

Seven myths of distance education (or realities?)



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Seven myths (or realities?)

1. universities do lifelong learning
2. distance education is about access
3. technology is the answer
4. e-learning replaces distance education
5. e-learning is a new and better pedagogy

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Seven myths (or realities?)

6. e-learning will make money and globalize the market
 7. anyone can do distance education
- Then lessons to be learned
Realities in green

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Myth 1: Universities do lifelong learning

lifelong learning essential for knowledge-based societies
market for lifelong learning = those leaving high school
DE most appropriate method for LL
universities not interested in LL
professors already overloaded
new economic model needed

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Myth 2: Distance education is about access

DE: originally commercial
UK Open University: access
open universities worldwide
now DE about money: more access
to HE, ideological shift to right
the promise of cost-effectiveness
access still important for many

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Myth 3: Technology is the answer

New technology better than old?
learning resource management
systems (LRMS), e.g. new WebCT,
Blackboard

- **integration with admin**
- **higher cost - open source**
- **Lone Rangers - poor design**

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Myth 3: Technology is the answer (cont.)

Web conferencing (synchronous)

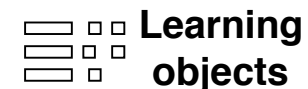
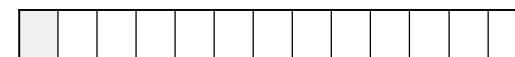
- **bandwidth limited off-campus**
- **high cost of software**
- **group interaction difficult**
- **poor design (real-time lectures)**
- **want good design models that**
integrate wideband to desk-top
with asynchronous learning

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Myth 3: Technology is the answer (cont.)

Learning objects (content
management) Course



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Myth 3: Technology is the answer (cont.)

learning objects: graphics, tests, animations, assignment questions, text

meta-tagged: IMS/SCORM/CAREO

high cost of implementation

business model/intellectual property?

context-free objects/classification?

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Myth 3: Technology is the answer (cont.)

cheap, reliable, accessible technology needed for DE

using advanced technology is research not teaching

design/project management/cost-effectiveness as important

using people often more practical

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Myth 4: e-learning replaces distance education

key issue: do students have access to the technology?

in most developed economies and for middle class: yes, but not for the poor

thus mass media of print/broadcasting still important for many target groups

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Technology and flexible learning

← blended learning distributed learning →

classroom aids mixed mode

face-to-face (less face-to-face + e-learning) distance education

no e-learning fully e-learning

←-----→

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Myth 4: e-learning replaces distance education

most e-learning aimed at campus-based students
distance education needs better

- **course design**
- **learner support**
- **administrative systems**

THEN it can be integrated

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Myth 4: e-learning replaces distance education

economics of e-learning different from mass distance education: economies of scope, not scale

Mass DE	E-learning
Higher access	Lower access
Lower quality	Higher quality
Lower cost	Higher cost

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Myth 5: e-learning is a new and better pedagogy (Peters, 2002)

Yes, e-learning is better than mass media distance education pedagogy:

- **greater interaction: student-teacher and student-student**
- **better integrated media**
- **better learning outcomes**

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Myth 5: e-learning is a new and better pedagogy (Peters, 2002 - cont.)

But no, e-learning is not yet a new pedagogy, e.g.

- **collaborative learning**
- **problem-based learning**
- **critical/creative thinking**

are also classroom based
difference is flexibility

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Myth 5: e-learning is a new and better pedagogy (Peters, 2002 - cont.)

technology and time/place of delivery different

needs of learners constant:

- **read, observe, think, practice, receive feedback, assessment, and accreditation**

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Myth 5: e-learning is a new and better pedagogy (Peters, 2002 - cont.)

but, e-learning could be a better pedagogy

new media adopt earlier formats

So far, potential of e-learning under-exploited

need to match potential to new learning outcomes that prepare for knowledge-based society

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market

Late 1990's: e-learning frenzy

e-learning for profit; global markets

Many for-profit initiatives failed (e.g. New York University, Temple University, FATHOM, Open University in USA)

US\$20 million lost on average

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)

ethical and credibility issues

e.g. Universitas 21 Global

degree transcripts have logos of all 19 universities

Thomson chooses authors

self-accreditation (U21 Pedagogica)

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)

**Profit in niche markets, e.g.
University of Phoenix Online:
26,000 students, vocational
corporate e-learning
MBAs (Queens, Athabasca)
other continuing professional
education degrees**

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)

**Masters in Educational
Technology (for teachers)
UBC/Tec de Monterrey: joint
degree + T de M degree
fully online: English and Spanish
certificates + master**

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)

**partnership since 1996:masters
opened 2002
joint degree: 80 students a year
Tec de M degree: 200 + per year
fee: US\$9,000, paid per course
full cost recovery inc. overheads
and risk = new research faculty**

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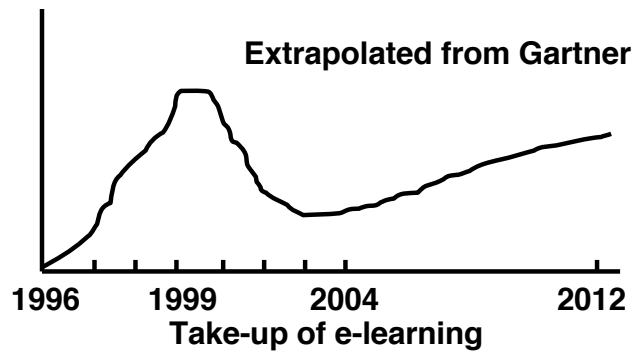
Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)

**Students choose known brands:
e.g. MET joint degree (English)
UBC on-campus students: 20%
rest of province: 24%
rest of Canada 23%
international (31 countries) 33%**

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)



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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)

Lessons:
different financial strategies for different markets
as student fees increase, DE becomes more attractive to institutions because of marginal costs (UBC undergraduate fees = 80% of DE costs, < 50% f2f)

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)

Lessons (cont.)
students want the real thing: don't exclude the star professors from DE (but protect them)
integrity matters: don't dilute brand
cost-effectiveness matters: project management + quality assurance

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Myth 7: anyone can do distance education


ostriches, geeks and amateurs
lesser problem when DE and classroom teaching separate
e-learning forces the issue
professors and managers don't understand need for help (apprentice model - research on learning not known)

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Myth 7: anyone can do distance education


Lone Rangers: distance education + WebCT or Blackboard
too much effort: no boundaries
poor interface/graphics/more time than professionals
no economies of scale
deter other professors



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Myth 7: anyone can do distance education

Project management: establish projects work in a team





- professor + course developer + web designer

schedules/budgets/product funding linked to project management

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The continuum of design

class-room aids	hybrid learning	multi-media	distance education
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technical help
less — change in methods — more
more up-front money

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Myth 7: anyone can do distance education

Ph.D. training for research, not for teaching
technology provides more choice in teaching
choice requires knowledge
train for teaching or put in team

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Myth 7: anyone can do distance education

HECTIC report: need for training implications for senior management:

- understand the issues around technology, e-learning and distance learning
- courses, training, and rewards

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Myth 7: anyone can do distance education

Technology raises the skill level of both teachers and managers in higher education

Teachers and managers in higher education are inadequately prepared for quality technology-based distance education

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Goal: cost-effectiveness and quality assurance

added value of professional DE: high quality at reasonable cost

- clear academic goals
- instructional design
- project management
- accurate budgeting
- evaluation and maintenance

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Implications for higher education institutions

roles of professors must change pedagogy + organization of teaching: face-to-face, hybrid, distance

technology raises skill level formal training/qualification

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The challenge

distance education needs to be more integrated with mainline teaching yet distance education remains uniquely different
professors need to work alongside distance education professionals
distance education is a highly satisfying professional career

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Further information

Bates, A. (2000) Managing Technological Change San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
Bates, A. and Poole, G. (2003) Effective Teaching with Technology in Higher Education San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
<http://bates.cstudies.ubc.ca>

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market

Growth of consortia:

Universitas 21 Global	Western Governors Univ.
Global University Alliance	Kentucky/Michigan Virtual
Cardean U	Canadian Virtual U
Fathom	e-University

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Myth 6: e-learning will make money and globalize the market (cont.)

Criteria for success:

- 1. widens student program choice**
- 2. coherent degree programs**
- 3. full credit transfer**
- 4. courses taught by regular faculty**
- 5. increased enrolments/access**
- 6. financially sustainable**

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