

How online learning is changing the face of education

Technology disrupts by its very nature. This is evident in many sectors where Uber - the biggest competitor to metered taxis - does not own any vehicles. The hospitality industry has seen a shake-up with Airbnb becoming a massive competitor without owning any real estate in the hotel industry.



We are seeing the same trend in education. Start-up EdTech (Education Technology) companies are getting higher valuations than traditional classroom-based colleges and schools. For example :

- In 2017, we saw the acquisition of a South Africa-based online education provider by a US-based education technology company for US\$103 million (R1.466 billion). If you consider that the education provider doesn't own a single classroom it becomes a staggering paradigm.
- In February 2018, it was announced that an online education start-up in the US, specialising in offering hi-tech subjects to students online, received a US\$1 billion valuation (R14 billion).

So why is online learning growing so fast?

The answer lies in the ability for education companies to scale using technology-based platforms called learner management systems (LMS). "Classroom-based learning presents logistical challenges and a higher cost per unit for delivery," says Lisa Schneider: managing director of the Digital School of Marketing. "Typically, we refer to this as the 'bums in seats' model. Online learning simply requires a device (smartphone, tablet or laptop) and internet connectivity."

Can you study as effectively online as in a classroom?

The answer to that question changes as technology evolves. A lecture delivered in a classroom has a see-and-touch aspect to it that is missed with online lecture videos. However, the benefits of online lectures videos are misunderstood, as every individual has a unique way of absorbing information. Many studies have proven this, as learning paths and the absorption of information are specific to each person.

Undoubtedly one of the biggest benefits of an online lecture, as opposed to a contact learning lecture, is the ability to **do four things that can't be done in person: pause, rewind, fast forward and replay. This allows a student to be in control in terms of how they absorb content. For this reason, we can understand why online learning is disrupting the traditions of classroom-based learning.**

Online learning is growing exponentially. More people are understanding the benefits and buying into the proposition of studying online. This disruption brings exciting new opportunities.

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