

RGICS Snapshot – Digital Education in India and National Education Policy 2020

One of the comprehensive shifts in the wake of COVID pandemic has been the shift of school and higher education to internet based, online virtual classrooms. The shift had begun a few years ago with setting up of ‘smart’ classrooms in schools and colleges, introducing students to satellite education. Going beyond that, education technology industry or EdTech for short in attempt to addressing the systemic challenges in education sector in India, has digitised learning in novel ways, including preparatory coaching for competitive exams. As per a 2017 KPMG report, the online education market in India was USD 250 million in 2016 and was expected to grow to about USD 2 billion by 2021 at 52% CAGR.¹

The e-learning or digital education sector in India has matured around such initiatives, most often led by social enterprise start-ups in this space. In the process, the focus on vernacular languages and removing other barriers to learning have come in useful during the pandemic induced shutdown of educational institutions. Additionally, building upon the digital education ecosystem in the making, the public sector, at the state and central level, initiated a number of programs for making school education accessible during the pandemic.

The National Education Policy 2020 that attempts to reform both the school and higher education with a focus on future of knowledge and work, also recognises the importance of digital education and technology in realising its objectives. NEP calls for research into mainstreaming digital education and investing in large scale public digital infrastructure to support digital education. Further, it calls for creation of content, standardisation, and teacher training to make digital education a success.²

Building on the best practices with the country, such as the Kerala Infrastructure and Technology of Education (KITE), as to the governance of EdTech, the NEP provides for creation of National Educational Technology Forum (NETF). NETF will lead research and innovation in EdTech, and perform functions such as supporting states with technical know-how around hardware and software, procurement and implementation in schools. The NETF is also expected to large scale capacity building of individuals and existing institutions such as Central Institute Educational Technology established in 1984, and number of State Institutes of Educational Technology.³

The NEP also provides for a redesigned student learning assessment framework, operationalised through a new national assessment centre called Performance Assessment Review and Analysis of Knowledge for holistic development or PARAKH for short. PARAKH will use data to set benchmarks and strengthen learning outcomes data system by conducting National Achievement Surveys, guide states to do the same.

¹ <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2017/05/Online-Education-in-India-2021.pdf>

² https://seshagun.gov.in/sites/default/files/update/NEP_Final_English.pdf

³ Central Square Foundation NEP Analysis

Concerns

While higher education institutions and schools in urban areas have transitioned to digital learning without much hindrance, the schools in rural areas have found it rather difficult to uptake technology at the pace required by the pandemic. There were concerns of network connectivity and access to technology to begin with, and also data usage pushes cost of education higher. Further, not only it is new for pupils to get accustomed to this change, it is equally challenging for teachers. There are bound to be implications for learning levels in the short term.

Learn More

[Likely and Desirable Future of School Education in times of COVID 19](#) – Webinar held on June 12, 2020 – Speakers Dr Alok Shukla, former principal secretary, Education, Government of Chhattisgarh; Chitra Ravi, Founder and CEO Chrysalis Chennai; Sandeep Dutt, Learning Forward India Foundation; and Prof Pankaj Jain, IIM-A and Gyanshala

[Digital Education: Remote Learning Initiatives Across India](#) – Report by MHRD June 2020