

Virtual Learning

In

COVID-19 Pandemic

Technical Communication

Group Members

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Abstract

Virtual learning has become the compulsory element of all educational institutions like schools, colleges, and universities worldwide due to pandemic of COVID-19 crisis. This deadly situation of COVID-19 has resulted in offline teaching. Virtual learning have produce an effective and efficiency teaching methods which brings out the best in student. In order to find out student's view towards virtual learning, some primary and secondary source of data has been collected. Its main aim is to study the process and methods of virtual learning among many students who are involved in it. The findings of this study review the literature review and discussion of virtual learning and its impact on the student. In conclusion, virtual learning has become so popular among the students around the global because of lockdown due to COVID-19 crisis.

Keywords : Virtual Learning, Mobility, COVID-19.

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1. Introduction

Virtual Learning Environment, also known as VLE, is an online platform designed to amplify students' learning experience. It is a technique of teaching and learning with the assistance of electronic means, internet and other available online tools.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a disease outbreak caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The disease is widespread across many countries and causing critical illness among the people. WHO (World Health Organization) declared this virus as an outbreak in January 2020 and eventually a pandemic just after 2 months in March, 2020 (WHO, 2020).

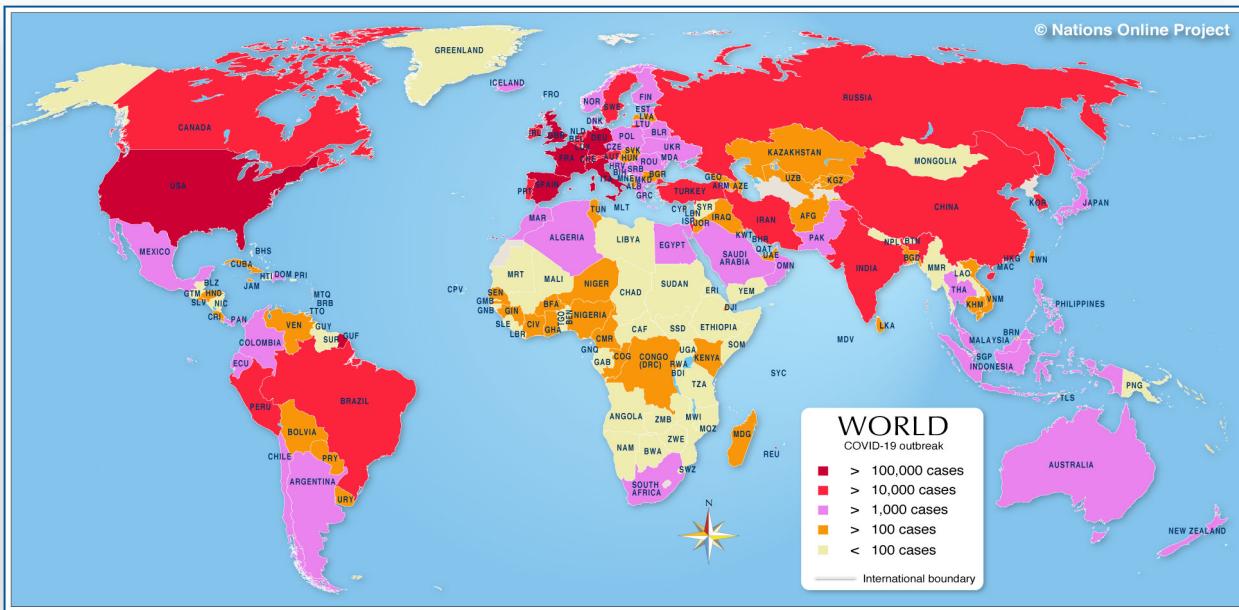


Fig: Coronavirus Map around the globe. (Nations Online Project, 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic created havoc in various sectors including education. This is when the concept of VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) stood up, becoming crucial than ever before. Following all the COVID-19 rules provided by WHO, virtual learning became the obvious solution for tutors and students to augment learning experience.

2. Literature Review

The infectious coronavirus and its pandemic created an immense chaos in educational department. According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), sudden closure of educational institutions resulted in 1.4 billion students getting away from their classrooms. The figure below displays data (between February and March, 2020) of students who got affected because of school closures during COVID-19 pandemic. (Wikipedia, 2020)

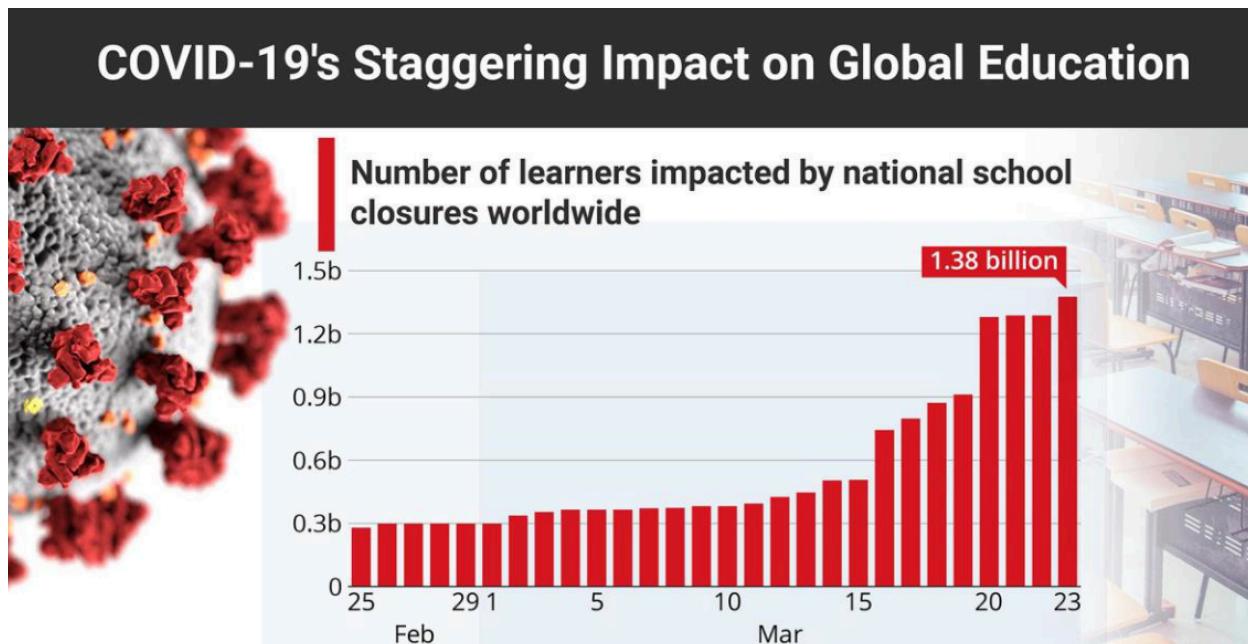


Fig: COVID-19 stumble impact on Global Education (The World Economic Forum, 2020)

2.1 Virtual Learning or e-learning

To overcome this complication, the concept of Virtual Learning Environment came into effect. Schools, universities and other educational institutions reinitiated teaching, focusing on remote learning approaches. With virtual learning, education became possible despite the global

pandemic: not physically but virtually. Top online platforms like Udemy, Codecademy and Skillshare are started adding more free courses so that students can get access to courses they like to learn. Meanwhile teamwork hubs like Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Google Meet provided free services for students once they verify themselves. With virtual learning environment, learning process got pliable as well as more innovational. (aswathynandan, 2015)

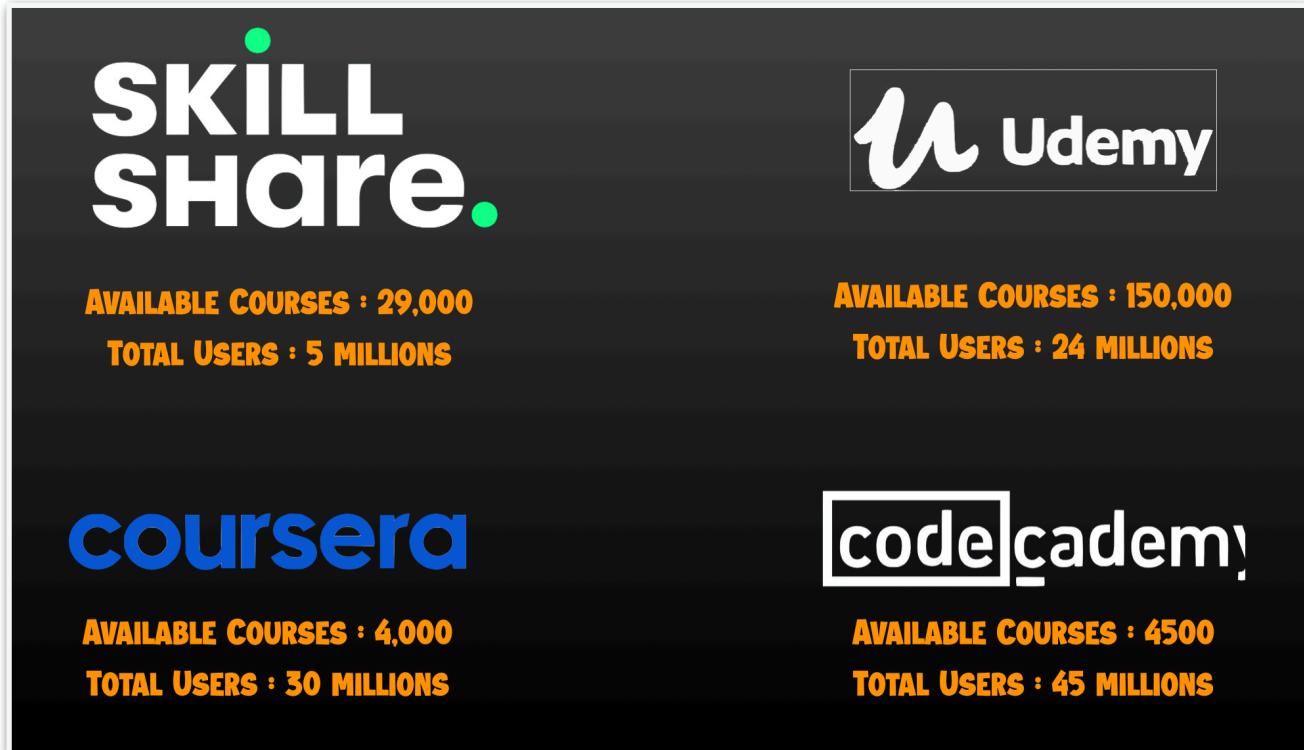


Fig. Popular Online Learning Platforms

2.2 Virtual Learning or e-learning

What's more, Virtual Learning Environment has some further consequential elements, fruitful for both learners and institutions. More than just a communication between tutors and students, VLE platforms provides important features such as :

- Email and chatting features to create better communication and alliance

- Accessing and storing required study resources for future use
- Administrative features such as course credits, installments and other details (Wikipedia, 2020)

Moreover, platforms like Microsoft Teams and Zoom provides features like creating a classroom environment on web applications, with the help of internet. This allows teachers to teach students as if everyone is in the classroom, connected to each other. Every student can ask their questions or discuss about topics just like in physical classrooms. Notes uploaded by teacher can be accessed by students anytime and anywhere for their usage.



Fig.: Virtual Classroom on Internet (The Kathmandu Post, 2020)

2.3 Virtual Learning : A necessity

The COVID-19 pandemic shut down the whole world and virtual learning ended up becoming a necessity more than just an alternative. This catastrophe of coronavirus made everyone rely on modern technologies of learning i.e., VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). Virtual learning became something really important for learners. Some of the advantages of virtual learning from our field are:

- While classrooms in colleges and universities are confined to limited students, a VLE platform grants opportunity to teach considerable number of students at a time.
- Flexibility in time and location is a key to a lot of students and teachers, especially during the pandemic.
- Being allied with virtual learning environment, students like us could get immediate feedbacks to our complications in learning. Tutors or classmates can be connected easily via group chat or live conferencing.

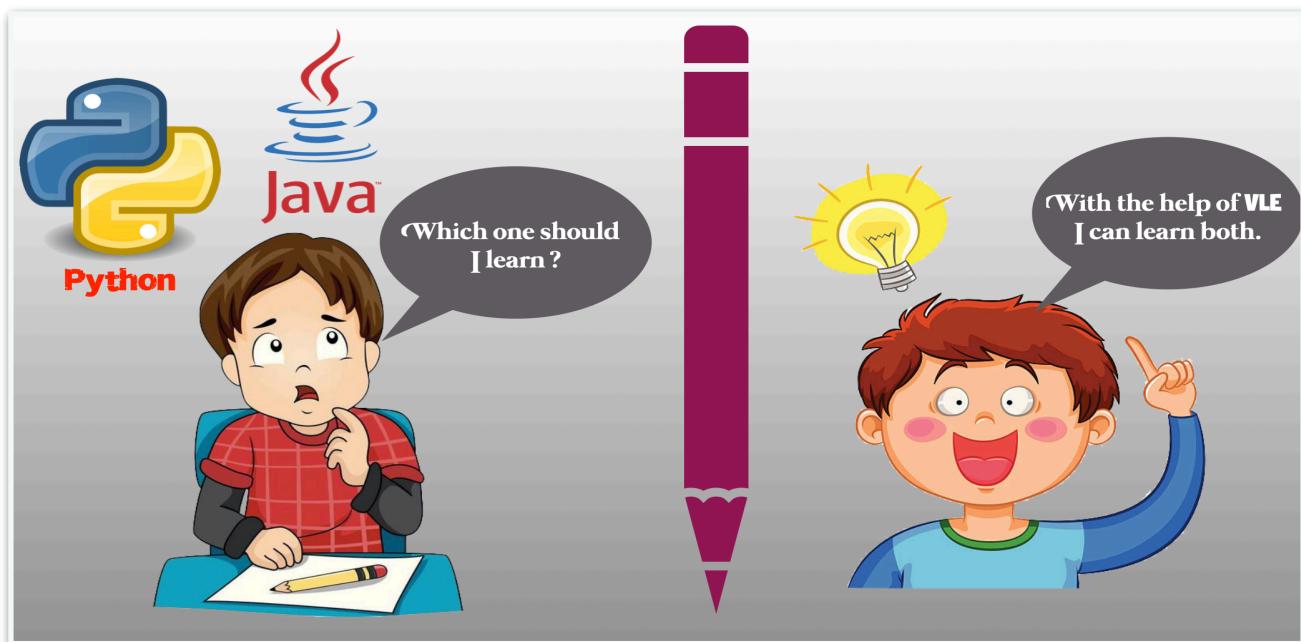


Fig: Variation in course selection with VLE

- Having virtual learning, there is variety in available courses. Students can decide and choose what they like to study. This will also further help in career development of the student. For example, students like to learn a program which was not included in college syllabus. With VLE, he/she can learn whatever they want to, without facing any difficulties (Conradi, 2020).

2.4 Challenges of Virtual Learning Environment

That said, Virtual Learning Environment also have some challenges and hurdles. Firstly, virtual learning is one of the ways to limit children's social interaction, which ultimately affects the creativity of a learner. Since there is no face to face communication, a student can neglect his social and emotional expertise, being surrounded by virtual environment. (Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal (TEAN)).

Secondly, lack of proper preparation can be evidently seen in students allied to virtual learning. Students will face obstacles in solving real life challenges that are present beyond the computer screen. Moreover, the concept of virtual learning is still not practiced properly in most of the countries. Not only tutors lose control over the students and classroom, but there is also no proper control over learning atmosphere. (Taylor Francis Online, 2016)

2.5 Pros and Cons of Virtual Learning

E-learning method has both positive as well as negative impact in student's life. Merits and drawbacks depend upon users and their methods or usage.

Firstly, the use of a virtual learning environment helped us to learn our course easily without any doubt because this learning system provides us with video recording facilities which we can access anytime and watch repeatedly. Throughout the pandemic, we felt that we had forgotten our schedule that we used to follow before the pandemic. Now, this learning system has helped us to improve our schedule and focus on our study more curiously.

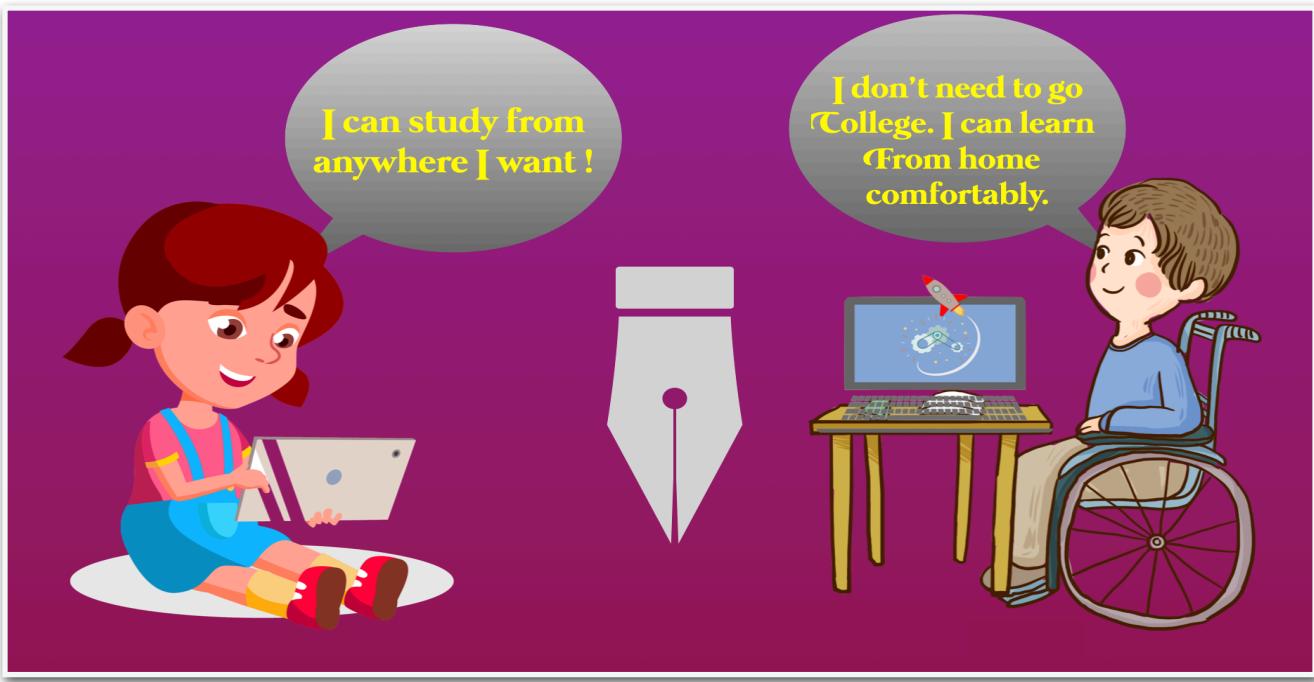


Fig. Mobility in Virtual Learning

Moreover, a mentor can guide us with our problems one by one any instantly via virtual learning platforms. While we were using it and taking lessons of a specific course, we were able to discuss our problem using features available in the application. This helps teachers to guide and discuss chapters among all active students.. Also, this facility helped students to get rid of shyness and made everyone able to express themselves virtually be it asking any issues that we felt or presenting our assignments. (aswathynandan, 2015)

On the other hand, the tech field of study also experienced few negative impacts too. Majority of the students were not able to attend any classes due to lack of internet facilities as they could not connect to virtual classrooms, especially in rural areas. So, this somehow hampered the mentality of some students and even faded their interest. The minimized curiosity of students became problematic and mental pressure without any productive work became a new issue. In brief, this system raised the bar of laziness by some extent and distracted students from doing their task. Most of the students might not feel good taking classes online rather they prefer to visit physical classes. In our field, as students were not made compulsory to open their video camera while

attending classes, students felt being away from teachers and that for sure, hamper in their concentration towards the teacher. Meanwhile, students could be busy using mobile phones or even do some other work like sleeping or playing games, rather than studying. Taking all these in consideration, virtual learning environments cannot be declared completely advantageous in our field of study. (Ghimire, 2020)

3. Methods

VLE has distinctive methods of learning. Selection of appropriate learning method can be handy in learning effectively. The learning activities take place either entirely or partially online. They can be conducted by means of electronic media without the use of the Internet. Organization needs to design their delivery structure to meet the requirement of majority of students or its user. General Learning Management System (LMS), Virtual classroom, Gamification Learning Management system (GLMS) are some main methods for delivering virtual learning environment (Bozkurt, 2020).

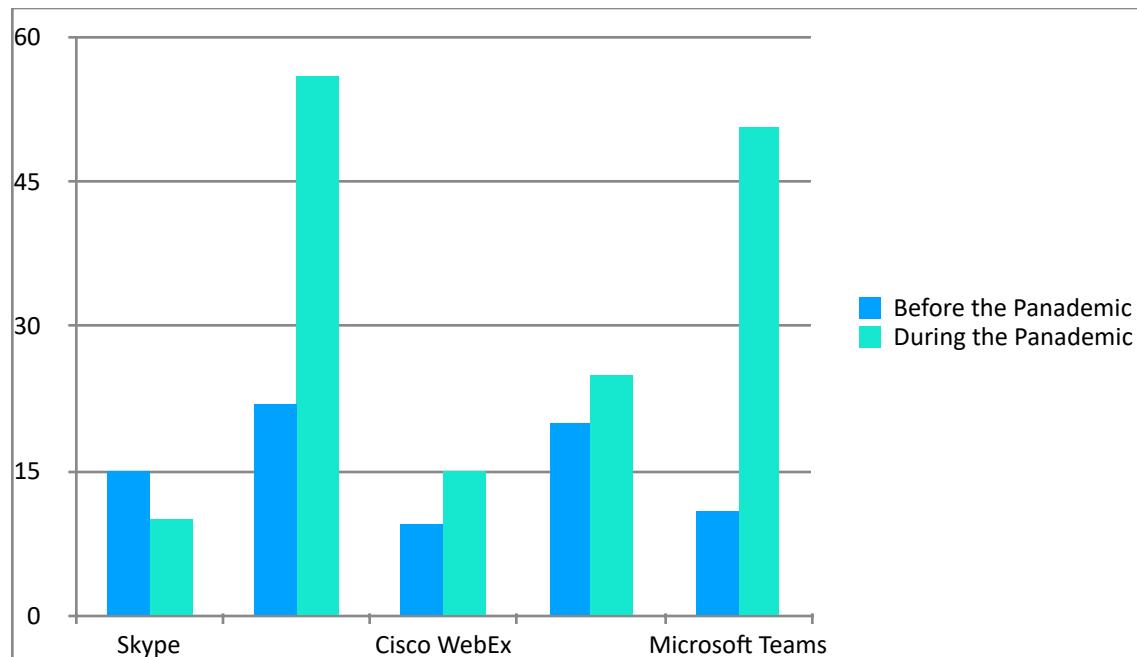


Fig: Use of specific platforms before and during COVID19 crisis (E-learning industry, 2021)

A lot of students are quarantined inside their home due to COVID-19 pandemic and they access to their educational institutions. There are different ways of getting connected online via online resources like, Zoom, Teams, Skype, Google Meet. By the help of these kinds of channels, students are given knowledge, ability to communicate and practice with their teacher. This type of online platforms fulfill the needs of physical class to some extent. (Dhawan, 2020)

3.1 Zoom



Fig. Online Class on Zoom

Most of students and organization choose Zoom for virtual learning due to its easy accessibility. It provides stable connectivity for below 100 users. This program or applications give unrestricted coverage free of charge. The user of this applications also have access to audio, video, screen sharing, recording, non-verbal reviews and many more features. Firstly, students have to register by school email address and provide required things there. The host should provide id and password to enter that meeting. Initially, the time of meeting was 40 minutes but it is set to infinite. (M.S. and Phalen, 2020)

3.2 Google Meet

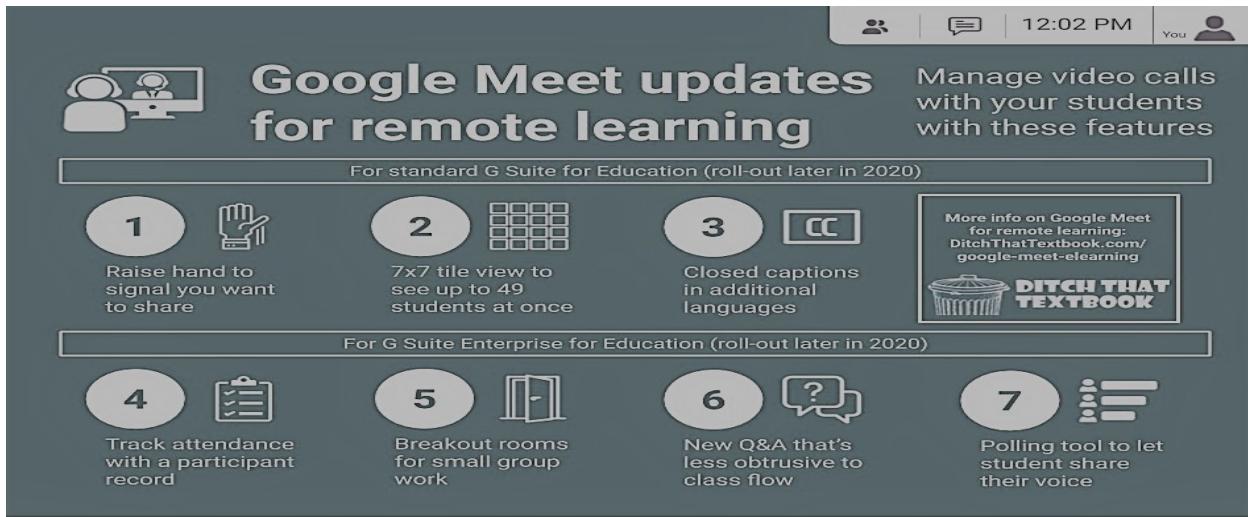


Fig: Google Meet(E-learning industry,2020)

Google provides a few online learning programs or applications. Google Hangouts, Google Meeting, and Google Classroom are famous applications for virtual learning. Google Meetings and Google Hangout have video conferencing but Google classroom do not have this feature of video conferencing. We can also exchange photos, documents, videos and also share the screen. The use of Google Meets has been increased by the factor of 20 between February to June of 2020 due to this pandemic. (M.S. and Phalen, 2020)

3.2 Microsoft Teams

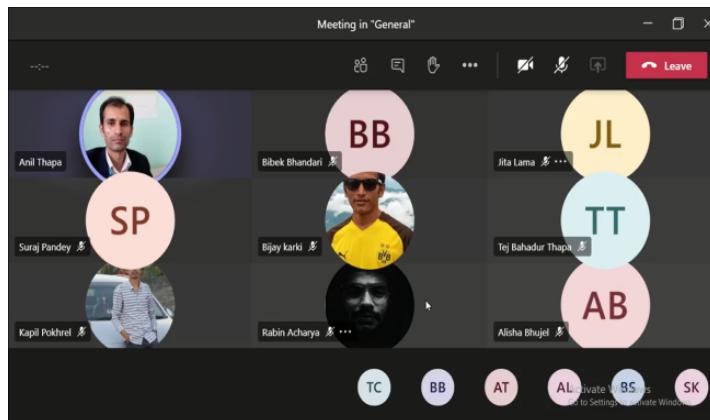


Fig: Online class on Microsoft teams

The use of Microsoft teams has been increasing day by day due to its convenience during this COVID19 pandemic. It is a partially supported program which is developed by Microsoft 365 family of products. This application is slowly replacing other communication network like Skype and Microsoft Classroom. Teams provide workspace chat, video conferencing; file sharing, recording and device integration. This is made easier to do by shared workplace applications. During this pandemic, we also used Microsoft teams for online educational learning class. (Moran, 2020).

4. Discussion

Although, there are some good reasons to use a virtual learning environment in pandemic but in case of using personally, I think there are some positive as well as negative impact that it creates throughout study in pandemic.

Firstly, the use of a virtual learning environment helps us to learn our course easily without any doubt because this learning system provides us with video recording facilities which we can watch repeatedly. Throughout the pandemic, we felt that we had forgotten our schedule that we used to follow before the pandemic. Now, this learning system has helped us to improve our schedule and focus on our study more curiously. Moreover, a mentor can guide us with our problems one by one. While we were using it and taking lessons of our representative course, we were able to discuss our problem using raising hand emoji. This may help teachers to guide and discuss with all active students, teachers can teach their students one by one. Also, this facility helped us to get rid of our shyness and made us able to ask any issues that we felt while studying without any fear. (Wang&Cheng, 2020)

On the other hand, there are some few negative impacts too that can be felt while using it. Majority of the students were not able to attend any classes due to lack of Wi-Fi facilities and stuff in rural areas. Distance learning conducted in a virtual learning environment with electronic study content designed for self-paced (asynchronous) or live web-conferencing (synchronous) online teaching and tutoring. It's hard for teachers, students, and parents to start using a learning management system or any other digital tool out of nowhere without additional training. So, this

might have minimized the curiosity of students toward study. Similarly, this system might have increased the laziness and also distracted the schedule of the student. Most of the students might not feel good taking classes online rather they prefer to visit physical classes. Since, students need not to open their cam while attending classes they might be less concentrated towards the teacher while they might be busy using mobile or prefer to sleep. Besides these problems there are other problems too . So, a virtual learning environment might not be advantageous to all the students.(Ghanour & Ezzat ,2020)

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