

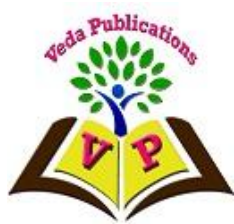
INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND EVALUATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EMERGING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT



Education plays a pivotal role in emancipation and transforming the lives of millions across the globe. It is evident that there are multiple challenges and opportunities to enhance quality and excellence in higher education. Culmination of creative teaching techniques and technology offers a platform for an effective teaching learning process. It is important to ameliorate and upgrade the teaching methodologies understanding the learners of digital era. Distance learning and E- learning cater to the need of students who wish to pursue their higher education besides work. This research papers highlights the innovations in teaching, learning, evaluation and research in higher education. It also focuses on the methods used to inculcate research interest, critical thinking and interdisciplinary approach. The discussions are also based on working youth pursuing higher education and E-learning.

Keywords: *Digitalization, E-learning (JWL), Creativity inteaching, Assessment.*

Higher education aims at spreading knowledge to a large number of people. It's important to muse on the changing trends and innovative teaching practices in order to enhance quality of the education and move towards excellence. There are several challenges as we diversified sect of students across the globe. There are several students deprived of higher education and are forced to work due to financial crisis, lack of opportunity, poverty etc. E-learning and Distance education is an excellent platform which provides a platform for millions to pursue their higher education while working. Though it is beneficial the students doesn't face a teacher but appears only for the exams. Lectures delivered in a classroom can be recorded and circulated along with study materials. E-learning also helps students to who are marginalized, war victims, refugees etc to continue their higher education For instance, JWL (Jesuit Worldwide Learning) is an excellent initiative taken by the Jesuits to provide higher education to the youth at the margins of the society. Education plays a vital role in emancipation and for a social change. It provides education to the refugees, poor, marginalized and other weaker sects in the society across the world. It's a successful program which caters to the need of the students and strives to provide the best possible training and job opportunities.

At present the JWL has established community Learning centres in different parts of the world such as Herat, Gibrail, Domiz, Amman (in the Middle East), Kakuma, Dzaleka, Beira (in Africa), war affected regions in Sri Lanka namely (Mannar, Vavunya, Hatton, Puthiyakudiyiruppu, Trincomalle, Sampur and Monarangala), some parts of India (Madurai, Thiruvannamalai, Mumbai, Thiruvananthapuram), Taunggyi and Yangon in Myanmar, and Nepal for the poor and marginalized communities. The courses offered by JWL help the refugee youth to continue with their education in local universities or abroad when they are resettled – Some are doing their higher

studies in the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia. The courses are not merely academic exercises, but offer real help to many of the thousands of the refugees in the camps. "When people become refugees, their access to many basic human opportunities including the right to education, self-improvement, and the dignity of work is suddenly closed". They are provided with Higher education via computer learning even though graduates cannot leave the camp. "Every course is delivered online by a range of volunteer faculty from universities within and beyond the Jesuit Commons, and is accredited by Regis University."(Peter Balleis SJ, Maria Dass Selvanayagam SJ 5)

Some of the programs offered by Jesuit World Wide Learning include Global English Language Program, Primary Teacher Training, and Diploma in Liberal Arts Studies etc. For instance, a teacher from India can teach a student from Afghanistan or Africa through online. E-learning helps the students to acquire equitable education from any part of the world. JWL is presently in 14 countries and has 31 community centres encourages different universities across the globe and is actively involved in transforming the lives of the millions through higher education. Ignatian pedagogy enables the students to inculcate virtues along with the academic excellence. Jesuit Education not only focuses on academic excellence but also on the character formation and social concern. Educations help the students understanding one and help others to live in peace and harmony. "Cura Personalis" meaning 'care for the entire person' is a hall mark of the Ignatian spirituality. Jesuit Institutions fosters these virtues among students through various programs such as Ignitors, Magis and Outreach programs. Academic Excellence, Social Concern and Character formation are the major concern of Jesuit Education. Hence it plays a vital role in transforming lives through various activities and also through higher education across the world.

In this Digital Era, culmination of creative teaching methods and technology enhances the quality of

higher education. It is highly important for the educators and academicians to understand the students and upgrade themselves to this modern world. Each and every student is unique and the teacher cannot adopt the same methodology to all the classes. For instance, these lines from 'Stopping by woods on a snowy evening'

"And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep"

are interpreted differently. Commerce or a management student might look for the literal meaning of the line whereas a literature student tries to do a critical analysis. It is the duty of the teacher to understand the audience and teach in a simple and direct manner avoiding ambiguity. Visuals are quickly understandable and interest the students but it also limits the students' creativity and imagination. Students might miss several details when a novel or a play is condensed in a film. For example, "Death of a Salesman" a play by Arthur Miller is discussed in a classroom. In this play, the protagonist Willy Loman is lost in his memories. It is very complex to understand the play as there is constant shift from the past and the present especially in the climax of the play. Biff Loman, Happy and Willy meet in the restaurant where Biff confronts Willy telling him that he was just an ordinary man and was not able to meet Bill Oliver. Willy Loman is suddenly lost in the past and could hear the voice of the woman whom he had an affair with. It would confuse the readers to some extent when read in the class whereas the film adaptation helps the audience to understand the plot clearly without any complexity. Iliad, Odyssey, Harry Potter and other films would help the audience to understand and visualize very easily. But it has its own limitations where a student limits his/ her imagination and doesn't taste the essence or the writing style of the author. Another effective way to teach the play is to enact in the class thereby the students are animated and understand the play and also improve their skills, diction and overcome stage fear. Learning through theatre is one of the effective techniques adopted in various institutions to enhance the creativity of the students.

Peer learning and interactive sessions would promote critical thinking and constructive discussions

in the classroom space. Interactive sessions would make the discourse lively and the classroom space effective. Quality of the education imparted can be understood based on the ideas and questions raised by the students during discussions.

There are several innovative techniques or measures to evaluate a student. Younger mind is highly imaginative and smarter than the old generation. Educators should play a key role in engaging and assessing students using leveraging technology. They should understand the basic principle of innovation in teaching practices. It the duty of the teacher pr an educator not just to know the information they teach but also to understand how to relate that information to the students. For instance a traditional written assignment can be replaced with poetry enactment, argumentative writing, soliloquies, reporting, documentary film making, and animation, short films etc. There is a maximum probability of plagiarism when a written assignment is given. These are some of the creative assignments that can be given to the students where a student understands the text or the concept and recreate or research further on the same. Formative assessment and summative assignment enhances the quality of the higher education. It is the role of the teacher to foster critical thinking and evaluate based on the creativity of the student. Advent of science and technology provides an opportunity for the students to acquire a broader knowledge in a subject or a field of study. Research can be effective with the technology. Students are able to access information through different journals and study sites. For instance, a student of law can retrieve a lot of information related to his subject through a site cadindia.clpr.org.in. CADINDIA.CLPR.ORG.IN is a website designed to enhance public awareness and critical engagement with India's constitutional tradition. It provides case studies and constitutional debates in a user friendly manner. A student of law can search or easily access this site to read case studies and various information related to the constitution law. Students should be equipped to face this competitive world which seeks for the practical knowledge. Curriculum should be designed in such a way that it is beneficial to the students to find better

job opportunities. Critical thinking and research interest should be inculcated among the students to enhance quality education. Interdisciplinary approach introduces students to a new arena where a student acquire a broader knowledge and contributes to a different field of study apart from his syllabus.

Thus it is important for the academicians and the stake holders to understand the students and design an appropriate curriculum which would enhance the quality of the higher education. It is high time to bring in creative teaching methodologies to inspire the heart and inform the mind and move towards excellence.

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