

E-Learning - The New Face of Education: Pros and Challenges

Dr. Bhavna U. Choudhary and Dr. Reema Kamlani

Dada Ramchand Bakhru Sindhu Mahavidyalaya, Panchpaoli, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India
bhavnachoudhary1016@gmail.com and rashivaswani@gmail.com

Abstract: *Today is the era of technology. After the recent COVID-19 outbreak, one of the most frequently used terms is “new normal.” In the field of education, this can be related to the rapidly increasing use of online learning tools. All over the globe, educational institutions are adapting online learning platforms to pick up the threads of the process of educating students. The new normal now is a modified concept of education with online learning being at the core of this transformation. In the present scenario, digital learning has emerged as a unavoidable resource for students and institutions all over the world. As is the case with most of the traditional teaching methods, online learning also has its own set of positives and challenges. The process of decoding and understanding these two will aid the institutions in creating strategies for more efficient delivery of the lessons, eventually, creating an uninterrupted learning environment for the students. So, this paper attempts to reveal these pros and challenges of E-learning faced by the institutions as well as the learners.*

Keywords: E-Learning, Electronic Resources, Internet, Virtual Class Rooms, Online Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Almost all the sectors have been hit badly by the Covid-19 pandemic. The education sector was no exception. All the educational institutions were forced to close down to stop the spread of infection. Due to this lockdown and loss of education, many educational institutions started online/E-learning using various platforms like Zoom, Google Class, Google Meet etc. to continue the learning process of students.

A system of learning which is based on formal teaching but with the help of various electronic resources is called E-learning. While on one hand, teaching can be in or out of the traditional classrooms, the use of computers and Internet forms the major component of E-learning. E-learning can also said to be a network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge, and the delivery of education is made to a large number of recipients at the same or different times. In the early times, it was not accepted with open arms as it was lacked the human element which was considered to be the basic requirement in learning.

Eventually, with the progress in technology and the rapid developments in learning systems, it is now readily accepted by the masses. The introduction of computers supported this revolution

and with the passage of time, as we got absorbed into smartphones, tablets, etc, these devices have now also marked their significance in the virtual classrooms for learning. Books are gradually being put back by a variety of electronic educational materials like e-books, educational content videos, pen drives etc. The most significant advantage of e-learning is that knowledge can also be shared through the Internet, which is accessible 24/7, anywhere, anytime.

The educational institutions which have adapted E-learning technologies are surely a step ahead of those who still follow the traditional learning methods. But the fact remains that although electronic devices are leading the education system to great heights, there are many challenges being displayed too. E-learning or online learning has its own pros & cons or challenges which we will discuss here.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no doubt that e-learning has an important role to play across all business sectors. In addition to its cost-effectiveness, its main advantages are its flexibility, its convenience to users, its wide reach, its easy accessibility, its consistency and its repeatability. The objectives of e-learning are dependent on the quality of the teaching process and the effectiveness of online access.

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Signe Schack Noesgaard and Rikke Green, Kata Foundation, Denmark in their paper “The Effectiveness of E-Learning” suggested that to understand what makes e-Learning solutions effective, analysis of factors promoting the effectiveness of e-Learning has to be practised. These factors were categorised according to the context in which the e-Learning solution was used.

M. Samir Abou El-Seoud and Naglaa Seddiek, Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt in their paper, “E-Learning and Students’ Motivation” It is expected that improvements in Internet technology (i.e. greater bandwidth and wireless Internet connection) are likely to increase the use of multimedia in education. Moreover, it is expected that technology would most influence the delivery of online learning. It is planned to use other Multimedia tools of the e-learning in future studies.

Nirmal Raj Singh Rathore in his paper, “E-learning- its pros and challenges” opined that everything in this world has pros & cons or challenges of its own. E-Learning has its pros and challenges but it provides the most important thing is education. E-learning brings so many benefits with it yes it has some challenges which can be eliminated or reduced by taking some necessary steps.

2.1 Aims and Objectives

- To study the various modes of e-learning
- To get acquainted about the needs to adapt to e-learning methods.
- To study the advantages of e-learning.
- To study the challenges faced by institutions and students in the e-learning process
- To study how these challenges can be overcome.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on Secondary data. The data that was required was availed from various sources like research papers, books, articles, newspapers and websites.

3.1 Scope of the Study

The main focus of the researcher while writing this paper was on the various modes of e-learning. The researcher has also made an attempt to study its advantages to the students and the various challenges faced by the teachers as well as the learners in adopting these methods.

3.2 Limitations of the Study

- This study is conducted with the use of secondary data collected by other sources that may contain some deficiencies.
- Due to constraint of time, the researcher was unable to collect primary data.

3.3 Pros of E-Learning

A. Student Centric Approach

The student/ learner is the core of any E-Learning system. The study material and activities are designed keeping in mind the needs and interest of the learner.

B. Time Saving

E-learning helps the students to judge and control the amount of time they spend and invest on a particular topic. This allows them to spend the additional time on the other tough part of the syllabus to be covered. Also, it saves the time and energy of travelling to the institutions for acquiring knowledge. Students can now avail the knowledge at their homes.

C. Flexible and Extended Learning

Being available 24/7 refers to education everywhere and anytime. Another advantage of e-Learning is that it brings education to remote areas and individuals who can't afford to pursue traditional university learning. The students can resort to these resources as per the time suitable to them. Teaching has not been limited to the class rooms on any particular time or date so the learning has now become flexible and extended.

D. Self-Paced

Many a times, the slow learners are not able to keep up with the fast ones. Also, they are shy to ask doubts/ questions in the class. In such situations, e-learning provides them a platform of repeated learning at their own pace. The opportunity of revisions increases here. Thus, E-Learning proves to be a blessing for such students.

E. Efficient and Interactive

Using E-learning methods, can make the topics more interesting with the inclusion of videos, documentaries, online case studies, pictures, power point presentations or links of some websites. This makes the student stay connected to the learning as it becomes attractive and the study material is full of innovations.

F. Cost Effective

E-learning has proved to be cost effective as the expenditure of travelling, hiring personal tutors, remunerations, paper resources etc. has been eradicated.

G. Supports Individual Learning Styles

The theory of learning states that different pupil has different mental abilities. Due to this, they learn better and quick when information is presented to them in their preferred style.

Some of these styles are:

- Visual – for those learners who learn more quickly and effectively when information is presented graphically or in pictorial form.
- Auditory – for the learners who understand and can concentrate by listening to information.
- Reading & Writing – for those who focus better on the written words
- Kinaesthetic – for the learners who like to be hands on or engage all their senses in the learning process.

Thus, varied and complex concepts requiring explanations in visual, audio or any other electronic forms can be very easily imparted to the learners.

3.4 Challenges of E-learning

A. E-Learning is Limited

There are some limitations regarding the use of learning methodology in e-learning. There are certain aspects of education that can only be acquired practically or through demonstration in the classroom only, which cannot be otherwise done in an online class.

B. Less Accessibility

Students of all genre do not possess the access to an android phone, tablet, PC or a Laptop. The rural/ slum areas of a city do not have access to internet and eventually online learning. This disconnects them from the e-learning tutorials.

C. Authenticity Issues

In the present scenario where digitalization rules the globe, E-learning is totally based on correct and authentic information. But nowadays a lot of fake websites misguide the learners with cheap sources of educational material.

D. Technical Knowledge Required

Any learner not familiar with technology or the modern electronic devices, will find it hard to adapt to E-learning. Also, a proper and stable internet connection is required to conduct a continuous online class without any disturbance.

**E. Lack of Interaction**

E-learning results in lack of interaction between the teacher and student as there is no face-to-face communication between the two. Also, the atmosphere is not as engaging as in the case of a physical classroom.

F. Health Issues

A student adhering to online classes may suffer from different kinds of health issues due to spending 7-8 hours in front of the electronic screen. This may cause them severe backpain, headache, poor eyesight, obesity and lack of social life.

G. Too Much of Information

According to a research, E-Learning can result into a negative effect upon the learners which is often called “lost on the internet.” When too much of information is available on a particular topic, students tend to lose their focus and direction and get perplexed by a lot of irrelevant information.

IV. CONCLUSION

E-Learning or Online learning is the process of gaining knowledge or education through use of electronic technologies or media such as android phones, tablets, laptops, and personal computers. On a broader scale, E-Learning or Online learning can be divided into two categories-

- **Synchronous E-Learning/Interactive E-Learning:** In this type, regular classes are conducted but through the digital platform. Here, greater opportunities are available for both student and the teacher to have interactive sessions.
- **Asynchronous E-Learning:** In this type, pre-recorded videos can be availed by the students at their convenience. But it lacks personal touch as there is no interaction and conversation between the teacher and students.

Developing effective online learning courses requires apt subject and technical knowledge, time management skill, experience, commitment, good communication skills, adaptability to change and innovations, and a true passion for learning. This doesn't mean that the concept of non-electronic teaching through books and lectures is of any less importance, but the importance and impact of technology-based learning cannot be taken lightly either. It has been proved a several times that the human brain can easily reciprocate to what is seen and heard via moving pictures or videos. E-Learning has a strong potential to break down the financial and geographical barriers that will definitely contribute to the concept of equal education for all. It will open the differed pathways for individuals and communities by providing more opportunities to the learners at a lower cost at their doorstep.

Thus, the development of education through the concept of E-learning, if applied in the correct way will surely take the students to greater heights.

4.1 Recommendations

A poorly designed course can prove to be boring and eventually may have a negative impact on the learners. As the content is digital, it should be original, appealing and dynamic. It should motivate the learners to be attentive and interactive in the virtual class room. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain a pleasant classroom atmosphere to speed up the process of learning adapting to welcome the new change with a positive attitude.

The very first requirement is a stable internet connection which helps to grab and maintain the attention of the learners. Next, a teacher can record the lessons and make them available for self -study and future reference 24/7. He must also necessarily include audio and visual content and timely small presentations on the different topics to hold the learners' attention and evoke their interest. The teacher must issue timely virtual assignments, conduct regular tests and evaluation. Also, regular feedback from the students/ parents must be collected which would help to make timely additions and the required changes.

In addition, a Learning Management System (LMS) comprising of multiple features can be adopted which would help to enhance the engagement, involvement and motivation among the learners.

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