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**The Effects of E-Learning
(On-line Learning) on the
Student.**

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Introduction

This is a report to UWTSD to show my understanding of what E-Learning is.

I will be discussing negative and positive effects of e-learning on students, my personnel experiences using the system and my personnel recommendations on how the system could be improved for the student.

“Robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those of its students that may be studying at a distance from the organisation are effective.”

(Department of Education WA - Department of Education, 2021)

What is E-Learning?

E-Learning stands for Electronic-Learning.

This is a method of teaching and learning from a distance, using electronic devices that are connected to the world-wide-web, also known as the internet.

Electronic devices such as a computer, a laptop, smart phone, or tablet are connected to the internet via WIFI (a wireless radio signal), and the screens of these devices are used as visual monitors.

Programmed software is used to connect the student to the tutor, lesson, or group. Participants interact by sharing screens to present information, text/email conversations, and hold virtual face-to-face conversations and/or group meetings via video calls.

E-Learning allows participants to form a virtual space in which teaching, and learning can be achieved despite the participants physical location or environment by using a digital platform.

In 1960, The University of Illinois housed a team of laboratory assistants, led by Donald Bitzer, who created the first e-learning system, naming it PLATO which stands for Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations, a computer assisted instruction system designed for computer-based education. Due to its innovative networking capability, it quickly became the foundation for online learning and online communities. (Take a Trip Through the History of E-Learning - E-Student, 2021)

E-Learning is Electronic Interactive Distance Learning.

Negative Effects of E-Learning on the Student

The classroom environment of old could be seen as an inviting place to be. The hustle and bustle of students entering the classroom, bursts of laughter from a small, collective group reminiscing about the weekend they shared, whispering voices of those trying not to cause a scene as they enter the room, screeching chairs being pulled out from under desks as students take their seats facing the front of the room where a teacher stands, arms folded across the chest, wearing a coffee-stained shirt and waiting impatiently to begin a lesson that most students are compelled to learn rather than choose to learn. Latecomers try their best to sneak in and slouch in the seats at the back of the class, hoping to be un-noticed. The good old days!

Fast forward to today. It is November 2021. My classroom is the dining room in my home. My desk is a corner of the dining table. My classmates and tutors are virtual. My pen and paper have transformed into a screen and a keyboard.

Studying while alone takes some grit! Self-motivation is the key as you become the only cheerleader of your success. You have no-one to hold you accountable. It is on YOU to attend all lessons, listen intently, take notes religiously and learn to navigate yourself around the vast world-wide-web of information that is your library, to sift through an amalgamation of truths and untruths in search of the over-riding truth that will compliment, add weight to and back-up any theories, debates, and understandings of the subject being studied. UWTSD Moodle

There can be various negative effects of e-learning on the student as it can feel like an isolating activity for some. No face-to-face connections made. No human interaction. You are isolated in a bubble of studious solitude which can affect a person's mental health.

A negative effect of e-learning on the student could be the student's limited technological ability/skill. Getting to know your computer/laptop/tablet's keyboard is a necessity. How do I create a word document and what do all the symbols that run along the top of the screen do? Learning how to use and instruct a digital device is the first subject matter to attend to when joining the e-learning environment for it is the only way to produce and present yourself within online spaces. Learning and showing understanding by verbal or written responses on a subject is not enough in this environment, here, it would benefit the student to be acquainted with their choice of digital, AI (Artificial Intelligence) device and the language it speaks as it is now the interpreter between you and your study goal. The misspelling of words and jumbled up sentences, inappropriately placed characters on a chart/diagram distorts the message being conveyed. An unstable internet connection can disrupt a message being delivered, understood and the response to it. Not having the ability to express oneself in a face-to-face environment is damaging to one's self esteem and this feeling is heightened in a virtual environment due to the lack of human interaction and understanding of the technology being used.

A negative effect of e-learning on the student is distance from co-learners when participating in group assignments. This can be a stressful activity for a new e-learner like myself for a couple of reasons. The e-learning system presented itself as a way for me to learn new skills whilst staying in a comfort zone of isolation. Prior to my commitment of becoming an e-learner I had been servicing my community as a mobile hairstylist and so was used to working solo. I have no issue with working in teams or groups...once I have familiarised myself with the people in the team or group which is hard

to do via a virtual setting. With the aftereffects of the Covid-19 lockdowns and social distancing still lingering in the air, the interpersonal skills needed to form new relationships are weak as I have literally been alone, except for the company of an AI (Artificial Intelligence) digital device that answers to the name 'Alexa', since the pandemic began almost 2yrs ago. Having some knowledge about your classmates in a learning environment has several benefits and is particularly important in classes where students must work on group projects together. What others in the group know and how they behave determines the groups success. In traditional face-to-face learning environments, students and teachers come to know about each other as they interact over time. (Altınay,2016) Unfortunately, this privilege is weakened in the e-learning environment as it takes a little longer and a lot more effort to get to know your virtual classmates and meet the activity deadline without a few 'Woosah' moments to keep one grounded.

Positive Effects of E-Learning on the Student

A positive effect of e-learning on the student is that it allows for convenience learning where a student has the advantage of working at their own pace. A student has access to the tutor, lesson plans/modules and recorded video sessions, through platforms such as 'Zoom' 'Microsoft Teams' and many more. Even though a student is away from campus they have the whole community in the palm of their hands, and they do not even have to get dressed for it! (...it is better to get ready for the day just as you would if you were attending campus, but as I mentioned above, the ownness is on you, the student.) It was my second term of e-learning with UWTSD. I decided that I was going to have a relaxing bath whilst having a lesson. When attending an online class, the student has the option to attend with their camera on or off. I slumped down into the aromatic bubbles and then my name gets called by the tutor who is marking the attendance register. I stretch to reach the keyboard of my laptop so I can press the speaker button and accidentally press the camera button and expose my nakedness to the class! Moral of the story is to have the same approach to e-learning as you would when attending a face-to-face class. Get dressed!

E-Learning is having a positive effect on students in the way that it directs the student to become responsible for their own education. It encourages personal development skills in a student as they now must hold themselves accountable. The student is led by the lack of face-to-face contact with a tutor to take full responsibility for their personal intake of the study programme. A student must learn self-motivation, self-management, and self-control amidst the innate and surrounding distractions of life that tirelessly seek to invade a student's inner space (the mind) and their physical environment. To be still and know...that you can achieve your intention of learning a skill through the system of e-learning is an empowering experience.

Another positive effect of e-learning for a student is gaining the ability to navigate oneself around the vast world-wide-web called the internet which is a skill that everyone in this world would benefit from as we enter and embrace the technological age of AI. Learning skills such as word processing, recording evidence of research, and ending the use of slang words from my vocabulary has been a life changing experience. With the provisions of study material, research strategies and software resources to facilitate the student, learning becomes exciting and adventurous as opportunities present possibilities to achieve learning goals at the speed of a hare or a tortoise, it really depends on the mind of the student. Before entering the e-learning space my personal interaction with the internet was limited to a few social media platforms, asking Google questions, and posting on YouTube. The thought of sending emails, creating PowerPoint presentations and charts had me sweating with fear until I did it. This was a great accomplishment at the time as I knew not how to do it, only that I wanted to do it and so I worked it out with the aid of regular cups of herbal tea to calm the nerves, snacking on walnuts to stimulate brainpower and taking breaks to meditate when anxiety and imposter syndrome attempt to distract me from the goal of becoming the best e-learner I can be.

The Government's Industrial Strategy recognised that there needs to be significant investment in the development of people to achieve its ambition of the UK leading 'industries of the future.' This includes up-skilling existing workers to ensure they have the skills to take advantage of new technological advances, while also re-skilling workers to enter new growing industries or new occupations. This is essential for supporting growth in the economy and enabling individuals to enter and progress in a changing labour market.

(Department of Education WA - Department of Education, 2021)

How can the e-learning environment best be provided for students to best meet the increasing demand due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Recommendations:

The year 2019 put a stop to many of the ways that we emotionally communicate with each other while the year of 2020 has opened many new ways of communication to us. Everyone has been affected directly or indirectly by the preventative measures of the lockdown and social distancing procedures put in place by most governments and there is no doubt in my mind that everyone will be affected by the trend of using the e-learning system as we evolve into the future.

Recommendations on how the environment can best be provided to students during a time where there is a high demand for distance learning could be to personalise the 1st month of the study programme into an app that a new student would receive on initiation to the institution/e-learning class which is designed from the information given at the registration for the course, and is tailored to the individual's personality, learning style and subject matter. The app would have a daily routine prepared for the student with notifications and pre-set alarms that instruct when to wake-up, take a break, eat, sit/meditate, study and sleep. The new student is studying on their own so why not personalise it further and match a study programme to the student which will encourage positive action steps to follow until it becomes an innate routine for the student (installing a new mental programme normally takes between 21-30 days to become a habit) Common apps that many have downloaded to their smart phones, laptops, and tablets have built-in software that tracks the user's activity and with that information it then sends out automated suggestions to lead the user to an associated product/activity that is relevant to the study programme. I think this suggestion would be great for a new e-learner like myself because I am remarkably close to the finishing line of my first year of e-learning and I am only just getting my head around it all! I am drafting this report in hindsight as I missed the final submission dates due to distractions and my lack of self-management (sigh).

Conclusion

As 2021 ends, and the threat of another government lockdown looms over our heads, I conclude that e-learning is a safe, economical, and productive way to learn. A student receives more than just a lesson conducted through a digital device. A student learns how to become a more organised, self-motivated learner AND tutor because as a student learns they also must show understanding of what has been learnt and so becomes the teacher to an audience through presentations, reports, and essays that used to be insignificant reposts of fake news on social media but have now become professional presentations to advertise a business, unnecessary rants through emails and text messages to friends and fellow students have become emails/text messages to mentors and prospective business associates. The time and money spent rushing around the city to attend class has been dramatically cut and hopefully heading toward elimination.

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