

E-Learning in Rural India

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ABSTRACT

Mobile phones, internet, tablets, I Pads, their applications, social media even travelling, cooking communication etc are part of our lives from the start till the end of the day. Technology is touching every aspect of society and changing it dramatically. But there is one very important and indispensable part of the society that has also been tapped by new innovations and discoveries and that is education with the concept of E learning. Like all other areas, in this case also urban areas are influenced to a greater extent than rural one. So much more could have been done to bring the revolution in learning process in rural areas of India. In this research paper development through ELearning in rural India is observed. If it planned properly then proper results will be affecting positively. In this research paper, we observed that E-learning is an effective tool for development of educational sector in India. E-learning is learning, utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online. The basic objective of this research paper is to understand concept of e-learning and to

examine the type of e-learning. The research paper focused on classroom learning and e-learning in rural India.

KEYWORDS

Education, educational development, e-learning, formal e-learning, informal e-learning.

1.Introduction

India is a young country on the move. More than half of the country's population is under 25 years of age and every year 10 million people join the workforce. India already has one of the largest education systems in the world. The country has 1.4 million schools, 35,500 colleges, and 600 universities. Right to Education is the primary right of every citizen of India, whether a child resides in a high profile society or in a far away not so developed secluded village, according to the Article 45 of Indian Constitution the basic elementary education must be provided to all the children up to the age of fourteen years. Even after 68 years of independence some States in India are still struggling to achieve Universal enrolment, retention and quality education. There are more than one million rural schools among 6,38,000 villages in India. Schools in rural areas are promoted to raise the level of education and literacy in rural India. The main aim of

running these types of schools in India is to increase the rate of literacy in rural areas. More than 30 percent of India's population is illiterate and cannot read or write.

Schools in rural areas are inadequate and often equivalent to being non-existent. Thus, government's initiative to set up schools in rural areas came into picture. India's education sector is being revolutionised by rapid increases in Internet penetration and the availability of low-cost mobile devices. Technology has the potential to multiply reach. E-learning is a combination of learning services and technology to provide high values. Internet plays a vital role in e-learning. E-learning is attaining significance in the world of internet. Due to the advantages of internet, e-learning reached at anytime and anywhere. E-learning clearly has a role to play in resolving the problem. The sector is expected to grow rapidly at a CAGR of 17.4 per cent between 2013 and 2018. To put things in perspective the market in India is predicted to grow more than twice as fast as the global average of 7.9 percent.

2)Research Methodology

This research paper is conceptual and Exploratory in nature. In order to meet such objective secondary method is adopted. The secondary data was collected through books, periodicals, journal and published material related E-learning for the study.

3)Concept Of E- Learning

Definition

E-learning is defined "as acquisition of knowledge and skill using electronic technologies such as computer and Internet based courseware and local and wide area networks." The term was introduced in 1995 when it was all called "Internet based Training", then "Web-based Training" (to clarify that delivery could be on the Inter- or Intra-net), then "Online Learning" and

finally e-learning, adopting the in vogue use of "e" during the dot com boom.

4)Types of e- learning

1 Synchronous training: means "at the same time," involves interaction of participants with an instructor via the Web in real time.

a. Virtual classroom: Virtual classroom duplicates the features of a real classroom online. Participants interact with each other and instructors online, instant messaging, chat, audio and video conferencing etc.

2 Asynchronous training: which means "not at the same time," allows the participant to complete the WBT at his own pace, without live interaction with the instructor.

a.Embedded learning: Embedded learning is information that is accessible on a self-help basis,24/7. It can be delivered to the place of work, or to mobile learners. Electronic performance support system (EPSS) is a type of embedded learning. The advantage is that embedded learning offers learners the information they need whenever they need it.

b.Courses: The clear advantage of a self-paced course is convenience. Participants can get the training they need at any time. This can include just in-time training where a participant gets exactly the training he or she needs to perform a task.

3 Discussion groups: A discussion group is a gathering of conversations that occur over time. They are also called message boards, bulletin boards and discussion forums. Discussion groups can be used to support a group of participants taking the same class or can be used to support participants performing related tasks. A discussion group is a very competent way to supply expert answers to a large group of people. A single answer to a common question can help many.

4 Blended learning: Most companies prefer to use a mix of both synchronous and asynchronous e-learning methods according to their requirement.

Current state of E-learning in India

Although the foundation of education is still reading, writing and arithmetic, today's students need broader education. Contemporary classroom, hence, needs to deliver live instruction, video content delivery, student to- student interactions via videoconferencing, remote test administration, up-to-date materials, self-learning etc. Digital India campaign is likely to benefit education by bringing many of these and other important elements together. Even as the previous government tried to bridge the digital divide, Modi's masterstroke offers a lot of positivity for the Indian education market which is estimated to be worth Rs 5.9 trillion in 2014-15 against Rs. 3.33 trillion in 2011-12. With nearly half the population of India below the age of 25 and increasing penetration of Internet and mobile devices in this demography which is expected to reach 250 million soon, rivaling the US and second only to China, India's potential as a huge market for e-learning is enormous. Indian corporate sector having hold on tech world such as Intel, Qualcomm and Tata are also making strides in this direction. Intel recently launched 'Digital Skills for India' initiative under which it introduced Digital Skills Training Application that is comprised of modules on Digital Literacy, Financial Inclusion, Healthcare and Cleanliness in five Indian languages. Qualcomm has launched Play 'n' Learn program for school children ages 5-8. It is providing 3G tablets under the Qualcomm wireless Reach initiative. Similarly, Samsung recently started on a Smart Learning initiative to provide interactive study materials to students. Likewise, Tata, Reliance and BSNL are among the prominent Indian names that are going big on this sector. While Tata is expanding its school education solution, 'Classedg',

Reliance has picked up over 38.5 per cent stake in digital education company, Extra marks Education Private Limited, through its subsidiary, Info tel Broadband Services Limited. Government owned enterprise BSNL has tied up with Grey cell 18 Media Private Limited, to launch its online education service 'Topper Education'. Other noteworthy names in this segment include the likes of Data Wind, Merit nation, and Class teacher. Even some of the e-commerce players have expressed their willingness in this segment. Needless to say, if the e-learning/education market takes root in the country, it will definitely improve the education scenario which desperately needs a shakeup.

Even the government is in strong supporter of elearning and the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (Deity) has been actively developing tools and technologies to promote it, what we need is more devices and an ecosystem.

There is a need for a greater participation from the industry and stakeholders. For this to happen, the tech companies have to take the lead and help enable a strong ecosystem. We also need more applications and services to strengthen the ecosystem. The developers and content providers are going to be encouraged only when there is a plenty of devices, more importantly interest of tech companies. Apparently, there is a huge opportunity yet to be tapped, even as infrastructure and regulation issues might be slowing down the otherwise accelerating education space in India.

Digital India (DI) programme is a GoI initiative to electronically integrate the government departments and the people of India. This move aims at ensuring that government services are made available to citizens electronically. It also includes a massive plan to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. Digital India has three core components. These include: Digital infrastructure, Digital service delivery and Digital literacy. The project was officially launched on July 01, 2015

and is slated for completion by 2019. The scheme will be monitored and controlled by the Digital India Advisory group which will be chaired by the Ministry of Communications and IT. It will be an interministerial initiative where all ministries and departments shall offer their own services to the public Healthcare, Education, Judicial services etc.

The initiative is commendable and demands full support and confidence of all stakeholders. However, it has scope for improvements regarding many crucial components like a legal framework, privacy and data protection laws, insecure Indian cyberspace, etc. So these issues will have to be managed simultaneously. But despite its shortcomings Digital India project is worth exploring and implementation and will raise India to newer heights on the international scene. The availability of high-speed internet to every citizen, easy access to government services through CSCs and allocation of private space on public cloud are some the DI features that will revolutionize the lives of rural populations pan India. While the government's aggressive National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) is all set to be spine of the Digital India drive, spreading out of broadband connectivity is going to aid growth of e-learning. There are three components of technology-enabled modern education; Digital Content, Technology platform and delivery infrastructure, or say the Internet. But there is a scarcity of internet infrastructure. Availability of high quality wireless internet speed is still a challenge. Penetration is also an issue. A correct ecosystem can be created when we will be able to empower better quality mobile based Internet. Increasing internet footprint will also help to create the right ecosystem which can be easily achieved through 4G – LTE technology as it provides high speed data transfer, low power consumption, high security, low cost and High level of frequency re-use enabled.

It can be used to meet communication needs of multiple customers within a small geographic region can be satisfied thus making it useful to rural India where still there are issues of power supply, private telecom company are reluctant to provide competitive services.

5) Challenges

1. Lack of Infrastructure and hardware facilities which hamper reliability of e learning
2. Lack of policies, strategies, schemes, monitoring and control that ensure cross-sectoral and multi stakeholder involvement
3. Lack of awareness about E-learning material usage and services offered
4. Lack of citizen (user) focus in G2C2G initiatives. i.e. services which listen and change as per peoples expectations. Products with a focus would develop a sense of “ownership” in local rural governance
5. Problem in finding willing skilled manpower to training illiterate rural areas of India.
6. No computer based courses/skills taught to students in primary schools to increase their knowledge about ICT importance in rural development
7. Lack of skills in trainer or kiosk operators
8. Community based participation (which fully understands and delivers the user needs) is not encouraged.
9. Content development is not relevant and participatory.
10. Services delivered to rural areas are not available using local language and this will affect their long term sustenance due to low interest in their usage
11. Capabilities are not adequately transferred to end user. This prevents them from using the applications independently.

Conclusion

Development of any society depends on its access to information and the same is applicable to rural India too. E learning can work wonders in this direction and help the socially marginalized community to attain their entitlements. Launch of

Digital India Programme is a welcome step in this direction. It is anticipated that with dedicated leadership, willpower and control and an integrated framework comprising of the government, technology industry and society, E-learning interventions in the rural areas will undoubtedly pave way towards sustainable growth.

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