Implementation and Readiness for E Learning in higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Technology is transforming the traditional methods of teaching and learning in the classrooms of the 21st Century. The goal is to create students who can become active, independent and lifelong learners rather than passive recipients of information. This new approach to education takes the student beyond the traditional textbook and allows the students to develop a combination of skills in computer technology, critical thinking and information-seeking strategies. The classroom teacher with suitable technology is the key to the success of an education program that promotes these qualities. Society has long viewed and acknowledged information experts. As modern-day satraps, we represent a professional group that learned to bridge the gap between the traditional methods and the modern technological techniques used in the organization and management of Education. The intricacy of teaching - learning process are taking a monumental change due to the perseverance of Information and communication technologies. The concept of E learning is a fast emerging trend in the education field. In this paper the prospects of E Learning and the readiness and acceptance of the students and staff members of a commerce college are discussed.

Key Words: e-learning, online learning, virtual learning, technology in education

Introduction:

In 17th century, Machine made waves during industrial revolution. Any and every job was finished with a machine. With such a relative ease, the letter “e” is used with everyday activities like commerce, banking, entertainment and now education. The “e” stands for electronic and relates to the use of the Internet to undertake the wide range of activities. People are becoming more familiar with the language of the Internet we find just how much it pervades our daily lives in the.com age. Educators are now beginning to hear terms like e-teaching, e-learning and e- education as these subtly become part of our regular vocabulary. E-learning encompasses both the acquisition as well as use of knowledge distributed and facilitated by electronic means.

Learning occupies a very important place in our life. Most of what we do and not do is influenced by what we learn and how we learn it. Learning, therefore, provides a key to our

personality and behaviour. Broadly speaking, the term learning stands for all those changes and modifications in the behaviour of the individual, which he undergoes during his lifetime. The technological and communication revolutions have created new patterns of economic, production and knowledge organization and also motivated deep social changes. Such change can create conflict, as the introduction of new technology challenges traditional cultural society. Education has become a commodity in which people seek to invest for their own personal gain, to ensure equality of opportunity and as a route to a better life. As a result, providers of Higher Education (HE) are finding themselves competing more than ever for students, funding, research, and recognition within the wider society. Even as competition has always been an issue for universities, historically the focus was national rather than international. During the last decade and through the development of virtual education i.e. distance methods of delivery and new communication methods, higher education has become 'internationalized'; providers are able to export them-selves and as a result competition has been extended beyond national boundaries.

Today the Internet has become an important instructional tool to facilitate the transfer of many types of information from one computer to another, and is rapidly becoming an effective means of communication in schools and colleges. Internet-based instruction has been manifested in one-to-one (tutor-to-student), one-to-many (tutor-to-group) and many-to-many (group-to-group) approaches to instruction.

E-learning can provide four major benefits for the organizations and individuals involved.

1. *Access to quality education:* The fact that instructors of the highest calibre can share their knowledge across borders allows students to attend courses across physical, political, and social boundaries. Recognized experts have the opportunity of distributing information internationally at minimum costs.

2. *Affordable education:* E-learning can drastically reduce the costs of higher education, making it much more affordable and accessible to the masses. An Internet connection, a computer, and a projector would allow an entire classroom in a Third World university to benefit from the knowledge of a distant instructor.

3. *Convenience and flexibility to learners:* in many contexts, e-learning is self-paced and the learning sessions are available 24x7. Learners are not bound to a specific day/time to physically attend classes. They can also pause learning sessions at their convenience.

4. *Reducing environmental impact:* e-learning allows a person to avoid travel, thus reducing the overall carbon output. The fact that it takes place in a virtual environment also allows some reduction of paper usage. With virtual notes instead of paper notes and online assessments instead of paper assessments, eLearning is a more environment friendly solution.

Growth of e-learning

By turn of this decade, millions of students were participating in on-line learning at institutions of higher education in the world. Many institutes of higher education, for-profit

institutions, now offer on-line classes. By contrast, only about half of private, nonprofit schools offer them. The Sloan report, based on a poll of academic leaders, says that students generally appear to be at least as satisfied with their on-line classes as they are with traditional ones. Private institutions may become more involved with on-line presentations as the cost of such instruction decreases. Properly trained staff must also be hired to work with students on-line. These staff members need to understand the content area, and also be highly trained in the use of the computer and Internet. Online education is rapidly increasing, and online doctoral programs have even developed at leading research universities.

Components of E Learning:

E Learning means learning processes are assisted by electronic devises. Internet, Intranet, smart Boards, Computer Aided learning (CAL), computer based learning(CBL), web based learning (WBL), Online Learning(OL), Online web based Learning(OWL) , Asynchronous Learning, virtual Learning. There is an interesting method of teaching- learning "blended Learning" is preferred more today. As its name indicates it is the successful blending of class room teaching with electronic gadgets. Use of audio, video, seamless streaming on the course content widens the scope and develops concentration and interest in the students.

Scope of E Learning:

In the present class room face to face teaching environment can be moulded into E learning stage with small but strong will of the educators and students. A start with using ICT in education in a small way initiates curiosity in the student. The aversion to use technology, audio and visual media, the smart boards and the feel of lack of skills in the teacher are to be addressed in an effective way. Blended teaching within the classroom is a best approach to start with. E Learning is not all about teaching –learning, examination and assignment and assessment online. It is about the judicious implementation and inclusion of technology in education. Such a drive produces the computer/ information literate students.

Present Study:

As a pilot study, SPB English Medium College of Commerce has been selected as a microcosm, to study and look at the intricacy and difficulties to adopt E Learning in regular curriculum.

Research sample is the faculty and student community of the college. Students include under graduates, post graduates and the research students of the college.
Survey was conducted as a questionnaire that played as a strong opinionnaire.
The survey was a segregate of four focal points viz. the present condition, readiness to embrace technology in Teaching learning process, infrastructure availability, skill development and the future seen.

Results:

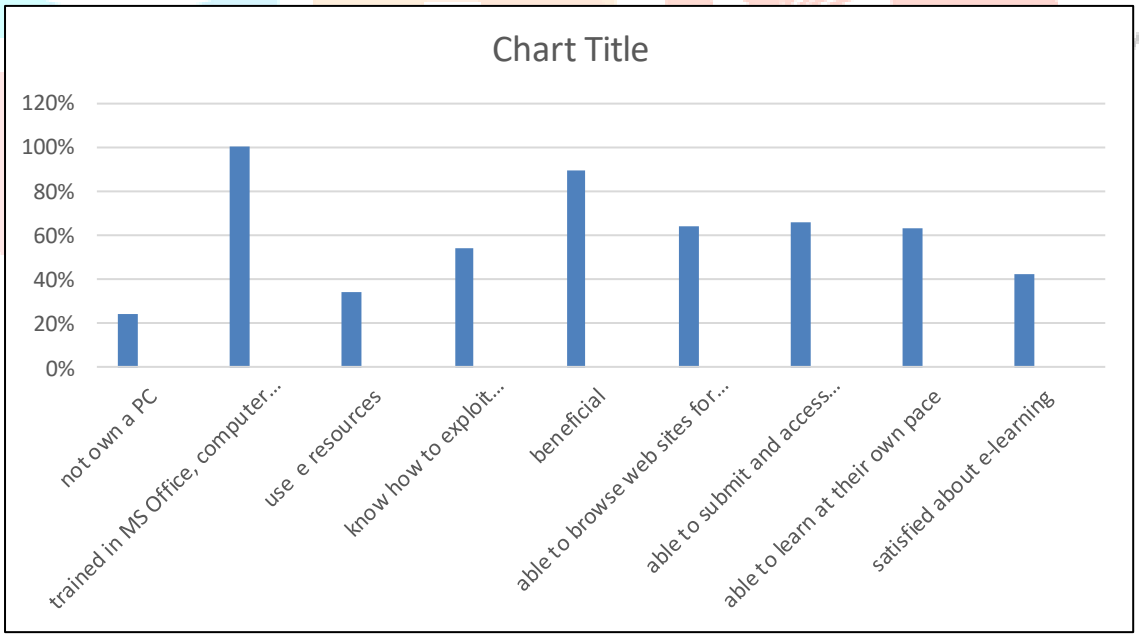
The Faculty
The demographic details of the staff are favorable for adopting E Learning technique

- They were provided with lap-tops for personal use, smart boards and

- Free Wi-Fi available in the campus.
- Regular training programs are on as per the need
- Already using technology in the class-rooms
- Teaching mostly on ppt presentations
- With the help of projectors, audio- video elements are incorporated
- Smart boards are available
- Student assignments are preferred as ppt presentations.
- Management of the college is considerate to adopt ICT in Education
- 76.28% pragmatic about E Learning mode of education

Undergraduate students:

- Coming from different income groups
- Parental push is willingly available
- 24% may not own a PC or smart phone
- 100% were trained in MS Office, computer literacy
- 34% students use e resources in their classroom course
- 54.51%of students know how to exploit expansion and extension of study material
- 89.69% of the students found that e learning method is beneficial
- 63.78% are able to browse web sites for study material single handed
- 66.08% able to submit and access online assignments independently
- 63% able to learn at their own pace
- 42.8% satisfied about E Learning mode of education



Post Graduate/ Research Students:

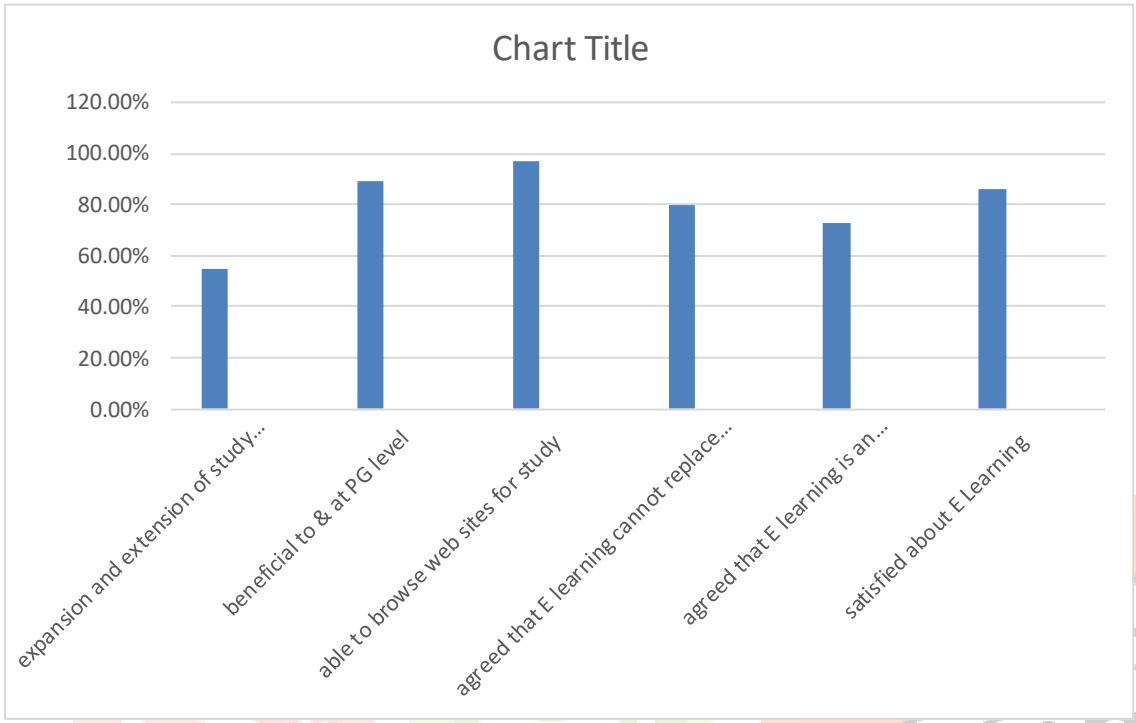
Better equipped with technology; computer/information Literates

Good knowledge about e Resources; Participants in UGC Infonet, N List

Regular browsers of e journals and cautious users of e content on net

- Parental push is willingly available
- All own a pc / laptop.
- Accomplished communication and information technology users
- Deeper knowledge and highly skilled patrons

- ✪ All PG and research students believe that e learning is a very pleasant alternative as they are accustomed users of ICT
- ✪ 54.51% expansion and extension of study material
- ✪ 89.1%to beneficial to gather information at PG level.
- ✪ 96.78% are able to browse web sites for study material single handed
- ✪ **96**.78% able to submit and access online assignments independently
- ✪ 79.48% agreed that E learning cannot replace present system completely.
- ✪ 73.03% agreed that E learning is an augmented/enhanced mode of learning
- ✪ 86.07% satisfied about E Learning mode of education



Motivation points mined out:

- ✓ Anywhere anytime learning
- ✓ Learning at one's own pace
- ✓ More learner - centric
- ✓ Encouragement of learner autonomy
- ✓ Increase in the active student population
- ✓ Direct participation of student in learning
- ✓ Development of lifelong skills
- ✓ Demand from the student
- ✓ Demand from the management

Challenges and disadvantages:

■One disadvantage of e-learning is that learners need to have access to a computer as well as the Internet. They also need to have computer skills with programs such as word processing, Internet browsers, and e-mail.

■Slow Internet connections or older computers may make accessing course materials difficult. This may cause the learners to get frustrated and give up.

■Without good computer organizational skills learners may lose or misplace reports causing them to be late in submitting assignments. Some of the students also may have trouble installing software that is required for the class.

■E-learning also requires just as much time for attending class and completing assignments as any traditional classroom course. Since, the e-learning method is self-paced and self-learnt, the attention length of the student may not be enough for him/her to learn a concept. This means that students have to be highly motivated and responsible because all the work they do is on their own. Learners with low motivation or bad study habits may fall behind.

■Another disadvantage of e-learning is that without the routine structures of a traditional class, students may get lost or confused about course activities and deadlines causing the student to fail or do poorly.

■Another disadvantage of e-learning is that students may feel isolated from the instructor. Instructions are not always available to help the learner so learners need to have discipline to work independently without the instructor's assistance.

■E-learners also need to have good writing and communication skills. When instructors and other learners aren't meeting face to face it is possible to misinterpret what was meant.

Conclusion

Sustainable e-learning growth and progress is reliant on the capabilities of teachers to see the promise offered by the online opportunities and to understand the ambience of the new environment. A strategy that helps to be e-teachers to define the landscape will offer them support and encouragement as they move forward. Nothing takes the place of good planning in the creation of e-education initiatives. An academic would be wise to undertake an assessment of the learning and programmatic outcomes it hopes to achieve through e-education. Including e-learning in the regular process will ensure that the pedagogi, staff development and budgetary concerns can be viewed with due consideration.

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