

VIRTUAL LEARNING DEVELOPS LEARNING CULTURE

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Abstract

Educational technology has changed the entire scenario of the teaching learning process. When the web-based learning amalgamates with conventional classroom, it is referred as blending learning. In COVID -19 pandemic situation education had a drastic change leading to online classroom and self-learning. It has become the new normal in the present education approach. Virtual learning is online learning with the use of internet. Virtual learning initiates a culture of learning and encourages the adoption of constructive learning habits. The different ways of virtual learning are synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid learning. Virtual learning is a student- centric method of learning process. This paper highlights the importance of virtual learning and how it develops a learning culture among learners.

Keywords: *Virtual learning, synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid learning, learners, education, self-learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning may be defined as “a process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning” (Ambrose et al, 2010, p.3). In the process of learning, change in the learner may happen at the level of knowledge, attitude, or behavior. Development of new technologies, explosion of knowledge creates new perspectives in the field of education and in teaching learning processes. Teacher’s role has changed from instructor to facilitator, constructor and creator of learning environment. The learners have gone into a self-learning mode. Self-learning is the method of gathering, processing, and retaining knowledge without the help of another person. In self-learning, the learner has control of the amount of material and duration they need to learn the information properly.

VIRTUAL LEARNING

Virtual learning refers to an environment where students study on digital-based platforms. Learning experience is enriched through proper use of internet both inside and outside of the

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educational institutions. Virtual learning motivates in self-learning process in a self-paced manner. Virtual learning replaces new pedagogical techniques in education and makes learning process more personalized and convenient. It magnifies the creative thinking of students. This method is adopted by many universities to offer education to the learners effectively. Use of technology in virtual learning improves the self-learning process, rather than rely on face-to-face teaching approach.

Virtual learning combines elements such as content management, curriculum, learner engagement, communication tools, collaborative tools, assessment and real-time teaching elements. It improves self-learning habit of the learners. As per the modern educational theories (Behaviorism, cognitivism and social constructivism) quality of virtual learning depends on the proper use of digital technology.

- Behaviorism - the learners respond to a certain stimulus.

Ex: Video tutorials, game-based activities, regular feedback, quizzes repeatedly stimulate the learner by which they can observe, control and modify their behavior.

- Cognitivism - focuses on brain performance and cognitive development that form the foundation of learning.

- Social constructivism - focuses on the learning activities

Ex: sharing, teamwork and collaborative learning.

In virtual learning platforms, online whiteboard, breakout rooms, screen sharing activities should be perfectly applied for group discussion, brainstorming in teaching learning process. The essence of virtual learning aspect may be represented on different forms. The most commonly used terms are:

- E-learning
- Web based learning
- Online learning
- Distance learning
- Blended learning
- Flipped learning

Different Approaches of Virtual Learning

Synchronous learning: It describes forms of education, instruction, and learning that occur at the same time, but not in the same place. Digital and online learning experiences can also be termed as synchronous learning. For example, educational video conferences, interactive webinars, chat-based online discussions, and lectures that are broadcasted at the same time fall under synchronous learning.

Asynchronous learning: It describes the form of educational instruction, and learning process that do not occur in the same place or at the same time. It is applicable to teacher-student or peer-to-peer learning happening in different places at different time. Asynchronous learning may also encompass a wide variety of instructional interactions such as pre-recorded video lessons or game-based learning tasks that students complete on their own, including email exchanges between teachers, online discussion boards etc.,

Hybrid learning: It offers the best of both traditional and online learning. It combines the best of both worlds, offering students the flexibility of online learning while still providing the structure and interaction of traditional classroom learning.

Components of Hybrid Learning:

- In-Person Instruction: Traditional classroom with a teacher and classmates.
- Online Learning: Independent or guided learning through digital resources.
- Blended Learning: Combining in-person and online learning

Importance of Virtual Learning

Geographical barriers are eliminated in virtual learning. Unique features of the virtual learning are:

- Leverage
- Convenience and Portability
- Flexibility and Quality
- Designed around the learner
- Accessibility
- Cost saving and Selection
- Enhance computer and Internet skill
- Global opportunities

Self-learning

Self-directed learning is a sort of learning in which learner are allowed to work with task or problem of own choice. Self-learning can be directed, refined and amplified with the use of

digital technology. COVID-19 pandemic situation helped to recognize the significance of self-directed learning and encouraged the teachers to facilitate such learning model in the classroom.

Components involved in developing self-learning

Internet as a learning resource and Digital storytelling are the components which aids learners in self-learning process.

Internet as learning resource:

- ✓ Different types of websites such as weblogs, company websites, Social Networking websites, Commercial websites, search engines, Forums etc., acts as learning resources for self-learning process. These websites help learners in quick access of information, to start a discussion among peers and find solution to the queries.
- ✓ The various documenting websites also show the possibilities for self-learning process. For example: “Talk to a Teacher”- spoken tutorial project, e-yantra - Robotics for project-based learning, UGC- Info net digital library, Virtual labs, E-kalpa - creating digital-learning environment are some of the websites specifically designed for a developing different skills.
- ✓ Technological tools that support self-learning process includes Concept or mind mapping tools, database software, spread sheet software which involves learners in collecting, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting various forms of data and information. These are useful for students to learn history, math and science.

Digital Storytelling

- ✓ Digital storytelling - describes the new practice of everyday people who use digital tools to tell story. Digital story is often presented in compelling and emotionally engaging formats, and is interactive. The key benefit of digital storytelling is students’ engagement in active learning process.
- ✓ It allows learners to work with authentic assignments, develop their personal and academic voice, represent knowledge to community of learners, receives feedback from their peers.
- ✓ It helps learners to develop a stronger voice to firmly place themselves in relationship to the arguments of others. (Oppermann and Coventry, 2011)

CONCLUSION

Virtual learning is an innovative development in learning environment. It allows one to learn anywhere and at any time, as long as the learner has a properly configured computer. Virtual learning helps learners to study in a self-paced manner. It allows learners to choose content and tools appropriate to their differing interests, needs, and skill level. It accommodates multiple learning styles using variety of delivery methods geared to different learners especially more effective for certain learners. Thus, virtual learning develops the self-learning culture among the tech savvy learners.

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