

E-Learning and Structural Meagerness in Elementary Education: An Exclusive Approach

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Abstract

This paper deals with the e-learning in elementary education with reference to the Govt. sector, where the basic facilities are not available for the healthy functioning of the teaching and learning process. In this context, the emphasis on the e-learning without the adequate physical facilities and quality assurance in the elementary education could be considered as an exclusive approach. When we compare this system of elementary education to the big private giant of school system, this make huge gap between the two and further strengthen the exclusiveness of the approach. There is an immediate need to resolve the entire problem regarding the elementary education in country like India where, there is lack of physical facilities, lights and other human and capital resource in the field of education. Which is the prerequisite for the betterment and development of the e-learning in any field be it primary, secondary or higher education. The central thesis of this paper is that e-learning as an approach in teaching learning which could not work actively in the absence of basic facilities which is the synonymous for the Govt. sector elementary education in Indian context. On the other hand, e-learning is reinforcing the teaching and learning process of elementary education which comes under the purview of big private players because of the resources available to them.

Keywords: *E-learning, Exclusive, Structure, Elementary Education*

Introduction

E-learning could be understood as the very facilitative approach to deal with the teaching and learning process or in other words it is the very innovative steps in the pedagogical perspective. It shrunk the distances between the learner and teacher; it has the virtual edifice in the process of knowledge production and consumption. It breaks the monopoly of knowledge production and gives opportunity to produce the knowledge which could be accessed by vanishing the entire time and space factor. It gives opportunity to learn at the time and pace of learner. E-learning could be substantiated only in the presence of adequate physical and human resources. The studies have been focused on the e learning as the constructive approach to enhance the teaching learning process, but this study is quite different from earlier approaches. This study is focusing on the very basic pre requisite of the e-learning, without this approach could not be sustained; it analyses the e-learning as an exclusive approach if there is too much emphasis on the e-learning without fulfilling the basic physical facilities for the e-learning. Apart from this, it is also an exclusive approach when it compares the private and public or rural and urban dichotomy in its accessibility. This

approach will not yield much and it will create the binary or unequal societies in the absence of resources as Ivan Illich argues in his book *De Schooling Society*.

Quantity versus Quality Debate

India is the country where e-learning could not function very well at the elementary level, because the very structural deficiency and the kind of quality education are prevailing in the country. Operation Black Board, which came into existence after the NPE 1986, for the expansion of physical facilities in the primary education, later on it take the elementary education within its ambit. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan type of programs are running for the catering the expansion of physical facilities, but there is still many miles to go for the inclusion of children and the quality education at the elementary level. Despite of the Right to Education and free and compulsory education, although the enrolment ratio is all time higher in this section of education, but the quality of this group is unleashed by the various NGOs and organizations. One of the organizations called Pratham, which published report every year called 'Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)' particularly in the fields of elementary education. The recent published report in 2014 titled as ASER 2014: Annual Status of Education Report, which reveals that 96.7% of children in the age group of 6-14 years are enrolled in school in rural India. Still there is 3.3% of children of schooling going age are outside from ambit of universalization of elementary education, the report says. In the same vein, Jha and Parvati in their work, focusing on the progress of the elementary education in India, argues that there is problems regarding the in adequate funds, which became hurdle in the progress of elementary education and concludes by saying the inevitable steps to follow the common school system based on the neighborhood schools. Although there is debate over the common school system in India, one group argue to have the same, while the bourgeois group do not such type of system.

On the issue of quality education, which is provided in the school, report (ASER) publishes the fact that 'of all children enrolled in std. V, about half cannot read at std. II level'. These are the facts which are specifically related to the rural India. There is also evidence to prove the increase in the enrollment of children in the private schools from 18.6 in 2006 to 30.8% in 2014. Despite the RTE Act, 2009, which provide the free and compulsory education to all children in the age of 6-14 years, but fails to sustain the students and there is continuous increase in the enrolment of children in the private schools. The quality of private schools in the rural areas is also the matter of inquiry and concerns about their so called quality.

The above stated fact somewhere raise the questions on the issue of e-learning in the elementary school particularly in the rural areas, wherein there is continuous effort to sustain the enrolment and provide the quality education to all children. The e-learning which could be considered as the marker of the quality education at any level of education and which could only be cherished with the help of adequate resources be it human or capital and other physical resources. In the absence of these resources this approach will not yield too much at the elementary level.

Rural versus Urban Dichotomy and Private versus Public

As stated above the quality of elementary education in the rural areas it is quite evident that because of huge pressure on the expansion of physical facilities (operation blackboard) and enrolment of children somehow effect on the qualitative aspect of education, which hinder another way to enhance the quality education through another means like e-learning and smart classes. The situations of expansion of electricity in the rural India needs to be taken

into account, where larger portion of the population is not getting the electricity particularly in the day time, which is very important factor for the enhancement of the e-learning be it elementary and secondary education. Very recent data on rural electrification by the ministry of power, government of India, released the data on the rural electrification as ‘under Deendayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojna –Rural Electrification (DDUGJY-RE), as on 30th september,2015, works in 1110680 un electrified villages and intensive electrification of 326958 partially electrified villages have been completed and (222399 lakh free electricity connection have been released to BPL households)’ however this program was titled as Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojna (RGGVY) in the UPA tenure. These facts reveal the scenario of rural electrification in India, which is the important factor for the e-learning and leads to the exclusive development or uneven development, where large section of the society is not getting the equal share in the fruit of development. However, on the other hand when it comes to the urban and metropolitan cities, the situation is altogether different from the rural India.

Big private giant in the field of school education like G. D. Goenka, DPS, Sanskriti Schools and different schools of international brands are providing the smart classes and the notifications and information are send through the e-mail to the students and their parents not only at the elementary level but preprimary and secondary level. Classes are equipped with the modern technological equipment like computers, language lab, Wi-Fi and other resources, which are pre requisite for the e-learning. This kind of opportunity is not available, if available, then for few in the government sector at the elementary education; they are lagging behind as compare to their counterpart. This is not true for only the big private school rather it is true for the small unrecognized school in terms of their performances. To substantiate this, the study conducted by Goyal and Pandey (2012), reveals that the ‘students in private school performs better than students in governments’ (Goyal and Pandey, 2012). This substantiates the exclusiveness of this approach that the big private agencies are gaining too much because of the resources available to them, on the other hand government schools are lagging behind in terms of material culture.

Tech-Savvy: Adequate Personnel?

India is the country where literacy roams around 74.04%, there is long way to achieve 100% literacy if we further interrogate this fact into the rural urban binary the picture get fragmented in the rural and urban context. Literacy is the prerequisite to have the tech savvy affairs from the point of guardians and parents because in the virtual era the parents which are considered as the one of the most important teacher at the home. In this context, the parent’s illiteracy and their lack of technological knowledge will hamper the progress of the children in their academics. Apart from this fact the present human capital (teachers) are not adequate to deal with this broad approach particularly in the government sector where the teaching personnel are not having enough awareness and knowledge about technological equipment which necessary for e-learning. This needs further extensive work to substantiate this argument, but we can’t ignore this fact. However the private sector (branded school) is having privilege to compete with the Govt. sector in terms of tech-savvy affairs. This is another loophole to establish the fact that e-learning in the elementary education could not yield positive effect as compare to the private school (high class). This consequently creates the unequal society as Illich have been argued in his work ‘De Schooling Society’, where poor (govt. school) could not get proportionally as compare to rich (high class rich school).

Recent Debate

E-learning could not be sustained without the proper use of the internet at any level. The very recent ongoing debate on 'the Free Basics service, which has been in the midst of Net Neutrality debate, offers free access to a set of *basic websites and services* (emphasis added) with the objective of introducing Internet to the people. When contacted, a Facebook spokesperson said: "This campaign gives people the opportunity to support digital equality in India. It lets people speak in support of the one billion people in India who remain unconnected, and lets them participate in the public debate that is being held by TRAI on differential pricing for data services. And it gives them the opportunity to support Free Basics'.

This very recent debate on internet usage in the name of 'free basic' is hampering the freedom of accessibility of the user. It is curtailing the freedom of the individual and it is the facebookisation of the world (although over 1 billion people are facebook user). It would shrink the meaning of the internet because the very nature of the 'freeness'. The new user will be know the meaning of internet through the facebook and will be consider the face as the prime source of internet and hence it will shrink the very vast virtual edifice of internet only to the face book. So the forthcoming generation, who would avail the basic websites and services on internet through face book, will be lagging behind as compare to their counterpart who will avail internet through the regular service. When we would apply this principle in the context of e-learning, it will further create the binary and exclusiveness as on the one hand those who would be using the regular internet service and those who would be using the controlled service of internet. it will further strengthen the rural and urban dichotomy. The rural (poor population, general understanding) will be lagging behind in comparison to the urban population in terms of internet usage, which is the prerequisite of the e-learning at any level.

Conclusions

Succinctly, to quote Microsoft founder Bill Gates admits that 'computing cannot benefit the world's two billion poorest people. He says that the first need is a schoolroom, the second is a teacher who shows up, the third is electricity, and only then it may be appropriate to consider ICT (e-learning)' (quoted in Latchem and Jung, 2010:2). To raising concern over the inclusive nature of elementary education, be it e-learning or other facet of learning, it needs to focus firstly on the expansion of all physical facilities in terms of light, at least in the school time, other physical facilities; secondly the quality in the teaching personnel and teaching learning material and lastly and most importantly the common school system based on the neighborhood school. This could only be eliminating the binary distinction as the rural-urban and rich-poor and it will further strengthen the inclusiveness of the education at any level and hence to the society at large.

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