

A Study into the Effects of e-Learning On Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The Internet is a development of technology that has the potential to change but not only the way of society retains and accesses knowledge but also to transform and restructure traditional models of higher education, particularly the delivery and interaction in and with course materials and associated resources. Utilizing the Internet to deliver e-Learning initiatives has created expectations both in the business market and in higher education institutions. Indeed, e-Learning has expanded on their current geographical reach, to capitalize on new prospective students and to establish themselves as global educational providers. This paper examines the issues surrounding the implementation of e-Learning into higher education and the global impact on society.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

e-Learning is construed in a variety of contexts, such as distance learning, online learning and networked learning. In the context of this paper all of these instances will be considered as to describe the e-Learning that utilizes information communications technology (ICT) to promote educational interaction between students, lecturers and learning communities

that fast expansion of the Internet and related technological advancements, in conjunction with limited budgets and social demands for improved access to higher education, has produced a substantial incentive for universities to introduce e-Learning course. e-Learning as a means of delivering higher education, but some critical success factors are also associated with introducing online models of education.

2.0 ASPECTS OF E-LEARNING

e-Learning is very beneficial in organizations. Here are some of the benefits of e-Learning

2.1 Supports the Organization's Goals

e-Learning helps in achieving organizations goals, like

- Improved training costs. Producing learning content is time consuming whether it's online or not. With e-Learning, each time the course is accessed your return on investment improves because you are dividing the fixed production costs by number of users.
- Decreased material costs. By creating the environment online and letting the learner practice, you never have to worry about the costs associated with set up, use, and clean up.

- Increased productivity. e-Learning is not bound by geography or time, you can control training's impact on production by training people during down times. So e-Learning is a great way to give them the tools and skills needed to enhance their performance.
- Standardization. e-Learning allows you to create a standardized process and consistency in the delivery of content. It also compresses delivery time. I've combined E-Learning courses with facilitated

2.2 Supports the Learner's Development

e-Learning helps in overall development of the learner, like

- **Real-time access:** During e-Learning course contents can be accessed anytime, anywhere.
- **Improved retention:** The combination of multimedia and instructional design can produce a very rich learning experience that is repeatable.

2.3 Enhanced Teaching Tools

The future delivery of education is envisaged through e-Learning technology providing lecturers with superior teaching tools. Online methods facilitate more effective education and offer significant advantages over traditional teaching methods. Firstly, educational re-engineering that will revolutionize classroom practices and secondly educational fortification that will improve the learning courseware through technology. Rita Falcão[6] in her research work shown impact of e-learning by the results of average grade distribution for the course Statistics before and after e-Learning(Fig. 1&2)

2.4 The Learning Environment

E-Learning environment offers students an improved learning experience when compared to a more traditional learning environment. Teare[7] found that student participants on e-Learning university courses using techniques such as virtual lectures and bulletin boards, achieved better grades than students who studied in traditional learning settings. The constraints of conventional university teaching practices with regards to group working are removed in e-Learning environments, as students can participate in group activities without actually being situated in the same location. This seems that the e-Learning environments loose the time and space restrictions associated with traditional university practices.

2.5Nurtures the Learning Community

- Ongoing access to resources. Continue to have access to the online content and resources to brush up on what you learned.
- Knowledge management. E-Learning includes all sort of online technologies. If you incorporate some of the tools that allow collaboration and conversation, you can capture organizational knowledge that is available for future learners.
- Encourage sharing. The foundation of a learning community is built on sharing what you know with others.
- Employer of choice. People want opportunities to grow. This allows them to explore other opportunities in the organization.

3.0 ADVANTAGES OF E-LEARNING

Some major benefits of e-learning are as follows:

- Class work can be scheduled around personal and professional work.
- Reduces travel cost and time to and from school.
- Learners may have the option to select learning materials that meets their level of knowledge and interest.
- Learners can study wherever they have access to a computer and Internet.
- Different learning styles are addressed and facilitation of learning occurs through varied activities.
- Development of computer and Internet skills that are transferable to other facets of learner's lives.
- Successfully completing online or computer-based courses builds self-knowledge and self-confidence and encourages students to take responsibility for their learning.

4.0 DISADVANTAGES OF E-LEARNING

- Unmotivated learners or those with poor study habits may fall behind.
- Lack of familiar structure and routine may take getting used to.
- Students may feel isolated or miss social interaction.
- Instructor may not always be available on demand.
- Slow or unreliable Internet connections can be frustrating.
- Managing learning software can involve a learning curve.
- Some courses such as traditional hands-on courses can be difficult to simulate.

5.0 INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SCENARIO

Higher Education in India consists of various streams i.e arts, science, management, technical and professional education. Since the Indian knowledge industry is into its initial stage, the strategy of survival of the fittest holds good. The foreign

institutions are also trying to join the Indian Market, so the less effective educational institutions are forced to merge themselves with others or they are forced to go out of market. If this system is well planned, students can reach the knowledge of remote and unreachable locations at very less cost. Institutes like IITs are adopting all latest technologies and are keeping their students enlightened from various parts of the world. e-Learning has vast potential in India. A major marketing and awareness effort will bring about the desirable change. UGC, NAAC, ICSSR, DBT, NCERT, ICHR, NEEPA, AICTE and other agencies of ISO 9000 family are pushing from various directions to bring the slow growers to walk with the rest. University Grants Commission provides e-Learning programs like EDUSAT and INFONET. The IT service sector export of India has grown up from US \$ 754 millions in 1995-96 to US \$ 12,000 millions in 2004-05. The annual growth based on the trend analysis is US \$ 573 in India and US \$ 1038 in TamilNadu[5]. The Indian IT sector especially Tamilnadu IT sector is growing at a faster rate. This same speed of growth is not replicated in e-Learning application.

6.0 CONCLUSION

E-Learning could have potentially major effects on the way higher education is designed, implemented and delivered. The demand for learning has never been so high, and this in conjunction with the need to geographically broaden learning may prompt universities to introduce e-Learning initiatives. The same demands for learning and the increased revenue of independent educational providers, has produced a real threat to the very existence of the traditional university. For students, e-Learning can provide an educationally-superior alternative to traditional lectures, in which learning can take place outside the lecture hall. E-Learning can also provide a model for students on how to become self directed independent learners, which may assist them to become 'life long learners'. E-Learning provides the opportunity to test students in real business situations and new methods to evaluate each student's learning. e-Learning programs represent a change in teaching style. The implementation of e-Learning, educational institutions must be structurally flexible and be able to distance learning as a tool to support overall learning.

7.0 REFERENCES

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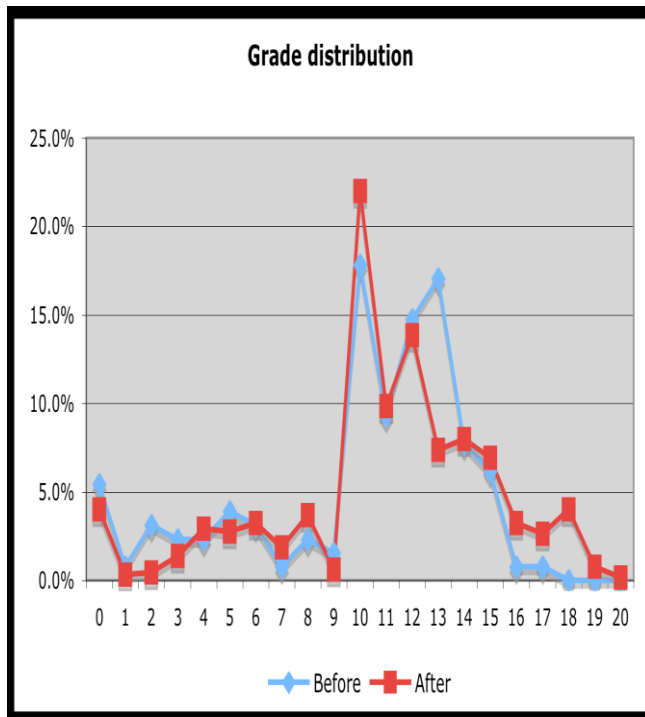


Fig1: Average grade distribution for the course Statistics before and after e-Learning.

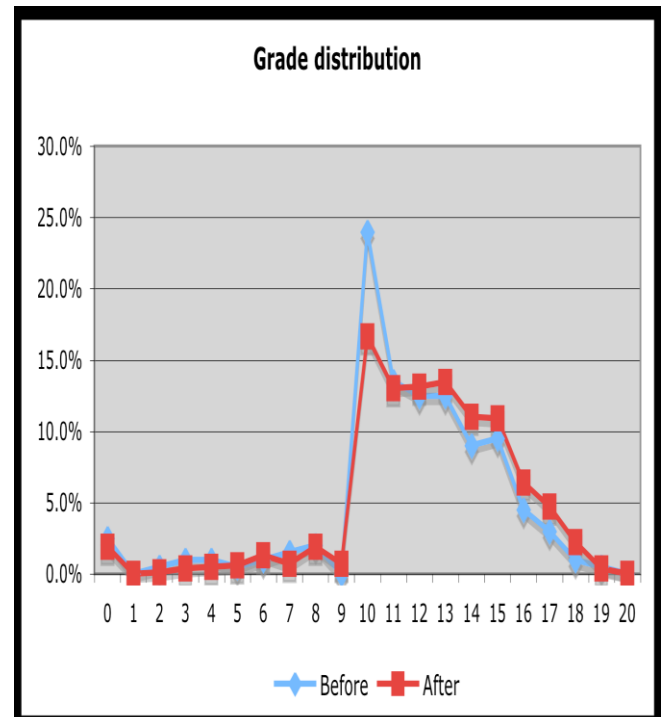


Fig2: Average grade distribution for the course English before and after e-Learning