ICT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATION OF ROLE AND IMPACT

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Abstract: Information and communication technology (ICT) is an emerging tool in the area of distance education and the students are studying in remote areas where schools are not easily accessible. Nowadays various types of Web 2.0 technologies like podcast, social networking sites are also used by the educators in the area of distance education for making effective teaching learning process. The present study aims to focus on role of ICT in distance education for tribal learners in Tripura. This study also focuses on impact of ICT on distance education for tribal learners in Tripura. This study is descriptive and informative in nature. This study is based on the secondary data and data is collected from the online and offline repositories including government reports. This study is brief one but describes various roles of ICT like competency and performance based curricula, information literacy, students centered learning and support in constructing student's knowledge. Moreover, impact of ICT on students learning have explored in terms of time and place. This study creates the portfolio for the next step of quantitative research for mapping the extent of impact on distance education for remote and rural area students and how it influences and enhances the students learning performances in Indian context. In this study some points have discussed by researchers to reflect the influence of ICT in social and economic development.

1. Introduction:

Education is one of the main keys to economic development and improvements in human welfare. As global economic competition grows sharper, education becomes an important source of competitive advantage, closely linked to economic growth, and a way for countries to attract jobs and investment. In addition, education appears to be one of the key determinants of lifetime earnings countries therefore frequently see raising educational attainment as a way of tackling poverty and deprivation. In developing countries, education is also linked to a whole batch of indicators of human development. Education of women influences the health of children and family size. The experience of Asian economics in particular in the past two decades has demonstrated the benefits that public investment in education can bring. In richer countries, education is as important not just in the early years, but also in later life/As the pace of technological change quickens and as the work force in many rich countries grows older,

education offers a way to improve and update the skills and capabilities of the workforce. The rare, however, many constraints on delivering education to the right people at the right time. In developing countries, there is frequently a shortage of qualified school teachers. People may live in scattered communities in rural areas. Money for books and teaching materials may be scarce. In wealthier countries, money is also a problem in particular, the cost of university education has risen sharply, and student are increasingly expected to meet all or part of the cost directly. But, at the level of higher education training, the problem is often also one of time students who are already in full- time employment find it hard to take part in a university courses offered at conventional times of day. Finally, employers, keen to train staff, are often actually conscious of the cost of taking people away from their main job in order to attend training courses. they are therefore eager for more efficient and flexible way to deliver information to employees. All these factors have encouraged an interest in the use of information and communications technologies (ICT)to deliver education and training computer s begins to appear in school and university classrooms in the more advanced countries around the early 1980s. broadband connections to schools and university became common place in wealthier countries in the second half of the 1990s. in developing countries in the second half of the 1990sl. In developing countries experience is more limited. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it should allow those countries to learn from the investments of richer countries, experiences are more limited. This is not necessary a bad thing, as it should allow those countries to learn from the investments of richer countries. Initially, educators saw the use of ICTs in the classroom mainly as a way to teach computer literacy. Most now see a border role that a delivering many kind of learning at lower cost and with higher quality than traditional methods of teaching allow. In addition, school and universities increasingly use ICTs, as do other large organizations, to reduce the costs and improve the efficiency of administration'. Student intake has increased considerably, while the resources have not. Hence, technology is needed for delivering instructions to the large number of learners. Today education technology making distance education more popular than face to Face teaching and learning.

We would like to point out some draw backs of the distance education for the developing countries

1. Probability of loss of the student contingent thus, young generation prefers western education system and inclines to cheaper sources;

2. Probability of loss of the real job places in the labour market. Faculty staff of the education institutions in the development countries fight for the student team that desires to get paid study via electronics facilities;

3. Depends on western education system. Developing countries are not competitive compared to these countries,

Why distance education needs ICT?

1. Transition from the traditional education buildings to the cyber space;

2. Transition from the classic lecture halls and classes to the computer classes, electronic games and virtual lectures;

3. Transition from the teacher's control to the self-control;

4. Transition from the classical libraries to the general or shared e-libraries;

5. Transition from the ordinary laboratories to the virtual research groups;

6. Transition from the ordinary meetings to the video and tele-conferences

2. Research Objectives:

1-To study the role of ICT in distance Education for enhancing students learning performance.

2-To study the impact of ICT on distance Education for remote learners.

3. Research Methodology:

The present study is based on secondary data. Data are collected from print and online repositories. This study is informative in nature.

4. Use of ICT in distance Education also affects the way students learning:

a) Competency and Performance-based curricula: The moving to competency and performance-based curricula are well supported and encouraged by emerging instructional Stephenson,2001). such curricula tend to require

- Access to a variety of information forms and types
- Access to a variety of information access and inquiry
- Learning environments center on problem-centered and inquiry. based activities
- Authentic settings and examples
- and Teachers as coaches and mentors rather than content experts.

Contemporary ICTs are able to provide strong support for all these requirements and there are now many outstanding examples of world class settings for competency and performance-based curricular that make sound use of the affordances of these technologies (eg Oliver, 2000). For many years, teachers wishing to adopt such curricula have been limited by their resources and tools but with the proliferation and widespread availability of contemporary ICTs, many restrictions and impediments of the past have been removed. And new technologies will continue to drive these forms of communication and access to sharable resources, the capability to support these quality learning setting will continue to grow.

b) Information Literacy: Another way in which emerging ICTs are impacting on the content of education curricula steems from the ways in which ICTS are dominating so much of contemporary life and work. Already there has emerged a need for educational institutions to ensure that graduates are able to display appropriate levels of information literacy, "the capacity to identify and issue

And then to identify, locate and evaluate relevant information in order to engage with it or to solve a problem arising from it"(Mc Causland, Wache & Berk, 1999, p.2). The drive to promote such developments stems form general moves among institutions to ensure their graduates demonstrate not only skills and knowledge in there subject domains but also general attributes and generic skills. Traditionally generic skills have involved such capabilities as ability to reason formally, to manage time, project management and collaboration and teamwork skills. The

growing use of ICTs as tools of every day life have seen the pool of generic skills expended in recent year to include information literacy and it is highly probable that future developments and technology applications will see this set of skills growing even more.

c) Students Centered Learning: With the help of technologies, it is possible to promote transformations of Distance Education from teacher centered into student centered e.g. 1) Increased use of web as a source. 2) Internet user can select the expert of whom they will learn. 3) process will become problem-based learning. 4) The proliferation of capability competency and outcomes oriented curricula. ICTs in Distance Education act as a change agent. It supports independent learning. Students become immersed in the learning process by using ICT.

d) Support in constructing knowledge: The emergence of ICTs as a learning technology unknowingly insists to think on alternative theories for learning. The conventional teaching process has focused on teachers planning and leading students through a series of instructional sequences to achieve desired out com. This way of teaching follows the planned transmission of knowledge though some interaction with the content as a means to consolidate the knowledge acquisition it depends on the process of personal understanding. In these domain learning is viewed as the construction of meaning rather than memorization of facts. Use of ICTS provide many opportunities through their provision and support for resource based, student centered learning. It acts to support various aspects of knowledge construction and as more and more stud. employ ICTs in their learning process, the more pronounced impact of this will become".

5. The Impact of ICT on place 'When'&' Where' to learn:

In the past, there was no or little choice for students in terms of method &choices in the same case.

a) Any place learning:

The use of ICT has extended the scope of offering programs at a distance The off-campus delivery was an option for student are able to make this choice through technology-facilitated learning settings. E.g.

1. In many instances traditional classroom learning has given eay to learning in work-based settings with students able to access courses and programs from their workplace. The advantages of education and training at the point of need relate not only to convenience but include cost saving associated with travel and time away from work, and also situation and application of the learning activities within relevant and meaningful contexts.

2. The communication capabilities of modem technologies provide opportunities for many learners to enroll in courses offered by external institutions rather than those situated locally. These opportunities provide such advantages as extended course offering and eclectic class cohorts comprised of student of differing backgrounds, cultures and perspectives.

3. The freedoms of choice provided by programs that can be accessed at any place are also supporting the delivery of programs with units and courses from a variety of institutions. There are now countless ways for students completing undergraduate degrees for example, to study units for a single degree, through a number of different institution, an activity that provides considerable diversity and choice for students in the programs they complete.

b) Any time learning:

In case of geographical flexibility, technology, facilitated educational programs also remove the temporal constraints. It is the good opportunity for student to undertake education anywhere, anytime & any place.

1. Through online technologies learning has become an activity that is no longer set within leading to succinct and to-the- point interaction and to succinct and to-the-point interaction and on-track, thoughtful and creative conversations. programmed schedules and slots. Learners are free to participate in learning activities when time permits and these freedoms have greatly increased the opportunities for many students to particular in learning activities when time permits and these freedoms have greatly increased the opportunities for many students to permits and these freedoms have greatly increased the opportunities for many students to participate in formal programs.

2. The wide variety of technologies that support learners are able to provided asynchronous support for learning so that the need for real-time participation can be avoided while the advantages of communication and collaboration with other learners is retained.

3. As well as learning at any time, teachers are also finding the capabilities of teaching at any time to be opportunistic and able to be used to advantage. Mobile technologies and seamless communications technologies support 24x7 teaching and learning, choosing how much time will be used within the 24x7 envelope and what periods of time are challenges will face the educators of the future.

Three critical elements will determine the future of ICT as an effective tool for social and economic development:

1. Any solution that India adopts has to be cost effective if we are to meet the development demands and reach the most remote parts of the sub- continent.

2. It is no use having state-of-the-art technology unless it can be sustained.

3. Deployment of ICT does not guarantee their efficient utilization. Capacity building and effective support mechanisms must accompany development.

6. Conclusion: ICT is revolutionizing and changing almost all aspects of our daily life. ICT is and will Increasing support distance education and skills development in India, but there is a number of factors that need to be in place for this to be effective. Models derived from countries that are ICT and bandwidth rich cannot be replicated in India, and nor should they. India has its own needs and aspirations and any use of ICT should be adapted to help developing the society each country aspires to. However, there are a number of lesions that can be learnt for the early adopters that will help India to embrace ICT in a way that can develop its education system and economics. These include government commitment to developing an education system that fits together with its plan for the e- enablement of the country, a reliable infrastructure: reasonable levels of access to the Internet in schools and for training; and an education policy that includes teacher training in new paradigms for education and recognizes that traditional methods do not provide the necessary skills for a developing economy. Additionally, and importantly, electronic resources need to be culturally relevant to teachers, instructors and students and local adaptations of global content

should either be made electronically or by teachers mediating the content for their students, and also take into account the availability of and access to avid technology dissonance.

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