Distance Learning: Current Issues and Challenges

Umar

STIT Buntet Pesantren

umar@stit-buntetpesantren.ac.id

Article Info	Abstract
	Education that is delivered virtually, with neither the teacher nor the pupils physically present, is referred to as "distance learning. Although the terms "Distance Learning" and "E-learning" are frequently used interchangeably, they refer to two different concepts. The main difference between e-learning and distance learning is location. With e-learning, students can be together in a classroom while going through their digital lessons and assessments. Distance learning, on the other hand, can be done online and from the student's home. The contact between teachers and students will vary as a result of the diversity in settings. This study employs a descriptive qualitative research methodology that depicts the scenario as it relates to an indicator or the current status of the findings in the field. A qualitative research process is one that generates descriptive data from people or observed behaviors as written or spoken words. In this study, the methods for gathering data and information were interviewing, and documenting studies of the necessary data sources. We come to the conclusion that the following needs will be met by this method of DLS improvement: (1) Improving the mapping between academia and industry; (2) Assist in keeping the skilled workers in the sector; (3) Bringing remote sector workers into the industrial job market on an equal footing with those who live in cities and towns and (4) Assist in the nation's development of an educated and cultural society.

✉ Correspondence Address: Cirebon, Indonesia

E-mail: umar@stit-buntetpesantren.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Both in academic settings and in the workplace, there is an increasing demand for education. There is pressure to lower overall costs despite the fact that the number of students is still rising. Flexibility is also needed so that lifelong learning can be incorporated into daily activities. These elements, along with the accessibility of effective communication tools and computer systems, have encouraged research and led to the adoption of novel teaching and learning techniques. Any education that is delivered virtually, with neither the teacher nor the pupils physically present, is referred to as "distance learning."(Knott, 2022). In the past, correspondence courses were available through high schools and universities as a form of distance education. Assignments were frequently completed online or sent back to the instructor by mail, and course materials were frequently mailed to the student.

In more recent times, distance learning programs have embraced the amazing possibilities provided by contemporary technology and now provide incredibly personalized and efficient learning opportunities in a variety of distant education courses. Effective distance learning is now a practical alternative for educational settings ranging from kindergarten to universities. The new craze in the educational world is distance learning. Despite its value, distant learning is still nothing more than a new way to use an old tool. Yet no matter how advanced a machine is, it cannot run by itself. Humans operate machinery.

Distance learning is described by Merriam Webster as "a method of study where teachers and

students do not meet in a classroom but use the Internet, e-mail, mail, etc. to have classes" (Merriam-Webster). Distance learning, put simply, is when students are separated from their instructors and peers. This implies that pupils receive their education online and do not interact directly with teachers or other students (Nair, 2020). A question about the origins of distance learning arises in light of its growing trend and popularity, particularly in the wake of the global pandemic (Raouna, 2022).

Distance learning, commonly referred to as distance education, is a style of education that is delivered via technology outside of the conventional classroom environment, including time, location, and schedule. It is a phrase used to describe classes that can be taken online without the student having to be present in person at the school, college, or institution. With hybrid or distance learning courses, online educational platforms provide limitless training opportunities for students and instructors to connect synchronously or asynchronously. Home is the most desired destination for students who embrace remote education. All academic levels, including those leading to undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, or doctoral degrees, offer distance learning options. It can also be applied to several forms of education (Raouna, 2022).

Issac Pitman was the first to offer students correspondence courses in the 1840s, according to research, and distance learning started with lessons delivered via postcards. Since then, colleges who wished to expand their market beyond the region immediately surrounding their campus have embraced distance learning together with modern information technology. One instance is The University of London, which aimed to provide less expensive higher education to students who were financially vulnerable (Raouna, 2022).

The People of Indonesia have not made full use of the quick and constant changes in knowledge and technology, which are thought to be the main potential to drive people's advancement in many areas of life. The Indonesian educational system must take this into account in order to continuously facilitate and make the required modifications in response to advancements in science and technology (Maliki et al., 2021, p. 607). By fostering a positive educational environment and a creative learning process that engages students in enlightening learning activities, education is meant to prepare students to be able to develop themselves into a cultured society. Yet, there are a number of challenges to overcome, namely location and time restrictions. One very real barrier that can be removed by using learning techniques with distant learning systems is the limitation of time and location. The distant learning system allows students to advance their skills through official and informal education while continuing to complete their daily tasks.

Distance learning's (DL) core purpose is to provide education without requiring that the learners be physically present in the same place as the teacher. This approach to lifelong learning and professional readiness in a variety of relevant studies empowers the student community to contribute positively to their communities. So, the individuals who will be using the DL system are more crucial than the system itself. For the special and unforeseen future situations of each nation, it is now crucial to start and build public-oriented DL education models. In fact, DL education is widely used in nations with a variety of political and socioeconomic structures, including Australia, Indonesia, Pakistan, UK, Thailand, China, Canada, India, Holland, Japan, and the autonomous members of the Common Wealth. This type of education develops the kids' intellectual and cognitive skills while teaching them how to learn for themselves. Because of these two built-in tools, "Self-motivation" and "Self-discipline," DL is becoming more and more popular. Self-motivation is a person's inner spirit, the self-drive that enables them to accomplish anything they set their minds to (Najib A. Kofahi and Nowduri Srinivas, 2004).

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research methodology that depicts the scenario as it relates to an indicator or the current status of the findings in the field. According to Bogdan dan Taylor (Moleong, 2013; Sawarjuwono & Kadir, 2003), a qualitative research process is one that generates descriptive data from people or observed behaviors as written or spoken words. In this study, the methods for gathering data and information were interviewing, and documenting studies of the necessary data sources (Umar, 2022). A sort of qualitative research known as library research is typically conducted without traveling out into the field in search of data sources. study that is entirely reliant on written materials, including published and unpublished study results, is sometimes referred to as literature research.

It is known as "library research" because the information or materials required to finish the

research are found in books, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, journals, documents, periodicals, and other things found in libraries. The reading materials employed for this study can be broadly split into two groups, namely: General sources of reference, such as books like encyclopaedias, monographs, and the like, which typically include general theories and notions. Particular reference sources include books, articles, theses, and more (Umar, 2021)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
The Distinction Between Distant Learning and Online Learning.

Although the terms "Distance Learning" and "E-learning" are frequently used interchangeably, they refer to two different concepts. There are some contrasts between the two approaches, even though they both include students using computers or other technology (Pretorius, 2020). The main difference between e-learning and distance learning is location. With e-learning, students can be together in a classroom while going through their digital lessons and assessments. Distance learning, on the other hand, can be done online and from the student's home. The contact between teachers and students will vary as a result of the diversity in settings. Regular in-person engagement is part of e-learning. This is due to the fact that e-learning is frequently employed as a blended learning strategy. Face-to-face interactions are not a part of distance learning. Online study groups and other digital communication channels will be employed in their place. Distance learning is used to deliver instructions and assistance only online while e-learning is designed to be used in a variety of other teaching methods, giving teachers the ability to offer their students a variety of learning opportunities.

Amity stated that online learning and distant learning share many similarities, there are also significant differences that you should be aware of before choosing one learning method over the other (How Is Online Learning Different from Distance Education?, n.d.). *Between students and teachers*, the primary distinction between online education and remote learning is that the former features formal classes delivered via the internet. This instructional design incorporates elements of both conventional on-campus instruction and online learning. There is some interaction between students and teachers thanks to taped or live classes. Students can interact with each other throughout the live classes as well. This creates a more typical classroom atmosphere. However, in distant learning, the student receives the course materials by email or courier. They must use it as a study guide, reference material for tests, and the basis for tasks. The teacher and student don't engage in a formal or informal way. In actuality, there is little to no peer interaction.

Timelines and the course syllabus, with regard to the simplicity of assignment submission deadlines, the course structure of the online learning programs is similar to that of traditional on-campus courses. The course is essentially the same, but the instruction is delivered online. Students must nevertheless participate in class discussions, attend virtual lectures, turn in assignments on time, and write tests according to the prescribed schedule. A wide variety of reputable institutions and universities, including Amity, offer online courses. A number of mediums, including videos, eBooks, quizzes, live classes, simulations, etc. are used to provide the curriculum. While online courses have more flexible deadlines and a simpler curriculum, students can extend their course duration if they have any difficulties and complete their tasks at their own leisure. Students with a demanding profession or family obligations can consider taking a course via distance learning.

Examination, distance learning: You must appear at the designated exam sites with online learning, you may effortlessly administer the tests from any location in a web-proctored setting. The administrative team is also ready for any back-end assistance, such as rescheduling tests, placements, internships, and other activities. Although both online learning and distance learning have advantages and disadvantages, they both give you the chance to pursue your education at home with simplicity and convenience. The objective is the same—to

receive a great education—regardless of the teaching style. Both of these learning methods require you to be motivated and disciplined, two qualities you should work on developing throughout your life.

Distance learning and online learning both need the same online learning resources, but that's where the similarities end (Stauffer, n.d.). Online and distant learning often have three key distinctions: Place, Activity, and Intention. Location is the primary distinction between distant learning and online learning. With online learning, also known as eLearning, students can complete their digital lectures and exams while seated in a classroom with an instructor. By adopting distant learning, the teacher assigns homework and conducts digital check-ins while the students work remotely from home. The way the teachers engage with their kids varies as a result of the geographic disparities. The teachers and the students will frequently interact in person as a result of online learning. This is so that online learning can be used as part of a blended learning strategy with other instructional techniques. There is no face-to-face interaction between teachers and students during distance learning. Yet you'll probably rely on electronic means of communication like messaging apps, video calls, discussion forums, and the institution's LMS.

The goal of the teaching method is the last distinction between online and distance learning. A range of alternative in-person teaching techniques can be employed in addition to online learning. It's an extra method to change things up in the classroom and give your pupils a range of learning opportunities. Remote learning is a technique for imparting knowledge completely online, not as a change in your teaching methodology. Let's discuss the benefits of online and remote learning now that you are aware of their distinctions.

Background and Development of DL

People aren't always able or ready to move in order to further their education, and not everyone lives close to a place of higher learning. It's simple to think that remote education has a little history because the internet as we know it is

a relatively new phenomenon. Nevertheless, simply being able to access course material online is merely one of the most recent innovations in a field that has existed since the 1700s. Writing letters was the most readily available technique in the early years of distance learning. In an advertisement that appeared in the Boston Gazette in 1728, a man by the name of Caleb Phillipps offered to teach shorthand to pupils anywhere in the nation by exchanging letters. This is considered to be the first well-known instance of a correspondence course (The History of Distance Learning | An Online Education Timeline, 2021).

Several new technologies were emerging during the first half of the 20th century. Many innovations in distance learning resulted from this. Distance learning was available at this time in a wide range of formats and for a wide range of academic goals. A significant advancement in distant learning was made by Coastline Community College Offering, which provided a full educational experience online. On the other hand, one emerging technology—the internet—would quickly replace other delivery methods for distance education. Although though the internet's foundation was laid in 1969, it wasn't until the 1980s that the technology started to completely transform distance learning (The History of Distance Learning | An Online Education Timeline, 2021).

The employment of various synchronous and asynchronous online technologies by educational institutions throughout the 1990s contributed to the rapid expansion of remote learning universities. Independent businesses also sought to provide pre-made templates for the online delivery of course content, and numerous different pilot programs were created. The creation and application of web technologies for the distribution of educational content took off in the 2000s. New platforms are continually being developed, and Internet access is expanding in popularity. As a result, it is anticipated that both the number of traditional colleges using online technologies and the number of distance learning universities would increase (The History of

Distance Learning | An Online Education Timeline, 2021).

The phenomena of distant learning have been referred to by many different names. Distance education is technically the combination of distance learning, which is the student's activity, and distance teaching, which is the teacher's activity. Common variations include e-learning or online learning, which is used when the Internet is the medium; virtual learning, which typically refers to courses taken outside of a classroom by primary or secondary school students (and also typically uses the Internet); correspondence education, which is a traditional method in which individual instruction is conducted by mail; and open learning, a popular method of instruction at "open" universities in Europe (Distance Learning | Education | Britannica, 2023).

Based on Britannica, Distance learning is distinguished by four features. First off, remote learning is by definition conducted through institutions; it is not done on one's own or in a setting that is not academic. The institutions may or may not also provide conventional classroom-based education, but they are nonetheless eligible for accreditation from the same organizations as those using conventional approaches.

Second, remote learning entails geographic and possibly temporal separation of students and professors. This kind of instruction has several advantages, including accessibility and convenience. Also, well-designed programs can help kids who differ intellectually, culturally, or socially. Third, interactive telecommunications establish a connection between students and the instructor. The most common means of communication is electronic, like email, although more conventional forms, like the postal service, may also be employed. Interaction, regardless of the format, is crucial to distant learning as it is to all forms of instruction. As communications methods advance and become more accessible, linkages between students, teachers, and educational materials become less dependent on physical proximity; as a result, the Internet, mobile phones, and e-mail have all contributed to the rapid increase in distant learning.

Last but not least, much like any other kind of education, distance learning creates a learning community made up of students, a teacher, and instructional materials, such as books, audio, video, and visual displays that let students access the curriculum. Online social networking encourages the development of communities. Users create profiles, identify members ("friends") with whom they have a relationship, and create new communities of people who share their interests on websites like Facebook and YouTube. Such networking can facilitate interactions amongst students in a distance learning environment and so lessen their sense of isolation.

Although its origins are debatable, Jennifer Sumner says in "Serving the System: a Critical History of Distance Education" that "the history of distance education is widely documented, notably in the 20th century" (Sumner). Even if the history of distant learning is a little hazy, a ton of sources explain what happened after that! Let's look at some significant events and dates in the development of distance education. According to some reports, distant learning dates back to the 1700s. Soon after, a technique known as correspondence education was used for distance education. This method of schooling spread like wildfire throughout the world (Admin, 2019). "The method was quite simple: students got instruction via mail and answered with assignments or inquiries to the instructor," says Mike Erwin of the University of Advanced Technologies. The process was extremely slow, and the instructor's response can take several weeks. Despite the limitations, correspondence courses expanded in part because to improvements in postal service that made it possible for students to study remotely (Erwin). Students were so driven to study that they didn't mind the delay, as dull and pointless as it may have seemed by modern standards (Admin, 2019).

From the late 1800s, a few key developments have molded and advanced distant learning. Ana Eliot Ticknor founded the "Association to Promote Home Study," an official correspondence education program, in

Boston, Massachusetts, in 1873. The Department of Correspondence Studies at the Australian University of Queensland was established in 1911 and made use of the country's mail service as well. The drawback of these approaches is that they only allow for one-way communication. Because everything was aired to them immediately, students were unable to interact with the teachers or ask questions of other students (Admin, 2019).

As time went on, technological advancements became increasingly important for distance learning. Universities are now able to broadcast information and courses to students thanks to the invention of the radio. Pennsylvania State College "became the first college to transmit courses across radio networks" in 1922, according to this infographic. The University of Iowa adopted a similar strategy a few years later, making it the "first university to use television as a learning tool" (aka Distance Learning). Since redefining its goal in 1946, the University of South Africa has been recognized as one of the largest open institutions for remote learning in the world.

In the twenty-first century, distant learning will still be practiced. In the United States, 89% of four-year public colleges and 60% of private institutions offered online courses by 2006. (Gensler). According to a Forbes article, "Online learning is evolving beyond this archaic, one-to-many broadcast model to become a social, collaborative, personalized, and interactive experience that generates two powerful, mutually reinforcing success accelerants: first, the long-term desire to learn, to improve one's position in the world; and, secondly - crucially - the moment-by-moment pleasure of participating in a learning experience that's continually exciting, rewarding" (Shockley). Luckily, one-sided communication is no longer a part of distant learning. Online education is the name used today for distance learning. You can find out just how integrated online courses have grown by asking any college student you know. Today, the majority of students have taken at least one online course or are presently enrolled in one.

The Challenges of Distance Learning

Students can access and interact with high-quality educational information through distance learning from the comfort and convenience of home. Although while COVID-related regulations will probably start to loosen as the pandemic recedes and vaccination rates increase, it doesn't seem likely that the e-learning sector, which had phenomenal expansion in 2020, will become outdated in 2021. Contrarily, according to PR Newswire, the virtual education market was worth $171 billion in 2019 — before the coronavirus epidemic — and is "anticipated to expand [by] 10.85% by 2025." (Challenges of Distance Learning for Students, 2021).

Based on that, it's simple to understand the relevance and advantages of distant learning, such as the improved flexibility, affordability, and mobility, it's as crucial to recognize the potential difficulties that may arise for students. E-learners of all ages must face challenges particular to online learning, like asynchronous communication and always present potential for time-wasting distractions, from elementary school students to doctoral students. E-learners can encounter difficulties including slow or ambiguous instructor feedback, which, while frequently present in a regular classroom, can be exacerbated in a virtual environment.

Successful time management is linked to better academic achievement and decreased levels of anxiety among students, according to research. The same study also revealed, regrettably, that "many students find it hard to establish a balance between their studies and their day-to-day life" and, even worse, that bad time management was linked to outcomes like "poor sleep patterns" and "higher levels of stress." In a distance learning setting, when students are forced to pace themselves without the assistance of friends and peers who could otherwise help them stay focused in class, effective time management can be particularly challenging.

Instant contact in an in-person situation makes it simple for students to obtain clarification on unclear points and receive answers. Communication is frequently asynchronous in an e-learning environment, which causes a chasm between the teacher and the learner. In these

spaces, it's simple for misunderstandings to arise, often causing a problem to worsen before it can be fixed. One of the most significant and impactful ways that a teacher interacts with a student is by giving feedback. Students may feel confused or unsure about your expectations, their progress, and their performance in your class if feedback is delayed by additional days or weeks due to an online format.

Setting clear expectations for pupils is always important. If not, they can only assume that they are doing jobs and projects correctly. Setting clear norms is difficult in any classroom, but it can be made more difficult by asynchronous communication. After looking at the difficulties associated with online learning for students, let's concentrate on something even more crucial: solutions.

CONCLUSION

We list the main problems and difficulties with DLS. We come to the conclusion that using the most recent technological technology, DL techniques should elevate industrialists to higher levels of abstraction. For the creation of an effective DLS, we recommend a few communication strategies as well as difficult problems. We come to the conclusion that the following needs will be met by this method of DLS improvement: (1) Improving the mapping between academia and industry; (2) Assist in keeping the skilled workers in the sector; (3) Bringing remote sector workers into the industrial job market on an equal footing with those who live in cities and towns and (4) Assist in the nation's development of an educated and cultural society.

Because to the possibility that they may lack certain practical skills or training, there are a few unique circumstances, in particular regions, where DL courses are still undervalued when compared to the standard university courses. We draw the conclusion that the degree or certification earned through the DL system is highly respected by the business community. There is still need for improvement in this area, including the creation of DL Universities (DLU) to raise the standard and dependability of

industrial goods. Also, this DLS aids in achieving higher organizational levels like ISO9002 and SEI CMM Level 5.

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