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E-Learning as a Way for Professional Development

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Анотація

В даній роботі розглядаються шляхи професійного розвитку та самовдосконалення, використовуючи можливості сучасних комп'ютерних та мережевих технологій; розкривається суть поняття «e-learning» та проводиться компаративний аналіз існуючих дистанційних он-лайн курсів(MOOCs), які працюють на різних навчальних платформах.

Ключові слова

Дистанційна освіта, електронне навчання, освітня технологія, масові відкриті онлайн-курси, навчальні платформи

Abstract

This work studies the ways of the professional development and self-improvement using the opportunities given by the modern computer and network technologies; it also reveals the essence of the concepts "e-learning" and gives the comparative analyses of the existing MOOC courses working on the basis of different learning platforms.

Keywords

Distance education, e-learning, educational technology, massive open online courses (MOOCs), learning platforms.

The work of every specialist presupposes constant self-development and self-improvement. In order to be able to remain high-class specialists, people should keep pace with the latest developments and technologies in their related fields. It is obvious that one must enhance his/her professional level regularly. Modern technological developments give everyone such an opportunity. Distance education has become a reality that greatly simplifies the access to education. It is becoming more and more popular and efficient nowadays.

According to Swan and Brehmer (1994), distance education refers to "the simultaneous delivery of instruction from a host site or classroom to remote site(s), coupled with real time live audio and real time live video interaction between teacher and student(s)". [1] The notion of distance education is closely connected with e-learning. The term "e-learning" came into use in the mid-1990s along with developments in the World Wide Web. It is formally defined as "electronically mediated asynchronous and synchronous communication for the purpose of constructing and confirming knowledge". [2, 3] E-learning emphasizes mobility and interaction, and is indistinguishable from modern educational technologies.

Many scientists working at the sphere of e-learning agree that "educational technology includes numerous types of media that deliver text, audio, images, animation, and streaming video, and includes technology applications and processes such as audio or video tape, satellite TV, CD-ROM, and computer-based learning, as well as local intranet/extranet and web-based learning". [3] It is obvious that a great number of information and communication systems underlie many e-learning processes.

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) have become recent developments in distance education. They were first introduced in 2008 and emerged as a popular mode of learning in 2012. They are aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. A great number of universities from around the world provide different online educational courses in various spheres of activities. So, everyone having desire to deepen his/her professional skills or to master some new sphere of activity has an opportunity to do it without leaving his/her home. In addition to traditional course materials such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions between students, professors, and teaching assistants. The work of MOOCs is based on learning platforms which are "an integrated set of interactive online services that provide teachers, learners, parents and others involved in education with information, tools and resources to support and enhance educational delivery and management". [4]

In fact, a learning platform contains a set of tools that work together to provide educational theory and practice using the means of the latest technological developments. Learning platforms can be described as the next generation of Virtual Learning Environments or Learning Management Systems used by educational

institutions. The major difference is that a VLE and LMS is an application, whereas the Learning Platform share characteristics with an Operating System (or CoursePark Platform) where different educational web based applications can be run on the platform.

For modern educators looking to provide the best tools and services for e-learning solutions, here are a dozen top resources offering various online courses to consider. Their work is based on the close cooperation with the leading world universities which develop on-line courses accessible for everyone.

edX is one of the leading sites for accessing massive open online courses. The venture was founded by Harvard and MIT, and offers classes from those prestigious institutions, as well as material from an expanding list of partners.

MIT OpenCourseWare provides a free publication of the course materials that reflect almost all the undergraduate and graduate subjects taught at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It should be noted that OCW does not grant degrees or certificates, it does not provide access to MIT faculty and the materials may not reflect entire content of the course.

FutureLearn is a massive open online course learning platform founded in December 2012 as a company wholly owned by The Open University in Milton Keynes, England. It is the first British-led massive open online course learning platform, and as of March 2015 it included 54 British and international University partners and – unlike similar platforms – it includes four non-university partners: the British Museum, the British Council, the British Library and the National Film and Television School.

Udacity is a for-profit educational organization. It is focused on merging education with technology to help make learning accessible, engaging, and effective to the world. There are currently 14 different classes that students can enroll in, all of them are related to technology: Introduction to Computer Science, Web Development, Interactive Rendering, Artificial Intelligence, HTML, Game Development, Applied Cryptography, and others. All the courses are free for students to take and they can be done at their leisure.

Coursera is an online portal that hosts courses from universities around the world. It was founded in 2012 and as of May, 2015, Coursera had more than 1000 courses from 119 institutions and 13 million users from 190 countries. All the courses are accessible for free but you need to pay fee if you want to get a certificate. Coursera offers a mobile app for iOS and Android operating systems.

In 2015 similar educational platform Prometheus was developed by Ukrainian educators on the bases of the courses developed by the leading scientists and educators from Ukrainian universities.

E-learning attracts a great number of followers around the world. It has become an important part of modern society, comprising an extensive array of digitization approaches, components and delivery methods. Modern technological developments give people a great number of possibilities. So it is no doubt that distance learning and online educational tools are rapidly growing in popularity worldwide.

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