NEED, ISSUES & CHALLENGES OF ONLINE EDUCATION IN POST COVID INDIA: WITH REFERENCE TO NEP 2020

Bhavin M. Badiyani

Assistant Professor,
Gujarat Arts and Commerce College (Evening), Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.
bhavinbadiyani24@gmail.com

Abstract

We have to bear the weight of some of the fundamental barriers to the traditional educational system. In all the universities in India, a high percentage of the admissions process is stagnating and millions of students are not admitted. Only online education can solve this problem. The only basis for admission is the acquisition of knowledge. The National Education Policy 2020 also focuses on digital competence and digital education. By accelerating online education, we can set an example to the world. There are many dimensions related to education in Indian education for which a curriculum has not yet been developed. NEP 2020 sought to give higher education a new direction through online education. But digital education or online education is a big challenge for India as we do not have sufficient infrastructure to cop up with the newly emerged requirement. Survey by 'Learning Spiral' throws some light on the reality by giving the statistics of internet access and connectivity in the country. Apart from the demand of the technical requirement for online education, social connection between the teachers and students & the issues regarding privacy and security are also a matter of concern.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Online Education, Online Learning, Digital Education

INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), launched by the Government of India on 29th July 2020, gives the vision of India's new future education system. It focuses on five pillars: Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, Equity, and Accountability – to ensure continual learning. The policy has been crafted consistent with the needs of the citizens as a demand for knowledge in society and economy called for a need to acquire new skills on a regular basis. Thus, providing quality education and creating lifelong learning opportunities for all, leading to full and productive employment and decent work as enlisted in United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, forms the thrust of NEP 2020. The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986 and forms a comprehensive framework to transform both elementary and higher education in India by 2040. (digitalLEARNING, 2021)

The NEP 2020 calls for key reforms in both school and higher education that prepare the next generation to thrive and compete in the new digital age. Thus, there is much emphasis upon multidisciplinarity, digital literacy, written communication, problem-solving, logical reasoning, and vocational exposure in the document. Out of all of these, the Digital Literacy, Digital Education or Online Education is one of the biggest challenges that India will have to face. (National Education Policy, 2020)

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

No one can deny the significance of education. Mahatma Gandhi has also placed the greatest emphasis on education to strengthen the country. There is no doubt that in the last 3 years, India has made great strides in the field of education. Approximately four crore students are pursuing higher education in the age group of 18 to 23 years. The number of higher education institutions has also exceeded expectations. Today, there are 993 universities and around 40,000 colleges and more than 11,000 private higher education institutions across the country. However, more than 60 per cent of the population between the ages of 18 and 23 is out of the reach of higher education. This is one of the big challenges the country is facing. One of the main reasons for this is that children drop out of school in the middle. The process of dropping out of school in the meantime deprives millions of children of higher education. However, there are reasons for this. From schooling to higher education, there are more adolescents than middle school dropouts. For economic and social reasons, girls do not get the opportunity to study in distant school colleges. Online education is playing a big role in overcoming this crisis.

It has now been proven that a radical change in society can be brought about if the structure of online education is strengthened and accessible to all with flexibility. The world has changed during the Corona epidemic. Changes are being witnessed in all spheres of society starting from personality.

This change will take a more concrete form in the future. Therein lies both education and employment. An important aspect of the self-reliance we are talking about in the country today is education. The good thing is that India does not lack both resources and willpower. Under the Pradhan Mantri e-Yojana, plans have been made to digitalize 20 lakh schools and more than 50,000 higher education institutions. Clearly, this is a big step towards educating millions of citizens. By accelerating online education, we can set an example to the world. There are many dimensions associated with education in Indian education on which no curriculum has yet been developed. An attempt has been made to give a new direction to higher education through online education under the National Education Policy 2020. Emphasis will now be placed on harmonizing knowledge and skills in education. The new education policy seeks to integrate different disciplines. Taking into account the national requirement, the new education policy will address the need to focus on expanding the scope of quality education in the country.

Efforts are being made to establish a well-organized mechanism, like e-library and Swayam-prabha. This initiative called Swayamprabha was started in the year 2016. It has textbooks of over 3000 subjects. It deals with topics including content engineering, technology, sociology, anthropology, teaching and education. In addition to preparing such subject wise syllabus, Swayamprabha tries to disseminate education through more than 20 channels.

Videos and other materials on those subjects are prepared by reputed scholars and subject matter experts of the country. Anyone can get admission in any subject twice a year to study such subjects. Admission is free. In addition to the digital curriculum, education is available through video. Discussions are also organized. This education system has proved to be very popular. This kind of online education endeavour can play an important role in enhancing the knowledge tradition of multidisciplinary policy of national education. This will not put more financial burden on the student and he will have access to quality education at home.

We have to bear the brunt of some of the basic obstacles to the traditional education system. In all higher education institutions, the admission process stalls at a high percentage and millions of students do not get admission. For example, in some colleges of Delhi University, admission is stopped by only 5%. Such is the condition of all the prestigious colleges in the country.

The question is, where will the rest of the students go? This fact is especially serious for the children of economically and socially backward communities. How can a poor student study in such good institutions? Moreover, a good educational institution is certified only because of its good education. Only online education can solve this problem. Online education only changes the negative side of admission. The only basis for admission is the acquisition of knowledge.

The size of India's population is very large. If education is limited to classrooms and blackboards, millions of children will be deprived of quality higher education. Building heavy machinery for colleges and universities for millions of students can be extremely costly and challenging. So online education remains relevant. U.S. research institutes on the online education system also support this.

A report from Harvard University concludes that the online education system enhances the quality of teaching and assessment. The teacher can also establish a close academic relationship with the student. Internet access to rural India has increased in recent years. Under the India Broadband Mission, all cities and villages in the country will be connected to the internet by next year, i.e by 2022.

There are other hurdles in the way of getting online education. There is no the majority of the population who want to get an education poverty. It has both urban and rural. Lack of computers and lack of internet facilities have become obstacles in online education. A technical problem like network has also proved to be a hindrance. There are no less obstacles in planning online exams. There are also problems with the language issue. The dream of online education will not come true unless the technological framework is strengthened and everyone has access to computers, smartphones and internet services.

ONLINE EDUCATION IN THE POST COVID (LOCKDOWN) PERIOD

Before the schools and colleges in India completes their educational session, the lockdown was implemented from 24 March 2021, followed by corona pandemic. The educational institutions attempted to complete the session with the help of online education during the lockdown. Classes were ongoing in many education institutions and the examinations were delayed due to the never before situation.

Many schools and colleges were resorted to the controversial online platforms like zoom to run their classes online. Some trusted upon Google, while some of them relied on skype. Somewhere online content was posted on online video streaming platforms like YouTube, and some also sent their video lectures to the group of students through WhatsApp.

But most of the organizations were not prepared for online exams. Organizations like IIT took the exams of the last year students. Amid the fear of Corona pandemic and inadequate medical facilities, there was a total chaos found in the virtual world.

The home became the only place for online business and online studies. When this condition was continued for a long time, some educational institutions declared a summer vacation and, in some institutions, the speed of online education was also slowed up.

But this whole experience has not only brought a change in the method and techniques of future education, but also prepared the way along the way. Amid the helplessness and fascination of online education, it is necessary to know whether the country is really ready for it?

A SURVEY BY 'LEARNING SPIRAL'

Recently a survey was carried out by 'Learning Spiral' on the availability of internet resources nation-wide and the findings are terrible. (Learning Spiral, 2021) Let us have a quick look at the survey findings:

- While 51 percent of rural households in Kerala have access to the internet, only 23 percent of them have access at their own home.
- States like Andhra Pradesh where 30 percent of rural households have access to the internet but only 2 percent of them have access at their home.
- In states like West Bengal and Bihar, only 7 to 8 percent of rural households have any access to the internet, while only 18 percent and 21 percent, respectively, of urban households have access to the internet.
- While 85 percent of urban household's children who study in universities have access to the internet, only 41 percent are likely to have access at the home.
- Only 28 percent of rural household's children have internet access to their home.
- 48 percent of remote university-level students do not have the internet access at home.
- Only 42 percent of students who reside in rural areas have the home access to the web and 69 percent of students who reside in urban areas can get online from home.

The issue is widely being discussed in the education world that; will the online mode provide any possibilities of progress in higher education in the future? Because this is the matter of digital divide, which appears like the divide between the rich and poor in this country.

SOCIAL CONNECTION

Apart from the demand of the technical requirement for online education, social connection between the teachers and students is also an issue.

A teacher can use human behavioural and psychological instruments for teaching and communication, but it is not possible to do it in online mode. Maintaining a constant interaction and emotional touch with all the students simultaneously is the biggest negative aspect of online teaching. On the other hand, in addition to this, the issues regarding privacy and security on the online learning platforms are also a matter of concern.

Some other things are also there. Social media networking is easy to popularize, but in case of Online Education, regular attendance and patience is also a challenge. Naturally this new experience demands special training on both ends.

Interestingly, not only parents or students but teachers are also leading to this change. Those teachers who have always taught through the traditional modes, they also have no choice, other than 'learning' themselves first (how to teach online via digital mediums?) before 'teaching'. Because of this, teachers are also, we can say, forced to adapt different types of novel ideas, platforms, methods and techniques.

We can think about some other aspects also:

1. It takes determination for somebody to really learn new things online to be comparable to the level of the traditional methodology. Without it, you simply fill in the psychological checkbox that you really did it to boast before others. Many individuals are simply sluggish web surfers.

2. Online learning incites a section mindset. You swipe from a slide-to-slide covering smidgens of data that scarcely present a test of wide perception. This methodology is at the danger of neglecting to pass on the fundamental ideas. Making these pieces greater and more extensive will not do since we inhabit the hour of limited capacity to focus with regards to perusing from a PC screen. All the more so telephone screen.

3. At the point when you learn in the relaxation of your home, you are not overpowered by the pressure coming from the need to pay attention to your educator right now, and you generally do not confront extreme cut-off times. Therefore, you lose the ability to acquire and work under pressure. Traditionally taught people are more cutthroat in such manner.

4. You feel absence of rivalry and upgrades when you learn on the web. Be that as it may, when you're inside the college corridors, you're generally on the caution. You see these new enthusiastic individuals strolling past you and you understand you would prefer not to lose to them.

https://www.gapgyan.org/

WHAT UNICEF YOUNG REPORTERS SAY?

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has started a volunteer initiative, where young people share their own views on topics important to them through Blogposts. The work of the Young Reporters during COVID-19 pandemic is also partly funded by USAID. In one of their blogposts (UNICEF, 2020), Matej Milosievski, Dorisa Zemon, Jana Stojkovska and Kristijan Popovski express their views on the issues of Online Education.

According to them, this situation affects everyone and we must all unite so that we can overcome the pandemic. However, we must not allow the situation to affect the quality of learning of those in whose hands the future of our country lies. They have given their own opinions and suggestions to improve online learning:

- The systemic solutions at the Government level must be well designed.
- Platform with a specific pre-established curriculum and a fair and effective form of assessment should be established.
- Vulnerable families should be supported so that they have the means to acquire the equipment and skills to help their children learn online.
- Students and young people should be consulted. Future decisions must also take into account the feelings, views, conditions, and needs of the students. Students should have access to materials without feeling discriminated against, without feeling helpless when they have questions, or without being heard when they have an opinion or concern.
- Students should not be graded numerically, but descriptively.
- As the situation evolves, a more focused approach is definitely needed, involving representatives from multiple areas to assess and share their experiences on what has worked and what has not. We must take into account the problems and solutions faced by students, parents, and teachers.
- Finding compromises, because only together and with united forces can we make the best of this situation.

CONCLUSION

NEP 2020 sought to give higher education a new direction through online education. But digital education or online education is a big challenge for India as we do not have sufficient infrastructure to cop up with the newly emerged requirement. Survey by 'Learning Spiral' throws some light on the reality by giving the statistics of internet access and connectivity in the country. Apart from the demand of the technical requirement for online education, social connection between the teachers and students & the issues regarding privacy and security are also a matter of concern. Considering all these factors, we can say that we cannot deny the importance of Online Learning and Digital Education in today's era, especially when NEP 2020 has put emphasis on various aspects of it. Better we gradually try to implement the measures to make Online and Digital Learning a routine, or as they say, a new normal.

REFERENCES

[1] digitalLEARNING. (2021, September 27). *National Education Policy 2020: Reforms in Higher Education*. Retrieved from digitalLEARNING: https://digitallearning.eletsonline.com/2021/09/national-education-policy-2020-reforms-in-higher-education/
[2] Learning Spiral. (2021). *Survey on Onine Education.* Learning Spiral.
[3] National Education Policy. (2020). National Education Policy 2020.
[4] UNICEF. (2020). Learning Online: Problems and Solutions. *UNICEF Blogs*.