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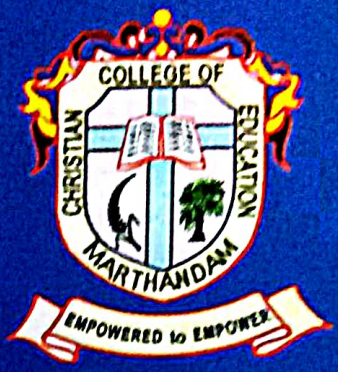
A NEW VISION: SMART EDUCATION AND E-LEARNING

(A Peer-reviewed Research Papers of
the Second International Conference of Teacher Educators)



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STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING IN A VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Virtual learning" is also known as "digital learning" or "e-learning." A single wire will provide everything by connecting the classroom, the library, the workplace, and the home. The challenge will be to choose the most practical combination of learning experiences based on a trade-off between the costs and capabilities of a vast array of media options. Virtual learning is one of the benefits of online learning. Virtual Learning is playing an increasingly important role in providing a new space in which to connect, engage and develop people. Virtual Learning help organisations respond to the challenges of a globally dispersed workforce give learners the chance to practice and develop the very skills; they need to manage people globally. This paper highlights the strategies for effective teaching in a virtual learning environment.

Introduction

The use of technology to support teaching and learning in furthe education has moved from a mere experiment to become fundamental part of many curriculum. A major part of that chang has been intensified by the widespread introduction and use of Virtua learning technology. One of the characteristics of the technology i that it combines a variety of tools and resources into a single integrated system. In the past, much of the literature on Virtual learning has concentrated on studies which list and compare system functions describing small scale and short term applications or providing speculative theories and predictions. Little attention has so far been

paid to analysing what effects a Virtual learning use has on the participants particularly across a large group of users and over a long period of time.

Computers and the Internet have revolutionized entire sectors of society. Face book, Twitter, YouTube, Skype and other online communications media have allowed billions of people around the world to share ideas in a matter of seconds, mostly at a very low cost. These advances in computer technology are as remarkable as they are familiar. But most people are not aware of how computers and Internet technology are transforming the way students learn. Virtual learning is the potential to improve student achievement, educational access and schools' cost-effectiveness.

Specifically, virtual learning uses computer software, the Internet or both to deliver instruction to students. This minimizes or eliminates the need for teachers and students to share a classroom. Virtual learning does not include the increasing use of e-mail or online forums to help teachers better communicate with students and parents about coursework and student progress; as helpful as these learning management systems are, they do not change how students are taught. Virtual learning environment is one of the fastest-growing trends in learning today.

Meaning of Virtual Learning

"Virtual learning" is also known as "digital learning" or "e-learning."

Virtual learning refers to a course that is taken completely online by the student. The student does not attend a traditional "brick and mortar" school building to take a virtual course. Communication with the instructor and other students is done primarily via electronic communication.

Virtual learning is the learning that takes place outside of the school, or bringing what is outside of the school into the school. So, we are thinking about the online environment as a way of connecting

students who may be located physically in a school with their learning that is somewhere else.

Types of virtual learning

1. Text Driven

In this level, the content is simple and includes text, graphics, some audio, and simple test questions. Compliance courses are a good example of text driven e-learning that usually has one purpose or goal: present the learning and quickly test on the content. The text driven course rarely has any interactive components, any gratification, and images used sparingly. PowerPoint files converted to e-learning often fall into this category.

2. Interactive

An interactive e-learning course is very similar to a text driven one, with the exception that there has been more consideration placed on interactive components to enhance the learning. There is also a greater use of visuals in general (graphics, charts, diagrams), all of which are likely to have an interactive aspect.

3. Simulation

Simulation e-learning is highly interactive and relies heavily upon graphics, video, audio and some level of gratification. Importantly, there are often custom simulations to aid in learning acquisition, which could very well include 3D components. New software training is an example of a course that often includes a high degree of interactivity and simulations. It isn't uncommon for these simulations to also be accompanied with some sort of controlled "test" environment.

E-learning that is simulation heavy puts an emphasis on portraying concepts through various mediums, usually starting with text and graphics, with audio and video examples. Afterwards, there is often a "try-it" mode where users can practice the new skills, potentially earning achievements or points along the way.

Forms of Virtual learning

- ***Computer-Based:*** Instruction is not provided by a teacher; instead, instruction is provided by software installed on a local computer or server. This software can frequently customize the material to suit the specific needs of each student.
- ***Internet-Based:*** This is similar to *computer-based* instruction, but in this case, the software that provides the instruction is delivered through the Web and stored on a remote server.
- ***Remote Teacher Online:*** Instruction is provided by a teacher, but that teacher is not physically present with the student. Instead, the teacher interacts with the student via the Internet, through such media as online video, online forums, e-mail and instant messaging.
- ***Blended Learning:*** This combines traditional face-to-face instruction, directed by a teacher, with *computer-based, Internet-based* or *remote teacher online* instruction. In effect, instruction comes from two sources: a traditional classroom teacher, and at least one of the forms of virtual learning described above.
- ***Facilitated Virtual Learning:*** This is *computer-based, Internet-based* or *remote teacher online* instruction that is supplemented by a human "facilitator." This facilitator does not direct the student's instruction, but rather assists the student's learning process by providing tutoring or additional supervision. The facilitator may be present with the learner or communicating remotely via the Web or other forms of electronic communication.

Strategies for Effective Teaching in a Virtual Learning Environment

Teaching in a virtual learning environment can be both challenging and extremely rewarding. While virtual teaching requires many of the same skills needed to effectively teach in a brick and mortar classroom academic expertise, teamwork, organization, creativity, and

of course love for learning and for students. There are some strategies that are particularly helpful when trying to reach students with whom you may never see face-to-face.

1. Communicate regularly with students and provide opportunities for students to collaborate with peers.

One of the biggest challenges facing those who teach in a virtual environment is to ensure authentic student engagement. The temptation to 'game the system' will be minimized if the student knows they will have to analyze, justify, and/or evaluate the content in a group discussion or in an extension activity provided through a journal activity, practice, project, or even a written assessment. This regular communication and collaboration can take place in person or online through a digital messaging center, discussion group, or even through the feedback provided on teacher-scored activities.

2. Set clear expectations.

While flexibility is one of the greatest benefits that virtual programs can provide, setting clear expectations in regards to participation, pacing, and progress are a key component to ensuring student success. It is important that teachers work with students to determine reasonable scheduling for pace and progress so that students will continue to work toward timely completion. While virtual learning provides the opportunity to deliver instruction based on individual student needs, all students need clear goals to work toward.

3. Use data to guide student learning.

As educators, we have all been told to use data to drive our instruction. This can be an overwhelming instructional task when you are staring at a classroom full of students with varying learning preferences, academic experiences, and reading levels. However, as virtual teachers, we have the ability to do just that. Because a virtual teacher will not be planning and preparing to deliver content on a daily basis. By regularly monitoring and reviewing student data, we are able to better guide student learning and provide interventions to struggling students.

The benefits of virtual learning for teachers

When we are thinking about virtual learning we can't forget about the impact on the teachers themselves. Many schools are starting to see that engaging in virtual professional learning and development is of benefit to both the school and teacher not only in the cost-saving from days off, teacher-release days, and travel, but also the benefit of continuity. Where the investment may have been made simply to get to a one-day course, seminar, or workshop, now, teachers can have access to their professional development over many weeks or months, for a similar size investment. What's more, it connects them with other educators doing similar things that they are, and who are looking for ways to improve their own professional activity and professional futures in that way.

So, *virtual learning* has a very broad application. It's not only about online courses, but also about the way that we extend what is happening in the premise of school way beyond the school gates.

Conclusion

Virtual learning is one of the benefits of online learning. Virtual Learning is playing an increasingly important role in providing a new space in which to connect, engage and develop people. Virtual Learning help organisations respond to the challenges of a globally dispersed workforce give learners the chance to practice and develop the very skills; they need to manage people globally. It helps people build relationships and lead complex tasks across boundaries. It enables people to develop essential influencing, networking and team skills in a virtual world. Students and teachers are able to have interactions not only in other parts of the country, but also around the world.

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