International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

E-Learning, an Emerging Trend in Education, The Concept, Importance, Benefits and Drawbacks

ᵃ Yasmin Bibi, ᵇ Fatma Dahleb, ᶜ Dr. Reema Abukhait

a,b,c *Northern Border University, Arar, PC.73312, Saudi Arabia*
Yasmin.khan2@nbu.edu.sa,, fatma.dahlab@nbu.edu.sa, reema.abukhait@nbu.edu.sa
DOI: https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.0224.0513

A B S T R A C T

We are living in an age where the technology has transformed our life. It has revolutionized each and every aspect of life that one can imagine, and of course the education system is obviously no exception. The rapid technological advancements like telecommunication, portable electronic devices, online meeting platforms, social networking software and so forth are rapidly redefining the ways people deliver and obtain knowledge. Consequently e-learning has become one of the most emerging and dynamic mode of transferring knowledge. This manuscript is an attempt to discuss at length that how e-learning is transforming the field of education and helping the teachers and learners to switch from the traditional mode of learning to a modern and more convenient mode of learning. The authors will also highlight the points referring to the fact that how befitting e-learning is for the learners.

Keywords: e-learning, electronic devices, internet, digital learning, online learning

1. Introduction

E-learning is the abbreviation of the tern 'electronic learning'. As its very name suggests here learning takes place electronically using electronic devices and internet. E- learning is interactive learning in which the learning content is available online and provides automatic feedback to the student's learning activities. (Paulsen 2003) It's kind of formalized learning, which makes learning easier as compared to traditional learning because in e-learning the user can learn anywhere any time. E-learning is the practice of using information and communication technology to create learning experience that can be formulated, organized and created with ample freedom without any boundaries (Horton, 2006).

E-learning can also be termed as a network chain transferring the data/learnings skills and knowledge and it comes under a good advantage which is that the education can be served to unlimited and vast number of recipients at the same or different times. At the beginning this concept was not accepted whole heartedly as it was assumed that this system lacked the human element and workforce required in learning.

2. History of E- learning

The e-learning did not appear by chance, but came as the Arini said (2003: p. 25) as the outcome of educational and technical efforts over half a century, while AL-Namleh said (2003: p. 4) that the pillars of e-learning instilled a long time back many educators to the year 1930, when the US military produced programmed books and used by its soldiers without any teacher role. The term "e-learning" was first used in the mid-1990s as a shortened form of "Electronic learning" (OED, 2007). Since that time, of course, the term has been used to describe not only a kind of learning, but also practices in education, teaching, design, and research. Besides acquiring general knowledge one of the other main goals of e-learning is to develop professional skills and understanding to help learners to achieve their learning objectives (Clarke, Mayer, 2008). Elliott Maisie coined the term e-learning back in "1999" at his Tech Learning conference at Disneyworld and was utilized by a CBT systems seminar marking the first time the phrase was used professionally. Maisie defined the "e" in e-learning as the experience dimension of learning that includes engagement, curiosity, simulation, and practice. Ever since the emergence of the term, e-learning has had several definitions.

3. Definition and concept of E-Learning

E-learning can best be defined as the science of learning without using paper printed instructional material. E-learning is the use of telecommunication technology to deliver information for education and training. With the progress of information and communication technology development, E-learning is emerging as the paradigm of modern education. The great advantages of E-learning include liberating interactions between learners and instructors, from limitations of time and space through the asynchronous and synchronous learning network model (Pei-Chen Sun et al., 2008)

Oxford Dictionary defines e-learning as 'a system of learning that uses electronic media, typically over the internet.' Rob Koper as educational technologist writes (2007), "E-learning can be defined as the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to facilitate and enhance learning and teaching" (p. 356).

Al-Shehri (2002, p. 38) defined e-learning as a "curriculum delivery system via the Internet, a local network, satellites, CDs or interactive television to reach learners"

E-Learning is the process of sharing knowledge through various channels such as e-books, CDs, webinars, and more as discussed above briefly. It has literally ended up the method of chalk and board style education. Unlike the traditional teaching, e-Learning makes the transmission of knowledge simpler, easier, and more productive. Tutors apply the method of teaching purely through the latest technology which has also developed a new way for the tutors to carry their jobs easily from anywhere in the world. E-Learning involves teaching courses in a way that are specially delivered through the internet everywhere other than the traditional classroom where the teacher is teaching physically. E-learning refers to the use of the internet, technology, knowledge and skills. Thus, teaching and learning both become simpler, easier, and more effective. Not only have different concepts been attributed to e-learning, but the term has also been substituted by others, such as computer-based learning, technology-based training, and computer-based training, which actually predate the first mention of e-learning in the mid-1990s (Friesen, 2009) or the more recent online learning. Moreover, some people confuse the concept of e-learning with the concepts of a virtual campus or online courses, which can be part of the e-learning universe but do not sufficiently define it.

4. E-Learning, Online Learning and Digital Learning

Although the terms e-learning, digital learning and online learning are often taken synonymously and are occasionally used interchangeably, but they are not the same. There are some subtle differences which are explained below.

4.1 E-learning vs Online Learning

E-learning doesn't require teachers and students to be online at the same time i.e. teachers don't have live lectures, but they provide students with materials and prerecorded video lectures. On the other hand, during online learning, live lessons are conducted where students and teachers can communicate through online meeting platforms via audio, video and/or interactive white board.

4.2 E-Learning vs Digital Learning

Digital learning takes place not only online but also offline using digital tools like laptops, tablets and computers in traditional classrooms or computer labs while e-learning always takes place online. Thus, we can say that digital learning is a broader term that covers e-learning as well.

The following picture illustrates the difference between e-learning and online learning.

5. Importance of E-Learning

E-learning plays a significant role in modern education and has become important for various reasons. Here are some main reasons highlighted the importance of e-learning listed below.

5.1 Accessibility and Flexibility

E-learning provides learners with access to educational content anytime and anywhere with an internet connection. This level of accessibility allows students to study at their own pace and convenience, accommodating various learning styles and schedules.

5.2 Personalization of Learning Experience

Recognizing that each learner is unique, with distinct learning styles, preferences, and strengths, E-learning platforms can tailor content to individual learners' needs and preferences. Adaptive learning techniques, data analytics, and personalized assessments help identify strengths and weaknesses, enabling a more targeted and effective learning experience.

5.3 Cost-Effectiveness

Online courses often cost less than traditional classroom-based programs. E-learning education eliminates expenses related to commuting, printed materials, and facilities, making education more affordable and accessible to a broader range of learners.

5.4 Lifelong Learning

E-learning facilitates continuous learning, enabling people of all ages to acquire new skills and knowledge throughout their lives. This is particularly valuable in a rapidly changing job market where upskilling and reskilling are essential for career growth.

5.5 Global Reach

E-learning transcends geographical boundaries, allowing students from different parts of the world to connect and learn together. It fosters cultural exchange, diversity, and a more global perspective.

5.6 Interactive Learning

E-learning platforms can incorporate multimedia elements like videos, animations, simulations, and interactive quizzes, making learning engaging and enjoyable. Interactive features promote better retention and understanding of complex concepts.

5.7 Immediate Feedback

Online assessments and quizzes provide instant feedback to learners, enabling them to identify areas that require improvement and track their   progress more effectively.

5.8 Access to Expertise

E-learning platforms can bring together renowned experts and educators from all over the world. Students can access high-quality educational resources and e-learning education from the best, regardless of their physical location.

5.9 Customizable Learning Paths

E-learning allows learners to choose their learning paths, focusing on areas of interest or professional goals. This flexibility empowers students to design personalized learning journeys that align with their aspirations.

5.10 Environmental Sustainability

By reducing the need for printed materials and physical infrastructure, e-learning contributes to environmental conservation and sustainability.

There is no denial of the fact that e-learning has revolutionized education by making learning more accessible, flexible, and inclusive. It has proved its importance. It complements traditional educational methods and continues to evolve with advancements in technology, enabling a more diverse and effective learning experience for learners worldwide.

6. Benefits of E-Learning

Al-Todry (2009: p. 80) emphasizes that e-learning contributes to a rich, multi-source learning environment, encourages communication between the parties of the educational system, contributes to the modeling and delivery of education in a standardized form, and contributes to the preparation of a generation of teachers and learners capable of dealing with technology armed with the latest skills of the times. Some of the benefits of e-learning are as follows:

6.1 24/7 availability

The digital revolution has created a whole new world where billions of hours of content about any topic is available for anyone's consumption at any time. All that is needed is an internet connection. This allows for online learners to not be limited to scheduled semesters of online training programs, but they can now learn after work, or on the weekends as well. In short, it provides flexibility, and in today's busy world, we need it!

6.2 The option of repeating lectures

E-learning offers 24/7 access to an educational platform for students to repeat the course as many times as they need. It provides the learner with an opportunity to replaying videos lectures. There is no stress over missing a lecture, as it is always available for you to watch on your own time when you are available to study.

6.3 Various Learning Formats

When listing the pros and cons of e-learning, we can't forget about the range of applications it has. E-learning modules can be applied in many different formats. The platforms include not only lectures but also presentations, videos, and tutorials. Various learning formats ensure the students remember the material better as the content is more engaging and matches with the different learning techniques of students.

6.4 Quick Delivery

E-learning is not only easily accessed, but the content is quicker to get through as well. In fact, statistics show that the actual time required for students to learn is reduced by up to 60% in comparison to traditional learning methods. For instance, learners don't have to keep with the same pace as their peers. They can speed up the video or skip the irrelevant content if needed.

6.5 Sensory Engagement

It's a well-documented truth that the more senses that are engaged while learning, the better the recall later. When eLearning engages a learner's eyes, ears and hands during a course, that sensory learning enhances what could have been a lacklustre experience. What's more, simulations and mastery checks give users another chance to truly experience the training in a safe space before employing new skills on the job.

6.6 Data and Analytics

Effectively employing a learning management system doesn't only allow you to create and deliver learning materials: it gives you more insight into how and when your learners respond to the material. Utilizing data aggregated from your LMS, you can refine your e-learning approach for better results. For example, if you notice that a large percentage of your learners aren't finishing modules, you could try breaking the e-learning into smaller "bites" via micro learning modules of five minutes or less.

6.7 Consistency in Quality

E-learning allowed teachers to provide consistent learning tools and experiences to their students with video recordings, quizzes, online live tutorials, and gamification. Though a shift in delivery, the consistency was well maintained and continues to improve as the e-Learning world develops.

6.8 Effective

E-Learning has generated positive results for students who prefer their learning experience to be based online. A few key reasons for this include:

1. Online learning has been proven to improve student's scores on tests or certifications.

2. More students pass or master the course as a whole.

3. It can provide an opportunity to implement the knowledge hands-on in the workplace, and continue studying nights or weekends.

4. Helps with information retention.

6.9 Improvement of efficiency

As we know, learners can learn through e- learning to improve their knowledge as well as skills which can enhance their efficiency, and the learners also take various courses at the same time. And as the learner works smartly and produces a different knowledge to enhance the efficiency in their upcoming life.

7. Drawbacks of E-Learning

7.1 Limited Feedback

In case of e-learning, there is not much feedback between students and instructors. Students sometimes could not fix their problems due to the lack of communication, and it may lead to dissatisfaction in the learner.

7.2 The risk of Social Isolation

Without peer-to-peer communication and activities, students can feel more isolated. The online environment is not as engaging as classroom interactions. Learning this way may lead to serious mental health issues among students such as anxiety or increased stress level. However, there are ways to prevent such situations from happening. Teachers should monitor students' behaviour and promote working in groups to increase the interaction between online students.

7.3 The lack of control

Online students can cheat on exams more easily as they use their personal computers in their own environment. It means without a proper identity verification procedure; they can let someone else write the exam for them. To ensure the authenticity of work, teachers have to put extra effort to prevent any fraudulent activities. They can request a camera to be turned on during the test. Also, before the exam begins students can be asked to show their ID cards in order to verify their identity. There are also e-learning tools dedicated to cheating detection such as Examity.

7.4 Technological requirements

E-learning education is accessible only for people with technological capabilities. According to statistics, around 25% of the population of developed countries struggle with computer illiteracy. Knowing this, switching to e-learning education won't be easy for everyone and that can be the strongest disadvantage of e-learning education.

7.5 Focused on theory not practical

As e-learning is based on theory-based learning. E-learning classes are limited to certain disciplines. There are fields such as medicine or engineering that can't be fully learned simply by participating in online classes. To actually become a doctor, one needs to gain a lot of practical experience that cannot be replaced by theoretical knowledge. This is the main cause that the learner only gets the theoretical knowledge rather than having any practical experience. Consequently, they may stay behind in the practical skills.

8. Conclusion

To sum up we can say that e-learning helps to diversify the teaching methods, which makes it effective in addressing the problem of individual differences between students, in addition it helps to transfer and establish knowledge effectively. No doubt, it is equally important to take forward the concept of non-electronic teaching with the help of books and lectures, but the importance and effectiveness of technology-based learning cannot be taken lightly or ignored completely. It is believed that the human brain can easily remember and relate to what is seen and heard via moving pictures or videos. It has also been found that visuals, apart from holding the attention of the student, are also retained by the brain for longer periods. Various sectors, including agriculture, medicine, education, services, business, and government setups are adapting to the concept of E-learning which helps in the progress of a nation. For sure, one size doesn't fit all. Although there are a few drawbacks of e-learning, we can easily notice the number of benefits it offers and obviously the befits outweigh the drawbacks. E-learning techniques and modules are very much tailored to one's needs, they don't impose a pace in which one has to work. At the same time, they provide students with much more than just educational knowledge.

REFERENCES

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 77 (2013) 429 – 442 New World, New Learning: Trends and Issues of E-Learning Harrison Hao Yang State University of New York at Oswego

l-Namlah, Abdul Aziz (2003): "The Concept of E-Learning… How to Benefit from E-Learning " Symposium 21-23 April 2003 AD, Riyadh: King Faisal Schools.

Al-Arini, Abdul Rahman (2003): "From Programmed Education to E-Learning" Alma‹arefah magazine, Issue 91, December.

Pei-Chen Sun et al (2008):" What drives a successful e-Learning? An empirical investigation of the critical factors influencing learner satisfaction", Computers & Education, Volume 50, Issue 4, May 2008, Pages 1183-1202,

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0360131506001874.

https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/e-learning?q=e+learning

Al-Shehri, Fayez Abdullah (2002): E-learning in Saudi schools "Before we buy the train, do we put the rails", Riyadh: Dar al-Maarifa.

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ983277.pdf

https://insights.fuseclassroom.com/elearning-vs-online-learning-whats-the-difference/

https://www.evelynlearning.com/digital-learning-e-learning-online-learning-whats-the-difference/

Al-Todry, Awad Hussein (2009): "Educational Technology: Its Innovations and Applications", Faculty of Education, Assiut University

https://www.digitalclassworld.com/blog/importance-of-elearning-in-education/

https://seorahulpal.medium.com/importance-of-e-learning-in-education-6e372498ae3

https://www.learnupon.com/blog/what-is-elearning/

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/e-learning

Hamad, Asma & abouelnaga, Hayah & metwally, Ahmed & shoshan, Hany & moawad, Nisren. (2022). The Importance Of E-Learning To The Students And Teachers. Dil ve Dilbilimi Çalışmaları Dergisi. 18. 952-968

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/e-learning

https://redvike.com/article/pros-and-cons-of-e-learning/

Friesen, N. (2009). Re-thinking e-learning research: Foundations, methods and practices. New York: Peter Lang

https://elearningindustry.com/importance-of-elearning-revolutionizing-education-in-the-digital-age

https://archylearning.com/blog/the-8-most-important-benefits-of-elearning-for-students/

https://elmlearning.com/blog/10-reasons-elearning-works/

https://www.ecoleglobale.com/blog/advantages-disadvantages-of-e-learning/