

SCOPE OF NEW MEDIA IN EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Ms. Debarati Dhar¹

Abstract

Today, in this cyber age people practically live an internet oriented life. It has entered almost all the spheres of human life including education. When one can depend on internet or more specifically ICT tools to take decisions right from small to bigger ones, then how education and its curriculum could be lagging behind. A change in education, the basic vehicle for developing young minds, can lead to a better positive society. New media, the latest and most popular interactivity tool, can have a strong role in creating a curriculum that would drift away from the conventional archetypal lectures and courses. New improved curriculum would accommodate learning materials supported by electronic interactivity tools. New media can facilitate the scope of learning by making it more interesting and engaging. This paper attempts to explore the possibilities that ICT can incorporate in the present education system and how it can help in improving the make learning a better experience especially for the underprivileged.

Keywords New Media, Social Media, New Media in Education, ICT, ICT Tools

¹ **Assistant Professor, Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, New Delhi**

Introduction

In today's age when technology has entered almost all the spheres of human life, the future foundations or the young minds need to be prepared accordingly. New media is one such tool of ICT or Information Communication Technology that can aid the educators in preparing the students to act and think innovatively in the changing world. There are of course some challenges that are faced on both the part of the educationalists as well as the students seeking to go on board on a new age educational curriculum. All these while, education meant making things understand with the help of fictitious presentation of scenarios and events and students are made to visualize. Before beginning the discussion on new media and how it can help in developing a new curriculum, it is necessary to mention that education with the support of new media necessarily does not mean distance learning. It also does not imply videotaped lectures catered to the students. What exactly new media and how does it help in formatting an advanced educational curriculum is the core of this paper. It is basically a high-tech mode of providing lessons to the students, which generally does not mean replacing the textbooks; rather it is assistance to it. It may include regular quiz evaluations or programmed home tasks. What is interesting is that this process of developing a new curriculum is continuously improving. Hence, this paper will also try to find out how and in what ways a bit of shift aided with technology can bring a fresh perspective in the regular classroom lectures making education a fun and quality experience through the analysis of existing literature and focused group discussion of university level students in Burdwan district of West Bengal.

Most definitions of ICTs have focused on their technological features. Other classificatory approaches define ICT or new media as those communication technologies involving computers that allow interactivity among users. Media researchers point out that new media has an overwhelming impact on the users however the users can always make their own choices of using them. New media comprises of email, websites and mobile communication and interestingly all these different modes of communication have their own characteristics. These different modes of communication are subjected to different socio-economic conditions of use, not every individual in the society may use new media technologies. Thus the impact of new media is pervasive in respect to societies where they are employed (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006).

Emphasis of ICT tools in education is on hands-on training through demonstration and well-designed programmes. Before going deeper about the efficacy of new media in the regular courses, it will be useful to have a quick look at how has it influenced the curriculum of distance education. Distance learning uses new media as a mode of imparting education. If distance learning can use the new media then why the regular courses would lag behind, this is a point worth justifying. As we all know that higher education builds the career foundations and imparts a positive influence for the students. So, a little bit of that extra step can really make a difference. Like for instance, a slight alteration in the tool imparting education such as a change in archetypical courses, textbooks and the entire way of delivering it can bring a positive effect. This new media phenomenon of change in the program of study can effectively contribute to the society at large. How and in what way remains the unanswered question.

Literature Review

A number of online journals and blogs have worked on the expression and interest of bringing social media in education. Social media though a relatively new concept has some potentialities to enter the classroom curriculum and take education and learning process to a new height. Students (personal and professional career use) as well as faculty (personal and teaching purpose) are active users of social media. Though there are certain inhibitions regarding social media taking a role in education as teachers and parents might have their doubts as social media is very popular especially among the youth as compared to parents. Some literary reviews would make the concept quite clear. Learning process is not just about reading textbooks and classroom lectures but it has more dimensions to it like communication and interactivity. 'Social media though a new concept for teachers, educators and parents, has gradually entered the classroom sphere globally (Arora, 2013).' Professors also warn the students that social media is not just a tool for fun rather it is a tool that should be used strategically and with full caution. Different tools of new media should be used for making the purpose of study a fruitful one. If classroom blogs where the best essay or write-up or any achievement of the students would be published, then it would generate a sense of accomplishments and motivation among the students. Videos should be shared with the students; this would make the class interesting (Treagus, 2013). At the very least, sites such as Twitter, Facebook and even MySpace can be used to create discussion in the classroom. Teachers can pull news stories from any of those sources. Students can ask

questions and facilitate deeper discussion after reading something on one of the thousands of social media sites. Professors can institute peer reviews on writing projects. Students can locate an expert in a field they are interested in and follow them on the Web. Geotagging can be used to target and find information about places that are being studied. The possibilities are endless. Hence, it proves that social media has a promising role to play in education system if incorporated properly.

Advantages of New Media in Educational Curriculum

New media can introduce a positive change by making teaching sessions an interactive one through electronically portable media thus resulting in the increased impact of school education. This highly developed mode of teaching would include movies, audio or video clippings of any instance that would not only make the learning process engaging but also productive. This can be better explained with an example. Like for instance, in case of a lesson on ‘cyclone’, clippings from some channels describing the origination, causes of how it occurs can be shown as all the channels nowadays have an online version too. It would increase the interest level among the students making them wanting to know more. Similarly, in case of a foreign language, students will be able to easily adapt only when they will be hearing conversations regularly besides studying the theory part. Higher education level needs constant upgradation. Books are irreplaceable but new media can make the overall learning experience even more eventful. What the students read in books, if they get to see that through some visual support, it would make them grasp the whole thing more easily and of course effectively.

Education at the higher level means more of developing a professional base. Students are more intended in getting more of hands on experiences rather than theoretical knowledge. The present model of education curriculum followed in majority of institutions across India is that of less exemplified, interactive and demonstrative. It does not lead to the desired systematic change in fulfilling the education needs. Hence, new media can help in designing a fresh perspective in educational curriculum for an enhanced experience. Well-illustrated learning materials aided by new-media are considered enormously helpful in understanding a lesson. This observation was found after talking to a certain group of students of different streams at the master’s level in Burdwan University, West Bengal. In one instance, the students of journalism and mass

communication department are of the opinion that when a particular topic or lesson is being explained with the support of technology and visual aids then they understand it comparatively better. When asked about the reason why so. Then their reply indicated that the technical portions like editing or how to face the camera can be understood better with the help of new media. In another observation, where a group of students from the technical (engineering) department were given a set of tools including wires, battery, bulbs, connectors, switches, etc. They were asked to set, assemble and light the bulb. However, they all knew the process and could explain how to do it but unfortunately they failed to establish the set up. This knowledge gap is a result of lack of practical sessions and demonstrations. If the students were given some practical training even with the help of some visual aids then the result would have been different and of course better.

Social media in a certain way has the capability of bringing a transformation in the education landscape. Interestingly, social media tools are categorically divided into two groups depending on the purposes they serve. First category includes the tools that are mainly meant for social networking purposes like Twitter, Facebook, etc. Second category includes the ones that are intended for sharing the contents generated by the users like the contents developed in blogs, etc. The second category gives the scope of expressing views and opinions on any matter informally and with ease and this aspect makes it so appealing. Younger generation especially students are heavily into the use of social networking. So if this tool can be used for bringing some changes or modifying the education curriculum, then definitely, it will have a positive impact. Advancement of new media has improved the communication process considerably. It gives the educational institutions and educators a whole new opportunity in merging educational activities with social activities online that would encourage group work among the students. The aspects of social media also support students in pursuing research work through which they express their opinions about the latest happenings around the world. These types of activities help the students in keeping themselves updated and brushing their communication skills. New media phenomenon comes with a number of relevant tools that can be converged with the traditional educational tools for producing a desirable output.

Different Tools of New Media in Educational Curriculum

Use of new media tools in educational curriculum is a very recent evolving phenomenon. Sharing of images for educational purpose can be useful it is widely known and is at times practiced too. But if the educational institutions extend the images to sharing of audio and video clippings then for sure it will be extremely engaging for the students. When a still image can create so much of interest then what would be the effect of a live video or audio clipping? This point too is worth giving a thought. In today's text based educational environment, a slight drift will be appealing as well as engaging for the students. In the age of new media sharing of images and videos is not at all problematic but is just a click away. It is cost effective too as there is no such system of storage as all the images and videos are available all the time through internet. There are innumerable sites like Picassa or Flickr web albums that are meant for educational purpose and they should be used for the vast base of updated knowledge they provide. Schools can simply download videos or show pictures for the concerned topic or can show them live. Audio clippings are equally important and valued as far as its role in education is concerned. It is useful both in case of regular and distance learning. Teachers can replay the lectures for the benefit of the students in case they have missed out on certain topics. Schools can use sites like YouTube EDU, Vimeo, etc., as these sites provide with a huge range of video collections. The audio and video contents can be used as regular educational resources.

The file sharing tool of social media could be used largely for educational purpose. Like for instance, students are already into file and document sharing and in mailing. Teachers can send study materials to the students through mails as nowadays every student has access to internet. Wikipedia is one website among the many websites that are designed in such a way that it can be edited by multiple users. This website gives information on almost all possible topics on earth. Students are needed to be encouraged to surf these types of informational sites. There are sites that let the students travel throughout the globe just with the click of a mouse. Through such informative sites students acquire intercultural knowledge but in an interactive learning method. They learn about new cultures and countries and share that information to their friends and partners and it in a way increases interactivity. Video conferencing is another effective tool and its use for educational purpose has increased in the recent years.

ICT and its different tools have positively entered the education circle with institutions supporting it with encouragement. Social media is used for marketing and business purposes and with such expansion social media usage needs to be extended to instructional purpose which is limited to the personal and professional purposes. The new media tool that is considered to be of most effective is the use of videos for elaborating any difficult topic. Even if any video is not in store then the teachers have the option of downloading or showing live videos from YouTube and other such similar sites, which is a vast store of videos. In fact, at times, if the teacher finds difficulty in getting a video, the students can come up and volunteer to search for a particular video. This shows two signs - the students not only get involved in the class but are also completely fluent in online surfing. Teachers also make it a point to assign tasks associated with video sharing.

Challenges of New Media in Education

The problems that could be cited regarding the incorporation of new media in education are quite basic. One basic challenge is its accessibility; every student might not have access to internet and might not be able to afford it. Moreover, comfort level of the teachers needs to be taken into account. In contrast to the students, teachers might not be that comfortable in using a Skype or Twitter for communication. Lack of personal touch can also be cited while imparting education through a new media tool. If the traditional way of teaching has its flaws then it needs to be pointed out that new media too have its flaws. It can never totally replace the face-to-face interactions; it can only act as an aid and that is what this paper has been emphasizing on. Participation without distraction is a major concern for the educators. With the availability of social media tools, the students might get distracted during a class and thus holding their attention is another challenge faced by the teachers. Teachers also get confused at times about what to post in the blogs that would benefit the students. Thus, teachers need to find out time before taking classes via social media for mastering social media literacy. Besides the various benefits that the social media offers in terms of education, there are a number of hindrances too that need to be overcome for attaining the desired results.

There is a prevalent debate whether new media is really beneficial for educational teaching process or it is of no help. To come to a conclusion in that matter, this new media factor needs to

be included in the imparting process. Social media has become one of the most influential factors today and the interest that the youth have for it can be used in an effective way. It would be like convergence of studies and interest resulting in positive effects. With the increasing number of social media users everyday; it implies that just like the way it has inevitably touched all the aspects of life it can do the same magic with education too, which definitely is the base point. Social media has the game-changing possibilities like in a way it can galvanize students by redefining the communication strategies that enhance healthy connection between teachers and students and group activities. Social media is a powerful tool and can make the students active in social issues. However, it is up to the teachers to draw a boundary that the students does not use the social media sites for personal use when in school or in case of interactions. When the interaction would be more between the teachers and the students, there would be more awareness about the cyber crimes, to which mostly the younger generation fall prey. Students can more freely discuss any sort of issues that they might be facing regarding their dealing with online media and teachers can help them through proper counseling. The teachers can engage the students in different types of activities like while taking a literature or language class they can ask the students in creating a page in Facebook for a character of any play or post interesting facts in Twitter that they have been learning and to observe the response they get. It would help in generating interest about the subject of study. Teachers among themselves can use the social sites for sharing lesson plans and students can not only connect with students of their school but also with students from other schools. All these group activities help in widening the knowledge horizons of the students.

Conclusion

New media is definitely an effective medium of research, professional purposes and last but not the least educational curriculum. If used properly in teaching process, it has the capability of giving wonderful results and transforming the education model from being teacher centric to more of student centric. It can be both an effective set of tools for teaching and research. Educational institutions need to use software that can be accessed by many machines at a time especially in case of schools instead of individual installation. These are comparatively faster too. In a class, students could be divided into groups and given some tasks that involve the use of internet and specifically the new media. This encourages group work and sharing tendency, a

good sign for personality development. One of the distinct advantages of using software that would let all the machines access the internet at a time is that it will have less individual problems, and even a problem arises, it would be in a group. Group work helps in finding solution of many complex problems such as unexpected outages. Social media encourages the students in experimenting and handling various types of software tools and techniques, bringing a sense of expertise and independency. However, it would not be justified to over-use the new media as then it might lead to the disconnection of students from the concern rooted in traditional learning process. New media is just an aid and not the entire process. New media technologies attract the young learners, by encouraging classroom activities providing scope for sharing views and interacting. This format of group learning and interacting is appealing to the young minds as it seems more of a group activity rather than studying making them conscious learners.

References

Armstrong, K. (n.d.). Social Media in Education. Retrieved from 1996-2013 Chris Pirillo: <http://chris.pirillo.com/social-media-in-education/>

Arora, K. (2013). Social Media in Education: Pros and Cons. Retrieved from EdTechReview: <http://edtechreview.in/index.php/news/news/e-learning/268-social-media-in-education-pros-cons>

Donley, M. (2012). Technology's Influence on Education. Retrieved from South Source, A Publication of South University: <http://source.southuniversity.edu/technologys-influence-on-education-76874.aspx>

Ferrier, M. (2012). Media Entrepreneurship: Curriculum Development and Faculty. Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), Chicago (p. 27). http://www.aejmc.org/home/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CofA_Michelle-Ferrier.pdf.

Lievrouw, L. A., & Livingstone, S. (2006). Handbook of New Media, Social Shaping and Social Consequences of ICTs. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Osborne, N. (2012). Using social media in education, Part 2: Tools, support, and technical issues. Retrieved from Developer Works: <http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/library/wa-ind-educ-social-media2/>

Sriharsha, V. (2013). Indian psyche & senior citizens. Retrieved from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/indian-psyche-senior-citizens/article4889288.ece>

The lessons of tweeting; learning from social media. (2013). Retrieved from euronews: <http://www.euronews.com/2013/05/17/the-lessons-of-tweeting-learning-from-social-media/>

Treagus, P. (2013). How can Social Media be used in Education? Retrieved from Socialnomics: <http://www.socialnomics.net/2013/03/11/how-can-social-media-be-used-in-education/>