

The New Teaching Era: New Trends and Methods of Teaching

Dr. Neelam Gaur

Drawing and Painting, J.V. Jain College, Saharanpur, UP, India

The nurturer of the naïve minds; the people who mold young minds into the bright future of the society; that are teachers; have always been recognized as the personas of respect and wisdom. Teachers play a very vital role in any nation, even more vital in a developing nation as ours. Indian culture has always associated teaching with the most high ranking and honorable professions. We cannot deny the fact that proper teaching methods hold an equally important place as the teachers, because with either one lagging behind, the immature minds can be turned into hazardous citizenship in the near future.

In earlier days children were sent to isolated 'Ashrams' to be trained in warfare and theoretical sciences like mathematics, social and political codes and conduct and other material sciences. Or they used to be taught by the priests at the nearby temples. The techniques and methods of teaching have remarkably changed since then. With the growth of science and technology, there are visual and audible classes to increase the efficiency of the teachers. All that being said, there are a lot of new advancements yet to be achieved in the teaching arena.

There are many predictions for the upcoming years like Micro-credentials, digital wearables and mobile learning, but these predictions are often misleading and even wildly inaccurate assurances. But analyzing trends and developments within a sector is far more constructive and strategic than considering stand-alone predictions.

This paper examines and explores three trends that meet the worthy criteria. The three are:

1. Skill-specific education also known as competency-based education (CBE) is expanding to institutions and generating new education technology products and platforms,
2. Social learning facilitated by technology and the acceptance of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) is a new and viable instructional method, and
3. Learning-on-the-go supported not just by mobile devices and internet connectivity, but by the availability of sophisticated applications with few barriers will expand learning to students seeking flexible access to education.

I. Sources for Trends Affecting Education

There've been several articles and reports written and shared by organizations, education entities and news agencies that highlight trends, developments, and hot topics concerned to varied sectors. Not all are specific to education, but reading between the lines there are subtle implications that suggest which potential developments will affect if not change how people learn. The sources might be few but are solid. A key source and excellent resource for the education community is the NMC Horizon Report: 2015 Higher Education Edition Wiki which provides insight into educational technology trends. Collectively these sources and events over the past years in education provide a window into new developments in teaching and learning to watch for in the years to come.

1. Skill-Specific Education

The most significant innovations in education programs in

the past years are those that focus on a specific skill set or knowledge area. These programs fall under the banner of micro-credentialing or competency-based education (CBE) and will be more disruptive to traditional education than anything we've seen to date. Traditional education in this context is defined as for-credit education measured by instruction time and grading of students work by teacher/instructor/faculty. Outcomes of traditional education typically are credentials in the form of a degree, diploma or certificate and are recognized by employers and institutions. On the other hand, skills education facilitates student's learning technical skills or knowledge in a specific topic area that is measured by criteria-specific performance. Typically assessment is an observable outcome(s) that demonstrates mastery in the form of an e-portfolio or interactive transcript. Examples are competency-based degree programs such as the one offered at Purdue, or nano-degrees offered by Udacity, micro-credential programs offered by edX or Coursera, certificates by Alison, and Mozilla's Open Badges program.

We can expect more institutions offering competency education programs and employer involvement in skill-specific education in the future, as in the example of AT&T giving funds to Udacity and Georgia Tech for development of online programs. We'll also see companies serving as advisors for curriculum and program development for courses of study at institutions.

(i). Drivers of Skill-Specific Education

- Pressure on education institutions from Department of Education and/or other government entities to offer more accessible and shorter education pathways (to a credential) to accommodate non-traditional learners. The non-traditional segment is a new and growing market of adult learners with prior skills and experience
- Expanding non-traditional student population who seek open, flexible learning
- Skills gap identified by employers
- High cost associated with higher education

(ii). Developments in Skill-Specific Education

- MOOCs on institution-affiliated platforms focusing on skill specific training in partnership with companies
- Courses focusing on skills with input from employers who have a hand in developing curriculum, e.g. Nano-degrees (Udacity), and professional courses for a fee — targeting professionals (edX and Coursera)
- LMS platform providers creating specific platforms that accommodate competency specific learning e.g. Helix LMS
- Digital badges, e.g. Mozilla Open Badge Project
- Brandman University's competency degree program incorporates digital badges for students to demonstrate skills to potential employers.

2. Social Learning as a Pedagogical Method

Social learning is not a new concept, but social learning as a method of instruction is. We are beginning to see social learning adopted

by education institutions as a method for learning through peer collaboration for instance, and in Human Resources departments as a method for employee training. Also technological advancement in the form of applications—mobile apps that support learners not just through collaboration but by learning core concepts through innovative software design. Gaming too has become more social, as well as learning management platforms (LMSs) which are incorporating features that support and promote interactivity and social connections among students.

The aim, of social learning, is to engage thousands of people in productive discussions and the creation of shared projects, so together they share experience and build on their previous knowledge — Innovating Pedagogy 2014, The Open University

(i). Drivers of Social Learning

- Advancements in technology have lowered barriers to learner connectivity
- MOOCs uncovered a new demographic of learners—non-traditional students with a thirst for knowledge and learning
- Dissemination of knowledge—learners can now access knowledge through networks rather than institutions
- Companies seeking alternatives to traditional employee training and development leveraging social platforms and tools
- Bring your own Device (BYOD) policies in education institutions

(ii). Developments in Social Learning

- Features within Learning Management Platforms that facilitate social interactivity
- Smart phone applications (apps) that support learning with and from peers and/or tutors, e.g. P2P Chat
- Businesses using social media platforms for employee learning and development, e.g. Cisco introduces Project Squared a service delivered via an app or the Web that offers an online gathering place for getting work done.

3. Learning-on-the-Go

Mobile devices along with low barriers to connectivity and the choice of hundreds of new apps specific to education puts access to education in the hands of learners making learning-on-the-go a reality. Learning-on-the-go, also known as mobile learning or m-learning is also not new, yet recent advancements in network capabilities and applications makes learning exclusively from a mobile device a reality.

Brandman University for example recently launched a competency based degree on a mobile platform where students have access to 30,000 pages of course material from a tablet or smart phone. Other education institutions are following suit by making education accessible to students from their mobile device for un-tethered learning—students aren't bound by a physical institution or even a desktop computer. Numerous apps for mobile devices also support access to knowledge sources via video tutorials, lessons on topic-specific modules, or to access tutoring support, study resources etc.

(i). Drivers of Learning-on-the-Go

- Non-traditional students looking for flexible learning that fits their busy schedule
- Low barriers to owning mobile devices
- Higher quality applications and infrastructure systems that

deliver user-friendly learning options

(ii). Developments in Learning-on-the-Go

- Education institutions offering degree programs fully online with mobile friendly resources
- Sophisticated applications available for mobile devices that provide quality education options
- Apps that satisfy a variety of education needs including degree programs, developmental education programs, one-on-one tutoring, academic advising

II. Conclusion

Though we can't predict exactly what will happen in the future of the education sector, we can make informed decisions and be strategic for the upcoming years. Nothing is certain in the future except change as the saying goes, yet being proactive rather than reactive will put educators in the best position for a successful and effective future.

References

- [1] Modern Trends in Indian Education by Jagannath Mohanty.
- [2] [Online] Available: <http://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2011/02/05/three-trends-that-define-the-future-of-teaching-and-learning/>;
- [3] [Online] Available: <http://www.teach-nology.com/currenttrends/>;
- [4] Equality of Educational Opportunity in India by Surabhi Patel.



Dr. Neelam Gaur, Asstt. Professor,
Drawing and Painting, J.V. Jain College,
Saharanpur, UP, India.