

## E-learning: The New Trend in Open and Distance Learning

Sabzar Ahmad Peerzadah & Shayista Majeed  
Doctoral Candidate Department of Commerce University of Kashmir, Srinagar  
Sabiya Mufti  
Sr. Assistant Professor Department of Commerce University of Kashmir, Srinagar J&K  
India

### Abstract

*E-learning is learning to utilize electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online. We define e-learning as courses that are specifically delivered via the internet to somewhere other than the classroom where the professor is teaching. The growth and development of distance education have been through several stages-from pure correspondence education towards multimedia distance education and maturing into open and distance learning and today moving towards online programmes of study through the internet and computers. In view of the current dominance of e-learning in general and particularly in the area of open and distance learning(ODL), the present study focuses on the concept of e-learning in the current environment, the growth of ODL in India, e-learning from the prism of ODL followed by conclusion and recommendations.*

**Keywords:** *Classroom, Curriculum, E-Learning, Internet, Open and Distance Learning.*

---

Corresponding Author: Dr. Sabiya Mufti, Faculty and Research Supervisor at the Department of Commerce University of Kashmir J&K India. Email Id: [drsabiyamufti@uok.edu.in](mailto:drsabiyamufti@uok.edu.in)

### Introduction

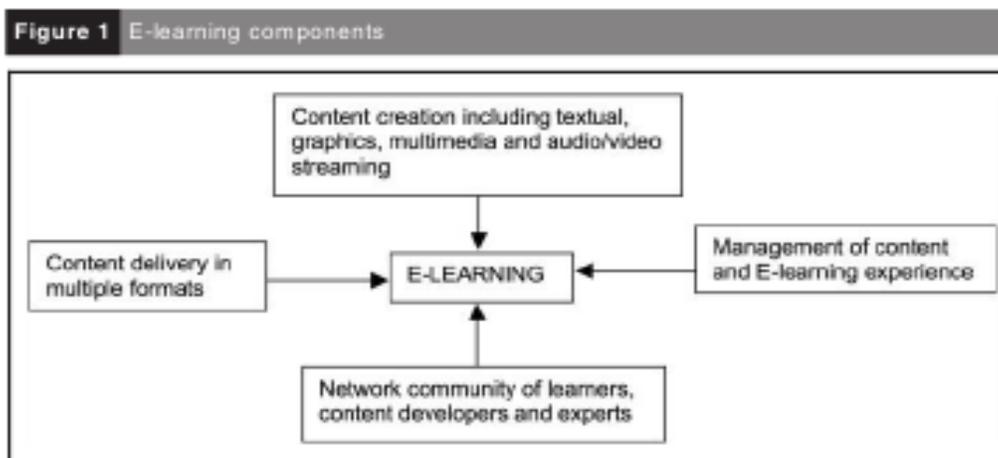
Education is a concept that holds an extraordinary level of importance in everyone's lives. It makes a person fit to survive on their own in the world. But, a lot of people even today do not have easy access to basic education. A majority of them travel long distances in order to fulfill this requirement. In other cases, some people are incapable of stepping out of their homes due to health complications or disabilities. This renders them helpless and thus unable to find a better source of livelihood. In such circumstances, a new form of education known as e-learning has started (although slowly) picking up the pace for this very reason. E-Learning or electronic learning allows people to learn, read and get educated with courses that are broadcasted using the internet. These courses can be accessed from anywhere and they're also available in other different forms such as videos, slideshows etc. The concept of e-learning took flight after the advent of computers, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century has made things simpler by making the same things available on tablets and smartphones as well.

### E-Learning environment

A methodical approach is needed while authoring instructional material for e-learning, CBT or WBT. The instructional design should be clear and consistent and short cuts are to be avoided. Up-front planning is one of the most important elements of e-learning. The user interface has to be intuitive and easy to navigate. Fancy or obscure techniques are better to be avoided, as these tend to discourage the learner. In short, there will be teaching ends and learning ends technologically and synchronously. An e-learning environment generally includes:

- Simulation. Because we learn by actually doing, learners from all over the world experiment on the net.
- Collaboration. It includes joint problem solving through study/discussion groups, chat rooms, etc.
- Live workshops. These are for those topics, which are best taught in the real world by a live contact with the instructor or expert. This can be achieved by both text chat and voice mediated instruction. In fact, text chat is an example of both synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

E-learning being a recent innovation, we have yet to find concrete evidence of its learning gains. E-learning's top-line upside is speculative while its bottom-line savings are more evident. It undeniably reduces the cost by cutting down on travels, facilities, infrastructure, administrative overheads, duplication of effort and more importantly the opportunity cost of people away from the job in times of great need. There's no doubt that e-learning can be rolled out fast. The time required to roll out a new product globally can shrink from months to hours. However, we would like to posit that e-learning is a composite entity and an integration of the radio and television and the computer. The Indira Gandhi National Open University, in India reaches out to its millions of learners all over the country with the help of interactive media and information and communication technologies. A methodical approach is needed while authoring instructional material for e-learning, CBT or WBT. The instructional design should be clear and consistent and short cuts are to be avoided. In short, there will be teaching ends and learning ends technologically and synchronously. Figure 1 shows the different components of e-learning.



Source: Guha and Maji, (2008)

### **Growth and Development of Distance and Open Education in India**

The growth and development of distance education have been through several stages—from pure correspondence education towards multimedia distance education and maturing into open and distance learning and today moving towards online programmes of study through the internet and computers. Thus the growth and development of distance education may be discussed in two phases namely:

#### **Correspondence education phase (1962-1982)**

Distance education in India has been started by 'Ekalavya' when he studied the art of archery from Guru Dronachariya at a distance in Mahabharata Era'. Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore also made use of distance education as a tool continuing further education of the people through Loka Siksha Sambad (Council of people education) initiated in Viswa Bharati in 1937 (Mukherje, 1997). However formally distance education in India was started in 1962 in the form of correspondence courses by Delhi University at the under graduated level which attracted a large number of student. As a follow-up measure, the UGC recommended the adaption of a correspondence course by other universities. As a result of which the latter half of the 1960s (3 universities) particularly the 1970s show support in the growth of correspondence institute by various universities (19 universities). Punjab University established the second correspondence course institute (1965) of the country which was also allowed to run its programme in regional language (Punjabi) in addition to English. This was the first university to establish full-fledged directorate of correspondence courses in the country. In the meantime, an open school was set-up in New Delhi in 1979 to provide education to out of school learners. However, the senior secondary course for class (xi-xii) was launched in 1988. By 1980, there were 25 universities which were offering correspondence courses at tertiary level and five Boards of secondary education providing correspondence course at school level (Mullick, 1986). Today more than 50 universities are offering correspondence education in the country making one of the largest dual mode system in the world.

#### **The Open Education Phase (1982 onward)**

U.K. established the first Open University in 1969 which prompted the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the ministry of information and broadcasting and the UGC to organize a seminar to consider the feasibility of starting an open university in India. The national progress towards a national Open University was slow and was overtaken by the state Government of Andhra Pradesh, which established the Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU) in 1982. The APOU which is presently under as the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) was an autonomous institution, using only distance education method for providing higher education. Thus the first autonomous single mode Open University came into existence, namely, Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), which is now rated as one of the best distance courses university in the world, came into existence by an Act of Parliament in 1985. Subsequently, the state government of Rajasthan, Bihar, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal, and U.P. set up their own open universities. Presently there are 903 conventional universities including 126 deemed universities in India (UGC, 2019). As on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2019, there are fourteen Open Universities in India. A few private institutions have also started offering courses through virtual education. Recently the State Govt. of Tamil Nadu has set up a virtual university. All the state open universities have been established by ACTs of the respective state legislature. The maintenance and development of the state open universities is the

joint responsibility of the centre and the concerned State Govts. Distance Education Council (1991) coordinates and maintains the quality and works as parallel UGC for open and distance learning system in the country. Distance education gets an overwhelming response in India, the universities introduced many new distance education job oriented courses according to the changing times and students requirements.

At the secondary level, the education programme through correspondence course was started by the Board of Secondary Education, MP in 1965. Delhi started 'Patrachar Vidyalaya' in 1968 (Manjulika and Reddy, 1996). This was followed by Rajasthan, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. The first open school of the country was established in 1979 in Delhi for secondary and higher secondary courses. This upgraded as National Open School in 1989. The states of Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal have also established their own State Open School. For the promotion and coordination of the Open University and distance education system and for determination of its standards in India, the Distance Education Council (DEC), was constituted under the Indira Gandhi National Open University Act (1985). Its consistent with the duty of the University that takes all such steps as it may deem fit for the promotion of the Open University and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and for the coordination and determination of standards of teaching, evaluation & research in such systems; and in pursuance of the objects of the University to encourage greater flexibility, diversity, accessibility, mobility and innovation in education at the University level by making full use of the latest scientific knowledge and new educational technology, and to further cooperation between the existing Universities. It is considered necessary and expedient to establish a Distance Education Council as an authority of the University under Section 16 of the Act.

### **E-Learning viz-a-viz Distance Education**

E-learning or electronic learning can be defined as instructional content or learning techniques delivered or facilitated by electronic technology. It has the potential to revolutionize the basic tenets of learning by making learning individual-based rather than institution-based. It aims at increasing the knowledge, skills and productive capabilities of the learners in a global situation. E-learning has a truly vast perspective. In e-learning, the instructional material and content may be delivered by any or all electronic media including the internet, intranet, extranet, LAN, Satellite broadcasts, audio/video tapes, CD-ROM and interactive TV. It includes computer-based training (CBT), electronic performance support systems (EPSS) and web-based training (WBT).

E-learning is important not only for economic reasons but it has significant social benefits as well. By broadening access to high-quality education and training opportunities to the various segments of society, it has a potential to reduce the economic disparities caused by denial of education to the economically deprived sector of the population offering them better work opportunities and income growth at all levels. At the same time, the much-hyped twenty-first century, instructional methods and pedagogy are undergoing swift changes. The computer and information and communication technology (ICT) has undoubtedly changed our daily lives to make communication swifter and easier. But in its wake computer-aided instruction is a living reality, which has left traditional teaching outmoded. The concept of the traditional classroom, with its four walls, has been extended and ramified. The computer has had a multiplier effect on teaching and learning. Let us briefly look at what these effects are on:

- traditional teaching;

- bridging on campus and off campus realities;
- distance education;
- integrating computer with the radio and the television;
- virtual campuses and universities; and
- Wireless communication as a mode of teaching.

“Distance education is an educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner, with the effect that all or most of the communication between teachers and learners is through an artificial medium, either electronic or print. By definition, in distance education, the normal or principal means of communication is through technology.” (UNESCO, 2002).

Distance education and its “history” so to say, has straddled three or four phases of communication technologies. These are the print, radio, television and the computer/internet/e-learning, etc. The first three arguably are also a form of communication technology. Actually, print too is a component of technology and now it has also merged with computer printing and publishing: for example, desktop publishing.

E-learning in its avatar as the CD-ROM as well as internet and online learning is bringing out a paradigm change in how we teach and how we learn. The e-learning pedagogical methods are both synchronous and asynchronous i.e. happening in real time, as well as outside of it. It is the concept and implementation of virtual learning that has radicalized distance education construction. It is such constructivist thinking for social and educational processes: that has made the computer a focal point of learning methods. At the same time, what is happening with alacrity is that the boundaries of traditional education and distance education are being narrowed down to on edifice: learning itself.

The e-learning methodologies and pedagogies can take distance education a great leap forward by putting in place the following methods in teaching-learning settings:

- blogging (web logging);
- podcasting (computer broadcasting);
- use of the classroom model to design a web-based learning and teaching ambiance; and
- Simulating a classroom or institution: welcome lounge, classroom halls, etc.

There is research evidence that modern information and communication technology based innovative practices like e-learning, online learning or learning via the internet, can easily make the teaching process more exploratory by using multitasking, such as the quiz, puzzles, group discussion, role-play, etc. The implications for education & training are immense if learning can be independent of time and place and available at all stages of a person’s life. The learning context will be technologically rich. Learners will have access not only to a wide range of media but also to a wide range of sources of education (Bates, 1993). A learning revolution, in which e-learning will play a vital role, is already on the horizon. It will equip human resource with skills, which are needed for success in the twenty-first-century digital economy, popularly termed as the knowledge economy.

#### ***Delivery media and technologies in e-learning***

In e-learning the delivery media can be grouped under the following heads:

**1. Print:**

- textbooks, study guides, workbooks – are still very common in online learning courses.

**2. Audio:**

- streaming audio – used to deliver the instructors' comments over any network, in audio-video conferencing; and
- audiotapes – could be mailed to students and are, in universities such as the UK Open University.

**3. Video:**

- streaming video – can deliver video over any network;
- videotape – could be produced and mailed to students; and
- cable TV – course segments can be produced and aired in various locations nationwide.

**4. Data:**

- web pages – a very common form of delivering content; computer based training content – often delivered via CD-ROM, but also deliverable via a network;
- computer files – can be e-mailed or downloaded from a server (word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, database, etc.); and
- online tests – computer scripts can be written to deliver a variety of test formats.

A high level of investment is needed in employing course creators who can use the full range of the web design tools such as animation hyperlinks, interactivity etc. to develop unique online programmes with provision for student feedback and tutor support. The idea is not to refashion the classroom-based material onto web pages. Courses where multimedia features, e.g. music, movies, and animation are used, they can substantially enhance the learning materials. Where discussion is important as in tutorials and small post-graduate courses the use of web-conferencing and real-time forums would be more appreciated.

**E-learning: growth, prospects, and trends**

Several inter-related factors and trends favour the growth of e-learning in higher education, both for on-campus instruction and distance learning, as well as in corporate, government and other training programmes: More than half of the college and university classes on US campuses use e-mail, world wide web (www) materials, or other internet applications. The University of Delhi in India is using satellite technology to beam and transmit classroom lessons from one campus to another. Part-time degree students with job or other responsibilities, along with recognized needs for adult/continuing education, opt for off-campus distance learning at times and places conveniently suited to the individual. Compared to other distance learning media, this interest offers him more interactivity, greater flexibility, and more functionality. Internet-based e-learning shifts the power from suppliers to customers and thus is likely to promote more vigorous competition. This does not necessarily mean that higher education and training will become marketable commodities but rather the students with different backgrounds and varied needs and preferences will be able to select from a broader range of instructional alternatives than at present.

E-learning also encourages “opening out” and ensuring greater efficiency of different instructional elements: content development course delivery, evaluation, and testing; as also such administrative functions like registration, payment, and student record-keeping. The University Fern at Hagen in Germany is one such good example where virtual classroom simulates the “real” classroom with mechanisms and facilities for libraries and student queries.

### **Conclusion**

E-learning offers distance learning through the internet, giving students an interactive educational experience and the opportunity to study through accredited learning providers. Through E-learning, companies can deliver distance training to their staff, or gain additional revenue through re-selling of training programmes. Using e-learning, colleges of distance education can deliver distance learning to students, or offer other educational establishments the opportunity to use their courses.

E-learning will not replace traditional full-time, residential degree programmes, nor will it supplant books and other distance learning media such as radio, television, audiotapes, videotapes, or packaged software. But it is changing the instructional media mix, as well as shifting the balance between taking courses on- and off-campus.

E-learning, in fact, comprises the gamut of technological learning such as the radio, the television the computer and the mobile. The blending of all the four will be an ideal of e-learning, where the computer via podcasting can serve the purpose of the radio, with the help of the webcam will be a form of the television, and with text, chat can be the artifact of a mobile. And, independently all these four can contribute to e-learning which literally means electronic learning.

Community radio is also becoming popular in India with the advent of community podcasting sites; such as [www.voiceofambition.com](http://www.voiceofambition.com). The Indira Gandhi National Open University has also uploaded its self-learning material on the web through its portal E-Gyankosh even as the MIT uploads the lectures of its teachers dispelling the myth of nationalistic boundaries of education to provide a more holistic, altruistic and seamless view of education. Also, e-learning has contributed in no small measure to the convergence of traditional and non-traditional categories of education expanding educational archetypes to wider and borderless horizons. In the widest sense e-learning is experimental where learning may not be formal but contributes to overall knowledge and, social and intellectual growth.

Finally, e-learning is an “Open Book”. Wikipedia is its best example as the idea was conceived to provide information and knowledge to those children in the world who are so penurious that they cannot afford textbooks. Cheap mobiles (Mohammed Younus), telephony such as the Skype and yahoo messenger, the “open book” such as the Wikipedia written in a multiplicity of languages all contribute to the phenomenal wave of e-learning, which is in its best sense knowledge liberalized, knowledge democratized and one need not necessarily simulate the University, or the four walls of a classroom, which has fundamentally free access and equity.

### **Recommendations for action**

- Create the highest-quality e-learning experiences possible. Important priorities for the public and private sectors include: providing reliable and universally accessible quality information for consumers; developing quality assurance mechanisms; ensuring that learning has

the support they need to make the right decisions about their e-learning options; and developing policies and practices to ensure privacy.

- Implement new measures and methods for assessing and certifying what individuals know and are able to do. Traditional, institution-based approaches to assessment and certification are not well suited to an e-learning world in which the focus turns from a record of classes taken and degrees received to measures of what an individual actually knows and are able to do. As a result, private and public sector leaders need to take steps to create new approaches such as: developing and promoting outcome-based assessments of learning results; and creating an electronic system for tracking those results.
- Ensure broad and equitable access to e-learning opportunities. In areas from supporting the development of common technical standards to promoting broader access in under-served communities, government and business must play a leadership role in making quality e-learning opportunities more widely available to all, in especially areas of literacy and neo literacy.

#### Note

*The Government of India's Educational Portal [www.sakshat.com](http://www.sakshat.com) is an example of education breaking hiatus of school and university education.*

#### References

- Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow, Advanced Technology Group, Apple Computer, Inc. (1992, May). Classroom Management: Teaching in high-tech environments: First-fourth year findings (Classroom Management Research Summary 10). *Cupertino, CA: J.H. Sandholz, C. Ringstaff, & D.C. Dwyer.*
- A.S. Guha Subhashish Maji, (2008), "E-learning: the latest spectrum in open and distance learning", *Social Responsibility Journal*, Vol. 4 Iss 3 pp. 297 – 305
- Barron, A., & Orwig, G. (1993). "New technologies for education". *Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.*
- Barron, A., Hoffman, D., Ivers, K., & Sherry, L. (1994). "Telecommunications: Ideas, activities, and resources". Tampa: *Florida Centre for Instructional Technology.*
- Cambre M. A., (1991), "The state of the art of instructional television. In G. J. Anglin, (Ed.), Instructional Technology, past, present and future". *Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.*
- Charp, S. (1994). "Viewpoint. *The On-line Chronicle of Distance Education and Communication*", 7(2).
- Drucker, P. (1999). "Management Challenges for the 21st Century", Harper Business, *New York, NY.*
- Green, Lelia (2010). "The Internet: A Introduction to New Media". Berg: Oxford
- K.Gaba, Ashok. & Sethy, S.S. (2010). "Learners' Perception towards Information and Communication Technologies : A case study of IGNOU". *Indian Journal of Open Learning*, 19 (3)

- Moore, M. (1973), "Towards a theory of independent learning and teaching", *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 44, pp. 661-79.
- McNabb, J. (1994, October). "Tele-course effectiveness: Findings in the current literature", *Tech Trends*, 39-40.
- Moore, M. (1993), "Theory of transaction distance", in Keegan, D. (Ed.), *Theoretical Principles of Distance Education*, Routledge, London, pp. 22-38.
- Orvis , K.L. & Lassiter, A.L.R. (2007). "Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning: Best Practices and Principles for Instructors". Hershey: *Information Science Publishing*.
- Savery, J.R., & Duffy, T.M. (1995). Problem-based learning: An instructional model and its constructivist framework. *Educational Technology*, 35(5), 31-38.
- Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1994). "Computer support for knowledge-building communities". *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 3(3), 265-283.
- Schamber, L. (1988). "Delivery systems for distance education". (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 304 111).
- Schlosser, C.A., & Anderson, M.L. (1994). "Distance education: a review of the literature". Washington, DC: *Association for Educational Communications and Technology*
- Stride Handbook 7 (2006). "*Media and Technology in Distance Education*". New Delhi: IGNOU.
- UNESCO. (2002). "Open and Distance Learning: Trends, Policy and Strategy Considerations", Paris: UNESCO.PP22. Online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001284/128463e.pdf>