A STUDY OF INDIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR DIGITAL LITERACY FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TOCOVID-19 LOCKDOWN PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary of ICT, Digital Education is to be considered the most important weapon for the access, equity and quality of education in the global scenario. An attempt has been made to discuss several initiatives taken by the Ministry of Education, GOI and also the efforts made by various states during a pandemic for continuing education. The paper will through light on the key challenges and opportunities in the path of digital literacy and discuss the suggestions to be taken to combat it.

Keywords : Digital Literacy, Govt. Initiatives, Covid-19, Quality Education

INTRODUCTION

Traditional education aims to enable the learner to use analyze synthesize and evaluate the synthesize the essential concept of education in a classroom setting. Now the education isn't limited to four walls of the classroom after the arrival of ICT, which has become one among the essential integrant of recent society. The introduction of ICT has dramatically changed the education system of India **(Sandipan Basu,2017)**.Integration of ICT in education promotes the digital literacy environment and reworking India into a digitally literate society. The SDG 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations in September 2015, the SDG 4 is to supply young people with quality and simply accessible education Plus other learning opportunities. One among its targets is to understand Universal literacy and numeracy before 2030.For digital literacy the Indian Govt. focuses on the three basic principles – Access, Quality and Equity. The study of **Uma Sheokand (2017)** discussed that the present education system required knowledge and wisdom instead of rote learning; practical application of learning and; learning outcomes instead of good marks.

So, digital classrooms can be a boon for achieving quality education in India. However, the most challenge is that the provision of quality education and therefore the main target of the Central Government is now on encouraging States to obligate steps for improvement within the quality of education. The vision of the Samagra Shiksha Scheme is to form sure inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-school to the senior secondary stage in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education4. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 which was approved on July 29 advocates the more dissemination of technology to reinforce learning, evaluation and assessment, planning and administration at all levels of education. The technological advancement will upgrade the classroom process, to aid teachers' professional development, enhance educational assessment for disadvantaged groups and streamlined educational planning as well as administration and management. The policy also suggests to line up more virtual Labs, equipped schools digitally, use Divyang friendly education software and increase the surplus of education for disadvantaged groups. Currently, virtual laboratories are at hand in various disciplines to cater to

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students at the college level. It aims to extend the GER ratio in Higher Educational Institutions including vocational training from 26.3 percent (2018) To 50% by 2035.Within the present scenario of covid-19, there's an interesting growth within the education sector by employing various ICT tools. These tools represent content in an ornamental way which makes teaching and learning more interesting and interactive, it also encouraging students' pace of self-learning and provides quick and fast feedback to learners and also to an educator. For ensuring quality education through digitalization at the college level, learners require little training but at the school level specially for the primary level, both the learners and the teachers requires skills for digital literacy environment. **Burgess and Sievertsen (2020)** enlightened the impact of a pandemic on education in regarding school, skills and learning in their column and described that schooling at home is not only a huge shock to the productivity of parents' but also to the learning and social life of learners The study of **Akfirat and Kezer (2016)** mentioned that life skills are the combination of knowledge and skill that are necessary for an effective survival of life and are different from academic skills. **Charu Bansal and Pradeep Kumar Misra (2019)** advocated that ICT based education initiatives orient the different life skills of the learners by using the suggested strategies for teachers.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE DIGITAL EDUCATION

To addressed several major gaps and an equitable quality school education system within the country, the Ministry of Education has undertaken several initiatives to assist students, scholars, teachers and lifelong learners. Some of the key steps are: -

Diksha (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) it's the national platform launched on 5th September 2017 for grades 1st to12th and has since been adopted by 35 States and UTs across also by CBSE and NCERT and by crores of teachers and learners with quite 30 crores content place and 200 crore page heads already thereon. it can't currently support 18 + languages.

E-learning: this sort of learning is based on computers. Having an internet connection in conjunction, one can access different e-learning materials easily from anywhere. The MHRD, GOI is emphasizing during this modern method of learning. the tactic of e-learning can be of two types: a)unidirectional and b)bidirectional. within the unidirectional method, only the educator gets to interact with the learner. But, just in the case of the bidirectional method, both the parties (educator and learner) can interact with one another over live streaming.

NPTEL (National Program on Technology-Based Learning): An initiative was taken by MHRD, GOI to provide e-learning through audio-video lectures within the field of Engineering, Science, Technology, Management and Humanities. this is often a joint initiative by IITs and IISc Bangalore with other institutions from India as an associate partner.

SWAYAM (Study Web of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds): Advantage taken by the department of MHRD, GOI, for providing online video courses. Alearner also can pursue certificates in different coursesvia this mode of learning, which isn't available in NPTEL. Content of those courses covers from 9[th]standard to post-graduation. the most difference between NPTEL and SWAYAM is that the video courses available in SWAYAM are interactive. Apart from video lectures, SWAYAM provides specially prepared reading materials, self-assessment tests and a web forum for clearing the doubts.

Virtual Labs: An initiative was taken by the Ministry of Education, GOI under NMEICT aims to supply remote access of laboratories to gush students to conduct experiments by inducing their curiosity in the disciplines of science as well as engineering.

E-Yantra: To equip the intellectual talent of young India to form utility based robotic applications for usage across a variety of applications and to supply hands-on learning experience to engineering students who have slight access to laboratories and faculties in their institutions.

Spoken Tutorial: This is often an initiative of the NMEICT. The aim is to supply software training workshops using spoken tutorials and certify those who pass a web test. The project is being developed by IITB for MHRD, GOI.

CEC (Consortium for Educational Communication):This is found out by UGC, India. The goal is to disseminate the educational programs by the use of TV and ICT.

FOSSEE (Free and Open Source Software in Education): This NMEICT project mainly promotes the utilization of FOSS and improves the standard of education. The reason to encourage the use of FOSS is to scale back the dependency on proprietary software in educational institutions.

E-Shodh Sindhu: The consortium for Higher Education Electronic Resources, an initiative by MHRD aims to supply access to e-resources to higher education institutions at lower subscription.

Shodh Ganga: An open access repository of Indian Thesis available for scholars to disseminate and preserve thesis submitted by the research students.

Shodh Gangotri: A repository of approved synopsis in electronic form submitted by registered scholars in the Ph.D. program

The disruption of schooling in the present amid of COVID-19 drives education reception through Innovative programs taken by different States. **Sharma and Gandhi (2020)** focus on the SMILE project of Rajasthan govt for effectively using a scheme of WhatsApp online link material for continuing school education during lockdown period for class 1 to 12 everyday with the slogan –"Roz Subha 9 baje, har ghar school ghanti baje. According to the **India Report-Digital Education (June2020)-**Delhi launched LEAD program and plans to ensure teacher training; Gujrat provided digital content for learners and their parents and broadcasting learning programs on T.V to ensure continuity of learning at home and also rolled out 11 courses for primary teachers; Maharashtra broadcast curriculum-based curated contents by using WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter; Assam promoted Diksha as "one nation one platform" and plays 9.6 lakhs material for learners since more than the last 3 months and conducted video classes on Swayam Prabha; Kerala broadcasted a program named 'FIRST BELL' through educational channels which is also available on the link, Facebook and YouTube and also rolled AKSHARA VRIKSHAM

(Trees of Letters) by which the students can develop competencies through various games and activities; Uttar Pradesh launched 'Prernaki e-Pathshala' through WhatsApp and also launched TOP PARENT app for turning parents into teachers to actively participate in their children learning.

In April 2020, **VIDYADAAN** was launched to hunt and permit donation of e-learning resources of school education by educational bodies, private bodies and individual experts.

On May 17, 2020, Prime Minister announced if there to merge all attempts associated with digital/online/on-air education to enable equitable multimode gateway to education and expected to be benefitted nearly 25 crores school level learners.

CHALLENGES FOR DIGITAL LITERACY ENVIRONMENT IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Development of appropriate digital environment is a big challenge within the present amid and for the longer term of the digital literacy there's a requirement to satisfy that gap between the truth and therefore the future vision. **Abdurakhmanov Kalandarkhodzhaevich and Zokirova (2020)**concluded that for each level there is a need to counter administrative violation, monitor the observance of the digitalization rights of students and teachers, reduced administrative cost and effective use of the working time fund. **Bella Thomas and S. Senith (2020)** explore the issue of single teacher faculties, lack of qualified lecturers, inadequate teaching materials generates a problem of quality education and affordable digital tools to be developed so that the rural society moves towards digital education successfully. **Burgess and Sievertsen (2020)** enlightened that Online teaching and assessment won't just be an issue for the short-term but also can have consequences for the long duration for the affected ones and are likely to extend inequality. **Sharma and Gandhi (2020)** determine constraints like lack of smart phone, lack of internet connection in tribal belt area, network problem and limited mobile data are the barriers within the effective implementation of students' learning. **Shilpa J Boricha and Trushna A Gohil (2019)** concluded that the e-learning initiative of MOOC platforms in India are being used globally for

offering online courses still cannot be a replacement of the traditional system. So, it is necessary to use both for complete education to the youth of today. **Rose (2018)** explores key traits of effective online educators and found that effective online educators avoid a didactic approach, variations in their pedagogy, use productive failure, facilitate the training process and provide a flawless structure. **Gon and Rawekar (2017)**studied the efficacy of e-learning by using WhatsApp as a teaching-learning tool and found few disadvantages like message flooding, eyestrain and using mobile with a bigger screen. **Sandipan Basu (2017)** concluded that there's a requirement to develop suitable tools and deployed them to uplift the education and the govt. must arrange training programs for educators to coach in this new methodology to assist our future generation. **Uma Sheokand (2017)** focuses on pedagogy, method of teaching, innovative and creative approach within the sort of digital classroom for quality education. **Bouhnik and Deshen (2014)** indicated challenges and problems within the study of WhatsApp messaging between educators and pupils of upper schools and revealed that: Not all high school students owe a smart phone; Educators become annoyed by too many irrelevant messages; Contrariety of language between learners and therefore the learners' thinking that their faculties are to be at hand on a 24*7 basis

OPPORTUNITIES FROM DIGITAL LITERACY

Initiatives taken by the government for shifting education from traditional approach to digital approach for creating digital literacy environment not only facing some challenges but also presenting some opportunities- **Sheetal and Manika (2019)** concluded that digitized education motivates more to find out and also to find out comfortably reception by using a smart phone, tablet or laptop and it's also a crucial source of gaining revenue for the govt and is taken into account as a boon for the Indian economy. **Shilpa J Boricha and Trushna A Gohil (2019)** discussed the role of universities emerge as an active linkage for e-learning to facilitate access and will create a paperless society and libraries **Cetinkaya (2017)** analysis presents that students developed positive approach towards WhatsApp. In overall, it's suggested

that the inclusion of WhatsApp technology in education supports and encourages learning. **Balbay and Kilis (2017)**results pointedthat bulk of the scholars benefitted from the video material of YouTube channel. **Gon and Rawekar (2017)** concluded that ongoing access of facilitators and uninterrupted learning has made WhatsApp a replacement and handy tool for educational process and there's no significant difference between the gain of data from WhatsApp or didactic lectures. **Uma Sheokand (2017)** explores that using digital technology within the classroom will enhance motivation and interest among learners and also make their performance more innovative and practical. **Nivedita Jha1 & Veena Shenoy (2016)** acknowledged that the country offers diversity in culture and ethnicity as well as in purchasing power of the Indian people.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Education is to be considered the most effective tool for the heightening of the country and the Indian government has undertaken various plans and policies to achieve the goals of education at different study levels. In global era of digitalization, there is a need to integrate ICT tools effectively to create a digital literacy environment for the achievement of Universal Literacy and Numeracy before 2030. Govt. has taken many initiatives to promote digital literacy to meet the challenge of remote learning. The present study aims to analyze the initiatives taken for digitalization and the challenges and opportunities for creating a digital environment with special reference to the pandemic.

DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Digital learning will help to achieve the vision of illiteracy free India by 2030.**Charu Bansal and Pradeep Kumar Mishra (2019**) indicated towards promoting different life skills among learners by using ICT supported education initiatives like e- Basta and e-pathshala and therefore the study suggested some below mentioned Strategies:-

- Teachers can create, organize and distribute multiple contents taking care of individual differences and wish of the youngsters to develop coping skills with cognitive skills.
- Teachers ask students to settle on the content and

activities of their option to develop deciding and self-confidence.

- Teachers ask students to make notes and observations by taking the help of e-pathshala content to develop problem-solving skills and cooperation skills.

- Teachers can use online discussion forums within the E- Pathshala to enhance the cognitive skills social skills and emotional skills of the scholars.

- Teachers can use the e- Pathshala portal to offer different activities associated with the topic which steps up the arrogance level of the scholars.

- Teachers can ask students to offer their feedback and reflections on the provided material and activities which formulate a bonding between educators and learners and develop different psychosocial skills.

The Ministry of Education has taken many initiatives towards digital education and still, some remarkable steps will be needed to uplift the education scenario in our society as more and more advancements will take place in the area of science and technology. So, there is a need of-

- Such integrated web and application-based learning platforms are easily adaptive, work well on assessments, form interactive contents empowers the teachers, motivates the students for learning and also work on every regional language.

- Arrange training programs for educators in a new methodology of teaching so that more techno-savvy teachers will be available for the education industry.

- Disciplined techno enabled learning becomes more meaningful.

- There should be such a system in which cheap and high-speed net packs should be offered to educators and learners by the govt. with the collaboration of net provider companies to promote digital learning.

- There should be a tracking system that tracks student's access for learning and minimum learning access with a net pack should be a necessary condition for learners.

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