

Virtual Classrooms and E -Learning: The Changing Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

Media Convergence and new communication technologies have created the new learning environment. The traditional approach of teaching is being replaced with online courses. Media Convergence and new communication technologies have created the new learning environment. Online courses with audio –visual tools such as colorful text, sound, images not only enhance learning but it has also turned the whole world into global village. There is need to revise the present pedagogies so that the use of ICT tools not only enhance the teachers basic skills and learning but should also play an important role on the student's employment and economic growth of the country. Virtual classrooms are an emerging trend which allows active participation, interactive discussions and information with blended techniques and skills thus replacing interpersonal communications. Communities of practice can also use blended techniques, leveraging both face-to-face interactions and online tools and discussions (Means et al. 2010; Bakia et al., 2011). Today, with digitalization it has become very easy and convenient for the teachers to share and connect with the larger global community of educators but at the same time it has also created Rural-Urban Divide not only at the national level but also among develop and developing countries. In most of the developing countries there is lack of ICT infrastructure or the digital divide is because of geographic proximity to internet access and internetcafes. Luke (1993) agrees with Campbell that this expansion of technology will create a 'new class' of information-elite, which will be unreachable to the information poor. Some learners will undoubtedly thrive in the new liberating on-line learning situation, while others will flounder (Lynch & Bishop 1998). Effective learning is closely related to context delivery and medium. The present chapter through review of literature will try to explore the pros and cons of virtual learning, effecting the education system, community and society at the large.

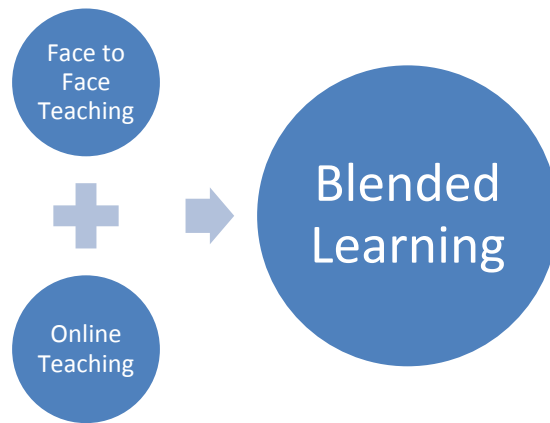
1. Introduction

Due to the mushroom growth of communication technologies, the traditional approach of face –to – face classroom based teaching has been replaced with asynchronous online learning and teaching methodologies. Information and Communication Technology has facilitated collaborative learning and teaching by bringing global education resources to personalize levels and institutions. Change in communication technologies, the internet infrastructure has been incorporated into many learning environments, including Blended e-Learning (BL), which leads to changes in instructional practices, such as the Traditional Face-to-Face Learning (TF2FL) environment (Romano et al., 2005). The replacement of traditional face to face teaching and learning with online teaching have not only given new opportunities but also new challenges for both teachers and students as well. Present and future teaching and learning requires virtual classrooms having interactive communication technology tools in the education environment which has become a challenging task. Laurillard (2002) asserted that if there is to be innovation and change in university teaching—as the new technology requires, as the knowledge industry requires, and as student's demand then it follows that academics must become researchers in teaching (p. 22). Collins & Berge (1997) have penned broadly on regulating on-line discussion areas, and question's 'where are the teachers to acquire the necessary skills for their online work?' It

is not only the teachers, but the students and administrators as well who need to learn these new skills, and what is the impact this has on their work, home and social life? Incorporation of Learning and online teaching methodologies have become imperative for Higher Education pedagogies. Looking at the changing scenario of education, it has become a vital prerequisite to create virtual learning environment in the curriculum so as to survive in the competitive digital world.

2. Role and Scope of E-learning and Virtual Classrooms

With the rapid growth of Information Communication and Technology, e- learning and virtual classrooms are gaining momentum in developing countries. E learning and virtual classrooms requires various teaching approaches, methods and technologies. No doubt, the chalk and talk method, textbook teaching has been tried and tested over the years but new communication technologies have provided high quality interactive videos, software's which involves more and more students from the distant through internet and video conferencing. Students receive live instructions from the teachers sitting at the far off places. Communication technologies have bought quality education by providing the study material for e-readers on smart phones and laptops etc. Therefore, there is dire need to promote the necessary 21st century skills among young generation so that they become critical thinkers in this knowledge centered globalized world.



Technology-Enhanced Student-Centered Learning Environments (SCLEs) : The design and development of student centered teaching programme has to be developed by keeping in mind the level and technology skills and facilities provided to teacher and student. One of the advantages of technology enhanced student -centered learning environment is the ability to send out messages all across the globe without being physically present at the same location.

Designing and Writing Online learning: One has to keep the same principle in mind while designing programmes for virtual classrooms such as learner's level, IT skills and preferences etc which caters to their needs'. The instructor has to add creative ideas and so as to make subject matter more, fun loving, interactive, dynamic and user friendly. Special commercially developed software's are being developed to design and write online lessons' with illustrations and animations'. In rethinking their familiar ways of teaching when moving online, a change that is noted numerous times ,is a shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction (Barker, 2003; Conceicao,2006; Conrad, 2004;)

Rural -Urban Divide: Today, with digitalization it has become very easy and convenient for the teachers to share and connect with the larger global community of educators but at the same time it has also created Rural-Urban Divide not only at the national level but also among develop and developing countries. In most of the developing countries there is lack of ICT infrastructure or the digital divide is because of geographic proximity to internet access and internet cafes .Luke (1993) agrees with Campbell that this expansion of technology will create a 'new class' of information-elite, which will be unreachable to the information poor.

3. Review of Literature:

Media Convergence and new communication technologies have expanded connections of teachers globally. The instructor is central in virtual classrooms situation. The instructor may have to change the pedagogies and need to focus on student centered learning than traditional teacher centered learning. As faculty have to prepare and present content differently, as they have to communicate, connect, and engage with their students differently, and as they have to forge new partnerships with media specialists and instructional designers, they begin to rethink their assumptions about teaching and learning (Diekelmann et al.; Jaffee, 2003).

One must consider the faculty members who believe that face-to-face instruction in the traditional classroom is the best and only way for students to learn (Meyer, 2004). The traditional teachers feel online teaching as treat with the changing role of the teaching. With the changing times it becomes difficult to refine teaching and learning practices specially when you need to have specialized IT skills. Without training many instructors try to replicate existing course design and pedagogical practices when they move from face to face teaching to blended or online teaching (Bonk & Dennen, 2003)

The use of ICT in the classrooms has brought about large changes in teaching practices. It has created learner centered environment by making it more colorful and user friendly by matching text with videos that boost the subject matter. Reconsidering their teaching practices can begin with something as simple as realizing that they now have different opportunities to communicate with their students (West et al., 2007). They have empirical evidence to support their beliefs and have colleagues who hold similar beliefs. When faculty members display a resistance to online teaching, it may be because it threatens their identity as professors and experts (Meyer, 2004). This could impact their online teaching experience.

The shift from face-to-face to blended and online teaching and learning is quite challenging. Many experienced or expert face-to-face teachers find themselves as novices or beginners when first teaching online. In some cases it could result in a resistance towards online teaching (McQuiggan, 2007).

Rotter, 2002; Young, 2002). Many experienced or expert face-to-face teachers find themselves as novices or beginners when first teaching online. In some cases it could result in a resistance towards online teaching (McQuiggan). , 2007 Student-centered learning requires students to set their own goals for learning, and determine resources and activities that will help them meet those goals (Jonassen, 2000).

4. Conclusion:

With the change in information and communication technologies, there is rapid change in teaching and learning process offering both opportunities and challenges as well. No doubt, online teaching requires active participation. It is more dynamic and has a value added service of synchronicity but at the same time it is also creating platform of resilience while

replacing traditional face to face teaching and learning environment. Face to face Traditional sometimes consider it as treat while changing the pedagogical pattern in order to survive in the digitalized society. As the new communication technologies have made the world a global village and has advance the evolution of higher education, so it has become extremely imperative for the traditional teachers to shift their

attention from traditional teaching to IT skills and pedagogical practices. The stakeholders need to engage in a meaningful reflective practice in order to increase the effectiveness of teaching and satisfaction of learners, which would support student centered teaching and change the communities at the large.

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