



Blending ICT in Teacher Education

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Abstract:

In this paper a humble effort has been made to emphasize the importance of ICTs in teacher education programmes especially for Indian context. Former Hon'ble President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam once said " If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference. They are the Father, The Mother and the Teacher." This great opinion significantly justifies the importance of a teacher in any educational system.

Key Words:- ICT, Teacher Education

ICT stands for Information and Communication Technologies and may be defined as '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 telephony.

ICTs provide an array of powerful tools that may help in transforming the present isolated, teacher - centered and text – bound class – rooms into rich, student – centered and focussed interactive knowledge environment.

ICTs greatly facilitate the acquisition and absorption of knowledge, providing developing countries unprecedented opportunities to enhance educational systems, improve policy formulation and execution and widen the range of opportunities for needy people including the poor. One of the hardships and problems endured by such people, who live mostly in the poor countries, is their sense of isolation. The newly emerged communications technologies promise to reduce that sense of isolation and to open the access to knowledge in different ways which were unimaginable some years back.

ICT supported learning encourages interaction and cooperation among students, teachers and experts regardless what they are. This also provides learners the opportunity to work with people from different cultures and thus helps them to enhance teaming and communicative skills as well as their global awareness.

The challenges confronting our educational system is how to transform and the teaching – learning – process to provide students with the skills to function effectively in this dynamic, information – rich and fast – changing society. ICTs are potentially powerful tool for extending educational opportunities, both formal and informal, scattered and rural population groups traditionally excluded from process of education due to cultural or social reasons such as ethnic minorities, girls and women, persons with disabilities and the elderly. One of the features of ICTs is its ability to transcend time and space. Its use providing online course material may be accessed 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Also with the use of internet and worldwide web a treasure of learning materials in a particular subject or topic with a variety of media can now be accessed from anywhere from anytime and without any limitation. ICT may also facilitate access to resource persons, mentors, experts, researchers, professionals, business leaders all over the world.

Since the concept of learning is going through a progressive change due to long time research in human learning it is the demand of the time that teachers should have operative knowledge of communication technologies and be aware for its proper use. For this they should possess the ability to adopt and manage in complex situations, desire to know, ability to use imagination to create new things and keen interest to take risk

Don Tapscott (1998) in his widely known book “ Growing Up Digital : The Rise of the Net Generation “ opines that we are entering a new era of digital learning in which we are in a process of transitioning from ‘ broadcast ‘ learning to ‘ interactive ‘ learning. This is the real situation that today’s students no longer want to be a passive recipient in the information transfer model of learning, rather they want to be active participant in the learning process. Along with this concept all the activities related to teaching – learning process are undergoing fast and drastic changes.

For developing countries like India ICT has the potential for increasing access and improving the relevance and quality of teacher education. It may represent a potentially equalizing strategy for such countries. UNESCO’s World Education Report (1998) mentions that the young generation is entering a world that is changing in all spheres: scientific and technological, political, economic, socio and cultural. The emergence of the knowledge – based society is changing the global economy and the status of education.

Blending ICT in teacher education indicates and refers to different learning models that combine traditional classroom practice with e-learning solutions. With this, both traditional and electronic, strategy may be very helpful in classroom to clarify any subject matter within limited infrastructures. A well – written technology plan will answer clearly to who, what, when, where and how – questions related to achieving the vision and goals. Also before using any technology the efficiency of the faculty should be kept in mind.

Not only in India but all over the world ICTs have been used broadly to improve access to and the quality of teacher’s training. For example, institutions like Cyber Teacher’s

Training Centres (CTTC) in South Korea are taking advantages of the internet to provide better teacher professional development opportunities to inservice teachers..Here the government funded CTTCs, established in 1997, offer self – directed, self – paced and web – based courses for primary and secondary school teachers. Such courses include ‘Computers in the Information Society’, ‘Education Reforms’ and ‘ Future Society and Education.’Also in China large – scale radio and television based teacher education programme has for many years been conducted by the China Central Radio and TV University.

In our country at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) satellite – based one way video and two – way audio conferencing was held in 1996 supplemented by print materials and recorded video to train school teachers. If designed and implemented properly ICT supported education promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills that empower teachers and students for life long learning. When used properly, especially computer and internet technology, it enables new ways teaching – learning and learning for some new situations Here Hadded and Draxler may be quoted well as they identify at least five levels of technology used in the educational process, namely, presentation, demonstration, drill and practice, interaction and collaboration. .

For education to reap the full benefits of ICTs in teaching – learning process it is essential That the pre – service and in – service teachers are able to effectively use new tools and aids of learning. Teacher education institutions and programmes must provide the leadership for pre –service and in – service teachers and model the pedagogies and tools for teaching and learning.

ICT can well support effective professional development of teachers. The most obvious technique for professional development for teachers is to provide courses in basic ICT knowledge and skills. It is necessary for teachers to become skilled in operating the new technologies and in exploiting them effectively as educational tools. Teachers must master the use of the information skills of research, critical analysis, linking diverse types and sources of information etc. Thus teachers must be adequately equipped with more didactic competencies so as to assume their new role as experts in the learning process.

Thus it is necessary and demand of the time to identify important strategies for managing the change process in the teacher – education programmes as technology becomes a CATALYST for transforming the teaching – learning process.