



An investigative study on the use of blogs as an educational tool by student-teachers of Delhi state

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Abstract

Indian Education System has seen many a new modifications and transitions, but the desire of having a high tech education accessible to all as per today's needs and requirements seems far to be achieved. With the recent launch of digital India campaign by our prime minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, it is expected that digitalization would promote many of areas including education. In order to enable our students in the modern technological world, education also should have technology as its base. As all educational reforms start with Teacher Education, there is a need to enhance the capacity of student teachers in the technological areas. Technological innovations have an important effect on altering the educational standards as they are based on constructivism theory, wherein knowledge rather than being transmitted through instruction is constructed, or created by the learners themselves with the help of their own cognitive structures. Almost all teacher education programmes, today, have incorporated ICT as a compulsory subject in their curriculum. Technological tools like blogs are reforming students into learners, preparing them for a future that is driven by peer production and networked learning. This article reports a study in which approximately 100 student-teachers were trained in creating and using a blog for educational purposes. Their views about the needed skills and the problems faced in using the blogs were collected using a perception scale. Percentage analysis was used to draw inferences from the collected data. Over 75% of the respondents said that a blog as a tool helps in the development and enhancement of ICT skills among student teachers. The respondents felt strongly that ICT is an enriching experience of learning and it also aids their understanding of technological interventions in the curriculum. According to them blogs expand future prospects of teaching profession and knowledge construction. Though most of the respondents agreed that ICT tools can make education more effective, 80% of them felt that there were many challenges and problems which needed to be addressed when working with ICT tools. According to them, availability of facility, internet connectivity and regular maintenance are major areas of concern.

Keywords: ICT tools, Blogs Teacher education, student-teachers, skills, problems

Introduction

In today's digital era, especially in the education sector, many institutions of higher education and knowledge based society are facing rapid technological changes, wherein technology plays a main role within the fundamental changes in education (Bates2009). Thinking about the future of learning and overall education system needs to be holistic as learning as a lifelong process, and this activity cuts across different generation and spheres of life. The diffusion of ICT which is widespread gives rise to the need for acquiring new digital competencies and enhanced ICT skills. Integration of ICT in the classrooms has become a necessity with a large investment in the ICT infrastructure and increased emphasis on the use of ICT in learning. Teachers are expected to be more digitally competent and effective in utilizing the various ICT tools in education. A teacher in the 21st century is expected to acquire necessary knowledge required to meet the changing trends and demands of their students of the modern times. Teachers also need to be more potential users and visionary of these technological tools, so that these can be effectively and efficiently used. Teachers and students require the sense of learning from ICT, with ICT, through ICT and around ICT, with the skills of digital age literacy, inventive thinking,

effective communication and higher productivity. ICT can also help to change the teaching practices, bring about school innovation and support community service. It may also help and support effective professional development of teachers in the use of ICTs. A new learning environment developed by ICT is called interactive learning environment. Teacher education institutions have the most important and crucial role of providing the necessary leadership and adaptive pre-service and in-service teacher education to deal with the changing demands of society. The student teachers must be well versed with the latest tools used and can be used to make their teaching more knowledge constructive and informative.

Web log or blog in education

Internet based technologies such as blogging provides new ways of doing and thinking and could be used in education for many purposes other than as a communication tool, information delivery. Web logs can be used as an online diary or journal wherein information is kept in reverse chronological form. There are many features this tool that can be used for educational purposes, some of which are hyper-linking to other web logs, instant publishing of web content, or digital portfolio or diary. Weblog combines the best

element of portfolio, where students work can be collected, edited and assessed along with the immediacy of publishing content for virtual audience. Blogs are relatively inexpensive to set up easy to maintain and to use. Blogs also allow users to publish posts along with text, graphic images, informational links and other data. Blogs also facilitate ongoing discussion that can take place between a teacher and student. Educational blog will help in developing knowledge, skills, attitude that will be used by the student throughout their personal and professional lives.

Writing a Blog

You can start writing your blog, if you are confident in your writing ability. Most of the blog services are user friendly. After creating an account, one can work on the blog in windows which is similar to those in any word processing application, wherein tools will enable you to change fonts, add links and content. After you have finished writing, click on publish button and your work is posted for the other viewers who want to visit your blog onto the web. Some of the blog services are typepad, blogger and Edublogs, out of these some are paid and some are free blogging services.

The need for using blogs for educative purposes has been realized extensively and many schools as well as institutes of higher education are creating blogs which their students are expected to use extensively. Teacher training institutes must ensure that the student teachers must be confident and skilled in using these technologies.

Statement of the problem

On the basis of the above exposition, the researchers chose the following problem for investigation:

“An investigative study on use of blogs as an Educational Tool the integration of ICT in education on student teachers of Delhi.”

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To study the development of skills related to the use of ICT through the use of blogs in education
2. To study the problems faced in using of ICT (Blogs) in Education.

Definitions of key words used

ICT

(Information and Communication technology (IES) is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications related to computers and its usage.

Blog

Blog is an online community platform to share resources such as text, audio, visuals, animations and simulations.

Teacher trainee

A teacher trainee is a student who is pursuing a degree in education under the supervision of teacher educators in order to qualify for a degree in education.

Digital learning tools

Digital learning is any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student's learning experience. It can be used for enhancement of professional development opportunities for teachers or trainees and to provide personalized learning experiences to them. All those technology which is used to learn through various technology based gadgets and applications comprises of digital learning tools.

Methodology of the Study

The present study is an **investigative** study on integration of ICT in education on student teachers of Delhi. It explores the role of blogs in developing ICT skills and the problem faced by student teachers in the use of ICT (Blogs). Investigative study very often relates to field study and research in which the area of study is defined and the variables are explored in depth. In the present study, the problems faced by student teachers and their skill enhancement in using ICT tools are explored.

Tools used

The tool used for the study was a self developed tool in the form of questionnaire covering the skill aspects related to the use of ICT and the problems faced in using ICT tools. After consulting relevant literature, 40 items were prepared in the preliminary draft. These items were based on two aspects related to the skills and the problems faced with the use of ICT. A group of experts from the field of education as well as computers were consulted and after getting their suggestions it was revised again. In the final stage of construction, it was checked again and small modifications were done. The final scale consisted of 25 items, 12 related to skill enhancement and 13 to problems faced in using ICT tools.

The response to these items was to be recorded on a continuum on a 5 point scale. In the beginning of the scale, directions were given and subjects were clearly instructed to tick (√) on any one of the five options given against each statement after reading it carefully. The options were in the form of ratings: Strongly agree, Agree, Don't know, Disagree, Strongly disagree.

Sample

A sample of 100 student teachers of B.Ed course from 2 colleges located in Delhi city was chosen purposively for the study. The sample included both male and female student teachers.

Procedure

The student teachers were given orientation regarding blog and its use in education. They were also required to create their own blogs and maintain them for a period of three months. Simultaneously, the tool for the study was developed by the researcher as explained above. After all the student teachers had created their own blogs and had maintained them for 3 months, the questionnaire developed by the researchers was administered to the total sample (N=100).

Scoring

For scoring, the five-point Likert type scale was converted

into three-point for ease. The response on strongly agree and agree were clubbed together and responses on strongly disagree and disagree were counted together. Then, the item wise scores were tabulated to obtain scores on different aspects.

Analysis and interpretation

Analysis and interpretation was done using percentage analysis. The data and their interpretation related to the two aspects of the study is as follows:

Table 1: Usefulness of blogs in development of skills related to the use of blogs in education

S. No.	Statements	% of respondents who Agree
	<i>Blogs help learners to :-</i>	
1	Develop familiarity with computers and its working	74%
2	Develop familiarity with internet and its resources	85%
3	Become aware about other e-resources for enhancing teaching learning.	92%
4	Develop skills of locating required information on the internet	73%
5	Develop skills of social networking	67%
6	Develop skills to integrate all forms of media, audio, text, video	80%
7	Develop skills of presenting thoughts meaningfully	62%
8	Develop skills of critical thinking	68%
9	Develop collaborative skills	71%
10	Help in understanding the use of technology in education	95%
11	Help in becoming more efficient teachers	85%
12	Increase prospects of employment	80%

The analysis of the data presented above shows that out of the twelve items related to skill aspects, the respondent agreed strongly on most of the items which shows that use of blogs results in development of skills related to the use of ICT in education. Over 75% of the respondents said Blog is indeed one of the major forms of communication tool which helps in the development and enhancement of ICT skills in student teachers. The respondents also agreed strongly that ICT is an enriching experience of learning and it also aids to teaching according to their understanding of technology interventions

in curriculum. They also agreed that Blogs expands future prospects of teaching profession and knowledge construction. Blogs also help to get aware about the other e-resources that can be explored for learning. Thirty to forty per cent respondents did not agree to a few items, those related to social networking, critical thinking and collaborative skills, perhaps because they already had exposure to these skills through other means. However, it can safely be concluded that training in the use of blogs resulted in general enhancement of skills related to the use of ICT tools in Education.

II) Problems faced with the use of ICT tools

Table 2: Problems related to the use of ICT tools

S. No.	Problems	% of respondents who Agree
1	Lack of awareness about ICT tools in education.	73%
2	Access to computer in the institute or college.	76%
3	Lack of knowledge about ways to integrate ICT to enhance curriculum.	65%
4	Lack of pedagogical expertise of the teachers to use such tools for enhancing their teaching.	74%
5	Lack of training in computer course or programmes.	63%
6	Lack of availability of ICT resources at the college like individual computer system to work on.	79%
7	Lack of good conditions required for the effective use of computers.	85%
8	Poor internet connectivity in the college or Institute.	85%
9	Lack of encouragement to make use of such tools in education.	86%
10	Lack of technical support.	80%
11	Lack of power back up and means of saving data.	75%
12	Use of technology being cumbersome for teaching and learning.	60%
13	Blog being not a very flexible tool.	73%

The analysis of the above data shows that majority of respondents consider this as the matter of fact that Blogs are helpful to them. At the same time they accept that they face problems in using Blogs as a tool for learning effectively without the training and support. A majority (above 75%) of the respondent agreed that there are various challenges and problems which need to be addressed when working with ICT and tools of ICT. To them availability of internet facility,

working internet connectivity and regular maintenance is a major area of concern. Around 86% respondents agreed that there is also lack of encouragement to use such tools in education. Lack of knowledge and lack of training were also cited as problems by almost 60% of the respondents. Sixtyper cent of the respondents feel that using technology is cumbersome. Perhaps they do not have much exposure or opportunity to use ICT tools in Education.

Conclusion

The web 2.0 technological tools can play great function in content improvement transaction and evaluation. These ICT tools can be effective for building competence for trainee teachers to develop their ICT skills and also to organize and participate in collective action for making the overall educational process more interactive, interesting and constructive for the learners. Student teachers can make use of blogs as additional teaching and learning resource. There are many technological tools to aid us in different ways. The use of these tools is indispensable for wider diffusion of knowledge. Though blogs are capable of playing an important role in the pedagogical interventions in curriculum, still there is a lot of scope for incorporation of skill and training in respect to its incorporation in teaching environment. Along with the skill, interest, attitude and training related to the use of such tools in education there is a need for the knowledge about these tools and their application in pedagogical curriculum and also the availability of good conditions in terms of internet connectivity, infrastructure facilities to use ICT resources and tools in the educational system.

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