

# ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING (AL): SHORT COMMUNICATION ON CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS

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## ABSTRACT

*"When written in Chinese, the word "crisis" is composed of two characters-one represents danger, and the other represents opportunity." John F. Kennedy. This quote reflects the transformational times, which the world is going through due to the pandemic COVID-19. Though our world, as we know it, is gradually regaining normalcy, we are also re-imagining new innovative ways to reach our destination. Industries have been disrupted by this crisis. Total lockdowns and widespread shutdowns had a devastating impact on the economic, physical and psychological well-being of all the stakeholders of the majority of the industry. The education industry has not been the exception to this churning process. This crisis has definitely sparked transformation and brought future trends which will stay with us. The world over, management professionals are performing key roles in understanding, analyzing, and handling the challenges of this pandemic. Along with economic setbacks, the pandemic crisis has also unveiled amazing opportunities for this industry to upscale itself.*

*Holistic problem solving, rebuilding capacity, refining strategic intent, and positioning, digital and data literacy are going to be the key differentiators in the coming days.*

*To capture the ever-changing challenges, the learners of management education need to upskill themselves with futuristic, holistic, and data-driven competencies. This paper attempts to identify the key challenges which the education industry, in general, is going to face the post-pandemic and analyze the strategic interventions which can be taken by the key stakeholders to ensure success as we move forward towards an unpredictable future.*

**Keywords:** Asynchronous learning, COVID-19, Management.

## Objectives of the Study

The central objective of this research is to understand the concept of asynchronous learning (AL) through an extensive literature review. The paper also has attempted to identify the challenges and advantages of asynchronous learning compared to synchronous learning (SL). The post-COVID-19 world necessitates all of us to re-imagine the future of Management Education. This paper has attempted to investigate the possibilities of adopting AL along with SL in traditional Indian classrooms.

## Research Gap and Research Problem

The research gap suggests that there are fewer number of such studies being done for AL in India. The comparative study between AL and SL brings out various challenges and advantages which have been identified by researchers all over the world. As the second wave of the pandemic hitting so hard, online learning still prevails to be a ubiquitous need since education cannot be interrupted at any cost. Meanwhile, it is necessary to review and redesign the existing threats posed by the novel scenario before it becomes too late. With the most vulnerable children having no more access to free meals (Mathivanan et al. 2021) offered in the school, accessing education that demands sophisticated technological infrastructure is still a far-

fetched dream for many students in India, particularly the marginalized, despite various initiatives taken by social welfare and non-profitable organizations. And the post-pandemic scenario eventually thrusts schools and higher education institutions to blend online learning with a wider scope for mergers with online program management (OPM) providers (Kim, 2020). Moreover, the regressions in the structured learning environment (Wadia, 2020) have called for a flexible method to impart education. So, a detailed investigation of AL is necessary to impose more viable policies to the existing regulatory framework governing the phenomenon. Hence the topic becomes significant, adding more value to the existing literature in varied pedagogical approaches, the evolution of distant education modes and student learning scenarios.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for this was an extensive literature review. The papers are selected from various electronic databases like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Taylor & Francis Online, ProQuest, and Ebsco. The keywords searched for finding the relevant literature are mentioned below.

*“Asynchronous Learning Definition” “Asynchronous Learning advantages” “Asynchronous Learning Challenges”.*

*“Asynchronous Learning and Synchronous Learning”.*

The criteria for the selection of articles are based on publication year, advantages and Challenges of Asynchronous Learning discussed in those manuscripts.

## Findings of the Study

The main findings of the study show that AL has become imperative in these post-pandemic times.

The challenges of AL are ease of procrastination, information, weakening ties with local communities and identifying and chastising rule-breakers become difficult. Challenges are that AL is less immersive, has a disconnected social environment. Besides, it might have independent learning difficulties, more distractions, challenges with procrastination, and lack of peer interaction with students with geographical and cultural diversity, which greatly reduces students' learning possibilities.

The advantages of AL are the flexibility to the learners in terms of scheduling and pace of their course. It gives them more accessibility and additional time with the study material. It also enables students to refine their skills and to pursue degrees while working full time. It allows learners to strengthen ties with geographically dispersed communities and have online interactions which are creative and uninhibited. AL was found highly beneficial to students with childcare responsibilities and health problems. Students in AL discussions are found engaged more in task-oriented interactions. It allows cognitive participation with more time to process information. The benefit of self-pacing also brings increased class sizes and decreased dropout rates for the educational institutes.

## Implications of the Study

The management institutions must rethink the methods in which they are imparting education to the students. There is an increased need for freedom of learners post-COVID-19. The institutes must understand AL requires a clear shift of the faculty role, and most faculties

find it difficult to do the same. Some strategies which can be adopted to involve AL improved eLearning for geographically dispersed learners, experiential learning, and gamification.

Learner-centric and data-centric personalization along with Curricula and pedagogical innovations based on neuro and learning science to improve learning.

It allows flexible delivery models enabling students to align their courses of study with their learning styles and with their circumstances, much like current employment. The data-rich and immersive teaching materials should be offered with the help of digital technology. The concept of the Flipped classroom must be made an integral part of the traditional synchronous learning. This will create more employable skilled learners who have enriched their knowledge base without time and location restrictions.

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