

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION : APPROACH AND ANTICIPATION

Volume 2 : Media and Mechanism for Social Transformation

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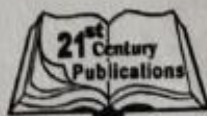
Editors

Dr. Amandeep Kaur

Ms. Harjit Kaur

Ms. Jasmeen Kaur

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e-mail : rinku_randhawa77@yahoo.com

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by

Dr. Amandeep Kaur, Ms. Harjit Kaur & Ms. Jasmeen Kaur

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THE ROLE OF ICT IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE 21st CENTURY

Manjeet Kaur*

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become common entities in all aspects of life. Within education, ICT has begun to have a presence but the impact has not been as extensive as in other fields. The use of ICT in education lends itself to more student-centered learning settings and often this creates some tensions for some teachers and students. But with the world moving rapidly into digital media and information, the role of ICT in education is becoming more and more important and this importance will continue to grow and develop in the 21st century. This paper highlights the various impacts of ICT on contemporary higher education and explores its potential for future developments. The paper argues the role of ICT in transforming teaching and learning and seeks to explore how this will impact on the way programs will be offered and delivered in the higher educational institutions of the future.

Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) is a force that has changed many aspects of the way we live. If one was to compare such fields as medicine, tourism, travel business, law, banking, engineering and architecture, the impact of ICT across the past two or three decades has been enormous. As we move into the 21st century, these factors and many others are bringing strong forces to bear on the adoption of ICTs in education and contemporary trends suggest we will soon see large scale changes in the way education is planned and delivered as a consequence of the opportunities and affordances of ICT. This paper seeks to explore and likely changes we will see in education as ICT acts as a powerful agent to change many of the educational practices to which we have become accustomed. In particular, the paper will explore the impact both current and emerging information and communication technologies will be likely to have in coming years on what is learned, when and where learning will take place and how the learning will occur.

The Impact of ICT on What is Learned

Conventional teaching has emphasized on content. For many years course have been written around textbooks. Teachers have taught through lectures and presentations interspersed with tutorials and learning activities designed to consolidate and rehearse the content. Contemporary settings are now favoring curricula that promote competency and performance. The moves to competency and performance-based curricula are well supported and encouraged by emerging instructional technologies (e.g. Stephenson, 2001). Such curricula tend to require:

- access to a variety of information sources;
- access to a variety of information forms and types;
- student-centered learning settings based on information access and inquiry;
- learning environments centered on problem-centered and inquiry-based activities;
- authentic settings and examples; and

* Assistant Professor, S.U.S. Govt. College, Sunam, Punjab