

E-Learning: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities for Educational Professionals

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Abstract

This paper describes what is E-learning? Types of E-Learning, Characteristics, features, advantages, disadvantages, Issues, Challenges, Opportunities in the E-learning environment. E-learning is being as an important activity in the field of education. It offers obvious advantages for e-learners making access to educational resource at any time or at any place. ICT provides an opportunity of E-learning besides of classroom learning. Now-a-day it is very important among learners because, it has gained prominent place in all over the world. How most of the institutions offered distance learning programs in E-learning mode such as CD-ROM, DVD, INTERNET, Moodle and WWW. Apart from e-mails, video conferencing, discussion forums, instant messages, Social networking and chat room are also used to connect the learner and learning provider with each other. "More and More individuals are taking courses to distance education to relish their dreams. E-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. The paper further discusses how we can provide effective e-learning to learners.

KEYWORDS: E-learning, ICT application, Internet, e-learning environment, e-learners.

Introduction:

E-learning is being as an important activity in the field of education. It offers obvious advantages for e-learners making access to educational resource at any time or at any place. With the development of e-learning technologies, learners can be provided more effective learning environment to optimize their learning. ICT provides an opportunity of E-learning besides of classroom learning. Now-a-day it is very important among learners because, it has gained prominent place in all over the world. Today many institutions like universities and colleges are used admission advertisement, curriculum information and study material to their learner online. E-learning provides best solution to such learners who are in job and wants to enhance his/her educational degree side by side. Now most of the institutions offered distance learning programs in E-learning mode such as CD-ROM, DVD, INTERNET, Moodle and WWW. Apart from e-mails, video conferencing, discussion forums, instant messages and chat room are also used to connect the learner and learning provider with each other. "More and More individuals are taking courses to distance education to relish their dreams. To cater to this large segment of learners, a number of institutions including the virtual institutions have started offering a wide range of courses on the web-based education tutorials or online courses or virtual courses. The web collects and creates knowledge resources from any place to any time" (Singh and Devi, 2009). E-learning is essentially the computer and network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. E-learning applications and processes include Web-based

learning, computer-based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM. It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video and audio.

What is E-Learning? The term E-Learning is used in a variety of ways such as online learning, Computer based Learning (CBL), Web-based training (WBT), online resource based learning (ORBL), networked cooperative learning (NCL), computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL), (Labo and Bhandi, 2006). Basically, E-Learning is the online delivery of information, communication, education and training. E-Learning provides can be in offline from like CD, DVD etc. E-Learning provides new set of tools that can add value to the entire traditional learning modes classroom experiences, textbook study, CD-ROM and traditional computer based training. It is characterized by speed, technological transformation and mediated human interaction (Sahu and Singhal, 2002).

Parts of E-Learning: It can be categorized broadly as-

Authoring Tools: Actually, these are the software which helps in generating the desired E-Learning content. They convert documents, images and charts which are generated on word processors and spreadsheets and presentations into E-Learning content e.g. MS-Word, MS-Excel and Adobe Page-maker for supplementing with the printed learning material, software to presentation, e.g. MS-Power-Point and for synchronizing stream audio and video content used Adobe premiere, Avid and pinnacle software, Software tools which help in generating advanced content like simulations and animation are Macromedia Flash MX and Macromedia Fireworks etc. Besides there are **many software** such as MS-Front-Page, HTML and XML are also used in generating learning management system (LMS) as they are web interfaced.

Content Delivery Methods: The E-Learning content is delivered through two specific kind of execution: Synchronous Mode (a) Live Broadcasting: Either one way through Tele transmission or two ways via Tele conferencing etc. (b) Voice on Demand i.e. though voice broadcasts and podcasts etc. (c) Interactive communications like chatting, email, blogs etc. d) Asynchronous Mode Multimedia content delivered though CD-ROMs, DVDs or AV Tapes in the form of computer Based Tutorial Modules (Ramaiah, Reddy and Kumar, 2007)

Types of E-learning: 1. Online 2. Asynchronous 3. Synchronous 4. Self Study 5. Instructor Led Group 6. Self study with subject expert 7. Computer based learning

Teaching for Learning: E-learning consists two part of technology The first being computer technology, which offers computer based courses, computerized tests, word processor, graphics software to the learning process. The second part in communication technology, which offer distance courses distributed educational resources, e-mails, and video conferencing, bulletin boards, white boards and chat rooms.

Characteristics/Features of E-Learning: 1. E-Publication is cheaper and faster. 2. Geographical barriers are eliminated. 3. Travel time and associated costs are eliminated. 4. It promotes better learning provider-learner interactivity. 5. It is self directed. 6. It enables update learning materials speedily.

Advantages of E-Learning: 1. online learning does not require physical presence. 2. It is learner centric. 3. No time spent communicating class. 4. Learner can learn at his/her own space. 5. Learning can fit into your busy schedule. 6. Online learning does not require physical presence. 7. E-resources easily updated and learner can get quick benefit of latest development in their respective field. 8. Global Opportunities 9. Flexibility 10. Freedom.

Disadvantages of E-Learning: No doubt, there may be a number of disadvantages in e-learning, some are:- 1. Lack of face to face conversation, 2. Very high cost for infrastructure facilities, 3. Maintenance also very costly, 4. Lack of technical trained staff, 5. Lack of technical support to learning providers and learners, 6. Very difficult for learner as well as learning provider to move traditional content offline.

E-learning Tools:

E-mail is an e-learning tool: Every teacher should have an e-mail account. Communicate with students, Communicate with parents, Students can submit assignment, Can have attachments, Create a paperless environment, Simple but effective, Efficient and cost effective.

Chat an E-learning tool: Chat Synchronous communication tool, Communicate with students, Communicate with parents. More students participate, Collaborative learning.

Online Forum is an e-learning tool: Teacher can create discussion groups, Teacher could post a question and request students to comment, Students can post their comments, Can encourage community participation, Collaborative learning can be fostered, Feedback from diverse culture.

Web is an e-learning tool: Web Wide range of materials available, Teacher will need to narrow down. It is a resource centre, sharing of resources, Supported by images, audio, simulation and multimedia.

Video Conferences: Video Conference can conduct a live lecture, Communication with students, Communication with parents, Support by audio, chat and white board, Support sharing of applications, Can be recorded and later be used for on demand lectures Demo...

Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

Issues: There may be certain burning issues that are related with E-learning environment:

Migrating to the electronic learning environment calls for a change in the attitude of learners. The learners need to be trained in handling of new media.

Learning provider need to upgrade their skills in developing and delivering the course content through networks. Training programmes for the learning provider in web page designing, multimedia courseware production, HTML document preparation etc. are essential.

Web based learning does not refer to just putting the learning material on the network. The material should be relevant, interactive, user friendly and able to facilitate the self learning process. Trained manpower is required with the knowledge and skills both in software development as well as educational process.

It must be assured that learners have equal access to material provided on the net, immaterial of where they live or placed.

Challenges: With the advancement of ICT, there is tremendous growth in every walk of life. The ICT has given a big challenge to educational professionals to explore and identify the E-content, their utility and quality assurance. It has also affective the economy and society both. Now a wide of E-resources are available on web. On the other hand, there are many major challenges in front of institutions such as lack of funds, infrastructure facilities and trained professional etc. We need to solve these challenges. The second biggest challenges are of illiteracy. Third is way by which everyone can received huge amount of E-resources. Fourth is how we redefined the library services to competent in ICT environment. The only way to overcome from these challenges is by providing E-learning to the learner.

Opportunities: The E-learning environment provides a number of opportunities to both learning provider and learner. In this environment learner gets access to a wide range of information. They can develop new ways for learning. i.e. to develop digital objects and converts the printed objects in E-format to deliver and disseminate resources to learners. The web also provides a vehicles for high teach learning where learning provider works as a facilitator for the learners. E-learning also provides an opportunity to store, acquire and preserve e-resources and e-learning objects in the portal technology.

Conclusion: E-learning has given a new path of learning to those who could not gain knowledge on regular basis .E-learning reduces time, cost of course material and improves the quality of E-resources. With the help of academicians and IT experts, educational professionals can generate E-resources and develop portals to integrate E-learning information. By using E-resources and services, educational professionals may enhance the scope and credibility of their profession and solve many problems regarding lack of funds, lack of infrastructure facilities and trained professionals. At last, we conclude that E-learning provides an opportunity to the educational professional to expand their vision.

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