

“Right to Internet” in preserving equal access to education: Prospects and challenges

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Access to Internet has now become an inseparable tool of our daily life. By January 2021, there are about 10.90 million internet users in Sri Lanka which is a drastic growth compared to the previous years. Despite that trend, there are many drawbacks in equal access to education in Sri Lanka due to the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic. Schools have been closed from March 2020 and universities are working online. There are many criticisms leveled against the quality of the online education provided in the island. Lack of access to meaningful internet is one of the major reasons among many socio-economic reasons behind this phenomenon. In this paper author argues that there is an indispensable connection between right to internet and right to equal access to education. Main objective of this qualitative research is to analyze the importance and challenges of recognizing right to internet as a fundamental right in Sri Lanka to enhance the quality of equal access to education. Thus, Part I of this paper discusses the normative scope of the right to internet by analyzing international and regional human rights documents. In this part, author argues that Sri Lanka has the possibility to locate this right either as an autonomous right or construe it as an emerging right within the broader scope of already existing freedom of expression. Part II of the paper attempts to draw a logical connection between right to internet and equal access to education in Sri Lankan context while analyzing possible challenges that need to be addressed to full realization of both rights. Drawing from the above said analysis, part III of the paper presents the identified challenges and recommendations to policy makers.

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