

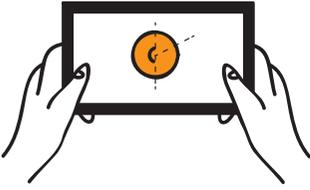


DIGITAL LEARNING

Digital learning platforms have the ability to truly transform the way learning and educating takes place. Here are some myths, facts and best practices around using this platform.

Quest Alliance is a non-profit trust working to bridge the education and skills divide by enabling self-learning for young people 10-35 years old.

Quest is fuelled by research, strengthened by partnerships and driven by innovation and technology.



What are some myths and facts around digital learning as a platform?

Myth: Learner outcomes are poorer with digital learning.

Fact: Learning outcomes from digital or online learning are the same as traditional learning if not better, provided that the course is designed effectively keeping the context of the learner, their needs, and the right blend of digital and offline learning in mind.

Myth: Switching to digital learning does not really lead to cost saving.

Fact: Digital learning has been found to be less costly per beneficiary over time for 83% organizations across sectors. However, any organization making the initial investment should have a defined pay-back plan for it to be sustainable.

Myth: Digital learning is not effective with the disadvantaged.

Fact: Nearly all beneficiaries can be served by digital learning, even if some groups are more familiar with and suited to digital learning than others.

Myth: Customizing digital content prevents it from becoming scalable.

Fact: Digital content is a lot more customizable to different learning contexts and styles at scale than traditional classroom content. However, balancing cost and applicability of this customization has to be done carefully.

Myth: Lack of access to technology makes digital learning difficult to implement.

Fact: Hurdles to accessibility have been overcome with regularity over the last few years and continue to be so, but it is advisable to use means of technology that is already present and affordable and familiar to the learners.

Myth: Trainer training is not very different than for a classroom program.

Fact: Transitioning to a new pedagogical system and learning to use the digital medium effectively requires significant training of trainers. Self-training may not be the solution.

Myth: There is no real way to validate if learning has taken place in digital learning systems.

Fact: Learning Management Systems (LMSs) can facilitate the collection and management of learner skill level data in highly organized and efficient manner.

What are the steps involved in implementing a digital learning platform?

Make the case

Before starting anything it is very important to be clear on whether technology can achieve what we want to achieve in a particular context. Making the switch to digital learning is essentially about managing change. It will involve instituting the right structures and design to deal with the transition.

Design effective content

Effective content should use the right blend of digital and offline learning and match pre-decided learning objectives. The learners' profiles and contexts need to be studied to find a suitable program structure and build content within it.

Build a scalable operation

The process of scaling can be made easier by partnering with the private and public sectors and other educational institutions for their resources and expertise. To achieve scale through technology, the requirements for content delivery and the LMS have to be thought through.

Execute the program

Executing the program once it's been designed broadly involves putting in place the right systems and structures to bring together change as an organization. Conducting a pilot and incorporating learnings from it can be an effective way of implementing a program.

Engage stakeholders

Tracking the progress and efficacy of the program is one of the most effective ways of keeping stakeholders engaged. Once the stakeholders are on-board, the program will have to be monitored closely to ensure stability during the transition to a digital platform.

Improve continuously

To be able to improve the system continuously a rigorous feedback mechanism must be built in that allows for regular collection and incorporation of feedback from all stakeholders.

What are some things to watch out for in this process?

Technology being a disruptive medium, there are some challenges that may arise while implementing digital learning:

- Educators in the classroom may view the transition as **threatening** their positions and seeking to replace them. It needs to be made clear that the educator remains critical to the process of learning and this is a tool to help.
- Not all educators may be equally **comfortable with technology**. They may, thus, need to be oriented extensively before a digital learning platform can be started.
- **Balancing** technology and human intervention in the learning process is a long-term process and needs to be refined to each individual context.

Is there an example where digital learning has successfully complemented offline learning?

At QUEST Alliance, there is a strong focus on building the capacity of trainers and facilitators and investing in them as learners to be able to deliver skills training.

Having a trainer network across multiple states and learning contexts, and using the digital platform has really enabled this process. The trainers forge their own learning pathways with QUEST, going through different stages like attending a training workshop, followed up by in-person visits and refresher workshops.

All these in-person interactions are complemented by an LMS that hosts training content easily available to all trainers, a discussion forum for trainers to share stories and best practices with each other, digital self-learning toolkits that can be downloaded and used even without internet connectivity, and a blended learning certification for those interested in advancing their facilitation skills.

“Digital learning still has an aura of being accessible to only a small portion of the rich and elite. But this is not true.”

- Aakash Sethi, QUEST Alliance



www.questalliance.net

#108 , 2nd Main, 6th Cross
1st Block, Koramangala
Bengaluru 560034
Ph +91 80 4098 3304

Email: info@questalliance.net