

ABSTRACT
PARALLEL WORKING SESSION

TEACHING & LEARNING

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Role of Virtual Learning Environment in changing the traditional learning methods

The virtual learning environments certainly have the potential to dominate or perhaps replace the traditional classroom learning as there are currently thousands of schools and colleges operating on the Internet and it is now possible to get a degree without ever having to leave the comfort of your own home. Virtual learning environments are hugely diverse in size, capabilities and services offered, and can cater for individuals ranging in attainment levels, ages and special needs. With our own personal experiences of virtual learning environments being little more than a text only Web page, the current uses of these new virtual environments and how they utilize technology to create a more interactive learning curriculum.

The technology emulated the role of traditional classroom equipment and teaching techniques and that can be successfully transferred to virtual learning. Our study on virtual environments has raised questions about the extent to which students' needs were being met and how students adapted to these new interactive virtual environments that has now become an integral part of our learning environment. More flexible, comprehensive and dynamic communication is now possible through the available technologies of video conferences, live broadcasting, and faster connection speeds. There has been a significant rise in interest towards practical implementation of Internet based virtual learning, as educational institutions and individuals have realized the benefits of these virtual environments.

In a physical classroom there is a standard set of equipment and tools, this usually includes audio-visual equipment such as textbooks, a chalkboard, video player, and tape recorder. Virtual environments need equivalent equipment and tools in the form of network-based software application to allow a group of instructors and students to carry out the learning process. The sophistication of such software structures vary widely, from simple electronic mail systems to systems that have been specially enhanced to support classroom-like experiences, such as virtual auditoriums. Some of them are well established on the Internet and new ones are still emerging. the goal of virtual text books is to move learners beyond content mastery to information-seeking and problem solving skills that include evaluating and synthesizing information from diverse sources; understanding and applying the difference between fact and opinions; grasping multiple and diverse perspectives; and drawing insights from these perspectives within the context of one's own knowledge base and experiences. (Siegel and Sousa, 1994).