Open Learning Environment

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Abstract

Open Learning Environment (OLE) is a learning environment that allows a flexible and engaging learning platform where learners can participate at any time at any age to continue their learning experience. With the advent of technology, OLE provides the opportunities of self learning and it supports inclusivity. OLE is such a platform which has the potential to decentralize the education system and empower learners to experience learning at any stage from anywhere in the world.

Keywords: Open Learning Environment, OLE, Self Learning, Lifelong Learning

Introduction

pen Learning Environment (OLE) can be defined as a learning environment which allows any interested learner to access educational resources without any restrictions regardless of their learning style, background, location and limitations. OLE basically gives the freedom to a learner to customize their learning experience using technology, collaborative learning and sharing learning methods. As a result this new method is gaining popularity due to its openness as anyone at any age can upskill themselves according to their need and interest.

The flexible characteristics and innovative teaching methods of OLE encourage more inclusiveness of education in a more personalized way. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is the best example of OLE, other than MOOCS , various online courses, digital and distance learning and blended learning systems are the part of OLE.

Objective of the Study

The Concept of Open Learning Environment has prospects in two most important ways, one is that it is open to all with all its flexibilities and continuous development of technology to support the OLE system. Based on two of these aspects, the present paper tried to explore the idea of OLE and how it can be a fruitful platform for those learners who are not able to participate in conventional educational systems. This study also finds the usage of libraries in encouraging OLE systems.

Usefulness of Open Learning Environment

Pertaining education at any stage of a learner is the main goal of Open Learning Environment (OLE). Utilizing OLE any learner may achieve 'good learning' by cultivating Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) strategies or the meta-strategies such as planning, monitoring and reflection (Arimoto & Clark, 2018)). As OLE supports learning for all or for any ages it is very useful to them who wanted to pursue their learning, therefore few of the usefulness of OLE are discussed below:

Openness: On OLE platforms learning resources are available free of cost or with a nominal cost over the internet globally to be accessed by anyone who is interested. Availability of global resources supports international knowledge sharing and exchange of rich ideas.

Accessibility: OLE provides the opportunity to access education beyond the conventional face-to-face learning system. As it is based on cloud framework learners can access the resources easily who are having hardship attending traditional educational systems due to financial, geographical, or other reasons. In other ways, it is a very affordable learning system compared to expensive traditional learning methods.

Scalability: It allows participation of more learners than a traditional learning environment.

Flexibility: It is more flexible for those learners who balance their studies with work, families and other responsibilities as it offers learning from anywhere anytime.

Personalisation: Self-regulated characteristics of OLE support the pace of a learner as they can personalize the learning according to their need and interests.

Collaborative Learning Experience: OLE facilitates collaboration between learners and educators which enhance the learning experience and inspire other learners to choose the OLE platform for continuation of their learning.

Worthwhile Learning System: OLE is more cost-effective than traditional learning systems in terms of payment for academic infrastructure, transport and many more associated costs.

How Library can Contribute in Open Learning Environment

As a part of the educational system libraries have always been a support system in learning, and while the Open Learning Environment is becoming an important part of the learning system regardless of the location, time and space libraries are having many roles to play or contribute to OLE. Here are few points discussed how libraries can be associated with OLE:

Libraries can provide a wide range of Open Educational Resources (OER). OER can be defined as teaching and learning materials freely available to anyone. Libraries can support the educators in identifying the OER or can curate them by collecting from different sites and imparting those to the learners.

Using Digital Library platforms, libraries can provide digital resources such as e-books, e-journals, various databases etc which can be helpful for the learners to access from anywhere and anytime having an internet connection only.

Libraries are responsible for spreading information literacy to the learners, by offering information literacy libraries can help the learners to identify, evaluate and use authentic information effectively.

By providing digital literacy training libraries can support the learners in developing the skills and knowledge in identifying the correct information and distinguish the misinformation.

As OLEs supports collaborative learning globally, by providing collaborative learning space it helps the learner to discuss and share knowledge. Different learning activities such as project-based learning, group discussion, tutoring and monitoring are provided in these learning spaces to help the learners succeed.

Through educating policymakers, educators and public, libraries can advocate the benefits of open educational resources and Open Learning Environments.

Conclusion

The main aim of Open Learning Environment is to make education more accessible, affordable and engaging for the learners who are unable to attain the traditional education system. OLE is very flexible and inclusive in nature. By utilizing technology it has the ability to reach out to the learners to experience personalized and collaborative learning. By promoting lifelong learning using various platforms such as MOOCS, Social Media and blended learning method it empowers learners to continue their learning and tries to foster their critical thinking, problem solving and self learning skills which helps the learner to combat with the rapidly changing world and help them to succeed. Moreover, it can be said due to engaging and inclusivity in nature OLE can be the best platform for collaborative, personalized, innovative, equitable and accessible educational platforms.

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