



## Recent Trends in Higher Education, Induced by Digitalisation

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**Abstract:** *Digitalisation and revolutionary spread of Communication networks affected all walks of human life. Changes are observed in the structure and functions of all social institutions. The institution of education too reflects the impacts of digitalisation. This paper analyses how technology changed the traditional authority of the institution of education and changed views of the student community towards the role and authority of teachers. This paper is based on a survey conducted among the students of the University of Calicut. The study found that the student community is highly digitalized and having high digital competencies. This leads to changes in the role and authority of teachers, changes in the attitude of students towards the system of education, the teacher-student relation, dependency upon teachers etc.*

**Keywords:** *Digitalisation, Higher Education, Teacher role, Authority of teachers, teacher-student relation*

**Introduction:** The advent of the 21st century marked a technological revolution. The most notable aspect of this revolution was the mainstreaming of the Internet and, subsequently, the introduction of various Internet “byproducts.” The spread of computers, other information and communication technologies, and networks affected all walks of human life. Digital devices are widely used in daily life. Mobile phones, computers and other digital devices became a part of human life. They became an inseparable part of human life, an extension of human body itself.

Digitalisation has its impact on all social institutions. Its impact can be seen in family, marriage, kin relations, economic system, political system, trade and commerce, banking sector, publishing, media, health, governance, education etc. The internet made a cyber society constituted with netizens. A cyber sphere is developed where free interactions, expressions and communication is possible. The cyber society has no limits of time and space. With the development of Information and Communication Technology and digital devices, especially with the revolutionary advancements in smart phone and tablet technologies and mobile networking systems, the world really reduced into the fingertips of individuals. This made a situation that one can live without the help of others, if s/he has technology in hand.

### **Impact of digitalisation on education**

Information technology has reformed and revolutionised each sector it has grasped and it is currently in the promising phases of altering academia. The advancement in the Information and Communication Technology, especially in internet and internet related technologies revolutionized the institution of education.

The digital technologies brought education outside the four walls of classrooms. Technology made it possible to bring the classroom with us and to access education through fingertips. There is no doubt that digitalisation is improving the quality of education by introducing virtual classrooms, ICT enabled teaching aids, open accessibility of information resources, inclusion of the marginalized and differently abled by introducing new technical aids and breaking the boundaries of classrooms.

As technology continues to transform our society, the traditional systems of learning and education are facing overwhelming pressure to adapt new technology. Education technology, e-learning platforms and the rise of the networked society is transforming the established concept of education, learning, teachers' roles and even the nature of knowledge itself. Digitalisation changed the nature and functions of traditional institution of education. Its role as an agency of socialization is decreasing with the advancement of technology. The role and authority of teachers is also changing and decreasing. Digitalisation opened the doors into a vast ocean of information and knowledge content which are freely accessible without the limitations of time and space. This made possible a real revolution in information, knowledge acquisition and education.

This paper analyses the changes in the institution of education, induced by digitalisation. The extent and level of digitalisation among the students of higher education, the changes in teacher-student relationship, the students' perception regarding the changing roles and authority of teachers, the changing patterns of interactions between teacher and students, the attitude of students towards the digitalisation of higher education and university services and the student preferences and perceptions over the café life and campus life are analysed in this paper.

### **Methodology**

This paper is prepared on the basis of an empirical study conducted among the postgraduate and undergraduate students under the University of Calicut. Data from 80 samples were collected by using a questionnaire survey. The samples were selected through a purposive random sampling from the University students. A few personal interviews and various available literatures, especially web contents are also used as supporting materials.

### **Extent of Digitalisation**

The study analysed the extent of digitalisation among the students of higher education. The study made an inquiry about the ownership of digital devices such as mobile phone, smart phone, Desktop computer, Laptop and tablet computers. The study revealed that all students own either one of the digital devices. Half of them own more than one digital device. This indicates that the student community is highly digitalized. The ownership of these devices was considered as status symbols in earlier times, but now a days they became a necessity. The study also revealed that all of them are having access to internet either through a personal connection or the Wifi connection available in the campus.

### **New trends in education: changes in teacher-student relation**

Like many other social institutions digitalisation has its impact over the institution of education too. Education is not only an agency for imparting knowledge. It is an agency of socialization too. The educational institutions, teachers and peers

have an important role in the socialization of an individual. Hence, teacher student relation is considered as important as the relation between parents and children. Teacher is a guide, motivator, mentor and role model for the student.

With the advancement of technology, especially the digital technologies and communication networks, changes are seen in the role of teacher. With the onset of virtual class rooms, advanced self learning materials, online classes and vast ocean of online knowledge bases, and with the revolutionary expansion and spread of digital devices, the roles of teachers are changing and their authority is decreasing. The study made an inquiry in to the changes in teacher- student relations induced by digitalisation.

The study reveals that most of the students believe that the role of teacher is changing in today's educational scenario. Most of the students want to see their teachers as friends. 80 percent of the respondents revealed that they have added their teachers as friends in Facebook. Three fourth of the students believe that it is appropriate to add teachers as social media friends. 40 percent revealed that they use to chat online with their teachers. It gives the inference that the student community likes to see teachers as a guide and friend, not an authoritarian figure or a respected 'guru'.

### **Role and Authority of Teachers**

In the digital era, changes are observed in the role and authority of teachers. Even though the majority of students believe that teacher is very important in education system and he / she cannot be substituted with technology; a good portion is having the opinion that teacher is not so important. The study revealed that 40% of students believe that teacher cannot be substituted by technology. However, 45 % believe that technology can take the role of teacher and 15 % believe that technology can take the role of teacher to an extent. Almost all students (95%) believe that teacher has many important roles other than imparting knowledge, but they believe that acquisition of knowledge is possible even without the help of teachers. Majority of the students believe that they can acquire knowledge with the help of technology, 72.5% believe that, students can acquire more knowledge than their teachers have, with the help of technology. Half of the students believe that it is better to surf in the website than attending a lecture to acquire knowledge. Only half of the students believe that the knowledge imparted by teacher is more reliable than that gathered from internet. However only 27% of them have the confidence that they can successfully complete their course without the help of teachers, if they have technology in their hand.

The dependency of students on teachers for learning, preparation of seminar and assignments, clearing doubts is also decreasing. It is revealed that 65% students depend the most on internet for preparing seminar and assignments. 22.5 % revealed that they depend the most on libraries and only 12.5 % says that they depend the most upon teachers. However, for clearing academic doubts, majority (55%) still depend on teachers. Here also 37.5% depend on internet.

Majority of students (57.5%) believe that the authority of teachers is decreasing in the contemporary society, with the development of technology. A good

portion (42.5%) also believe that the role of teacher in education is decreasing with the development of technology.

Half of the students opine that today's teachers are not competent enough to deal with the modern technology. It indicates in to the need that teachers must be provided with more technical knowledge and training in modern technologies and internet use. 82.5% of students have the opinion that teachers have to change in tune with digitalisation. This gives us an inference that a digital divide exist between the students and their teachers; which must be addressed in order to strengthen the educational system.

The above analysis points out in to the changing attitudes of students in higher education towards the role, importance and authority of teachers in today's educational system. Though they are not ready to quit teachers out of the system, the majority believe that they can survive even without teachers, if they have technology in their hands. This indicates the declining authority of traditional education system and a marked value shift that will surely have its impacts on the integration of the educational system and the society at large. These impacts are yet to be studied through empirical explorations. The ethical issues involved and the authority and reliability of information and education gained through internet are also to be analysed and discussed in detail.

### **Outlook Towards Digitalisation of Educational System**

The student community who live in a highly digitalized world call for the digitalisation of educational system. They want that digitalisation must be implemented in the whole system of education, including the classroom, teaching-learning process, university services, examination system, issuance of certificates and mark lists etc.

85% of the students believe that digitalisation will improve the quality of education. 80% like virtual classrooms and 75% support online examination system. 95% support digitalisation of university services and 90% support online issuance of mark lists and certificates. This indicates that the digitalized students in our cyber society wish to get everything in their fingertips. They prefer to study at virtual environments in their own time and space and to write exams online and get the results and certificates online.

### **Campus life v/s Café life**

The study also made an inquiry in to the preferences of students regarding café life over campus life. The study revealed that in spite of higher rate of digitalisation and spread of communication and social media, the students prefer campus life over café life. Hardly 10% of the students believe that café life is better than campus life. Majority of students (82.5%) revealed that they have more friends in campus than in internet and social networking sites; and majority (92.5%) value their campus friends the most than friends in the virtual world. Most of them (50%) like to spend more time in campus than in home (32.5%) or hostel (12.5%) or internet (5%)

However they believe that internet helps in strengthening the campus friendships. 60% revealed that they use to chat with their campus friends after returning from the campus. Most of the students (80%) revealed that they keep strong online relation with their old school and college friends. 40% revealed that they often

keep logged in to Facebook and other social media websites while they are sitting in the classroom and they revealed that they sometimes chat with their classmates online, while both are attending the same class.

### **Conclusions**

Digitalisation and spread of networks has affected the institution of education too as all other social institutions and agencies. Digitalisation improved the quality of education, the accessibility of resources and provided better facilities in classrooms. However, marked changes are seen in the teaching learning process, teacher student relationship and students outlook towards education.

The study revealed that the student community is highly digitalized and having better digital competencies. They use digital technology and internet services widely and they use it for educational purpose too. It is also evident that a feeling is developing among students that they can acquire knowledge without the help of teachers if they have technology in hand. Though the role and authority of teachers are not denied, it is accepted that the role of teacher is changing and the authority of teachers is decreasing. They want to see teachers as friends and use to interact with them via online media. The dependence of students upon teachers is also decreasing. The digitalisation of education system and university services are welcomed by the students. Even with the revolutionary developments in technology and abundant social media networks, the student community still prefer campus life over café life. However, they believe that digitalisation and new media are strengthening their social relationship.

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