



CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHER EDUCATORS WHILE USING ICT IN TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS AND REMEDIES FOR THE FUTURE

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Abstract

ICT is being used in every field imaginable of daily life such as finding jobs, fighting crimes, shopping online etc. It's even greater use is in field of education, to increase its quality and making it easier and effective. In a modern day world, a teacher should be able to not only use digital technology but also should be able to incorporate ICT in teaching process to enrich the quality of education. Hence teacher training programs which aim at training future teachers have implemented ICT as a compulsory course. In this paper, challenges faced by teacher educators while training future teachers in field of ICT are reflected upon and their solutions are suggested which will help shape the future of ICT education in the teacher training programs.

Keywords: *ICT, Teacher education, Teacher-educators.*



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Introduction

Importance of ICT in daily life

In this fast changing world, the use of Information and communication technology (ICT) has grown to a large extent. The world is now referred to as a “global village”, where physical distance does not create a barrier to commercial and social contact. Although Information and communication technology started making its appearance in late 1980s, its abbreviated form ICT started getting recognized when Dennis Stevenson used it in a report submitted to UK government in 1997 and in the revised National Curriculum for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2000. Although ICT makes use of computer and internet extensively, ICT covers any product that will store, recover, maneuver, convey or receive information in an electronic or digital format. The useful of ICT cannot be denied. In field of finding jobs, ICT has immensely helped. Along with this ICT has also generated jobs. This has enabled countries like India to progress in field of software. As a result of this, India is likely to emerge in long term as a leading provider of knowledge-based tradable services strengthening India's economy further.

ICT has also played part in reduction of crimes. A study carried out in Netherlands suggested reduction in crime rate by 16% percent in control areas, with 51% reduction in crime at car parks. Also, with help of Geographical information systems (GIS), crime mapping has become vital to policing and crime reduction. ICT has also had significant impact on our life by fundamentally changing the way consumers shop and buy goods and services. E-commerce possess many advantages over traditional shopping such as reducing time and

energy consumption, saving store expenses and other expenses which reduces pricing of goods and product prices can be easily compared. ICT finds its place in making important business decisions too which have an impact on global market. Businesses with extensive ICT usage continue to expand their business at a faster rate than those who don't use ICT or use it to lesser content. Due to increased use of ICT the marketing ability has increased. This has enables small and medium enterprise owners to reach many more potential consumers.

Importance of ICT in education

Another undeniable place where ICT finds importance is in field of education. Digital technologies are thought have potential benefits because they can provide great assistance to facilitate the process of learning. Effects that ICT can have in field of education are as follows:

- There is effect on student such as increase in information about academic subjects, increased interest in learning, and the gaining of new skills needed for a country with developing economy to grow. ICT may help reduce the gender gap; one way is by providing equal education opportunities to boys and girls and help students with special needs.
- Teachers benefit a great deal too as development of teachers skills takes place, gaining proficiency over subject content and changed positive attitudes toward teaching.
- Other outcomes such as increased creative approach to education and increase in number of people taking up adult education are also seen.

The World Bank report (2003) notes that ICT can increase access to education through distance learning, enable a knowledge network for students, train teachers, and broaden the availability of quality education materials. At the World Summit on the Information Society, the United Nations (2005) notes the potential of ICT to expand access to quality education, to boost literacy, and to provide universal primary education in developing countries. Through ICT, learning can take place anytime and anywhere. Course material can be made available online; this increases their availability and accessibility. Learning through video conferencing allows the student to interact directly with the teacher with ease and convenience.

Importance of ICT in teacher education

ICT finds importance in various fields of education, particularly in field of teacher training. The future teachers need to be imparted with knowledge about computers and internet which ranges from the basics such as what is keyboard and mouse to learning to present, demonstrate and manipulating data by making use of the latest computer programs. Imparting the knowledge of how to use computers effectively as an aid in learning process is important since we need to provide the student of this and further generations relevant and contemporary experiences that allow them to successfully use technology which will equip them for life after school.

It is already known that human engage in the learning with active participation and remain motivated to learning when it happens with help of pictures and sounds. This is easily achievable with the help of technology. Due to this, the student teachers engage in learning activity with more concentration. This also makes learning process more effective with learner's retaining knowledge imparted in training for longer period of time.

Problems in application of ICT in teacher education

Even though it is undeniable that introduction of ICT can enhance the quality of teacher training programs, there are challenges faced while implementing its use. A few of these include

- a) Lack of teachers who can impart the education of ICT to student teachers: the number of educators for imparting knowledge about ICT to the future teachers is few in India. The number especially drops down further for training institutes situated in towns and villages instead of cities.

- b) Apprehension of educators: Most educators who impart teacher training belong to the older generation. This is beneficial in terms of the trainer having years of experience for imparting best kind of conceptual knowledge to student teacher but they are inexperienced in terms of use of computers and technology. This generates fear in minds of teacher educators, further pushing them away from learning and using ICT effectively.
- c) Uneasiness of teacher educators: Most teacher educators are not comfortable with using ICT in teaching training. Another reason for same being that computers require moderate to high visual motor skills. These skills decrease with increase in age of the person. This again causes apprehension in educators for use of computers.
- d) Lack of course material: Most course material designed for learning to use computers is for all age groups and backgrounds. Course material designed for targeting teacher educators is unavailable.
- e) Fear of losing authority: In any traditional classroom environment, the educator remains the ‘sole figure of authority’. This is cherished by many teacher educators too that they are only source of knowledge to their students. Hence, introduction of computers or other means of education is considered as a threat to their position in the classroom training as they fear they might be considered unnecessary for imparting knowledge and training.
- f) Out of date computers: Most schools and colleges, including the ones that impart teacher training would make use of out of date computers and software. The reasons for the same could be anywhere from lack of knowledge about the latest product by college management or lack of budget. Whatever the reason may be, it affects the morale of both the teacher educators and student teachers as they do not find using or learning it relevant to the present day world.
- g) Absence of internet or slow internet connections: In rural areas and towns, there can be complete absence of internet connectivity. Sometimes, even if internet is available the connectivity is very slow. This again affects learning of student teachers and in some cases ICT remains a subject confined to theory only.

These challenges create hindrances to implementation of ICT which can be very beneficial for future teachers for imparting education with quality.

Remedies for challenges in using ICT in teacher education

Combating these limitations is of importance to our developing country. Few ways this can be done are:

- a) Implementation of ICT for teacher educators to should be done more vigorously. If teacher educators are equipped with knowledge about ICT only then effective training in ICT can occur for student teachers.
- b) A specific course material for imparting knowledge about ICT training should be designed for teacher educators which can be adopted by teacher educators across the country
- c) This course material has to be user friendly. It has to be designed in such way that it makes use of minimum visual motor skills, making it easy for elderly teacher educators to adopt and follow.
- d) Supplementing the ICT training courses for teacher educators with counseling sessions for self esteem. This will help teacher educators build confidence that adopting ICT in their teaching methodology will only prove to assist them and not replace them.
- e) Creating a post of computer technician and making it compulsory to have such a post in teacher training institutes. The computer technician can then guide the management with the knowledge about latest computer hardware and software available for procurement.
- f) Generation of policies by teaching training institutes that will help raise funds for procurement of computers and different audio visual aids needed. These policies should

be designed in such a way that is beneficial to the institute, the student teachers and also society as a whole.

- g) At rural level, Create strategic partnership for sustainable ICT programs through collaboration with local community
- h) Internet connectivity can be brought in rural areas at substantial rates with collaborations done with mobile network companies under their CSR initiatives for the purpose of education

Conclusion

Teachers now have to be 'e-teachers'. That means a teacher should be able to use digital technology but also should be able to incorporate ICT in teaching process to enrich the quality of education. Implementations of these suggestions will see an increase in teacher educator's usage of ICT for pedagogy and education. This will enhance the quality of work future teachers do. Implementations may also influence future government policies regarding teacher training institutes and curriculum related to ICT. Although ICT has the capacity to enhance the learning process and facilitate communication between peers and students and teachers, it must be used, especially in education institutions, under the guidance and vigilance of qualified professionals or educators who have experience in pedagogy in the subject and in education to ensure that its use does not weaken the learning process or the development of student teachers, thereby reducing the quality of training imparted.

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