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THE EDUSAT NETWORK IN SUPPORTING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF TRIPURA

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Abstract

The pivotal role of education as an instrument of social change by altering the human perspective and transforming the traditional mindset of society is well recognized. The universalisation of education has become the top priority, especially for the developing countries. But the extension of equality education to remote and rural regions becomes a Herculean task for a large country like India with multi-lingual and multi-cultural population separated by vast geographical distances, and in many instances, inaccessible terrain. Since independence, India has seen substantial increase in the number of educational institutions at primary, secondary and higher levels as well as the student enrolment. But the lack of adequate rural educational infrastructure and non- availability of good teachers in sufficient numbers adversely affect the efforts made in education. Satellites can establish the connectivity between urban educational institutions with adequate infrastructure imparting quality education and the large number of rural and semi-urban educational institutions that lack the necessary infrastructure. EDUSAT is essentially dedicated to meet the felt-need for an interactive satellite-supported learning and act as an interface between face-to-face and open flexible learning. The small state of Tripura has been making use of EDUSAT since 2007. EDUSAT network in Tripura has helped in taking education to the door steps of the students studying in insurgency prone areas. The present study aims to study the necessity of EDUSAT network in providing support to the education system of Tripura. It also attempts to share the experiences about the prospects of this technological boon and the major challenges faced in materializing the objectives set towards imparting education.

Key words – *Tripura; EDUSAT.*

1.0 Introduction:

"Its land is not like our land; Its sky is not like our sky."

The observation of Mullah Darvish of Herat who accompanied the Mughal General Mirjumallah to Assam in the middle of 17th century is applicable for most of the North eastern states. Tripura remains further away from greater India for its transport and communication constraints. Yet the second smallest state of North East has been striving for education right from the days of its kings. An erstwhile princely state Tripura, situated at the latitude of 23.756 and the longitude of 91.825 with a land area of 10,491 km² (4,051 sq mi) surrounded almost on all four sides by foreign territory has been trying to utilize its resources towards achievement in education. From a humble beginning of about hundred schools and no college in the pre-independent India, today, Tripura has a total of 4,455 schools, of which 2,298 are primary schools. The total enrolment in all schools of the state is 767,672. Tripura has one Central University (Tripura University) and one private university (a branch of the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India). There are 15 general colleges, two engineering colleges (Tripura Institute of Technology and National Institute of Technology, Agartala), two medical colleges (Agartala Government Medical College and Tripura Medical College), three polytechnic colleges, one law college, one music college, and one Art College according to the Economic Review of Tripura 2010–11. The problem of accessibility which was also within the state could not debar growth of schools, particularly up to secondary level. As a result there were and are schools in every remote area. The necessity of more or less standardized educational transaction was felt strongly more than a decade ago. The concept of EDUSAT was appropriated by the education system of the state as early as in 2007. Tripura is one of the many states in the North – East region that has availed the ICT through EDUSAT network facilities. The system of education in Tripura largely followed the pattern of West Bengal with the patterns of Central Schools and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) as well as of the Indian School Certificate Examination (ICSE) in a number of schools. At present Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE) has been switching over to the all India pattern suggested by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

1.1 History of EDUSAT network in Tripura

On August 14, 2007, Tripura became the first among the northeastern states to have satellite based educational facilities aimed at enhancing the knowledge base of the students. Education terminal was inaugurated on 14th August, 2007 in Tripura and the first program was transmitted on the same day of inauguration. At present, there are 50 Satellite Interactive Terminals (SITs) in Tripura. It includes 38 Block Resource Centres (BRC), 7 Higher Secondary Schools, 4 DIET centres and 1 teaching end (EDUSAT hub) at the Agartala State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) from where the programs are transmitted.

Table 1. Number of Satellite Interactive Terminals in Tripura

Terminal	Number
Block Resource Centres	38
Higher Secondary Schools	07
DIET Centres	04
Teaching end – Edusat hub	01
Total SIT in Tripura	50

EDUSAT programs have been transmitted for the teachers teaching in elementary and upper primary sections and for the students of upper primary and secondary section. The focal areas of the programs were to identify and chalk out difficult topics of the various subjects viz, English, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies etc. for content generation. In addition to these different awareness programs like health awareness, yoga, social awareness, disaster management (school safety) were also included in the EDUSAT network. From the survey

conducted by Social Research Division (SRD) Development and Educational Communication Unit, Indian Space Research Organisation (DECU - ISRO) in the year 2009 the hard spots and difficult subjects were identified by both the teachers and students through focus group discussion and questionnaire. The students of Class VI to VIII have mentioned very broad topics: In English – Grammar, Text (Prose & Poetry), in Science - Structure and function of Living Organism, Organization of living body and Structure of Human Body, in Social Studies – Evolution of Ancient Man, Ancient History and Modern History, Latitude, Longitude, Local Time, Solar System, for Computer – Basic. The students of Class IX and Class X have identified the following topics: Mathematics – Algebra, Arithmetic, Mensuration, Ratio and Proportion, Geometry, Statistics, Trigonometry, Physical Science – Organic Chemistry, Chemical Bond, Electricity, Symbol, Life Science – Nervous System, Sense Organs, Cell Division, History – Gupta Dynasty, Ancient History, Second World War, Geography – Physical Geography, English – Grammar, Computer – Software skills. Teachers teaching in both upper primary and secondary schools identified relatively similar topics from the syllabus prescribed by Tripura Board of Secondary Education.

2.0 Objectives of the present study:

The broad objective of the study is to understand the necessity of EDUSAT network in providing educational support to the schools located in remote places of Tripura.

- To study the functioning of EDUSAT network in supporting the education system of Tripura.

- To find out the major challenges faced in materializing the objectives set towards imparting education

- To ascertain the prospects of EDUSAT network in the education system of Tripura

3.0 Methodology of the study:

A Survey method was used for conducting this study. Purposive sampling method was applied for sample selection (Program Coordinator and teachers) Secondary data has been

collected using certain predetermined questionnaire.

4.0. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

4.1.To study the functioning of EDUSAT network in supporting the education system of Tripura.

The EDUSAT network is presently functioning in four districts viz. West Tripura, North Tripura, Dhalai and South Tripura. The total number of schools in West Tripura district is 1669 and Satellite Interactive Terminals are 19. In this district the population is heterogeneous (Scheduled tribes, Muslims and Bengalis) and to reach education to each and every doorstep more number of satellite centres should be created. The total number of schools in North Tripura is 803 and Satellite Interactive Terminals are 10. Jampui Hills are mainly inhabited by the Lushai tribes (Mizo) and also by Reang tribes. The main occupation of these tribal people is Orange cultivation. Technology has to be introduced to meet the requirements of tribal students living in remote places. Dhalai district has 861 schools and only 7 centres are there to meet the requirements of the students. More number of Satellite Interactive Terminals should be set up because students may face lot of hardships in accessing other schools as the area is quite backward. South Tripura district has 1243 schools and 14 Satellite Interactive Terminals. The number of centres is more here compared to other districts and the Government of Tripura is focusing a lot related to the education facilities of the students studying in this district.

4.2. To find out the major challenges faced in materializing the objectives set towards imparting education

The objectives of EDUSAT network are as under:

- To make use of EDUSAT for various developmental/social/educational/scientific/health/literature/cultural/training/research/ scientific programs.

- To collaborate with other institutions have similar objectives such as IGNOU, CIET, National Institute of Open Schooling, etc. for availing various schemes and programs and seeking their help, support, guidance etc. in rolling out various activities of the society.

- To participate in the programs relating to use of technology in education and allied subjects.

- To maintain a film/video/audio library and arrange film shows on use of technology including EDUSAT in the Government educational institutes concerning all the Departments of the State

To achieve these objectives it is necessary to overcome the major challenges.

Challenges for the network:

i. During live video lecture sessions frequent power failure disrupts the continuity in session both at the teaching and receiving end.

ii. Maintaining consistency in transmission and reception quality uninterrupted

iii. Designing and transmitting a good program by a reputed subject expert to make students sit throughout the live session

iv. Most of the technical persons are basically recruited on contractual basis. So, there is a question that in near future if the State Government doesn't regularize their service then the dream of extension of quality education to every nook and corner will just remain in red tape only. Ensuring the safety and security of the Satellite Interactive Terminals SITs.

4.3. **To ascertain the prospects of EDUSAT network in the education system of Tripura**

- The Government of Tripura is planning to increase the capacity of 50SITs to 500SITs in different phases so that the various Government Departments can derive the benefits of EDUSAT network.

- The HUB has the capacity to support infinite number of ROTs (Receive only Terminals) as a result of which State Government is planning to increase the number of ROTs to2000 so, that the various anganwadi centre and primary schools can be included in the EDUSAT network.

- Department of Science and Technology, Government of Tripura is planning to set up 10SITs in various Government Degree Colleges for Information Technology Entrepreneurship Training Program for the educated youths

- Government of Tripura is planning to set up a Multimedia Content Development Laboratory at State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT)

- As an effort towards making available to students quality courseware State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT) is planning to produce properly edited CDs of the live video sessions.

- The program duration should be 30minutes so that the students can utilize the network to the optimum level.

Improvement in education has been making use of information technology EDUSAT is one most important need. The small state of Tripura has been making use of EDUSAT since 2007. EDUSAT network in Tripura has helped in taking education to the door steps of the students studying in areas prone to insurgency issues. It also aims to provide effective teacher training, supplementing classroom teaching and increasing community participation.

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