

## **Digital Education**

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### **Abstract**

Over a period of time, it is found that different sectors of economy have changed including education sector. Unlike any other sector, education sector has seen many evolutions and changes. Education system changed from Guru-Shishya Parampara to class room teaching, then teaching with the help of projectors or LED and now its online teaching classes or teaching through E-Learning portals or Web Based E-Learning (WBEL). It has been seen from the past several years that online education system or E-Learning system has emerged as a powerful contender for new education system. From the recent past it has been found that several online courses have been conducted to educate millions of people around the globe on various topics. In spite of difference in culture and language and diverse population E-Learning system has gained a lot of popularity increase in affordability and purchasing power of Indians. The only reason for growth in E-Learning system is drastic change in information technology and technological improvements. This article aimed at examining the impact of E-Learning or Web Based E-Learning (WBEL) in modern India Education System.

**Keywords:** *Education, E-Learning, Web Based E-Learning (WBEL), Information Technology, Purchasing Power, Education System*

### **Introduction:**

The Covid-19 outbreak has disrupted children's lives, pushed out many, and stalled classes and examinations across the country. To ensure students do not miss out on studies, schools shifted the classes to online mode.

With the pandemic forcing the teaching and learning process to migrate to the online mode, the education system has faced an upheaval like never before. Many of the students have been left clinging to their phones and computer screens. However, the 2017-18 National Sample Survey suggested that less than 15% of rural Indian households have Internet as opposed to 42% of their urban counterparts.

Therefore, this shift to the e-learning system has sparked a debate on whether it helped the students to learn or has impeded their progress, social and emotional well-being, and more importantly if this is indeed education. [1]

### **Digital Education**

- Digital education is the innovative use of digital tools and technologies during teaching and learning and is often referred to as Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) or e-Learning.
  - Exploring the use of digital technologies gives educators the opportunity to design engaging learning opportunities in the courses they teach, and these can take the form of blended or fully online courses and programs.

### **Technology as a Savior:**

- **Flexibility:** Online education enables both the teacher as well as the students to set their own learning pace plus provides the flexibility of setting a schedule that fits everyone's agenda. Consequently, providing a better work-study balance.
- **A Wide Range of Courses:** In a space as vast and wide as the internet, infinite skills and subjects are there to teach and learn.
  - A growing number of universities and higher education schools are coming forward to offer online versions of their programs for various levels and disciplines.
- **More Cost-Effective than Conventional Learning:** Lesser monetary investment is there with better results.

- With the online mode of learning, the money spent on study materials along with commute charges is considerably less.
- **A Comfortable Learning Environment:** Online learning allows students to work in the environment that best suits them

### **The Other Side of the Coin**

- **Lack of a Healthy Learning Environment:** Education is not just about classes but interactions, broadening of ideas, and free-flowing open discussions.
  - Students learn more from each other while engaging in challenging collective tasks and thinking together.
  - There is substantial learning that is lost when education goes online. Staring at a screen prevents them from using their mind and acting as remote receptors of what is beamed.
  - **Lack of Technology Access:** Not everyone who can afford to go to school can afford to have phones, computers, or even a quality internet connection for attending classes online.
  - Due to this, the mental stress that students have to undergo is very high.
- **In Contradictory with Right to Education:** Technology is not affordable to all, shifting towards online education completely is like taking away the **Right to Education** of those who cannot access the technology.[\[2\]](#)
  - Moreover, the **National Education Policy** that talks about the digitization of education is also in contradiction with the right to education.
- **Health - Eye issues:** younger students, especially in classes 1 to 3 were most likely to suffer from eye-health issues due to staring at the computer or mobile screen for extended periods.
  - Other health issues like neck and back pain etc. due to bad posture and lack of movement have been noticed in older students.

## **Government Initiatives in past to help digital education**

### **1. NOFN — National Optical Fiber Network (Now called Bharat Network)**

- The objective of this programme is to connect all 2,50,000 panchayats at the cost of over Rs 40,000 crore
- It was conceptualized as a bulk broadband common infrastructure for the country. Overlaying education and health services up to panchayats and villages was an important component of the strategy.
- It has reached many rural areas telecom operators did not want to serve due to lack of profitability. The Universal Service Obligation (USO) fund was used to build NOFN.
- However, the NOFN is still not completely operational, after almost eight years.

### **2. National Knowledge Network (NKN)**

- The NKN was established as a high bandwidth, low latency network to **connect all knowledge-creating organizations** comprising IITs, IIMs, universities, research labs and other e-governance institutions up to the district level.
- It was aimed at encouraging collaborative development and building a repository of knowledge in all fields.
- This network exists and is fully functional.
- However, only a few institutions take full advantage of it because of a lack of understanding, local facilities, funding and technical expertise. [3]

## **Way Forward**

- **A Multi-Pronged Approach:** Flexible rescheduling the academic timetable and exploring options in collaboration with schools, teachers, and parents for providing access to education to a larger section of students.
  - Staggering teacher-student interactions in physical mode with not more than 50% of the total strength attending schools on alternate days.

- Giving priority to the less advantaged students who do not have access to e-learning.
- Genuine efforts must be invested to ensure every child gets good quality equitable education as a fundamental right.
- **Making Online Education More Effective:** Shorter but quality discussions rather than long hours of monotonous sitting and one-way communication, should be preferred.
- The teacher's role has to go beyond just being in control of the class to being a facilitator for the transfer of knowledge.
- **Focusing more on Knowledge Aspect:** Education is not about competence but more about motivation. The students are meant to discover not just cover the syllabus.
- The system should not just heartlessly push the students and teachers in only finishing the course regardless of any gain of knowledge, stress should be upon quality learning and not quantity cramming.[4]

## Conclusion

'Equality of Opportunity' is one of the basic principles of the Indian Constitution. Shifting to a system that benefits only a section of people and leaves behind the neediest ruins the very notion of this statement.

Moreover, digital education is something where India is not successful yet. There is still a lot to do in terms of checking if students' entitlements are not being compromised or in providing meaningful academic curriculum alternatives.[5]

## References:

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