INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND POLICY MAKERS: NEXT GENERATION LEARNING?

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Since the introduction of the first iPad in 2010, it has been one of the most quickly adopted digital technologies in recent history. Everyday more and more education applications have been created. Assessing how it is being used both formally and informally in education settings is an important issue for educators and policy makers. This paper justifies the applications of tablet computer as a mobile device for multimedia database components. For policy makers, they have to reevaluate the entire online teaching strategies described in this paper. Further research exploring iPad utilization in other education policies is needed.

INTRODUCTION

The appeal of online education has not been without challenges, and the growth and expansion in online education has been accompanied by debate and concerns. A general overview of the literature reveals several issues and problems that need to be addressed for an online education program to be successful. The major discussion is rooted in the quality of online education and the education effectiveness of the technology application as a pedagogical tool. In addition, the effectiveness debate in online education has been surrounded by other concerns ranging from technological problems to institutional issues. Many scholars have identified few major categories of concerns associated with online education: internet/web-based, instruction-related, and student education effectiveness-related.

Education Effectiveness

The effectiveness of technological changes cannot be realized unless it is accompanied by major structural and organizational changes in education. The central topic of this debate is the effectiveness of online education in promoting learning. The evidence suggests that the effectiveness of online education depends on factor such as the academic level and the mode of delivery. Given the debate focusing the effectiveness of online education, the general view seems to suggest online education is as effective as traditional on-campus education, if not better (Williams, 2006).
Policy

A policy is defined as a written course of action or plan, such as a rule, regulation, procedure, which is adopted to facilitate program development or certain agenda in progress. Policies can be compared to laws of navigation or traffic rules. Policies provide structure to unstructured events and are a natural step in the adoption of an innovation.

The major indicator that online education is transferring into the mainstream is the increased discussions on the need for policies to guide its effective growth.

Model

Since the 1990s and the early 2000s, a new development generally termed online learning emerged that has altered the way faculty teach and student learn. Millions of students are learning online, and entire colleges have been “constructed” that offer the entirely of their academic programs online. Academic planning and administration, which in the past occurred away from the classroom, can now be integrated very closely with instructional activities.

Neumann (2010) has proposed the Robust Learning Model (RLM) for closing the gaps in the existing e-learning literature in the area of online university planning and administration. The model has been implemented with administration structure for online university offering undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degrees completely online.

Big Data

Recently, big data and cloud computing are the two most popular terms. As CEO of Oracle, Larry Ellison once openly suggested cloud computing is not just water and vapor but rather has been network machine all alone. In a big data scenario, data would be collected for each student transaction in a course especially if the course was delivered online. Every student’s entry on course assignment, discussion, interaction could be recorded, producing many transactions per student per course.

Data mining software or the so-called “BI-business intelligence” software can establish decision process by converting data into actionable insight, targeting certain issues, and responding to certain concerns (Lin, 2013). The great examples of “BI” are when ecommerce companies such as amazon.com or Netflix examine customers web site traffic visits, purchases, or search patterns to determine which customers are more or less likely to buy certain products (movie, books, etc.) Applying these data, companies send notifications to customers of new products as they become available. In higher learning, institutions are using similar applications to assess and to address student learning outcomes.
Conclusion

Currently, American colleges and universities are facing a number of challenges; some of these challenges are global and external to the higher education enterprise. Education policies that provide guidance and direction to the educational systems should include the choice of online delivery of instruction and hybrid on top of traditional campus learning setting. Furthermore, online education along with next generation learning policies will probably need to be separate from existing policies by introducing agenda setting and framing (Reese, 2008).
References

