The Roles of Online Teaching and Innovative Methods

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ABSTRACT

The expansive nature of the Internet and the accessibility of technology have generated a surge in the demand for web based teaching and learning. As the nation prepares to meet the threat of COVID-19, we are surrounded by the language of loneliness. We move from "social distancing" to "self-isolation" to even the prospect of avoiding the people we love. At colleges and universities across the country, we are pivoting quickly toward online learning, or as it is often called, distance learning. Online education is quickly infiltrating intoeducational establishments and there are risen the question, should we keep on using the traditional method of teaching or should we use innovative methods. This article explores whether students could benefit from online courses and examines the potential challenges and draw backs of online course work.

KEYWORDS: Online learning, online education, innovative methods, traditional methods, communication, strategies, collaborative learning, Internet – based education, drawbacks.

Introduction

Online learning, also known as Web-Based Instruction (WBI), and Internet-based education, has become very popular world wide. Today, thousands of courses are available online from different universities and for profit institutions. These courses include a wide range of topics ranging from basic subjects to skill-based subjects such as programming languages and interpersonal skills. Many educational and non-educational institutions offering traditional learning programs are also beginning to exploit the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) for reaching out to a wider audience. This new medium gives rise to new issues and questions from the perspectives of educators. One of the most important of these issues is the answer to this question: what kind of methodology should be used in online learning? As educators, should we keep on using the same methods that we use in traditional education, or should we use more innovative methods? This article answers several kind of questions.

In formal education system there is a curriculum that needs to be learnt by learners. The technique of learning or teaching this content is the method. Some examples of methods are lectures, inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and problem-based learning. These different methods carry some in herent advantages and disadvantages. For example, most educators use lecturing because it is practical time wise. However, since lecturing is instructor-centred and it is usually carried one-way (instructor to students), it becomes boring for learners and create motivational problems. Over the years the method of teaching became more important than the content in education, because the diffusion of communication and network technologies madea vast amount of different content readily available to many people. As an example, it is announced that it would make its entire curriculum freely available on the Internet over the next ten years. In this way, it is showed that it was their method of teaching, and not the content that

was important in their education. Traditional formal education is based upon a paradigm generally called "knowledge reproduction model." The methods used in this model are verbal lecture, printed handouts, drill and practice sessions, structured classroom activities, and office hours. In this model, students are seen as passive learners. The purpose of teaching is to transfer static body of knowledge from sources, like instructor and books, to learners. On the other side, the research findings claim that all kind of learning are promoted when the methods of teaching favour active learning. For example, it is identified that learning is promoted when learners are engaged in solving real-world problems, when new knowledge is demonstrated to the learner, and when new knowledge is applied by the learner. Computer mediated communication and online learning in general support this kind of active learning and the most important distinguishing characteristic of it is the emphasis on instruction and not just on information delivery. For this reason, online teaching should be designed by basing it upon the cognitive-based theories of learning, where learners purposefully interact with the environment, solve real-world problems, practice the knowledge, and thus become an active learner. Active Learning Strategies in Online Learning Multiple strategies can be used in an online course to support the active role of the students. But after immersing ourselves in this modality for a few years, we do have several practical ideas that might help you get the best out of this medium and create a compelling, engaging, enjoyable learning environment for students who might need that more than ever.

Use your students' exploring, editing and creative skills

As you plan assignments, think about what the students do so well in the digital environment and build their work around those skills and behaviors. Online, students quickly shift from consumers to producers of content, and sharing is easy. Build activities that encourage them to co-create and peer review. Have students create or improve wiki pages on key topics.

Emphasize group projects

Figure out what the students should be practicing and create exercises that help them reflect on their own perspectives and learn from one another.

Interact with students as they work

Whether it is commenting on a document as it is drafted online, dropping into a chat room or simply acknowledging students in live sessions, make the journey with them. This environment is very appropriate for the constructivist role of "the guide on the side." Let them know that not only are they looking at you, you are looking at them.

Solicit questions

Hold online office hours and encourage students to come and bring their questions. The barrier to entry is lower than it would be coming to your physical office, and it is one of the best ways that faculty members can create relationships with students.

Mix it up

In class, think of what you are teaching in smaller "chunks" -- micro-lectures, interspersed with silent activities and group work.

Highlight students' individual experiences

Unlike a physical classroom, students online are in different places, living different lives. Encourage them to share those distinct experiences and help them tap such experiences for their coursework.

Among these different strategies the role of instructor, practicing the knowledge, collaborative learning, and feedback are discussed below. The role of instructor should be that of mentor or supporter. In online courses, instructors should not be talking heads like they used to be in traditional courses. In this sense, presenting video clips of a lecturing instructor in an online course as the only source of information is a bad practice. This leaves the learner in a passive state. Such video clip resources can be utilized in a more active way. For example, learners and instructors can participate in online chat discussions after watching these video clip resources. In addition to facilitating online discussions, the instructors might focus on students' learning. For example, they can send supporting e-mail messages to encourage learner participation in course activities. The online learning environments afford the opportunity to shift the role of instructors from "delivering" to "listening and supporting". Learners should practice what they learn considers two kinds of knowledge in the learning process: knowledge as detached, which is meaningless, and knowledge as a guide to purposeful action. Detached knowledge is competence; when that knowledge is used for purposeful action it is performance. For many people, knowledge is helpful when it is used in action. For example, in an online course on basic accounting skills learners might learn basic concepts such as planning, controlling, and decision making in business organizations; however, their accounting skills does not improve until they use that knowledge in a meaningful business-related project. To accomplish this strategy, learners might work on papers or participate in real-world projects. These kinds of artefacts provide opportunities for learners for showing what they have learnt in the course. Learners should be provided collaborative learning opportunities. Recently, learning theories that emphasize collaborative learning are on the rise. For example, the situated view gives importance to activity rather than knowing and emphasizes the reciprocal character of the interaction through which individuals, as well as cognition, are considered socially and culturally constructed.

According to this view, the knowledge is distributed among people and their environments including the objects, artefacts, tools, books, and the communities of which they area part. Therefore, learning depends not only on the individual but also on social relations. Collaborative learning opportunities in online learning environments can provide linkages among the factors of the context. Asynchronous communication modes such as e-mail and threaded discussion groups, and synchronous communication modes such as chat, instant messaging, and audio and video conferencing tools in an online course can link remote participants. By using these modes, the remote learners can participate in cooperative projects or papers. The purpose of feedback should be to improve the learning process and most points to the importance of trial and error in experiences; learners simply do something and when they fail they do something else until it works. In traditional learning environments, like schools, this phenomenon is not recognized and learners are expected to perform above a standard in their first trial. Then their performances are graded and that experience is considered to be concluded. On the contrary, an experience that is improved over time encourages learners to come back to the learning context. The projects or

papers undertaken by students in online courses might be broken down into several steps to facilitate this "layered" feedback mechanism.

It is suggested that one of the biggest advantages of Web-based courses is that they provide anytime and anywhere learning. It was argued in this paper that the pedagogy of online courses should be driven by active learning strategies. Implementing these strategies might not fit into the "anytime" and "anywhere" features of the Web based courses. For example, real-time collaboration of learners requires their arranging a time and meeting in the online or offline space. Therefore, it is important to consider other contextual factors of the online course along with the methodology of the course.

Conclusion

The study concludes that all kind of learning are promoted when the methods of teaching favour active learning. Also, learning is promoted when learners are engaged in solving real-world problems, when new knowledge is demonstrated to the learner, and when new knowledge is applied by the learner. Computer mediated communication and online learning in general, support this kind of active learning and the most important distinguishing characteristic of it is the emphasis on instruction and not just on information delivery. For this reason, online teaching should be designed by basing it upon the cognitive-based theories of learning, where learners purposefully interact with the environment, solve real-world problems, practice the knowledge, and thus become an active learner.

Recommendations

1. Government should adopt Online learning, also known as Web-Based Instruction (WBI), and Internet-based education, into the educational system, as this will widen the scope of learning and give students the chance to explore the world of electronic learning.

2. Online teaching should be designed by basing it upon the cognitive-based theories of learning, where learners purposefully interact with the environment, solve real-world problems, practice the knowledge, and thus become an active learner.

3. School administrators should incorporate feedback into the school system, this improves the learning process, it gives room for trial and error in experiences; and assists instructors to detect where students are having difficulties and profess solutions immediately.

4. The instructor should adopt different strategies of teaching for better understanding. These include Use your students' exploring, editing and creative skills; Emphasize group projects; Interact with students as they work; Solicit questions; Mix it up and Highlight students' individual experiences.

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