The Need for Public Private Partnership in Digitization of Higher Education

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Abstract: <u>Purpose</u>: *Education is an essential component of Human Life Index and higher education is considered to be the imminent and proximate step to employment. A country's future depends on a massive expansion of higher education. The socio-political structure of India does not encourage commercialization of higher education sector as it is also opposed to the objectives Public Policy Education. So digitisation of resources is necessary to reach a large number of beneficiaries. Partnership with private organisations by public institutes can improve the access, quality and efficiency of educational services provided by HEIs. This paper proposes to explore the need of public private partnership in digitization in the wake of expansion of Massive Open Online Courses and learning in HEIs, which are expected to design and offer courses for the benefit of public. <u>Methodology</u>: This paper looks at how updated, transparent and engaging public education courses offered by HEIs with the help of improved digital infrastructure and digital initiatives of the MHRD, GOI can facilitate attainment of the objectives of Public Policy Education, contributing to the national progress. <u>Findings</u>: MOOCs is a great platform for higher education not just in India but all over the world. The courses are advantageous for faculty development, student mentoring and acquiring job oriented skills. <u>Originality</u>: This paper was presented at the National Seminar on 'Public Policy Education' conducted by the EFL University, Aug 2019 at Hyderabad, Telangana to encourage discussion on the Draft 'National Education Policy 2019'*

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1. Introduction

Recent times have witnessed massive increase in the number of students completing higher secondary school and would demand quality higher education so as to improve their employment prospects. In the Indian higher education context availability of suitable number of quality institutions such as EFLU, IITs or IIMs are very less. For example, only one out of thousand aspirants may get a chance to enter an IIT. This holds true for all prestigious institutions. In a country with huge population to get everyone properly educated, the challenges are many. This goal can be achieved by using advanced digital teaching and learning tools. The need to enhance the employability of graduates is necessitates improvement in access and expansion in higher education resources.

PPP and relevance to Higher Education
Public–private partnerships (PPPs) broadly refer to work relations between the government and the private sector in the design and delivery of a service. The economic and political imperatives that drive the complex nature of higher education today have introduced a new paradigm of management reform with a contemporary focus on efficiency and quality. Although touted by many as a new phenomenon, Public Private Partnerships PPPs require that the role of the state be redefined to accommodate the changes and pro- vide space for the private sector's role in the provision of education. State should focus on 'the strategic control, funding, and planning of the education system'. benefits associated with PPPs in education include taking advantage of specialized skills in the private sector; overcoming operating restrictions; governments to respond to new demands and facilitate adoption of innovations in service delivery. PPPs continue to be important in the provision of education especially so in developing countries.

public–private partnership in education in this paper is understood as the collaboration between the state and the private sector in the delivery of education.

The government was interested in PPP, when it proposed, university-industry collaborations, essentially for academic reasons, to improve the relevance of curriculum, increase employability of graduates etc. As Pritha Gopalan (2013) observed, paradoxically, public education, which is an essential service, to remain public "needs partners outside the government to keep it up-to-date, efficient, transparent and engaging."Secondly, PPP is advocated to overcome the weaknesses of the public system: it is claimed that the public system is inefficient; it is rigid and inflexible; it does not respond to market needs; Thirdly, it is argued that PPP increases competition, brings in efficiency associated with the private sector, improves accountability, reduces costs, improves cost-effectiveness, and thereby reduces prices or fees in education. improve efficiency of the system; improve performance and promote autonomy which will ensure high quality in higher education.PPP is projected as a model which imbibes in it the best features of both – the state and the private sector models and will be free from certain functions and can focus on functions where it has a comparative advantage.

The Reverse Outsourcing Model, as reckoned by the university grants commission, may be more useful in case of the existing institutions of higher education. Under this model, the government would invest in infrastructure while the private sector would run the operation and management. This model would also provide flexibility for the educational institutions in matters related to modernization of teaching facilities. The complex nature of P3s is best understood by understanding system theory, which describes the relationship between various entities and their

interconnected parts which are organized in such a way that they achieve a specific function for a particular reason (von Bertalanffy, 1976).

Digitization of Higher Education

The efficiency of higher education depends on the efficiency of the universities. Today, higher education in India is passing through a phase of unprecedented growth. This is marked by an increase in the number of students and courses. To meet these global challenges of imparting quality education and fulfilling students demand, educational institutes must be transformed from conventional academic bodies to technologically advanced entities. New teaching and learning methods are emerging each year as technology in education is continuously upgrading. It helps in improving both student and teacher development. Digitization is the key to this change.It is the process of converting information into a digital format. Changes have been predominant in the education sector. Similarly, digitization in education shows the shift from textbooks to digital tutorials. Digitization in education evolves from in-class lectures to online learning using videos and written text tutorials, as everything was made more comfortable and faster after the innovation of technology.

Digitization in education provides opportunities to people who can't afford higher education and to people who can't access educational institutes as they are from remote areas. Digitization also helps employees with a heavy workload and can't attend classes. Digitization makes it possible to pursue education to people with professional and family commitments. Though online education is not that strict, they have some deadlines to attend lectures, complete assignments, and to attend exams with greater concern to cover the syllabus. And it also allows users to access lectures 24*7. Digitization allows customized learning in terms of level and modality.

Digital Initiatives in Higher Education
MHRD with the objective of promoting expansion, access and quality improvement in higher education has introduced many digital initiatives for the improvement of various modes of delivery making use of ICT and IT interventions. They are listed here.

Swayam, Swayam Prabha, 32DTH Channels, National Digital Library of India, Virtual Labs, e-Yantra, FOSSEE-NME, National Academic Depository, e-Shodh Sindhu, Campus Connectivity, e-Acharya, e-Vidwan, e-Kalpa, GIAN. IMPRINT, SAKSHAT, ATAL Spoken Tutorial and Central Cloud Infrastructure. Out of these we are looking at MOOCS here.

A Massive Open Online Course **(MOOC) is a** web-based platform which provides unlimited number of students worldwide with a chance of distance education with the best institutes in the world**.** It was established back in 2008 and gained momentum in 2012 as a popular learning tool. Many MOOCs have communities that have interactive sessions and forums between the students and professors along with the study/course material and video lectures. There are various notable institutions, both non-profit and commercial, that offer these courses worldwide with the help of MOOC providers. A few of these are listed below,

NPTEL-SWAYAM (India): Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Science (IISc.) offer online courses through this platform which require registration but are free of cost. The University Grants Commission (UGC) along with the HRD (Human Resource Development) Ministry has launched the MOOC program in India for higher secondary, bachelors and masters degrees. This will cover a wide range of subjects that may or may not be taught in regular campus studies. A new portal for MOOCs named '**Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds**', in short, **SWAYAM**, is said to present students with an opportunity to study anything from a list of 2000 courses out of which 200 are currently available for registration. Audio-visual medium, illustrations, research and case studies with self-assessment are few of the methods chosen to approach the study of these courses.Now both these portals are merged and working together.

National Coordinators

2. Conclusion

I have completed two courses from NPTEL –SWAYAM and COURSERA. I have also translated the e-content of an NPTEL course into Telugu. It is evident from this experience that I had the choice to learn courses from my field of study as well as from interdisciplinary fields. In the field of education due to the nature of its target audience – mostly young and highly connected – implies that it must adapt to accommodate their expectations. Most students have grown up online and will expect the same levels of technology in their learning environments as in their day-to-day lives. Today's students want always-on access to the network and resources, wherever they are on or off campus, for a deeper and more flexible learning experience. Traditional rigid modes of classroom instruction are unlikely to inspire students whose online life outside the classroom is dynamic and evolutionary. MOOCs is a great platform for higher education not just in India but all over the world but it comes with its pros and cons when it comes down to the future prospects of students who passed out of MOOCs. Since the concept is new and has garnered a lot praise recently, it can turn out to be one of the best concepts.

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Author Profile

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