

Chapter 15

A Quest about eQuest and Blended Learning in Teacher Education: An Indian Study

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ABSTRACT

While alternate modes of delivery in education are assuming importance, it is imperative to train the pre service teachers to use the web resources to maximise learning experience. This paper attempts to study the inquisitive nature of student teachers of south India to use the e resources named as e quest. This experimental study uses blended learning strategy as a treatment for experimental group and conventional method of teaching for control group with respect to some personal variables. The findings prove that blended learning strategy increases the e quest score of pre service teachers irrespective of their prior exposure.

OVERVIEW

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are a major factor in shaping the new global economy and producing rapid changes in society. Within the past decade, the new ICT tools have fundamentally changed the way people communicate and do business. (Information and Communication Technologies in Teacher Education UNESCO Planning guide, 2002)

With the rapid progress of scientific and technological development, technology of education has also transformed accordingly. Internet has gained the limelight in providing any kind of information on any branch of study. The printed resources had been out moded by electronic resources in terms of creating, hosting, accessing and cost of production. The active seekers of knowledge through internet are increasing exponentially. Instead of totally depending on the instructions imparted

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by the teachers and the subject matter available in the printed media, the e learners can access the repository of information over the internet not only to seek information but also to form groups with interested peer members, to make threaded discussions and to form on line communities the way it happens in the real classroom environment.

Though e learning may be understood as an innovative technique or a form of ICT used in providing learning experiences to the learners through on line by using internet services and web technology, in real life situations it is not limited to internet and web technology alone. Therefore e learning in present day context may be considered as learning carried out, supported and facilitated by the advanced multimedia utilities as well as internet and web technology delivered to the end users in their computers, laptops and personal digital assistants. E learning may be in general classified into total e learning, support e learning and blended learning. In blended learning attempts are made for making use of a combination of traditional and ICT enhanced e learning practices. Blended learning describes the learning environment that either combines teaching methods, delivery methods, media formats or mixture of all these. It also refers to the integrated learning activities such as mixture of on line, off line and face to face learning. In other words blended learning is a mixture of traditional and e learning strategies. It is the combination of face to face learning with web based on line approaches the combination of media, methods and pedagogical approaches, to enhance control over learning, critical thinking and assessment.

In order to perpetuate the organized system of society, teacher education moulds the suitable persons as expected by the society to nurture the young minds as teachers. The strength of an educational system largely depends on the quality of its teachers. Whatever high the aims, however up to date the equipments, however efficient the administration, the performance of children is determined by the teachers. It is high time that

we develop a class of teachers who are academically well prepared, trained professionally and can sustain the formidable task of nation building with confidence. These teachers must also possess experimental attitude with wholesome philosophy of education which calls for innovative approaches to prepare teachers at all levels. These teachers must be able to comprehend with findings of educational research, translate them into practice, and feed the same to the up coming generation for further research and development. The prospective teacher must be made to realize his duties and responsibilities in an emerging society like India. He must be taught what is relevant to the needs of the society. The teacher education program should be competent enough to inculcate the qualities, abilities, attitudes, ideals etc.....expected out of good teacher along with the ability to grab and refine the repository of information available in the World Wide Web, to scaffold the knowledge base of the learner instantly.

Educational machinery across the world is under severe pressure to use new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to teach learners the knowledge, attitude and skills that are needed for the 21st century. With the help of emerging new technologies the teaching profession is evolving from teacher centric chalk and talk lecture based instruction to student centric, information rich interactive learning environments. Designing and implementing successful ICT enabled teacher education programs is the key to fundamental and wide ranging educational reforms. It is the universal truth that a teacher can not be substituted by any electronic gadget. Many times the newer gadgets are playing a supplementary role along with the teacher's aim of maximizing the learning experiences. In this context the teacher can be said well informed and fully competent only when he is well versed with the usage of web resources and optimal use of them in the required proposition along with his sturdy commitment to discharge his lively role.

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