

Digital Education System needs to evolve rather quickly to democratize quality education

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The rural urban divide is starkly evident in education where the disparity is glaring. The rural education landscape in India is distinctly different from the urban setup. While modern schools with swanky infrastructure designed in western concepts focus on modern experiential method of learning, the rural setup is still reeling under extreme paucity of infrastructure, lack of quality teachers, skewed teacher-taught and a societal overhang which still does not give primacy to education. The phenomenal growth in the education sector has largely benefited the urban elite. Rural India continues to learn by rote.

The Digital India mission presents an opportunity to correct this glaring imbalance and fast track rural India to contemporary education. As bulk of India still resides in villages, the potential clientele for such a venture would be vast. This would lead to cost effective infrastructure, affordability and would a significantly increase the mean years of schooling in Rural India. This would significantly raise the employment quality of the rural workforce, and

would impact the lifestyle of subsequent generations.

The growth of the education sector in the recent past and the rise of Digital India are two simultaneous event which must transform rural education. Harnessing ITES for smartening the rural education system would lead to much higher penetration levels to crucial to harnessing the demographic dividend. Proliferation of knowledge not only inspires application but also results in a wider perspective on contemporary issues.

As long as we are still a developing nation, the challenges of such an exercise will remain. There is a woeful lack of infrastructure to handle digital education. Infrastructure costs would be significant, particularly in the initial phases. These costs must be supported by the government through subsidies and enabling schemes under the 'Digital India' umbrella.

Empowering teachers by imparting them special skills to handle technology requires special focus as it is crucial to the success of the mission. The national skill development in concert with the AICTE and CBSE must evolve a robust strategy to fast

track this urgent imperative.

Overcoming regional challenges in a diverse country like India are unique.

The federal nature of the country requires technology to communicate curriculum across regional languages. Curriculum would have to be designed and delivered across regional languages while maintaining uniformity of context. Modern computing methods make this easily feasible allowing much higher levels of penetration.

Education and a changing the rural mindset is an inter related phenomenon. The deprived sections of society must be given access to quality education at affordable costs. This would unleash a self-sustaining demand and usher quality.

Affirmative action by society at large will be required to nurture the digital and propagate the digital education system so that it can reach down to even the most deprived margins of society. This would not only usher inclusive growth but also create equitable living standards, promote creativity and confidence and propel a young vibrant India far forward on the human development index.

The sustained growth of India is vital to its well-being. Home to one sixth of all humanity, it is the youngest nation with an age profile projected to be in the mid-twenties. This youth bulge is an abundant resource which needs to be educated, skilled and harnessed to ensure a positive spin-off in society and reap rich demographic dividend. Education is the single most critical element in achieving this goal. It not only brings direct benefits like knowledge, empowerment and critical thinking skills but also positively impacts on living standards, quality of work and promotes health and hygiene. An educated society will nurture positive discourse within itself and contribute to a vibrant, effective and progressive democratic system. Education is a great source of alleviating the society by lifting thousands of people out of poverty each year.