



E-learning and higher education

Kapil Dev

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Chaudhary Ranbir Singh University, Jind, Haryana, India

Abstract

The higher education institutions utilize modern information and communication Technology (ICT) for teaching-learning process. Due to the rapid growth of ICT, all educational institutes around the globe are investing heavily in e-learning systems to upgrade their teaching-learning experience and performance. Reasonable acceptance has gained from educational institutions by Electronic learning (E-learning) at all levels of education. However, the success of an E-learning system depends on the understanding of certain factors that influence the students' acceptance and usage of such e-learning systems. Here we find the meaning or definitions of E-learning, its aspects, tools, including their characteristics and the role that E-learning plays in higher education institutions in relation to teaching and learning processes and the advantages and disadvantages of its adoption and implementation.

Keywords: e-learning, information and communication technology (ICT)

Introduction

Now a days, the computer as an educational tool has become more and more popular. It focuses on the importance of incorporating new technology.

Recently, E-learning has been introduced as a fundamental part of the student learning experience in higher education and computer as an educational tool has become highly popular. It focuses on the importance of incorporating new technology. A growing use of E-learning to support face-to-face experiences presupposes there is an understanding of the key aspects of E-learning, its internal constitution and external association with each other and its relation to different key aspects of the face-to-face experience. In this paper, E-learning is defined as the Information and Communication Technology used to support students to improve their learning. ICT (Information and Communication Technology) with the help of Internet has opened access to the new possibilities and every type of academic material with the breaking boundaries of time and place. It is for all fields of Teaching, Learning, Training, instruction and research activities etc. The introduction of different types of technologies through ICT has converted it from impersonal to highly interactive medium of pedagogy i.e. the art and science of teaching. The advantages of internet have led to emergence of 'e' in both areas i.e. in the academics and corporate business sectors. With this, E-Learning is becoming a continuous process with no continent on age, time and location.

Meaning of E-Learning

E-Learning means the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance and support learning at every level of education but this covers a wide range of system from students using e-mail and accessing course work online. Simply it can be defined that E-learning is an approach to enhance the use of electronic tools like computer, internet,

CD, ROMs, i-pod, and laptop and Mobile phone etc. As a learner-centered instructional strategy, E-learning provides Opportunities to the students for in-depth investigation about any topic. With the arrival of information and communication technology and its growing use in education sector, a transformation is noticed in both traditional as well as conventional teaching methods. With the use of E-learning techniques, modern teacher feels to improve their professional competency according to the modern day teacher's requirement. It has also been noticed every day that E-learning is more effective in teaching subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences and languages.

Aspects of E-Learning

E-learning consists of 5 'E' which expresses different aspects of e-learning:

1. *Exploration* – E-learning provides tool to explore information.
2. *Experience* – E-learning gives the learning experiences through internet in all areas. It encourage for self-learning.
3. *Engagement* – E-learning provides innovation in methods or ways in learning through internet, which is helpful in community development.
4. *Easy to Use* – E-learning provides digital learning environment and handy tools in education sector.
5. *Empowerment* – Learner grasps the content easily at his own cost. It develops the habit of self-learning.

E-learning tools used in higher Education:

Web log: Web log is a user-generated website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order. Blogs provide comments or news on a particular subject, some function as more personal online diaries.

Social bookmarking

Web-based service to share Internet bookmarks is known as social bookmarking. Social bookmarking is the popular method for storage, classification, sharing and searching links through the practice of different techniques on the Internet.

Wiki

It is a website that allows visitors to add, remove, edit and change content, without registration and allows for linking among any number of pages.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication)

The web feed formats used to publish frequently updated digital content, such as blogs, news feeds or podcasts, podcasts etc. is called RSS.

Podcasting

Podcasting is a synthesis of two words: iPod and broadcasting. Podcasts are digital audio programs that can be subscribed to and downloaded by listeners by RSS (Really Simple Syndication). It can be accessed on an arrangement of digital audio devices i.e. Mp3 players, desktop computers, laptops, mobiles etc.

Instant Messaging

An instant messaging application allows one person to communicate with another over a network in relative privacy. There are many options like G-talk, Skype, Meebo, Viber, We Chat, Messenger, WhatsApp, ICQ, Yahoo! Messenger, MSN Messenger and AOL for instant messaging.

Text chat

Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and other online chat technologies allow users to join chat rooms and converse publicly. Users may join a pre-existing chat room or create new chat room about any topic. Internally or externally, from any chat room, a user is usually free to invite others online to join him/her. This system facilitates both one-to-one and many-to-many communication.

Internet forums

Originally modeled after the real-world paradigm of e-bulletin boards of the world before Internet was born, internet forums allow users to post a "topic" for others to review. Other users can view the topic and post their own comments in a linear fashion, one after the other. Most forums are public, allowing anybody to sign up at any time.

Importance of E-learning for Higher Education

Any student who is learning by using information and communication technology (ICT) is using E-learning. These interactive technology support many different type of capabilities like-

1. Internet access to digital versions of materials unavailable locally
2. Internet access for searching and transactional services
3. Interactive educational games
4. Personalized information and guidance for learning supports
5. Simulation & models of scientific systems

6. Tools for creativity & designing

7. Electronic devices to assist disabled learners

E-learning can make a significant difference to: methods of learning, speed of skill sharpening, easiness to study. And equally important, how much students enjoy learning. Such a complex set of technologies make different types of impact on the experience of learning.

Cultural

Students are comfortable with E-learning methods, as they are similar to the founts of information search and communication methods. They use these methods and information on other parts of their lives.

Intellectual

Interactive technology offers a new mode of engagement with ideas via both material and social interactivity online.

Social

The reduction in social difference afforded by online networking fits with the idea that students should take greater responsibility for their own learning.

E-learning increasing the ability for managing quality and sharing resources through different networks. Participation has increased because of its greater flexibility regarding expansion of place and time.

Changing Higher Education towards the use of e-learning

Institutions of higher education generally feels that E-learning has broad positive impacts on the quality of teaching & learning. There may not be enough to offset the prevalent doubt about the pedagogic value of E-learning in teaching learning situation.

ICT is making many incremental changes to local ways of working, but it also requires the pooling of resources to create shared networks and agreed technical standards to enable those networks for interpretation. These changes happens only with the proper planning and coordination. The change towards E-learning creates the peculiar challenge that it needs both the network style 'cybernetic system approach' for innovation and the 'top down, command and control approach' to share infrastructure and standardization.

In fact, E-learning had more changes on administrative service such as admissions, registration, fee payment and purchasing than on the fundamentals of classroom teaching and learning. It changes the learning experiences of students by providing easier access to information through online e-journals and e-books and student portals etc.

Advantages of E-learning

The inclusion of E-learning in education, especially for higher educational institutions has several benefits. E-learning is considered among the best methods of education. Some of the advantages that the adoption of E-learning in education are as follows:

1. E-Learning is flexible in concern with time and place that every student has right to choose place and time according to their choice. It is affordable and less expensive to deliver. There is no need for the students or learners to travel from one place to another.

2. Through E-learning a huge amount of information is obtained by a learner and enhances the efficiency of knowledge and qualifications via ease of access.
3. E-Learning helps in building relationships and improves self-confidence. It also helps in motivation for good communication by allowing more affective interaction between the learners and their instructors through the use of e-mails, discussion boards and chat rooms etc.
4. E-learning always deals with the concept of individual differences in learning. Some learners complete their Course in parts and some as in whole.
5. E-learning helps in the compensation for the scarcity of teachers, instructors, facilitators, lab technicians etc.
6. E-learning helps in self-evaluation.
7. With the help of E-learning, learners become able to learn different types of activities and different styles of learning.
8. E-learning is helpful in encompassing with latest knowledge and highly sophisticated gadgets used in the field of education.
9. With the help of E-learning educational institutions can engage in many support services to stakeholders/students i.e. online advice and registration, e-counseling, online purchasing of different types of books, student newspapers, Live online teaching; streaming videos and managing virtual classrooms.
10. E-learning helps in overcome the drop-outs of those students who feels insulted to go to school again and again after declared fail or left school by any other reason.
11. E-learning is helpful in imparting education at home to the physically challenged students or having any other disability students who are not able to go to school daily but capable to study.
12. With the large number of students E-learning makes easy the computerized assessment of students' performance.
13. Interactive multimedia courses makes learning interactive, interesting and engaging. This instinctive content integrate audio-Video, graphics, pictures, diagrams, animations, visuals, demonstration and case-studies and is imported via virtual classroom.
14. Through E-learning students can establish direct relationship with higher education institutions i.e. colleges and universities. Moreover, now some universities are starting to use synchronous learning technologies like Edu-Sat (Education Satellite) to educate students.
15. Teachers have an e-access to additional reading material related to the teaching. The material concerned is located in the form of course document. It helps teacher in better preparation.
16. As E-learning is electronically driven, it reduces the chance of error and therefore data can be stored in a database for future use.
17. Different teaching strategies in E-learning are made by e-tutor, e-lecture or by e-mentor.
18. E-learning helps in structuring of different types of learning activities. Teacher or instructor or facilitator usually guide the students electronically. Through this process and with the help of electronic equipments and

gadgets, learner participate in various types of group activities like seminar, small discussion, simulation or role play and peer learning groups etc.

19. E-connected education as a future vision of education inter-connects teacher, student and other supporting professionals to convey improved information, ideas or technology.

Disadvantages of E-learning

1. Excessive use of E-learning in education reduces interaction, motivation of self-learning, diminishes teacher-student relationships, isolate learner.
2. Sometimes, E-learning method is comparatively less effective than the traditional method of learning regarding clarifications, explanation or interpretations.
3. E-learning may have adverse effect on communication skills of learners i.e. a learner may have an excellent knowledge in academics but may not possess the required communication skills to deliver acquired knowledge.
4. It is very difficult to stop cheating during the tests for assessments in E-learning.
5. There is always a threat of piracy and plagiarism in E-learning because of inadequate selection skills and easiness of copy and paste.
6. E-learning adversely affects the institutions' role of socialization it also hinders the process of socialization.
7. In scientific fields, where practical is compulsory, E-learning is difficult to employ.
8. E-learning may also lead to congestion or heavy use of some websites. This may bring about unanticipated costs both in time and money disadvantages.
9. Most of the developing countries face the certain infrastructural problems like lack of finance, insufficient e-learning strategies, required furniture and equipments, selection and training of staff members and most importantly the resistance from student to use the E-learning systems.

Conclusion

E-learning plays a vital role in developing countries of the world in increasing literate population, promote higher education, develop the status of women and helps in good governance.

With the help of E-learning lot of opportunities can be created and captured and speedy development will possible. It is expectation from the experts that if developing countries will act as joint venture together work out on this issue of development, it will be beneficial for educational sector.

Educational institutions of higher education has been using E-learning very extensively and effectively to modernize the teaching, learning and administration. The students of modern world are changed. They are never the students of past. They know the method of web searching, downloading information and study materials and they know how to use them. They work with others in chat room, produce content & figures and functioning of various applications. So, in the field of education E-learning improves the quality of learning experience and extend the reach of every teacher and student. This paper, more specifically, had an insight in the meaning of E-learning, its aspects, E-learning tools used in higher

education, importance of E-learning for higher education, higher education towards the use of E-learning and the advantages and disadvantages of E-learning.

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