

Models of eLearning: Technology promise vs learner needs - case studies

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Abstract

In the first paper for this project, we described a range of perspectives for reviewing eLearning interventions including what we consider to be a holistic, 'ideal' model (Collis & Moonen 2001) for establishing flexible learning, their term for eLearning. The ideal model is perceived as such as it includes and integrates four key factors: institutional drivers, implementation programme, pedagogy and technology. The reality from the provider perspective is that such ideal implementations are a rarity (Reeve & Flowers 1999; Conrath, Cuneo, Evers, Kalmin, Malinski & Warrick 1999). We thus explored the works of authors whose views were less holistic but which could lead more easily to categorisation. Benefits and drawbacks were found in each perspective. However linking them together into a framework provided a 'wide horizon' view of the way eLearning practice is evolving in UK Business Schools.

In this second paper we explore eLearning in practice, in relation to this framework of models. We characterise eLearning in four different settings and find four very different approaches. The outcomes illuminate the realities for providers, implications for learners, and pinpoint issues for future investigation. We conclude that eLearning is still in an early phase of innovation and multiple models are being presented to the market, a few of which will become the accepted standard. As eLearning embeds itself within UK business education, the debate will increasingly revolve around the assessment and benchmarking of quality of this form of learning against the more traditional paradigms.

Key words: e-learning; implementation models; evaluation policy; positioning