

DIGITAL LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: AN INSIGHT

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125.

Online learning is the future and will undoubtedly replace traditional learning. Mobile platforms have given more people access to online learning. In the coming years, there will be more elements in the online learning structure such as virtual reality (VR) to democratize the learning more. Future universities will be places where university and industry are co-located and collaborate on projects that solve real-world problems. They'll become precincts of innovation that actively apply research for community impact. No doubt technology changing is the future of higher education. Future universities will be places where university and industry are co-located and collaborate on projects that solve real-world problems.¹ They'll become precincts of innovation that actively apply research for community impact. Digital transformation in higher education refers to an organizational change realized by means of digital technologies and business models with the aim to improve an institution's operational performance. The adoption of digital technology in education has accelerated at a breakneck pace over the past year, thanks to the **effects of COVID-19**. Concepts such as video lectures, remote learning, and online examinations have permeated the education space and revolutionized the way instructors teach and students learn. Students who use the digital education platform become more engaged and develop their knowledge base. Moreover, digital learning is more interactive than the one-sided lectures in the traditional system. In addition, digital learning allows students to connect better with the learning material.²

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Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on learning methods:

The pandemic has made it clear that virtual learning is here to stay. In the West, the big question is whether it will dilute the quality of the college experience and education. In India, which grapples with digital divide, the question remains whether this will reach most people at all. As 2022 gets off to a limping start, the impending crisis in higher education so different in India and in the West, that they practically complement each other. So much so that they could almost solve each other's problems.³

In this digital era, a lot of students are slowly but steadily shifting towards online digital courses in almost every field including business, arts, engineering as well as programming languages and technical tools. In each and every field, there are numerous courses available digitally across the world and the learners are eagerly filling up the seats. Digital learning is an advanced technological medium providing learners with a great deal of flexibility, allowing them to study at any time from any place at their own convenient speed without worrying about timetables and schedules. It allows students to pursue what they want to learn and what they don't. The expansion of technological advancements is bringing new changes in the way education is being imparted and perceived. The outreach of educational programs is becoming better with every passing day with the digitalization of education. Digital education is providing both teachers and students new opportunities to teach, learn, and grow thereby improving the overall learning process.⁴

Adaption of new learning technology: E-Learning

The adoption of new technology-aided learning tools have changed the way education is being imparted in schools and colleges has completely changed. The internet of things is turning out to be an affordable way to impart education to young minds and a powerful way to integrate experiential learning for everyone. The digital learning companies are constantly upgrading to advanced solutions to increase access to education for people who are currently struggling to get proper education facilities. The role of teachers is changing. They can now access the entire classroom through digital

screens. Student reach and engagement is higher as it combines various instructional styles. It gives each student the exposure to world-class education, something that was not available in a chalk and talk approach. It is a very flexible way for studying sitting in the comfort of one's own room. Students can now study, experience, test their learning through self-assessment, and even keep a track of their progress and milestones. The digital medium has also been ideal for corporate training, as these online learning platforms are portable, efficient, flexible, and robust mechanisms. A lot of companies have now started using digital learning tools extensively to train their employees, help them upgrade their skills, and provide seamless sessions for knowledge transfer.⁵

The number of young minds opting for digital education from across the world is increasing profoundly. One of the greatest advantages of digital education is that the resources created once can be used multiple times for generations to come. This saves a lot of resources and effort. Furthermore, digital education allows teachers to personalize the content of the course based on the needs of individual students.

Massive Open Online Courses

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are empowering self-learning in a crucial way. The popularity of online courses via MOOCs programs in India is a growing movement. They are helping young minds in the country to upgrade their qualifications and skills, and allowing millions of Indians access to affordable education to improve their employability by gaining access to a range of skill-based courses.

It facilitates students and working professionals to study at their own convenience from anywhere and at any time. Moreover, several courses offered under this platform provide a valid certificate that is duly acknowledged by institutes and companies. India is the second biggest market for MOOCs in the world, after the U.S. However, it is expected that India, in the coming years, will supersede the U.S.⁶

India is home to the largest population of children in the world, with an estimated 430 million children in the age group of 0-18 years in the country. Digital education is going to be the new way of learning in India. Smart and innovative technologies are changing the overall educational framework in the country. The penetration of digital education in rural India is evolving fast. Online learning platforms have large amount of user data, which enables them to use machine learning algorithms to enhance the learning patterns of people. Pattern recognition is used to personalize the content for each individual. For example, when a student repeatedly struggles with a concept at the course, the platform adjusts the e-learning content to provide more detailed information to help the student.

The instantaneous feedback loops inside the platforms, which are provided by other online students or the platform improves the learning curve. This also offers shy or more reticent people the opportunity to participate in class discussions more easily than face-to-face class sessions.⁷

Positive Outcomes in the Rural Sector

The rural sector is dealing with issues such as old teaching methods, shortage of teachers, inadequate student-teacher ratio, and insufficient teaching resources. With the digitization of education, students in backward areas, mainly rural areas, are being taught with the help of the latest teaching tools and methodologies. This technology is helping teachers connect with students remotely spread across at one time. This will certainly help in bridging the student teacher ratio gap in the near future. According to a report by the UK-India Business Council, India's e-learning sector is expected to grow at an annual rate of 17.4 per cent between 2013 and 2018, twice as fast as the global average. Majority of India's population is incapable of reading or writing English, but with the help of technology, learning material can digitally be made available in regional languages as well. Even though connectivity continues to be an issue in India, mainly in rural areas, with e-learning and m-learning initiatives, students can access the content offline as well that can be synced as and when internet connectivity is available. Moreover, education online is comparatively more affordable, as it consists of freely accessible media for learning, teaching, and research purposes. This fosters an ecosystem of free learning.⁸

With the internet becoming far more affordable and accessible, digital education will be the new way of learning in the near future. The education industry will witness the proliferation of small,

medium, and large scale digital learning start-ups offering a variety of innovative digital products fostering digital learning. The government is also supporting this by coming up with policies that will help boost the digital education market in the country. There are constant efforts to improve the quality of digital infrastructure across the country with the use of innovative educational tools.

In the near future, digital education, like all other professions, will see noteworthy changes in the way universities and colleges provide education. We can witness a myriad of possibilities emerging out of digital education to empower the youth of this country.

Advance Learning Management Systems (LMS) with its right knowledge management tools will help in improving the design and delivery of educational courses being offered by universities and colleges in India.

Digital technology is also helping overcome all language barriers. Now, learning material can digitally be made available in regional languages as well. Through e-learning and m-learning initiatives fostered by the government and private players, students and teachers can get access to the vast pool of knowledge content.⁹

Impact of COVID-19 on the Education System

Moreover, the global pandemic, **COVID-19**, shook the world and has changed the way education is perceived. Whether it is virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools or online learning software, there has been a significant increase in usage of these tools since COVID-19. Also, many online learning platforms are offering free access to their services, including platforms like Byju's. If utilized appropriately in a planned manner, it very well can become a gift of this global pandemic, as it would break physical barriers for providing quality content to remote places and bring the youth across different geographies together.

Major world events are often an inflection point for rapid innovation – a clear example is the rise of e-commerce post-SARS. With time, we will know whether the same will apply to **e-learning post-COVID-19**, as it is one of the few sectors where investment has not dried up. What has been made clear through this pandemic is the importance of disseminating knowledge across borders, companies, and all parts of the society. If online learning technology can play a role here, it is incumbent for all of us to explore its full potential. Online learning is the future and will undoubtedly replace traditional learning. Mobile platforms have given more people access to online learning. In the coming years, there will be more elements in the online learning structure such as virtual reality (VR) to democratize the learning more.¹⁰

Take A way

India is waking up to the comprehension that industry 4.0 needs education 4.0. With advancement of technology, we must radically alter both, how we learn and what we learn. Digital education can encourage today's youth to engage themselves in the vast sea of knowledge available to them. Even though there are a lot of challenges when it comes to digital learning, digital learning is the new way of imparting education and will continue growing and cause a paradigm shift. In the near future, it can be said that digital education is the future of the world and is here to stay.

On the other side of the Frame:

Many students have struggled to make the jump from physically being at school to learning virtually. The change in the style of learning now provided has made it harder for many to learn.

The physical distance between students and teachers due to the online learning environment has made it difficult for students to be able to connect with their teachers. When working online it is much harder to show your teachers exactly what you are struggling to learn. This is just one example of how online learning is hard.

A major thing that has changed is the way students are being taught. Many teachers have resorted to giving their students videos to watch instead of instructing them themselves. For many students, this style of teaching has not been effective.

Online learning is harder for many reasons; from missing crucial parts of your learning to not being able to access your education because of the internet, online learning has been a rough adjustment.¹¹

In conclusion, we can say that there are three key factors that created learning challenges for students: lack of access to technology and the internet, a gap in learning resources (such as instructor feedback, structured course materials and opportunities for collaboration), and limited prior experience with online learning.

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