Impact of Virtual Learning Environment on LIS EDUCATION: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Today virtual classrooms are functioning in a system of virtual reality in   the Indian educational scenario. These are, in fact the cyber classrooms, where the teacher and students can converse in real time. In every sense, a virtual classroom tries to stimulate, in every way it can, the learning platform provided by conventional classroom. There has been a sea change in the ways how education is provided with the application of new ICTs. Providing LIS Education in Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has become an issue today. Delivery of library services has also been in existence such an environment. The present study highlight the virtual learning environment its characteristics, features, objectives of, LIS Education in Virtual Learning Environment etc.

Keywords: Virtual learning Environment; LIS Education, Libraries, IGNOU, NODLINET, E-Gyankosh.

1.   Introduction

ICT, or information and communications technology (or technologies), is the infrastructure and components that enable modern computing. It is also often found shortage of teachers.. ICTs make curriculum implementation learner-centred with a self learning environment that enables the student customize his/her own learning experiences.

The rapid strides made in the field of ICT have also led to a paradigm shift in education and training in all fields and the borderless library plays a vital role. More and more individuals are taking courses to distance education to relish their dreams. To cater to this large segment of learners, a number of institutions including the virtual institutions have started offering a wide range of courses on the web called web-based education tutorials or online courses or virtual courses. The web collects and creates knowledge resources from any place any time. Thus, it acts as collaborator between the creators and users of knowledge and become a part of the global knowledge network. Again the emergence of Open Source Software (OSS) has also brought a drastic change the way how information is delivered and accessible freely. Such advancements in ICTs in the web era have enabled the LIS Schools to provide education by adopting maximum technologies in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Modern library systems are also coming up to deliver their services in such an environment.

2.   Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Virtual Learning Environment is a virtual classroom that allows teachers and students to communicate with each other online. All the information, learning materials, and assignments are typically provided through the web. Students can log in to their registered class link to view all the information and they can also download assignments and required reading materials to their computers or laptops. In a virtual classroom, the teacher may communicate with the students in real-time using video or Web conferencing. This type of communication is typically used for giving lectures and for question and answer sessions. Some Virtual Learning Environments even allow the students to complete assignments and tests online. In much literature, different names have been used for the term "virtual learning" as:

- Internet learning
- Distributed learning

- Network learning
- Online learning
- Tele learning
- E-learning
- Computer assisted learning
- Distance learning
- Web-based learning
- Federated learning

3. Virtual Community

A virtual community is a community of people for sharing their common interests, ideas, and feelings through the Internet. The web environment provides a number of opportunities to both the teachers and learners. In the environment, learner gets access to a wide range of knowledge. They can develop new ways for learning. The web also provides a vehicle for high tech learning where teacher acts as a facilitator for the students. Virtual learning with innovative applications of ICT has become today a boon. Specialized websites are coming up in various disciplines providing online courses and training in virtual environment. Some such sites include:

a)   The Australian Correspondence School (http://www.asc.edu.au)
b)   California Virtual University (http://www.california.edu/catalogs.html)
c)   Belford University (http://www.Belforduniversity.org)
d)   Online Study for UK (http://www.ebam.ac.uk)
e)   E-Learning training (http://www.outstant.com)
f)   f) United States Open University (http://www.open.edu)

4. Characteristic Features

The characteristic features of the web based VLE are:

- It facilitates self learning at the learner's convenient time and place.
- Electronic publication is cheaper and faster.
- It facilitates faster and cheaper delivery of the material.
- It promotes better teacher-student interactivity.
- It enables to update learning materials speedily.
- Net Library (www.netlibrary.com): A division of OCLC providing versatile e-content for libraries and publishers which also offers e-books, audio books, databases, ejournals online.
- Ebrary (www.ebrary.com): A leading e-content services and technology, provides more than 60,000 full text digital books and other authoritative

content from over 200 leading publishers.

- Books 24X7(www.books24X7.com) : A leading provider of web-based digital, technical and business reference content, containing thousands of

digitized "best-in class" reference books, research reports, documentation
and articles.

- Questia (www.questia.com): An online library providing 24X7 access to the world's largest online collection of books and journals articles in

humanities, social sciences, magazines and newspaper articles

5. LIS Education in VLE

The scope for LIS Education has changed drastically with the f a s t growth and development of

research activities, particularly in the field of Information and Communication Technology. For qualitative improvement of LIS education in VLE , there is need to introduce new courses based on ICTs in different LIS schools to face the challenges In fact ICT has not only have its impact on day to day library operations and services but also LIS education. For which there is a need to develop the changes in the LIS Education:

- To increase quality of LIS students
- To meet demands of the market in e-environment
- To face the challenges due to fast development of ICT and its impact on LIS Education
- To suit increasing demands for trained LIS professionals
- To increase job opportunities for LIS professionals
- To use internet based e-courses which are increasing day-by-day
- To adopt e-publishing which is being increasingly accepted by the users
- To transform traditional mode of LIS education in India.

5.1   Objectives: The general objectives of providing LIS education in VLE are

- To have a broad perspective on the core principles of LIS and its applicability in the new environment;
- To understand the managerial activities of the libraries and Information systems in the modern context.
- To comprehend the principles of knowledge organization, retrieval, management, delivery, etc;
- To enhance practical skills in new virtual environment to face the challenges;
- To meet the current demands of the new digital era;
- To train the learners suitably in the tune of the market demand;
- To provide on-line information skills; etc.

5.2   Essentialities in VLE: To boost the ICT based LIS Education it is essential to adopt

- Intensive and rigorous short term training courses
- continuing education programme
- workshops/conference/seminars
- in-service training
- project based learning
- computer assisted instruction
- Developing intelligence learning technology by having self teaching guides or do it yourself series.

5.3.   Issues in VLE: The LIS education system is not able to effectively cater to the needs of the emerging market for the LIS professionals. The web based teaching and learning system may solve problems to a great extent. For effective implementation of the web based LIS education, it is however, necessary to consider the following issues.

- **Changing the Learning Culture:** Migrating to the electronic learning environment calls for a change in the attitude of learners. The learners need to be trained in handling of the new media.
- **Training of Teachers**: Teachers need to upgrade their skills in developing and delivering the course content through networks. Training programme
for the LIS teachers in web page designing, multimedia courseware
production, HTML document preparation, etc is essential.
- **Courseware/software Development**: Web based learning does not refer to just putting the learning material on the network. The material should be

relevant, interactive, user-friendly, and able to facilitate the self-learning
process. Trained manpower is required with the knowledge and skills both in software development as well as in LIS.

✓   **Equal Access to Technology**: It must be assured that learners have equal access to the material provided on the net, immaterial of where they live or
placed.

6.   IGNOU Initiatives in India

6.1 E-Gyankosh: eGyanKosh has emerged as one of the world's largest educational resource repositories. It offers free, open access and is available to the world to facilitate self-learners and empower educators. More than 2,200 courses and 2,000 video lectures are available online in the repository.

6.1.   Nodlinet: Stands for National Open Distance Learner's Library and Information Network. Its name implies NODLINET is a National Network of Distance Learning for sharing collections, e-resources and services on a common platforms. Its main objective is to strengthening the ODL Library. One of the Important activities of the NODLINET is upgradation of IGNOU Regional Centre's Libraries and to establishment the infrastructure to have access to library resources.

6.2.   IUC-TEFED: Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development (IUC-TEFED) is the latest initiative of IGNOU which works as a central point to undertake all types of collaborative activities involving new knowledge, Open and Distance Learning, e-learning, etc. The structure of Inter University Consortium is on the lines of Pan-African e-Network and the existing consortia of UGC, AIU, etc. All the open universities in the country can be its founding members while conventional universities as its associate members. NGOs, organizations involved in the development of Education and Training, Industry, etc can also be invited for collaboration and partnership. The consortium is expected to facilitate convergence and sharing of knowledge through the media and technology.

7.   IATLIS Recommendations

The Joint National Conference of IATLIS and Association of Government Libraries and Information Specialists held at Hyderabad in 1997 on IT have recommended that:

✓   IT and its by products such as internet, CD-ROM and E-mail should be increasingly and effectively used in LIS education.

✓   LIS students may have internship in libraries which have IT environment for gaining practical experience and confidence.

✓   LIS students should acquire multimedia technology which has vast potential and utility for teaching LIS subjects.

✓   IT environment might be created in all types of Library and Information Centres in the country LIS should adopt IT in the management and offer
value added services to the community.

✓   Short term and long term programmes such as seminars, symposia and workshops be organize at regular intervals by agencies like DST, NIC, NISCAIR, INFLIBNET, Library Schools, Library Associations for the LIS teachers as continuing education programme.

Conclusion

Virtual learning is really the new age of learning. The future of V-learning is very bright. This idea has been mounting at a very rapid rate as more and more uses for the computer in education have been discovered and attempted in Indian educational scenario. There is an explosion in information and it is beyond the edge of places. It is available everywhere. Interactive web is creating new thresholds

of the hour. V-learning is the future of e-learning. As an impact of the globalization and ICT revolution as well, there is generally an agreed implication that education and training in LIS should go in the tune of the same. LIS schools all

over the world, as such, are accepting the new technologies. The establishment of the Indian Training and Education Network for Development (INTEND) by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India is a good approach of the government. The initiatives taken up by IGNOU are a good signal in the country. Web-based mode of teaching has become an important component of LIS Education in India. The use of new ICT by the Indian LIS Schools should be encouraged to produce professionals to manage knowledge resources in the VLE.

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