

The Viability of Online Education in India: Its Safety and Limitations

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Abstract – The world is moving at a pace which is quite rapid. Especially after globalization, the movement has been rapid in a way that it has brought many technological advancements on its way. One such advancement is seen even in the field of education. The old classroom system has changed over the years and online education is currently the trend that is being popularized. Students going to school no more have to carry books and a lot of weight and rather prefer to carry a laptop or tablet which has all softwares. However, with everything being online, there are certain disadvantages which comes with them. The digital infrastructure also bring issues in relation with privacy. This research paper aims at covering all major concepts of e-learning at the first place. While explaining them in detail, the author also stressed on the disadvantages of it. The paper also is a good way to learn all about the new education policy with special emphasis on the digital policy. With more increase in the internet users, the limitations cannot be ignored. There are ways to avoid problems caused by internet and suggestions have been added in that regard.

Key Words: Online Education, E-learning, Technological Advancements, Limitations.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past 10 years the changes in the field of education has been tremendous. The Indian education system is a multi layered system with more than 200 million students[1] distributed in various levels. These levels include not just the higher level but also primary school, secondary school and colleges distributed at both graduation and post graduation level. After the independence, the education system in India was privatised and the process of privatization increased greatly after globalization.[2] The effects of globalization in the education system cannot be undermined as only after that most of the institutions have been privatised, faculties have been appointed across borders, different foreign universities have invested within the country and opened their branches and cross border education and travel has become a common thing.

There are different bodies which govern education at different levels. For schools across the country, be it private or government bodies, they are governed by CBSE or ICSE or state boards, for colleges at all levels there are different bodies depending upon the different courses like for medical courses there is MCI (Medical Council of India), BCI (Bar Council of India), AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) etc. The online education concept started around 2008 and at the beginning phase it was

limited only to an extent of learning unique courses or hobbies following etc. however, for the past 3 4 years, the growth in the online education has been tremendous.[3] But this would not have been a possibility without a huge surge in internet and a massive development of the online platform. The massive growth in internet users have given a huge confidence to all the educational institutions to offer courses through the online mode as it has given them a boost that people would opt for it as the charges of the internet have also fallen down to a great extent. The low-cost data revolution and the government's digital push have made access to internet more diverse and inclusive. India now has more rural internet users than urban internet users. For the first time in 2019, rural users outnumbered those in urban areas (227 million and 205 million, respectively).[4] If a trend is to be believed, the most important course which finds the most attention are the technical courses which is driven by a IT majority trend and the costs of the same falls on the higher end. The second most followed course involves the language based course which is quite important in the development of an individual personality. The future predictions for the education system is even more higher and around 1.96 Billion USD is predicted to be invested in the system which makes the Indian education system one of the most accessible markets for all countries.

THE CONCEPT OF E-LEARNING

E- Learning is defined as an acquisition of knowledge and skills using electronic technologies such as computer, internet based courseware and local and wide area network.[5] The overall concept of e-learning increased owing to a wide development in the internet services. There are certain contributing factors for the increase in e-learning among students and they are:

a. Increase in internet use[6]

The internet users in India has majorly increased after the development of mobile phones, especially smart phones. The prices of the smart phones falling to a low level is yet another key factor which helps in the growth of internet users and one supplementing factor is the cost of the data packages which has also fallen steeply. Internet is a gateway for all countries and bridges gaps.

b. Online education is a money saving option[7]

The increase in wifi usage and data plans have made studying from home or online mode a cost efficient option. Compare two options where one person has to buy books from a book store and the other has to download the materials. It is obvious that downloading is a free option. Such examples makes it easy to understand the situation.

c. Online e-learning offers ease in studying[8]

Online e-learning has opened doors for many professionals and employees working in an office. Earlier such options were not available and even the elderly class people had no option to study. Even bigger firms like Price Water Cooper and KPMG have given a full report that online education system is one of the most easiest way to approach courses and never stop learning.

d. Steps taken by the Government

Government after 2014 have taken huge initiatives in the field of online education. Time and again all the budgets covered a special costs for colleges providing online learning, internet has reached even the rural areas, libraries have been opened online etc. National Digital Library has a wide coverage and offers online packages for students enrolled in different courses and contains more than 17 million educational material.

e. Industry standards and educational system[9]

Industry standards connected with the IT field has quite enhanced after the e-learning platforms have found a place. Online courses are also accepted throughout the globe and it brings a confidence in people to pursue these courses. There are a wide

range of options available for one to choose and and everything comes up with its own higher level of industry standards matching.

f. Enhanced employment in technical field

After the advancement of the online learning platform, employment rate has increased in India. Online education is one of the alternatives to bridge the gap between what industries expect and what the educational institutes are delivering. Online education offers an opportunity to enhance skills through advance courses available in different domains. Teaching has also increased and there is a surge in the need of teachers in the online platform which gives more privilege to the field.

TECHNOLOGICAL HITCHES

For any e-learning course to be successful and develop the online education, technology is the one major important aspect.[10] However, like there two sides of a coin, there are certain disadvantages of using the technological field and they are as follows:

a. Hitches in Digital Infrastructure

Even with a vast development in the digital infrastructure, there are certain factors which cannot be undermined. Poverty and underdevelopment is yet prevalent and there are places with a different topography where network coverage is yet not there and developing is quite time taking. This causes a trouble to many households and institutions needs to have a better approach for improving digital infrastructure.

b. Physical involvement

With huge development in the online platform, the physical involvement has decreased greatly. Though it cannot be said to be technological hitch yet the involvement of technology being the contributing factor, this issue has cropped in making people more available in social media and online platforms rather than being available physically causing a distrust in things.

c. Credibility of the degree

Education field has also become a yet another field where competition has grown tremendously. With many colleges and universities going online, there are private institutions as well which have started giving online courses. This leads to a question whether every degree can be trusted on an equal footing. If one scam is found, it makes people question every other organization operating in the field.

d. Language of the course

With a wide increase in the technology combined with globalization, languages have increased. Every course is packed with different linguistics scope and also has a wide range of language options. This increases yet another level of competition especially for a country like India where we have a wide range of language options.

e. Approaching teachers and professors becomes difficult

With rise in e-learning, students find it difficult to approach teachers and professors. Especially for a person taking a course from a foreign university in the online mode, even with all the technological development, approaching the professor at the right time gets difficult which makes things even harder.

f. Fast internet: always a necessity

Another technological hitch which is unavoidable is the necessity of a fast internet. The courses runs mainly on the basis of video tutorials and online notes. If at one point there is low internet or less coverage, it causes a huge issue to the person pursuing it.

NEW EDUCATION POLICY IN COMBINATION WITH DIGITAL POLICY

The Government is aligned with all major technological developments and have never been on a back foot while taking care of developments in the education field. One of the major development is the New Education Policy which instigates a huge confidence in the minds of people to not just pursue online courses but also offers credibility to them. This government backing up is a huge boost. Also, the allocation of an appropriate budget with funds being infused into the education field is yet another major boost coming from the side of the Government.

Another major step is the approval of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are one of the most prominent trends in higher education in recent years. It represents open access, global, free, video-based instructional content, problem sets and forums released through an online platform to high volume of participants aiming to take a course or to be educated. With time and place flexibility, MOOCs gathers scholars and learners around the world. MOOCs bring new opportunities for innovation in higher education that will allow institutions and academics to explore new online learning models and innovative practices in teaching and learning. MOOCs become the latest trend in the field of distance education which indicates a significant need of research studies to reduce the threat related on it.[11]

LIMITATIONS IN THE VIABILITY OF ONLINE EDUCATION

The impact of online education in India is quite high and impeccable. It has not changed the view of the students but also people from all age groups have a complete different view over it. The viability of online education has been accessible only because of the rapid growth in internet and mobile users combined with all other aspects. However, there certain issues which cause limitations in the development of the field of online education. The major issues pertaining to the online education includes:

a. Challenges in the technological field

Technology itself is a word which is a dynamic field. Howsoever large is the development, there is more scope for improvement. For instance, after the advent of 4g, it is now the era of 5g and there is a wide competition in acquiring the status of 5g. Then one has to think about accessibility. Such challenges lie on the field of technology and making the internet accessible to all the people is yet another issue. Digitalization is even now an urban concept and to take them to rural places would definitely take an effort and cost.

b. Hitches in developing new forms of learning

Presently, there are a wide range of courses and thinking of the future would make anyone go berserk. Yet, there are universities and colleges coming up with many more courses on the go. With all such developments, there is a huge pressure to develop more new forms of learning and enhance them to a higher level. This development must not happen at the cost of anything else which is already prevalent.

c. Development of a better platform for e-learning

There has been a monotonous way when it comes to the usage of the online platform for online teaching and learning. If an organization uses a particular way to take a course forward, the same way is followed by many of the other competitors causing huge troubles for the existing platform. Many online platforms hangs in between, are slow in picking up and all these causes troubles.

d. Privacy concerns

The online platform opens the doorway to a lot of issues circulating among students. The primary concern is the issue of privacy. When one logs in for a course, be it a student or a teacher, one gives away too much personal information. It is very difficult to trust online educational institutions. Also, the presence of social media has further widened

the scope of the privacy getting infringed.[12] Such issues needs to be checked failing which can cause a huge problem to everyone taking up such courses.

CONCLUSION

In expectation of a prolepsis, the governments, organizations, business companies and professional associations can start focusing on applications and the effective and efficient implementation of e-learning. The primary goal is to identify that e-learning is a new platform overall and requires time and dedication. In the end, the fact remains that, with respect to e-learning, poor quality or unfair procurement practices are some of the major issues in the growth. So it is necessary to make a thorough appraisal when it comes to choose e-learning software for education in order to improve the knowledge of learners, the learning outcomes, the performance outcomes, and the business and policy impact and in order to value the money spent. In underdeveloped and developing countries, e-learning raises the level of education, literacy and economic development. If the agricultural industry targeted through Elearning, the growth rate will defiantly increase. E- Learning and E-commerce can be developed through proper investigate and plan of action. It is proved that the developing wave of adaptive learning will help higher education, women, government. E-learning is increasing the percentage of literate population in the total population of India. E-learning plays a vital role in educational development as a wheel of growth in education sector. It is expected that if India and developing countries proceed as joint venture and work mutually on the issue of elearning, it will be beneficial for the developmentof educational sector. Through E-learning lot of opportunities can be captured and speedy development will possible. It is expected that India should work out on this issue for development. It will be beneficial for educational as well as social sector in future.

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