

Transforming Classroom Practices through ICT Supported Quality

Education

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ABSTRACT

According to Aristototle, "Education is what makes the difference between living and the dead. Education is the touchstone of civilization and culture of the country. The progress of the country can be gauged from its achievements in education." Education cannot and must not remain static. We should re-orient the system to meet the changing needs of the society. The twenty first century witness fundamental changes in the conditions of nations and also a paradigm shift from conventional education towards logic, rational, ICT enabled teaching. Thus the challenges before us are formidable. The real challenge lies in making education socially relevant and its sole purpose is to raise the standard of higher education and make them globally competitive. To address the quality and standard of education, Universities and Colleges of higher learning must pursue and implement ICT skills in the teaching learning process. Therefore for the purpose of continuous satisfaction and upliftment of students and community at large, the concept of integrating ICT skills should be introduced in the classrooms of higher education. The impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the past two decades is enormous, not only in the fields like medicine, tourism, travel, business, law, banking, engineering and architecture, there is no doubt that ICT brings a massive change in the field of education too. It makes teaching-learning process effective and interesting and it can be considered as a subfield of educational technology.

Thus this paper on "Transforming Classroom Practices Through ICT Supported Quality Education" attempts to focus on the new changes and challenges in the current educational system and the innovative use of ICTs to enhance the quality of education by increasing



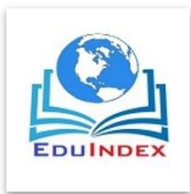
learner motivation, by facilitating the acquisition of basic skills and by enhancing teacher training.

Key Words: ICT, Integrating, Quality education, Teaching, Learning, Facilitating.

Albert Einstein said that “I never teach my students. I only provide the conditions in which they can learn”. The true happiness of the teacher lies in the arrangement of possibility of learning in classrooms. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had rightly said, “The nation is built only inside the four walls of the classrooms”. Today things have changed. The 21st century classroom is almost learner centered. GO ONLINE GO GLOBAL becomes the mantra for ON LINE GENERATION. Technology is everywhere – entwined in every part of our culture. It is recognized as a transformation tool. It provides access to the retrieval of information and network of communication and helps to promote the shift to a learner-centered environment. In such a “information society”, students as information handlers are faster, updated and refreshed. They demonstrate ‘emergent capabilities’ which teachers need to understand and relate to teaching-learning process with the aid of ICT tools.

Information Communication Technology is potentially powerful tool which reduces the sense of isolation, provides an easy and open access of knowledge, offers new opportunities to enhance quality education by increasing learner motivation and engagement by assisting the acquisition of basic skills and by enriching teacher training. It is considered as a major tool which could provide a way to reanalyze and redevelop the educational systems and processes, thus leading to quality education for all. The global demand for higher education is that for more than 250 million students in 2025 should integrate the innovative tools made available by ICT to increase access to and improve the quality and competitiveness of higher education programs. Failure to access these tools and technologies would result in poorer chances to address the 21st century issues and challenges.

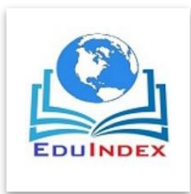
One of the major responsibilities of ICT enabled teaching-learning should help to prepare the present and future generation of students technologically literate and to possess the desired competencies to use ICTs effectively. So a teacher today should be an ICT-Literate. While the learners are digital natives we most of the teachers today are digital immigrants. Today’s classrooms are full of digital natives. It is the responsibility of the teachers to device



strategies to incorporate technology and new methodology into their classrooms. They represent the first generation who grow up with this new technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by technology and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age. So, a teacher should familiarize technological advances in education in order to allow learning with the use of modern innovations. Realizing this fully, teachers should understand that ICT serves both as a platform and a motivating tool for giving instructions. It can be used to promote the existing pedagogical practices as well as to change the way teachers and students interact. The learning process aided by ICTs such as Over Head Projector, LCD Projectors, Television, Electronic Whiteboards, Audio Players etc. help the student's understanding and thinking either through whole class discussions or individual/small group work.

ICT also enables and support the process to move from traditional 'teacher-centric' teaching styles to more 'leaner-centric' methods. UNESCO has specified that the basic objectives of education of the 21st century are to teach for understanding. Learning to be creative and critical makes the students adapt themselves with the changing educational scenario. Online tools and resources have made it easier for the teachers to include those online contents into the classroom to instruct the students. The most important fact in the use of online teaching is that it contains hyper links to other parts of the world. This transforms the classrooms into a global village. In order to develop some of the strategies of on-line teaching, a teacher needs to spend some time browsing for the content of the daily lesson in the INTERNET and download them for display purpose. The teacher should learn to select suitable content accordingly to suit the level of student understanding. As technology provides more inputs teachers can spend less time in teaching and more time in mentoring students tutoring them in specific areas in which they need help. The teachers should encourage the students to go paper less by submitting their assignments, projects etc through e-mail, whatsapp groups. To create their own web context exposure to the following online classroom tools may be useful.

- Animoto – Web tool simplifies the creation and sharing of education videos
- Slideshare – Web tool helps to share PPTs embedded music etc.
- Teacher Planet – Free online tool for teacher resources, templates, worksheets.



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- My Project Pages – Used to create online activities and projects.

Classroom education can be enhanced and reformed through ICT-based teaching learning process. As the learning shifts from the “teacher-centered model” to a “leaner-centered model”, the teacher’s role becomes more of a facilitator, mentor and coach from “Sage to Stage” to “Guide on the Side”. Since ICT teaching becomes a new experience for the teachers, the teachers become co-learners and discover new things along with their students. In view of ICT, education can be classified into two main categories : E-Learning and Blended Learning.

E-Learning provides online learning to thousands of learners to access qualitative learning environment from anywhere at any time. Mobile learning (M-Learning) as a form of e-learning was found to be motivating in the teaching-learning process which has outgrown the physical constraints of the classroom. E-Learning mobile app encourages maximum efficiency and effectiveness, to educations and students alike. Thanks to smartphone technology which has evolved numerous educational apps and teaching softwares. “Kaboot’, ‘Google Classroom’, Teach, Learn, Lead’, ‘Seesaw’, ‘Slack’, ‘Additio’, ‘Class Dojo’, ‘Dropbox’ are some of the apps which helps to enhance digitally interactive learning. There is no doubt that mobile apps are the future and add power to tomorrow’s economic and social culture. Digital learning resources have been developed to get a life time learning experience in the field of education. Technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Class Flow, Cloud, Artificial Intelligence (AI) appeals to visual learners to see and experience things instead of merely reading about them.

In Blended Learning, the teachers can create a balance between both online education and face-to-face education. It can be defined as the combination of multiple approaches to pedagogy or teaching. In this type of learning, the learners are either totally dependent on technology or sticking to the age old traditional pedagogy. It acts as a paradigm shift by inverting traditional teaching methods and helps students to engage in the learning process. It also creates an environment to move out of the class and helps the teacher to provide material and guidance to the students by means of online or offline videos. In such a blended learning environment students are continuously connected to the content. Many learning styles are



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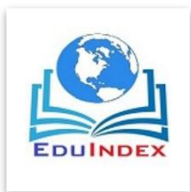
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actuated through various technologies and digital media, helping the students comprehend, retain and apply information. Some of the models in blended learning are Face-to-Face Driver Model, Rotation Model, Flex Model, Online Lab Model, Self-Blend Model, Online Driver Model. Terms like “hybrid learning”, “mixed learning” or “multi-method-learning” are used for blended learning. However, all of these concepts broadly refer to the integration or blending of e-learning tools and techniques with traditional methods.

We all know that our present students were born after the World Wide Web came out in 1991. Imagine how technology has made their childhoods vastly different from ours. Today's 17-year-old was born in 2001, the same year a human received the first artificial heart. In 2007 the world got its first i-Phone. Our new generation students only know a life with technology, so we can see why blended learning is not a trend but the new pedagogy. Although students thinking about their own learning are not an inherent part of the blended classroom, the higher cognitive functions associated with class activity, accompanied by the ongoing peer/instructor interaction that typically accompanies them, can readily lead to the meta-cognition associated with deep learning. In order to effectively implant a blended learning, teachers must process a set of requisite technical skills, conceptual knowledge and pedagogical expertise.

ICT enables the teachers to act out new roles. Teachers should be clear about their role and they should encourage the learners' autonomy that need to take charge of their own learning outside the formal learning context. Using technology in the classroom gives teachers the opportunity to develop the student's digital citizenship skills. It helps them be more responsible. Technology transforms the classroom learning experience. New technology has super-charged how we learn today. With technology in the classroom the teacher becomes the encourager, adviser and coach. Technological advancements are truly impressive. We should accept that this is the world our students are growing up in and provide opportunities to expose them to these wonderful developments. However, each new technology should be carefully evaluated and used as a tool to enhance the personal element in the teaching process, not to completely replace traditional learning methods.



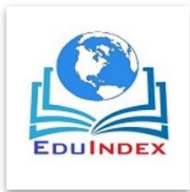
ICT helps in the professional development of teaching and learning and individuals involved in the programmes of teacher education. It can be infused in the learning process so as to acquire the knowledge and skill efficiently. ICT provides access to resources so that teachers can apply new knowledge and skills they have learnt. Communication technology will be able to develop the capacity of teacher and teacher educator and at same time, strengthen the capacity of teacher educator, which is the fundamental requirement of effective transactional strategy. Ultimately, the power of ICTs will be determined by the ability of teachers to use the new tools for learning to create rich, new, and engaging learning environments for their students. The UNESCO World Education Report (1998) notes that: The challenge for ICTs in Teacher Education is to assure that the new generation of teachers, as well as current teachers, are well prepared to use new learning methods, processes and materials with the new ICT tools for learning.

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