

A RIDE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION WITH ICT TOOLS: OBSTACLES AND DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Educational field becomes successful with proper communications by imparting value-based knowledge and get fruitful outcomes with thorough understanding. Unfortunately, the globe put a stop to drilling as of the pandemic COVID-19. In such circumstances, the internet becomes a boon for the educators to provide distance education using numerous synchronous and asynchronous ICT tools and the learners too by keeping in touch with their studies. In fact, it becomes the most experiential time for teachers as well as for learners to value the things they need the most and those which will become beneficial in their respective fields as of this epidemic. For the sake of their students, institutions now offer courses made by their teachers or they purchase from outside sources to provide education effectively. Interactive communication technology is in common use today including the tools like- computers, laptops, desktops, mobile phones, tablets, projectors, scanners, printers, microphones, interactive white boards, web boards. However, just offering online courses does not guarantee that the programs will be successful or the best option for the newbies. This paper presents the use of ICT tools in the education sector by noticing the insight of teachers as well as students on the technology enhanced teaching in the schools of Punjab, India. Here, the focus is especially on the challenges of the use of modern ICT tools that are widely implemented in yielding distance learning and discussing recommendations for the customization of these tools.

Keywords: Interactive communication technology, quality education, blended learning, synchronous tools, asynchronous tools.

INTRODUCTION

Emerging trends of information and communication technology raise a boom in the educational field and becomes a helping hand for teachers to dispense genuine distance learning. Almost all countries in every part of the world are in hoard to deliver better educational facilities to their learners. Here ICT tools play a vital role in bestowing one-way and two-way presentations using synchronous and asynchronous ICT tools. ICT can be defined as a TECHNOLOGICAL means of COLLECTING (inputting/gathering), COLLATING (processing/analyzing) and CONVEYING (outputting/transferring) INFORMATION via TECHNOLOGY. Nowadays, ICT became a crucial part of teaching-learning process as such approaches replaced chalkboards with interactive digital whiteboards, using students' own smartphones and other devices for learning during their class time and the "flipped classroom" paradigm where learners watch lectures at home on their computer machines and use classroom time for more interactive applications. For successful online courses, the most important quality of an online program is the staff's ability to know their students personally, something that many online initiatives taken by schools simply can't do.

EDUCATION IN PUNJAB

Punjab is one of the most popular states in the northern part of India known for its wide open hearts. The Covid-19 pandemic has come as a kiss of life for government schools of Punjab. More than 2.1 lac new students were enrolled in these schools till the second week of June 2020. Government schools don't charge more than nominal fees. Private schools were prohibited from demanding any fee from parents and show-cause notices were issued if some schools sent a reminder for dues. The Punjab Education Department has taken to popular applications Zoom, YouTube and WhatsApp to start online classes amongst the alert. These apps are also being used by the ministry to spread coronavirus awareness among the students and parents. While there have been teething troubles due to varying social-economic backgrounds of students and technical glitches, most parents appreciate relentless and dedicated efforts of school teachers in keeping the children usefully engaged. According to a survey taken by the government, all the teachers in Punjab are now taking online classes through Zoom app, YouTube and WhatsApp.

TOOLS OF ICT

Electronic devices are very important in learning, teaching and education. .Nowadays, blended learning is promoted by following traditional classroom practices with e-learning solutions. Students in a traditional classroom, for example, can be assigned both print-based and online materials, have online mentoring sessions with their teacher through chat, and are subscribed to a class email list. ICTs stand for the information and communication technologies and are defined, for the purpose of this primer, as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information". These technologies include computers, the internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephone.

In recent years there has been a groundswell of interest in how computers and the Internet can best be harnessed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education at all levels and in both formal and non-formal settings. But ICTs are more than just these technologies; older technologies such as the telephone, radio and television, although now given less attention, have a longer and richer history as instructional tools. For instance, radio and television have for over forty years been used for open and distance learning, although print remains the cheapest, most accessible and therefore most dominant delivery mechanism in both developed and developing countries. The use of computers and the Internet is still in its infancy in developing countries, if these are used at all, due to limited infrastructure and the attendant high costs of access.

ASYNCHRONOUS TOOLS USED BY TEACHERS IN PUNJAB

People first developed asynchronous mode of communication in the form of small pictographs and written language. Various conditions, for illustration, the distance travelled and issues faced while delivering the message, matters the most. Besides this, there would be chances for the loss of messages. With the advancement in technology and use of the Internet, revolutionized asynchronous communication. Asynchronous ICT tools include those means of application software that can be retrieved by the users at any time. In Punjab, teachers facilitate their students by providing notes in the form of pdfs, images, videos made in apps like kinemaster, powerdirector, powtoon, animaker, ppts made in prezzi, MS powerpoint, mapping using mind mapping,, c-map, freemind, flowcharts in documents and through emails too so that the learners keep in touch with their subjects according to their time to be spend.

SYNCHRONOUS TOOLS USED BY TEACHERS IN PUNJAB

Synchronous ICT tools are considered as real-time learning tools. The modern day e-learning environment involves online studies through chat and video conferencing as well.

Rather than taking lessons alone, virtual classrooms are preferred where the students can ask their queries and teachers are able to revoke their solutions instantly through instant messaging, that is why it is called synchronous communication. In such type of real time communication, there is almost no feeling of isolation, moreover, it increases the sense of community in the online classroom session. In Punjab, a large locality of schools make use of apps like Zoom, Google meet, Google classroom, WhatsApp video conferencing, chatting, social networking sites like facebook, MOOCs.

CHALLENGES IN USING TOOLS BY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

As per rightly said by UNESCO, "Teachers need specific professional development opportunities in order to increase their ability to use ICT for formative learning assessments, individualized instruction, accessing online resources, and for fostering student interaction and collaboration". It becomes one of the biggest concerns of educators to make the present generation of learners future-ready especially in Punjab as the development of every country primarily depends upon the education system. Foremost issue in front of instructors is the unawareness for the modern tools as what kind of tool is available in the digital world for a certain work. Moreover, the way of handling these tools in a conventional way also mark up challenges in front of teachers and learners. Lack of trained teachers is a major obstacle in the use of ICT in Punjab. Besides this, just in a chase to cover the syllabus on time, the salient objectives like to know the interest of learners, engagement and creativity among learners, positive feedback of the learners and more like these are lacking behind at some point.

CONCLUSIONS

From all above discussion there is no conclusive research that the ICT tools proved their best achievements in the education field. Unquestionable to revoke that ICT tools act as a catalyst to accelerate, innovate, encourage and engage students to work practices as well as strengthen teaching practices. ICT tools function as an active healer in this trauma whilst the guardians have only the option not to send their wards in schools. Tutees usually learn more, and learn more swiftly, in courses that use computer assisted instructions. The use of computers to provide effective instructions interact the students towards their learning. With the use of complex multimedia tools, students learn to have more control over their own learning hence capable to think analytically and critically too and increase the sense of working collaboratively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ICT provides meaningful, absorbing media that makes teaching-learning more productive. ICT benefits schools in several ways: (i) enhancing learning in the classroom; (ii) improving school management and related tasks; (iii) improving accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in school activities; (iv) introducing usage of PowerPoint presentations and internet. Keengwe and Onchwari also support the view that ICT in schools can lead to high quality teaching and learning. In present scenario, ICT tools are strictly limited to some elite organisations. Most of the schools in Punjab have limited resources for buying books, stationery, furniture and other classroom materials. Another big challenge for quality control in education is lack of standards for parameters to measure the quality of education. For the solution of this all the accreditation bodies like NAAC, NBA, AICTE, CBSE and other high authorities must sit together and circulate a standard list of parameters to decide the quality of education. In order to bridge the gap, it is necessary to evolve cooperation between public and private contributors. It must be the duty of the government to ensure that each school must have at least one computer lab. ICT enabled education must be enriched with all types of audio-video aids. In addition to this appropriate hardware for Satellite terminals will be provided to selected schools in a progressive manner. Each school will be serviced with broadband connectivity capable of receiving streaming audio and video, a range of digital learning resources and interactive programmes. Appropriate guidelines will be provided to teachers and students

on issues related to safe use of the internet. The bright future of ICT based education depends upon the maturity of the users using digital data.

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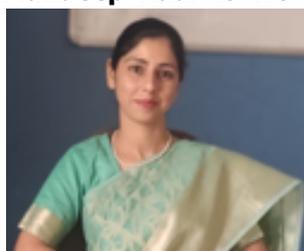
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