and learn more if are regular.

8. What are the distractions from students that you face during the session?
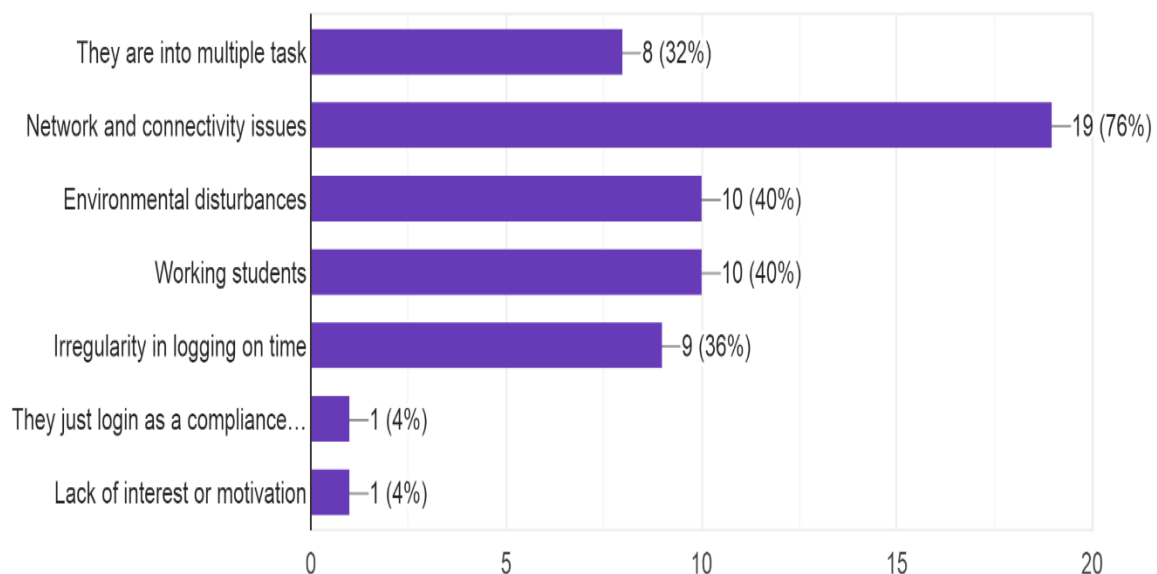
The major problem in conducting an online class is network and connectivity issues, followed by environmental disturbances and students being in work situations. Therefore, it is seen that students need to focus on the class with such dire situations.

Findings:

85% of the faculties from ODL gave opinion about their experience with online learning and the student's behaviour online and its impact on learning.

It was observed that the faculty felt that even when the recorded sessions are available for the students, it is also seen that students want to have live sessions. The reason being that concept can be discussed as per the difficulty faced by the student.

As per the graph, 68% faculties teach one to four subjects, 24% faculties teach more than 10 subjects. This shows the teaching load and the responsibility of the faculty

towards variety of subject with respect to virtual classes, developing learning material, and evaluation.

Faculties are mostly using video lectures than recorded because the faculties feel an interactive class is more preferred for learning by the students because the students can understand and apply concept rather than just hear the faculties in the recorded sessions.

As seen in the graph, most faculties felt that less than 25% of the enrolled students were attending live class and that the faculties do their best in reaching the students.

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The major problem in conducting an online class is network and connectivity issues, followed by environmental disturbances and students being in work situations. Therefore, it is seen that students need to focus on the class with such dire situations.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that the faculties are enthusiastic about online sessions and also ready to adapt to technology. The perception that online education is very easy and interesting for students is questionable because, if given a choice to select between recorded sessions and virtual class, the students prefer virtual classes; however, they are not attending as much, and those who attend tend to be active and do interact in the class. The major challenge is the attention span, most faculties felt the attention span was less than half an hour. The next major challenge is the distractions in the session when the environment around the student during the session may not be conducive for the student to focus on studies. The students have access to recorded session if they miss the live interactive class; such recorded session supports learning largely. It would benefit students if they are given the reading notes that could help them to understand the recorded session better, otherwise mostly they are not able to connect to the content. Evaluation should be session wise, so as to assess the learning from the teachings. As seen from the secondary data, availability of network and an attention-grabbing

environment are the biggest challenges for Online Distance learning. The researcher has observed that unless there is a learning objective plus discussion on the concept and a comprehensive test on the concept, the students will not be able to give the required outcome or the understanding of the knowledge shared with them. The author suggests that online teaching will be more beneficial when the lecture will be for less than 45 minutes. The student must be briefed about the concept beforehand and lastly the student must be solemnly testing his knowledge through a quiz or a multiple choice question. With these suggestions, the entire idea of getting the outcome of education at all ages in life can be achieved.

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