

Education innovation in new learning environments

The University of Pretoria has embraced the new information era and the use of technology for e-learning in a holistic way. A key strategic initiative of the University is the implementation of organisation-wide education innovation to promote the notion of *cheaper, better and faster*. UP has developed substantial expertise in telematic learning and education innovation, supported by a modern and sophisticated infrastructure. UP believes firmly that, to be in the forefront of knowledge creation, management and dissemination, we should continue to develop and fully utilize our already considerable capacities in the ICT (information and communication technology) environment. Knowledge management and even the innovation of the learning process itself, is part of the new information age.

Education innovation is multidimensional and aimed at all levels and areas of educational practice. The key focus of education innovation is to promote the effectiveness and efficiency as well as the quality of educational activities at the University – where possible to optimise these. The focus is therefore on the innovation of existing contact education activities. Education innovation entails far more than merely the application of technology. The use of ICT (information and communication technology) to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of education is an example of education innovation. Technology plays a role in the support and optimisation of contact education, the enrichment of teaching and learning environments and the design of new opportunities.

Education innovation and flexibility within a new learning environment is the way forward when providing *education for the innovation generation*. The aim is therefore to provide a full range of academic and administrative services to learners in all walks of life using optimal, innovative techniques. At one end of the spectrum, and for some learners, conventional contact education as the dominant mode of instruction will be maintained, with effective use of new information and communications technologies to enhance teaching and learning. For other students, particularly mature and adult students, not able to

be on campus full-time, the notion of lifelong learning compels us to provide a different mode of access to knowledge and opportunities for attaining tertiary qualifications. Flexible learning environments, enhanced by technology, form part of the education approach in the repertoire of a fully comprehensive institution.

E-learning is offered through the appropriate integration of various information and communication technologies (ICT) including the worldwide web (WWW), interactive multimedia, computer-assisted assessment, interactive television and video conferencing. UP has developed a virtual campus that provides for integrated administrative services, web-based courseware and instructional materials, academic support services and extensive e-communication facilities. The latter allows for interaction between lecturers and students and amongst students. Simulations, the use of CD Roms, computer-based testing and on-line tutoring may all form part of the package.

An innovative education model introduces the concept of flexible teaching and learning.



Students are now enabled to structure their education around their own lifestyle, choosing, when, where and how to study.

The physical location of the place of instruction has become less important than the question of effective interaction between teacher and learner,

and efficient transfer of information, leading to world class, relevant qualifications. The University of Pretoria believes that the contribution it can make is enhanced by innovative approaches to delivery and an unwavering commitment to quality education.

Compiled by Tom Brown
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