

Education at the Crossroads: Digitalization of Education in India During an Age of Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Education is an integral part that reinforces values to life. Life has gone awry with the outbreak of the novel coronavirus that has weaved a web of ambiguity, bringing the world to its knees. In this era of the pandemic, digitalization plays a vivacious role to ensure the connectivity in the world and recommence the once hampered life. Students all over the world can resume the once suspended classes, with the help of online platforms. In the form of online discussions and webinars, the classrooms are virtually brought to every student's home. They act as a portal to bind human beings with various domains of life: personal, social, educational, and professional. These challenging times mark the transformation of traditional educational setting to modern digitized settings. The Post-Covidien circumstances demand the world to adapt to the booming digital structure which has become a necessity to carry out the day-to-day activities. This paper intends to analyze the role of digitalization in the revival of education during this pandemic crisis based on an online survey conducted among modern learners.

Keywords

Pandemic, Digitalization, Education, Ambiguity, Post-millennials.

Introduction

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”-Nelson Mandela. Education, the best boon bestowed upon humanity sculpt them into the finest specimens on earth. An educated man is treated with sheer reverence in society as it enlivens the discriminative power that differentiates a human being from all other species. Cultural significance of education is that it

forges the personality of an individual and the overall future of society as well. The self-sufficiency and the liberating energy that education radiates in the evolution of human beings is miraculous. It illuminates one's idea about the self and the universe and heightens his rational thinking which would ultimately refine his social responsibility to lead a life with moral integrity.

Being a social animal, human existence is reticulated with nature

and other organisms. For eons ago man has been pregnable to multitudinous infections afflicting human conditions. The first pandemic to be ever recorded in human history can be traced back to the caveman days. Malaria, tuberculosis, influenza, leprosy, and smallpox appeared during this period. Literature is a mirror that reflects the social-economic and political conditions of the society. Pandemic Literature provides sagacity into the grotesqueness that humanity undergoes during the times of pandemic and alludes human's powerlessness against the natural course of life. The genre resonates the tales of isolation, endurance, survival, and solitude that men had to encounter in life amid the pandemic.

A breakthrough of a novel Corona Virus rippled the tremors of tautness in the year 2019. The Virus pioneered in China and subsequently ramified in around 163 countries and was later promulgated as a Global Pandemic by WHO. Economy's ennoblement was stunted as a result, leaving the world in ambiguity and astray. It obstructed the intrinsic dribble of life leaving the world to retrieve the lost balance. In contrast to the other epidemics that have befallen upon humanity, the only asset that sets the modern world apart is the development of technology and communication that capacitate the people to alternatively run the world, therefore making life possible.

The evolution of digitalization has a momentous role to help the people

consummate their daily activities during the austere circumstances akin to the pandemic. The government has put into effect potent measures that would help to mitigate the communal spread of the Virus. Quarantine and lockdown are the safe roads adduced by the World Health Organization to shield our way through the deadly pandemic. Though social isolation might take a toll on the psychological sphere of man, digitalization comes to the rescue, for the sustenance of life, assenting man to connect with the various domains of life.

The lethal pandemic compelled families and friends to be stranded away from their loved ones as they are forced to stay in isolation to ensure theirs as well as other's safety. Though this alienation could create tremors in the psyche of humanity, digital media provides various platforms for people to stay in touch with one's kith and kin. Socializing is an imperative part of any civilization but due to the present pandemic scenario, everyone is asked to follow social distancing and has been rebuked from attending social gatherings such as marriages, exhibitions and festivals, and so on. The advancement of technology and communication has opened plenty of opportunities to virtually socialize, helping people to take part in various social events without putting theirs and others life at risk. Education has a pinnacle of prominence in one's life, but when the world took an unexpected turn, schools and

universities had to be closed to contain the spread of the virus. The classes were resumed online with the help of digital platforms through webinars, meetings and online classes, providing students with a safer way to acquire knowledge at the safety of their home. Similarly, the professionals were also able to continue their work through the digital medium.

Digitalization, the most ground-breaking avant-garde dominates the life of modern citizenries globally for over several decades. The technological revolution's hegemony has an overpowering influence on the social, economic, political and industrial parameters of the world. The invention of information transmission gave birth to a digital universe which instigated the new world economy to thrive forward attaining incalculable apexes. Modern digital communication tools have fashioned their way into the business industry escalating them to the creation of mass media and entertainment platforms that bonds humans today. The booming technological endeavor metamorphosed the educational system from conventional blackboards to high-tech projectors. GEN Z or post-millennials encompasses the student populace of the contemporary generation who were born between 1995-2010, after the progression of technology which gives them an upper-hand in the same. Instant feedback and smooth access to information are the two yardsticks that make this generation

exceptionally individualistic. The steadfast adaptation faculty of Gen Z in the digital environment makes them inimitable from their predecessors. Digital evangelist and the Traditionalists are under a heated debate concerning the pedagogical methodologies attributed to modern learners. Traditionalists argue that students might probably lose their attention as they are enthralled by modern technology while digital advocates defend that technology is indispensable to conceive an interactive and collaborative learning atmosphere. Post-millennials hailed as the "digital natives" cogitates technology neither intriguing nor distracting. According to the reports combined by eco consultancy, about 96 % of this gen owns gadgets of their own. In comparison to their millennial predecessors, the visualization endowment of the brain is further amplified amid modern apprentices as per the studies. Rather than being an inert listener, the intellectual productivity of this generation in their contribution to collaborative projects is commendable. Thus, it is safe to assume that the modification of classroom education to virtual platforms during this pandemic catastrophe have augmented the learning competencies of this student generation.

Digital infiltration in the Indian economy has ameliorated the proliferation of the nation into the fastest developing economy of the world. The acceleration of advancement in information

technology prompted a digital revolution in India which engenders novel employment opportunities and market intensification. The embryonic internet economy has transfigured the emergent paradigms and emboldened the nationals digitally. Multifarious sectors like health care, academics, business ventures are the patrons at the receiving end of digitization. Another momentous benchmark in the expedition of digitalization in India is the installation of 'Digital India' by honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the single-minded goal of extemporization of digital prowess in rural areas with access to high-speed internet. Technical brainchild in the educational zone in India witnessed the acclimatization of academic solely from textual to virtual platforms. To authenticate a robust ambience for systematic education, the affiliation between teacher and student is pivotal. History itself replicates how teachers emanate a puissant on the psyche of the students. Socrates and his disciple Plato, and Plato and his disciple Alexander the great are a quintessential teacher-student duo. The global pandemic has constrained the traditional classrooms to virtual classrooms. Though the new mode of online education quite confounded both the academicians and students primarily, they have become habituated to its hacks gradually. Indian educational ministry enunciated their trepidations over the closure of schools and

universities and commenced to stimulate new ideas to resurrect the halted education amid the pandemic predicament that would sooner or later act on the future of learners. The ministry of human resource development amalgamated potencies with educational ministry and allot free digital e-learning platforms like SWAYAM, DIKSHA Portal, e-Path Shala and so on. The government propelled miscellaneous training programs upskilling the teachers to corroborate that they are invigorated and inured to virtual classrooms before the investiture of education. "Teachers need to integrate technology seamlessly into the curriculum instead of viewing it as an add-on, an afterthought, or an event." — Heidi Hayes Jacobs, Owner, Curriculum. It is strictly essential that there should be a healthy interactive relationship between these two orbits of education.

Educational digitalization has been the finest futuristic developments that transpired during the past few years. Textual education could not suffice to challenge the prerequisites bred by additional progressive sectors as the epoch befits added digitally and scientifically cultured. Traditional teaching tactics could no longer mollify the unquenchable thirst for knowledge amid modern learners who are inquisitorial. Here emanates the efficacy of digital media that overtures abetting hands to the learners and postulate their gateways for inexhaustible knowledge. Thus, hefty textbooks

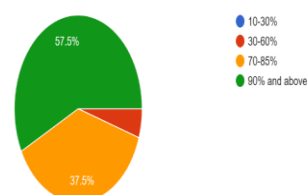
were supplanted by innumerable gadgets that students could expediently carry wheresoever they go. Students should have the myriad adroitness to outlast in an era subjugated by virtual manifestos. The modern educational institutions coalesce both textual and digital education whilst assimilating their curriculum and habituate to the requirements of students. Along with the students the Academicians and teachers should be personalized with technology and maintain a tab on the latest advanced applications in the digital market. The traditional classroom milieu assiduously enforced a stringent curriculum demonstrated within curbed boundaries and time limits. However, the insatiable inquisitiveness of modern learners could not be gratified barely with the abet of the traditional education system. Thus, the modern education structure inducts an impeccable symmetry between traditional and digitalized education settings. Mutual consolidation of both these entities is indispensable to accomplish the irrefutable aim of being expedient to the student's cognizance of learning. Manifold ingenious pedagogical formulas ought to be recuperated by teachers as it will assist them to get time off from the monotonous traditional way of teaching. The live classes can be recorded and reiterated conferring to the student's cadence in pursuing lessons without peer pressure in the virtual educational platforms. There are no demarcated precincts in

digital platforms in comparison to the traditional setting.

Digitalization paves the way for the headway of digital competence ensuing in the professional development of an individual. It has abetted students to espouse the genteel practical and digital skills which help them to learn, collaborate and demonstrate their works to the world. Digital literacy and digital skills prepare an individual to be virtually responsible while browsing the internet, owing to their instant employability. As technology is copiously intertwined with life, procuring to be mobile, flexible, and negotiable is crucial for employability in the present scenario. Ergo, upgrading one's digital competence is inevitable as it aids an individual to instigate a digital identity to proliferate in this ever-changing world of technology.

This research paper elucidates how digitalization has become a necessity rather than a supplementation in the revival of education during this pandemic catastrophe with the help of a survey conducted among modern learners. The survey is conducted among modern learners ranging from the age of 15 to 25 and it consists of 12 questions that aims to analyze the role reversal of digitalization from being an add on to

How much do you think digitalisation has helped in driving education forward during the pandemic?
40 responses

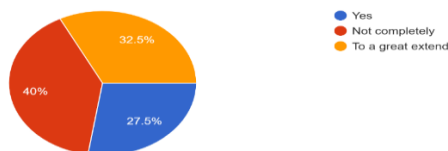


necessity to resume the halted education on a global spectrum.

The results ostensibly depict that modern-day learners identify digitalization to be a phenomenal factor in driving reinstituted academics all over the world. Among the 40 responses that the survey received, 57.5% of the learners agree on the impertinent role played by digital media in providing virtual learning platforms to be 90% and above. Furthermore, 37.5% of students deem the pivotal presence of digitalization in wheeling the education forward to be around 70 to 85%. The percentage of results obtained through this survey pinpoints how students discern and appreciate the importance of digitalization that provides the twin advantages of being able to continue their studies without any hindrance under this pandemic catastrophe with the assured safety at their respective homes. Both parents and students

Several research on student psychology allege peer pressure as one of the gravest issues that learners of all time had to encounter. The angst of being behind their peers in studies aggravates peer pressure in the learners and might eventually push them into a state of frenzy. According to the results obtained, 32.5% of modern learners claim that digital educational platforms help them to cope up with this issue to a great extent and 27.5% agrees that virtual classes were able to expunge peer pressure. However, 40% of the learners assert that digital classrooms do not completely help them with the issue at hand. By combining the two results it is safe to assume that more than 40% of learners agree digital learning to cause lesser peer pressure than the conventional one. They consider online classes as a haven that have reduced their constant stress and pressure over

Has online education mitigated peer pressure among modern learners?
40 responses



can forget their concerns about the delayed classes that might come in the way of their future and the anxiety and fear of contracting the lethal virus in their pursuit of wisdom.

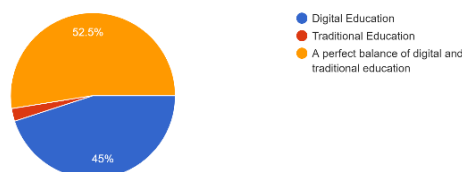
falling back behind their peers.

This pandemic era countersigned the role reversal of digitalization from being a mere supplementation

Do you think digitalisation has become a necessity rather than a supplementation to education post Covid?
40 responses



Which of these pedagogical methods do you prefer the most?
40 responses



to a candid necessity to recommence the restrained normality of life. This was unequivocally demonstrable in the educational realm globally. As the results epitomize, 100% of modern learners entitles that digitalization has irrefutably become an inimitable stimulus in homogenizing the education post-COVID-19. The quotient of the result procured from the survey patently connotes how imperative digitalization has evolved throughout this period. The modern learners unanimously ratify that the overruling domination of digitalization in reviving the education during these trying hours is unambiguous. There has been a sizable number of debates and frenzied consultations over the burgeoning pedagogical methods that should be accredited in the modern educational system universally. The results indemnified from the survey, as depicted in the pie chart, shows that 45% of the modern learners prefer Digital education over traditional classroom education. And 52.5% of the students claim that they prefer a perfect balance between digital and traditional education to be amalgamated in the system. This extrapolates that though digitalized education and conservative classroom education differ in their

strategies, their earnest aim is to aid the learners to improvise. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the perfect balance between both these systems aiming the betterment of learners is the ideal pedagogical method that should be attributed in the modern educational settings.

Conclusion

After observing the survey reports conceded among the modern-day learners it could be forestalled that role of digitalization in education has become sturdily incontrovertible. Digitalization has always been cogitated as a supplementation to the limited textual knowledge taught within the circumscribed time-limits in the classroom. Conventional classroom concepts are being outdated with the entrenched development of educational digitalization during these past few years. Though modern educational settings have found a middle ground between traditional and digital pedagogical methods, still there is an incessant debate between digital advocates and traditionalists deeming the fineness of education delivered by these two sectors. The results gained from this survey palpably elucidates that digitalization has become a necessity from supplementation in the revival of education during this pandemic catastrophe. There are still a subsidiary proportion of students who finds it

difficult to adapt to this virtual classroom system, as the experience may differ according to each learner's standpoint. "Technology can become the 'wings' that allow the educational world to fly farther and faster than ever before, if we allow it"- Jenny Arledge. This quotation by Jenny Arledge resonates with the futuristic conception of educational digitalization and how it can corroborate the learning dynamics if we will allow it.

Appendix

The following questionnaire was used to carry out the Survey among the modern learners.

1. How much do you think digitalization has helped in driving education forward during the pandemic?
 - a) 10-30%
 - b) 30-60%
 - c) 70-85%
 - d) 90% and above
2. Has quarantine helped you in developing any new skills?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
3. How many webinars have you attended during the pandemic?
 - a) One
 - b) More than one
 - c) None
4. Did you attend any online internship since the pandemic?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
5. Which of these pedagogical methods do you prefer the most?
 - a) Digital Education
 - b) Traditional Education
 - c) A perfect balance of digital and traditional education
6. Which of these platforms gives you more confidence to communicate with your mentor?
 - a) Virtual Classrooms
 - b) Conventional Classrooms
7. How much did visualized education has enhanced your learning skills?
 - a) Below 30%
 - b) 40-60%
 - c) 70% and above
8. Has online education mitigated peer pressure among modern learners?
 - a) Yes
 - b) Not completely
 - c) To a great extend
9. Do you feel online classrooms to be more liberal than the traditional classrooms?
 - a) Strongly agree.
 - b) Maybe
 - c) Strongly disagree.
10. Does online education help you to learn at your own pace?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Maybe
11. Has online education instigated in imbibing in-depth knowledge in the subjects that you learn?
 - a) Poorly
 - b) Moderately
 - c) To a great extend
12. Do you think digitalization has become a necessity rather than a

supplementation to education post COVID-19?

- a) Yes
- b) No

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Bio- Note



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