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**Scopes and Challenges of Teaching Literature Online: Innovation and Praxis at Techno India University, West Bengal**

## ARTICLE TYPE

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### **ETHICAL CLEARANCE**

Ethical approval was not required for this study.

# Scopes and Challenges of Teaching Literature Online: Innovation and Praxis at Techno India University, West Bengal

## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the scopes, innovations, and challenges involved in teaching literature in an online environment through a practice-based case study of the Department of English at Techno India University, West Bengal. Triggered by the pandemic-induced transition from face-to-face to virtual instruction, the study explores how technology-mediated pedagogical strategies can be effectively integrated into literary studies while ensuring accessibility, engagement, and meaningful learning outcomes. Drawing upon institutional experiences, the paper reflects on the adoption of asynchronous learning models supported by the university's Learning Management System (TIG Student Corner), alongside complementary platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Webex, and Google Meet.*

*The study highlights the role of chunking and flipped learning approaches in promoting cognitive flexibility and self-paced learning. It further analyses the incorporation of Open Educational Resources (OER), digital humanities archives, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) such as SWAYAM to enhance research exposure, collaborative learning, and skill development among undergraduate and postgraduate learners. Particular emphasis is placed on student-centred assessment design, which combines asynchronous submissions—such as portfolios, recorded presentations, and project work—with scheduled online evaluations to ensure fairness and improved learning outcomes. Institutional initiatives, including the creation of shared e-resource repositories, faculty development programmes, and online career counselling, are discussed as key enablers of pedagogical continuity.*

*The paper also foregrounds the importance of addressing mental health concerns in online learning environments through counselling services, interactive programmes, and dedicated wellness platforms. While the study acknowledges limitations related to digital divide, bandwidth constraints, and its context-specific nature, it argues that the pandemic has accelerated pedagogical innovation in the humanities. By documenting an integrated framework that combines technological adaptability, collaborative praxis, and affective support, the paper contributes to emerging scholarship on digital pedagogy in literary studies and offers insights for educators and institutions navigating post-pandemic hybrid learning futures.*

### Purpose

*The primary aim of the paper is to examine the scopes, innovations, and challenges involved in teaching literature in an online mode at Techno India University, West Bengal during the pandemic-induced shift from face-to-face pedagogy. It seeks to explore how technology-enabled pedagogical practices, Learning Management Systems, Open Educational Resources, and student-centred assessment models can transform online pedagogical strategies.*

### Design / Methodology / Approach

*The study adopts a practice-based institutional case study approach grounded in reflective pedagogy. The data sources include:*

- 1. Departmental experiences of shifting to online teaching*
- 2. Implementation of institutional LMS (TIG Student Corner) and platforms like Google Classroom, Zoom, Webex, and Google Meet*
- 3. Use of Open Educational Resources (OER), MOOCs (SWAYAM), and digital humanities archives*
- 4. Student-centred assessment practices (portfolios, recorded presentations, quizzes, online exams)*
- 5. Institutional initiatives such as e-resource repositories, mental wellness support, and career-oriented online training*

*The analytical approach is largely qualitative, descriptive, and experiential, informed by frameworks of ICT integration, cognitive flexibility, flipped learning, and collaborative instructional design (e.g., Critical Friends protocol).*

### Findings

*The study finds that:*

- 1. Asynchronous and flexible learning models enhanced student accessibility and self-paced engagement.*

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <i>LMS-based hypertextual and non-linear learning environments supported cognitive flexibility and collaborative learning.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Integration of OER and digital humanities resources expanded research exposure and interdisciplinary participation.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Student-centred assessment design improved motivation, learning outcomes, and fairness in evaluation.</i></li> <li>5. <i>Institutional mental health initiatives and technological adaptability were crucial for sustaining learner participation during crisis conditions.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>Overall, the pandemic accelerated pedagogical innovation and digital transformation in literary studies, demonstrating that technology can act as both a learning tool and a catalyst for academic worldview shifts.</i></p>
<b>Research Limitations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The study is context-specific, based on experiences of a single department within one private university.</i></li> <li>2. <i>It does not employ quantitative data or large-scale empirical surveys to measure learning outcomes.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Technological disparities such as bandwidth constraints and digital divide issues limit generalisability.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>Future research may include:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Comparative multi-institutional studies</i></li> <li>2. <i>Student perception surveys and performance analytics</i></li> <li>3. <i>Longitudinal analysis of digital pedagogy in literary education</i></li> <li>4. <i>Exploration of hybrid models post-pandemic.</i></li> </ol>
<b>Practical / Policy Implications</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Universities can adopt flexible LMS-driven pedagogies and blended assessment frameworks to ensure continuity of humanities education.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Policymakers may promote OER integration, digital infrastructure development, and MOOC credit transfer systems to democratise access.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Educators are encouraged to incorporate mental health support, collaborative teaching practices, and career-oriented digital training in curriculum planning.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Institutional investment in faculty development and digital repositories can strengthen resilience in crisis situations.</i></li> </ol>
<b>Originality / Value</b>	<p><i>The paper contributes original value by presenting a ground-level praxis-oriented model of online literature teaching from an Indian private university context. It bridges digital pedagogy, literary studies, and crisis-responsive educational innovation, highlighting how ICT and OER can reshape disciplinary teaching practices.</i></p> <p><i>Its novelty lies in documenting integrated institutional strategies—technological, pedagogical, affective (mental wellness), and evaluative—within a single coherent framework, thereby offering a replicable model for humanities departments navigating digital transformation.</i></p>

## KEYWORDS

Online Pedagogy • Digital Humanities in Teaching • E-Learning Innovation • Blended Learning Praxis • Higher Education Technology Integration.

## Introduction

Contrary to the contemporary connotation of the term ‘technology’, which is strictly associated with the application of science, math, engineering, and forms of digital knowledge, the concept was generated to represent a rational process of creating means to realize certain valued ends. Hence a discussion on the use of technology in teaching literature is ‘expected’ to engage within the bounds of integrating Communication and Information Technology in Language Communication and Literary Studies. However, learning a technology is not merely an acquisition of skills in operating technological objects but also concerns to discover new means for transformations through the use of

technology. Hence, when the Department of English at Techno India University, West Bengal decided to shift from face-to-face to online teaching in response to the global crisis, it went on to design an entire set of academic worldviews that has emerged from and drives the technological process.

### **Learning Management in Education**

Awareness in the issues of digital literacies, connectivity, and accessibility, prompted the Department to choose asynchronous mode of education which was to provide the highest level of flexibility for students. Making the most of the institutional Learning Management System (LMS) entitled TIG STUDENT CORNER, the Department facilitated courses in Literary Studies through Chunking and Flipped models, where much of the instruction and content is given to students to engage outside of 'class' time, to create learning environments where students are better able to work at their own pace.

TIG STUDENT CORNER has been designed to be the one-stop solution for the frequent queries that may stir up in a learner's mind. The institutional LMS is not only handy in providing basic information on syllabus and examination policies but also doubles up to create professional structured course content. In order to facilitate instructor-led training, the digital interface provides a wide variety of schemes to manage study material. The teacher can add text, images, tables, slideshows and more to make the process of learning engaging as well as absorbing. Apart from supporting the upload of document files in a number of formats, the system also allows to share URLs as reference to web resources. The system acknowledges the usefulness of hypertext in education and views the resource material not principally as teaching tools but rather as learning tools. The approach is essentially one which understands the principle of non-linearity and puts it into practice. Our basic training in literary studies and history of ideas makes us believe that there can be no single order that determines the sequence in which the text is to be read and the same is attempted to be recreated in the LMS, through the aids provided for cognitive flexibility. Moreover, the system is designed to be individual-paced and enables to perform in an hour that suits the learner.

The LMS also enables the facilitator to schedule an exam as well as manage a quiz. Students' exchange of feedback both with teachers and their peers is made possible through LMS. In case of urgency, students have the liberty to generate a feedback ticket in the system, which is then brought to the notice of the administrator and the issue stands resolved, at the earliest opportunity.

Being empathetic to internet connectivity issues, which may mar the digital experience of a learner, all resources were also made available in the Learning Management System of Google Classroom. Assignment creation and distribution was accomplished through the Google Drive that comes with our institutional G Suite domain while Gmail was used to provide classroom communication. Its seamless integration ensured that no single exchange is missed. As the Google Classroom platform integrates with Google's other tools like Docs, Drive, and Calendar, so there are lots of built-in "shortcuts" for classroom-management tasks. In certain occasions, it was also used to teach live by linking up with Hangouts Meet. In addition to live video capabilities, the recording feature in Hangouts Meet gives teachers an easy tool for creating prerecorded lesson videos for students to watch on their own time.

However, as there is no limit to innovation in the dialogue between facilitator and learner, one is expected to be open to suggestions from both ends. Often, on basis of bandwidth issues and other

related factors, we had to randomly shift from ZOOM or CISCO WEBEX to GOOGLE MEET, all to ensure that no one is left out of the learning experience. It is the process that collectively supports such differentiation in the online classroom, so that all stay in the loop.

In order to facilitate the transit from face to face to online classes, the Department was quick to form a departmental repository of e-learning resources. A faculty member volunteered to work as departmental coordinator for e-study materials, who reached out to all the facilitators and requested to submit relevant resources in a shared Google drive. Such gesture of share and care did not only create a ready base of referential resources and recommended reading for the learners but also generated, what is known in contemporary educational practices to be The Critical Friends protocol, a structure for providing and receiving formative feedback among colleagues during the ideation phase of an instructional design.

The institution was also generous to extend the institutional library services in the online format. Our librarian was prompt and active to share a list of titles available in the pdf format at the Central library. Every faculty member had the opportunity to choose from the list. In addition, the University was generous to offer free access to students as well as teachers to a plethora of specific skill-oriented courses offered by digital platforms such as Coursera and edX. When our entire nation seems to be moving towards LOCF or Learning Outcomes based Curriculum Framework, such an initiative provided much impetus to generate interest in research as well as job-based skills. The University was not far behind in effectively arranging relevant career counselling courses in the online mode for preparing the talented freshers for the New Age careers.

### **Accessing Open Educational Resources**

Prepping up for online classes oriented us to pick up Open Educational Resources or OER, as it is commonly referred at, and usher in systemic change in teaching and learning content through engaging educators in new participatory processes. Open educational resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released

under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others in the digital domain. OER may include full course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge. Use of such e-learning tools ensures much more than to enhance teaching learning situation – it leads to an immersive experience in collaborative teaching and learning.

Given that quite a few amongst us would remember the 1990s as the decade of liberalization, it was in the revised National Policy of Education published in 1992 that emphasis was laid on the use of educational technology for improving both ‘quality’ and ‘quantity’ of education for the first time in the history of Indian education. Later, Education Technology or ET paved the ways for Information and Communication technology, also commonly known as ICT. In 2010, UNESCO, i.e. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization came to define ICT as the forms of technology that are used to transmit, process, store, create, display, share or exchange information by electronic means. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Scheme in Indian schools, which was launched in December 2004, went through a major revision in the same year of 2010 to provide opportunities to secondary stage students to mainly build their capacity on ICT skills and make them learn through computer aided learning process. The emancipatory and transformative potentials of ICT in higher education in India came to be realized as it started catering to the country’s requirement of higher education through part-time and distance-learning schemes. Under the UGC country wide classroom initiative, education programs started to be broadcasted on Gyan Darshan.

We look at the Pandemic induced shift to ‘All in Online’ framework as the next level towards optimal utilization of opportunities arising from the diffusion of ICTs in higher education system. Creating a virtual classroom culture using OER is enabling effective as well as affective ways in educational environments. The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a gamechanger for how educators must look at

their tools, training, and portability of content. In the months since the virus began to spread, institutions have been required to shift their pedagogical model and delivery methods in a very uncertain time. It has created a culture that has gone suddenly remote, adapting courses to meet the current crisis. It is the technology of Open Educational Resources or OER that has saved the day for many of us. OER often have a Creative Commons license that state specifically how the material may be used, reused, adapted, and shared. OER has championed the cause of liberalization in the field of education and surfaced as an effective means of remote teaching.

As far as the component of Communication Skill in Career Advancement and Skill Development courses are involved, use of multimedia to impart knowledge was an accepted methodology in our Language Laboratories. Highly sophisticated audio-visual apparatus was employed to aid students in developing their expertise in putting the language into use. Now that we have moved on to the online module, the students are regularly provided with OER pertaining with listening and speaking skills to improve their communication in and through the language. The classes have been divided into a healthy mix of theory and practice as special care is taken to break the monotony. Students were also guided to enrol themselves in Online Courses on Employment Communication in the SWAYAM Portal. SWAYAM, as we know, is the indigenous platform of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India providing an integrated portal and platform for hosting Massive Open Online Courses, commonly known as MOOCs. Government of India adopted the MOOCs concept to supplement the formal education system in the country from high school to higher education, named aptly as the ‘Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds’ or SWAYAM. Techno India University is a Parent Institution where a prospective learner enrolled in a particular program may further opt for a particular MOOC hosted on the SWAYAM portal. On successful completion of each course, the host institution offering the Online Course would issue the certificate, along with the number of credits and grades, through which the student can get credits transferred into his/her grade at the parent institution. To this effect, the University has designated a SWAYAM coordinator who facilitates the process for the enrolled learners. The programme also enabled the participants to take an Online Remote Proctored Examination where they had the option to take up the exam from wherever they are, i.e. their homes or current place of residence, if they have a laptop/desktop, webcam, microphone and good internet connection. In addition, faculties also developed themselves by participating in Refresher Course on English Language Teaching conducted online. This enabled the facilitators to have a better understanding of the learner’s perspective.

For undergraduates and postgraduates of English Literature, apart from providing digital resources for Virtual Instruction and Online Learning, e-book and AV substitutes for printed material were made randomly available to learners. In addition, several OERs were incorporated in our daily exchange with the learners to facilitate a hypertextual approach towards learning. Initially, learners were introduced to British Council’s ‘English Literature in the Classroom’ portal ([https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/resources/secondary/storiespoems?\\_ga=2.146271092.1102966401.1603030010-178923899.1603030010](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/resources/secondary/storiespoems?_ga=2.146271092.1102966401.1603030010-178923899.1603030010)). This resource enables learners to engage with a wide range of English literature texts. Advanced learners were trained to use more research-oriented platforms such as ‘LUMINARIUM’ (<http://www.luminarium.org/>) and Peter Robinson's ‘Canterbury Tales project’ (<https://www.dhi.ac.uk/projects/canterbury-tales/>) for Early Modern Literature in English, as well as, for instance, ‘CENTRAL ONLINE VICTORIAN EDUCATOR’ (COVE) (<https://editions.covecollective.org/>) and ‘Victorian Web’ (<http://www.victorianweb.org/>) for Nineteenth Century Studies. Let us not forget that such initiatives in digital humanities were crafted out of a social undertaking and harbors networks of people who have been working together and sharing research for many years now. By incorporating the learners into this circuit, a serious attempt is being made to facilitate interest in such collaborative projects as well as enlarge the circle for one and all. Learners were also made aware of Resources for Graduate Research in English Literature

such as the Advanced Research Consortium at Tufts University (<https://researchguides.library.tufts.edu/c.php?g=769182&p=5560777>) and open access DigitalCollections at New York University (<https://guides.nyu.edu/c.php?g=276589&p=1848819>).

### **Providing Support, Challenge, And Choice in Student-Centred Assessment Design**

We are living in unpredictable times, and to truly provide continuity, we must think about what we are moving towards as well as where we started from. Such realization prompted our resolutions in designing a student-centred assessment policy. We did not hesitate to ask ourselves - Why are we assessing? What is being assessed? How could it be assessed fairly? How could assessment and feedback choices impact students? How will assessment and feedback decisions impact us as an educator?

A lot of soul-searching enabled us to realize that an assessment is also learning and hence it leads to greater motivation and academic success. At the most, a facilitator can only access the student's critical ability to analyse creative ideas. A fair assessment may be achieved by a healthy mix of asynchronous submissions (such as pre-recorded presentations, portfolios, essays, project work) as well as scheduled evaluation practices (mid-term assessment and end semester examinations), through portals like Google classroom and university exam portal/s. The assessment and feedback choices are to reflect improvement in learning outcomes, so that students find it easy to understand where they may have gone wrong and what they did right. On the other hand, knowing what students know will enable the educator to effectively design the lesson plans.

To make student-centred assessment design, the Department provided the students with multiple ways to demonstrate their learning through recording, written work or presentation. The exam portal of the University was upgraded to respond and evaluate objective as well as subjective pattern of questions, keeping in demands of the discipline. The Exam Portal of the University effectively organises evaluation models in accordance with respective batches and concerned

cohorts. It offers a wide variety of choices in terms of designing an evaluation assignment. Special care is taken in making information available to examinees by stating determinants such as full marks, number of questions to be attempted, parts of the question etc in the quiz description. The system emphasizes to set timing with grace added. In order to minimize confusion, all open attempts are submitted automatically at the end of examination. Question Sequences may or may not be shuffled depending on the nature of the examination. The Exam Portal allows determining total number of questions to be displayed on a single page for smooth functioning of the process. Standardising Question Behaviour allows one to shuffle the options provided as probable answers to a particular question. Objective as well as Subjective Question Options is made available in the Exam Portal. In response to Subjective Questions, the system accepts validating documents such as image, graph etc. from the learner. The facilitator may also set Review Options as to make students aware of their performance then and there. The University was extremely prompt to launch mobile-friendly version of the Exam Portal interface. In addition, choice of offline mode of assessment was made available to those who failed to connect online.

### **Addressing Mental Health Issues**

The students are individuals and of course there will be many variables, but simply trying to put oneself in the situation of the students can be a shortcut to working out how to support them and prepare them for success in online learning as best as the teachers can. Such realization prompted the faculty members to start off the online sessions by addressing Pandemic-induced anxiety. Several lightning talks on representation of Pandemic in Literature were delivered to generate perspective. Faculty members also encouraged personal interactions across any medium preferred by the learner.

In addition to providing free counselling service available to all, the University also conducted interactive programmes entitled “MINDISK on Mental Health and Education”, "Minding Your Minds During Covid-19: Coping with Depression” as well as "Future Perspective for COVID 19: Mental Health Issues” to provide pastoral care. Eventually, the university was successful in launching a Mental Wellness Platform and called it “MONOSIJ” which would loosely translate to mean ‘mind from within’. It aims to function as comprehensive mental & health wellness midpoint that caters the need of every individual’s well-being. The list of assortment services in offer would include ADHD healing (offering assistance for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), anxiety counselling, depression therapy, OCD counselling (offering assistance for Obsessive-compulsive disorder), child and teenager treatment, personality disorder cure, anger management for members of all age groups.

In these trying times, when the academic world is facing unprecedented challenges, all of us have our own ways and means to cope with the current situation and deliver our best to the students. The Department of English at Techno India University, West Bengal is no exception, adhering by the vision of our university, which is to provide education of the highest standards using state-of-the-art pedagogical strategies, by using technology and innovativeness.

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