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Online Learning 2.0:
The Technologies and Trends Revolutionizing the Classroom

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ONLINE LEARNING 2.0: THE TECHNOLOGIES AND TRENDS REVOLUTIONIZING THE CLASSROOM

As educational institutions continue to mature in their use of technologies, there is a growing use of advanced synchronous and asynchronous methods of communication for online learning. Technology advancements and changing perceptions toward virtual classrooms have resulted in a significant uptake in online education. Online education has seen exponential growth in recent years. *Online education enrollment at 21 percent* is far ahead of the trivial 2 percent growth seen in the overall higher education student population.

Key Trends in Online Education

Often students are the pioneers in new technology adoption, setting the pace for other segments of the market. As such, educational institutions have to stay on top of new technology adoption. There are several trends that are emerging to change the face of education:

- Impact of consumerization – Students are probably most susceptible to consumerization trends. They want the communication devices and software applications used in their personal lives to be available for their educational experience. As a result video, mobility, and social media are becoming key aspects of online education. mLearning (mobile learning) is being driven by the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) trend, where students are asking for rich content that can be consumed anytime and anywhere, changing the way teaching and learning is taking place today.
- Emergence of blended learning – Physical classroom education is being complemented with online classes. Blended learning is all about combining the power of online education with traditional teaching. The Department of Education plans to spend \$30 million over the next three years to bring blended learning to 400 schools around the country. Blended learning can also take place online, where students work through on-demand content at their own pace and then join in-person or online sessions for discussion and practice. Blended learning is preferred by a majority of students to pure eLearning.
- Flipped classrooms provide a richer experience – A natural outcome of blended learning, flipped or inverted classrooms offer educators innovative ways to use the classroom time. In a flipped classroom environment, instruction is delivered by on-demand video and online content at home; the classroom time is reserved for activity-based “homework” and practice in the classroom. Students can watch videos and lectures at home and use class time for hands-on projects. This allows teachers to use the classroom time for more interactive concept engagement and allows students to work through material at their own pace.
- Social and collaborative learning catches on – The power of social media is most pronounced among the student population. While educators are still split over the use of Twitter and other social networks in the classroom, which can be more distracting than helpful, the overall use of social media in academia to connect with and learn from each other and find and share information has caught on in a big way.

The Growing Role of Video in Online Education

Collaborative learning is being further spurred by the integration of video into virtual classrooms. As a result of the growth in online and virtual education, video conferencing has become a key enabler for providing a richer, more flexible, as well as a cost-efficient means to online learning.

Students around the world are using video conferencing to take classes remotely, connect with other students globally, and learn from teachers and resources virtually. Advances in high-speed Internet services, easy-to-use software, emergence of cloud-based services, and changing perceptions toward video are paving the way for integration of video conferencing into the online classroom experience.

Educators and schools are embracing video conferencing because it improves access to educational resources and experts at lower costs, allowing access to instructors regardless of their physical location. This has particularly helped education departments that are increasingly faced with lower budgets and resource limitations.

While video conferencing has been around for several years, it is only now that it has become accessible to all via personal computers and mobile devices in an easy-to-use and low-cost way. Often called the democratization of video, this change is enabling students to experience the power of video conferencing for online education, offering a richer and more engaging experience by adding the visual elements and cues that were otherwise missing from online learning.

In addition to learning, video conferencing is being used in several other ways. Business schools are using video conferencing to conduct admissions interviews, reducing travel time and expenses. Instructors and admin staff are using video conferencing to conduct meetings, design course curriculum and content, and to collaborate with each other in a richer, more interactive setting than phone calls and e-mail can provide.

The world of education is changing at a fast pace. Technologies like video conferencing will continue to reshape how learning will take place in the future, significantly enhancing access and reducing the cost of education.

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