

Abstract

Twenty years ago, a school lesson in any European country, might have required students to read a textbook and, maybe to watch a film or hear an audio tape. Today, with the help of computers and the Internet - the world biggest network, that lesson could be transformed from a one-way flow path of information into a fully interactive process. Students could easily go on-line to search for the latest piece of information regarding that lesson. Depending on the connection speed, the time to retrieve the result could be from seconds to 1 minute or maybe in most cases a bit more. This is, maybe, the most important step for the human knowledge. Due to the Internet, time is compressed and also distances. It is possible to have an interactive lesson where the teacher is thousands miles away from their students.

1. Introduction

Distance learning programs are now offered by most of the Universities, the main reason for doing this is the cost of education. Despite the lack of human contact between the student and the teacher, this method is cheaper for both the student and the University.

2. Distance learning - not only technology needed

There are a few things needed to offer distance learning programs. Supposing the good teacher, that is required in the standard version too, only the computer, the software and the Internet connection are strictly necessary. To prepare students for the world of tomorrow, schools must therefore take the next step by helping teachers integrate digital tools and content into the curriculum.

Technology is not the drug for educational problems, but experience shows that when it is linked to clear educational objectives, it can help students master traditional skills such as math and reading and prepare students for work in an increasingly technological age. Studies made in the USA show that more than 30 percent of teachers are well prepared to do multimedia classes and more than 17 percent are very well prepared to do the same thing.

Although digital tools may never wholly replace the textbook, they could supplement and enhance learning in almost all grades and subjects because they have certain dynamic characteristics that help students take an active part in learning. Students using digital tools can access and manipulate up-to-date information to formulate hypotheses, evaluate evidence, and draw conclusions. They can explore subjects in greater depth and apply information in increasingly complex ways. They can hone their problem-solving skills and learn how to use information to make decisions. Moreover, because digital content is available in various formats, it can be tailored to a student's individual learning style. Students who learn visually can rely more on charts and video; those who learn analytically can use text and data.

As technology spreads through the schools, teachers and students will assume new roles. Students will pursue more self-directed projects and set their own goals; teachers will take on the role of facilitator. Parents and outside experts will form part of each student's learning team. Moreover, digital learning prepares students for the demands of life and work in a way that traditional educational methods don't. Since almost half of all students in the United States go straight into the workforce from secondary school, introducing technology into primary and secondary education is essential.

The US Department of Labor has found that nearly all of the job categories expected to expand most in the coming year - in manufacturing plants, health care, and services - will require some technological knowledge. Students should learn to use technology productively to find and manipulate information, to understand systems thinking, and to master interpersonal skills and teamwork. To help students develop these

skills, more emphasis must be placed on thinking creatively, solving problems, and making decisions - the very skills digital learning develops most effectively.

3. Communications costs - the most expensive ingredient

The connection costs could be dramatically reduced by increasing the number of users. This is the oldest method, also possible to use today. But, telecommunications regulators could help reduce the cost of fixed and mobile connections much further. On the supply side, they could create the competitive conditions that would pressure operators to improve efficiency and keep prices down. Although incumbents may not welcome such conditions, operators in general have an interest in persuading regulators to keep license fees low and spectrum auctions simple and transparent. Operators serving only commercially attractive segments, and distance learning is not one of them, would have to pay 1 to 3 percent of their revenues into such a fund, from which operators serving less attractive remote and low-income segments could draw compensations, thus ensuring universal service.

4. Knowledge culture - the key to success management

Executives from many western companies think that knowledge management begins and ends with building very complex information technology systems. Some of them go much further. They build models that increase their profitability by improving processes, products and customer relations. Such companies understand that a good education of their employees and customers is one of the most important element to contribute to their success.

A success company rewards their employees for seeking, sharing and creating knowledge. Creating databases, virtual team rooms aren't enough. In cooperation with the most prestigious universities, the biggest companies are trying to offer their employees continued education. Digital education is the key to success. Without interrupting the work, education is supplied to many employees with minimum effort and cost.

5. Summary and conclusions

Today education suffer a dramatically change due to both the need for more information and the technological revolution. The Internet changed the way we think and we can expect that it will change all the things we are doing in the next ten to twenty years. Despite the books will not disappear in the next predicable future, we might expect a major step in the method of reading them.

Educators must develop their abilities to present well known things in "Internet compatible" packages - that means a lot of images and sounds combined with good quality classical information. Students must help teachers with feedback on their lessons. Only this way the digital education will be a true value.

6. References

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