

Educational levels of Internet use

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A close examination of the use of the internet by educational institutions could lead to a simple definition, such as, 'the use by educational institutions of the world wide web to facilitate educational activities'. While this definition is technically correct, it fails to explain the full range and use of the Internet by educational institutions. This poster describes and illustrates four levels of Internet usage identified by the author in educational institutions.

Keywords: internet, education, world wide web

Overview

The relatively rapid embracement of information and communication technologies by educational institutions has forever altered approaches to the provision and sequencing of educational activities, has modified the way information is presented to learners and has changed the ways teachers and institutions communicate with students, students communicate with teachers, the institution and each other (Illinois Online Network, 2006; Suhonen & Sutinen, 2006). However, the levels of integration of the functionalities of the web and the internet differ from one educational institution to another (Clayton, 2006; Clayton, 2007). For example, some institutions may establish informational websites providing potential students with information on courses offered, on staff roles, responsibilities, research interests and qualifications, physical and virtual resources available to students and maps illustrating the layout of the institution, past, present and upcoming events and a range of policy documents. Other institutions may supplement these institutional information resources with a range of student and tutor areas to make available links to external resources, course units, notes and handouts and tools to encourage interactivity. Still other institutions will deploy sophisticated learning management systems incorporating resource publication and presentation functionality, the ability to communicate asynchronously and synchronously, formal and informal assessment options and access to student administration tools such as electronic logs, results and grades.

Levels of Internet use

This poster describes and illustrates the four levels of web and Internet usage identified by the author in educational institutions. These are;

1. *Informational*: Information, such as upcoming events, course syllabus, class notices, tutorial and lecture notes and links to required text and other resources are provided.
2. *Supportive*: Links to supplementary resources, the library, Internet sites are provided as well as opportunities to participate in competency-building courses in areas such as note taking, essay writing and examination preparation.
3. *Blended*: While the course may have a face-to-face component a number of major course components such as quizzes, chat, messaging and tutorials using threaded discussion are held solely on the web.
4. *Dependent*: All course activities such as enrolment, assignments, assessments, and simulations, entire course content and activities are on the web.

Educational institution levels of use and the resulting Internet-Learner relationships created are illustrated in Figure 1 *Educational levels of Internet use* below

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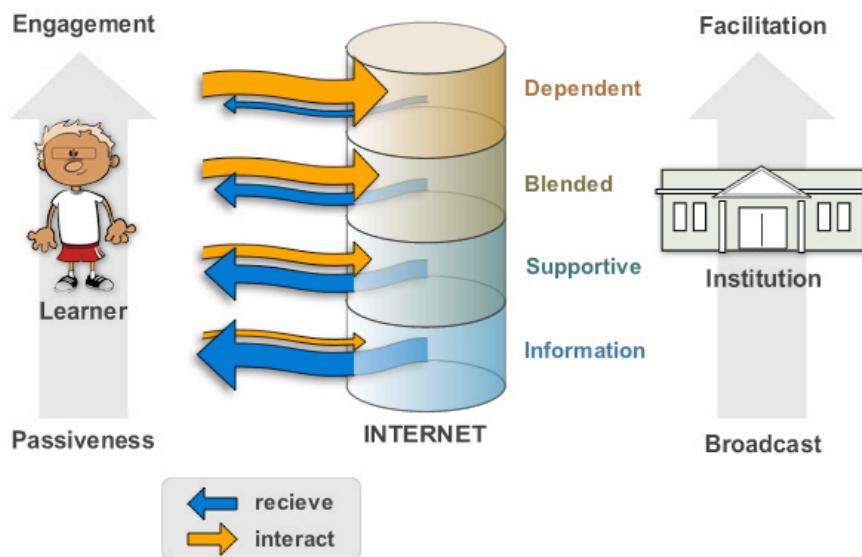


Figure 1: Educational levels of Internet use

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