



E- Learning in higher education– The need of the hour

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E-learning, Higher education, ICT

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ABSTRACT Nowadays, the educational role of technology has grown tremendously in several ways proving that technology use is definitely capable of and important for teaching learning process at all levels of education. It means that it can be an efficient tool to increase access to instruction and education system where there are financial, cultural, geographical and physical barriers. Use of technology in education system can produce very fruitful results in teaching learning process. One of the most effective uses of technology over the past decades is the emergence of e-learning. E-learning has become increasingly important in higher education institutions. Considering the importance and effectiveness of e-learning, recent years have seen a dramatic increase in both the uptake of e-learning within higher education. Students are undoubtedly considered as a key element in the useful e-learning enabled teaching process. Therefore in this paper the importance of e-learning in higher education and advantages of utilizing e-learning for the students are studied.

Introduction:

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent but the one most responsive to change" said by Charles Darwin. We call the 21st century an era of technology. This word "TECHNOLOGY" has given its personalized magical touch to the last decade. If we want to survive, we have to go with the technology. Need of the hour and requirement of the era is ICT. The voice, image, documents, videos can also travel in a lightening speed. Which seemed impossible in last decade is no more surprising now. As whole world has got its technological touch how can the most important field of teaching & learning remain untouched.

ICT has entered in each and every field of society. Be it any area business, banking, medical, cinema, science, etc. ICT has totally changed the picture of education by giving its magical touch to it named E learning. The word E learning has changed the picture of education system and widens the borders of classrooms. The traditional classroom lectures are replaced with virtual talks & chats. Libraries are on our study table now. Instead of just theoretical information giving simulation is used and has been more easy and convenient. Notebooks are replaced with notepads. Group discussions have got their place in chat rooms. Student of a country can have guidance from the subject expert of any other country. The traditional distance learning has traveled up to mobile learning through E-learning. We have to wake up now.

Concept of E-learning:

E-learning is an emerging concept in education. In normal language learning the content which is in electronic or digital format is e-learning i.e. learning of the contents on web. ICT has developed a system to apply the technology in education and this system is known as e-learning.

E-learning refers to the use of different types of electronic media and information and communication technologies in education. E-learning is the term which includes all the forms of educational technology that electronically or technologically supports learning and teaching. E-learning is termed as different words such as Technology Enhanced

Learning (TEL), Computer Based Training (CBT), Internet Based Training (IBT), Web Based Training (WBT), online education, virtual education, digital educational collaboration etc. depending upon the particular aspect considered. E-learning was previously known as WBT or online education still these phrases are used somewhere.

Some definitions of E-learning are stated here for reference.

"E-learning is a combination of learning services and technology to provide high value integrated learning, any time any place."

-Sharadchandra Babu
(Head- C-DAC, Haidrabad)

"Learning conducted via electronic media, typically on the internet is called E-learning"

-Oxford dictionary
"E-learning depends on internet technology and is typically a networked form of learning based on a more general concept of learning which transcends the traditional paradigms."

-Rosenberg
So we can conclude that E-learning is an internet based learning, it is supported by electronic media. It is a combination of technology and education.

In E-learning E stands for not just Electronic, but it stands for

- Exciting
- Energetic
- Enthusiastic
- Emotional
- Extended
- Excellent
- Educational

E-learning models:

E-learning is the setup which uses the ICT and aims at creating the environment of online education. There are two

paradigms for E-learning based instruction.

1. E-learning assisted classroom instruction model:

In this model the teacher takes help of ICT, web and other E-learning tools to find out the content and techniques which can help him in making classroom instruction more effective and interesting. 3D images, animation and multimedia can help explaining the content easily.

2. Model of individual learning through E-learning:

In this model students get information directly from web and learn on his own pace. Teacher assists them and helps creating education environment. Evaluation can be through web. Follow up is also done so. At higher level education this model works better.

Advantages of E-learning:

- E-learning in any manner can not be avoided. E-learning now a day is becoming more and more popular due to its easy access and other advantages. E-learning is now widely used. Gradually people are becoming aware of it and are getting attracted towards it .why we should use it? We can have some reasons.
- E-learning provides interesting classrooms in which a student can raise and answer question, listen to multimedia lectures, interact with other student and teachers, watch experiments on videos, attend online expert's lectures etc.
- E-learning provides self paced courses. It is very useful for special kind of learners like slow learners, students having mental or physical disabilities, extremely fast learners, working students etc.
- In E-learning software make the assignment and project work easy to manage. To write assignments, see references, get image, pictures, charts for that, add different types of element in that, submit the assignment, and check it -all can be done easily interestingly and fast in the E-learning set up.
- Due to the use of ICT the learning process is easy, quick, convenient, and economical for all students, instructors, and administrators. Using a multi level content architecture, E-learning develops a more profound knowledge approach.
- In E-learning, syllabus can be made interesting by adding pictures, videos, images, graphics, 3D models, chart, sounds, links, blinks, etc. this ultimately results at higher retention of information.
- E-learning fulfills the requirement of interactivity. Here the students can be in touch with other students, teachers, parents, experts and can communicate very easily and instantly. It can be in synchronized manner or otherwise also. The interactivity determines the students to be active, to be involved, and to be a part of the learning process.

Limitations of E-learning:

Every coin has two sides. E-learning at a glance seems like a boon but it has also another side. There are some limitations of E-learning.

- E-learning is not the solution for everything. The education does not mean only the information giving process but it includes over all development including physical, mental, social and even emotional development of child. E-learning can not help learning skillful activities like boxing, swimming, etc. So it is not just enough for the student to be a part of E-learning and not doing any other co curricular activities. E-learning is not the perfect substitute of education but it is one of the medium of giving education.
- As John Dewey said "School is a small society". E-learning enhances the knowledge level but can not teach the real application of knowledge, which a student can learn by face to face interaction with other student. Social interaction is reduced due to E-learning.
- Students in E-learning needs to be extremely focused and highly disciplined. They have to be alert for day to day announcements and follow them properly. They need to be more academically focused and need to engage in virtual social space.
- E-learning is based on the content available on web or in digital form. It is very important to update the content regularly. Otherwise the main benefit of E-content. i.e. 'advanced' can not be taken in to consideration. More over the day to day announcement or regular management of the course is also important, which is also a difficult task.
- Threat of infringement of copyright may occur in E-learning.
- In E-learning students require high bandwidth which may cost higher.

There are some advantages and some limitation also of E-learning but like any other thing we can use it in a safe way. The main oppose against E-learning is for that it is not a perfect substitute of traditional teaching methods. Here is a solution for that. Blended learning is a combination of traditional learning and E-learning. We can not ignore E-learning and can not leave traditional learning. This can help us taking advantages of both and having fruits of both.

According to Margaret Driscall (Consultant, IBM.2002) "It is not surprising that blended learning solutions are a great way to initiate an organization in to E-learning."

BLACKBOARD and MOODLE are internet based application that institutions used to reach their students. It allows educators to create and deliver course material using the internet. Educators can post announcements, grade assignments, check on course activity and participate in class discussions. Students can submit their works, read and respond to discussion, questions & take quizzes.

Evaluation is very important in case of teaching. When we talk about E-learning. We should also think about the online evaluation system. Soft wares like "HOT POTATOES" can help in evaluation in E-learning.

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