



REVIEW ARTICLE

QUALITY ASSURANCE THROUGH INTERNET SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

Higher Education in India has undergone a unique transformation since independence. Quantitative growth and qualitative improvement both are important for the higher education. The higher education system in India is at the stage of *Quality Assurance*. Internet, an Information Superhighway is an open non-participatory computer communication infrastructure that reaches every corner of the globe, carries information on every topic and is available to users round the clock. Major services of the Internet with its Strengths and Limitations were discussed. A survey was conducted on a sample of sixty individuals in order to identify the dominant usage of the Internet among the various strengths of the Internet. It is concluded that among the various strengths of the Internet, *Wealth of Information Resources* is found to have a better usage. If the Internet is used for all of its purpose, the knowledge horizon will move to infinity.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher Education in India has undergone a unique transformation since independence. It implies that there has been the expansion of higher education facilities in India with increasing speed day by day in the context of globalization, liberalization and privatization. But the quality of expansion must be ensured. Quantitative growth and qualitative improvement both are important for the higher education. Therefore, the educational system should be able to respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of the society. The higher education system in India is at the stage of *Quality Assurance*. In the present day world, the end of formal education does not mean the end of one's learning. The pace at which new knowledge is being generated and old knowledge is becoming outdated, demands that an individual should continue to learn all through life. Open learning systems have to provide facilities for lifelong education. The computer can render excellent service in this, both as a tutor and as a tool. The concept of lifelong education is based on post-formal education and it assumes learners to be adults or near adults who can manage their learning on their own. The computer-tutor spares the adult learners of the psychological disadvantage that he/she may experience while learning from a human tutor. The availability of various types of software can help learner chose instructional material, which meets his/her specific needs.

The development of the Internet provides a real opportunity for lifelong learning through the use of the computer.

Internet, an Information Superhighway is an open non-participatory computer communication infrastructure that reaches every corner of the globe, carries information on every topic and is available to users round the clock. Technically it is a global collection of interconnected networks. It is a goldmine of information, expertise and resources. It offers scholars and practitioners the flexibility to confer with colleagues from all over the world, discuss new findings, locate resources and use remote libraries.

Internet services

Major services of the Internet were discussed

(1) Telnet: Telnet enables a computer on a network to log on to another computer and read the information stored on it if it has an account on the other machine. The physical distance between these machines is of no consequence. Users can Telnet into a huge database, which is part of the host computer, to do research or even Telnet into libraries around the world to get information about a certain document.

(2) File Transfer Protocol (FTP): File Transfer Protocol is a program used for copying files from one machine in the Internet to another. People who like to share their resources, such as articles, databases and other information, they put them at FTP sites and in this way they become available to others for

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viewing and also for downloading. The biggest advantage of FTP is that the information is available in electronic form. FTP is a fast, efficient and reliable way to transfer information.

(3) Electronic mail (e-mail): Electronic mail is a mailing system which has the ability to compose, send and receive mail via electronic media. Unlike the telnet and FTP, e-mail is not required to log on to the host computer to send a mail. It is highly popular facility of Internet used for message exchange.

(4) Internet chatting: Internet permits interpersonal chatting through talk program where you can chat with one or more persons in the real time environment. The client has to be connected to a nearby server and all the servers are connected in turn and can chat on all 24 hours a day.

(5) Mailing lists: Mailing list is a list of names/address of people with common interest area. Anyone from the group or outside can send a mail/message to the group and each member will receive a copy of it. The response from any member can again be sent to all the group members.

(6) CU-SeeMe: CU-SeeMe, pronounced "See you, See me" – is a videoconferencing system which can connect directly to one another in a point-to-point manner, or to a group conference by connecting to reflector software. It can provide real-time interactivity on the Internet, where a learner can see, listen and interact with his/her teacher.

(7) World Wide Web (WWW): The WWW is a set of protocols that allows you to access any document on the net through a naming system based on URLs (Universal Resource Locators). It helped the Internet become a common person's information tool.

Strengths of the internet

The Strengths of the Internet are as follows

(1) Wealth of information resources: The Internet provides a wide range of information resources in almost all fields of knowledge.

(2) Multimedia capabilities: The Multimedia capabilities to store, process and disseminate information in a variety of formats make it highly convenient for education and training.

(3) Ease of Use: The simplicity and ease to access and use is the hallmark of the system.

(4) Fast and up to date: It provides a fast and reliable communication infrastructure that provides up-to-date and almost real-time information.

(5) Number of people reached: At present the Internet has more than 36 million host computers. This indicates the wide reach of the Internet to a large number of people.

(6) Affordability: The usage cost is very less.

(7) Technology support: A worldwide community of experts is working on this technology round the clock. Many are also working in an individual capacity. So technology support in this area is clearly excellent.

Limitations of the internet

The Limitations of the Internet are as follows:

(1) Junk-e-mail: Institutions connected to Internet are flooded with useless and unwanted e-mails. This consumes a lot of the subscriber's time.

(2) Security: As messages travel across several backbone infrastructures, there is the possibility of hacking and leakage of sensitive information over the network.

(3) Computer virus: Internet e-mail and downloaded files from the WWW have been reported to contain viruses. This demands every computer should be installed with anti-virus software.

(4) Less serious issues discussed: As the Internet is a public forum; every one can join it and share their views and even the discussions are not too serious.

(5) Lack of support to rural people: The Internet is still an urban phenomenon. So it increases the divide between the haves and the have-nots.

Identification of the dominant usage of the internet

In order to identify the dominant usage of the Internet, a survey was made. Fifty academicians, aged above 35, were identified from various sorts namely, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Lecturers working in DIETs, Teachers of Teacher Training Institutes and Higher Secondary School Teachers. Purposive Sampling was made and ten from each sort was selected. Also ten Research Scholars were selected for this survey with no restriction on their age and hence the sample is sixty. The entire selected sample is assumed to have eagerness in learning due to their profession. A Check list was made to identify the Strengths of the Internet and only one question was asked about the usage of the Internet. *No factor is dominative for the usage of the Internet was taken as the Hypothesis. A Percentage analysis was made to test the hypothesis.*

The Findings of the study are:

(1) Fifteen (25.00%) individuals marked that Wealth of information resources is the highest usage of the Internet.

(2) There are fourteen (23.33%) individuals marked that Fast and up to date is the highest usage of the Internet.

(3) In the sample, thirteen (21.67%) individuals marked that Ease of Use is the highest usage of the Internet.

(4) Multimedia capabilities are the highest usage of the Internet for ten (16.67%) individuals.

(5) Each of three (5.00%) individuals marked that Affordability and Technology of Support is the highest usage of the Internet.

(6) Remaining two (3.33%) individuals marked that Number of people reached is the highest usage of the Internet.

Conclusion

The concept of lifelong education is associated with a learning society. Open learning systems have to provide facilities for lifelong education. The development of the Internet provides a real opportunity for lifelong learning through the use of the computer.

The Internet being the gold mine of information has a number of services. It is concluded that among the various strengths of the Internet, Wealth of information resources is found to have a better usage. If the Internet is used for all of its purpose, the knowledge horizon will move to infinity.

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