

E-Learning: It's about Nature (technology) AND Nurture (pedagogy)

Prof. Curtis Jay Bonk

Abstract

Emerging technologies - such as electronic portfolios, blogs, wikis, podcasts, e-books, digital object repositories, computer games and simulations, and wireless and mobile computing - are generating waves of new opportunities in higher education, K-12 schools, corporate training, and other learning environments. Higher education instructors are always pressed for time and yet they encounter new technologies that they might incorporate into their teaching on a daily basis. Educational technologies, as genes are to human beings, instill a wondrous nature of possibilities for learning. However, this is an interactional model and nurture is equally important. In fact, the effective use of these educational technologies involves far more than simply shoveling tutorials, readings, and slideshows onto a web site or deciding to use a new technology in one's teaching. Instructors must be trained how to motivate online students as well as how to address their individual learning styles and adjust learning methods and assessment to the learner-centered expectations of Generation X and millennial students. As enrollments in online courses surge, today's students - immersed in an increasingly digital world - are seeking richer and more engaging learning experiences. Amid the rising tide of expectations, instructors are exploring innovative ways to use technology to foster interaction, collaboration, and excitement for learning. The current debates about e-learning will not be won by technology advocates, promoters, and zealots, nor by those who are more hesitant, resistant, and reluctant to incorporate technologies into their teaching. One may get excited about nature (technology), while for the other it is all about nurture (pedagogy). But, as this talk will show, it is both that matter. Neither nature nor nurture can be ignored.