National Institute of Technology Rourkela

Defence Seminar

Seminar Title	: Parental Engagement and Accountability: Educating Children from Slums in a 'Smart City'
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Venue	: Seminar Room, HS Dept. (Room No. 436)
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Abstract	:

Education as a 'social sub-system' includes teachers, parents, students, and administrators to provide vital knowledge to children. The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed education by emphasising accessibility, digitisation, and heightened stakeholder responsibilities. Schools have adopted flexible and innovative teaching methods, but excluding parents complicates their role in children's education. Interactive platforms have transformed urban education, yet the lack of focus on parents has hampered the effective use of educational resources and forced children from impoverished backgrounds to drop out of school. Parental engagement (PE) is vital in bridging the parent-school gap for student success, especially among low-income families. The semi-systematic review (SSR) approach addressed the topic's broad scope, revealing research gaps such as studies neglecting the dynamic nature of PE influenced by evolving patterns, non-Western countries relying on strategies from developed nations and omitting broader sociological perspectives. Educational surveys also overlooked parents, disrupting the accountability balance between schools and stakeholders. In response to observed issues in 'Smart City' Rourkela in the Sundargarh district of Odisha (India), this research investigates patterns of parental engagement, analyses associated accountability practices, explores technological mediations, and identifies enablers. Current research has used multi-stage sampling and concurrent triangulation. It employed descriptive statistics, the Location Quotient Method (LQM), surveys, case studies, content analysis, and Focused Group Discussions (FGD). The study applied Anthony Giddens' *Structuration Theory* (1984) and Van Dijk's *Digital Divide* (2020) based on crucial components chosen for their relevance within the current context. Results of the first objective revealed that PE is procedural but shaped by structural factors and school policies, often resulting in parents surrendering their agency to teachers. The second objective on accountability practices highlighted accountable events, networks, metrics, and resources as vital. Schools can promote inclusivity and cultivate a culture of agency through community liaising, personalised support, and resource sharing. The results from the third and fourth objectives uncovered a shortage of technological resources, and only a few schools had functional websites. Schools with websites reflected a hierarchical orientation that disregarded broader audiences. While technology emerged as an enabler, concerns remain on substitution and inadequate representation of parental roles. Recommendations include voice notes through push notifications in local languages, a language-inclusive feedforward approach, home-school agreements, community outreach programmes, centralised school websites, and others. The novelty is in supporting schools in underprivileged areas and aid policymakers in aligning engagement programs with SDG 2030 goals. Lastly, the research urged continued investment in PE to promote an encouraging environment where parents can engage in their children's education.

Keywords: *Parental Engagement Accountability Education Slum Smart City*