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Dealing With Technology in Art & Education

Abstract

The online education is good in the era of social-distancing or physical –distancing only for those who can afford the money on laptop, mobile, internet and beyond this the main issue is the connectivity. Suppose one can any how arrange all the electronic gadgets but there is a huge problem of connectivity especially in remote area.

Introduction

Recently, in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic ,the University Grants Commission had issued a circular to the universities encouraging them to adopt massive open online courses(MOOCs) offered on its SWAYAM plateform for credit transfers in the coming semesters.This sounds like a benevolent act during the national lockdown.However ,it poses great danger since it is also being seen as an instrument to achieve the country's target Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER) in higher education (envisioned to be 30% by 2021;it was 25.8% in 2017-18).1

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this research article is that how can we get the benefit of education when we are completely dependent on technology in present day disasters ... This is also a big problem..which attracts everyone's attention in this area. There is also a need to explore our ancient values to protect humanity, which are found in abundance in art and art education.

Main Text of the Paper

Besides this as educational institutions across the country switched to online classes following the lockdown, students across large swathes of the Northeast wait in hope for their smart phones to come alive or catch the signal long enough to keep pace with their more fortunate counterparts.[2*]

The online education is good in the era of social-distancing or physical –distancing only for those who can afford the money on laptop, mobile, internet and beyond this the main issue is the connectivity. Suppose one can any how arrange all the electronic gadgets but there is a huge problem of connectivity especially in remote area.

"Online classes sound nice but we know how tough it can be. We have to update the district inspector of schools on the progress of the classes that we have not been able to take at all. The parents of only a few students have smart phones while many don't own a phone. The inability of school to impart online classes has only widened the gap between more than 2,000 students of the Umswai-Amkatchi area and their counterparts in the more fortunate parts of Assam," says a teacher of the government school.

Rahul Chandra Goswami, general secretary of the Assam State Primary Teacher Association says," We are not against online class as it appears to be the only alternative now. But not more than 20% of the students have been covered ,as most students do not have access to a smart phone and recharging for parents beyond the basic need to talk is taxing on the lower middle class, not to speak of those economically weaker".[3]

An assistant professor of Education at IDE says, "We are supposed to be the pioneers of online education (classes) throughout the year since we started out in 2005-2006 with a Bachelor's degree in five subjects-Economics, Education ,English, History and Political Science and

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we were to have done away with face to face classes, but poor or no connectivity made us fall back on the old school method.[4]

"I have been fighting with my teachers because RGU, to which we are affiliated, the Ministry of Human Resources Development and the University Grants Commission want us to conduct online classes. But I really cannot insist on this because of the practical situation on the ground. Almost 90% of our students are coming from far flung areas without connectivity, and those who have would rather not sacrifice their limited data pack on online classes that may snap any time," says Father Jose K., the principal of Itanagar's Don Bosco College.[5*]

Many Students and teachers are saying that online classes are not the solutions for the States unless the mobile phone or broadband connectivity is made robust in remote areas. They do not want schools, colleges and other educational institutions to open until normalcy returns. The COVID 19 crisis is not going away soon. But online classes should not be made mandatory as there are many districts deprived of good communication and electricity.

These are the basic problems in most of the rural and remote areas in our country. But the developed areas also sometimes suffer such problems. During lockdown I have attended many webinars, but the network issues are prevalent in cities too. There are also issues in the more fortunate areas such as Guwahati the urban centre that enjoys the best connectivity in the Northeast." The schools seem to be in a hurry to finish the classes through Whats App groups comprising the students of class and some teachers .But the communication is one way as only the teachers can post as the administrators. If the students are not able to ask questions or say whether they have understood about the lesson, how can you judge the progress," asks a father of class 7 student of a private school in Assam.

The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted the academic year, cancelled classes and examinations across the country.To ensure that students do not miss out on their studies, schools moved classes online, forcing students to attend lectures via their gadgets. However, this has also sparked a debate on whether the increased amount of screen time helps students learn or if it impedes their progress. While Maharashtra has banned online classes from pre-primary to class 2nd, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh have extended the ban till class 5th.

Looking at the screen for long periods of time can be harmful. And since schools have shifted to online instructions, it does imply long hours of screen time for the child. And that doesn't seem to be a healthy way of learning. In addition to the impact on their health, online learning from home can also be very isolating and lonely for the child. They don't have their peers around them and are sort of learning by themselves. Even the teacher's role becomes limited. Children do not get the kind of supervision that they would get in a classroom. Parents might be too busy with their own work to supervise online learning. These factors impact learning.

Also, many children, especially those attending government schools, are being deprived of education during the pandemic as they do not have access to online facilities. They are actually missing out on their lessons. Though some families may have access to digital technologies, there might not be enough devices for personal use of all family members. The parents may be working from home and need to use their computers. So, each household need to have several gadgets that they can distribute among all of them, which is not possible for a large section of the population.

The entire conversation has shifted to the use of technology. It is not just about computers and smartphones, even watching Doordarshan amounts to screen time. Nobody (in India) is really talking about turning schools into safe places , where education can resume. Education is not just about information or content delivered to students via screens. It is about a lot more. And most of it takes place through the social interactions in a school, with peers, with the teachers. Since online classes have begun, all that has been cut out that would have other kinds of development and cognitive impact on the child and their development. It is high time that we started to talk about how the school and colleges actually can be made a space that are safe again for children and students of higher education to come back to, rather than make a complete switch to online learning/classes.

In other countries of the world schools and colleges may be reopening, but in India the situation is different. In abroad schools and colleges are taking utmost precautions in their opening for instance, they are using tissues and tissue boxes for every class. Students can dump their used tissues in these boxes.But the waste generated is so huge , and it it will also require to be discarded safely. Do every Indian schools have that kind of infrastructure? It is also very difficult to make children sit in the classroom wearing mask without touching it or not to touch other children and their masks.

There is a large section of the population that is unable to access technology and that's huge concern. Children belonging to migrant families might have moved far away from their schools. In Delhi, the capital of India, government school teachers were trying to reach some of the students whose mobile numbers they have, but they are not able to reach them, they have disappeared. And these are kids who are going to be out of school education soon. Nobody knows whether their families will return to the cities and what's going to happen to them. Teachers are doing enough to develop better online modules, based on activities, but how many children are benefiting from it? The problem is that our policy has always neglected the marginalised child . That is why we still have so many children who are not in school. All our policies tend to focus on those who already have access to certain facilities. We just forgot the invisible –the poor and the marginalised.[5,]

Reeta Sonavati, an Executive Director at the Early Childhood Education Association, says ,"If we stop online education ,even the children who have

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access to technology will lose out. So stopping online classes is not the solution. Instead, we need to work on providing technology to these (disadvantaged) children. Some non-government organisations are already working on these issues. They are providing smartphones, electronic tablets and teaching children to make use of technology .We need more such initiatives.[6,]

During pandemic, schools and colleges can be opened in a staggered manner ,with 50% students attending every alternate day. This will help avoid crowded classrooms and give institutions time to clean up or sanitising their premises .Temperature checks of teachers ,students and non-teaching staff should become mandatory. Social distancing or physical distancing should be followed strictly by teachers and students. Second, it will be better to give priority to opening schools marginalised and migrant children, as they might not have access to technology. We can create separate safe spaces for these children.

Dealing with technology it is also important to talk about the stress in modern life. There are many factors that causes stress in the modern life. They include more engagement with technology and less with people; more focus on" success "(the end)rather than the process of learning (the means); never-ending aspirations ; relationship issues ; impatience while doing tasks , for this is a generation looking for instant gratification;; and too many choices and the limitations of the human mind to choose wisely. With the bridging of gender inequalities, increase in employment of women, growth and development of urban and pre-urban areas, interference of the media and social media in every aspect of life, and disruption in the traditional joint family system, there is an underlying strain on the socio- cultural fabric. Some of this stress, if not handled well, can push human beings into depression.

Some interesting cases and studies throw light on the coping mechanisms for anxiety and depression. Viktor Frankl, who was detained in Nazi concentration camps, studied the source of depression and found that it is the lack of meaning in life. Individuals who are able to discover meaning tend to achieve the will and strength to endure life. The next question is,"How do we find meaning in life?" Meaning can be found in love and work. Love for fellow being is what motivates a person to work or take action. If we can base our actions and work on a shared love for family members and society at large, we can find effective meaning in life." The Art of Living" involves managing the self for others.

Our HRD Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhariyal "Nishank" says "Prescriptions for depression and anxiety can be found in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore believed that being socially connected was an antidote to the mental estrangement that plague-affected people were undergoing in 1918. Tagore was aware that such a wildly contagious disease was likely to cause panic among the students. He organised many events in the Ashram which ensured that social connections existed despite physical distance. In an essay, he suggested that we

generate bonhomie between the affected and those who were not, because the ill were not the enemy; the illness was. For immunity from psychological suffering, what was required was a design of togetherness, which Tagore insisted was ingrained in the famous Rig Vedic dicta, Yatra Visvam Bhavati Ekanidam (where the whole world meets in a single nest) and Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam (the world is one family).[7,]

In Art education technology and technique both are important but technique is must for the students which is very well known as" Shaili or School of Art" in the history of art as Bengal School, Pahari School ,Rajasthani Shaili or School etc." Gurudeva (R.N. Tagore) had recognised that an artistic atmosphere was essential for creating artists " said Nandlal Bose…." and it was in order to create such an atmosphere that he summoned us to the Shantiniketan Ashrama .Here in Kala- Bhavana it is recognised that to keep us in such an atmosphere, the teacher must continue producing original works of art which will inspire the pupils to similar efforts. This is considered to be an essential part of teaching and, without it teaching would be a mechanical process devoid of inspiration and utterly useless".8'

Tagore's Shantiniketan did not believe in rigid formulate nor in-flexible or dogmatic methods or in any techniques being forced on the students. There were no admission tests. If a student was very keen to learn he would normally get a place and probably was more welcome than those who had already an art training behind him. These latter would need one full year to unlearn what they had learnt and come out of the pedantic groove." Technique is not recognised as a study by itself nor are lessons as such given in it. The aim always kept in view is that technique must help forward the original work of student. As an individual's needs differ, the order of study differs accordingly".(Nandalal Bos) 9'

Today in the era of COVID-19 pandemic life is our priority and education is very essential for a society to live respectively. It is also very necessary for every individual to become a civilized human being. Physical distancing needs a different education system, and online teaching / learning programme is no doubt a very good option but we should be very careful, especially for the marginalised society. Our Government is working very positively with some schemes like "Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat, Dekho Apna Desh, Lokal Se Vokal, Swakshata Mission, Kaushal Vikas ,Digital India" etc. We hope one day India will become very sound and friendly with technology …….then we will be able to say "Sabka Sath- Sabka Vikas".

We should always remember that we come from a very powerful civilization of Indus-Valley and our Art and culture are still our strength, as they were in the ancient time. Today we all are Quarantine but the theory of' Vasudhaiva –Kutumbkam' make us UNITED.

To conclude I will cote the Syrian astronomer-monk SEVERUS SEBOKHT(writing A.D. 662)

"I shall not speak of the knowledge of the Hindus,…of their subtle discoveries in the science of astronomy--- discoveries even more ingenious than those of the Greeks and Babylonians—of their rational system of mathematics, or of their method of calculation which no words can praise strongly enough ---I mean the system using nine symbols. I these things were known by the people who think that they alone have mastered the sciences because they speak Greek they would perhaps be convinced, though a little late in the day, that other folk, not only Greeks but also men of a different tongue, know something as well as they."[10,]

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