Need of E-Training for the Academic Staff of the Universities in India

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ABSTRACT *We are living in the 21st century society which is truly known as digital and cyber society. People are found using the electronic media for communication and information. Sometimes, it appears as if we are quite handicapped in the absence of technology. Educational technology has been in active use for a long time especially in most modern educational institutions of all the levels in India and abroad. The presence of sophisticated tools and innovative pedagogy naturally force the educators, researchers, pedagogues and university teachers to equip them in the area of technology in general and e-learning in particular in the current learning-teaching environment. Thus, the university teachers are expected to utilize the multi-media, mobile learning etc in order to make the teaching process more interesting. In this case, the teaching staff would need an electronic training to be used in the classrooms.*

1. Conceptual Framework

Electronic learning (e-learning) has become an integral part of modern educational system. In order to utilize e-learning in an appropriate manner, e-training is inevitable for the concerned university staff in general. E-training can operationally be defined as preparation and equipment of e- instructors so that they are able to utilize and implement e-learning program of education. It is basically a training scenario derived from the electronic concepts: hardware and software either online or offline. As e-training is carried out for effective implementation of e-learning, all the components and dimensions remain the same, and falls under the head of teacher's in-service education/continuous professional development.

In the university system of Indian education, the academic staff is not usually trained for teaching therefore it remains a far-fetched idea to expect a new incumbent to have been equipped with electronic tools prior to his teaching exposure. The situation becomes worse when the teaching staff doesn't adapt to the changing situation ad train himself. Rather he becomes passive, indifferent towards any such changes unless forced to in order to get promoted to a higher designation.

The importance of electronic media can't be ignored for many reasons. It can play a critical role in equipping modern university teachers with sophisticated and innovative learning tools. However, it has been noticed that effective implementation of e-learning is not possible without teacher's attitude, readiness and appropriate training. The present paper discusses the importance of training in e-learning for teacher's professional development (in this context: e-training) as part of a pedagogic strategy for successful implementation of e-learning/e-resource for effective teaching and better results. The major aim of this paper is to raise and tackle some of the training issues and components of in-service teacher-training for effective utilization of e-resource and achievement of educational objectives. The study will equally benefit the future teachers of English in particular in a way that they will prepare themselves in advance to face similar situation if the need arises.

The need and importance of e-training is as crucial as the educational development in the present educational scenario. It is felt that without proper training, the attainment of educational target is next to impossible.

Need of e-training for teacher development

Teacher development as a professional has always been in demand despite the fact that there is a section of practicing teachers who often claim that pre-service training/education of the future teachers are not always essential. There is no denying the fact that a continuous professional development is always better in order to minimize the chance of waste for human resource-the teachers. At present, theoretical orientation of the practicing teachers is not enough as every day there are dimensions of the teacher development, and e-development of a teacher has perhaps become mandatory for every modern, innovative and equipped teacher for the most effectively achieved educational outcomes. In sum, the teacher development should go along with the e-development of the teacher as a professional-teacher.

Philosophy of Academic staff colleges as envisaged by the UGC

The ASC's main philosophy is to keep in mind that the teacher is a key to the whole educational system. Yet, the system does not provide adequate opportunities for their professional development. It is, therefore, necessary to develop inbuilt mechanisms to provide opportunities for teachers within the framework of knowledge society. It is also interesting to note that even though some institutions encourage the staff to g for teacher development, some staff members don't take enough interest for some known and unknown reasons.

As per the perception of the UGC, a college/university teacher learnt the 'art' of teaching on the job by emulating outstanding models such as his/her own teachers or senior colleagues. But, in the current competitive environment , it is no longer adequate to expect a newly appointed teacher to acquire the 'art' of teaching without self development through official training/orientation.

Objectives of the Academic Staff Colleges

Some of the major the objectives of the Academic Staff College (ASC) are to enable newly appointed Lecturers to:

a. understand the significance of education in general, and higher education in particular, in the global and Indian contexts;
b. acquire and improve art of teaching at the college/university level to achieve goals of higher education;
c. keep abreast of the latest developments in their specific subjects;
d. utilize opportunities for development of personality, initiative and creativity; and g. promote computer literacy as well use of ICT in teaching and learning process.

Educational Technology and Orientation in IT

The UGC believes that new methods of teaching and educational technology along with developments in Information

Technology have made the job of a teacher both exact and demanding. Now, it has been decided to give a bigger thrust to e-content development. In order to create Internet savvy as well as computer literate teachers, to create e-content assemblers and creators, the UGC is launching specially designed orientation programmes/refresher courses in these subjects.

The special orientation programme in IT is to create Internet literate people from amongst new entrants as well as in-service teachers and to make them familiar with use of software tools irrespective of the subject/discipline they are teaching. Acquisition of knowledge is a two-way process between the teachers and the taught and, therefore, collectively they must advance the frontiers of knowledge.

Knowledge update
There has been knowledge expansion in every field of study. A university teacher has to continuously update his skills as per the change in the society and educational system.

Based on the above literature of the UGC for the ASCs in India, the following areas become crucial as a part of training of the university academic staff:

- understanding of the modern curriculum
- Training and innovative strategies
- Training and online/e-learning
- Technology related readiness

In order to train the teachers and achieve the targets, it should be borne in mind that infrastructure is extremely important.

Infrastructural availability
A successful implementation of technology integration basically depends on the availability of following:
-enough budget,

-appropriate infrastructure and resources,
-establishment of an e-learning unit at the institution,
-equipped human resources ,
-online material, and
-supportive technical staff.

As mentioned earlier, any success in the area of effective e-learning can never be accomplished without an appropriate and intensive preparation of the teachers. In other words, teacher training/development for e-learning is a necessary pedagogic condition for attainment of curricular goals.

The Research Context
The studies pertaining to e-learning: theory, research or practice are no more rare. Plenty works are being undertaken in almost every aspect of e-learning including teacher development. The following (only a few) studies create a base for the present research context/review of literature. Online instruction, according to Khan (1997), is an innovative approach for delivering classroom instruction to a remote audience, using the Web as the medium. Volery (2000) further noted that online delivery is a form of distributed learning enabled by the Internet. Pedagogues think that besides being a facilitator, the instructor should also be an instructional designer (Zheng & Smaldino, 2003). The teachers can try to develop themselves, and the management can provide the opportunities for the teachers to develop and utilize the e-resources for the betterment of teaching/learning.(Khan, 2011, p.77) Effective programs are sustained over time, have at their core professional learning teams for collaboration, involve teachers in solving authentic problems related to teaching and learning, deepen teachers' pedagogical skills and include opportunities for practice, research and reflection (Lawless, 2007).

Teachers should be actively involved in defining priorities about what are their real problems and able to select suit-able solutions (Tobin, 1988, Hewson and Hewson, 1988). It is also important to analyze the outcomes of teachers' attitudes. Pre-service courses can benefit from that knowledge and guide selecting courses and methods to insure a good foundation for future teachers. One possible way to evaluate could be to put together the two groups (teachers and students) during the undergraduate training period of future teachers.

In addition, Ryu (1987) conducted a survey among Japanese teachers, about their opinions of the pre-service educational programs they had at university, in preparation for their future professional performance. Most the teachers pointed out that pre-service teaching programs (courses, procedures and models) were, at best, of some use to prepare them for effective and result oriented teaching.

Educational technology is considered as a tool of change. Yet, the integration of technology into a classroom or school does not inherently nor naturally reform teaching or learning (Dede, 2001 and Wiske, 2001). If and how teachers adopt technology determines if change in teaching or learning occurs. An outcome of change seems less likely than the many claims in the literature might make it appear, for "teacher's cognitions have taken years to take shape and are, consequently, not easily changed" (Verloop, Driel, & Meijer, 2001,p 454). To help teachers incorporate technology in ways that support powerful instruction, needs an array of professional development experiences different from traditional workshops and how-to training sessions. (David, 1996, p238). Teachers need continued practice to become comfortable with technology. (Kent, 2004)

The teacher developmental programs should follow a direction, conduct programs in sequence, and resume the course from the point one has stopped earlier with a view to bridge the gap, if any. Despite the availability of resources and increased emphasis on the use of technology, many teachers, whether pre-service (Doering, Hughes, & Huffman, 2008); Willis & Sujo de Montes (2002) or experienced, currently feel ill prepared to use technological tools and resources for teaching of contents. The factors may be contributing to pre-service, novice, and veteran teachers' struggles with integrating technology into their teaching in innovative and effective ways. First, school leaders call for technology integration without actually defining their vision for integration (Perry & Aregaldo, 2001).

The Present Study
It is purely of qualitative-descriptive type. Case study method has been followed to explore the dimensions of e-training. An observatory approach has also been used to support the data gathered through the questionnaires administered on some of the Academic staff of Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delh-25, India.

Objectives
The objectives of e-training/learning were as follows:
- To explore the need of e-training for the academic staff of JMI,
- to ascertain the infrastructure for e-learning at JMI,
- to find out the possibility to use electronic materials in teaching and learning.

Research Questions
1- Is there a need to train the JMI staff for technology integration?,
2- Is infrastructure sufficient for technology integration?,
3- Is technology integration feasible in the existing situation?

Need of essential E-resources
The implementation of e-learning at JMI required computer equipped classes and labs with a net connection. In the case of language teaching, a computer assisted lab is always in demand. Power point presentations are quite important these days so we need important accessories to run power point based instruction.

Image-1

(back view of a language lab)

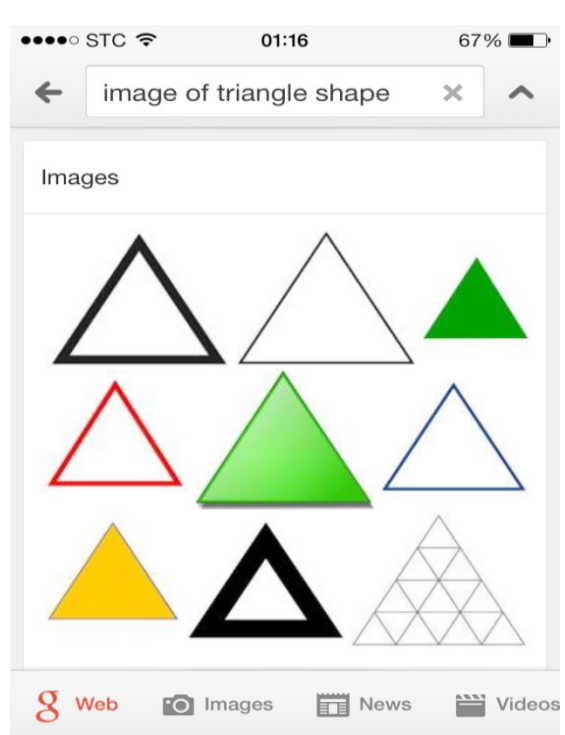Image-2

(back view of the seminar room)

Many activities are supposed to be completed before implementing the e-learning. A comprehensive e- training of the teachers is one of them. The institution needs to accomplish the following phases of provision and training for successful implementation of educational technology.

- Resource establishment,
- design and development of e-material,
- Try out of the electronic system,
- Re-designing and improvement, and
- implementation.

## Benefits of the E-learning System

Though e-learning and integrated technology has already become an integral component of face to face education, it is not an easy task to accomplish the task of successful implementation. Many activities were completed before implementing the e-learning in general and mobile learning in particular. Habboush, Nassuora & Hussein, (2011) worked on the acceptance of mobile learning by university students, and found it quite useful and relevant in the context of professional development. The following aspects of the training deserve special mention:

Image.3

(google image)

Image.4
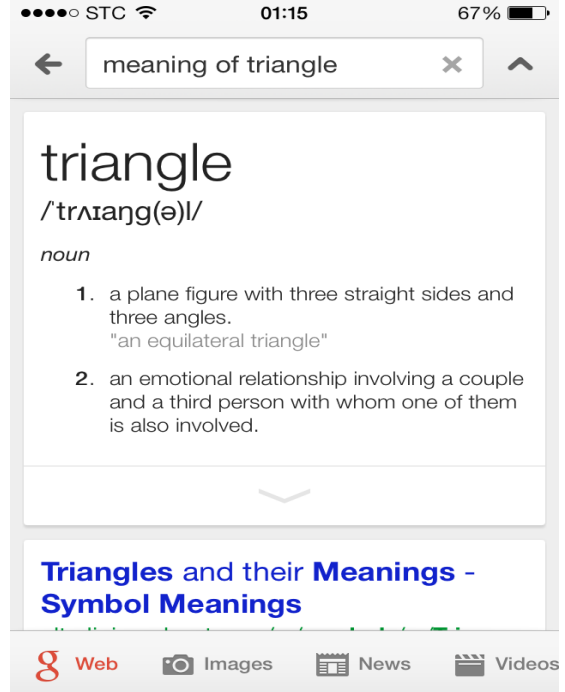
(web definition)

Both the teachers and learners can utilize the resources available in many forms: online dictionary, images, encyclopedia, Wikipedia and what not. Websites are full of material on all areas of teaching, learning and education. If we can't access something for some easons, instant translation facilities are available for all kinds of users.

Figure.5
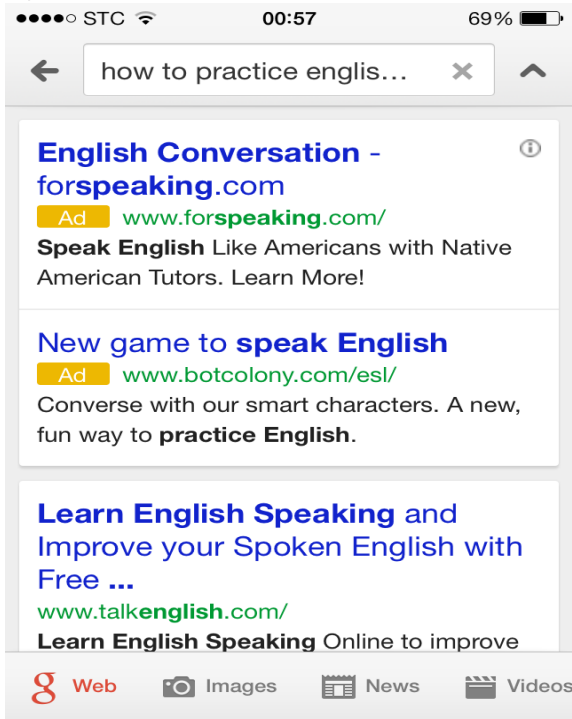
(conversation practice)

Figure-6
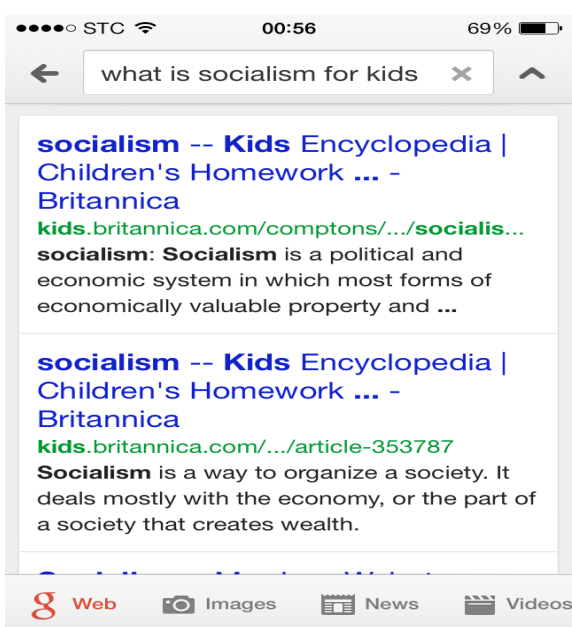
(online Encyclopedia)

The above link for online English daily conversation is an apt example of good listening to the different varieties of English, and a detailed information can be downloaded instantly as in the figure-6 regarding socialism. The only requirement is to possess the tools, have facilities and know how to use.

There are many other tools and electronic activities in which both the e-teachers and e-learners can involve. On line 'Quizzes' are one of them. The quizzes can be added and evaluated and even a response can be sent to the learners online. Such practices can reinforce the motivation level of the target learners. Barbarick (2010) studied the relevance of crossword puzzles. These interactive quizzes are available readymade on the websites, and the teachers can design their own as templates and programs are also available on the websites. Those who want to use it quite frequently, they can buy on-line the puzzle maker programs and save it to their PCs for future use. With a very little efforts, 'puzzles' can be developed in almost all kinds of subjects/specialty.

Interactive online Crossword puzzles
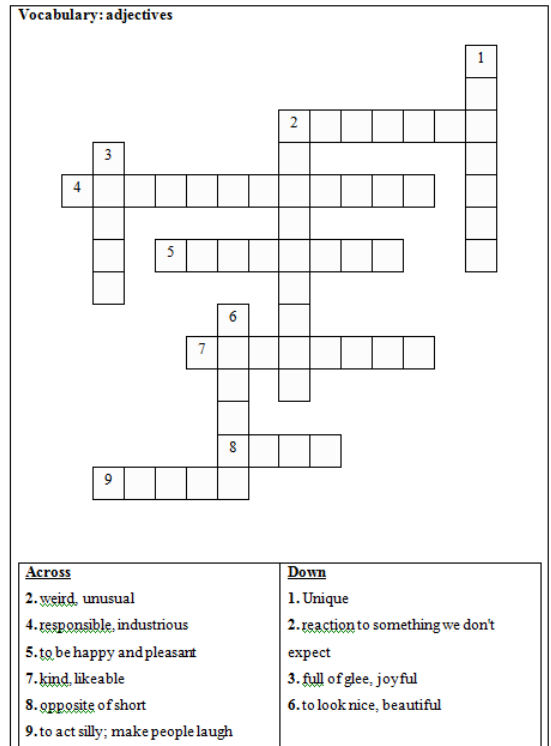
Skilled trainers/ Educators
In order to implement e-learning, the teacher development needs to be primarily considered as it is felt that trainers/ educators, and instructors need to be sufficiently skilled in the expected model the use of e-learning.

Professional Development/e-training
The teaching faculty can't achieve the best possible results, professional development should be initiated immediately before it is too late. The professional development should keep on going from time to time. In order to achieve the professional development objectives, the institutional support is also an important factor. Last but not least, teacher educators and in-service teachers always need prompt managerial/ technical support also in order not to hinder the active learning process. It is because of the fact that tools and equipment need off and on maintenance to keep the things up to date ready to use status.

Methods of the Study
As mentioned above, the present case study involves data collection from some teachers of Jamia Millia Islamia New Delhi-25, India. Apart from observation and assessment of the e-resource and e-resource, the teachers concerned shared their perception through a self developed questionnaires by the investigator (appendix-A).The items included in the tool were related to the need of e-training in particular as well as associated concepts.

The data collected were minutely studied, presented in the tabular form (table-1) and figure-7 as under:
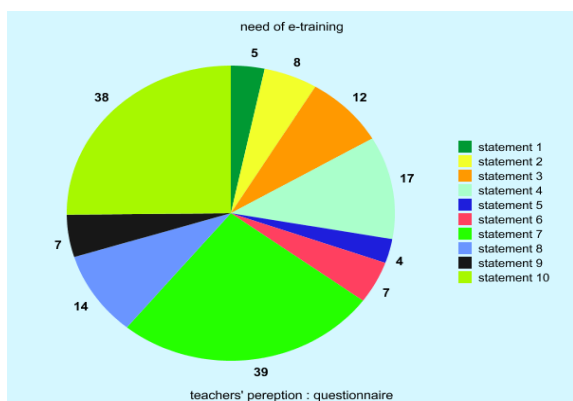
Table-1

S.N.	Statements	agreed	undecided	Disagreed
1		5	-	40
2		8	-	37
3		12	-	33
4		17	-	28
5		4	-	41
6		7	-	38
7		39	3	1
8		14	4	27
9		7	5	33
10		38	4	3

(tabular presentation of data)

The data show that despite the fact that respondents are ready to utilize technology and e-learning, they need to be trained, infrastructure be provided by the institution.

Image-7

Though, the need of professional development was emphasized by NPE-1986 which was later incorporated by UGC's Academic staff colleges, the universities and colleges lack e-resources. It is interesting to note that despite the presence of national policy and a central funding agency, the achievement is not up to the mark. Such gaps between theory and practice need to be seriously looked into.

The analysis of chosen statement led to the interpretation that the staff is not able to integrate technology independently, and they lack specific skills.

Figure-8
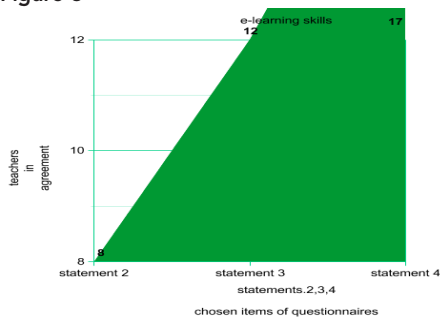
(level of skills in technology)

If we compare the electronic skills of most of the staff members with those working in even the gulf region, the findings will lead to frustration. Teachers in the gulf and middle east regions are able to create, innovate, design, upload and implement e-learning material with the help of Indian manpow-

er and we in the central universities and reputed colleges lack technology related skills.

Findings and Conclusions

Based on the analysis of data, literature review, personal experience regarding the need of teacher training in general, it is concluded that e-learning is also essential for integration of technology and e-learning environment. E-training can basically be provided during the job, and in a particular context. It can be a continuous process of teacher development. Thus, in sum, one can state that a general teacher training and e-training can go hand in hand for an optimum teaching-learning environment and achievement of the objectives.

Implementation of the study and recommendations

The findings of the study are going to be implemented in the form of theory building that e-training is urgent and essential for all the university teacher (irrespective of the subjects) as education without technology at present will not be effective. In this regard, each e-teacher must have a prior e-training or on the job training before utilization of the technology for learning.

Appendix-A: Teachers' questionnaires

(Perception of teachers on the need of e-training)
Name: (optional):
Teaching experience:
Department/Faculty:

S.N.	Statements	agreed	undecided	Disagree
1	1- I have you been using e-learning in my class.	5	-	40
2	2- I have attended a few technology based training sessions.	8	-	37
3	I attended e-learning sessions at Academic staff college, JMI..	12	-	33
4	I can integrate technology independently.	17	-	28
5	I can design, upload and use power-points and videos.	4	-	41
6	My classrooms equipped with essential technology.	7	-	38
7	I want to integrate e-learning in my class.	39	3	1
8	My department is well equipped with labs, classes and offices.	14	4	27
9	The administration provides required support for implementation of e-resource.	7	5	33
10	Every single teacher needs intensive e-training for effective implementation of e-resources.	38	4	3

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