○ **Title**
Digital Literacy at Navajeevan: Scribe free board examination in the horizon

○ **Abstract**

Digital literacy is a transformative force in empowering visually impaired students to achieve independence in academics. At Navajeevan Blind High School, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, the reliance on scribes for board examinations has been a long-standing challenge. Inspired by the success of scribe-free board examinations conducted using computers at RDT Ananthapur, Navajeevan initiated its digital literacy journey with the guidance of Bookshare, Dr. Homiyar Mobedji, and master trainer Mr. Kumaresan. This paper outlines Navajeevan's goal to enable its students to appear for board exams without scribes by 2028.

The methodology includes intensive digital literacy training for teachers, visits to RDT to observe best practices, and piloting the use of laptops and smartphones with external keyboards for students in classes 3-7. A total of 30 students were identified for the study. Digital classrooms have been prepared with upgraded infrastructure, and trainers from Karna Vidya Foundation provided additional support to enhance the initiative. This pioneering project demonstrates how structured interventions can address systemic challenges, paving the way for an inclusive and self-reliant future for visually impaired students.

○ **Introduction**
Navajeevan Blind High School has long depended on scribes for students to appear for board examinations, posing logistical and psychological challenges. Recognizing the potential of technology to foster independence, the school embarked on a mission to eliminate scribe dependency by 2028. Inspired by the success of similar efforts at RDT Ananthapur, Navajeevan collaborated with Bookshare, under the guidance of Dr. Homiyar Mobedji and master trainer Mr. Kumaresan, to introduce digital literacy among teachers and students.

Objectives

1. To prepare visually impaired students to take board exams independently using digital tools.

2. To equip teachers with the skills required to guide students in using assistive technologies.

3. To create sustainable digital classrooms for visually impaired education.

○ **Methodology**

1. **Training and Exposure:** Teachers visited RDT Ananthapur to observe their scribe-free examination model.

2. **Digital Literacy Training:** Under the guidance of expert trainers, teachers underwent rigorous training to integrate technology into their teaching practices.

3. **Pilot Program:**
• Classes 6 and 7 utilized laptops, while students in classes 3-5 used smartphones paired with external keyboards.
• A total of 30 students were selected for the pilot study, representing a diverse range of abilities and learning paces.

4. **Infrastructure Development:** Digital classrooms were prepared with necessary technological upgrades to support the initiative.

5. **Collaboration with Karna Vidya Foundation:** Trainers from the foundation provided specialized training to ensure smooth implementation.

Results

Preliminary results from the pilot study indicate a significant improvement in students' ability to use digital tools for academic tasks. Teachers reported increased confidence in guiding students, and students demonstrated enhanced independence in completing assignments and assessments digitally.

Moreover, all students are continuing to pass with a 60% pass rate, which we believe will make them fully prepared by the end of this academic year.

Challenges and Solutions

• **Infrastructure Limitations:** Addressed through targeted investments in digital classrooms.
• **Initial Resistance from Teachers:** Overcome through continuous professional development and exposure to success stories from RDT.
• **Student Adaptation:** Tailored training modules ensured that students at varying skill levels were adequately supported.

○ **Conclusion and Future Scope**

Navajeevan's initiative represents a paradigm shift in education for visually impaired students. By integrating digital literacy, the school is fostering a culture of independence and inclusion. The goal of scribe-free board examinations by 2028 is ambitious yet achievable with sustained efforts. Future plans include scaling the program to higher classes and collaborating with more organizations to enhance the digital learning ecosystem.

This pioneering effort not only addresses the immediate needs of Navajeevan students but also serves as a replicable model for other institutions across India.

Gallery

Venkatesh Sir, getting the Std IV children familiar with keyboard orientation. All children listening and learning very attentively.

Murali Sir explaining to the class VII students in a digital classroom, where each student is accessing a laptop with external keyboard, getting familiar with screen reader and listening with earphones.

Mounika Ma'am is teaching a math lesson to 6thh grade students using a laptop. The children are listening attentively and taking notes.

Sujatha Ma'am is teaching an Environmental Studies lesson to 5th grade children using a laptop. The children are listening intently.