

Analysis of training gaps that persist in online training essay

[Business](#), [Accounting](#)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Web based training/instruction or internet based training is a type of distance instruction delivered over the internet or a company's intranet. Therefore, online training is part of the computer based training (CBT) which is a course available on an intranet, extranet or internet linked to learning resources outside the course. There are various benefits accrued from this program. Such benefits are: (a) lecturers can access in-service training without leaving their classrooms; (b) lecturers can improve their computer literacy; (c) lecturers are better able to interact with their trainers and other teachers online; and (d) once a database of online courses has been developed, lecturers can access those courses that meet their individual needs. Despite the fact training is a critical component in any organization's strategy; many organizations or institutions do not always evaluate the core omissions which might impede its successful delivery. These core omissions are known as gaps.

These gaps were realized after major debate surfaced about the basis of teaching and learning in an online environment. Though many were to the theories supporting instructional design for web-based training/instruction, which are behaviorism and constructivist view, these gaps observed have provided an opportunity for opponents unbridled to behaviorist and principles that are the foundation of constructivism. The purpose of this paper is to address how to limit these omissions.

Hence, the paper seeks to: (a) provide researchers and faculty with how best the students can learn online so as to refine and re-design their online courses; (b) provide a feedback of technical support to institutions on the

assessment of their online classes and programs; (c) provide technical support for effective online students services that are necessary to promote student learning and persistence. Consequently, the tools developed by the institutions should provide a methodology to evaluate measure and continuously improve training, as well as the organizational and technical infrastructure to implement the methodology. Cross-functional and reporting and learning analytics should provide important connections between the measures of learning effectiveness offered by a learning management system. ORGANIZATIONAL SUMMARYThe paper has been divided into three sections.

The first sections deals with the gaps which still persist despite the technological advances which have overwhelmed all institution charged with the responsibility of distance training. The paper has systematically short-listed eight gaps which still characterize most intranet training. These gaps are: training costs, time allocation, and student drop out, problems with equipment, misuse of technologies, quality of instructions, the role of the technicians and attitudes toward online training. The second section deals with the recommendation on how to solve the gaps fore mentioned in the preceding section. The solutions are also following the systematic order of the problems highlighted in the above section.

These solutions were proposed by all the stakeholders, that is the students themselves and the teachers' trainers. Nevertheless, the management have not fully adhered to them and hence accounting for these gaps persisting up to date. Lastly, the paper gives the materials that were used in this research.

CHALLENGES Despite the promises and obvious advantages to distance learning, there are problems that need to be resolved. These problems include the training costs, quality of instruction, hidden costs, and misuse of technology, student drop out cases and the attitudes of instructors, students, and administrators. Each one of these has an effect on the overall quality of distance learning as a product. In a number of ways, each of these issues relates to the others.

These problems form a vicious cycle since one problem contributes to another and the cycle continues viciously. Take an example, high cost of training would mean some students will not complete their studies. In attempt to solve this, the faculty would remove some facilities which are likely to raise the costs of training. Consequently, the time allocated and the quality of instruction will be compromised and this will in return affect the attitudes toward distance learning. Solution to one will adversely affect other problems emanating from that problem.

Training costs; since the advent of online teacher training courses, there has been concern over the training costs. Human capital and the costs of conversion expenses have been constantly underestimated. The clients still remain highly charged for the services rendered to them (Christensen, E. et al. 2001). Despite the attempt to integrating with other training activities, the problem still persists. The Verizon wireless has no concrete data available on evaluation of cost benefit of online vs.

conventional training. This problem has also been escalated by the taxes which are imposed by the state to the company and local government means there's less money available to keep building, upgrading and enhancing wireless networks across the country. Consequently, the firm is left to charge highly in order to make profit. There is cost savings in distance learning programs where large number of students, with small groups, was still more cost effective to teach smaller groups in a traditional setting.

The startup costs, maintenance costs, and personnel costs should also be factored in to arrive at a true cost for a distance-learning program. For instance, the minimum number of staff required for delivery of a compressed video class would be one instructor and two technicians, one at each site. This means a minimum of three people is needed to deliver the same class as one instructor does in a traditional setting. The costs associated with training technicians and instructors should not be overlooked. For effective distance education to take place, the staff delivering the instruction should be well trained. Adult student drop out cases; the students which enroll on these online courses are expected to possess self-directed learning skills (Ferguson, et al 2000). Online studies lack regulation and students are more influenced by the surrounding environment which offers an external locus of control.

The Verizon firm has no ways to avoid this drop out, either due to dispossession from the external locus of control or due to inadequacy in self-directed learning skills on the part of the students enrolled. Besides the lack of self-directed learning skills, the attitude toward distance learning has

affected the number of enrollment and those who complete their studies. This is because they consider it as second rating form of studies.

Insufficient planning by the faculties make it not avail some materials, such as handouts and functional equipments. Hence, lack appropriate of appropriate equipment coupled with the negative impact of external locus of control makes the drop out of the students to be very low. Besides, the situation escalates as the training cost consequently go up as the numbers of students dwindle and this further lessen the number of enrolment. Quality of Instruction; the quality of instruction that is given through distance learning depends on the attitude of the administration and the instructor. There have been conflicting attitudes about teaching distance education between the instructors and the students. Majority of instructors are willing to teach another, although they rate the quality of the course as only equal or lower quality than other classes taught on campus.

It seems they expect the technology will improve the quality of the class and not effectiveness of the lecturers. Consequently, instructors do not design their lessons to take advantage of the technology presented (Christensen, E. et al. 2001). This affects the quality of the instruction and precipitates the notion that this is a second rate and deficient form of education. This creates a negative influence on entire distance learning experience.

The teachers' trainers consider some information as vital and therefore releasing it to the internet would make them not to have control over it and thus lose touch with it. This includes some instructions on some experiments

and manuals which would serve the student body with the prerequisite information required for their studies. Moreover, this works can only be accessed on copyrighted books which leave the students with the only option of purchasing these books. The problem of quality of instruction leads to the first problem of training cost and even the second problem of drop outs or poor enrolment. These instructions are: (a) use of practice and application to ensure a strong trainer-trainee association; (b) pre-assessment of students to determine where instruction should begin. Misuse of Technology; apart from the cost of the technology, there is the possibility of not utilizing all its potential.

These problems may arise from hardware problems, lack of training, instructor's attitudes about using the technology, and still others by. It is evident that some instructors need to be trained to use distance learning technology, but too often they are not. Once again, it appears that administration may feel that the technology itself will improve the course. Advancement in technology does not lead to effective distance education. The best distance education practices depend on creative, well-informed instructors (Caffarella, et al. 1992). It should be known that newer technologies are not inherently better than old ones and many of the lessons learned from the application of older technologies will still apply to any newer technology. The instructor should be trained to take advantage of both their experience and being able to adapt that experience to the new environment of distance learning.

This training should not only include how to use technology, but also to shift the way in which they organize and deliver material. The Role of the Technicians; there has been underestimation of the role the technicians play in the success or failure of distance running. Beside the role of technical delivery, little is known about the non-technical activities of the technicians that could have an influence on the instructional process. The indirect influence on the environment of learning is much overlooked.

Instead, they should be used to orientate the participants to the technology, reducing the anxiety of the participants as well as by advising the instructor on instructional techniques. If this is viewed negatively by the instructor, it can have a huge impact on the quality of the presentation. Often however, the instructor and the technicians do not meet until the initial class meeting (Basom, M., et al, 1992). Instructors are thus given inadequate orientation to the equipment and really could not operate it until they had hands on experience. Basically, there exist disparity on adaptability to the technology, with some unable to use it altogether. Those who adapted were, in the opinion of the technicians, superior in conducting the classes.

It should be noted that the instructor need to adapt to the educational environment and also must adapt to another person in the room that can help or hinder the delivery of the lesson. However, much of the outcome will depend on the attitude of the instructor. The online learning thus lacks reinforcement to impact performance, as well as tangible rewards and informative feedback which are important elements in effecting instructional design. They also lack simple to complex sequencing and the use of prompts

that are elements of effective instructional design. Problems with equipment; hardware and malfunction of the equipment have been a times been quite detrimental to the effectiveness of distance learning. When a problem crops in a class everything comes to a sudden stop and the learning environment is severely interrupted. Frequent occurrences of these instances can affect the entire course. Say, if an overhead projector goes out during an instructor's presentation other forms can be employed to deliver that information.

However, if a DVD video presentation has problems, the entire class must be stopped until the problem is resolved. If the instructor goes ahead with the lesson, one site will miss out on that information. Therefore, unanticipated technical problems with the system would shorten the class time and discussion. This in return would negatively affect the overall quality of the presentation. Technology was thus creating avenues of losing connection with the students (Clark, T. 1993). It would also impart frustration and inability on part of the technicians, for failing to keep the class running smoothly and thus affect the instructor's view of their competency, causing friction. As for the student, an inability to get a flow to the class and feel like progress is being made can hinder the learning process.

The students who are used to the traditional face-to-face instruction and who do not have a tolerance for ambiguity will have a difficult time with this form of learning. Attitudes towards distance learning; in spite the above mentioned problems, the instructor can set a precedent in the educational environment. The institutions usually assume the precedent that is normally

set by the instructor. Where the instructor frustrate the students, either in terms of the assignments and the handouts that s/he give the student will mean low enrollment and hence low income generation for the institution. It is therefore important to note that it is not the technologies that make a student better but it's the nature of the teacher/lecturer (Clark, T.

1993). Learning must be collaborative and not one person show to bridge the gaps which persist in the field of learning. Time allocated for the course; instructors are more concerned about distance learning and primarily on how it will change their role in education. Where the instructors have negative attitude, the instructors will fear putting their course materials online as they risk losing control and its possession (Ferguson, L.

, et al 2000). This fear has ended up with the administration tending to hiring cheaper and less skilled labor to deliver the technologically prepackaged course. Rewards are not always good for distance-learning instructor and this puts the instructors in attempt to publish materials to get their department recognized.

This robs off the amount of time allocated to prepare for distance learning and on activities the students will be evaluated on. Instructors have no emphasis on mastering early steps before progressing to more complex levels of performance and enough time for creating objectives, performing task analysis and competency-based assessment. This in return contributes to bad reputation for the online training as a second rate and hence student drop out. RECOMMENDATIONAs early mentioned, solution to one problem

will lead to partial solution of another. Therefore, effective solution to one problem has to be coupled with solution to another set of problem.

Otherwise, the gaps will still persist even if in disguise. Other problems are the pedestal to another. For instance, the training cost and student drop out cases will be contributed by the attitude towards distance learning which was created by misuse of technology, poor quality of instruction and little time allocation to the course.

It is thus recommended that Verizon wireless and other stakeholders to: Training costs can be reduced by sharing courseware or databases with other training institutes, adopting student-led interaction, building appropriate partnerships between the public and private sectors, and increasing the number of times training with courseware is used. Moreover, the institution offering online training should make use of the established infrastructures. Training costs however lowers as the number of students increase. Sharing the information with other institutions help to evaluate the quality of the work and encourage cooperation in the area of research. There is enhanced trainer-trainer relationship across the board. The institution should make necessary measures to reduce the drop out cases. Such measures should include: providing academic, social and administrative support services through study centers as well as encouraging study group activities.

The students should be allowed to go at their own pace as far as the study and assignments are concerned. This would provide opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous interaction using various technologies.

Organized sessions would facilitate self-directionality or self-regulation in learning, along with a long-term vision necessary for helping learners to develop and strengthen competencies. Instructors should emphasize on learner control and capability of the learner to manipulate information as well as what is being learnt. Course work should base on problem-solving skills thus allowing learner to expand their thinking beyond the information given. The work presentation should be appealing to the students/learners throughout its developmental life stage. It can have animations where the instructor is required to portray a certain physiological process, say, active transport or the sodium pump mechanism in the cell surface membrane.

This will ensure there is sharing of interpretation of information between the trainer-trainee and trainee-trainee. A sense of a real classroom is created through such designs and thus inculcating self-regulation as a result of the internal locus of control created by this venture. Quality of instructions will be improved by embracing properly training and motivating the instructor. The instructor must have confidence and technological skills to use all of the various electronic devices in order to be truly effective in the electronic classroom. Moreover, the instructors must also change the manner in which information is delivered. Where lecture does not work well, multimedia presentations should be used. This would mean more preparation time for the instructor and the motivation must be there.

Faculty should look into ways of presenting the information in order to reinforce important content and allow for review of their contents thereby achieving different purposes and perspectives. The web-based instruction

should be adapted to the learners' level of experience and skill so far acquired. Instructional modules and curricula should be designed based on content for the online training so as to ensure it is meaningful and of relevance to the learner or student. Educator must have accessed the objective developed before beginning to design an online training course. This should include features such as demographics, charts and other pictorials. There should be checkpoints with questions and other activities that ensure the basics have been mastered. One idea must be delivered at its time to allow for the students/learners to decipher what is therein. Problems arising from the equipments can be solved by the faculty getting instructional materials, handouts, tests, and other class items to both sites simultaneously.

It is important for the instructors to develop a sense of community between the sites, achieve maximum participation, and get the participants to buy in to the process. The faculty should regularly monitor and evaluate systems. The instructor must do all he can to overcome the limits of the technology and involve the students in an environment of interaction, which can work to create the feeling of a true class. In sharing the information with other institutions, this cooperation can extend to the equipment the two uses. If the equipment for one institution fails, they can secure one from their allied institution.

Misuse of technology can be solved by encouraging trainer-trainee and trainee-trainee interaction since the idea of learning as a collaborative process is very important when students are separated by distance. In

addition, there should be training provision for learners to inculcate self-direction or self-regulation. Technology should be used to replicate traditional methods and improve instruction. Moreover, there should be assessment on the transfer of knowledge and skills. Role played by the technicians can be addressed by embarking on trainer training and by applying a systems approval to training program design. Once the facilities are not available, there is minimal adaptability of the instructor.

Faculty should put in place avenues to have good communication between the instructor and the technician. Attitude problem toward distance learning can be addressed by removing barriers for online teacher training as requirement regarding classroom attendance; and also review on the use of normal referred grading system. There should be use of practice and application to ensure a strong stimulus-response association or trainer-trainee interaction. The fear of losing the possession of the information by the instructor can be alleviated by customizing the web-based training/instructional material by basing on their current information and understanding they have for the subject. The web-page design should have a place for the readers and other interested persons to air their comments over the subject at question. This helps in aiding the instructor on what to include or improve on.

Faculty should work to see proper time is allocated for learning. They should provide incentives for the teacher training institutions to restructure their programs and teaching as part of their future initiatives. Instructors should have enough time for laying emphasis on identify the context in which the

skills will be learned and applied; emphasis on learner control and the capability of the learner to manipulate information. Besides, they require time to set objectives, perform task analysis and competency-based assessment.

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