IMPACT OF DIGITAL LEARNING IN EDUCATION SECTOR : A PANDEMIC PERSPECTIVE

VOLUME - I

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S.No	Title	Page.No
16	ROLE OF ICT IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS WITH REFERENCE TO TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT **Dr.T. Velpandi & C. Pravindas**	103
17	EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING THROUGH E-LEARNING **Mrs. B. Poornima & Dr. T. Prabu Vengatesh**	109
18	DIGITAL LEARNING IN EDUCATION **Dr .P. Archanaa & D.Soundharika**	114
19	EFFECT OF ICT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS **Dr. S.Poongodi & Dr. P.Jayanthi**	117
20	LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION **Ms. M. Shanmugapriya**	122
21	APPLICATION OF GAMIFICATION AND SIMULATIONS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING TO CREATE LEARNING INTEREST **S. Rajagopalan**	128
22	EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES **B.Sivasankari, G.Sowbarani & D.Punithavathi**	134
23	A STUDY ON BLOOM'S TAXONOMY AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS **Ms.V.Poornima**	142
24	TOOLS FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNING **Dr. S. Shanmugapriya & S. Pavithra**	147
25	21st CENTURY METHOD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING **Dr.P.Maheswari**	151
27	COLLEGE STUDENTS PERCEPTION TOWARDS ONLINE EDUCATION DURING PANDAMIC – A SUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO POLLACHI TALUK **Dr. M. Deepa**	155
28	INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN 21ST CENTURY TEACHING AND LEARNING **Ms. R.Subha Sangeetha & Ms. P.Priyanka**	161
29	A STUDY ON E-LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM **Ms.Kesavy & Ms.T.Bhavinaya**	165
30	STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE ON ONLINE LEARNING AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS DURING COVID – 19 PANDEMIC **T.Sivagnana Selvakumar & Dr.R.Balaji Vignesh**	171
31	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS IN ICT **Dr.S.Kokilavizhi**	178

DIGITAL LEARNING IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Digital learning has become a major concern in most education sectors around the globe. Most institutional leadership have invested a lot of resources to ensure that the teaching and learning processes of their various institutions are digitalized demands of the 21st century of learning and teaching. The objectives of the research was to examine learning pedagogies relevant in the 21st century; the relationship between digital learning and digital natives; the Use of digital learning platforms in tertiary institutions in Fiji; both positive and negative impacts of digital Learning on tertiary students and the challenges faced by students during the sudden transition from the traditional face-to-face learning mode to online instructional delivery of learning

Keywords: *Digital learning, online, innovative, students.*

Introduction

Over the last several decades, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become prominent in higher education. With this prominence, educators increasingly expect to utilize, and even embrace, technology to enhance the delivery of course content in keeping current with future workforce demands. Pandemic has forced all institutions to adopt faster and continue the education teaching-learning process given the closure of all institutions. Online Distance Education (ODE) uses the internet and other significant technology to produce educational content, instructional delivery and program management. ODE we can deliver in two main formats: synchronous and asynchronous. As the name suggests, Synchronous Distance Education (SDE) involves live, real-time interaction between teachers and students. It aims to simulate the communication model of a traditional classroom. Examples of SDE would include live webinars or virtual classrooms. Asynchronous education, on the other hand, introduces temporal flexibility. It does not require real-time interaction; instead, the educational material is available online for students to access at their convenience. Examples of asynchronous education would be video recordings and emails.

The Effect of Digital Learning during COVID-19 on Students' Learning Process

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed a huge challenge on education system all over the world. Governments had to close schools as a precautionary measure thus putting face-to-face learning to a stop. Schools have to come up with means of ensuring that the learning process continues from home for all teachers and students. Sol (2020) stated that majority of schools has closed down and the education system has transitioned from face to face learning to online learning. It is also stated that online learning has become the new normal for teaching and

learning during the COVID –19 pandemics. The development in technologies has led to the development in educational technologies all over the world. Schools and tertiary institutions have relied heavily on these educational tools during this pandemic. It is a mean to inform and to keep up with their interaction with students and parents. This sudden transition of learning should not involve complicated technological usage but an educator should work with what they know about technology to ease education through the internet. Digital learning once, encompassed in the program of a school will make it part of the school culture. Digital learning will allow a child to be digitally literate. Digital literacy allows a child to use the internet to solve varieties of problem solving activities. It will not only help a student in online education but also it prepares the child to be digitally competent in private and public life. Once the child gets used to digital learning, education will not be a problem in the future if there is going to be another pandemic. The reason being that majority of the students are digital natives and they learn well too through internet. Students nowadays are familiar with the use of internet so online education will not be a problem to them. The education department just have to ensure that all students have access to it during this pandemic.

Forms of Digital Education

Digital education has been categorised in different ways into several forms, but most of that differentiation fall under these three forms:

Online Learning: Online learning is the form of learning whereby teachers and students communicate over the Internet without being in the same place. This form of education has increased access to education over the years and allowed more people to learn at their convenience. The main feature of online learning is that the teachers and students use technological tools such as computers, smartphones and the Internet to teach and learn.

Today, the disparity between online learning and physical learning has been reduced to the barest minimum.

Blended Learning: This form of digital education is also known as hybrid learning. It is a combination of physical and online learning. For example, teachers sometimes supplement lectures in physical classes with instructional materials sent over digital platforms. Some of the technological tools used include video conferencing, learning management systems, learning content management systems, discussion forums, etc. Education under this type of learning system usually takes place in the form of synchronous and asynchronous learning. An example is flipped classroom whereby lecturers send videos and instructional materials to the students before the class and interact with them physically.Under the blended learning system, students can also take their discussions online and interact with one another and their lecturers.

The Obstacles to Effective Digital Learning

The popularity of digital learning is on the rise. However, there are obstacles that have to be overcome to make it very effective. Studies show that digital learning is changing the face of education for the better, but the obstacles are:

- Self-discipline is a major issue that many students struggle with.

- Moreover, children cannot have the kind of social interaction that the traditional education system allows.
- Digital platforms do allow children to interact with teachers but it cannot be compared with the kind of interaction that is possible on a physical campus.
- Other obstacles include poor time management and difficulties posed by technology.

Conclusion

With, so many different ways to define e-learning and the educational approaches that can be taken in these learning environments, it is the conclusion of this author that e-learning is an innovative approach to learning. It is a holistic way of teaching and learning that meets the needs of today's digital natives. Education can also benefit from digital learning as a collaboration tool, by bringing people together through video conferencing, enabling students and teachers to use shared documents or simply by helping to prepare students for the world of work.