



E-learning in a developing country like India

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Abstract

The life of knowledge and human skills today is shorter than ever, mounting the pressure to remain up to date with ones education and training throughout a career. In the age of globalization and technological revolution, four-year degrees are just the start of a forty-year continuing education. Life-long learning is quickly becoming an imperative in today's world. E-learning is among the most important explosion propelled by the internet transformation. This allows users to fruitfully gather knowledge and education both by synchronous and asynchronous methodologies to effectively face the need to rapidly acquire up to date know-how within productive environments. The purpose of this study is to deepen the conceptual understanding of E-learning. The present study also explain the categories, challenges and future of E-learning in India. The study concludes with an overview of some issues and suggestion relate to the E-learning.

Keywords: e-learning, developing, technological, synchronous

Introduction

E-learning is the use of electronic media and information and communication technologies (ICT) in education. E-learning is broadly inclusive of all forms of educational technology in learning and teaching. E-learning is inclusive of, and is broadly synonymous with multimedia learning, technology-enhanced learning (TEL), computer-based Instruction (CBI), computer-based training (CBT), computer assisted instruction or computer-aided instruction (CAI), internet-based training (IBT), web-based training (WBT), online education, virtual education, virtual learning environments (VLE) (which are also called learning platforms), m-learning, and digital educational collaboration. These alternative names emphasize a particular aspect, component or delivery method.

E-learning includes numerous types of media that deliver text, audio, images, animation, and streaming video, and includes technology applications and processes such as audio or video tape, satellite TV, CD-ROM, and computer-based learning, as well as local intranet/extranet and web based learning. Information and communication systems, whether free-standing or based on either local networks or the Internet in networked learning, underly many e-learning processes. E-learning can occur in or out of the classroom. It can be self-paced, asynchronous learning or may be instructor-led, synchronous learning. E-learning is suited to distance learning and flexible learning, but it can also be used in conjunction with face-to-face teaching, in which case the term blended learning is commonly used.

E-learning is an inclusive term that describes educational technology that electronically or technologically supports learning and teaching. Bernard Luskin, a pioneer of e-learning, advocates that the "e" should be interpreted to mean "exciting, energetic, enthusiastic, emotional, extended, excellent, and educational" in addition to "electronic." This

broad interpretation focuses on new applications and developments, and also brings learning and media psychology into consideration. Parks suggested that the "e" should refer to "everything, everyone, engaging, easy".

Review of Literature

Zhang *et al.*, (2004) ^[5] explored the issues related to web site which are affecting learners while interacting with the e-learning websites. Since multimedia materials are heavily used in e-learning systems, a high-bandwidth network is a basic requirement for efficient content access. So the organizations involved in providing online education should consider the factors that are affecting learner's satisfaction with their websites and should prepare strategies to effectively deal with such factors.

Inglis (2008) ^[2] identified some methods of validation that have been used in relation to development of different frameworks, and four main types of quality processes that are used in developing a quality framework for e-learning education namely Quality Assessment, Benchmarking, Quality and Quality improvement. Also, since the quality is a relative term it is not feasible to have a single global measure that will suit all conditions. Much effort has been placed in arriving at this single global measure and none has been conclusive.

Ireland, Correia, & Griffin (2009) ^[1] describes the features of a new framework and explains how to develop the e-learning design skills of academic staff and to encourage greater engagement with e-learning quality initiatives across the university. The study suggests basic and advanced standards of e-learning. Another researcher has gone one step further by discussing about next generation of e-learning as next version web surfaces with more media content.

Jung (2010) ^[3] analysed dimensions of e-learning quality, from

the learner's perspective. Seven dimensions were identified in evaluating the e-learning quality: Interaction, Staff Support, Institutional Quality Assurance Mechanism, Institutional Credibility, Learner Support, Information and Publicity and Learning Tasks.

Weigel (2010) [4] thinks that the best approach for nurturing deep learning is the cognitive apprenticeship model. This concept adapts the traditional craft apprenticeship model to one based on the development of cognitive skills. The cognitive apprenticeship approach is a staged approach in which the "apprentice" develops from being a dependent observer to becoming an independent practitioner, with initially high and then decreasing levels of teacher support.

Objectives

- To deepen the conceptual understanding of E-learning.
- To study the categories, challenges and future of E-learning in India.

Seven great reasons to use e-learning

1. Scalable, Efficient and Fast E-learning give you the ability to quickly create and communicate new policies and training. By using our Authoring Tool and our Learning Management System (called our DLE) you'll be able to roll-out to large audiences cost-effectively.
2. Capacity and consistency E-learning offers the ability to achieve high levels of coverage among your target audience and ensures the message communicated is consistent. This means all learners get the same training.
3. Higher Learning Retention than traditional learning Blended learning results in higher knowledge retention rate as it appeals to a wider range of learning styles. There's also the added ability to refresh or update coursework whenever it's needed and learn at a pace that suits your learners.
4. Using e-learning saves you time and money It reduces time away from the workplace, cuts down on expensive travel and reduces the need for costly classroom-based training.
5. Measuring learning activity and proving return on investment Using our Learning Management System, tracking Learner progress is a breeze and reporting on activity is a button press away.
6. Reduce your carbon footprint By delivering your training online and testing your staff through online quizzes you're providing alternatives to paper-based forms of learning and testing.
7. Flexibility and finding hard to reach people E-learning can give staff the freedom to learn when and where they want, and at their own pace. You can train staff who would usually be in remote locations and have trouble getting to and from classroom training venues.

Categories of E-Learning

These are considered as follows.

Courses

Most discussion of e-learning focuses on educational courses. Educational course materials or courseware are usually

modified and added with various different media and are uploaded to a networked environment for online accessing. Today, there are several popular learning management systems (LMS) such as WebCT and Blackboard which are commonly used by educational institutions. In achieving a more motivating courseware, courseware designers have begun to add innovative presentation such as simulations, storytelling and various unique traits into the materials. E-learning has distinct similarities with classroom environment whereby both of the learners and the instructors are together related to the common course arrangement and flow.

Informal Learning

Information learning can be said to be one of the most dynamic and adaptable features of learning but nevertheless it is least recognized. Our need for information (and how we intend to use it) drives our search. Search engines (like Google) coupled with information storage tools (like Furl) and personal knowledge management tools like wikis and blogs present a powerful toolset in the knowledge workers portfolio. Cross opined that in workplace we acquire more knowledge during break time than in a formal learning environment. We progress more in our jobs through informal learning, sometimes using trial and error and other times through conversations.

Blended Learning

Integrated learning provides a good transition from classroom learning to e-learning. Integrated learning which is also referred to as blended learning is a combination of a face to face and online learning. The productiveness of this method cannot be over emphasized. It encourages educational and information review beyond the classroom settings. Blended learning combines several different delivery methods, such as collaboration software, web-base courses and computer communication practices with face to face instruction. Integrated learning utilizes the best of classrooms with the best of online learning.

Communities

Learning is social. The frequent challenges we battled with in our business milieu are sophisticated and unstable. Because we are in the global era, our methods of problem solving are changing daily. Therefore people dialogue with other members of the same organization or network globally to other organization. Communities strongly contribute to the flow of tacit knowledge.

Knowledge Management

Globalization is focused on e-learning because e-learning technology has the potential to bring improved learning opportunities to a larger audience than has ever previously been possible. Suggested that a nation's route to becoming a successful knowledge economy is its ability to also become a learning society. Early KM technologies included online corporate yellow pages as expertise locators and document management systems. Combined with the early development of collaborative technologies (in particular Lotus Notes), KM technologies expanded in the mid-1990s. Subsequent KM efforts leveraged semantic technologies for search and retrieval and the development of e-learning tools for

communities of practice. Knowledge management is an essential process which is concern with how to create atmosphere for people to share knowledge on distribution, adoption and information exchange activities in an organization. The semblance of knowledge management and the theory of e-learning reveal powerful relationship which is causing disarray between the two fields.

Learning Networks

Learning network is a procedure of developing and preserving relationship with people and information and communicating to support each other's learning. Therefore (LN) is enhancing and it offers chances to its members to engage online with each other, sharing knowledge and expertise. States that, the use of pen and paper in our educational system today is producing inadequacy and challenges in the global era that we are in today where subject matter is changing speedily. The application of personal learning networks will create connections and develop knowledge for workers to remain current in their field.

Challenges faced by e-learning in India

Majority of population staying in rural areas and making them aware about the concept of elearning is a major challenge. Lack of infrastructure in terms of connectivity, availability of Internet, etc. is another issue. The government is taking various measures to improve the communication systems and new technologies like 3G in the telecom space have already started to be implemented to make things better.

Social Implications of E-Learning are another segment of study that is very important to be understood for the success of e-learning in India. The social implications of e-learning may be categorized into the following types of issues: cultural, gender, lifestyle, geographical, religious/spiritual, literacy, disabilities, and digital divide. Within the cultural issues category are content, multimedia, writing styles, writing structures, Web design, and participant roles. Some content, although crucial to the course, may be either unacceptable or unfavorable with certain members of the class. If faculties are aware of a sensitive component of the discussion or material covered, how can that faculty member lead the class to include or exclude the materials? Even writing styles can impact the process of holding an online course. The students and instructor need to know the —rules of the road of written assignments. And, what participant roles are expected and/or tolerated; and, if the expectations are not met, who is responsible for keeping discussions and homework on track? Gender issues continue to be a part of class, even though people are separated by miles and even continents. Possibly it is the instructor's responsibility to monitor facilitation and rotate leadership roles in groups to assure gender neutralization. Any behavior issues must be addressed and corrected immediately. Lifestyle differences take on any number of forms, and the instructor will need to be on guard to assure equal treatment of class members, regardless of their respective lifestyles and preferences. In some situations the students themselves will take on this monitoring role, while in other situations the instructor must step in. The —different strokes for different folks adage must be maintained—preferably with a minimum of disruption to the entire class.

Geographical issues and differences make be very apparent, especially when we are looking at a global perspective. For example, if a chat room activity is to take place, all impacted time zones need to be accommodated. Within this category would also fall the insensitive locale jokes. And even the technology issue of Internet access needs to be considered. In some communities, dial-up access is the only possible means of interconnect; there are no alternatives. Religious and spiritual considerations must be addressed and honored. Perhaps it would be unwise for an instructor to require work be done on certain days, given that these days may be religious days for some religions; suggest, perhaps, a block of time when activities might be assigned. Sensitivity to religions is critical. Literacy should be a —given for an online course, but it cannot be overlooked. Regardless of the level of the course, there will very possibly be people who lack certain skills (or at least could use improvement): reading, writing, information, and keying (typing) are skills which are necessary but may need improving. Disabilities must not be overlooked. The Digital Divide is the last category within these social implications to be discussed in this presentation and paper. Regardless of how the term —digital dividel is defined, it means there is a gap, whether this difference is between general and minority groups, men and women, persons with disabilities and the remainder of the population, young and older members of the class. It comes down to differences—those without something (whatever this something happens to be) and those without it. Accessibility to technology and the training to use this technology will help reduce the digital divide, the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Future of e-learning in India

India has a major role to play in the international e-learning services industry. It is already one of the leading IT service provider countries, and it is now aiming to achieve the same position in the IT enabled services. The presence of world-class educational infrastructure and training professionals enables it to be one of the leading e-learning services providers in the world. On the domestic front, the government and private sectors have taken many e-learning initiatives. Though these initiatives have been met with a lot of enthusiasm and user acceptance, their commercial viability is still under consideration. The government has been taking some proactive measures in a regulatory and financial capacity to boost the e-learning environment in India. Funds have been invested in setting up Internet kiosks in rural areas for the purpose of communication, which can be used for e – learning initiative as well and can help in providing informal and vocational training as well as formal education. The main strengths of the Indian e-learning services industry are:

- English speaking, highly qualified and techno savvy manpower.
- Safe Electronic Environment – Official recognition for Digital Signatures and E-transactions.
- Lower costs of human capital when compared to developed countries.
- Strong and buoyant domestic education industry that facilitates up-gradation of skills and introduction of new products.

Future trends in e-learning

Business-to-employee initiatives will address E-learning: Companies can build B2E intranets or corporate portals to conduct business with employees, and provide them self-service for access to benefits, forms and information. B2E capabilities will become increasingly important tools for recruitment, retention, and employee-relationship management. Also will reduce cost, save time for the company.

E-learning will extend to customers: CRM initiatives might include customer education. Companies can use e-learning to introduce new products, educate customers in self-service techniques, and compare competitors' products and services.

Simulation, gaming and interactivity will enrich e-learning: Research shows that student understanding and retention improves when they learn by experience. Technologies such as collaboration, interactivity, modeling, simulations, virtual reality interfaces and gaming will help students experience the skill while being taught.

There will never be enough of the right skills: Along with technologies and business practices, some skills are changing so quickly that they're outdated within a few months of introduction. In addition, the number and range of skills required of the average employee is increasing.

Conclusion

In a market such as India where the concept is still new, one crucial element that will make a difference in generating a good response is marketing. This not only holds true for segments such as government and education, but for the corporate sector as well. Experts are of the view that there needs to be a mindset for the adoption of e-learning. In underdeveloped countries, e-learning can raise the level of education, literacy and economic development. This is especially true for countries where technical education is expensive, opportunities are limited, and economic disparities exist. However, one of the problems with e-learning in India is the lack of course content, especially outside the mainstream focus areas of IT education, English-language content, and tutorial-like courses. There will be high demand for people who can develop multi-lingual courseware that addresses various topics. The social implications of online learning center around one primary requirement that students need to feel a part of the class, regardless of where they are located physically or geographically. The —missing of connectionl to the other students in the class and with the institution can impact the success of an online student. Bottom line: the Indian market is still young, but it will continue to adopt the concept of e-learning in order to meet its communication needs and seize business opportunities.

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