



TEACHER EDUCATORS' NEED OF E-TRAINING IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Modern age is digital and highly technological. Thus, education as an industry is not exempted from the impact of technology and digital connection. Therefore, each one of us is trying to be compatible with the electronic revolution which has become quite essential for other related changes. Educational technology too has been in active use for a long time especially in most modern educational institutions in India and across the globe. Electronic media can play a critical role in preparing modern teachers equipped with sophisticated learning tools. It has been noticed that effective implementation of e-learning is not possible without teacher's attitude, readiness and appropriate training. The present paper discusses the importance of training in electronic learning scenario for teacher educator's professional development in general and language educators in particular. The main purpose of this paper is to raise and tackle some of the training issues and components of pre and in-service teacher-training for effective utilization of e- resource and achievement of educational objectives conceived at teachers' colleges for different disciplines.



KEYWORDS : Teacher educators, e-training, educational technology, in-service training, professional development, pedagogy.

1- INTRODUCTION

Technology includes everything related to tools and techniques: theorized and used for effective communication. Electronic training can operationally be defined as preparation and equipment of e-instructors so that they are able to utilize and implement e-learning program of education. It is basically a training scenario derived from the electronic concepts: hardware and software either online or offline. As e-training is carried out for effective implementation of e-learning, all the components and dimensions remain the same, and falls under the head of teacher's in-service education/continuous development.

1.1.1. Teacher education: its importance

Teacher education is backbone of all kinds of education because it deals with teacher training for better delivery of the targets as conceived as educational objectives. If teacher educators are well equipped, teaching and learning will prove to be surely better.

1.1.2. Relevance of educator's continuous development

No one can deny the fact that continuous professional development is always required for teacher's enhancement. It ensures minimization of any chances of waste for human resource-the future teachers. If educators are up to date, they can implement all teaching strategies especially E-Learning and related pedagogy.

Any success in the area of effective e-learning can never be accomplished without an appropriate and intensive preparation of the teachers. In other words, teacher training is a necessary phase for effective pedagogic outcomes.

2. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The studies pertaining to e-learning: theory, research or practice are available in almost every context. Plenty works are being undertaken in almost every aspect of e-learning including teacher development. The following (only a few) studies create a base for the present research context/review of literature. Khan (2011a, 77) opines E-Learning has emerged as a worldwide phenomenon in the field of pedagogy. Therefore, the teachers are supposed to be able to use and utilize the e- resources available in an institution.

Khan (2011b, 1252 & 2016, 125-35) again emphasized the need of technology use: It is my firm belief now that the language laboratory (suitably equipped with computer assisted language learning) must be looked upon only as an aid to the mastery of certain specific language skills. This can motivate the learners as they may enjoy the activity. This can be an added advantage if the teaching is improvised by sophisticated tool and technology and proper implementation of such principles.

Online instruction, according to Khan (1997), is an innovative approach for delivering classroom instruction to a remote audience, using the Web as the medium. A step further, Khan (2005) concluded, 'Teacher factor is the most important of all in the educational setting. It is the teacher's responsibility to refresh his knowledge update his potential and equip himself with the advancement of the society and use of technology in general and educational environment in particular.

Regarding professional development, Khan (2011c, 119; 2011d, 1584) contended that in order to justify the job of a teacher he has to attend trainings/refresher programs which are considered quite essential in this fast changing society. Thus, in order to be updated, modern and sophisticated, one should attend in-service training or professional development programs. Professional development is always needed for every teacher even if he is highly knowledgeable, experienced and trained.

2.1 Theoretical importance of e-learning/training

Though 'learning' is a complex process, it can be an equally enjoyable experience for all kinds of learners. However, it is felt that both the teachers and learners require initiate training for efficient use of learning resources (Khan, 2005, 197). The ability to develop and apply the lessons of electronic educational resources for teachers true today, it is a requirement of time (Condie & Livingstone, 2007). The teachers should know as to how to pedagogically utilize both the modern and traditional learning methods for better outcomes. As everyone knows, the Internet that connects the world and offers all kinds of information available to a few clicks is certainly one of the most important inventions of the last century. Besides, one of its most interesting features is the fact that it continues to evolve and to discover. (Whisenand & Dunphy, 2010). One can Access free information related to any subjects in different languages. The learners who chooses this method can access online material whenever they want provided there is an internet connection. (Shah et al, 2010). Scholars of education, pedagogues and researchers agree while using multimedia tools and technology, an online English class can have video, audio, images and interactive exercises that facilitate the student's experience and transform the moment of learning in a fun and light practice. (Barbarick, 2010).

2.2 Distance Learning

Distance learning (DL) has emerged as an importance mode of learning especially in a densely populated country like India. DL is nothing but a set of technologies that provide students with the basic delivery volume of the studied material, interactive interaction of students and teachers in the learning

process, providing students with the possibility of independent work on the development of the material under study, as well as in the learning process (Nuray, Ercan & Ozden, 2013).

2.2.1 Distance Learning Technologies

Distance learning opens room for broader interaction and offers several different technologies that can be used during training. The basic technology of distance learning technology is built on the use of Internet technologies. Within the framework of distance learning have been used all the means offered by the Internet users. In general, it should be noted that the use of distance learning technologies, built on the use of Internet technologies, displaces all other distance learning technologies including due to the fact that Internet technologies gradually include other information technology. For example, telephony is increasingly becoming part of the Internet (Sosabowski et al, 1998). It may be quite beneficial for pronunciation drill and speaking skills.

Volery (2000) further noted that online delivery is a form of distributed learning enabled by the Internet. Pedagogues think that besides being a facilitator, the instructor should also be to some extent, an instructional designer (Zheng & Smaldino, 2003).

Teachers should be actively involved in defining priorities about what are their real problems and able to select suitable solutions (Tobin, 1988, Hewson and Hewson, 1988). It is also important to analyze the outcomes of teachers' attitudes. Pre-service courses can benefit from that knowledge and guide selecting courses and methods to insure a good foundation for future teachers. One possible way to evaluate could be to put together the two groups (teachers and students) during the undergraduate training period of future teachers.

In the literature, educational technology is considered as a tool and a change agent (1994) in which learning new technology leverages teachers' reflections on the nature of teaching and learning during which they access, consider, question, and eventually change their professional knowledge and practice. Yet, the integration of technology into a classroom or school does not inherently nor naturally reform teaching or learning (Dede, 2001; Wiske, 2001). If and how teachers adopt technology determines if change in teaching or learning occurs. An outcome of change seems less likely than the many claims in the literature might make it appear, for "teacher's cognitions have taken years to take shape and are, consequently, not easily changed" (Verloop, Driel, & Meijer, 2001, 454).

To help teachers incorporate technology in ways that support powerful instruction, needs an array of professional development experiences different from traditional workshops and how-to training sessions. (David, 1996, 238). Teachers need continued practice to become comfortable with technology. (Kent, 2004) Despite the availability of resources and increased emphasis on the use of technology, many teachers, whether pre-service (Doering, Hughes, & Huffman, 2008); Willis & Sujo de Montes (2002) or experienced, currently feel ill prepared to use technological tools and resources for teaching of contents. The factors may be contributing to pre-service, novice, and veteran teachers' struggles with integrating technology into their teaching in innovative and effective ways. First, school leaders call for technology integration without actually defining their vision for integration (Perry & Aregaldo, 2001).

Need of professional development for even teacher educators in the Indian Universities is a continuous and dynamic concept. The simplest reason being that concepts and techniques once learnt 20 years ago may not be compatible with the current socio-academic transitions in a fast changing digital society. Khan (2014,a) observes, 'Since education deals with the human development, there is always a chance of waste in the form of drop out or underachievement.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

It is purely of descriptive type in nature leading to exploratory type. An observatory approach has been followed to support the data gathered through the structured interview administered on the teacher educators of three universities of North India.

3.1. E-Learning Resource and practice by teacher educators

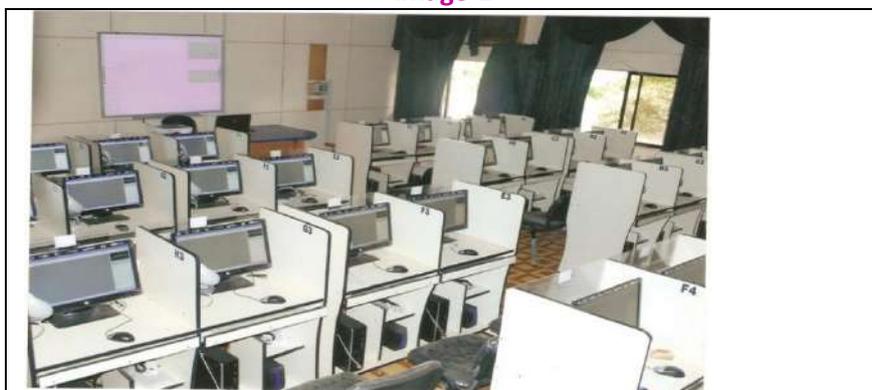
There are a lot of e resources and plenty of academic activities that can be carried out by the educators/instructors. However, the application depends on the availability of resources and teachers' preparedness for electronic integration. In addition, learners' readiness is also important.

3.2. E-resources at teachers colleges

The implementation of e-learning requires computer labs equipped with all necessary accessories including net connection. The following four images provide an evidence towards the equipment and resource availability at the College.

There is an urgent need to develop infrastructure to utilize e-resource. Later, professional development of the teacher educators through various means will be required for best practices. An establishment of a computer operated learning environment need to be created and utilized.

Image-1



(a view of the language lab required for effective pedagogy)

Following could be the seminar cum lecture room which includes required electronic facilities.

Image-2



(a view of the smart classroom)

3.3. The phases of e- training

At teachers' colleges, e-training implementation needs to include most of the following phases:

- Resource establishment,
- Designing and development of blended material,
- Trying out of the electronic system,
- Re-designing and improvement, and
- Implementation of online/blended learning environment

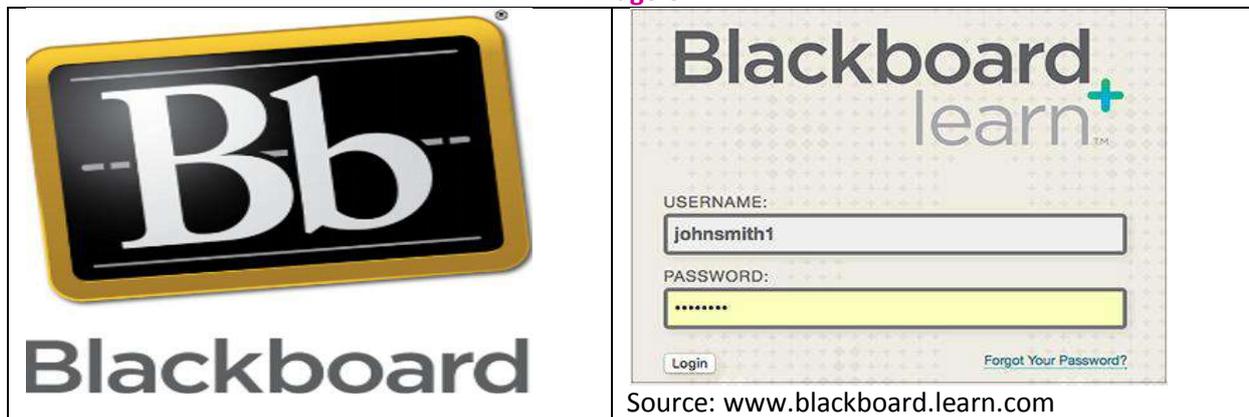
3.4. Benefits of the E-learning System at modern teacher education institutions

In most teaching institutions, e-learning and integrated technology has already become an integral component of face to face education. However, the practical aspect of technology based strategies is yet to

be fully accomplished. It is not an easy task to accomplish the task of successful implementation. Many activities were completed before implementing the e-learning.

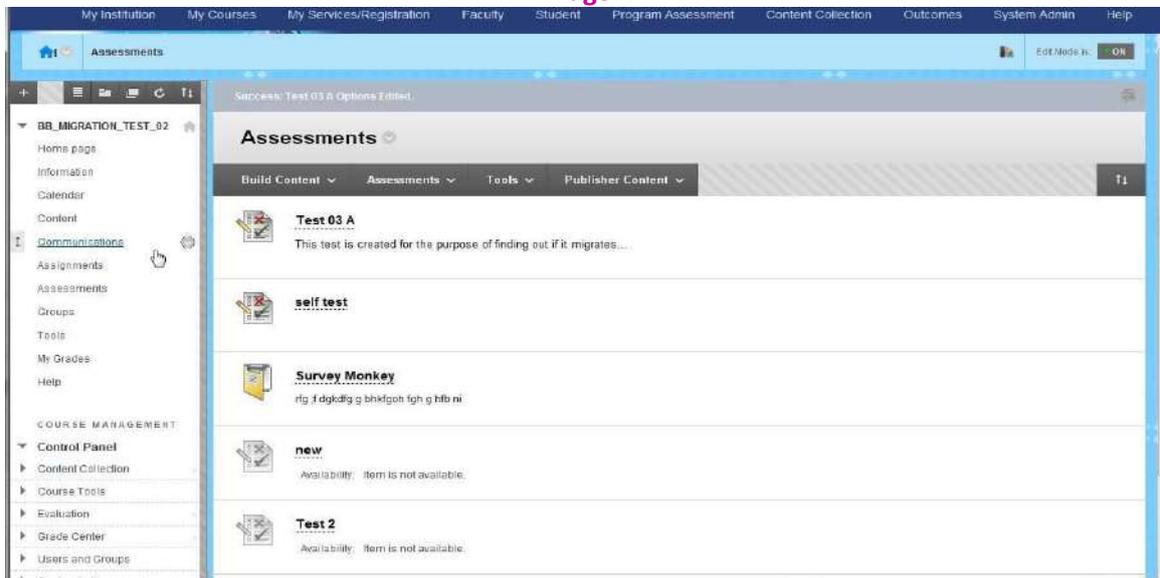
It is always better if an institution has developed its own electronic management system. It will assist in getting rid of copyrighted issues. In additions, materials could be developed and modified as per the need. If there is an issue related to creating a personal/institutional platform, one can create an access to blackboard: a platform which is highly useful for teaching-learning and even testing.

Image-3



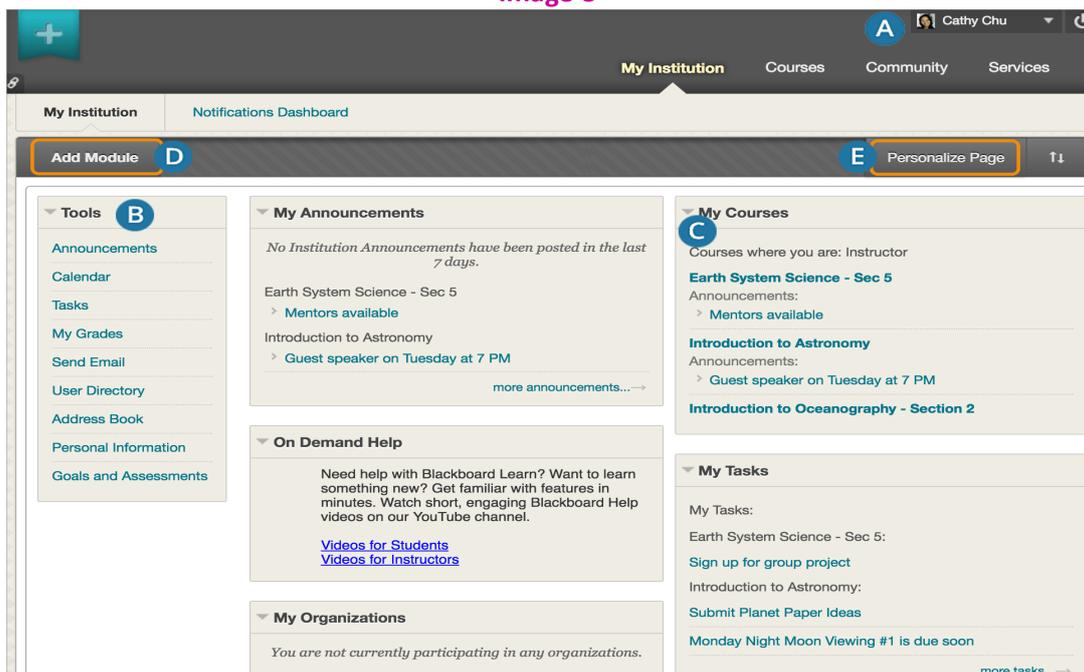
Blackboard(BB) as an electronic platform has been globally tested and successfully applied to different courses and programs at different international institutions, and has been found useful. Use of technology including blackboard is extremely essential. (2016b). BB is indeed comprehensive and beneficial as under:

Image-4



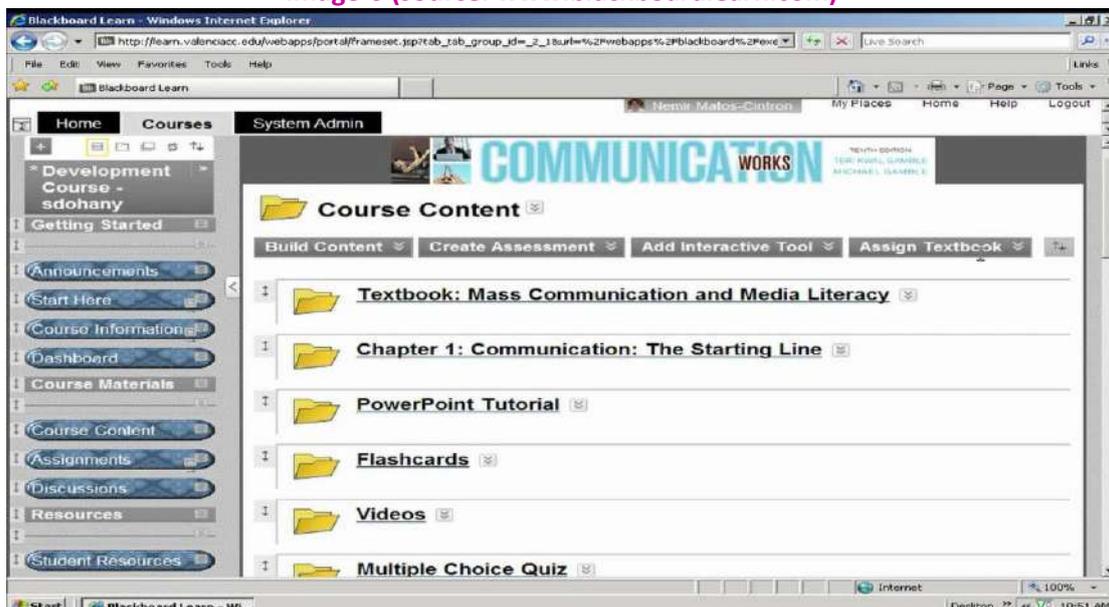
It has a scope of each and every type of options that can be integrated for better learning such as courses, tools, assignment, test, feedback and even discussion forum.

Image-5



Following is a detail description of the course content that can be uploaded and downloaded for each course an instructor is teaching.

Image-6 (source: www.blackboardlearn.com)



There are many other tools and electronic activities in which both the e-teachers and e-learners can involve. On line 'Quizzes' are one of them. The quizzes can be added and evaluated and even a response can be sent to the learners online. Such practices can reinforce the motivation level of the target learners.

3.5. E-training of the teacher educators

In order to implement e-learning, the teacher development needs to be primarily considered as it is felt that trainers/ educators, and instructors need to be sufficiently skilled in the expected model the use of e-learning.

The teaching faculty can't achieve the best possible results unless up to date in target area. Therefore, appropriate professional development should be initiated immediately before it is too late. The development process should keep on going from time to time. In order to achieve the professional development objectives, the institutional support is also an important factor. Last but not least, teacher educators and in-service teachers always need prompt managerial/technical support also in order not to hinder the active learning process. It is because of the fact that tools and equipment need off and on maintenance to keep the things up to date ready to use status.

3.6. Objectives

The objectives follow:

- To ascertain the e-training need of teacher educators,
- to find out the need of integrating online/e-learning materials,
- to elicit the possibility to use electronic materials in teacher education,
- to study perception of teacher educators, and status of teacher preparedness for integration of e-resources.

3.7. Data collection & Analysis

As mentioned above, the present case study involves data collection from interview schedule (Appendix-A). The interview was carried out face to face and through online modes such as skype, whatsapp, voicemail and imo. The items included in the tool were related to the need of e-training in particular as well as associated concepts based on literature review, observation and personal experience.

3.7.1. Analysis of data

The data collected were minutely studied and analysed, however qualitatively:

Interview questions:

1. *Is e-training essential for teacher educators? If yes why?*

Most of the interviewees (out of 28) were positive in responses and contended that the teacher educators should also be aware of technological issues and facilities in order to cope with the present day needs of modern digital based education.

2. *Have you ever used e-learning strategies for your teacher trainees?*

Only 6 out of 28 teachers have tried e-learning modes, however with difficulties of different kinds.

3. *Did you receive any training in the area of e-learning/teaching?*

It was found that 21 teacher educators from different areas of specialties have received training of different kinds in the area of technology and educational technology.

4. *Do you need technical support for e-teaching?*

Most of them required technical support in order to utilize electronic media.

5. *Can you design and upload power-points and Videos on electronic platforms?*

Only three respondents claim that they are able to design and upload e-learning material.

6. Are you aware of an electronic platform known as Blackboard?

Only 4 educators were aware of BB as an electronic platform that can be used for teaching-learning.

7. Is your college/dept. well equipped with labs, classes and offices?

Seven teachers agreed that college/dept was equipped for electronic learning.

8. Does college/university administration provide required support for implementation of e-resource?

19 educators were of the opinion that they get enough support for e-resource implementation.

9. Should all educators require intensive e-training for effective implementation of e-learning?

Nearly all the respondents say that they need intensive and appropriate training in electronic learning for better utilization.

10. Do you face challenges in e-learning/teaching?

All the respondents accepted that there are many types of challenges in e-learning implementation.

3.7.2. Findings

Based on the above data analysis and available literature review, personal experience and a need of teacher training in general, it is concluded that e- learning is also essential for integration of technology and e-learning environment. E-training can basically be provided during the job, and in a particular context. It can be a continuous process of teacher development. Thus, in sum, one can state that a general teacher training and e- training can go hand in hand for an optimum teaching- learning environment and achievement of the objectives.

3.7.2. Conclusions and discussions

E-learning has become a necessary and inseparable component of modern curriculum, therefore training in the target field is also required for almost all the teachers who need to be modern, sophisticated and result oriented. E-learning can be a boon and simultaneously a challenge if not accessed timely and properly. It can be accomplished unless the management and the institution supports positively during the transition phase of pedagogy from traditional method to blended learning.

3.7.3. Implications, Recommendations and suggestion for research

The findings of the study are going to be implemented in the form of theory building that e-training is urgent and essential for all modern instructors, teachers, teacher educators, researchers and managers as education without technology is perhaps not effective in the present time. And, each e-instructor must have a prior e-training or on the job training before utilization of the technology for learning in order to eliminate the chance of waste.

3.7.4. Suggestions

An empirical study needs to be carried out to authenticate the effectiveness of technology use in general and blackboard in particular.

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Appendix-A (Interview schedule for teacher educators)

1. Is e-training essential for teacher educators? If yes why?
2. Have you ever used e-learning strategies for your teacher trainees?
3. Did you receive any training in the area of e-learning/teaching?
4. Do you need technical support for e-teaching?
5. Can you design and upload power-points and Videos on electronic platforms?
6. Are you aware of an electronic platform known as Blackboard?
7. Is your college/dept. well equipped with labs, classes and offices?
8. Does college/university administration provide required support for implementation of e-resource?
9. Should all educators require intensive e-training for effective implementation of e-learning?
10. Do you face challenges in e-learning/teaching?