Lessons From Online Teaching During COVID-19 For Mainstreaming Zoom And Google Classroom In English Language Teaching And Training To Address Low Proficiency Among Job Aspirants

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ABSTRACT
Information and communication tools (ICT) were the answer to the crisis created in imparting education due to COVID-19. Many precautionary measures were introduced to combat and prevent the spread of the pandemic. The learning process was affected to a great extent because of the pandemic-induced lockdown of educational institutions, among others. The traditional teaching and learning process was significantly impacted, and educational institutions had to adapt to online teaching. Information and communication tools played a major role in replacing the vacuum created by the shutdown of schools and universities through online teaching. It also played a significant role in imparting uninterrupted education to students. The online education tool meant for students has also proved to be a learning process for parents and teachers. Despite its various challenges and initial hiccups, online learning using ICT platforms such as Google Classroom or Zoom demonstrated that remote learning and teaching were possible. Further, the boom in app-based learning, such as Biju's, WhiteHatJnr, or Udemi, proved that ICT could augment formal education and offer quality education accessible to a wider range of students and varied capacities. In this paper, we explore remote education during COVID-19 and how those teaching experiences could be utilised beyond the pandemic period to fill the continuing need for soft skills and communication training among students who lack language proficiency which further impacts their employability. We undertook a survey with 140 respondents (120 students and 20 teachers) and found that a majority of the students agreed that the online classes were effective and feasible; while some of the teachers found it easier to adapt to online teaching using ICT, few senior teachers found it difficult to adapt from traditional teaching methods to remote teaching. We conclude that Google Classroom and Zoom can be effectively used for online teaching and recommend the use of these proven technologies to fill the language proficiency gap among job aspirants.
Keywords: *COVID-19, Google Classroom, language proficiency, Zoom, ICT, online learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Students worldwide were out of the classroom because of COVID-19. In this digital era, students and teachers were equally impacted due to the pandemic-induced social distancing. Many educational institutions and industries were greatly impacted. COVID-19 forced universities across India and the world over to substitute physical classrooms with online classes. ICT encompasses both the internet-enabled sphere as well as the mobile powered by wireless networks. It also includes antiquated technologies, such as landline telephones, radio, and television broadcasts. ICT is a list of all components related to computer and digital technology. The list of ICT components is exhaustive, and it continues to grow. Some components, such as computers and telephones, have existed for decades. Others, such as smartphones, digital televisions, and robots, are more recent entries. There is a huge increase in access to information and services due to the capability of bandwidth, broadband, and the connection speed of the Internet. ICT, with the help of many online digital initiatives and tools, has reduced the barriers caused by social distancing during the lockdown. Because of e-learning, the teaching style has drastically and dramatically changed. An attempt is made in this paper to surface the benefits experienced by teachers and students in the conduct of online teaching with the help of

Google Classroom and Zoom. The need of the hour is technology efficacy, without which we might remain disconnected from the whole world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In assessing the value of technology in learning, Mercy Gnana Gandhi [1] (2017) commented, "A thorough understanding of technology-enhanced learning processes seems indispensable for teachers and learners in the current context". Further, "ICT is said to enable teachers to save time and to increase productivity", Balanskat, Blamirid, and Kefala[2] (2006). According to Bradbury[3] (2014), technology ensures that "students take an active role in learning instead of taking on a passive role of receiving information from the teachers". It is also "a wonderful, powerful, and useful tool in engaging students" (Motamedi, 2015) [4]. Similarly, Amalnik, Moayyedi, and Mirzaei (2015) argue that technology has made interacting with others and acquiring knowledge easier and faster, which allows individuals to gain the knowledge they need over a short period. [5] Mercy Gnana Gandhi S [6] (2011) has observed that "Learning can be individualised using computers. Students can study materials related to their individual goals and interests, with the appropriate difficulty level and at their own pace". Likewise, Fennila James S [7] (2019) argues, "Android mobile phones have become an affordable possession by any category of student. The present student community is comfortable with the mobile and internet culture" (Drent and Meelissen 2008; Mueller et al. 2008). [8] In assessing the value of technology in teaching, Saranya P [9] (2017) claimed that "Previous practice in using computers and positive attitude towards technology are variables that favour success in teachers' integration of ICT". She found that "As for the educational value assigned to technology usage in a language teaching class, it is clearly indicated that technology would make teaching lessons more student-centred". On the other hand, Ashley NP [10] believed that when education was conducted online, a significant amount of learning was lost because education is not solely about attending classes, but it entails "interactions, broadening of ideas, free-flowing open discussions, debates and mentoring of each student". Therefore, according to Ashley, a significant portion of this "gets lost in translation on the online platform". As a result, language teachers need to adapt to using "a variety of new technologies and applications and redesign their curricula" to effectively apply technology in a manner that meets the requirements of their curricula, their instructional goals, and the needs of their students. Further, Otto and Pusack[11] (1996) reaffirm that "It is indisputable that the students who want to succeed in global market situations and in multicultural settings need to be trained in combining their technological skills with their linguistic and cross-cultural knowledge".

BACKGROUND

Technology has turned into a boon. In response to significant demand, we now have free access to many online learning platform services. Many companies are trying to provide a one-stop shop for teachers and students. Some argue that the unplanned and rapid move to online learning, without training, insufficient bandwidth, and little preparation, will result in poor user experience, which is not conducive to sustained growth. Others hope a new hybrid model of education with significant benefits will emerge as a result of increased demand. Several online audio, video, and text content have been shared on using ICT for students, teachers, educators, and researchers.

SCOPE

The information technology (IT) revolution has made the internet the resource hub for students. Information technology combined with communication technology is ICT. The teacher's teaching ability is enhanced by using technology in pedagogy. ICT is widespread and is essential to play a meaningful role in modernising and changing educational systems. With the advent of computers, the internet, and blogs, teaching has dramatically changed in the 21st century. Teachers and learners have been empowered and have promoted and fostered change in the development of 21st-century skills through the introduction of ICT.

The learning process from current teaching methods allows students to make use of opportunities to develop their creative and problem-solving abilities. Thus, we understand that the process has shifted to student-centred learning from teacher-centred learning. The real world is investigated thoroughly by the students. The sources of information can be accessed outside the classroom by the learners, and ICT tools can be effectively used to analyse and interpret. Though ICT was minimally used in teaching earlier, COVID-19 forced teachers to step up and take the initiative to address the immediate task of educating online.

ICT TECHNICAL TOOLS USED FOR ONLINE TEACHING DURING COVID-19

The goal of computer-aided education is to develop the learning capacity of students and increase productivity. ICT has contributed to shifting the focus on learning than teaching. Many ICT initiatives and digital learning platforms are accessed by students, teachers, and the corporate sector. Flexibility, comfort, interactive interface, and user-friendliness are some of the features that ensure learning using ICT tools is quite enjoyable. E-learning is one of the key components of ICT. It serves to share specific information that is not easily found elsewhere and also presents information in an easily accessible manner.

The method of sharing and communicating knowledge via multimedia is e-learning. There are many technical tools for teaching, such as Edmodo, Socrative, Projeqt, Class Dojo, Kahoot, and Animoto. However, it is advisable that teachers select the appropriate platform that best suits their teaching objectives after a brief review of the online teaching tools landscape. The compelling need (due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns) and gain in productivity using ICT tools have propelled the sudden shift from traditional classrooms to online learning platforms in many parts of the globe. This online platform is also bridging the generational gap between parents, teachers, and students.

ICT TOOLS: ROLE OF STUDENTS DURING COVID-19

The ability to learn has improved through the use of different online tools and methods. ICT ensured that there was minimal disruption in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students listened to the recorded audio or video of the subject lecture and worked at their own speed and convenient time. Mobile phones, which generally were a source of distraction for the students, turned out to be an effective learning tool. Research shows that, on average, students retain 25–60 per cent more material when learning online compared to 8–10 per cent in traditional classrooms. According to statistics, online learning also requires 40–60 per cent less time to learn compared to a traditional classroom. This is mainly because students choose to learn when they are free. While it also benefits learners who learn best by listening, it enhances interaction and increases student engagement. Students learn new life skills which prepare them for their future workplace. The students are extrinsically motivated by the desire to get good grades, to please teachers, and to gain rewards. In addition to spurring creativity among students, online learning also latently familiarises them with another learning management system.

ICT TOOLS: ROLE OF TEACHERS DURING COVID-19

COVID-19 forced teachers to use innovative methods of teaching with the help of ICT. Technology allowed teachers to reach out to a large number of students. During the pandemic, dedicated teachers and educators ensured that the learning process did not stop. Though it was not business as usual for educators during this time, they adapted using the right educative technology tools. From games to virtual field trips, it opened new avenues for teaching the same subject matter.

The major advantage for the teachers was that they could be at home, take care of their family, and simultaneously work. Previous research, such as the study in 2013 by PBS Learning Media, found that 74 per cent of teachers agreed that technologies enabled them to meet their teaching outcomes. They argued that traditional teaching did not encourage students to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. The limitation of the conventional class is that it fails to address the unique needs and interests of each student. But online teaching fulfils this purpose.

TECHNOLOGY NEEDS OF ONLINE TEACHING

High-speed internet and education-delivering platforms or learning management systems are the basic requirements for educational institutions wishing to offer online learning opportunities. Faculty members must get comfortable teaching online. The infrastructure for teaching online is found mostly in private colleges; therefore, many educational institutions completely shut down during the pandemic for not having access to e-learning solutions. However, the use of ICT in online teaching poses some challenges. For instance, teachers have to spend some extra time learning the software they intend to use before they conduct the online class. Concerns have been raised on how to evaluate students online. Further, teachers are not able to have face-to-face free conversations, discussions, and mentoring during online classes. Students have been distracted when staying at home and studying along with family members. Many educational institutions do not have enough computers. Glitches with specific applications, attaching particular file types, etc, have been common. Some students have also struggled to participate in digital learning processes without reliable internet access. In addition, ICT in education also has the potential to reinforce the digital divide and portray those who do not use ICT as backward digital immigrants. Notwithstanding these challenges, the role of ICT, particularly in providing an online learning environment, is significant. Platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom Class were the most popular learning tools used by educators widely during the pandemic.

GOOGLE CLASSROOM

Google Classroom has a user-friendly format for teachers and students. It allows sharing files with all students regardless of their location. A notification is sent through email to the students when something is shared by the teachers. It is a tool that was adopted by many teachers to allocate assignments, provide notes, and share many audio and video clippings. From any mobile device or computer, regardless of the platform, Google Classroom can be accessed via Google Chrome. In a classroom folder on Google Drive, the files uploaded by teachers are stored. Anytime anywhere, the users can access the classroom and the relevant files. Google Classroom is able to effectively recreate the learning environment for the students.

The assignments and assessments are directly saved to Google Drive, and the students can access and complete their work anytime at their own convenience. It is completely paperless. It is a time saver, and the teachers have more free time to complete other tasks. Students and teachers can participate through their tablets or phones, and Google Classroom can be accessed from mobile devices.

Sending emails, posting to the stream, sending private comments on assignments, and providing feedback on work can all be done by students and teachers. An online discussion between students and group projects within the classroom is facilitated by the teachers. The most valuable part of all learning is providing meaningful feedback to students. The ability to create a future comment bank is also available within the grading tool. In a nutshell, the entire site is customisable and can be arranged according to the needs of the teachers and students.

ZOOM CLASS

Zoom shares a multifunctional screen which is very easy to use. It allows for a virtual background with a variety of meeting settings and continuous security improvements. With an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, Zoom is the leader in modern enterprise video communication chat and webinars across mobile, desktop, and conference systems. Zoom rooms are the original software-based conference, huddle, and training rooms.Founded in 2011 in a frictionless atmosphere, it helps to bring teams together to get work done. It has the ability to include people via phone calls. Participants are able to see other participants and simultaneously interact using the chat feature. The moderator is able to mute others and enable customised access and control. It is very easy to share the link to join the class. Screen sharing is a major advantage and is very helpful in this tool by which any participant is able to share their screen.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative analysis using a survey. The purpose was to determine the efficiency of ICT in online teaching. The sample consisted of 70 students from the Commerce Department, 50 students from the English Department, and 20 teachers who used ICT tools in teaching during COVID-19. Online teaching was conducted for both classes through the Zoom platform and Google Classroom. Assignments and tests were given in Google Classroom, and online virtual teaching was conducted through the Zoom application. The performance of the students was studied.

A sample of 70 students was randomly picked from both classes and asked to answer a questionnaire. Twenty teachers who used the same platform in teaching were given a different questionnaire. The advantages and disadvantages of online classes during COVID-19 were consolidated through students' and teachers' perspectives. Analysis was undertaken, and a final conclusion arrived.

RESULTS

During the research process, there were specific challenges faced by the faculty as well as the students. Online instructions can turn students into passive observers rather than active participants if not thoughtfully crafted. It can be difficult for teachers to teach online when they are unable to gauge how students comprehend course content and whether they are participating in the learning experience. Sometimes to overcome the lack of their physical presence, teachers go into long winding explanations of the concepts leaving the learners bored and ultimately distracted. Online classes are also open to public and parental scrutiny; this has made teachers conscious while taking classes. The learning experience in switching from traditional to online teaching is entirely difficult for students. Some teachers are adamant about not changing to computer-based training in a virtual classroom from face-to-face instructor training. Thus, their conservative attitude does not allow them to have an online learning atmosphere. Some stay in places where they face technical problems because of internet inaccessibility. Computer knowledge is also a major issue; some teachers and students find troubleshooting basic computer problems difficult.

Figure 1:

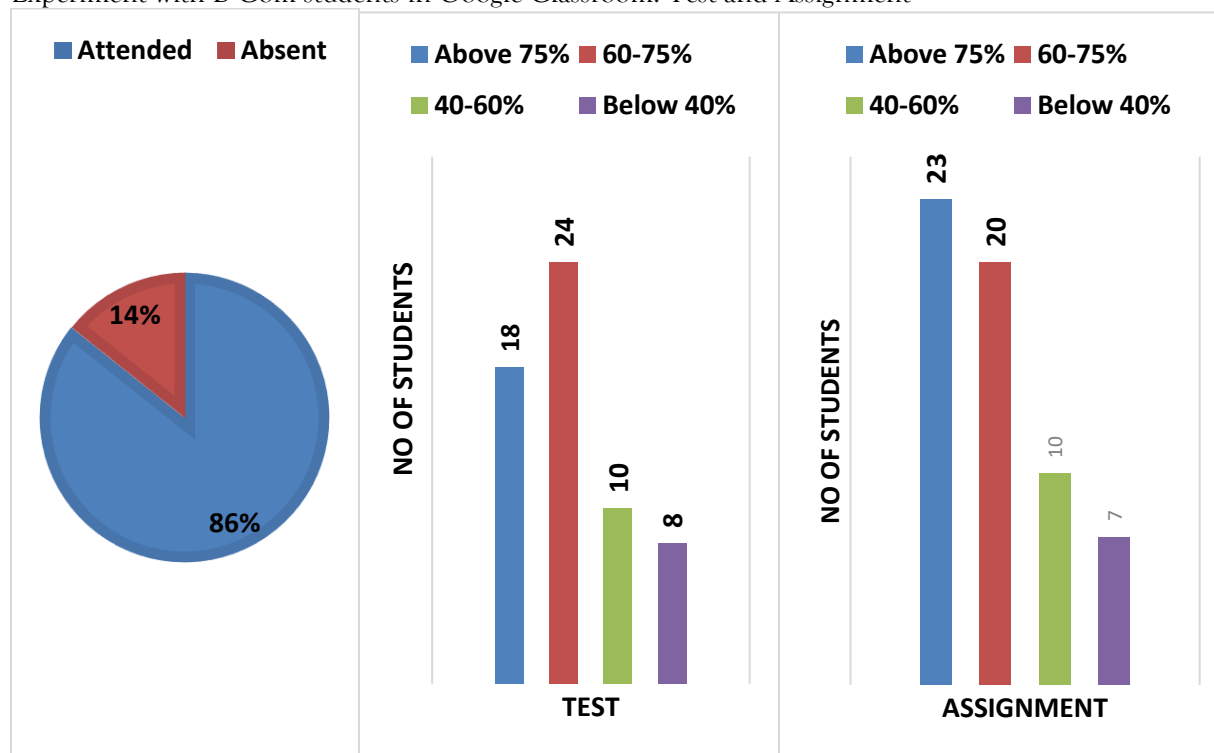Experiment with B Com students in Google Classroom. Test and Assignment

Figure 2:
Experiment with B Com students in a Zoom classroom. Presentation and group discussion.
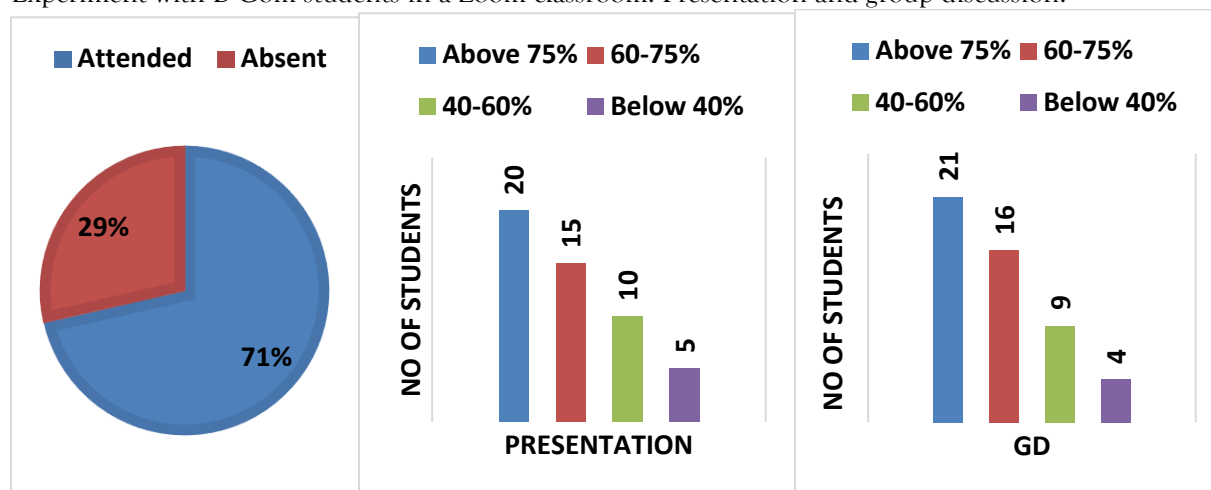

Figure 3:
Experiment with BA (English) students in a Google Classroom. Test and Assignment
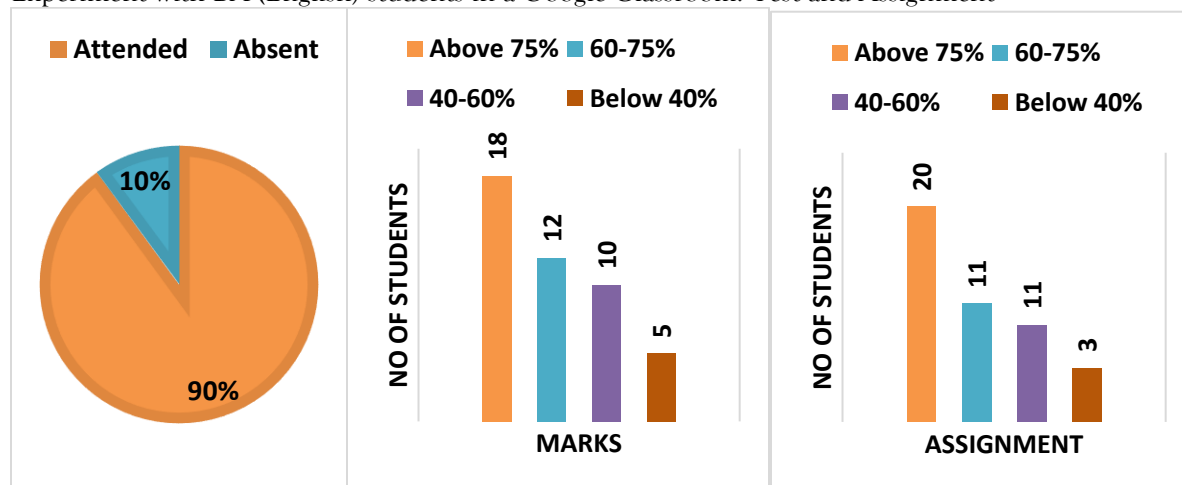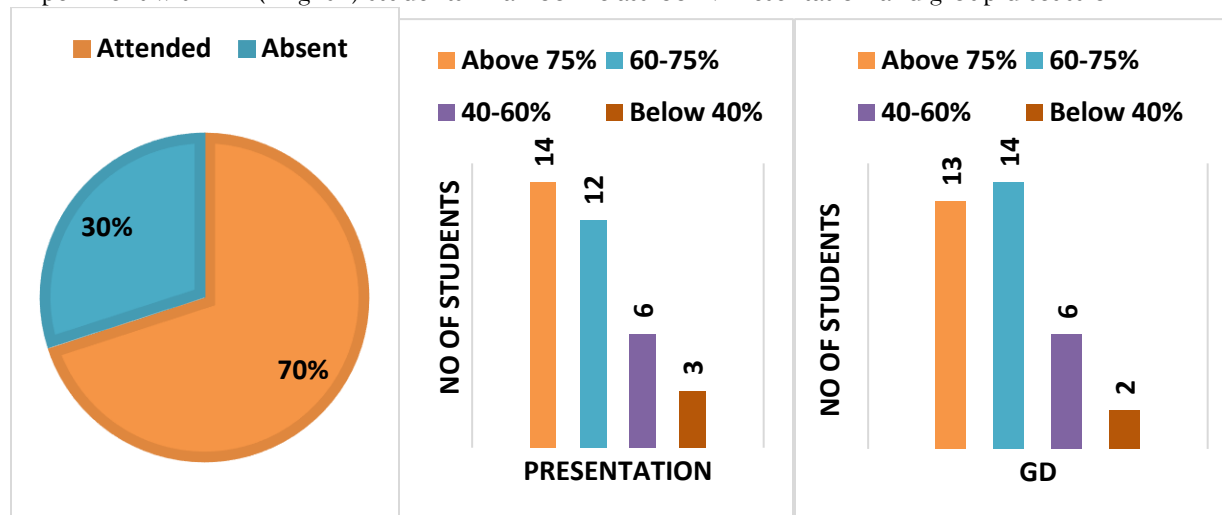

Figure 4:
Experiment with BA (English) students in a Zoom classroom. Presentation and group discussion

Comments of some students and staff

Assignments

Table 1: Questionnaire for Students

Feedback collected from students. Sample size: 70 students

S.No	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Online teaching is effective in communicating and it brings attention of class room.	30	25	5	8	2
2.	It encourages the students' independency, active learning and self-responsibility for learning	38	15	7	5	5
3.	Helps in developing the students for uplifting the higher level of learning styles	39	10	6	9	6
4.	It helps the students to collaborate, to interact, and take ownership during their convenient time and adds additional learning experience	43	11	4	6	6
5.	Online integrated learning is welcomed by all students as they are learning within their comfort zone	38	15	5	7	5
6.	Staff are comfortable in handling the ICT tools while handling the online classes	30	14	11	8	7
7.	Staff motivation and readiness is one of the important factors for successful implementation of ICT tools in online classes	37	13	10	6	4
8.	Since the class can be accessed from any place through mobile devices it is an advantage for the students	38	15	8	6	3
9.	Teachers can facilitate online discussion between students	35	14	8	7	6
10.	Providing meaningful feedback through this online platform is a valuable part of learning	30	23	9	6	2
11.	Online learning exposure may help student's transition into other learning management	36	17	8	5	4
12.	Retention of material during online learning is more when compared to traditional classroom	32	16	10	8	4
13.	Study material available in the ICT platform are adaptive and easy to learn format	35	18	8	6	3
14.	Lecture based subjects are best suited for online classes than class room	32	17	10	6	5
15.	Online classes are more of student controlled environment and it empowers the student community	33	16	10	7	4

Table 2: Questionnaire for Faculty Members
Feedback collected from teachers. Sample size: 20 teachers

No	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	All staff are ready to adapt ICT tools	5	7	3	3	2
2.	Online classes using ICT tools act as catalyst and support to the staff in preparation and delivery	6	7	3	3	1
3.	New dimensional learning irrespective of Socio-economic condition, peer pressure on performance, impact of prior performance	6	6	4	2	2
4.	Staff training and their knowledge in handling the infrastructure of ICT is comfortable	7	5	3	3	2
5.	It enhances interaction and increases student engagement	6	7	4	2	1
6.	Time is saved to a great extent	8	5	4	2	1
7.	Online teaching is completely paperless	7	6	3	3	1
8.	ICT tools have shown teachers new ways of teaching	6	8	3	2	1
9.	Online teaching complement a teacher's existing pedagogical philosophies	7	5	5	2	1
10.	Sharing of resources , expertise are excellent in ICT online platform	6	7	5	1	1
11.	Comfortable time learning hours increases the efficiency of student and staff	6	6	5	2	1
12.	Able to connect quickly with parents with more accurate data on the student performance	8	6	3	2	1
13.	ICT offers to staff for better data handling, presentation and increased conceptual understanding	7	7	4	1	1
14.	ICT plays major role in raising the standard of Institutions and performance	6	7	4	2	1
15.	ICT tools empowers the teaching community	11	6	2	1	1

Figure 5:
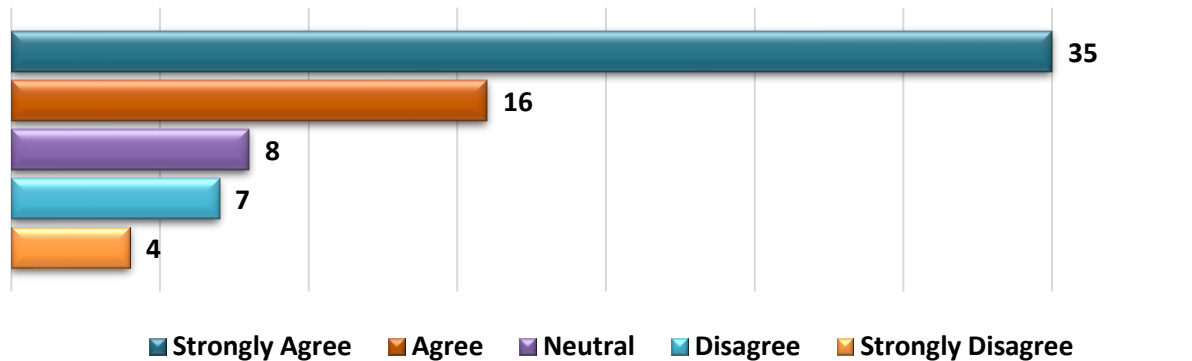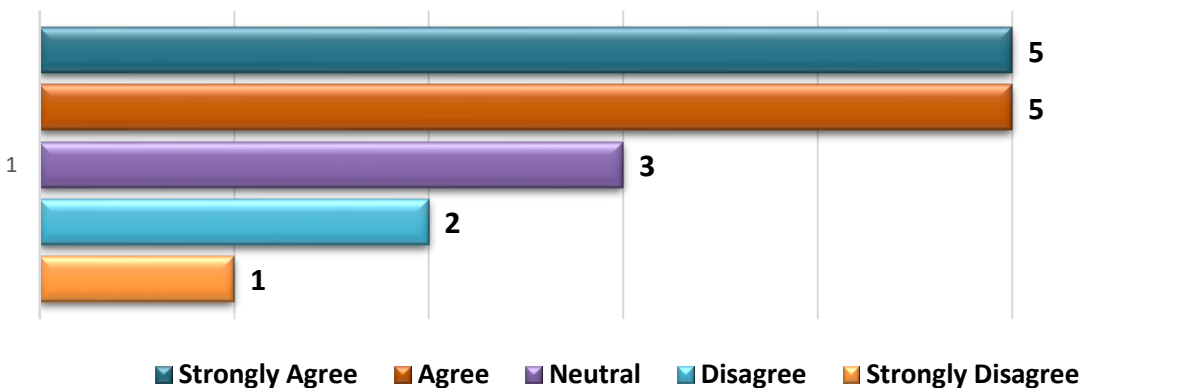**Students' Survey Results on Effectiveness, Competence, and Skill Developement**

Strongly Agree — 35
Agree — 16
Neutral — 8
Disagree — 7
Strongly Disagree — 4

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 6:
Staff Response on ICT Effectiveness

Strongly Agree — 5
Agree — 5
Neutral — 3
Disagree — 2
Strongly Disagree — 1

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Figure 1 shows the attendance and performance of the B Com class, where 60 out of 70 students participated in Google Classroom. Among the 60 students who were regular to the class, 52 students scored above 40 per cent in tests and 53 students scored above 40 per cent in the assignments they submitted. Figure 2 shows the attendance and participation of B Com students in Zoom class, where 50 out of 70 students regularly attended the Zoom class. Among the students who were regular to Zoom class, 45 students scored above 40 per cent in PowerPoint Presentations and 36 students in Group Discussions. Figure 3 shows that 90 per cent of the BA (English) students participated in Google Classroom. Among the 45 students who were regular to class, 40 students scored above 40 per cent in tests and 42 students scored above 40 per cent in assignments. Figure 4 shows the attendance and participation of BA (English) students in Zoom Class, 35 out of 50 students were regular to Zoom class. Among the 35 regular students, 32 students scored above 40 per cent in PowerPoint Presentations, and 33 students in Group Discussions. Figure 5 shows that 35 students strongly agreed, and 16 students agreed on the effectiveness of online classes. Figure 6 shows that out of the 20 staff, 5 strongly agreed, and 5 agreed with the advantages of online learning. A majority of the student community found online learning feasible and effective. The feedback received from the students brings out the qualitative analysis of the advantages of learning online. The teachers also reacted positively to the benefits of online teaching during COVID-19. Some senior teachers who found it difficult to adapt to the ICT initiatives were

a little resistant in their feedback to online teaching. In a nutshell, online teaching and learning were acknowledged and appreciated by the majority of the teachers and students,

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 created awareness among teachers and students regarding online teaching tools. Though there were some setbacks regarding this online teaching methodology, the benefits accrued were significant. In a sudden disruptive pandemic such as COVID-19, when the whole world was paralysed, the students found themselves engaged in their academics to some extent. The frustration and anxiety among the student community during COVID-19 was relieved to some extent by spending some quality time on their academics. It is believed that specific ICT tools have positive effects on student achievement when used appropriately to complement teachers' existing pedagogical methods. Parents were happy that their children were engaged in some learning process, understanding the complementary nature of e-learning.Learning did not stop even during the crisis. ICT proved to be a great facilitator of online learning and kept the learning process intact even during the pandemic. The teaching and learning process, with the help of ICT, has become more interactive and efficient. Students could be in constant touch with their teachers with the help of online classes conducted through Skype, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Google Classroom etc. We found that ICT, to a great extent, supported the students and teachers in the process of learning and teaching.This study found many benefits of using ICT in educating during COVID-19. It established learning was possible, and as demonstrated in some instances, it was quite enjoyable for the students. It enhanced interaction, access, and individual communication between the students and teachers. The crisis forced educators to quickly adapt to various ICT tools for teaching and effectively use them to transfer knowledge which otherwise happened using traditional offline methods; many of them adapted their lesson plans and teaching materials for online teaching. And particular ICT tools such as Google Classroom and Zoom were able to offer a platform that suited and encouraged virtual classrooms. On the one hand, these platforms kept the students engaged and ensured that learning continued, and on the other, they facilitated teaching for the educators by offering various tools to teach, monitor, interact, assess, and evaluate the student's learning. All these learnings on the efficient use of ICT in imparting knowledge should be put to continuous use. There is a significant need among low-proficiency students, and the traditional educational system has not provided them with additional skill enhancements for employability, particularly soft skills and communication. ICT could be effectively used to fill that need. Learning has been demonstrated using online tools. Teachers have become equipped to offer online teaching. And specific ICT platforms have become available to make teaching and learning easier online. The specific learnings from using Google Classroom and Zoom could easily be adapted to address the vital need among low-proficiency students to enhance their communication skills and equip them better for employability.

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