Abstract:

Education as always been geared to societal needs and aspirations. In view of the omnipresence of IT in modern life its impact on education- the life-blood of information and knowledge-was bound to be far reaching.

We are said to be living in the Information Age. In a way, mankind has always lived in the age of information. Not only that. The Big Bang, which marked the origin of the universe, released such vast oceans of information that mankind has spent millennia unraveling the message contained in a tiny drop of it. The cell—the basic unit of life- is the most densely packed parcel of information ever created. But ours is an Information Age in a special sense. Its driving force is Information Technology (IT), its societal impact is pervasive, and the speed and nature of changes it has brought about are revolutionary. That is why it is often referred to as information Revolution. And its two pillars are the computer and telecommunication.

Key Words: IT, E-learning, Distance Education, Future of E-learning

Introduction:-

The world has changed completely since the Industrial Revolution but our education system has remained the same in its basics over the last century and a half. Now IT is being used extensively in schools and colleges, and this has brought some radical changes in the educational system. An important aspect of this development is that for the first time the educational sector has become an area of great commercial interest. The missionary zeal with which the computer industry has promoted the introduction computers in schools has had a significant impact on the changes brought about in school education. Computer hardware and software worth billions is now being consumed by schools and students, and never before in history has school education attracted such corporate attention. As a consequence of this development, technology has been introduced as an important factor in the educational system. It would be useful to keep this phenomenon at the back of one’s mind while dealing with this subject.

IT & Education:-

Before we begin exploring various dimensions of this revolution, it may be useful to start at a more mundane level and examine to nuts and bolts of the chariot of IT. Much of the ground covered may be familiar to many readers, yet is may help in forming a clearer and more coherent view of this technology. The computer’s great value as an educational and at certain levels is unquestioned, and we shall come to that point a little later. It is also a fact that it is changing the traditional meaning of knowledge, as also the structure and content of curriculum. But some champions of this technology go so far as to claim that “it has rendered schools entirely irrelevant since there is now so much more information available outside the classroom than inside”. And, that,” … in this world of pedagogical plenty, children and adults will be able to dial up a programmed on their home television to learn whatever they want to know, at their own convenience.

The university level and in research that computers have the most significant contribution to make. All mathematical sciences use computers as a matter of routine. Equations that would take hours
and hours to solve are cracked in a jiffy. Even in the life sciences computers are now used extensively, and it would not have been possible to sequence the human genome but for computers. No space scientist can make any headway without them. Whole teams of researchers can be networked to tackle a common problem or project. In the humanities, the Internet provides instant access to whole libraries of literature from the comfort of one’s home.

In this fast changing world, continuous, life-long education has become imperative. With life-time employment in the same organization having become increasingly uncertain, one has to re-educate oneself over and over again for different types of jobs. This is where the Internet access provides one with the necessary material for learning new skills.

**IT & Distant Education:**

A valuable fallout of the use of IT in education has been the emergence of distant education, Net university and the virtual classroom. There are several factors which have led to the growth of this sector. First, the desire for higher or specialized education has spread faster than the infrastructure to provide it. It is particularly a boon to developing countries where a large number of students have no access to university education. Second, whereas IT is bringing about rapid changes in every sphere of activity and requires new skills and knowledge for handling a job properly, it is not possible for employees to repeatedly go back to the universities to update their knowledge. On the other hand, the falling prices of computers, access to multimedia facilities on the Net and availability of high bandwidth have made it possible not only to deliver course material to students at distant places, but also to interact with them to answer their queries.

In fact, the concept of distant education predates the arrival of computers. Earlier students used to get registered with a distant university, printed course material was supplied to them by post, and all interaction also took place through postal service. This was a slow process with several limitations. With the arrival of computers and the Internet you can, in theory, reach millions of students, interact with them, keep updating the course material continuously, and also modify it in the light of the feedback received from the students. Also, each student can access the material at his convenience, as there are no fixed timings for a virtual class.

Whereas distant education is a real boon for the developing countries, it is the affluent countries which are making the maximum use of it. For one, their need for re-training their workforce is much greater. Second, it has emerged as big business. These countries not only cater to the national market, their courses are designed for the international student community also.

Increasingly, organizations are adopting online learning as the main delivery method to train employees. At the same time, educational institutions are moving toward the use of the internet for delivery, both on campus and at a distance. However, for organizations and institutions to make this often expensive move, there must be a perception that using online learning provides major benefits. Some of the benefits for learners and instructors are outlined below.

For learners, online learning known no time zones, and location and distance are not an issue. In asynchronous online learning, students can access the online materials at anytime, while synchronous online learning allows for real-time interaction between students and the instructor. Learners can use the Internet to access up-to-date and relevant learning materials, and can communicate with experts in the field in which they are studying. Situated learning is facilitated, since learners can complete online courses
while working on the job in their own space, and can contextualize the learning.

For the instructor, tutoring can be done at anytime and from anywhere. Online materials can be updated, and learners are able to see the changers at once. When learners are able to access materials on the Internet, it is easier for instructors to direct them to appropriate information based on their needs. If designed properly, online learning systems can be used to determine learners; online learning systems can be used to determine learner’s needs and current level of expertise, and to assign appropriate materials for learners to select from to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

It will be helpful in discussing the future of electronic learning, to distinguish between two futures, a near one and a far one. Of course they may overlap or blend together at points, but it is worthwhile to see the difference between the two.

**Future of E-Learning:**

The near future of applications in education of information technology is predominantly the application of educational techniques that we already know fairly well but must improve, adapt and exploit. Here I’m referring to computer assisted instruction (in the broadest sense), interactive television word processing, electronic mail, data management, and other advanced, excellent, applicable information technology that has been developed over the last 20 to 30 years for the military, for banking, for airline reservations, for this that and the other application. It’s there. Except for computer assisted instruction, most of it hasn’t been appropriated by education yet. But now we are caught up by this fantastic wave that’s been set off by the microcomputer, that obviously is coming into education, and which will probably bring a lot of additional technology with it.

**Conclusion:**

The far future, is seems to me, will be different from the neat, future mainly in respect of how much work educationists will have to do to bring it into being. The information technology out of which one could make the educational technology of the far future is here now or developing on a predictable schedule. But it is going to take an awful lot of work from the education community to adapt it and adopt it, to make educational technology out of the information technology that has been or soon will be presented to us. The far future, I think, is going to be determined by near-future research, study, experimentation, and empirical development. The educational community (broadly defined) will have to do a large part of that work itself, because that work deals with the structure of knowledge and with the organization and representation of knowledge in ways that are attuned to educational applications as well as to the computer and digital telecommunications. I will mention artificial intelligence, also, because that field is going to keep on advancing. By the turn of the century we are going to be dealing with it in practical educational applications. Indeed, there will be many interesting developments that we will have to deal with. Some of them one can envision now, but not clearly enough to start on them now.
References:

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