

Virtual Learning: The Parents Perspective

Yatendra Pal¹, Kavita Sharma², Shasanka Dev Bhuyan³, Prakash Divakaran⁴, Swati Saxena⁵

¹Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research, Mangalayatan University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh

²Assistant Professor, Institute of Education and Research, Mangalayatan University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh

³Assistant Professor, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, Usha Martin University, Ranchi, Jharkhand

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of Business & Management, Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Mangalayatan University, Jabalpur, MP

Abstract

The shift to virtual learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has brought forth a multitude of challenges for parents and guardians worldwide. Parents have been facing with virtual learning. Many parents, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, encountered challenges accessing necessary technology and internet connectivity for their children's virtual education. The digital divide has exacerbated educational inequalities. Parents have had to juggle their own work responsibilities with the need to supervise and support their children's online learning. Balancing work and homeschooling have strained many families.

Ensuring students remain motivated and engaged during virtual classes has been a consistent struggle. The lack of face-to-face interaction with teachers and peers has hindered some students' ability to stay focused. Mental Health and Well-being: Prolonged screen time and isolation have taken a toll on the mental health and well-being of both children and parents. Increased stress, anxiety, and a sense of social disconnection have been reported. Virtual learning has limited children's opportunities for social interaction and extracurricular activities, impacting their social development and emotional growth. Concerns over educational quality and the potential for learning gaps have arisen. Parents worry that virtual learning may not provide the same level of education as traditional in-person schooling. Establishing effective communication between teachers, students, and parents in a virtual environment has been challenging, potentially leading to misunderstandings and difficulties in tracking progress

Key Words: The Issues, Parents, Virtual Learning.

Introduction

School districts have done their best to plan learning contingencies due to the COVID situation. Some schools have opted for virtual learning to keep children and staff safe, and this is an entirely new paradigm for everyone involved—the teachers, the students, and last but not the least: the parents.

Everyone is going through an abrupt change, and this is bound to produce anxiety in everyone. The idea of virtual learning is new and possibly intimidating for many parents. Many families may additionally be undergoing financial stress, employment flux, or pressures of home-working as a result of the pandemic.

The fact of the matter is that every parent wants their child to do well in school, even in the face of mitigating circumstances.

In a survey, *Distance Learning Challenges*, taken in April 2020, the following were found as the top five difficulties faced by parents (of kids in K-12) with virtual learning:

Keeping their children focused on schoolwork (instead of other online activities) – 50.31%

Establishing a daily routine – 49.26%

Balancing household responsibilities and teaching – 41.83%

Establishing a wake-up and bedtime schedule – 33.40%

Balancing working from home and teaching – 33.31%

There are n number of technologies available for online education but sometimes they create a lot of difficulties. These difficulties and problems associated with modern technology range from downloading errors, issues with installation, login problems, problems with audio and video, and so on. Sometimes student finds online teaching to be boring and unengaging. Online learning has so much of time and flexibility that students never find time to do it. Personal attention is also a huge issue facing online learning. Students want two-way interaction which sometimes gets difficult to implement. The learning process cannot reach its full potential until students practice what they learn. Sometimes, online content is all theoretical and does not let students practice and learn

effectively. Mediocre course content is also a major issue. Students feel that lack of community, technical problems, and difficulties in understanding instructional goals are the major barriers for online learning.

Biggest Issues Faced by Parents with Virtual Learning

01. Parents are unsupported with the tech

A study by edtech company Promethean found that only 5% of teachers feel like they're receiving full training and support for edtech in their schools.

Everyone is getting used to the virtual learning interface that their child's school has provided, and many parents are likely to run into issues.

Consider creating a WhatsApp group or other line of communication with other parents to share problems and fixes. We need to help each other as much as we can. For persistent issues, reach out to the school.

02. Students may not ask for help

Schools that are offering virtual learning are largely relying on students to self-learn. Students are expected to read the course material, watch a few videos, and print some learning material to study from. There is minimal instructor-led training to explain the content, though there might be a couple of help-sessions for those that need it.

However, a lot of children shy away from asking for help or do not know what to ask for. In that case, there will be gaps in the student's learning which will give them a shaky foundation and have long-term repercussions for their education.

This is where the parents' involvement is key. One thing that will help parents in this is giving the student a platform to practice questions based on their lessons. This serves a dual purpose:

The results of the practice questions will help identify where the student needs help.

The practice of answering questions will help create a stronger foundation and build the confidence students need during exam time.

03.Reducing distractions

There's a number of distractions available to students in their home environments. You can put them in front of the computer, but kids are kids – it's not a stretch of the imagination to suppose they might switch over to a game at some point.

A 2016 report found that students check their devices for "non-class purposes" 11.43 times a day on average. And that was in an environment where a teacher could walk around and monitor what's happening, and keep them engaged. The ease of that proximity is lost with virtual learning.

04. Creating an academic environment at home

Home is home, and school is school. Both places have a very different vibe, and yet students are now being asked to get into the school mentality at home.

This can prove to be difficult, especially if everyone is at home for 24 hours. And a bustling household can be very distracting indeed.

Parents need to do what they can to provide a quiet space for their kids, and help them mentally demarcate that as a learning space.

05. Investment in technology

Some families may find the investment in technology a little taxing. At a minimum, a high-speed internet connection is required. For families with multiple children and a single screen at home, this can present a real conundrum – on the one hand, it's unfair to their kids; on the other hand, it may be financially prohibitive to invest in another machine.

Devices like a Chromebook, noise-cancelling headphones, an extra, larger monitor are all great additions that could enhance a child's learning experience, but may not be within everyone's budget.

06. Malfunctioning technology

There is little that parents can do if the school software itself crashes. And many school districts across the country experienced exactly that as they tried to kick off virtual learning this year.

School-issued Chromebooks in Maryland would not load on the first day. A ransomware attack in Hartford, Connecticut forced schools to postpone the start of online classes.

Unfortunately, there's not much we can do in these situations but be patient and help our children be patient. It's definitely going to be hard on them, but if we remain calm, then they are more likely to do so as well.

07. Motivation needs monitoring

Classroom environments are explicitly designed to support learning, whereas bedrooms and kitchen tables are not. Those are comfort environments, and it can be difficult to get into "school mode".

Sustained motivation needs monitoring. A teacher on the other end of a Zoom call can't really do that, so it often falls to the parent. Between doing their own job and running the house (making sure everyone eats on time, and so on), it's asking a lot.

One of the best things parents can do is set clear, measurable goals with their children, and set them regularly so that students have something to focus on. Check in on them periodically to see if they are on course to reaching their goals.

08. Sometimes a student can't stay engaged

Sometimes a student just can't get into a certain lesson, and without a teacher to intervene with personal guidance, it can become a real hindrance to progress.

There's no quick fix to this, but there are things that parents can do over time that will help students get unstuck and develop a growth mindset towards facing problems like these.

Parents can also get involved more directly to help students stay engaged. One analysis showed that school children benefit from discussions about learning and school-related issues with their parents and from joint readings.

09. Children need to move

Children just aren't used to sitting in one place for extended periods of time, and we may forget that. At school they had a structured schedule that gave them a lot of movement in recess time, walking through the hallways, talking to classmates, and a lot of other ways that are lost in virtual learning.

It's not healthy to spend excessive time sitting (which is something that we parents would also do well to remember).

Make sure your kids are getting some movement throughout the day. Mid-lesson stretching and walks around the house are good enough to start with. They should also be encouraged to get some strenuous physical activity after school hours.

10. Brain breaks for virtual learning

Students all have different attention spans. This is really put to the test in a virtual learning setup.

Additionally, paying attention on a Zoom call, which lacks many of the emotional and physical cues of in-person instruction, puts a heavier cognitive load on students.

Make sure your child is getting "brain breaks" between lessons. This time lets their minds relax and refresh.

11. Student's physical health

Virtual PE classes are perhaps a bit of a force-fit, but it's about as best as schools can do. But it's not enough. And as we stated in a previous point, children aren't getting nearly as much movement in virtual learning as they were getting in school.

Lack of physical exercise can lead to physical ailments, and reduced attention spans and cognitive function. On the other hand, repeated physical activity during school can improve children's attention.

Encourage your kids to get some exercise before starting learning, and definitely after school hours. It might be a bit of a fight, because they may feel like jumping on video games as soon as school instruction is over. But sitting down to stare at a screen after a full day of doing exactly that is not ideal!

12. Feelings of isolation

Many students will miss school. The buzz of the classroom, meeting their friends, the daily activities of school life – everything they are used to has been replaced with sitting in front of a computer screen in their own house. Under these conditions, students can begin to feel a sense of isolation that affects their ability to learn.

Keep an open dialogue with your child about their feelings. If possible, help them stay in touch with their friends (though let's face it, their generation is way ahead of us when it comes to that). The point is to be present, be patient and understanding, and be as helpful as possible.

Conclusion

Distance learning using networks or online learning has many challenges faced by parents. Parents at home replace the role of teachers in school, teachers only guide children to learn through materials or teaching materials that have been prepared through learning media for students. Parents are the ones who play an active role at home to teach their children to learn at home. Challenges faced by parents in online learning are limitations of media resources, limited time, mastery of technology etc.

Demand that parents must change and follow changes, especially in this post-modern era. Parents can no longer fully assign responsibility to the teacher in learning activities, but parents must be able to guide, help and direct their children to be able to take part in online learning, so that their children do not fall behind in learning and are able to complete all homework. which has been given by the teacher.

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