Digital Education in Rural India

Abstract

India has a conducive environment and situation, where e-learning needs to develop to solve several problems of education, especially in rural areas. Various facets of e-learning, present status, major organisations with their respective technologies is being appropriately tapped to enhance the emergence of a new India .Digital education as a novel technology is addressing the plight of education in a big way in rural India and meeting the forthcoming challenges. It is definitely a step to ensure the diminishing of the existing gap between urban and rural education in terms of advancement with the help of all available and latest technology. India is striving at its best to encourage, education. This move is enchanged by collaborating with multinational telecom companies.

Keywords: Digital, e-learning, Rural, Technology.

Introduction

Children are the future of any nation and India is home to one of the largest population of children in the world, in the age group of 0 – 18 years approximately. It is imperative on the part of the country to provide necessary, modernized education system to these children. Almost 70% of India's population still lives in rural areas, approximately spread across 600,000 plus villages. Rural Indian population is not fortunate enough in terms of access to quality education system, infrastructure, in comparison to urban areas. Moreover, India's NPE 1986, which was modified in 1992, gave stress on the need for educational technology to improve quality and governance of education, its access and thereby focus on the effective implementation of ICT programmes along with technical education. Keeping all these in mind, it is possible to digitise education in rural areas with the help of multimedia tools to teachers, and using smart-boards, LCD screens, video-clips, etc. in guiding students. Teachers in rural areas sometimes face certain challenges, such as, shortage of teachers, limited training in ICT, and inaccessibility to new modes of teaching.

Aim of the Study

There need to be various programmes that aim to bridge the digital gap in education between urban and rural India, thereby providing equal educational opportunities for quality education to children, irrespective of their background. It has been observed that when technology comes closer to people, dreams become larger and bigger. Technology will also help in increasing their interest and curiosity level and hence the implementation of digital interface.

The educational system of India has long since needed a strong review to meet the growing demand for quality along with high tech system, reaching out to more children across the country. According to RTE Act, 2010, the provision for the right of education, to free and compulsory education till the completion of elementary education, needs a mechanism that addresses the current challenges of teacher shortage, quality schools access, etc. All the more, Indian youth, have become increasingly hungry for technology, given their potentials to imbibe and learn through digital media. Children especially in the rural areas, who cannot join the formal institution due to familial problems, can enormously benefit from this system.

Review of Literature

Indian Government as well as many private sector companies have undertaken quite a few projects. Many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have put forward their visions and missions. Under E-Kranti, one of the pillars of Digital India, the Government of India has collaborated with several telecom service providers to develop remote rural areas with basic infrastructure for internet services, and also provide digital tools effectively.

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Again, since 2013, the Jawaharlal Navodaya Vidyalayas have collaborated with Samsung, an MNC to provide access to digital learning to over 8,000 teachers and 2.5 lakh students, approximately in 500 such schools. These schools primarily run for rural children, who have access to quality education through digital learning. Nevertheless, students at JNV in rural areas, have limited exposure to the latest technology. So, with the Samsung Smart Class, students have become more confident in using various technologies.

Another programme undertaken was the Smile Foundation's Digital Literacy Project meant for underprivileged children under the Mission Education Programme. It includes a small library, language space, wherein, the teaching is carried out as per the language and skill sets of children.

The Government of India, formulated a National Policy on ICT enabled school education in 2012, with the aim of preparing students to compete in the global arena. The National Mission on Education, through ICT, seemed to change the total environment by assuring network access to remote rural areas. Infact, many low-cost PC's called Akash was distributed.

Objectives

Digital Education for students in rural schools actually can bring them at par with students studying in urban schools, thereby leading to universalization of education. This goes on to add to employment opportunities as well.

The Flagship Citizen Programme of JNV and Samsung Smart Class has the objective of spreading digital education among underprivileged students as well. Through a comprehensive and widespread digital platform, youth, especially from rural settings, may strengthen their access to technology to enhance greater learning outcomes.

India's NPE 1986, modified in 1992 laid few objectives for which effective implementation was needed to overcome the following challenges:--

1. Attitude regarding the readiness of school teachers, in rural schools.
2. Quality content in view of regional languages, high-speed connectivity, size of classrooms, disrupted electric supply.
3. Lack of private sector in rural areas.

In order to make teachers available in remote areas, the introduction of virtual classroom was very significant. Various policies are made to ideally reflect the best interest of all stakeholders in education – teachers, learners, administrators etc.

The largest objective of digital learning is to make people, accessible to various Government E-services along with several other factors. The aim is to first digitalise schools which eventually will go on to the larger life.

Findings

The Digital India Programme lays special emphasis on the development of teachers to enhance pedagogies, which should also be uniform in design. Digital education is changing the process of teaching learning by adding elements of vitality, for example, virtual classroom. It is also learning "anywhere and anytime." It enhances distance learning, which is very much needed in rural India.

The fact that mobile phones is very much into rural population, many organisations have introduced learning apps, which is definitely cost-effective.

Conclusion

The Government of India has declared 2010-2020 to be the Decade of Innovations. It is aiming at Digital Literacy leading to 360 degree turn in E-learning, especially in remote areas. Of course, it involves the act of creating policies and regulating measures. Multiple financing channels should be established for contingency support. So far, the policies have largely focused on the overcoming of infrastructural barriers to rural accessibility.

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