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The future of eLearning from the lessons of the past

An analysis on the main challenges of eLearning to predict the changes that will impact the sector and find out how to best tackle them

In recent years, eLearning has created new opportunities to access information quickly and easily and has become an essential for students of all ages, to the extent that over **60% of students in the United States use eLearning on a daily basis.**

However, the increased adoption of eLearning has presented a unique set of challenges for students, teachers, principals and universities. In addition to the technical problems that could arise in virtual classrooms, it is in fact necessary to consider a whole series of pedagogical problems which, if not addressed in advance, could hinder effective learning.

Here, then, are some of the most common eLearning challenges and their possible solutions.

1. Technological innovation and skills

While technology is the driving force behind the growth of the eLearning industry, it also presents a unique challenge. The rapid pace of technological advances in online education is evidenced by the amount of investment in the sector, which reached **$166.6 billion** in 2023. This means that eLearning platforms and content can quickly become outdated. **Keeping up with emerging technologies** and adapting to new tools and methodologies can be a difficult task for both educators and eLearning providers.

Whilst the whole ecosystem has improved access to education as a whole, it means that any technical issues need to be addressed on an individual level. For example, the sudden shift to online education during the pandemic has resulted in a huge learning curve, especially for teachers who weren't as accustomed to using technology as younger students.

In this context, **continuing professional development for educators and eLearning professionals** is essential to keep pace with technological advances. This may involve providing training and resources to help educators integrate new technologies into their teaching methods.

2. The problem of data privacy and security

Teachers must also pay attention to the **issue of privacy and data security**.

The eLearning industry relies heavily on **data collection and analysis** to personalize learning experiences and measure student progress. However, this dependency on data, also raises significant privacy and security concerns.

To address concerns about potential misuse of personal information and data breaches, eLearning platforms must prioritize robust data protection measures. This includes implementing strong encryption protocols, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations, and being transparent to users about data collection and use practices. Additionally, educating users about data privacy and giving them control over their data can help build trust and mitigate concerns.

For more information, also read " **The key security components of an LMS platform**".

3. A growing lack of motivation

One of the biggest changes that the shift to online education has brought about is the growing lack of **motivation**. Often, in fact, students are more motivated to attend academic courses in a physical environment, with their classmates and their teachers.

With the shift to online learning, the lack of a friendly and competitive environment often takes away the **sense of urgency** and importance of **time management**. Maintaining learner engagement and motivation in the digital learning environment remains a persistent challenge. Many students struggle with self-discipline and find it difficult to stay motivated when learning remotely. Additionally, the absence of face-to-face interactions with instructors and peers can result in a sense of isolation that leads to disengagement.

This, in turn, affects your ability to meet deadlines, attend classes on time, and progress in your learning. It also makes students more prone to distraction, especially with the immense amount of content available online.

When eLearning was introduced en masse during the Covid 19 pandemic, 65% of US teenagers said they wanted to return to school in person after the pandemic, showing a strong preference for learning with their peers present in person.

One of the most common solutions that the industry is increasingly focusing on to overcome the problem of lack of motivation is gamification. This strategy uses interactive learning techniques to increase learner engagement. Incorporating elements like games, quizzes, challenges, leaderboards, and rewards can make the learning experience more enjoyable and motivating. Additionally, fostering a sense of community through online forums, encouraging discussion and forming virtual study groups can help combat feelings of isolation and improve engagement.

4. Lack of technology to access online education

As eLearning continues to grow, it is imperative to address issues of **digital equity** and **accessibility**. Not all students have the same access to necessary technology, reliable internet connectivity, or appropriate learning environments. This digital divide creates educational inequities, limiting opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged communities.

According to a **study** conducted by the Pew Research Center, one-third of families with children between the ages of 6 and 17 and an annual income of less than $30,000 do not have access to high-speed internet at home. This **digital divide** prevents this group of students from accessing such an essential commodity as primary and secondary education.

To address this challenge, eLearning providers should strive to make their platforms and content **as accessible as possible**. Additionally, partnerships with governments and NGOs to provide technology and internet access to underserved communities can help bridge the digital divide.

5. A growing sense of isolation

The sudden shift to online education has also led to an increased sense of isolation, as students no longer have their peers around them that they can rely on. After all, humans are social animals and **human interaction** is psychologically critical. This is perhaps one of the biggest challenges of online education. While the quiet, solitary time that comes with studying from home can be beneficial for some, it often leads to demotivation for others. This sense of demotivation also makes it easy to get distracted. Furthermore, the preference for studying in school is one of the main factors influencing the statistics mentioned in the previous section. This is especially true for students in the 12 to 17 age group.

6. The challenge of keeping students engaged

While it is common for students to feel boredom, demotivation, or even isolation, addressing these issues in a constructive way can also be challenging for teachers. That's because online education doesn't give them the luxury of curating engaging study modes or collaborative projects like they would in a physical classroom. As a result, teachers must continually think of new ways to keep their students engaged, so that they stay motivated, manage their time well, and progress academically. Not having tools that allow them to easily solve the problem, teachers are **frustrated** by this situation.

Who faces the challenges of online education?

The online education challenges mentioned above are just the tip of the iceberg. There are many other ways that online education can prove challenging for all stakeholders.

Those directly involved in the process of delivering and receiving education (teachers and students) are bound to face these challenges on a daily basis. However, there's not much teachers can do when separated from their students via a screen, which is where ed-tech companies and those that curate online courses need to find intuitive ways to make the learning experience much healthier and more engaging. for both students and teachers.

Furthermore, those from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to face these challenges much more intensely, as they are often dealing with the digital divide, isolation or even the distractions of contributing to their finances.

How to overcome the challenges of online education?

As institutions around the world see a return to the physical learning model, online education and its student adoption are set to increase over time.

With this in mind, different strategies and solutions can help mitigate the barriers that online education can entail. Some of these include:

- **Increased student awareness** on the **programs they intend to follow and their technology requirements** can help them make the right decision about whether or not to access learning materials once enrolled.
- Institutions must have a robust student support system in place, for example in the form of **IT assistance**, so that problems can be addressed in a timely and stress-free manner.
- Encouraging students **to set goals** for their learning journey can help them stay motivated, thereby increasing their participation and improving their willingness to set aside distractions.
- A **strong student and alumni network** that facilitates communication and the exchange of ideas can help reduce feelings of isolation, as students can easily turn to those around them when needed.