

Kazakhstani E-Learning Practice in Higher Education: The Key Trends and Challenges


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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to analyze the experience provided by e-learning in a higher education setting in Kazakhstan as viewed by university administrators and graduate school e-learners. Surveys revealed that the e-learners expressed a high interest in study at remote universities. From the standpoint of the administrators, the main challenges of distance education development are the considerable implementation costs, a lack of technical support, the need to train qualified teachers, and a need for the full-fledged development of new courses. Clarifying the implication of these challenges can help administrators develop e-learning classes in universities nationwide. The research results can be applied towards identifying the resources needed for further developing e-learning initiatives for higher education, with the goal of giving universities a competitive advantage.

KEYWORDS

Administration, Distance Education, E-Educational Environment, E-Learning, E-Teaching, Higher Education, Kazakhstani Universities

INTRODUCTION

A review of the literature would reveal that e-learning is becoming an increasingly global phenomenon especially in higher education (Alekseeva, 2015; Kislukhina, 2017; Paul & Heather, 2014) and that “the dot-com world will lead to a fundamentally transformed way of delivering and supporting the instructional process in higher education” (Pittinsky, 2002, p. 41).

Earlier, in 2012, Anderson, Boiles, and Rainey (2012, p. 4), in a survey of 1021 experts and stakeholders, found that 60% of respondents expect a relatively large change in distance education by 2020. These changes began to materialize much faster and earlier. To date, we are witnesses and users of the mass introduction of teleconferences and distance learning in higher education and beyond. The change is the fact that a significant number of training events have switched to individual, timely approaches to learning, to hybrid classes, which combine online learning components with less frequent face-to-face meetings on campus. The evaluation of university studies is changing, which takes into account more individually oriented results and the possibility of studying the subject. Requirements for graduation have significantly shifted to customized outcomes. One of the key elements of these changes is e-learning.

E-learning is a broad term that encompasses many approaches to learning, many different kinds of technological and administrative practices (Noesgaard & Orngreen, 2015; Spector, Merrill, Merrienboer, & Driscoll, 2008). The challenge in analyzing e-learning is that technologies and their educational applications are developing extremely quickly (Harasim, 2000; Wilen-Daugenti, 2009). There is an additional problem, that is, the novelty of e-learning and the interest around its effectiveness leads to various/controversial views on the ways distance learning technologies in the classroom and beyond ought to be used (Conrad, 2006; Newby, Stepich, Lehman, & Russell, 2000; Li & Irby, 2008). Summarizing the studies of e-learning/distance education/online learning, the authors can conclude about the varied and scattered opinions and judgments on this phenomenon (Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).

The changes that have occurred in e-learning lately are due both to a technological breakthrough and adaptive organizational leadership. On the organizational front, Shane has predicted (2010, p. 370) that “the more turbulent the environment, the more likely it is that the organization with the more diverse cultural resources will be better able to cope with unpredicted events. As the world becomes more complex and interdependent, the ability to think systemically... favor of complex mental models will become more critical to learning.” This complexity in society and its organizations affects learning in both content and methodology.

Merriam (2008, pp. 94-95) notes that the various contexts and multidimensional nature of learning influence adult learning itself in two main shifts. One shift is from the individual learner to the learner within the various contexts in which learning takes place. The new perspective considers “learning as part of the system’s cultural and historical norms... [and] how physical space and spatiality encourages or inhibits

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