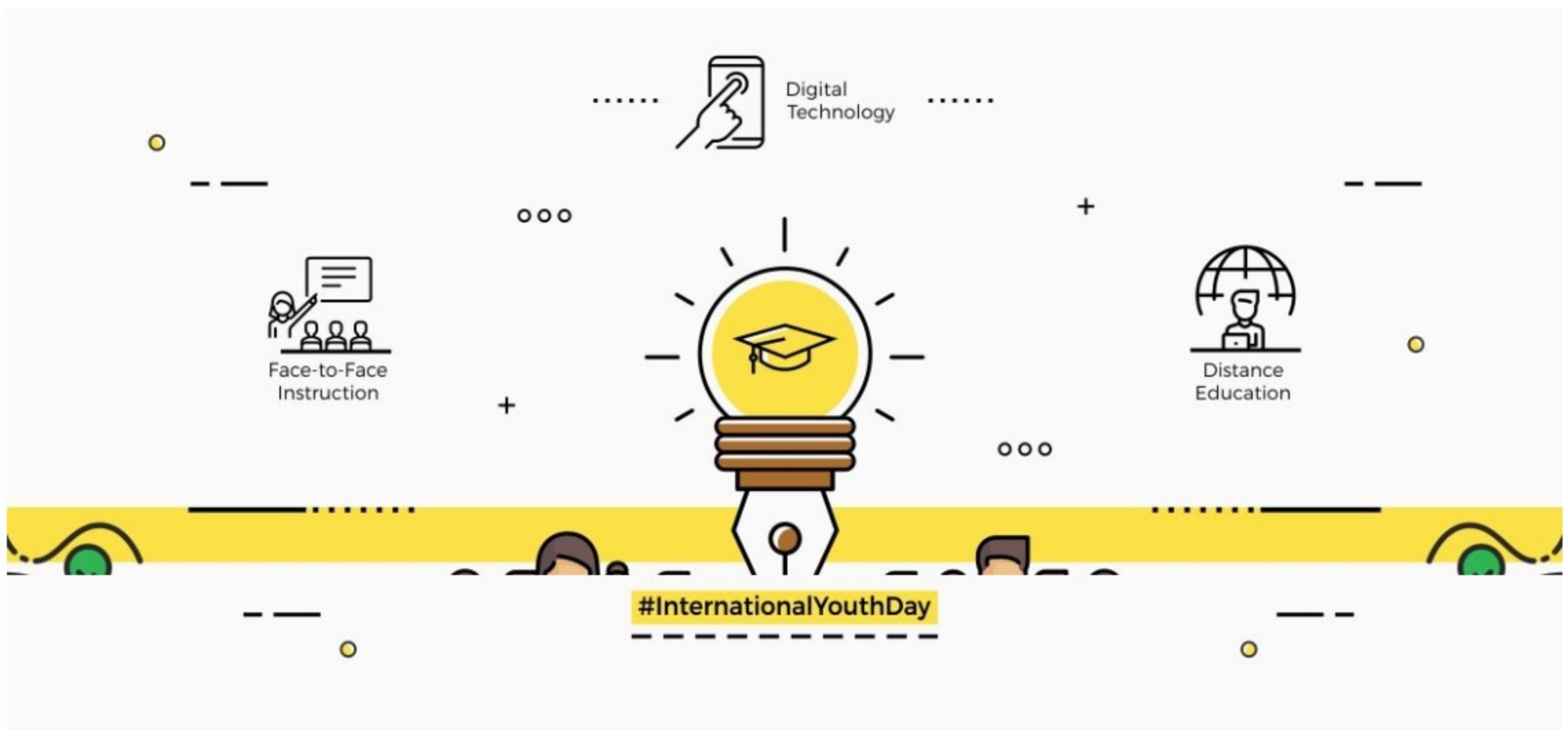


Field Diary: Hybridity in Education



Posted by Dr. Rajarshi Singh in [Public Policy Advisory](#)

This International Youth Day, our Monitoring Learning and Evaluation Technical Lead shares his experience at a small village in Assam, sharing what may be representative of India's youth and its experience with education. Education is widely believed to be the key to a better life; yet the insights of this small village demonstrate a much wider problem, begging the question: is India's education system providing adequate skills to equip its youth with the tools to find meaningful and relevant employment?

There were 20 houses on either side of a straight and narrow street. Borderoi village consisted of four such "lines"; 160 families working and living in a tea garden in Sivasagar, Assam, the erstwhile Ahom kingdom.

You would think an orderly village would be inspiring. It wasn't. Yes, it was cleaner than many other villages; connected to a pukka road with a functional school nearby, yet the village did not feel happy. Children looked older than their age; it felt like the people had given up on living, and chose to simply survive through another season. Yet the youth had hope lingering in their eyes.

After having spent a day talking, assessing learning outcomes, and walking around Borderoi, two features of this village stood out: like many other villages, the homes in this village had television antennas, the penetration of the mobile phone was evident, and the youth wanted more out of life; they aspired for an education that would lead them to better employment opportunities. These hopeful young men and women ranging from 14-18 years of age were unfortunately uninformed about the gap between education and employment.

While modern corporations have realized the value of creativity of a person originating from own multifaceted backgrounds – both along cultural and economic lines, the education system is averse to harnessing the cultural and linguistic diversity of its users. The teaching of real-world tools such as "problem solving skills", is non-existent in the education curriculum. Given this polarity between education and employment, what are then some potential avenues of solution that might help the youth of Borderoi and others like them?

The youth of Borderoi may benefit from the concept of "hybridity," which has been applied across many other fields. This involves blending approaches of face-to-face instruction, distance education, and digital technology to create solutions to better learning within the context of youth aspirations, motivations, and physical realities. Hybrid Learning and Skilling (HLS) would provide the youth an opportunity to pick up micro-skilling courses in bite sized quanta. Each module is pegged at a self-contained level, with the non-linear chain of modules forming the curriculum. A HLS approach would integrate vocational learning into the academic curriculum. A digital mode of delivery realized through a hub and spoke model of teacher – learner connections would reduce the burden of finding and funding a plethora of instructors. Regular assessments, and socially empowered group learning would enable participatory learning.

Hybrid Learning and Skilling would meet the demand of India's rural youth – an education geared towards employment and other *21st century skills*. Considering the propensity of satellite television and popularity of mobile phones, a networked approach to education delivery could serve as a start to bridging the gap between employment and schooling.

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About Dr. Rajarshi Singh

Dr. Rajarshi Singh is interested in Social and Cultural Development with respect to Educational Practice and Policy. His focus is on discovering data-driven insights for outcome oriented improvement of program designs and monitoring and evaluation.

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