



IMPLEMENTING E-LEARNING METHODS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG THE DIPLOMA HOLDERS - A STUDY BASED ON THE 2ND YEAR DIPLOMA STUDENTS OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE- DEHIWALA.

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Abstract

E-learning is a type of learning conducted via electronic devices using the internet. It can be accessed through most electronic devices which consist of a computer, laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc. It is an easy way for students to learn where ever they are. Recently, most of the Sri Lankan Higher educational institutes are compelled to start e-learning as a new method to facilitate teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. This study is aimed to find out the students' perceptions of implementing e-learning among English diploma holders. This study includes the learners' purposes, level of exposure, driving factors, and barriers to place e-learning. A sample of 15 students was selected randomly from ATI Dehiwala. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. The results revealed that almost all the respondents were well exposed to e-learning types and different platforms. The most significant findings were learners use e-learning to maintain social distance during COVID-19, to continue distance learning, and to improve Listening, reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills. Moreover, poor network coverage, less student-teacher interaction, and difficulty in performing group work weakened e-learning. On the other hand, respondents believed that e-learning is a suitable teaching method to proceed during dynamic teaching-learning conditions. Also, the respondents were self-motivated to learn English through e-learning. For successful e-learning in higher educational institutes, it is recommended to pay concerns to drivers and barriers found in students' views.

Key Words: e-learning, driving factors, barriers, teaching and learning, electronic devices

Introduction

Education is one of the basic needs of a human being. When it comes to a country, an educated community is a force that drives a country better to the best. So, the whole world does experiments to find the most effective teaching and learning method to empower their education system. As a result of educators' and innovators' experiments world has introduced electronic learning (e-learning). The IGI Global defined **e-learning** as “**the use of various kinds of electronic media and information communication (ICT) in education**”

With the rapid development of the world wide web, the internet, personal computers, and applications, e-learning has been adopted in educational institutes. Therefore, most educational institutes across the world have started using e-learning methods as a new learning-teaching pedagogy. At first, this new method was used as a non-formal alternative method as many users and educators found several pessimistic aspects of e-learning methods. So, e-learning methods have been used only for limited purposes such as distance learning programs. As usual, schools, and universities continued “the traditional classroom method” that was practised for years as their formal method. Moreover, one would think what is the necessity of implementing e-learning methods as teachers and students comfortably engage in traditional classroom methods. A **traditional classroom** is where a teacher moderates and regulates the flow of information and knowledge. Students are expected to continue developing their knowledge of a subject outside of school through homework exercises. Here, the students’ main resource is their instructor who only teaches them face-to-face. (tophat.com)

In the year 2020, another factor accelerates the influence of implementing e-learning other than the rapid growth of technology. It is COVID-19, that the whole world has been compelled to maintain rigid social distancing measures to overcome this deadly pandemic. As a result, e-learning methods have been implemented to continue the teaching-learning process. Though a variety of barriers stand against implementing e-learning, researchers have found plus points to continue such as flexibility, distance learning access, economy, and efficiency. Moreover, with the pandemic, there has been an increasing move towards e-learning methods because of the shutting down of educational institutes for an indefinite time as the only option left.

In Sri Lanka, e-learning is considered as the education provided by the universities, Higher educational Institutes for distant learners as it is not widely applied due to a lack of skills, resources, accessibility, and other barriers. However, with the COVID-19 outbreak, the Sri

Lankan Education system was too affected. So, the only alternative left was to continue via e-learning methods. Therefore, e-learning methods have been adopted immediately by the majority of non-state and state universities. But some Higher educational institutes are unable to adopt effective e-learning methods to meet the learning requirements of the students which causes a great delay in covering the syllabus and meeting deadlines of semester examinations which will end up making a gap in the learning-teaching process while leaving the students as the most affected party. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the driving factors and barriers to implementing e-learning methods while determining students' exposure to e-learning methods in English language learning among diploma students and the purposes of using e-learning methods by 2nd-year diploma students of ATI, Dehiwala. So, this would be a helpful study to implement effective, favourable e-learning methods in higher educational institutes that could not adopt effective e-learning methods. Also, this will be a guide to adopting teaching-learning processes that can be applied in different teaching-learning circumstances.

Problem Statement

How is it possible to continue an effective teaching-learning session during dynamic teaching-learning circumstances for English language learning among diploma students at ATI Dehiwala?

Research Objectives

1. To determine the students' level of exposure to e-learning methods.
2. To find out students' purposes for using e-learning methods.
3. To explore driving factors and barriers to implementing e-learning methods.

Research Questions

1. What are the purposes of using e-Learning methods?
2. What are the driving factors and barriers to implementing e-Learning?

Methodology

Sample group

The population of this study would be 35 students from the 2nd-year 2018 Batch, English diploma students of ATI Dehiwala. Among the population 15 will be selected through random sampling.

Methods of data collection

Copies of a questionnaire consisting of four sections will be used as the instrument to collect data. The questionnaire will be prepared by focusing on the following areas;

01. Demographic factors of the students
02. Identify the students' level of exposure to e-learning methods
03. Identify students' purpose for using e-learning methods
04. Identify driving factors and barriers to implementing e-learning methods

Methods of data analysis

Collected data will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Significance of the study

This study aims to explore the driving factors and barriers to implementing e-learning methods in English language learning among diploma holders while determining students' exposure to e-learning methods and identifying the purposes of using e-learning methods. The importance of this study is that the researcher only considered the students' perspectives on implementing e-learning methods as students are involved in the major part of the teaching-learning process. The reason behind this selection is that similar studies have been done by several researchers but most of the studies focused on perceptions of the administration or the management who are involved in Higher Educational Institutes and it is rare to find studies that focused on student's perceptions before implementing a new learning-teaching pedagogy. Therefore, the student's responses will reveal the requirements, problematic areas, advantages, and disadvantages of implementing the E-learning method. Accordingly, decision-makers of educational institutes can plan or select the effective e-learning method to meet the educational requirements of students for different teaching-learning circumstances. So, this study will provide a kind of guidance to educational institutes before implementing a new educational pedagogy.

Literature Review

In the Sri-Lankan context, implementing e-learning methods among learners has become a quite new approach. However, many developed countries use this as a trending tool for the teaching-learning process amid many doubts. Effectiveness is the most doubted aspect of this method. In 2016 Inkatha Alam Khan did research on the “Effectiveness of e-Learning for teaching English”. The researcher found that e-learning can be effective and useful in the whole education setup. In this regard, a student in general and distance learners, in particular, can be benefitted from e-Learning/e-resources/ Online learning.

Also, it is necessary to find out the teachers' and students' perceptions of e-learning methods as they are the ones who are directly involved in the process. In 2018 Ibrahim Mulambik researched “The role of e-learning in studying English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia: students’ and teachers’ perspectives”. The researcher found that e-learning helps to develop students’ listening and speaking skills which are important as proficiency in these areas is lacking in individuals who receive a traditional face-to-face English Education in Saudi Arabia only. Also, in 2004 Muain Jamlan researched "Faculty opinions towards introducing e-learning at the University of Bahrain". The researcher found that e-learning provides rich resources to students and teachers. E-learning can make teaching more efficient, e-learning can save teachers and students time and effort, e-learning provides students greater access to educational opportunities, it is easy to monitor the teaching and learning process via e-learning can help to standardise course contents and learning materials.

When implementing an e-learning method or after adopting the method educational institutes evaluate the new method to get feedback and monitor the factors to minimize errors or to enhance the effectiveness. In 2013 Jing Liua researched "Factors impacting ESL and use of the Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (MOODLE)". The researcher found that participants' interaction with MOODLE and LMS was impacted by five factors: Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), Facilitating Condition (FC), and Former Experience (FE).

Furthermore, in 2010 Jing Ma did research on “Implementing e-learning in traditional universities: Drivers and Barriers” The researcher found that distance education distributing course material and simplifying the administrative process as their major driving factors of implementing e-learning. Major barriers as lack of time and lack of knowledge about technology, lack of economic incentives for teachers, and lack of appreciation of the effort.

In addition to that with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic experienced and inexperienced teachers and students had to deal with e-learning methods to meet educational needs. Many claims that it caused a positive impact while some argue it caused a negative impact. In 2020 June Dr Lokanath Mishra, Tushar Gupta, and Dr Abha Shree researched “Online teaching-learning in Higher Education during the lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic”. The researcher found that the online learning process during the time of COVID-19 had helped students in touch with lessons outside the four walls of the classroom and created an alternative for the completion of the syllabus. The major challenge while teaching online was the unstable network connection and most of the students came from remote areas of MIZORAM state with low socio-economic conditions of the family. Therefore, during the lockdown period when they needed a laptop for online learning but they could not do so as they didn't have a desktop or a laptop at home and mobile phones are not found enough effective for participants.

Above mentioned research findings reveal the areas that researchers touched on implementing e-learning methods and the English language. E-learning and effectiveness, e-learning and factors affecting (ESL) English as a Second Language, teachers' and Students' opinions on implementing e-learning methods, drivers, and barriers to implementing e-learning from the aspect of teachers and e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic are considered areas. So, it is clear that there is a gap between implementing e-learning methods and students' level of exposure to e-learning, students' purpose of using e-learning methods, and the student's perception of drivers and barriers to implementing e-learning methods. Therefore, this study aimed to find answers for those untouched areas.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This is descriptive research that employs the collection of data and analyzes collected data to answer the purpose of using e-learning methods and discover driving factors, and barriers to implementing e-learning methods. Furthermore, the main focus of the study is to find the students' perceptions of implementing e-learning methods among ESL learners. The researcher gathers primary data by distributing a structured questionnaire among the selected participants. Mainly this research uses statistical descriptions and a few qualitative descriptions to justify the situations in which they are one of the scientific tools.

Research Location

To carry out the survey, the researcher chose Advanced Technological Institute Dehiwala which is a state Higher Educational Institute that offers several Higher National Diploma courses over the decades as one of the leading higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka.

Methods of Data Collection

To collect primary data, a structured questionnaire was set with ten different questions. So as the data collection tool, the questionnaire was selected. Moreover, the questionnaire consisted of many close-ended questions and a few open-ended questions. Close-ended questions were further diversified such as multiple-choice, dichotomous, and rating questions. The intention behind the use of open-ended questions was to break the monotone especially to identify additional concerns or opinions from the respondents which were not captured by close-ended questions.

The questionnaire was structured focusing on four areas. The four areas were;

1. Demographic factors of the students
2. Identify the students' level of exposure to e-learning methods
3. Identify students' purpose in using e-learning methods
4. Identify driving factors and barriers to implementing e-learning methods

Research population and research sampling

Since the research location was ATI Dehiwala, the research population was selected as the second-year Higher National Diploma in English students of the 2018 batch. Among the population, fifteen students were selected to serve as a representation of the entire population. The sample was selected by using one of the simple random sampling methods. For that, the researcher got the register numbers of the 2018 HNDE students and wrote all the index numbers on a little piece of paper, put them into a box, mixed all the pieces, and selected 15 students randomly. To have unbiased data, random sampling was chosen.

After finishing the sampling, each selected participant was contacted personally and informed that they were selected for the research sample and provided a clear description of the research and the process to gain their authentic participation. Also ensured the respondents' confidentiality. Besides, to ensure all the respondents were treated equally, a questionnaire was presented with the same wording and in the same order to all respondents.

Survey Implementation

To implement the survey, the researcher chose the google form method since it is the most convenient, efficient, and technology-based method that most surveys were carried out. After setting the google form, it was emailed to each participant through the hyperlink that allows the participants to answer the questionnaire itself. Once the respondents complete answering answers forms will automatically save to the researcher's google drive and can go through the responses immediately after. Here in this method research participants were free to use their own time without time boundaries. It allowed the respondents to think freely to provide authentic answers in a free mindset that finally caused a positive impact on data collection. In addition to low cost and broad usage, questionnaires often use for participants who are not easily approachable and distant. So, the researcher used the questionnaire to minimize those difficulties.

Overview of data analysis

Before analysis, the gathered data were prepared and arranged. The data were checked for missing and abnormal data. Then most of the data were analyzed quantitatively using spreadsheets and Microsoft excel sheets. Moreover, the final question was analyzed quantitatively.

Data Analysis

The gathered data were filtered and organized before analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the data. Data were analyzed under four sections as mentioned in the methodology chapter (03) which answers the research questions.

The first nine questions in the questionnaire were close-ended questions, which were analyzed quantitatively and the final question which was an open-ended one analyzed qualitatively.

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages whereas qualitative data were analyzed descriptively(thematically). Moreover, the findings were presented over tables and charts.

Findings

This section presents the results gathered from the questionnaire of this research.

1. Demographic factors of the students

This is the starting section of the questionnaire which was comprised of five questions. All five questions were designed to gather information regarding the respondents' data such as gender, age, travelling time, employability, and marital status respectively.

Table 1.1 indicates the demographic factors of the participants. A total of 15 students participated in this study. 86.7% were female while 13.33% were male students.

40% of the respondents were between 20-25 years old, 13% were between 25-30 years old, 20% were between 30-35 years old, 20% were between 35-40 years old and 7% were above 40 years old.

When it comes to the travelling time, the majority confirmed that it took less than 2 hours. It was 40%. 20% confirmed less than an hour, 6.7% said less than 03 hours, 26.6% said less than 4 hours, and 6.7% said more than 4 hours.

Among the 15 respondent's majority were employed which was 66.7% and the rest were only scholars. Furthermore, 33.3% were married while 66.7% were single.

Table 1. Demographic factors

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	2	13.3
Female	13	86.7
Total	15	100.0
Age		
20-25	6	40.0
25-30	2	13.0
30-35	3	20.0
35-40	3	20.0
Above 40	1	7.0

Total	15	100.0
Travelling time(hours)		
Hour <	3	20.0
2hrs<	6	40.0
3hrs<	1	6.7
4hrs<	4	26.7
04hrs>	1	6.7
Total	15	100.0
Employability		
Employed	10	66.7
Unemployed	5	33.3
Total	15	100.0
Marital status		
Married	5	33.3
Single	10	66.7
Total	15	100.0

2. Students’ level of exposure to e-learning methods

This section was designed to identify students’ level of exposure to e-learning methods. Therefore, question 2,3,4,5 collected data relevant to exposure. Table 2.1 shows the percentages of students who got the help of e-learning. All (100%) of the respondents were e-learners.

Table 2.1. Students who got the help of e-learning

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	15	100.0
No	0	00.0
Total	15	100.0

Table 2.2 shows the percentages of the frequency of the students who got access to e-learning. The majority of 46.7% of the students got access daily.20% used every other day.26.7% used weekly and 6.7% used other schedules.

Table 2.2. Frequency of students’ access to e-learning

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	7	46.7
Every other day	3	20.0
Weekly	4	26.7
Monthly	0	00.0
Other	1	6.7A
Total	15	100.0

Table 2.3 indicates the devices used by learners to log in to e-learning methods. A greater percentage used smartphones (37.4%). The rest used tablets (31.4%), laptops (25.7%), and desktops (5.7%) subsequently.

Table 2.3. Types of devices used for e-learning

	Response	Percentage (%)
Desktop	2	5.7
Laptop	9	25.7
Tablet	11	31.4
Smartphone	13	37.4
Computer –internet cafe	0	0.0
	35	100.0

Table 2.4 shows the percentages of preference types of e-learning that the learners always used when they studied. The higher type of learning was audio and video conferencing (23.3%). The next type was self-paced online courses (16.3%). Virtual classroom, application, and sharing methods were used in same the percentage (14%). Also, webinars, discussion forums, and groups were in the same percentage (11.6%). The lowest type of e-learning was using messaging instantly (9.3%).

Table 2.4. Types of e-learning platforms used

	Response	Percentage (%)
Virtual Classroom	6	14.0

Audio & video Conference	10	23.3
Webinars	5	11.6
Application and sharing	6	14.0
Messaging instantly	4	9.3
Self-paced online courses	7	16.3
Discussion forums and groups	5	11.6
Total	43	100.0

Students’ purposes for using e-learning methods

This section presents the results gathered under section 03 of the questionnaire that was set to find the students’ purpose in using e-learning methods. Questions numbers 6 and 7 collected the relevant data.

Based on table 3.1, the highest percentage of (24.1%) admitted that the majority’s purpose of using e-learning was to maintain social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Distance education and submission of assignments showed (16.7%) similar priority after social distancing. To get additional learning support (14.8%), covering the syllabus within a limited time (13%), distributing learning materials (9.3%) and group learning (5.6%) followed respectively.

Table 3.1. students’ purposes for using e-learning methods

	Response	Percentage (%)
Distance education	9	16.7
To maintain social distancing during COVID-19	13	24.1
To cover the syllabus within a limited time	7	13.0
Group learning	3	5.6
Distribute learning materials	5	9.3
Get additional learning support	8	14.8
To submit assignments	9	16.7
Total	54	100.0

Based on Table 3.2, the Majority (26.7%) of the students admitted e-learning positively influenced learners’ English listening skills over other skills. English speaking and writing skills were the least (6%).

Table 3.2. Factors positively influenced by e-learning

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Learners’ listening skills	12	26.7
Learners’ reading & comprehension Skills	11	24.4
Learners’ vocabulary level	10	22.2
Learners’ speaking skills	6	13.3
Learners’ writing skills	6	13.3

Total	45	100.0
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Driving factors and barriers to implementing e-learning methods

This section presents the results gathered from the final section of the questionnaire. So, questions 8 and 9 are set to find factors that promote e-learning and factors that pause implementing e-learning methods.

Based on Table 4.1, the majority (14%) admitted that, can use in a dynamic learning environment as the most powerful driving factor to implementing e-learning. Statements “effective method for far away students” (12.8%) and “save time” (12. %) were the second most admitted drivers. 10.5% admitted that effective method for the working crowd. 9.3% admitted that flexible time schedules as one of the driving forces.

Table 4.1. Driving factors to implementing e-learning methods

Statement	Response	Percentage (%)
An effective method for faraway students	11	12.8
An effective method for the working crowd	9	10.5
Can use in dynamic learning environments (e.g.) COVID-19)	12	14.0
Can cover academic plans within a stipulated time	7	8.1
No need for physical classroom facilities (e.g. chairs)	8	9.3
Less Maintaining cost	9	10.5
Learner, instructor doesn't have to travel	10	11.6

to a specific location

Save time	11	12.8
Flexible time schedules	8	9.3
Other	1	1.2
Total	86	100.0

Based on Table 4.2, it was found that poor network coverage was the major barrier to implementing e-learning (20.3%). Apart from that, less student-teacher interaction (17.2%), and difficulty in performing group work (15.6%) were the next most affected factors. The lowest (4.7%) was the most probably a one-way method.

Table 4.2. Barriers to implementing e-learning methods

Statement	Response	Percentage (%)
Lack of technical Guidance	9	14.1
Lack of updated knowledge on the Applications	7	10.9
No timely updates of websites, applications	5	7.8
Difficulty in performing group works, demonstration	10	15.6
Most probably a one-way method	3	4.7
Less student-teacher	11	17.2

Interaction		
Need costly devices	6	9.4
Poor network Coverage	13	20.3
Other	0	0
Total	64	100.0

Final question (10) was analyzed qualitatively through identification patterns in the collected data. Since it was an open-ended question, gathered data were categorized under 03 coding based on the responses received.

Table 5 shows three types of responses received on implementing e-learning methods while continuing the traditional method. Most participants commented e-learning is a positive approach to be practised since it is efficient, flexible, and economical, many have access and become familiar with e-learning gives space to both teacher and student to be updated on new learning pedagogies.

Many participants raised concerns about the mixed method as the most appropriate method to carry on. Also suggested that, good to practice and would be a perfect filler during dynamic teaching-learning circumstances.

Few respondents suggested that e-learning could be used as an effective, optional pedagogy since it had both positive and negative aspects such as being suitable to use during social distancing as a safer approach, but due to less interaction and limited control, it was not very effective.

Table 5. Views on Implementing a mixed-method/ blended method

E-learning as a Positive approach	E-learning as an alternative method	The mixed-method as a Positive approach
06 responses	04 responses	05 responses

Discussion

As electronic learning has become a compulsory method it is not a crucial thing to start over with learners. Study findings such as 100% usage, daily usage, a majority use smartphones to engage in e-learning, and usage of multiple e-learning types reveal the students are well exposed to e-learning. Also, some demographic factors such as 71% young learners and 66.7% employed students triggered the level of exposure.

24.1%(majority) stated their intention behind using e-learning was to maintain social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. That reflects the need to exercise health regulations while fulfilling learning goals.16.7% (second highest) purpose was to accomplish distant learning. That shows a relationship with one of the demographic findings that 40% of the learners spend more than 2 hours travelling. Many are reluctant to prescribe e-learning for ESL learners as they doubt the effectiveness of the method. But this study reveals e-learning positively influences the majority's (26.7%) English reading and comprehension skills. Also, the findings of "e-learning types used" help to draw parallels between skills improved by the use of e-learning and mostly used e-learning type which was "audio and video conference".

Findings show e-learning is the best suited for dynamic learning environments as the majority (14%) accepted "can use in dynamic learning environment". Additionally, demographic factors too implied that the majority of learners were working people and distant learners. with the fact that findings reveal e-learning is a positive method as it saves time and can use as a distance learning method. On the other hand, poor network coverage, less student-teacher interaction, and difficulty performing group work make e-learning an ineffective method.

Collectively all the discussed areas reveal that students are positive about the e-learning approach and well exposed to e-learning methods. ESL Learners use e-learning as an effective tool to improve skills and to maintain social distancing during the pandemic. Also for distant learning purposes. Further learners believe e-learning is the suitable method to replace formal teaching-learning during dynamic learning conditions which triggers the implementation of e-learning the most.

Conclusion

The study was conducted to find students' level of exposure to e-learning, and factors affecting to implementation of e-learning methods ATI, Dehiwala according to the viewpoints of the learners. Based on this study, it can be concluded that the students were exposed to e-learning in great depth as the findings proved such as every student get the help of e-learning, daily

usage, diversified devices used to access, and varieties of e-learning platforms used. Moreover, it is clear that to engage in e-learning it is not compulsory to have complicated, costly devices as the study reveal one can use simple cost-effective devices to use e-learning such as smartphones. This study has also proven that learners use e-learning methods to maintain social distancing during the pandemic as well as an effective method for distant learners since the majority of learners spent much time travelling, the majority were employed, and were indifferent age group as proved in demographic factors. Additionally, it was proved that as ESL learners, students use e-learning platforms to improve listening, reading, and comprehension skills where many questions about the effectiveness of e-learning for ESL learners. The main driving factors to implementing e-learning methods are it enables learning in dynamic learning environments and distant learning while poor network coverage, less student-teacher interaction, and limited practicability to perform group work stand against as barriers to implementing e-learning methods. But researchers suggest that student-teacher interaction and barriers to performing group work can be solved by applying various tools and techniques. If poor network coverage could be solved e-learning would be a successful pedagogy for every learner. Collectively, the study reveals that students' perception of e-learning is positive and they believe e-learning is a positive approach that can be applied especially in dynamic learning circumstances. Also, the findings of the final question reveal that many raised concerns on not only e-learning methods but also the combination of e-learning and traditional methods considered as a suitable method to be implemented.

In short, e-learning is an integration of technology in teaching and learning. It enables students to meet learning goals effectively in any dynamic circumstance but it is up to the institution management to implement effective and accessible e-learning methods while hindering the barriers and promoting the drivers for the learning process to happen.

Recommendation

Since this is a small-scale study, it is recommended that future studies can be carried out on a larger scale engaging many students from different years which gives a more generalized result on students' perception. This study was conducted only on second-year English diploma students of ATI Dehiwala. Therefore, it is recommended for further studies could include a comparison between first-year and second-year students to investigate their English Language improvement with the support of E-learning. Moreover, future research could focus on the lecturers' perception of implementing e-learning methods. Finally, this study gained only

minute feedback on blended or mixed learning so further studies can be carried out in the future since many held the idea that mixed-method is an effective and practical approach.

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