

Chapter 6

Empowerment of Grass Roots Communities Through Information–Driven Learning

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ABSTRACT

Methodologies involving issues to empower remotely distributed communities localized with sub-standard or lower-standard information backbone are still in demand of imperative attention from the policy initiation level in each country. Hence, particular attention should be given to grassroot-level participants in formulating non-conventional approaches to elucidate on demand-driven content by articulating grassroots communities in homogeneous coherence, and at the same time emulating to multifarious conjunctures of socio-economic elements. Efforts have been given in this chapter in synthesizing contents dependent on technologies, meant for distant mode of education and online education including analytical approaches to develop a pragmatic repository of the education system.

INTRODUCTION

When groups of users interact simultaneously and intensively through some medium, they progressively constitute a community. The community feeling does not automatically emerge because groups use electronic communications as it takes a lot of time and a lot of interactions. It requires sharing goals and, whatever that means, sharing experiences (Dillenbourg, 2000). However, the focus of the concurrent interactive learning systems is mainly evolving around the grass roots communities, who are deprived of basic livelihood pre-requisites. Therefore, this has become a competitive challenge for the global leaders to provide them with basic literacy, health and other supports to improve their livelihood. In these contexts: information, free flow of information, and easy access to it, can be treated as the primary ingredient to empower the grass roots communities for learning, livelihood management and knowledge development (Rahman, 2003a).

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Effective utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) has lead the educators and researchers to avail means of innovative methodologies to reach out to the learners at the outskirts of the education belt. Though, initially intended for dropouts, or residuals of the under-developed society, but the distant mode of education, at its concurrent Diaspora, is no longer lies within, and has achieved overwhelming success in consolidating the core stakeholders of the society.

Extending the conventional norms of learning processes towards interactive and collaborative learning; physical networks towards virtual communication platform; point-to-point connectivity towards multi-point interactive connectivity; stand alone data warehouse towards inter-connected distributed repositories, a homogeneous backbone of education system can effectively be realized through the appropriate utilization of ICT methods (Rahman, 2003a). The intention of this research is to portray the current contexts, effective utilization and appropriate application for the benefit and improvement of learning and knowledge development for the grass roots communities.

The effectual manipulate of network technology to deliver training to the remotely located grass roots communities is the latest trend in the training and development industry and has been heralded as the 'e-learning revolution' is rapidly emerging across the globe. In an effort to separate hype from reality, this chapter reviews practitioner and research literature on e-learning, incorporating unpublished information from interviews with managers and consultants directly involved in e-learning initiatives. Specific attention is given to why organizations use e-learning, what the potential draw-backs to e-learning are, what we know from research about e-learning and what the future of e-learning may hold for the betterment of communities at large (Welsh, et. al., 2003).

It has been observed that ICT mediated learning provides utilities for achieving the goal of education for all, and in turn acts as an enabler in reducing the digital divide, reducing poverty, and promoting social inclusion across the globe. However, the integration of ICTs in education sector deserves considerable investment in terms of time and resources. Consequently, during planning and development stages for the integration of ICTs in evidence-based information for making sound decisions by the end users incorporate extensive research and sharing of critical information along different phases of planning remains as a challenge. Furthermore, implementation of ICT based learning demands in depth analysis and intelligent feedback of the processes. It should be understood that the technology does not improve learning in a straight way and the fundamental question remains always unanswered, in assessing the effectiveness of ICTs or assessing the effectiveness of instructional treatments that were initially (and effectively) less than perfect (Rahman, 2003b). This chapter has tried to critically analyze the effective role of ICT methods in learning and put forwards several success cases of learning mechanisms that assisted in socioeconomic empowerment and at the same time, provided a few futuristic recommendations in establishing similar endeavors in promising economies.

The Internet is supposed to be a deductive tool to promote awareness, provide content, raise skills, and act as the catalytic agent of empowerment. However, an older assessment reveals that the actual picture is challenging and although the non-English-speaking population comprises almost 90 percent of the world population, only 8.4 percent have Internet access and only 4 percent access the Internet in Asian languages. Of the entire world population, only 12 percent has Internet access. About 35.2 percent of the Internet web sites are in English (Global Reach, 2004). But, with the recent advancement in the Internet technologies, the overall scenarios are rapidly increasing. It has been observed that globally the number of Internet users have increased from only 413 million in 2000 to over 3.4 billion in 2016. The most desired one billion barrier was crossed in 2005. It has also been observed that every day over the past five years, an average of 640,000 people went online for the first time (Roser, et.al., 2020).

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