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A STUDY ON IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT   India is a country of millions of young minds, seeking knowledge to move ahead overcoming their limitations. Now it is important for India to get prepared for the future with full-fledged education. Though we have many institutions, enough teachers and facilities for students and teachers, the great variation in the quality of education is found due to factors like social background of students, parents, different standards of teaching training programs. All teachers cannot deliver the same message to all learners which fetches the need of WBeL – Web Based e-Learning. E-learning is a computer based educational tool or system that enables you to learn anywhere and at any time. Today e-learning is mostly delivered through internet instead of offline content through CDs or DVDs. Technology has advanced so much that the geographical gap is bridged with the use of tools that make you feel as if you are inside the classroom.

KEYWORDS : Higher Education, E-learning, ICT (Information Communication Technology), Internet, Competent Teachers.

INTRODUCTION:

Information Communication Technology is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications to convert data i.e. facts and figures into required information.

E-learning offers the ability to share material in all kinds of formats such as videos, slideshows, documents, spreadsheets and PDFs. Conducting webinars and communicating with teachers via chat and message forums is also an option available to users.

There are different e-learning systems (also known as Learning Management Systems – LMSs) and methods, which allow for courses to be delivered. With the right tool various processes can be automated such as the marking of tests or the creation of engaging content.

QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION:

The higher education portfolio has great significance as it frames the education policy of the nation and implements the same with long term vision for a developed country with a vision of collective efforts and inclusive growth. The basic objective of higher and professional education is not only rapid advancement of the affluent sector of the society but also to improve the last man in the line in India.

This means that the government is committed to rapid reforms with inclusive agenda in the context of higher education and it is also acknowledged that this field needs complete overhaul as the international scenario is rapidly changing and the country cannot, and should not stand isolated in this era of globalization in which India has huge stake. In a special reference, it was declared that University Grants Commission (UGC) will be restructured with a new agency having a new mandate to ensure quality, standard and excellence in higher education with a 'Higher Education Commission'.

Quality education leads to quality employment and higher incomes. Higher incomes enable families to spend more in absolute terms on goods and services. They also augment savings and investment. This leads to formation of capital and wealth. The improvement in life and living can be linked to quality and relevance of education.

Education is the key catalyst of socio-economic transformation in a knowledge driven economy. Higher education has failed to fully take advantage of the 'demographic dividend' largely due to the failure of all the stakeholders – Governments, Universities, Colleges, Teachers and Students.

PROVOKING QUOTES:

Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself. Change is the result of all true learning. An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. – Malcom X

Every educated person may not be rich, but almost every educated person has a better access to job and a way out of poverty. So, education is a fundamental solution to poverty. – Kathleen Blanco

Quality education has the power to transform societies in a single generation, provide children with the protection they need from the hazards of poverty, labor exploitation and disease, and give them the knowledge, skills and confidence to reach their full potential. – Audrey Hepburn

The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet. – Aristotle

The foundation of every State is the education of the youth. – Diogenes

Education is an investment; an educated individual will indeed serve the society. – Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

OBJECTIVE BASED EDUCATION:

It is time for the governments, universities, college managements, leadership, teachers and the students to recognize the importance of higher education in respect of its ability to usher in socio-economic transformation. It is recognized world over that education is the best long-term solution to bring down unemployment and poverty.

Government should consider education as a priority area and enhance budgetary allocation to education to 6 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Grant-in-aid should be need and performance based. University should relook at curriculum design to meet the purpose/objective – expected learning outcome. Hence curriculum needs to be revised regularly to include fundamental knowledge and directly employable skills and attitude. For this, the traditional mode of education must be replaced with relevant i.e. ICT based

teaching-learning and outcome-based education.

Colleges should provide state-of -the-art facilities, employ competent teachers and change from traditional pedagogy to innovative/participative teaching, learning and evaluation. The campus should provide opportunities for networking with industry and learning for life and making a living. Teachers should periodically enrich (update) themselves and become competent 'professionals' who can make a lasting impact.

Students should treat learning as their responsibility and acquire 'global competencies' while in the college/university. As growth of formal employment is not keeping pace with growth of GDP, it is important to encourage research, innovation, incubation and entrepreneurship development programs to promote self-employment. Competency building of students could be accelerated if the institution becomes autonomous and establish close linkages with industry.

IMPORTANCE OF ICT BASED HIGHER EDUCATION:

Online learning technology has done a significant job of changing how Higher Education institutions, operate, educate and innovate over the past few years. While Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) may not have been all they were cracked up to be, other innovations in online learning have helped make Higher Education more accessible, opened up new opportunities for students, and changed how many view the value of an online education. Now that online learning is becoming ubiquitous in Higher Education, colleges and universities can reach students that they were previously unable to. Non-traditional students, such as parents and those fully employed, had often inaccessible due to scheduling issues, but now have access to Higher Education. Thanks to advances in ICT based learning.

Despite online learning's successes, many still believe that it lacks the interaction of its in-person counterpart. However, innovations in pedagogical strategy and technology are helping make it much more engaging. Foe instance, video communication technology now allows teachers to teach from the comfort of their homes while still being able to speak directly to their students. Those students are also to work more closely together, as they would in a traditional classroom. Additionally, teachers can have experts from their join the discussion online to speak with students directly. Advancements in online learning technology are helping make Higher Education more impactful and accessible to more people than ever before.

RECENT E-LEARNING INITIAITVES IN INDIA: (GoI, n.d.)

1. Swayam – Study Webs of Active–Learning for Young Aspiring Minds is a program initiated by Government of India (GoI) and designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education Policy viz., access, equity and quality. It seeks to bridge the digital divide for students who have hitherto remained untouched by the digital revolution and have not been able to join the mainstream of the knowledge economy.
2. SWAYAM PRABHA – It is a group of 32 DTH channels devoted to telecasting of high-quality educational programs on 24x7 basis using the GSAT-15satellite. Everyday there is new content for at least 4 hours which gets repeated five more times in a day, allowing the students to choose the time of their convenience.
3. NPTEL – National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning is an initiative through which online courses on different topics are offered by IITs, IIMs & IISc are powered by Google's open source MOOC. It also runs on App Engine and Compute Engine.
4. NME-ICT – Under the National Mission on Education through ICT, funded by the Ministry of HRD, GoI, a proper balance between content generation, research in critical areas relating to imparting of education and connectivity for integrating our knowledge with the latest advancements is being attempted.
5. NDL – Ministry of HRD under its National Mission on Education through ICT as initiated National Digital Library of India pilot project to develop a framework of virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility. Filtered and federated searching is employed to facilitate focused searching so that learners can find out the right resource with least effort and in minimum time.
6. e-PG Pathshala – MHRD, under its NME-ICT, has assigned work to the UGC for development of e-content in 77 subjects at post graduate level. The content and its quality are the key component of education system.
7. e-ShodhSindhu – Based on the recommendation of an Expert Committee, the MHRD has formed e-ShodhSindhu merging three consortia initiatives, viz., UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, NLIST and INDEST-AICTE Consortium. The objective of this is to provide access to qualitative electronic resources including full-text, bibliographic and factual databases to academic institutions at lower rates of subscription.
8. NAD – The vision of National Academic Depository is born out of an initiative to provide 24x7 online store house of all academic awards viz., certificates, diplomas, degrees, marksheets, etc. duly digitized and lodged by academic institutions / boards / eligibility assessment bodies.
9. AISHE – To portray the status of Higher Education in the country, MHRD has endeavored to conduct an annual web-based All India Survey on Higher Education since 2010-11. It is useful in making informed policy decisions and research for development of Higher Education sector.
10. SAKSHAT – It is the pilot project – A One Stop Education Portal launched on October 30,2006 by His Excellency, the then President of India to facilitate lifelong learning for students, teachers and those in employment or in pursuit of knowledge free of cost to them.
11. NROER – The National Repository of Open Educational Resources is an initiative of MHRD, GoI and CIET-NCERT to bring together all digital and digitizable resources across all stages of school and teacher education. It will also provide platform for MOOCs and online forums for different stakeholders.

ICT PLATFORMS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: (Jaiswal, 2019)

1. CBE – Competency based Education recognizes that all students enter a program with different skills and proficiencies and that each move at a different rate. With advancements in CBE, learning can be more self-paced and individual-focused, which makes it more efficient and effective.
2. IoT – The Internet of Things has opened a whole new world of possibilities in Higher Education. The increased connectivity between devices and 'everyday things' means better data tracking and analytics, and improved communication between student, teacher and institution, often without ever saying a word.
3. VR/AR – Virtual and Augmented Reality technologies have begun to take Higher Education into the realm of what used to be considered science fiction. With access to augmented reality, students can immerse themselves in real-life learning situations that are either too dangerous not possible to experience otherwise.
4. AI – While Artificial Intelligence may not currently be taking Higher Education by storm, its potential is evident in its rise in mainstream popularity. Having AI that learns and improves, its help in the learning process could have a far-reaching effect on Higher Education both online and in-person.
5. NUIs – Natural User Interfaces access input in the form of taps, swipes and other ways of touching; hand and arm

motions; body movement; and increasingly, natural language. They enable users to engage in virtual activities with movements like what they would use in the real world, manipulating content intuitively.

6. e-Portfolio – It emerges as an instrument that enriches the teaching and learning processes, enabling a more profound approach to the types of knowledge the students develop in given learning context.

7. Cloud Computing – With cloud technology, any computer application or service can be delivered over a network or the Internet, with minimal or no local software or processing power required. It is helpful in Higher Education for delivering quality and interactive content on the go, without carrying it in physical medium which is prone to many vulnerabilities.

KEY TRENDS IN ICT BASED HIGHER EDUCATION:
(Stansbury, 2017)

1. Blended Learning Designs – The current focus of this trend has shifted to understanding how applications of digital modes of teaching are impacting students.

2. Collaborative Learning – Cloud- based services, apps, and other digital tools promote persistent connectivity, enabling students and educators to access and contribute to shared workspaces, anytime.

3. Growing Focus on Measuring Learning – As societal and economic factors redefine what skills are necessary in today's workforce, colleges and universities must rethink how to define, measure and demonstrate subject mastery and soft skills such as creativity and collaboration.

4. Redesigning Learning Spaces – Educational settings are increasingly designed to support project-based interactions with attention to greater mobility, flexibility and multiple device usage.

5. Advancing Cultures of Innovation – The focus of this trend has shifted from understanding the value of fostering the exploration of news ideas to finding ways to replicate it across a span of diverse learning institutions.

6. Deeper Learning Approaches – To remain motivated, students need to be able to make clear connections between their coursework and the real-world, and how the new knowledge and skills will impact them.

7. Ubiquitous Learning Environment – It provides an interoperable, pervasive and seamless learning architecture to connect, integrate and share three major dimensions of learning resources: learning collaborators, learning contents and learning services.

CONCLUSION:

If we are failing to make reforms and become unresponsive to the demand of people, particularly in higher education, the future of India will become dark and life of the people will become a great misery and unpredictable. The country has achieved a remarkable progress and global standard in the sphere of Information Communication Technology and Digital Technology. If we apply these technologies into Higher Education sector, India will become a global player and country can reinvent her legacy of being a knowledge hub as in the ancient past.

There is an immediate need to observe techno pedagogy, rather than producing the programs arbitrarily. There is need to modernize technology available here. Techno pedagogic skills should find expression at the operational level. Teachers need to need to be techno savvy rather than mere info savvy. Technology is well woven in almost all walks of life. But education is relatively technologically backward here. Every teacher should put in efforts to be techno savvy, because it is education alone which can deploy and integrate ICT or technology faithfully with a service motive.

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