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Virtual classroom: An innovative classroom

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Abstract

Virtual classroom is an online, web-based tool, which virtually creates a classroom environment similar to traditional classroom wherein instructors/professors and students login simultaneously. Virtual classroom gives the students as well as instructors/trainers a similar experience like that of traditional classrooms without the need to be physically present in the class, and at the same time offers flexible as well as cost-effective courses online. Virtual classrooms has many advantages like ideas sharing, recording, interactive white board, audio-video support etc. with lots of advantages it also have some of the disadvantages like lack of socialisation, structure and interaction etc.

Keywords: virtual classroom, education, socialisation

Introduction

Virtual classroom is a web-based online tool, independent of any other user side software. There are no downloads available almost for this tool and this makes the tool; time efficient for the user. Instructors or students can just browse the link and login to the virtual classroom, just like they walk-in to the traditional classroom with additional benefits of technology. Virtual classrooms are equipped with various useful tools to engage learners and participants to make the learning experience similar to traditional classroom.

A virtual classroom can be web-based learning environment that is accessible through a web based portal or software-based tool that require a downloadable executable file. Just like a student in a real-world classroom, same as in a virtual classroom participation through synchronous based instruction, which means that the instructor and learner are logged into the virtual learning environment at the same time and interact with each other.

A virtual classroom environment successfully adds up different inputs i.e,

- Face to face plus virtual classroom which can vary from adding system use to enrich on-campus courses conducted to traditional means; for distance courses where system requires the usage of supplemented by one or two face-to-face meetings.
- Virtual classroom as the sole means of delivery of multi-media i.e., virtual classroom in the form of video, audio or audio-graphic media, animations and
- Print media usage example, in the form of e-text books or course notes electronically.

Characteristics of Virtual Classroom Learning

In the traditional classroom, interaction between student and teachers maintained by pleasing voice, occasional jokes, dramatic gestures, eye-contact with each other and the classroom interaction can help to enliven a long lecture. Basically, these are main principles to be kept in mind for successful teaching and learning process in the virtual environment such as dealing with Media content richness, Timely responsiveness, Management/Organisation and Feedback/Interaction. Hence, in order to maintain the interest in learning process, the instructor should use multimedia in a skilful way by creating some interest and make learning process easier.

The instructor should deliver small parts of lecture with print or pre-recorded multi-media materials with opportunities for student's participation. In traditional classrooms, the students will not receive an immediately response to their questions and comments. Virtual classroom also needs equipment and tools in the form of web-based or software applications to allow a group of instructors and students to carry out the teaching learning process. In order to encourage the students, the instructor can promote more active participation / interaction and provide the feedback to students in the virtual classroom more frequently/daily or even on

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the spot basis. The study materials of online courses/virtual classrooms get organised, otherwise students will become very confused. Therefore the instructor must establish synchronous rhythms and schedules, based on dividing the course into smaller modules which lasts a week and half, or two weeks each. so, that the participants can plan ahead in terms of when they will need to sign in online and when work will be due, and so that the group moves through the topics in an orderly manner.

How Virtual Classrooms Help

- It provides convenience to the instructors by offering any time access not just when physical facilities are available.
- It enables the students to meet the different learning styles, an auditory or visuals.
- Self pace learning modules allows to learner to work at their own pace.
- Persons with disabilities can take great help from the technology under the classroom with various devices.
- It creates a sense of community among students and instructors who might not otherwise interact with one another.
- Chat messaging allows the students to communicate textually so they can participate with their instructors and batch mates. There is no fear of criticism, snubbing and ridiculing by their teachers and colleges.
- This system may prove beneficial to the students on account of online admission, information about courses, assignment, evaluation, grading and results.
- Equal opportunity to participate in the lesson overcomes the traditional process in this type of classroom so it becomes fully interactive.
- Downloading the material and using it later can be created in this classroom only.

Where it lacks

Virtual system in spite of its so many advantages is found to suffer from number of loopholes and limitations.

- When the students are younger and not mature to understand their responsibility, they may miss-utilised the flexibility failure.
- Sometimes the students enrolled with this system suffer adversely when poor quality of study material, guidance and feedback is provided by instructors.
- The warmth of teacher - people relationships, the charms of group, fellowship and humanistic touch lacks in this type of classrooms.
- Emotional and social climate is found missing in virtual system.
- Along with curricular instruction work, co-curricular activities are necessary for whole some personality. However, such things are completely lacking in this virtual environment.
- A remote area and poor students may not have such facilities of technology and some of them may not have knowledge to handle that technology. Here the concept of mass education cannot be successful.
- No doubt it is very costly as comparative to traditional classroom. Every organisation cannot afford it so some time institutions adopt mixture of both traditional as well as virtual, which does not give good results.

- Technology has created boundaries in this type of classroom while virtual is something beyond the boundaries.

Conclusion

The future of virtual learning environments has many innovative and exciting possibilities in learning and teaching. Teaching should always be learner centered along with best methods. The virtual classroom has tried to adopt this concept of learner centered teaching and opened a new vista to many of our youths and adolescents for venturing into new areas of education. Learning adventures in call for creative and potent environments where individuals create and share meaningful knowledge and experiences in constructing new information and ideas with others. Its limitations and shortcomings can be overcome with the blended method where physical classroom.

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