

## VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

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### Abstract:

In the era of ICT and Internet it is important to keep pace with rapid changes in the technology that are taking place in the world, especially for developing countries with strong emphasis on the Education sector. For this, changes ought to be introduced in the teaching-learning process. The Use of Internet is becoming an engine of innovation in education. The Internet or indeed ICT and all its interactive elements are able to have an extremely positive impact to the learning potential of students as well as teachers. Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a web-based toolkit that facilitates learning through the provision and integration of online teaching and learning materials. This paper shows the concept of virtual learning environment, virtual community, characteristics of present virtual learning environment/classrooms; differentiate with traditional learning environment, demerits and suggestions of VLE, proposed model and some innovative initiatives by the government of India.

### Keywords:

ICT, VLE, Collaborative Learning, Virtual community, Video Conferencing, e-Library, Virtual Classroom.

### Introduction:

We know the field of Information and Communication Technology is a challenging field. The rapid growth and uses of Internet made in the field of ICT have led to a revolutionary shift in the field of education and training and the Open library plays a vital role. More and more learners/students are taking education via these open sources 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. They can access these tutorials any time anywhere from the web. Thus, it acts as collaborator between the creators and learners

of knowledge and formed a global knowledge network. Again the availability of free Open Source Software like ELMS[1] has also brought a drastic change the way how information is delivered and accessible freely. There are a number of universities in India which are working for creating such type of open learning system which can be freely accessed by anyone.

Such advancements in ICTs have enabled 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.

### Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

A VLE is a virtual classroom that allows teachers and students to communicate with each other online. Class information, learning materials, and assignments are typically provided via the Web. Students can log in to the class website to view this information and may also download assignments and required reading materials to their computers. 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. If the teacher only needs to send out a homework assignment, he or she can simply post a bulletin on the class website. The students may also receive an e-mail notification letting them know a new assignment has been posted. If class members have questions about the homework, they can participate in online forums or submit individual questions to the teacher. Virtual learning environments are a popular method of e-learning, which refers to learning through electronic means. While a VLE cannot fully replace the traditional classroom, it can be a useful way of teaching students who reside in many different locations. VLE contains the online learning services. This is a learning platform that organizes and provides access to online learning services for the students, teachers and administrators. In VLE, the learner is at a far off place from the tutor or teacher or instructor. He/She uses some form of technology (obviously internet connected computer) to access the learning resource materials which are web- based and also interacts with the teacher/tutor or instructor and other learners.

### **Characteristics Of Virtual Learning Classrooms**

Virtual classroom also needs equivalent equipment and tools in the form of network-based software application to allow a group of instructors and students to carry out the learning process. 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. No physical boundary is required for getting access to virtual learning. Entire universe is the classroom. It enables to update learning materials speedily. The output of virtual teaching-learning process depends upon the

factors like students' motivation for self-learning, subject expertise and communication skills of the teacher, on-line problem-solving facility, connectivity to e-library, and use of technology based lightly interactive multimedia, etc.

### **Proposed Virtual Learning Environment Model**

To boost the ICT based Virtual Learning Environment 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.
- Creation, storage and access the learning resources.
- Lesson planning and assessment.
- Manage access to learner's information and resources and also tracking of progress and achievement.
- Communication with learners via emails, notices, chat, blogs.
- Self assessment quizzes.
- Formal assessment functions such as examination, presentation of projects etc.
- Provision for necessary hyperlinks to create a unified presentation to the students.
- Interaction in vernacular language
- Integrate heterogeneous technologies and multiple pedagogical approaches.
- Upgradation of teachers' skills in developing and delivering the course content through networks.
- Developing intelligence learning technology by having self teaching guides or do it yourself series.

### **Some Initiatives In Vle By Ignou In India E-GYANKOSH**

It is a digital repository initiated by IGNOU to enhance the accessibility of knowledge to share its valuable resources with educational institutions and learners internationally. This national Digital Repository acts as a podium to store, index, preserve and share the digital learning resources developed by the Open and Distance Learning Institutions in the country [7].

### **Gyan Darshan**

A satellite based TV channel devoted to educational and developmental needs of the society [8].

### **Nodlinet (National Open And Distance Learners' Library And Information Network)**

The Library and Documentation Division of IGNOU has started giving efforts to take higher education to the doorsteps of the hitherto un-reached through its various modes of Information and Document Delivery Services

### **IUC-TEFED**

Inter University Consortium for Technology-Enabled Flexible Education and Development (IUC-TEFED) is the latest initiative of IGNOU which works as a nodal point to undertake all types of collaborative activities involving Open and Distance Learning, e-learning new knowledge creation, appropriate technology, etc.

### **Conclusion**

As an impact of the globalization and ICT revolution as well, there is generally an agreed implication that education and training should go in the tune of the same. Virtual Learning schools all over the world, as such, are accepting the new technologies. In this regard,

India is lagging behind in comparison with other advanced countries like, US, UK, etc. 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 and other Universities are a good signal in the country. The future of virtual learning environments has many innovative and exciting possibilities. At the same time adventures in learning call for creative and potent environments where individuals share meaningful knowledge and experiences in constructing new information and ideas. These adventures foster mutual collaboration that allows learners to apply newly acquired learning in the design of insightful, cognitive processing without detachment/ obscurity from real-life situations. A judicious blend of both traditional and virtual learning environment with special attention to students' needs and satisfaction can create constructive and creative learners, teaching community and learned society. The use of new ICT by the Indian Schools/Universities should be encouraged to produce professionals to manage knowledge resources in the VLE.

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