Abstract:

The intervention of technology in education besides enhancing learning experience has also solved many shortcomings of traditional method of teaching. This paper examines the initiative of Carleton University, Canada to use instructional television- ITV to support open learning and conventional classroom teaching. In this interactive learning system students are provided with an option to take ITV as well as on campus courses as core and elective subjects. The course content, credit and method of teaching are the full equivalent of courses offered on-campus. There is a greater degree of flexibility in the courses. The students residing in Ottawa can gain access to televised course through cable ITV 65, which is an independent cable channel transmitted from ITV centre of Carleton University. There is ‘tapes-to-you-service’ offered to enrolled students who do not have access to the local cable channel. The course lecture tapes are loaned to students for a specified period of time each semester. The study reveals that the enrollment of ITV students has increased over the years and has never shown decline denoting the demand for access to courses through non-traditional means. ITV model of teaching-learning is feasible in any system of education across the world.

Introduction:

Learning is a continuous process. One never ceases to learn. Communication technology has made education, training and learning accessible. The new technology has changed the method of teaching and learning. It has increased opportunities for students and teachers to access abundant and a variety of resources hitherto not available. Many studies support the contention that today’s
students spend more time with television and computers than learning in a classroom. The use of TV in enhancing learning experience has been hotly debated in academic circles. Study after study has confirmed the awesome power of TV to impart education. TV has the potential to transform the instructional practice in both traditional and non-traditional teaching practices. Nevertheless television can be used as a tool and not as a substitute for existing effective teaching.

**The Canadian Learning Experience- ITV Courses**

In some of the Canadian Universities, learning resources including videotapes continue to be used in the classroom of today. The conventional method of teaching is gradually giving way for the technologically mediated education for both on campus and off campus students in Carleton. Efforts are being made to improve classroom teaching to include electronic resources to enhance the quality of learning. The instructional model is different paving way for innovative teaching.

The Carleton University situated in Ottawa, the capital city of Canada has taken instructional television to greater heights transforming the instructional practice and providing alternative way of learning. The model that is being evolved is a convergence of classroom instruction and technology tools.

Instructional TV popularly known as ITV began at Carleton University in 1978 as a project and was part of the School of Continuing Education. It began as an experiment in community-centered televised course delivery. Unlike other schools of distance education, Carleton developed ITV courses for regular courses from the undergraduate faculties of the university every semester. As a result a student is provided with an option to take ITV as well as on campus courses as core and elective subjects. The course content, credit and method of teaching are the full equivalent of courses offered on-campus. There is a greater degree of flexibility in
the courses. The students residing in Ottawa can gain access to televised course through cable ITV 65, which is an independent cable channel transmitted from ITV centre of Carleton University. There is ‘tapes-to-you-service’ offered to enrolled students who do not have access to the local cable channel. The course lecture tapes are loaned to students for a specified period of time each semester.

The method of teaching involves direct recording of the classroom teaching of a live course on video. It’s recorded in a classroom specially equipped with microphones and video camera. The course design brings in the diversity of the classroom televising all the class activities. The students are those who are enrolled for on campus courses. This ‘camera in the classroom’ approach encouraged teachers/instructors to participate in course innovation, curricular development, in collaborative and/or team teaching and use of technology in course delivery. The classroom-centered delivery is different from video-based courses produced in documentary format using animation and other hi-fi sophisticated techniques. The latter mode requires enormous resources and is prohibitively expensive. Further it will escalate the cost of the course. ITV therefore continues to propound the model of ‘camera in the classroom’ approach. Nevertheless the teacher is encouraged to integrate computer tools in support of classroom teaching. Many teachers who make power-point presentations desire to leave the material on the computer for students to access. Some teachers have their own web sites facilitating greater interaction.

In order to make ITV courses much participatory, the instructors hold review sessions for the students prior to the examination. Interestingly newsgroups have been formed to conduct group discussion and interaction between course students. Chat e-mail has become one of the potential tools of alternative learning practices.
Assignments play a major role and ITV students send as well as receive their assignments by mail. Writing tests and examinations is flexible and may be scheduled during daytime, evening or weekend hours. Individual students who live 160 kilometers or more away from the university campus have the privilege of writing examinations in different locations.

It's noteworthy that the enrollment of ITV students has increased over the years and has never shown decline denoting the demand for access to courses through non-traditional means. Interestingly ITV courses are funded to the extent of retaining the highest possible level of service to the students. Over the past decade ITV has successfully delivered courses to large number of students. In 1996 and 2001 ITV student surveys were conducted. According to the findings the ITV students performed on par with and in some courses better than on campus students.

**Technologically Mediated Education:**

Nevertheless in the age of networking and connecting people today there is increasing pressure to update ITV learning system to integrate the digital media and the new wave of technologically mediated education as there is greater degree of interactivity in the computer assisted instruction. Ross Mutton, the Director of Instructional Media Services of Carleton University sees two major trends in the field of educational technology. First, he says, 'Faculty and students want to create and display computer images originating from presentation software such as PowerPoint, presentation or data display from CD-ROM's, and data and information from the Internet. In addition, we see computers being used in self-paced learning and supportive tutorial roles outside of the classroom'. The second trend according to
him is, ‘there is more universal dedication to the use of technology as a teaching support from the student level, through the faculty level, to the administrative level. Reasons are speculative, from the need to use visually supportive techniques in large classrooms, effectively communicate through electronic mail deal with students who are more visually oriented.’

The perceptions of new media prompt the educational institutions to provide visually based education than mere linear classroom teaching. Nevertheless the beginning has already been made and blueprint has been drawn in the Carleton University. Robin Allardyce of Carleton University endorses the use of new instructional practices to establish learning environment. He states that ‘the teaching technology toolkit has substantially evolved and now enables individuals to more efficiently produce and use digital learning materials, incorporate communications protocols into courses, build testing and diagnostic tools, and provide administrative services for learners to provide an integrated and much enhanced learning environment’. Learning environment has been defined as ‘an environment that can surround video with enriched content, provide opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous interaction with peers and instructors, and provide opportunities to access interact with and manipulate the content and other resources associated with the course’. The learning package today also consists of cooperative learning styles. The cooperative learning is described as ‘a style of instruction that centers the learning activity on the student and away from the instructor. This transforms the student out of traditional passive note taking into an active participatory mode within the
classroom setting and sets up the learning situation so that out of class activities are a natural extension of class activities’. The objective is to encourage students to have confidence in their abilities to learn independently and at their own pace. It hopes to instill critical thinking skills in the students.

ITV proposes to use different teaching strategy to include resources and services of next generation information technology to create learning environment through the combined efforts of the EDC, IMS, and CCS. Further it intends to replace the existing analogue video technology with digital video, which will enable the teachers, or instructors to reuse the current lecture material and redesign the course model.

Distributed Learning

ITV intends to build its future model of learning system on the concept of distributed learning. This concept of Distributed Learning was offered by Tony Bates’ publication, ‘Managing Technological Change’ (2000). The definition says that ‘a distributed learning environment is a learner centered approach to education, which integrates a number of technologies to enable opportunities for activities and interaction in both asynchronous and real time modes. The model is based on blending a choice of appropriate technologies with aspects of campus-based delivery, open learning systems, and distance education. The approach gives instructors the flexibility to customize environments to meet the needs of diverse student populations, while providing both high quality and cost-effective learning’.

ITV is shifting its course design from linear presentations to multi-dimensional and multimedia based courses. The implementation of technologically mediated education requires enormous funding resources coupled with training both
the faculty and the students in the effective use of new media and evaluation of such an education. An effort to evolve an accepted method of teaching in the age of electronic highway is riddled with complexities.

In the process of integrating computer technology into the classroom, the television need not be relegated to the background. The television will play a significant role by providing the much-needed visually based instruction component in the new teaching approach called the open-ended learning environment

**Public Broadcasting System- Canada’s TV Ontario:**

Public Broadcasting System which propounded the concept of using the medium of television for educational and enrichment programmes in both western and eastern countries is a crumbling institution unable to sustain owing to dwindling public funds and the demands of the new wave of technologically mediated education. Unfortunately education is no longer seen as the staple diet of the PBS models in Britain and America. The commercial cacophony of television has drowned the social agenda of the television systems world over.

Nevertheless in the midst of confusion and despair, Canada’s TV Ontario, the public broadcaster of Ontario province in Canada has sustained the onslaught of commercialization and has set a good precedent by continuing with its mission of supporting life long learning using television and other new communication technologies. In the new era of information, TV Ontario continues to be committed to social agenda intending to provide quality education through its English and French services. According to Isabel Bassett, the Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Educational Communications Authority, TV Ontario has moved closer to the goals of
the educational mandate as originally laid out by the Ontario Government and has focused on fostering lifelong learning. TV Ontario was established in 1970 when TV was the focus of all experiments in the west to evaluate its potential as a tool of information, education, instruction rather than entertainment. Established as the Ontario Educational Communications Authority, TVO was given the mandate of providing uninterrupted programming and access to interactive media resources that educate, inform, and enrich all Ontarians. The mandate further states that TVO is committed to delivering new media strategies that incorporate and support quality lifelong learning opportunities for adults and children, using the power of educational television programming. Even after three decades of existence, that TVO continues to be the leading educational broadcaster in the world speaks highly of the media organization. The Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC) while renewing its license till 2007 has recorded its appreciation and has observed, that ‘Educational television services such as TVO and TFO provide programming distinctly different from that which is generally available to the public. The Commission fully supports the unique and valuable role they play in the Canadian Broadcasting System’. Funded by the Government, the TVO comes under the provincial Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Although its major funding comes from the provincial government, it also generates some funds through licensing, corporate sponsorship and public contribution. A fully non-commercial channel it operates two major networks TVO in English and TFO in French though both the channels are independent of each other as far as programming and content are concerned. TVO—the English channel commands a reach of 98.5 percent of all Ontarians, and TFO—the French has a reach of all Franco-Ontario households. Its on-air programmes are
connected with a number of websites. TV Ontario has a network of 215 transmitters to reach the Ontario province.

TV Ontario has five categories of programmes catering to the needs and interests of children and adults. The categories are;

1. Children & Youth
2. Life Skills
3. Public Affairs
4. Drama
5. Documentary & Performing Arts

The new media strategy according to the CEO of the TVO concentrates on three distinct areas;

1. Eureka- support for schoolwork through the current programme, ‘Ask a Teacher’, which is a free Homework Online service for the students;
2. Lifelong Learning Challenge Fund that is used for skills training;
3. Enhancement of its existing broadcast programmes through linked web activities.

TV Ontario now has a new responsibility of creating a distance education network linking its on-line services with training centre. The Independent Learning Centre has been brought under the umbrella of TV Ontario to strengthen the movement of lifelong education. This effort has resulted in combining the content expertise in elementary and secondary distance education programmes provided by the Independent Learning Centre and the e-learning expertise of TV Ontario which is recognized as a world leader in educational children’s broadcasting. The CEO of TV
Ontario Ms. Isabel Bassett observes that ‘...this will help us strengthen our commitment to providing education and training programmes, in English and French, to all Ontarians, as an adjunct to the education system. We now have the right combination of content and new technology needed to launch Ontario’s first strategy for lifelong learning.’

It’s noteworthy that despite commercialization of television countries like Canada have evolved new media strategies to fulfill the learning needs of the people to cater to accomplish the goals of social agenda.

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