

Pros and Cons of E-Learning by Children in Rural Areas During Lockdown Situation And Ways To Empower It

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Abstract: E-learning for children in rural and remote areas during lockdown is beyond reach for many where internet facilities are poor. Since, Primary Health care of rural students remains key concern, stress on e-learning becomes prerequisite during covid-19 lockdown. The perspectives of online education, Laying of e-learning platforms for change, for transforming Indian education landscape. But, the digital education during lockdown is not accessible for all. The pros and cons of e-Learning and ways to empower it is discussed in this paper.

Key words : E-Learning; Lock Down Period; Remote Areas; Primary Health;

INTRODUCTION

India is a developing country with more than 50% of country's young population is under the age of 25 years. The country has got largest education system in the world, comprising of 15 crore schools, around 37000 colleges and more than 600 universities. The student population accounts to 315 million, pursuing education from nursery to PHD, while more than 30% of Indian population being illiterate. The outbreak of Corona virus pandemic and imposition of lockdown has lead to widespread closure of schools and colleges across the country. An anomalous situation due to pandemic and consequent lockdown exposed a stark digital inequality in both distribution of Information and Communication Technologies at every corner of India. Before the lockdown, the students were told by governments to leave their hostels to avoid assembly and facilitated them to return to their villages. Lack of effective internet connectivity and technological tools was a curse among vulnerable and marginalized rural community students, as classroom was a place of 'Practice of freedom and expression', apart from students teachers are suffering from technical knowhow. In India, even though Digital inclusion may be on the rise , but digital empowerment is big challenge that needs to be achieved. Lack of English language proficiency or expertise in regional languages among rural students, makes it difficult for them to access information through internet.

Concept Of E-Learning

E-learning is defined as the acquisition of knowledge using electronic devices with the help of Internet. E-Learning is also known as online learning or web based training.

Types of E- Learning

Synchronous training:

It is a mode of education wherein a teacher can directly interact with students using digital Technologies and virtual platforms like the zoom and Skype.

Virtual classroom:

A virtual classroom is a classroom wherein students can access education from quality teachers anywhere on the planet using platforms like

1. Video & Audio conferencing
2. Interactive online whiteboard
3. Library resources(print, video, audio)
4. Teacher tools and controls - Text tool, draw tool, eraser, shapes, pen colour etc.,

Asynchronous training: means "not at the same time."

Asynchronous learning is a teaching methodology wherein students will be able to access digital content, complete their assignments at their own convenient time & pace without the help of instructor.

Embedded learning:

Embedded learning is a teaching methodology where in teacher explains the topic briefly using Visual models, followed by posing a question to learner, prompts the learner to answer the question to understand concept.

Health of students versus Stress on e-learning

As a consequence of CORONA VIRUS outbreak and in order to safeguard the health of lakhs of young people who are the future of the country, both the central and state governments have taken several lockdown measures like social distancing, limited

movements have restricted Students to their homes. Closure of schools and colleges have stressed the governments to promote education via e-learning mode, so as to make our country better what is today. In order to evade from current Health Crisis, all Students should embrace elearning ways of learning and also be prepared for future possible disruptions similar to COVID.

Perspectives of online education

Owing to COVID crisis, similar to other countries, India too has no choice but to enforce School lockdown so as to ensure protection of our most precious young human resources.

This was one area where there was unanimity among bureaucracy, school education departments in India, both urban cities or rural towns, have decided to shutdown schools and colleges. All the parties have shown inclination & decided to deliver education to students at homes through e-learning on experimental basis. Closure of schools during lockdown has in turn lead to some adverse effects. These include disruption in lesson plans, continuation of old unstructured information, breakage of Teacher – child – parent interaction & students facing difficulty in the preparation of annual board examinations. The stoppage of physical classrooms has encouraged Ed Tech companies to surge their offerings in online education space. Leading known players and education startups have begun encouraging children /students to pursue online education during this lockdown & continue learning in order avoid wastage of time. Among the existing Ed Tech companies, some of these organizations have digital platforms, few have quality content , some are heavily dependent on internet ,while others have platforms that are single directionally interactive. The advantage/ prerogative to run these online alternatives remain with schools and hence one finds few schools incorporating online courses , many other schools not, while one third schools set watching by the side. It has been noted that not one government school seems to have adopted to online e-learning mode of education for the dissemination of knowledge.

Disadvantages of incorporating online platforms alterative to schooling are

1. Very discretionary and restricted to few private schools who can afford this program.
2. None standardized and hence content / teaching approach vary from school to school.
3. Accessible only to privileged students due to unstable internet connectivity.

It is also noted that school will only open once the situation comes under control and the virus gets

contained to a large extent, adding that the health of students is a key concern. Further, we should treat this situation as an opportunity and strengthen the digital infrastructure. The teachers need to adopt different modes of rendering online classes to their students, so that their education does not get impacted by prolonged lockdown .

Learning platforms changing Indian scenario

Online learning has widened the scope of education and transcended beyond classroom boundaries. With greater penetration of high speed internet in last 2 years, e-learning platforms has taken over the traditional methods in urban areas in particular and needed to be extended to rural and remote areas too. Professionals will need to equip themselves with relevant skills before their current skills become obsolete. Moreover, the government is adopting a series of measures to bring a technological revolution to accentuate e-learning which will ultimately lead to a major shift in Indian education sector.

e-Learning during lockdown not for all

Amidst the Nationwide Lock down, the schools and Universities are depending on the online modes of teaching so as to maintain the continuity of education. Schools are launching apps, connecting classes over Google Hangouts or Zoom platform and sending interactive worksheets and videos for learning. Even though internet based teaching is the most appropriate stop-gap arrangement now, it has highlighted the inequalities in education system. A majority of student population is being left out in the pursuit of basic education. Only 36% of Indian population about 385 million, above and the age of 12, has access to internet according to the Indian Internet 2019 report of IAMAI and Nielson. However, access is not uniform with just 27% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas getting access to internet. WhatsApp has over 400 million subscribers in India, the majority in urban parts of the country

e-Learning and ways to empower

Government needs to strengthen Capacity Building measures in rural areas. This may be done by conducting sensitization workshops on developing minimum IT skills viz Power Point Presentation(ppt) to teachers for enabling them to develop pictorial content . Open Education Resources (OERS) needed to be channelized and routed to remote areas, for effective utilization of knowledge by rural students.

Measures needed to be taken to increase the band width in rural areas for good internet access, which is pre-requisite for E-learning. In this direction, Government of India has launched ‘National Broad Band Mission’, which promises band width access to all villages by the year 2020.

Teachers need to utilize inexpensive National electronic mediums like Television for teaching different courses. By using Radio devices, Teachers can develop cost effective Audio courses, which would aid in empowering education for rural students during lockdown.

Intranet facilities in villages needed to be strengthened. Intranet facility is a private network comprising of small servers, wherein content & course material are managed under Control management system and delivered to the students through a computer.

Finally, learner engagement tools like games based tools, apps, needed to be developed for empowering effective Knowledge management.

CONCLUSION

According to NSSO survey 2017-2018, nearly 45% of India's population above 15 years of age is either literate or has just attended formal primary education. In rural India, particularly in remote areas almost 70% of the people above 15 years are either 'not literate' or have education only till middle School. This section may not have the required level of education to teach their children at home nor afford to provide internet facilities in view of their Poor financial status. Strengthening Capacity Building measures, increasing internet bandwidth, utilizing Electronic devices effectively, inclusion of Intranet are few measures to empower e-learning among students in Remote and Rural areas.

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