“E Learning – The Next Religion of Education” An In-depth Analysis of its Effectiveness from Different Perspectives in Context of India

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Abstract

Learning in this new era of internet has changed completely moving from the traditional black board to ICT smart class and then to web based learning and the journey is still on. Due to its convenience in terms time and place now many students are adapting that mode of learning rather than the traditional college education. In this paper which is conceptual in nature we have analyzed and compared it with other International programs of similar nature. We also viewed the effectiveness of such programs from the perspective of employer, academician and the student.

Key words: E learning, Education effectiveness, ICT in learning.

1. Introduction

Considering the advent of internet and the way it has revolutionized the day today activities of life, the aspects of education and learning are not untouched by it. ICT has changed the way our classrooms were existing and at times it raises serious questions on the need of a teacher. Instant is new mantra of the young following those footsteps even educations has become instant, any time any where education.

With the new policy of Govt. of India providing online Engineering degrees as well along with the traditional diplomas and degrees this new form of education will provide a new twist in the academic circles. Till now there was nothing called self paced learning, everything was driven by the teacher or the instructor now the onus is on the student. There is a sea of change when it happens.

It is not easy to come to conclusion in a fast and dynamically changing environment however we have made an attempt to enhance our understanding in the current scenario. It is bound for further debate and discussion as time progresses.

2. Research objectives

i. To analyze and compare the online courses effectiveness with respect to the corporate engagements as viewed and expressed by managers and recruiters.
ii. To analyze and compare the online courses with respect to traditional classroom teaching in the perspective of academicians.
iii. To compare the Indian online courses (teaching resources & pedagogy) with that of the other similar international online courses.

3. Research Methodology

This research is exploratory in nature and this paper is a conceptual paper. The research is based basically on secondary data. Secondary data was collected from media reports. There are sufficient media reports since it created a sensation when it was introduced first in the west. Since then there are other institutions in other countries which introduced similar courses and by now there are a few relevant courses in India. Primary data was collected in the form of expert opinions. No statistical analysis was attempted. Suitable recommendations were made at the end.

4. Literature Review

There are numerous research papers in Europe on the subject of E Learning and its importance in the education system. No research paper was found for Indian education scenario. This gives a good potential to conduct research in this area.

3. The Present Scenario

E-learning broadly refers to the process of obtaining or equipping oneself with certain skills in the form of certification, diplomas & degrees that are provided online by authorized institutions. The primary objective of e-learning is education for all as there are many people who have to balance their work and education at the same time and also the economics of education has a major role to play. MOOC stands for a Massive Open Online Course. It is an online course aimed at large-scale participation and open (free) access via the internet. They are similar to university courses, but do not tend to offer academic credit. A number of web-based
platforms (initiatives) supported by top universities and colleges offer MOOCs in a wide range of subjects.

There are two general approaches to e-learning: self-paced and facilitated/instructor-led. Self-paced learners are alone and completely independent, while facilitated and instructor-led e-learning courses provide different levels of support from tutors and instructors and collaboration among learners. Often, e-learning courses combine both approaches, but for simplicity it is easy to consider the two separately.

e-learning approaches can combine different types of e-learning components, including: (a) e-learning content; (b) e-tutoring, e-coaching, e-mentoring; (c) collaborative learning; and (d) virtual classroom.

E-Learning can be Synchronous or Asynchronous. Synchronous events take place in real time. Synchronous communication between two people requires them to both be present at a given time. Examples of synchronous activities are chat conversations and audio/video conferencing. Asynchronous events are time-independent. A self-paced course is an example of asynchronous e-learning because online learning takes place at any time. E-mail or discussion forums are examples of asynchronous communication tools.

Quality of E learning programmes:

In 2010, an international quality standard for e-learning programmes – “Open ECB Check” – was officially released. ECB Check is an accreditation and quality improvement scheme for e-learning programmes which supports organizations in measuring the success of their programmes and allows for continuous improvement though peer collaboration. It was developed through an innovative and participative process involving more than 40 international, regional and national capacity-development organizations. ECB Check provides a set of quality criteria to assess e-learning programme design, development, management, delivery and evaluation, as well as the quality of learning materials, methodology, media, technology and e-tutoring.

In India

NPTEL is an acronym for National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning which is an initiative by seven Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT Bombay, Delhi, Guwahati, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras and Roorkee) and Indian Institute of Science (IISc) for creating course contents in engineering and science. NPTEL as a project originated from many deliberations between IITs, Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) during the years 1999-2003. A proposal was jointly put forward by five IITs (Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur and Madras) and IISc for creating contents for 100 courses as web based supplements and 100 complete video courses, for forty hours of duration per course. Web supplements were expected to cover materials that could be delivered in approximately forty hours. Five engineering branches (Civil, Computer Science, Electrical, Electronics and Communication and Mechanical) and core science programmes that all engineering students are required to take in their undergraduate engineering programme in India were chosen initially. Contents for the above courses were based on the model curriculum suggested by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the syllabi of major affiliating Universities in India.

FLEXILEARN by IGNOU has brought education to the desktop of any person. It allows you to access free and open courses of the Indira Gandhi National Open University. This is a personal learning space where free learning resources are integrated with learning management system for anyone who wants to learn, whatever their educational needs and experience. Flexi Learn facilitates informed learning wherein, anyone can register and explore courses free of cost to gain knowledge and skill in a particular area of interest. Certification for courses will be based on payment of the requisite fees.

Other technical universities such as Anna University-Tamilnadu, VTU-Karnataka, JNTU-Andhra Pradesh etc have come up with their e-Learning Centre to keep up with the demands of a fast-changing education scene, the e-Learning Centre has accorded due role to industry in developing e-Learning content and research activity. Most of the E-Learning Centre’s have diversified with their full fledged activities like EDUSAT based live transmission, Web based e-learning, E-Vidya Media Streaming Solutions, Courses with 3D Animations, SCORM Content, Innovative Workshops for research scholars, Faculty Development Programmes, NMEICT-NPTEL Project and other technology enhanced learning initiatives for the benefit of Students Community and Faculty Members.

In US & Europe

EdX is a joint partnership between The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University to offer online learning to millions of people around the world. EdX will offer Harvard and MIT classes online for free. Through this partnership, the institutions aim to extend their collective reach to build a global community of online learners and to improve education for everyone.

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, welcomes the new initiative: “This is an exciting development and I hope it will open up education to tens of thousands of students and trigger our schools and universities to adopt more innovative and flexible teaching methods. The MOOCs movement has already proved popular, especially in the US, but this pan-European launch takes the scheme to a new level. It reflects European values such as equity, quality and diversity and the partners involved are a guarantee for high-quality learning. We see this as a key part of the Opening up Education strategy which the Commission will launch this summer.”

Courses range from mathematics to economics, e-skills to e-commerce, climate change to cultural heritage, corporate social responsibility to the modern Middle East, and language learning to writing fiction. Each partner is offering courses via it’s on the own learning platform and at least in its home language. The current choice is from the 11 languages of the partners (see list below), plus Arabic.

Courses can be taken either in a scheduled period of time or anytime at the student’s own pace. They typically involve from 20 to 200 hours of study. All courses may lead to recognition: a completion certificate, a so-called badge, or a credit certificate that may count towards a degree. In the latter case, students
have to pay for the certificate, with the cost ranging from € 25 to € 400, depending on the course size (the hours of study involved) and institution.

4. **Results and Data Analysis**

The results of the research are presented here in terms of SWOT Analysis.

**Strength:**

*In view of Academicians*

Significant amount of content can be delivered to a large number of learners.

Learners can be geographically dispersed locations yet interacting with each other.

Infrastructural capacity inadequacies can be overcome.

Learners are highly motivated to learn and appreciate proceeding at their own pace.

There is a need to collect and track data monitoring becomes easy.

Visually challenged and physically challenged students can also use it.

Keywords can be indexed so relooking at the lecture can be easily done.

Auditory mode of learning with a headset on regulates your concentration and deviations can be avoided.

The content can be translated into any language of choice and can be delivered.

Packaged training modules can be delivered at any place at any time.

*In the view of the Students*

Being a self paced learning it is considered more effective.

Choice of variety in the subjects that can be chosen based on their feasibility and interest.

Flexibility of time and place.

Learners who are balancing work with education have limited daily time to devote to learning for them it’s very useful.

There is no peer pressure.

*In View of Corporate /Recruiters*

Candidate’s exposure to international standards of knowledge is appreciated.

He has more relevant skills than just degrees of diplomas.

Knowledge matters the most not the source of it so online or regular it is not a matter of concern.

**Weakness:**

*In view of Academicians*

Knowing that student is paying attention and is involved in the lecture.

In third world countries and remote areas internet connectivity is still a problem.

Measuring the outcome of the lecture becomes difficult.

The content has to be altered completely in the new for e learning.

Peer pressure can drive wonders which are missing.

*In the view of the Students*

Although it’s flexible it does not provide a firm timeline for finishing the course so things can be taken for granted, procrastination creeps in.

Not everyone will be able to follow the lecture and interrupting and clarifying then and there becomes difficult.

They feel isolated as there is no physical interaction with other students.

Learner reaction and satisfaction levels are difficult to measure.

There is tons of freedom for those students that take online classes; however, this freedom can be a dangerous thing if the person cannot handle it.

The biggest disadvantage of e learning is the need to keep you motivated and disciplined.

The coaching and mentoring as an individual will become a challenge.

*In View of Corporate /Recruiters*

Branding of the institution plays major role i.e online courses should be from a reputed institute.

The content of the course needs to be analyzed irrespective of the delivery mode.

**Opportunities:** (in a condensed form of Academicians, Students & Corporate)

As the population grows the no of people who want to take up higher studies also increases so people who aspire to study with limited expenses can utilize this mode.

There are no physical barriers for learning so it becomes easy to enroll and gain the knowledge and certificate.

The best will deliver the best and everyone gets the advantage of the same.

Time will not be able to kill the lectures they become immortal so they become a part of knowledge bank.

**Threats:** (in a condensed form of Academicians, Students & Corporate)

The market will be flooded with degrees and diplomas leading to lot many choices.

Traditional collages may fade out.

The human touch may be out there by taking out the traditional value systems of education like respect, gender sensitivity etc.

The perceived value of online degrees and diplomas still requires a considerable revision.

5. **Conclusion**

The corporate recruiters are ready to accept online degrees and diplomas provided that they are from institutes of repute.

The effectiveness of class room teaching or through e – learning has least impact on the knowledge acquiring process of the student.

The Indian online courses are at par with any international courses there is no second thought in it.

There was a similar situation of confusion and quality when distance education courses were offered however things settled and distance education was accepted and it continues to grow.
similarly e learning will undergo turmoil but it will be there to rule the future of education.

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