Shikshan Sanshodhan : Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences ISSN(o): 2581-6241
Monthly, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed Journal Impact Factor: 6.831
Volume - 7, Issue - 05, May - 2024

DOIs:10.2018/SS/202405003 --:-- Research Paper / Article / Review

'U'-learning in the new Education policy-2020 : Pros and Cons

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Abstract: *We find ourselves amidst a period of swift and unprecedented climate change. As science and technology evolve, they are reshaping the dynamics between educators and learners, influencing their social interactions. Globalization further accelerates the transformation of educational norms, posing fresh challenges to teacher training institutions as new technologies emerge. Educators are acutely attuned to this paradigm shift and are leveraging current technological trends to adapt. One such trend is 'U'-learning, or ubiquitous learning, which is described as both widespread and enduring, offering students flexible and serene access to education.*

Objectives*: This paper aims to delve into the pros and cons of u-learning in the context of teacher education in India. Additionally, it seeks to assess the efficacy of u-learning technology within the framework of the current new education policy*

Methodology *This study is based on secondary sources like book articles, journals, websites, expert opinions etc. The method is based on descriptive method.*

Findings and conclusions *: Consequently, the potential of u-learning lies in its ability to offer expanded learning content and foster collaborative learning environments that are accessible anytime, anywhere, and in any format. Consequently, students can enhance their cognitive abilities and be motivated towards self-paced learning.*

Key words: *Ubiquitous , Self –paced learning, current technological trends.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

In our current era of globalization, technological innovation has become a cornerstone of human civilization, especially in developed countries where technology is evolving at an astonishing pace. When it comes to our own country, like many others worldwide, the new education policy reflects a growing reliance on technology to meet the needs of society and drive further advancement. We're witnessing rapid and transformative changes across all aspects of society, with online tools and techniques becoming integral to the educational process, fostering progress and enrichment. Educators are increasingly turning to digital platforms to conduct their classes, while the internet and smartphones are advancing rapidly, becoming central to new educational trends.

In this context, U-learning, or ubiquitous learning, has emerged as a significant trend in the education sector, enabling learners to acquire knowledge and skills in a manner that suits them best. U-learning is essentially an evolution of e-learning, and many experts anticipate that it will lead to a pedagogical shift towards more creative and personalized learning approaches. The value of U-learning lies in its capacity to provide flexible access to learning resources and computer-supported collaborative environments, anytime and anywhere. This allows for a seamless integration of virtual and physical learning spaces. Furthermore, U-learning has the potential to revolutionize education by breaking down many of the physical barriers associated with traditional learning methods.

2. Statement of the problem:

The researcher had taken up the present descriptive study entitled

" U-learning in the new education policy: pros and cons"….

U-learning Definition:

Ubiquitous Computing represents a new frontier in information and communication technology. The term was introduced by Mark Weiser in the late 1980s to describe a method where computing devices are seamlessly integrated into the environment, rendering them virtually invisible to users. In a ubiquitous computing system, users receive timely information and relevant services by automatically collecting various context data and intelligently processing it to deliver appropriate outcomes. This technology shift has given rise to ubiquitous learning, a new educational paradigm that allows for individualized learning experiences. It builds on previous models of learning, evolving from e-learning to m-learning, and now progressing toward u-learning.

So, A Ubiquitous learning environment (Vicki & Jo, 2004) is a setting whichstudents can become totally immersed in the learning process:

Ubiquitous= pervasive, omnipresent, everywhere.

Learning= instructive, deductive, pedagogical.
Environment= surroundings, climate, atmosphere

Ubiquitous learning is a continuous learning style where learners can start the learning process at any time and from any place (Zhang et al.). It is based on platforms or environments designed with ubiquitous computing technology. The u-learning environment is a comprehensive network comprising various physical and abstract resources, including people, devices, and information spaces. This kind of environment fosters pervasive education, happening worldwide, often without students even being aware of their learning process. Currently, u-learning is being implemented in a variety of educational settings and is being used in different ways to address pedagogical challenges, whether in classrooms or to support outdoor studies, thus overcoming the limitations of traditional learning environments.

Basic Traits of U-learning:

- **Immediate learning needs**: The u-learning environment can be employed for learning needs that require immediate attention.
- **Proactive knowledge acquisition**:: U-learning systems can deliver information tailored to learners' requests in real-time.
- **Interactivity in Learning Process**: Learners can effectively communicate with peers, instructors, and subject matter experts through the interfaces provided by u-learning systems.
- **Contextualized Instructional Activities**: In a u-learning environment, the learning process can be integrated into daily life, with knowledge presented in authentic, real-world settings.
- **Self- directed Learning:** The concept of self-regulated learning is pivotal in u-learning environments, allowing learners to actively manage their learning objectives, strategies, and outcomes.
- **Continuous Learning**: The u-learning environment facilitates continuous learning, allowing learners to engage with educational content without disruption as they move from place to place.
- **Content Adaptation**: The u-learning environment can adjust educational content to align with the capabilities of various learning devices.
- **Learning Community**: The u-learning environment fosters an online community, enriching the learning experience by bringing real-world insights to virtual interactions between learners and educators.
- **Embedded Learning**: Learning in u-learning environments can be integrated into daily activities and authentic settings, providing practical and context-relevant experiences.
- **Real-Time Feedback**: U-learning systems can provide immediate feedback to learners, enabling them to adjust and improve their learning process on the go.
- **Cross-Platform Integration**: U-learning environments can integrate with other platforms and technologies, allowing learners to access educational resources and tools from various sources.

3. Significance of the study:

In recent years, science and technology have dramatically transformed society, impacting every aspect of human life, including education. A key contribution to this shift has been u-learning, or ubiquitous learning. This technology has become crucial for societal communication and relationships, revolutionizing education in the process. This study examines various dimensions of u-learning and its impact on education.

The scope of educational research will be expanded, shedding light on the pros and cons of u-learning technology in teacher education. This will provide learners with a clearer understanding of the importance of u-learning and its relevance for educators, educational planners, and researchers. Moreover, it will allow for a deeper exploration of how applicable u-learning is within the Indian context.

4. Objectives of the study:

- To find out the pros of u-learning in the context of teacher education in India
- To find out the drawbacks of u-learning in the context of teacher education in India
- To assess the efficacy of u-learning technology within the framework of the current new education policy

5. Methodology of the study:

This study relies on descriptive and survey methods. Within the Indian context, it primarily employs qualitative research techniques. The data is sourced entirely from qualitative sources, such as journals, books, articles, and similar publications.

6. Discussion:

Pros of U-learning:

"U-learning" typically refers to "ubiquitous learning," which involves learning that is available anytime and anywhere through various devices and platforms. Here are some pros of u-learning:

- **Accessibility**:

Learners can access educational materials and resources from anywhere with an internet connection. It enables learning on-the-go, fitting into learners' schedules and lifestyles.

- **Flexibility & Mobility :**

U-learning allows for personalized learning paths tailored to individual needs and preferences.

Learners can choose when and how they engage with the content, leading to more effective learning outcomes.

- **Diverse Learning Resources:**

U-learning platforms often offer a wide range of multimedia resources, including videos, interactive modules, podcasts, and eBooks.

Learners can explore content in various formats, catering to different learning styles and preferences.

- **Cost-Effectiveness:**

U-learning can be more cost-effective compared to traditional classroom-based learning, as it eliminates the need for commuting, physical textbooks, and sometimes even tuition fees.

It reduces overhead costs for educational institutions, potentially leading to more affordable education.

- **Life-skill Learning:**

U-learning promotes lifelong learning by making educational opportunities available to people of all ages and backgrounds.

It facilitates continuous skill development and knowledge acquisition, essential in today's rapidly changing job market.

- **Global Connectivity**:

U-learning breaks down geographical barriers, connecting learners with educators and peers from around the world. It fosters cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, enriching the learning experience.

- **Self-Paced Learning:**

U-learning allows learners to progress at their own pace, without feeling rushed or left behind. Individuals can spend more time on challenging concepts while moving quickly through material they already understand.

- **Real-Time Feedback**:

Many u-learning platforms offer instant feedback through quizzes, assessments, and interactive activities.

Learners can gauge their progress immediately, identifying areas for improvement and reinforcing their understanding of the material.

- **Engagement and Motivation**:

U-learning often incorporates gamification elements, social learning features, and multimedia content to keep learners engaged and motivated.

It can make learning more enjoyable and rewarding, increasing retention and participation rates.

- **Environmental Sustainability:**

U-learning reduces the need for physical resources like paper, leading to a smaller environmental footprint. It promotes eco-friendly practices by minimizing travel and energy consumption associated with traditional classroom settings.

These points highlight the numerous advantages of u-learning in providing accessible, flexible, and engaging educational experiences for learners worldwide.

Cons of U-Learning

While u-learning (ubiquitous learning) offers many benefits, it also has its some drawbacks. Here's a list of cons with a focus on clarity and coherence:

- **Promotes Digital Divide:**

U-learning requires access to technology and a stable internet connection, which not everyone has. This can exacerbate existing inequalities and create barriers for learners in underprivileged or remote areas.

- **Lack of Structure**:

- Without the traditional classroom structure, some learners might struggle with self-discipline and time management. The flexibility of u-learning can lead to procrastination or inconsistent learning patterns.

- **Limited Social Interaction:**

U-learning can lack the face-to-face interaction and social connections that traditional classrooms provide. This might result in feelings of isolation or reduced opportunities for collaborative learning.

- **Technical Issues:**

Technology-related problems like software bugs, hardware malfunctions, or connectivity disruptions can hinder the learning experience. These issues can be frustrating and cause interruptions in the learning process.

- **Quality Variability:**

The quality of u-learning resources can vary widely, with some content lacking depth or accuracy.

Inconsistencies in content quality can impact the overall learning outcome and reduce learner trust.

- **Reduced Accountability**:

In a u-learning environment, it might be easier for learners to avoid participation or engagement.

The absence of direct supervision or regular attendance can make it challenging to ensure accountability and track progress.

- **Limited Practical Experience**:

U-learning may not be suitable for all subjects, especially those requiring hands-on practice or physical presence, like laboratory work or clinical training.

The lack of direct, practical experience can limit skill development in certain fields.

- **Inadequate Assessment Methods**:

Online assessment tools might not always capture a learner's full range of skills and knowledge.

Cheating or plagiarism can be more difficult to detect in an online environment, affecting the reliability of assessments.

- **Reduced Emotional Connection:**

U-learning can be less effective at fostering emotional connections between instructors and learners. This may impact motivation, engagement, and the overall sense of community within a learning cohort.

- **Privacy and Security Concerns:**

U-learning platforms often collect personal data, raising concerns about privacy and data security. Inadequate security measures could lead to data breaches or unauthorized access, compromising learner information.

These cons highlight some of the significant challenges and limitations associated with u-learning. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure that this mode of education can be both effective and inclusive.

The efficacy of ubiquitous learning in the context of current education policy 2020:

Ubiquitous learning (u-learning) involves learning at any time and from any location, often supported by technology. It has gained traction in modern education policy, particularly with advancements in digital infrastructure and remote learning tools. Here's a list of points describing the efficacy of ubiquitous learning in the context of current education policy 2020:

- **Alignment with personalized Learning**:

Ubiquitous learning provides students with the flexibility to learn at their own pace, which aligns with education policies promoting individualized learning paths. This flexibility helps accommodate different learning styles and paces.

- **Increased Accessibility:**

U-learning extends education to remote or underprivileged areas, where traditional education facilities might be lacking. Education policy 2020 often emphasizes inclusive education, and u-learning supports this goal by providing learning opportunities to more people.

- **Support for Blended Learning:**

The combination of online and face-to-face instruction (blended learning) is a key feature of contemporary education policies. Ubiquitous learning provides the technological backbone for this model, enabling seamless integration of various learning resources.

- **Lifelong Learning Opportunities**:

Education policy 2020 promotes continuous learning and professional development. U-learning supports lifelong learning by allowing learners to access educational resources beyond traditional schooling years, which encourages a culture of on-going education.

- **Engagement and Interaction**:

With technology-enabled learning, students can engage with interactive content and collaborate with peers and instructors from anywhere. Education policies that focus on student engagement find that u-learning can boost interaction through digital platforms, fostering a sense of community.

- **Cost-Effectiveness**:

U-learning can reduce educational costs associated with infrastructure, travel, and physical resources. This aligns with policies aimed at optimizing education budgets and making education more financially accessible.

- **Support for Diverse Content Delivery**:

U-learning allows educators to deliver content through multiple formats, including text, video, audio, and interactive elements. This variety caters to diverse learning preferences and aligns with education policy goals for differentiated instruction.

- **Adaptability to Changing Circumstances:**

Ubiquitous learning can adapt to unexpected events, like the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continuity of education. Education policies emphasizing resilience and adaptability benefit from the flexibility u-learning provides.

- **Global Collaboration and Exposure:**

U-learning opens opportunities for global collaboration, allowing students to connect with peers and educators from different cultures and backgrounds. Education policy 2020 often emphasizes global citizenship, and u-learning supports this by fostering cross-cultural interactions.

- **Data-Driven Insights** :

Ubiquitous learning platforms often offer analytics tools that track student progress and engagement. This data-driven approach aligns with education policies focused on accountability and continuous improvement, providing educators with valuable insights to enhance teaching strategies.

These points demonstrate how ubiquitous learning effectively aligns with and supports the objectives of current education policies, particularly in terms of flexibility, accessibility, engagement, and adaptability.

7. Conclusion :

The 21st century has ushered in a disruptive transformation in education and society. U-learning, or ubiquitous learning, has taken on a significant role in education, transcending traditional constraints of time and place. This shift has contributed to reducing certain educational disparities related to caste, wealth, and social status. Today, an Indian student can study virtually any subject from any country, creating unprecedented access to global education.

However, while u-learning illuminates new opportunities, it also casts a shadow. The potential downsides, such as a loss of personal interaction, data privacy issues, and the erosion of traditional educational structures, could lead society into darker territory if not carefully managed. Educators play a critical role in shaping a positive u-learning environment. They guide learners through the challenges and uncertainties that come with this new learning paradigm. The use of web-based u-learning technology has the potential not only to boost cognitive performance but also to support learners' social, moral, and psychological well-being. With proper implementation, u-learning can drive educational development in a more proactive and inclusive direction.

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