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Study Habits on Usability of Online and Offline Learning Resources is an Indicator of Quality Higher Education: Issues and Concerns

Abstract

Higher education is one of the most crucial indices of socio-economic development and of vital importance to build knowledge – based society. The quality of the higher education decides the quality of human resources of a country. Considering online and offline learning resources as an indicator of quality higher education the present paper will focus on study habits among the student pursuing higher education. An attempt has been made to sketch the benefit of using online and offline learning resources in achieving quality higher education.

Keywords: Study Habits, Higher Education, Online learning Resources and Offline Learning Resources.

Introduction

Higher education means an education which is of higher standard than the general education. It plays a vital role in the society by upbringing all round development to mankind. Higher education is one of the most crucial indices of socio-economic development and of vital importance to build knowledge-based-society .The progress of a nation mainly depends upon the expansion and quality improvement of higher education. When we traced back, Higher Education, in our country, was started as early as Vedic Age. And the modern higher education in India was started by the European Christian Missionaries. The Kothari Commission, 1964 proposed the 10+2+3 pattern of education for the whole country. As per the National Education Policy, 1986, higher education now starts after +2, which is divided into many categories, namely-arts, commerce, science, law, agriculture, medicine, engineering and management etc. The post-graduate education and research work is also organized in all these fields, and also the policy stated that the higher education is a means to achieve higher knowledge, to discover new knowledge, to prepare specialists for different fields of the nation, to develop broad attitude among youths and all-round development of the nation. Looking into the data over 70 million students are enrolled in higher education. According to the survey by Times Higher Education not even a single Indian University could stand among 200 top most ranking Universities in the World. So it is a high time to pay our attention towards the quality of higher education.

What Online and Offline Learning Resources is?

When we encompass the very terminologies of online and offline learning resources we understand that – online learning resources refers to learning which is done through the connectivity of Internet that can be accessed from a computer, Smartphone, laptop, tablets with a Web browser. On the other hand, offline learning resources refers to learning without any connection of Internet where learning is done only through the hand-out materials. Taking into the cognizance of online and offline learning resources an attempt has been made to discuss on the *study habits* relating to online and offline learning resources which determines the quality of higher education. But there are many current issues and challenges grappling over the study habits of present generation learners that have been discussed below.

Issues and Concerns

We know that the importance of information and communication technology (ICT) is achieving national educational objectives which are rising day by day especially in the area of higher education. No doubt manifold changes have been undergone in the recent times in the sector

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of teaching learning process with an advent of modern sophisticated technologies such as-multimedia, telecommunication and internet etc. The recent technological developments in computers and telecommunication particularly in the use of internet and World Wide Web (www), specifically in access to the storage and transfer of vast quantities of information have included many possibilities for direct application to the classroom teaching learning situation. In this era of networked information, Internet, the largest worldwide network of networks has emerged as a powerful educational tool for an instant access to information.It has made a tremendous impact on the academic activities of the teachers and students in the process of teaching and learning. Information is just a 'finger touch' away from the used and it can be said that the internet has become the biggest global digital information library, which can provide the fastest access to the right kind of information at any time and at any place in the world.

With the advent of internet, a significant transition can be seen in the academic communities approach and the way they seek information and the methods they employ for teaching and learning activities. This have been become possible as internet provides a wealth of current information and delivers text, graphics, images, audios and videos at the same time and anywhere. It has become a powerful supplement to the traditional ways of teaching, studying and learning. The Internet can provide access to essentially unlimited resources of information, which is not conventionally obtainable through other means.

The Challenges Ahead

On the other hand, it can be emphasized here that today's students are called "digital learners" because of their technologies savvy and free agent approach to learning. With the advent of electronic resources and with the iphones, computer games, social media pages, and text messaging. These digital learners have access to resources and knowledge beyond traditional institutional structures and practices. These students are now less dependent upon traditional education institutions for knowledge acquisition and are much more self-reliant, exercising their internet-based skills to aggregate data and information. In every field people are enjoying the advantages of recently adopted ICT in one way or the other. It has entered into every aspect of our lives from personal to business, from economical to educational. This recent adoption of ICT in the process of educational system has taken a big notice giving birth to the term, 'Online learning Resources' which in turn contributes a gap in students' learning. Take for instance now-a-days most of the time it has been observed that in the sector of higher education the students from any field /area are using some electronic resources like Smartphone, Laptop, and Computer etc. as a means for collecting their study materials. Students of higher education have begun to shift from traditional way of learning to modern sophisticated way of learning. As a result of which their study habits also changes to a great extent. Most often students are busy in learning through internet

based skill. They study online and prepare their notes by downloading the readymade material in their mobile phones (Smartphone), Laptop or Computer etc. Using of online learning resources has become a very common task with every higher learner. Due to the current internet sources which can be avail through electronic resources students/research scholars of higher education have lessen their habits of using library sources like textbook, preserved theses, journal, university news, magazines etc. Higher learners are now less interested in visiting library for the purpose of collecting materials, because those are available in the internet sources and they can easily avail it with the help of online learning resources without any much effort. So things are achieved readymade with just a finger touch in any time and in any place of the world. But is these readymade materials will really impart a deep learning to the student of higher learners? Or will those materials will able to improve student's learning outcomes? No doubt ICT is the best gift to mankind and one cannot ignore its importance in their life. So also it has influences in the education sector too. Now-a-days higher learners in every discipline are excessively using ICT based electronic resources like-mobile phone, laptop, tablets etc. for the purpose of collecting academic materials. Will the usage of electronic resources help the students of higher learning to gain positive progress in their learning outcomes? Rajasingham, L. (2010) opined increased use of mobile telephones and their convergence with PDAs and similar devices has created new possibilities for providing learning and the development of education on the go (analogous to "food to go") that offers just-in-time learning moments in synchronous mode. Just as "food to go" is regarded as junk food or merely a "hunger-buster", there is ongoing debate as to whether learning on the go can in fact provide "deep learning". Whether the usage of ICT based electronic resources will have positive impact or negative impact in the learning outcome of the students is an issue of concern? Rismark, et al (2007) found out that sometimes, students used the mobile phone to view the videos ahead of lectures without future preparation. The mobile phone thus worked as a preparation tool for the purpose to familiarize them with the topic without using other study material. Sofowora (2011) found that mobile communication device had both positive and negative impact in education. Nigeria as developing country welcomes mobile technology with enthusiasm. However the enthusiasm soon began to fade out as a result of myriad problems associated with the use of mobile phone by students in schools. Some of the problems are: concern for discipline, examination malpractices and mobile bullying. Research has shown that some people have become addicted to their phones, they cannot do without it, and they sleep and wake up with it beside them. Another research conducted by Attewell (2005) found out that mobile technologies make a useful contribution to attracting young people to learning, maintaining their interest and supporting their learning and development. Thornton and Houser (2004) studied on the use of mobile phones to teach English as a second language

and the report was that mobile phones in Japan outnumber PCs five to one, and that while 43% of students use a computer to send email, 99% of their subjects transmitted email on their mobiles. They however concluded that in situations where class time for the courses is limited, there is a real need to provide extra-curricular learning opportunities. Liang and Huang (2013) found that e-books are able to lead to better retrieval outcomes as compared to printed ones. However from the above studies it is clear that usage of electronic resources in relation to higher learners contributes both positive and negative impact in education. It is upon the human itself who can create balanced-link between the uses of ICT based electronic learning resources. Moon (1997) and Bates (1995) also advises about the dangers of over reliance on technological media and calls to be more balanced and pragmatic. It is also said that unimaginatively use of ICT may create a digital divide, which may result into a social divide.

Again the continuous uses of online learning resources may also degrade some of the basic quality of higher education:

1. Excessively uses of online learning resources may lead students towards the chaos, leading disorder in their study habits.
2. Over uses of online learning resources may deteriorate some of the basic skills of student learners of higher education.
3. Deterioration of basic skills in turn will result on degradation of quality higher education.

When we speak about basic skills of student it may include- writing skill, reading skill, understanding skill, listening skill, questioning skill etc. One may think or wonder how the basic skills of the student are being affected by the use of online learning resources? Take for instance, ICT based electronics resources is so powerful that it can deliver any kind of information without any effort in any time and in any place of the world. So with the help of these resources students are availing all the necessary materials in the form of downloading and printing, which sounds the absence of writing, reading and understanding, listening or asking any question on the part of the student. As a result they are depriving from basic skills which is a part of quality education. It seems that due to excessive usage of electronic devices in education the art of writing, reading, understanding, listening, questioning etc are slowly losing its worth. We cannot think of quality higher education without taking into consideration the basic skills of the students because it is the prime learning of every sort of knowledge. It is stated in the National Policy 1986, higher education is a means to achieve higher knowledge, to discover new knowledge, to prepare specialists for different fields of the nation, to develop broad attitude among youths and an all-round-development of the nation.

Suggestions for the Use of Online and Offline Learning Resources

1. In this 21st century both online and offline learning resources should go hand in hand in order to meet the challenges of Quality Higher Education.
2. In case of using online and offline learning resources balance should be maintained otherwise it may become unnecessarily the reason of the other cause.
3. Too much encouragement for the Internet based learning may create chances of deteriorating some of the basic skills of the student.
4. Totally elimination of use of Internet based learning also may make the student deprive of the advantage of the ICT in this 21st century.
5. Taking into consideration the merits and demerits of both online and offline learning resources they should be utilized equally for better performance leading to quality higher education.

Aim of the Study

The present study intents to highlight on.
1. The prevalent issues and concerns pertaining to the On- line and Off- line study habits of undergraduate learners in Assam and,
2. The challenges ahead to confront the study habit problems among the learners in higher education

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the invention of IT has dominated every field and it is also being regarded as 'explosion of knowledge'. But it is also because of the invention of IT that electronic resources have taken birth through which information is achieved. No doubt in the 21st century the students of higher education have welcomed and accepted the IT based electronic resources in their life. But still there are some categories of learners who merely depend upon traditional way of learning as they found interest basically in the use of library resources/ hand-outs/ supplementary etc. So from this point of view online and offline learning resources is one of the emerging environments among students.

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