Learning Goes Hi-Tech

Pralhad Jadhav, KM & Library, Senapati Bapat Marg, Mumbai, India

ABSTRACT

The need for usage of technologies which removes the boundaries of time and location increases day by day today when information and accession to information gains importance. The evolution in education and training at a distance can be characterised as a move from dLearning (distance learning) to eLearning (electronic learning) to mLearning (mobile learning). Though the environment in which a student and a teacher interact has considerably changed, the basics of a student-teacher relationship remain the same. The avenues for obtaining information for students are plenty now. The study concludes on four major concerns with regard to implementing m-Learning into an educational environment that is Cost factor, Accessibility, Usability and Compatibility.

Keywords: Distance Education, E-Learning, Learning Technology, Mobile Devices, Mobile Learning (mLearning), Mobile Technology, Wireless Learning Environment, Wireless Revolution

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional education is carried out in classrooms where the teacher presents the learning material to a group of students. The education technology depends mainly on the teacher and the students must physically participate in the learning process. Regardless of obvious advantages of direct contact between a teacher and a student and immediate feedback, the traditional classroom education has many disadvantages. For example if the student has no ability to take part in some lesson he or she will miss the training material. These disadvantages lead to search for new and more effective educational methods.

However, the educational industry has entered the fourth stage of its development that is the use of “Communication and Information Technology (ICT)”. This revolution in the educational industry was preceded by three previous ones. Carnegie Foundation summarized these three revolutions as follows:

1. The invention of writing;
2. The use of textbooks in schools after the invention of printing;
3. The appearance of mainstream education.

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The fourth revolution can contribute to the achievement of the mainstream education by employing E-Learning technologies, communication and networking technologies to facilitate learners in accessing the learning material.

2. EVOLUTION IN EDUCATION

The evolution in education and training at a distance (see Figure 1) can be characterised as a move from dLearning (distance learning) to eLearning (electronic learning) to mLearning (mobile learning). These three stages of development correspond to the influence on society of the Industrial Revolution of the 18th to 19th centuries, the Electronics Revolution of the 1980s and the Wireless Revolution of the last years of the 20th century.

3. DISTANCE LEARNING OR D–LEARNING

Distance learning makes it much easier for some students to complete a degree or get additional job-training while balancing work and family commitments. Because the hours when class work can be completed are flexible, as most distance learning programs allow students to work at their own pace and on their own time, many students can complete their work during times when they are free, rather than scheduling their lives around a set classroom time.

Distance learning is also a great tool to help reach students who are in geographically remote areas and may not have readily available access to educational facilities or who want to explore opportunities not offered by their local schools. Of course, schools are not the only institutions who are taking advantage of distance learning, as many businesses have found it a valuable tool in making employee education and training quicker and more cost efficient.

4. ELECTRONIC LEARNING OR E-LEARNING

The term “E-Learning” was coined in the late 1990s to describe the use of technology to deliver learning and training programs. E-Learning is a term that means something different to almost everyone who uses it. Some think of it only as a web-based self-study while others realize

Figure 1. Evolution in education

![Diagram showing the evolution from d-Learning to e-Learning to m-Learning](image-url)
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