

TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF E-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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Teachers and students in higher education are coming to realize that to become competent practitioners there is need to take advantage of up-to-date digital technologies and learning practices. Learning process requires measurement and evaluation of students behaviour. In the case of e-learning evidence is sought for improvements resulting from the use of online tools and processes desired to achieve a given set of learning outcomes. In this 21st century, knowledge is fast becoming a powerful engine in life. The visions, innovations, and inventions are the building blocks of developing knowledgeable and sustainable society. E-learning has facilitated the use of a plethora of internet and web-based applications as the method of communication with a distributed audience. Therefore, institutions of higher learning are constantly venturing into new and innovative methods and are radically changing the educational practice making it competitive. Some schools of thought are of the opinion that the present structure of materials as used in e-learning unlike turning the pages of a book lacks some degree of interactivity and pedagogical strategy. This makes students feel that the contents are static and uninteresting.

This paper examines how emerging technologies and e-learning are being used in education to create a major shift in the educational service paradigm that promises major advantages over the traditional distance learning and face-to-face systems. The authors present developments in distance education and e-learning whilst clarifying the similarities and differences between them. We identify factors affecting development of e-learning systems and examine the implementation of some systems in pervasive distributed computing environments.

In this paper we present and discuss the emerging concept of e-Learning 2.0, which is used to describe the new ways of thinking about e-learning inspired by the emergence of Web 2.0. In e-Learning 2.0, increased emphasis is placed on social learning and use of social software such as blogs, wikis, podcasts and virtual worlds such as Second Life. The present developments in e-learning spell more access for learners, cautionary expansion for universities, and accelerated learning and influences for both. The future directions is such that the higher educational system which lies ahead and especially in Europe must aim to meet human development needs with e-learning playing some major parts through promotion of access and widening participation in knowledge and skills acquisition.