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# DIGITAL LEARNING AND THE ONLINE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA: PERSPECTIVES ON 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT
*Present Era is mostly called the age of Science and Technology. In our human civilization, the necessity of science and technology has been felt everywhere and education is one of the needed aspects of it. Education is an important factor of human civilization to improve the quality of living standards. To achieve this goal, modern Science and technology play the most vital role. Science and technologies are not just help to grow online education system; even today, it's impact is being noticed in regulation of educational platforms as well as creating a fast-evolving curriculum for modern formal education. In this study researchers explore that how our online education system put the base of our future learning aspects and how it going to reshape the education system with the help of science and technology. Researchers used secondary data to analyses the objectives of this present study.*
**KEYWORDS:** *Digital Learning, Online Education System, Virtual classroom, Challenges, Opportunities*

## INTRODUCTION
In the last few years, the Development of online education system evolved tremendous way and also it is increasing day by day. In traditional education system, where students are doing various activities such as attending offline classes, reading books, acquiring various educational knowledge, submitting assignments etc. but after the massive development of technology and Internet connectivity, Online education is becoming a flexible instructional delivery system that encompasses any kind of learning that takes place via the Internet (Haleem et al., 2022). As a result, today's education not be possible to deliver knowledge without the help of technological support. Online learning gives educators an opportunity to reach students who could not be able to enroll in a traditional classroom course as well as support those students who are need to learn on their own schedule and their own pace (Kumari et al. 2021).

The quantity of distance learners and online degree holders are large and increasing rapidly. Institutions those offers online learning courses are also increasing in number like Amity University, Manipal University, LPU, Chandigarh University, Jain University etc. Students who are pursuing their degrees via online courses must be selective, to ensure that their course should be done through a reputed and credentialed institution. With the easy accessibility of the internet and technologies, this dream will be fulfilled quickly, now students are able to access information anytime and anyplace that would normally not be available in a traditional classroom.
'COVID-19', the world epidemic had taken a large sharp across the worldwide, as a result it creates an inauspicious situation. Many countries had compiled various strict rules because the outbreak of the Novel Corona Virus. The whole world had shut down, as results shows social deterioration, economic downfall and political division which had been affected their economy, politics, health, and last but not the least education also. Every aspect of our education system, like- daily classes, teaching-learning process, assessment & examination and also the administration system had hampered by this peril. The education system can never be abandoned because education is a continuous, dynamic and lifelong process. Though in that time education system had freeze traditionally and formally, many institutes provided online classes and video conferencing for imparting education. So, actually COVID-19 had the transition period where online education took the place of traditional education system because the whole education systems of India were in a great trouble.

We know that every student belongs from various socio-economic contexts that's why their need, interests, attitude, aptitude is different to each other and we think that online education system has the potential capability to fulfill these needs.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS OF THE PRESENT STUDY
**Hong et al. (2020)** conducted a comparative study between online education and traditional offline education during COVID-19. In the study researcher aims to find out the comparative analysis between online education and traditional offline education and explore the direction of medical education reform in colleges and universities. For this purpose, researcher surveys among teachers and students and they were conducted on live broadcast courses and traditional online courses by Guanghua School of Stomatology, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China. The result shows that the effective and proper use of online education in stomatology can help improve teaching effect significantly, but it is impossible to replace the traditional classroom.

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**Jindal et al. (2018)** explore the challenges and opportunities for online education in India. The aim of the study was to identify the major challenges and opportunities for online education in India. In this study, researcher had identified the key factors which will boost online education in India and also identified internet penetration; low cost of online education, ease of doing course, initiative by government, employer's recognition and bridging gap were the key factors the growth of online education. The study also looks into what opportunities are there in future in education sector.

**Jena (2020)** conducted a study to explore the online learning during lockdown period for Covid-19 in India". The main goal of this paper to Study the what measures taken by Government of India to support online learning process during the lockdown period for Covid-19 and Merits and merits & demerits of online learning platform are also discussed. For this study researcher was conducted some online counselling classes and online induction meetings with learners of different Learner Support centres under Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Regional centre, Bhubaneswar. This research uses Video conferencing software ZOOM/Google Meet to collect the data. This research concludes that during the lockdown period for Covid-19, online learning is the best platform to keep learners engaged and safe by maintaining social distancing.

**Camilleri (2021)** conduct a study on shifting education from traditional and blended learning approaches to a fully virtual and remote course delivery: Implications from COVID-19". This study discussed the latest opportunities and challenges that affected higher educational institutions, following the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic.

**Hiltz et al. (2005)** conduct a study to investigate the evolution of online learning and the revolution in higher education. This study discussed about online learning is a new social process that is beginning to act as a complete substitute for both distance learning and traditional face to face class. This research is qualitative research. This study conclude that we must assume the technology of online learning will produce learning systems of a blended nature that are far better than the prior gold standard of the face-to-face class.

**Dhawan (2020)** conducted a study on Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis. The aim of this research to explore the growth of EdTech Start-ups and online learning. This study includes the importance of online learning and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Challenges analysis of e-learning modes in the time of Covid-19. The research tool used for analysing the data which amassed from different sources for this study is a content analysis and the research method is descriptive research. This study is completely based on the secondary data. This study concludes with some suggestions and recommendations for the success of online mode of learning during a crisis-like situation.

**Kimmel et al. (2020)** conducted a study to know the methodology for retaining student learning during the Pandemic. This is qualitative research. This study discussed about the different modes of learning that are considered include total face to face, total remote, hybrid, Synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning and appropriate technological platforms. It's also discussed about various kinds of challenges, instructional issues, and assessment issues.

**Singh et al. (2021)** conducts a study on Online Learning as Future Transition of Education in Indian Prospect. The aims of the study to present the expected new normal in the near future, which requires proper infrastructure, well-trained teachers and students without any inhibitions, uniform government policies, and fast universal access to network. This study discussed about various types of Digital Educational Platforms launched in India and Global Trends and Indian initiatives for Online Education. This Study concludes that it is better to continue with teaching-learning with the help of technology integrated in our future education and teaching approaches.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the different aspects between the online and offline education?
2. What are the various platforms and tools of online education?
3. What are the major challenges and opportunities of online learning?

## OBJECTIVES

1. To know the different aspects between the online and offline education.
2. To explore the various platforms and tools of online education.
3. To find out the Challenges and Opportunities of online learning.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. The exploratory method helps the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the selected topic by exploring various dimensions and existing information related to the study. At the same time, the descriptive method enables the researchers to describe and analyze the characteristics, facts, and conditions associated with the subject matter in a systematic and scientific manner. This method is suitable for the study because it helps in collecting detailed information and presenting it in an organized way.

The study is mainly based on secondary sources of data. Secondary data were collected from different reliable and authentic sources such as online books, academic journals, research papers, magazines, newspapers, government reports, websites, and other internet resources. These sources helped the researchers to understand the background of the study, review previous research works, and gather relevant information related to the objectives of the research. The use of secondary data also made the study more comprehensive and informative.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Objective 1: To know the different aspects between the online and offline education system**

Here is the comparison backed by the latest data from the UGC (University Grants Commission), Technavio, and independent education surveys from 2024-2026.

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| Feature | Online Learning (EdTech) | Offline Learning (Traditional) |
|---|---|---|
| **Market Size (India)** | Projected 26.56 Lakh Crore by 2026 | Estimated 9.7 lakh crore to 9.8 lakh crore (Total sector) |
| **Student Preference** | 26.4% (Significant drop from 61% in 2022) | 73.6% (Strong resurgence) |
| **Retention Rate** | 25% - 60% (Due to repayable content) | 8% - 10% (Traditional one-time lecture) |
| **Cost Savings** | 60% - 70% (No travel/ hostel/ relocation cost) | 0% (High tuition fees with living expenses) |
| **Motivation Level** | Only 14% feel highly motivated | 86% feel more motivated in-person |
| **Course Fees** | ₹30,000 – ₹1,20,000 | ₹1,50,000 – ₹4,50,000 |
| **Accommodation** | ₹0 (Live at home) | ₹80,000 – ₹2,00,000 |
| **Travel/Daily** | ₹0 | ₹15,000 – ₹40,000 |

**Difference between Online Learning and Offline Learning**

a. **Time Management:** Both the modes of learnings required time. A student needed sufficient time to master the course which in he enrolled himself or herself by offline learning but in online study learning time limit is strictly prohibited. Offline learning required time discipline but online study allows a student to fit learning according to his own pace and own time. (Poonia, 2023)

b. **Financial Requirement:** Cost is certainly a most important factor that highly differentiates both the modes of education. Traditional offline learning involves a hell lot of cost to manage the physical assets while the online study is less expensive and comparatively cheaper than face to face offline learning.

c. **Convenience:** Online study is more convenient. It offers students time and location flexibility instead of binding them within a time limited frame (Aslam et al. 2021). While the traditional offline mode of study involves less convenience, because it is disciplined in physical appearance.

d. **Choice of Courses:** Traditional offline learning offers limited tried and tested courses for the students while the online learning offers a wide variety of courses where a student can choose any course according to his or her skill and interest. The online study also helps a student to explore the unexplored paths.

e. **Exposure:** Exposure in offline studies limited to a particular number of fellow students from the institution but online learning offers a vast exposure. Any fellow students can be enrolled or learned from those courses who are wanted to enhance his skill or a congested time.

By this above discussion, we have a clear picture of what's inside the online learning and how it is distinct from traditional or offline learning. Though it is unproved that the quality of education does depend on what the mode of learning but both of modes comes with pros and cons. (Ambitions Commerce Institute Pvt Ltd.)

**Teachers and students' feedback on online and offline courses:**

According to Yun Hong, Xiaolan Li, Yingwen Lin, Jun Xie, Xutong Yan and Zhengmei L, they found that

| Aspect | Online Live Class | Traditional Online Course |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher Preparation Effort | More effort and planning required | Comparatively easier to manage |
| Preparation Time (6–10 days) | 30% teachers | 26% teachers |
| Preparation Time (More than 10 days) | 30% teachers | 48% teachers |
| Providing Learning Materials | 63% teachers provided before class | Less emphasis on pre-class materials |
| Recorded Classes | 91.18% students found playback useful | Useful for revision |
| Classroom Interaction | Lower satisfaction | Better interaction |
| Teacher Control of Class | More difficult | Better classroom control |
| Overall Satisfaction | Lower | Higher |
| Student Preference | Less preferred | More preferred |

The data suggests that while Online Live Classes are superior for revision and logistics thanks to that 91.18% playback utility, they still struggle to match the emotional and social impact of traditional classrooms. This is exactly why the Indian education market is currently diverted toward 'Hybrid Models' using traditional classrooms for the interaction and control, while using online tools for materials and recordings. (Hong et al. 2020)

**Objective 2: To explore the various platforms and tools of online education system**

**Virtual Classroom and Collaboration Tools:** Some of the commonly used online tools to continue teaching and learning through virtual class are mentioned below:

i. **Zoom Classes:** K-12 schools use collaborative Zoom classrooms for student engagement and learning. Features such as one-click content sharing, digital white boarding, group-chats and more ensure increased student participation and learning retention. Teachers can use other tools available to keep track of both

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attendance and learning. They can also create recorded videos to enable the students to learn at their own pace. (Aslam et al. 2021)

ii. **Ekstep:** This is a collaborative open learning platform offering equitable access to learning opportunities for every child. Teachers can use the medium to create and publish interactive content for their students. This on-demand platform contains educational videos that students can use, anytime and anywhere. This platform also facilitates the measurement of learning outcomes and builds an open framework to include investment in scale.

iii. **Google Classes:** This is a streamlined tool that teachers can easily use to impart learning and manage coursework in the present world scenario of voluntary school closures to keep students safe. Teachers can adapt it to create classes, assign tasks, grade answers, and send in their feedback. (Arora et al. 2021)

iv. **Lark:** This tool is a one-stop-shop for class schedules, assignments, notes, project reports and more, all of which are available on the cloud. Teachers can use this tool to create robust and customizable lesson plans. The verified calendar feature helps teachers to stay on top of their schedules. They can use it to design timetables for their classes as well as for fixing meetings with colleagues. The tool also facilitates real-time marking and grading of assignments, where students can receive valuable feedback from teachers.

v. **Ding talk:** This is a free communication and collaboration platform that has been recognized as a powerful digital learning solution by UNESCO during the Covid-19 outbreak. Schools, teachers and parents can use this app to facilitate student learning and ensure social interaction. The app comes with an online classroom initiative that offers free digital tools such as live streaming, online grading, instant messaging and video conferencing to support student learning remotely. (India Today, 2020)

**Live Communication Platforms:** Dr. Pravat Kumar Jena also discussed many free live video communication platforms. These are discussed below:

i. **Google Meet:** Video calls integrated with other Google's G-Suite tools. Video meeting recordings, Screen sharing, join calls using Google Calendar.

ii. **Skype:** Video and audio calls with talk, chat and collaboration features.

iii. **Facebook Live:** it is a great fit for businesses, influencers, or individuals who are looking to broadcast demos, videos, or showcase their company culture while streaming live, followers on Facebook can comment and chat live, schedule videos ahead of time to gain excitement.

iv. **YouTube Live:** it is a platform for demonstrating a product with live interaction, hosting an educational session to teach audience with screen sharing or using a whiteboard, having features with Location tags and advanced scheduling. (Aslam et al. 2021)

v. **Uber Conference:** Unlimited Video and audio calls with talk, chat and collaboration features

vi. **Free Conference:** it is ideal for smaller teams or meetings; feature includes Screen sharing, Document sharing, Text sharing etc.

vii. **Teams:** Chat, meet, call and collaboration features integrated with Microsoft Office software.

viii. **TrueConf Online:** HD video with Collaboration tools (screen sharing, remote desktop control, recorded calls, file transfer and shared virtual whiteboard).

ix. **Slack Video Calls:** is good for teams looking for a supplementary video calling solution for small teams, features include individual calls and messenger services.

x. **Lifesize Go:** No restrictions on meeting length, preferred for small group conversations. (JENA, 2020)

All these online tools are being recognized, reviewed and accepted by educators and students from across the world to bring is some semblance of normalcy and routine in the new reality of the outbreak.

**Digital Educational Platforms launched in India:** India will experience a digital revolution as soon, 915 million to nearly 1 billion active users internet users in India and reinforcing the country's position as one of the world's largest and fastest evolving digital markets. The outreach of the internet is not only limited to the urban area but it has also reached the rural areas (57%), too. All these factors create a huge market for the eLearning sector in India. (The Hindu)

A number of considerable online learning platforms has been provided by HRD ministry to support online learning and make education easier for all:

i. **SWAYAM Portal MOOCs:** These all are online based interactive-media courses designed specifically for higher education students. Many courses are approved by AICTE and most of these courses are also provided academic credits which Students can easily earn. Accessed Website address is: https://swayam.gov.in/

ii. **E-PG Pathsala:** This web-based platform provides e-books which can be accessed up to PG level students. The content and its quality being the key component of education system, high quality, curriculum-based, interactive e-content in 70 subjects across all disciplines which have been developed by the subject experts working in Indian universities and other R & D institutes across the country. Accessed Website address is: https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/Home

iii. **Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA):** It is a national platform for school education initiative by NCERT. It provides around 80,000 Curriculum related content and currently supports 133 languages: 126 Indian languages and 7 foreign languages which access to wide extensive scope of explanation videos, various interactive activities, games, quizzes, lesson plans, and worksheets etc. Accessed Website address is: https://diksha.gov.in/index.html

iv. **CBSE PODCAST:** A new podcast app for the CBSC students has been launched by CBSE which name is 'CBSE-Shiksha Vani'. This application is available on Play Store for downloading by smart phone users. Accessed Website address is: https://www.cbse.gov.in/cbsenew/prunit_temp/PreExam/Podcast.html

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v. **National Digital Library of India (NDL):** This is an integration digital for all categories of educational institutions, academicians, differently able students and anybody who are curious to learn. Accessed Website address is: https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/.

vi. **IIT Pal:** Many students are interested in online coaching for IIT entrance exams. So IIT Pal provides many lectures in science subjects for students to cracking IIT entrance exams. Accessed Website address is: https://nta.ac.in/LecturesContent.

vii. **Vidwan:** It is the premier database of profiles of researchers and other faculty members who are involved in teaching and research working at leading academic institutions and other R & D organization in India. It is maintained by INFLIBNET and linked with National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT).

viii. **e-Shodh Sindhu:** It is based on MHRD recommendation for higher education electronic resources with the help of INFLIBNET centre. It provides a large number of peer reviewed journals, citation, bibliographic and factual databases. Accessed Website address is: https://ess.inflibnet.ac.in/

ix. **E-Classes On Swayam Prabha DTH Channels:** MHRD has started e-classes when the school students are in quarantine to ensure that the students are not distract from learning and stay connected with studies. Synchronous and Asynchronous both techniques are being used on the Swayam Prabha, TV channel. The gap of classes six hours and each class repeat four times a day which makes the learning available for 24 hours.

x. **UMANG mobile app:** Government creates a UMANG mobile app for the students. It provides a large number of e-books, audio and videos related to all subjects which Primary and Secondary level students can easily access. It also given access to books and study material of NCERT on e-pathshala. (Nandini, 2020)

xi. **One Class, One Channel:** 12 channels are proposed by Union Finance Minister for higher secondary classes in school and utilization of radio community programmes. Top 100 universities of the country got Permission to provide online degrees and courses for imparting of e-learning from 30 May 2020 automatically. (Singh et al. 2021)

All these initiatives undertaken by the Indian government reflect its commitment to transforming digital learning for the future. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology actively promotes the use of technology as an essential means of delivering education. Consequently, the government has launched various programs to strengthen research and development in digital technology. It also aims to provide financial support to all stakeholders involved in the development and expansion of online education initiatives at different levels.

**Objective 3: To understand the Challenges and Opportunities of online learning in India**

There are some common challenges that were considered while developing the online education in India. Some of them are provided below.

**1. Socio-Economic Disparities and Device Accessibility:** A primary obstacle is the unaffordability of technological hardware. A significant portion of the Indian student population originates from lower socio-economic backgrounds where the cost of laptops or high-end smartphones is prohibitive. This creates a 'digital divide', where academic participation is contingent upon financial capacity rather than intellectual merit.

**2. Pedagogical Shift and Faculty Readiness:** The transition has revealed a critical deficiency in trained educators. Proficiency in traditional classroom management does not inherently translate to digital fluency (Singh et al. 2020). Without standardized institutional training programs, faculty struggle to adapt their teaching styles to a virtual format, often leading to a decrease in instructional quality.

**3. Assessment and Evaluation Frameworks:** India faces a substantial deficit in online examination resources. There is currently a lack of robust, scalable infrastructure to conduct secure summative assessments. Furthermore, the absence of standardized proctoring and evaluation metrics makes it difficult to accurately quantify the learning outcomes of online students compared to their offline counterparts.

**4. Subject-Specific Constraints:** The efficacy of online education is highly subject-dependent. While theoretical subjects may be delivered effectively via digital platforms, practical-oriented disciplines such as the laboratory sciences and performing arts suffer significantly. The 'screen-based' nature of online learning fails to provide the tactile, kinesthetic experience required for professional mastery in these fields.

**5. Infrastructure and Connectivity Barriers:** Internet penetration in India remains inconsistent. While urban centers may have access to high-speed broadband, many regions are still restricted to substandard 2G or 3G connectivity. Frequent bandwidth fluctuations disrupt the 'synchronous' learning experience, leading to cognitive disconnection and frustration for the learner. (Jindal et al. 2018)

**6. Developmental and Psychological Factors:** Learner age plays a vital role in digital success. Students under the age of 17 often lack the self-regulation and intrinsic motivation required for independent online study (Bhati et al. 2024). Without the physical supervision of a teacher, younger learners exhibit lower attention spans and reduced engagement with the curriculum.

**7. Erosion of Holistic Development:** Finally, online education often fails to facilitate co-curricular and social development. Education in the Indian context is viewed as a process of all-round personality growth. By isolating students from physical interactions, such as sports, team-based projects, and campus culture digital platforms struggle to replicate the social capital and leadership skills fostered in traditional environments.

**Opportunities in Online Education:**

**Online learning as integral part of education in future:** India has over 915 million internet users, making it the second-largest internet user base in the world, which strongly supports the growth of online education. The e-learning market in India is expected to grow rapidly, indicating increasing dependence on digital learning platforms. During the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 250 million school students in India shifted to online learning, highlighting its importance in ensuring continuity of education (Bhati et al. 2024). Platforms like SWAYAM, DIKSHA, and other digital initiatives provide access to thousands of courses, videos, and interactive learning materials,

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benefiting millions of learners across the country.

Reports suggest that over 70% of students prefer flexible learning options, such as recorded lectures and self-paced courses, which online education provides. (Jindal et al. 2018). The use of blended learning models is increasing, with many institutions adopting digital tools even after reopening physical classrooms. Growth in smartphone usage (over 750 million users in India) has made online learning more accessible, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

**Online learning as part of blended learning in future:** Blended learning means we blend digital teaching methods with traditional means of teaching to make the entire process more efficient. In no way will it affect the workload of teachers. On one hand, students are connected with their teacher virtually, while on the other hand, the teacher engages students in a live, interactive classroom through the tools of technology (Pahal et al. 2024). The primary objective is to make the process of learning not only impactful but also engaging, interesting and challenging for the learner.

The blended mode of learning would prepare students for a technology-driven world. If we see from pure administrative and financial point of view, it also reduces expenses and maximizes savings for an institute. It offers flexibility to both students and teachers—students can learn at their own time and pace; teachers can plan their work hours better (Kuhad, 2021). Moreover, blended learning can allow regular student feedback as well as facilitate collaboration or discussion among students.

The New Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 has unveiled a blueprint for much-needed changes in the Indian education system. The NEP 2020 clearly states that education has to become more student-centric, that student is the major stakeholder here and the entire education system has to help them accomplish their dreams, and in turn, lay the foundation for building a country of our dreams.
UGC has recommended blended learning under which up to 40% of a course can be taught online and the rest 60% through traditional, offline methods, at all higher educational institutions. (Kuhad, 2021)

## DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

1. Through this study researcher reveals that the online education system and offline education system both have limitations and benefits. We can't deny that both are equally contributed to impart education.
2. Through this study researcher reveals that many online educational platforms were designed for our education system by the Indian Government which shows that future of education system relies on these platforms.
3. Through this study researcher reveals that though the online education system has faced many difficulties but it has a great future.
4. Through this study researchers reveals that India has facing many challenges to develop online education system because currently India is a developing country. So economically and technologically, India have not that much of strength to overcome these challenges.
5. Through this study researcher reveals that the future of education has mostly depended on online education so in future our education should be became blended learning system as an integral part of traditional education.

## CONCLUSION

Broadly speaking, the true purpose of education is to empower individuals to adapt to any challenging situation. Furthermore, a defining characteristic of humanity is the ability to engage with and adopt innovation. As we live in an era dominated by technology, its influence is rapidly expanding from our daily activities into the field of education. To keep pace, we must master various technological techniques and apply them effectively. Without the proper integration of technology, our education system will fail to address emerging challenges. Consequently, delivering quality education through online platforms appears to be the most viable solution for the future.

Since education is the backbone of society, its continuous development is essential. We must strive to mobilize and modernize our educational frameworks by leveraging the latest advancements in science and technology. We have already seen how online classrooms played a vital role in imparting education during the pandemic; however, they cannot fully serve as a substitute for the traditional, physical classroom. In conclusion, while the online education system presents several obstacles that may hinder learning, it simultaneously offers numerous benefits that are essential for progress.

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