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Students' Overview: the Impact of Technology on Learning in Higher Education

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Students’ Overview:
The impact of technology on learning in Higher Education

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Motivation:
Students are the end users of the Information Systems that educators use to enhance students’ learning experiences. These research studies were undertaken to obtain students’ perspectives (as the end users) on the uses of technologies in higher education to assist educators in improving the pedagogical design of e-learning platforms alternatively known as learning management systems or Technology Enhanced Learning.

Introduction:
In April 2009 this survey was conducted in the Faculty of Business, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the findings were presented in a chapter of a book, “Critical Design and Effective Tools for E-Learning in Higher Education: Theory into Practice” (R. Donnelly, Harvey, & O’Rourke, 2010). The title of the chapter was “The Student Perspective: Can the use of technologies transform learning?” In March 2010 this survey was conducted in the School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College Dublin (TCD). The datasets collected in both surveys were analysed and comparisons of the findings presented.

Methodology
An evaluation of current literature was performed to identify key attributes to be explored. From these attributes statements were devised to seek student perspectives regarding the issues identified. A survey was compiled to ascertain students’ perspectives on the concept that the use of technology in Higher Education has the ability to transform learning. Permission was sought and granted from the Research Ethical Clearance Committees in both the Dublin Institute of Technology and Trinity College Dublin to conduct this research.

Positive difference to studying
Using technology to augment lectures
Enhances the learning experience of students
Technology will make lecturers disposable
Technology could replace interaction with lecturers
Technology could replace interaction with peers
Increased satisfaction with course
Improves student engagement

What use of technology has the most beneficial impact on student learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DIT</th>
<th>TCD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online lecture notes/podcasts/video casts/e-learning</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to access a large selection of information</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to academic journals/databases/books/library</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No time constraints, access anytime day or night</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion:
The statistics outlined in this research indicate that even though students expect technologies to be used in higher education, they realise that lecturers form the backbone of third level education, and while technologies can effectively be used to enhance the students’ learning experience, the use of technologies in higher education will never replace the lecturers.

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The co-operation received from students of the Faculty of Business, Dublin Institute of Technology, and also from students of the School of Computer Science and Statistics, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, Trinity College Dublin, who gave their time so graciously to complete surveys. Their involvement in this study was paramount and we are deeply indebted.

References: