Integration of ICT Platforms for the Students and Teachers to CreatE an Open and Independent Educational Environment.

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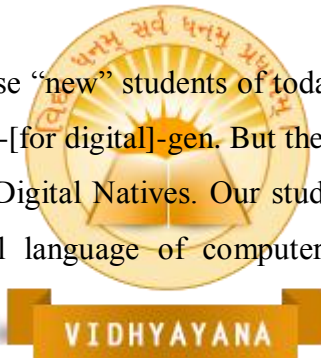Assistant Professor in English
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Technology is growing day by day at lightning speed. We are experiencing things which we never imagined before. Technology is changing very fast so the world and so also the ways and means of education. Pedagogical concepts keep changing. In modern times Teacher's role is significant in creating an open and independent environment through the integration of ICT platforms. With modern technology, the teacher can make the teaching-learning process time saving and energy saving. Technology is now an integrated part of education. It should not be looked at separately. Without technology, the teaching and learning process is insufficient. Technology is not the aim of education but through technology the goals of education can be achieved. Technology makes education open without time and space boundaries. The new generation is now in a totally different environment. They want everything very fast and in digital form. Mark Prensky aptly termed new generation as digital natives,

What should we call these "new" students of today? Some refer to them as the N-[for Net]-gen or D-[for digital]-gen. But the most useful designation I have found for them is Digital Natives. Our students today are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet[1]

Teacher has to think differently not from his perspective but from the perspectives of the environment in which these digital natives have grown. These digital natives have totally different mindset. They are comfortable in a digital environment. They adopt new technology without any support and guidance. They are prone to multitasking and fast processing.

Digital Immigrant teachers assume that learners are the same as they have always been, and that the same methods that worked for the teachers when they were students will work for their students now. But that assumption is no longer valid. Today's learners are different.[2]

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To cater to the need of digital natives, teachers can adapt, innovate and integrate online platforms to make his or her task easy and effective ignoring time and space boundaries. Internet is the treasure of many educational platforms. Platforms like Google Classroom, Google Website, Google forms, Blog, YouTube, Coursera, EDX, Khan Academy, Unacademy, BYJUS etc. are such examples through which teachers and students can make teaching and learning process more effective and interesting. Technology can help the learner to create a personal learning environment by using all such ICT based platforms. Digital natives find themselves more comfortable to study using these internet-based platforms as compared to the digital immigrant.

> 'Digital natives' are generally born after the 1980s and they are comfortable in the digital age, because they grew up using technology, but 'digital immigrants' are those who are born before 1980s and they are fearful about using technology. 'Digital immigrants' are the older crew, they weren't raised in a digital environment. The term digital immigrant mostly applies to individuals who were born before the spread of digital technology and who were not exposed to it at an early age.[3]

Integration of ICT based platforms in education is a welcome change. It is full of varieties. It is the teacher to decide which one fits best and effective for the end result. Ultimately the ultimate goal of any academia is to provide education in an effective manner. If these online ICT based platforms help the digital natives to learn with ease and comfort then it should be the part of formal education. It helps the students to generate their own perspective. In formal learning they mostly depend on elder's views. They are not bestowed full freedom. They feel themselves as slaves to others. On these platforms one gets a vast area to explore by sitting in his or her study table. No rigidity, hence more flexibility of thought. It is widely accepted that online educational platforms can play a very important role in achieving educational goals.

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We live in the information age, at a time that *information and communications technologies (ICT)* permeate all aspects of our social activities (administration, business, industry, research, entertainment, culture, etc.) and radically influence our lives. ICT has been widely welcomed as having the potential to enhance learning by offering a variety of learning environments for the students and the adults as well. Educational systems around the world are under increasing pressure to use ICT in order to teach students the knowledge and skills needed for their future directions in the 21st century's knowledge society.[4]

Teacher's success lies in achieving educational goals. To achieve these goals teacher has to get updated. He has to develop the innovative bent of mind. The new and innovative ways and means using following different online platforms to make teaching and learning process smooth, easy and effective.

Google has designed Google Classroom for educational purposes and specially for the teachers to make teaching learning interesting and interactive. This platform helps to connect teacher with the students 24/7. By creating Class teacher asks students to join the class through class code or through mail invitation. Once students become part of the Class, teacher can assign homeworks, can instruct, can suggest and also can comment on the work submitted by students. Here grading and marking facility is also available. In the beginning, teachers and students may find it difficult and raise their eyebrow to this. But once students and teacher are fully acquainted with this platform then the desired result can be achieved easily.

The advantage of this platform is that the students' can access it from anywhere, anytime and from any device. Here there is no barrier of time and space. Data communicated on this platform goes to google drive which has 15 GB capacity currently.

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Websites and Blogs are the best medium to communicate with the students. This platform also removes many barriers which come in the way of teaching the learning process.Through websites and blogs teacher can share study material, syllabus, videos, links and PPts. The new digital natives want everything fast, easy and in digital forms. So websites and blogs help to cater to this need of today's digital natives. Study materials in digital form helps to save paper, trees and the environment. There are many free website services through which you can create your own free websites like Google Sites, Webs.com and many more. There are many ways to integrate your site to achieve your desired goals. It's up to you how optimum you use.

If a teacher wants to survey on any particular topic or wants information from people or wants to conduct an MCQ test or wants to create a registration form then Google Form and Microsoft Form is the best for him. Using forms teachers can create questionnaires and can collect information for research and development. In this service teacher can gather any type of information be it in the form of rating, short answer, yes no answer, grading, feedback and so on. After creating form a teacher can share its link via social media, can mail or can be embedded on a website and can receive the information. Data gathered using the form is typically stored in a drive spreadsheet. These forms responses give excellent analyses on this platform. So the teacher and researcher's task becomes easy to understand the responses and can plan accordingly.

Google Drive, OneDrive, DropBOx are cloud storage platforms in which data can be stored and retrieved from any devices accessing the account. For teacher it is easy to manage the study material on these plateforms and can be easily shared with students. Through different plans we can expand the storage capacity of these cloud storage capacity. The data stored in these cloud storage are more secure from viruses and malware attacks than the data stored in PC and pendrive. Office work like typing documents, creating PPTs, Spreadsheet works, developing forms are easy enough on these cloud computing.

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Learning becomes easy and independent through video services like YouTube. If you have a desire to learn anything new under this sky than you tube gives everything and anything from cooking to aeronautics. Through videos complicated scientific puzzles are easy. Video formats make things easy and arouse interest. Teachers can create their own YouTube channel and can upload recorded video lectures so that the students can relearn at their convenient time and place.

Those who live in far and distant areas and have geographic challenges and those who can not go to school or college for some reason, many online courses are boon to them. Without time and distance constraints they can get knowledge and degrees. There are many such platforms which provide online courses like Coursera, Edx, Khan Academy, Unacademy, BYJUS etc. are such examples.These platforms caters to the need of those who can not go to school and colleges.

Wikipedia is a great source of knowledge and information written collaboratively by the people. It's like a digital online encyclopedia. If you need any information without searching anywhere else one can go to Wikipedia to get the information on any topic.

New innovations and technologies are evolving everyday changing the basic concepts of teaching learning process. New generation absorbs these changes very easily as they are digital natives. Education systems, institutions and teachers must adopt these changes very fast to keep space with the time otherwise the students will find their ways and means easily. There is no doubt that teachers can not be replaced by technology at what level technology progress. But the teacher has to equip themselves for the effective and smooth teaching-learning process.

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