EMERGING DIMENSIONS OF STUDENT-CENTERED ONLINE LEARNING IN THE POST COVID-19 SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT:
In the past, the teaching-learning process was entirely teacher-centered. However, after the arrival of modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the teaching-learning process is gradually becoming student-centered. Online learning, which became very popular during the Covid-19 induced lock down period, basically involves the use of ICT and Internet to facilitate the teaching-learning process. The government has been taking severalmeasures to promote online learning in India. Due to its obvious advantages, it is very unlikely that online learning will wither away, even when regular classes restart in the post Covid-19 era.

Keywords: Covid-19; Online Learning; Student Centered Learning; Teacher Centered Learning; SynchronousOnline Learning; Asynchronous Online Learning;Hybrid/Blended Learning.

I. INTRODUCTION
Prior to the emergence of modern-day computers and internet, learning was by default teacher centric. This was primarily due to the fact that information necessary for learning was not readily available. Very few text books were available and most of those books were costly to purchase. Consequently, students almost exclusively relied on the knowledge and experience of the teacher to learn [1]. The lecture notes along with the available text books served as the learning material for most students. Consequently, teacher stood at the center of the teaching-learning environment and made all decisions regarding the teaching-learning process. The role of the student in the entire process was passive [2].

The arrival of computers, internet and ICT has changed the scenario. Today, there is an information revolution. At virtually no cost, information regarding any subject/topic can be downloaded from the Internet by any student. Hence there is no need for students to excessively rely on lecture notes. Learning has now become student centered and students are responsible for their own learning [3]. Consequently, the role of teacher has changed. His role now is to facilitate the learning process. However, traditional classroom based face-to-face learning remains at the core of education system particularly in India. This is in spite of the fact that authorities in India have been encouraging and promoting Open and Distance Learning (ODL). However, that situation drastically changed with the recent outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. All educational institutions including colleges and universities were forced to close down. For the purpose of ensuring that there is no disruption of academic activities, online learning was encouraged. Traditional classroom learning is at least temporarily substituted by online learning through software applications like Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, etc. This has made the teaching-learning process even more student centric. This article seeks to briefly analyze the changing contours of teaching-learning process with the emergence of student centric online learning.

II. DEFINITIONS
For a proper understanding of the topic, it is essential that the concepts namely teacher-centered learning, student-centered learning, open and distance learning (ODL) and online learning be studied.

i. Teacher-centered learning: - Teacher-centered learning is a learning environment in which the teacher act as the information provider. The students are considered as learners who passively receive
information [4]. In teacher-centered learning, teachers take all the decisions concerning teaching methods, assessment methods, curriculum, etc. and hence, students have very little control over their own learning [5].

ii. **Student-centered learning**: - Student-centered learning on the other hand is a learning environment in which the students are placed at the core of the learning process and provided with need-based instructions [6]. The student has the freedom to choose what and when she/he will learn [3]. The focus of student-centered learning is on student learning and what the student does to achieve the same [7]. The role of the teacher in this type of learning is to facilitate the learning process and assist the students to acquire those skills necessary to discover their own knowledge [8].

iii. **Open and distance learning (ODL)**: - As evident from the name itself, ODL combines within itself two concepts namely (i) open learning and (ii) distance learning [9]. Open learning refer to a type of learning wherein the emphasis is on the learner and the achievement of learning objectives by the learner [10]. In this type of learning, the learner has a great degree of flexibility to choose from a variety of options in relation to place, time, instructional materials, modes of access and other such factors related to the learning process [11]. Thus, it can be seen that open learning is conceptually very similar to student-centered learning. Distance learning, on the other hand, is a method of instruction/learning wherein the physical proximity that exists in the teaching-learning process between the teacher and student is replaced by a technical medium like print, audio-visual media, Internet based application, etc. [12], [13].

iv. **Online learning**: - When the modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and Internet is used to achieve the objectives of ODL, the learning is known as online learning. Online learning, which is also called as e-learning, has the following five characteristic features:

1. There is no physical proximity between the student and the teacher. This gap is bridged by using ICT.
2. Both the student and the teacher interact with each other using the same communication media. Hence, ICT facilitates two-way communication.
3. The student gains access to learning materials using ICT.
4. The student uses ICT to obtain online support during the learning process.
5. The assessment/testing of the student, if necessary, is also enabled using ICT [14].

### III. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TEACHER-CENTERED LEARNING AND STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

There are a number of differences between teacher-centered learning and student-centered learning which is summarized below:

Teacher-centered learning focuses on the experiences of teachers whereas student-centered learning focuses on the experiences of students (Muganga & Ssenkus, 2019).

i. In teacher-centered learning, teacher or instructor is sole leader, whereas in student centered learning leadership is shared (Garrett, 2008).

ii. In teacher-centered learning, the balance of power in the teaching-learning process is always tilted in favour of the teacher. The student who plays a passive role expects the teacher to make/take all decisions regarding the course. However, in student-centered learning, the student plays an active role and takes a number of decisions regarding the course. The teacher only plays a facilitating role (Wright, 2011).
iii. In teacher-centered learning, the teacher provides all information to students. Consequently, teachers have a major role to play in the knowledge construction process. However, in student-centered learning, the students with the assistance of the teacher chooses/selects the information necessary for the knowledge construction process (Baeten et al., 2016).

iv. In teacher-centered learning, the role of students in class room management is very limited and teacher takes all responsibility for paper work and organization. However, in case of student-centered learning, students are seen as facilitators for the operation of the classroom. The students share class room responsibilities with the teacher (Garrett, 2008).

v. In teacher-centered learning, the teacher is the provider of information which the students have to accept. However, in student-centered learning, teacher is seen as a facilitator or coach. The role of the teacher is to stimulate students to think and reach their own conclusions (Baeten et al., 2016).

vi. In teacher-centered learning, the course content is quite often treated as end in itself. Students instead of learning

vii. /conceptualization, memorize the course content for the purpose of reproducing the same in the examination. However, in student-centered learning, course content is not treated as an end in itself but as a means of helping students to acquire skills of critical thinking and practical problem solving (Wright, 2011).

viii. In teacher-centered learning, the regulation/control of the learning process is exclusively with the teacher. However, in student-centered learning, the learning process is regulated by the students themselves. This means that students are expected to be self-regulators of their own process of knowledge construction (Baeten et al., 2016).

ix. In teacher-centered learning, the primary purpose of evaluation is to generate grades. However, in student-centered learning, the primary purpose of evaluation is promote learning and evaluate the extent of learning achieved by the student (Wright, 2011).

In a practical classroom situation, the teaching-learning environment cannot be easily classified as a teacher-centered learning or student-centered learning environment in black and white terms. A practical classroom could be better understood by viewing the teaching-learning process as a continuum, with pure student-centered learning and pure teacher-centered learning at the either end of the continuum as represented in figure-1 (Neill & McMahon, 2005).

![Student-centered and Teacher-centered Continuum](source)

Source: (Neill & McMahon, 2005)

Figure 1. Student-centered and Teacher-centered Continuum.

IV. TYPES OF ONLINE LEARNING

Online learning can be classified into two broad categories namely, synchronous online learning and asynchronous online learning, based on the nature of interaction between the participants in the teaching-learning process.

i. **Synchronous online learning**: It is a type of online learning wherein there is real-time interaction between the participants (teacher and students) located at different geographical locations. The real-
time interaction is made possible through the use of various applications like video conferencing, chat, etc. [15]. Synchronous online learning enables students to overcome geographical barriers in having face-to-face interaction with the teacher [16], [17].

ii. Asynchronous online learning: - It is a type of online learning where there no real-time interaction between the participants (teacher and students) located at different locations. The students/learners are provided with necessary instructions and learning material, which they can learn/study anytime and anywhere according to their convenience. The students do get opportunities to interact with the teachers for seeking 1 explanations/classifications. However, this interaction does not happen real-time. The student submits his query/doubt to an electronic platform like chatroom, bulletin board, email, etc. The teacher asynchronously replies to the student through the same electronic platform [17]. Asynchronous online learning thus promotes flexible learning that is not constrained by geography or time [18]

2 In addition to synchronous/asynchronous online learning, there is another type of online learning which is called as blended learning. In this type of learning the main attribute of online learning i.e. computer mediated instructions using ICT is integrated into the regular class-room based learning methods [19]. Since, this type of learning combines face-to-face instructions with ICT enabled instructions, it is also called hybrid learning or mixed mode learning [20].

V. ONLINE LEARNING IN INDIA

Even in the pre-covid era, the central and state governments have been encouraging online learning in India. For the purpose of promoting the use of ICT in the teaching-learning process, in higher educational institutions (HEIs) in India, the central government has set up the National Commission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) [21]. NMEICT is responsible for coordinating the functioning of various ICT enabled learning initiatives like SWAYAM platform, e-PG Pathshala, National Digital Library, etc. [22]. Further, in order to ensure that the standard of the fully online courses offered by various higher educational institutions (HEIs) in India are same as the regular conventional courses offered by the same institutions, UGC and AICTE have enacted a number of regulations. The UGC (Online Courses or Programmes) Regulations, 2018 is one such regulation.

The outbreak of Covid-19 disease and its rapid spread across the globe infecting millions of people had compelled the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare Covid-19 disease as a pandemic on 11th March, 2020 [23]. In order to prevent the rapid spread of the disease in India, the central government in late March, 2020 enforced a nation-wide lockdown by invoking the powers under the National Disaster Management Act, 2005 [24]. The lockdown has subsequently been extended a number of times with gradual relaxations [25].

Initially, when the lockdown was implemented, the central government directed the closure of all educational institutions [26]. However, subsequently, the central government permitted and encouraged online/distance learning while directing that all educational institutions remain closed till 15th October 2020. After that date, central government permitted the state governments to decide on the question of re-opening schools/colleges but suggested that online/distance learning should be preferred mode of teaching and the same should also be encouraged [27].

Thus, by the compulsion of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak and resultant nation-wide lockdown, online learning has become the preferred mode of learning in schools and colleges across India [28]. At least in the academic year 2020-21, online learning has substituted traditional classroom learning. Classes are being conducted both in the synchronous and asynchronous online modes. Audio/video learning materials are created and uploaded by teachers on the online platforms like YouTube, Moodle, etc. The students can access these materials at any time of their choice and convenience. Also, software applications like Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, Uber Conference, Free Conference, etc. has facilitated the conduct of synchronous online classes [29], [30]. The synchronous online classes have enabled students to directly interact with their teachers. These synchronous online platforms facilitate (i) students to present assignments,
(ii) teachers to take attendance and (iii) teachers to conduct internal assessment of students through the conduct of quizzes, etc.

It must not be forgotten that the initiatives taken by the government for the conduct of online classes as a substitute for classroom learning is only a temporary measure which will cease, once the Covid-19 pandemic comes under control. Online learning cannot be a substitute for traditional classroom learning, as online learning is not affordable for a substantial segment of the poor students in India [31]. Nevertheless, online learning will not disappear even when traditional classroom learning resumes. This is because, during the Covid-19 influenced lockdown period, online learning demonstrated its usefulness and flexibility [30]. Online learning will continue as a healthy supplement to traditional classroom learning. Eventually, coaching classes, tuition classes, etc. will completely shift to the online mode. Also, online learning will be used by schools/colleges to supplement regular classroom learning during holidays, vacations, etc.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the pre-covid period, the education system was gradually shifting from teacher-centered learning to a student-centered learning. The Covid-19 influenced lockdown forced students to learn by themselves using online materials. During that period, teachers, on their part, assisted students in the learning process by interacting with the students through online platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom etc. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak induced lockdown, learning has become student centric and both teachers and students have accepted the same. Consequently, even when the regular classroom learning resumes, the teaching-learning process will remain student centric. Further, in the post covid-19 world, online classes, due to its inherent advantages will, at least supplement, if not totally replace traditional classroom learning.

REFERENCES

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