E-LEARNING : AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract:

The beginning of wireless electronic communication can be traced back Over 100 Years ago. In this advance digital era, the education system is also getting digitised and the educational providers cannot be completely dependent and survive on the traditional method of teaching and learning. Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has given new magnitude to learners by providing continuous and convenient learning and support activities through e-learning platform. This paper gives an overview of the methods through which e-learning can be imparted. It also focuses on difficulties and probable ways to overcome difficulties of e-learning.

Introduction:

The beginning of wireless electronic communication can be traced back Over 100 Years ago; the journey began from transmitting the telegraphic messages through electric telegraph, which led towards invention of wireless communication through radios leading to recording, movies, television, computers, CD-ROM, mobile phones, Internet, laptops palmtops. Today we have various electronic devices that can bring Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in some form or other literally to every home.

In this advance digital era, the education system is also getting digitised and the educational providers cannot be completely dependent and survive on the traditional method of teaching and learning.

Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has given new magnitude to learners by providing continuous and convenient learning and support activities through e-learning platform.

E-learning means technology enhanced learning. Teaching and learning supported electronically. E-learning means "The delivery of a learning, training or education programme by

electronic means. E-learning involves the use of a computer or electronic device (e.g. a mobile phone) in some way to provide training, educational or learning material." (Derek Stockley 2003) E-learning offers learning anytime and anywhere and provides just in time information by overcoming the limitations of time, distance and resources.

Review of Literature:

August Tsai (2011) in the study has proposed hybrid E-learning model that integrates teaching-and-learning methods that have been found to be effective in the past in order to remove the limitations on time, location, and tutor's availability that are imposed by a physical classroom. A yearlong platform development in the research has proved an integrated application could be very effective but not necessarily expensive. In the IT structure, for the most part, common and existing software applications and infrastructures have been used so that costs were reduced.

According to Haroon Altarawneh (2011) The e-learning implementers need to work with e-learning standards for common interoperability software. This will promote high quality learning experiences and provide different instructional and learning methods. Teachers and students must have technical and cognitive skills in ICT so that they become effective users of the technology.

E-Learning Offered:

Most of the Universities and colleges in India are offering e-learning facilities to their students.

Following are the methods through which e-learning can be imparted.

1. Asynchronous E-Learning:

It is a mediated form of communication in which the sender and receiver are not concurrently engaged in communication. Under this method there are two ways of offering learning Self-paced Courses and Discussion Groups

a. Self-paced Courses

In self-paced courses the learner can learn any time at his own convenience. Self-paced courses usually have features like multimedia, interactivity, book-marking, and tracking report while some have the advanced features like simulation, online experts, multiple bookmarks, search, notes and highlights. These courses are delivered through Internet, Intranet or Local Area Networks, CD-ROM or DVD.

b. Discussion Groups

Discussion group/ message boards/ bulletin boards/discussion forums are collection of conversations that occur over time. The discussion starts out as a question from an individual where another individual responds to it sometime later. A discussion group is a very efficient way to provide provides expert answers to a large group people. A single answer to a common question can benefit many.

2. Synchronous E-Learning

Synchronous e-learning means classes conducted over the Internet, which allows learner to interact with peers and experts.

a. Virtual Classroom

A virtual classroom is replica of the competency found in a real classroom. In a virtual classroom students and teachers use their computers to go to a virtual meeting place instead of a classroom student's attendance is recorded. Lecture is delivered through Slide presentation, Audio and video conferencing. Through Audio and video conferencing there is interaction.

b. Audio and Video Conferencing

Audio conferencing can be implemented through computers connected to the Internet and Phone.Video conferencing can also be implemented through computers connected to the Internet the computers need digital cameras and Special video conferencing devices that connect over the Internet or over phone lines.

c. Chat

Participants use a computer to type their comments. The other participants can see the name of the person and their comments.

d. Shared Whiteboard

A shared whiteboard helps group of learners to communicate by typing comments, drawing, highlighting and pointing

e. Application Sharing

Demonstration of how to use software applications to remote learners is possible with application sharing. A teacher can also let the learner take control of the application to practice performing tasks.

f. Instant Messaging

It is similar to chat. One person communicates to another through typing. Instant messaging also provides some additional features. With instant messaging, you can keep a list of list of people

that you might like to chat with. The list will indicate if they are online, offline, available for chat or busy. These features make instant messaging an excellent tool for learning from peers.

Further, the colleges and universities offer to the students e-learning facilities by giving them an online account (it operates like an email account provided by gmail.com or a rediffmail.com) facility on their website.

Through this account the students can get quick access to following academic information and make online requests.

i)   Admission procedure

ii)   A Student can maintain Profile: - Personal Profile, Previous Qualification Profile, Current Academic Profile and Examination Profile.

iii)   Information related to Examinations like Exam Time Table, Exam Schedule, Syllabus & Previous Question Papers is available.

iv)   Online Lectures

v)   Online Examinations

vi)   Applications for : - Photocopy of Answer book, Revaluation, Duplicate Statement of Marks, Exemption Cancellation, Ordinance Cancellation, Paper Change, Migration and Convocation Verification

vii)   Profile Correction: - Add Profile Correction Request, Update Contact Details and View Request Status

viii)   Online Library.

ix)   Open Learn and Open Courseware

x)   Job openings

xi)   Cultural events

A student is also able to get online learning experience by clicking on the link on the website where in the modules of the relevant courses are there and student can read the module appear for test and get the results immediately. The University/colleges also give academic guidance to students and colleges through web based discussion forums. Questions can be posted and after stipulated hours decided by , web server can automatically forward all posts on all discussion forums, by email to the concerned university/ college officer, who is free to choose mode of reply (by normal postal system, email or here on this discussion forum) to query.

Difficulties in E-learning Process:

1. Since self-paced courses are offered without teachers, so some students may fail to learn.

2. Sometimes students may not complete the course due to external motivation.

3. Technical issues such as bandwidth speed of the connection or power failure may create problem while presentation is going on.

4. Providing E-learning in the rural India is difficult.

Probable methods to overcome these difficulties:

1. Awareness through short term modules on e-learning should be created

2. E-learning environment should be improved.

3. Instructors should use a professional-oriented approach.

Conclusions :

No single e-learning method is best for every learning need. A blended learning programme combines both e-learning and traditional learning methods, which provide the convenience, speed and cost effectiveness of e-learning with the personal touch of traditional learning. Thus e-learning environment should be improved at grass root level to overcome the difficulties faced in implementation of e-learning.

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