How Digital India Initiative can Revive the Education Sector

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Abstract

The Digital India vision provides the intensified force for progress and promotes inclusive growth that covers electronic services, products, devices, manufacturing and job opportunities. In the 21st century India strive to meet the aspirations of its citizens. The government and its services reach the doorsteps of citizens and contribute towards a long lasting positive impact. The Digital India programme aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. It has leveraged IT as a growth engine that has given the direction after launching make in India plan of Indian Government to focus on making the Indian Economy more transparent and speedy. The Digital India project aims to offer a one-stop shop for government services by using the mobile phones as the backbone of its delivery mechanism. The government of India hopes Rs. 1.13 lakh crore initiatives that seek to transform India into a connected economy. This would attract investment in electronics manufacturing, create millions of jobs and support trade. Digital India Govt's Umbrella Branding of all past and new e-projects and ideas to facilitate engagement with the Public promises access to internet, phone and banking infrastructure. Government of India has been planning India for a future knowledge. It would not only help government in transparency but also help Indian people to upgrade their knowledge. Digital India Initiative will go a long way in reviving the education sector.

Introduction:

Digital India is a Government of India initiative taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The initiative was launched on 1st September, 2015, to ensure that online government services are available to Indian citizens. The main motto of Digital India is to transform the entire system of public services through information technology. The mission of this initiative as mentioned by

Modi is "We want to have one mission and target: Take the nation forward – Digitally and Economically," thus, improving the web infrastructure and developing better internet connectivity across the country.

The Indian Education system and 'Digital India Initiative:

India's education system has long waited for a major revamp. Not that we aren't seeing positive changes but that dream of having modern high tech education accessible to all seems far from reality. While the previous government tried to bridge the digital divide, the new Narendra Modi-led government has launched a new Digital India Campaign.

There are high hopes from the new initiative, which is likely to benefit a lot of sectors, especially e-commerce, banking, health and e-governance. Education is also one of the important elements of this initiative.

Education system transformation:

In India, the education sector is transforming due to the increasing Internet penetration. Already, many private educational institutes have initiated digital classrooms and have included e-learning as part of their curriculum. This can be extended to more institutions, public and private organizations, with the government pushing digital technologies for quick and easy knowledge transfer to the masses.

Much has happened these days with rapid Internet penetration, availability of low-cost mobile devices, and the presence of a youthful workforce who are tech savvy; all these combined provide easy access to e-learning and this beacons a huge opportunity for e-learning companies to provide training for better skill development and knowledge empowerment.

Digital India not only limits itself to the periphery of urban areas but also makes its effort to penetrate the rural areas of India. There are many campaigns being conducted and it promises high-speed broadband connectivity across all villages. This is likely to change the facet of rural India. So, time has to tap the potential of e-learning to educate the rural population. The agricultural sector can be educated, especially the farmers, for better crop productivity.

But, the following questions need to be addressed:

1) Will Digital India help education becomes modern and accessible to all?

2) How can it be achieved?

3) What are other modern technologies that are helping evolve the modern education system?

These questions will be answered in the following paragraphs.

Digital education:

The Indian education system has a great opportunity to go digital, thereby leapfrogging the progress in education that other countries have done. Over the past 8-9 years, Indian schools and students have demonstrated that their ability to adapt to digital technology is no less than anybody else in the world.

It is a fact that today many private schools in India which use products like Smartclass are way ahead of the technology adoption curve than many other schools in the US, Singapore and even Japan. There is a great opportunity in front of us to take e-education and spread it across the country.

The advantages are quite obvious. With one stroke, we will be able to deal with the critical teacher shortage problem and also the teacher quality problem. We will also be able to make education contextualized, localized, relevant and consistent across the country.

It has been proven through multiple studies that when kids are exposed to multi sensory and multimedia education, they absorb better and they are able to retain the learning content. One of the perennial problems in the Indian education has been the huge drop out ratio because students in school do not find education relevant or contextual to their surroundings.

Using high quality digital materials will immediately ensure that every learner in the country will find it a joy to go school and immediately cut down the dropout rate. In the past, many proposals have been made to the government regarding e-education and this could be an opportune time to take up digital class room and digital education across the country.

NOFN, Smart Classes, Gamification:

Almost every sector has high hopes from the Digital India initiative, which is extensively based on faster communication facilities such as National Optical Fibre Network and adoption of Internet enabled devices such as smartphones and tablets.

Indian government's ambitious National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) is going to be backbone of the Digital India campaign. Expansion of broadband connectivity is going to help growth of e-learning. "There are three components of technology enabled modern education. Digital Content, Technology platform and delivery infrastructure i.e. Internet. However there is a lack of internet infrastructure. Availability of high quality wireless internet speed is still a challenge. Penetration is also an issue currently. Right ecosystem can be created when we will be able to empower better quality mobile based Internet. Increasing internet footprint will also help to create the right ecosystem" .Of late there's a lot of focus on gamification. A lot of interactive online and offline tools are being developed to modernise the segment. Robotic education has also taken off well in the country. Next Education India Pvt Ltd is one of the companies targeting this segment for quite some time. Robotic education is growing globally as well as in India. It has all the potential to help education gets modern and make learning easy for students."

"Robotics will play a major role in the future so it is imperative that we prepare the present generation of students for this transition. The use of robotics in the current Indian education system is an intriguing mix of theory and practical. When used properly in schools, it forms the basis of cross-curriculum activities and becomes an ideal resource to teach Mathematics, Scientific principles, Design and Technology and Computer programming," he adds.

Online learning or Live Virtual Classrooms (LVC):

Online learning or Live Virtual Classrooms (LVC) have paved the way for modern education in India. With the evolution of technologies such as the Cloud, Data Centers & Virtualization, there is a huge potential for technology to be integrated into education industry. However, this segment is largely untapped. Low adoption rate is one of the reasons because technology enablers in rural India are still scarce. The requisite Infrastructure & Security must be in place in order to set the ball rolling for digital education. Availability of internet in remote areas, that allows two-way interaction and performance feedback are some of the fundamentals needed to

launch a more widespread platform for LVC market in India. Moreover, India is yet to travel a long way to shift the mindset of people from distance education to online education".

Now with government initiatives and PM Modi's Digital India dream, the ecosystem we seek is not a distant reality. Indian youth are technology-driven and find online learning to be especially beneficial as it saves them significant amount of cost, time and effort. For young working professionals who are determined to imbibe new skills to excel in their careers faster, LVC is the perfect option since they can pursue knowledge at their own pace and time."

Bridging digital divide:

The power of technology cannot be denied. With approximately 131 million cellular-phone households in the country, we believe that delivering education through the digital platform to children and teachers could be a potential way to bridge the education deficit. However, the challenge has always been how the technology will get adopted to make a significant difference. With the various digital initiatives that the government has launched, we are hopeful that it will help strengthen access to technology especially in government schools and preschools.

What we need: More devices and an ecosystem:

At almost every discussion forums on Digital India, there's been a consensus on the need for a greater participation from the industry and stakeholders. For the education segment, tech companies have to take the lead and help enable a strong ecosystem.

Educational devices were in trend a couple of years ago. But, of late we haven't seen many educational devices. While we definitely need more education-centric devices, we also need more applications and services to fortify the ecosystem. Developers and content providers are only going to be encouraged if there plenty of devices, more importantly interest of tech companies.

How does it Change the Paradigm?

Gone are the days of "chalk and talk" classroom training, where students are limited to the four walls of a classroom. With e-learning, learning can happen at any place, any time. We can flip through the screens in your smartphone or laptops.

Even corporate enterprises are focusing on social and collaborative learning. Other latest trends are mobile learning and responsive e-learning. Responsive learning allows learning, using either of the devices. The senior management of a company prefers the use of mobile for their just-in-time learning.

Cloud computing also adds value to e-learning. This provides flexibility and extensibility of learning; and adoption to thrive in the cloud gives better solutions enterprise wide in terms of integration.

Who are going big on digital education?

Fortunately, tech giants including the likes of Intel, Qualcomm and Tata have made some strides in this direction. Intel recently launched 'Digital Skills for India' initiative under which it introduced Digital Skills Training Application that is comprised of modules on Digital Literacy, Financial Inclusion, Healthcare and Cleanliness in five Indian languages.

Qualcomm has launched Play 'n' Learn program for school children ages 5-8 in. Qualcomm is providing 3G tablets under the Qualcomm wireless Reach initiative. Samsung recently launched a Smart Learning initiative to provide interactive study material to students. Tata, Reliance and BSNL are among the big names that are going big on the segment. Tata is expanding its school education solution, 'Classedge', while Reliance took over 38.5 % stake in digital education company, Extramarks Education Private Limited, through its subsidiary, Infotel Broadband Services Limited. BSNL has teamed up with Greycell 18 Media Private Limited, to launch its online education service 'Topper Education'.

Other notable names are DataWind, Meritnation, and Classteacher in this segment. As we pointed out in our previous analysis, e-commerce players have shown keen interest in the digital education segment. If the e-learning/education market grows, it will definitely revamp the education landscape in India.

Conclusion:

Digital India is one of the most ambitious projects launched by the Indian government. : Digital India has been envisioned as an ambitious umbrella programme to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The Digital India initiative will add

another dimension to the education sector and corporate learning sector. Traditionally, India always had ambitious projects and plans, but implementation and execution has been sluggish. Good thing is there's a lot of positivity around the Digital India initiative. Digital education could be one of the segments that can be best benefited from the initiative.

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