Highlight: Critical perspectives on online learning

Being present- A critique of online education
One potentially positive result of the current fascination with online education is that universities and colleges may be forced to define and defend quality education. The author of this critical review on online learning stresses the importance of the presence of students and teachers in their classes and that education is the central presence of the institution.

Is e-learning effective?
e-learning is a medium which opens up the possibility for methods that would otherwise be impractical or impossible to deliver using traditional means. This article by an e-learning practitioner discusses the effectiveness of e-learning.

News & Events

Flood fighter’ game launch takes disaster awareness to new level
UNESCO Bangkok made its first foray into the virtual world of video games to teach real-life lessons on disaster safety and survival with the launch of the mobile game, “Sai Fah: The Flood Fighter” on 11 January.

UNESCO launched “YouthKnows” Virtual Classroom to promote HIV and Sexuality Education in China
UNESCO Beijing Office in collaboration with Baidu and the Research Center on Health Communication and Public Media of the Communication University of China jointly launched “YouthKnows”, an interactive knowledge-sharing platform aimed at improving HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health education for young people in China.

Kudos to K-science: More partners, higher profile for educational TV initiative
K-science, a joint initiative of UNESCO Bangkok, Korean TV Channel YTN Science and the Korean Creative Content Agency, ended 2013 on a high note – with three new channels signing on to broadcast its free educational programming.

ICDE and partners launch Global Online Higher Education Report initiative
Have you ever looked for good research data on the global impact of distance or online learning and discovered that this just doesn’t exist? The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) has partnered with UNESCO and other institutions to begin work on this formidable task.

Programmes & Projects

JISC e-learning programme
The JISC e-learning programme enabled the development and effective use of digital technologies to support learning and teaching in universities and colleges, so that staff benefit from e-learning and students enjoy a more flexible learning experience.

Resources

Lessons learned from Vanderbilt’s first MOOCs
When Vanderbilt University announced its Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) initiative in 2012, one of the stated goals of the project was to explore ways that digital technologies
might enhance Vanderbilt’s teaching mission. This article reflects on some lessons learned since the launch.

Five critical views of the Open Educational Resources movement
This essay reviews existing literature on Open Educational Resources, introducing five critical views which may provide a framework for OER to develop a theoretically rigorous area of scholarship.

The spectrum of opinion about MOOCs
It has been interesting to see the incredibly wide variety of opinions about the hot topic of MOOCs in the past two years. This blog entry compiled some articles on MOOCs and arranged them from the most extremely “pro” MOOC articles, to the most negative and critical.

Highlight: Critical perspectives on online learning

Being present- A critique of online education

*by Bob Samuels, President, University Council - American Federation of Teachers*

One potentially positive result of the current fascination with online education is that universities and colleges may be forced to define and defend quality education. This analysis of what we value should help us to present to the public the importance of higher education in a high-tech world. However, the worst thing to do is to equate university education with its worst forms of instruction, which will in turn open the door for distance learning. Perhaps the most destructive aspect of higher education is the use of large lecture classes. Not only does this type of learning environment tend to focus on students memorizing information for multiple-choice tests, but it also undermines any real distinction between in-person and online education. As one educational committee at the University of California at Los Angeles argued, we should just move most of our introductory courses online because they are already highly impersonal and ineffective. In opposition to this argument, we need to define and defend high-quality in-person classes.

Although some would argue that we should prepare students for the new high-tech world of self-instruction, we still need to teach students how to focus, concentrate, and sustain attention. In large classes, where the teacher often does not even know if the students are in attendance, it is hard to get students to stay on task, and many times, these potential learners are simply surfing the web or text messaging. In a small class, it is much harder for students to be invisible and to multitask, and while some may say that it is not the role of university educators to socialize these young adults, it is clear that the current generation of students does need some type of guidance in how they use technology and participate in their own education. When people multitask, it often takes them twice as long to complete a task, and they do it half as well. For instance, my students tell me that when they try to write a paper, they are constantly text messaging and surfing the web: the result is that they spend hours
writing their essays, and their writing is often disjointed and lacking in coherence. Since they are not focused on a single task, they do not notice that the ideas and sentences in their essays do not flow or cohere. Literally and figuratively, these multitasking students are only partially present when they are writing and thinking.

This lack of presence also shows up in the classroom. Students often act as if they are invisible in small classes because in their large lecture classes they are in many ways not present. Many students seem to lack any awareness of how they appear to others, and they are so used to sleeping in their large classes that they do not think about how their present absence appears to other students in a smaller class. Of course, it is much more difficult for students to be either literally or figuratively absent in a small class, but some students have been socialized by their large lecture classes to ignore the different expectations of more intimate learning environments. As many higher education teachers have experienced, some students are able to participate in online discussion forums but have a hard time speaking in their small seminars. Once again, students may find it difficult being present in front of others and taking the risk of presenting their own ideas in the presence of others. Some distance educators argue that we can resolve this problem by just moving classes online, but do we really want to train a generation of students who do not know how to communicate to other people in a natural setting?

I worry that students are losing the ability to make eye contact and read body language, and that they are not being prepared to be effective citizens, workers, and family members. This disconnect from in-person communication also relates to a distance from the natural world, and a growing indifference to the destruction of our environment. In this alienation from nature and natural environments, people, also lose the ability to distinguish between true and false representations. Since on the web, everything is a virtual image or simulation generated by digital code, we live in a state of constant in-difference. The web also creates the illusion that all information is available and accessible to anyone at any time. This common view represses the real disparities of access in our world and also undermines the need for educational experts. After all, if you can get all knowledge from Wikipedia or a Google search, why do you need teachers or even colleges? In response to this attitude, we should recenter higher education away from the learning of isolated facts and theories and concentrate on teaching students how to do things with information. In other words, students need to be taught by expert educators about how to access, analyze, criticize, synthesize, and communicate knowledge from multiple perspectives and disciplines.

While online educators argue that the traditional methods of instruction I have been discussing are outdated because they do not take into account the ways the new digital youth learn and think, I would counter that there is still a great need to teach students how to focus, concentrate, and discover how to make sense of the information that surrounds them. Too many online enthusiasts sell the new generation of students short by arguing that they can only learn if they are being entertained or if learning is an exciting, self-paced activity. Yet, we still need to teach people to concentrate and sustain their attention when things may get a little boring or difficult. Not all education should be fast-paced and visually
stimulating; rather, people have to learn how to focus and stick with difficult and challenging tasks. In this age of distracted living, where people crash their cars while text messaging and parents ignore their children while multitasking, do we really want a generation of students to take college classes on their laptops as they text, play games, and check their Facebook status updates? Isn’t there something to value about showing up to a class at the right time and the right place with the proper preparation and motivation? The idea of anytime, anyplace education defeats the purpose of having a community of scholars engaged in a shared learning experience. Furthermore, the stress on self-paced learning undermines the value of the social nature of education; the end result is that not only are students studying and bowling alone, but they are being seduced by a libertarian ideology that tells them that only the individual matters, and there is no such thing as a public space anymore.

When students have to be in a class and listen to their teacher and fellow learners, they are forced to turn off their cell phones and focus on a shared experience without the constant need to check their Facebook pages or latest texts. This experience represents one of the only reprieves young people will have from their constantly connected lives. In fact, students have told me that they would hate to take their classes online because they already feel addicted to their technologies. From their perspective, moving required classes online is like giving free crack to addicts and telling them that it will be good for them. In order to help my students understand their dependence on technology and their alienation from nature and their own selves, I often bring them outside and tell them that they cannot do anything. This exercise often makes students very anxious, and when I later have students free-write about the experience, they write that they are not used to just doing nothing, and they felt an intense need to reach for their phones: this dependence on communication technologies will only be enhanced by moving to distance education.

Online education then not only adds to our culture of distracted multitasking, but it also often functions to undermine the values of university professors. In the rhetoric of student-centred education, the teacher is reduced to being a "guide on the side," and this downgraded position entails that there is no need to give this facilitator tenure or a stable position; instead, through peer grading and computer assisted assessment, the role of the teachers is being eliminated, and so it is little wonder that colleges operating only online employ most of their faculty off the tenure track.

These online colleges and universities have also separated teaching from research and have basically “unbundled” the traditional role of the faculty member. Like the undermining of newspapers by new media, we now have more sources of information but fewer people being paid to do the actual on the ground work of researching and reporting. Also as Wikipedia has turned every amateur into a potential expert, our society is losing the value of expert, credentialed educators. Although some see this as a democratization of instruction and research, it can also be read as a destruction of the academic business model and a move to make people work for free as traditional jobs are downsized and outsourced. Many online programmes proclaim that education is democratized by having students grade each other’s
work, but isn’t this confusion between the roles of the student and the teachers just a way of rationalizing the elimination of the professor? Moreover, the use of computer programmes to assess student learning is only possible if people think that education is solely about rote memorization and standardization. Yes we can use computers to grade students, but only if we think of students as standardized computer programmes. In contrast to massive open online courses, small, in-person classes often force students to encounter new and different perspectives, and the students cannot simply turn off the computer or switch the channel. Unfortunately, too many colleges and universities rely too much on large lecture courses that allow students to tune out during class and then teach themselves the material outside of class. While I am all for flipping the class and having students learn the course content outside of the classroom, we still need to use actual class time to help students to engage in research in a critical and creative fashion.

This push for small interactive classes will be resisted by the claim that it is simply too expensive to teach every student in this type of learning environment. However, my research shows that it is often more expensive to teach students in large lecture classes than in small seminars once you take into account the full cost of having graduate assistants teach the small sections attached to the large classes. Furthermore, the direct cost of hiring faculty to teach courses is often a fraction of the total cost of instruction, and massive savings could be generated if higher education institutions focused on their core missions and not the expensive areas of sponsored research, athletics, administration, and professional education. Being present at the university means that students and teachers are present in their classes and that education is the central presence of the institution.

The author, Bob Samuels, is the President of the University Council - American Federation of Teachers based in California, USA.

Read more: http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/01/24/essay-flaws-distance-education#ixzz2IujdcaLm

Note:

As we believe it is timely to take stock of the return of online learning fever thanks to new movements such as OER, MOOCs, flipped classrooms, etc. in early 2010’s, we are featuring “Critical perspectives on online learning” in this newsletter edition. Online learning is known to be effective in enhancing access to learning opportunities; however, just providing an online course doesn’t mean that it guarantees strengthening the learning outcomes or effectiveness. This newsletter introduces readers to various perspectives and research in online learning. UNESCO Bangkok ICT in Education Team believes that to make the best out of the online learning initiatives, more holistic approaches should be considered and operationalized (e.g. policy support to recognize online learning, quality control to encourage quality contents, robust learning theories to provide scientific foundations for developers, etc.). Your own opinions on this issue are also more than welcome (mailto:ict.bgk@unesco.org).
Further information:

- Being Present- A Critique of Online Education by Bob Samuels
- University Council - American Federation of Teachers

Related links:

- MOOCs: The Asian perspective
- Making sense of MOOCs
- Turning back the clock on lifelong learning: The paradox of MOOCs
- Increasing teachers’ ICT competency through open educational resources
- New publication: Open Educational Resources - Innovation, Research and Practice
- Implementing the Paris OER Declaration: Launch of Project
- eLearning Africa report shows ICTs transform education
- Mainstreaming eLearning in national policies: How can we make change happen?
- UNESCO Global Task Force on Quality Assurance in e-learning
- Digital Edition: E-Learning 2010

Previous issues of the e-newsletter:

- UNESCO "ICT in Education" Announcement e-newsletter

What do you think about this topic?

- Visit our on-line forum and share your views

Is e-learning effective?

By Clive Shepherd, Learning and Communications Technologies Consultant, UK

My focus in this article is a question that I am frequently asked by learning and development people: ‘Is e-learning effective?’ A reasonable question, because there is no point in using a new approach if it doesn’t work, however much time or money it might save.

Unfortunately - as is so often the case - there is no easy answer.

E-learning is just a medium

E-learning is a medium for learning, just like face-to-face communication, print, the telephone and countless other technologies. In other words, it is a delivery channel. On balance, the evidence would suggest that the medium, the delivery channel, is much less important in determining effectiveness than the learning strategy you choose to address the task in hand (exposition, instruction, guided discovery, exploration, etc.), the social context in which the medium is used (self-study, one-to-one, group) and, indeed, the relevance and
importance of the subject matter on which you are focusing. Thomas L Russell reviewed 355 research reports, summaries and papers that documented no significant differences in student outcomes between alternate modes of education delivery. It is the method that matters when it comes to effectiveness, not the medium.

However, e-learning is a medium which opens up the possibility for methods that would otherwise be impractical or impossible to deliver using traditional means. Let’s take two examples:

The Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) makes it possible for many thousands of students to learn together at the same time. While the underlying pedagogy of a MOOC can, in some cases, resemble that of a traditional course, the sheer scale of the endeavour and the opportunities that this provides for peer interaction make the MOOC something very different from what we have ever been able to experience face-to-face.

An immersive and highly-realistic training tool, such as a flight simulator, has no meaningful traditional equivalent other than practice in the real world.

In both of these cases, e-learning is providing something different from what we had before. You cannot dismiss it as ‘just another medium’ because the medium has made possible the method, just as the invention of the printing press made it possible for the population as a whole to learn by reading.

E-learning supports many methods

To answer the question, we also have to qualify the type of e-learning that we are talking about. Do we mean instructional tutorials delivered for the individual learner? Live group sessions in a virtual classroom? The delivery of online content using web sites, video, podcasts, etc? Collaborative, distance learning like the MOOC described above? The only characteristic these approaches have in common is that they use the same delivery channel - a computer network. In all other respects they are radically different.

Let’s take the first of these approaches, the self-study tutorial, because that’s what most workplace learning and development people associate with the term ‘e-learning’.

The Towards Maturity Impact Indicator released in March 2010 and based on UK findings, demonstrated many real benefits of e-learning to employers. However, the majority of the indicators related to efficiencies, i.e. time and cost savings, convenience and scalability. None of these really indicate the effectiveness of the approach in terms of impact on individual performance, when compared to alternative approaches.

It depends what you use it for

I’m not sure where we’ve got to in answering the question. Is e-learning effective? To the extent that a medium can make much of a difference to outcomes, it would seem that much depends on the type of e-learning and the use to which it is put. For more information, please visit the author’s blog.
The author, Clive Shepherd, is a consultant specialising in learning and communications technologies. He works with a broad range of public and private sector organisations, helping them to effectively harness the benefits of technology for workplace learning and communications.

Further information:

- Is e-learning effective?
- Clive on Learning - web blog

Related links:

- eLearning Africa report shows ICTs transform education
- Mainstreaming eLearning in national policies: How can we make change happen?
- UNESCO Global Task Force on Quality Assurance in e-learning
- Digital Edition: E-Learning 2010

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News & Events

Flood fighter’ game launch takes disaster awareness to new level

UNESCO Bangkok made its first foray into the virtual world of video games to teach real-life lessons on disaster safety and survival with the launch of the mobile game, “Sai Fah: The Flood Fighter” on 11 January.

The app, developed in partnership with Thai software company Opendream, was launched at the Education Ministry’s Office of Non-Formal and Information Education’s day-long “Wan Dek” (Children’s Day) event on 11 January at Sanam Suea Pa in Dusit district.

Each level of “Sai Fah” contains an important lesson related to flood preparedness. Players must overcome challenges by choosing the safest course of action, with pop-up boxes alerting them to common hazards and other information related to floods. The cartoon-like design and inclusion of mini-puzzles increase the game’s appeal to young gamers.

The need to raise awareness around flood safety issues was made grimly apparent following the 2011 deluge in Thailand, which resulted in scores of preventable illnesses and deaths.
“Sai Fah” marks the first time that UNESCO Bangkok, the Regional Bureau for Education in Asia-Pacific, has developed a game for educational purposes. The project recognizes how “gamification” – using elements of games in non-game settings – can engage young learners by “speaking their language”, says Ichiro Miyazawa, Programme Specialist for Literacy and Lifelong Learning.

“We at UNESCO Bangkok acknowledge the tremendous potential gamification has in delivering a meaningful education experience to learners in the region, whether they come from formal, non-formal or informal backgrounds,” Mr Miyazawa said. “‘Sai Fah: The Flood Fighter’ makes the learning experience dynamic, and we hope users will enjoy this way of learning key concepts in disaster risk reduction.”

Opendream Project Manager Nathalie Sajda said that the project developed out of a desire to answer the question: “How do you capture the attention of today’s youth, who demand high quality and are constantly shifting between trends?

“Sai Fah [The Flood Fighter] balances the gaming elements that appeal to young people, such as a cute design and incentives through challenges, with an educational approach focused on teaching young people how to react before, during and after a flood disaster.”

The game, which was available for testing on mobile and tablet platforms at the Children’s Day event, will initially be available in Thai, with an English-language version set for wider release later this month.

“Sai Fah” is available for download via:


Further information:

- Flood fighter’ game launch takes disaster awareness to new level

Related links:

- First online climate change education course for teachers
- “Climate literacy” in the classroom
- Stop disasters
- Japan Solidarity Project website

Previous issues of the e-newsletter:

- UNESCO "ICT in Education" Announcement e-newsletter

What do you think about this topic?
UNESCO launched “YouthKnows” virtual classroom to promote HIV and sexuality education in China


The “YouthKnows”, hosted by Baidu Knows which is the most popular Q&A platform in China, is a key initiative under UNESCO’s Virtual Classroom project with the goal of contributing to zero HIV infection, discrimination and death (the “three Zero” goal), as well as overall sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing among young people.

Taking place just before the 26th World AIDS Day, the event brought to attention the pressing issue of HIV prevention, especially among young people. Currently there are 780,000 people living with HIV in China. From January to September 2013, there were 70,000 new HIV infections, nearly 90% of which were through sexual transmission, according to the Health and Family Planning Commission of China. New HIV infection among young students is also increasing. The percentage of youth aged 15-24 living with HIV represent 1.7% of the total number of people living with HIV in China, as compared to only 0.9% in 2008. In contrast to this, as some studies showed, though most youth have had pre-marital sex, less than 5% of them have comprehensive sexual and reproductive health knowledge, and less than 15% of them know how to prevent HIV infection.

UNESCO has been supporting the Chinese government in the fight against HIV & AIDS through education. While promoting life skills programmes that address sensitive issues such as HIV and sexual and reproductive health as an essential component to school health education curriculum, UNESCO recognizes how the spread of Internet, mobile and smart phones, and social media has revolutionized the ways in which people seek, access, share and interact with information today. This is particularly true for young people. According to China Internet Information Center (2012), nearly two thirds of young people aged 10 to 29 in China, or 232 million in total, are using Internet. According to a research conducted in 2012 by the Research Centre on Health Communication and Public Media of the Communication University of China with UNESCO support, nearly two thirds of young people aged 15-24 (66% male and 54% female) use computer-based Internet to access HIV and sexuality-related information, while a significant percentage of them (49% male and 33% female) use mobile phones to access such information. Dating and marriage, safe sex, HIV & AIDS and STIs top the list of topics that young people search for. The research also found out that search engines and online user-generated Q&A are the most popular methods for young people to access HIV and sexuality-related information.
Clearly, using ICTs for HIV and health education has many advantages. It meets young people’s need for privacy when it comes to searching for information on sensitive issues such as HIV and sexual and reproductive health. It provides information in a personalized and flexible manner and allows interaction and participation. It also has the potential to disseminate information in a gender-sensitive way.

The launch of YouthKnows took place at the Headquarters of Baidu and was witnessed by over forty HIV & AIDS and sexuality specialists, IT specialists, health communicators, media representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

Baidu is China’s largest search engine and one of the top web service companies in the world. It covers 94% of all internet users in China including 80 million adolescents, and is used by Chinese speakers in 138 countries. Baidu Knows, under which the “YouthKnows” is hosted, enjoys a 75% market share of the total Q&A platforms in China. It serves 3 billion users every day and has, since 2005, answered 240 million questions. In his opening speech, Baidu’s Vice President, Mr Liu Jun, highlighted that “knowledge can change individual life, and technology can promote social development”. In collaboration with UNESCO, Baidu hopes to provide accurate knowledge about HIV and sexual and reproductive health to young people in China.

Ms Justine Sass, UNESCO Regional HIV and AIDS Adviser for the Asia Pacific, made a presentation on “understanding and addressing adolescent and youth health and wellbeing”. She noted that “while today’s generation of adolescents and young people in the Asia-Pacific region are generally healthier and better educated than in the past, sexual and reproductive health is often an overlooked aspect of their well-being”. Therefore, this requires us “translating words into action, and leveraging collective commitment and expertise”, and the “YouthKnows” represents the innovative and collaborative approach to help adolescents and youth to survive, grow and develop to their full potential.

“Our vision is to empower every young person in China, regardless of their social and economic status, physical condition, sexual orientation and gender identity, to enjoy a healthy life that are free from health hazards, discrimination and violence, and to actively participate in the society and fully realize their potential. In order to achieve this, we should not miss the great opportunity that the new ICTs have brought to education for young people”, said Eunice Smith, representing UNESCO Beijing Office.

The Research Centre on Health Communication and Public Media of the Communication University of China, as the main implementation partner of the Virtual Classroom project, has played a strong coordinating role in the establishment of the YouthKnows. In his speech, Dr Wu Weihua, Director of the Centre, highlighted the importance of exploring the vast opportunities for sexual and reproductive health education enabled by new ICTs, and expressed special thanks to organizations and individuals that have committed their support to the project, including China Family Planning Association, Marie Stopes International China, Ford Foundation, Adolescent a vnd Youth Sexuality Education Committee of China Sexology Society, etc.
“YouthKnows” is a key initiative under the project “Virtual Classroom: Using New Media to Improve HIV and Sexuality Education among Youth” that is being implemented in China and other countries. Other initiatives under the project include the development of a series of video episodes covering a variety of HIV and sexuality-related topics to be distributed through popular video-sharing sites; a creative competition and knowledge contest conducted through UNESCOs’ collaboration with Baidu Campus (a subsidiary of Baidu aiming at youth talents cultivation and technology innovation) and a Codefest event in collaboration with the Communication University of China aiming at mobilizing youth participation, including from young ICT developers, in creating user-generated content, which we believe is the best way to promote self-education and peer education among young people.

Further information:

- HIV Prevention and Health Promotion - UNESCO Bangkok
- UNESCO launched “YouthKnows” virtual classroom to promote HIV and sexuality education in China

Related links:

- Xplore Health – new teaching modules available
- UNESCO collaborates with Mahidol University on animation to raise HIV awareness
- Fast Car: Travelling safely around the world
- UNESCO launches first computer game for young people on HIV and AIDS

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Kudos to K-science: More partners, higher profile for educational TV initiative

K-science, a joint initiative of UNESCO Bangkok, Korean TV Channel YTN Science and the Korean Creative Content Agency, ended 2013 on a high note – with three new channels signing on to broadcast its free educational programming.

News of the channels joining the project toward the end of last year capped off an already eventful 2013 for K-science, which saw two partner TV channels, in Mongolia and the Philippines, begin airing episodes of Science Class, produced by YTN Science.
The project, launched in the latter half of 2012, also saw its profile further raised in the region through participation at a major inter-ministerial forum on ICT in education.

Educators in Thailand and Bhutan Eager to Tune In

The three most recent channels to join K-science (Education and Science TV Contents Sharing Project in Asia and the Pacific) were: Educational Television of the Centre for Educational Technology, Thai Ministry of Education (ETV), Bhutan Broadcasting (BBS) and the National Television and Radio Company of Uzbekistan (NTRC).

In October, YTN President Bae Seok-Kyu and YTN Science Director Hee-Lim Ryu visited ETV and BBS to meet officials and explore how to strengthen cooperation among project partners.

BBS Managing Director Mr. Thinley Dorji said K-science would benefit Bhutanese schoolchildren, particularly when it comes to engaging those who might be falling behind in areas focused on by the channel.

“I think cooperation with K-science can be of great help to our children in the schools,” he said, during the channel’s launch in the capital Thimpu. “We have a little problem of children not being very good in science and maths in the schools and we need to promote this so that our science curriculum in the schools will improve.”

Mr. Wang Po Tianjin, Director of the Science Department of the Bhutan Ministry of Education, meanwhile, emphasized the numerous potential benefits of ICT in learning.

“Besides using textbooks and materials available in the library, TV programmes offer a way for students to learn that is much more interesting and interactive, which improves our students’ learning experience,” he said.

The director added that K-science also offered a way of putting students in touch with an advanced, high-tech world that may not be accessible in their everyday lives, but that they can learn about through this initiative.

In Thailand, YTN Science officials were warmly welcomed by Dr. Preecha Chuenchanokpibul, Director of the Centre for Educational Technology (CET), who said the initiative was a necessary one in the country.

“I am proud and honored that Thailand will have good science TV programs for our children as a result of this,” he said. “There are very few Thai TV channels that provide this kind of content.”

ETV representatives also took the opportunity to make suggestions on the future of the K-science collaboration.

Mrs. Jaruporn Puttaviriayakorn, Head of the Educational Television Broadcasting Service, hoped to see the programme expanded in Thailand. “We would like to broadcast more of K-science’s educational programmes covering all of our target audience, from youngsters to teenagers, as well as everyday life sciences programs aimed at the general public to promote
lifelong learning,” she said. “We would also like to develop our human resources [television production staff].”

Mr. Suchaipat Hankittimongkol, a Producer at ETV, added: “Co-productions for other educational TV programmes targeting school-aged children would be great, as they will grow up to be future of the nation.”

*Participation at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education 2013*

K·science saw its regional profile raised and its innovative nature celebrated as part of the Gallery Walk exhibit at the [Asia-Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education 2013](#) (AMFIE) held on 26-28 November in Shenzhen, People’s Republic of China.

The Asia-Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education (AMFIE) is an annual event organized by UNESCO Bangkok since 2010 that serves as a platform for policy-level dialogue and the sharing of promising models and experiences in developing, adapting and monitoring ICT in Education policies and practices.

The Gallery Walk at the recent AMFIE showcased ICT in Education innovations, with K·science among the exhibitors. K·science organizers took the opportunity to communicate the benefits of the project to education officials to help increase the reach and impact of the project throughout Asia-Pacific.

Ms. Ba Liu Qy, Vice Principal of Shenzhen Xixiang Middle School and a participant at AMFIE, took an interest in K·science’s potential in the classroom.

“I think it is very good and very useful for the students to watch K·science TV programmes. My school has a TV station and I’m very interested in importing [K·science],” he said. “The students are interested in all kinds of fields, such as science, technology, geography, films, sports, music and so on. The students can watch it after supper or during their break of classes. It will broaden the students’ horizons and views.”

James Gao, a Grade 12 student volunteering for AMFIE, is also looking forward to the expansion of K·science. “Having more science TV programmes will be good for our students and also for our teachers, because there are many things we don’t know in science,” he said.

*Looking ahead*

This year promises to be an even more eventful one for K·science, now only a year and a half into its existence. YTN Science has translated another two of its educational TV programmes, which will be made available to partner channels. Knowledge Channel (Philippines), has already provided episodes of its programmes, not only in science but also in communication/literature, environment, and values education. Making the programmes available via new media (ICT) is also in the pipeline and intended to complement the airing of the K·science TV programmes.

*Further information:*

- K·science project
ICDE and partners launch Global Online Higher Education Report initiative

Have you ever looked for good research data on the global impact of distance or online learning and discovered that this just doesn’t exist?

The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) has partnered with UNESCO, the European Commission, the International Association of Universities, the Sloan Consortium, StudyPortals and Babson Survey Research Group to begin work on this formidable task.

**Context**

The global landscape of post-secondary education is in a period of dramatic change. A significant driver for this has been a dramatic rise in the use of technology and the extension of the traditional campus to more learners.

Although there is clear evidence of the growth of online learning, the global data remains anecdotal or limited in scope. There has been no formal effort or process to define online learning in the global context.
An international outlook on distance education

The Global Online Higher Education Report (GlobalOHER) initiative is designed to address this deficiency by conducting a global survey and issuing a report that will provide:

- Information on enrolments and programmes offered online
- Information on the role of MOOCs around the world
- Information on the adoption of Open Education Resources, OER
- Perspectives on the importance of online learning in institutional strategies
- The challenges institutions face in delivering high quality programs and services
- A framework of the policy issues that institutions believe need to be addressed

Partners

Such a study can only be conducted through the combined efforts of multiple partners. Leading international organizations have joined forces to develop and support the GlobalOHER effort. These include:

- UNESCO
- The European Commission, DG Education and Culture
- International Association of Universities, IAU
- International Council for Open and Distance Education - ICDE
- The Sloan Consortium
- StudyPortals
- Babson Survey Research Group

In addition, many regional associations and stakeholders around the world have already agreed to support the initiative.

Timescale and products

The initial global survey of institutions will be conducted in 2014. The GlobalOHER will then be issued semi-annually. The report will be designed for general readership, offered free of charge under a creative commons licence, and available in a variety of formats, supported by a website.

The project has already completed a feasibility study, where the partners’ data sets were examined.

The global study will be created in two steps: the first will be to survey the full set of members of the partner institutions. This will provide global coverage and allow for all aspects of the full global outreach to be tested. The coverage for this first stage will exceed any existing study of global online learning to date. The follow-up study will include all global higher education institutions.
Methodology

The report will replicate, as far as appropriate, the methodology, approach and report scope of the U.S. Higher Education reports produced by the Babson Survey Research Group for the past ten years.

These reports have become the benchmark for tracking distance education and the most quoted metrics on the growth in online enrolments in the United States. The approach used in the US will be modified to suit the global audience for the project.

A more detailed description of the initiative is to be found below:

Sponsorship

The GlobalOHER partners seek interest from prospective sponsors for this initiative. As a sponsor, you will have the opportunity to suggest questions and/or topics for consideration by the GlobalOHER steering committee.

Further information on opportunities for sponsorship and other forms of contribution to the initiative can be downloaded below, and enquiries directed to the ICDE Secretariat: icde@icde.org

Further information:

- ICDE and partners launch Global Online Higher Education Report initiative

Related links:

- MOOCs: The Asian perspective
- Making sense of MOOCs
- Turning back the clock on lifelong learning: The paradox of MOOCs

Previous issues of the e-newsletter:

- UNESCO "ICT in Education" Announcement e-newsletter

What do you think about this topic?

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Programmes & Projects

JISC e-learning programme
Digital is a new way of life. Over the past few years, we may have heard this statement more often, but it is undeniably becoming a reality. Many more products and services are in electronic forms or being delivered electronically. New terms or vocabulary are created to reflect those new digital/technological innovations, most likely starting with an e, for example e-mail, e-books, e-wallet, and etc. Thus, it is not surprising that the way we are learning is also catching the trend, as we see the concept e-learning being discussed and implemented all around the world.

There are many organizations and educational institutions that are working on many interesting programmes and projects about e-learning, providing funds or conducting researches to improve the way people learn and live with technology. One organization in this sector worth highlighting is the JISC, historically the Joint Information Systems Committee founded in 1993. It is a non-departmental public body, now a registered charity, which aims to provide vision and leadership to higher education institutions in the United Kingdom to stimulate innovation and fund research into technology developments in teaching and learning for the benefit of universities and colleges.

JISC, funded by various government bodies, gives its members (mainly higher education institutions) access to a package of products and services from across JISC at reduced rate. The package includes network and IT services, digital contents and journal collections, advice, and research and development. Overall, JISC claims that it saves UK education and research £259m annually in direct savings and cost avoidance from using the products and services.

As many higher education institutions are grasping on incorporating e-learning concept and practices in their curriculum and instructions for learning and teaching, it is essential that they are properly guided by experienced experts and learn from research and case studies to ensure effective e-learning implementation. This is when an organization like JISC comes in. Although JISC primarily serves the higher education and further education sector in the UK, other policy makers, higher education institutions, and practitioners around the world can also benefit from their expertise and extensive resources.

Students, researchers, academics, and individuals alike can also have access to digital publications. To facilitate access to theses produced UK higher education institutions, JISC in collaboration with the British Library launched the Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS) as a digital hub of over 250,000 digitized theses, which are instantly available for downloading.

One of JISC’s successful programmes is the e-Learning programme (October 2003 – March 2012), which was funded by JISC Learning and Teaching Committee. The vision of the e-learning programme was “to enable the development and effective use of digital technologies to support learning and teaching in higher education institutions, so that staff benefit from e-learning and students enjoy a more flexible learning experience” (JISC).

The programme aims to identify the benefits of e-learning; give advice on its implementation; develop and improved understanding of the potential of digital
technologies to support learning and teaching; consider the strategic implications of this programme; and inform and support the delivery of national policy in this area (JISC).

Under the umbrella of this e-learning programme, JISC currently have 6 programmes of work:

- **Institutional approaches to curriculum design** focused on the role of the strategic use of technology in enhancing institutions’ systems and processes through their engagement with a wider range of more flexible and relevant curricular.

- **Transforming curriculum delivery through technology** had the objective to examine how specific curriculum developments impact on learning and teaching experiences, and to investigate how the appropriate integration of technology can help institutions deliver a more engaging and flexible learning experience in response to changing learner and employer needs.

- **Open educational resources** projects intended to make existing learning resources available online, working towards the sustainability of long-term open resources release via adoption of appropriate business models. JISC provided guidance and advice from existing JISC services and other organizations and covered issues around licensing, intellectual property rights, technical aspects, and resource discovery.

- **Learning and teaching innovation grants programme** supported one-year projects of up to £50,000 each dealing with any aspect of e-learning.

- **Lifelong learning and workforce development**

- **Course data: making the most of course information** corresponded to the Government transparency agenda which promotes the release of public data and internally by a need to inform business planning, and the demand for more, easier to find, accurate comparative course data for students to make an informed choice.

JISC’s work is applicable to policy makers, senior institutional managers, and practitioners throughout further and higher education, who are wishing to learn and improve on the integration of ICT in education. Progress reports, meeting presentations, and final outcome documents for these programmes, which are available on the website, present useful detailed information about programme developmental stages and final results. Readers can elaborately learn about the programmes, take away lessons learned, and make appropriate decisions for themselves and/or their institutions.

JISC’s website (http://www.jisc.ac.uk) provides many useful links to its various programmes and resources, including progress reports, meeting presentations, final outcome documents and various publications.

For more information about JISC and its e-learning programmes, please visit http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning.aspx. Additionally, readers may follow JISC e-Learning Blog (http://elearning.jiscinvolve.org) for updates on activities related to JISC e-learning programmes.

**Further information:**

- JISC e-learning programme
Lessons learned from Vanderbilt’s first MOOCs

When Vanderbilt University announced its Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) initiative in 2012, one of the stated goals of the project was to explore ways that digital technologies might enhance Vanderbilt’s teaching mission.

As faculty, staff, and students worked during 2012 to launch Vanderbilt’s first three MOOCs, they grappled with the following question: How do you create effective learning environments online for thousands and thousands of students?

As Vanderbilt launch its next two MOOCs in September 2013 and as the instructors of those first three MOOCs look ahead to leveraging their online experiences in their on-campus courses, this blog post by Vanderbilt’s Derek Bruff, Center for Teaching Director, reflects on some lessons learned during this time.

Read the full blog post:

- Lessons learned from Vanderbilt’s first MOOCs

Related links:
- MOOCs: The Asian perspective
- Making sense of MOOCs
- Turning back the clock on lifelong learning: The paradox of MOOCs

Previous issues of the e-newsletter:
- UNESCO "ICT in Education" Announcement e-newsletter

What do you think about this topic?

- Visit our on-line forum and share your views
Five critical views of the Open Educational Resources movement

This essay by Jeremy Knox reviews existing literature on Open Educational Resources, introducing five critical views:

1.) An under-theorisation of ‘openness’, in which the concepts of positive and negative liberty will be used to suggest a neglect of coherent theorisation concerning the practice of self-directed learning.

2.) The simultaneous privileging and rejection of institutional authority, where OER literature will be shown to endorse the reputations of established institutions while claiming liberation from them.

3.) The diminishing of the role of pedagogy, in which OER will be aligned with an untheorised learner-centred model of education.

4.) Humanistic assumptions of unproblematic self-direction and autonomy, and

5.) an alignment with the needs of capital

It is suggested that these critiques may provide a framework for OER to develop a theoretically rigorous area of scholarship.

This is an Author’s Original Manuscript of an article whose final and definitive form, the Version of Record, has been published in the Teaching in Higher Education 2013 [copyright Taylor & Francis], available online at: http://www.tandfonline.com/ DOI:10.1080/13562517.2013.774354].


Read the full article:

- Five critiques of the Open Educational Resources movement

Related links:

- Increasing teachers’ ICT competency through open educational resources
- New publication: Open Educational Resources - Innovation, Research and Practice
- Implementing the Paris OER Declaration: Launch of Project
- Making sense of MOOCs
- A world map of Open Educational Resources initiatives: Can the global OER community design and build it together?
- UNESCO World OER Congress releases 2012 Paris OER Declaration
- Policy Forum for Asia and the Pacific: Policy and Practices in Open Educational Resources
- The future of (open) education with Sir John Daniel
The spectrum of opinion about MOOCs

It has been interesting to see the incredibly wide variety of opinions about the hot topic of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the past two years.

This blog entry by Dough Holton from the EdTechDev Blog compiled some articles on MOOCs and arranged them from the most extremely “pro” MOOC articles, to the most negative and critical.

Read the full blog post:

- The spectrum of opinion about MOOCs

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