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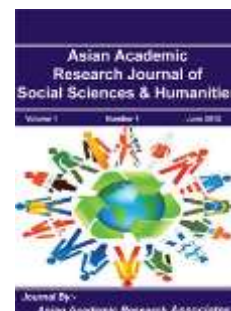
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**TEACHING AND LEARNING CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES  
TOPIC- STRATEGIES & CHALLENGES OF E-LEARNING**

**SAMRIT MONA\***

\* Lecturer,

Chandigarh College of Education, Landran (Punjab)

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**ABSTRACT**

One of the most cost effective methods that can reach a large part of the society in a short time is to integrate ICT in education through e-learning initiatives. E-learning is changing the way enterprises gain competitive advantage through improved human performance. As a consequence they vary widely in their learning and training needs. They have to deal with limited personnel, organizational and financial resources. The situation is furthermore stimulated by the difficulty to formulate detailed training strategies that will enable their employees to be better qualified to cope with increased competition. As they are more and more discovering the advantages of ICT-based learning it is necessary to provide a framework that takes into account these limitations and tries to find effective solutions. This paper also covers the E-Learning Environments and Prospects and Institutional e-learning strategies

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## **Introduction**

The past two decades have seen phenomenal developments in the application of media and technology in education. With the amazing Internet connecting personal computers and mobile devices distributed around the world, the field of education has tried to exploit the web as a communications channel to connect distant learners with instructors and a rapidly growing plethora of learning material. Today, even primary school children easily conduct research from their homes and create media rich submissions for their assignments. Technologies, tools, techniques, methodologies and standards are advancing at such a rapid pace so as to overwhelm the ability of educationists to isolate, study, and report on the best methods to be used for any given audience. With all these advances, the prospects for E-Learning are clearly bright and many. But the real challenge facing many of us is to ensure that we develop appropriate theoretical frameworks and formal approaches, which guarantee that we do not stop merely at creating technical solutions, but press on to document the impact of technology on learning, and pass along lessons learned. Further, in a developing country like India, the digital divide is still with us, and appropriate use of technology requires consideration of a wide range of low-tech and high-tech solutions. Our responsibility as educators is to humans and not to machines. Empirical evaluations of education technology solutions are essential before attempting wide dissemination.

**E-learning** (or online education as it is still commonly termed) has been variously defined, but can be simply described as a learning process in which learners can communicate with their instructors and their peers, and access learning materials, over the Internet or other computer networks. It therefore provides a means through which the powerful and pervasive computing and communications technologies can be applied to tertiary education – and to some of the key challenges now facing universities.

### **E-Learning Environments and Prospects**

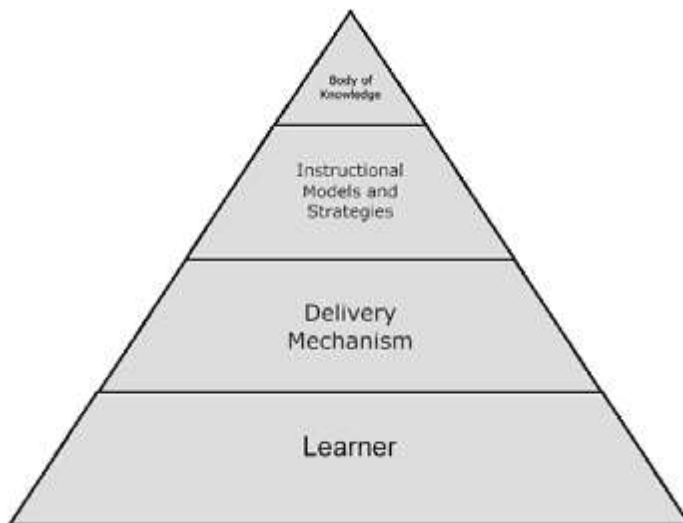
E-Learning, specifically, is becoming a prominent learning environment aimed at providing student-centric, self-paced instruction using the electronic medium of the World Wide Web (www).

E-Learning has evolved and acquired a certain maturity level as can be seen through the increasing deployment of various tools and standards listed:

- a. Available tools in the form of Learning Management Systems like WebCT , Blackboard etc., Authoring tools like Macromedia, etc,
- b. Standards for content reuse, discovery and packaging like SCORM, IEEE LOM 1484.12.1 etc., and
- c. Deployment of these standards in the form of reusable Learning Objects.

Any E-Learning environment can be perceived through a layered model with a body of knowledge to be learned as the topmost layer and the learner at the bottom. Figure 1 shows a diagrammatic representation of the model. It is common belief that each of the layers needs to be appropriately designed and/or integrated in order to make a successful E-learning learning environment.

**Figure**



**How do we create a good e-Learning environment?**

**What are the factors of success and how can tripwires be avoided?** Is the best approach to *play safe* and simply put the on-campus course directly up on the Internet, or is it true that e-Learning indicates a paradigm shift in higher education? The instructional approach - the notion of getting information across over a fixed period of time - is the pedagogical approach that most of us have experienced through our days at school. Communication has mainly been one-way or restricted two-way in this traditional and well tested approach. **Does good e-Learning imply a shift to many-to-many communication, with focus on learning rather than on teaching?**

### **The classroom 1000 years ago**

The ideal classroom since the Middle Ages has been quiet, with students taking notes while listening to knowledgeable people. Fellow students were regarded as competitors and performers, performing better or worse than you. Collaboration was discouraged, and could be regarded as cheating. Information was seen as objective and predefined. Evaluation was based on the student's ability to reproduce what was taught accurately. No doubt this system has worked well for ages, and should not be discarded simply because it is old. However, the last 200 years have seen a gradual transformation of our society from a relatively static one to a society that can be described as a society where the only constant is change, and with a rapid development towards increasing complexity. Certainty is gone. The concept of science as objective and impersonal is undermined. There is an abundance of perspectives on everything, even on fundamental scientific units. There is a shift from a largely mechanical view of the world to a more ecological, holistic and constructivist view. In addition, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) evolve at a quick pace and affect the way we live, work, access information, communicate and learn. *To meet the challenges of today's society, we must understand how people learn and how ICTs can assist in the learning process.*

### **University coaches and trainers**

New ways of teaching using Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) focus on collaboration between the learners in online conferencing and many to-many communications with tutor assistance. Learning, although a personal matter is no longer an individual process it has evolved into a collaborative system. This type of collaboration can be extended in online networks. Transferable generic skills - which are expected to be required for future employment - are increasingly being specified as learning objectives. For instance, adaptability, creativity,

communication and social skills, problem solving, organization, time management, being able to work independently, metacognition (ability to reflect on and improve one's own learning processes) and the use of information technology are being identified as important. It is less important to massively store facts. The new challenge, especially for student-centered e-Learning, is to find the right balance between the objective traditional approach: instructionalism and the more subjective and modern approach: constructivism. There is no single truth. Only practical experience can tell.

### **Institutional e-learning strategies**

With expansion came awareness; as universities became increasingly conscious of the potential of online technologies – and of related demands on staff time and central resources – more and more universities moved to develop institutional strategies for the deployment of e-learning. Initially this process might entail little more than providing the necessary staff and infrastructure to allow application of these technologies to routine tasks (e.g. facilitating student access to syllabi, course readings, and bibliographic services; providing the essential infrastructure for teacher-student communication) – but on a more systematic and centralized basis. As the process of assimilation continued, many universities adopted additional measures to promote the use of online learning (e.g., by providing funding to encourage teaching staff to use online resources in their regular teaching practice; assigning to a dedicated unit responsibility for promoting the use of technology-based teaching; or providing the necessary infrastructural and training support to staff engaged in e-learning initiatives).

The effectiveness of these measures inevitably varied somewhat at an institutional level, but overall the speed and pervasiveness of the subsequent spread of online learning among tertiary institutions is impressive. A survey of about one hundred U.S. tertiary institutions (in 1998) showed that two-thirds were already participating in a 'virtual university', or were a partner in an IT-supported distance-education project that benefited non-traditional students. A later, more extensive, survey showed that 55% of responding institutions offered college-level, credit-granting, distance education courses; more impressive still, 30% of institutions presented degree programmes to be completed totally through distance education.<sup>4</sup> True, this data relates to distance education (rather than e-learning per se) and no doubt reflects the increasing involvement by universities in distance education



## Strategies for e-Learning Success

Recent technological advances and the advent of e-Learning have dramatically altered the world of education and training. There are millions of e-Learners around the world. Today's e-Learners come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and are of all ages. Most are working people who are trying to continue their education and improve their opportunities. Still, e-Learning is quite different from traditional classroom learning and is not for everyone. Successful e-Learning students share certain qualities and abilities.

- **E-Learning requires motivation and self-discipline.** Successful e-Learning students are able to study independently and incorporate study time into their busy lives. Students should set aside regular study time. e-Learning requires a real commitment to keep up with the flow of the process and to finish within the required period of time.
- **Define your goals and plan for success.** Define your goals and objectives for your e-Learning experience. Understand the requirements and plan ahead so that you will know what's expected of you and how your performance will be evaluated.
- **e-Learning requires good reading and writing skills.** The ability to efficiently read and interpret instructions is a critical skill in e-Learning. Most activities and communications are also written, so it is important to be comfortable with your ability to express yourself through writing.
- **Incorporate work, life, and other educational experiences as part of the learning process.** e-Learning requires the student to make inferences based on experience as well as facts. Meaningful reflection and critical analysis of information are an essential part of the learning process. Look for opportunities to apply what you have learned in your life.
- **Be willing and able to commit adequate time to the e-Learning process.** e-Learning is a convenient way to receive education and training, but it is not easier than the traditional educational process. In fact, it often requires more time and commitment.
- **Have access to the necessary equipment and create some personal space.** It is important that you have a place to study in a peaceful and focused manner.

To be a successful e-Learner you must believe that meaningful, high quality learning can take place without a traditional classroom. When properly designed and executed, e-Learning is a highly effective and rewarding learning environment.

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*Patricio MONTESINOS Head of Unit Lifelong Learning Centre, Universitat Politecnica de VALENCIA, SPAIN.*

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