

NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION - A GENRE OF OUTREACH LEARNING

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Abstract: *New Media is a definitely proving to be a significant technological revolution dawning an era of e-generation. It is creating a significant ripple as dynamic content provider and interactive media indeed revolutionizing the world of communication. Obliterating the geographical barriers, new media is connecting us to every corner of the world sprouting the virtual world. The present paper attempts to study the new media's ingress into the education sector redesigning the knowledge economy. The online media is allowing students a new avenue to explore their interest and inquisitiveness. As an agent of immense change it is the opted tool for greater specialization in curriculum through experiential learning. New Media, a forum for interaction, self expression, and an avenue for skill enhancement is enabling students to develop professionally. Having redefined the learning process infringing the traditional norm of education, it is crafting individuals for the industrial demands and the competitive world. With exclusive characteristics and undeniable risks, new media is emerging as the preferred medium for outreach learning in younger generation.*

Keywords: *New Media, communication, e-generation, education sector, knowledge economy, experiential learning, outreach, technological revolution.*

Introduction

Technology is an important aspect in the era of globalization. It has intruded into the sphere of our life to a greater extent bringing the world closer to us. The concept of “Global Village” by Marshal McLuhan is turned appropriate with the technological innovation. It has brought a drastic revolution in reception of information. Every aspect of human's life is heralded with the technological advancements. The eruption of technological advancements has reformed one of the core aspects of ones life i.e. education. Similarly a change in technology undeniably affects the education sector to a greater extent. The Technological advancement i.e. the emergence of new media in the latter part of 20th century has bombarded the education

sector with expansive information and data. It has widened the boundaries of learning beyond the four walled classroom and is creating waves in education sector with its exclusive characteristics.

New media technology, a significant innovation has evolved far ahead of traditional media through its interactive characteristics. It has substantially transformed the entire world of media. It has digitized the world and made it accessible. New media has broken the barriers of traditional media which confined to just providing content without allowing the readers or viewers from participation. It has revamped the educational world through content sharing and constant updating and upgrading of the information creating sweeping changes in the learning process. The new media technology has provided public domain of interaction with varied forms of information and knowledge sharing. Today we can witness a drastic shift in learning which had confined to classrooms and library to the world of technology. Social networking sites, blogs, wikis, smart phones are supplementing the classroom teaching as well as the books. They have become the learning tools proving that New media is an essential need in education sector.

Today, new media technology has making education sector more competitive responding to the globalization. It is allowing students to explore their interests and inquisitiveness on a global scale. It has interwoven into the fabric of academic life allowing students to construct their own knowledge through online services. The digitization and online facilities have evolved a new learning style called outreach learning which equips students with industrial content and skills that is more appropriate for employability. The new media broadens the knowledge sphere of students by facilitating interactions, community learning and exchange of ideas. Outreach learning beyond the classroom provides students an experiential learning of theoretical aspects helping in better understanding. New media technology through its step in knowledge sector has provided education a multidimensional learning approach and enhancing outreach learning giving rise to generation of innovative and competitive students.

The present paper has studied the essentiality of new media in education. New Media's role in learning process, its advantages and risk is studied by adopting survey method among college students in Bangalore. The paper also studies the outreach learning aspect through the use of new media among college students.

Redefined Education through New Media

Education, an investment of lifetime includes learning at different levels from school to the university. It enables an individual to grow with adequate knowledge, critical thinking and an environment conducive maturation. This knowledge sector definitely shapes the life of an individual into a confident being to make a mark in the competition driven world. Being an important segment of one's life it evolves and reshapes with the changing society demands. Education is considered as indispensable for the growth of an individual and the socio economic development of a country. Undoubtedly it is a tool for transformation process of a nation and a journey for students to carve a niche for themselves in the competitive world. The education world is constantly restructured and reconstructed with technological advancements. It is rightly pointed that "Technology related developments are Change Drivers that have significantly reshaped the landscape of higher education", *IJMT (2011)*.

The technological advancement in the latter part of 20th century i.e New media is the fusion of traditional media with the computer technology. It is usually referred to as digital media that are interactive, incorporate two way communication with some form of computing as opposed to traditional media which is more static in nature. Its ability to combine text, audio, digital video, images and source of information accessible on personal computer, mobile or any digital device has garnered the attention of student fraternity as a tool to enhance learning capabilities. It has overthrown the traditional concept of learning

taking place only amidst the four walls, the classrooms. New media has induced the whole new concept of learning by not confining for the purpose of fun. *Education without borders (2013)* opines that “New media technologies and ideas have considerable potential to positively impact learning. They are demonstrating their teaching and learning potential rather than just the tools for information exchange, social networking and good old fashion fun.”

New media is a transformation from the non-digital traditional media to digital interactive participatory communication revolutionizing the sphere of communication by creating the virtual world. New media technologies disseminate information and help in building knowledge networks by integrating diverse content. *Dr. A.W. Bates (1999)* asserts that “New technologies are fundamentally changing the nature of knowledge. Based on the representing knowledge in various ways through technology, it will change the nature of understanding which would be different.” It is providing a wide spectrum of information and contents relating to academics, industry and current aspects contributing to increase knowledge and skills in students. These sweeping technological changes will effectively change the skill sets of workforce (*The Economic intelligence unit-2008*). Presently students are highly dependent on the new media for varied learning options and could well be tagged as e- generation.

New media with its varied types - wiki, blogs, social networking sites such as facebook, twitter and so on, video sharing sites such as you tube; micro blogs are familiar among young people. New media had exceeded from just being the medium of entertainment to sector of knowledge. The young people not just use new media for networking with friends and gaming but have imbibed a peer leaning, public participation and information seeking behavior. These types of new media are extensively used by students for learning process as a supplement for books and have induced ability of discussion and critical thinking among students. With the new media technology at the fingertips college students are triggered for practical knowledge of theoretical aspects and industrial perspective on their syllabus topics widening their knowledge horizon.

New Media Tools for Learning

Wikis: Wiki is a tool that ensures a better form of public domain interaction and community involvement. Wiki is collection of webpages and is developed so as to accommodate a wide array of content and accesses. Anybody can contribute or modify content in a wiki. Wikipedia, a web encyclopedia is one of the best known wikis.

Social Networking Sites: Social networks are where users set up a profile of themselves, create formal connections to people they know, communicate and share preferences and interests. It allows the individuals to present variety of formats including videos and texts. Facebook, Myspace, linkedIn and so on are the well known social networking sites among college students.

Blogs: Blogs are major interactive tool. An individual can create and update content and can also maintain regular entries of commentary, events or news. Blog sites may be maintained by a single individual, a group of individuals, corporate body and so on. In most of the blog sites, users (usually referred as bloggers) share a lot of common information disseminated through audio, animated graphics and video files.

You Tube: An online video sharing site where videos are uploaded by users and be viewed freely. Users can leave comments on the videos.

Google: Google is the largest search engine on the web it handles several queries through its various services. This search engines lets us find other sites on the web based on keyword searches.

Outreach Learning

Education world is changing immensely with the emergence of new media technology. It is no more a learning school amidst four walls confining just to the static syllabus defined and designed. Today the proportion of outreach learning is evident with the multidimensional approach for education. Outreach learning is defined as learning process beyond the routine classroom and laboratory activities. It provides an educational experience to young college students by incorporating activities like interactions, community learning, peer learning, industrial discussions and exposure supporting the professional development of students. Outreach learning emphasis and enables in building confidence and abilities in subject area bombarding with vivid information and perspectives on academic related topics and general topics. It definitely is an instrument to develop scientific temper and independence of mind. Outreach learning continuously evolves students as skilled and competitive individuals by maximizing their effort through experiential learning. The evolution of new media technology is an innovative change in the world of education by enriching students with new dimension of learning for the competitive world.

Need of the Study

The evolution of new media technology has instigated changes in aspects of human life. It has absolutely heralded the knowledge economy. New media has interwoven itself into fabric of academics. The education is revamping itself as students are ardently using new media for the learning purpose. The conventional idea of enhancing knowledge in a classroom and libraries is seeing changes as students depend on new media for better understanding, extra information, industrial knowledge, current affair and experiential learning. They are involved more in interaction, sharing information, acquiring skills and exemplary understanding. New Media is undoubtedly is causing a significant ripple in higher education by allowing students for greater specialization in curriculum.

Students in college extensively use new media tools for varied academic purposes. From assignments to making notes, from alternate information to industrial content, their preference is new media. Bygone are days when students referred books in libraries for enriching themselves. In this era of e-generation with new media tools and the phenomenal spread of mobile phones, going online has turned easy to clarify their doubts instantly and satisfy their learning instincts. It is encouraging an outreach learning concept and producing a skill set students as the confident individuals and better future workforce. The new medias role in outreach learning without confining to prescribed information of syllabus topics among college students is studied in the current research paper.

Objectives of the Study

- a. To study the relevance of New Media for Outreach learning among college students.
- b. To study the new media tools used extensively for learning purpose.
- c. To study the benefits and risks of New Media among college students.

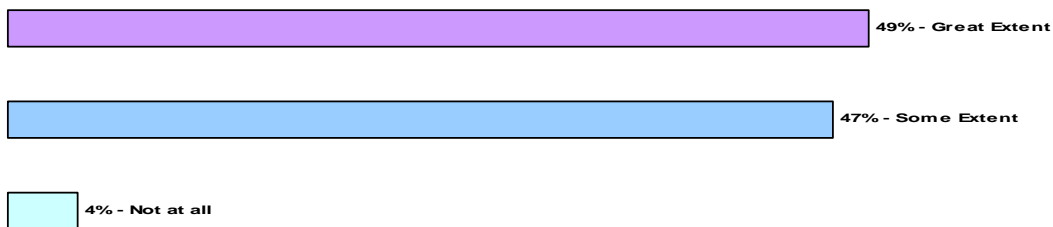
Methodology

Quantitative research method is adopted to assess the relevance and usage of new media for outreach learning among college students in Bangalore. Non Purposive sampling was used and 300 students were randomly selected for the research. A questionnaire was designed with open-ended and close ended question for data collection. Percentage analysis is adopted for the data collected leading to the findings below.

Findings

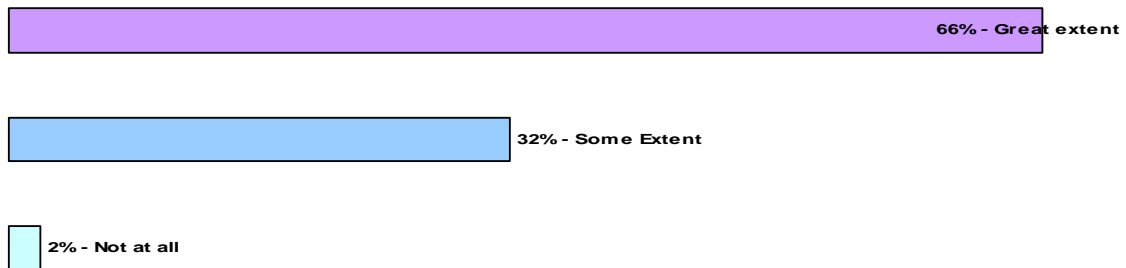
New media's entrant into the education sector changed the scenario of learning from four walled classroom to the world. The primary data collected substantiated this with majority of students, 94% (Graph 1) resorting to new media for learning. It is erasing the process of learning through books, library, and classroom teaching presenting the trend of using online tools for augmenting the academic performance.

Graph 1: New Media Technology For learning



Online study materials, discussion forums on academic topics are lacing in additional information to the predesigned syllabus. Online's extensive information on academic subjects bounded with set notes is diluting the class room notes making habit among the current students. 92% (Graph 2) of the students to a great and to some extent lay back on online resources for their academic excellence .

Graph 2 : New Media facilitate additional information on academic subjects



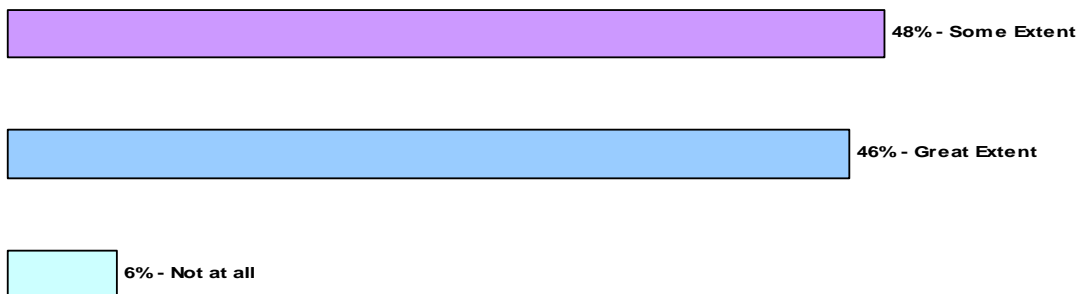
An array of options in new media tools are providing a choice for students to select the information tailored completely according to their interest, understanding capability, and rich content. The respondent's opinion clearly indicates that the most opted tool is wiki followed by social networking sites and blogs for alternate information. The respondents opine that new media has not just restricted to providing syllabus content but the practical exposure through industrial lectures, discussions and debates, interactions and so on inducing the experiential learning which are denied to a great extent in colleges. Experiential learning has unleashed a new phase in education or learning that is beyond passing examination. It is defined as better understanding of concepts and fundamentals leading to a potential learning and professional development. 38% of respondent's correlate new media and experiential learning to a great extent, while 56% says it is providing a better understanding of fundamentals for some extent (Graph 3).

Graph 3: New Media technology for experiential learning



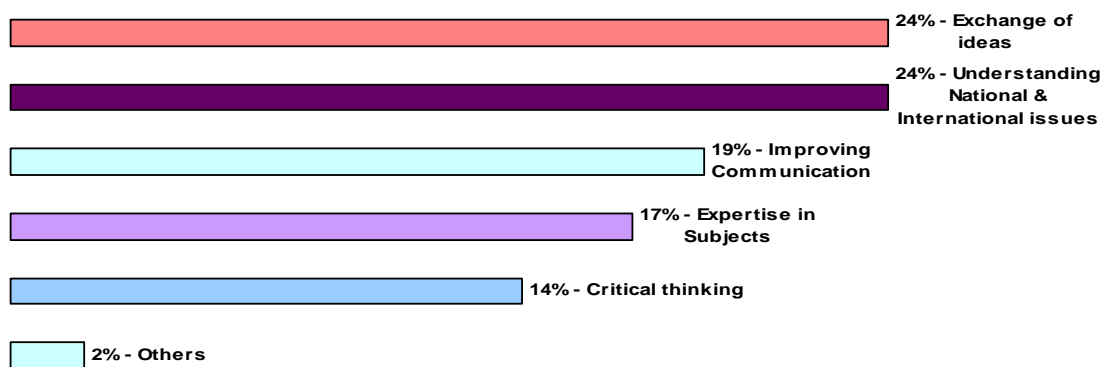
For a student to be an asset for the country the skill are as vital as a degree certification. An *industrialist opines* that “Only small sections of our educated youth are readily employable. The majority are impaired by some sort of skill deprivation. The gaps are most in the areas of soft skills, functional skills and industrial skills.” Along with education it is important for students to tailor according to the industrial needs. In relation new media is definitely a forum for enriching the skills, be it creative, technical or employability by its immense content, enhanced video and presentation tools contributing to quality of education. 46% of respondents cited that new media tools are enhancing their skills at a greater rate and 48 % have developed certain skills through digital media (Graph 4).

Graph 4: New Media for Enhancing Skills (Creative/ Technical/ Employability)



This digital world of learning is allowing youth to explore their interests and find information that goes beyond what they access in classroom. They do turn to specialized knowledge with the established networks from around the world. It is a stage to exhibit their work and share their view on issues. It has directed to peer learning and motivating them to improve their personality. For 24% of respondents new media is forum for exchange if ideas and share their views while 24 % strongly opine new media is a window to know and understand the national and international affairs. It has indeed helping them to improvise their communication skills and abilities through constant interaction and discussions as stated by 19 % students. 17% of the participants are excelling in academics by its extensive study materials while 14% have developed the analytical mind with the debates and discussions online (Graph 5). It has triggering their critical thinking on various current issues and motivating them to be active public participants.

Graph 5: Benefits of New Media Technology



Ever since its evolution new media has changed the dynamics of learning. It is so permeated in to the life of young generation that a new world of communication, self-expression, and autonomy is seen. It has encroached their everyday activities from friendship, learning to a public participant. With the mobile technology they can access online facilities without a time frame. As it is evident that a large number of colleges are in thought process for introducing new media or online facilities in colleges 96% students insist that new media is be introduced in college or universities for the benefit of students and faculties while a small section of 4% say a strong no for its entry into colleges (Graph 6).

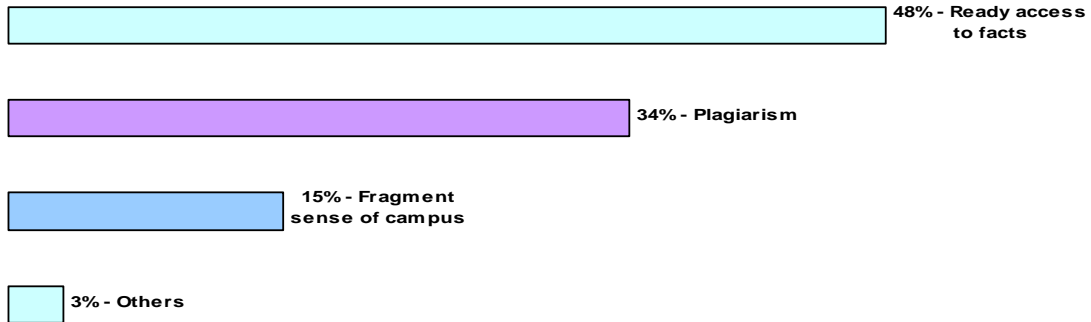
Graph 6: Introducing New Media in Colleges/ Universities



Applauding the benefits of new media and longing for its entry into colleges, students undeny that it does accompany with certain risks which need to be monitored. Being an informative medium with enormous content that could be accessed easily, new media is persuading students to blind foldely accept the contents

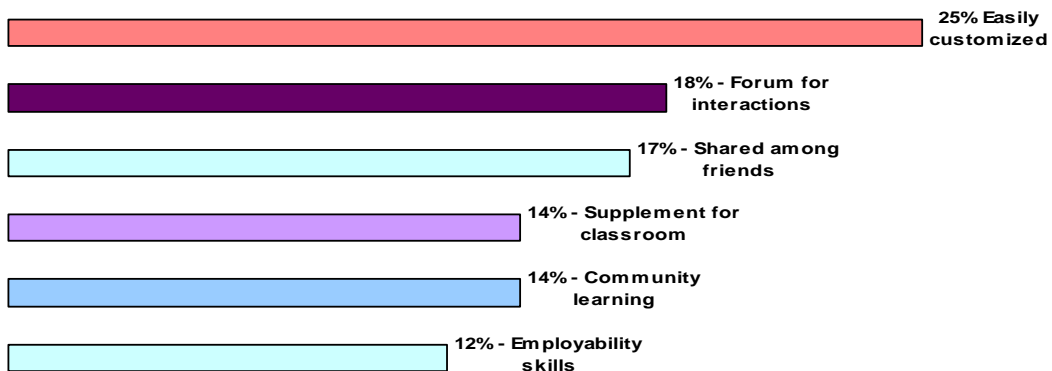
and indulge in plagiarism as stated by 34%. They agree that it is completely changing the campus and classroom learning through fragment sense of learning (Graph 7).

Graph 7: Risks posed by New Media in Education Sector



The affiliation to new media and online learning is growing stringer among students as the contents are available and is chosen according to individuals learning ability. The overall opinions regarding new media technology in education clearly indicated that new media and education are intertwining with students extensive dependency on the new media for prospective learning. 60% of the respondents assert that new media provides them with easily customized contents to their leaning capacity. This indeed has encouraged for better understanding. According to 44% it has triggered the ability to question, analyze and opionate by raging the trend of interaction, discussion and debates on every issue. The digital media has evolved the culture of sociability by creating groups allowing for exchange of ideas and sharing resources among friends as said by 40% of the participants. New media being a tool for networking, making friends, creating groups has brought in peer and community learning concept according to 35% of respondents while the other 35% feel it is a supplement to the formal classroom which has set predefined goal. By providing an exposure to innovative learning methods and rich content, new media has attracted the students unperturbedly. 30 % of the respondents say that new media is definitely an avenue for acquiring skills that make them employable. By giving an exposure to industrial skill sets new media is contributing to the better workforce (Graph 8).

Opinion about New media Technology in education



Implications

The research clearly indicates new media has created a significant ripple in the education sector. It has introduced to the concept of dynamic learning methods beyond the formal classroom. New media is proving that it is not just a medium of fun but bundle of knowledge for the interested. This is evident with students resorting to the tools of new media for learning and understanding the concepts of academics. College students' online learning is not confined to academics but is making them socially active by providing a platform to make their voice heard or to express themselves. Undoubtedly, it is widening their knowledge horizon through experiential learning. New media is the sort medium to acquire the required skills for professional development.

An agent of immense change, new media technology is allowing for greater specialization of the curriculum. It is enriching the students' knowledge sector with substantial information on varied aspects. New media tools are contributing interest driven community and peer learning. The digital media has enthralled the college students to great extent with its spontaneity and interactive nature. Though new media is creating a revolution with positive approach, its negative aspects are undeniable. The new media technology is well accepted as the content, approach, presentations are crafted according to individuals needs. It definitely is tool to produce confident and competitive students.

Conclusion

A great transformation is seen from books, libraries to mobiles, computers, and digital media in the era. The era is well a synonym to the e - generation, which is technology driven. Its ingress in to the knowledge economy has significantly changed the learning sphere. It has broadened the academic world from pre set goals like syllabus, examination to skills, world affairs, community learning and of all an experiential learning. It is treading its path to make students carve a niche for themselves in the competitive world. New media technology has bombarded the student fraternity with wide array of rich content, avenues for learning, social participation and medium for expression. It has broken the barriers of learning amidst four walls by providing an exposure to information on academics as well as topic of interest. It is allowing the students to construct their own knowledge and enhance their skills for the professional development. Indeed new media technology is interwoven into academics giving a multidimensional approach to educational sector and the knowledge economy. The New Media technology in education is creating a genre of outreach learning and contributing for the future global leaders.

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