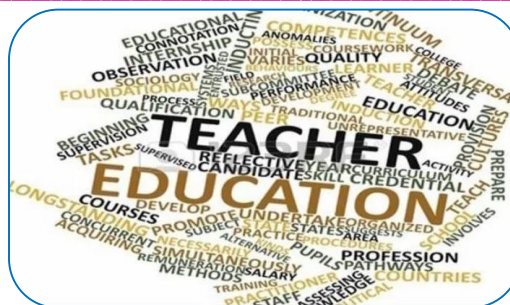# DIGITAL LEARNING AS AN INSTRUMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to analyse the role of digital learning in the quality enhancement of teacher education specifically in Indian context. Quality is a never ending journey. Technology plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of learning. Technological advancement has entirely changed the patterns and designs of learning. This scenario has enhanced the idea of digital learning in the field of education. Digital learning plays a significant role in making teacher education programmes effective, creative and productive. It gives learners equal opportunities to learn anywhere and anytime in accordance to their own pace, place and path irrespective of caste, creed and colour. It has brought revolutionary changes in the world of education throughout the world. It can be used as a powerful tool in the hands of a teacher to keep his or her knowledge, skills and ideas updated in accordance to the specific wants and necessities. Hence, the need of the hour is to include the idea of digital learning as an integral part in the curriculum of teacher education programmes to make it more innovative, dynamic and fruitful.

KEYWORDS: Digital learning, teacher education, quality education, technological revolution, ICT.

INTRODUCTION

The world is changing faster than at any time in the human history. What is learnt today may not have any significance tomorrow. Technological development has completely changed the way we learn. This scenario has enhanced the idea of digital learning in the field of education. Further, teacher education plays a significant role in the development of any country directly or indirectly. It shapes the destiny of a nation generation after generation. The quality of any kind of teacher education programme can be enhanced, if it gets integrated with the idea of digital learning. Digital learning plays a significant role in making teacher education programmes effective, creative and productive. It gives learners equal opportunities to learn anywhere and anytime in accordance to their own pace, place and path irrespective of region and religion. It can be used as a powerful instrument in the hands of a learner to keep his or her knowledge and skills updated (Waxman, Lin, & Michko, 2003).

We have entered in the era of digitalization which is reshaping the dimensions of learning through connecting more and more people on common platforms like Google+, YouTube, Facebook, What's App and other platforms of digital learning. Digital learning helps in the development of critical thinking, awareness and understanding of different issues from various angles and perspectives. It also allows the learners more freedom to connect and collaborate beyond the physical barriers. It makes the user active and participative self-directed learner rather than passive absorber of information (Higgins, Xiao, & Katsipataki, 2012). Moreover, it shapes and represents information in such a way that excites, ignites and stimulates the user in an effective, productive and creative manner. In these circumstances

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this is the need of the hour to include the idea of digital learning as an integral part of the curriculum in teacher education programmes.

IDEA OF DIGITAL LEARNING

The idea of digital learning is growing as an integral part of education system throughout the world. In simple words, digital learning means learning using electronic media or devices. Digital learning can be defined as a web based learning which effectively makes use of information technology to impart knowledge to the learners (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). It is the learning facilitated by technology that gives learners autonomy, convenience and flexibility to a great extent. It uses digital tools and technology to create a better learning experience for learners. It helps in connecting people and gives them opportunities to share the ideas, thoughts and experiences beyond borders, barriers and boundaries. Different platforms of digital learning have a profound impact on the teaching learning process of the present generation.

Digital learning helps the learners to get associated with the professionals, specialists and intellectuals. It makes the process of learning fascinating, exciting and pleasant. It helps in developing the notion of learning environments as more than physical space to provide learners with more opportunities for meaningful learning. Digital technology links the learners to their own world, make them experts and give their voice a platform. It uses creative and technological tools that help students in evolving higher levels of thinking. It is connecting people beyond barriers and boundaries. It has evolved as an instrument in the hands of the learners to express himself or herself. It has created a platform where an individual learner is free to exchange his or her ideas, information and imagination with each other confidently, creatively and fearlessly (Chauhan, 2007).

DIGITAL LEARNING AND QUALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher education is a continuous, ever-evolving and dynamic process. In the broader sense 'teacher education' refers to the total of educative experiences which contribute to the preparation of a person for a teaching position in schools (Waxman, Lin, & Michko, 2003). Quality of teacher education matters. This is because it affects generation after generation directly or indirectly. Quality is a never ending journey. It means constantly pursuing excellence. It is a continuous and lifelong process. The platform of digital learning not only plays a significant role in the equalisation of educational opportunities, but also ensures quality education to the learners without any discrimination

The platform of digital learning empowers a learner of remote region to go through the lectures of renowned personalities of top most global educational institutions in the audio-visual format. Digital learning helps a learner to get connected with the experts, analysts and thinkers worldwide. It provides interactive learning content and communication channels to the learners and also offers tools to analyze their own learning performance. It allows the learners to reach their fullest potential and become successful and responsible teachers, transforming their own lives along with the lives of their students (Higgins, Xiao, & Katsipataki, 2012).

DIGITAL LEARNING AS A TOOL OF INNOVATION

Digital learning enhances the creativity, innovation and out of the box thinking of learners. Platforms of digital learning help in linking the learners to exchange their ideas and imagination. Further, it helps in exploring the unexplored, reaching the unreached and seeing the unseen. Digital learning gives to learners abundant opportunities for expressing themselves in various ways. This leads to enhance the creativity and innovation of the learners (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower. Since digital learning is a tool of innovation, it has the potential to convert a learner into a leader in the world of ideas, knowledge and education.

People feel happy to share their knowledge, skills and wisdom on different platforms of digital learning. In this process of sharing, relationship develops, connectivity expands and thinking advances. Thinking is sharpened by original and innovative ideas which are the products of ignited and aspiring minds. The mind gets ignited, when it interacts with others and imagine freely and fearlessly. Further,

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this interaction and imagination which leads to innovation is the crucial product of digital learning. If teacher education programmes get integrated with digital learning platforms, they will become more igniting, inspiring, interactive, innovative and imaginative. The need of the hour is to assimilate the idea of digital learning as an integral part of the curriculum of various teacher education programmes for making them more fruitful, productive and collaborative.

DIGITAL LEARNING AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SELF-LEARNING

Digital learning provides the opportunity to a learner for learning himself or herself in accordance to his or her own pace, path and place. Self-learning is the process where individuals themselves take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs and formulating learning goals; and identify human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning ways and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975). Self-learning gives learners opportunities to learn in accordance with their own interests, convenience and consciousness (Leary, 2012). It is a continuous process concerned with self-management, self-monitoring and self-modification (Hiemstra, 1994). The idea of self-learning makes the process of learning beyond books, classrooms, schools, colleges and universities. It makes the whole world as a laboratory for an enquiring and ignited mind.

Self-learning implies that a learner can certainly learn on their own without instructional interventions while discovering, analyzing and evaluating their own learning process. It is a process of deliberately monitoring one's own thinking and reflecting on one's own thinking patterns, plans, strategies, decisions and actions. Self-learning is both a process as well as an outcome in the process of learning (Loyens, Magda, & Rikers, 2008). It requires that learners monitor, evaluate and adjust their approaches to learning. The idea of digital learning enhances self-learning strategy which is the need of the present postmodern world to fulfill the daily demands of personal and professional life.

DIGITAL LEARNING AS AN OPPORTUNITY OF GETTING CONNECTED WITH THE WORLD

The essence of digital learning is 'connecting people'. This connectivity leads to the diffusion of ideas, knowledge, skills, wisdom and experiences beyond barriers and boundaries. The platform of digital learning connects a learner to the entire world where he is free to explore, exchange and express his or her ideas, thoughts and experiences according to his needs, interests and desires. It creates a classroom without walls, a school without boundaries and a world without borders. It helps in expanding the notion of learning environments and ecosystems more than physical space to provide learners with more opportunities for meaningful learning (Shinkareva, 2006).

Technological advancement is restructuring the world (Toffler, 1971). Every aspect of life is getting transformed. In this process the way of learning as well is getting altered. Digital learning has become an integral part of modern education programmes. It makes the process of learning more innovative, interactive and collaborative through linking more and more people together on common platforms. It is a well known fact that feedback motivates and encourages a learner in the process of learning. And digital learning offers the learners quick feedback regarding their understanding a specific concept. In this way they can concentrate their efforts where further understanding is most needed. Digital learning helps the learners in learning their own way. It also helps a learner to formulate his or her own strategies in accordance to the interests, conditions and requirements.

CONCLUSION

The quality of teacher education programmes influence the entire education system directly and indirectly. Digital learning plays a significant role in improving the quality of teacher education programmes through connecting the learners or users with the experts, analysts and professionals. The platforms of digital learning connect the learners and encourage the exchange of ideas, thoughts, knowledge, skills, wisdom and experiences amongst them. Digital learning helps a teacher to learn according to his or her interest, convenience, time, pace, place and path. It must be an integral part of the curriculum of all kinds of teacher education programmes. The present world around us is full of

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uncertainties. Rapid technological advancement is making the world more uncertain. To cope up with this situation digital learning can be used as a potential weapon by the teacher educators of 21st century. The need of the hour is to include the idea of digital learning as an integral part in the curriculum of teacher education programme to make it more innovative, dynamic and fruitful.

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