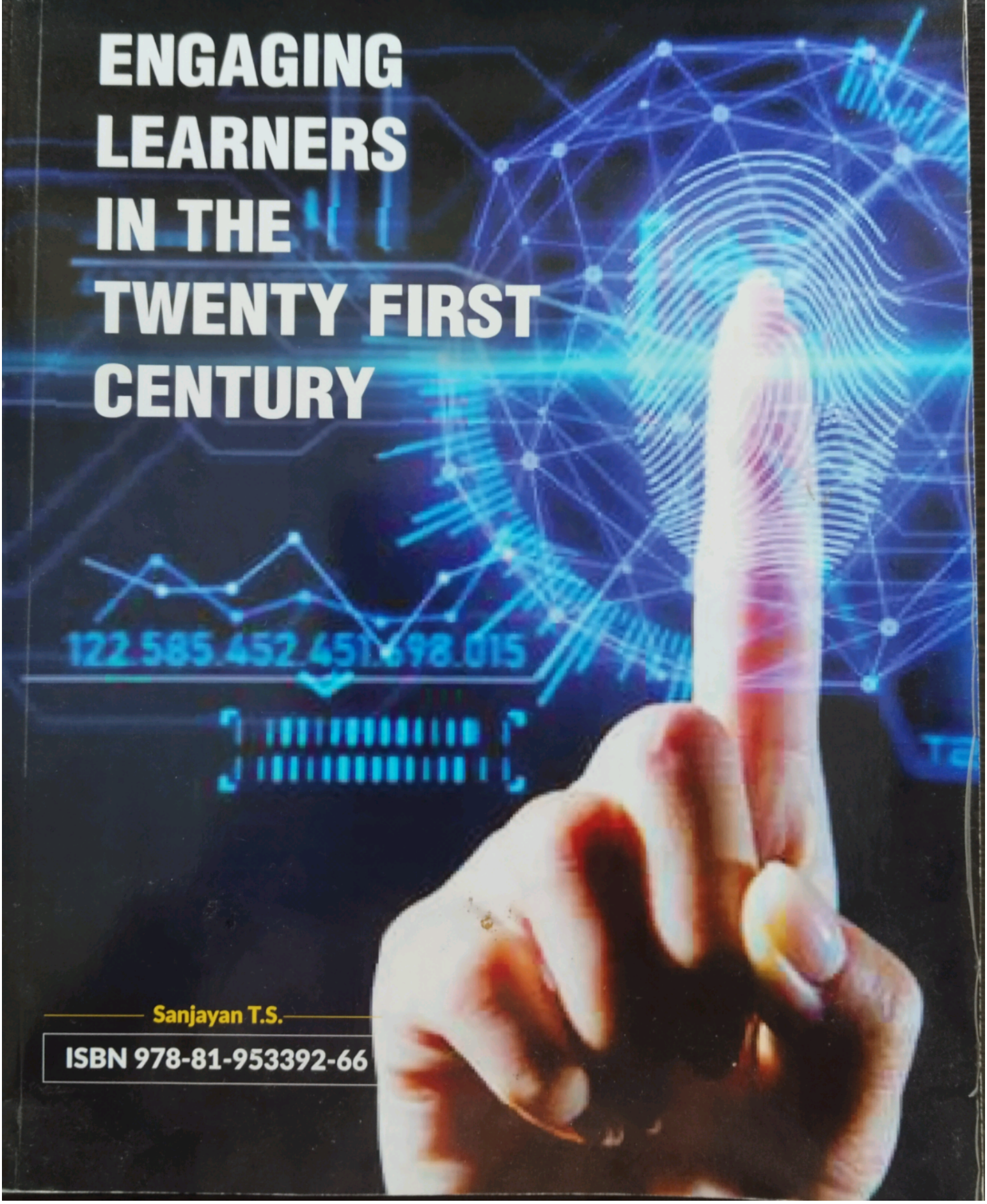
ENGAGING LEARNERS IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY



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ISBN 978-81-953392-66

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ISBN: 978-81-953392-66

Upsurge Of Digital Education: Creating An Impact In Academic Sector

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Introduction:

Digital age is engrossed with the rapid pace of technology development. Education has adopted and adapted technology over the years. The impact of technological intervention in education is a paradigm shift which brings forth a virtual classroom space with the support of Learning Management Systems. Online learning integrates different facets of media like text, graphics, audio, video, animation and simulations. Education must contextualize the need of the age and the gradual shift from classroom- oriented teaching to digitally- oriented platforms enabled technology- based learning.

The landscape of digital learning is evolving with a rapid increase in digital education programs around the world. Technology based education prepares students for work force and high-quality education. Despite the potential benefits of digital learning, many students lack access to technologies creating a digital divide. Effective digital learning is channelised through high-speed internet, technological devices, online classes and software for personalized learning.The report from the Asian Development Bank (2009) provides three rationales that support digital learning: the knowledge economy rationale, which emphasizes education's role in preparing students for the workforce; the pedagogical rationale which prioritizes the optimization of student achievement and educator effectiveness; and the equitable access rationale, which focuses on providing all children with a high-quality education.

Integrating Technology in Teaching:

The credibility of new technology and communication platforms integrate online component into educational scenario. This digital panorama is supported by Information Communication Technologies (ICT), cheap telecommunications, the existence of open resources, digital libraries and the spread of access points. Digital education accommodates increasing number of enrolments, new audiences, diversification of student population and promotion of lifelong learning. The globalized access of digital technology increase "either the access to higher education of populations that would be otherwise excluded, or increasing the range of people who might be served by elite institutions" (Larreamendy-Joerns&Leinhardt, 2006, p. 568). Online paradigm also leads to the transformation of educational environment which is more inclusive and triggers professional development. In the digital era, faculties need to be competent to handle online teaching and employment of adequate technologies.

The miraculous leap of technology is visualized in almost all walks of life whether it be economy, health, science and education. The educational institutions have become instrumental in making huge investments in the field of technology to enhance learning.Powerpoint presentations, multiple projectors and screens, clickers for recording student responses, 'back-chat' channels on Twitter, enable students to comment on lectures. The transmission of information has been accelerated with the implementation of digital education and it also channelises knowledge management of the students through finding, analysing, evaluating, sharing and applying knowledge under the direction of a skilled subject expert. Digital tools increased the scope of project-based learning, collaborative learning and experiential learning.

Blended learning or hybrid learning ensures technology enhanced learning which allows students to learn online and to improve independent learning skills. This mode of learning demands catalyst for change and is in stark contrast to formal classroom model with students facing the instructor and writing board. The present-day learning environment is guided by three key elements like pedagogy, technology and space. The evolving and diversified teaching methods and learning preferences should be imbibed by the instructors who teach a generation of 'digital-natives'. Vertical surfaces to display content, multiple projection surfaces and whiteboards in various configurations are all important classroom considerations. The constructivist pedagogies in digital education replaces the role of instructor from that of a sage to a guide. Technologies and new modes of delivery open up innovative ways and methods in teaching. In the digital age, the instructors communicate with students through synchronous communication media- real time collaborative online teaching(voice phone calls, text and