WEBINAR: An Appended Feature For Developing Pedagogic Understanding

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Abstract

It is an ascertained fact that the best learning happens in real life with real problems and real people and not in classrooms. But the E-revolution has changed the meaning of the word "real". Moving from the one-room schoolhouse to the one-world schoolhouse is now a reality. And more over, X-Generations demand X-cellent training in an X-celerated speed. The new emerging world is based more on brains and brawn - and moves more on broadband byways than concrete highways. The conventional learning model in higher education is insufficient to accommodate the needs and realities of the new generation competing in the global, knowledge-based society. An individual's ability to learn and translate that learning into action is the ultimate competitive advantage. You can't teach people everything they need to know. The best you can do is position them where they can find what they need to know when they need to know it. These philosophical undertones calls for a blend of the digitally available information and a methodology of involving a learner to scramble on the pile of information, roil it to generate new creative and critical mental processes and come out with a super-learner spirit.

Teacher Education programmes are often blamed as archaic system with all its age old theoretic content to be taught and mode of delivery of that content. Integrating technology in Teacher education is understood as encouraging use of internet amongst student teachers or using ppts in the theoretical discussion. The practice of Locating e resources from internet and enabling student teachers use those resources in their classroom is also evident in some of the institutions. But using Blogs, social networking sites for triggering academic discussions are rare instances in teacher education. The modern mechanism of technology i e WEBINARs have also started contributing widely in teachers' professional development breaking all the barriers of place one studies at. It is found as one of the mechanisms of E-Learning through which transformation from student teacher to Eudtech Student Teacher is possible. This was envisaged by the researcher by becoming a co participant in one of the webinars aiming at developing pedagogic insight of student teachers. An exploration into participant's reflections on their experience of participating in a webinar series and feeling the change occurred in their pedagogic understanding was undertaken by the researcher.. This paper is a printed documentary of this bona fide exploration.

ICT in Teacher Education : Panorama Driven Reflection

> *Darshan and Darshini, enthusiastic student teachers undergoing pre service teacher education course in their journey towards becoming effective, insightful innovative facilitators were good enough at their skills in using computers. During their practice teaching phases, they were hunting for finding proper images, ready to use worksheets, activity ideas, audio/video based teaching materials. Such effort of them was appreciated too. When they were made to adapt or create technology based material keeping in view the local context, it was a long row to hoe. This demands for a fresh pair of eyes for the pedagogic understanding of the student teachers apart from their technological skills. A teacher educator invested much time in making them understand this cliché. But the techno savvy student teacher wanted their pedagogic skills to be sharpened though technology. Webinar, as a magic wand came to the rescue of the teacher educator and enabled her to create a platform for learning pedagogy with the use of technology.*

Educational systems around the world are under increasing pressure to use the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to teach students the knowledge and skills they need in the 21st century. It predicts the transformation of the teaching-learning process and the way teachers and learners gain access to knowledge and information. This directly demands teacher education programmes to become ICT based. Integrating technology in teacher education is a no doubt a rising tide these days but rarely some boats are meaningfully lifted by such tide. This is because the meaning of integration of technology is accepted in teacher education only to mean enabling the student teachers use technology in their teaching. How far they are facilitated to reach to this point using technology is rarely thought of. The common practice amongst teacher educators while using technology for imparting pedagogic understanding is using power point presentations loaded with information on them or using readymade worksheets /handouts downloaded from internet for the theoretical discussion of the pedagogy. A little step ahead can bring wonders to what is expected from the teacher educators. This is nothing else but Webinar: an appended feature for building pedagogic understanding.

NCTE issued a Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education in 1998. One of the recommendations in this document was to update theoretical and practical components of teacher education by giving new orientation and adding new inputs to the existing programmes. During the last two decades, the teacher education curricula have received severe criticism and their weaknesses have been well exposed. Some educationists and social activists call it insipid, irrelevant because the field has failed in modifying way of its working. Webinars having a very enormous scope for student teacher's participation has a potential to come up as an added feature to set free the filed from the criticism.

The Concept of Webinar:

The term **webinar** is short form of Web-based Seminar, a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar that is transmitted over the Web, specifically a portmanteau of web & seminar, to describe a specific type of web conference. Webinars themselves are more collaborative and include polling and question & answer sessions to allow full participation between the audience and the presenter. In

some cases, the presenter may speak over a standard telephone line, while pointing out information being presented onscreen, and the audience can respond over their own telephones, speaker phones allowing the greatest comfort and convenience. There are web conferencing technologies that have incorporated the use of VoIP (voice over Internet protocol) audio technology, to allow for a completely web-based communication between the speaker and participants. Depending upon the provider, webinars may provide hidden or anonymous participant functionality, making participants unaware of other participants in the same meeting. For interactive **online workshops** web conferences are complemented by electronic meeting systems (EMS) which provide a range of online facilitation tools such as brainstorming and categorization, a range of voting methods or structured discussions, typically with optional anonymity.

The features of webinar include:

1. Slide show presentations - where images are presented to the audience and markup tools and a remote mouse pointer are used to engage the audience while the presenter discusses slide content.

2. Live or Streaming video - where full motion webcam, digital video camera or multi-media files are pushed to the audience.

3. VoIP (Real time audio communication through the computer via use of headphones and speakers)

4. Web tours - where URLs, data from forms, cookies, scripts and session data can be pushed to other participants enabling them to be pushed though web based logons, clicks, etc. This type of feature works well when demonstrating websites where users themselves can also participate.

5. Meeting Recording - where presentation activity is recorded on the client side or server side for later viewing and/or distribution.

6. Whiteboard with annotation (allowing the presenter and/or attendees to highlight or mark items on the slide presentation. Or, simply make notes on a blank whiteboard.)

7. Text chat - For live question and answer sessions, limited to the people connected to the meeting. Text chat may be public (echo'ed to all participants) or private (between 2 participants).

8. Polls and surveys (allows the presenter to conduct questions with multiple choice answers directed to the audience)

   o Screen sharing/desktop sharing/application sharing (where participants can view anything the presenter currently has shown on their screen. Some screen sharing applications allow for remote desktop control, allowing participants to manipulate the presenters screen, although this is not widely used.)

This paper talks about only those webinars organized hosted exclusively for audience of educators. These interactive events are free and universally accessible Each event is designed to connect valued audience with thought leaders in the movement for educational reform, providing opportunities to learn about the latest research, tools, and ideas from experts in the field.

The Context of the Present Research:

A central and high profile strand of education policy everywhere in the world over the past decade has been the development of a technologically empowered teaching force so that ICT is 'embedded in teaching and learning' (Clarke, 2003: 3). Reports have generally showed a disappointingly sluggish increase in the number of teachers making regular use of computers in their teaching. The ImpaCT 2 Report (Harrison *et al.,* 2002) suggested that roughly 60% of teachers are

making little or no use of computers in their teaching and Teacher Development Agency (TDA) feedback from NQTs regularly reported that many trainees do not feel well equipped to make effective use of ICT in their teaching (TDA, 2006, 2007). In spite of political commitment and financial investment, there still appears to be a 'rhetoric-reality gap' between the claims made for the use of ICT in education, and what is current practice. Perhaps even more exasperatingly, some research suggests a degree of polarisation in ICT use, with some schools and teachers making effective and inspirational use of ICT, but others lagging behind. It has proved more difficult than envisaged to disseminate good practice in the use of ICT. In particular, the belief that expertise and ideas could be simply disseminated via electronic networks has proved to be misplaced. It would be helpful if the research could be designed in a way which would develop our understanding of the factors which explain why ICT is making a big difference to teaching in some schools (and teacher training institutions) but not in others. This has proved to be more difficult than envisaged.

Another dimension to ICT use in day to day life reveals that many pupils are more familiar with Web 2.0 applications than many of their teachers. Many student teachers have social networking accounts and even they upload artefacts using Web 2.0 applications. However, nearly their use of Web 2.0 is currently outside educational institute, for social purposes. Few Student teachers do have understanding of the ways in which Web 2.0 might be used for educational purposes, and few have well developed digital literacy and critical skills to navigate Web 2.0 territory in a mature way. But the fact is a very small number of student teachers are using Web 2.0 applications in their teaching, Researches have proved that Web 2.0 applications do the potential to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Tthe trend in researches in ICT integration concludes that 'despite the anecdotal evidence and hype surrounding the concept of Web 2.0 technologies in education, there is a lack of adequate use of Web 2.0 technologies to support learning.' Webinar is one of the mechanism using web 2 technology. It has wider potential in creating scope for learning. The question arises here is do teacher education colleges reap the benefit of such technology.

For the present study the webinar series five on the topic : **Shaping the Way We Teach English** offered by The Office of English Language Programs in Washington, DC. Was chosen. The 5 online seminars of the course covered a variety of topics and were intended for teachers of English or future teachers of English around the ...world. Participants were encouraged to join the associated Ning (http://www.shapingenglish.ning.com/) to participate in discussions, view or download video and other materials from the sessions, and access recordings of the webinars. The series ran from January 18th to March 14th, 2012. Each 90-minute webinar took place every other Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. in Washington, DC.

To take part in the webinars, participants had to first register at: https://dos-materialsdevelopment.adobeconnect.com/shapingwebinars5/event/registration.html Or http://tinyurl.com/shapingwebinars5

The schedule of the whole series was:

Webinar 1

The Musical Classroom: Teaching English with Tunes

Presenters: Jenny Hodgson & Kelli Odhuu

Wednesday January 18, 2012 6:00pm-7:30pm EST

Webinar 2

Towards a Pedagogy of Peace

Marti Anderson

Wednesday February 1st,2012 6:00pm-7:30pm EST

Webinar 3

Large Classes: Tips & Techniques for Teachers

Presenter: Christina Chandler

Wednesday February 15th,2012 6:00pm-7:30pm EST

The Research

This section of the paper deals with the description of the entire research work which led the researcher evaluate webinar in the context of making the student teachers develop pedagogic understanding.

Objectives:

The present study aimed at the following objectives;

1. To obtain the participants' (of the webinar)responses regarding its effect on their pedagogic understanding

2. To analyze the participants' responses statistically and descriptively to derive the effectiveness of the webinar in context of what they learnt about pedagogy.

3. To delineate a plan of action to integrate webinars in pre service education to enhance students' pedagogic understanding.

Delimiting The Study:

1. The participants who got registered for the webinar from H M Patel Institute of English training and Research were treated as the sample. They were 23 pre-service students among them 17 participants gave responses on the inventory.

2. The effect of the webinar was tested in the context of its qualitative contribution in strengthening the pre service students' understanding about English language teaching.

Research Methodology:

The 23 participants were given a reflection tool containing a rating scale (part I and II)to reflect on how far webinar contributed in developing their pedagogic understanding .It has three parts:

1. Effectiveness of Webinar In Context Of Participants' Learning About ELT (Rating Scale)

2. Contribution Of Webinar's Procedural Mechanics In Context Of Student-teachers' pedagogic understanding About ELT (Priority Ranking)

3. Enhancement of practical aspects of ELT through Webinar (Open ended questions)

The rating scale was analyzed calculating Chi-square value (for part I) and percentage(For part II) for each item and the open ended questions were analyzed using content analysis method. The analyzed data was interpreted and conclusions were made from which a plan of action to integrate webinars in pre service education to enhance their pedagogic development.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data:

The data obtained has been interpreted into three parts:

Effectiveness of Webinar In Context of Participants' Learning About ELT:

The data from rating scale part I is presented here with the chi square values given in the following table.

Table 1: Effectiveness of Webinar In Context Of Participants' Learning About ELT

Sr No	Features	Completely agree	Agree	Neutral	Dis agree	Completely disagree	Chi-Square	Significance
1	Use of language for facilitating learning	2	13	2	-	-	14.23	*
2	Inviting participation	2	13	2	-	-	14.23	*
3	Organisation of content and its delivery	5	11	1	-	-	8.9	*
4	Creating Scope for interaction	2	13	2	-	-	14.23	*
5	Gradual opening up/unfoldment of the content	2	11	4	-	-	7.88	*
6	Methodology of presentation	10	7		-	-	.529	**
7	Creating scope for language production	1	13	2	1	-	24.17	*
8	Initiating inquiry and leading it further to reflect on one's practise	2	13	2	-	-	14.23	*
9	Constructing Thinking generative questions	14	3		-	-	7.11	*
10	Creating Scope for Enjoyment and ease	3	9	5	-	-	3.29	**
11	Innovation in presenting the content	2	13	2	-	-	14.23	*
12	Use of pedagogically sound ppts for presenting the content	3	12	2	-	-	10.70	**
13	Eliciting and highlighting Quality responses t in discussion	3	10	4	-	-	5.05	*
14	Technique Creating scope for self reflection based learning	1	7	9	-	-	6.11	*
15	Pointing out how to enhance understanding of theories learnt	5	12	-	-	-	2.88	*
16	Execution of communicative activities	3	7	7	-	-	1.88	**
17	Technique for Encouraging for variation/modification/adaptation in responses	3	10	4	-	-	5.05	**
18	Way of evaluating what has been learnt	8	8	1	-	-	5.76	**
19	Ways of pointing out to mistakes	3	14	-	-	-	7.11	*
20	Bringing in creativity in discussion.	3	14	-	-	-	7.11	*

* Indicates that the spread of frequency in a given statement is significant. So the statement shows significance towards the category in which highest frequency falls.

The Chi-square values mentioned in the above table suggests that in all the instances except no. 6,10,12.16,17 and 18, the highest frequency is in the column, 'Agree' and the values of significance in features other than indicated above are less than 0.05. so the it can be concluded that the frequency spread in these columns are significant at 0.05 level. It is therefore summed up that the constructs of pedagogy such as use of language for facilitating learning,ways of pointing out mistakes, bringing creative tasks in the classroom, creating scope for reflection based learning, technique Creating scope for self reflection based learning, eliciting and highlighting Quality responses t in discussion, Innovation in presenting the content, constructing Thinking generative questions, Initiating inquiry and leading it further to reflect on one's practise, Creating scope for language production , radual opening up/unfoldment of the content, Creating Scope for interaction, Organisation of content and its delivery and Inviting participation were the areas wherein participants' pedagogic understanding got developed.

Contribution of Webinar's Procedural Mechanics In Context Of Students' Learning About ELT

The data obtained from rating scale part II is presented here with percentage values in the following table:

Table 2 : Contribution Of Webinar's Procedural Mechanics In Context Of Student-teachers' pedagogic understanding About ELT

Sr. No	Mechanics	Contribution of procedural mechanics in percentage
1	Thinking triggering questions:	75%
2	Inputs based on participants' responses	67%
3	Text chat facility	89%
4	Task based theory derivation	82%
5	Stretch break	35%
6	Poll/survey questions	78%
7	Slide show along with presenter's commentary	88%

The above mentioned table suggests that the respondents considered text chat facility of the webinar as the most effective mechanism. It has received 89% of positive responses. The facilities : Slide show along with presenter's commentary and task based theory derivation have also received positive response . This makes it clear that though the learner is physically away from the presenter he is constantly engaged in by responding to the invited questions and group and individual tasks. The poll questions and thinking triggering questions were also seen as ef**fe**ctive mechanism by the respondents. The input giving mechanism based on the participants' responses gained 67% of favour by the participants. The Stretch Break was favored 35% only. This may be because during the entire session the participants do not feel any boredom or monotony.hey are physically as well as mentally alert all through the session so no break is required.

Participants' Verbal Responses Regarding Effectiveness Of Webinar

Following content analysis method, the descriptive data has been analysed deriving the major response units and their frequency in the following table.

Response Area (effect after the participation)	Response unit with frequency **(The figures in the bracket shows frequency of the response)*
Areas wherein pedagogic concepts and their know how became sound	How to handle communicative tasks(12)** Innovative ideas for Classroom management(10) Skills for effective classroom teaching (9) Planning for the large classes(5) Creative way of presenting content(2) Co-operative techniques of learning(2) Communication in classroom(1)
Areas wherein some managerial skills became pedagogically sound.	Taking On the spot Decisions when need arises(16) Experimenting innovative tasks(12) Technique of grouping students(11) Triggering thinking through poll questions(7) Redefining responses by referring what others have said(3) Consolidation of discussion(1)
Areas wherein new insight were developed	Clarity of previously learnt pedagogy(8) Confidence in designing materials(6) Readiness for designing fun giving tasks(7) Thinking provocation (6) Comparison of responses leading to further responses (1)
Contribution of webinar in future role as a teacher	Enrichment of skills using technology(15) Communication with teacher fraternity(8) Development of Readiness for keeping on learning(6)
Comparison of webinar with class room teaching	Individual efforts coupled with group involvement encouraged(12) Strengthening of classroom discussion(9) More attractive(9) More active (9)
Problem Faced	Following the English pronunciations.(11) Lack of Indian contexts as far as situations in communicative tasks were concerned.(09) Following international timings (07)
Suggestions to students on the campus for attending webinars	Becoming independent learners(14) Expand the scope for sharing and learning(12) Learning from technology is faster and attractive(6) Going away from boredom and traditional teaching(2)

The response units and their frequency indicates that the participants saw themselves pedagogically growing after attending the webinar. The first response area and the response units show that the pre service students have become pedagogically rich through this webinar. The second response area and response units indicate that pre service students' reflective engagement in the webinar has made them develop and receive novel ideas of teaching English also.. This reveals that in the teacher preparation programme, webinar contributed in making the pre service students sound in

dealing with their concepts about ELT. The positive responses in the webinar's contribution in their future role, it is found that such e learning mechanism can make them to be learners forever. The webinar was seen as more attractive and active than the traditional classroom teaching techniques by more than 55% of the respondents. To make teacher education technology mediated, such webinar mechanism needs to be introduced. This statement finds evidence if the response units of the last response area are studied.

Findings

Through the interpretation of the data given in the above tables, the following findings can be derived.

1. The webinar offered scope for participation and interaction among the student teachers to develop understanding of ELT concepts

2. The participants felt that the webinars proved as a supplement to classroom theoretical teaching as the learnt items are strengthened and new knowledge is built upon it.

3. The methodology of the presentation of the content in webinar proved effective as information impartation was not on the focus. Consolidating participants' views and weaving into it theoretical foundations practical tasks were assigned . This made student-teachers feel that they were not passive but they could establish synthesis in theory and practice.

4. The webinars generated divergent thinking too as thinking generative questions, poll questions and invitation to reflect on issues were raised/assigned. This made them experiment in diving into new ideas and come out of it with finer insights.

5. The sharing among the participants across the globe picked up the pace for the broader viewpoints too. Learning form co-learners took place which enabled the student teachers develop a consolidated picture of ELT. They could become witness of the feasibility of many of the principles of communicative ideas.

6. The webinar, being participative in nature attracted the learners more than the classroom teaching as there is enjoyment and ease coupled with reflective exercises.

7. Webinars being not didactic in nature offered scope for individual modification of what is generalized. This enabled the learners to be responsible in making choice about what to accept and what to discard.

8. The webinar although voluntarily attended by individual did not encourage raw or half cooked responses. The presenter along with the commentary interwove the qualitative responses. Thus repetition and casual comments were avoided.

9. The poll questions offered scope for opining on current issues. This enabled the student teachers to be connected with contemporaneous on goings of the world.

10. In the webinar the individual student teacher was connected with the presenter and other respondent as well as he was detached in the sense that reflective tasks demanded individual efforts.

10. The webinars as offered by a hosting country, the contexts did not fit completely to participants' own country. Thus, learners had to be aware of such diversities. They took decisions keeping in view their own country's context.

11. Webinar mechanism of e learning attracted the techno savvy generation and thus made them spend time voluntarily for their own learning.

12. To make higher education more active and relevant, inclusion of webinar should be done.

Recommendations For Bringing In WEBINARS In Pre- Service

From the above mentioned findings, the researcher has made certain recommendations to encourage the use of webinars in higher education.

1. The teacher education institutions need to search for agencies which offer qualitative webinars and should make it compulsory for the students to attend at-least one webinar per semester. The well known agencies can be contacted from the following sites:

2. www.ascd.org/**webinars**

3. www.edweek.org/ew/marketplace/**webinars**/**webinars**.html

4. www.pbs.org/**teachers**/**webinar**/

5. www.parentcenternetwork.org/.../**Webinars**/Autism**WebinarS**lides.pdf

petm.iupui.edu/.../Physical**_Education_Teacher_Education**.

petm.iupui.edu/academics/peunderoffer.php

6. . Qualitative Institutes offering webinars should be tied up by our institutions. Our specific needs can be communicated and thus need based webinars can be made available.

7. Linking amongst institutions of a particular region/state and country can be established and collaborative effort can be done to offer webinars.

8. One of the submissions in B Ed Course be attending a webinar and writing a reflective report on it.

9. The seminar system can be replaced with webinar as the later offers wider scope for participation, interaction, inquiry and theory building.

10. Classroom discussions can be treated as pre and post tasks for selected topics to be attended on webinar. This strategy enables learners to get oriented on the topic in pre webinar session and to consolidate what is learnt through reflections in post webinar session.

11. The attendance of webinar can be treated as a part of internal assessment.

Conclusion:

Teaching can be complex, but strategies to ignite powerful student learning do not have to be. Webinars are the state of the art instructional tool which can make the student teachers become pedagogically sound mediated through technology and add to their existing "tool belt" that will guarantee to increase learner understanding, motivation, and engagement. Webinar technology paves way for reconsidering the modus operandi of teacher education institutions. It has the potential to utilize technology in right sense of the term to enhance what a student teacher must learn.

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