Hi-tech teachers making learning easy

From social media to Google Classrooms, mentors in key City institutes are using technology to bridge gaps between students and teachers

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For the young IIT Bhubaneswar professor, Barathram Ramkumar, social media is an useful tool. But, the usage comes with a purpose, transcending the thrill of picture-sharing, unrestrained self-expression or browsing news feed. He uses the social media to connect to his students and help them in shaping up their careers.

An active user of LinkedIn, Bharathram uses the platform to stay connected with IIT alumni. "The experiences shared by old students help the existing ones in grabbing internship or job opportunities," he said.

The assistant professor in Electrical Sciences Department believes that communication with the students must be done in an easy and engaging way.

Not just Bharathram, the City is home to a host of tech-savvy mentors, who are breaking the stereotyped 'Guru-Shishya Parampara.' Teaching is not confined to the boundaries of classrooms. It's a 24x7 task, now. Constant feedbacks, close monitoring and seamless conversations shape the mantra for mentoring GenZ, which is hooked to technology, Internet and the social media, of course!

Technology is also being used to keep a close watch on the performance of students. At IIT Bhubaneswar, a specially designed SAP-like portal, 'ERP'--designed by the institute's director professor R V Rajakumar--is used for keeping a track on the attendance, marks and progress of students. "We ensure that data on the students' academic progress is uploaded to the portal," he said.

Social media is also providing a platform to the students to voice their criticism too. "Students create special pages on social media to post their criticism. Often, teachers read those confessions and take these as feedbacks," said Abhishek Anmol of IIIT Bhubaneswar.

Recently, cross-platform messaging application Whtaspp has gained popularity across campuses in the City. While there are student groups on Whtsapp for various extra-curricular activities, the teachers are also members of a few. It helps the teachers in organising various college events and exchange messages concerning class assignments.

For instance, professor Renu Sharma of SOA University was largely dependent on Whatsapp while organising the 26th National Children Science Congress on the varsity's campus last year. "We had created several social groups to co-ordinate among students and teachers," she said.

The cybernated shift has overthrown the elementary teaching techniques at some institutes. Though the chalk-and-board method still exists, the City also has IOT-powered classrooms. The hi-tech program, Google Classrooms, is quite popular among students and teachers.

Some institutes are actively using the free web service developed by Google to simplify creating, distributing and grading assignments in a paperless way.

"It streamlines the process of sharing files between teachers and students. We use Google Docs, sheets and slides for assignment creation and distribution among students. I also use Google Calendar for scheduling class programs," added Renu. Learning Management Systems (LMS) are available in the City too. A city-based education start-up, Web Era Technology , has designed a smart LMS with automated features. As claimed by the firm, the software gives automated guidance to the students in the form of a virtual teacher.