

Research Trends in E-Learning

S.Thowfeek Khan

Part-Time Ph.D. Research Scholar

Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai

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Abstract

E-learning is playing very important role in the present educational scenario. It has potential to change the whole education system and due to this very reason it has become one of the most preferred subjects for the researchers. Research works on e-learning are going on in various disciplines like Mass Communication, Education, Information and Technology (IT) and Distance Education. Scholars are working on the various aspects of e-learning. This study analyzed the various research works on e-learning to find out the research trends in this field.

E-learning refers to the cognitive process of acquiring knowledge or skill where electronic media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education serve as a medium. E-learning does not require any physical accommodation and can be self-paced. This is known as asynchronous learning. It may also be instructor-led and the user needs to attend various sessions which are scheduled by the instructor. This is known as synchronous learning. Due to this flexibility (asynchronous) and interactive collective learning (synchronous) E-learning has evolved tremendously. Studies have proven that E-learning has the capability to provide quality environment for future education.

Keywords: E-learning, Learning Management Systems, Education, Training, Distance Learning.

Introduction

E-learning or electronic learning is changing the educational scenario rapidly. Information and Communication Technology has opened a new sky for the experiments on teaching-learning methods to make education more interesting, flexible and broader. It is a broad term including various types of teaching-learning methods based on information and communication technology. E-learning is the combination of technology and specially designed learning material. Learning material must be according to the medium so special design is required. On the basis of the involvement of e-learning content we can classify it into two major types:

1. Complete Online Learning
2. Blended Learning.

Complete Online Learning

This type of learning depends completely on e-learning tools. Delivery of course materials, discussions, assignment evaluation, examination and other evaluations are performed only on e learning platform. It provides maximum flexibility to the learners regarding place and time of learning.

Blended Learning

In this category e-learning tools are used to increase the effectiveness of conventional face-to-face methods as an add on tool. Sometimes these tools are used for reducing face-to-face contact time. Some part of learning activities is occurred in classroom and rest of the part at e-learning platform.

Meaning of E-Learning

When it comes to online learning in education, the model has been pretty straightforward - up until the early 2000s education was in a classroom of students with a teacher who led the process. E-learning is a rapidly growing industry, the effects of which we can trace back to the 1980s and even well before that (in the form of distance learning and televised courses) – these will be discussed later in this ebook.

E-learning offers the ability to share material in all kinds of formats such as videos, slideshows, word documents and PDFs. Conducting webinars (live online classes) and communicating with professors via chat and message forums is also an option available to users.

E-Learning Trends

E-Learning is present in the society and business for several decades and is here to stay. It might seem as simple process of delivering learning materials and examining the proficiency and/or knowledge by electronic means but the development and flexibility of the Information Technology enables many different approaches and implementation of new methods regarding the process of learning helped by the technology and we can consider that it is still evolving. As the technology develops and some best practices are confirmed certain aspects and tools are adopted and widely used by many institutions and business. Some of the established and emerging trends include but are not limited to:

E-Learning Tools (or) Trends

- Micro learning
- Mobile Learning
- Tests and Assignments
- Gamification
- Social/Community Learning
- Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality Technology
- Open and Flexible Systems.
- Cloud Computing
- Mobile Technology.
- Continuous Learning.

Advantages of E-Learning

1. Reduces overall cost.
2. Reduce Learning Times.
3. Ensures consistent delivery.
4. Offers expert Knowledge:
5. On-demand availability
6. Confidence.
7. Global connectivity
8. Fast access

9. Flexibility.
10. Self-paced.

Dis Advantage of E-Learning

1. Technology dependent.
2. Lack of Motivation
3. Lack of human touch
4. Inflexible.
5. Start up Cost.

Status of Research Work in E-Learning

E-learning is a part of many subjects or it is involved in different disciplines of knowledge. Research on e-learning is going on in various disciplines like Mass Communication, Education, Information and Technology (IT) and Distance Education. We can find the component of e-learning in various research projects of above mentioned subjects. One can find e-learning as a popular topic of research in the research journals of Communication, Education, IT and Distance Education. Many scholars of these knowledge disciplines are doing their M.Phil. and doctoral research on e-learning. Few International research journals are completely dedicated to education technology mainly e-learning. British journal of Education and Technology (BJET) is the example of it. In nutshell we can say that sufficient research work is going on about the different aspects of e-learning nationally and internationally.

Different Aspects of E-Learning Under Research

1. Learner's access
2. Learner's and teacher's perspective
3. Learning behaviour
4. User friendliness of e-learning platforms and tools
5. Comparison between e-learning environment and traditional face-to-face learning
6. Impact of e-learning in terms of memorizing and understanding of the content by the students.
7. E-learning in open and distance education.
8. E-learning in blended learning and teaching mode

Conclusions

Given that the e-learning has many benefits for both sides in the learning process (trainers and learners) it is widely adopted by the educational institutions (80%), the companies (77%) and the military. On the other side, the learners/students also turn to e-learning where 32% of regular students take at least one online course and in 2015 and 35 million students signed up for at least one MOOC.

E-learning is convenient and has the ability to reach more learners. It is cost effective as compared to other learning methods but still there is a concern in the corporate world that cost would exceed the financial returns. In recent years, the corporate E-learning market has shown incredible growth due to the increased awareness of benefits of its adoption. The need of the current E-learning scenario involves recommendation and adoption of the best technologies in the inception stage of business.

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