



ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ENHANCING CONCEPTUAL SKILLS IN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Technology, bright young minds and good intentions is one of the most potent combinations to change the old and dysfunctional and usher new, engaging and meaningful change in Indian Society.

India is the youngest nation in the world today but apart from this demographic dividend what adds to our country's promise is aspiration. The opening of Indian Economy in 1991 and the subsequent growth could not have happened if middle class parents had not saved and invested in their children's education. Interventions in education will be a force multiplier.

We are very far away from the Utopian ideal of giving every child access to same standards of quality education .Given the wide disparity in quality standards; it is disconcerting to see that the word quality for most people quality translates into high marks. Very little attention is paid into what the final outcome of education should be.

The aim of the paper is to explore how social entrepreneurs are using technology to enhance thinking abilities of students. The paper will also investigate whether these interventions are only accessible to the privileged and hence is unwittingly the gap between the have and the have nots is being widened or bridged.

Keywords: Technology; Social Entrepreneurs; Quality; Students.

DilDekho IndiaKaaDilDekho – Vyapam in MP

The Incredible India campaign for Madhya Pradesh “ India kaaDilDekho “ has now got an eerie feel to it . The Vyapam scam , is indeed at the centre of it all.

When scams break out, the chain of events is pretty much the same; breaking news, endless mind numbing debates, passing the buck, finding the most vulnerable scapegoat, behind the scene negotiations, some more news and silence till the next scams descends on the teeming billions running around for the elusive three – roti , kapdaaurmakaan and for some, the other three wealth, power and influence.

While all of what has happened so far, with coal , 3G , DLF , IPL etcetc seem to have happened in and around the corridors of power, elite homes, glamorous parties or surreal locales far removed from the lives of the cattle class, but this one definitely about you and me and how ??

It is and should be dubbed as the heart of what's rotting about Incredible India !

Shivers run down my spine , thinking about my next visit to the neighbourhood doctor in a bout of a viral infection or diarrhoea, did this doctor pay 15 lakhs for a degree or perhaps more for passing out . Next time you take the elevator, think about the civil engineer who has engineered and crafted his career right to the top.

This scam has put at stake the very credibility of the education system. Think a little deeper , imagine a system churning out fake doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers . Think also of people who buy government jobs and then will probably think of only recovering their investments and making more so that their children follow the same route because it's so simple really. No sweat and blood only connections!

Now think of what happens in middle class homes across our country, first nursery admissions; getting admission in a good school in India is more a matter of divine intervention than a well deserved right, then the back breaking school bags, the exorbitant coaching and tuition fees demanded by dream merchants across India. If the kids do make it to one of these elite institutions, it's the beginning of another heart wrenching story. Not to forget hundreds of suicides in between, psychopathic depression caused by rejection for others.

And all this sound and fury signifying nothing because at the end of it all, the system ruthlessly throws out skill deficient, over literate , unemployable young people.



And so what will these people do with the rest of their lives? And how on earth will India's Visionary Leadership fulfil its promise of "deliverance" ?

I can probably add a smattering of smart statistics, results of PISA tests, demographic dividends, unemployment figures to substantiate all of this but the point is, will that help ?

The Yyapam Scam is more grotesque than the murders. The CBI enquiry has put an official seal of seriousness and grave intent and the law will take its own meandering course ?! To say that this should shake the collective conscience of all of us sounds cliqued because we get all shaken and stirred a bit too often now. While some will decide to do all that can be done to pack off their children to Europe, USA, Australia, now also Lithuania to get a degree, and be away from this desperate and hopeless state of affairs, many will be forced into helpless silence forever.

Whilst the world looks at India with glamour struck eyes, while there is every noble intention behind all the glitzy campaigns run by our government, somebody please take notice of what's happening in the classrooms of India and tell us why all of this ? We really need to get to the heart of this scam for sure.

India KaaDilDekho !AtulyaBharat !!

Introduction

Technology in all sectors of the economy has been causing massive disruption. The underlying theme in all is the same, faster, cheaper, more convenient and superior customer experience at a fraction of a cost. Also technology is constantly questioning legacy establishments and conventional methods everywhere.

Education in India is no exception. There are systemic faults in this huge system where largely, government education which is what most people in India can afford lacks quality, and private education, which only the privileged can afford has become a mangled corporate entity and not without its faults too.

- i) Some of the pain points that startups in the space of education in India have been trying to address are as follows: Education in India is far too Institutionalized and generalized. Large class rooms create more of a factory system of schooling where no attention can be made to individual learners.
- ii) Teacher Centric and not Learner Centric: Education in Indian Classrooms has always been how the teacher teachers or methods individual teachers use and is not learner centric. Learning does not follow the pace and understanding of the learner.
- iii) Emphasis on Memorization: Since education is factory system and centered on the teacher, where the teacher in most cases conducts a one way dialogue, the emphasis is on cramming facts and formulae which generate a lot of pressure for children.
- iv) Pressure to crack entrance exams: Pressure to cram comes from the pressure to crack entrance exams for the haloed few institutes like the IIT's, medical etc. . Students often fall prey to dream merchants or people who run crammed coaching institutes and often teach methods to beat the system
- v) Divide: Although the right to education is a fundamental right every child has, the quality of education falls short. Good quality of education can be only affordable by the rich or the fortunate and hence their good fortune is perpetuated and remains trapped in the vicious cycle of endless poverty and desperation.

Objective of the Study

- To encourage more ventures in the digital education space.
- To understand the challenges being faced by existing models.
- To build a research strategy and provide suggestions.

Conceptual Skill

According to online sources, the term Conceptual Skills are " Skills that allow a person to think creatively while also understanding abstract ideas and complicated processes. A person who has conceptual skills will be able to solve problems, formulate processes and understand the relationship between ideas, concepts patterns and symbols."

Literature Review

The term Entrepreneur originated in France in the 17th and 18th centuries. Entrepreneurship is a multidimensional phenomenon which touches upon many disciplines. The term "entrepreneurship" comes from the French verb "entreprendre"

and the German word “unternehmen”, both mean to “undertake”. According to Cantillion (1730) an entrepreneur is someone who engages in exchanges for profit, he is someone who exercises business judgment in the face of uncertainty. In the late 20th century Merriam Webster defined an entrepreneur as one who organizes, manages and assumes the risk of a business or an enterprise. Social entrepreneurs are those who use innovative approaches to social problems such as poverty, lack of access to healthcare in the rural areas, difficulties in bridging the gap between employability and unemployed youth. Education may not always be thought of as an innovative sector but as schools increasingly look to relieve budgetary burdens and provide inspirational education experiences, a new breed of innovative social enterprises are emerging that can help on both counts. As per the study of Fazalbhoy, S. (2014). Young minds need to be nurtured to enhance creativity among them. New technology is an area that is arguably easier for a small social enterprise to innovate than an entire school or local authority. Excite-Ed was launched by Julia Bateson in 2011, following training at the School for Social Entrepreneurs after her redundancy as a local authority adviser for study support and extended learning. Excited-Ed works within schools helping children (and teachers) create computer games that teach both digital and social skills.

Bill Drayton first put the word “social” before the word “entrepreneur” in 1980 with a keen eye for how the world was going to change, the concept of social entrepreneurship has blossomed into a professional field, complete with thousands of practitioners and an ecosystem of funders, academics, policymakers and volunteers all supporting these entrepreneurs in their efforts to change the world. Social innovation and technology are interacting with each other in constant, often profound, and ever deeper ways.

Goals

Startups in the field of education have identified the deficiencies in the system and are trying to cover up. Some of the notable goals are as follows:

- i) Autonomous Learning :To provide autonomous learning or learning that is based on application and one can scale up the concept after understanding
- ii) Self-paced learning: is being introduced so that the students can administer his or her own testing and can be in charge and in control of learning outcomes as is required.
- iii) Best Resources at very little cost: These startups provide the best content and the best facilitators at a fraction of a cost because technology overcomes barriers of geography and time.
- iv) Innovative Questioning: The questions asked in most of Indian schools, across the income spectrum focus only on reproduction of facts, figures and definitions. Startups use innovative questions like puzzles; diagrams etc to really test concept and make the topic more interesting and approachable.
- v) Use of audio video aids greatly enhance the understanding of concepts and generate interest and excitement for learners. Since many schools could not afford such technology, these startups are filling in the huge gap.
- vi) From Pre School Children to Professionals: Startups in the technology space are carving out niche areas from the entire spectrum of Indian Education from preschool to working professionals. Highly specific and pointed solutions are being provided across all segments, age groups and income profiles.

Examples

Name	Profile	User Metrics (as claimed)
NayiDisha	Educational computer games for pre schoolers	
Schoolguru	Online courses to Indian universities	
Testbook	Online content provider to prepare for competitive exams	5 lakhs registered users
Simplilearn	Professional certification company. Offers over 400 courses Big Data, Data Analytics etc.	Has trained half a million professionals already
Culture Alley	Indians can learn English from 15 vernacular languages	10 million downloads of the app
Toppr	Prepares student for state boards, medical and IIT-JEE	6,90,000 registered users
Vedantu	Online tuitions for students of class 6 onwards	
MeritNation	Interactive study material for students of class one to 12 for CBSE, ICSE, Maharashtra , Kerala and TAMIL Nadu State Boards	Over one crore users
Unacademy	Free education initiative which aims to index all the world’s education on its platform in all languages. Most popular education channel on YouTube	2,00,000 visits and 1.5 million page views a month

Rural India

Name	Profile	Users
Learning Delight	Digitising education in rural and semi urban areas in Gujrat	Started with five schools four years ago and now functional in 3,300 rural government schools spread over nine districts in Gujrat
Desi Crew, the Rural Job	Provides people in rural areas BPO Jobs in their villages and towns	

Findings and Discussion – Future Challenges

Considering that India has 1.4 MN schools, 227 MN students and more than 36,000 higher education institutes, it is clear that the current education market in India pegged at approximately \$ 100 Bn holds clear potential and an unprecedented opportunity for education technology companies . The sector is expected to grow and this space is being closely watched by angel investors.

The advent of technology startups in India started from the year 2012, which is fairly recent. Some of the key challenges identified are however:

- i) There is a plethora of free content that is available online now, so it is difficult to get subscribers for paid content.
- ii) There is a lot of funding that has gone into education startups, so at this stage it is difficult to pinpoint a successful model.
- iii) There are many players for Urban India which is now spoilt for choice and has caused overcrowding whereas the rural sectors are still largely out of the system and will remain marginalized if this trend continues.
- iv) It is difficult to get subscriptions from schools because of lengthy bureaucratic processes.

Conclusion and Suggestions

It can be said with certainty that startups in India are impacting critical aspects of learning in the field of education where it was much needed. The solutions are smart and cost effective too. However, the impact on learning outcomes needs to be explored further.

It is also suggested that further research must be taken up to measure the impact of digital education on financial inclusion. It is of paramount importance to assess whether technology will bridge the gap between the privileged or the marginalized or will it great a greater divide .

Whilst thechalk,duster, board and the “strict” teacher for now will stay and should stay as well. The role of class room learning should never ever be questioned. Learning is a social process as well and gets strengthened with the socialization process.

This should not be viewed as this or that situation and neither should institutions be undermined, however schools, colleges and universities should now know that it’s time to weed out the redundant. Also, learning is only one aspect of education, getting disciplined; organized, tolerant are many important bye products of class room teaching.

Lastly, as the research shows that rural penetration is still quite low the divide between urban and rural children will be made wider unless this is addressed, however the challenges for that still remain.

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