

# Digital Education: A Positive Step Towards Nation Building and Growth

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## ABSTRACT

Digital education is indeed a great innovation in the field of imparting of education to the students in terms of learning and accessing knowledge through means of technology and digital devices. The importance of digitally imparting education was realized during the covid-19 pandemic when almost all the educational institutions were closed during to lockdown. At that time, the importance of digital education was understood which helped in maintaining continuity in the education of students. Digital education helps students attain knowledge and access information from any corner in the country according to their convenience using digital devices. Initiatives of government such as eVidya, DIKSHA ( Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), Swayam- Prabha, e-Pathshala, Shiksha Vani etc have facilitated in imparting of education digitally. Along with education, students also get technical and practical knowledge. Imparting of education digitally remove all geographical barriers in providing education. Along with advantages of digital education, there are also various challenges in imparting education digitally which need to be addressed.

## INTRODUCTION

**“Technology will not replace great teachers, but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational.”**

The NEP 2020 has laid special focus on digital learning in India. It has encouraged imparting education using digital technologies so that students can avail education in online mode. It has emphasized the building up of measures such as virtual labs, online assessment and exams of the students. Use of digital technologies to impart education is important in the present scenario and due to its flexible nature it has gained immense popularity. This has lead to development of virtual connection between the teachers and students. The easy availability of study material online and its accessibility from anywhere has helped the students in a great way. The Indian education system is reportedly criticized for being too costly with inadequate facilities( Bansal,2017)

This imparting of education digitally was very much praised during the hard times of corona virus spread in the country. All the educational institutions were shut due to the lockdown which was done to prevent the spread of corona virus. This negatively impacted the studies of students and online digital education paved a way for them to attain education and access online classes even in lockdown. Online classes became new normal during covid-19 times. It helped students even in the remote areas in accessing education who could not afford to attend regular classes during to difficulties posed by the lockdown and spread of the deadly corona virus in the country.

The most important aspect of imparting education through online mode digitally is the erasing of geographical boundaries. These restrictions vanish when online education is imparted to students as they

can access online classes from any location of their choice. There is also an option of live chats which helps the students when there is any doubt regarding study material, the students can clarify them using online chats option. It was through using online teaching and use of digital technologies that continuity of students' education was not hindered during the covid-19 times. Education transmitted online has been rising substantially all over the world as various new technologies have emerged and also due to increased internet usage.(Palvia et al,2018). The effect of pandemic has lead to online learning become prevalent in India which was not the case in past. Basically educational institutions, due to closure of educational institutes during lockdown were forced to provide education through online mode (Dhawan,2020)

If we talk about digital education, it involves use of digital technologies for imparting education to the students. It has prime benefit that the students can access education sitting in any corner of the country according to their choice as there are no geographical boundaries in digital education. Digital education has been hailed as the future of education system in the country. The government has taken various initiatives regarding imparting of digital education in the country. These initiatives has changed and transformed the way in which education is imparted in the country. In these initiatives firstly, e- Vidya has been launched by the government on may 17,2020. It is a measure by the government to unify all the measures which are used in digital education with an aim of helping 25 crore school going children. There is another important initiative by the government named DIKSHA which stands for Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing. It was launched in the year 2017 and is for grades from 1 to 12. DIKSHA serves as an online platform for school students over the country. There is web portal for assessing DIKSHA and it can be accessed through mobile application also. Another initiative related with this platform is VidyaDaan which was launched in 2020. It invites e-learning resources contributed by various experts and educational bodies in the field of school education using DIKSHA platform. This measure has led experts to contribute digitally to the school education so that school students can be benefitted.

An important initiative taken by the government in the field of digital education is Swayam Prabha. Swayam Prabha is an initiative of MHRD. Swayam Prabha has been launched to provide 34 DTH channels, 24\*7. These educational channels help students in accessing education through direct to home channels designed in such as way that the channels contain information about different subjects and disciplines. The telecast of channels have helped students specially in remote locations where internet facility is not available or is disrupted. GSAT-15 satellite is being used to telecast these channels. The content that is telecasted through SWAYAM PRABHA which is new everyday for atleast 4 hours, which is then repeated 5 times so that the students can access the education according to their convenience. The contents contained in the channels are provided by UGC, EC, IGNOU, NCERT and NIOS. The information provided through DTH channels contains information about higher education, school education, curriculum based courses and also education related to competitive exams which are beneficial for class 11 and 12<sup>th</sup> students.

e-Pathshala- It is one of the initiatives of digital learning and use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education sector. A joint initiative of NCERT (National Council of Education Research and Training) and Ministry of Education, e- Pathshala provides online access for all classes along with various learning materials and it also facilitates participation in various seminars, conferences, contests etc. Various textbooks, and other materials whether in print form or digital form can also be accessed with the help of e -Pathshala. The various study materials can be accessed by using

mobile phones and laptops. It has various advantages for the students, teachers, and educators alike. It helps students in getting access to millions of textbooks in the form of e-books related to various classes. Students can access various learning materials in the form of reference books or other related supplementary books. Along with it, they can access various e-resources including audios, videos regarding their studies. With students, it is also immensely beneficial for the teachers as teachers can also access various textbooks, periodicals and journals, syllabus etc. The educators can also can access policy documents, periodicals and journals etc.

Shiksha Vani- is a podcast app launched by the Central Board of Secondary Education so that important information can be transmitted to the students promptly. Regular updates by CBSE can be accessed by the students through Shiksha Vani app . It helps by giving directions, results etc to affiliated schools. Podcasts are more beneficial when compared to written circulars as they are more engaging than written information.

A recent trend that has also helped the transmission of education are the EdTech startups that have been started in online education market which has helped students immensely during the lockdown amidst the pandemic and have provided many students education through online medium. Many of them have been providing free online courses to the students.

Advantages of Digital Education- there are various advantages of digital education. First and foremost it enables the students to access online classes from anywhere in the country at their convenience. Also the study materials can be accessed by the students easily as they are imparted in digital manner. Along with studies, students also gain technical knowledge while gaining education in digital manner. This access of online classes from anywhere and easy availability of study materials have tremendously helped students gain education at the convenience and flexibility of students.

Key challenges of Digital Education-

Along with various advantages that can be listed of online digital education in India there are various disadvantages also of digital education. Suresh Kumar (2018) has done research on advantages and challenges of providing online education in India. Everything has positive and negative aspects. Same is true for digital education. On one hand there are very advantages of digital education in India which we have discussed earlier, on the other hand it leads to reduced face to face interaction among teachers and students which is an essential aspect of teaching. This reduced face to face interaction has its own negative consequences for the students as it leads to lack of communication and attachment between teachers and students. Lack of interaction between students and teachers can often make learning a difficult process. This can result into lack of discipline among the students. Discipline is crucial when learning about a particular subject. Maintaining discipline is important in studies and online digital education lacks the capability to foster discipline among the students. Lack of discipline often results in lack of motivation among the students. Students tend to remain motivated when they are focused on a particular subject but with lack of discipline, the focus is often disrupted which can lead to disengagement and lethargy among the students that can hamper their self-confidence. Therefore, lack of discipline along with reduced motivation is closely related to lack of self confidence in the students. These happenings are direct consequences of reduced face to face interaction and communication between teachers and students.

One of the most concerning disadvantage of online digital education is related to the increase in screen time of the students which has hampered their vision drastically. Many students have complained of blurred eyesight, redness in eyes, pain in the eyes and other eye related issues which are a direct result of

increase in the time spend on computer used for online education. Another concern is the reduced physical activity among the students. The reduced physical activity among the students has lead to various health issues among the students due to prolonged sitting for hours in front of the computer screen which results in physical inactivity and is a cause of concern as it negatively affects the students' physical well being. The negative impact on eyesight and reduced physical activity were not much of concern during regular classes in offline mode where students indulge in various physical activities during school hours. Therefore, this negative physical impact of digital online classes cannot be ignored. Another major issue with digital education in the country is lack of trained teachers and professionals who can make use of digital technology to teach the students in right manner so that maximum knowledge can be imparted to the students. The unavailability of trained personnel has a negative impact on the imparting of education in the right manner to the students. Therefore, lack of trained teachers is a major hurdle in imparting digital education to the students.

Along with lack of trained teachers who can meet the demand of providing digital education to the students another problem regarding the imparting of digital education efficiently is poor availability of internet connections in the areas which are situated in remote locations. There are many parts in India where basic amenities like electronic connections are still missing and internet connections are not available in remote locations in the country. This lack of internet connection in the remote areas leads to students missing lectures and poses a hurdle for students in getting online digital education. So, lack of trained professionals who could teach students digitally are severely less in number and along with it lack of internet connection in remote areas of the country makes it difficult for the students of remote areas to avail benefit of online digital education.

Lack of electronic gadgets through which education can be imparted digitally to the students are also not sufficient. Not everyone owns a smartphone or laptop. With huge population of the country still living below poverty line, owning a smartphone or laptop seems like a distant dream. Still many students feel left out because they donot own a smartphone or laptop which is required for online classes. Many times, in newspapers the condition of such students is reported who are not able to gain the benefit of online digital education in the absence of digital devices. They usually leave the classes or their parents have to take loan or borrow money for buying them smartphones or laptops. So, poverty itself poses a challenge in front of the students in gaining education through online mode.

## Conclusion

Digital education serves as an innovative method in gaining education which enables the students to learn, gain knowledge and education from anywhere by using digital applications which helps in learning. Initiatives like Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA), VidhyaDaan, SWAYAM, e-Pathshala etc have proved to be fruitful in the field of online education. These digital method initiatives have helped the students in gaining education along with technical knowledge. Also it has helped students in gaining education in a convenient manner. The flexibility feature of digital education has helped the students attain education and study from anywhere in the country and gain access to online digital education which has helped students in attaining education in an easy manner at their convenience. But problems such as lack of face to face interaction between students and teachers, increased screen time of students which leads to eyesight and focus problems among students along with reduced physical activity has hampered their physical well being. There is also lack of trained professionals and teachers who could impart education digitally. This, along with unavailability of

internet connections in the remote areas of the country becomes problematic in imparting of digital education to the students. The prevalence of poverty in the country also makes it difficult for students to afford smartphones and laptops for gaining access to online digital education. Therefore, these problems must be eradicated so that digital education can be accessed by everyone in the country. It is essential that the teachers should be well trained so that digital education can be imparted to the students in an efficient manner. Digital education can really change how we learn and what we learn and it really can help in bridging the student- teacher ratio gap in the near future.

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