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E-Learning: An overview

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Abstract

Present scenario suggests that we will see effective changes on large scale in the field of education, is planned and delivered as a consequence of the application of e-learning. Information, communications and technology (ICT) facilitated and supported the learning process easily. E-learning may involve the use of laptop, computers, interactive whiteboards, digital cameras and various digital tools etc. E-learning offers a great opportunity to raise the educational standards. This paper reveals that how can we improve the quality of education through the utilisation of e-learning as a technology.

Keywords: e-learning, communications and technology, education

Introduction

E-Learning is an alternative method of delivery and receiving education and training. The meaning of alternative in the sense that it is quite different from the traditional method which is focused or rely more on instructor led classroom environment that we are most familiar with this concept. The term “e-learning” holds a wide range of educational set of practical experiences. Instructional content may be delivered through a wide range of different methods including: CD or DVD, internet, audio, video tapes, television and video conferencing etc. the content can include text, audio, video, animation, simulations and virtual reality etc. E-learning is more learner or student-centered, self-paced and hands-on-learning.

E-learning can cover a wide range of activities from traditional learning, to blended learning, to learning that is entirely delivered digitally. Learning is the vital element, however, whatever the technology is used. E-learning is not only associatively learning distantly or remotely, but it forms part of a choice of that most and best appropriate ways of reaching and promoting effective learning electronically.

E-learning is an instruction medium that occurs when the instructor and the learner are separated by time, distance, or both and it can be divided into two delivery methods.

- Synchronous E-learning
- Asynchronous E-learning.

Synchronous E-learning always happens in real time with an instructor facilitating the training. Most commonly this type of learning takes place over the internet, on specialised web sites having chat-room like structure. Learner can log in or enter the digital area at a specific time and can communicate or interact directly with the instructor and with peers. Synchronous e-learning concept can be achieved through telephone or video conferencing or through live television broadcasts between instructors and learner in spite of geographical barriers.

Asynchronous E-learning is e-Learning training in the more conventional type of the world. Asynchronous e-Learning is usually CD or DVD based, or can be Intranet or Internet based. Students generally work and study with an interactive “self-paced” program. This may include through online bulletin boards, discussion groups and e-mail access to instructors or experts. Learning programs may also be self-contained with links to various reference materials completely in place of an instructor. Asynchronous e-Learning allows the students to learn anywhere and usually at anytime, as long as they have the proper equipment.

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Its advantage can be seen as:

Student centered: the learner is the base of any e-learning system. Materials and activities are designed with the needs and interest of the learner in mind. Students can control of their learning experience and know their own learning specific needs.

Self-paced and directed: learners can use flexible amount of time they spend on any particular topic to understand it. This allows learners to spend additional time on difficult topics before moving on or to skip material they already understand.

Interactive experience: the use of a variety of multimedia which is attractive as well as interactive experience in e-learning increases student involvement and reinforces the learning experience. This leads to increased focus and a well grasp knowledge on the subject at the end.

Flexibility: digital learning can take place anytime and anywhere, as long as the necessary equipment and platform is accessible. The expense of physical presence in the classroom education and training can be extremely limiting when students are separated by distance. E-learning also allows physically or otherwise challenged students to full fledged participation.

Consistent and effective training: the target audience can participate simultaneously and receive the same information, reducing the variability introduced through multiple sessions in different locations.

Portability: a student can access the courses at their own pace conveniently and enjoy by following their own personal schedule.

Cost effectiveness: there is a wide range of courses available for study, the courses can fit any budget and this can applies to certificate, vocational and degree programs.

Global approach: through studying online, there is a large community and array of opportunities because of the competitiveness of the technologies used. This means that a student can appreciate getting widespread resources and unprecedented connections.

Better Retention: Though E-learning, the student is subjected to courses and programs that interest them and the learning process is therefore made more fun. This means that they can understand better and retain what they learn more than they would if they were attending physical classes.

Although e-learning has many advantages for students and organisations alike, it also has disadvantages:

- A student that does not possess digital literacy skills, or have access to these tools, cannot succeed in an e-learning program.
- Certain topics are not appropriate for E-learning.
- Students themselves can be a limited to e-learning.
- Learners with low interest or motivation may fall behind.
- Students may feel separated or isolated from the physical classroom.

- Instructor may not available always when students need some help.
- Slow connections or old hardware's may make accessing course materials frustrating.

E-learning has various benefits and provides unique opportunities for people who have limited access to education and training to their surroundings.

Conclusion

The e-learning system not only provides learning objectives more clearly, but also evaluates the progress of the students and credit can be earned towards higher learning institutions. E- learning is best suited to those who are in need for distance learning and flexible learning, but can also be used in conjunction with face-to-face teaching. For the success of e-learning we must believe that meaningful, high quality learning can take place without traditional classroom. It is a boon for the learners who are deprived to attend formal mode of education but strategic development of e-learning should be based on the needs and demands of learners and the quality of their educational experience when it is properly designed and well executed, then it is highly effective and rewarding learning environment.

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