
DEVELOPMENT & ISSUE OF E-LEARNING IN LIS-EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

E-Learning is as an approach to instruction and learning that utilize Information and communication technologies to communicate and collaborate in an educational milieu. This includes technological expertise that supplements traditional classroom training with web-based components and learning environments where the educational process is experienced online. This paper reflects the importance of e- learning in higher education with its extent and growth in Indian LIS education.

KEYWORDS: E-Learning; Higher Education trend

INTRODUCTION

At the time of independence, India inherited an education system with glaring disparities between males and females, between upper and lower classes, between economically advantaged and disadvantaged groups and urban and rural population. Consequently, one of the primary responsibilities of the Government of India after independence was to make education available to all her people. This responsibility was sought to be realized through the opening of more and more primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. However the formal education system alone was found to be unable to meet the demand for education. The access to education remained limited. The report of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1993) underlined the fact that only seven percent of the relevant age group is enrolling for higher education in India. Today even the most affluent countries are convinced that they will not be able to provide adequate education to people as long as they exclusively depend on the formal education stream. There is no doubt that there has been appreciable quantitative expansion in the formal system of education. But the quality of education is abysmally low. The relevance education provided through Universities and colleges has also been called into question. Universities have been referred to as “Ivory Towers”. All these factors underlined the need to develop an alternative to provide access to quality education to all. The result was the expansion of distance education which was seen to hold the potential to achieve universalisation and democratization of education.

HISTORY

Historically, distance education can be traced back to the 18th century, to the beginning of print-based correspondence study in the US. In the mid-19th century correspondence education started to develop and to spread in Europe (Great Britain, France and Germany) and the United States. Isaac Pitman, the English inventor of shorthand, is generally recognized as the first person to use correspondence courses. By the late 1960's and early 1970's significant changes in distance learning occurred due to development of new media technologies and delivery systems. The Open University (OU) in Great Britain became the first autonomous institution to offer college degrees through distance education. The OU now uses all possible forms of technology to deliver learning to students. Open and distance learning in India dates back to the 1960s. By the 1980s there were 34 universities offering correspondence education through departments designed for that purpose. The first single mode Open University was established in Andhra Pradesh in 1982, followed by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), and subsequently in Bihar, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh (established throughout 1980s and 1990s). The establishment of these single mode distance education universities was stimulated by the government's intention to democratize education and make it lifelong. The initiative did not discourage the

expansion at the same time of correspondence programmes in dual mode universities. The year 1995 witnessed the enrollment of 200,000 students in open and distance learning, accounting for 3% of total higher education enrollment.

USE OF E-LEARNING FOR TEACHING BY THE LIS DEPARTMENTS

As discussed earlier, printed and online resources are in use by academic community. To study in-depth regarding use and adaptability of E-Learning among the academic community, for teaching and learning purpose especially by the LIS departments besides traditional methods, the question “E-Learning is an electronic mode of instruction / method of teaching, besides traditional teaching would you like to use E-learning for teaching?”

Table-1
Use of E-learning for Teaching by the LIS Departments

| Total | Yes (%) | No (%) | Did Not Respond (%) |
|-------|-------------|----------|---------------------|
| 330 | 298 (90.30) | 12(3.64) | 20(6.06) |

Result represented in Table 1 shows that 90.30% of the users are using ELearning or would like to use E-Learning for teaching and learning purposes, 3.64 % not in a support to use E-Learning, 6.06 did not responded. Isam, Choudhary & Islam (2009) discussed e-learning with reference to Bangladesh and expressed that an immediate dedicated decision needed to ensure an appropriate E-Learning environment for LIS education. Similar kind of decision needed in favour e-learning for LIS education of India also. Gokhale (2009) mentioned that the E-Learning could be a suitable alternative for existing teaching learning. Chandawani & Anilkumar (2010) E-Learning is the extended form of traditional classroom teaching, highlighted initiatives taken by several institutions and Library centers around the world and in India. Bhabal (2009) study discussed briefly E-Learning in LIS and focuses on ELearning at SHPT School of Library Science, discussed the syllabus, teaching and assessment practices used to train library science students. The aim is to make aware and train the students in latest technologies useful for library science profession. State of art technology savvy professional can enter in the emerging job market confidently, will be in a position to apply their professional and technological knowledge effectively and efficiently. Malhan (2011) expressed that old and new methods need to be mixed and blended in a right proportions to provide a rich and fulfilling learning experience to the learners. The traditional education with E-Learning methods can complements each other (Kumbhar, 2009). Based on discussed results and literature it can be stated that academic community would like to use E-Learning besides traditional teaching, and learning due to its enormous advantages.

LIS EDUCATION

The first training course in Library Science in India was established at the Central Library, Baroda in 1911/12 by W. A. Borden and at Punjab University in 1915 by A. D. Dickinson. Gradually other universities and library associations started setting up library schools. Madras Library Association and Bengal Library Association started certificate courses in 1929 and 1935 respectively. Postgraduate courses also started in other universities subsequently, such as Andhra University (1935), Banaras Hindu University (1941) and University of Delhi (1947). The University of Delhi started providing facilities for research leading to doctorate degrees. It was the first institution to start the M.Phil courses in 1977. In addition to formal teaching courses, many universities have introduced correspondence courses at various levels of education. This provides facilities to library personnel working at the lower level to improve their qualifications and update their limited knowledge and skills and also to those who could not get admission to formal courses earlier. In India, Library Science has almost been recognized as an established discipline now at par with other social sciences courses in the university education system. In spite of this, LIS education is currently facing a turning point. Various factors have contributed to bring about the change from the conventional to an automated library operation. Today only computerised libraries can participate in networking at the national and international levels. Most of the computerised libraries suffer from paucity of competent personnel at top and middle level managerial positions.

E-LEARNING IN INDIA

The e-learning, though reached India late of course, but it is being fast accepted in a big way. The India perhaps has watched the success of west in adopting e-learning and is trying hard to implement it. Over the past few years, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has been trying to achieve the target of making education accessible to every corner of the country. Still there are many parts of the country, which are in darkness about e-learning (MALIK, 2009). Due to the growing Indian economy, India has a chance to become heart of e-learning programs. There are many e-learning classes which are coming to India to build and develop e-learning infrastructure.

The e-learning does not seem to replace the conventional classrooms with black boards but it seems to coexist with the already existing system. This system rather promises to reach too far off rural areas in India where education is still a looming darkness. This objective can be achieved by providing PCs at low cost with broadband connection. The chances of e-learning to strengthen the educational system in India are very high. Furthermore the Government has also come forward undertaking the programs of upgrading the technical quality of the fresh graduates inciting them to go into research and teaching professions. The e-learning is fast growing and seems to take control of the world because of its educational advantages (SAHA, 2010).

The scope of e-learning is much wider in India with many e-learning companies stepping forward in providing the service. Though nothing can actually outrun the popularity of traditional classroom teaching, e-learning only gives more value to the process, independent of the distance factor. In India, e-learning scenario is still growing and at an experimental stage. The traditional mindsets are changing, with the corporate and business sector leading the way in embracing technology- based learning networks.

ONLINE EDUCATION SCOPE AND GROWTH IN INDIA

The scope of open distance education in India is actually much wider. Apart from proper course works, some E-learning portals in India are also conducting ridicule mock tests for various competitive examinations like engineering, medical, management etc. There are many E-learning portals in India which are providing tutorials for school students also. Thus, the reach of E-learning in India has expanded from adults to youth.

The future of E-learning industry in India seems to be vibrant as number of Internet users is growing in the country, at quite a reasonable rate and more, and more reputed players are showing their interest in the e-learning business. The global revenue of world stands about US\$36 billion by 2010 and e-learning market in India stands at US\$11 million in 2010. The e-learning market in India is in an infant stage and in 2002 it was approximately US\$ 4-5 million with an expected four year annual growth rate of 20-25 per cent. Companies such as McGraw-Hill, Digital Think, Skill Soft, and Mentergy are setting up operations in India which is a positive sign for the e-learning segment. In the recently published report 'E-Learning Outsourcing 2009: Advantage India', the estimated growth in the e-learning off shoring industry at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 15% through 2012 is reaching USD \$603 million (it is now US\$ 341 million) (BANDUNI, 2008). While the economic recession will impact growth for the next few quarters, the market will recover and grow faster until 2012.

CHALLENGES TO E-LEARNING

Some of the challenges that e-learning initiatives from the Institutions of Higher Education Management could face are:

- For those Institutions offering online e-learning course, awarding a Recognized Degree for students might become imperative. Most students and their potential employers are happy only when a certifying endorsement is given.

- A fall out of the above could be escalating a number of Online Institutions offering courses with spurious certificates, which may not have any value.
- Since, the e-learning method is self-paced and self-learned, the attention length of the student may not be enough for him/her to learn a concept.
- Generally the duration of the course also matters in this mode of lecture delivery.
- Lastly, the Legal implications of e-learning come into play. Once again, we should not forget that e-learning over internet is across geographical boundaries. This makes it all the more, tougher for the enforcing authorities to have a global legal framework for the net offender

E-LEARNING IN INDIAN LIS-EDUCATION

The scope of LIS education in India has undergone sea changes with the rapid expansion of research and development activities, particularly in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). For qualitative improvement of LIS education in India, there is a need to introduce new courses based on ICTs in different LIS schools to face new challenges. In fact, technology has not only affected operations of library services but also LIS education itself. There is a need to integrate qualitative changes in LIS education to:

- Increase excellence of LIS students to meet the growing demands in e- environment.
- Face challenges due to the growing influence of ICT and its impact on LIS education.
- Suit ever-increasing demands for trained LIS professionals.
- Amplify career opportunities for LIS professionals.
- Use internet-based e-learning courses which are growing day-by-day.
- Adopt and promote e-publishing which is being fast accepted by the users.
- Transform traditional and habitual mode of LIS education in India.
- The appropriate utilization of technology for imparting LIS courses can produce better results. It has now become indispensable to consider the utilization of online learning environment in LIS education. The main objectives for providing LIS education in online environment must be:
- To cover broad perspectives of the core principles of Library and Information Science and its applicability in the new milieu.
- To understand the managerial activities of Library and Information systems in present context.
- To comprehend the principles of knowledge organization, management, retrieval and delivery.
- To develop practical skills in new online virtual environment to countenance the challenges.
- To educate learners in the tune of market demands.
- To offer online information skills.

The education and training in LIS in the digital environment shall contribute to accomplish the following:

- Extensive theoretical and practical knowledge of information management and Business.
- Behavioral attitudes and understanding and information needs of individuals and institutions
- Financial and quantitative methods of analyzing organizational information
- Problem solving methodology
- Analytical abilities and critical thinking expertise
- Research theories and practices
- Human resource management and quantitative practices and management
- Competence in information handling
- Online information skills
- Expertise in the use of electronic information
- In depth understanding of information organization, marketing and using information retrieval systems
- Analytical abilities to access information and to understand the principles of the organization of knowledge

FUTURE OF E-LEARNING IN INDIA

Compared to an almost 80% literacy rate in urban India, that in rural areas is only 56%. Further, the average teacher: student ratio at primary level is 1:58 in rural regions (CHOUBEY, 2009). The perfection and improvement of connectivity is another area of concern. India needs to increase penetration in terms of PCs and communication lines for any e-learning project to be successful. The soaring cost of ownership, which proves to be a hurdle, needs to be lowered. Following steps could help in arresting the above problems:

- The Service providers, including the Government need to cut the tariff levels. As the field becomes more and more competitive, this is bound to happen.
- The government needs to stimulate a learning culture and e-learning must become a policy issue. Government must distinguish the e-learning industry as a separate forum and not treat it as part of the IT enabled services (ITeS) or a sub sector of the IT industry.
- Use of open source software will not only be cost effective but can also meet the localized demands for the vast linguistic diversity of India. Further, open source software can also be used on old hardware.

CONCLUSION

The e-learning is emerging as the future trend of learning in India would be dominant in the times ahead. E-Learning has created new dimensions in education, both within and beyond the curriculum and is still looking at further opportunities of becoming more practical. A word of concern at this juncture would serve good, though, the e-learning seems to be a solution for an absent teacher, deploying such an atmosphere would be requiring much thought. In India many states have come out with IT policies, they have highlighted IT in education to make the future generation “Techno-savvy” and to be “information literate”. E-Learning related provisions in policies need to be considered. “National Mission on Education through ICT” (NME-ICT) of India and E-pG pathashala made efforts to create content, developed systems in this regard, but due to lack of national guidelines, policies, and strategies and lack of co-ordination among the various projects has resulted duplication of efforts and initiatives. Development of model plan, policy, and strategy is much needed to have systematic development in regard of E-Learning implementation and use.

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