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Technical note

E-Learning

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ABSTRACT

E-Learning or Edutainment Learning, the word has several meanings, E-Learning can best be defined as the science of learning without using paper printed instructional material. The concept is new, dynamic and robust approach towards learning and is gaining more and more popularity, as the Subject Matter Experts (SME) are using several tools to create E-Learning modules for the learners. Numerous top institutions and distance learning universities have started degree and diploma courses based entirely on E-Learning. Internet is the primary tool of E-Learning through which students connect from across the world. E-Learning is user interactive, easy, and low cost, and can be done 24 hours a day- 7 days a week depending on the convenience of the learner. The future of E-Learning is very bright as it will replace the burden of carrying heavy school bags on the shoulders of school students and also E-Learning is environmental friendly, as it would certainly put a brake on cutting trees for the sake of printing paper based books; also it could now be called as G-Learning (Green Learning).

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1. Introduction

E-Learning can be best defined as learning without using paper text books. The internet webpage's, mobile phones, compact disks and pen drives have replaced the old weighted text books in this modern era. The concept of E-Learning is much more interesting than learning from the text books. E-Learning is of two types: Online and

Offline. In online E-Learning course content is present on a website and can be accessed anytime from anywhere, with an internet connection. In offline E-Learning pen drives, CDs and DVDs are used as distribution media. In E-Learning course content is developed on Microsoft PowerPoint presentation slides, Microsoft Word documents, PDF files, videos, pictures and games. Although, the course content is the same in online and offline modes, but online E-Learning medium has an edge over the offline medium of E-Learning, as the feature of live help and search is available 24x7, and doubts can be cleared immediately. Also, online course content can be browsed with just an internet connection from anywhere, anytime, even from a mobile phone, during travelling, from a remote location, car, park etc. but for offline mode a PC, laptop or a tablet is required and there must be slot for CD, DVD and pen drive in it.

IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University), the world's largest Open University in collaboration with Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Government of India and Prasar Bharti launched a 24x7 E-Learning satellite channel called Gyan Darshan on January 10, 2000. The objective of Gyan Darshan channel was to reach out to the students in a new environment of virtual classrooms. Professors of IGNOU, University Grants Commission, National Council of Educational Research and Training/Central Institute of Educational Technology, Directorate of Adult Education, Indian Institute of Technology and other educational institutions give lectures and now students have the advantage of viewing classroom lectures from their homes. The concept of E-Learning is robust, advantageous and good for the learners.

2. Types of e-learning

The medium of E-Learning is far more interesting than the old fashioned learning through heavy books. The modern Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are using the latest internet features and software's to the learner's advantage for creating instructional material. Now the virtual class rooms exist in the cyberspace, which have taken place of the real classrooms, and the students can login into the virtual classrooms through their computers. There are several software's available in the market that are being used by institutions and organizations that provide E-Learning for creating virtual classrooms. Virtual classroom increases the institute's reach to a vast and geographically spread pool of potential students across the world. A virtual attendance register is maintained and updated on each class meeting. Instructor can teach by using several methods, like Application sharing, Whiteboard sharing, through Chat sessions, Instant Messaging, Audio/Video/Tele Conferencing, giving online questionnaires etc.

3. Comparing instructor led training and e-learning

When a company or organization wants their employees or students to learn new skills, then they often take into account the two best possible ways available for learning that are Instruction Led Training (ILT) and E-Learning (Web Based Training: WBT). Numerous cost factors are associated before taking a final call on adopting these methods. The costs associated with ILT are the course development cost, good teaching professional cost, paper cost, printing cost, electricity cost, infrastructure cost, travelling cost, training material cost, stationary cost and several other costs are associated with it. Advantage of ILT is the physical presence of instructor in a classroom, who can solve the queries of students instantly. Costs associated with E-Learning or WBT are the course development cost, software purchase cost, internet cost, audio/video/tele conferencing cost, website cost, CD's, DVD's and pen drive costs. In WBT classroom, an instructor broadcasts his lecture live through video/tele conferencing and students connect from all around the globe to participate in this virtual classroom. The benefit of WBT system is that the lecture is attended by much larger population as compared to the ILT method. Thus, WBT minimizes the overall costs and maximizes the overall output. WBT software also provides a virtual instructor, who teaches like a real instructor; the advantage of this feature is that students can pause and take a break in between and can further start the lecture from where they left at their own comfort. Thus, E-Learning has definite edge over ILT method.

4. Future of e-learning (edutainment learning)

The concept of E-Learning is still in its starting days and is being accepted by students, teachers, academicians, researchers and professionals. More and more E-Learning companies are getting born by each

passing day, major institutions and universities are offering their academic programs through E-Learning. One of the major drawbacks of ILT in schools is the weight of school bags that children have to carry on their shoulders and face the problem of backache. Also, as the number of trees is becoming less and less by each passing day due to cutting of trees for manufacturing paper, though prohibited by most governments in their respective countries, is making way for E-Learning very fast. E-Learning will overcome these drawbacks, if instead of a heavy school bag; students are given a tablet with the course content fed into it, which would be much more interesting, entertaining, hi-tech and thoughtful decision to take in the 21st century instead of the old fashioned ILT way. This would also reduce the cutting of trees for the sake of paper and also give relief to students from backache. The cost associated with feeding the course content into a tablet is almost 25-30% less than buying several books of different subjects. The tablet will provide multimedia effects to teaching, for example when learning science students can see animation videos of protons and electrons, similarly when learning history students can see animation movies of Ashoka, Lord Buddha, and Vasco-De-Gama. E-Learning, a totally different experience, would soon take over from the old fashioned way of instruction led training. Presently, a tablet costs round \$200, and is equipped with the latest gadgets like Wi-Fi, 4G, internet, phone and all other features of a laptop. In coming time, tablets are expected to replace the school bags that would provide a complete new experience of E-Learning or Edutainment Learning to the learners.

5. Conclusion

E-Learning or Edutainment Learning is the new innovative and inspiring way of learning by combining modern features of technologies used today, like animation, videos, graphics, websites, PowerPoint Slides, audio/video/tele conferencing and much more. The laptops, PC's, tablets, internet, mobile phones, DVD's , CD's and pen drives are becoming the tools of E-Learning. Academicians and intellectuals across the world over are exploring and sharing to foster interaction, collaboration, and increased excitement for E-Learning. More and more courses are being offered by premier institutions to charter the needs of education for working professionals, housewives and students. E-Learning is still in its early days, and is getting popular by each passing day. Many distance learning programs are now following the E-Learning approach, as it increases the access to information and communication, and decreases the overall cost. The future of E-Learning is very bright and prosperous, as it is much more robust and dynamic than the conventional classroom teaching, and in the coming time tablets and laptops will replace the paper made books and school bags and will provide a complete new and interesting way of innovative learning experience called E-Learning or can even be called as G-Learning (Green Learning).