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Online Education: Betterness and Bitterness

V. KAVITHA¹

ABSTRACT

Education to Children determines the stability of future India. Since Independence our Indian Government made many education policy to strengthen education system. In this scenario a sudden tremor globally due to Covid-19 pandemic which totally tilt the education of children. But still as like light house to the sailor Online education brings hope in the mind of the children for restoring their education. This paper analyse Online education as a coin which has two faces.

*“Education is not the learning of facts,
But the training of mind to think*

- *Albert Einstein*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is very important for every country. Education begins at home and continues throughout our life. Our first teachers are our parents. They teach us how to speak our native tongue and identify things around us. Teachers and professors play a very important role in our life by teaching us various important and specialized subjects. There are many reasons why people need education. It helps them to learn new things, find good jobs and lead a respectable life in the society. The more educated a person the higher is the chances of her or his success in life.

History about Education System

The education in India has a rich and interesting history. It is believed that in the ancient days, the education was imparted orally by the sages and the scholars and the information was passed on from one generation to the other. After the development of letters, it took the form of writing using the palm leaves and the barks of trees. The temples and the community centers formed the role of schools. Later, the Gurukul system of education came into existence.

The Gurukuls were the traditional Hindu residential schools of learning which were typically

¹ Author is an Assistant Professor, Government Law College, Chengalpattu, India.

in the teacher's house or a monastery. Even though the education was free, the students from well-to-do families paid the Gurudakshina which was a voluntary contribution after the completion of their studies. At the Gurukuls, the teacher imparted knowledge on various aspects of the religion, the scriptures, the philosophy, the literature, the warfare, the statecraft, the medicine astrology and the history. This system is referred as the oldest and the most effective system of education.² The present system of education was introduced and founded by the British in the 20th century, by the recommendations of Lord Macaulay³. It has western style and content.

II. ORIGIN OF ONLINE EDUCATION

After independence, the education became the responsibility of the states and the Central Government coordinated the technical and higher education by specifying the standards. The 21st century has brought about a massive change in the world of education. The internet has brought about a paradigm shift in the fundamental way in which learning is done. Though there are numerous examples of the usage of machines and tools in education throughout history, e-learning in the modern sense of the term is a relatively new concept. Slide projectors and television-based classes have been in use since the 1950s. However, one of the first instances of online learning in the world can be traced back to 1960, at the University of Illinois, USA. Though the internet wasn't invented back then, students began learning from computer terminals that were interlinked to form a network.

The first-ever completely online course was offered in 1984 by the University of Toronto. In 1986, the Electronic University Network was established for being used in DOS⁴ and Commodore 64 computers. Three years later, the University of Phoenix became the first educational institution in the world to launch a wholly online collegiate institution, offering both bachelor's and master's degrees. This was the beginning of a revolution whose potential was largely unknown to the public back then, but one that would make learning greatly accessible and within reach of what people could ever have imagined. This image illustrates the works of some of the early pioneers of online education: The Open University in Britain was one of the first universities in the world to begin online distance learning, in the early 1990s. Currently, the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India is the largest university

V.Kavitha, Asst.Professor, Government Law College, Chengalpattu.

² V.A.Ponmelil, 30thSep 2015, <https://education.newkerala.com/india-education/Brief-History-of-Education-in-India.html>, Last visited:12.06.2021

³ Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) Who introduced the English education system to British Colonies including India, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Babington_Macaulay, Last visited:12.06.2021

⁴ DOS means Disk Operating System

in the world with around 4 million students enrolled, most of whom currently receive education via online methods.

Progress Rate

Online learning is booming in current times. Aided by the widespread availability of high-speed internet, making use of new technologies such as 4G and the soon-to-be-released 5G, online learning is expected to grow by leaps and bounds in the foreseeable future. The worldwide market size of online learning is approximately \$187.87 billion in 2019, a 400% increase over what it was just six years ago. This phenomenal growth has been made possible not just by the rapidly evolving scenario in the world of technology, but also by the spread of education in the developing world. Experts predict that the next wave of online education will occur not in North America and Europe, but newly emerging markets like Africa, India, and China⁵.

III. ONLINE EDUCATION IN INDIA

The online teaching in India has got a long history with broadcasting space provided by the All India Radio and the Doordarshan for telecasting recorded educational programs for not only higher education but also for school-going children. Though many educational institutions including UGC, IGNOU⁶ and NCERT using the services provided by All India Radio and Doordarshan still there was a need for interaction from the learners to be fulfilled since all these broadcasting was in recorded form.

In 1994 there was a paradigm shift as the ISRO⁷ provided the teleconferencing facility at IGNOU headquarter in New Delhi for the first time. It was a one-way video and two-way audio communication through phone line providing scope of live interaction for the learners. The teleconferencing facility was a booster for a large number of online courses like management studies, computer science and especially for teachers training in India. For several years a large number of educational institutions and various government and private organizations utilizing the service of teleconferencing provided by ISRO at IGNOU headquarter. In the year 2000, the teleconferencing got the recognition as an official education channel under the Gyandarshan

⁵ Soumik Sarkar, May 16, 2020, <https://adamasuniversity.ac.in/a-brief-history-of-online-education/> Last visited:14.06.2021

⁶ IGNOU- The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is a open university with its headquarters in New Delhi, India. Named after former Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi.

⁷ ISRO- The full form ISRO is **Indian Space Research Organization**, it is the space agency of the Indian government and has its headquarters in the Bengaluru Region. The goal is to develop space exploration for national growth while researching space science & planet exploration. It is one of the world's largest Space Agencies.

platform. Along with other channels of Gyandarshan it was then made available in the DTH as GD-interactive channel.

There was still the need for two way video communication to be fulfilled. In 2005 an effort was made by ISROU in collaboration with MHRD and IGNOU in this regard with the launching of EDUSAT⁸ satellite designed by late “APJ Abdul Kalam” during his tenure as President of India. Despite all efforts, EDUSAT could not fulfil the need as expected as the communication technology still to be developed to support such an initiative. In 2020 one may find it very easy today. But it is a fact that even 15 years back from today it was a big challenge to establish a two-way video communication between one to many. Today in 2020 both the teachers and learners must be fortunate to have so many apps developed for two way communication even in mobile. Now the challenge is not with technology but with ideas that how to make the online teaching more useful⁹.

IV. BETTERNESS IN ONLINE EDUCATION:

Despite the lockdown, many schools have taken timely steps to continue the flow of education by holding online classes for students. Interestingly, online classes have helped students during lockdown more than ever before. There are many benefits of online learning like flexibility, plenty of choices, cost benefits, comfortable environment to study, advancing your career even while you are working, gaining skills that are transferable, avoid commuting and learning at your own house. Additionally, it also helps you to develop self-discipline and makes you join study groups from different places to understand perspectives.

In the limited time frame of online teaching where a teacher has to address a large number of learners and it may not be possible to respond to the queries of all of them and many of the learners may not get the chance to ask their queries. Hence online teaching must be supported with some other mode of communication such as Email, Wats App, etc. through which learners can send their queries prior and at the same time the teacher must be prepared to answer those before going to the online classroom. Many times the teacher may find similarities in the queries received from the learners and get an idea about the common difficulties of the learners. In such a situation separate sessions need to be organized to address such issues. Online teaching increases the engagement between the student and the teacher, resulting in personalized attention to the student. But we

⁸ EDUSAT: Educational Satellite (EDUSAT or GSAT-3) was a communications satellite launched by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) on September 2004. EDUSAT is the first dedicated “Educational Satellite” that provides the country with satellite-based two-way communication to the classroom for delivering educational material.

⁹ Mridul Mazumdar, dt:May 27,2020, [https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/mridul-mazumdar/the-history-and-usefulness-of-online-teaching-in-india-2048/Last visited:14.06.2021](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/mridul-mazumdar/the-history-and-usefulness-of-online-teaching-in-india-2048/Last%20visited:14.06.2021)

should keep in mind is that the usefulness of online teaching always depends on live interaction rather than silent participation.

V. BITTERNESS IN ONLINE EDUCATION

Lack of sustained connectivity is the most prevailing problems faced by students while attending online classes. **All subjects can't be taught online, for example in Mathematics**, to teach a few new concepts in an online classroom though we use an interactive app as students focus at home is an issue besides the complexity of the topic. Children studying regional languages are at a disadvantage as there is not much standardized content available yet online for them. Majority of our students cannot afford two square meals and live in an 8x10 room with adult members besides their parents and other siblings. For them, school is the best time of the day.

The High court of Delhi also had delivered the judgement on a plea filed by the NGO seeking directions to the centre and the Delhi Government to provide free Laptops, tablets, mobile phones to poor students so that they access classes online during the COVID-19 lockdown. The division bench of the High court had directed that cost of gadgets and internet package are not part of the tuition fee and have to be provided free of cost to EWS¹⁰ by the schools, subject to the right of private unaided schools to claim of reimbursement from the state in accordance with the provision of the Right of children to free and compulsory education Act 2009. Supreme court stays High court verdict asking schools to provide gadgets, internet to poor students¹¹.

And moreover, online classes to the primary school children is so pathetic. The Karnataka government has decided to ban online classes for children studying in lower kindergarten to fifth grade. S. Suresh Kumar, Karnataka's primary and secondary education minister said that online classes will not be conducted for the kids in pre-primary (LKG, UKG) and primary classes. The minister also stressed that the government had taken this decision after consulting senior educational experts, psychiatrists and private schools association representatives who underlined that these classes are not an alternative to classroom teaching. In fact, online teaching may even prove to be detrimental to a child's mental health, given it leads to increased screen time and puts unwanted strain on little ones.

¹⁰ EWS: Economically Weaker Section

¹¹ Feb 10, 2021, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/sc-stays-hc-verdict-asking-schools-to-provide-gadgets-internet-to-poor-students/articleshow/80792214.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst, Last visited: 14.06.2021

Unlike adults, the mind of a child is not made to sit in front of a laptop for an extended amount of time and follow the instructional videos--many of which are not exactly interactional at this point of time. As little ones stay confined to their homes and screens owing to the pandemic, online classes only put further burden on the young minds¹².

Apart from all the bitterness, the recent issue which threaten the life of the students is sexual harassment in the online classes in schools and colleges by the teachers and the professors who are the respectable and responsible persons to teach moral values to the students but they themselves indulging these kind of actions which creates fear and bad image about the faculties in the society. Recently a school teacher who was accused of sexual harassment was arrested by the Chennai city police on Monday midnight. The Ashok Nagar All Women Police in the early hours of Tuesday arrested G. Rajagopalan, the teacher accused of sexual harassment. He was brought to a magistrate who remanded him in judicial custody. The incident came to light after Kripali, an alumni of the school collated and shared screenshots of many students sharing their ordeals of being allegedly harassed by the teacher. The School management suspended G Rajagopalan, a class 12 Commerce and Accountancy teacher from the KK Nagar Branch.

Rajagopalan was arrested under POCSO Act Sections 11 (When a person commits sexual harassment on a child by uttering words, showcasing his body, etc.,) and Section 12 (Whoever, commits sexual harassment upon a child shall be punished with imprisonment), under IPC Act 354 (a) (Sexual Harassment and punishment for sexual harassment) and 509 (intending to insult the modesty of any woman, utters any words, makes any sound or gesture, or exhibits any object); under IT Act section 67 and 67(a) (Punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form)¹³ Just five days after the suspension and arrest of the above said G.Rajagopalan, the city's crime against women and children wing on Friday registered two or more cases on similar charges. J.Anand, a teacher of one of the senior secondary school in chetpet who has been suspended, and the second against P.Nagarajan, an athletic coach who is a superintendent in the GST Commissionerate.¹⁴

After this incidents, Tamil Nadu Government issued multiple directions for framing guidelines for schools and colleges for conducting online sessions. Based on that all online classes conducted in Tamil Nadu will have to be recorded by the respective school managements and reviewed

¹² Times of India, dt: Jun 12, 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/parenting/toddler-year-and-beyond/should-online-classes-be-banned-till-class-5>, Last Visited: 17.06.2021

¹³ Sahaya Novinston Lobo, Express News Service, dt:25.05.2021, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2021/may/25/chennai-police-arrest-psbb-school-teacher-accused-of-sexual-harassment-under-pocso-act-2307267.html>, Last Visited: 17.06.2021

¹⁴ A.Selvaraj,TNN, dt:May 29, 2021, <https://timesofindia.com/city/chennai/another-teacher-athletic-coach-booked-for-sexual-harassment-in-chennai/articlesshow/83053749.cms>, Last visited:18.06.2021.

periodically. Tamil Nadu Chief minister also issued directions for constituting a committee which would establish a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to avoid cases of sexual harassment in schools and other educational institutions.¹⁵

VI. CONCLUSION

The happiest thing to note in online education is that the flow of education is not interrupted because of online classes that too in this pandemic situation but still it is myth to the students in rural and Tribal areas. Government providing food subsidy, Gas subsidy, but now people in need of Network subsidy because those families who are getting only Rs.100 to 200 as wage per day, how can we expect such students to attend the online classes. They are not even having a single smart phone in their family. Tamil Nadu Government in their election manifesto promised to give free internet data with personal computer for school & college students.¹⁶ Let's hope for the same. And the issue relating to sexual harassment, the initiative taken by the state is appreciable one but still the Central Government should make special legislation and regulation for online education as well as subsidies for getting uninterrupted network.

¹⁵ The Hindu, Chennai. dt:27.05.2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/online-classes-in-tn-to-be-recorded/article34653307.ece>

¹⁶ <https://www.dmk.in/manifesto-2021>, Last visited:18.06.2021