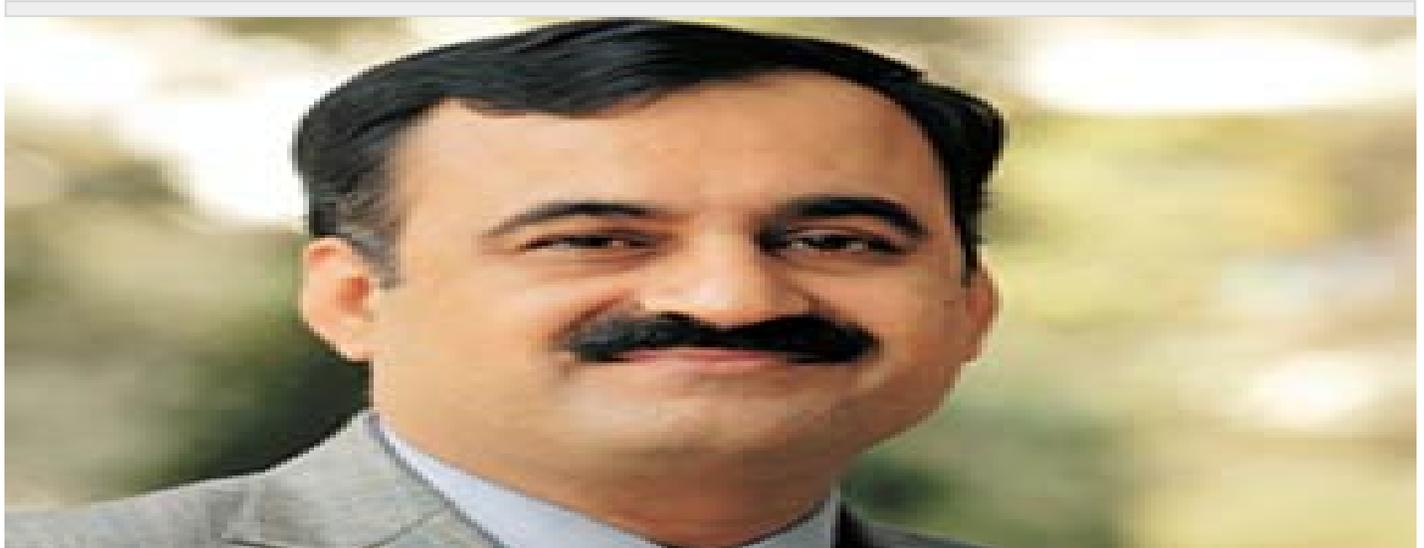




Tablets for reform in education

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The tablet revolution is today an important trend in the digital ecosystem. Today tablets are becoming increasingly popular devices for the purposes of doing a variety of multi-dimensional tasks including accessing the Internet and doing various other computing functions. The success of the iPad over the last few years, ever since its launch, has demonstrated in no certain term the future that lies for the tablet. Thereafter we have seen various telecom companies coming up with their own versions of tablets. In India, the Government of India has been instrumental in bringing forward Aakash which is the world's cheapest tablet. With increasing penetration of tablets and their acceptability for a wide variety of tasks, it is only but natural to expect that as time passes by, tablets would be within the integral vision of policy makers. Already there have been various experiments taking place regarding tablets. Tablets are being distributed in China. Various State Governments in India have already indicated their intention to distribute tablets for the purposes of education.

Seen in another context, tablets hold the promises of completely revolutionizing the current educational system in India.

In case the tablets are used in the educational system in India, they promise to change the face of the present Indian education system.

India is a land of diversity. There are the haves and the have nots. The digital divide has further

accentuated this broad distinction between digital population and non-digital population. The tablet would hope to help enable India leap frog this digital divide.

Once competitively priced tablets like Aakash are successfully launched in India, the same are likely to be immensely used in the education system. Students, once they have access to iPad and the tablets, would completely experience a new dimension of education. Internet is an ocean of knowledge. With so much rich sources of information and knowledge available on the Internet, these tablets will help the students to access the said sources of knowledge. Further, usage of tablets and iPads is further going to make classes far more interactive and less paper based. The same is likely to have immensely positive impact upon making the classes far more interesting and help the children to bridge the digital divide.

The children of today are the citizens of tomorrow. These citizens need to be well groomed about how to deal with the challenges of technologies. The use of iPads and tablets in education system is going to change the way of delivery of education in India. However, for that it is absolutely essential that the said tablets must be extremely competitively priced. We need to be aware of the fact that India is a land where large number of population does not even have access to basic amenities. In this context, have just tablets competitively priced and further having a tablet based schools would not suffice. There is a need for creating an enabling policy and positive environment.

When one looks across the world, one finds that the statistics show that more and more people are accessing information through tablets.

Here are August 2011 statistics according to ComScore :

54.7 percent of all tablet owners were male and nearly 30 percent were 25-34 years old 45.9 percent of tablet owners belong to households earning more than \$100K a year.

Almost half of all tablet owners used their tablets to purchase something in August, 2011.

3 out of 5 tablet owners consume news on their tablets and used them to check social networks.

As per Gartner, Worldwide media tablet sales to end users are on pace to total 63.6 million units, a 261.4 percent increase from 2010 sales of 17.6 million units, according to Gartner, Inc. Media tablet sales will continue to experience strong growth through 2015 when sales are forecast to reach 326.3 million units. The tablet market will grow from next to zero in 2009 to more than 320 million units sold in 2015.

During the next five to 10 years, media tablets will instigate change in computing form-factors. Modular designs will enable tablets to take on new functions, becoming the cross-platform controller and brain for hybrid consumer electronics and computers.

However, merely giving tablets and iPads in schools in India would not suffice. That itself would not be a revolution. The teachers need to be well acquainted and trained on how to use tablets. Further , the teaching curriculum has to be so drafted so that the teaching is tablet based in a

more interactive manner. It will be useless if the students are provided iPads but teachers are not able to effectively educate and teach the students using tablets.

We should learn from our past experiences. During the computerization era, when the computers were introduced in various Government offices, the computers were more used as typewriter rather computers. It is imperative to ensure that the tablets are not used as mere multimedia devices for the purposes of accessing various kinds of content on the Internet.

It will indeed be counter productive if tablets are used for the purposes of watching pornography. We need to clearly have national policy pertaining to tablets in place more so in the context of education. We further need to put in various adequate safeguards which could ensure that the said tablets, distributed or used for educational purposes, are not used in a manner which are contrary to the stated objects or which do not help in furthering the cause of education.

The world of technology is moving at a very fast pace. The education and educational policy of India has by and large traditionally have not been able to keep pace with technology. The tablet today represents the first means in the Internet era, which would help India to leap frog the existing technological divide and make Indian education more meaningful and relevant in the constantly changing technological paradigm. A lot of contribution has to be made by the relevant stakeholders in this regard for the purposes of ensuring that the use of iPads and tablets for Indian education purposes becomes a success in the coming times.

(The writer is practicing in the Supreme Court and leading Cyberlaw expert)

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