



Role of E-learning in higher education

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Abstract

The world is undergoing numerous transformations due to rapid development and diffusion of information and communication technologies in all walks of life. The computers with their unimaginable working and functioning capacity coupled with a tremendous progress in the field of electronics and communications technology have yielded so much power, abilities and capacities to human beings that we can boast to do anything and everything imaginable or unimaginable on this earth. Computers have become an integral part of our lives. The development in computer technology has resulted in E-learning. An innovative application of computer in the teaching and learning process is known as E-learning. Present scenario E-learning has enough potential to make the education, instruction and learning opportunities provided to the learners adaptable to their needs-mental and skill level local needs and sources at their hands.

Keywords: ICT, E-learning, computer, technology, education

Introduction

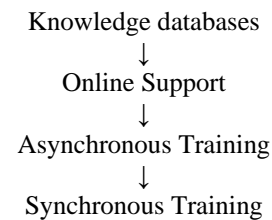
E-learning is an abbreviation of the term electronic learning. Electronic learning in its literal meaning stands for the type of learning carried out, facilitated or supported by some or the other electronic gadgets, media or resources. It is quite a broader meaning of the term E-learning. Judging in this sense, the learning facilitated by the use of any electronic media or means like microphones and listening devices or audio and videotapes can be termed as E-learning. E-learning, however, is not taken in such generalized sense. Although, in general, it may refer to all types of learning facilitated and supported through the use of information and communication technology, yet in real practical sense, its use is limited and associated nowadays with the field of advanced learning technology (dealing with both the technologies and associated methodologies in leaning using networking and/ or multimedia technologies).

In this sense, E-learning may call for the services of the advanced electronic information and communication media and means like CD-ROMs and DVDs, teleconferencing, video-conferencing and computer based conferencing, E-mail, live chat, surfing on the internet and Web browsing, on-line reference libraries, video game-style simulation, Customized E-learning courses, and Web blogs. Identified in this way, E-learning may be taken as an electronically carried out learning facilitated and supported by the use of advanced learning technology particularly calling for the services of computers, networking and multimedia.

In this way, if we try to have a broad view of the nature and meaning of the concept E-learning in terms of the hard realities of its functioning and use in our day-to-day life, we can come to the conclusion that E-learning is an innovative technique or a form of information and communication technology used in providing learning experiences 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.

Level of E-learning

E-learning falls into four categories, from the very basic to the very advanced.



1. **Knowledge databases:** These databases are the most basic form of E-learning. You have probably seen knowledge databases on software sites offering indexed explanations and guidance for software questions, along with step-by-step instructions for performing specific tasks. These are usually moderately interactive, meaning that you can either type in a keyword or phrase to search the database or make a selection from an alphabetical list.
2. **Online support:** Online support is also a form of E-learning and functions in a similar manner to knowledge databases. Online support comes in the form of forms, chat rooms, online bulletin board, E-mail or live instant messaging support. Slightly more interactive than knowledge databases. Online support offers the opportunity for more specific questions and answers as well as more immediate answers.
3. **Asynchronous training:** This is E-learning in the more traditional sense of the word. It involves self-paced learning, either CD-ROM based, network-based, intranet-based or internet-based. It may include access to instructors through online bulletin board, online discussion groups and E-mail or it may be totally self-contained with links to reference materials in place of a live instructor.

4. **Synchronous training:** Synchronous training is done in real-time with a live instructor facilitating the training. Everyone logs in at a set time and can communicate directly with the instructor and with each other. You can raise your cyber hand and even view the cyber whiteboard. It lasts for a set amount of time from a single session to several weeks, months or even years. This type of training usually takes place via internet?

Important Features of E-learning

E-learning is dynamic

E-learning operates in real time.

E-learning is collaborative

E-learning is individual

E-learning is comprehensive

1. **E-learning is dynamic:** Today's content, is real time, not old news or shelf ware but online experts, best sources, quick approaches for emergencies.
2. **E-learning operates in real time:** you get what you need, when you need it.
3. **E-learning is collaborative:** Because people learn from one another, E-learning connects learners with experts, colleagues and professional peers, both in and outside your organization.
4. **E-learning is individual:** Every e-learner selects activities form a personal means of learning opportunities most relevant to his/her background, job and career at that very moment.
5. **E-learning is comprehensive:** E-learning provides learning events from many sources, enabling the e-learner select a forward format or learning method or training provider.

Promotion and arrangement for E-learning in our 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 treasure of the knowledge and information to all subjects of the school curriculum besides providing helpful in managing the multidimensional affairs related to class room instruction and 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. E-learning and m-learning is the demand of the time. We have to prepare our students and bring suitable modifications and improvements in the prevailing system of our educational institution to face this challenge. Let us see what we can do, in general, for promoting E-learning in our educational institution.

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. The student should be made to appreciate the fruits of E-learning. In any case, they should not be allowed to get a wrong message that online education or learning is somehow second-rate.
2. Provide the needed 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. 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. The following initiatives may be taken for this purpose:
 1. It must fit to the age, mental and skill level, clearly defined leaning objectives and goals, and local needs and available resource related with the student population.
 2. Provide special attention in displaying information or learning experiences on the web pages of the site. It should invariably allow ease of navigation and charm of their multimedia presentation. Use a familiar interface such as a standard Web browser or Microsoft Windows interface so that the uses don't have to master a new technology for reaping the benefits of the school and classrooms website.
 3. Have adequate provision of including an interactive element in the website for enabling the students to interact with their teachers or with each other. In case the website is in the developing stage, then at least include options such as self quizzes or simulations, which let them test and apply what they have learned.
 4. Make provision for the due enrichment of the website by adding the Internet facilities like E-mail, chat option or audio-videoconferencing for the need communication and interaction among the students and teachers.
 5. Utilize the services of the internet facilities and websites of the school and classroom for building bridges with parents and community. It will surely provide a proper platform for seeking involvement of the parents and the community for the enhancement of the learning and personality development of the students.

Advantages of E-learning

1. Most of the learners who may not have time and resources for getting access to the traditional class-bound learning experience may get it now easily at their convenience in the form of E-learning. A learner can now satisfy his desire and fulfill his ambition of getting access to school or higher education or take up a hobby course without leaving his job, compromising his comfort or feeling handicapped in one or the other sense on account of his limitations. The learners can access information and educational contents any time, any place.
2. E-learning has enough potential to make the education, instruction and learning opportunities provided to the learners adaptable to their need-mental and skill level-local needs and sources at their hands.
3. It has a unique feature of arranging an access to the same quality of the content that a full time student has. The best of the world's educational content, treasury of knowledge and the opportunities are available through E-learning to an increasing number of learners especially in the developing and underdeveloped countries.

4. Unlike traditional classroom education, E-learning can cater to different learning styles and promote collaboration among students from different localities, cultures, regions, states and countries.
5. E-learning can prove an effective media and tool for facing the problems of lack of the trained and competent teachers, paucity of schools and the needed infrastructure and material facilities for providing quality education to the number of students residing in the far and wide corners of the country.

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