A Need for Change in Education

Many of us can remember when personal computers were first accessible to the general public they were nothing more than glorified calculators or simple word processors, if that. There was simply no market or demand for the personal computer, the product itself created the market. This concept of a self-created market is referred to as disruptive innovation. Harvard business professor Clayton M. Christensen’s latest book, *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*, predicts the same concept is true for online education. As online education has developed and evolved it too has created its own market and demand. Also, much like the personal computer in the beginning, the quality was less than ideal. However, today many people cannot live without personal computers, and online education is becoming more dynamic and valuable then ever before.

Today, online education if delivered in a global platform can provide educators and students with valuable and dynamic skills that are becoming more and more critical in today’s rapidly shrinking world. For students who attended elementary school before the turn of the millennium, the extent of global exposure in education was limited to dusty outdated books and—if they were lucky—a dedicated pen pal.

Only in the last few decades have high school graduates even been educated in basic computer skills and programs, that would help prepare them for college or the business world. Many of the teachers instructing students in these skills learned them through post secondary education programs. There is an ever-increasing need for education technology programs that can help keep our teachers up to speed with technology and communication at a global level.

Some educational institutions are beginning to leverage technology in an innovative way to design, deliver, facilitate and manage instruction for global learners of all ages. By developing a vast global network of scholars and professionals these institutions are, “empowering educators to be evolving digital citizens who advocate cultural understanding and global responsibility.”

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1. [http://edtech.boisestate.edu/web/edtech.htm](http://edtech.boisestate.edu/web/edtech.htm)
Disruptive Innovation in Education Technology

Over the past several years, technology, careers, and job requirements have rapidly evolved. Education on the other hand, has evolved slowly and only when pushed by the needs of technology. More recently market demand has begun to push the evolution of online education rapidly.

Innovation of Education

The traditional one-to-many interaction of teachers and students is no longer an effective way to teach. This tried and true method that has been used in the American education system since the industrial revolution is now failing us as a country. According to U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, in addition to our country’s 25% drop out rate, 75% of young adults in this country aren’t able to enter the military, mostly because they’re deficient either mentally or physically. Maya Frost author of The New Global Student: Skip the SAT, Save Thousands on Tuition, and Get a Truly International Education, says, “The college graduation rate in the US has slipped from first in the world to fifteenth in only 10 years.”

Our education system was developed as a way of preparing future leaders for a completely different economic environment. Our country has drastically evolved from a nation of farmers and manufacturers to a country of global business and service providers. It only makes sense that our education system would also need to evolve. Education technology programs focused on providing unique and innovative teaching methods can help us to utilize an online format to provide “student centric” instruction.

Clayton Christensen describes online education as a form of disruptive innovation. A term he coined, disruptive innovation happens when a new product establishes itself as a simple application at the bottom of a market and eventually gains momentum, displacing competitors. Usually these are products that were once only available to a small portion of the population that had vast amounts of wealth to access them. As described earlier the personal computer is a fairly well known example of disruptive innovation. Christensen predicts that by 2019 over half of high school classes will be taught via the Internet.

For educators and policy makers this should be an eye-opening indicator of the direction that our nations educations system needs to be heading. Today’s, educators are not always provided with the resources and knowledge needed to provide a culturally and technologically diverse education.

3 September 13, 2009 Article, Worlds Apart: How the Educational System is Failing to Prepare US Youth to be Competitive in the Global Economy http://diversitymbamagazine.com/how-the-educational-system-is-failing-to-prepare-us-youth-to-be-competitive
4 Clayton Christensen’s website, http://www.claytonchristensen.com/disruptive_innovation.html
5 March, 2010 Article, Online Education Cast as ‘Disruptive Innovation’ http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/05/07/36disrupt_ep.h27.html
Innovation of Technology

In our current suffering global economy there is an increasing demand for cost effective and accessible education. Many educational institutions are facing drastic budget cuts. Turning to technology can help educators to provide quality education at a reduced cost. With online education, although initial cost of development is expensive, the ongoing costs associated with program overhead can be significantly reduced.

Through the use of various mobile devices, online education programs are now globally accessible. Individuals in third world countries lacking modern infrastructure now have the potential to tap into endless amounts of online resources as easily as someone in Manhattan.

There is a growing demand for alternative education options. Online education makes education more accessible. For our education system to evolve, educators are being required to improve their knowledge of technology. What students are taught today is critical for preparing them for their futures tomorrow. For educators, finding easy access to a high quality program that meets the needs of busy schedule can be a challenge. Online education technology programs can provide a realistic option for educators. What better way to learn how to teach technology than by utilizing the latest advancements in education technology?

Global Networked Learning

By establishing a vast global network of education scholars and professionals, an education technology program can provide endless advantages to students and educators alike.

Having the opportunity to work with different cultures helps individuals to build tolerance and appreciation of diverse perspectives. Technology in many ways helps to make initial cultural differences invisible, eliminating preconceived ideas or biases about working with others. Interacting with different cultures also helps to address challenges associated with individual differences in learning styles. These experiences are valuable and can make it easier to interact with differences in one’s own culture.

Global networks combined with technology can provide an experience similar to studying abroad without the high costs associated with travel. This expands the opportunity to a much broader population of individuals who otherwise could not spend the money or time. However, the same connections with partner universities may also help establish more beneficial opportunities to study abroad for those that can afford the hands on experience.

What to Look for in a Global Education Technology Program
There are many criteria, including personal considerations, you should consider before enrolling in any online program. However, there are a few key considerations you should look for if you are thinking of starting an online education technology program.

Accreditation
The first and most important consideration that you should look for in a good online or global education technology program is accreditation. You need to look for a program that is both regionally and nationally recognized by agencies approved by the U.S. Department of Education. These agencies ensure that you will receive not only a high quality education, but also one that will be recognized by other accredited institutions.

Internationally Recognized Faculty
Part of establishing a solid global network implies that an institution will have internationally recognized faculty. Internationally recognized faculty, have global connections and have worked with foreign institutions. A good program will make information on their faculty available to you. Look for individuals that have experience working in innovative education design and deliver methods as well as connections with foreign institutions. Faculty should also have a good balance of research and teaching.

Global Partnerships
A global partnership is a key indicator of the extent of an institution’s global network. Look to see if a program has partnered with a foreign institution to offer dual degree programs or opportunities for exchange students.

Student Focus
Despite the fact that you will be attending an online program, a strong student focus is a good indicator of a program’s dedication to its candidates. Are there opportunities for student involvement, such as an online community or student association? Is there potential for research interaction with faculty? Does the program offer scholarships and or grants?

Adaptive Curriculum
What types of courses are offered on a regular basis? A good program should offer courses with a variety of different delivery methods. Look for a program that has more live fully facilitated courses and interactive instruction as opposed to self passed tutorial type courses. There should be a good mix of asynchronous and synchronous communication with your instructors.

You should also consider the tools that are being utilized for instruction.

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"We need to use the Internet to involve students in project based assignments in the real world, taking place around the world. Incorporating social networking tools into educational curriculum is the way forward." – Ann Flynn, Director of Education Technology for the National School Board Association

There should be a variety of platforms being used to teach different courses. Avoid programs that are structured around preformed uploaded static courses.

**Focus on Emergent Technologies**
Technology is constantly changing and therefore you would expect that new courses would need to be created to keep up with those technologies. Try to find a program that offers a variety of electives and find out how often they are updated based on market needs.

**Global Community**
Finally one additional indicator of a strong global network is if a program utilizes tools to make their global community available. Does the program utilize social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter?

**Boise State University’s Education Technology Program**
Located in Boise, Idaho, Boise State University is a metropolitan research university of distinction. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) accredits Boise State University as a whole. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), approved by the U.S. Department of Education specifically accredits Boise State University’s online graduate programs in Education Technology.

The Education Technology program is a high quality online program that offers various paths of study that include: graduate certificates, master’s degrees, and a doctoral degree program. They have also partnered with the National University of Tainan, located in Taiwan, to offer a unique dual degree opportunity to qualified candidates. All of their courses are online and accessible anywhere in the world. Courses are developed to be interactive and include a mix of asynchronous and synchronous communication methods between the candidates and professors.

Virtual learning environments such as Moodle and Second Life along with various social networking tools are used to offer different methods of content delivery. This variety effectively engages and simulates interaction amongst classmates, enhancing the learning experience and community.

Each of the program’s instructors is a professor not a facilitator and is actively involved in research related to the latest advances in education technology. Their research is incorporated into the design, delivery, and content of each class.

Boise State’s vast global network of education scholars and professionals, along with their interactive approach to online learning makes their program ideal for anyone, anywhere, interested in gaining a broader understanding of education technology.

*Empower your Career in Education with Global Networked Learning*
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