The Role and Impact of Digital Initiatives on Higher Education in India

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ABSTRACT

The Government of India launched many digital initiatives to improve the quality and access of higher education in our country. Over the last 5 years, the NMEICT has made significant gains by developing IT interventions that have potential to transform the higher education scenario. Purpose- The purpose of the study is to assess the Role of digital Initiatives on higher education with special reference to media students and to get Idea what can be done in future to strengthen the quality of higher education through these digital initiatives. Methodology - This research has been done on students enrolled in UG and PG courses and pass out media students who have taken help of these initiatives in any kinds, we got responses of 50 media students through survey method by questionnaire in which we asked total 18 questions 16 close ended and 2 open ended question. Researchers analyze the data through statistical analysis and interpret the data through graphs. Findings of the study - 58% respondents are female and 42% are male.44% are student of MA/MSc in Mass Communication, 22% is of MPhil and 30% from BA/BSc in Journalism and Mass Communication. Mostly student 78% are agree that they knew about ePathshala Portal, 74% are aware about SWAYAM, 70% aware about are aware about SWAYAM PRABHA and Shodhgangaand 36% are aware about other digital initiatives. Mostly 36% of media students came to know about these government digital initiatives in classroom, 36% in informal discussion with friends or teacher, 14% came to know about these through Newspaper, 12% through television, very less people got to know about these initiatives through radio.

Keywords: Digital Initiatives, Higher Education, Media Students, Government

I INTRODUCTION

India is developing towards digitization of education very rapidly because of increasing internet penetration and soaring demands of students and situations too because of global coronavirus pandemic. Digital education is the primary focus of the government and they are working on strengthening the digital infrastructure of our country. Internet connectivity is also increasing even in remote areas of the country. Indian government launched digital India initiative in July 2015, to expand internet accessibility among pan India and to strengthen online infrastructure. As part of this initiative the government also started e- Education initiatives to provide online education to all and to make education accessible for all and to make it more economical.

Further amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Indian government has launched several initiatives (eg. PM eVidya programme, DIKSHA etc) to offer best quality education as per global standard and to offer extended distance learning opportunities to students.

According to UNESCO, India is expected to join eight other countries (including Brazil, China, Bangladesh, Egypt, Mexico, Pakistan, Nigeria and Indonesia) in a list to accelerate digital learning and benefit from the global digital education initiative. Together with these countries we are also shifting from a traditional approach to modern digital education globally.

(a) **Digital Initiatives launched by Government of India and their Purposes**

- **Swayam-** The government of India launched Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) to provide an integrated platform for online courses at economical costs to all learners, especially to the unprivileged section of our country who are unable to afford and access traditional education. This portal conducts Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to provide quality education on various subjects. This portal is beneficial for Class 9-12 and for Under Graduates and Post Graduate students.

- **Swayam Prabha-** In 2017, SWAYAM PRABHA, a group of 34 DTH (Direct to Home) channels dedicated to broadcast educational programmes 24x7, was introduced. The channels broadcast new content for a minimum of four hours daily, and this content is repeated five times in a day for students to select slots according to their convenience.

- **ePathshala Portal -** In 2015, the government launched the ePathshala portal to provide a resource bank for educational videos, audios, flip books etc. Resources on this portal are available in Indian languages for example in Hindi, English, Urdu and can be accessed through smartphones, laptops, desktops and tablets.

- **EGyankosh -** It is a National Digital Repository to store, index, preserve, distribute and share digital learning resources developed by the Open and Distance learning Institutions in the country.
- **ePGPathshala -** ePG Pathshala is portal under which High quality, curriculum based, interactive content in various subjects across all disciplines of social science, arts, fine arts and humanities, mathematical sciences and languages is being developed. MHRD, under its National Mission on Education through Information and communication technology, has assigned work to the UGC to provide e content in 68 subjects at PG level. The content and its quality is the key component of the education system.
- **Shodhganga -** A reservoir of theses and dissertations submitted to universities in India. Shodhganga provides a platform for research scholars to submit their Ph.D. theses and make it available to scholars in open access. This repository has the ability to capture, index, store, disseminate and preserve ETDs (Electronic Theses and Dissertations) submitted by the researchers.
- **Shodhgangotri -** The word Shodh originates from Sanskrit and it means Research and Discovery. Gangotri is largest glacier of Himalayas which originates of Ganga, the largest, longest and holiest river of India. Under this Shodh Gangotri initiative research scholars in universities requested to deposit electronic version of approved synopsis. The repository would reveal trends and direction of research and it would avoid plagiarism. Shodhgangotri would later be mapped to full text thesis. Under the "Shodh Gangotri" initiative, research researchers and research supervisors in universities are asked to submit an electronic version of their authorized synopsis to the institutions in order to register for the Ph.D programme. It now includes MRPs, PDFs, and Emeritus Fellowships, among other things. On the one hand, the repository would expose the patterns and directions of research being undertaken in Indian universities, while on the other side, it would prevent research duplication. "Shodh Gangotri" synopsis would later be matched to "Shodh Ganga" full-text theses. As a result, after the full-text thesis is submitted for a synopsis, ShodhGangotri will provide a link to the full-text theses from "ShodhGanga".

- **EShodhsindhu -** This initiative was formed with merger of three consortia, namey UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, NLIST and INDEST-AICTE Consortium in December 2015, e shodh sindhu provides access to more than 10,000 core and peer reviewed journals and a large number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines.
- **Sakshat -** His Excellency, the then President of India, launched the pilot project SAKSHAT: A One-Stop Education Portal on October 30, 2006, with the goal of facilitating lifelong learning for students, instructors, and those in work or seeking information at no cost. The Content Advisory Committee (CAC) for the respective subject, which included representatives from educational institutions such as IGNOU, Delhi University, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodyaya Vidyalaya Sangthan (NVS), National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), and National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), as well as prominent academicians in the field, was in charge of the content development task for 'SAKSHAT.' The programme may also include provisions for certification of human resource skills gained through formal or non-formal means, as well as the development and maintenance of a database of human resource profiles.
- **Oscar -** The major goal of Project OSCAR (Open-Source Courseware Animations Repository) is to create a vast collection of web-based, interactive animations and simulations, also known as learning objects, for teaching and learning science and technology subjects. These could be beneficial not only in the classroom, but also for independent learning and distance education. The present purpose is to provide LOs for diverse topics in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. It provides students with opportunities to learn how to create LOs, manage the repository's back end, and perform educational research.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

Dolch, Carina; Zawacki-Richter, Olaf; Bond, Melissa; Marín, Victoria "Responding to the lack of longitudinal analyses on media usage in higher education, this study explores the changes of higher education students' access to and use of technology for learning in 2012, 2015 and 2018. Using an online questionnaire, a total of 5,572 German higher education

students participated. Via descriptive and inferential analysis, the data show a clear trend towards using flexible, location-independent devices, accompanied by a rapid increase in the use of instant messaging. This is in line with an increasing demand for digital and flexible learning opportunities such as web-based training and lectures as podcasts or vodcasts, which is not met by higher education institutions." This longitudinal research provides a framework for the continued development and application of digital media in teaching and learning at higher education institutions, which is especially important given the COVID-19 epidemic that began in Spring 2020.

The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education by Chickering and Gamson (1987) provides extensively researched and validated concepts for best practices in higher education. Following a review of the literature, twenty-eight evaluation instruments currently used to design and review online courses in higher education institutions were gathered and categorized into groups depending on their geographic reach and the type of institution for which they were created. This study looks into how higher education assessment tools examine the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education, as well as what additional issues are addressed in course evaluations .Findings show that national and statewide evaluation instruments were fewer institutes specific and more closely aligned to the principles of good practice, and that evaluation instruments often measure extraneous items (e.g., student services, navigation, resources, or institutional support). Additional findings and conclusions based on the analysis of the instruments are discussed.

III RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(a) Inspect the role of digital initiatives in higher education in today's perspective.
(b) How many media students are aware about these digital initiatives?
(c) Which populations of students are more aware or deprived of these learning facilities, urban, rural, Semi urban or metropolitan areas students?
(d) From where students got to know about these digital initiatives?
(e) How frequently do they engage with these digital initiatives?
(f) To what extent students find it easy to access these digital initiatives?
(g) To what extent these digital initiatives are beneficial for media students?
(h) How much are these digital initiatives helpful for learners to learn?
(i) For what purpose students mostly use these digital initiatives?
(j) Do students face any difficulty while using these digital initiatives?
(k) Can students access these digital platforms in understandable language?
(l) Did students face any difficulty while using these digital initiatives?
(m) What are the suggestions of students to improve this digital initiative which can help digital initiative which can help future generations?

IV METHODOLOGY

(a) **Research Type: Quantitative and Descriptive Style with Survey Design - Tools of data collection:** Questionnaire is the tool selected by the researchers for collecting data from the chosen sample.
(b) **Method of data collection:** Sample was selected by purposive sampling technique. The questionnaire was distributed to postgraduate, graduate students, scholars and pass out too. Out of 61 questionnaires distributed to the defendants the research was able to get back only 50 duly filled in questionnaires.
(c) **Data Analysis and Interpretation:** The data collected was simplified through tables. The tabulated data were analyzed with the simple percentage method in MS Excel to draw the necessary inferences.

V MAJOR FINDINGS

(a) **Demographic Measurements**
     (i) Age of Respondents

Table 1

Age of Respondents	Percentage
17-20	11.8%
21- 33	31.4%
24- 26	27.5%
26-30	25.5%
Above 30	3.8%
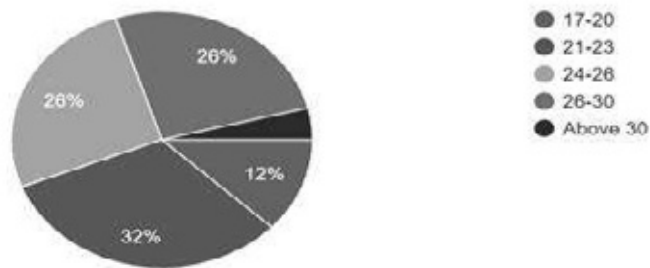
Fig. 1

(b) Gender Distribution of Respondents –

Table 2

Gender	Percentage
Male	41.2%
Female	58.8%
Others	0

Fig. 2

(c) Courses in which media student is studying/studied

Table 3

Course	Percentage
B.A/BSc. Journalism and Mass Communication	29.4
M.A./MSc. Mass Communication and Journalism	45.1
MPhil/PhD (Media and Communication Related Studies)	21.6
Other Journalism Course	3.9

Fig. 3

(d) Media students are aware about which of these digital Initiatives?

Table 4

Name of Digital Initiative	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
SWAYAM	38	74.5
SWAYAM PRABHA	36	70.6
ePathshala Portal	40	78.4
eGyankosh	32	62.7
ePGPathshala	27	52.9
Shodhganga	36	70.6
Shodhgangotri	26	51
eShodhsindhu	27	52.9
SAKSHAT	22	43.1
OSCAR	14	27.5
Other Initiatives	19	37.3

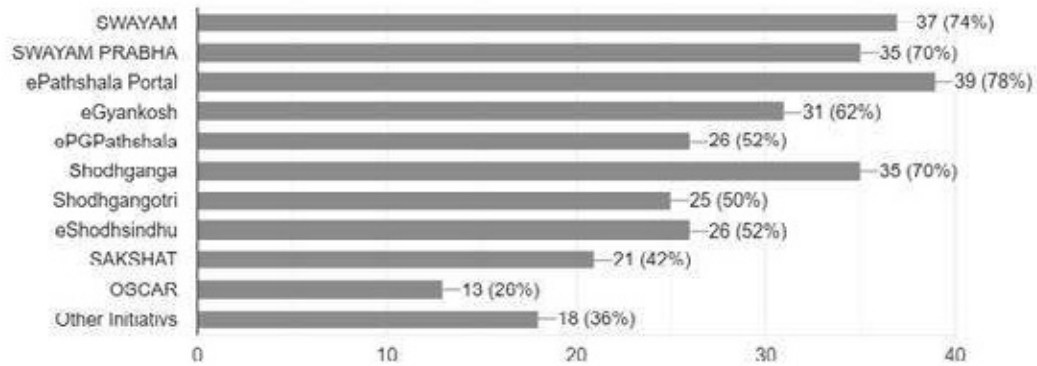6. Are you aware about these digital initiatives? (Select one or more)

50 responses

Fig. 4

(e) Respondent's area of residence

Table 5

Area of Residence	Percentage of Respondents
Urban	54.9
Rural	19.6
Semi Urban	13.7
Metropolitan	11.8

7. What is your area of residence? *

50 responses
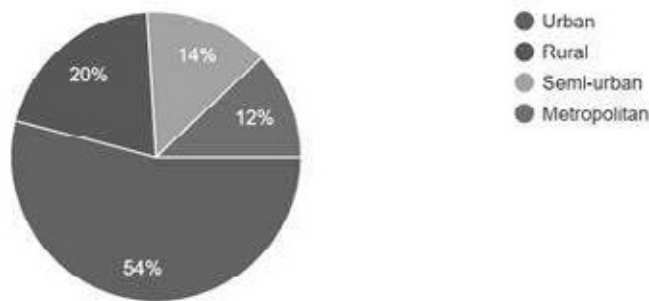
Fig. 5

(f) From mediums media students got aware about these digital initiatives –

<div align="center">Table 6</div>

Medium of Awareness	Percentage of Respondents
Newspaper	15.7
Television	11.8
Radio	1.98
Classroom	35.3
Informal Discussion with friends, teacher or relatives	35.3

8. From where you came to know about these government digital initiatives?
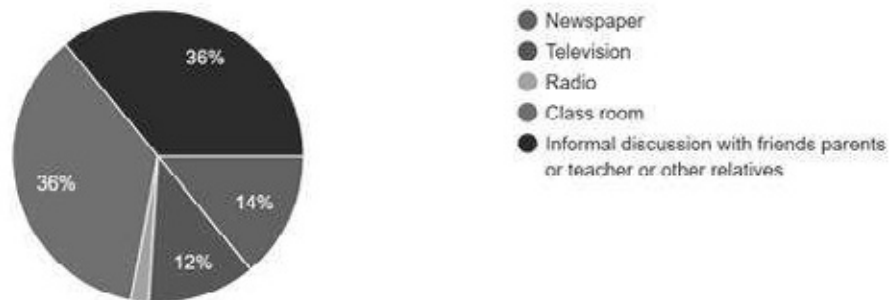
50 responses

- Newspaper
- Television
- Radio
- Class room
- Informal discussion with friends parents or teacher or other relatives

<div align="center">Fig. 6</div>

(g) Frequency of using these digital initiatives -

<div align="center">Table 7</div>

Frequency	Percentage of Respondents
Daily	19.6
Once in a week	33.3
Once in a month	25.5
Unable to remember	19.6
Never	2

9. How frequently do you engage with these digital initiatives? *
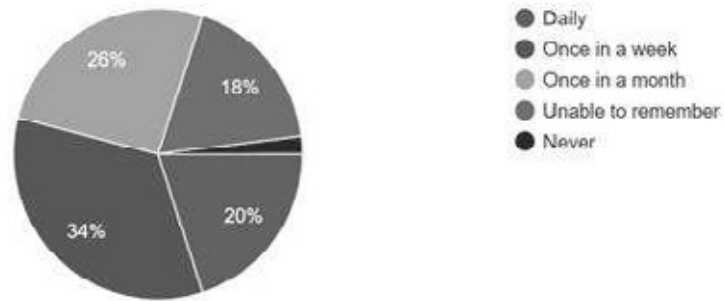
50 responses

Fig. 7

(h) To what extent Digital Initiatives seems beneficial to media students –

Table 8

Level of Consent	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly Agree	12	24
Agree	15	30
Don't Know	8	16
Disagree	7	14
Strongly disagree	8	16

Fig.7

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree(1- Strongly agree, 2-Agree, 3 Don't know, 4-Disagree, 5-Strongly disagree) with the statetment that, these digital initiatives are beneficial for media students
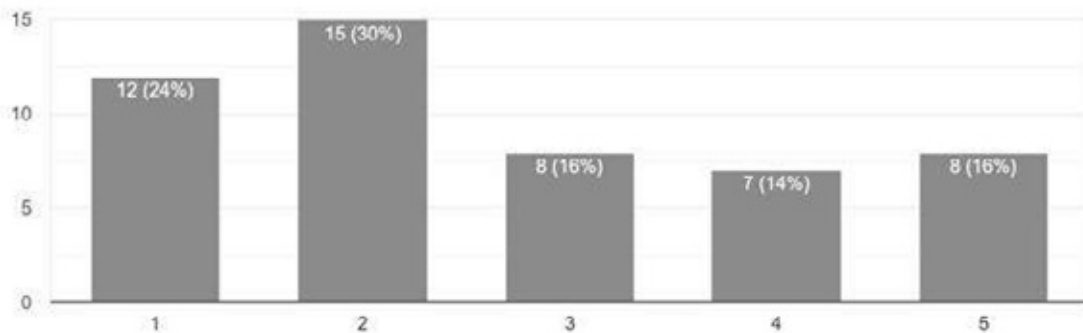
50 responses

Fig. 8

(i)   **To what extent these initiatives help students to learn –**

Table 9

Level of Consent	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly Agree	12	24.5
Agree	15	30.6
Don't Know	11	22.4
Disagree	4	8.2
Strongly Disagree	7	14.3

12. To what extent do you agree or disagree(1- Strongly agree, 2-Agree, 3 Don't know, 4-Disagree, 5-Strongly disagree) with the following statement in relation to the use of digital initiatives in education? *These initiative helps me to learn
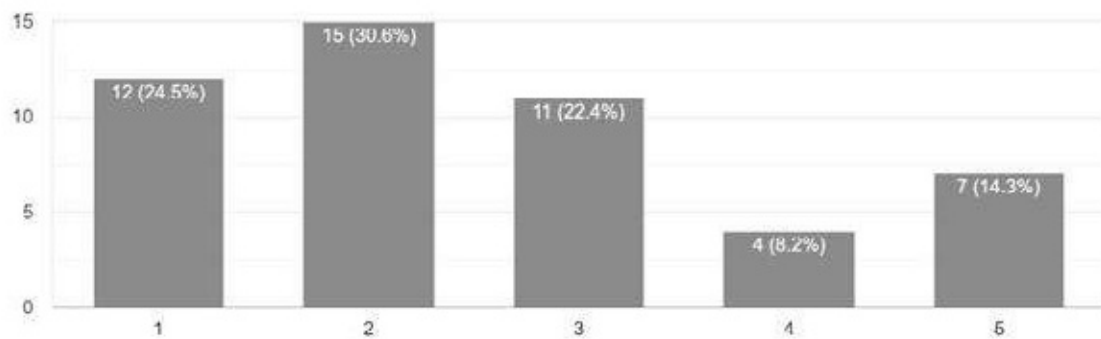
49 responses

Fig. 9

(j)   **Main purpose of using these digital initiatives**

Table 10

Purpose of Use	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To give Mock test	20	40
To find subject Notes or study material	39	78
To attend lectures	17	34
To do any course for credits	11	22
To clear your subject doubts	27	54
To understand concept well from subject export	26	52

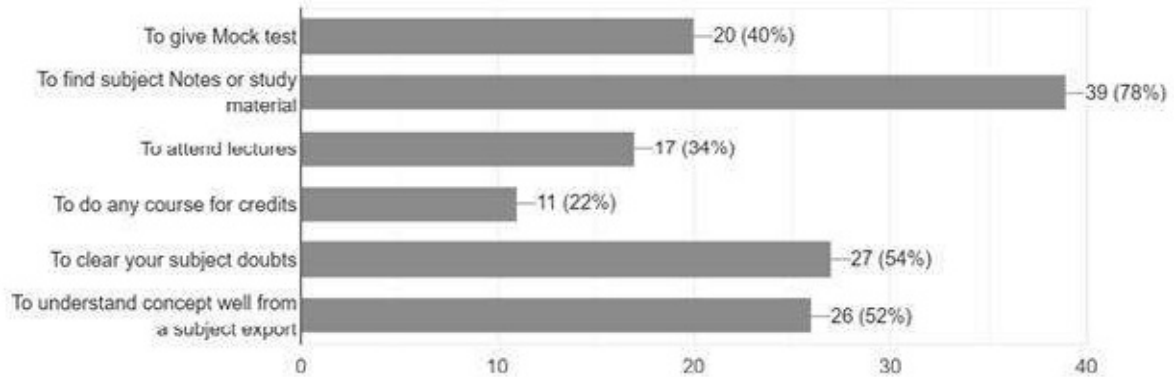13. For what purpose do you mostly use these digital initiatives?(Select one or more)

50 responses

Fig. 10

(k) Respondents faces any difficulty using these digital initiatives –

Table 11

Responses	Percentage (%)
Yes	24
No	38
Maybe	38

14. Do you face any difficulty while using these digital initiative ?

50 responses
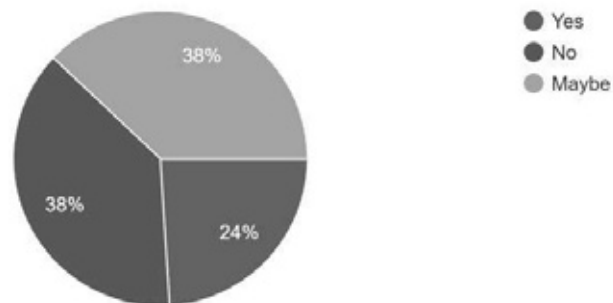
Fig. 11

(l) These platforms can be accessed in understandable language –

Table 12

Responses	Percentage (%)
Yes	88.2
No	10
Maybe	9.8

15. Can you access these digital platform in your understandable language?
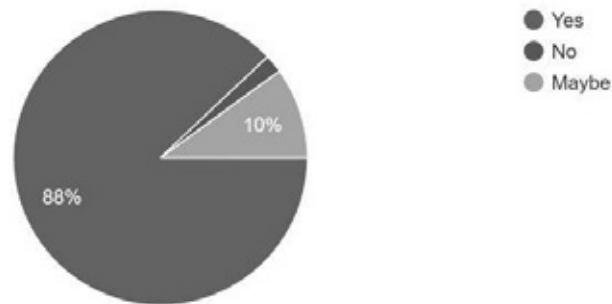50 responses

Fig.12

(m) Difficulty Faced by media students while using these digital initiatives –

Table 13

Type of Difficulty	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Network issue	31	62
Not found appropriate content	20	40
Problem in understanding content	12	24
Difficulty in running programs	13	26

16. Did you faced any difficulty in accessing these digital initiatives? choose one ore more
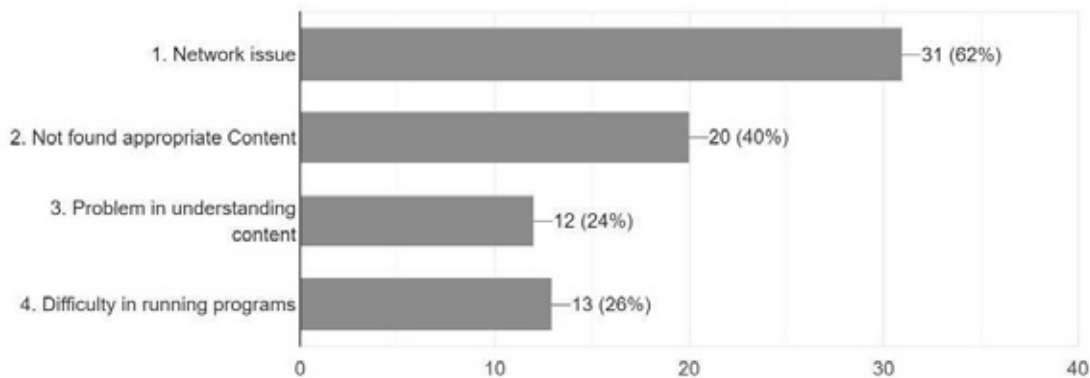50 responses

Fig. 13

(n) Name of one digital initiative which helps you a lot in your studies?

Mostly students mentioned the names of Shodhganga, ePGpathshala, Google classroom and SWAYAM portal names as their most used initiatives.

(o) Do you have any suggestions for how we could improve these digital initiatives or do you have any idea of a digital initiative which can help future generations for quality education in India? Kindly give your views on it (Max 100 words)

Researchers got only 25 responses to this last open-ended question, which means only 50% of students wrote answers. Students suggested making programmes more interactive by increasing student participation in classes, by doing live classes and by solving doubts of students. As media students they should not only focus on theoretical knowledge but also on practical knowledge too. Online MOCK exams should be more like the real one, for example the NTA NET Exam, so that students can practice as per exam requirement. These programs should be in regional languages too so that one can take benefit of these initiatives. Sometimes the language of these programs seems very critical. They should be in easy words and conversational style that can be grasped by any student easily.

VI CONCLUSION

This study clarifies the Role and Impact of Digital Initiatives on Higher Education in India with special reference to Media Students. Study not only focuses on the bright side of the initiatives but also highlights problems, challenges and weak areas for improvements of these digital initiatives.

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