

# E-Learning Models

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## INTRODUCTION

*As global e-learning grows, all types of organizations are getting involved.* - Kaplan

Although distance learning is not for everyone, many have benefited from some form of distance education. E-learning is a form or subset of distance learning. Although distance learning is briefly discussed, e-learning (the use of computer-integrated electronic information systems) is the central focus of this article. Examples of the three major forms of e-learning—academia, business, and government—are given as well as examples of reputable accrediting agencies.

## HISTORY OF DISTANCE LEARNING AND E-LEARNING

Traditional education models suggest attending classes facilitated by lecturers, written projects, and exams. However, according to Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), “Since 1890, more than 130 million Americans have studied via distance learning, including Franklin Roosevelt, Walter Cronkite, Barry Goldwater, and Charles Schultz” (Abernathy, 2001, p. 20). There are “over seven decades of research, applying [to] different media in instruction” (Howell, 2001, p. 87; see also Clark, 1983; Russell, 1999).

“Each new technology has brought its share of hype from those who would like to see its use for education” (Howell, 2001, p. 87). In 1922, Thomas Edison said, “The motion picture was destined to revolutionize our educational system” (Oppenheimer, 1997, p. 88). In 1945, William Levenson, director of the Cleveland public schools’ radio stations, said that the time might come “when a portable radio receiver would be as common in the classroom as the blackboard” (Oppenheimer, 1997). In 1961, the Ford Foundation claimed that educational television promises “a whole treasure-trove of new and stimulating experiences” (McKibben, 1993). “In 1997, at the National Education Computing Conference, Bill Gates compared the computer and the Internet revolution with the California gold rush” (Howell, 2001, p. 88).

“Researchers have long been aware of such hype and the often-unfulfilled promises that educational technol-

ogy has brought to education” (Howell, 2001). Extensive studies have been conducted on computer technology in the classroom. For example, “second graders scored higher on reading fluency and creative ability tests” (Williams, 1986) and “fourth and eighth graders scored higher on basic skills tests” (California Department of Education [CDE], 1984).

Although this study shows e-learning arena in a positive light, there are many drawbacks addressed further. Among these are depression, anxiety, loneliness, and the possible “cause of violent or aggressive behavior linked with excessive television [and Internet time]” (Centerwall, 1993; Eron, 1993). “Prolonged periods of Internet and television time contributes substantially to obesity” (Andersen, Crespo, Bartlett, Cheskin, & Pratt, 1998; Dietz & Gortmaker, 1985).

## THREE E-LEARNING DESIGN MODELS

For the sake of simplicity, there are three basic e-learning design models:

- **Academia:** The pioneer and forerunning champion
- **Business and Industry:** Including not-for-profits (NFPs)
- **Governments:** And other large, globally focused organizations

## ACADEME E-LEARNING MODELS

This section briefly describes and gives examples of the following:

- Special education (including K–12)
- Higher education, universities, and university consortia
- Online master of business administration (MBA) programs (among others)
- Accreditation and accrediting agencies

Academe has pioneered e-learning initiatives, exploiting and saturating the market with every kind of online learning imaginable. If it is not there today, look again tomorrow. Online learning models can be received around

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the clock, in the privacy of the student's home or at work—wherever e-access is available!

Academe is very familiar with e-learning in mainstream institutions. Based on needs, individualized curriculum models for students with disabilities, including sight and/or hearing loss, have been established. E-learning also gives students with wheelchairs, seniors, single parents, financially disadvantaged, or full-time employees with families who just want to learn something new—given the time constraints to meet other specific, unique educational curriculum demands.

### Special Education

One example of educating elementary school children is The Virtual Reality Education for Assisted Learning System (VREFALS), “a three-dimensional virtual world made up of a post office, police and fire stations, a farm, a greenhouse, and a coastline” (Kaplan-Leiserson, 2003). Future plans, states Kaplan-Leiserson, will “include a hospital and planetarium” (2003). Kaplan-Leiserson wrote that students with severe hearing impairment could learn “abstract concepts—often impossible to grasp without the use of sound” (2003). VREFALS has proven successful in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.

### Higher Education

Most colleges and universities have some form of an e-learning program. These programs have spilled over into the business and government arenas, forming new e-learning consortia, especially for MBA degrees. Carriulo (2002) states, “A major stumbling block is the fact that many still do not have ready access to computers”. “The message [is] distance learning is providing a portal not just to academic degrees but also to upward social and economic mobility” (Carriulo, 2002).

### Examples of Universities Providing E-Learning Curriculum

- **Harvard:** <<http://www.harvard.edu>>
- **Princeton:** <<http://www.princeton.edu>>
- **Yale:** <<http://www.yale.edu>>
- **Kent:** <<http://www.kent.edu>>

### Examples of Consortia Providing E-Learning

- The University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School
- The University of Cambridge's Judge Institute of Management

- Duke University's Fuqua School of Business (Abernathy, 2001)

### Examples of Consortia Providing Online MBA Programs

- UNext.com
- Pensare
- FT Knowledge
- Quisic

UNext, accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council (ACDETC), provides online MBA courses from Stanford, Columbia, and the London School of Economics–Cardean University. MBA accreditation for Pensare, FT Knowledge, and Quisic partnerships are linked directly to respective business schools awarding the credits (Abernathy, 2001).

### Accreditation

According to Abernathy (2001), “Accreditation is the number one verification of the quality of a higher-education distance education provider”. “Consumers,” Abernathy (2001) further states, “must be aware that not all [accrediting agencies] are equal or recognized,” quoting Peter Ewell, senior associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management in Boulder, Colorado. It is highly recommended to check the legitimacy of accreditations through reputable institutions.

### Accrediting Agencies

- **U.S. Department of Education:** <<http://www.ed.gov>>
- **Council for Higher Education Accreditation:** <<http://www.chea.org>>
- **Distance Education Training Council:** <<http://www.detc.org>>

American Society of Training & Development (ASTD) updates guidelines for evaluating U.S. distance education programs in response to the growth of WBT (Web-Based Training) and the increased phenomena of institutions entering into partnerships to share technology and courses (Abernathy, 2001, p. 21).

## BUSINESS E-LEARNING MODELS

Finding education, training, and development solutions can be a costly undertaking. Keeping everyone in an organization on the same page can be frustrating, exhausting, and time consuming. However, top priorities of

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