E-Tools for Communication

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ABSTRACT

Enhanced tools for education and communication purposes have been coined with unprecedented efficacy and efficiency. Today anyone can obtain education anywhere, anytime through online education. Thus, breaking the shackles of traditional classroom and adapting to new and electronic learning Technologies empowers all learners irrespective of their diversities. This development in ICT has resulted in a learning environment called e-learning. Some of these technologies (e.g. blogs) have even livened communication and interaction among users.

Keywords: E-tools, Globalized education, E-learning, Communication, Technology

E-learning is a flexible learning environment which serves a number of individual and organizational purposes by making use of a number of technologies. There are many tools and technologies essential for e-learning and many of these tools come in handy as a standalone to deliver learning using variety of approaches to e-learning. The implications of e learning are that learning and teaching have been moved to the desktop, where teaching and learning can take place in self-paced (asynchronous) formats or in virtual classes through the use of synchronous tools. Everyone can use and learn from electronic devices. ICT today has the power to transform Education. As e-learning technologies have become more advanced, learning can be customized automatically based on an initial assessment of learner needs. E-learning emerges from the current needs of the knowledge-based society: anyone, anytime, anywhere delivery of education and training, adapted to the specific requirements and preferences of each individual citizen within different e learning settings (Wong, 2003).

The introduction and vital role that ICTs have played across the globe in attempting to connect different people/spaces have reached unprecedented levels and will be discussed in this article. This is where online distance education has stolen the limelight as the best option to reach out to students and to defeat the challenges poised on students who have work commitments

or impeded by distance for the institution of learning. As you are aware, modern technology provides us with a plethora of options for communicating. The most common Communication tools used in e-learning include, e-mail, Instant Messaging and Blogging.

E-mail: E-mail stands for electronic mail; e-mail is defined as the transmission of messages over communication networks. There are many e-mail service providers and the most famous ones are Yahoo mail and G mail. Exchanging-mail messages with a mentor or peer is an e-learning experience.

Instant Messaging (IM): Instant messaging is the exchange of text messages through a software application in real-time. Instant messaging allows learners to chat with one another through text messages. This has become very popular as here, everything is performed in a faster, more reliable and cohesive manner. Instant messaging helps teachers to create subject specific groups for exchange of information and sharing of resources. Instant messaging applications like WhatsUp are extensively used by teaching community as reliable communication tool.

Chat: Chat is synchronous communication tool facilitating online communication. This tool helps teachers and learners to schedule a discussion on a particular question or theme and later save the chat discussion for later use.

Blogging: A blog is your own website that you are going to update on an on-going basis. A blog is a frequently updated online personal journal or diary. It is a place to express yourself to the world and to share your thoughts and your passions. In blogs entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via widgets on the blogs and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites.

Globalization and ICTs

The process of globalization has encouraged closer economic, political and social interaction. Globalization is characterized by the fact that distance and national borders no longer matter, the ease with which business with a customer across the globe can take place and that the nation state and geography are no longer relevant for economic purposes. E-Learning refers to the ability to acquire information, knowledge and skills through the use of multimedia technologies and the Internet.

E-Pedagogy and Communication Tools

Existing trends in the field of distance education have indicated a paradigm shift in pedagogical perspectives and theoretical frameworks, with student interaction at the heart of learner-centered constructivist environments. Among technologies that have highlighted trends in modern technologies include e-tools such as wikis, blogs and podcasts. Although emerging technologies offer a vast range of opportunities for promoting collaboration in

both synchronous and asynchronous learning environments, distance education courses and around the globe have encountered challenged that may limit or deter implementation of these technologies.

Citing the Blog as an Effective Communication E-Tool

Globalization has made the use of enhanced communication tools mandatory. The dynamic nature of technology has transformed the face of communication. New, efficient and enhanced communications tools, such as blogs, have come to supersede the previously glorified Internet technology which had, over the years, dominated the communication discourse.

This article further seeks to share how an e-learning support unit at the institution markets lecturers' experiences and e learning practices, as well as the application of e-pedagogy. Moreover, the article seeks to highlight the use of blogs as a vehicle to market these e-learning best practices, which are indicative of measuring e-learning success.

Challenges and Opportunities

Blogs have provided both opportunities and challenges for users, especially towards enhancing communication and marketing. Through blogs, one can inform others about what goes on in one part of the world. Blogs have also provided for easier access to research websites as researchers post their respective research findings on website for others to access. In addition to research findings, one can also inform readership about one's academic profile through the blog. Academics and institutions can also inform students (both current and prospective) about courses and services that are on offer.

Despite the unprecedented adoption of blogs and blogging as a communication and marketing tool, there have been challenges to its introduction, which the researchers envisage goes for other HEIs across the globe. Closely associated with under-utilization of existing blogs is the fact that those who make use of the facility do not regularly up-grade their blogs, resulting in them lagging behind with information dissemination to fellow bloggers. With the dynamic nature of ICTs, upgrading of one's blog helps to keep other informed about whatever developments one needs to inform the world about. At the University of the Western Cape, just as is a common practice among some e-mail recipients, the campus community often deletes e-mail communication sent to them, some of which contain information and links to the marketing blog, thus losing valuable advice regarding the use of e-tools.

CONCLUSION

The ability to some of the social utilities to employ audio and visual presentations has further made the use of them not only a necessity but more interesting and a source of joy. In short, most of the social utilities have been able to live the world and lives of users. On the education

side, the unprecedented number of students seeking to further their academic and professional skills could not have come at the right time. It is unimaginable how institutions would have handled the large number of tertiary students in the absence of ICTs. In addition, balancing work and study would not have taken off from the ground for most distance education and part-time student without the invaluable utilization of the internet. The private sector has also benefited from the products of higher education institutions whose skills have been able to service industry for economic growth and development. Should one dare to cite any disadvantages brought about by the introduction of technology, then such deliberations would not outweigh advantages brought about by ICTs in education, communication and marketing as well as for employment as social utilities.

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