

Technology Enabled Teaching -Learning Initiatives: A Learner Centric Innovative Approach to Commerce Curriculum

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Abstract

Youth today is extremely passionate about technology. Whether we talk about computers, tablets, smart phones or phablets, their 'super-dependency' on these gadgets has increased to a great extent. Teachers in higher education, imparting commerce curriculum have to understand this and include this technology effectively in the teaching-learning process. It is necessary for the college faculty to adapt to the changing needs of their students if they expect them to be in the classroom (both mentally and physically). This paper focuses on the use of information and communication technology in teaching learning commerce subjects so that it has a greater impact on the students. The following paper is based on experiments undertaken by the author in 'technology enabled' teaching-learning process and endeavors to offer means to make the contemporary commerce education more interesting and pertinent.

Keywords : Teaching-learning, Technology enabled, Higher education, Commerce curriculum.

Introduction

“Technology will not replace teachers but teachers who use technology will replace those who do not”

- Anon

Today’s youth is very experimental regarding the technology and its usage. Their keenness in taking education in the traditional format is decreasing, thereby reducing their overall interest in the learning process as Learning is now perceived as a monotonous process and a typically exam based criteria. Majority of the youth taking higher education resent the present ways of teaching and learning, and, therefore we teachers witness more students on the campus rather in the classroom. Where a notebook and pen may have formed the tool kit of prior generations, today’s students come to the classroom, engaged with smart phones, laptops and I Pads.

At this crossroad where students are close to the reality and closer to their smart phones, their passion for technology needs to be harnessed. Innovative for teaching learning in commerce and business education can make it extremely enjoyable, fascinating and most importantly effective. There is a need to shift from the conventional teaching learning to learner centric environment. A technology driven learning environment can simplify the problem of mass education, actively involving every student in the learning process.

Objectives

This paper in state is an outcome of real-time experiments done by the author in teaching commerce subjects. It aims to take an overview of the expanding field of the contemporary e-learning tools.

It clearly enumerates the applicability of each tool for commerce subjects. It endeavors to state the benefits of using communication technology by sharing the experiences of their use in teaching-learning commerce curriculum. The paper intends to emphasis the significance of making teaching-learning process interesting and effective through use of technology with a ‘student centric approach’.

Literature Review

Modern learning technologies are targeting the higher education campuses, changing ways in which delivery takes place. The mounting use of the Internet and WWW as tools for information access and communication has increased the popularity of online learning (Chen et al., 2004). At an Institutional level e-learning platforms are used for delivery content and facilitation learning process. It focuses more on electronic access to course material and assessment (OECD, 2005). Open source e-learning software is gaining importance in the developing countries like Tanzania, but with the immense challenges (Sanga, Sife 2010). A study conducted in Purdue University revealed that use of I Pads in the classroom increased access and availability of information, increased sharing and collaboration, made class more interesting, brought in novelty and was reported as a change from standard lecture and discussion based activity in classroom (Miller,Rossing;2012). Virtual simulations are considered by many academicians to be equally valuable for student learning (Challis, Hoit & Rice 2005). Mobile learning is gaining popularity (Lorillard, 2004). A NESTA Future lab report asserts that learning activities incorporating mobile technology will move out of the classroom and into learners' physical and virtual environments, amplifying learning to be more situated, personal, collaborative and lifelong (Naismith, Lonsdale, Voavoula and Sharpies, 2004). Learning with mobile technology allows students, then, to expand discussion and investigation beyond the walls of the classroom. It enables students to collaborate and create knowledge and to interact with a larger range of content. (Miller,Rossing,Cecil,Stamper; 2012). The literature review asserts the extensive use of ICT tools for teaching-learning in higher education institutions, showcasing a paradigm shift in learning environment.

Technology Enabled Teaching Learning: Student Centric Approach

Father of Indian Telecommunication and advisor to the Indian Prime Minister on Public information, infrastructure and innovation, Sam Pitroda says 'the old model of education needs to be replaced by a new model through which teachers can be mentors and, and students can learn from each other and not only from teachers.' This statement suggests that there is a need

to use the ‘new technology enabled model’ for teaching-learning in India.

To further understand the applicability of technology in teaching learning commerce curriculum is to impetrate and comprehend the basic teaching-learning elements. The typical course content teaching involves prescription (Objectives), development (content development, curriculum designing) and delivery (application and evaluation). If the use of technology is embedded at every stage then the traditional model of teaching-learning can be challenged bringing about certain definite changes in learners approach. Moreover, he becomes more curious and derives better understanding of the concept, takes initiatives in further reading for gaining more information, practices more to gain perfection and derives lifelong learning.

Individual teacher initiatives in using ICT are high-lightly relevant to connect meaningfully to the present students. Some minor changes in teaching-learning with help of technological availability can create large impacts in delivery. This paper explores four prominent technologies that can be used in making Commerce and Business Education an interesting journey:

1. **Telecommunication-mobiles- cell phones,**
2. **Computers-internet-online,**
3. **Audio visual aids,**
4. **Television.**

Use of these four technologies in simple ways can give multiple benefits such as skill enhancement, development of research skills-thinking, critical reasoning, analytical soft skills-team building, presentation, persuasion skills, improved communication skills, entrepreneurial skills, knowledge enhancement, networking –on campus, global connectivity, professional networking, enable industry education linkages, corporate exposure, preparedness for better work culture, self- learning, creativity, increased confidence and empowerment.

1. **Telecommunication-mobiles/cell phones:** In India mobile subscribers at the end of February 2013 was over 85crores and is rising at an average 5lac

per day. (*Source: Dalal Street Investment Journal, Oct 2010*). In the present scenario, owning a mobile is considered a status symbol. Can't this technology be used for learning too? Mobiles can be used for learning in various ways: An **experiment** in SMS learning (*Gokhale R; Bhakare S 2011*) was conducted where one student in a group was volunteered to frame a message daily about economy news, topics taught in class e.g. mergers, chapter in the book (e.g. Business ethics) word meaning, etc. and forward it to the other students in his group. This resulted in knowing new concepts through message sent by their peer on regular basis. These messages were then discussed in the classroom in which students interestingly participated culminating into enjoyable and retained learning. This experiment was then extended to include students of another college and the impact was similar. This method can be useful for critical learning. If 'smsing' is followed by group discussions, learning is made appealing and effective. With free message service available, as on WhatsApp or Viber this method results to be economical.

Smart phones can be used for knowing fascinating facts and to learn languages. Mobiles can be effectively used for making video recording in case of interviews or case studies.

Students can make short films on entrepreneurs, events or industry operations which can later be documented into research papers or discussed in the class. An **experiment** where students were asked to interview entrepreneurs personally and record their interview was very positively accepted by the students. Very interesting they recorded the interview and also some shots from their industry and made it into a shortfilm. The entire exercise gave them a platform to acquire varied skills, from technical to soft.

With internet available on each phone students could be given exercises individually or in groups to search for terms or concepts, for e.g. trade blocks of the world, and they surely take pleasure in executing such exercises. Camera in mobiles can be used for taking pictures of important visits, blackboard notes and matters of significance. An application named 'Note Taker' may be used in some handsets can be used for taking quick notes of interviews and guest lectures. Card scanner can be used to scan business

cards of key persons such as a scientist, managers, etc. Document scanner can be used to scan documents of value or even notes of your friends. Blue tooth facility can be used for information sharing and dissemination such as important queries, references and other resources. Internet on mobiles is a powerful tool to search information, mail queries and crisp academic discussions.

Mobile learning benefits provide these opportunities
(Miller,Rossing,Cecil,Stamper; 2012)

Benefits	Opportunities
Access and availability of information	Research, Real world problem solving
Sharing and collaboration	Collaborative learning and group work
Novelty	New learning tool, dynamic learning environment
Learning styles and technology design	Design element include more learning styles(tactile, kinesthetic ,visual, auditory)
Convenience and Usability	Ease of use, intuitive design, variety of apps

2. Computers-internet-online: India has the Internet users with over 121 million as of December 2011. Learners can use internet on computers in various ways such as- email (forward relevant ‘forward’ and written mails , mail views, store important mails e.g. mails from NSE can provide useful information on capital market.)

Students can be advised to join various professional group of forums e.g.:- Higher Education Forum, Maratha Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture(MCCIA), academy of marketing professionals, business ethics, AIMA etc .These groups mail regular updates on their area of expertise which could be useful for the students to update their knowledge or prepare their projects.

Information search is another basic use of internet. Students should acquire the skill of sourcing and resourcing the right information for right purpose.

Social networking sites such as Face book, twitter can also be useful learning platforms. These have applications such news (contains e-

newspapers), communities and groups of like-minded professionals' e.g. marketing group can be created or existing can be joined to increase and share knowledge; **Experiment:** Regular informative updates on the SCAC entrepreneurs club face book group comprising of students from all faculties in our college is actually helping in building an entrepreneurial mindset in 60% of its members and 40% have become extremely proactive on the group.

Discussion forums can be started to express your views and clarifications on a particular topic for e.g.: Euro crisis, Arab spring etc. Links such as Washington post could be joined to know more detailed global information. For entrepreneurship groups like Pune entrepreneurs, your story, tie can give updates of current entrepreneurial events and facts. In fact students have been able to indentify certain entrepreneurs from this group who were invited on our campus for personal interactions.

Professional networks like LinkedIn can be used to strengthen network which could be helpful regarding placement opportunities.

Application news hunt (on mobile & computer) and TOI (Times of India) has stacks of newspapers to get current news on your subject. Through the E buddy application the user is able combine all chat boxes of all accounts FB, Google, yahoo, etc and thus have a comprehensive form of discussion platform. Students can indulge themselves in writing blogs on topics such as economy, market trends, and EU zone crisis. This will facilitates discussions, content sharing and peer to peer learning.

You tube can be used constructively to understand a situation clearly. For e.g. a video on financial meltdown can clarify your understanding on financial crisis. The students can share an informative video on you tube. is another powerful learning tool. Talk about Gandhi an engineering by Dr. Mashelkar, when shown to the students gave them a unique insight into the concept of 'many for less and less for many'. Ted talk on 'Heroes of Taj' made them realize the actual recruitment policies of Taj besides, instilling in them the commitment values. The screening was followed by a discussion where students actively participated in expressing their views. Sometimes a so-called 'typical lecture' could be replaced by such screenings.

www.ted.com has videos of lectures by experts in science, philosophy, literature, management, governance, innovation etc.

Skype can facilitate in interacting to experts in distant places. A lecture screened on Skype on cost accountancy in the author's college increased curiosity. Web sites such as can give adequate knowledge about management aspects. Corporate websites give a lot of practical information about the companies, which (if) viewed with an objective to learn can turn out to be a good source of education. The website is a virtual institute itself where the student can witness easy sessions on physics, mathematics, statistics, finance, economics etc.

In case of project work, students could be recommended to use the website to frame questionnaire, administer and analyze them. Ms excel spreadsheet could also be used to analyze quantitative data in research projects. www.changingminds.org provides tools to teachers to make teaching more interactive. Students could be guided to use open source learning websites such as , , , for additional digital resources and case studies. With upsurge in the use of tablets such interactive exercises are feasible and effective.

3. Audio visual aids: Audio aids- language laboratories can be used to improve language and communication skills. If this facility is not available in any college, it can be mutually shared with other colleges who have it.

Commercial films like '*Rocket Singh Salesman.....*', *3 Idiots*; *Gabricha pause*, *Aaramb*, *Guru*, can sensitize and inspire students in many ways.

Story of stuff, Capitalism a love story, Home, Inconvenient truth, are some films which should be screened and deliberated upon to know the practical economic, social and environmental problems. When the author teaches recession as a topic in class s/he usually puts up a theory followed by screening a movie 'Capitalism a love story'.

Through educational and corporate films e.g. - Suzlon corporate and CSR, Corporate governance and CSR students can explore the corporate world without visiting the company. Documentaries on RBI, SEBI, and MCCIA can help to comprehend their operation and purpose. Patriotic films

can help in value embedding and instilling patriotism.

An **methodical experiment** conducted by the author to expose a group of students to the concept of Business ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility was successful as known from the student feedback. For the experiment, a group of two students were taught about a topic in CSR and business ethics using two methods. For group A, teaching this concept was confined to a typical classroom instruction. However, the group B was taken for a visit to the CSR department of an organization. It was then followed by a workshop and then screening of corporate film which gave them a practical insight into CSR. They were then shown another documentary on business ethics and CSR which included discussions on the subject matter in the film. An assessment done after the experiment, resulted in group B performing better than group A. Thus, the technology channelized in correct form resulted in varied and successful learning experience in group B leading to a better performance.

4. Television: Television has no more remained the 'Idiot box'. In fact it can be the most useful tool for learning. News channels, when watched regularly provide latest information in subjects like finance & economics-NDTV profit, CNBC, BBC. Information channels such Discovery; History (e.g.-history of McDonald, money, food technology) can make learning a joyful process. Programs like 'young Turks' on NDTV showcase live cases of entrepreneurs which could be recorded and discussed later in the class. In an **experiment** students were instructed to identify the different kinds of advertisements on television and give detailed description of their uniqueness. Most of the students responded well to this exercise and even analyzed the changing trends in some ads. for e.g. Cadburys. Capital markets and FIIs theory could be better comprehended by watching the program 'market today' on CNBC.

Conclusion

Higher education institutions in India are on the threshold of technological revolution and this demands a serious change in the role of commerce teachers. Commerce education should not be confined only to acquiring a mere degree but, it must also be 'value added' with curriculum

that is industry based and delivery that is more effective. It is observed that technology based learning is commonly used in parallel education but not very keenly accepted in commerce education which is the base of industry functioning. An appropriate blend of traditional pedagogy and ICT can facilitate enriched learning of commerce subjects. It can model real world systems and transactions and can therefore create an environment in which learners feel free to explore, manipulate and experiment.

If students explore and analyze the relevant utility of ICT, they can use it constructively resulting in creating a learning environment conducive for their own development without depending entirely on their educators. Teaching-learning should shift from being supervised to self-programmed and organized and more importantly peer to peer. Integral use of ICT in teaching- learning can build skills such critical thinking, lateral thinking, ability to assimilate, analyze and evaluate knowledge thus elevating his employability and self employability possibilities. Institutional support is imperative for ICT to be effectively used but if absent, individually teachers can strive to use this technology at its best to enhance the teaching-learning process. We need to think in terms of transforming the educational experience so that it is meaningful to the information age learner. If there is to be innovation and transformation in commerce education—as the new world demands, as the knowledge economy requires, as the industry entails and students demand, someone needs to start working on it. Technology will be the FACILITATOR and the CHANGE FACTOR where the student is open and ready to use technology with the ease and poise as they would lift a pen to write on paper!

“Technology is nothing. What is important is that you have a faith in people, that they’re basically good and smart, and if you give them tools they’ll do wonderful things with them.”

-Steve Jobs

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