

ONLINE AND E-LEARNING EDUCATION AND ITS ROLE IN MODERN EDUCATION

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Annotation: Similarly, varieties of terms connected to online and distance learning have also evolved in the wake of them becoming more established learning pathways. Online and distance learning platforms have evolved to include features such as Learning Management Systems (LMSs), Application Programming Interface (APIs), and Massive Open Online Course (OLX) among others. Such terms signify different features attributed to online and distance learning methods and tools. As such, deciding on a course becomes easier once you understand what each type of learning offers. So let's take a look at eLearning vs online learning.

Keywords: Online Learning, E-Learning, pre-recorded video lectures, video lectures, quizzes or tests, post questions, virtual platforms, live lectures, assignments.

History of E-learning

E-learning has come a long way since its introduction in the 1990s. The history of the concept can be traced back to the days of distant learning on radio programs in the 1920s. PLATO, the first computer-based education tool, introduced by Professor Don Bitzer in 1960, became an important milestone in the world of e-learning. Its fundamental purpose was to amplify and enhance student literacy.

What is eLearning?

eLearning, also known as "home-based learning" "virtual learning," is when students learn through electronic media and online portals or platforms. As such, students and teachers can use eLearning in the classroom, and employees can use it in professional settings such as the workplace too.

Likewise, eLearning can be CD-ROM-based or Internet-based. It contains materials students go through on their own, such as text, pre-recorded audio and video, animation, slides, documents, and quizzes. Indeed, it is an independent, self-paced, and hands-on way of learning. Hence, if students have any questions or doubts, they can post their queries on online forums or email their teachers to have their queries answered, or ask the teachers themselves if the teachers are conducting a class with the help of eLearning materials. Similarly, the structure is rather rigid and standard. There

are no varied materials that teachers can personalize for individual students as they are pre-recorded. All students, therefore, receive the same materials. Also called “virtual learning,” e-learning generally refers to a course taken entirely over the internet. The teacher and students do not meet face to face. All course work and communication is handled via email, forums, chat, or video conferencing. Some institutions refer to this type of course as a “fully online” course.

Types of E-Learning

❖ E-Learning can be classified by the ways in which it is shared from the instructor, to the student. An informal distribution form of e-learning is one in which the students are trusted to view the available course material, and are not tracked or tested, for completion.

❖ In the formal distribution form of e-learning, instructors usually keep track and make recordings of learner progress and results. Most educational institutions that offer certifications for students have specific systems and standards for gauging the scores for students.

❖ Learning Management Systems or LMS is used for tracking scores and to ensure that the students’ standards for each course are maintained. They are platforms that enable users to create good online courses; and also the students to be able to access these courses. These platforms are of different types and they have different capabilities. Some are free while others are offered at a fee.

Elements of E-Learning- When creating an online course, there are a number of criterion to be met. Setting a list of criterion ensures that students benefit fully from the course they signed up for. Some common elements of e-Learning are as follows:

I. The role played by the teacher/instructor is vital. He/she is necessary to offer necessary feedback to students. He/she is also sometimes responsible for keeping students’ progress or scores.

II. A well-organized Learning Management System is necessary. It should be easily navigable by both the student and the instructor.

III. The learning material is the key feature in e-learning. Usually, course material is formatted in a way that is simple and easily accessible for students.

IV. Communication is important for learning. To be able to access online coursework from the instructor, students have to use one or more of the many modes of communication or delivery methods.

Advantages of E-Learning- E-learning platforms possess tech-savvy and smart tools for the users to gain access to top notch content and knowledge.

1. Multimedia Tools

From graphics to engrossing video clips, the e-learning process makes studying compelling. Instead of going through mundane lessons, the e-learning platforms have high-tech multimedia tools to engage with the users.

2. Sensory Engagement -E-learning tools and features increase the sensory engagement of the users. The learning methods require the learners to actively use their ears, eyes and hands while taking a lesson. This engagement makes the user involved in the particular assignment.

3. More Customization-Each individual has a different set of skills. The pace and the power of retention is contrasting in every user. E-learning platforms acknowledge this fact and thus offer an individual experience for every user.

4. Course Correction -The e-learning platforms provide immediate feedback to the students. The users are corrected at once and are directed towards the right answer. The first hand feedback clears the queries of the users.

5. Speed -Instead of wasting time,the e-learning users can speed up the learning process.If the users already have the required knowledge of the subject, they can test their knowledge through mock tests and thus save time and resources.

6. Learner Satisfaction -Result boards, certificates and metrics provided by e-learning to its users boosts up the confidence of the users. It satisfies the users as they get to see the fruit of their labor.

7. Data and Analytics -With the help of data and analytics, the user responses can be checked. The Learning Management system can learn from the responses of the users and carry out the necessary changes.

8. Standardization -The e-learning system makes its content and material user friendly to engage the user. Shaping learning methods as per the user's need makes it easier for the user to absorb and retain better.

9. Frequent Assignments -There are plenty of mock tests, quizzes and assignments on each e-learning platform for the users to put their knowledge to test. These assignments not only help the user to use their knowledge but it also boosts their confidence.

10. Eco friendly and Maintainable -E-learning tools do not waste resources and instead are good for the environment. These tools use less energy and carry out better results.

11. Scalability -The e-learning system reflects the ability to allow a number of users to connect from all over the globe. It manages and organizes the users into various branches without delays.

What is Online Learning?

This is another broad term, but slightly narrower than digital learning. It means that the majority of the coursework will be done through the internet — through forums, shared documents, email, chat, etc. However, it doesn't imply that there is no face-to-face interaction between students and the teacher. It can include doing coursework in a classroom or at a distance, so long as communication is primarily online. Online learning, on the other hand, refers to learning with the use of the

internet. In online learning, the internet and the online learning platform are key elements. As such, virtual platforms enable live lectures, assignments, and tests during online learning.

Besides, unlike the pre-recorded materials of eLearning, online learning enables interaction between teachers and students. In fact, instructors can use eLearning materials in online learning as well. For example, teachers can use pre-recorded videos or audio to teach an online class.

Similarly, while eLearning does not require teachers and students to be online at the same time, lessons during online learning are conducted in real-time. As such, students and teachers can communicate through the online platform via audio, video, or/and interactive whiteboard features. Moreover, in this method, the online learning platform is crucial. Now, you might be wondering, “Can teachers use Zoom or Google Meet to conduct online classes?” Well, yes, but such mediums are not effective for learning as they are not equipped with the necessary features. Online Learning Platforms though, are equipped with Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Student Information Systems (SIS) that help teachers and students conduct classes and learn respectively. Furthermore, developers equip online learning platforms, such as Fuse Classroom, with tools and features that facilitate efficient interactions between teachers and students to ensure hassle-free and productive results. Fuse Classroom is even integrated with Zoom, allowing teachers to conduct online live classes.

Types of Online-Learning- Below are some of the most common online learning format types that remote learners can choose from to accelerate their remote education.

❖ Synchronous Learning-Synchronous classes are some of the most common types of online learning available from various educational institutions. This recreates the typical classroom format through an online platform with the instructor joining the class via video conference. They can use this platform to share lecture slides while teaching class live.

❖ Asynchronous Learning-While synchronous learning is a type of online education that involves a fixed time for class, asynchronous learning goes the opposite route with online learning classes that can be taken up during one’s own time. While they also come in the form of pre-recorded lectures or voice recordings that are combined with predetermined outputs that students can submit for the grading of their instructors.

❖ Hybrid Learning-During the COVID-19 pandemic, some educational institutions adopted hybrid learning as their primary online education type. A hybrid learning curriculum combines both synchronous and asynchronous formats, creating a structured and interactive learning process where students can ask questions in real

time on some days while leaving them to their own devices and engage in independent learning on others.

Essential Elements of Online Learning- The following are the most essential elements to include in your online learning modules, to ensure an interactive and engaging learning experience for your remote learners:

I. Assessments and Knowledge Checks-It is more traditional for quizzes and assessments to be delivered at the end of a course, but we would recommend rather including them as recurrent checkpoints. For example, you can ask your online learners to complete a short quiz or answer true or false questions from time to time to help keep them sharp and engaged in the content.

II. Images and Videos-Interactive images and videos will help take your online learning path up a notch. Images can be personalized with informative overlays, while videos hold the power of transforming passive, boring content- into an engaging eLearning experience for learners.

III. Interactive Powerpoint Slides-If you are using Power point slides, including interactive elements on your slides will help boost learner engagement and retention. It can be as simple as clicking on a link to listen to an informative podcast on the topic at hand, or a link to a YouTube video that will help further your learners' understanding and cement the learning content in your presentation.

Advantages of Online-Learning- While there are many pros to online learning, there are cons to consider.

1. Flexibility-Among the many benefits of an online learning, you'll find virtual classrooms are great for people who are advancing their education while working. In a traditional classroom, lectures will be scheduled at a specific time of day and your schedule will be formed around the availability of classes. If you're currently employed and courses aren't available after your working hours, it can be difficult to juggle a course load in addition to your work duties. When attending a virtual campus, online learning allows for far more autonomy in deciding your own schedule. That means you can study whenever it's convenient for you. Live with some noisy roommates? Having more control over your schedule also means you can avoid distractions easier.

2. Reduced Costs-Education can be expensive, but virtual learning can provide a number of ways for students to save. Not having to commute to campus can help you save on transportation costs. Every year, the average student spends more than a thousand dollars on textbooks and course materials. Virtual coursework often takes advantage of virtual resources, which translates into less money spent on textbooks. Tuition costs can also vary between online and on-campus programs. For instance, at Drexel University, students enrolled in online programs in the School of Education receive a 25% discount off the price of regular tuition. Most online programs

offered by the school are also financial aid eligible. Between all these sources of savings, cost-cutting can be an enormous benefit of online classes.

3. More Free Time-Because your schedule isn't dictated by classes, you can spend more time doing the things you want. Plus, in addition to saving money, not having to commute also means saving time because you don't need to travel to-and-from campus. That extra time can be used in any way you want, such as focusing on your career or spending time with your family. All you need is a digital device and an internet connection, and you have access to the necessary tools to further your education and earn your degree on your own time.

4. Increased Course Variety-Another reason why online school is better for some is the increased variety of education options. Since students are not required to travel to campus for courses schedule on specific days and times, students can enroll in the courses they are most interested in. There's no need to rearrange schedules, students in an online program can take the course they want and complete the coursework at a time that is most convenient for them. Through online courses, students can gain the knowledge they need to earn their degree or grow in their profession. Online courses allow you to earn essentially the same range of different degrees that can be earned from a traditional educational environment. That includes learning certificates and professional certifications to master's degrees or doctoral degrees.

5. Career Advancement Opportunities-Just like courses taken in a traditional classroom setting, virtual learning can provide you with a number of career advancement opportunities. Because you're the master of your own schedule, students of virtual learning are better prepared to continue working while pursuing academic credentials. And for students who aren't employed, academic work can serve to explain any discontinuity or gaps in a resume. In either case, the advantages of virtual learning can be clearly seen on a resume.

eLearning vs Online Learning – Differences

While people use both eLearning and online learning interchangeably, there are many differences that separate the two.

eLearning	Online Learning
Teachers do not conduct live lectures, but provide students with materials and/or pre-recorded video lectures	Unlike eLearning, Live lessons conducted during Online Learning
Students go through learning materials themselves	On the contrary, teachers guide students during online lessons
eLearning enables students to go through video lectures, quizzes or tests anytime	On the other hand, both teacher and student should be present at the same time for online learning lessons

Students go through pre-recorded video lectures, slides, and notes independently in eLearning	In online learning, however, teachers guide students and explain learning materials along the way
Students doing eLearning post questions on an online forum/discussion board/email their teachers	Students during online learning can ask questions during live lessons on the spot instead of having to wait for answers in a forum

Features of E-Learning:

- + A typical e-Learning course may contain PowerPoint slides and/or Word documents as well as a pre-recorded video lecture.
- + Students are expected to review a substantial amount of information independently.
- + PowerPoint slides typically contain textual explanations of the theory.
- + Usually, video lectures are pre-recorded by teachers and show them browsing through PowerPoint slides while lecturing or simply talking.
- + Such materials do not encourage students to think while simultaneously learning.

Features of Online Learning:

- + A professional online tutor or teacher is available to assist online learners.
- + Instead of watching a pre-recorded video lecture, the course is conducted live.
- + A tutor or teacher discusses the materials with a student during a live session (such as worksheets, test papers, homework).
- + With the help of the tools and features presented on the online platform, the learning and teaching platform can help both tutor and student communicate what they want to say. A common feature of online learning platforms is an interactive whiteboard, on which tutors and students can upload materials (e.g. textbook questions, test paper questions, theory to be explained).
- + The features of the platform allow tutors and students to point out the information they are looking at easily.
- + Additionally, students can ask questions or state their thoughts during the live lesson with online learning. Besides, teachers or tutors can answer all of their questions and clarify their doubts on the spot.

In conclusion, the learning environment has a major role in the success of online courses. Generally speaking, administrators and lesson planners should create online

learning programs that better utilize the true potential of digital technology. It should also use creative methods to improve the educational experiences. Students should choose one type over the other based on their commitments, general interests, and learning style.

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