

E-learning verses traditional learning

[Education](#), [Learning](#)



Learning methods in an unbiased approach and evaluate findings in terms of impact upon practice. My report will highlight both strengths and weakness in both methods. I also want to demonstrate within this essay what I have learnt during my two years on this course both in the classroom and in my teaching practice.

E learning has been part and parcel of education and training in the western world for many years now. In recent times, since the Internet took the world by storm, online learning has become accessible to people in various parts of the world. Now e-learning has found its way into the educational system of developing nations as well. The advancement in technology and communication has made teaching and training almost possible anywhere, anytime.

This brings me to the question of how relevant traditional methods of teaching like classroom teaching are in the modern world. Will a teacher or a trainer eventually become dispensable? Will textbooks and other reference books cease to exist? Will writing be totally replaced by the keyboard? Will there be no schools and colleges in future? Will e-learning companies replace traditional publishing companies?

Before I attempt to answer these questions, it is important to understand what it takes to make teaching or training effective? Whether it is traditional classroom instruction or e-learning, the key areas of designing a course and implementation remain the same

What is E Learning?

It includes the use of technology as part of a conventional or traditional course where learners and teachers may never meet face to face. The 'technology' includes not just computers and the networks that connect them, but also the software such as e-mail, online databases and CD-ROMS, and the peripherals such as video cameras and interactive whiteboards.

Stand-alone computers were introduced into schools in the early 1980s. This form of e-learning was known as Computer Based Training (CBT). Children learn best when information is presented aurally, visually and kinesthetically and once computers were able to make simple sounds and display graphics, good software could be almost as effective as a teacher in making learning memorable. Although, just like a badly taught classroom-based lesson, poor software or a poor e-learning session could affect the quality and quantity of learning.

E-learning had other advantages too. The same information could be shared in exactly the same way with lots of learners, eliminating differences between teachers. Students could explore models and simulations safely (and cheaply) in virtual worlds without fear of failure, and learners with special needs were able to use the technology to enhance their learning experience, to help them prepare their work and become more independent.

What is Traditional Learning?

Most of us have experienced a traditional learning environment. If you've ever gone to school, sat in a desk, and learned with a teacher and other students in a classroom, then you know what traditional learning is all about.

This type of learning can also be called "brick and mortar" education, because it usually takes place in a building.

There are many different sides to any argument about whether a traditional take on education is the best approach. Whether you agree with the structure or not, traditional learning environments are by far the most commonly used in the western world and throughout the world. Most traditional approaches take on a required amount of in-class hours in order to learn subjects and get qualifications

Though there are many new approaches to education, like online learning, the most prestigious educational institutions still follow this traditional approach. Oxford, Cambridge, and Eton are just three highly respected institutions that are structured as brick-and-mortar institutions. Many of these universities, however, are also breaking into new educational trends by offering a number of classes through online learning.

Compare and Contracts between E Learning and Traditional Learning

Whether it is distance learning or traditional learning the facts show that both take careful planning. There are many pros and cons of E Learning. For the purpose of this essay I conducted some research, I spoke with 3 teachers who work in a traditional teaching environment and 3 teachers who work in an E learning environment, some Teachers state that distance learning is ideal for many students. Comparing distance learning and traditional learning will show that both of these are great depending on who the student may be and which educational program the student has chosen.

All 3 E learning teachers agreed one of the reasons so many students like distance education is the ability to take classes at any time of the day or night. Distance education reaches a broader student body than any traditional education courses. It often meets the needs of its students and saves students money too. Two tutors agreed that traditional classes are inflexible and more teacher-centred. Many students would not be able to get a degree if they could not go online to achieve it. Some examples of students choosing to go online for a degree are often mothers who can take their classes late at night after their children go to bed. All 3 tutors also said other full-time workers are able to take classes when it is convenient for them. The flexibility that distance education gives to students is important in meeting educational needs of non-traditional students. Another argument in favour of distance learning is they encourage passive learning and often ignore the individual needs of students while distance education allows the students to select the best type of education for them.

The class room based teachers said traditional classrooms offer advantages of allowing the student to see the teacher face to face and ask pertinent questions concerning their classes. Another advantage is the ability of the students to meet with other students for study groups which can encourage peer teaching and friendship. One teacher said students who choose the traditional method of education believed that the face-to-face students enjoy the ability to learn with others and they like the ability to get to know their teachers or lecturers. Students in the face-to-face courses are able to get together in study groups that help them achieve better. While on this course

I have built up friendships and there is certainly a peer pressure to keep up to date with essays and observations.

From my research I discovered that many teachers do not agree with online education. They believe it does not teach them to overcome barriers that might hinder their traditional education. However, the changing nature of technology and distance learning is about meeting the challenges and needs of the students in ways that many traditional education classes cannot do. Teachers argue that distance education is not truly worth anything. They tend to believe that many careers will not recognise the degrees of distance education.

Those getting a degree online have the same degree of satisfactions traditional students have when they graduate but perhaps miss out on the class and group comrade and overall success. Many students getting an education online are satisfied with the courses they take and believe these courses are equal to traditional classes. Research finds that there is no real significance in the differences between traditional and online classes. Many students were more satisfied with the feedback they receive from their online instructors than many traditional students. Many of the students who have taken online courses state they will be willing to take more online courses. Ref: (on-line learndirect learner survey 2009)

Most effective distance education classes are carefully planned with the college they represent and meet the educational requirements of the course. These courses do not just happen overnight but they are planned between

the instructors and the college to be sure they meet all the requirements the course has with traditional education.

Online classes require the student to think about what they are learning and to pass tests similar to tests given in the traditional classroom. The student's ability to pass these courses creates a desire in them to be able to perform the tasks that are required. Will online education increase the student's desire to be successful in the career they have chosen? No doubt the students will be successful because they have a desire to earn their education often while working and having a family.

While conducting this research it was obvious that all six teachers cared about the student's progress and ability to achieve

Good tutors show that they care about students. They engage with them and take responsibility for dealing with problems. They have high expectations: ensure good attendance, homework completion and achievement. They follow up students when they fall behind required standards and they inspire students and communicate their own enthusiasm about their subject to them." Fawbert (2003)

Again through my research I discovered that E Learning required the same amount of planning, not only is administration planning required i. e. Schemes of Work, Lesson Plans, Session Plans and Rationales etc., which in themselves are an important task, but knowing your learners is essential to be able to understand their needs including learning styles, personal backgrounds and motivational reasons for attending. ... " an approach that is

appropriate to one student may well be inappropriate to another" Reece and Walker (2000: 138)

With E learning one of the main advantages is the flexibility, students can log on a times that suite them and work to fit individuals, but I discovered that time management is still very important, courses do have an agreed end date, time management can be crucial in aiming to achieve the objectives. It is important to plan and prepare for learning sessions in advance and not to leave this 'until the last minute'. Teachers should work together as a team, which could reduce the time spent on duplicating tasks that occur on a regular basis.

With both E learning and traditional tutors first impressions are important. The teacher's initial meeting with the learner must be friendly and positive, which will progress, with the teacher having a rapport with the learner. The teacher has to be approachable for the learner to be able to communicate with confidence.

The teacher must communicate in a clear manner without, initially, the use of jargon. This must be introduced as the lessons progress as and when relevant.

Constructive feedback should be given, for all the work the learner carries out, giving reasons for comments made. " Feedback should be constructive and sensitive, with students fully involved." Fawbert (2003: 186)

Motivation

While researching for this essay one of the main differences between E learning and traditional learning is that E learning students need to be self motivated, although tutor support can be given through feedback, emails and tutorials, but the face to face tutor to student relationship is difficult to replace.

Some students seem naturally enthusiastic about learning, but many need-or expect-their instructors to inspire, challenge, and stimulate them: " Effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability ... to maintain the interest that brought students to the course in the first place" (Ericksen, 1978, p. 3)

Whatever level of motivation your students bring to the classroom will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens in that classroom.

Unfortunately, there is no single magical formula for motivating students. Many factors affect a given student's motivation to work and to learn (Bligh, 1971; Sass, 1989): interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness, general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence. And, of course, not all students are motivated by the same values, needs, desires, or wants. Some of your students will be motivated by the approval of others, some by overcoming challenges.

Researchers have begun to identify those aspects of the teaching situation that enhance students' self-motivation (Lowman, 1984; Lucas, 1990; Weinert

and Kluwe, 1987; Bligh, 1971). To encourage students to become self-motivated independent learners, instructors can do the following:

1. Give frequent, early, positive feedback that supports students' beliefs that they can do well.
2. Ensure opportunities for students' success by assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult.
3. Help students find personal meaning and value in the material.
4. Create an atmosphere that is open and positive.
5. Help students feel that they are valued members of a learning community.

Research has also shown that good everyday teaching practices can do more to counter student apathy than special efforts to attack motivation directly (Ericksen, 1978). Most students respond positively to a well-organized course taught by an enthusiastic instructor who has a genuine interest in students and what they learn. Thus activities you undertake to promote learning will also enhance students' motivation.

Again with E learning i. e. learndirect courses, all courses need to have a personal learning goal attached them, the goal has to be SMART specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic and time bound. Failure to attain unrealistic goals can disappoint and frustrate students. Tutors should encourage students to focus on their continued improvement, not just on their grade on any one test or assignment. It helps students evaluate their progress by encouraging them to critique their own work, analyse their

strengths, and work on their weaknesses. (Sources: Cashin, 1979; Forsyth and McMillan, 1991)

Learning Styles

There are many ways that people learn and E learning is not for everyone, I personally learn by a wide variety of delivery methods i. e. reading, PowerPoint, note taking, listening and doing 'variety reawakens students' involvement in the course and their motivation. Breaks in the routine by incorporating a variety of teaching activities and methods in your course: role playing, debates, brainstorming, discussion, demonstrations, case studies, audiovisual presentations, guest speakers, or small group work. (Source: Forsyth and McMillan, 1991)

This approach to learning emphasis's the fact that individuals perceive and process information in very different ways. The learning styles theory implies that how much individuals learn has more to do with whether the educational experience is geared toward their particular style of learning than whether or not they are " smart." In fact, educators should not ask, " Is this student smart?" but rather " How is this student smart?"

The concept of learning styles is entrenched in the classification of psychological types. The learning styles theory is based on research demonstrating that, as the result of heredity, upbringing, and current environmental demands, different individuals have a tendency to both perceive and process information differently. The different ways of doing so are generally classified as:

Concrete and abstract perceivers-Concrete perceivers absorb information through direct experience, by doing, acting, sensing, and feeling. Abstract perceivers, however, take in information through analysis, observation, and thinking.

Active and reflective processors-Active processors make sense of an experience by immediately using the new information. Reflective processors make sense of an experience by reflecting on and thinking about it.