

ONLINE EDUCATION – ARE WE FUTURE-READY? A RETROSPECT DURING AND ‘POST’ PANDEMIC ONLINE LEARNING

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Abstract

Online education, in reality, has been around for at least a quarter-century. It is a proven instrument for adult education and professional continuing education that is effective, adaptable, and economical. That reality, along with the coronavirus's unforeseen, large-scale experiment in off-campus training, almost guarantees that online learning will explode in the future.

However, the elite educational establishment has kept it at arm's length until now. Although administrative affairs, academic scheduling, curriculum, assignments, and even certain evaluations have moved online, most students are still required to attend lectures, labs, and seminars. This is one reason why, despite the spread of personal computer devices, the higher-education sector has not witnessed significant productivity gains due to technology.

Although some people believe that the shift to online education has hampered their ability to accomplish a new, effective, and efficient form of education, others are aiming to make e-learning part of their new normal after witnessing its inexhaustible benefits. Although online education is not a perfect or simple substitute for on-campus education, why not look into combining the two delivery models? The pandemic has thrown a wrench into education systems that many believe were already losing relevance, with schools focused solely on traditional academic abilities rather than the adaptability and critical thinking skills that would be crucial in the future. This retrospect would explicitly discuss our experiences dealing with online learning issues, now, then and future direction.

Keywords: Covid-19 era, ICT in ELT, Online Learning, Retrospect

INTRODUCTION

Our educational system was compelled to undergo a long-overdue reform as a result of Covid-19. Many other colleges and universities rapidly followed suit, taking their classes online from home using platforms like Zoom/Google meet/YouTube, and so on. The Covid-19 pandemic will eventually stop, and most areas of daily life will revert to their "new" normal.

Higher education, in particular, may never be the same—our colleges and institutions are currently undergoing the greatest, most radical, and disruptive technology-enabled educational experiment ever undertaken. The coronavirus has the potential to change that. When the dust settles, millions of students will discover that even though they were not on campus, they received a significant education.

Traditional vs Online Learning

E-learning, computer-based training, m-learning, web-based training, computer-aided education, and online or internet-based training are some of the terms used to describe online education. When used to its maximum capacity, students often use home computers connected to the internet to access learning programs, making it more flexible and convenient than traditional classrooms.

Many institutions migrated away from their classrooms during the pandemic; however, they are now asking whether they will continue to utilize online education in the post-COVID-19 time, and how this will affect the global education system.

Although online education was still growing and being adopted at a rapid pace, there has been a noticeable increase in its

use following the release of COVID-19. Online education grew in popularity as a result of the directions issued to learners and instructors to study and work from home in order to decrease contact and avoid the spread of the virus. This shift from classrooms to online platforms is fraught with difficulties, but it also presents a fantastic chance for a diverse group of students to get experience with online learning. Many students' perceptions of online education are expected to shift as a result of this, and after the epidemic, adoption may become more widespread.

Every year, the argument between traditional teaching and online learning methods intensifies. Because practically everyone worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, it became even more relevant. When deciding between traditional and online education, it's important to examine factors such as technology demands, learning styles, and settings.

Traditional classroom setups with face-to-face lecturers are typical of traditional instruction. It's useful for students who have issues with technology, learning/physical limitations, proficiency in the official languages, or pandemic-related stress or illness. It's also more suited to teenagers, small children, and

adolescents who haven't yet entered the workforce.

- It takes place in a controlled environment and on a set schedule.
- Space that has been imposed.
- There is a lot of interaction between trainers and students.
- The major source of information is the trainer.
- Involves working with and learning from one another.

In conventional teaching, student-teacher interaction helps students and teachers get to know each other as well as possible. Teachers can accurately assess their pupils' faults and talents. Teachers can inspire and guide them in getting rid of exam fears and guide them adequately in their career possibilities.

During the pandemic, online education grew in popularity. The COVID-19 epidemic forced the closure of various activities and functions, including the education sector, resulting in significant changes in learning around the world. I conducted an ICT survey of my ELT students last semester, and I also experienced and used it in my teaching, and I discovered several amazing teaching tools as the best practice in integrating ICT in online learning.

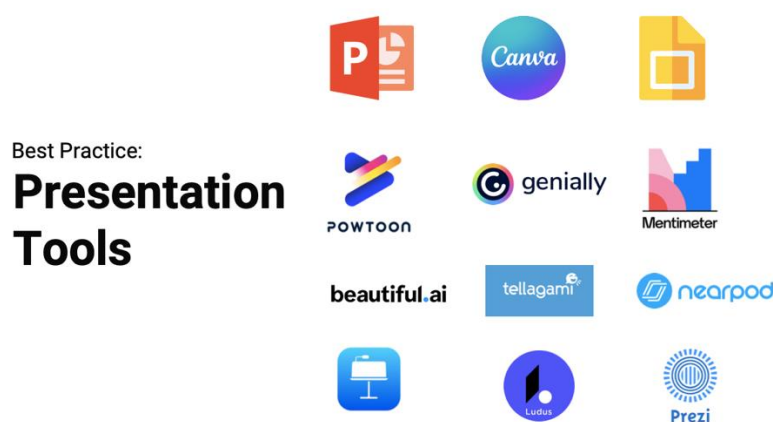


Figure 1 Presentation Tools

Best Practice:
Teaching Games



Figure 2 Teaching Games

Best Practice:
Audio & Video

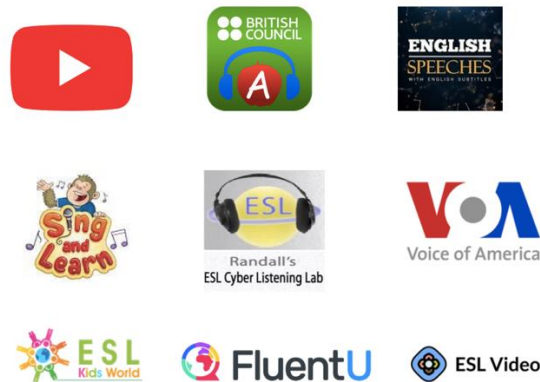


Figure 3 Audio & Video

Challenges and Opportunities

To benefit learners in both urban and rural locations, the shift from traditional to digital learning should be made as easy as possible. All students should have equal access to workbooks, films, and other resources, according to the school's policies. Teachers, on the other hand, should be prepared to address any queries that students or parents may have about how to navigate the platforms.

In today's highly competitive and fast-paced workplace, online education is a critical tool. To improve their skills and develop their careers, many young professionals prefer online training. Furthermore, online learning allows one to enhance or learn new skills while remaining focused on their profession. It enables students to take advantage of

unique course options that may not be available at their local educational institutions. A student can network or connect with a wide range of experts from across the world through online education, and gain knowledge and expertise through access to education that may not be available in their area.

Some students in online classes do not have a strong connection with their lecturers. They handle the interactions as if they were on social media, where you may say things you wouldn't say in person. Students were eating throughout class and yelling nasty, frequently obscene, and ignorant comments at the rest of the class was my crucial concern.

It's not like I could do anything to punish them - being muted and taken out of the class is hardly a penalty. Teachers

had no illusions that virtual lessons would be simple, and 'mute' was, predictably, my best buddy during the online learning.

I believe that is primarily symptomatic of their stage of life. Teenagers are plagued with a slew of misunderstandings, many of which have disastrous repercussions. For example, they believe they are invulnerable/immortal, which leads to disastrous decisions about drink, drugs, sex, and texting while driving, and so on.

I'm sure I could come up with more, but these are a good start. These factors have been true for a long time, but teachers take a disproportionate share of the blame because parents are increasingly vocal about their dissatisfaction with teachers or lecturers. They may also witness disrespect for teachers on the part of principals, superintendents, and school board members in some situations. To be honest, instructors don't always earn or deserve a lot of respect, but the numbers are rather small. However, they lead to a generalization that is not applicable for all teachers. If teachers are provided examples of how to interact with their online pupils more profoundly, the effect is reduced. Our civility is being impacted by social media. It's already making an impact on online schools, but it'll eventually spread to the workplace and other areas.

Remote learning is difficult for everyone, including students, and it has made interactions that would normally take place in a classroom impossible. One of them is discipline. I conducted a weekly live lesson for each of my classes when schools were closed, and while most students just knuckled down and tried their hardest, it presented some challenges for me. They aren't acting this way because they don't care. It's just that it's in their nature as students to push the boundaries, and what better moment to do so than when the boundaries were seen but not enforced?

CONCLUSION

Finally, online learning is here to stay! Many students prefer online programs because they allow them to work around their busy schedules. In today's environment, the abundance of knowledge and information allows students to be lifelong learners. Online education, on the other hand, is critical for gaining access to self-directed and learner-centred learning. With learners becoming more skilled with technology, student enrolments increasing faster than traditional classrooms can be built, and educational programs that fit students' requirements, the future of online learning will continue to develop.

Factors such as a learner's physical location, responsibilities, and life circumstances that cannot be changed should no longer be obstacles to learning. Online learning has led to an increase in access to higher education tremendously.

SUGGESTION

With the correct tools and techniques, delivering online learning can be sped and streamlined. It is critical that you use collaborative technologies to provide the greatest learning courses for your students. Collaborative technologies allow for easy communication via computer, tablet, or smartphone, overcoming the major barrier of distance and the use of various devices. Always keep in mind that embracing technology that supports multi-device learning is essential.

It is suggested that as much as possible of the course programs be automated. Setting up automated email series, such as sending a welcome email when a new student signs up for the course, reminder emails for forthcoming courses, and encouraging, motivating emails with advice and videos throughout the week, are just a few examples. Another strategy to improve online material distribution is to create courses that can be readily refreshed and updated.

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