

ONLINE PLATFORMS AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR HOUSEWIVES

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to identify the role of online education to enhance the language competency and social status of educated housewives through online jobs. In the present scenario this is an important issue as there are thousands of women who are highly qualified and at home, without doing a job. Online jobs will enable them to work at home and it will provide them both financial security and self-esteem. This will enable them to work and manage household chores at a time.

Keywords:- Information and Communication Technology, Online Education, Online job

AIM

To enable the educated housewives self-dependent by doing online jobs

OBJECTIVES

- To study the effectiveness of online courses to improve language capability and communication skills of housewives.
- To improve awareness about various language learning platforms and employment opportunities among housewives.
- To enable housewives to do online jobs and make them self-dependent.

The growth and development of Information Technology (ICT) has influenced every aspect of our life. It is very difficult to find an area which has not been revolutionised by the application of technology in some form or the other. The power and pervasiveness of technology has become an integral part of education also. Internet facilitates communication, action, interaction among individuals across the world. ICT is playing a vital role in transforming the mode of education. Application of technology in the mode of imparting knowledge is helping a lot in bridging the rural-urban divide. Technology is no longer or a separate end where bright IT students learn how to code; now it is a fundamental part of the education process.

Online learning is one of the recent trends in education. A gadget with internet connection is the basic necessity of online education. This trend helped learners to pursue a degree being at home. Areas of online courses vary from history to latest technology. One can do interdisciplinary courses or multiple courses at a time being at home. Online education allows

anyone with internet access to learn and earn credits. In the late 1970s and 1980s, higher education institutions in the US and Europe began delivering instructional content to distance learners over cable and satellite TV. From the mid 1990s onwards, the Internet became the most common method of delivering lessons.

Online education can be of two types; synchronous and asynchronous. It becomes synchronous when the teacher and the student have direct and simultaneous contact. In this way the teacher may meet the students in a chat forum for a discussion or the teacher delivers lecture at a scheduled time while students watch it simultaneously at a webcam. In asynchronous method the instructor and learner do not meet in time or space. Asynchronous learning opens up enormous possibilities by releasing education from the constraints of time as well as place. It makes possible education anywhere and at any time.

In ancient India there were “Gurukul” or “Ashrams.” The scholars were supposed to stay there for their education. As the time keeps change, the methods of education also changed. Gurukuls or Ashrams altered to schools and colleges. In this modern age of computer and internet the way of education are again modified to online education. Online education is more about learner’s convenience. Traditional methods of learning will never fade away, but still online education is growing fast. The terms e-learning, m-learning, distance learning are used interchangeably.

Social networking and educational networking are the two terms associated with ICT. Social Networking is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who share their ideas, experiences, interests or activities. A social network site provides each user their space through individual account. Educational networking is the use of social networking technologies for education purposes. The term educational networking crosses the negative connotations associated with social networking. One area where faculty adoption is almost universal is in the use of video for classes. They make use of YouTube, EduTube.org or TeacherTube.co.

As online learning is one of the easiest and affordable methods for home based learners, housewives can be the most beneficial targets. A house wife is considered as a married woman who is taking care of the family and managing all the household affairs. For ancient period onwards men are considered as important figures in the family. Though women also work, as their job is not paid it is not regarded as important. But as days passed the condition got changed. Earlier girls were not educated much, because they are supposed to get married and run the family. So educating them was considered as a waste. Nowadays girls are educated but there are lots of women who are sitting at home without going for a job after marriage. Even professionally qualified girls remain to be jobless.

Educating a woman is educating a family and society. Through motivating and upgrading a woman’s status more than an individual, others around her also will be benefitted. Married women, especially housewives are neglected regarding education. Being at home these women will face certain problems regarding language learning as they are not much interacting with outsiders. Language learning will help them in every fields of life. It will offer them a high rank in society. Online language learning courses will enable them to improve language competency within their limitations. Without going out they can do online courses that also in little expenses.

Even though they are educated and competent enough to use English language, they will not be interacting much in English. They lack the exposure to interact with outsiders and to use

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formal English. Most of them will not be having the habit of reading English newspapers or watching English TV programmes. Married women will be having so much of stress. The main reason for their stress is that they don't have an opportunity to socialize or to express themselves. Online chatting and interacting platforms will offer them an opportunity to convey their thoughts. There they get an opportunity to share their ideas and also they can get acquainted with others.

Nowadays most of them will have account in facebook and other social networking sites. But the general tendency is to use informal English for communication through these sites. The main criticism about social networking is regarding the language used in it. Even professionals and highly educated people use informal English in these sites. They use short forms like 'wt,' 'hw,' 'u,' 'hm' and much more regionalised versions. Even regional form of English like 'manglish' is popular. In the real sense social networking sites can be used as a platform to develop language and literary skills. But nobody bothers about whether they are using formal or informal language. The only factor is whether the language used conveys the idea. Development of media even paved way to form 'social media language.' In this, short forms, misspelled words are acceptable, unless it does not interrupt the idea.

Most of the users are unaware of the fact that these social networking sites can be used for educational and research purposes. There are hundreds of chat forums where the active members are participating in discussions on various topics. Though initially it will be difficult to use official English, slowly one can attain fluency in language. Communication in formal English through these chat forums will help them to develop language competency. Language competency will provide them social status and it will be easy to teach their children if they have fluency in language. Personal interaction through chat forums will give them an opportunity to improve their language. Moreover they can realise where they stand in language proficiency and in what all communication skills they have to improve.

Being mothers, housewives will have interest to find websites which will be helpful for their children. Websites like www.plattscsd.org, grammar.yourdictionary.com, www.englishonline.org.cn, www.speaktoday.com, British council learning software, www.bbc.co.uk/learning /and English Grammar 4 U online www.edontheinternet.com, www.harcourtschool.com. have games and other interesting activities to teach English language and grammar. These sites will offer a new experience to children. They will find it more attractive than printed books. Mainly the contents of the websites include grammar and vocabulary exercises and games, audio and video interactive learning programmes, speaking activities, spelling games, games for idioms and sounds. By regular practice children can develop respective language skills.

As an extension to this activity, these housewives can be introduced to online courses. There are hundreds of free online learning websites which offers multi-disciplinary courses. Streams of the courses include arts, literature, history, science, medicine, general awareness and various other relevant topics. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) is an online course aimed at large participation through web. As there is a discussion forum they can share experiences with people from different part of the world. Sites like WizIQ, Coursera and edx are some online learning platforms. All the three sites offer free courses in different subjects.

Sharing experiences with others and among themselves through online forums will make them confident to join online programme. They can go through all courses and can select one, as per their taste. The course structure in the three websites is almost similar. Course duration is also

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minimal. All the courses were of length of one week to eight weeks. The course material contains audio and video lessons and printed notes. Learners can download the materials and go through it as per their convenience. Video lessons are adequate to substitute the presence of an instructor. The materials given for all the courses were up-to-date and reviewed by an expert team. This ensures the authenticity of notes.

At the end of each session there are quiz and assignments. For learners there is an option to redo their quiz and assignments. The only criterion is that one has to finish and submit assignments before deadline. Learners will get immediate feedback of their work. At the end of the course students has to attend a final test to get qualified. The final exam does not have the option to reappear. In the final test there will be objective and descriptive questions. This includes all the topics so far discussed. This will help to analyse the total understanding of the course. As the instructor's physical presence is absent for clarification, it is learner's duty to understand the content. For this one should be competent enough to handle English. To comprehend and grasp the new course, along with basic subject knowledge, language proficiency is also necessary.

Successful completion of online courses will raise their self-esteem. After finishing courses the housewives can be introduced to certain online jobs likeonline teaching, medical transcription and networking. The purpose of online profession is to make them self-dependent and to boost their confidence level. One can choose any online job as per their taste and convenience. Though the jobs will be of different streams, the basic criterion for all these is language proficiency. Along with subject knowledge a thorough ability to handle language is also a must to be successful in online jobs.

Online jobs will give them a new exposure. By working at home an average of 3-5 hours per day they can earn an income of 5000-10,000 per month. This will help to raise their self-esteem. Along with household chores they can manage the job. They can schedule their working time according to their ease. In online job there is no hard rule about working time. The only norm is one has to finish work within the allotted time. Educating women will not only profit single individuals, as they are mothers they can teach their children easily. Along with them the whole family and society have advantages.

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