

Thuvan Pham

LTLE 560: Foundations of Educational Technology

Online Learning in Corporate and Academic Web Instructions

Dr. Michele Estes

07 December 2016

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe the educational technology that will be reviewed in the Literature Review. The concept will a review of online learning used in distance corporate training. The whole idea is that online learning can increase the efficiency of administering training over a far distance for corporations that have locations worldwide. Instead of sending instructional designers and trainers to specific locations, online learning being disbursed via specific mediums such as SharePoint or Blackboard in the form of PowerPoint or Captivate can be more beneficial. The ease of online learning can be much less expensive than having to have trainers or instructional designers travel to create and teach learning materials.

Introduction

The technology that is of interest to me is Online Learning in Corporate environments. The reason this is of interest to me is because my job requires me to constant come up with innovative and low cost options for training. This is not the only factor that pushes me to research more about online learning but it is the fact that as a trainer for a large corporation, I am required to travel on many occasions to administer training material. I am often accompanied by an Instructional Designer and together, we must come up with training material based on the need of the company for certain locations. Online learning allows time for me to better focus on a specific training instead of spreading myself too thin when it comes to having to provide training.

Following in the literature review will be the emergence, adoption, adaptation, diffusion, integration and future implications of online learning, especially in the corporate environment. We will discuss the use and benefit of online learning through current innovations such as Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) as well as a

current focus that is not currently popular in the corporate environment, education through social media. We will see how online learning has been incorporated in both higher education and corporate environments. There will be similarities between online learning in higher education and corporate environments as well as differences.

Ubell's (2010):

In a Robert Frost poem, a traveler suddenly comes upon two roads diverging in a forest. Setting out one way, he regrets that he “could not travel both.” With a sigh, he doubts he will ever return to explore the road not taken. If you take one path, you never know what might have happened if you went another way. Curiously, two recent pathways – corporate and academic web-enabling learning – each taking a separate road, give us an opportunity to retrace steps.

Keywords: Online Learning, Distance Education, Corporate Education, online learning in corporate education

Emergence

The first form of distance learning was seen during World War II when the audio-visual movement became largely popular. The United States Military needed a way to distribute training to soldiers in a quick and simple way. The solution was to show the soldiers training films to help them learn their parts. The audio-visual movement was chosen due to its ability to be viewed many times and by many people. This type of training started the movement towards distance learning. This enabled any learner to be able to learn from afar.

The movement that came into the picture soon after was the use of computer, digital technology and the internet in 1995 (Reiser, 2001). Due to the audio-visual movement and its role in distance learning, it paved the way to incorporating online learning for instructional purposes. Reiser acknowledged at the time of the emergence of distance learning that “as the demand for distance learning programs has grown, so has the recognition that in order to be effective, such programs cannot simply be on-line replicas of the instruction delivered in classrooms; instead such programs must be carefully designed in light of the instructional features that can, and cannot, be incorporated into Internet-based courses” (p. 64).

The United States played a big role in the development of distance learning as well as working adults. Distance learning enabled adults who have other obligations such as job, family or geographic separation to continue their education. The reason that distance learning is so popular is that it can be low cost and can be easily disbursed to a variety of people for starting education, continuing education, and even certificate programs.

The initial need or perceived need the technology addressed was distance learning available outside of a classroom setting. As stated, many working adults were established in job and family or due to geographical location, could not complete or continue a higher education.

Online learning provided them the ability to continue their education without having to physically return to a university.

Adoption/Adaptation

The instructional needs that distance learning addresses include ease of delivery of instruction. The instruction can be delivered as long as there is a connection to the internet. This makes it possible for anyone who seeks education either in higher education or the corporate environment, to be able to do so. The adoption of this technology not only allows for access to training material at any point in time, but it also allows trainers to focus on larger scope trainings that can benefit the corporation.

The primary beneficiaries of online learning in the corporate world would be the corporation and the learners. Online education can be available as long as there is a connection and no disruptions. This would allow for the learners to be able to obtain training whenever it is needed. The corporation would also be able to assign the learners additional training to satisfy the need of the corporation. The corporation would benefit due to the low-cost administration of online training.

The side effects that may occur due to the utilization of this technology would be the reliance on online training. Although there are many great benefits to online learning, it is not always the best form of education. Online education does not provide the learners with hands on activities. If there are activities within online learning, it would be simulations and are perceived outcomes based on a variety of scenarios. Another side effect could be retention of knowledge may be impacted due to the learners being distracted by actual work or simply not paying attention to the training that they are assigned. This would cause major problems within organizations learners were supposed to retain certain information for business functions.

The rate of adoption of this technology is quite rapid since online learning was available in the year 1995 (Reiser, 2001) and is online increasing its productivity within higher education learning and the corporate world. The incorporation of MOOCs as well as LMS are providing a whole new field for online learning to be facilitated which is a large advocate for online learning.

There have been several different adaptations to online learning including MOOCs, LMS, and even education via social media. The online education that is available also includes either synchronous or asynchronous education depending on the institution and the learner. Corporate education, however, focuses more on the MOOCs, LMS and possibly the incorporation of education via social media.

Estrada (2013) looked into the possible use of social media in corporate learning, however, there were obstacles that may impede the use of this type of online media for education purposes. The conclusion was that there was a benefit in implementing education through social media, however, most of the subjects did not see that there was benefit to this type of online learning. “Social media can transform corporate education by enabling environments of collaborative learning” (p. 28).

Other modifications such as MOOCs and LMS have increased the effectiveness of online learning. The argument was from Dodson (2015) that concluded that MOOCs are the future of our learning experience because it is the closest form to traditional education. MOOCs courses provide learners with the experience of face to face learning without the interaction but also provides the learner with the ability to contact the instructor with additional questions. For LMS, this innovation helps the learner stay active in the learning experience. LMS creates an environment for the learners to interact with the training material through simulations which enhances the effectiveness of this form of online training.

The efforts still needed for the adaptation of these modifications would be research and acknowledgement from the educational society that online learning through MOOCs, LMS, and social media are useful tools. MOOCs and LMS within corporations are currently being utilized but research would help in the facilitation to get the learning to advance in the direction of the corporations need. For social media, there is a need for more research in regards to the effectiveness and how social media creates collaboration and how to overcome the obstacles that education through social media is faced with as evident in the article by Estrada (2013).

Diffusion

Online learning is widely utilized across different instructional settings. This includes military, corporate, and higher education. Online learning is also available to K-12 however, it is not as popular since at that level of education, many people still favors traditional learning which consists of face to face instruction. In Angiello's (2010) article, she came to a conclusion on the effectiveness of online learning from data collected by the U.S. Department of Education. The study found that online education was more effective in data retention than traditional face to face education. There are a several points the author addressed in regards to the findings. The author stated that although the results showed that online learning was more effective, the subjects of the study were mainly higher education and working professionals. The study only included five K-12 subjects. The conclusion was that online learning was more effective in that it allowed the learner to interact with the material that they are learning about. The learning was also readily available to be reviewed if needed whereas in traditional face to face education, the learner relied solely on any notes that may have been taken during the initial lecture portion thus making traditional education less advantageous.

The other utilization for online education includes MOOCs, which “is a technology-based learning format that encourages open education” (Dodson, Kitburi, & Berge, 2015). In the article, the authors addressed that some educators feel that MOOCs are disrupting the traditional online learning whereas others believe it is enhancing the learners’ knowledge. One thing that is greatly discussed in this article is that the use of MOOCs is becoming more prominent in the corporate environment. “Employers may leverage established MOOC providers’ extant courses, encouraging staff to boost their job skills or knowledge by taking relevant courses” (p. 16). MOOCs can also be beneficial to corporates in that it is relatively low cost and that their courses have been tested due to the existing partnership that they have with higher education communities to create MOOCs to be available to university students and “a global directory of MOOCs, between June 2013 and June 2014 there was a 327% increase in the total number of MOOCs worldwide from a total of 615 to 2,625 by June 2014” (p. 18).

Online learning is available and widespread and based on the article from Angiello’s (2010) there is not enough data to determine if online education is beneficial to K-12 audiences. For higher education and the corporate environment, online education was concluded to be effective. For the corporate environment, online education is an easy way to distribute online courses to employees. Larger corporations utilize Learning Management Systems for their online training to help facilitate the release of the training to employees. This type of training is available to a large group of people, and if utilized correctly, can be greatly beneficial to any corporation.

Factors that can impact the integration of online learning environments are technical aspects of this type of learning. Although online learning can be widespread and readily available, the downside to this is internet access. The problem is that, although most individual

will have internet access, there are still people in the world that do not. Whether it is a personal reason or monetary reason, online education can still be fairly expensive when the cost of technology is factored in. When online learning is viewed in an international setting, not all countries will view online learning as beneficial for cultural reasons. Internet restriction is a significant factor in countries outside of the United States so although online education is easily accessible, it can also be easily restricted.

The demographic employing this technology is a factor in the subsequent utilization of these tools. Due to the growing educational environment where higher education is valued, the need for continued education grows. Since many individuals cannot go back to traditional campus school, online education is a great alternative for them to be able to complete a degree. Professional individuals in corporate environments also benefit from online learning due to ease of access and that the companies can assign them additional education without sending every individual to training since online learning can have them complete what they need online.

Depending on the professional learned society, some are for and others are against this technology. Educators in the field for K-12 believe that this type of education is not useful and according to Angiello's (2010), there is not enough data acquired that will give a conclusive result to the use of online learning in K-12 education. However, for higher education and corporate environments, online learning is deemed beneficial due to its low cost and ease of access.

"Learners appreciated when instructors developed a course with clear expectations and guidelines" (Gunawardena et al., 2010, p. 217). In the article stated that online courses had little guidance as to what is expected and when it was completed because the course material outlined the expectations and due dates of each assignment. This negates miscommunication between the

student(s) and the instructor. One thing that was a negative factor that was discussed in the article or a potential problem for online learning in the corporate environment was that “organizational challenges often impeded learners’ ability to participate to the fullest extent.”

There have been research and continue to have research on the effectiveness and diffusion of online learning. There was a case study completed by Hsu (2016) that was concerned with the technology integration into K-6. Since there is no definitive conclusion on the effectiveness of online learning, there will continue to be research to better understand the effectiveness as well as the diffusion of online education into society.

In Ubell’s (2010) studies, he stated the evidence that although corporate and university learning have each succeeded in their own way in online learning, the administration of the learning is vastly different. Where universities focus on the use of online learning as a classroom based course, the corporate environment provides “web-based self-learning modules”. Currently, the utilization of online learning is very much apparent among local professionals.

Future Implications

The future for this technology looks pervasive. This conclusion is based on the ever-growing trend of technology, largely centering around computers, tablets and smartphones. All of these mediums facilitate the pervasiveness of online learning among both students and professionals.

The factors that influence and impacts the growth of online learning is the ease of access. As discussed, due to the changing technological advancement in computers, tablets and smartphones, the future of online learning is still apparent and will be growing with every new available technology. The other factors are have made an impact are MOOCs since they are easy to use and can help increase understanding in specific fields. It can be utilized not only in the

educational world but also in a professional training development. The last thing that will most likely impact the growth of online learning is Learning Management Systems because it engages the learner and lets them be more hands on in the training.

The implications of online learning for the future is that online learning is here for good. Online learning is not a trend that was predicted that will fade out as stated in Reiser's (2001) article. Online learning provides an easy approach for individuals to complete, continue, and enhance their education. Although it is not definitive on the effectiveness of online education, the idea that there is education that is readily available when needed is great for any individual.

Further research issues that are important when exploring the effectiveness of online learning is retention of information for the learners. For corporate environments, the cost factor is an important proponent for online learning. This can be based on company size and how much money the company is putting into the learning material to determine if it is worth it for the company to continue developing this type of education. However, due to the fact that online learning can be modified to adjust to the ever-growing research and need of the company, the benefit may outweigh the cost. The idea of synchronous and asynchronous courses may benefit how online learning will be viewed. And lastly, researching effectiveness of MOOCs in professional environments can help explore the effectiveness of online learning. To conclude, online learning is an effective tool and is continuing with new innovations for the future.

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