

Highlighting the Advantages and Disadvantages of E-Learning

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and learning in or outside of the classroom through computers and internet is called E-Learning. In the present era, technology-mediated learning approach has gained worldwide popularity from the educational standpoint. E-Learning is computer-based learning, and pedagogically, it is student centered and collaborative learning. E-learning serves learning and teaching procedure through all electronic forms. The information and communication systems serve as definite media to carry out the learning process. A number of educational institutes in developing countries are still using old and conventional methods of learning. These types of methodologies follow traditional method of delivering lectures in classrooms. Since, several institutes have started blending learning, still a lot of them follow traditional procedures. Several epidemics outbreaked and changed the whole picture of the world. The world of 21st century is now experiencing the same phenomenon in form of Covid-19. It is deadly disease spread by Corona Virus. It is declared as a pandemic by WHO. Every field of life is badly affected. This situation challenged the education system across the world and forced educators to switch to an online mode of teaching overnight. Face to face classes is banned to ensure the social distance. The educational institutes which were not ready to accept new method of teaching, they are left no choice except to change their methods and switch to online teaching and learning. The undertaken research explores the significance, advantages, disadvantages and benefits of E-Learning both for students and teachers.

Keywords

E-Learning, collaborative, Covid19, Epidemics, phenomenon, WHO

Introduction

Every field of life is drastically affected by Covid-19. Field of education is no exception to it. To continue the process of learning and teaching at home, the method of E-learning emerged. It introduced a unique, new and different teaching and learning environment for both teachers and students. To make successful to this method, a different set of skills are needed (Chitra & Raj, 2018). Critical thinking, research, and evaluation skills are important because learners have access to wide range of information from a variety of sources to sort through. Using electronic tools for learning, students are much more independent than in the traditional setting. It is the need that these tools should motivate students for learning and commit to teach, minimizing the social interaction with peers or an instructor. In online courses, students are expected to learn in the same as they do in classrooms, but there is higher incidence of withdrawal or incomplete grades. It is said that E-learning is an intentional attempt of

using networked information and communication technology in teaching and learning. Other prominent terms as Online learning, Virtual learning, Distributed learning, Network and web-based learning are used to describe this type of learning and teaching.

A new mode of E-Learning is being incorporated in education sector due to the digital innovation. The Covid-19 deadly hit the world. The world is observing strict lock-down and MCO to restrict the activities of the people. It is proved that this pandemic spreads due to the interaction of the people. That is why, every country is trying to practice social distance as it is the main solution of stopping it. Almost All educational institutes have been closed across the world. Observing this situation 150 crore learners and 6300 crore instructors decided to adopt the online mode of teaching. This situation exposed the strengths and weaknesses of education systems facing the challenge of digitalization. The digital breach is still a reality. According to Bates, the current

inequalities in the system have been elaborated. It is not the failure of E-learning itself, but it is the failure of educational organizations which underestimate the importance of E-learning in pedagogy. E-learning can be fruitful in the future if the principles of equality and openness must be followed in digital competence. It is argued that the industry of E-learning has made progress to a great extent during the last decade.

The covid-19 has shaken the economy of the whole world and education sector has also been affected. This pandemic has closed all educational institutes temporarily. Educational sector is endeavouring to find options to deal with this challenging situation. These circumstances make us realize that academic institutions should make scenario planning (Rieley, 2020). Humanity and unity are the demand of the situation. To protect the learners, teachers, faculty and communities is the need of the day. It is said that online mode of learning is easily accessible and can even reach to rural and remote areas. Students can learn anytime and anywhere. They can learn new skills which will be helpful for them in future. Online learning serves as a panacea in the time of crisis (Dhawan, 2020).

Definition of E-Learning

E-Learning is the process of providing information through different channels such as E-books, CDs etc. Learning and teaching styles have been revolutionized. It discarded the traditional method of teaching and discouraged the use of chalk and board to impart to the learners during classrooms. Education procedure has become informative, effective and productive. Teachers are well aware of the latest technologies regarding their fields. They impart the latest knowledge to their students. E-Learning is defined as the courses which are specifically delivered through the internet everywhere. Thus, teaching and learning both become simpler, easier, and more effective.

Aparicio, Bacao, and Oliveira (2016) are of the opinion that E-learning is not a new term which focuses on the use of computerized systems to make the learning process easy and effective. Online learning depends on the educational need

and purpose (Valverde-Berrocoso, Garrido-Arroyo, Burgos-Videla, & Morales-Cevallos, 2020). According to Sangrà, Vlachopoulos, and Cabrera (2012), E-learning delivers learning and training programmes using technology. It serves the purpose of delivering the educational programmes using electronic means. It serves the purpose of communication as in online learning and teaching process, students and teachers may interact with each other. It enhances the learning of students providing them access to informative and communicative technologies. Njenga and Fourie (2010) state that E-learning is the powerful tool and it should be adopted by all educational institutes. It may replace human interaction and it reduces the economic costs of education. It makes learning process interesting as learners are not get bored using technologies. It is web-based learning which provides training and development to the learners and teachers through Electronic media such as the Internet, audio, video etc

Literature Review

McBrien, Cheng, and Jones (2009) state that E-learning has facilitated the distance education. It introduced rapid technology in education sector. Owing to it, everybody can learn and gain information easily from anywhere, and anytime as all these modes are computer centred (Cojocariu, Lazar, Nedeff, & Lazar, 2014) . It makes the learning and teaching process student-cantered. Learning procedure is characterised by innovation, novelty and flexibility. Online learning is defined as “learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments applying several devices as mobile phones, laptops, etc. with internet access. With the help of these devices, students from any part of the world may interact with their peers, teachers and experts. All kinds of information are in the access of learners (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

In synchronous learning environment, everything is structured in the sense that learners are supposed to take live lectures. During attending live lectures, students and teachers interact with one another. So, it ensures the real-time interactions and students can give feedback instantly. Asynchronous learning is different in the sense that it is not properly structured. In it,

students are not supposed to attend live lectures but learning content is available for learners at different learning systems and forums. Feedback and responses are not given instantly under such environment (Littlefield, 2018). Social interaction is possible in Synchronous learning (McBrien et al., 2009). Synchronous learning is needed in the world suffering from covid-19. Such online programmes are carried through video conference, and 30 to 40 students can be taught. Students can be engaged through online discussions. Students can give immediate feedback and assignments can be assigned and taken instantly (Basilaia, Dgebuadze, Kantaria, & Chokhanelidze, 2020).

Al-Samarraie (2017) carries out a research to determine the worth of E-learning. Fuzzy Decision Making, Trial and Evaluation Laboratory techniques are utilized. Their research participants were 38 learners and 9 teachers. To collect research data from participants, interview and survey are used as research tool. The collected research data was analysed and the finding showed that information quality, task-technology fit, system quality are basic factors which put impacts on users' E-learning continuance satisfaction. To elaborate the importance of E-learning in Malaysia, Goh, Leong, Kasmin, Hii, and Tan (2017) conduct a research. They explore that interaction of students with students is the most powerful tool in predicting learning outcomes and satisfaction.

Top E-Learning Apps

Technology has made human life comfortable and new things are being introduced to facilitate the human beings. The whole world has become global village due to technology. Education is necessary to make progress in this global village. Technology has revolutionized the sector of education by introducing apps as Google Classroom, Zoom, Education, Seesaw, Photo math, Socrative, Edmodo, Scratch, Prezi, Thinglink and Quizlet etc.

Importance of E-learning

E-learning empowers the learners to get basic schooling and enhance skills. It enables them to obtain a degree certificate, without actually

attending any other institution. It is important for both teachers and students. It has facilitated the teachers by providing a rich source of earning, wherein they can teach from anywhere in their preferred time. They can teach anybody and anywhere without going physically. It is argued that the ability of students to understand the lesson is uplifted by applying E-learning to all levels of schooling. Students and teachers are engaged effectively in this mode of pedagogy.

It is significant for both teachers and students in learning as they can uplift their skills regarding learning. Creating and selling e-books is the example of this development. It has provided online platforms and brought them to one place. These platforms are used for good practice of knowledge and information sharing. Since, 21st century is the period of competition, its importance has been increased manifold in the present world. Every walk of life has been changed due to innovation in technology and science and it speeds up everything. Everybody wants to complete the tasks within no time. Same is the case in the field of education. Students and teachers want to learn and teach quickly. E-learning has made it possible. They access to all learning data through computer and internet within seconds quickly. They need not to go any library and institutions for learning.

Benefits of E-Learning

E-learning does not dependent upon the traditional method of teaching and learning where chalk and board are essential. E-learning provides the online mode of learning as the students can learn at their comfort and requirements. They access the study material unlimited times. It provides them the opportunity that they can study their Courses anytime and anywhere. Updated content is in their reach. The basic advantage of E-learning learning is that it makes sure that the students are in synchronization with modern learners. It offers access to exclusive, prolific, and updated content and accessibility is open, secure, and uninterrupted. E-Learning lets the learners be updated with the current trends.

It ensures the quick mode of delivery. It is opined that it saves times and effort by easy and quick learning. Traditional classrooms involve sometimes a delay in learning. Whereas, E-Learning provides expeditious and exclusive delivery of lessons. There is no procrastinator in E-Learning. E-Learning is a way to provide quick delivery of lessons. As compared to traditional classroom teaching method, this mode has relatively quick delivery cycles. Lessons can start quickly and also wrap up in a single learning session. Learners can maintain or boost up their own speed of learning instead of following the speed of the whole group. Times is saved because the students need not to travel to the training venue. Learners may learn with a great ease staying at home or any place of comfort. Learners can read the specific topics which are important and skip the unimportant topics. All students can receive the same type of syllabus, and study materials through E-Learning. E-learning is advantageous for students in the sense that it is cost effective compared to conventional learning as it saves time, money and reduces expenses of transportations and books.

It stays away the learners from traditional environment of learning where papers are used. Web-based learning helps in promoting active and independent learning (Chitra & Raj, 2018). The students who have no time to go colleges and universities as they do part jobs or full time to fulfil their expenses, it becomes blessing for them and they can learn during free time. Learners, YouTubers, and coaching institutes may get benefit from E-learning education. There are countless benefits of E-learning but the most important is that learners can educate themselves comfortably from their own homes and get a degree.

The feelings of self- responsibility are produced among learners and they become responsible. They decide themselves when they should study. They do not rely on textbooks or learning materials provided by the teachers or institutes but they search authentic learning materials and information through internet. They have opportunity to expand their knowledge by researching and using the World Wide Web. Students can communicate with other students and

teachers at any time. Their communication skills are enhanced. It proves helpful in establishing the critical thinking ability of the learners (Chitra & Raj, 2018). It is helpful in making students thinkers, active learners and risk takers in a sheltered environment. It empowers the students to learn independently and their dependence for learning upon teachers decreases. They may get knowledge which they need anytime and anywhere. Online Learning can accommodate everyone's needs. Classes can be taken from any place and at the time which students or tutors prefer.

Using online learning students can access the content an unlimited number of times. This is especially required at the time of revision while preparing for the exam. It promotes a self-paced learning process. Self-paced training schedule can be developed by students. Things become quite easy for tutors. People who don't have ample time to attend or conduct physical classes are no longer left behind. Opportunities are knocking at their doors because of Online system of learning and teaching. They can take online sessions after work, in the evening, on the weekends, or whenever they are free. All they need is a proper internet facility, computer or laptop, microphones, and headphones.

Teachers can teach the learners at any time and at any place. Through recording lessons, conducting webinars and selling courses online, they have variety of options to teach. They can increase their income by using online platforms. It helps in creating and communicating new training, policies, concepts, and ideas. E-Learning is the quick way of learning whether it is learning for the sake of formal education or entertainment. The scalability of learning, content, and duration that is taken can be reasonably examined. It is very advantageous for those who are shy and prefer to learn in isolation.

Disadvantages of E-Learning

Apart from advantages, E-learning has some disadvantages. E-learning has some disadvantages (Hameed, Badii, & Cullen, 2008). It develops the tendency of lack of discipline among learners and even among teachers. If the individuals do not

have the discipline, they will not be motivated to study bringing about procrastination. Traditional classroom setting teaches discipline. Good discipline leads to regularity in every sphere of life which is essential for success.

Health problems are observed among most of the students due to E-learning. Students suffer from poor eye sight problems. It is usually noticed when any person spends more time on the computer or tablet, he or she faces such problems. It is, however, advisable to relax for at least 10 minutes an hour, walk around and even do some wrist exercises to prevent pains.

It promotes the tendency of isolation. People who usually spend the most of their time for online learning and teaching, they do not like the company of people. They do not give importance to social interaction physically. They become shy and avoid the company of people.

It promotes the habit of wasting time in useless activities. Many students use these devices without any check and balance. Due to their immaturity, they use vulgar sites. Some students are fond of playing games. Instead of learning, they waste their time and health.

It decreases the interest of students for reading textbooks thoroughly. Textbooks are rich source of authentic information and knowledge. Many students just grasp the information from internet without knowing its authenticity because all pieces of information available online are not reliable.

It decreases the confident level of students. During face-to-face classes, students have opportunity to interact with other students and teachers physically. They become bold and confidently, they deliver their point of view. Face to face classrooms develop the confidence among students. In presence of the whole class, they have to answer the questions asked by the teachers. They know how to sit in the class and how to interact with others.

Types of E-Learning

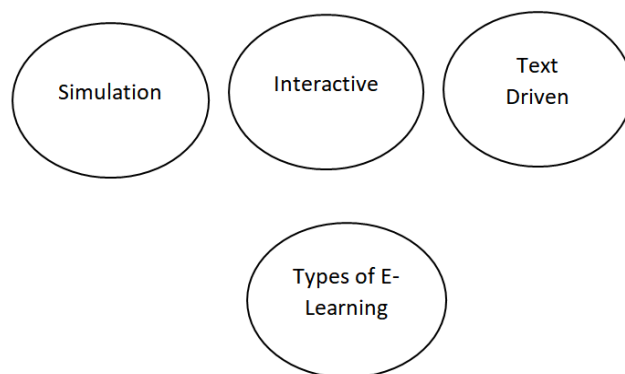


Figure :1

Figure :1 shows the types of E-Learning. Chitra and Raj (2018) describe 3 types of E-Learning and they are:

Text Driven

The content is simple and includes text, graphics, audio and test questions. Compliance courses are the good example of text driven E-learning.

Interactive

Like Text driven, an interactive E-Learning course is used to upgrade the learning. Graphics, charts and diagrams are its examples and it focuses on the use of visuals in general for interactive purpose.

Simulation

It is also used for interactive purpose and utilizes graphics, video, audio and gasification. Its basic function is to enhance the capability of learning acquisition. New software training is an example of a course that often have a high degree of interactivity and simulation.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the picture of the whole universe in 21st century. Every department and field are affected. To survive in this situation, new trends and modes are emerging. To find new solutions for learning and teaching problems, some much-needed innovations and changes are demanded. But the teachers have become habitual to traditional methods of teaching in the form of face-to-face lectures, and

therefore, they hesitate in accepting any change. Though traditional method has its own kind of importance but amidst this crisis, no other alternative left other than adapting to the dynamic situation and accepting the change. It will be helpful for the education sector bringing a lot of surprising innovations. It is true that there are a number of students who have no access to online technology. All countries have no such resources that they provide online technology to all people of the country. The students of these countries may lose out because of the heavy costs associated with digital devices and internet data plans. This digital divide may widen the gaps of inequality.

The covid 19 made us realize that everything is unpredictable and we are helpless in the decree of fate. In order to face the challenges and difficulties in the form of pandemics, we should be well-prepared. Although the outbreaks do not give us much time to plan, we should take a lesson from this that planning is the key. To tackle any kind of unhealthy situation, we should have plans. If one plan does not work, immediately switch to other suitable plans. This pandemic has also highlighted that learners should have awareness about certain skills such as to survive during the crisis. Today, learners and teachers are facing problems in online learning and teaching. The situation would have been different if they have already mastered it. The time we lost in learning the modes could have been spent on creating more content. But it is better late than never. This outbreak surely has enhanced the process of online learning.

E-learning makes the learning and teaching easy for both teachers and the students even during the pandemics. It offers them the ability to fit learning around their lifestyles in an effective way. Even it is fruitful for the busiest persons to gain new qualifications. With the invention of internet, education sector is making rapid progress. Now the learners are using smart phones, laptops and tablets for researching and learning purposes. The use of ZOOM and WebEx is common for conducting online classes. These applications allow conducting live online classes, web-conferencing, webinars, video chats, and live meetings.

The schools, colleges, universities and other institutes are closed due to the covid-19. In this situation, mostly people are doing work from home because physical presence is not allowed. These apps help in keeping people connected via video conferencing. Educational institutes conduct online classes to teach the students through these apps. To stop the disasters happening is not in our hands, but we can cope with them with the help of technology (Meyer & Jones, 2011). To face these challenges, we need a high level of preparedness. We should be in a position to adapt ourselves quickly according to the changes in the environment and adjust ourselves to different delivery modes, for instance, remote learning or online learning in situations of pandemics such as Covid-19. Institutions and organizations should prepare contingency plans to deal with challenges such as pandemics and natural disasters. Reliable and sufficient availability of Information Communication Technology infrastructure and learning tools etc occupy a core place in such severe situations (Dhawan, 2020). Martin (2020) narrates that five basic factors should be kept in minds while imparting online education and these are Instruction, content, motivation, relationships, and mental health.

In order to make E-learning effective in difficult situations, proper attention should be paid on the application of technology and used it more efficiently. Since the application of such technology has minimum procurement and maintenance costs but can effectively facilitate educational processes. Before bringing in and adopting any e-learning tool or technology, its pros and cons need to be weighed. Institutions should conduct plenty of research when bringing the right technology for different educational initiatives. There should be proper clarity on the purpose and context of technology adoption. E-learning helps us in providing inclusive education even during disasters. Such systems require to be developed in educational institutions that make sure that no student is getting deprived of education due to their location, resources, ethnicity etc. Online methods of teaching support in facilitating learning-teaching activities, but there is a dire need to weigh the pros and cons of technology and harness its potentials. Disasters

and pandemic such as Covid-19 make the situation creating a lot of chaos and tensions; therefore, there it is the demand of the time to examine the technology deeply and with due diligence to balance these fears and tensions amidst such crisis (Chitra & Raj, 2018).

E-learning utilizes digital tools for pedagogy. Learners learn with great comfort at anytime and anywhere with the use of technological tools. Training and delivery of knowledge is involved in it and it inspires the students for interaction. Students interact with each other, present their own point of view and show respect to other's opinion. Information and knowledge are shared across the world using the platforms of online learning. Communication through writing and speaking is carried out easily. It has become the effective tool of improving active skills of the learners. It enhances the relationships that sustain learning. It has increased faculty and learner's access to information. The overall literature which explains the advantages and disadvantages of E-learning suggests that it should be implemented in education not only in pandemics but in peaceful situation too for faculty, administrators and students so that they may enjoy the full benefits that come with its adoption and implementation.

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