

# **E-learning: A Broad-spectrum View toward Benefits and Pitfalls**

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## **Abstract**

In a world on the move, the need for technology in any of its form is desired every minute of every day. For any type of technology to stay in vogue, real-time information is to be delivered to the applicants; otherwise, it is doomed to fall. The process of updating information and delivering it to the applicants needs education—with no doubt. But it seems that education is also employing technology to upgrade itself. Electronic learning, known as e-learning is becoming popular day in day out. This paper studies e-learning in a broad sense. Then, it goes through a general evaluation of e-learning in terms of the benefits and pitfalls. Put simply, although e-learning has proved itself beneficial in many aspects, it seems to bear some weak points still in need of more work and research. Thus, an absolutely positive look at e-learning as a substitution for traditional classroom would be harmful to the body of education in a way or another.

## **Introduction**

We are a technological world on the move; a world which hungers for more and more technology to be satisfied. A good means to deliver the knowledge of this technology is mass media. E-learning is becoming part of training in both fields of education and industry (Chapelle, 2004; Kirk, 2002). E-learning is a young field holding the use of technology as its central focus to conduct educational or organizational training. It is individualized and customized learning rather than organizational-based (Kirk, 2002). E-learning delivers real-time knowledge (i.e. immediate and updated knowledge) to the right applicant. It is self-paced and applicants freely choose what they want when they want; in-house systems also help them have immediate and comfortable access to the knowledge. E-learning enjoys a sort of infrastructural classroom—a notion introduced by Bielaczyc (2001, 2006 cited in Lakkala, 2007); a classroom as ideal as possible for learners. E-learning has found its way to a vast area of subjects like marketing, organizations, worker employing, retaining employees, and education. Like every other notion proposed, e-learning has its own proponents and opponents.

Proponents suggest that e-learning is efficient learning in the sense that it delivers updated knowledge to the exact applicant(s). Moreover, it is cost effective because the expenses are drawn on individuals. E-learning is considered to be easily presentable and satisfactory in many aspects. But this is not the side often seen; there are some difficulties in play as well.

## **Statement of the Problem**

As a young field, e-learning is subject to face much obstruction on its newly commenced way. E-learning could have been mistakenly thought of as a substitution for traditional training. This should not be so. Some (Díaz & Entonado, 2009 among others) admit this fact; there are certain fields which are in complete mismatch with e-learning. Díaz & Entonado (2009) reported

some studies done in the area public application of e-learning (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008; Hui et al., 2008; Lim et al., 2008; Riesetter et al., 2007; So & Brush, 2008). This may not have internal validity, for e-learning is assumed to be self-paced. As affirmed in the language of Kirk (2002), “E-learning *can be self-paced*, with a focus on the learner” [italics mine] (p. 8). This ‘*can be*’ might imply that e-learning—according to the urgency of knowledge need and time—may not be self-paced; one then can ask if it is not self-contradictory to the nature of e-learning. Sometimes field, sometimes people, sometimes sexes may not benefit from an e-learning program.

Consequently, e-learning should not be thought of as an alternative for traditional face-to-face learning but an assistant to it. Chapelle (2004) and Kirk (2002) assert that e-learning has suggested a new way to use technology besides face-to-face training. Díaz and Entonado (2009) draw almost no differences between e-learning and face-to-face training satisfaction in some areas in tutors and applicants; some areas should be made as exceptions.

### **Research Question**

Based on what is said, the following research question is proposed;

As it offers an infrastructural classroom to applicant to learn materials, can e-learning be an absolute substitution for traditional classroom learning?

## **Review of the Related Literature**

We are a world on the move. In information age, where technology is estimated to experience a growth of at least two thirds (Kirk, 2002) every year, mass media is hired to deliver immediate knowledge to applicants—a cover term employed to include vast sorts of those in need of knowledge. E-learning is becoming part of training in both fields of education and industry (Chapelle, 2004; Kirk, 2002). E-learning is a young field holding the use of technology as its central focus to conduct educational or organizational training. It uses media—the Internet, computer, audio/video tapes, interactive TV, intranets, extranets, and CD-ROMs (Cross, 2001 as cited in Kirk, 2002)—to present appropriate material to appropriate applicants. The interesting point is that learners are free to choose the items and learn at their own pace. It enjoys a sort of infrastructural classroom—a notion introduced by Bielaczyc (2001, 2006 cited in Lakkala, 2007); a classroom as ideal as possible for learners. E-learning has found its way to a vast area of subjects like marketing, organizations, worker employing, retaining employees, and education. Internet portals are presenting online programs, and businesses are selling their products in retail and wholesale thru e-marketing. But this deceptively rapid growth of e-learning might overshadow possible roadblocks it may encounter although eyes should not be closed to the advancement and convenience it has provided us with. Thus, a closer look at benefits and pitfalls of e-learning is of significance.

Like every other notion proposed, e-learning has its own proponents and opponents. As mentioned above, it is a young field and has a long way ahead. Proponents suggest that e-learning, as an individualized and customized approach of learning rather than organizational, is efficient learning (Kirk, 2002); they believe that it delivers the exact information to the exact applicant on his or her desktop. Moreover, the applicant is totally free to choose what he or she

wants to learn, and most importantly, learn at their own pace. In-house systems, on the other hand, put applicants at ease by allowing them to enjoy their personal *infrastructural classroom*. E-learning also offers a timesaving opportunity as it is self-paced; so, applicants go for knowledge when they want. As more and more countries—in various time zones—are being involved in this sort of technology applied for training, applicants can adjust their time to coordinate with the same applicants in other countries. But this is not the side often observed because there are some problems in play.

Within the zone of pitfalls, e-learning could have been mistakenly thought of as a substitution for traditional training. This should not be so. Some (Díaz & Entonado, 2009 among others) admit this fact; there are certain fields which are in complete mismatch with e-learning. Moreover, because it is efficient learning as a result of being cost-effective, easily presented, and advantageous, it does not mean that applicants can have their own pace in learning. At least, this cannot be applied in public classes although Díaz and Entonado (2009) reported a public application of an e-learning program for their specific aims; they also reported some studies done in this area (Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008; Hui et al., 2008; Lim et al., 2008; Riesetter et al., 2007; So & Brush, 2008). Put simply, a group of applicants do not mean the same goals in a set time; even though this could be the philosophy behind its being individualized. As affirmed in the language of Kirk (2002), “E-learning *can be self-paced*, with a focus on the learner” [italics mine] (p. 8). This ‘*can be*’ might imply that e-learning—according to the urgency of knowledge need and time—may not be self-paced; one then can ask if it is not self-contradictory to the nature of e-learning. Sometimes people may not benefit from an e-learning program. Díaz and Entonado (2009) make a comparison between various studies like those of Blankson and Kyei-Blankson (2008), Lim et al. (2008), and So and Brush (2008)—with no internal validity as e-

learning is applied in various contexts. Plus, these comparisons, if of any validation, may not be useful as long as groups of applicants are considered; e-learning is assumed to be individualized though. There is good support by Chapelle (2004) who reports that technology-assisted learning, and especially research in this area, is unique in the sense that one should change his or her perspectives toward such issues with the emergence of technology; in other words, technology changes perspectives toward contexts and approaches of data collection. As another opposing point to e-learning, when it may not be applicable to all fields, neither can it be to all aspects and skills within a discipline. E-learning needs a tutor; thus, one could make sure that there is interaction between applicant and the tutor. But there is no interaction between applicants. This is magnified in case of educational courses like language classes; that is to say no interaction, thus, no learning occurs. Besides, the mentioned studies do not hold bio data of the participants to consider gender differences in e-learning.

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E-learning is cost-effective only if it is drawn on individuals; otherwise, if provided by schools or organizations, it would not be so. In information age with this rapid growth and hunger for the new, schools or organizations may put time and energy to understand what the new are. It is, therefore, logical to ask what if there is no application if e-learning is solo-presented training way.

After all, e-learning has a long way ahead. And one should bear in mind that e-learning is to be regarded as a facilitator not a total substitution for traditional face-to-face learning style.

## Method

It is, thus, while-worthy evaluating different aspects of e-learning to see how good it does to both fields of industry and education. To this end, this section is intended to bear some of this evaluation.

To start with, e-learning has benefits among which is its cost-effectiveness, and as with some findings, it is no less satisfactory than traditional classes for both tutors and applicants (Díaz & Entonado, 2009). It is also self-paced which means that the applicant can choose what they want to learn when they want to learn. With the infrastructural classroom atmosphere it offers the learners as introduced by Bielaczyc (2001, 2006 cited in Lakkala, 2007), e-learning in both fields of education and technology puts applicants at ease when learning.

But this is not, and should not be, the side often seen about e-learning. It was said it is cost-effective; that is just in the case of being personalized. In other words, if organizations and companies are to provide the costs of technology-assisted learning—e-learning—it would not last long enough and keeping updated would not be that possible. Plus, by being self-paced is not meant that individuals can learn on their own pace; if so, e-learning cannot be applied to a group of applicants who are supposed to achieve a goal. Bielaczyc might have missed the point that infrastructural atmosphere of classes in e-learning processes might put applicants at ease and many fail to communicate with the class if they are not in a *class*.

## References

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