

E-LEARNING SERVICES FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the prerequisites of development. New and improved concepts of teaching and learning has been introduced in the field of education by Information and communication technologies (ICTs). But its extent hasn't been able to access the geographic rurality of our country. Learning management system is one of the most important tool used in educational institutes to facilitate e-learning. This paper presents a model that provides e-learning services to the rural areas which will help to promote and facilitate modern education. A dedicated resource center hosting the learning management system, facilitates e-learning centers through Internet.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tremendous development in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has paved the way for e-learning. The Internet has revolutionized the computer and communications world like nothing before. This brings us great learning opportunities by having access to a large amount of information with benefits in terms of time and cost savings. The modern educational technology facilitates design, delivery and management of educational activities for learners. This could be face-to-face in a lecture hall, online, or combination of both. Imparting education in this way is known as e-learning (electronic learning) i.e. learning through information and communication technologies [1]. E-learning promotes distance learning and provides learners to access learning material any time and at any place.

A learning management system (LMS) is the software application that facilitates e-learning [2]. Various commercial as well as open-source LMSs are available today which are being used in educational institutions. Traditional learning involves setting up infrastructure of school/college and hiring of faculty and staff. Students have to attend school/college in order to learn. In the rural areas, development of such institute and hiring of full-time faculty requires a lot of resources. Professionally trained educators mostly prefer to work and reside in urban areas.

Consequently, the population of rural areas is deprived of quality educators and thus quality education. The proposed model is about the development of e-learning centers based on ICT to provide good quality education with up-to-date learning material in rural areas. The model employs latest educational technologies that will improve the education standard and will provide means to introduce educational technology to learners. The learners will have a chance to get familiar with latest technologies which will give them deep understanding and effectiveness in using it. The study will promote e-learning platforms and also the development and usage of open-source technologies.

2. LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

LMS is the software which is used for managing e-learning with a delivery mechanism, providing access to resources, tracking and assessing the academic activities. LMS provides an environment in which learning contents are developed and organized by instructors. Interactions between instructors and students take place through communication tools. Most of LMSs are web-based in order to facilitate online access to learning content. Features offered by LMS include user management, content management, activity tracking, file storage, storing of grades, reports generation, and communication tools. Courses are made more interesting and easy to understand with the help of enriched multimedia examples. The environment offer collaborative learning by assigning tasks to students, making assessments, assignment of grades, active participation with synchronous or asynchronous communication tools, such as chatting, discussion groups, forums, email, video conferencing, and so on.

3. MODEL FOR E-LEARNING SERVICES

The proposed model is based on three entities, namely LMS resource center, e-learning center and learners.

3.1 LMS Resource Center

It is the central hub of the proposed model. The resource center is established in city/town where ICT resources are available. This center is equipped with required resources to develop and distribute learning contents through Internet. The main components of resource center are LMS server, LMS application, content development team and administrator.

3.2 E-learning Center

In the initial phase, schools can be used to setup e-learning centers. Only requirement is to add IT equipment and communication media to setup e-learning facility for learners. The e-learning center is equipped with a computer having audio/visual accessories and connection to Internet through DSL/Cable modem. The e-learning center is supervised by an ICT Technician who is responsible for operation and maintenance of IT equipment in e-learning center. Initial training will be provided to ICT Technicians to have hands-on knowledge of LMS.

3.3 Learners

Learning is the process of acquiring or modifying knowledge, skills, and values by study. Learner is the person who learns or takes up knowledge or beliefs. The learner uses the platform to get new competences. The target learners for e-learning centers are the students of rural schools.

4. CONCLUSION

ICTs can play important role by introducing new teaching and learning practices thus revolutionizing the educational system. The use of LMSs from higher education to schools is increasing day-by-day, and LMSs are future of educational technologies with a great amount

of new possibilities. We present a model for development of e-learning centers in rural areas based upon open-source LMSs with technical overview and features. The study may contribute in promoting education in rural areas by offering latest educational technologies and developing students' interest in e-learning. This will create productivity and contribute to economy thus improving livelihood of rural population. The study may also promote ICTs, e-learning and usage of LMSs. Considering the increasing popularity of e-learning, it is quite worthwhile to offer such facilities in rural areas in order to reduce the digital divide and to support in the process of rural development by contributing in the socio-economic factors.

5. REFERENCE

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