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Teacher's learning on ICT platforms during Pandemic: Relevance for teacher education with special focus on Zoom, YouTube

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There is a rise in the importance of teacher's learning on ICT platforms during the times of pandemic. However, there are some important issues to be addressed to make this learning more progress-oriented. In this context, the focus should be on the technical awareness of teachers, usefulness of the ICT platforms and methodology adopted to put the platform to appropriate and productive use. The paper focuses on the relevance of ICT platforms for Teacher Education with a special mention of Zoom and YouTube.

Keywords— Open learning, ICT platforms, Teacher Education, Zoom, YouTube, webinars, workshops

1. INTRODUCTION

Though theory and hands-on activities related to ICT are part of the curriculum of Teacher Education courses, there is less focus on how ICT can be tailored to suit the local needs of learners (Gudmundsdottir, 2010) and teachers. It is high time to include that analysis in learning (webinars/workshops/ talks/seminars/panel discussions/online forums) of student teachers or in-service teachers.

With the clear evidence of unequal reach of technology in the times of pandemic, the issue of 'Digital Divide' has gained national importance. The impact is not only on learners but also on teachers. Teachers from poor internet/no-internet connection areas, low language proficiency levels, low digital proficiency levels feel excluded from the programmes planned on online platforms. The fact that learning takes place on online platforms cannot be denied but not many can benefit from such programmes if some important factors are neglected. The paper focuses on: learning opportunities available on online platforms with a special mention of zoom and YouTube, challenges to be addressed and methodologies to be adopted.

1.1 Learning opportunities for teachers

- Knowledge resources: As part of theme-based online learning sessions teachers can collect information from the expert and also can further explore on the shared knowledge. A quick access to information supplied through web links in the sessions is possible.
- Hands-on activities: Teachers can know the use of a particular app or platform for pedagogical purposes and can involve in collaborative learning to reproduce the same.
- Interaction: Interaction happens in two different ways: formal and semi-formal. In formal interaction, participants are allowed to share their queries at the end of the session. These questions can be posted on 'chat' section which will be put forward through the moderator or teachers can speak directly. As part of semi-formal interaction, teachers are allowed to use the 'chat' section to share their views. Sometimes, apps such as Mentimeter can be used to collect responses from participants for theme-based question shared by the expert. This instant survey result can be shared with participants and can be analysed. Sometimes Google form links will be shared with participants in 'chat' section to check their factual understanding of concept. This serves the purpose of formative assessment.
- Collaboration: Online workshops provide extended opportunities for participants to involve in collaborative hands-on activities. These collaborative projects will be part of assessment of participants. Submission of the task will be an indicator of the completion of the course. Collaborative activities provide a chance for teachers to interact with other teachers and exchange pedagogical information.
- Visual Information: Though non-verbal communication is very limited on online platforms it is well compensated with verbal information which is provided in the form of graphs, diagrams and moving pictures. This adds meaning to learning and makes complex concepts easy enough to comprehend.

- (f) Confidence boosters: As information is provided instantly within less time and easy to access it provides participants with a sense of confidence. Posts shared through Facebook, WhatsApp regarding a webinar or workshop or any learning course has drawn the attention more than ever. This shows the instant success of online platforms in drawing the attention of participants.

2. ZOOM AND YOUTUBE

With the pandemic though all offline learning opportunities got a pause, it is a few learning platforms created chances and digital connections among all. The most widely heard and explored platforms are Zoom and YouTube. Though YouTube is well recognised for personal learning it turned as a platform for professional learning too. Many experts gave their talks on Zoom app which gave professional appearance for the platform during this pandemic. It is the audio-visual features of both the platforms created interest among participants to take part in the programmes. In contrast to YouTube, Zoom offers two-way communication. But the recordings done on Zoom can be watched on YouTube for free. There are other apps similar to Zoom such as GoToMeeting, GoToWebinar, Cisco Webex Meetings which turned as learning platforms.

2.1 A reflective stance

- Less scope for peer interaction can be seen on almost all ICT platforms (Zoom, Go Meeting) that are used during this pandemic. This can act as a hurdle for the critical thinking of teachers. Whatever information is provided is readily accepted without questioning. This can result in undesirable consequences.
- Feedback which is generated from the programmes is limited to assessment of the quality of the programmes.
- Specific needs of participants are often kept aside as the webinars or workshops are designed to cater a single purpose or meet one big theme.
- Digital proficiency of teachers is left unchecked. As importance of online learning increased it is need of the hour to enhance the digital proficiency of teachers.
- Poor internet connection or no internet connection acts as a hurdle to learning process.
- Information load will keep participants disinterested as it often happens in online learning.

2.2 Choice of ICT platform/platforms:

Every platform has got its own advantages and disadvantages which should be properly evaluated (Daniela & Rüdolf, 2019). Learning objectives, local needs, duration of the learning, digital proficiency of participants and technical hurdles should be taken into consideration while choosing online platform (Trentin, 2003). A right combination of ICT platforms need to be done for effective learning to happen.

2.3 Choice of methodology:

- Instead of Individual learning or Individual assessment, collaborative learning and collaborative assessment may bring more benefits for online learners whose digital proficiency levels are low and average. Collaboration can bring learners of different proficiency levels together for a purposeful learning. It saves a lot of time for evaluators to assess each learner which is almost an impossible task unless it is an objective-based formative assessment.
- Task-based learning (Richards & Renandya, 2002) will result in active learning by fostering purposeful interaction among learners. Peer interaction will provide more scope for reflection.

3. CONCLUSION

Pandemic created a time space for participants to register for many free courses offered online. However, impact of those ICT platforms on one's learning has to be further studied. Teacher Education courses has to adopt new methodologies or active methodologies to suit the needs of 21st century teachers. The focus should be more on interaction, reflection and critical thinking. The courses should combine the digital skills of learners with the pedagogy in an effective way.

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