E-Learning- Importance and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we have discussed the meaning, advantages and challenges of E- Learning. It also includes different ways through which E- Learning is being implemented. In this era of modernisation, digitalisation has become a necessity, education being no short of this. With the outbreak of E- Learning, a big reform can be seen in educational standards. Students are provided with a new option and are able to understand the things in a better way. They can access information from anywhere. Instructors and teachers also have a new media by virtue of which they can deliver in a better way. But every new method comes up with certain challenges. So, basically we have tried to figure out importance of E- Learning and challenges it is facing, so that it can become a boon to society rather than just becoming a curse.

Keywords: E- Learning, Meaning, Advantages, Challenges, Digitization, Accessible

MEANING OF E- LEARNING

Educational technology is the effective use of technological tools in learning. As a concept, it concerns an array of tools, such as media, machines and networking hardware, as well as considering underlying theoretical perspectives for their effective application.

Educational technology is not restricted to high technology. Nonetheless, electronic educational technology, also called e-learning, has become an important part of society today, comprising an extensive array of digitization approaches, components and delivery methods.

Educational technology and e-learning can occur in or out of the classroom. It can be self-paced, asynchronous learning or may be instructor-led, synchronous learning. It is suited to distance E- Learning and in conjunction with face-to-face teaching, which is termedblended learning. Educational technology is used by learners and educators in homes, schools (both K-12 and higher education), businesses, and other settings (Archambault, 2010).

E- Learning may be defines as "the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources". The Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) denoted instructional technology as "the theory and practice of design, development, utilization, management, and evaluation of processes and resources for learning." As such, educational technology refers to all valid and reliable applied education science, such as equipment, as well as processes and procedures, that are derived from scientific research, and in a given context may refer to theoretical, algorithmic or heuristic processes: it does not necessarily imply physical technology.

The whole concept of E- Learning, which is relatively new, is based on a much older concept: distance E-Learning. Distance E- Learning consists of a scenario in which the learner is not face to face with the teacher or the trainer.

So basically E- Learning is the modern - and technologically enhanced way - to approach distance E-Learning. In fact, it is now possible to leverage a lot of extremely interesting and useful tools such aslearning management systems, online videos, video-conferencing apps, forums, reports and a lot more in order to boost training performance.

DIFFERENT MEDIA FOR E- LEARNING

Educational technology includes numerous types of media that deliver text, audio, images, animation, and streaming video, and includes technology applications and processes such as-

- Audio or video tape
- Satellite TV
- CD-ROM
- Computer-based learning
- Local intranet/extranet and web-based learning.

ADVANTAGES OF E- LEARNING

Flexibility

E- Learning can be done in short chunks of time that can fit around your daily schedule. Unlike public scheduled and in-house training, you don't have to dedicate an entire day to the training that has been organised by your company. Instead, you will have a set amount of learning, normally divided into modules, with a deadline in which to do them in. This way, if you want to do all of the E-Learning in one day as you work better this way, you can. However if your schedule does not allow you an entire day off your everyday tasks – then you can easily spend an hour or 2 here and there at times that suit you.

Easily Accessible

As E- Learning can be done on laptops, tablets and phones – it is a very mobile method. Learning can be done on the train, on a plane or any other time that could normally be wasted. Whilst you used to be confined to the classroom, the whole world can now be your classroom.

No Travel

As just mentioned, E- Learning can be done wherever you have a device capable of doing so. Therefore again you can fit it in to your schedule, but also save money on the costs of travel. As mentioned before on the public scheduled blog, external courses can sometimes only be sourced in locations far away from your company so you then have to pay the costs of travel as well potentially accommodation. E- Learning takes these costs away completely.

Lower Cost

As you aren't using a trainer's time or any room or equipment, E- Learning tends to be the much cheaper option. If you already have a device capable of carrying out the training on, then the savings can be considerable. Therefore, if you and your company are on a budget, this can be the ideal option for you. Equally, for companies that have thousands of employees then it can reduce the

cost per head especially on areas such as Money Laundering, Compliance and Microsoft Office training.

Tailor it to you

E- Learning courses aren't confined to be fixed to try and suit the needs of the majority. If you feel you already know a particular area well and don't need to spend an hour on it again, then you can skim over it and concentrate that time on something you feel you need to work more at. Everyone is able to learn at their own pace – a massive factor that only eLearning can provide for.

Technological Possibilities

E- Learning is fast becoming a more and more popular method and with it, so has the investment into how to improve it further. The computer based nature of training means new technology is being introduced all the time to help with the E- Learning. Different apps are helping to further reinforce the E- Learning whilst forums can be used to greatly increase the amount of interaction and engagement between learners. This is only going to improve as time goes on as well.

Global

With very few restrictions companies can be confident that their staff can receive the same content regardless of their location, and in many cases, their nationality. Therefore if you wish to provide the same training or have your staff understand and use common - methodology, E- Learning is a useful way of ensuring this happens with ease and reduced cost.

Reporting

In order to gather useful information and data you can actually use, you have to be extremely precise while reporting by using standards and a unified approach. Thanks to modern technologies it's extremely easy to automatically create reports that fit your needs no matter how many learners you're trying to evaluate.

Management

Obviously, it's important to get reports right away, but it's also very important to keep your data and reports in a place where you will be able to retrieve them at any time for future analysis and history tracking. Say no to huge paper folders that can easily get lost or ruined. It's now time to leverage databases and online storage to keep your

learner's records in a permanent and easy to browse organizational system.

CHALLENGES FOR E- LEARNING TRAINING

Lack of Control

Learners with low motivation tend to fall behind when using E- Learning as there are no set times to be doing it and they are responsible for the organisation themselves. A lack of routine or fixed schedule can mean E- Learning becomes complicated with various deadlines often given to different people at different stages of their learning (Archambault, 2010).

Learning Approach

It does not appeal to all learning styles so some learners will not enjoy the experience – especially strong activists and pragmatists. It is still a challenge to make eLearning appeal fully to these groups as different people learn better or worse using different styles. Some may prefer images, some prefer just reading words and some prefer to talk about or actually do a task in order to learn.

Isolated

A lot of questions are a lot easily answered when face to face with someone when you can guarantee an instant answer. E- Learning often does not allow that with trainers often having to answer numerous questions all of the time and only doing it within working hours – where a lot of learners may prefer to do their learning out of working hours. This feeling of isolation can often demotivate individuals as they feel they don't have the support and reassurance that the physical presence of a trainer provides.The digital divide is most commonly defined as the gap between those students who have, do not have, and know how to use the internet and the information technologies that are currently transforming education (Bernard, 2011; Hall, 2013). According to Warschauer (2003), the "digital divide is marked not only by physical access to computers and connectivity but also by access to the additional resources that allow people to use technology well" (p. 6). Due to the affordability of many information technologies today the current meaning of digital divide is changing from having access, to knowing how to use the technologies (Bernard, 2011).

Technology Issues

With heavy reliance on computers that eLearning brings, comes the potential risks that comes with it. Firstly, you need to ensure that all learners have a device that is able to support the training modules. Some eLearning tools require software such as Flash that devices like iPads don't support. So all requirements need to be set out at the beginning. Poor internet connection and unavoidable general random faults also can interrupt learning and so need to be planned around. This is especially true if it is a global roll out as Internet connections and power reliability changes dramatically between countries.

Computer Competency

Some employees might not be too comfortable using computers, especially if their jobs don't require them to. Therefore, even if the software is user friendly, the very idea of using the software can be daunting and demotivating for some. Thus, these employees are likely to learn a lot less than they would from a physical course.

CONCLUSION

With so many different ways to define e-learning and the educational approaches that can be taken in these E-Learning environments, it is the conclusion that e-learning is an innovative approach to learning. It is a holistic way of teaching and learning that meets the needs of today's digital natives. It is an environment made up of collaboration, choice and an array of technological resources that supports a successful online E- Learning experience. However, in order for learners to be successful in this learning environment the challenges to e-learning must be overcome with support and best practice solutions. Instructors and learners must embrace the shift away from traditional classroom practices to an e-learning approach to education. Despite the fact that today's learners are digital natives, the use of technology for e-learning can be overwhelming and provide student motivation challenges however, with the proper supports from instructors, learners can be successful within these e-learning environments. Finally, and probably the most important challenge for the instructor is to focus on the overall elements of a well-developed course. Developing a purposeful and well-defined online course, which supports the instructor and learner, means devoting the appropriate time and embedding the applicable course elements into the e-learning environment.

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