

VIRTUAL AS THE ‘NEW-TRADITION’ IN THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This article intends to explore the facilities introduced by the Virtual Education System during this era of Covid-19 pandemic. The term ‘tradition’ has been taken into consideration from T.S.Eliot’s essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” where he discusses his views on poetry and the importance of tradition. While reading the essay, I could visualize the way T.S.Eliot considers ‘tradition’ to be. He also mentions the terms such as, ‘historical sense’ and ‘depersonalization’ in the essay. However, my main aim here has been to justify the term ‘tradition’ in Virtual Education, as how tradition brings in the essence of the past in the present.

Keywords: Catalyst, Historical Sense, Depersonalization.

Introduction

*“Like as waves make towards the pebble’d shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end.”*

The above lines from Sonnet 60 by William Shakespeare are recognised as one of the greatest because it deals with the universal concerns of time and its passing. In the above lines, time is represented by ‘waves’ and ‘minutes.’ There has been a drastic change in our lives with the passage of time. The pandemic has changed the world in just over 6 months across the globe. It has changed the way we work, learn and interact as social distancing guidelines have led to a more virtual existence, both personally and professionally. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused an extraordinary crisis in all areas. In the field of education, this emergency has led to the massive closure of face-to-face classes at all levels across the globe. The Education System has totally taken a different track ever since the pandemic has started. The present system of education is partially different than that of the education in the past. It hasn’t changed; yet it has changed to an extent.

Traditional Education and Virtual Education

Traditional Education is an active mode of learning where we can see active participation of students and teachers. It is rather completely effective. There is a fixed schedule and specific periods dedicated to learning.

The Education System during the present time is totally virtual which means education is imparted mainly through personal computers and the Internet. This emerging education paradigm is often known as “virtual learning.” It has the potential to improve student achievement, educational access and school’s cost-effectiveness. This kind of education can also be imparted without a teacher and student being present in the classroom to share teaching and learning.



Traditional Education Vs. Virtual Education

Due to Covid 19 pandemic, students are opting for virtual or online education more than that of receiving face-to-face classes. Online Colleges can see increasing enrolment. The best part of online learning is that students have all their assignments at their fingertips and it is possible for them to attend their classes with flexibility.

Again, when it comes to traditional education, the best part is that of the social interaction which is an integral part of the educational experience. Students can make friends, spend their time with people, chat face-to-face. Everything happens in-person.

With Online Schooling, there is freedom and self-motivation is needed to succeed. However, traditional schooling is often having attendance policies and deadlines for assignments.

When it comes to traditional learning, many students fail to pursue a traditional education as their location doesn't allow them. Whereas, online education allows the students to attend classes in an accredited institution and get the degree they need from the comfort of their home.

Should Virtual Education be accepted by people in the same way as that of Traditional Education?

After having read many articles on Online Education, I could say that most of the people across the globe criticize Online education. People are of the view that technology advocates may see online teaching as the best path forward but it isn't as simple as it seems to be for many. Although the pandemic has made it impossible for everyone to socialize, we aren't possibly wasting time rather we are continuing the education system by making it virtually accessible to the students. Time has arrived to continue education with computers and laptops at the forefront.

We don't know yet what we are going to come across in the future. Hence, switching to online learning/teaching has been accepted at this period of time. Students are experiencing multiple forms of education from Zoom meetings to fully asynchronous classes. People actually get tired of sitting in front of their computer screens however, since we belong to this era where technology dominates the world, where people are addicted to their phones and screens, we are having less problems against the digital world.

Justifying the Educational System that exists during the era of Pandemic by the terms as discussed by T.S. Eliot in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

People across the globe are of the view that the Educational System, ever since the pandemic has changed drastically. They are of the view that the education is no more traditional. As a matter of fact, we should have a clear idea of what 'tradition' is before we claim what has changed and what has not.

What is 'tradition?' Can we praise the new educational system for its newness that differentiates it from the so-called 'traditional' education system ?



According to Eliot, tradition means a historical sense. A historical sense is what makes the writer traditional. In this case, if we say a teacher is teaching on virtual mode, he is teaching the same things that he teaches in a face-to-face class. The only difference that exists is that we receive the classes from the comfort of our home on virtual mode.

For instance, if a teacher teaches virtually, he/she teaches in such a way which is a reflection of the teacher who used to be in the face-to-face class while teaching his/her students. It can be accepted as an effective way of teaching too as long as a student is willing to learn and a teacher puts all the efforts to teach.

Eliot believes that there is a dynamic relationship between the past and the present. Here, in this case, the online/virtual classes at present are having a reflection of the classes in the past. Because the only thing that has changed is the mode as how education is imparted, not the subject matter. The essence of the subject studied hasn't changed at all.

According to Eliot, a poet is judged by the standards of the past. In this context, a teacher is judged by the standards of the past too because the subject matter which he teaches, remains the same. The teaching methodology has changed a bit and the test formats have changed to an extent. In this way, the teacher's personality gets merged with the tradition, here, we can consider 'tradition' as the factor which accepts newness as a way to move forward with the essence of the past.

Eliot also mentions in his essay that the mind of the poet is like a catalyst. For instance, when a piece of platinum which is the catalyst is introduced in a gas chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide, they combine to form sulphuric acid. In this context, the subject matter could be considered as the catalyst. Taking this into consideration, a teacher can use various methods online to teach the students such as, using different applications or their own way to deliver the lecture and make the students acquainted with the exact information which they actually need to know which can be compared to that of the gas chamber which contains oxygen and sulphur dioxide to which the platinum gets introduced; and the outcome will be the same as that of the outcome in a face-to-face class. However, students will learn to use the technological tools and also get the information of the specific subject that they are learning. This is what we can call as the dynamic relationship between the past and the present.

Eliot also talks about the term 'depersonalization' which means the continual surrender of the personality of the poet to the art or tradition of poetry. According to him, the progress of the artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. In this context, I take into consideration the teacher who needs to surrender his old way of teaching to the new way of teaching or online education system by using technological tools as the medium to communicate with the students in order to get a desired outcome during this era of pandemic. This is to clarify that we are learning something or the other, each and every day even when we are in an awkward situation. This also denotes that we are adapting ourselves to the present situation and trying to not stop studying because the world needs to grow, considering the online education as a part of our tradition.



However, as Eliot says; “Poetry is not turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not expression of Personality, but an escape from Personality.” Hence, we can justify that online teaching/learning doesn’t mean that we are changing the things that we are learning rather it’s the same subject matter that we have been learning from the past but in a different rather creative way which is an escape from the exclusive traditional face-to-face learning.

Online teaching alone cannot define the entire educational system; it is rather an escape from what we used to call as ‘traditional’ education.

Conclusion

There goes a saying: “All the world’s a stage and all the men and women merely players.” This is to say that we, human beings, are all having different roles to play in our lives. We all act, depending on the circumstances that surround us. In this era of Covid-19 pandemic, nothing is better than to stay at home. Technology has become the major tool to escape from this awkward situation whether it be socializing with friends, relatives, family and also to receive education or to study. We have considered Virtual Education to be the ‘new-normal’ which also can be related to that of T.S.Eliot’s definition of ‘tradition’ which means that the essence of the past remains with the present while moving forth thus, defining a new tradition. As I have already mentioned the first two lines from William Shakespeare’s Sonnet 60, we can say that anything can happen with the passage of time. We don’t know how life is going to treat us with a new surprise in the upcoming days. However, what we are doing is not wasting our time and gaining knowledge and learning new things each and every day, although Virtual Education System has a lot of advantages and disadvantages thus, accepting this mode of education as our new-traditional kind of education during this era of pandemic.

Notes

Catalyst: Something that causes a change without itself being affected

Historical Sense: Perception which not only involves the pastness of the past but also of its present. Eliot realises that the past exists in the present. It is the sense of the timeless and of the temporal together.

Depersonalization: getting detached

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