

E-Learning In India: A Critical Review

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Abstract

Today's world is changing at alarming speed. Each passing day information technologies brings new changes, traditional classrooms has been converted into virtual classes. But the e-learning concept in India is still unclear. E-learning is simply electronic learning and is transferred through a computer or Smartphone. Meaning of e-learning differs across different sectors. For example, in business sector it assigns approaches used by an organisation to provide training to its employees. In Indian universities the term e-learning is used to mean a particular method to transfer contents of particular course to particular students. Nowadays almost all universities are providing e-learning facility to their students. Online education or e-learning system is developing at fast speed in the global education system and in Indian education system as well. This paper aims at Indian education system, tools used in e-learning process, challenges and future of e-learning in India. A few remarkable suggestions have been provided to use e-learning most efficiently and effectively in informal and vocational education.

Keywords: E-learning, informal, universities, virtual classes.

Introduction

E-learning simply means “electronic learning” or “enhanced learning” by using computer or smart phone. It is a type of education provided by modern innovation and technology. Under e-learning no face to face interaction is required to disseminate information to people. E-learning process includes network based learning, computer (Desktop or Laptop) based learning, online classes and digital participation. The lectures, topics, contents, presentations Etc. are conveyed by using network, audio and video tapes, satellites TV, pen drives and hard disk. E-learning helps students to get quality education at home by paying nominal fees. E-learning is not used by only students and educators but it is also used by businesses and others. E-learning didn't

get hyper impression at early stages even it was assumed that to enter into classroom along with computer might throw out human element. But with the passage of time and development of technology e-learning not only embraced only computer but Smartphone's and tablets as well.

E-learning got momentum after unexpected growth of internet since last couple of years. E-learning is very helpful in distance education system. It brought a revolution in distance education across the globe. Still e-learning faces many difficulties like lack of awareness among general masses, computer literacy, internet connectivity, speed of network connection, cost of network connection and language issues.

Objectives of study

1. To know the types of e-learning.
2. To explore the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning.
3. To understand the components of e-learning.
4. To understand the future of e-learning in India.
5. To provide suggestions for improving e-learning process in India.

Research Methodology

Secondary data is to be used for the present study collected from various books, articles, blogs and national and international journals.

Types of E-learning

Synchronous and Asynchronous are the two main types of e-learning. Synchronous simply means “at simultaneously”, it involves online or real-time interaction between the parties. Synchronous requires a fixed or scheduled time table so that both the instructor and participants can interact. Its examples are videoconferencing, live streaming, live classes etc. Asynchronous means “not simultaneously”, it doesn't involve online interaction between the parties. Under Asynchronous participant gets enough time according to his flexibility to complete web based training. Its examples are recorded audio video, printed material, voicemail, fax Etc.

In recent times a new form of learning is emerging out which is known as “blended learning”. Under blended learning traditional classroom training is provided by using online tools so that effectiveness can be maximized. Under blended learning process students learn and can interact with teachers either in actual or virtual classrooms. It

increased student's effectiveness and retention rate without compromising the easiness, comfort and cost effectiveness. Blended learning provides greater flexibility for learning different styles, saves cost, reduces interaction, and focuses on face to face learning.

Advantages of e-learning

Flexibility: Flexibility is one of the biggest advantages of e-learning. One can earn as well as learn. E-learning is very helpful for weaker sections of society. They can earn a handsome salary while completing his study. One can utilise his free time for learning new things regularly.

Economical: Another advantage of e-learning is economical. Very nominal fee is to be paid to get access to online classes. It becomes expensive when computer access becomes necessary as computer is not realistic for everyone. Maximum online classes can be accessed through smart phones which one can easily get at nominal price.

Environmental friendly: E-learning is environmental friendly. Paper is made from trees which costs a lot to our environment. To use more papers means to cut maximum trees which degrades our ecosystem. E-learning reduces use of paper and helps in building green environment. Under e-learning content is prepared in PDF, email, Word, PowerPoint and other electronic formats. These formats are very easy to use and transferable from one device to another without any specific coding.

Maximum revisions: Under e-learning process one can study according to his own pace. Different students have different grasping capacities. Some students understand contents or concepts quickly while others very slowly. Weaker students can do maximum revisions under e-learning process. One can spend as much as time according to his ability and capacity for understanding the concept without having a fear of being weaker student or last mover.

Effectiveness: When the method of education is properly planned and sorted out according to the requirements of students any mode of education can be proved very effective. E-learning is also very effective as it is always planned according to the exact requirements of students. It is also proved by researchers that computer based learners learn more than non-computer based learners.

Disadvantages of e-learning

Limited bandwidth: The basic disadvantage of e-learning is limited bandwidth. It causes low performance for audio as well as for video, making download difficult and decreases overall effectiveness of e-learning process.

Depends on technology: In reality, e-learning is not a learning tool available to everyone. Majority doesn't have stable computers and internet access. The people who have stable computers and internet connectivity but still struggling while using it, because of changing technology. This issue can be overcome by providing advanced tutorials at regular times.

Isolated feeling: Universities or Colleges are not only learning places but also socializing places. In universities or colleges new friends can be made which helps individuals to overcome from isolation and depression, but under e-learning process socializing is not as same as in universities or colleges. Due to it some students have feeling of isolation and deprivation of support.

Insufficient feedback: Timely feedback helps in examining student's progress. Student's progress can be accessed only after knowing their strength and weakness. It is not possible under e-learning process to examine every detail of students. Insufficient feedback is responsible for unsuccessful completion of course on time.

Components of e-learning

Following are some main elements of e-learning developed due to high quality of internet technologies.

Virtual classes: Virtual classes are well-organized and of high quality lectures delivered by experienced trainers, with the help of multimedia presentations. A virtual class helps the trainer to complete his work more efficiently in less time, along with high-quality. Live streaming helps in playing and downloading content simultaneously. Premier institute's like ICAI, ICAI, ICWA and also various private education companies uses virtual classes, so that higher and professional education can be reached out to rural and distant population as well. Virtual classes help to use time efficiently and get lectures from master trainers. Students have choice of repeating the content as per his/her requirement. Virtual classes made education very cheap and qualitative.

Discussion forums: Discussion forum can be defined as an interactive chat room that allows visitors to debate on topics that have already been published, replying to such published topics and to publish new ones. Today's chat rooms have search button, which helps the visitor to search the topic of one's choice. It allows text based massaging interface among visitors for interaction each other. But the interaction among visitors is visible to all visitors. Chat rooms or discussion forums have various features like;

- ✓ List of contents along with hyperlinks of related topics.
- ✓ Search button for searching topic of one's choice.
- ✓ Entry form for new visitors for publishing new topics.
- ✓ Confirmation page for publisher's which informs publisher about his topics development.
- ✓ In protected chat rooms, a registration form is available which allows visitors to log in chat room.

Online counselling: It is because of booming of internet services throughout the globe that online counselling is becoming popular day by day. "Online counsellor" is a competent and experienced professional who interacts with trainee, learners and students to clear their problems by using discussion forums or chat rooms. Universities or colleges appoint number of counsellors for one course depends upon number of students enrolled for such course. Online counsellor has to answer all the queries very swiftly. Online counselling is available to learners anytime and anywhere.

Prospective future of e-learning in India

India is one of the leading IT service providers across the globe. It has a great role to be played in e-learning process. State of art education infrastructure and training professionals will help India in becoming leading e-learning provider across the globe. In India, both government and private sectors have started number of e-learning initiatives. Numbers of initiatives have already got outstanding success, where as some initiatives viability is still at examination stage. The government of India is very proactive in regulating and financing the e-learning environment in the country. To promote distance education government has developed open university

system. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is one of the leading open university across the globe. Almost 162 courses are available in IGNOU. More than thirty five (35) lacks students are enrolled in IGNOU till 2018. Development of technology brought revolution in Indian distance education system. E-learning and distance education brought education on the doorsteps of rural India. E-learning made education very cheap and reachable. Marginalized sect of society is now acquiring higher education because of e-learning and distance education. The Indian space research organisation (ISRO) is going to launch 10th education dedicated purpose satellite. Funds are to be allocated by government of India for promoting informal and vocational education. Skill India programme is recently launched by Indian government to build skill among youths so that they can earn easily.

Suggestions

Lay down a learning target: learning targets must be setted by the learner. Learning targets helps the learner to complete the course on time. Setting learning targets have two main advantages, one is it helps the learner in understanding the importance of course, and other is it Keeps course content focused.

Using of visuals: Visuals may be used instead of text to make understanding easy and attractive. Visualisation is very helpful in clearing Complex concepts and preventing cognitive overload. It also helps online learners in speeding up learning process and making well informed decisions on proper time.

Removing of unwanted graphics, text and images: while designing online courses tutors must structure in such a way so that only compulsory graphics, text and images is to be inserted. Unwanted material takes away the focus of learners.

Uniformity and cohesiveness: E-learning study material must have uniformity and cohesiveness. The graphics, images, texts, links and other required items of online course must provide exact and coherent message to online visitors. There should be no competition but harmony of these items among each other. Learners should not be confused while reading the content.

Affordability: Government should launch such type of schemes which will make e-learning affordable to general public. Free laptops and tablets should be given free to outstanding and merit holders students. Government should install free Wi-Fi

networks in schools, colleges and universities so that maximum access can be achieved.

Improvement in quality: Recent report of MHRD revealed that some schools have shortage of required staff which hindrances in focusing on the students in the classrooms. With the help of modern technology such issues can be removed, if the quality of online learning is to be improved by using appropriate methods.

Conclusion

In India, e-learning concept is a new as well as growing concept. Marketing of e-learning will be a game changer in promoting the concept. E-learning has a potential to bring revolution in education sector of India. Government is also very proactive in promoting e-learning. Department of information technology and communication have been continuously developing new concepts and products for promoting e-learning process across the country. In developing countries like India, e-learning have ability to increase the literacy and education level along with economic development. However, lack of proper content in english language and availability of experienced trainers are problems faced in e-learning process in India. Continuous efforts from government are required to make e-learning process as an effective tool in promoting distance education

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