Implementing E-Learning in Teacher Education – Issues and Problems

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ABSTRACT

The present day children are living in knowledge economy. Knowledge is the power and every child should possess maximum knowledge to survive in this competitive world, regardless of the nation in which the child exists. E-learning is one of the powerful tools and all powerful sources of knowledge, which is necessary for current and future generations. With e-learning, one can provide more content in the same timeframe, as distractions are kept aside in some cases and to a minimum level at some occasions. E-learning is an opportunity for us to raise the bar and march forward to higher levels. E-learning is also an opportunity to make more effective use of scarce resources – our professors and their expertise. It is a known fact that many researches have proved and placed E-learning at the height of achievement of students at different levels. However, here, an attempt is made to enumerate the issues and problems of implementing this all powerful E-learning in Teacher Education Level.

INTRODUCTION

E-Learning could be rightly defined as the Learning experiences facilitated through the use of electronic resources and designed to support the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, skills, attitudes, aspirations, and behaviours for the purpose of improving teaching and learning and consequently increasing students achievement. Knowledge includes information, theories, principles, and research. Skills are the strategies and processes to apply knowledge. Attitudes are beliefs about the value of particular information or strategies. Aspirations are the desires or internal motivation to engage in a particular practice. Behaviours are the consistent application of knowledge and skills.

E-learning includes multiple uses of technology to facilitate learning. The uses range from the simple to more sophisticated. Videotape and audiotape are simpler forms of technology-mediated learning. Computer-based learning such as computer-aided instruction and tutorials represent different forms of e-learning. Internet-based learning such as online courses and web-based videoconferencing represent still other forms of e-learning.

Technology mediated learning requires more level of support and resources to ensure effectiveness than the traditional face-to-face teaching learning process. Learning process may include collaboration, inquiry, dialogue and reflection that ultimately seeks to increase the student achievement. Here, in this paper, an attempt is made to pin point the key issues and problems of implementing E-learning in the Teacher Education Programme.

TECHNOLOGY – VEHICLE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Here are a few points enumerated on how Technology serves as a vehicle for the development of classroom instructions in Teacher Education.

- It alters the learning environment;

- It provides new structures and media for reflecting, communicating, and acting;
- It facilitates modeling and visualization of the learner;
- It allows learners for construction and discovery of knowledge;
- It expands access to information, networks, people, and ideas;
- It increases the flexibility of time and places for learning; and
- It provides significant resources.

On the whole it could be rightly summarized that Technology brings the world of learning to the learners, rather than requiring learners to go in search of the learning aspects and materials.

ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTING E-LEARNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION

When considering the implementation of e-learning into the system of education, attention must be paid to the demands to be met at different levels. It is a known fact that the difficulty of implementation varies from primary level to university level. At primary level, e-learning is only a supplement to traditional lessons, while at Teacher Education level tutorials can be made up entirely of e-learning elements. Here are some issues listed down in the implementation of E-learning in Teacher Education Programme.

- **Results Oriented:** It is essential to ensure that results are measured in terms of increased student achievement. It must be used in such a way that it facilitates the learners in achieving their goal rather than disgusting.

- **Content Quality:** Much is available online; however, not all that is online is of the same quality. Course content and program design vary significantly from product to product. Content is most effective or appropriate for the learners when it is linked to school, district, state, and national standards. Yet, even this alignment can potentially limit content quality. It may reflect a limited emphasis on inquiry learning, project-based activities, or collaborative learning models in favor of "drill and kill" learning models as was characteristic of early models of computer-assisted learning. Technology should enhance and support the content, not limit it.

- **Content Flexibility:** E-learning provides the flexibility to design or select the specific content learners need at the moment. Content flexibility allows learners to determine areas in which they want to spend additional time, seek alternative resources, and choose to deepen their own learning in areas of interest or need.

- **Flexible Time:** Traditional formal face-to-face teaching learning – conferences, courses, seminars, meetings, consultant presentations, and training sessions, for example – happens when it is scheduled. If the participants are unavailable at the scheduled time, the opportunity for learning is lost. However, technology makes it possible to extend the opportunity for learning beyond scheduled time. Therefore with e-learning, educators are no longer restricted to scheduled time.

- **Learner Readiness:** Learners' needs and preferences for learning media, structures, and processes differ. Not all learners will be comfortable and successful with e-learning, just as not all learners are successful in a lecture setting. E-learning requires self-directed, motivated, and independent learners with some competence and comfort in computer literacy and navigation. In addition, learners who have limited or no experience with e-learning may be reticent to jump in until they have confidence that they have the skills necessary to be successful.

- **Follow-up Support:** Technology facilitates the ways educators can extend their own learning, seek help from others, solve problems associated with implementation, and receive feedback and support from both experts and colleagues.

Designing e-learning that incorporates follow-up support will make the difference. Technology facilitates multiple structures for ongoing support, collaboration, feedback, and extended learning. When these elements are embedded into the design of e-learning and available over time, participants will likely be more successful in the application of learning. Electronic support can be coupled with face-to-face classroom-based support to offer even more assistance for participants.

- **Strengthening Networks:** Educators learn from other educators. They often report that exchanging ideas and information and solving common problems with those in similar roles is a powerful form of their learning. Technology expands opportunities and eases the physical challenges of networking by linking educators anytime, anywhere with others in similar roles. These electronic learning teams provide educators a forum for discussing authentic issues, learning from each other's experiences, sharing resources, and coaching or mentoring each other. Virtual networks can substitute for face-to-face meetings while providing the similar advantages.

- **Use of Technology:** Technology can be either slick or substantive. E-learning for educators depends on appropriate use of the available technologies to enhance and facilitate learning rather than making it convoluted and complex. In some ways the technology should be as invisible in the learning process as possible to allow the content and the process of learning to remain in the forefront.

- **Technical Support:** E-learners, especially those new to e-learning, will be more successful if they have access to technical support during their learning. Technical support can be available in a variety of formats, online through searchable help programs, in chats, via e-mail, by telephone, or face-to-face. Access to support in using the technology is important to learners who encounter problems during their learning time. When problems occur with connectivity, the program, hardware, or learners' capabilities, the more immediate the support, the more likely the learner will be to continue participation. Frequent problems can lead to increased dropouts among e-learners.

- **Interactivity:** A leading cause of dropping out in e-learning is isolation among learners and a lack of direction and motivation. Increased interactivity among participants and the instructor through immediate feedback, frequent assessments, shared assignments, and small study teams, will create a cyber-community among learners. When examining programs, products, and services, consumers will want to know, among other things, how interactivity is structured, how often it is expected and it occurs, how easy various communication systems work, and if there is the option for private and public communication within the learning group.

- **Places for Learning:** Learning will become an integral part of the learners if the facilities for learning are readily available, comfortable, and conducive for learning. Educators need a suitable learning environment that provides easy access to e-learning programs and services; accommodates individual and small group work comfortably with the technology; meets ergonomic standards; and integrates various technologies. A suitable learning environment improves educators' motivation to access e-learning resources. Individual classrooms and offices equipped to accommodate brief learning episodes increase learners' flexibility and efficiency.

- **Cost:** Those considering the purchase of online products and services for learning analyze the related costs – not only of purchasing the products, but also of providing the infrastructure necessary to realize their full potential. Infrastructure includes both behind the wall wiring and electricity, as well as hardware and software, technical support, ongoing maintenance, and equipment upgrades. Costs include both financial and human resource investments in e-learning. Greater access to information and increased opportunities for educator learning can both reduce and increase cost.

Programs available in market are not necessarily less expensive to purchase or implement than traditional face-to-face leaning; however, they may be more convenient and flexible. While costs for travel, substitutes, facilities, materials, and consultants may be reduced, it is prudent to invest these savings to ensure the availability of the highest quality programs, high speed, stable connectivity, readily available technical support, ongoing job-embedded learning, collaboration, planning, and implementing new practices.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Advantages of e-learning often include flexibility and convenience for the learner especially if they have other commitments, facilitation of communication between learners, greater adaptability to a learner's needs, more variety in learning experience with the use of multimedia and the non-verbal presentation of teaching material. Video instruction provides visual and audio learning that can be paused, and reversed for watching again. E-learning has huge benefits when compared with organizing classroom training. Some are critical of e-learning in the context of education, because the face-to-face human interaction with a teacher has been removed from the process, and thus, some argue, the process is no longer "educational" in the highest philosophical sense.

The feeling of isolation experienced by distance learning students is also often cited, although discussion forums and other computer-based communication can in fact help ameliorate this and in particular can often encourage students to meet face-to-face and form self-help groups. Discussion groups can also be formed online. Human interaction, faculty-to-student as well as student-to-student, should be encouraged in any form.

The cost-effectiveness of e-learning is a subject of debate as there is usually much upfront investment is required to implement it. Web and software development in particular can be expensive as can systems specifically geared for e-learning. The development of adaptive materials is also much more time-consuming than that of non-adaptive ones. Consequently, some of the cost is often forwarded to the students as online college courses tend to cost more than traditional courses.

CONCLUSION

Education is a life long and complex process. The pattern of education and its transaction process is changing very fast. A curriculum of latest demand may be outdated in a couple of years due to the fast changing need of the society. Quality has become the keyword in the present globe due to globalization, industrialization and liberalization. There is no existence without quality. E-learning is a powerful tool which can achieve some remarkable results and magical output. E-learning keeps people at the top of the world. E-learning leverages technology in new and powerful ways to develop enthusiastic, skilled learners and keep them current and operating in peak form. Though E-learning has some disadvantages in terms of inconveniences in installation and cost effectiveness, implementation of the same at Teacher Education level would serve a lot for the student community, who are the pillars of the next generation.

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