

Online and Digital Education in Contemporary India

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Abstract: *Education is a continuous process. It continues from the cradle to the grave. During the Vedic period, the form of education was mostly oral. Important knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next through oral pronunciation. After the creation of script, information started being written down. The manuscripts received at the ancient time are the best examples of writing skills. The medium of language seems to be different in different times. In the Vedic period it was Sanskrit and later in the British period it were Hindi, Urdu and English. More or less, even today these four languages are mainly used in our India. Education has been imparted through these languages in the classrooms also. The form of education in India has been in the form of personal contact. In ancient times, disciples used to acquire knowledge by going the Guru's Ashram. Later, according to the times, educational institutions were established in which students went to schools, colleges and universities to acquire education. This was the system in country before the Covid pandemic. But during Covid era, students and teachers have been in touch with each other through online education instead of going to schools, colleges and universities. Thus, a latest form of online and digital education has emerged.*

Keywords: Vedic period, Manuscripts, Ancient times, Disciples, Guru's Ashram, Covid pandemic, Online and digital education

I. INTRODUCTION

Science and technology have influenced every sphere of human life. Science and technology have also brought about unprecedented changes in the field of education. Through computer technology, education is being imparted outside the classroom and from home. This system has become more prominent in the last two decades. Digital Education has also spread due to the Covid pandemic.

Meaning of Online and Digital Education:

Education is a medium that takes a person away from ignorance and towards knowledge. Through this, a person proves his usefulness in the society. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi. "By Education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit." Aristotle said. "Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body." ¹

There are many forms of education. Education can be given formally and informally. Education in the educational institutions, is a formal education whereas informal education is received from family and society. It is based on experiences. Apart from this, education can also be classified on the basis of students and institutions. Primary, secondary, senior secondary, college and university education comes under this category. Education can also be divided into general and professional education.

Under online and digital education, students take online classes on computers. Internet is used under this. Students can be connected with their classes on the computer screens. Nowadays it has become easy to take classes through mobile and tablets also. By clicking on the link under Digital Education, students can join educational institution and take education.

Programs under Online and Digital Education:

(i) Operation Digital Board (ODB): The scheme of Operation Digital Board provides class-centric digital intervention for teaching and learning and is proposed to be implemented for class IX to XII in all the government and aided schools in the country. ²

(ii) Online Education on the Radio: In India, lessons are broadcasted on TV channels for education in various states. These programs help the students complete their curriculum regarding teaching material in addition to the classroom. Under this, various subject experts teach students on TV. Through this, students get information about specific subjects in addition to their regular classes. Apart from this, it Saves time and money of the students.

(iii) e-Labs: The launching of One Class-One Channel under PM e-Vidya, 200 TV channels will supplement equitable right to education in national and regional languages for classes 1-12; setting up of 750 virtual labs in science and mathematics along with 75 skilling e-labs to simulate a learning environment; development of high quality e-content in all spoken languages for delivery via internet, mobile, TV, radio, etc. will equip the teachers with digital tools of teaching and facilitating better equitable learning outcomes throughout the country. ³ Lessons are being taught on TV by Indira Gandhi National Open University(IGNOU). Digital form of this type education is promoting distance education in a better way. Apart from this, DD Bharti also started educational programs for students. ⁴

(iv) Digital University: The setting up of Digital University, rolling out of National Digital Health Eco-system of digital registries of health provide and facilities, launching of tele mental health counseling through a network of 23 tele mental health centres of excellence with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) will ensure a healthy India. ⁵

(iv) Digital Library: The famous digital libraries are the Project Gutenberg, the World Digital Library in U.S.A. and the Europeana Library. These libraries are providing books in the electronic mode to their members. These libraries are an open access that serves its members. Members can access the study materials on following the certain conditions the particular library. The study materials of digital libraries are works in the public domain. ⁶ National e-Library has been envisaged as an on-line portal that will democratise access to knowledge by ensuring that quality content developed in central universities and other premier educational institutions is available in a digital formal and easily accessed by variety of stakeholders through laptops, smart phones and tablets, etc. ⁷

(v) Online Education Courses: Now various universities and institutions provide online courses on varieties of subjects. Indira Gandhi Open University (IGNOU) provides various under graduate and post graduate courses in all the faculties including professional courses.

(vi) SWAYAM Program: Under Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), professors of centrally funded institutions like IITs, IIMs and Central universities will offer free on-line courses to citizens of our country. This is certainly a positive attempt to break the exclusivity of such institutions which have traditionally favoured only a selected few. ⁸

(vii) Tools for Online courses and research: The following online courses and research tools are used in online education. These tools are software programs. Through these programs, teachers take online classes. These programs also facilitated the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). For online courses and research, we can use- Slideator, Mendeley Desktop, QDA Miner Lite, NVivo, IBM SPSS Statistics, Tux Paint, Google Classroom, Pear Deck, Blackboard, Coursera, Canvas, Edpuzzle, Khan Academy, Edmodo, Socrative and Loom. ⁹

(viii) Smart Class Rooms: A new concept of smart class has come in online classes. In smart classes, smart boards are used instead of traditional boards. This smart board is connected to the internet. Lectures given in the class can be saved in this smart board. It can also be shared among students in digital form. Already created videos can also be shown in smart classes. Big screens are used in smart classes, this makes it easier for students to visualize from a distance. ¹⁰

Impact of Online and Digital Education:

(a) Favourable: Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', the Union Minister of Education, Government of India says that education will develop both-cognitive, social and emotional skills- also referred to as 'soft skills' including cultural awareness and empathy, perseverance and grit, teamwork, leadership, communication, among others. The education of New India will enable learners to foster character-making while preparing for gainful and fulfilling employment. ¹¹

The favourable impacts of online and digital education can be elaborated as follows:

(i) Easy to access: In online education, students can attend classes from anywhere at any time as per their convenience. Online classes are proving to be a boon for the students of the rural areas, remote and hilly areas. In these areas the basic infrastructure conditions like road etc are in very bad shape.

(ii) Saving of the transportation Cost: Online education, the student receives education while sitting a home. The student does not need to go the educational institutions personally. The student's transportation expenses are saved. Thus, online classes are available at comparatively low cost.

(iii) Time saver: In online classes, student's transportation time is saved. Students can utilise this saved time in other extra-curricular activities. students can play or attend hobby classes.

(iv) Wide Spread Network: Online education is based on a wide network. This network connects different countries to each other. This network works simultaneously on thousands of sites. Thousands of sites are available where online classes can be taken. Today the whole world has been turned into a small classroom in terms of online classes.

(v) Facility of Digital Library: At present the form of the library is changing significantly. Today the library is working in the both traditional form as well as in the online digital form. Thousands of books are kept in digital form in the digital library. These digital books can be accessed from anywhere in the world. Books on any subject are available to students in digital or digital form. Research articles have also been uploaded online. Researchers also get information about previous research work done in their field.

(v) Assessment can be judge through the google form: Online Education provides a platform for teachers to get online assessment their students through google forms. Teachers can prepare questions in the google form and shares it to the students. Students give answers of the question in the google form and their answers can be assessed on online mode.

(vi) More useful in the Professional courses: Online education is more used in professional courses like medical, law, chartered accounting, company secretary, cost accounting, master of business administration and engineering etc.

(b) Unfavourable:

The unfavourable impacts of online and digital education can also be elaborated as follows:

(i) Internet issue-slow speed: The most important obstacle in online classes is the speed of the internet. Often companies do not pay much attention to the speed of the internet. This problem is more common especially in rural and remote areas. For higher speed of internet the students has to spend more money. An ordinary consumer or student is unable to spend much on the internet.

(ii) Costly education: Online classes prove to be expensive for the consumers. Expensive mobiles, tablets and computers are used in internet classes. Apart from this, money has to be spent every month on internet connection charges.

(iii) Not good for small students: Online Education is not considered good for students, especially younger students. First of all, they are not able to adjust themselves in online classes as this new phenomenon. If students do not understand in the classes, they hesitate to ask questions to the teacher. The teacher is the main speaker and the students are the listeners. Small students can also access vulnerable things without knowing their pros and cons. Apart from the students can only listen and do not do practice homework at home and thus they are forgetting their writing habits. They do not perform while attending their main examinations.

(iv) No substitute of the classrooms: Online classes cannot be a substitute for classroom study. In classroom study, the teacher and students sit face to face and do the work of teaching and learning simultaneously. Student's doubts are also resolved immediately on the black board. Students have the opportunity to have direct contact with the teacher. More interactive is available in the classroom teaching. It helps in the development of their personality. Students see their icon in their teacher.

(v) Low Expenditure on education: Expenditure at the government level on online and digital education remains relatively low. Expenditure on education has been less than 3 percent of the budget whereas various education commissions had suggested at least 6 percent expenditure on education.

(vi) **Lack of Teachers training:** Not all teachers are proficient in online and digital education. They need to be given information about various education tools. They should be sent to participate in various such training programs so that teachers can present the content of their lessons well.

II. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that online and digital education is a great need of today. Online and digital educations are bringing a significant change in the field of education. Today India's education has become world class. Now many foreign educational institutions are also coming and opening their branches in India. Many of these institutions are offering online classes. Now the level of education of Indian students is at par with the world. Indian teachers are also becoming proficient in online and digital education. But despite this, there are many challenges before online and digital education in India. Online and digital education is in its nascent stage and still has a lot of progress to make.

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