

How Can Structured Digital Learning Support in Achieving FLN Goals For Last Mile Learners in India?

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Explore how structured digital learning via Smart TVs or Interactive Panels can help Anganwadi workers achieve FLN Goals.

Achieving FLN Goals would mean that every child who enters into Grade 1 is absolutely ready for Grade 1. This includes skills such as: being able to count from 1 to 20, being able to recognise numbers till 10, recognise letters in both upper and lower case and being able to classify objects based on shape, color or size. These are of course some skills from the 57 learning outcomes outlined in the National Curriculum Framework.

Let's look at some recent statistics showcasing progress toward achieving FLN goals:

According to ASER 2022, basic reading and arithmetic skills among young children in Class 3 & 5 in India have declined. The report highlights that the % of Class 3 students in both government and private schools who could read at a Class 2 level fell from 27.3% in 2018 to 20.5% in 2022. This trend is observed across all states. Similarly, the proportion of Class 3 students capable of performing basic subtraction dropped from 28.2% in 2018 to 25.9% in 2022.

The 2019 ASER report also indicated that only 21% of Grade 1 students had foundational literacy skills, and just 29.3% had the necessary numeracy skills.

This is very low for a country like India, especially when in the 2021-22 academic year, 14.3 million students were enrolled in Grade 1, with 68.7% attending government schools.

What could be some possible reasons for the decline in foundational literacy and numeracy skills?

The state of Anganwadis in India is well known. **One challenge is that they are understaffed.** As per our own observation and general understanding, a single anganwadi worker at an early age center is responsible for food, data entry, and taking care of children from different age groups. Additionally, they are expected to support mothers, expecting mothers, and handle education responsibilities. Education is just one of many activities which the Anganwadi worker is expected to do.

The second of course is the availability of enough education resources as truly required for early age learning.

Our team had once gone to set up a Tablet based ICT Lab in a government school in Rajasthan. There was an early learning center within the school boundary. When we went inside, we saw 6-7

kids playing outside the room while the Anganwadi worker was filling in some data in a register. Upon enquiry, she explained that she was recording the ration supplies that had arrived. The ration, however, was carelessly scattered across the room.

During another visit to Anganwadis in the far East, we found that while the infrastructure was relatively better, the centers were often without electricity. The books and activity sheets they used were rarely up-to-date. The staff shared that it sometimes takes months after the academic year begins for the necessary learning materials to arrive.

In the same eastern state where we visited the Anganwadi center was the place where we went for conducting a baseline assessment of students from Grades 6 to 10. Here, we found that the learning gaps are as much as 4 to 5 grades lower. We may blame the school ecosystem, of course it is to find faults with, but if you connect the dots like we did, the challenge lies right there in the early age ecosystem of our country.

The third challenge is lack of training of Anganwadi workers

The lack of training for Anganwadi workers affects their ability to deliver the competencies that a child going to Grade 1 should have. While the FLN guidelines outline 13 competencies based on three key development goals, the challenge lies in translating these goals into practical action on the ground, especially when many of our staff are either undertrained or, in some cases, not trained at all.

So, how do we fix this? Can Digital content designed for early age learning make a difference?

A good thing is increased focus from our government. Nipun Bharat Mission, NCF 2020, FLN mission, Vidya Pravesh are all the thoughts in the right direction. And we are seeing that various states have started talking about this. The problem however is so huge that at the pace at which we are going right now, it will take a lifetime to bring about the change.

Can therefore digital solve this faster? Perhaps, not entirely. But can it help partially? We believe it can.

Rohit, Co-founder of iDream Education shares an interesting revelation.

"When Covid happened, both my kids were at home. The younger kid completely missed going to a preschool, while the elder one did online classes, which were only partially effective. We were worried about them being able to pick age appropriate skills especially in language, particularly English. We used to work on alphabets and simple two letter words. With practice, they had both started to pick a little. During one of the weekends, we exposed them to Peppa pig. I know many say there are several negative impacts of Peppa Pig, but I found them simply, funny, engaging and easy to understand. Considering we did not want to give them a lot of screen time, they were allowed to watch Peppa Pig for 10-15 mins every day.

He concluded by sharing that, a great positive of watching digital content was that,

"My kids started picking up several words in English and soon began constructing sentences of their own as well. I was quite convinced that digital learning, if done right and in a structured way can make a difference"

Some might say that Rohit's kids had an advantage because they grew up in urban areas, making it

easier for them to learn. While this argument may apply to older children who have more exposure to various activities in cities compared to those in government schools, young children in rural areas can also learn just as quickly if given the same opportunities and exposure.

Enabling structured exposure to digital content through a Smart TV or Interactive Touch Panel to young learners in Anganwadi centers can kick-start the development of essential skills.

Structured exposure to digital learning is 200% more efficient than them doing nothing or simply spending time with each other while the facilitator is either arranging food or busy filling in data in a register or the app.

From the anganwadi worker's point of view also, even if they have to do tasks other than teaching, it takes them double the time to do so because some kids fight, some feel hungry, some have to use the washroom, while someone may just be crying because the other kid took the toy. If all kids are engaged in watching enjoyable animated videos, the worker can spend dedicated time to finish off the rest of the tasks quickly and hence can actually spend the remaining time towards learning and growth.

The anganwadi worker can also engage with children in reading on the digital hardware, solve puzzles, look at image based worksheets and because all content is available as per age and learning levels, the worker can take students through all the content in a structured way and in much less time. Eventually inching towards building the specified competencies in the children and hence over time enabling students to be closer to achieving the development goals.

Using digital content specifically designed to achieve FLN goals can help:

- The Anganwadi worker completes rest of the work faster
- Spend the balance time more effectively with the kids on actual learning
- Kids will enjoy and hence would want to come to the Anganwadi centre everyday, thereby improving the attendance
- With variety of digital content available, multiple skills can be built in a structured way faster than the time taken otherwise
- Lesser dependency on textbooks or physical worksheets. They may arrive or they may not, everything is available in digital format to ensure continuity in learning
- Without a lot of training, the digital content itself will enable Anganwadi workers to deliver the required skills to the kids

While digital content may not help meet 100% of the FLN goals, our research, work, and experience clearly show that at much less cost, a lot more can be initiated and achieved. This can be done at a much faster speed.

And hence the idea of giving access to structured digital learning content to our Anganwadi centers looks a lot more promising.

We at iDream Education look forward to an opportunity to work in the early age learning space. We would be happy closely work with Anganwadi worker for ensuring digital adoption, facilitating better

engagement and monitor the impact. If you would like to enable structured digital learning content to help Anganwadi facilitators achieve FLN Goals, you may share your details here. You can also contact us at 91 7678265039 or write to us at share@idreameducation.org

Watch the video to learn about our FLN content, its structure, and how it can support structured learning at Anganwadi centers/Primary Schools