



Vision of inclusive higher education in India can be achieved through digital literacy

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Abstract

Today we live a digital life. We are surrounded by digital technology almost everywhere. It is troubling to know that the country soaring new heights in respect of the usage of digital technology/internet is lagging far behind in terms of educated youth population. India is a country with one of the highest percentage of youth deprived of higher education. This article discusses upon various possibilities of combining digital technology with education. Firstly, the article delves on the opportunity of leveraging internet technology to educate. To achieve the same there will be a significant role of policy makers and education institutions to glean the potential of internet for learning. This paper establishes through discussion synchronization and interaction of education and Internet which has the ability to transform education space of the country. This requires equal commitments and actions of the policy makers and education institutions. Lastly, the article concludes with the challenges and future of digital education in India.

Keywords: digital, population, Lastly, education, inclusive

Introduction

Seeking inspiration from the words of Albert Einstein –“I never teach my pupils I provide the condition in which they can learn”, builds the foundation to realize the dream of inclusive education through digital literacy. Truly education is an ever evolving process and the main aim of an education institute should be to make it reachable to maximum number of individuals. Rapid adoption of technology in India has a potential to transform the education space. Leveraging internet technology, learning/education can be given to all those who are unable to avail it through traditional modes of learning. This can be achieved through E-learning which is generally defined as learning through electronic devices such as desktop / laptop computers and mobile phones. Through E learning not only the students in urban areas can be benefited but it has the potential to penetrate in rural areas. This research project intends to generate a framework for implementation of asynchronous E learning as one mode of availing education in higher education institutions. In achieving so the research observes and suggests the ways for feasibly design, develop and execute E learning through mobile phones. This will include large base interaction with prospective students and educational institutions. Higher education system in India needs to innovate to reach to those who are unable to learn through conventional learning ways. It is a matter of plight for us that the country which has such a rich culture of education and ancient India once had the universities like “Nalanda” and “Takshashila” which established themselves as international centers of educational excellence where students from all over the world came to study, today is the home of largest population of illiterate adults in world – 287 million. Education through E learning has immense potential to transform the education landscape in the country because India has the second largest internet user base in the world consists mainly young population. Further, India is becoming an internet economy with nearly seven hundred

million mobile internet user base including the people residing in rural parts of country. Educational institutions must commit themselves to E learning as an add - on to classroom learning because it will be both cost efficient and effective. Cost efficiency is obtained through the ratio of input (one e – learning module) vs. output (educating thousands of student). Effectiveness can be justified because less cost is involved.

Leveraging internet potential to educate

If today’s students are taught the same way we were taught yesterday, we are doing unjust to the students of tomorrow. At this time when digital landscape of the country is evolving at the fastest pace and with the boom of internet on line shopping companies foresee a bright future, why can’t we have a vision of dispersing higher education using the same platform of Internet? As per a report of BCG Decoding Digital Consumers –“India is currently underestimating its digital potential by not completely capitalizing on it. Half of India’s internet users will be rural and 40% will be women by 2020, the report by the Boston Consulting Group further said. It also reported that Indian companies are underestimating and under-investing in the country’s digital potential. Further it was highlighted that Urban India has close to 60% internet penetration while in rural India there are 163 million internet users which shows a close relation of contemporary Indian society with technology. It is estimated that India will have more than 850 million online users by 2025, more than the combined population of the G7 countries. This highlights immense potential in the country’s digital soundness. The current article intends to bring to fore and also propose institutionalization of digital education in the country. Education and Internet are significant national assets which has the capacity to transform the lives of billions of people. Mobile internet is the most popular source which is used by the youth of our country.

Role of policy makers and education institutions to glean the potential of internet for learning

Synchronization and interaction of education and Internet has the ability to transform education space of the country. This requires equal commitments and actions of the policy makers and education institutions. This will require clear vision, strategy and most importantly government support regarding provisions for necessary funding requirements. Universities may offer programs and courses through digital mode which will require investment in learning resources, preparing and launching a formal interface for online education. In this policy makers/Government has a crucial role in generating the necessary ecosystem for digital integration in education. Lessons for lectures should be prepared for each course as a material available for online study. Government primarily needs to articulate a holistic vision for a blended form of learning delivered through internet/online by crafting and implementing an education policy that covers the entire spectrum. A much detailed planning is required in order to make it a regular feature of Universities. Regulators and decision makers need to create an enabling environment for Universities regarding infrastructure and content. Governments need to support all technical, legal and institutional means in order to create an environment for digital education.

Challenges and road ahead to digital education in India

To fulfill the dream of inclusive higher education the country firstly has to have the requirement of basic schooling fulfilled. It is a plight that India has high illiteracy rate because of inaccessibility to basic education. This gap is needed to be bridged and our country should seriously plan and implement policies through which number of schools offering free education surge. Another important challenge is to motivate students once implemented to engage in this type of unconventional way of learning. At a mature stage of implementation of this program – Digital literacy Government has to invest in awareness campaigns for students so that maximum participation can be obtained. Further, Learning is an inherently social activity an intelligent teacher through digital mode of teaching might be able to help a student master specific subject related concepts, it may be unable to teach students to critically analyze a work of literature or to debate on some important topics. Finally, it's true that internet presents a wide range of opportunities for people around the world and for developing countries it's a boon. It helps in economic and social development, and educational needs. Burgeoning mobile and Internet penetration improved access to networks through efforts by service providers and an increase in national backbone networks in recent years promises more opportunities for technology-powered learning to help India realize its goal of inclusive education. The full integration of ICTs and the use of the Internet for education require clear vision and policies. There is a need to develop Internet Enabling Environment to facilitate education through a set framework. Lastly this article is a small attempt to evoke the matter of education through internet in India. It will certainly require a robust policy framework to achieve the dream of inclusive education.

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