

E-LEARNING - TRENDS AND HYPES: A LOOK TO FUTURE PROSPECTS OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this digital world, opportunities for education are available like never before. E-learning has revolutionized the world of teaching and learning. E-Learning is an adaptable technology that can be used to cover different areas of interactive or live learning as well as training needs. It makes skills available through newer technologies and reduces the learning time even for complex topics. E-Learning is a changing trend in education that no longer limits the education to the four walls of a class room. It is learning, utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online. The basic objective of this research paper is to understand concept of e-learning and to examine the types of e-learning. With e-learning, the possibilities for getting knowledge and information through various modes or trends out to the learner at her or his own pace opened a whole new world for knowledge transfer. The article is also about the latest trends and tools used in e-learning and presents future perspective of it in India, where demand within higher education is no different from that seen in developed countries. Emphasizes the importance of information and communication technologies, no one can deny the fact that e-learning is the most innovative application of the internet and it has done wonders globally and currently is achieving education classroom as well.

Key Words: E-Learning, Hypes, Internet, Prospects And Trends.

I. INTRODUCTION

The computers with their unimaginable functioning capacity coupled with a tremendous progress in the field of information and communication technologies have yielded so much power, abilities and capacities to human beings that we can boost to do anything and everything imaginable or unimaginable. Teaching-learning process that entirely happened to be a domain of the human factors such as teacher and students is now no longer limited to its traditional boundaries or ways and means. It has gradually turned into a subject of technological advancement which has almost revolutionized the field of teaching and learning. And one such advancement in the field is e-learning.

E-learning is an abbreviation of the term electronic learning. It stands for the type of learning carried out, facilitated or supported by some or the other electronic devices, gadgets, media or resources. It is quite a broader

meaning of the term e-learning. By this it can be understood that the learning facilitated by the use of any electronic media or means can be termed as e-learning. E-learning, however, is not taken in such a generalized way. Although, it may refer to all types of learning facilitated and supported through the use of information and communication technology, yet in a real practical sense, its use is limited and associated with the field of advanced learning technology such as dealing with both the technologies and associated methodologies in learning using networking and or multimedia technologies. (Fry, 2001)⁽¹⁾ defined technology based e-learning encompasses the use of the internet and other important technologies to produce materials for learning, teach learners, and also regulate courses in an organization. There has been extensive debate about a common definition of the term e-learning. Existing definitions according to (Rossi, 2009)⁽²⁾ tend to define it as a concept covers a range of applications, learning methods and processes.

E-Learning encompasses much more than just the offering of wholly on-line learning. It can also be used in conjunction with face-to-face teaching. It is commonly thought that new technologies make a big difference in education. Many proponents of e-learning believe that everyone must be equipped with basic knowledge of technology, as well as use it as a vehicle for reaching educational goals. There are certain issues available in connection to e-learning such as:

1. e-learning as an educational approach or tool supports traditional subjects;
2. e-learning as a technological medium assists in the development, communication and exchange of knowledge.

II. TYPES OF E-LEARNING

Basically there are two types of e-learning: synchronous and asynchronous.

- 1. Asynchronous learning:** Asynchronous means "not at the same time," which allows the participant to complete the Web Based Training (WBT) at his own pace, without live interaction with the instructor. In this style, the course information or learning experiences are passed to the learners through e-mail, discussion forum, web pages, web logs, blogs, and wikis or through the recorded CD-ROM and DVD. As a result, the instructor and participants do not interact simultaneously. Instead, information and reading materials are posted on a forum or web page or are sent as e-mail. At an unspecified time later, a reply is provided. Any follow-up questions are dealt with through additional postings or messages with requisite delays. Hence it neither provides any opportunity for the face-to-face dialogue nor any on-line direct timely interaction between the instructor and the learner.
- 2. Synchronous learning:** Synchronous means "at the same time," involves interaction of participants with an instructor via the web in real time. Here the communication between the instructor and the participants directly occurs in an on-line chat room or through live audio-video conferencing. It allows them properly to gather at a specified time for communicating with each other regarding the course material. As a result, an instructor can provide valuable information, lecture or share one or the other learning experiences with the participants. He can immediately respond to the queries and questions put to him by the participants. The follow-up questions can also be addressed immediately at an appropriate level of detail. Moreover, the

teacher can inquire as to whether the students are clear on what has been communicated to them as a course material or learning experiences. In this way, synchronous communication offers proper opportunities of lively interaction between the instructor and participants.

III. MODES AND STYLES

E-learning situations may be seen to adopt any of the following delivery modes and styles.

- 1. Support learning:** e-learning can play a mere supporting role to the teaching learning activities organized in the classroom. As a result, a teacher may make its use for his better teaching and a learner for his needed learning, e.g. they may use multimedia, internet and web services for their teaching and learning to enhance their classroom activities.
- 2. Blended learning:** In this mode, attempts are made for making use of a combination of traditional and ICT enhanced e-learning practices. The programme and activities are so planned and executed as to present a good combination of both the traditional classroom teaching practices and e-learning-based instruction. Thus, one can reap the benefits of both the practices of traditional and e-learning.
- 3. Complete e-learning:** In this mode of learning, the traditional classroom teaching-learning is totally replaced by the virtual classroom teaching-learning. There is no existence of classrooms, schools and teaching-learning environment as happens in the traditional set-up of school education. Such type of e-learning activities carried out through synchronous and asynchronous communication style.

IV. E-LEARNING TOOLS USED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- 1. Web log:** The term "blog" is a combination of the words web and log. It 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. The modern blog evolved from the online diary, where people would keep a running account of their personal lives. There are web blogs, such as Word Press, Movable Type, blogger or Live Journal, or on regular web hosting services, such as Dream Host.
- 2. Social bookmarking:** It is a web-based service to share internet bookmarks. The Social bookmarking sites are a popular way to store, classify, share and search links through the folksonomies techniques on the internet. In a social bookmarking system, users store lists of internet resources which they find useful.
- 3. Wiki:** A wiki is a website that allows visitors to add, remove, edit and even change content, without the need for registration. It also allows for linking among any number of pages.
- 4. Instant Messaging:** An instant messaging application allows one to communicate with another person over a network in relative privacy. There are many options like Gtalk, Skype, ICQ, Yahoo! Messenger, MSN Messenger and AOL for instant messaging. You can add associates to a contact list or buddy list, by entering their email address or messenger ID.
- 5. Text chat:** Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and other online chat technologies allow users to join chat rooms and communicate with many people at once, publicly. Users may join a pre-existing chat room or create a chat

room about any topic. Whether you are in another person's chat room, or one you've created yourself, you are generally free to invite others online to join you. This facilitates both one-to-one communication and many-to-many interaction.

- 6. Internet forums:** Originally modelled after the real-world paradigm of electronic 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.

V. ADVANTAGES OF E-LEARNING

Some of the advantages that the adoption of e learning in education includes the following:

1. It is flexible in nature when issues of time and pace are taken into consideration. Every student has right of choosing the time and pace of learning according to their requirement.
2. It provides ease of access to acquire the huge amount of information available across the world.
3. E-learning is cost effective in the sense that there is no need to attend the classes physically. E-learning help individuals cut down or eliminate costs of transportation, babysitting, and other expenses incurred by attending classes in a traditional setting.
4. It always takes into consideration the individual differences among learners. As some learners, for instance prefer to concentrate on certain parts of the course, while others are interested to review the entire course.
5. The use of e-Learning allows self-pacing. For instance the asynchronous way of learning permits learners to study at their own place, pace and speed whether slow or quick.
6. Above all learning becomes more interesting and joyful as digital activity is more attractive for learners.

VI. DISADVANTAGES OF E-LEARNING

While e-learning have significant strengths and offer unprecedented accessibility to quality education, there are certain weaknesses also and these are as under:

1. Internet access poses a significant cost to the user. If the participant's online time is limited by the amount of internet access they can afford, then instruction and participation in the online program will not be equitable for all students in the course.
2. Both students and facilitators must possess a minimum level of computer knowledge in order to function successfully in an online environment. For example, they must be able to use a variety of search engines and be comfortable navigating on the World Wide Web, as well as be familiar with FTP procedures and email.
3. User friendly and reliable technology is critical to a successful any e-learning program. However, even the most sophisticated technology is not 100% reliable. However, breakdowns can occur at any point along the system.
4. There is a lack of peer to peer learning in an online environment whereas in creative fields, seeing your peers making progress serves both as an instructional tool and as a motivator.

5. Though e-learning offers ease, flexibility and the ability to remotely access a classroom in the student's own time, learners may feel a sense of isolation.
6. Online learning requires the use of a computer and other such devices; this means that eyestrain, bad posture and other physical problems may affect the learner's health.

VII. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF E-LEARNING

Several online learning trends give us a view to how e-learning and learning tools will be shaped in the future:

1. **Personalized Learning:** In future education will become more personalized. Personalized learning is the tailoring of pedagogy, curriculum and learning environments to meet the needs and aspirations of individual learners. Personalization is broader than just individualization or differentiation in that it affords the learner a degree of choice about what is learned, when it is learned and how it is learned.
2. **Future Technology:** Computers will become more reliable and will look less like computers. Computer programs of the future will be function based. For example, the student of the future will not start up an operating system, internet browser, word processor and e-mail program in order to start work on a course. The student will start up the course, which in turn will start up these applications on its own.
3. **Time and Place Independence:** E-learning is in essence distance learning, and distance learning in turn is characterized by time and place independence. Today's e-learning, while clearly time independent, is not so clearly place independent, as students are tied to a computer terminal and internet connection. The emergence of PADs (Personal Access Device) will change all that and will become the dominant tool for online learning.

VIII RECOMMENDATIONS

E-learning has enough potential to provide solid assistance to all types of academic tasks such as theoretical as well as practical-in individual and collaborative classroom situations. It can provide a valuable treasury of the knowledge and information. Hence the following are some of the suggestions made in order to make in more effective:

1. The first and foremost thing that needs to be done is to develop a positive attitude towards the process and products of e-learning. For this purpose, attempts should be made to develop a culture that value e-learning as much as traditional face-to-face education.
2. Provide the facilities for training and equipping the students and teachers along with the supporting staff with the essential technical knowledge and skills related to the operation and utilization of multimedia appliances, computers and their networking with special emphasis on the internet and web technology.
3. Orientation programmes should be organised for the staff and students not only in terms of making them technologically capable for engaging in e-learning but also to have full awareness about all the possible advantages and gains drawn from such ventures.

4. Make provision of the internet facilities and classroom websites for giving opportunities to the teachers and students to carry out the teaching and learning tasks using the mechanism of e-learning.
5. Last but not the least, make adequate provision for the availability of the technical support services to train and provide online support to both the teachers as well as students in reaping maximum benefits from the e-learning programme.

IX CONCLUSION

Despite e- Learning, no better forum is available to address the ever-increasing challenges and opportunities of present age of information and global competition across cultures and national borders. e- Learning provides an essential platform that can encourage cooperative and collaborative interaction both for the instructors or learners. e- Learning has the ability to harness such emerging technologies that provides more options for learners to remain updated and stay connected with course content as well with other learners through such emerging technologies. Today, e- Learning is used in different sectors like medicine, agriculture, education, services and business. It helps in improving the employee's skills and the economic benefits. So, the government should also take relevant efforts for the inclusion of e-Learning that helps in the all-round development of the individuals in particular and the entire nation in general.

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