ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

KEY WORDS: Education Technology, Virtual Classroom, Apps

Education-Technology in times of COVID 19

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ABSTRACT

We live in an era driven by technology. From science labs we have progressed to computer labs, from blackboard to e-board, from dictating notes in classroom we have progressed to posting material in Google Classroom, from real lectures we have progressed to virtual classroom. The millennial generation can no longer be taught through age old traditional methods. Today, a teacher must deliver what is not readily available on the internet. Here, the several techno apps if used creatively by the teachers can be of great benefit. Currently, the world is facing tough times with the outbreak of Corona Virus. The three week lockdown has forced us to revamp our day to day classroom procedures as well as our teaching methodologies. Education cannot at any cost take a backseat. It's time for teachers to look at all alternative as well as creative approaches to keep the teaching-learning cycle moving at the same pace.

INTRODUCTION:

Education has been since time immemorial recognised as an indispensable tool in the armor of a person's development tool kit. The importance of correct education can never be over emphasized.

In early India the 'Gurukul' system of education existed. The learned 'guru' (teacher) would train his selected few pupils in the ways of the world. These were the days when the guru was an epitome of knowledge. He was expected to have gainful insight on any and every topic under the sun. It was the time when practical knowledge was combined with theoretical knowledge.

The education system changed and evolved drastically in the Mughal era, the British era and later in the new independent India with a pre- dominantly 'British' mindset accompanied with Indian values. Religious scriptures and practices were sidelined and knowledge about the world and human race gained prominence. Blackboard teaching within the confines of the walls of an institution became a norm across India.

OBJECTIVES:

This research paper is written with the following objectives:

1. To identify the alternate means of imparting knowledge to the students.
2. To study the role of technology as a counter foil to classroom teaching.
3. To bring to the fore different software and mobile based applications which can be used by students and teachers to maintain connectivity and continue the teaching-learning process.
4. To estimate the efficacy of online mode of teaching and its level of acceptance by students.

Review of literature:

Dahal, N., & Pangeni, S. K. (2019), in their study on 'Workshoping in Online courses' have studied the use of online assessment tools for which the researchers selected Workshop Activity-for learning through peer review in online, distance, and face to face modes of learning and assessment. They observed that in addition to the usual forms of assignments such as uploading a file, administering quizzes, assigning written work, giving choices in the Moodle learning management system and involving students in forum discussion, Workshop is unique. Such activities benefit both students and teachers. Therefore, the future focus should be on implementing such assessment tools in all the courses.

Padhi A.K, Padhi S.K, Panda A.K (2013) in their study on 'Internet Lab as a Major Source of Modern Learning Resource' opined that technology brings in fundamental structural changes that can contribute greatly in bringing in improvements in productivity. It covers course offerings, experiences and learning materials; supports learning 24 hours a day.

Kilcoyne, M., & Habig, W. P. (2016) in their research on 'Online Learning- Learning Styles in a Virtual World - Addressing Student Learning Styles in a Virtual Class' found that exploring and understanding different methodologies for effectively constructing an online course can help lead to creating a successful learning experience for learners.

Need for change:

As imparters of knowledge educational institutions continuously strive to go beyond the curriculum and add value to the life of students. A teacher has to find different ways of drawing pupils into a subject. When way back in 1986-87, the education policy brought in a number of changes to the conventional modes of higher education it was time to do a re-jig. Former prime minister Late Rajiv Gandhi presented a vision of developing India by introducing modern technology as an aid while imparting knowledge through the curricula of higher education. Cassettes, CDs along with Personal Computers were the new tools used in the 90's. It was followed by use of electronic projectors and other similar aids.

Digital era- advent of new technology:

Digital education which spread across India in early 2000 brought in a total turn-around. Internet invaded India and brought in a paradigm shift in the means and methods of sharing information amongst the various stake holders. The ever changing and continuously evolving technology is re-defining the parameters of knowledge sharing. Internet has given students access to information which in yesteryears was obtained only through the teachers in the classroom or through books/ journals available in a library.

The significance of moving to virtual means of teaching was brought to the fore completely when the world was stuck by COVID-19. The pandemic forced us to shut down all educational institutions in the crucial month of March when most schools are in the midst of examinations, while degree colleges and professional courses are in the last leg of the academic session. This three weeks break would have thrown our education system out of gear and broken the systematic pattern of teaching- learning had not 'Edu-Tech' (Education Technology) come to the rescue.

During this time the researcher found a few interactive learning technologies that can be used for learning and assessment. The only requirements are; uninterrupted internet connection, a smart phone or a computer and willingness to learn.

Some of the applications are listed below.

1. Google Classroom:
Easy to create and use, Google Classroom: is one of the most popularly used application. It helps teachers to post reading material, share videos, upload assignments, and grade the assignments too once it is handed in by the students. It boosts collaboration between teachers and students and helps them stay connected at all times.

2. VARK- A guide to learning preferences:
In 1987, Neil Fleming from New Zealand presented a systematic series of questions with help sheets for students, teachers and others to use in their own way. VARK uses this concept. It provides several ready to use questionnaires, formats, graphs, charts, plans, maps etc. that can be used by students for self analysis and can be used by teachers to assess their pupils. It suggests new strategies that allow the user to incorporate the four learning styles namely **V**isual, **A**uditory, **R**ead and **K**inesthetic.

3. Sakai- Learning Management System:
It is an educational software platform popular in American educational institutes. It is designed to support teaching, research and collaboration. It offers features such as plagiarism detection, streaming media and lecture capture software.

4. Blackboard:
It is a mobile learning app which can be downloaded from Android or App Store (iOS). It is very similar to Google Classroom. It allows teachers/instructors to post course material, respond to students' queries, grade them for their submitted work etc. Students can use this app to stay connected with teachers even when they are travelling or are away from the college/institution.

5. e-Front:
Under this e-learning platform, the tutor can form groups of learners on the basis of their class or subject. Students can self-enroll in the group or can be added by the tutor. The tutor can communicate with all the users in a group at once, assign the same courses or curricula to all group members and can also view respective group reports.

6. Zoom:
A Times of India report (29th March 2020) reported that during the lockdown period due to Covid-19 outbreak across the globe, people are forced to work from home and are relying on video conferencing solutions for carrying out basic meetings. 'Zoom' became one of the most downloaded apps on both iOS' App Store and Android's Google Play. This app allows for video conferencing between multiple users at a time. Teachers can use it for video meetings with students. It also has a feature of scheduling a meeting before hand. Thus, a teacher can move as per the allotted time-table. The only difference will be that both the primary parties will be in a virtual classroom instead of a real classroom.

7. Open OLAT:
Open OLAT is a web-based learning management system for teaching, assessment and communication. OpenOLAT stands for Open Online Learning And Training. The users of this software can avail the following features:

- Create groups and invite fellow learners
- Create courses and run exams
- Contact other users via email, chat, and even virtual classrooms

8. Socrative:
This app was developed by Boston based graduate school students. Through this app a teacher can frame simple quizzes based on the subject being taught and all students can attempt the quiz simultaneously through their laptop or smart phones. It is a fun way of conducting tests and usually the race feature of this software is enjoyed by the students.

Research Methodology:
During this period the researcher questioned several under-graduate and post graduate students to assess their thought process towards virtual means of education.

Data Collection
The researcher collected primary data through closed end structured questionnaire Secondary data about availability of technology driven apps was collected from several websites.

Sample Selection:
Sample of 50 students, 25 each from UG and PG courses from field of Commerce and Management were selected. Convenience sampling was used.

Findings:
Following results were obtained

1. 42% under graduates said that virtual classroom was better than real classroom, while a majority i.e. 58% said that they would prefer a real classroom with the teacher being physically present.
2. 55% of the post graduates opted for the convenience and flexibility of connecting online than in person.
3. If given a choice majority students from both groups would opt for a mixed pattern wherein classes on weekends could be held through virtual modes.
4. 53% of under graduates and 60% of post graduates preferred handing in their assignments in Google Classroom or similar apps rather than submitting it in person to teacher.
5. On being questioned about retention of attention, students gave a mixed response. While some said video lectures and online quiz could hold their attention for longer durations as compared to real classroom teaching, some opined that a good teacher teaching in person is irreplaceable.

CONCLUSION:
Today the role of a teacher has become more challenging due to several complexities arising out of an explosion of information and knowledge. Searching Google for answers has become more convenient than posing a query to a teacher in the classroom. In such times, it's a clarion call to all educators to develop more creative approaches if they wish to teach the new generation learners. Technology has opened the door to a myriad of possibilities; a plethora of opportunities awaits us. We, the tutors can make education more exciting and in the process develop a new learning pattern where human and technology co-exist as reservoirs of knowledge sharing.

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