

'E-Learning: Practices and Promises'

2010 International Arab Conference of e-Technology (IACe-T'2010;
<http://www.iace-t.org>)

Kuwait, Kuwait

March 30-31, 2010

Abstract

Higher education is under increasing pressure from three non-economic forces, namely, the explosive growth in information creation and access; the open technology, open educational resource, open access and open education movements; and the changing habits, attitudes and expectations of today's incoming university student. These pressures are characterized by decentralization, democratization, a changing notion of what it means to know, continual suspended (un)certainly, and a chaotic (diverse, messy and unbounded) view of knowledge. These characteristics are at odds with formal education which likes learning to be controlled, authoritative, certain, linear, neat and bounded.

This new technology rich environment is changing the way we gather, use and create knowledge and resulting in students who switch contexts quickly, are inherently collaborative, cynical, and do not respect authority.

How can the competing paradigm of formal education systems respond in this environment? Are the long held values of a formal educational system, namely, cognitive growth; conceptual maturity; the development of reasoning; and exposure to alternatives; still relevant? Is a system which puts boundaries on knowledge by circumscribing what has to be learned through a course or program an anachronism? Can elearning bridge the gap between the tools and strategies between informal learning practices and the culture of educational institutions?

This presentation will provides examples of pedagogical approaches that address the new habits, attitudes, expectations and abilities of students and that rethink authority, control and teaching and learning strategies in a networked world.