



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME AND PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 05th February, 2016
Received in revised form
23rd March, 2016
Accepted 05th April, 2016
Published online 31st May, 2016

Key words:

Education sector, Digitization,
Technology savvy, Online education,
Digital India Programme, Potential,
Education, Government initiatives,
Empowerment etc. Potential, Education.

ABSTRACT

Education sector in India has long awaited an overhaul to meet the growing demand for a contemporary educational system that may be accessible to all. During last decade the youth in our country have transformed themselves into technologically-driven, revealing considerable potential and readiness to imbibe and learn through the use of digital and electronic media in place of print media. Digital India programme has potential to create of a knowledge based society. Digital India has been envisioned as an ambitious umbrella programme to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge generating economy. Indian government has introduced many initiatives like e-education, e-basta, NandGhar which will contribute in imparting education using science and technology including smartphones, mobile apps and internet services in far-flung areas where it may not be possible for teachers to be present in person. Further, a plan has been made to convert 13 lakh Balwadis in India into NandGhar where Anganwadi educators will be trained to use digital tools as teaching aids. e-basta is another important initiative by the Indian government which is aimed at making school books accessible in digital form as e-books which may be accessed through tablets and laptops. In this article, authors have reviewed the impact of digitalization in Indian education system.

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Citation: Prof. Dr. Rajkumari Singh, Dr. ManjuJohari and Dr. Neeta Gupta, 2016. "Digital India programme and present educational system", *International Journal of Current Research*, 8, (05), 32205-32208.

INTRODUCTION

India famous as a powerhouse of software in the world, but even though the availability of electronic government services to citizens is still comparatively low. The National e-Governance Plan approved in 2006 has made a steady progress through Mission Mode Projects and Core ICT Infrastructure, but greater thrust is required to ensure effective progress in electronics manufacturing and e-Governance in the country. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/tech-news/Government-advances-NOFN-roll-out-deadline/articleshow/45318168.cms>) The Digital India initiative was launched by Mr. Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on July 1, 2015 with a view to empower the people of the country digitally. (<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/tVi3qteBfYKkXOPdwl1O4J/Intel-India-to-aid-govt-with-digital-literacy-programme.html>) This initiative also aims on bridging India's digital segment and also to bring big investments in the technological sector to empower people digitally. This programme seeks to achieve the following aims

(<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/tech-news/Government-advances-NOFN-roll-out-deadline/articleshow/45318168.cms>; <http://www.india.com/budget-2014/union-budget-2014-live-e-kranti-scheme-gets-rs-500-crore-boost-93234/>)-

- The Digital India initiative is a programme that seeks to lay emphasis on e-governance and to transform our country into a digitally empowered society.
- An amount of Rs. 113000 Crore has been projected to prepare the country for knowledge-based transformation.
- The Department of Electronics and Information Technology anticipates that this program will have a huge impact on the Ministry of Communication and IT.
- It is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that government services are available to citizens electronically.
- This programme will focus on providing high speed internet services to all the citizens and to make services available in real time for both online and mobile platform.
- Digital India also aims to transform ease of doing business in the country.

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Present government of our country is focussing on providing broadband services in all the rural settlements of the country,

tele-medicine and mobile healthcare services and making the governance more participative.

Vision of the Digital India Programme:

The government of India aims to achieve following aims through Digital India Programme:

(a) Infrastructure development:

The Digital India Programme has a vision to provide high speed internet services to all its citizens through connecting all gram panchayats of the country. At individual level bank accounts will be given priority. People will be provided with safe and secure cyber space in the country. (<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/tVi3qteBfYKkXOPdwl1O4J/Intel-India-to-aid-govt-with-digital-literacy-programme.html>; <http://farmer.gov.in/>)

(b) Governance and Services:

All the government services will be made available online where citizens will be ensured easy access to it. Transactions of banking services will be made easy through electronic medium. (<http://dackkms.gov.in/Account/Login.aspx>)

(c) Digital literacy:

This is one of the most important factor of the Digital India Programme to provide universal digital literacy and make digital sources easily accessible. All the services will also be provided in Indian languages for active participation. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/tech-news/Government-advances-NOFN-roll-out-deadline/articleshow/45318168.cms>; <http://farmer.gov.in>; <http://dackkms.gov.in/Account/Login.aspx>) Projects under the Programme:

(a) Electronic manufacturing:

The focus of the government is on zero imports of electronics and other devices for the programme. In order to achieve this, the government aims to put up ATMs, smart energy meters, micro mobile, consumer and medical electronics. (<http://india.gov.in/gis-based-planning-atlas-lucknow-district>)

(b) Universal Access to Internet:

The government has aimed to provide internet services to 2.5 lakh villages comprising of one village in every panchayat by March 2017 and also aims for 1.5 lakh post offices in the next two years. These post offices will function as Multi-Service centres for the people of the country. (<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/tVi3qteBfYKkXOPdwl1O4J/Intel-India-to-aid-govt-with-digital-literacy-programme.html>; <http://www.india.com/budget-2014/union-budget-2014-live-e-kranti-scheme-gets-rs-500-crore-boost-93234>; <http://dackkms.gov.in/Account/Login.aspx>)

(c) Highways having broadband services:

Government has aimed to lay optical fibre network in all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats of the country. Broadband for the rural

areas will be laid by December 2016 and broadband for all urban will mandate communication infrastructure in new urban development and buildings. (E-Kranti scheme gets Rs 500 crore boost; Farmer's Portal) The Government of India aims to provide nationwide information infrastructure by March 2017. (Kisaan Call Center; GIS based Planning)

(d) Access to mobile connectivity:

The government has taken initiatives to ensure that all the villages are covered through mobile connectivity latest by 2018. The aim is to increase network penetration and cover gaps in all the villages of the country. (Intel Digital Skills program; GIS based Planning)

(e) Promoting e-Governance:

The Government of India has aimed to improve processes and delivery of services through e-Governance with Aadhar, payment gateway, EDI and mobile platforms. School certificates, voter ID cards, Ration Cards etc. will be provided online. This is the initiative for a faster examination of data provided. (Government advances NOFN rollout deadline; Farmer's Portal)

(f) Training in technology:

The government has aimed to train around 1 crore students from small towns and villages for Information Technology sector by 2020. To set up the Business Processing Organisation sectors in NE states is also part of this programme. (Digital India plan could boost GDP up to \$1 trillion by 2025: McKinsey, December 2014)

(g) e-Kranti:

The Digital India Programme aims at delivering electronic services to the people which deal with health, farmers, education, security, justice and financial inclusion. (Kisaan Call Center; Digital India plan could boost GDP up to \$1 trillion by 2025: McKinsey, December 2014)

(h) Global Information:

The aim of the Indian government has been hosting the data online and engaging social media platforms for governance. It also aims at making Information easily available to the citizens. The website named MyGov. In ahs been launched by the government which aims at 2-way communication between the government and the citizens. People can send their suggestions and comment on various issues raised by the government, like net neutrality. (India is now world's third largest internet)

(i) Early harvest programs:

Setting up of Wi-fi facilities has been planned by the Government in all universities of the country. Electronic mail will be made the primary mode of communication. Aadhar Enabled Biometric Attendance System will be deployed in all central government offices where recording of attendance will be made online. (Kisaan Call Center; GIS based Planning;

Digital India plan could boost GDP up to \$1 trillion by 2025: McKinsey, December 2014)

Response of investorstowards the Digital India Programme:

Several global investors like SatyaNadella, SundarPichai, Elon Musk and etc. have supported Digital India Programme of Government of India. Microsoft CEO, SatyaNadella intends to become a partner of Government of India in the Digital India program. Microsoftcompany will set up low cost broadband technology services to about 5 lakh villages through out the country. SundarPichai, the CEO of Google has declared that India can play a big part in driving technology forward in future which will improve living standard of people in India. Prime Minister NarendraModihas shown keen interest in this initiative and wants to use Tesla Motors' power wall technology to store electricity in a battery that can be used for a long term.^(8,9)

Scope of Digital India Programme

The scope of Digital India programme is:

- (a) To Make technology central for enabling the change.
- (b) To prepare India a base for a knowledge in future.
- (c) On being transformative that is to realize IT (Indian Talent) + IT(Information Technology) = IT (India Tomorrow)
- (d) To make this an Umbrella Programme for covering several departments.

This programme aims to weaves together a large number of individual ideas and thoughts into a single, comprehensive vision, so that each of them is seen as part of a larger goal. Each individual element of such thoughts stands on its own, but is also part of the larger picture. The weaving together makes the Mission transformative in totality.

- (e) Many existing schemes which would be restructured and re-focused will be put together by this Digital India Programme and will be implemented in a synchronized manner. The common branding of the programmes as Digital India, highlights their transformative impact.

Digital India Programmeand education:

Following are the expected aims of Digital India Programme for the promotion of educational facilities in India. (Digital India, Government of India Press Release, August 2014)

(a) To bridge digital divide:

- Digital India programme can also play important role to bridge education deficit.
- The power of technology cannot be under estimated.
- With approximately 125 million cellular-phone households in the country, It is believed that imparting 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 the manners in with the technology will get adopted to make a significant difference.

- With various digital initiatives launched by the government, everyone is hopeful that it will help strengthen access to technology especially in government schools and preschools. At almost every discussion forum of the Digital India Week, there has been a consensus on the need for a greater participation from the industry and stakeholders.
- For the education sector, technological companies have to take the lead and help enable a strong ecosystem by providing technology driven educational devices which should be backed by creative and engaging content.
- This requires for a number of businessmen across the nation to join hands together and support this initiative that may result to strengthen the education sector in India.

(b) To create a Society based on knowledge

- Digital India has been envisioned as an ambitious umbrella programme to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- We are glad to see that the Prime Minister has introduced initiatives such as e-education, e-basta, NandGhar which will impart education using technologies including smartphones, mobile apps and internet services in far-flung areas where it may not be possible for teachers to be present in person. Further, 13 lakh Balwadis in India are planned to be converted into NandGhar where Anganwadi educators will be trained to use digital tools as teaching aids. (GIS based Planning; Digital India, Government of India Press Release, August 2014)
- e-basta is another cherished initiative by the government aimed at making school books accessible in digital form as e-books to be read on tablets and laptops.

(c) Improvement of school attendance:

- Digital India programme has also potential to improve attendance in schools. More than 90 million children in India who are aged between 0-8 years are unable to access to quality education.
- Census of India 2011 survey has concluded that almost 20 per cent children aged between 6 to 8 years cannot read letters or words and are unable to recognise numbers, while enrollment in primary school is almost universal. (India is now world's third largest internet; Japan's E-Governance)
- Sesame Workshop in India through its flagship programme 'GalliGalliSimSim' uses the power of electronic media to help children learn basic academic and life skills and enhance their overall cognitive, socio-emotional and physical development. (Kisaan Call Center; India is now world's third largest internet; Japan's E-Governance)
- Sesame Workshop in India is trying to bridge the education gap by providing innovative and engaging content that is integrated into the prescribed curriculum through games on digital devices.
- The research for this ongoing project with Qualcomm® Wireless Reach™ initiative has demonstrated that children in classes 1 and 2 who were provided with games on digital devices, both in classrooms and at homes showed significant achievements in their Hindi language, comprehension and numeracy skills amongst others. (India

is now world's third largest internet; Digital India, Government of India Press Release, August 2014)

- Further the games have played a significant role in improvement of school attendance and helped with teachers becoming more familiar with technology as a teaching tool.

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