

## **Digital Learning in New Normal Situations after COVID-19 with Reference to Tribal Students**

**Dr.V.Mercy Jyothi**

Assistant Professor

Department of Education

Dravidian University

Kuppam 517 426

### **Abstract:**

*The present study aims at exploring the current scenario of teaching and learning in teacher education using digital technology or e-learning as an alternative to normal traditional practices and its shift to new normal (e-learning) to face covid- 19 pandemic situations. For this purpose, the study also reviewed digital learning in normal and new normal situations, English as medium of Instruction with reference to tribal students to handle new normal with ease.*

### **1. Introduction:**

**Digital learning** is any type of learning that is facilitated by technology and it encompasses the application of a wide spectrum of practices. Out of many digital learning strategies online learning or e- learning is one which is considered as a boon for students to learn and teachers to teach their courses in pandemic situations. So, digital learning includes e- learning or online learning.

Some of the digital learning strategies are adaptive learning ,badging and gamification, blended learning, classroom technologies, e-textbooks, learning analytics, learning objects, mobile learning(e.g.Mobile Phones,Laptops,Computers,iPads),personalized learning,online learning(ore-learning), open educational resources (OERs), technology-enhanced teaching and learning, virtual reality, augmented reality.

Digital education is the innovative use of digital tools and technologies during teaching and learning, and is often referred to as Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)ore- Learning.

Exploring the use of digital technologies gives educators the opportunity to design engaging learning opportunities in the courses they teach, and these can take the form of blended or fully online courses and programmes. Online learning offers many benefits for students, including the chance to study flexibly and from a location that suits.

### **2. Digital learning in normal school situations:**

In normal school a situation that is before the covid -19 pandemic situations, everything was normal and the students were attending the school and performing their learning under normal conditions. Where there were taught with the prescribed curriculum for their classes and performing the activities, projects, co-curricular and extracurricular activities normally as in any other schools. Coming to digital learning, students were equipped with digital literacy according to their class in the computer science laboratories. In the case of Govt. schools especially in tribal areas, most of the schools are not equipped with such laboratories with internet connection and those situations digital literacy confines only to books without any hands on experience where we can expect only abstract idea though in the guidance of an efficient and knowledgeable teacher.

Teaching in normal situations usually in private and most of the government schools teachers are intended to teach lessons using digital technology especially using power point presentations, video clippings for better and easy understanding. Even projects would be assigned where the students have to depend on digital technology for the successful completion of the project. Through earlier cases, the students would be acquainted with digital learning.

These were the conditions which were going on in the schools before covid-19 pandemic relating to digital learning which was referred as Normal.

### **3. Digital learning in new Normal situations:**

During pandemic situations drastic change was observed in each and every situation and school education was not an exception. For almost half the year academic school activities were collapsed where the teachers and students were unable to attend the school because of covid

situations. Later this academic year that is 2020-2021, took its vitality in running the school with the help of online classes.

Digital technology proved to be a boon in these situations in making teaching learning possible. For this purpose various platforms like Zoom, Google meet, Google class room, Go to meeting, Cisco WebEx , Whatsapp etc. were utilized by teachers and students.

The above said platforms were new to most of the teachers in the beginning but they strived a lot in learning the technology behind their usage on their own and finally they have succeeded in taking classes utilizing all the options available for effective teaching and learning.

This mode of transaction between teachers and students extended even to giving assignments, home work and Evaluations by conducting online examinations. In this context teachers are to be applauded for their perseverance and zeal to teach students by gaining awareness relating to online tools for the benefit of students. So the above said conditions are considered as new normal. To get things to be done New normal situations are to be accepted and adopted.

Now comes the question that is it possible for all the teachers and students especially in tribal areas to fit into New normal? If not, what are the major barriers that are obstructing them to adjust and fit into New normal.

### **Barriers and solutions:**

#### **a. Availability of Gadgets:**

For the smooth conduct of teaching and learning in New normal, teachers and students are to be provided with Laptops, Palmtops or Smart phones. Usually in private schools, they make it mandate to have laptops for secondary school level students and obviously those who can afford would join such private schools and for teachers working in those schools, the institute itself will provide the Laptops and other necessary materials.

Where as, in tribal areas only government schools are the sources of Education. One cannot expect Laptops, Palmtops or Smart phones with students. In case if smart phones are available, it would be with their parents at their work places and may not be available for students. Not having necessary Gadgets for digital learning is considered as a major barrier.

This barrier can be removed by taking an initiation by the government under any one of the schemes available for school students to distribute either Laptops or smart phones. Teachers some resolved this task by using their own Smart phones. But still, their teaching would be made more effective if ministry of school education take any steps to equip all the government

school teaches with Laptops. With Laptops it is possible to share the whiteboard screen, power point presentations, video clippings, animated experimentation films to deal with biological science and physical science classes would be done with ease.

#### **b. Internet Connectivity:**

Though how many types of gadgets are available, without internet connectivity one cannot think of online or digital learning. Inter can be connected to gadgets through Wi-Fi or switching on mobile data, or through hotspots, and soon.

In normal conditions, to make internet available to students and teachers each and every school is provided with broad band Internet connectivity, which would definitely be confined only to school premises.

But in New normal situations, for online learning especially in tribal areas, students may not be in a position to afford for mobile data at home for about 3-4 hours a day.

In such cases BSNL can take initiation to identify certain places like nearby railway stations, post offices, Grampanchayat offices, Rural cooperative Banks, schools, Anganwadis' etc., in the village and arrange Wi-Fi connectivity in those Hotspots using devices viz., Dongle, High frequency Wi-Fi router, signal enhancers so as to make internet connectivity available to students in the entire village. Not only BSNL can do this work but even NGO's can come forward to this. Esha foundation, an NGO is presently doing this type of work in some states.

#### **c. Medium of Instruction:**

For the purpose of online learning the tools that are being downloaded and used most commonly with free of cost are Zoom, Google classroom, Google meet, Goto meeting, Cisco

WebEx etc. Most of the private schools are using self developed Apps for their institutes.

To handle these Apps, it is necessary to have the knowledge of English to follow the instructions and participate in the learning process without any difficulty.

Even for teachers it would be easy to prepare Power point presentations in English than in their regional Languages. Even video clippings and learnings of software's and teaching material for various subjects are available mostly in English. So, English language plays a major role in teaching and learning transaction through online.

As it seems the New normal continues in future it would be better to have medium of instruction as English to overcome this barrier and also to meet the global needs, tribal students should be equipped with English language by introducing English medium in all Government schools.

Babasaheb Dr.B.R.Ambedkar compared English to the milk of the lioness, and said those who drink it become stronger," said Chandra Bhan Prasad, Dalit columnist, researcher and chief promoter of the pro-English campaign.

Mr. Prasad says that in the cities, people know the importance of English. In smaller towns, there is some knowledge of its importance. But in villages, there is no awareness that you need English to get ahead.

**References:**

- [1] ICTs in education for people with disabilities: UNESCO institute for information technologies in education.
- [2] The Disability Divide in Internet Access and Use: Kerry Dobransky and Eszter Hargittai.
- [3] Inclusive Information and communication Technologies for People with Disabilities: Jenifer Simpson.
- [4] <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jan/11/learning-english-india-dalits-rahman>
- [5] "English and Medium of Instruction: Dalit Discourse in Indian Education", Dhanaraju Vulli, Research Journal of Educational Sciences, ISSN 2321-0508 Vol. 2(2), 1-6, May (2014)