



ROLE OF E- LEARNING ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Anangahana Das

Research Scholar, Department of Education, Dibrugarh University, India

ABSTRACT

E-learning activities are important for the development of any country. In modern era, everybody is thinking about growth and Educational development. E-Learning is a role of new dynamics that characterises the educational system. It comprises of a wide selection of digitalization approaches, components and delivery methods .The use of e-learning is seen at all levels of educational system, including higher education .Education is Nations strength. A developed nation is inevitably an educated nation. Since independence, India as a developing nation is continuously progressing in the field of education. Though there have been lot of challenges to the higher education system of India, but there have equally been lot of opportunities too to overcome these challenges and to make higher education system much better. The current study aims to present the role of e-learning in higher education system of India and highlight various challenges facing it.

Keywords: E-Learning, Higher Education, India, Challenges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Though E-learning reached India late of course, but it is being fast accepted in a big way. Perhaps India has watched the success of the west in adopting e-learning and is trying hard to implement it. Over the past few years, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has been trying to achieve the target of making education accessible to every corner of the country. But India being such a huge and diverse country, there still remains many parts of the nation, which are in darkness about e-learning (MALIK, 2009).

Defining E-Learning: Allison Rossett (2001) defines E-learning as: Web-based training (WBT), also known as e-learning and on-line learning, is training that resides on a server or host computer that is connected to the World Wide Web

Education is one of pillars on which a nation stands. The purpose of education is self sufficiency. But with the advent of rapid changes in technology, education and its application

too is undergoing a transformation. This should be seen in a very positive light as only when there is a motivation to change, there is hope for progress in any field. Use of technology to facilitate learning is accepted to be of value across educational institutions. E-learning holds particular relevance to India as the youth constitute its major population and there is no other way to offer or receive education in such a scale without the intervention of technology. E-Learning includes all the forms of electronically supported learning and teaching including Edutech. It involves making use of the available information and communication systems to generate both in the class room and out of the class room educational experiences in technology, even as advances continue in regard to device and curriculum. E – Learning applications and process include web – based learning; computer based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. Content delivered via the Internet, Intranet, extranet, audiotape, 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.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To study about the role of E-learning in higher education in India.
2. To find out the challenges of E-learning programme in higher education system in India.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary data. Data has been collected from books, journals, news, letter, websites etc.

4. DISCUSSION

Objectives wise discussion has been done below:

Objectives no 1: To study about the role of E-learning in higher education in India.

Indian Education system is the world's third largest higher education system, having a well-off mix of premier Government and private institutes with a network of 38498 colleges and 875 universities. For quality improvement and in order to extend the vision of India as a global centre for higher education, the enrolment and self-important systems in colleges and universities should be simplified. In this line UGC has worked with other countries in getting more students to Indian universities. A quality society can be produced only through quality education. In this line, the higher education of India needs mechanisms to improve the quality of education provided through universities and other degree awarding institutions. The mechanism should pay attention on refining, diversifying, and upgrading present higher education and research programmes making possible a higher education system providing accessible, flexible, affordable and fast-track completion of courses for free or at a low cost for learners who are interested in learning. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) brings new opportunities for innovation in higher education that will allow institutions and academics to explore new online learning models and innovative practices in teaching and learning. MOOC has become the latest trend in the field of distance education which indicates a significant need of research studies to reduce the threat related to it.

E-Learning is seen as a promising way for improving the quality of higher education and effectiveness of learning. It can provide increased flexibility of learning experience to student, enhances access to information resources for more students; harnesses the potential to drive innovative and effective ways of learning and teaching at very low marginal cost among the teachers and learners. E – Learning can also lead to the enhancement of quality in higher education by implementing innovative pedagogical methods, new ways of learning and interacting by the easy sharing of the new practices among learners and teachers communities,

as well as by more transparency, an easier comparison and cross fertilization of materials and methods.

E-learning encompasses a field of integrated educational technologies. At one end are applications like PowerPoint, which have minimal impact on learning and teaching strategies for the organization. At the other end are virtual learning environments (VLEs), and managed learning environments (MLEs), which can have significant impact upon learning and teaching strategies, and upon the organization (OSU, 2003; Julian et al, 2004). Broadly, OSU (2003) views the continuum of e-learning as the educational technology from the supplemental use of technology in the Classroom, through blended or hybrid uses comprising a mix of face-to-face and fully online instruction, to fully online synchronous and asynchronous distance learning environments delivered to remote learners

Some Advantages of E-Learning in higher education are:

4.1. Greater Access

One of the biggest advantages of e learning in higher education is that it transcends geographical boundaries. It allows students the benefit of a class, irrespective of their physical location.

4.2. Resource Flexible:

E-learning enables institutions to save a great amount of time and money. They don't have to acquire any form of expenditure in terms of hiring instructors, purchasing equipment or other resources.

4.3. Cost –effectiveness

E-learning can prove to be a cost effective alternative for students too. Traditional methods of education are more expensive because they include the charges of trainers, classroom, course materials, travel and accommodation.

4.4. Rapid Lesson Delivery

As compared to traditional methods of lesson delivery, e- learning is much more sophisticated, dynamic and quick. More E – learning lessons are wrapped up within a single academic session. However, students are given the flexibility to extend or reduce their session time, depending on their needs and requirements, Learners can choose to skip the areas that they are already familiar with while focusing their energies on more relevant subjects.

4.5. Individualization

E-learning in higher education does not usually take place in a group setting. Instead, it transmits education in a more individualized, definite, specific and transparent way. Students can choose to ask questions, leave feedback, get responses, seek repetitions and clarify doubts as per their own level of comprehension.

4.6. Instand upskilling

In a time where skills are required to be updated regularly, e learning can prove to be an immensely helpful tool. Be it students, veterans or beginners, it enables everyone to upskill themselves at a time and place of their choice.

4.7. Accountable Outcomes

E- Learning works to measuring outcomes, tracing results and gathering feedback. While it is not possible to keep a close tab on every student seeking education under the traditional system,

e- learning methods ensure that a continuous and consistent evaluation can be undertaken to assess regular progress. As a result, the needs of every student are accommodated and the quality of learning becomes better.

Objectives no 2: To find out the challenges of E-learning programme in higher education system in India.

- **Lack of Systemic Approach to Information Communication Technology Implementation:** Integration of Information Communication Technology in the functions of any organization is a complex process that needs to be fully conceptualized and defined from the beginning. However, this is not the case in many higher learning institutions in developing countries as most of them have embraced the ICT integration process without clear plans to guide the way. The institution ICT policy and strategic plan should be defined to provide a framework for the development and implementation of specific ICT projects.. The following issues, amongst others, should be taken into consideration: 1) The ICT infrastructure already in place; (2) ICT skill levels in the institution; 3) Number of staff and students in each department and projected growth; 4) Academic management process: curriculum development, assessment methods and administration .
- **Awareness and Attitude towards Information Communication Technology:** It is important for all stakeholders in the institution to know the existing Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities and services and their importance in relation to their specific tasks. Lack of awareness goes along with attitude. Positive attitude towards ICTs is widely recognized as a necessary condition for their effective implementation (Woodrow 1992). Full involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation process is a key to addressing awareness and attitude problem. Formally organized awareness programmes, visits to similar institutions where success has occurred, and short trainings can contribute to raise the awareness and change the attitude of stakeholders towards facilities and services.
- **Inadequate Funds:** Financial resources form a key factor to the successful implementation and integration of Information Communication Technology in higher education. It is obvious that countries with higher financial resource bases stand a good chance than those with limited resources, to reap benefits offered by ICTs. In addressing the problem of limited funds and sustaining donor funded projects, higher learning institutions can do the following: 1) Adopt freeware and open source software for teaching and learning activities; 2) Continuously press for more funds from their governments; and 3) Diversify sources of funds to have a wide financial base
- **Administrative Support:** Lack of Administrative support is critical to the successful integration of Information Communication Technology into teaching and learning processes. Administrators can provide the conditions that are needed, such as ICT policy, incentives and resources. The commitment and interest of the top management and other leaders at every level is the most critical factor for successful implementation of ICTs. Dwyer et al (1997) emphasize that for the integration of ICTs to be effective and sustainable, administrators themselves must be competent in the use of the technology, and they must have a broad understanding of the technical, pedagogical, administrative, financial, and social dimensions of ICTs in education
- **Transforming Higher Education:** Many institutions fail to integrate Information Communication Technology (ICT) into teaching and learning because they are using ICTs to replicate their traditional practices, content and control. Their plans appear to be driven by ICTs and not by pedagogical rationale and focus. (Ehrmann 1995).

However, effective integration requires a transformation process where all stakeholders are involved to re-examine their existing structures and practices, as pointed out by Bates (2000: 13), if universities and colleges are to successfully adopt technologies for teaching and learning, many more than minor adjustments in current practice will be required. Indeed, the effective use of technology requires a revolution in thinking about teaching and learning. Part of that revolution necessitates restructuring universities and colleges – that is, changing the way higher education institutions are planned, managed and organized.

- **Lack of Ownership:** It is critical that all associates contribute to and demonstrate ownership of the plans and the policies. Institution-wide consultations are necessary in the identification of challenges, and in proposing areas for Information Communication Technology (ICT) application. Stakeholders must agree on the projects to be implemented, including their role therein. Employees must see ICTs as tools rather than as competitors for their jobs. A related challenge is getting stakeholders in an organization to think for the organization, rather than the natural tendency of considering the interests of their particular departments.
- **Technical Support:** This includes issues like system, operation, maintenance, network administration and security. This is an important part of the implementation and integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in education system. In most cases however, technical support is not available, which implies that trainers and students require some basic troubleshooting skills to overcome technical problems when using ICTs. Appropriate strategies should be in place to ensure that integration of ICTs in teaching and learning process goes together with the recruitment, training, retaining and retention of required staff.
- **Staff Development:** Integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning does not only deal with introduction of new hardware and software, but both trainers and the students have to adopt new roles, and change their ICT behaviours and ways of teaching and learning. As Farrell (1999) points, training and workshops are needed not only to improve the skills of the instructors, but also as a means of getting them involved in the process of implementing and integrating ICTs in teaching and learning.
- **Problematic for Instructors:** As software is getting more and more advanced, instructors are constantly trying to learn how to keep up. Traditional instructors believing in lectures and handouts may have tough time in adopting the system and software. It may take some time and effort, but the instructors should always look to keep themselves updated with the latest technological changes. In this respect, the students must also be self-motivated and disciplined to progress through his/her program in a timely manner.

5. CONCLUSION

E-learning involves the use of digital tools for teaching and learning. It involves the training, delivery of knowledge, motivating students to interact with each other, as well as exchanging and respecting different point of views. Higher Education institutes in developing countries possess basic ICT infrastructure such as Local Area Network (LAN), internet, computers, video, audio, CDs and DVDs, and mobile technology facilities that form the basis for the establishment of e-learning. Pedagogical, technical and cost issues should be taken into account for each specific technology when integrating ICTs in teaching and learning practices.

The study has tried to explain the role of E-learning in particular and it has shown the despite the challenges discussed, the value and the need for effective application of E-learning is of

great significance to an effective higher education structure because of its strong impact in teaching and learning. Present higher education system plays a vital role in individual and society development. So higher educational institutions need to have suitable strategies in place for successful deployment of the e-learning process, with the aim of developing the student, society and the Nation.

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