International Journal of Information Movement *Vol.2 Issue V* *(September 2017)*

Website: www.ijim.in *ISSN: 2456-0553 (online)* **Pages 93-98**

USE OF E-LEARNING IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION

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Abstract:

E-Learning is a part of new dynamics that characterises the educational system. It has become an important part of the society, comprising an extensive array of digitalization approaches, components and delivery methods. The use of e-learning is seen at all levels of educational system, thus in Library and Information Science Education as well. Studies show the positive effects of ELearning for the Library and Information Science Education system in India. And the only way to sustain a better future is by educating the younger generation with effective and efficient education methodologies. In LIS education, it is becoming popular day by day due to its applicability and recognized as a suitable mode of education. This system also changes the library and information services, changing the role of information professionals and unwrap a new vista for effective and efficient environment for library education.

Keywords - E-Learning, Library and Information Science Education (LIS education).

1.0 Introduction:

E-learning is a part of new dynamics that characterises the educational system. It has become an important part of the society, comprising an extensive array of digitalization approaches, components and delivery methods. The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for educational purpose has increased, & the spread of network technologies has caused e-learning practices to evolve significantly. Education through internet, network is E-Learning. It is the network based transfer of skills & knowledge. E-learning refers to use of electronic applications and processes to learn. The e-learning applications and processes are the web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration. The contents are delivered through the internet, local intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV & CD-ROM. E-learning is used by learners and educators in homes, schools, higher education, business and others. In the early days, e-learning received a bad impression, as many people thought bringing computers into the classroom would remove that human element that some learners need, but as time has progressed technology has developed, and now we embrace smart phones and tablets in the classroom and office, as well as using a wealth of interactive designs that makes e-learning not only engaging for the users, but valuable as a lesson delivery medium. The use of e-learning is seen at all levels of educational system.

2.0 Aspects of E-Learning:

The ELearning delivers few aspects. There is live instruction where specialized instructors can remain in their own/one locations and provide instructions to many students in other locations. Video content delivery where pre-recorded content is provided as material. that can be viewed when needed. Student to student interactions is an aspect where students learn as much from each other as they do from teachers. Up-to-date materials are provided through digital delivery for e-readers where textbooks are expensive to purchase, maintain and deliver. Another aspect is Self-learning which is quite common in higher education which is done by computer based training. (Bhadauria)

3.0 Concept of E- Learning

E–learning is defined "as acquisition of knowledge and skill using electronic technologies such as computer and Internet based courseware and local and wide area networks." The term was introduced in 1995 when it was all called "Internet based Training", then "Web-based Training" (to clarify that delivery could be on the Inter- or Intra-net), then "Online Learning" and finally e-learning, adopting the in vogue use of "e" during the dot com boom.

E-Learning: Allison Rossett (2001) defines e-learning as: *Web-based training (WBT), also known as e-learning and on-line learning, is training that resides on a server or host computer that is connected to the World Wide Web.*

4.0 Types of E-learning

E- Learning can be divided in several different types.

4.1 Web-supplemented:-courses focus on classroom-based teaching but include elements such as putting a course outline and lecture notes on line, use of e-mail and links to online resources.

4.2 Web-dependent:-courses require students to use the Internet for key elements of the programme such as online discussions, assessment, or online project/collaborative work, but without significant reduction in classroom time.

In **Mixed Mode** courses, the e-learning elements begin to replace classroom time. Online discussions, assessment, or project work replace some face-to-face teaching and learning (Kalaivani)

5.0 Objectives of E-Learning

The following are the objectives of E-learning:

- All students and teachers will have access to information technology in their classrooms, schools, communities, and homes;
- All teachers will use technology effectively to help students achieve high academic standards;
- All students will have technology and information literacy skills;
- Research and evaluation will improve the next generation of technology applications for teaching and learning;
- Digital content and networked applications will transform teaching and learning; and
- Distance education provided the base for E-learning's development.(Mohasin)

6.0 Advantages of E-Learning

There are several advantages of e-learning. First, Users are able to proceed through a program at their own pace. Users can access an e-learning course anytime, anywhere, and learn only as much as they need. E-learning can be accessed by Web browsing software on any platform. A training program can be delivered to any machine over the internet or intranet without having to author a program for each platform. Most computers have access to a browser, are connected to the organization's intranet or the internet. There is no need for a separate distribution mechanism. If changes need to be made to a program or courseware after the first implementation, these changes are made on the servers storing the program or courseware. Everyone worldwide can instantly access the update of information. There are no travel costs for bringing remote employees to a centralized workshop. Not only from a qualitative standpoint (i.e. pedagogical by the use of a new method, personalization, learner autonomy, memorization and follow-up, operational by learning by opportunity and the speed of the learning updates, and organizational by creation of knowledge sharing community) but also from a quantitative standpoint (i.e. learning elapse decreases, learning cost may be reduced and learning effectiveness is increasing).

7.0 Disadvantages of E-Learning

Besides the advantages of e-Learning, there are some disadvantages too. The first and fare most is Limited bandwidth. It means slower performance for sound, video and intensive graphics, causing long waits for download that can affect the ease of the learning process. Future technologies will solve the problem however. Besides this, there are some other drawback with E-learning there is a general concern that as we move towards

more computer usage, a terminal will replace a friendly face. Gradual introduction of e-learning or the use of blended learning may be the answer to this concern. E-learning programs are too static. The level of interactivity is often too limited. E-learning systems take more time and more money to develop then expected. This is indeed the case, as it is with any new technology that is implemented. It is easier by starting with an easy program and building on success. Not all courses are delivered well by computer. Some training topics are not best served by computer based training and require a more personal touch. Team building issues and dealing with emotional issues are two examples. Progress in the field of e-learning has been relatively slow when compared to other _fields'. A lot of web-based systems are not better than systems that were developed 15 years ago. Still, focus is often on how to develop a lot of courses and not on how to improve the quality of learning. (Sharma)

8.0 E-learning suitability for LIS-education

E-learning should be adopted in LIS education for the following reasons:

8.1 Management of Change

Like most other institutions libraries are also facing dramatic changes in its dimensions. Particularly, the growing use of ICT in library activities is enforcing many changes. However, the staff working for many years in libraries may not be well-convergent with the ICT. The reason could be the emergence of ICT long after them and their education. The ICT terms like metadata, thesaurus construction, ontology, taxonomy, electronic Dewey, information literacy programmes, open source software for library management, digital library, digital library software, creation and maintenance of institutional repositories, Web 2.0, Library 2.0 technologies and their use in libraries, HTML, XML, knowledge management, web design, copyright implications in the digital library era, etc. might be a bit difficult for them to comprehend. E-learning is the most suitable teaching-learning method for imparting education on such important and useful topics in LIS.

8.2 Modular or Cafeteria-based Learning

Most of the undergraduate courses are of three years duration. The postgraduate courses are of two years duration. This 3+2 years pattern of education is common in LIS education also, and does not allow studying topics which are peripheral to the core subject of the degree. As a result, there remain some topics which the potential LIS professional desires to study, but not been able to do so due to the set pattern. E-learning will certainly help to overcome this problem because it allows creating customized learning modules as per the need of the learner.

8.3 Increased Expectations from the Employers as well as Users

All potential library employers expect that the LIS professionals must have optimum skills and thereby efficiency in their housekeeping operations. They also expect that the library staff should be able to provide library services effectively. The users of the library also have similar expectations. They feel that the library staff must answer their reference and referral queries quickly and accurately. One common expectation of both these stakeholders is that the LIS professional of any cadre must have skills to use ICT to provide efficient library services. Thus, the ICT handling skills have become an essential qualification for the LIS professionals. These and other similar expectations of the employers and users of the library can be fulfilled if LIS professionals get an opportunity to learn these skills. Due to time constraint, in-service library professionals may not be able to attend regular LIS courses. In such a situation, the e-learning remains the most viable option for in service LIS professionals.

8.4 Multi-skilled Personnel

The present employment market expects that their potential employee must have multiple skills. The skills required by libraries are changing. A study indicates that library staff needs more and newer skills5. The workflow is changing. The classroom-based, traditional pattern of LIS education may not allow the library staff to have multiple skills. Through e-learning they can acquire more skills at their own pace and time.

8.5 Job-Specific Needs

The traditional LIS education, particularly in India, is a general LIS education in the sense that the learner of this system of education does not get specialized in managing a specific type of library. He even does not get special/depth education for any specific information technology or depth education on designing tools like ontology or a digital library. The above requirements are environment specific, where the LIS professional is working after having the basic LIS education through the traditional methods. E-learning offers the opportunity to provide education, which is job specific and will help LIS professionals to perform to the optimum extent.

8.6 Image of the Profession

The e-factor (electronic factor) is an image building factor. As such the provision of e-learning, if made available by the LIS educational institutions, will definitely improve the image of LIS teaching profession.

8.7 More Content and Short Duration

In India library science is mostly taught as a postgraduate course (there are some undergraduate and certificate courses also). These courses are of one- and or two-year duration. New subjects, aspects, facets, are continuously emerging in LIS. The quantum of knowledge and skills to be imparted to the upcoming LIS professional are continuously increasing. It is difficult to provide all this knowledge and impart all expected skills in one or two academic duration. So the subjects which could not be taught/ studied during regular courses can be taught through e-learning.

8.8 Changing Learning Trends

The changing learning trends are of part-time/home learner. To respond to these trends the LIS education should adopt the e-learning.

8.9 E-learning in Indian LIS-education

The scope of LIS education in India has undergone sea changes with the rapid expansion of research and development activities, particularly in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). For qualitative improvement of LIS education in India, there is a need to introduce new courses based on ICTs in different LIS schools to face new challenges. In fact, technology has not only affected operations of library services but also LIS education itself. There is a need to integrate qualitative changes in LIS education to:

- Increase excellence of LIS students to meet the growing demands in e-environment.
- Face challenges due to the growing influence of ICT and its impact on LIS education.
- Suit ever-increasing demands for trained LIS professionals.
- Amplify career opportunities for LIS professionals.
- Use internet-based e-learning courses which are growing day-by-day.
- Adopt and promote e-publishing which is being fast accepted by the users.
- Transform traditional and habitual mode of LIS education in India.

Appropriate utilization of technology for imparting LIS courses can produce better results. It has now become indispensable to consider the utilization of online learning environment in LIS education.

The main objectives for providing LIS education in online environment must be:

- To cover broad perspectives of the core principles of Library and Information Science and its applicability in the new milieu.
- To understand the managerial activities of Library and Information systems in present context.
- To comprehend the principles of knowledge organization, management, retrieval and delivery.
- To develop practical skills in new online virtual environment to countenance the challenges.
- To meet the demands of new digital era.
- To educate learners in the tune of market demands.
- To offer online information skills.

The education and training in LIS in the digital environment shall contribute to accomplish the following:

- Extensive theoretical and practical knowledge of information management and Business.
- Behavioural attitudes and understanding and information needs of individuals and institutions.
- Financial and quantitative methods of analyzing organizational information.
- Problem solving methodology.
- Analytical abilities and critical thinking expertise.
- Research theories and practices.
- Human resource management and quantitative practices and management.
- Competence in information handling.
- Online information skills.
- Expertise in the use of electronic information.
- In depth understanding of information organization, marketing and using information retrieval systems.
- Analytical abilities to access information and to understand the principles of the organization of knowledge.
- Practical experience in information retrieval, indexing, cataloguing and classification of information resources. Information management in various professional contexts. (Imran)

Conclusion

The world scenario of LIS education is changing fast. The change is enforced by many forces such as technology, demographic features, economic characters, etc. The LIS education is responding to these changes by making appropriate changes in its teaching-learning strategies. Adoption of e-learning in LIS is robust indicator of this response. The Indian LIS education too, is slowly but steadily making progress in this direction. Availability of proper and adequate infrastructure will add momentum to LIS e-learning in India.

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