

The Digital Divide Is the Greatest Setback Concerning Education

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ABSTRACT

The problems of digital divide are an obstacle in the teaching- learning process. It depends on the quality, access comfortability and usability of the information and communication technologies (ICT) that enumerates hitches in the education process. The rise of online learning has raised concerns. The divide is huge and even today it is important to remember that accessibility is still a problem. When access is equally distributed among people, technology assists people in expanded and unrestrained learning practices. There are still some urban areas, with unskilled and poorly educated people, and limited financial resources. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced sudden transformation in the education sector and has made us realize the importance of resolving the digital divide. Owning a digital device is not sufficient, the skill to use, knowledge about its working and how to troubleshoot is important. The shift from offline mode to online mode has increased the requirement to become tech-savvy. The rural areas that are miles away from the market areas faces network glitches which leads to the issues infunctinality and operation of the technology.

Keywords

gadgets, customary education, society, economy, administration, democracy, destabilizing, digital adoption, digital disruption.

Introduction

The instant shift of offline working, learning, buying and selling of goods to online made people confused. The regularity of working requires coping with the current trends in technology. Learning to bridge the gap and making oneself competent not only helps in overcoming the work at hand but helps in saving time and energy at a higher rate. The customary education has its own perk and worth. The recent learning techniques have been possible to impart knowledge more effectively and more impeccably. The technology-driven learning with the use of websites, e-learning sites, and gadgets has not only attracted the learners but also teachers to become more creative. The timely accessibility of study materials in traditional method of learning are solved using the online learning sites. The wide range of contents available has made students free to choose courses and start acquiring knowledge as per their interest. The decrease of digital gap is a solution for problems like career, start-ups and creativity. Considering a child who has access to online learning has freedom to learn, independence to explore and sense of discovering. The uneven distribution of information and communication brings about difference in access and usage of computers and internet. The availability of affordable mobile devices and network coverage improvements has helped people know the benefits of remote monitoring and usage. The socioeconomic differences are high in rural areas; including subjects related to technology might help the students to dream and aim bigger later.

The persons with disabilities shouldn't be left out of internet access but should be benefitted more. Some features that are added on have helped people with disabilities to easily collect required information.

"The power of the web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect." ~Tim Berners Lee. ^[5]

1. Gap Indicator for Measuring Digital Divide

The necessity of indicating and bridging the gap affects the base of developing societies and economies. While information technology use is growing around the world at a fast-pace, the applications in practice, in business and real-life usage, the disparities are also growing. The disparities between "haves" and "have-nots" are increasing and the potential impacts on society whether good or bad are complicated. The chances to improve require budget, choices and knowledge about the field. The beneficial impact of ICT on society, economy, administration, democracy and small communities is becoming even more evident, which is why who have no access, cannot use or are not willing to use these tools find themselves at a significant loss.

1.1 Education

What is clear within the complexity that has been created by increasing digital divide is that an institutional paradigm shift is needed. Adaption of teaching online, posting assignments, managing records of students was a challenge for some

teachers because of the unavailability, less access rate of digital devices and low connectivity. The digital products and services usability has proven that it has unbounded benefits for learners.

"Every student can learn, just not on the same day, or the same day" - George Evans. ^[6]

1.2 Accessibility

With the advent of advanced technology, the use of mobile phones and other gadgets are growing. The price of mobile phones and other gadgets depends on the supportability, versatility and capabilities. Good quality and dynamic phones have captured the market, thereby increasing the charges. Some children belonging to unstable financial families face problems to meet the digital requirements necessary for their education. After taking a major step by banning Chinese Smartphone brands in India which offered top specification for a low price, the children face problems to purchase mobiles and gadgets at a minimum cost.

1.3 Network cost and weakness

The internet has become the fundamental requirement for education. The internet and education are based on information exchange, imparting knowledge and the generation of knowledge. It isn't just sufficient to have a mobile or a digital gadget but also requires strong connectivity and internet facilities. The people living in areas with good network supportability and speed have maximum benefits in strengthening business connections, getting fresh ideas, gaining knowledge etc. A lack of dependable, high-speed internet will only make the opportunity gap wider in the present era.

Internet speed is one of the important contemplations when picking up an Internet Service Provider (ISPs). If the internet speed is not upto the mark, we might face trouble while performing tasks on the internet. Children taking online classes may face problems in connecting to their virtual classes, submitting reports, attempting time-based examinations etc. Therefore, the internet speed needs to be strong in order to overcome the digital divide.

1.4 Cyber Safety

Awareness and alertness among users may reduce the security risks involved with the use of internet and self-protect from cyber-crimes. The divide-divide relies directly on the safety of digital usage. Virtual education is problematic because of the rise of cyber-crime, which requires safe access to everybody using it. To withstand this, the ISP provider needs to provide safe and secure network and create awareness among their end-users frequently.

2. Suggestion to bridge the digital gap

Comprehensive communication and equity are essential for the public to realize the full potential of the global digital economy, to support the inclusion of all citizens and to remove barriers to knowledge and services. Digital segmentation is not an access problem. Closing the digital divide is an issue that requires access, accessibility, and digital skills that affect the social economy, infrastructure and technology. Solutions require the distribution of online devices, technical instructions for using those secure and productive devices and the internet, installation of internet access, access to that access, and security to ensure that people are not exploited. ^[2]

2.1 Providing internet access and laptops

Some non-profit groups have focused on providing internet access and portable computers in school districts and areas with low-paid internet users. The main obstacle for many people connecting to the internet is the lack of affordable or high-speed options in their area. NPGs work to get more people connected to quality broadband services at home. Other non-profit groups digitally segregate Everyone, human-I-T, Mobile Citizen, National Digital Inclusion Alliance etc. In a fast-paced and technologically advanced world, it is important for all children to have access to the tools and resources they need to become productive, effective members of society. As time goes on, home internet access will be much needed for students to engage, grow and perform at school. Fortunately, government programs, big business programs and the establishment of grassroots companies are already well underway in their quest to make fast internet accessible to all households. ^[1]

2.2 Cost Reduction

The cost reduction of internet, mobile gadgets and other transmission medium etc. plays a vital role in increase of digital device usage thereby bridging the gap in the education field. Making the devices affordable by children from various income levels would help children to grow unanimously disregard of their financial differences and backgrounds.

2.3 Advantages of Digital World awareness

Apart from the disadvantages of digital world, there are many advantages too. The advantages of digital world in business, education, marketing, career guidance etc. is uncountable. The step of making people understand the bright side of using digital technology would aid in bridging the digital gap at large.

It is dangerously destabilizing to have half the world on the cutting edge of technology while the other half struggles on the bare edge of survival~ William J. Clinton ^[3]

2.4 Availability in Public Available

The availability of mobile devices, internet, transmission mediums etc. in public areas would increase accessibility and flexible to stay connected. Regardless of the geographical coverage, and income levels people would have benefitted a lot by using resources that are readily available for their benefit. The public resources would bring about changes in society and remove the digital differences that exist today.

3. FUTURE SCOPE

The rise of ubiquitous computing, cloud storage, online marketing and learning, virtual gaming has increased the need of digital device in every house. The quality and learning outcomes have been improved with the active use of computers in the present education system. Complex concepts are made simpler with the help of digital devices and multimedia.

In the century of science and technology, education will have to play a leading role in the promotion and development of human resources ^[7]. The process of making teaching-learning smoother and enriching educational goals requires people to fix the digital gap quickly.

CONCLUSION

'Everyone faces challenges in life. It's a matter of how you learn to overcome them and use them to your advantage' ~ Celestine Chua ^[4]

The breakdown of COVID-19 has pushed educational institutions over the technology tipping point. The unavoidable circumstances laid by the pandemic have speeded the adoption of digital technologies. Acceleration of digitalization has increased but to make these changes long lasting the digital gap needs to be minimized. Digital adoption requires skills and training, online channels require maintenance and quality. Digital disruption will be required as the economics and human situation evolves.

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