



## E-Teaching in Virtual Worlds : The Second Life Education

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### ABSTRACT

*This research paper tries to investigate about e-teaching and the different virtual learning environments through which e-teaching is carried out. For carrying out teaching in these virtual learning environments a virtual world is created which is basically a computer-based simulated environment intended for its users to inhabit and interact via avatars. An avatar is a computer user's representation of himself/herself or alter ego. Virtual environments like Second Life as well as Moodle promote interaction, cooperation and collaboration between students and e-teachers as well as between peers. These virtual environments allow new pedagogical approaches that enhance collaboration, as well as both asynchronous and synchronous interactions between participants. Special importance is given to "Second Life education (SLE)" as it is making an impact in the academic world and it has unique features that potentiate, collaborate, share and have different experiential learning in the virtual learning community.*

**Keywords : e-teaching, e-learning, virtual world, second life education, moodle**

### INTRODUCTION

#### The "e" terms in education

In order to discuss the "e" terms and how they relate to education, the following are definitions of e-teachers, e-learning and e-education as described in this paper.

#### Who are e-teachers, and what do they do?

E-teachers are the new generation of teachers who will work in an Internet environment in both regular and virtual classroom situations. They will build new concepts of working in time and space. E-teachers collaborate, build and discover new learning communities and explore resources as they interact with information, materials and ideas with their students and colleagues.

#### What is e-learning?

E-learning is learning which takes place as a result of experiences and interaction in an Internet environment. It is not restricted to a regular school day and can take place in a variety of locations including home, school and community locations e.g. libraries, cafes etc.

#### What is e-education?

E-education involves e-teaching and e-learning along with the various administrative and strategic measures needed to support teaching and learning in an Internet environment. It will incorporate a local, regional, national and international view of education.

The importance of a vision for e-teaching, e-learning and e-education from the exciting email activities of the late 1980s to the distance conferencing opportunities and web-building of the 1990s, enthusiastic teachers have worked hard to lead their colleagues toward an often uncertain e-teaching future.

Through e-education students can go for credit-bearing courses without ever entering a classroom. After completion of the course the students can appear in examination via internet.

An internet is capable of communication between the admin-

istration, faculty members, students, library and others on the campus, symposiums and seminars. Research presentations can be held on internet. Teachers and students can ask questions, request advice and share information. Information has become a key asset of the organization for its progress. The power of information is such that almost all decisions made in different sectors like education, science, technology, economics and business development will be based on information that has been generated electronically.

E-learning is not about screens and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Involvement in e-learning is not going to mean that teachers will spend hours sitting in front of computer screens any more than there is an expectation that their students will be doing the same. To focus on this perspective is to assume that the technology is the vehicle for all e-activity and nothing could be further from the truth. E-learning is not going to replace libraries, friends, colleagues and many of the existing social networks that contribute to a satisfying learning and teaching experience. In fact many of these will be enhanced by the ability of the teacher to access them in different ways. This is not an either/or type of learning environment but one where the Internet can be used for the things that cannot be achieved in any other way. The flexibility, availability and adaptability of the Internet environment must serve the needs of both e-teachers and e-learners.

Earlier in this paper e-learning was defined as "learning which takes place as a result of experiences and interaction in an Internet environment. It is not restricted to a regular school day and can take place in a variety of locations including home, school and community locations e.g. libraries, cafes etc." The words experiences and interaction are used deliberately rather than having access to because access does not infer that any learning will necessarily take place. Trusting computers and the Internet to instill learning is an abdication of the most essential role of teachers (Healy, 1999). E-learning is not just about having access to information any more than having access to ICT will mean that it is used effectively in classrooms. E-learning, like non-e-learning, will occur when people

are engaged in an activity they value and it is meaningful for them. Teachers are the learning and information architects of e-education and the experiences they each have will enhance and challenge their e-teaching in the most unexpected ways.

E-learning can give students much greater control over their own learning experience while giving e-teachers an opportunity to further meet the needs of individual students in a digital age (Layton, 2000; Wallhaus, 2000). A comparison of some aspects of conventional learning and e-learning are discussed below:

- In conventional learning - students attend a school in their local community or attend a boarding or correspondence school while in e-learning - students participate from a variety of locations and may "attend" multiple learning institutions and/or their local school.
- In conventional learning - students are directed to work individually or in groups while in e-learning - students may determine the times when they access e-learning opportunities.
- In conventional learning - students are generally enrolled with one school while in e-learning - students can choose to work individually or collaboratively with people who may or may not be in their regular class.
- In conventional learning - learning objectives are set by the teacher and institution while in e-learning - classes may be synchronous or asynchronous.
- In conventional learning - students follow a linear pattern influenced by the needs of other class members and the teacher's planning while in e-learning - students can follow a non-linear path at a pace that meets their individual needs at that time, i.e. just-in-time learning. The teacher is facilitating the activity.
- In conventional learning - students are developing the essential skills through the seven essential learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (1993) while in e-learning - students are developing the essential skills through the seven essential learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (1993).
- In conventional learning - teachers work in one school while in e-learning - e - teachers can work in more than one school.

To get a further understanding of the topic let us discuss some terms below:

#### What is a Virtual world?

Virtual world is "a computer-based simulated environment intended for its users to inhabit and interact via avatars".

#### What is a Avatar ?

"A computer user's representation of himself/herself or alter ego"

#### What are virtual environments ?

Virtual environments such as Second Life as well as Moodle can promote interaction, cooperation and collaboration between students and e-teachers as well as between peers. One of the drawbacks of traditional distance education has been the fact that students tend to feel lonely, isolated leading to very high drop rates. These virtual environments allow new pedagogical approaches that enhance collaboration, as well

as both asynchronous and synchronous interactions between participants. Scientists can share information by sending files back and forth.

#### About Second Life (SL) Education :

Second life is a Multi-User Virtual Environment (MUVE) that allows students and teachers to collaborate actively in projects, and to exchange ideas and information in-world. Second Life (SL) is a world that tries to reproduce the real one, including the development of rules and even its own economy. People are represented by their avatars (their 3D representations) and they communicate through chat (voice or written text), notecards, their profiles or Instant Messages (IM). The latter are delivered if the resident is not online at the moment he / she logs in.

#### Its Uses:

- ❖ Supports "a constructivist model, specifically situated learning and shared meaning through collaborative experiences"
- ❖ Supports active learning
- ❖ Supports multiple learning contexts
- ❖ Formal education – classroom, laboratory
- ❖ Informal education – museums, cultural events
- ❖ Distance learning
- ❖ Vocational training
- ❖ Special needs education

#### About Moodle

Moodle is a Course Management System (CMS), also known as a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It is a Free web application that educators can use to create effective online learning sites.

Moodle.org is the community site where Moodle is made and discussed.

#### Conclusion:

Forecasts regarding the future applications of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and Virtual World(VW) tend to be extreme. Those in favour go as far as stating that traditional education soon will come to an end: "By 2025 traditional universities may be a thing of the past replaced by a consortia of course providers with delivery system that simply bypass the classroom."- Dunn, S. L.

Virtual environments can provide grand opportunities for educational purposes, both in a technical and in a social sense, and this should be exploited to a larger extent when building educational strategies.

Second Life education (SLE) is making an impact in the academic world as it has unique features that potentiate collaboration, sharing, decision making, critical thinking and experiential learning in the virtual learning community.

Teachers need to learn how to teach in Second Life(SL) as Real Life teaching expertise does not guarantee SL teaching positive experiences.

In conclusion it can be said that as a whole the Virtual Learning Environment has a great potential for education, being required that educators identify and select the strategies and activities that are more appropriate for face-to-face context or virtual context. Nevertheless more research is required to make this world more accessible and easy to use so that educators can optimize these virtual worlds for the teaching and learning process.

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