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Research Paper Title**: E Skills: Teaching with Technology for Online Educators**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby would like to explicitly state that the write-up titled, "**E Skills: Teaching with Technology for Online Educators**" is original and has not been published earlier, or that it is not under consideration for possible publication elsewhere.

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E Skills: Teaching with Technology for Online Educators

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Abstract

Teacher is the one who shapes the destiny of students and that of the future citizens who eventually shape the destiny of the country. An inspiring, dynamic, enthusiastic, encouraging, skilful and dedicated teacher brightens the school environment. Teacher is a lifelong learner because of his association with scientific knowledge, so opportunities have to be afforded to him to ensure that he keeps learning and developing throughout his professional life. This is precisely the responsibility of teacher education system, which is more than a mere combination of two of its major components, i.e. pre-service teacher preparation and in-service education. Professional preparation and professional development of teachers is a continuous process. In-service training is the education a teacher receives after he begins his teaching profession. Training of a teacher is a lifelong process. There is a need to equip a teacher with more knowledge and more education to transform him into a best teacher.

Training is a need for developing teacher's skills for effective teaching–learning process. In today's scenario, there is paradigm shift from classroom teaching to online/virtual teaching. Teachers have experience in face-to-face teaching whereas no experience in online/virtual teaching. Due to advancements in technology, Open and Distance Education has gained importance and recognition worldwide. The distance educators, who teach in distance institutes, generally belong to conventional teaching. Therefore, to develop their skill to teach online, training is a dire need.

This paper highlights the importance and need of in-service training for distance

educators and to develop skills in e-teaching.

Keywords

Distance education, Distance educators, In-service training

Introduction

Because of technological advancements, there is a change in teaching–learning process. Teachers play a vital role in overall development of the students. Technology-enabled teaching has also transformed the place of teacher. This transformation helped overcome the barriers of distance, language, rigidity, lack of personalization, etc. This multifold transformation in teaching–learning process using several electronic tools and appropriate methodologies is broadly referred as e-learning/online teaching. Teacher as a protagonist have to be versatile to play multiple roles including that of an administrator, curriculum developer, manager, guide and online teacher. Teachers are trained to teach in conventional classrooms. When he/she joins distance education, he/she applies the same knowledge and skills for teaching; however, that is not enough in case of online teaching. Thus, there is a need to provide in-service training to the teachers.

The need of in-service education of teachers cannot be underestimated. It is a necessity in enhancing the work performance and motivation of teachers in the field. Absence of in-service training of teachers will retard professional growth of teachers as well as create "missing gaps" between demands and actual achievement levels. In-service education allows activities that may include seminars, workshops, conferences, classes, exhibitions, etc. that develop and improve employees in an organization from the initial employment stage until retirement. From the foregoing, it becomes imperative that entire attention should be devoted to the in-service education of teachers to promote their professional growth and development (Eduwen, 2016).

Generally, the teachers are regarded as the hub of educational development. Therefore, in-service education is concerned with the activities and courses in which a serving teacher may take part to upgrade his professional skills, knowledge and interest, after initial training.

Open and Distance Education (ODL)

Whenever we speak about education, we think about school. We often view school in a traditional, formal sense. Many people believe that true learning can only take place in a formal classroom setting. Others feel education occurs in different forms and environments. ODL is not the same thing as the conventional education. The profile of the distance learner is much different as compared to higher education through a distance mode and is different from the 17-23 age-group of tertiary college students. In a country like India which has a huge backlog of adult illiterates, semi literates and the educated unemployed, all in search of new knowledge and new skills including professional skills, ODL is a *god-send* opportunity (Soman, 2011). The learners in the distance learning system are separated from the institution by space. Hence, almost all the distance education institutions around the world adopted various technologies to minimize this 'divide.' Salimi (2007, p. 19) indicates that that are entire accounting degree programmes which offered online at the undergraduate and graduate the course needs to have the active presence of the instructor, the development of an online sense of community, participation and discussion by the students, a rich set of online presentation materials and study aids and inclusion of knowledge and problem based learning exercises.

E-Resources for Teaching

Distance education should widen and create access to learning and training opportunities that are tailored to meet the needs of the individual. Educators embraced the revolution, and the increased educational opportunities and especially the new learning models that have emerged are now influencing education and society as a whole. The 21st century thus begins with a paradigm shift in attitudes towards online education. Online learning is no longer peripheral or supplementary, yet an integral part of mainstream society. Our new understanding of the very nature of learning has affected the definition, design and delivery of education. Paradigm shift in education has resulted in new modes of educational delivery, new learning domains, new principles of learning, new learning processes and outcomes, and new educational roles and entities (Bozkurt et. al, 2015).

To bridge this gap, use of e-resources is an essential medium. By considering the following factors, it can give a platform for these learners to fulfil their life goals. The present scenario demands technologically enhanced structure of education, which can

fulfil the needs by overcoming the distance, and for which the teachers need to be trained.

The resources which enabled distance learning are (Fig. 1):
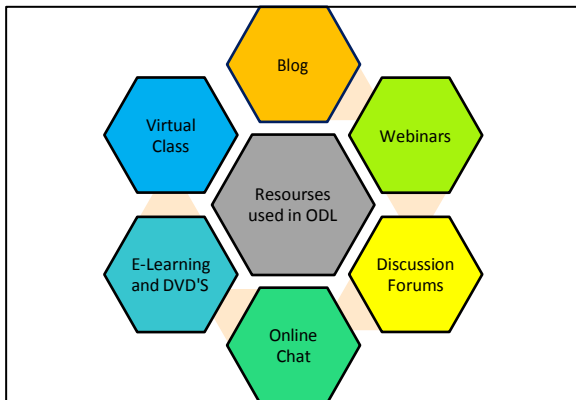
Fig. 1 Resources used in ODL

Virtual Classroom: Internet-based classes in live format for all courses can be conducted with proper infrastructure. The subject expert conducts the session where students can interact from their home or workplace. Live lectures can be archived and made available through the website 24x7.

E-learning CDs and DVDs are the asynchronous teaching aid given to students. In e-learning CDs, the contents are explained with reference to day-to-day real world practical examples.

Discussion Forums: A discussion forum is a Web Application for holding discussions and posting user-generated content. Internet forums are also commonly referred to as

Web forums, message boards, discussion boards, (electronic) discussion groups, discussion forums, bulletin boards or simply forums.

Webinars: A webinar is a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar that is transmitted over the Web using video conferencing software. A key features of a Webinar are its interactive elements which provides the ability to give, receive and discuss information in real-time.

Blog: A blog is a website where entries are written in chronological order and commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. Blog can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. A typical blog combines text, images, links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic (Parchure, 2016).

In-Service Training

In-service education is also referred as continuing education that is designed for the retraining and reskilling. There are formal and informal programmes of in-service education organized from time to time. The higher authorities concerned with education want to ensure that the standards of education are properly maintained. That is possible only if the teachers refresh their knowledge and keep it up to the mark. The different agencies, therefore, keep on

organizing teacher education programmes for enriching the knowledge of teachers and also for overall proficiency and betterment. According to Lawrence, "In-service education is the education a teacher receives after he has entered teaching profession and after he has had his education in a teacher's college. It includes all the programmes–educational, social and others in which the teacher takes a virtual part, and also all the extra education which he receives at different institutions by way of refresher and other professional courses and travels and visits which he undertakes. All these are conducted for teachers' teaching in traditional mode (Fig. 2).
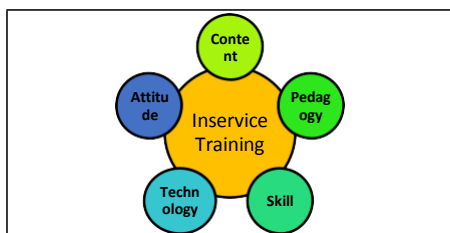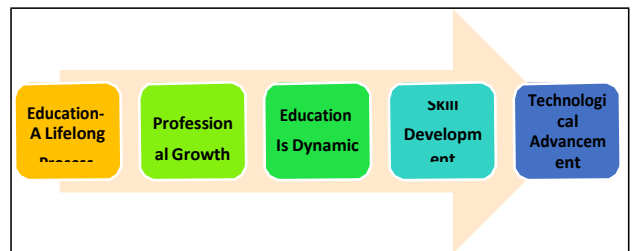

Fig. 2 In-service Training

Need and Importance of In-Service Training

Rabindranath Tagore has rightly stated, "A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its flame." Unlike other countries, in India the trend is that once a teacher has joined service as a teacher, he continues to be so. For all types of teachers in India, in-service education is extremely needed. The following points (Fig. 3) indicate its need and importance.

Fig. 3 Need and Importance of In-service training

In-Service Training for Distance Educators

As training and up-gradation of knowledge is imperative for conventional teachers, similarly it is indispensable for distance educators also. E-teachers should be very comfortable and up-to-date with technology and trends in education. Understanding how to communicate online and how to use internet-based tools in an education environment is critical to be successful as an e-teacher.

Berger and Goldberg (1974) highlighted these competencies:

1. Understanding and appreciating the educational objectives of the curriculum

2. Having an interdisciplinary science and technological education including history and philosophy of science rather than being a specialist in only one discipline
3. Seeking creativity

4. Being technology literate

5. Extending the capacity and imagination to improvise

6. Developing self-confidence and independence

7. Ensuring familiarity with the variety of existing instructional materials and available e-resources

8. Being emotionally intelligent (Eduwen, 2016)

Types of In-Service Training

Distance Institutes can arrange various types of high quality in-service training programmes for the distance educators based on the need analysis, such as:

1. A series of lectures designed to give participants as much information as possible by the experts.

2. Conferences (give participants an opportunity to question others and discuss ideas presented).

3. Workshops - Practical activities are conducted by a skilled consultant to enhance the performance on the job.

4. Staff Presentations - Used to acquaint teachers with administrative procedures and policies.

5. Professional reading - Group library reading and presentations.

6. Visits and demonstrations (opportunity to observe actual teaching techniques).

7. Seminars: A seminar is an academic forum whose major purpose centres on a reflection or discussion of problems and resolve it in the forum.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Good education requires good teachers. Therefore, appropriate opportunities should be provided to up-grade their knowledge and skills over the entire length of their career. It is, therefore, essential that there is a major reorientation of teacher education to ensure that teachers are equipped with necessary knowledge and skills to cope with the new demands placed on them. In view of the apparent problems confronting in-service teacher education, the following recommendations are made:

There is need to have a well-planned in-service education programme with clearly defined objectives, growth and improvement of instruction and leadership skills. In-service education should be recognized as part of institutional or organizational activities designed by government for staff development and motivation. Organizers of in-service education should focus on job-related tasks that are real, practical oriented and relevant to the participants. To regulate the conduct of in-service training for teachers to ensure uniformity of standard in-course content, methodology and evaluation. Government should encourage participants of in-service training through adequate funding to cater to some areas of their needs such as tuition fees, cost of textbooks and handouts, transport and boarding facilities. Deliberate efforts should be made by the various distance institutions to provide adequate information, knowledge and develop skill of distance educators.

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