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Digital Learning Plays A Key Role In The Improvement Of Education For Posterity

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Abstract:

Institutions of higher education have increasingly embraced Digital education, and the number of students enrolled in distance programs is rapidly rising in colleges and universities throughout the United States. In response to these changes in enrolment demands, many states, institutions, and organizations have been working on strategic plans to implement online education. At the same time, misconceptions and myths related to the difficulty of teaching and learning online, technologies available to support online instruction, the support and compensation needed for high-quality instructors, and the needs of online students create challenges for such vision statements and planning documents. Technology has played and continues to play an important role in the development and expansion of online education. Accordingly, many universities have reported an increase in the use of online tools. This paper focusses on how the universities of various countries try to adopt this new style of learning to encourage the students in terms of self-learning. Due to this Digital learning, students are able to listen and learn to the lectures of premier universities professors like IIT and NIT under NPTEL online courses.

Key words:*Digital education, Technologies andNPTEL online courses.*

Introduction

The process of adopting new innovations has been studied for over 30 years, and one of the most popular adoption models is described by Rogers in his book, Diffusion of Innovations (Sherry & Gibson, 2002). Much research from a broad variety of disciplines has used the model as a framework. Dooley (1999) and Stuart (2000) mentioned several of these disciplines as political science, public health, communications, history, economics, technology, and education. Higher education explores e-learning technologies (for example, electronic books, simulations, text messaging, podcasting, wikis, blogs), with new ones seeming to emerge each week. Such technologies confront instructors and administrators at a time of continued budget economizing and rethinking. Adding to this dilemma, bored students are dropping out of online classes while pleading for richer and more engaging online learning experiences. There is a demand for online learning, the plethora of online technologies to incorporate into teaching, the budgetary problems, and the opportunities for innovation; we argue that online learning environments are facing a "perfect e-storm," linking pedagogy, technology, and learner needs. Considering the extensive turbulence created by the perfect storm surrounding e-learning, it is not surprising that opinions are mixed about the benefits of online teaching and learning in higher education. As illustrated in

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numerous issues of the Chronicle of Higher Education during the past decade, excitement and enthusiasm for e-learning alternate with a pervasive sense of e-learning gloom, disappointment, bankruptcy and lawsuits, and myriad other contentions. Appropriately, the question arises as to where online learning is headed. Navigating online education requires an understanding of the current state and the future direction of online teaching and learning.

This paper described the surveyed instructors and administrators in postsecondary institutions, mainly in the United States, to explore future trends of online education. In particular, the study makes predictions regarding the changing roles of online instructors, student expectations and needs related to online learning, pedagogical innovation, and projected technology use in online teaching and learning.

Online Teaching and Learning

A recent survey of higher education in the United States reported that more than 2.35 million students enrolled in online courses in fall 2004. This report also noted that online education is becoming an important long-term strategy for many postsecondary institutions. Given the rapid growth of online education and its importance for postsecondary institutions, it is imperative that institutions of higher education provide quality online programs. The literature addresses student achievement and satisfaction as two means to assess the quality of online education.

Studies focused on academic achievement have shown mixed reviews, but some researchers point out that online education can be at least as effective as traditional classroom instruction. Several research studies on student satisfaction in online courses or programs reported both satisfied and dissatisfied students. Faculty training and support is another critical component of quality online education. Many researchers posit that instructors play a different role from that of traditional classroom instructors when they teach online courses,8 as well as when they teach residential courses with Web enhancements. Such new roles for online instructors require training and support. Some case studies of faculty development programs indicate that such programs can have positive impacts on instructor transitions from teaching in a face-to-face to an online setting.

Pedagogy and Technology for Online Education

Effective pedagogical strategies for online teaching covered by the researchers but Partlow and Gibbs, for instance, found from a Delhi study of experts in instructional technology and constructivism that online courses designed from constructivist principles should be relevant, interactive, project-based, and collaborative, while providing learners with some choice or control over their learning. Additionally, Keeton investigated effective online instructional practices based on a framework of effective teaching practices in face-to-face instruction in higher education. In this study, Keeton interviewed faculty in postsecondary institutions, who rated the effectiveness of online instructional strategies. These instructors gave higher ratings to online instructional strategies that “create an environment that supports and encourages inquiry,” “broaden the learner’s experience of the subject matter,” and “elicit active and critical reflection by learners on their growing experience base.

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Technology has played and continues to play an important role in the development and expansion of online education. Accordingly, many universities have reported an increase in the use of online tools. Over the past decade, countless efforts have sought to integrate emerging Internet technologies into the teaching and learning process in higher education. Several studies have reported cases related to the use of blogs to promote student collaboration and reflection. Some researchers also have promoted the plausibility of using wikis for online student collaboration, and podcasting is beginning to garner attention from educators for its instructional use. Although some discussions in the literature relate to effective practices in the use of emerging technologies for online education, empirical evidence to support or refute the effectiveness of such technologies, or, perhaps more importantly, guidance on how to use such tools effectively based on empirical evidence, is lacking.

This led to the development of a five-part framework for describing next-generation pedagogy, which can be summarised in the acronym IDEAS: Intelligent, Distributed, Engaging, Agile and Situated. The IDEAS framework presents five "signposts" on the roadmap of innovative approaches to teaching, which point to next-generation pedagogy:

Intelligent pedagogy is an approach to teaching in which technology is used to enhance the learning experience. Examples include using learning analytics to support course leaders in curriculum design decisions as well as to help students manage their learning, ensuring that both learners and teachers learn digital competences, creating a learning environment that is not restricted to an institutional learning management system , and the creative use of technologies such as virtual and augmented reality for learning and teaching.

Distributed pedagogy refers to shared or distributed ownership of different elements of the learning journey by different stakeholders in the process. It includes, at the one end of the spectrum, collaborative partnerships between institutions, and at the other, a deliberate separation of services to allow learners to select different aspects of their learning experience from a marketplace of potentially competing providers. It is possible for a single institution to have offerings at both ends of this spectrum.

Engaging pedagogy is an approach to curriculum design and delivery in which learners are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process. Related practices include supporting students to develop portfolios that have relevance for them outside of the classroom, involving the learners in producing content both for peers and for the wider public, creating conditions in which learners can construct knowledge for themselves, and including an element of gratification in the learning process. There is a related increased emphasis on teaching enhancement programmes for teaching staff to support them in making the learning experience engaging for learners.

Agile pedagogy refers to flexibility and customisation of the curriculum and the student experience. It includes personalised learning pathways and individualised support for learners, recognition of prior, non-formal learning achievements in order to widen participation and fast track learners through programmes, responsiveness of institutions and

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systems to learners' needs, and support for virtual mobility of students and internationalisation of the curriculum. All these developments also support the widening of participation in higher education, facilitating access for learners who might previously have been excluded.

Situated pedagogy encompasses the idea of contextualisation of learning and emphasises the need for curricula with real-world relevance. It expands work-related learning opportunities for students, and supports students in identifying and addressing "big issues" in industry, government, and society through project- and problem-based learning. In situated pedagogy, learning and assessment are contextualised according to students' professional and personal goals.

Each of the five signposts is associated with a number of "landmarks" – practices that were observed in institutional initiatives and that may be of interest to other institutions wishing to innovate in their teaching practices. The landmarks are indicative rather than comprehensive, and descriptive rather than prescriptive or predictive of any particular future. Possible ways of using them would be as the basis for generating a checklist for curriculum development or programme review, as a template for representing organisational alignment of policies, strategies and practices, or simply to spark discussion amongst colleagues in course teams, departments or institutions about their daily teaching practice. On a deeper level, we hope that the roadmap and its associated signposts (IDEAS) and landmarks may inspire open-ended dialogue and contribute towards the development of a shared vision for the future of online, blended and lifelong learning provision within and between institutions in the higher education sector.

Conclusion

As institutions of higher education continue to embrace and debate online learning, it is important to envision where the field is headed. What might the next generation of online learning environments look like? Will they move from warehousing students in online environments to engaging them in interactive and motivational activities? What technological and pedagogical advantages will they offer? Current studies provide a glimpse of the pedagogical and technological possibilities. Clearly, we are entering a unique and exciting era in online teaching and learning. And perhaps the perfect e-storm is becoming less cloudy and ominous.

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