REVIEW OF RESEARCH
IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631(UIF) UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514 ISSN: 2249-894X
VOLUME - 7 | ISSUE - 12 | SEPTEMBER - 2018

INTEGRATING ICT IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Dr. S. D. Singh Parihar
Associate Professor & Head, Department of Teacher Education,
PG College, Ghazipur (UP) India.

ABSTRACT

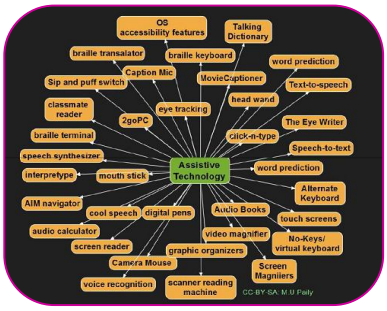
The write up explores the integration of information and communication technology in higher education and also discusses about the rationale and key challenges of inclusive society. Today's students live in a globalized world that is technology driven, fast – paced and constantly changing. Information and communication technology plays a significant role in almost all the spheres of contemporary society. The institutional infrastructure based on information and communication technology can also be established for isolated, disadvantaged, and marginalized students beyond the time and space. This paper highlights the rationale for information and communication technology in higher education while discussing the inclusionary perspective in the Indian society. Today's society by and large has become technology dependent irrespective of fields of work. The paper, however, concludes that the concept and understanding of inclusive society through higher education needs to be strengthened and new technologies, applications and other appliances should be widely utilized for varied purposes as and when required. For inclusive education to be effective, extensive consideration may be given to the appropriate selection and use of technological tools and applications. These technological interventions need to be representative, participative and effective all at the same time.

KEYWORDS: *Information and Communication Technology; Higher Education; Inclusive Society.*

INTRODUCTION

The diversity of the twenty first century students creates numerous challenges for teachers, researchers, and other practitioners. Among these, teachers must address the issues of providing equal access, opportunity and inclusion in the pursuit of knowledge, learning and education. At the same time, teachers must also contend with an increasing number of learners belonging from culturally, linguistically, socially and economically diverse backgrounds especially from high poverty family background. As observed, that more women than men live in poverty. Research reveals that the roles that men and women play in the various professional activities and society are not only biologically determined but, by and large, they are more sociologically and culturally oriented.

One of the modern beliefs is that the new technologies hold the key to research and development in the society. These technological developments have greatly increased the accessibility and opportunity for all in the pursuit of learning, education and knowledge. However, new technologies shift the emphasis towards inclusive perspectives. Interactive form of e-learning can lead to a more reflective, deeper and participative learning, learning by doing, inquiry learning, problem solving, creativity etc. (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011, p.09). In the context, it is being reiterated that information and communication



technologies are valuable tools for all those people who are marginalized and want to improve the quality of their lives.

Furthermore, student centered guidance results in better skills and competencies development. The institutional infrastructure based on information and communication technology can also be established for isolated, disadvantaged, and marginalized students beyond the time and space. Given the high profile debate with regard to use of ICT, this paper highlights the rationale for information and communication technology in higher education while discussing the inclusionary perspective in the Indian society. As, it can easily be seen that today's society by and large has become technology dependent irrespective of fields of work.

ICT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

As we know, that today's students live in a globalized world that is technology driven, fast – paced and constantly changing. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now a more recognized term referring to a kind of learners – centered approach to the use of electronic and digital technologies and the Internet in order to improve the quality of learning. In this connection, it can easily be stated that information and communication technology plays a significant role in almost all the spheres of contemporary society. Technology and social inclusion moves beyond the limited view of haves and have-nots to analyze the different forms of access to information and communication technologies (Warschauaer, M. 2003, p.01). On the other hand, the development of ICT based teaching and learning activities for transacting in the institutions of higher learning and research promises increased accessibility, opportunity and inclusion in the society. The use of technology in classrooms is found to be socially contextualized, interacting with the institutional and organizational cultures of schools and reflecting elements of the prevailing social relations in and around the context of use (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011, p.022).

It is important, however, not to over emphasis the use of ICT. The judicious use of ICT in education will lead to outcome oriented learning. Having considered the limitations of ICT in education, it is also reasonable to look at the very aims and objectives of instruction. Hence, a balanced approach and judiciously mixed mode of instruction may suit a relatively larger number of students. ICT in higher education is being used for developing course material; delivering content and sharing content; communication between learners, teachers and the outside world; creation and delivery of presentations and lectures; academic research; administrative support, student enrolment (UNESCO, 2017, p.01).

There is also, however, a further point to be considered and that the students, teachers and researchers can actively learn by means of webcasting and collaborating online from and with the teachers, students and experts anytime, anywhere beyond the geographical boundaries. In general, use of ICT in higher education enhances student centered learning approach. However, these technological devices, if used appropriately, help in independent learning, cognitive processing and critical thinking. And, that is why, students in the 21st century needs more than basic skills not only to engage with the livelihood but also to compete in the globalized economy.

Many studies specify a long list of roles which teachers are expected to undertake when utilizing the new technologies in their teaching (Sarah Guri-Rosenblit, 2009, p.23). These technological interventions need to be representative, participative and effective all at the same time.

INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Resilient and prosperous societies are based on tolerance and inclusion (Partners Global, 2017, p.01). A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity (Glosbe, 2017, p.01). Inclusion, usually, is referred to an inclusive approach and practice. It is a concept which is basically concerned with the way of thinking about the rights of the individuals with disabiltities and other special needs to fully participate on par with others in all spheres of activities including education in the society. In school, inclusion usually

refers to the practice of educating students with disabilities, regardless of level of functioning, with typical peers in general education settings, with the learning and behavior needs of all students addressed in integrated institution (Friend, Marilyn, 2012, p.1144).

It is interesting to note that the information and communication technologies help in providing inclusive education thereby leading towards inclusive society. For inclusive education to be effective, extensive consideration may be given to the appropriate selection and use of technological tools and applications. Inclusive education refers to a way of structuring educational services so that all students, regardless of labels or putative disabilities, are educated together a shared community (Shevin, M.S., 2012, p.1150).

Not only some but all members of society with different backgrounds must have a say and a stake in their shared society (DESA, 2009, p.08). Thus, an inclusive society usually refers to a social structure which over-rides differences of class, caste, category, gender, and ensures equal access, opportunity, and inclusion of all individuals in the society.

It is important, however, to note that shift towards the more inclusive approach to students teaching and learning will certainly result in a change in objectives. Subsequently, objectives of teaching - learning and competency development need to be re – determined in order to establish the inclusive society. In this connection, teachers need to become sensitive enough to the social patterns and re-construct the society towards ensuring equality, access, opportunity and inclusion.

As sensitive minds, we also need to celebrate the differences irrespective of caste, color, creed, religion, region or gender.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

There are mounting benefits of the integrating information and communication technologies in higher education especially in the context of inclusive society; however, a few of them are mentioned here:

• Increases accessibility to education, learning and knowledge,
• Provides equal opportunity,
• Reduces poverty,
• Removes inequality,
• Provides greater access to employment,
• Provides entrepreneurial skills,
• Raises productivity,
• Creates social cohesion,
• Promotes social justice,
• Emphasizes on overall well being.

There are numerous other benefits of integrating information and communication technologies in higher education for inclusive society which can be highlighted. At the most, priorities should be given to combat the high risk inequalities in the society.

Key Challenges

It can be seen from the above analysis, that the ICT is used as a powerful tool to address the issues of learning, education and knowledge at length, at the same time there are challenges while integrating information and communication technologies in higher education especially for inclusive society, a few of them needs special attention.

Indeed, in today's society, the ability to access knowledge, get employment and improve living standards using information and communication technologies has become more critical to inclusive society.

There appears then to be an acceleration in the growth and development of ICT and thus, integration of information and communication technologies in higher educational institutions should be considered as a key tool for providing inclusionary approach and perspective in society. Increased access to new information and communication technologies should be ensured. Tech – based training of teachers, researchers and other practitioners needs to be prioritized. The composite consciousness requires that how we treat and interact with the individuals and groups of marginalized need to change.

Evidence from the practices shows that in order to address all those challenge, certain affirmative action needs to be taken. Above all, affirmative lesson plans to combat the inequalities are essential to creating welcoming learning ambience for all the students and other stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Integration of information and communication technologies in higher educational institutions should be considered as a key tool for providing inclusionary approach and perspective in society. The paper, however, concludes that the concept and understanding of inclusive society through higher education needs to be strengthened and new technologies, applications and other appliances should be widely utilized for varied purposes as and when required. Increased access to new information and communication technologies should be ensured. For inclusive education to be effective, extensive consideration may be given to the appropriate selection and use of technological tools and applications. Tech – based training of teachers, researchers and other practitioners needs to be prioritized. These technological interventions need to be representative, participative and effective all at the same time.

REFERENCES:

UNESCO (2017): ICT in Education. Higher Education. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/themes/icts/lifelong-learning/higher-education/ (Accessed and Retrieved on 10.06.2017).

Partners Global (2017): Inclusive Societies. Partners Global: Together for Democratic Change. http://www.partnersglobal.org/expertise-area/inclusive-societies/ (Accessed and Retrieved on 12.03.2017).

Glosbe (2017): Inclusive Society. English Dictionary. https://glosbe.com/en/en/inclusive%20society (Accessed and Retrieved on 16.03.2017).

Friend, M. (2012): Inclusion and Inclusive Practices in Special Education. Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education, Banks, J.A. (Ed.) 2012 Vol. 02, SAGE Reference.

Shevin, M.S. (2012): Inclusive Education. Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education, Banks, J.A. (Ed.) 2012 Vol. 02, SAGE Reference.

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2011): Information and Communication Technology for Inclusion: A Review of the Literature. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/ICT-for-Inclusion-literature-review-draft.pdf (Accessed and Retrieved on 03.09.2016).

Sarah Guri-Rosenblit (2009): Digital Technologies in Higher Education: Sweeping Expectations and Actual Effects. New York, Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

DESA (2009): Creating an Inclusive Society: Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration. http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2009/Ghana/inclusive-society.pdf (Accessed and Retrieved on 06.11.2016).

Warschauaer, M. (2003): Technology and Social Inclusion: Rethinking the Digital Divide. https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/technology-and-social-inclusion (Accessed and Retrieved on 18.02.2017).