E-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EMERGING TREND

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Abstract:

E-learning has become a necessity in higher education institutions and is being deployed in educational establishments throughout the world. Researches have made much emphasis on its benefits but not much is discussed on the disadvantages of e-learning technology. This paper references some of the research work on the limitations of e-learning technology which are facing by the teachers and taught in teaching learning process. With the advent of e-learning technology, academics are facing the challenges of acquiring and implementing IT skills for the purpose of teaching.

According to some distinguished researches that internet is a perfect tool of learning that offers flexibility and expediency to learners at the same time offering endless opportunities for innovate teaching (Applebome, 1909; Moos and Azvedo, 2009; Zhang et al 2004; Wang and Wangi, 2009; Hardakar and Singh, 2011).

In the same time other researchers stated that e-learning success is that e-learning system would likely to encourage student learning resulting in higher level of student encouragement, E-learning can be better than face-to-face learning, the quality of interaction and timely feedback is superior (Hardaker and Singh, 2011, Macharia and Pelser, 2012).

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Though many research articles and case studies have been completed on how best to use the technology. However learning style and cultural challenges, technological challenges, technical training challenges, time management challenges are the major issues for teacher, administrator and policy makers and after all students for successful implementation of e-learning strategy in higher education. However e-learning is meant for individualised instruction, easy access, suitable for disadvantageous children, different approaches and learning style, flexibility, interesting and motivating, self-pacing, mass learning in higher education in spite of various disadvantages such as requires knowledge and skills, lack of equipment, costly, feeling of isolation, lack of co-curricular activities and technical defects etc.

Key Words: e-learning, advantages and disadvantages, challenges in higher education.

Introduction:

Electronic learning popularly known as e-learning includes all types of technology enhanced learning (TEL), where technology is used to support th.e learning process. Most frequently e-learning seems to be used for web-based distance education, with no face-to-face interaction. E-learning is defined as an educative activity, which is done using electronic medium. In general, e-learning refers to all types of learning facilitated and supported through the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

According to Rosenweig, "e-learning refers to the use of the internet technologies to deliver a broad array of solution that enhance knowledge and performance."

View of Tom Kelley and Cisco, "e-learning is about information, communication, education and training. Regardless of how trainers categorize training and education, the learner only wants the skills and knowledge to do a better job or to answer the next question from a customer."

View of Brandon Hall, "Instruction that is delivered electronically, in part or wholly via a web browser, through the internet or an intranet, or through multimedia platforms such as CD-ROM or DVD is known as e-learning."

Objectives of e-learning in Higher Education:

i)   Communicating text.

ii)   Providing facility of education to local community and global community.

iii)   Providing opportunity for open education.

iv)   Encouraging blended media.

v)   Providing education in open universities.

vi)   Encouraging and developing on-line education.

vii)   Encouraging research through on-line education.

viii)   Developing learning technologies.

ix)   Making higher education economical.

Promotion and Arrangement for e-learning in Higher Educational Institutions:

E-learning has enough potential to provide solid assistance to all types of academic tasks – theoretical and practical – in individual and collaborative classroom situations. It can provide a valuable treasury of the knowledge and information to all subjects of higher education curriculum besides proving helpful in managing the multidimensional affairsrelated to classroom instructionand all round development of the personality of the students. In the rapid moving world, we can sustain only by making ourselves capable of racing with the pace of the time and technological progress. Let us see what can we do, in general, for promoting e-learning in our higher educational institutions.

1.   The first and foremost thing that needs to be done is to develop a positive attitude towards the processes and products of e-learning.For this purpose, attempts should be earnestly initiated to develop a culture that value e-learning as much as traditional face-to-face education.

2.   Provide the needed facilities for training and equipping the students and teachers 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.   Provide proper orientation to 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-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 and students in reaping maximum benefits from the e-learning programme.

Different media used in e-education/e-learning:

1.   **Print Media:** It includes e-text and e-textbooks.

2.   **Video Media:In video media (i)** Visual tape, (ii) Cable, (iii) Satelite broadcast, (iv) television, etc. are included.

3.   **Communication media:** Communication media are divided in two categories.

(a)   Asynchronous media: e-mail, hearing and discussion etc. are included in asynchronous media.

(b)   Synchronous media: Internet, video-conferencing and teleconferencing are used in synchronous media.

Advantages of E-learning:

E-learning as an innovative technique provide unique opportunities to the learners for gaining useful learning experiences both on the individual and group levels. Its advantages are summarized below:

1.   **Individualised instructions:** E-learning provides individualised instructions suiting to the needs, abilities, learning styles and interests of the learners. Thus, it is learner centred. It concentrates on the needs of the learner.

2.   **Easy access:** The learners get access to learning by breaking all barriers of time, place and distance. The learners can access information and educational contents any time and at any place. Most of the learners who may not have time and resources for getting access to the traditional class bound learning experiences may get it now easily at their convenience in the form of e-learning.

3.   **Disadvantageous children:** It is available for those with poor health or disadvantageous physical conditions or any disadvantageous psychological conditions that can inhibit them from

undergoing any institutionalised education. E-learning enables even handicapped like deaf and dumb to learn.

4. **Effective Media:** e-learning can prove an effective media and tool for facing the problems of lack of trained and competent teachers, shortage educational institutions and the needed infrastructure and material facilities for providing quality education to the number of students residing in far and wide corners of the country.

5. **Different learning styles:** e-learning can cater different learning styles and promote collaboration among students from different localities, cultures, regions, states and countries.

6. **Flexibility:** The flexibility of e-learning in terms of delivery media (like CD, DVD, laptops), types of courses (modules or smaller learning objects) and access may prove very beneficial for the learners.

7. **Interesting and motivating:** e-learning may make the students more interested and motivated towards learning as they may get a wide variety of learning experiences by having an access to multimedia.

8. **Evaluation and feedback:** E-learning can also provide opportunities for testing and evaluating the learning outcomes of the learners through teachers, peers and auto-instructional devices and software available with the reading material on-line, or through the Internet and mobile phone facilities. It may work for them as a desired source for the proper feedback along with the needed diagnostic and remedial teaching. Thus it provide opportunities for timely evaluation and feedback for the learning outcomes.

9. **Self-pacing:**e-learning through audio-visual recording technology has a unique advantage of providing learning experiences that can be paused and reversed for observing, learning and imitating at the will and convenience of the learners. Such self-pacing provides a special weightage to the process of learning.

10. **Mass learning:** e-learning is a system of mass learning. It is a method of taking learning to millions who find no time to have opportunity to study regularly in an institution.

Disadvantages or drawbacks of E-learning:

E-learning is said to suffer from some serious limitations and drawbacks as mentioned below:

1.   **Requires knowledge and skills:** e-learning requires special knowledge and skills for the use of multimedia internet and web technology on the part of its users. Lack of knowledge and skills on this account may prove futile the valuable services of e-learning.

2.   **Costly:** It is more costly than traditional education. E-learning tools are very expensive. Their repair is also very expensive. Hence, it is beyond the reach of most of the students. They do not have resources for purchasing electronic equipment's.

3.   **Feeling of isolation:** The feeling of isolation experienced by the users of e-learning is one of the main defects quite visible in any system of distance learning including e-learning. There is no face-to-face interaction and humanistic touch profoundly available in the traditional classroom setup. Therefore the type of personal attention, diagnostic testing, and remedial instruction, warmth of feeling towards each other and timely guidance, supervision and feedback as provided in the real time setting of the prevalent classroom system are not available in the e-learning programmes.

4.   **Negative attitude:** An overall attitude of the learners, teachers, parents, educational authorities and society is usually found negative towards the processes and products of e-learning. E-learning is adjusted as second rate in comparison to regular classroom teaching.

5.   **Lack of co-curricular activities:** Co-curricular have great importance in the field of learning and education. But these activities are neglected in e-learning.

6.   **Adverse effect on health:** e-learning adversely effects the eye-sight and some other parts of the body. The learners become physically inactive. Sometimes they become victims of physical diseases.

7.   **Technical defects:** e-learning is based on technology. When technical defects occurs, e-learning stops. As a result continuity of learning is broken and there is no progress in e-learning.

Conclusion: From the above discussion we can conclude that e-education/e-learning is an innovative technique or a form of ICT used in providing learning experiences to the students in Higher Education through the use of Internet services and Web technology of the computers on the same lines as witnessed by us in the form of e-mail, e-banking, e-booking, and e-commerce in our day-to-day life.E-learning has enough potential to provide solid assistance to all types of academic tasks- theoretical and practical – in individual and collaborative classroom situations.Thus the present day e-learning is learning carried out, supported and facilitated by the

advanced multimedia facilities as well as Internet and Web technology delivered to the end users via computers, laptops and mobile ICT appliances.In the rapid moving world, we can sustain only by making ourselves capable of racing with the pace of the time and technological progress. With a change scenario reflected in the reapid evolution in technology, competitive global economy, we need a properly organized and guided system of e-learning and e-course for higher education.

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