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A NEW VISION: SMART EDUCATION AND E-LEARNING

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Developing Professional Ethics for Teacher Educators C. Subbulakshmi	
Smart Classroom in Indian Education Scenario	106
K. Vellaichamy	Alta err
Personality, Role Expectation and Role Performance of Commerce Lecturers in Arts and Science Colleges C. Kalai Suseela	114
Concept of E-learning K. S Jayanthi and S. Chelvi	121
Temperature Variability and Monsoon Trend Analysis ove	r Kerala
S S Anie, S Abraham Thambi Raja and A. S. Jebamalar	133
E-learning	115 mb - 3
T. Ponmalini and S. Chelvi	143
Diabetes and Yoga	
A. Ravi	157
Innovative Research in the Field of Teaching and Learn R. Kabeer	ning .
Attitude of Prospective Teachers towards E-learning	1/1
P.S Prasad. and N. Latha Saraswathy	179
Smart Education and E- Learning:	
The Smart Way of Learning Environment in Classroom K. Sindhu and I. Jesu Doss	185
Cultivating Critical Thinking in E-learning Environment	103
V.B. Viniba and R.P Deepa	193
Empowering Prospective Teachers with	193
Digital Technology for Future Classroom	
T. Vishnuja and R. Karthick	199
Teacher Education in A New Paradigm:	A M mex I = 10
M. Sreedevi and R.P.Deepa	205
Church and Rural Development	
M. Edwin Sobitha	210
E- Learning in Education	210
S. Augustin Bens Raj and H. Deepa	222
Reading Skills and its Success in Rural Readers	Signilian i
P. Sherly Bell	227
	XVII

CULTIVATING CRITICAL THINKING IN E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

E learning enabled classroom make students more active in the learning process. E learning integrated pedagogy fosters higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking. Critical thinking is the ability to discriminate, analyse and evaluate the given situation. The use of different learning approaches and along with the e learning environment nurture critical thinking of students. This paper presents the concepts of critical thinking and how e-learning environment cultivate critical thinking skill among students.

Keywords: E learning environment, higher order skills, critical thinking

Introduction

E learning environment has produced a rich array of new visions in teaching and learning that makes individuals lifelong learners and prepares them for the 21st Century. It provides a re-conceptualisation of teaching and learning, and successfully prepare all learners with the skills and capacities for 21st century citizenship such as global awareness, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and self-directed learning. It creates a very interesting challenge and opportunity to reconsider, re-imagine, and re-invent learning environments able to prepare and excel each individual for effective life-long learning.

E-Learning

E-learning is a new educational concept by using the internet and technology tools that are web-based, for the purposes of education. 193

It facilitated and supported through the use of information and It facilitated and of a street and and communication technology. It can cover a spectrum of activities from communication technology to support learning as part of a street o communication to the use of technology to support learning as part of a 'blended' the use of technology to support learning as part of a 'blended' approach to learning that is delivered entirely through online. The approach to team elearning therefore essentially covers the use of computers and technology as a vehicle for knowledge exchange within teaching and learning. E-learning covers a wide set of applications of computerassisted instruction, computer-based learning, virtual classroom, online learning, blended or hybrid, asynchronous and synchronous. Both the online and asynchronous approaches are self-directed and self-paced methods of learning that enable learners to increase knowledge and skills provided the learner is ready to learn. Blended or hybrid learning is a type of learning that is a mixture of face-to-face and online learning. The online portion of this learning can be delivered in various ways, such as online tutorials, documents, interactive tests, presentations, video, audio, animations and many other types of interactive media. Typically this approach involves approximately thirty percent of face-to-face classroom time combined with the remaining time spent online (Mitchell & Honore, 2007). They list the advantages of this type of learning are:

- i. convenience
- ii. increased interaction
- iii. flexibility
- iv. increased learning
- v. higher retention
- vi. reduced seat time
- vii. higher order thinking
- viii. problem solving
- ix. collaboration
- x. immediate reinforcement
- xi. active learning
- xii. self pacing
- xiii. decreased costs

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is an important and vital topic in the modern education. According to the Foundation of Critical thinking, 'Critical is that mode of thinking about any subject. education.

education.

that mode of thinking about any subject, content, or problem

thinking is that mode improves the quality of his art. thinking is the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by in which the thinker of the structures inherent in thinking by skilfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing skillfully and imposing and imposing intellectual standards upon them'(http://www.criticalthinking.org/ intellectual articles/27thconf-keynote.cfm.). Ennis (1987) that explained critical articles/2.

thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what thinking is a type of a cognitive ability that to believe or do". Critical thinking is a type of a cognitive ability that has a special importance in decision making and judgment processes (Chartrand, Ishikawa, & Flander, 2009). The Center for Critical Thinking, 2004, (Mandernach, 2006) defines, "Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplines process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/ or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action". Michael Scriven and Richard Paul define critical thinking as the "intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information gathered from or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning and communication, as a guide to belief and action".

Critical Thinking in the e learning environment

The advent of e learning technology has permitted the learning to take place virtually, in an electronic, distant environment. This distant and electronic format poses more high-level learning (Saade & Bahli, 2005; Saade & Galloway, 2005). Weblogs, social networking (for example Facebook) and discussion forums as Web 2.0 tools have the potential to develop learner's critical thinking. Critical thinking is an important skill to foster in students engaged in the learning process, for both their professional and personal prosperity (Noll & Wilkins, 2002). Saade, R. G., et al.(2012) viewed that the virtual environment

enhances critical thinking through the integration of creating philosophies critical thinking through the integration of creating enhances critical thinking through the critical thinking through the critical through through the critical through through the critical through through the critical through the critical through the critical through through the critical through through the critical through through the critical through through through the critical through the critical through the critical through th enhances critical thinking enhances critical thi instructional strategies, community, and discussion using digital media learning, team-based learning web based classroom teamle learning, found that integrating web based classroom teamle and critical think: learning, team-based team based reading web based classroom teaching learning, team-based that integrating web based classroom teaching Burgess (2009) found that integrating web based classroom teaching skills. The Burgess (2009) found that generated and critical thinking skills. Thomas has improved reading engagement and critical thinking was supported by a critical thin has improved reading characteristical thinking was supported by online and Morin (2010) found that critical thinking was supported by online and Morin (2010) found instruction. E-learning to modern society and meet the demands of students to be ready for modern society and meet the demand of students to be ready for modern society and meet the demands students to be ready student based e-learning system saves students, of 21st century skills. Student based e-learning system saves students, 21st century skills. Students, time and they can think deeply when they have to answer to the time and they can their assignments (Benson & Samarawick time and they can the time assignments (Benson & Samarawickrema, questions and do their assignments (Benson & Samarawickrema, 2009).

E learning in a cooperative manner creates a unique learning E learning in a series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience, deeper insight of learning and Samsa (2009) examined the series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience, deeper insight of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and critical thinking (Garrison experience) and series of learning and serie experience, accept and Samsa (2009) examined the effects & Vaughan, 2007). Akyuz and Samsa (2009) examined the effects & vaugnan, 2007)
of blended learning environment on the critical thinking skill of the of blended learning students and found out that it had strong influence on developing critical thinking skill. Multi-media tools for educational purposes that includes web-based instruction, streaming video conferencing, face-to-face classroom time, distance learning through television or video or other combinations of electronic educational models encourage participants to be well-educated and critical thinker as well. (Bates & Poole, 2003).

E learning environment cultivate critical thinking through the following ways.

- i. Questioning
 - e learning strategies provide ample opportunities for questioning in the classroom.
- ii. Problem-based learning
 - e learning mostly comprised of Problem based learning strategies which enhance student's logical reasoning and evaluation skill.
- iii. Active listening
 - e learning engage students as active listeners.

Cooperative conflict resolution Cooperative problem solving situation. R Thinking aloud

Thinking through problems solving elearning promote thinking through problems solving vi. Concept mapping

Create environment for brainstorming

vii Learning portfolios/records of progress Develop opportunities for individuals and groups to develop documents that reflect learning progress over time (minutes/ journals; blogs/media productions; speeches/presentations)

viii. Classroom space accommodates interaction Encourage active interaction between small and larger groups ix. Illustrate concepts

explain the concepts with suitable examples and link students' own experiences to concepts and their applications. x. Provide feedback to the learner

Immediate feedback is provided to the learner during

Conclusion

Critical thinking in the e learning environment is facilitated by physical and intellectual skills that encourage a spirit of discovery. Students can share the stage with the teacher and interact with each other in the virtual classroom which fosters their critical thought processes . To reach this goal, schools and colleges should redesign their curriculum with e learning environment to cultivate critical

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