

## **Classrooms Beyond Walls: The Spread of Online Teaching–Learning in Secondary Education in**

**Malda District**

**Menoka Sultana**

M.A. (Education), University of Gour Banga, Malda, West Bengal. B.Ed. Baba Saheb Ambedkar

Education University Erstwhile, WBUTTEPA, Kolkata, West Bengal

**bristi0078@gmail.com**

### **ABSTRACT**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online teaching and learning became a crucial means to keep education running in the secondary schools of Malda district. Teachers and students adopted various digital methods, some of which proved to be more convenient and accessible for both groups. Although online education brought several challenges, such as poor internet connectivity and lack of devices, its importance during the crisis cannot be denied. Many teachers managed technical problems by recording video lectures in advance, checking their materials beforehand, and keeping alternative plans ready so that classes could continue without interruption. Among the commonly used platforms, Google Meet and WhatsApp were the most preferred for regular teaching. In addition to these, platforms like Zoom, YouTube, Teachmint, and school websites were also used for sharing lessons and study materials. However, Google Meet was found to be particularly effective for conducting continuous classes, as it allows audio, video, chat, and screen-sharing features in a single space, making teaching more interactive and organized.

The study is based on a qualitative research approach. Data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires from both teachers and students of secondary schools in Malda district, including government and private institutions. The researcher selected participants using purposive sampling to ensure relevant and meaningful insights.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Pandemic, Online Teaching, Secondary Schools, Malda District,

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to Donna J. Abernathy, online learning is a process of acquiring knowledge via the application of electronic and digital media. Simply put, online teaching-learning provides an interactive platform through which a teacher and a student are able to interact and share ideas even without necessarily meeting in a classroom. This type of learning has turned out to be particularly significant in the Malda district in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, as students could now study at home. It is also more personalized in learning where students are more interested to read topics that are not on the textbooks, and will have more interest in learning.

Online education that came up during the pandemic has proven to be a powerful support system both to teachers and learners in the Malda district, as they have slightly hope to go through with the

educational process despite school closures. On a larger scale, e-learning plays a critical role in ensuring that a country such as India meets its development goals and especially with respect to skill development and education of human resource. Nevertheless, it is also associated with a number of difficulties, including the inability to have appropriate devices, weak internet connection, and insufficient technical expertise among users. However, despite these challenges, online learning continued to keep the students entertained with worksheets, recorded video lectures, frequent assignments, and so on that the process of learning did not come to a standstill.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Basu and Mishra** (2020) conducted a study on higher secondary students to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their stress levels and behaviour. They selected 450 students (250 boys and 200 girls) using a stratified random sampling method. The study found that there was no major difference in stress and behavioural changes between boys and girls. However, the pandemic situation significantly influenced students' mental conditions and led to noticeable behavioural changes. The researchers suggested that counselling sessions should be arranged for students and that alternative teaching methods should be adopted to reduce the gap between schools and learners. In the context of Malda district, such findings are relevant, as many students also faced emotional stress and adjustment issues during the shift to online education.

**Fauzi and Khusuma** (2020) studied the views of elementary school teachers regarding online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a survey method, they collected responses from 50 teachers through questionnaires. The study revealed that although teachers understood the importance of online learning, they faced many challenges such as lack of proper facilities, poor internet connectivity, difficulties in planning and evaluation, and limited cooperation from parents. Around 80% of teachers expressed dissatisfaction with online teaching. These challenges are quite similar to those experienced by teachers in Malda district, where technological limitations and lack of resources made online teaching difficult. The study recommended that policymakers should improve support systems and develop better strategies for effective online education.

**Gope and Rawat** (2021) focused on the issue of equal access to education during the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Using a descriptive method, they collected data from government reports, newspapers, and articles. The study found that lack of infrastructure, irregular electricity, and unavailability of smart devices were major barriers to online learning. The researchers warned that continuing online education without proper support could increase inequality among students. This is highly relevant to Malda district, where many students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds struggled to access online classes due to similar problems.

**Jena** (2020) examined the role of online learning in India during the lockdown period. The study highlighted that online education was the most effective way to continue learning while maintaining safety and social distancing. It also discussed various initiatives taken by the Government of India and the use of different online platforms for teaching. The findings showed that online learning

helped teachers and students stay connected and made education more flexible and interactive through tools like video conferencing. In the context of Malda district, online learning also played an important role during the pandemic, though its success depended largely on access to technology and digital skills. Overall, the study suggests that online learning has the potential to transform the future of education, but it requires proper planning and equal access for all students.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PAPER**

The present study is conducted with the following objectives in the context of Malda district:

1. To identify the different platforms used for online teaching and learning.
2. To examine the various ways in which instructional materials are delivered to students.

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

#### **Method:**

Based on the nature of the study, a descriptive survey method has been used to understand the situation clearly.

#### **Population and Sample:**

**Population:** The population of the study includes teachers and students from both government and private secondary schools in Malda district.

**Sample:** The researcher has used purposive sampling technique for selecting the participants:

1. Students of classes IX and X from both government and private schools.
2. Selected schools from Malda district, including both well-performing and less-performing institutions from different areas.

#### **Tools Used:**

The researcher has prepared the following tools for data collection:

1. A semi-structured questionnaire for students to understand the problems they faced during online learning in the pandemic.
2. A semi-structured questionnaire for teachers to identify the challenges they experienced during online teaching.

#### **Data Collection Procedure:**

The data were collected by sending semi-structured questionnaires to teachers and students through Google meet and WhatsApp in Malda district.

**Table Google Meet and WhatsApp:**

Teachers and Students	Private school Students	Public school Students	Private school Teachers	Public school Teachers	
The Best School	90%	100%			
			Math	50%	90%
			Geography	25%	75%
			English	75%	100%
The least Good School	60%	70%			
			Math	100%	100%
			Geography	75%	90%
			English	90%	100%

**Data Analysis:**

The collected data focus on analysing the problems faced by both students and teachers during the COVID-19 period, especially in the context of online teaching and learning.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Objective:** To find out the platforms used for delivering online teaching and learning.

**Research Question:** What platforms were used for online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malda district?

An online learning platform refers to a digital system that provides teachers and students with tools, resources, and communication facilities to support the teaching–learning process. These platforms help in conducting classes, sharing study materials, giving assignments, and maintaining interaction between teachers and students even without physical classrooms.

Based on the data collected from secondary schools in Malda district, it is found that several online platforms were used during the pandemic. The most commonly used platforms include Google Meet and WhatsApp, as they are easy to access and require less technical knowledge. Teachers used Google Meet mainly for conducting live classes, while WhatsApp was widely used for sharing notes, assignments, and important instructions.

In addition to these, some teachers and students also used platforms like Zoom, YouTube, Teachmint, and school websites for teaching and learning purposes. However, the choice of platform often depended on factors such as internet availability, access to smartphones, and digital skills of both teachers and students. Overall, Google Meet emerged as the most effective platform for regular online classes due to its features like video interaction, screen sharing, and group communication, making the learning process more organized and interactive in the context of Malda district.

## **MAJOR FINDINGS**

The researcher made a sincere effort to identify the different platforms used for online teaching and learning through a survey conducted among teachers and students of secondary schools in Malda district. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all selected schools shifted to online mode, where teachers gradually improved their technical skills and moved from traditional chalk-and-board methods to digital teaching. The most commonly used platforms were WhatsApp, Google Meet, Zoom, YouTube, Teachmint, and school websites. Data collected from both government and private schools show that teachers and students mainly relied on these easily accessible platforms for classes, assignments, and communication.

However, the study also reveals that many participants were not aware of several government-provided learning platforms such as internet-based resources, podcasts, community radio, IVRS (Interactive Voice Response System), and other web-based initiatives. This indicates a significant gap between government schemes and their actual reach among students and teachers in Malda district. Most schools asked students to complete textbook exercises and submit them through WhatsApp, email, or Google Classroom. To solve their doubts, students often depended on additional books, online resources, and YouTube videos.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There is a strong need to provide proper online teaching aids, especially in government schools of Malda district.
- Awareness programmes should be organized for both teachers and students regarding government initiatives and available digital learning platforms.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the long run, online teaching–learning can be highly beneficial for both students and teachers, as it introduces them to modern, technology-based methods of education. However, for effective implementation, teachers need proper training through workshops and webinars on digital tools and online teaching techniques. In a developing country like India, it is essential to ensure the availability of proper equipment, internet access, and digital resources so that online education can be carried out more effectively and inclusively, especially in districts like Malda.

**WORKS CITED**

- Anderson, Terry. *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning*. Athabasca University Press, 2008.
- Basu, J., and K. Mishra. "Impact of COVID-19 on the Behavioral Pattern of Higher Secondary School Students in North 24 Parganas District of West Bengal: A Case Study." *A Global Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. III, no. IV, 2020.
- Dhawan, Shivangi. "Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis." *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2020, pp. 5–22.
- Fauzi, I., and S. Khusuma. "Teachers' Elementary School in Online Learning of COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions." *Jurnal Iqra Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.25217/ji.v5i1.914>.
- Gope, M., and P. Rawat. "Problems of Accessing Equal Educational Opportunity to All during COVID-19 Pandemic with Special Reference to Indian Context and Recommendations to Authorities." *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2021.
- Jena, K. "Online Learning during Lockdown Period for COVID-19 in India." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, vol. 9, no. 8, 2020.
- Means, Barbara, et al. *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies*. U.S. Department of Education, 2010.
- "List of Digital Learning Platforms for Students by MHRD and Government of India." *Jagran Josh*, 14 Aug. 2021, <https://m.jagranjosh.com/articles/list-of-digital-learning-platforms-for-the-students-by-mhrd-and-government-of-india>.
- "National Education Policy 2020." *Ministry of Education, Government of India*, <https://www.education.gov.in>.