

Poster presentation

A comparative study on the effectiveness of e-learning at a Malaysian university

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Introduction

This proposal focuses on only e-learning in one developing country, Malaysia. For this study, e-learning is used at tertiary level. The overall purpose of the research is to investigate, analyse and discuss the effectiveness of technology in the education system - theoretically and pedagogically. Since there are not many empirical researches in developing countries about the effectiveness of using technology in the education system, perhaps this paper may be able to contribute some ideas and new insights into the field. Many assumptions have been made nation wide about the fact that technology helps in the process of teaching and learning. However, they are not proven and as such the need to have more independent study on the effectiveness of e-learning is high. Another research concludes that the performance of e-learning students is at least the same as face-to-face (FTF) learning students. This comes with the same consideration for pedagogical designs, delivery and also the right amount of sources. Thus, the governments and education stakeholders have to look again at the investments on e-learning; if e-learning gives the same results as FTF, then perhaps educators can just choose to explore new FTF strategies.

e-Learning: Concept and practice in Malaysia

To be more specific on the practice of e-learning, there is not yet a 100% e-learning. It is always a blended e-learning; a mixed mode e-learning whereby a combination of e-learning and FTF learning are used together. The e-learning concept allows for more working people to further their studies as distance and time are no longer the barriers to education. There are four objectives of this tertiary e-learning in Malaysia. The first is to introduce new concept of learning at a higher level of education. Secondly, it introduces interactive and productive method of learning. The third objective is to ensure students study independently and lastly to allow for balanced education in Malaysia. Learning model in e-learning includes independent study, on-line interaction, self-evaluation and graded assignments sent on-line.

This proposal intends to use pre/post tests, examination results, questionnaires and interview as the basis of data collection and measurement for the effectiveness of e-learning. These designs are chosen because they can give an indicator for the effectiveness of e-learning. Pre/post test results can give a surface value on the effectiveness of e-learning itself. Meanwhile, questionnaires and interviews can gauge students' awareness and belief on e-learning as a new tool of learning.

Research questions

This proposal has four research questions. They are,

1. How does e-learning help in the process of teaching and learning?
2. What are the relations between students' academic achievement and e-learning?
3. What are the differences in students' academic achievement before and after e-learning treatment?
4. What are the relations between gender, socio-economic background, academic ability and e-learning?

Conclusion

As this is a proposal on the topic of effectiveness of e-learning, collecting and analysing secondary data are still in progress. Students or subjects for the research have been identified and preliminary preparation is being made to organise groups, classes and materials for the students. At the same time, questionnaires are being prepared and will soon be pilot tested. The pre/post tests are being finalised. It is hoped that this research can be completed within its time frame as the findings may be crucial to the education system in Malaysia.