E-LEARNING: INNOVATIVE AND UNIQUE LEARNING APPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technology has revolutionised the facilities for the citizens all over the world in such a way that the world-society has had a new perspective of things already in existence. The grand parade of Information and Communication Technology through computer to internet to smart phones is a great march towards technological height of attainment. One of the greatest boons of Information and Communication Technology is e-learning, which has made its impact felt in the field of education. E-learning has come to make all the difference with closing the distance between the teacher and the taught and thus initiating a new trend beyond the portals of educational institutions. The students need not be in the classrooms as e-learning facilitates the learning and the teaching process to be undertaken from different locations. The present paper focuses on the changes that have become trend-setters in the field of education and the benefits of such innovative applications.

Keywords: ICT, e-Learning, impact, portals of educational institutions.

INTRODUCTION

With the beginning of an era of Information and Communication Technology which has revolutionised the facilities for the citizens all over the world in such a way that the global society has had new perspectives of things already in existence and the things in future. The great march of Information and Communication Technology through computer to internet to smart phones is itself a grand parade towards technological height of attainment. The impact and the greatest benefit of Information and Communication Technology is e-learning, which has changed the scenario in the field of education. E-learning has come to make all the difference with closing the distance between the teacher and the taught and thus initiating a new trend beyond the portals of educational institutions. The students in the field of education need not be in the classrooms as e-learning facilitates the learning and the teaching process to be undertaken from different locations or time points.

E-learning is the premium and latest means of facilitating education and training with the use of the Internet even when the teacher and the students are separated by time and space. It provides for an on-line learning environment with a variety of resources and tools at its disposal crossing over the boundaries of space, time and location. E-learning is being used globally as an effective means of course delivery method particularly for students who are widely scattered across different locations.

Technology for Education

Modern Educational Technology, breaking through the traditional modes of teaching and learning has brought into the classrooms innovative and interesting teaching tools. It has overcome the drawbacks of traditional teaching which the students of present times find to be abstract, monotonous with loads of boring contents. Use of multimedia in the classroom bound to change the scenario into interesting, absorbing and entertaining with audio-visual and dynamic components. As if to meet the demands of stakeholders a new trend in teaching and learning has already taken shape with the revolutionary changes in Information and Communication Technology. With such a visible change the teaching and learning becomes lively with more participation of the stakeholders. Keeping in view the students’ academic needs and help them develop higher order skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving to perform a range of activities assigned by the teacher, there are a number of ways which can be applied. The present paper focuses on one of the techniques of using multimedia in the process of teaching and learning in the classrooms for enhancing the skills of the students. Multimedia use in classroom will provide opportunity for interacting with diverse texts that give students a solid background in the tasks and content of mainstream college courses. Educational technology is expected to become an integral part of the curriculum, students must become proficient in accessing and using electronic resources such as television, film, video, radio, computer, mobile phones, internet, web resources etc., as these are the technological tools used in e-learning and teaching.
Unique Features of e-Learning
As observed by many an educationist E-Learning has a unique combination wherein a single experience caters to
provide for the three distinct learning styles of students such as auditory learners, visual learners, and kinesthetic
learners. This is only one of its kind experiences which is absent in other forms of learning or training. The advent
and development of e-learning has created other distinctive opportunities with more efficient training of globally
dispersed stakeholders; and considerably reduced costs on publishing and distribution since Internet and Web-
based training has become a standard in e-learning.

While printed curricula in the form of textbooks along with instructor-led courses operate in the prescribed limits
and also being expensive, e-learning offers individualized instruction, which in conjunction with assessment of
needs, can also provide for target specific needs. E-learning can locate and target individual learning preferences
by using learning style tests.

In addition, synchronous e-learning is self-paced. In e-learning advanced learners are allowed to speed through or
avoid instruction that is uncalled for. It also facilitates below-average learners to slow their own progress through
content comfortably, without any frustration to themselves, their fellow learners, and the course. In more than one
way, e-learning is very learner-centric with a maximum number of participants and a maximum range of learning
styles, preferences, and needs.

Multimedia tools of e-learning
As various multimedia resources are available today successful e-learning can be imparted with effective and
planned approaches. In this technological age, access to instant streaming video, crystal clear recording capabilities
and instant chat support services are available to design interactive and engaging e-learning courses. Also available
are a multitude of highly interactive multimedia production tools, such as design software and high definition
.cameras to record informative courses to cater to the needs of stakeholders of different categories. There are even
editing tools that facilitate and enable with the power to turn raw footage into a masterpiece in just a matter of
minutes. With such plethora of tools a variety of learning systems can be evolved that support and make e-learning
an interesting and enjoyable experience for the stakeholders. The present paper also takes up a few such systems
under e-learning for a brief study wherein multimedia tools are used and modestly enumerates their respective
advantages and limitations.

Blended learning
Blended learning is a combination of offline (as in traditional learning, face-to-face) and online learning in such a
way that the one compliments the other. It provides the stakeholders with the opportunity to enjoy the best of both
worlds. As such, a student might attend classes in a real-world classroom setting, and then supplement the lesson
plan by completing online multimedia coursework. As it is, the students would only have to physically attend
classes once a week and would be free to go at their own pace without worrying about scheduling issues.

Often also referred to as “hybrid” learning, Blended Learning can take on a variety of forms in online education
environments. While some institutions may only use blended learning techniques on rare occasions, others might
utilize it as a primary teaching method within their curriculum. There are two key principles commonly associated
with blended learning which the contributing factors in its success are: students who can share information and
work with other students directly in a collaborative setting have a more enriched learning experience, and collaboration
between students can be improved upon if group activities rely on information gathered from online resources or
lessons. It is also tested and proved that students who complete online coursework followed by interactive, face-to-
face class activities have richer educational experiences.

Tools and platforms that complement blended learning include LMSs and mobile devices such as tablets and smart
phones.

Collaborative and Social Learning
Collaborative learning is another e-learning approach where students are able to socially interact with other students,
as well as instructors. In this approach, learners work together in order to expand their knowledge of a particular
subject or skill. In e-learning environments, this is typically done through live chats, message boards, or instant
messaging. Collaborative learning is based upon the principle that students can enrich their learning experiences by
interacting with others and benefiting from one another’s strengths. In collaborative learning situations, students
are responsible for one another’s actions and tasks which encourage teamwork as well.
Advantages of collaborative learning online

This method of learning can be conducted either offline or on the web, and can be done either way such as asynchronously or synchronously. It allows students to learn from the ideas, skill sets, and experience of others enrolled in the course. By engaging in a shared task (whether it be a project or lesson) learners gain the opportunity to learn a variety of skills, such as group analysis and collaborative teamwork building skills. Besides this, even students who are unable to attend a live event online can participate in collaborative learning, thanks to online forums, message boards, and other various posting sites that do not rely on real-time interaction.

Gamification

Gamification is the use of game-based mechanics, aesthetics and game thinking to engage students, motivate action, promote learning and solve problems. Basically it’s the use of gaming technology to solve problems outside of the games sector. Gamification is taking elements of gaming and adding them to traditional instruction. Instructional designers have been using some elements for years, like stories, case studies, or interactive activities, but gamification is more about taking into consideration interactivity and engagement first, and objectives second.

Games are created to draw students in, to keep them playing, to keep them interested, entertained and involved and it’s much more than just adding rewards, points, and badges to processes to motivate and it is the instructional method, and not just the delivery system, that provides the elements for learning in a game situation i.e. we must ask what pieces in games makes them engaging such as interactivity, content, story.

Impact of gamification

Studies on the impact of gamification have revealed that personnel trained on video games learned more factual information, attained higher skill levels and retained more information longer than workers who learned in less interactive environment. It was also observed that games provided a high level of instruction, but that it wasn’t just dependent on the game per se, but the interactivity or the elements that make the game engaging. In other words, the engagement of the learner in the game leads to learning.

Micro-learning

Micro-learning entails learning in smaller steps, hand-in-hand with traditional e-learning. Activities which are based on micro-learning usually feature short term lessons, projects, or coursework designed to provide the students with ‘bits’ of information. For example, rather than trying to teach a student about a broad subject all at once, aspects of the topic will be broken down into smaller lesson plans or projects. Typically, micro-learning exercises are best utilized at the point where a student will actually need the information, or when they are going to be most receptive to receive that information.

Micro-learning, of late, has become a term that is being mentioned quite often especially in corporate e-learning environments. “Micro-learning” teaching approach can provide a wide range of benefits to students/employees, as well as employers/instructors. This is primarily due to the fact that it can provide the knowledge and skill sets that online education typically offers without overwhelming the learner. It is quickly becoming one of the most popular emerging e-learning trends.

As a matter of fact, micro-learning takes place on a daily basis. Even reading a bulletin that has been posted at work about on-the-job safety or going through tweets in your timeline to catch up on the latest news can be considered micro-learning activities.

Advantages of Micro Learning

Micro-learning gives students and employees the ability to gather information in “bite-sized” forms, which can help them to absorb it much more comfortably and effectively. It is an ideal solution for those who may not have the time to devote to a lengthy course, given that you can learn at your own pace and avoid the risk of becoming overwhelmed by too much data at once. Micro-learning can also be done on-the-go, which means that you can receive smaller lessons that help you advance toward your educational goal, even when you are waiting for a bus or caught in traffic.
Micro-learning can be carried out in a variety of ways. Emails, online posts, short multimedia videos, and even short chat sessions can give e-learning students the small building blocks that are necessary for them to achieve their educational goals and broaden their overall knowledge base.

**Video Learning**

Use of video in the e-learning process has become commonplace what with the faster internet connections and the increasing use of mobile phones and tablets. Gadgets with video capabilities have come into more use now than ever before providing access to learning via video. If one wants to watch a video on how to wire a plug, plant a rose bush or bake a cake, one only needs to visit YouTube which has big number of videos available, showing step-by-step processes one needs to follow to complete a task.

Video brings a whole new dimension to teaching methods. If the course content involves a level of practical skill, this can be demonstrated. Whether it is configuring of a PC or conducting a chemistry experiment, these aspects of the course will most definitely benefit from being seen rather than simply explained in text and static images. Video also helps to add a feeling of personalization to a course. A video of the tutor giving a lecture helps the students to feel a connection, to put a face to a name.

**CONCLUSION**

In e-learning a combination of multimedia and instructional design can produce a very rich learning experience that is repeatable. With good number of practice activities along with feedback would have a learning environment which would help the learners retain the course content make them produce better results. Live learning events requires the learners to align their schedules to the training calendar whereas e-learning eliminates this because the course can be accessed anytime, anywhere. Many people view e-learning only as the authored courses. But e-learning includes all sorts of online technologies. Some of the tools which allow collaboration and conversation are incorporated in e-learning process then the institutions can extend the horizons of knowledge available for future learners.

E-learning is cost effective and can produce great results and it’s all a matter of how one uses it. One of the challenges with making e-learning effective is how best to manage the courses and access to resources.

**REFERENCES:**


