A World of Tomorrow

The Perspectives of Online Learners on Digital Teaching and Learning

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1. Introduction

When I decided to do a master's degree in global education after almost a decade after graduating from university, I did not realize what a journey I was embarking on. I thought this was going to be a walk in the park. Why shouldn't I do this? That is what I had thought. As I was an ICT professional and a corporate trainer by profession, I thought I was carved out for the digital world and took it for granted that the learning world was calling for my expertise.

However, I was in for a surprise! Online learning was new and different. It was nowhere near as easy as I thought, and though I had the technological knowledge and media tools to support me, it turned out that there was a more challenging and lonely life of learning ahead of me than I had anticipated.

A learning phase revealed itself that was unavoidable and intimidating. Many a time, I felt this as a self-inflicted pain that, far from bearing any immediate – fruit, did not even make any sense to me, with a piled-up list of missed deadlines on assignments and academic records that left me feeling awful and agonized.

Then why continue learning? And why the digital life? (I asked myself). The only answer I could give myself was that it was possible! It was very much possible. There was a wealth of knowledge out there, and with its abundance it was calling me to take a dip in it.

Getting into it wasn't difficult, but keeping myself afloat was the real challenge. I was able to contact my professors during my hit-on-wall situations, seeking guidance or support, or just rambling away -sometimes my conversa-

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tion went along the lines of repent and remorse, and I started to think I had made a terrible mistake enrolling myself in this course.

Meanwhile, as usual, my real world was going about its business, ruthlessly demanding and needy. And like a hamster in a wheel, I forgot all about my need to learn and went about my chores, and learning, education, and study all took a back seat.

While I was caught up in meeting deadlines, I received unread emails from my teachers. They followed up and asked about my progress, gently pushing me to keep going. Their encouragement inspired me to be brave, pick up my pen, and continue learning, sharing and growing.

This was a digital learning breakthrough for me. I didn't have to go through a difficult academic process. Academia quietly came to me, motivating me to move forward. The universities reached out, urging students like me to keep progressing and stay ahead.

This chapter is written to share my experiences and observations as a digital learner and corporate trainer, with the help of reference to the relevant research literature to back up my analysis.

2. Digital learning background

We cannot hide from information technology. Every living person is exposed to waves of digital information, and can no longer choose freely to ignore it. Teachers cannot therefore avoid information technology; and likewise, students cannot escape digital learning. Technology and digital learning are here to stay and are the way forward. University education is widely accessible now beyond national borders, pandemic life having paved the way for this from 2020. National borders are dissolving with globalization. Today, digital technology is deeply integrated into university teaching and learning, from the institutional provision of learning management systems and journals to the widespread use of word processing, email, Google, and Wikipedia.

It is now considered a routine part of academic study and campus life for students to use digital technology at universities, an unremarkable feature of contemporary higher education. The use of digital technology outside of higher education continues to be portrayed as a force for change and reform. As a result of growing up »digital«, today's students are more dependent on digital technology than in the past (Prensky, 2012).

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However, the »disruptive« nature of new technology and the need for increasingly digitally attuned students are causing universities to struggle (Losh, 2014). The overarching sense is a fundamental re-alignment and reform of university teaching and learning along digital lines. This then leaves us with the question of what to do about the other different types of atypical learning formats that are being introduced with the expansion of digital technology and the disruption in curriculum and structure that students are expected to negotiate. How much of classroom structure needs to be rediscovered?

3. Digital learning and teaching – technology in higher education and other learning institutions

Online learning is prevalent in today's educational environments and is supported by virtual learning environments (VLEs) such as Moodle™, Sakai™, or Blackboard™. The new VLEs are important elements of the new educational experience that addresses all aspects of user activity, courses, and communication management. In addition, VLEs are being used at all levels of education. Among the choices in highly interactive multimedia content, games are positioned as an excellent complement to traditional education, as they have several exciting features from a pedagogical perspective.

As a corporate trainer for cloud software programs, I primarily teach online. As part of the pieces of training conducted periodically, students are assessed on the last day of the learning program by undergoing configuration setup and answering multiple-choice questions. Interestingly, in normal life professionally and technically well-versed students, who invest their time in learning state-of-the-art cloud software, often have trouble accessing their learning materials using the eLearning system. At least 2 out of 10 students have difficulty accessing their online exam portals, whether they are baby boomers or generation Alpha. This makes one wonder if technology is to be blamed, or whether the cause lies with the individual student's inability to adapt to new learning methods.

Different teaching and learning strategies are required on different vertical levels[1] of an educational system to ensure effective and efficient learning. It is also the case that different formal and non-formal learning spaces require

1 As a result of the learning system, a student/learner expands their knowledge and enhances their skills on a horizontal level of learning. As we learn vertically, we transform

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different technological and cognitive development levels. The main task and challenges consist in identifying the appropriate institutional or atypical levels and the algorithmically suitable methods regarding the age and mental characteristics of the learner. (Dostovalova, et al., 2018)

4. Is interculture a companion or conflict in order?

My participation in the transnational university project raised my awareness of various digital media tools, different representations of the same idea, and, most importantly, what languages and locational displacement can cause us to experience. Cultural differences will no longer be a barrier or a bargaining chip as we spread our wings and embrace the world. On the other hand, this will be a necessary experience that will shine through and enrich one's life. Furthermore, whether a person is Asian, Western, or European will be less critical, as a more credible picture of global existence and human relationships emerges.

Digital technology and global access constitute a tool that can make all this possible, but at the same time can potentially be a double-edged sword. If digital media and technology are utilized inefficiently, we may lose the partial aim of creating global citizens.

The concept of »multicultural education« can refer to any attempt on the part of education to respond to cultural plurality, or similar approaches, which can then be contrasted with other approaches such as »anti-racist.« ones. The basic idea behind »multicultural education« is that cultural diversity should be appreciated and reflected in the school curriculum (Ward, 2004).

5. Conclusion

Digital teaching has come to stay, irrespective of geographical location, culture, age, and social needs. We hope that by establishing a culture of good practice around digital technology as a professional body, we will see a positive change in the quality of services provided to students, which may improve students' overall digital literacy development (Podorova A., et, al., 2019).

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how we think, absorb and understand the world and run through its layers of complexity.

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Preparing the staff in higher education, and students, who are consumers of the knowledge, to be receptive to the technology stream is vital. Digital teaching must be interwoven with the classic form of learning and standardizing academic learning tools and technology is a must. When we are using more and more digital technology, class involvement techniques and appropriate forms of learning discipline need to be discovered by both educators and learners. It is critical to remember, from a pedagogical standpoint, that course delivery – whether face-to-face, blended/hybrid, or entirely online – is not an end in itself. The goal is to design effective learning (Guppy et al., 2022).

The learning field is going through a lot of changes, and this has brought with it an amalgamation of positive changes and challenging situations. As a consequence, the educational industry and higher education institutions must devise plans and policies that must be sensitive to these changes and include perspectives of faculty, students, instructional designers, and curriculum developers. Digital teaching is not a sudden and short-term need, but a kind of »gearing up« for a bigger and more novel social change. This observational study offers just a glimpse of what is possible and cannot be a conclusive work.

The DIVA project stands out as an example of taking students beyond the curriculum and classroom setup to collaborate and learn in similar ways, and the learning culture needs to adapt and develop innovative methods to take the learning to students and vice versa. We need many such examples to allow digital technology and students to depend on each other and thrive in doing so, thus creating a society with a high level of digital literacy.

In our DIVA workshop, three things stood out: (1) students from a variety of universities exchanged ideas and thoughts, (2) collaboration itself varied from formal to informal, depending on the student's country of origin, i.e., where he or she migrated for study, and (3) the media environment which participants encountered.

As this was a complete digital and online collaboration project, an interesting aspect of participation was that some of us were novices in technology usage, while others tended towards the level of experts.

Our conversation moved from awkward introductions to awesome insights about learning, global understanding, and what we knew about each other.

I felt that the spectrum of intercultural learning had developed well when every group ran through its learnings and project outcomes.

A distinctive feature of this project was that it provided students with the freedom to use the best technology for the project, encouraging exploration while at the same time providing academic support whenever needed.

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