



ESSENTIALITY OF E-LEARNING TO THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract - The education sector in India is no longer bound to just classrooms. Thanks to new start-ups and higher internet and smart phone penetration, the online learning space in India is growing manifold. The e-learning market in India is estimated to be around \$3 billion. The central government's efforts to make digital available to students in every corner of the country is also aiding the sector. Currently, online training in India focuses equally on school and college-based courses as well as mid-level professional courses. Owing to the steady economic growth and globalization, education in India is no longer just a teacher talking to a bunch of students in a classroom. With more than 370 million internet users and hundreds of local as well as global business tycoons willing to invest in the future of education, online education in India has picked up pace. Online education helps people get access to a world-class learning experience when traditional higher education is simply not possible due to financial or personal constraints. Some may also suffer from physical or mental disabilities that make learning in a classroom impossible. For these students, online courses, specializations and degree programs can offer an incredible opportunity to continue their education and build careers for themselves. This paper discusses about essentiality of E-Learning and how it is developing worldwide.

Keywords: classrooms, new start-ups, penetration, online training, globalization, build careers, specializations.

INTRODUCTION

"Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school." —Albert Einstein

Educational Technology is defined by the Association for Educational Communications and Technology as "the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources."

Educational technology refers to the use of both physical hardware and educational theoretic. It encompasses several domains, including learning theory, computer based training, online learning, and, where mobile technologies are used m-learning.

There are several problems with the traditional system of education. First of all, you need to pay thousands of dollars per term to attend a prestigious school. With all those budget cuts, busy classrooms, and course shortages, you won't always get the chance to study exactly what you want. It's no wonder why millions of students from all around the world opt for online degree programs or take at least one college course through an online platform. Online learning has to be the greatest revolution in contemporary education. It made a huge change in the system and opened great opportunities for everyone who wants to learn something.

Nevertheless, online education is still related to stereotypes. People often think that online students are not smart enough for a traditional college or university, they are lazy, and they don't get "real" degrees. These claims discourage many people from taking online courses, so they get stuck in the traditional educational system that consumes a huge deal of money, nerves, and years of their lives.

E-LEARNING

When it comes to online learning in education, the model has been pretty straightforward – up until the early 2000s education was in a classroom of students with a teacher who led the process. Physical presence was a no-brainer, and any other type of learning was questionable at best. Then the internet happened, and the rest is history.



E – Learning is a rapidly growing industry, the effect of which we can trace back to the 1980s and even well before that (in the form of distance learning and televised courses) – these will be discussed later in this ebook.

Now that affordable e-learning solutions exist for both computers and internet, it only takes a good e-learning tool for education to be facilitated from virtually anywhere. Technology has advanced so much that the geographical gap is bridged with the use of tools that make you feel as if you are inside the classroom.

E-learning offers the ability to share material in all kinds of formats such as videos, slideshows, word documents and PDFs. Conducting webinars (live online classes) and communicating with professors via chat and message forums is also an option available to users. There is a plethora of different e-learning systems (otherwise known as Learning Management Systems, or LMSs for short) and methods, which allow for courses to be delivered. With the right tool various processes can be automated such as a course with set materials and automatically marked tests. E-learning is an affordable (and often free) solution which provides the learners with the ability to fit learning around their lifestyles, effectively allowing even the busiest person to further a career and gain new qualifications.

Some of the most important developments in education have happened since the launch of the internet. These days learners are well versed in the use of smart phones, text messaging and using the internet so participating in and running an online course has become a simple affair. Message boards, social media and various other means of online communication allow learners to keep in touch and discuss course related matters, whilst providing for a sense of community.

In the fast-paced world of e-learning the available technologies to make a course new and exciting are always changing, and course content can and should be updated quickly to give students the very latest information. This is especially important if the e-learning training is being given to employees in a sector where keeping up-to-date on industry developments is of the utmost importance. This is one of the reasons why many businesses are now offering training via e-learning - other reasons includes low costs and the ability for employees to study in their own time and place.

HISTORY OF E - LEARNING

The term "e-learning" has only been in existence since 1999, when the word was first utilized at a CBT systems seminar. Other words also began to spring up in search of an accurate description such as “online learning” and “virtual learning”. However, the principles behind e-learning have been well documented throughout history, and there is even evidence which suggests that early forms of e-learning existed as far back as the 19th century.

The first online learning systems were really only set up to deliver information to students but as we entered the 70s online learning started to become more interactive. In Britain the Open University was keen to take advantage of e-learning. Their system of education has always been primarily focused on learning at a distance. In the past, course materials were delivered by post and correspondence with tutors was via mail. With the internet the Open University began to offer a wider range of interactive educational experiences as well as faster correspondence with students via email etc.

ADVANTAGES OF E - LEARNING

EXPANDING E-LEARNING

The rapid increase in internet connectivity has been an important catalyst for the growth of e-learning. A robust internet ecosystem, with a multitude of local and global players, will help online learning make further inroads. The story is not limited to schools alone. Indian companies are adopting e-learning platforms as continuous employee learning has become a strategic necessity.

UNIQUE ADVANTAGES

E-learning brings unique advantages, the prominent being the ability to provide personalized attention to all students. In a conventional set-up, this is only possible when a highly skilled tutor offers one-to-one tutorials. However, considering that most institutions have a classroom-based set-up, such attention becomes difficult. Another advantage is people living in smaller towns and cities can get access to the best possible learning resources from across the world, at a very affordable price. This helps create a level-playing field.

Live instruction

Certain curricula may require specialized instructors. By using live broadcasts, these instructors can remain in one location and provide instruction to many students in other locations. This type of specialization increases as students move into higher levels of education, for example towards advanced degrees in medicine.

Video content delivery

Pre-recorded content such as lectures, documentaries and other video content may be delivered in a store and forward model so that the material can be viewed when needed.



Student-to-student interactions (video-conferencing)

Students may learn just as much from each other as they do from teachers. So communications technology can be used to connect students.

Remote test administration

In some countries, standardized tests are used to evaluate students on a level-playing field. These tests must be delivered securely and on-time to meet testing schedules. In Indonesia, this is a daunting task simply because of geography and population size. Digital delivery could be the solution.

Up-to-date materials

Basics seldom change. However, virtually all textbooks must be updated. Textbooks are expensive to purchase, maintain and deliver. Digital delivery solves this issue when coupled with e-readers.

Self-learning

Computer-based training or self-paced learning is common in higher education and trade-oriented learning. Kiosks to support this may be located close to under-served areas where populations already work.

Business opportunity

In underdeveloped and developing countries, e-learning raises the level of education, literacy and economic development. This is especially true for countries where technical education is expensive, opportunities are limited and economic disparities exist.

SOME OTHER ADVANTAGES

- *Educators can experiment in creative ways using unique and intriguing web sites.*
- *Remote delivery of cost-efficient and conveniently distributed "virtual courses".*
- *Networked learning gives not only education but also fun as students browse Internet in teams or on their own.*
- *Better performance and evaluation can result.*
- *Adopting new learning technologies in courses and curricula.*
- *One can become a part of worldwide movement of researchers.*
- *Better funding resources for technology research.*
- *New technology leads to more cross-discipline research and applications.*
- *Avoidance of obsolescence teaching.*
- *Learning can be more contextual as one can create interactive and animated hypermedia graphics and simulations that bring students closer to realities and experiences.*

ONLINE LEARNING TODAY

With the introduction of the computer and internet in the late 20th century, e-learning tools and delivery methods expanded. The first MAC in the 1980's enabled individuals to have computers in their homes, making it easier for them to learn about particular subjects and develop certain skill sets. Then, in the following decade, virtual learning environments began to truly thrive, with people gaining access to a wealth of online information and e-learning opportunities.

By the early 90s several schools had been set up that delivered courses online only, making the most of the internet and bringing education to people who wouldn't previously have been able to attend a college due to geographical or time constraints. Technological advancements also helped educational establishments reduce the costs of distance learning, a saving that would also be passed on to the students - helping bring education to a wider audience.

In the 2000's, businesses began using e-learning to train their employees. New and experienced workers alike now had the opportunity to improve upon their industry knowledge base and expand their skill sets. At home individuals were granted access to programs that offered them the ability to earn online degrees and enrich their lives through expanded knowledge.

E – LEARNING – INDIAN CONTEXT

India has one of the largest education systems in the world with a network of more than 1 million schools and 18,000 higher education institutions. More than half of the country's 1.2 billion population falls in the target market for education and related services. In India, e-learning courses could be made more popular through availability of broadband connections at competitive rates, regional language-based content for technical subjects, two-way interaction for doubts, and performance feedback with students. The real India, the bottom of the pyramid, still lacks education and guidance to a proper career. E-learning could be a solution for employability.



India's online education market size is set to grow to \$ 40 billion by 2017 from the present \$ 20 billion. The key factors leading to the growth of the E-learning market in India include low education coverage, rising demand from various segments, growing personal computers and internet penetration, increasing government participation and convenience factors. Strong opportunity exists in the market due to low coverage of education in India. This coupled with the fact that demand from other education segments are rising, will drive the e-learning market.

Indian youth are technology-driven today and find e-learning to be especially appealing. For young working professionals with a desire to escalate their careers faster, e-learning is convenient as they can pursue their degrees in their own space and time. Global companies in sectors like KPO's, BPO's, publishing houses (ElementK, McGraw-Hill, Lion Bridge, Skill soft, IBM, and Oracle) along with domestic retail education have established centers in India. Companies like NIIT and Tata Interactive Systems are considered pioneers of the industry.

CHALLENGES

The key challenges identified are accreditation and recognition issues, expensive mode of education and lack of awareness and acceptance. There is still institutional resistance to online learning. Whilst the Aakash tablets have helped to stimulate the e-learning market it is important to remember the costs of Internet access and the lack of bandwidth in many rural areas. There is also a lack of attention paid to instructional design and learner support leading to high drop-out.

The schools of the 20th century were clustered around the idea that time would be constant and learning would be variable. Students were presented with subject matter over a fixed period of 180 days and then their ability to master the content in that period of time was tested. It was accepted that some can master certain content quickly and others need more time. Simply replacing one fixed time model of education with another is futile. It is now believed that time is not important: gaining mastery or excellence in a skill is. Schools of the past were essentially filtering institution, separating those who learnt quickly from those who did not.

Today with computers taking over, jobs that can be done with minimum education are fast diminishing. Skilled jobs and the need for lifelong education are on the increase. Schools of the future should therefore be institutions, which will provide whatever support is needed to achieve excellence. The idea of schools as a fixed time activity is being replaced by the concept of continuous learning built around a variety of tools and techniques. The 21st century classroom will be wherever the learner is located & 151; at school, on the bus ride home, in the park, at a museum, or in the playground.

Traditional tools (e.g., books, pens and paper) will co-exist with the high-tech tools of the telematic era. The teacher's role in this distributed setting will be quite different from that of content presenter and test giver. The Internet eliminates geography as a limiting factor. A child in a remote hamlet can have the same access to the same reference materials as one located in the cosmopolitan city. Time is transcended by telematic tools. Technology will have an increasingly positive impact on the student's creativity.

CONCLUSION

Overall, traditional learning is expensive, takes a long time and the results can vary. The importance of E-learning is now a given fact and it can offer an alternative that is much faster, cheaper and potentially better. Thanks to satellite technology, the costs have come down so significantly that every student—whether a grade school student or medical student doing a rotation in a remote area—can take full advantage of bandwidth provided by broadband satellite systems.

E-education is not entirely new concepts but has grown as the WWW has developed in each country. E-education is taking roots for Indian students as well. But first, it is important to understand exactly what we mean by e-education and quite simply it is education and training delivered and accessed via the Internet. One of the major advantages of e-education is that one can access the best education in the world direct from the persons who wrote the courses for online study.

The courses may range from technical, medical, academic to general interest subjects and the levels can be from beginner to higher advances. With over 800 courses to choose from, the individual should find the right course and level without difficulty. In the 21st Century, students may stay at home and take distance education (synchronous and asynchronous) in their homes across the world. Geographic comparative advantage will shrink and shrink and shrink. More importantly, excellent students who could not be accepted as onsite students in prestige universities (due to lack of financing and constraints as to how many can fit into onsite classrooms) face new opportunities to get a prestige degree in their own homes.

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