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Importance of Distance Education and its Rise during the Period COVID-19

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Abstract

Distance education of all kinds has become a matter of concern to most universities, education centers, and trainers, with the tremendous development that the world is witnessing today, especially in the field of information technology and the expansion of educational technology horizons, by making use of every new method that will accelerate the process of human learning and its development, The most prominent of which is what is known as distance education, and recent years have witnessed an increasing interest in the provision of education and development through the Internet. There are many electronic universities, educational institutions and centers that provide this type of education, in addition to integrated programs and scientific certificates obtained by those who complete the prescribed curriculum and several companies have also adopted it to train human staff to hone skills or update information in the field of work. In this paper, the researcher aims to discuss the role that the COVID-19 pandemic played in bringing the distance education project out of drawers into practical application in many of our schools and universities, as schools and university colleges gave virtual lectures and enabled students to follow the lectures at their homes via computers. Without this pandemic situation, our schools and universities would not have practiced distance education. The researchers also concluded that distance education has the following characteristics: flexibility, ability, impact and effectiveness, interaction, and equality.

Keywords: distance education, electronic universities, characteristics of distance education, covid-19 pandemic, advantages of e-learning

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Introduction

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It is more than ever clear that open and distance learning will be an important element of future education and training systems (Tehrani, 2009). Distance education is one of the modern methods of learning and depends mainly on the teacher gives lectures from the virtual classroom, and the student can receive the lecture anywhere in the world, and the virtual classroom opens to everyone for interactive discussion and participation in a way that achieves benefit for all students from anywhere in the world (Gilbert, 2015; Cacault et al., 2019; Tarhini et al., 2016; Traxler, 2018; Aladwan et al., 2018; Leontyeva, 2018; Alves et al., 2017; Sadeghi, 2019). Distance education is one of the secretions of modern cognitive education, and indicators of knowledge education confirm that distance education will achieve more spread throughout the world, and it will have a major place in the education system everywhere in the world, and the need for distance education increases in emergency circumstances such as These conditions the world is experiencing today due to the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic (Bao, 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Tria, 2020).

The difficult equation that the world faces is that the costs of building educational institutions and providing educational staff and equipment are very high (Sá, 2014), and that the rates of increase in the population, and thus the increase in the demand for education, will exceed the Offered and available by very high rates. Therefore, the apparent deficit began to accept students in many universities in developed and developing countries. That is why the distance education project came to save human civilization from failure to absorb more students and pioneers of science (Heredia et al., 2019; Gulati, 2008).

Distance education is an integrated education of elements and activities, starting with designing the interactive curriculum, then contracting with competencies capable of managing knowledge, knowing the latest developments in modern technology, and ending with exams and continuous scientific evaluation systems, meaning that distance education is based on comprehensive knowledge skills and specialized knowledge. It also invests in information and communication technology systems and adapts them to enrich all stages of educational processes (Ghirardini, 2011), in addition to applying international standards and specifications that guarantee the provision of the highest quality. Recently interactive classes have appeared that allow the teacher or lecturer to deliver his lectures directly to thousands of students around the world without being restricted to the place, but these tools have evolved to allow the participation of students from all over the world in the dialogues and interventions (Thomas, 2016).

Distance education must have interactive electronic systems, modern educational tools, and specialized software linked to educational portfolios with high-level competencies in order for this education programs to rise to the level of conviction of broad segments of students of science. Distance education is no longer just an open-air education in the manner of (talk show) programs, but rather a group of smart sciences that are managed through the world of knowledge with the aim of achieving many balances in human societies. It is like a comprehensive global war on illiteracy, in addition to it contributes to raising the cultural, scientific and social level of community members, and it also addresses the shortage of teachers and trainers (See & Gorard, 2020), fills the deficit in educational and university buildings, and works to cover shortcomings in capabilities. Distance education provides various educational resources at unmatched prices and without competition. Distance education in major American and European universities and in all countries of the developed world has achieved unparalleled prevalence and success, and has proven to the person who is looking for knowledge and science that he is in safe hands, and that he will achieve scientific gains that are difficult to achieve in formal education (Palvia et al, 2018).

Discussion

Characteristics of Distance Education

Compatibility

It is clearer than ever that open learning and distance learning will be an important component of future education and training systems (Islam, 2016). As remote education technologies provide convenient locations for both the lecturer and the student in many cases, many of these technologies such as the Internet, compact discs, and the phone can easily be used at home or at work sites at times that may suit all participants. While, for example, desktop meeting technology via image can be broadcast from one place to a number of sites.

Flexibility

Many forms of distance education allow the student the option to participate according to desire, and to clarify the concept of flexibility in the field of distance education, we will use the following example from the reality of students in general, as we find that some students prefer to review the lecture's video of the of the subject at times appropriate for them whenever they want (Karadeniz, 2009).

Impact and Effectiveness

A research has been conducted on the distance education system, which has proven that it is equivalent to or superior in the impact and effectiveness of the traditional education system, when modern technologies are used (Safar & Alkhezzi, 2016; Hartsell & Yuen, 2006).

Ability

Many forms of distance education do not cost a lot of money, for example, education through the television set, as most homes today have a television set, as well as many offices and companies have phone lines, which enables the use of voicemail and group phone meetings (Bajko & Fels, 2016).

Interaction

The distance education system allows increased interaction between the lecturer and the students, especially those students who are shy of asking questions and inquiries in front of their colleagues, and it also allows the lecturer to meet the needs of a specific student without the knowledge of the rest of his colleagues (Kemp & Grieve, 2014).

Equality

Inequality in education is a very important issue that plagues most countries (OECD, 2012), especially in rural areas, where its schools suffer from a severe shortage of specialized and qualified teachers, and the weak educational programs offered in them compared to the level of the major cities where the educational programs are well prepared. Distance education offers great solutions to this important issue by making use of available technologies and adapting them to suit our reality, and then imparting even a small amount of equality to a legitimate right that is considered one of the foundations and basics of life in all societies.

Results

Advantages of e-learning

Effectiveness

The recall of information depends on all our sensory capabilities, while the response depends on the characteristics of each individual and his learning motivation. Consequently, the method of transmitting information must provide the learner with the possibility of repetition according to different perceptual methods, a possibility rarely provided by traditional educational methods. And providing the opportunity for learners to interact online electronically between themselves on the one hand and between them and the teacher on the other hand through e-mail means, discussion boards, chat rooms,

and the like.

Lower cost

The instant e-learning service, via the Internet, CDs, DVDs, etc., saves the learner the hassle of moving to a remote learning center, which means that he will save the cost of travel and gain more time.

Easy access to curricula

E-learning curricula are available around the clock, allowing the online learner to follow them at any time he deems appropriate and bypassing the restrictions of place and time in the educational process.

Boosts participation

Participatory learning theories stress that human interaction is a vital component of the learning process. It is worth noting that simultaneous e-learning provides such participation through virtual classrooms, chat rooms, e-mails and videoconferences.

Integration

E-learning provides the learner with knowledge and educational resources in an integrated manner, through assessment tools that allow analyzing the knowledge of the learner and the progress he achieves, thus ensuring the availability of unified educational standards.

Flexibility

An online learner can work with a large group of teachers and other professors around the world, at any time that matches his schedule. He can thus learn at home, at the workplace, or anywhere he is permitted to use the Internet at any time, and use a variety of different methods that are more accurate and fair in evaluating learners' performance.

Taking into account the state of the learners

E-learning provides the learners with the ability to choose the speed that suits them in learning, which means that they can accelerate or slow the learning process as needed. It also allows them to choose the content and tools that suit their interests, needs, and skill level, especially as it involves several educational methods in which various methods are used to transfer knowledge to different learners, which makes it more effective for some of them, and thus it works to enable the students to receive scientific material in the manner which is commensurate with their abilities through visual, audio, read, and so on, and taking into account individual differences between learners and enabling them to complete learning processes in suitable environments for them and progress according to their own capabilities.

Conclusion

Although the process of distance education is not considered a new approach, huge developments have taken place in this era as a result of the development of technology, and it is expected in the future that distance education will become a basic approach to receiving education and it will become easy to obtain it via phone, computer and even television.

When distance education appeared for the first time, it was not acceptable as it is today, so the equipment and tools needed for it were expensive, and everyone's owning them was impossible, but today this matter has changed a lot and distance education tools have become available to everyone, and the use of technology is becoming better in terms of use of audio, video, graphics, etc., in education.

It is expected that the field of distance education will witness further development and progress and provide the necessary means for presenting and obtaining it, as it still has not reached the stage of saturation yet, so many educational institutions are working to provide its tools and build a large information and data base for distance learning to enable a greater number of those interested in learning to take advantage of it.

The process of distance education depends on providing academic and scientific materials to students without going to the classes, and one of the goals that prompted many institutions to follow this approach is to try to reduce the financial burdens on students and provide learning materials for them at the lowest possible costs, but in order to achieve this, the student has been deprived of the possibility of interacting

with his teachers and benefiting from them at the educational level, so it is necessary to focus on the quality of educational transactions that students receive as compensation for the educational aspect that was waived in order to enable the largest number of students to learn, so the issue of distance education is no longer limited to getting an opportunity in education at the lowest possible cost. The issue of communicating and interacting with them is no less important than their education.

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