

ELT and ICT Interface: Challenges for the Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Education system around the world is in favor of using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for universalizing education, improving the outreach of quality education and also making classroom teaching interesting and effective. The advent of new technology in education and information technology at large has added a new dimension to teaching and learning in the classroom in general and English language teaching in particular and as a consequence poses new challenges for a teacher. These new challenges address issues of integrating ICT in teacher education and effective use of ICT in classroom teaching. Though ICT is being used at the tertiary level, especially in teaching of science and technology and engineering subjects, it is yet to be fully integrated in school education system as needed. This study attempts to trace challenges faced by the teachers in the classroom teaching and also tries to trace the status of integration of ICT in teacher education. The study suggests that the need for the use of technology in teacher training programme is essential and needs to be implemented properly.

Keywords: *ICT, Teacher Education*

Introduction

Nowadays, Information and Communication technology (ICT) tools such as radio, T.V, the Internet, mobile phone, computer, laptop, tablets and many other hardware and software applications have become common for formal as well as informal use. Certain tools like laptops, computers, mobile phones have become essential in education.

The ICT course in teacher education is known as Educational Technology. At tertiary level especially it is being used and at school level initiatives are also taken. ICT like smart edu com is used in schools to educate students from class one to ten. Earlier, the teaching was done in the traditional way, but the situation has changed and modern technology like smartboard is getting used in school

teaching. Similarly, to use these technological tools in the classroom, teachers are needed to be well qualified and techno savvy to use it. This study attempts to trace challenges faced by teachers in the classroom teaching and also tries to trace the status of integration of ICT in teacher education. This paper discusses the challenges which have come up in English language teaching due to the emergence and fast growth of ICT and highlights how the present system of classroom teaching finds it difficult to address these challenges. The paper also talks about the necessity of incorporating ICT as a compulsory component of teacher education so that the teachers could address these challenges appropriately.

Background

A. Role of ICT in School Education and English Language Teaching (ELT)

The ICT has a vital role in the process of language teaching and learning by providing an influential base for efficient education (Ibrahim). ICT has entirely changed the criteria for teaching and learning. It was launched in December, 2004 and revised in 2010 for schools of India (MHRD, n.d.) It has become one of the important tools, especially in an English language classroom globally. Technology in education is the efficient organization of any learning system adapting or adopting methods, processes, and products to serve identified educational goals. This also involves systematic identification of the goals of education, recognition of the

diversity of learners' needs, the contexts in which learning will take place, and the range of provisions needed for each of these (Mulay and Chaudhary) .

The integration of ICT in school education has brought a revolution in teaching as well as learning of all subjects. Teaching and learning with ICT brings innovation and develops creative and motivational environment. Richard states that ELT is an area that has changed over the years, moving from very teacher-centered approaches to learner-centered ones (quoted in Roblyer and Edwards). Use of ICT helps in creating learner-centered environment in the ELT classrooms. Now a days, availability of electronic workbook as accompaniments to textbook represents the technological developments in learning (Garret 705). Software comprising all the four skills are available. In recent times, the use of technology as a tool to develop the different language skills has received great attention (Dudeny; Chun, and Chapelle; Young; and Yunus), hence the ELT teachers should be exposed to new practices. Hennessy stated that "the introduction of ICTs could act as a catalyst in stimulating teachers and pupils to work in new ways" (quoted in Parvin and Salam 49). Also Warschauer has mentioned different perspectives about integration of technology into classroom. These reflects the demand of knowledge of ICT and practical aspects of ICT to ELT teachers.

ICT is very useful in teaching all the four skills, i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). Blogs and social networking sites have been proved very useful in

developing writing skills. Discussion on the forum provides fruitful results for teachers as well as students, scaffolding the teachers' knowledge of content as well as technology. Audio-visual aids accommodate the teaching of listening and speaking skills. Use of ICT creates more interest and enthusiasm among students towards language learning as compared to traditional language teaching. The use of audio-visual aids in English classrooms has transformed the method of teaching and learning. The use of ICT has emerged as a necessity and demand of the time to meet the professional development of the teachers as well as the upcoming students in schools.

B. ICT in Teacher Education

The integration of ICT in teaching and learning is considered as a medium in which a variety of approaches and pedagogical philosophies may be implemented (Salehi and Salehi). Consequently, the need for professional development of teachers is worldwide acknowledged. Integration of ICT into teacher education and school education system is an ongoing process. Teacher training in the classroom use of modern technology helps increase teacher's efficiency in using ICT in education (Bingimlas). Teachers need to possess the knowledge of content, pedagogy and also technology. Teaching as well as learning has changed due to the advancement of technology into education. The teachers need to familiarize themselves with the new technology in order to carry out their teaching effectively. The aim of the integration of ICT in teacher education

should not be only to make the teachers learn the use of technology, but to make them techno-savvy, so that they should use it with their interest and not treat as a burden. The first ICT Competency Framework for Teachers was launched in 2008 by UNESCO to help teachers become efficient learners of technology.

The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) is making efforts to enable teacher education institutions produce a workforce of trained teachers who are fully conversant with the technology (Annual Report 2006-2007). Though the ICT was initiated early in the 1984 and again in the 8th five year plan was emphasized, but finally, the ICT scheme was launched in December, 2004 in Indian school education system to promote computer education (MHRD). Much research has been done on the integration of ICT in teacher education. The current classroom teaching demands from teachers the ability to provide technology-supported learning environment. Similarly, teachers need to be provided with the technology services during their pre-service or in-service training. If the integration of ICT in the classroom is limited, then it is due to teachers' low level of ICT competence, insufficient ICT-based training, and limited ICT resources (Annual Report 2006-2007).

Literature Review

A study assessed the ELT teachers' ICT literacy and the problems faced by the teachers in integrating ICT in ELT classroom, where it found that teachers' ICT literacy was moderate and also the ICT

usage was very limited in classroom due to the gap in the knowledge of the teachers(Correos). The study found that teachers seemed to be weak in managing the problems occurred while using ICT in teaching of writing skills (Yunus, et al.). Ban and Bronzin have proposed for the training of teachers of informatics based on a hybrid model of distance learning with the help of modern ICT. All these studies describe that learning usage ICT is becoming a global phenomena and need.

Methodology

The present study is a descriptive study that focuses on the status of the integration of ICT in teacher education and the challenges faced by the school teachers while using ICT in ELT classrooms. The data were collected from twelve schools. The respondents were teachers who have undergone teacher training during 2003 - 2013. The tool for collecting data was structured interview, which included three open-ended questions. The data collected were analyzed descriptively. The personal teaching experience also helped as a tool in analyzing the data and authenticating the results. Interview questions were:

- a) What is the status of the integration of ICT in teacher education?
- b) What are the challenges faced by you in real classroom teaching?
- c) What is the status of usage of ICT in your practical exams of teaching during your teacher education programme?

Analysis And Conclusion

A. Result and Discussion

The data indicate that the ICT in teacher education is merely treated as one of the courses and nothing more than that. It is known as 'Educational Technology' in teacher education programs. The respondents said that they got minimum knowledge of ICT skills from training. They also said that during their teacher training programme, there was no emphasis on usage of ICT. Although the respondents were spread over a decade (2003-2013), but there was no difference in their responses of question one: the status of the integration of ICT in teacher training programme was not good. They were not provided with required amount of exposure, which again affects their classroom teaching. Only the theoretical aspect was taught and that too not very exhaustively. No practice was given to the teacher participants the responses to the second question also indicate dissatisfaction among the teacher participants. The respondents do face problems in usage of ICT in their classroom, due to lack of required exposure of ICT during their teacher training programme. Hence, there are lots of barriers in teaching, especially in ELT. Of all the subjects, technology is used more in language classroom teaching, especially for skills like L and S. For this, teachers of ELT need to be well equipped with practical knowledge of technology; they can create technology-oriented learning environment; and they can also bring in innovations in teaching and

learning. Use of technology in ELT classroom also creates enthusiasm and motivates the teacher as well as students. The data also indicate that the teachers face some barriers that prevent them from employing ICT in the classroom or develop supporting materials through ICT.

The responses to the third question are also not very positive. There was unanimity among the respondents that during their practical exams of teacher training, they were not provided with the environment in which they could use ICT while teaching. There was no emphasis on using ICT during training, which has created a visible gap in their actual performance in classroom teaching. They were given only theoretical knowledge of technology that too very less and without any practice.

B. Conclusion and Suggestions

On the basis of the findings, derived from the data analysis and also based on own personal experiences it may be said that there is a need for practice oriented training in using ICT. The training institutes have to understand the need for a rigorous use of ICT knowledge in language classroom during training programme itself. The current education system has fully become the technology oriented. ICT to a large extent is proving to be a panacea for all problems related to education. The study has found that there is a greater realization among the teachers that they should be given hands-on experience about integrating ICT in their actual classroom teaching. Though, the conclusion is based on a very small data,

the study address important issues and their significant on technology driven teaching and learning. Based on the above findings, it may be suggested that:

- Teachers should be given exhaustive exposure to ICT skills in teacher training programme.
- Teachers should be encouraged to teach through ICT.
- ICT instead of one course should be infused in their teaching methodology as a part.

If the data size get increased, it might cover other aspects unearthing other significant findings.

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ELTAI Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting of our Association will be held at our office at 5.00. p.m on Thursday the 22nd December, 2016 to elect new office-bearers for 2016-18 and also to consider and adopt the audited Financial Statement for 2015-16.

Dr. K. Elango
Secretary. ELTAI