Advantages & Disadvantages of E-Education & E-Learning

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Abstract

Education can become transformative when teachers and students synthesize information across subjects and experiences, critically weigh significantly different perspectives, and incorporate various inquiries. Educators are able to construct such possibilities by fostering critical learning spaces, in which students are encouraged to increase their capacities of analysis, imagination, critical synthesis, creative expression, self-awareness, and intentionality. E-learning, one of the tools emerged from information technology, has been integrated in many universities education programs, shifting from traditional way of education to electronic environment.

Keywords: E-Education, E-learning, electronic environment

Introduction

Everyone in his or her life has experienced somehow traditional learning, the face to face learning. Traditional learning is an ancient method of learning that conducted by a teacher gathering students in places such as classes, labs or seminars to study and learn about different subjects. This method of learning has been practiced around the world in all levels such as kindergartens, primary, secondary, high schools, colleges and universities. In Traditional learning environment, teachers and professors have various teaching styles but the most popular traditional teaching style is teaching by telling. (1-4)

The evolution in information technology and prescient of Internet quickly change the way people access the information. In 1991, Sanders wrote that electronic mail, and information technology in general, had begun to change the way people Conduct both their personal and professional businesses. (Sanders, 1991 quoted by Bowman and Cuyjet, 1999). Higher institutions during last two decades became more familiar with the effect of using advanced technology such as e-mail, Internet, advanced networking and overall information technology in their daily operation. (9)

According to Mills in 1990 quoted by Bowman and Cuyjet (1999) In today's college campuses, student affairs professionals in their providing services such as residence life, student activities, student unions, admissions, and registrars, "are becoming increasingly proficient with technology" through the use of word processors, spreadsheets, databases, planning and decision-making packages, and other technological tools. Bowman and Cuyjet (1999) also wrote that Community development as one of the aims of student development can also be
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E-learning has been introduced as a tool in the learning process in the majority of the international universities worldwide. The term “e-learning” is defined as “any learning that involves using internet or intranet.” A year later [8] made the definition more generalized by indicating that it is “anything delivered, enabled, or mediated by electronic technology for explicit purpose of learning”. According to “e” in e-learning should not stand for electronic; it should be an abbreviation for “evolving, enhanced, everywhere, every time and everybody.” In fact, the quotation shows most of the advantages of e-learning for learners and instructors. (8)

According to Williams, Jeremy B., and Michael Goldberg (2015), It is very common for people to use a search engine such as Google to look for information ranging from what to eat to what to wear in a particular day. People consult different blogs or online tutorials to learn about products or particular ways of doing tasks. These all are e-learning processes. Depending on the use of the source or the delivery medium, e-learning can be of different kinds:

- Purely online: no face-to-face meetings
- Blended learning: distance learning or a combination of online and face-to-face
- Synchronous: instructor led online courses

E-learning/E-education has been aided through the use of technology. Nowadays student affairs administrators and professional staffs are using, internet-based technology and resources such as World Wide Web, e-mail, chat, for their daily operation and communication.

H Li, J. Masters (2009), The growth of E-learning and E-education is more of a dynamic process as it is affected by many factors such as the subject matters, the knowledge level of the audience and the environment around the audience. The users also play an important role in how they want to learn as all users do not have same approach to learn. A major factor that affects the e-learning process is the amount of information that the user wants to receive. The users must decide for themselves which information is important for them at a moment of time and how much they can process. These all factors have vastly affected the way e-learning has developed from the early times to the present. During the early 1980’s when computers were scarcely available instructors-led training (ILT) was the only way of learning things from or about computers. Computers were only available for official use, and if staffs wanted to learn from computers they had to use the office hours. Using the office hours to train led to major slowdown in the official work and was rather counterproductive for the offices. Web-based learning is used nowadays as another option to face to face education. (10) As a matter of fact, its use increases in a direct proportion with the increase of the number of students. This has made educators exert a lot of effort to help the learners to get interactive content that is full of multimedia as it has been proven that it has a significant effect on the process of learning. The impact of blogs and wikis has also been investigated on learners’ collaboration and reflection and it was reported that they both have a positive effect. (5)
Asynchronous: self-placed learning methods placed on the internet, network or storage devices
Instructor-led group: distance learning where students may be from different geographical locations and learn from a single teacher
Self-study: learning by visiting blogs, tutorials or informative websites
Self-study with subject matter expert: learning by regularly visiting some experts blogs or up-to-date sites
Web based: learning purely by looking up on the Internet with the use of search engines or social media groups such as Facebook
Computer based: learning by accessing study materials from different storage devices like CD ROM or USB in the computer
Video/audio tape: learning by accessing multimedia files through YouTube or any other video/audio sharing websites.

Advantages and disadvantages of e-learning (Mobbs R (2003))

As the world is moving towards the digital age and more and more universities are trying to maximize the use of technology in education, one must consider both the advantages and disadvantages of doing so.

Although the use of technology in the field of education has revolutionised the way we learn there are still some downsides of relying completely on technology to learn. E-learning systems are the storehouses of information, trainings and knowledge but at the same time they could be the storehouses of misinformation, poorly guided training or bad knowledge.

E-learning has many advantages. With the combination of a well-organised e-learning system and a highly motivated student, one can achieve great success in a short period of time. Some of the major advantages of e-learning are listed below:

- **Convenient for students**
  E-learning materials are self-placed and can be accessed any time the learner wants. They do not require the learner to be physically present in a classroom. Students can also download and save the learning materials for future purposes from the system.

- **Lower cost**
  E-learning is usually a cost-efficient way of learning for most students as they can choose from a large range of courses and make the selection depending on their needs. It can also be cost-efficient for many universities because once the learning platforms are set up, they can be reused for many sessions.

- **Up-to-date learning materials**
  The study materials in e-learning systems can be updated more frequently than in the classroom-based education systems. Once the study materials are placed in the system, they can be updated without changing the whole materials and the materials can be available and reused for longer times.

- **Flexible way of learning**
  E-learning is a flexible way of learning for many students. Most of the study materials are stored for the students to access whenever they want. Students can also choose between an instructor-led and a self-learning system. In e-learning systems it is also possible for
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students to skip over the study materials they already know and choose the ones they want to learn. World-wide learning society E-learning systems help in creating a worldwide learning society as anyone can access the study materials regardless of the geographical location. In the systems available now learners can also contribute to the study materials, which help to keep the materials updated.

➢ **Scalable e-learning systems**
The number of students in virtual classes or e-learning systems can be very few or really high without causing any significant difference in the total cost.

➢ **Higher degree of freedom for students**
One may find it difficult at times to learn new ideas. E-learning systems provide the possibility for students to learn the same material repeatedly until they are satisfied.

➢ **Better retention**
The video and audio materials used in e-learning make the whole learning process more fun. This will help students to remember the things they learn for a long period of time. E-learning materials can also be accessed whenever wanted, thus the repetition makes the retention easier.

As any other systems e-learning also have some drawbacks. Being flexible is not always good as it may cause laziness and thus reduce efficiency. Some of the major disadvantages of e-learning include:

(Sources-Optimus Solutions)

➢ **Low motivation**
Students with low motivation may not achieve the set goals most of the time, as there is none to look over. Students are themselves responsible for the routine and organisation of the course, thus leading to laziness and low motivation at times. Lack of a fixed schedule and deadlines may lead to students dropping out of the course prematurely.

➢ **Technology-dependency**
The study materials in e-learning are delivered using computer applications. For some people just to learn how to use those applications might take a long period of time. There are also other factors such as a poor Internet connection and machine malfunction, which may make the learning process tedious and time consuming.

➢ **Compatibility issues**
As there are many learning systems available, sometimes the study materials prepared by using one system may not be compatible with another. For example mobile devices such as i-Pads block the flash videos from being played in their browsers. Access to websites may not be free in all places as some countries impose restrictions on the number of websites that can be accessed.

➢ **Reliability of the content**
The content available on the Internet might not always be reliable. There are people who mislead the readers and feed wrong information. So the readers must be careful while searching for the information and check the reliability of the content before learning it.

➢ **Social isolation**
Lack of a real classroom or classmates might not be good for all students.
Students might feel socially isolated at times due to lack of real people around while learning.

- **Expenses management**
  In the long run e-learning is usually a cheaper option but still for the first time it might prove too expensive for some institutions. Buying new equipment like computers, projectors or new software all at once might not always be easy for new or small institutions. Also the cost of developing training materials is high compared to the traditional methods.

- **Disadvantages for disabled students**
  While developing new study materials or study environments companies usually target at large user groups. They might not always think about disabled students such as visually impaired students as they might not gain from it as the development costs may be high.

- **Not effective in all cases**
  In some cases face-to-face study materials might be more effective than learning online as e-learning lacks two-way communication.

**E-learning facilitates any time learning**

Learner can decide when the best time for learning is, e.g. during breaks or when the learner is relaxed and can adjust the speed of learning according to their needs like their powers of comprehension or whether they are in a fit state. Potential risks involved here is two important parts of e-Learning are communication and collaboration. Especially synchronous communication like chat or video conferencing is highly time dependent and only works if all communication partners are online at the same time and thus requires good time management. Even asynchronous communication and collaboration are not completely free of any time constraints because it does not make sense to answer questions or work together on a project if the time delays after each reaction are weeks or months.

**Conclusion:**
E-learning is a very effective method to impart knowledge and information to staff/Person/Student, who are on different geographical locations. (7) It can be a very beneficial means to improve Person performance. E-learning tools can be used to share knowledge and experience among the Person, which improves the performance of the workers and eventually improves performance of the whole organization. The bottom line is that if the company does not see long-term profits on their investment, they will not invest in implementing e-learning systems. Before making any significant investment it is crucial for companies to calculate the cost-benefit for e-learning before implementing it in their organization. The benefits of creating and administering the e-learning systems should outweigh the development cost associated with it in the long run. (6)

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