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USE OF ICT TOOLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Today with advancement in technology teachers have been conscious about the quality of their teaching. To enhance the teaching Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools are widely used in education system for better understanding of the subject. This paper aims to discuss the objective, benefit and role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in learning and teaching process for both teachers and students in higher education. Various ICT tools such as blogs, social networking websites, Web 2.0, virtual learning technologies, Learning Management System (LMS) etc. are used to make the subject more interactive, interesting and productive.

KEYWORDS

ICT tools, Information Communication Technology, higher education.

1 INTRODUCTION

Students cannot be effective in tomorrow's world, if they are trained in yesterday's skills." Tony Blair. Education is a process by which a person's body mind and character are formed and strengthened, which enables a person's holistic development of personality through knowledge [1]. This knowledge can be improved by the students through their learning environments. Nowadays Information communication technology (ICT) tools are widely used to interact in digital environments. ICT brings more rich material in the classrooms for the teachers and students. **With the help of ICT, students can easily browse via sample examination papers, e-books, assignments, videos etc. and can also have an easy access to, mentors, experts, resource persons, researchers, professionals all over the world.**

Today sequential learning becomes adaptive learning, role of teacher is changing **Student and learners can now use online course study material, anytime-anywhere. ICT-based educational delivery (Internet, projector and television,radio) also provide service with the need for all learners and the instructor to be in one physical location.**

ICT tools can be used by students through links to useful online resources, discussion forums and online interactive classrooms. However an, e-class is not a substitute for a regular classroom. The experience simply elevates learning and makes the process fun for both teachers and students.

Therefore in the absence of real classroom, the use of ICT tools provide a platform to student's to answer their doubts, whatever the subject, be it computers, commerce, science. It also takes away the nerves experienced in a classroom and one can learn via X-Box, plugging their pen-drive, into a laptop at their convenience or logging to their college servers. There is a treasure trove of information just waiting to be discovered.

Also, if one has been ill and missed classes, ICT tools are a great way to catch up on missed lessons. All classroom notes can be accessed in a single click in an online session. One can download the study material required.

ICT has emerged as a perfect tool as it includes usage of multimedia, graphic displays videos, television and computer software that combine sound, pictures, text and audio-visual features through which students get more interested and engaged in the learning process.

This paper examines the use of ICT in higher education and how integration of ICT tools helped the students as well as teachers in the teaching and learning process.

2 METHODOLOGY

This is a research base paper describing

1. **The trends occurring in ICT in education.**
2. **The use of ICT in Transforming teaching and learning**
3. ICT applications for formal and non formal education
4. Challenges and solutions for applying ICT for learning

Now we will see in coming subsections how we can use different ICT tools to make teaching and learning process more interesting and effective.

3 PROPOSED APPROACH

The use of ICT in education lends itself to more student-centered learning settings and often this creates some tensions for some teachers and students. But with the world moving rapidly into digital media and information, the role of ICT in education is becoming more and more important and this importance will continue to grow[2].

Although the traditional approaches may not be appropriate for all type of courses, there should also be a corresponding emphasis on specific ICT tools. For example, teachers can be encouraged to engage their students through generating learning activities on virtual learning environment accessible 24 X 7 using various ICT tools such as blogs, podcasts, social networking websites, Web 2.0, wikis. The investigation presented in the subsection could be useful for enriching their teaching and learning experiences.

3.1 ICT TRENDS

Various ICT trends are prevailing on Internet which can be used to discover useful information within seconds. For example Google, Yahoo, Google Scholar, Wikipedia, academic index etc. has lead to quick and easy information retrieval on almost any topic and with relevant and accurate information can be gained.

In addition, there have been a number of education packages released on the market that has influenced the take up of ICT in education. These packages may include learning and content management systems, web conferencing, slide sharing, student report cards, virtual classrooms, virtual worlds and online collaborative work spaces [3].

3.1.1 MOBILE DEVICES

Five to ten years ago, 'going mobile' still held novelty value, even though the mobile movement was gaining momentum with the dropping prices of laptops and mobile phones. The evolution of mobile Internet aided the expansion of the mobile device's role in consumers' lives.

Nowadays, mobile is so pervasive that the word itself is in danger of becoming redundant, much like the 'personal' in 'personal computers' has been dropped from common parlance.

With tablets and smart phones filling yet another niche in a young, gadget-crazed market, and with more and more powerful technology occupying smaller and smaller devices, communications and computing on the go are not set to slow down.

3.1.2 SOCIAL LEARNING SITES

In the field of education, social-networking sites offer a student the opportunity to connect with other students, educators, administrators, alumni, both within and outside his current institution. Scholars praise social-networking tools for their capability to attract, motivate and engage students in meaningful communicative practice, content exchange, and collaboration [4].

Social networking has become one of the most important communication tools among people nowadays. However, social networks exist on the Internet websites where millions of people share interests on certain disciplines, and make available to members of these networks various shared files and photos and videos, create blogs and send messages, and conduct real-time conversations. These networks are described as social, because they allow communication with friends and colleagues study and strengthen the ties between members of these networks in the space of the Internet. The most famous in the world of social networks are Facebook (Facebook.com) and Twitter (Twitter.com) and MySpace (myspace.com) and others.

Wikispaces : Share lessons, media, and other materials online with your students, or let them collaborate to build their own educational wiki on Wikispaces.

EduBlogs : EduBlogs offers a safe and secure place to set up blogs for yourself or your classroom.

Skype : Skype can be a great tool for keeping in touch with other educators or even attending meetings

3.1.3 OPEN SOURCE

Software (both operating and application) plays a major role in education, with most of the academic institutions offering on line courses to their local and remote students by means of new teaching methods.

Open source is defined as the production and development philosophy of allowing end users and developers to not only see the source code of software, but modify it as well at free of cost.

A number of open source software's are available in the market, namely Linux, Apache, Perl, and Sendmail, which can be customized to fulfill specific educational needs.

3.1.4 SMART BOARD

Smart boards are becoming increasingly popular. Students love to interact with these technology based educational tools. A smart board takes the place of a traditional chalk board or white board. It is essentially a white board with technological capabilities that allow you and your students to interact in ways they had previously not been able too. Teachers can create engaging, active lessons using the many tools that a smart board provides. They can transpose diagrams, charts, and templates, have students come up and actively participate in the lesson, and then print anything such as notes that were done on a particular day and give them to students as a handout. Learning to use a smart board correctly does require some training, but teachers who use them regularly say that notice their students are enthusiastic when they create a lesson that implements the smart board.

4. THE USE OF ICT IN TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING

Today ICTs—including laptops wirelessly connected to the Internet, personal digital assistants, low cost video cameras, and cell phones have become affordable, accessible and integrated in large sections of the society throughout the world. It can restructure organizations, promote collaboration, increase democratic participation of citizens, improve the transparency and responsiveness of governmental agencies, make education and health care more widely available, foster cultural creativity, and enhance the development in social integration [4].

There are some reasons why e-classroom can transform education

- Technology engages students and improves learning
- It enables students to learn independently. On their own at their pace, without relying solely on the teacher.
- Students learn digital behavior skills and are acquainted with issues such as plagiarism, cyber safety etc., which will help them in future.
- It also encourages them to take more interest in classroom lectures and approach learning in a fresh manner.
- Students from economically weaker background also have the chance to increase their levels of knowledge.
- Preparing students for jobs that require skills in technology.
- Utility of technology to improve performance and effectiveness in teaching management and many other social activities

In view of students and teachers by incorporating ICT in education, the benefits are:-

To summarize, below are the main benefits of using ICT in education to the students and teachers.

Students are aided with:

- Increased access,
- Flexibility of content and delivery,
- Combination of work and education,
- Learner-centered approach,
- Higher quality of education and new ways of interaction

Teachers have following benefits:

- High quality, cost effective professional development in the workplace,
- Upgrading of employee skills, increased productivity,
- Development of a new learning culture,
- Sharing of costs and of training time with the employees,
- Increased portability of training.

Source: (UNESCO, 2002)[5]

5. ICT APPLICATIONS FOR FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

ICT can be utilized for better teaching learning process and improving quality of education. Using multimedia in education results in the increasing productivity and retention rates, because people remember 20% of what they see, 40% of what they see and hear, but about 75% of what they see and hear and do simultaneously.

Lectures by distinguished scholars stored in computers or other ICT tools can easily be shown to the students anywhere, anytime. In colleges subjects like Commerce, History, Geography, Political science, Computer, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, etc are taught. Lessons in these subjects can easily be taught by showing small movie related with the subject to create interest among the students. Such type of movies and related multimedia material is easily available at academic repositories and from various related sites with the help of Internet. Various facilities like Computers, Edusat are started by various state Governments, LCD projector and other peripheral devices related with teaching learning process are easily available. Easy availability of "Aakash" tablet will help in providing and getting more education for both teachers and students [6].

Various seminars and quizzes can be shown to the institutes with the help of Edusat. Edusat can be used for providing training to teachers on the latest subjects and technologies and can save lot of time and money of governments.

In Non-formal learning, includes open and distance learning education programs in higher education and learners can access information and learning materials from anywhere and at any time. There are various functions to be performed with the enrolment of students in any course of distance education in any University or institute.

In the distance education ICT can be used for better management of records by making a complete database of all the students in various courses. The students can get access to any kind of information like registration to course, fee deposition, study material, exam schedule, roll numbers, result etc. online and saves time, paper work and also brings transparency to whole system. All these come under non-formal education.

6. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR APPLYING ICT FOR LEARNING

Traditional thinking has always been that technology-facilitated learning would provide economies and efficiencies that would see significant reductions in the costs associated with the delivery of educational programs. The costs would come from the ability to create courses with fixed establishment costs, for example technology-based courses, and for which there would be savings in delivery through large scale uptake. We have already seen a number of virtual universities built around technology delivery alone (eg. Jones International University, www.jiu.edu). The reality is that few institutions have been able to realize these aims for economy [7]. There appear to have been many underestimated costs in such areas as course development and course delivery.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to explore the role of ICT in education as we progress into the 21st century. Taking the trends discussed in this paper into account it can clearly be seen that the education system should change to adapt to modern requirements and to incorporate new technologies. By incorporating these technological trends into the educational system a higher quality education can be provided at a cheaper cost and spread over a larger segment of the population. Children are required to apply their ICT know-how in other lessons, but little emphasis has been placed on how they are taught ICT. This paper discusses the current teaching practices and techniques used in teaching and learning process

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