



PROBLEMS OF E-LEARNING IN INDIA: SOME REFLECTION

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Abstract: In the age of globalization and technological revolution life-long learning is quickly becoming an essential in today's world. Electronic learning or e-Learning is a type of Technology supported education/learning where the medium of instruction is computer technology. With e-learning, the possibilities for getting knowledge and information out to the learner at her/his own pace opened a whole new world for knowledge transfer. India is a fast developing country with large population and providing education to such a large population is itself a challenge. E-learning has potential in India; adoption has been slow and will need a major marketing and awareness effort. In India, globalization has generated a good environment and life for education. The benefits of these technologies have to reach the rural masses of India. Understanding issues and challenges in respect of e-learning is of significant importance to the society involved in e-learning and will have a significant role in forming future practices. This paper is focus on the education scenario, issues and problems in India with reference to e-learning. This paper also discuss about the ways to overcome problems in e learning.

Keywords: e-Learning, Technology, Education

Introduction:

The World Wide Web (WWW) is being used to improve communication, collaboration, sharing of resources, promoting active learning, and delivery of education in distance learning mode. E-Learning may be taken as the latest form of distance learning mediated by state-of-art technologies like Internet and World-Wide-Web.

In recent years, many of the universities and educational institutions worldwide offer online services such as for admissions, virtual (online) learning environments in order to facilitate the lifelong learning and to make this compatible with other educational management activities.

Definition e-learning:

E-learning is defined as acquisition of knowledge and skill using electronic technologies such as computer and Internet-based tools and local and wide area networks. The term was introduced in 1995 when it was all called "Internet based Training" then "Web-based Training" to clarify that delivery could be on the Inter- or Intra-net, then "Online Learning" and finally e-learning, adopting the in vogue use of "e" during the dot com boom. The "e-" breakthrough enabled the industry to raise hundreds of millions from venture capitalists who would invest in any

industry that started with this magic letter. E-learning is the computer and network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. E-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration.

Indian Scenario

The education sector in India is no longer bound to just classrooms. Thanks to new start-ups and higher internet and smart phone penetration, the online learning space in India is growing manifold. The e-Learning market in India is estimated to be around \$3 billion. The central government's efforts to make digital learning available to students in every corner of the country are also aiding the sector (Business standard Feb7th, 2015). Now higher education in India has been diversified and extended its reach and coverage quite significantly.

India has a major role to play in the international e-Learning services industry. It is already one of the leading IT service provider countries, and it is now aiming to achieve the same position in the IT enabled services. The presence of world-class educational infrastructure and training professionals enables it to be one of the leading e-Learning services providers in the world. On the domestic front, the government and private sectors have taken many e-Learning initiatives. Though these

initiatives have been met with a lot of enthusiasm and user acceptance, their commercial viability is still under consideration. The government has been taking some proactive measures in a

regulatory and financial capacity to boost the e-Learning environment in India. India has also developed an Open University system to encourage distance learning (Sharma Sunil Kumar, 2014)

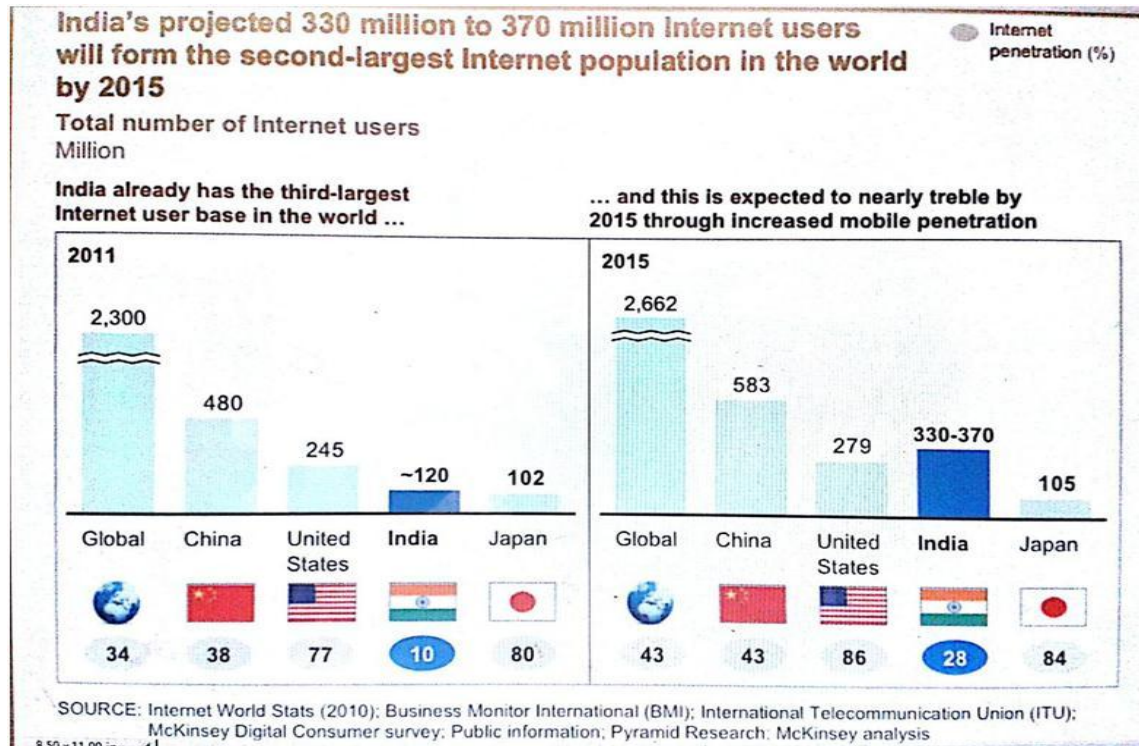


Fig.-1: Existing number of Internet Users

It clearly shows that e-Learning will also grow many folds in future and e-Learning has many advantages over traditional learning. In India, globalization of education has generated sudden quantitative growth in higher education

Scope of e-Learning

E-learning can be examined at two levels. The first one is education and another one is training. For education can be used at both elementary and higher levels. In training it can be used by companies to train and upgrade their employees. E-learning permits the delivery of knowledge and information to learners at an accelerated pace, opening up new vistas of knowledge transfer. Early adopters are companies that have tried to supplement face-to-face meetings, demonstrations, training classes and lectures with this

technology. The adoption of e-learning in all spheres like corporate, schools, universities, etc. is low at present. The Indian market is not substantial when compared to the international market. E-learning in India has been most successful in the corporate segment where it is seen as a means of achieving business goals and motivating employees. A lot of work has to be done to make e-learning successful for education, both formal and informal and to cultivate faith of people in online degrees in India apart from the ones given by renowned institutions like IITs. If e-learning reaches the remote and rural parts of India, it would be much faster to educate people. One major problem faced by India is that almost all highly skilled professionals are based in bigger cities that deprive the rural population from getting educated through

them. E-learning simplifies this process by taking the knowledge to masses provided that there's internet connectivity available at some nearby area. Even in the area of higher education, the supply and demand are not balanced.

Benefits of e-learning

- It is cost effective and saves time
- The self-paced aspect of e-learning shines through all obstacles
- E-learning results in a higher knowledge retention
- Tracking course progress becomes easier
- E-learning provides ample room to be discreet
- E-learning encourages sharing
- The target audience base for e-learning is quite large

Problems faced by e-learning

- The Internet is still a luxury in many parts of the country

A vast majority of the Indian population resides in rural areas. The lack of infrastructure in such areas gives rise to connectivity and accessibility issues. However, the Government of India has been instrumental in removing such barriers by implementing various measures. Two schemes have been launched to aid in e-learning implementation:

1. National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT)
2. National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning

These two schemes have been solely launched to implement ICT in video and web-based learning.

E-learning does not cover a lot of certification courses

The certifications that come with conventional learning are somehow lost in the e-learning concept of education. The e-learning courses do not cover a lot of certification courses that are recognized by colleges and universities across India or abroad. This pulls the e-learning courses out of sync with any stream of school education.

It would take some time to renovate the conventional educational system

The traditional education methods have enlightened generations for decades now. Even though you might feel that they have overstayed their welcome, it has become increasingly difficult for us to overthrow tradition completely and embrace newer methods of learning with open arms. However, renovations in the old-school methods have seen the light of the day with technology entering the industry. But a complete makeover in education with the e-learning methods would still require some time to establish itself.

Not all learners are tech-savvy

Even though the e-learning courses are available in a wide range of platforms for learners to choose from, a basic knowledge of how to operate those devices is imperative to benefit from the courses. And being a tech-savvy teacher becomes a primary requisite. Therefore, before e-learning could be implemented, learners and educators need to be educated about the ins and outs of technology to facilitate a smooth learning curve.

Lack of awareness

If a large part of the population isn't aware of the amazing benefits that e-learning has to offer, then how can it be expected to change the face of education in the coming years? Awareness plays a key role in making the proliferation of e-learning a joy ride. With that lacking, the future becomes questionable. While the challenges pose an impending storm rocking the e-learning ship violently, the numerous benefits calm the waves to a soothing cradle. E-learning streams in like a shining ray of hope, making education accessible for anyone, anywhere and anytime.

Ways to overcome the problems in e-Learning

Adaptability Struggle

Switching from traditional classroom and face to face instructor training to computer-based training in a virtual classroom makes the learning experience entirely different for students. Their resistance to change doesn't allow them to adapt to the online learning environment, whereas it takes time for them to get accustomed to Course Management Systems and the methods of computer-based education.

Students with a “traditional” mindset find it difficult to adapt; however, they need to accept the new learning circumstances with an open mind and heart. Understanding the benefits of eLearning and even discussing them with their peers may change this mindset and better prepare students for online classes.

Technical Issues

Many students are not provided with the high bandwidth or the strong internet connection that online courses require, and thus fail to catch up with their virtual classmates: Their weak monitors make it hard to follow the Course Management System and their learning experience becomes problematic. Moreover, most of them live off campus and find it difficult to keep in tune with the technical requirements of the chosen course. Some of them don't even own computers and seek help in Learning Resource Centers for technical assistance. The only solution to this problem knows exactly what kind of technological support they will need for a certain course before enrolling in it, as well as properly equipping themselves for the course's successful completion.

Computer Literacy

Although students are generally tech savvy and thus able to manage computers well, lack of computer literacy is a major issue among students today. Many of them cannot operate basic programs such as Microsoft Word, excel and PowerPoint and therefore are not able to handle their files. Furthermore, many students find fixing basic computer problems troublesome, as they have no knowledge in this area. However, technological proficiency is a must for following online courses, as it enables students to manage their assignments and courseware in an organized manner without struggling. Basic courses in computer literacy enhance students' knowledge in the field; having a fundamental knowledge of computer hardware would help them participate in online classes without interruptions and hindrances.

Time Management

Time management is a difficult task for e-Learners, as online courses require a lot of

time and intensive work. Furthermore, whereas it is mostly adults who prefer web-based learning programs for their place and time flexibility, they rarely have the time to take the courses due to their various everyday commitments. A regular schedule planner would be a significant help to these learners, as they could even set reminders for their courses and assignments.

Self-Motivation

Self-motivation is an eLearning essential requirement; however, many online learners lack it, much to their surprise. After enrolling in distance learning courses, many learners fall behind and nurture the idea of giving up, as difficulties in handling a technological medium also seem insurmountable. Students need to find the motivation to follow the new educational trends and also properly equip themselves for future challenges in their education and careers. Only a positive attitude will help them overcome the challenges in eLearning; though this is hard to practice, students need to understand that it is necessary in order to reap the e-Learning's benefits in the future.

Conclusion:

In a market such as India where the concept is still new, one crucial element that will make a difference in generating a good response is marketing. This not only holds true for segments such as government and education, but for the corporate sector as well. Experts are of the view that there needs to be a mindset for the adoption of e-learning. The other point is content. In underdeveloped countries, e-learning can raise the level of education, literacy and economic development. This is especially true for countries where technical education is expensive, opportunities are limited, and economic disparities exist. However, one of the problems with e-learning in India is the lack of course content, especially outside the mainstream focus areas of IT education, English-language content, and Lack of awareness. The Bottom line is that, the Indian market is still young, but it will continue to adopt the concept of e-learning in order to meet its communication needs and seize business opportunities.

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