A Study on e-Learning for Philippines

Reynato C. Arimbuyutan[1], Seoksoo Kim[2], Jae-gu Song[2], and Wooyoung So[3]

[1]*Department of Multimedia Engineering, Hannam University(PhDIT)*
[2]*Department of Multimedia Engineering, Hannam University*
[3] *Dept. of Computer Engineering, Hannam University*
racrtcab@yahoo.com, sskim@hannam.ac.kr, bhas9@paran.com,
wsoh@ hannam.ac.kr

Abstract

Filipino culture places a high value on education. For the majority of the Filipinos, the only best thing for a child to acquire and secure a better future is through education. So, they want more effective education system. E-Learning is still an emerging market in the Philippines. Its use is still sporadic and most users represent only a small segment of the Philippines education and business communities. The study wants to correct analysis and right direction presentation for Philippine remote education environment.

1. Introduction

Development of information Technology and knowledge information society transfer brought huge change of education filed in the world. In fact, Educational infra of Philippines was meager before 4~5 years. Also computing and Internet infra it will not support to education environment. But Philippine education environment changed fast during 2000~ 2006 years. Development of network environment is big effect of computer game by Philippine young generation. Also, effect of education reform policy that Philippines government. Philippines making e-Learning systems for remote education environment. And, there is progressing various project with more interest about e-Learning. Therefore, the study wants to correct analysis and right direction presentation for Philippine remote education environment.

The study is structured as follows. In chapter 2, environment of education in the Philippines. In chapter3, environment of e-Learning in the Philippines, Lastly, e-Learning environment and prospects of the study is made in chapter 4.

2. Environment of Education in Philippines

2.1. Culture of about Education in Philippines

Filipino culture places a high value on education. For the majority of Filipinos, the only best thing for a child to acquire and secure a better future is through education. Because a good education has become increasingly hard to attain nowadays, there is increased demand for new and more convenient ways to obtain a post secondary school degree. Even the government has tried to change the formal school system by introducing new methods in learning. TESDA started with the identification of highly in-demand skills and then designed a Competency Based method patterned after the Australian government's Competency-Based Training (CBT). This application combined self-learning approach and formal classroom instruction.

CHED reported a total enrollment of about 2.5 million tertiary students in 2006 while TESDA has about 0.5 million school-based enrollment and another 0.7 million non-school based enrollees that includes (training centers operated by TESDA), community-based (training centers financed by the local government) and enterprise-based (corporate sectors) for a total of about 3.8 million in enrollment.

The prime advocates that spearhead the drive to incorporate e-Learning technologies into the Philippines school system are educators from prominent universities like the University of the Philippines which has established in 1995 the UP Open University (UPOU), as an alternative to traditional classroom. It has started offering fully accredited classes in 2001. The University of Sto. Tomas (UST) have added in their curriculum an e-learning course that provides learning materials on-line named as e-LeAP (e-Learning Access Program). Moreover, Ateneo de Manila University, the Dela Salle University and other major universities offer some form of online courses. Many of these academic institutions use prepackaged programs brought from suppliers, although some schools are now creating their own programs using a variety of software options.

Some schools, under the TESDA use Moodle, which is an open-sourced Course Management System (CMS) to help educators create on-line learning communities in carrying out their technical and vocational programs.

On-line degrees however are still fighting an uphill battle to be recognized as legitimate equivalents to traditional degrees. There are only a few number of students use these services. Consider the culture of the Filipinos preference for a face to face interaction as learning process and are used to classroom training.

2.2. Infra of Computing and Internet in Philipines

During the recent conference of Computer Manufacturers, Distributors and Dealers Association of the Philippines (COMDDAP) last October 2006, they have estimated that there are over 1.53 million personal computers (PCs) in the country (i.e. about 1 computer for every 57 Filipinos), and roughly 7.82 million people can readily access the internet, which puts the internet penetration at about 9.0 percent. Users access the internet through their own personal computers, corporate facilities, schools and the growing Internet Café business. It is estimated that internet dial-up still predominates (80 percent of the total internet users) up to the moment. The big telecommunication companies PLDT, Digitel, Smart and Globe put enormous marketing campaign for DSL and broadband shift though. Internet penetration and infrastructure is superior in urban centers like Metro Manila.

Between 2000 and 2006, the number of internet users increased by about 291 percent, fueled by affordable pre-paid cards (preferred by Filipinos), increased access and interest, but most of all since users are dominated by Filipino youth, on-line gaming. Added to this is the desire of the corporate sector to identify more cost-efficient and productivity-enhancing training methods and the academic sector's drive to improve learning techniques to cope with the rest of the wired world.

3. Environment of E-learning in Philippines

3.1. e-Learning in Philippine Schools

E-learning can be regarded as a relatively new concept in the Philippines and is still in its embryonic stage. Although open and distance learning has been documented to be introduced in the Philippines way back in 1952 through the Farmers' School-on-the-Air program over a one kilowatt radio station in the province of Iloilo, the development of distance education, much so of the e-learning environment lags far behind more industrialized countries due to a relatively lack of infrastructure, investment, and a pedagogy applicable to many Filipinos.

3.2. Corporate Training

The first to adopt online corporate training methods in the Philippines were the multinationals. Big local corporations followed suit namely: the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT), Manila Electric Company (MERALCO), the Aboitiz Group, Unilab among others.

These companies applied e-learning methodologies to cut cost and improve their human resource development system.

Take into account the experience of PLDT, they used e-learning techniques to significantly increase its number of certified CISCO network associates and to train employees across various operational functions. Using their customized solution Smart force as its packaged software they were able to encourage employees to pursue training in any area of the business they had interest in and blending e-learning with hands-on projects. PLDT estimated that this kind of "e-cross training has saved the company over US$400,000 in training expenses over the past five years.

3.3. Education Market Trends

E-Learning is still an emerging market in the Philippines. Its use is still sporadic and most users represent only a small segment of the Philippines education and business communities.

There are no stereotypical e-learners; schools large and small can be found using the technology. There is a slow adoption of e-learning mainly due to underdeveloped infrastructure, high cost and the propensity of the Filipinos to maintain the status quo instead of implementing changes in training and learning system and processes. Two major types of e-learning solutions have begun to emerge in the Philippines (1) prepackaged, off-the-shelf courses; and (2) custom solutions. Currently, cost is a major consideration in adopting an e-learning solution, especially given the current exchange rate. Some schools and businesses elect to outsource their e-learning needs from some local distributors such as SkillSoft, Thomson NetG, Datatrain and Element K, while others build their own materials using Microsoft Office products and the Web.

Many technical schools provide certification preparation and training by applying e-learning methods. IBM has also ventured into a customized on-site training, consulting, course delivery transformation and outsourcing. Yapster, Inc. (2studyIT), a local distributor of Thomson NetG(USA), Element K(USA), Datatrain and other software providers for e-learning has penetrated the market. Also, some Asian neighbors have provided customized content such as ICUS and PurpleTrain.com (Informatics) from Singapore which offers business, IT, and health sciences program fully online.

4. e-Learning Environment and Prospects

The design for a good formula to suit the Filipino preference will open the opportunity for growth of e-learning in the Philippines. It will benefit individuals who place high value on education and the desire to succeed. Even those self-motivated and dedicated adult learners are most likely to benefit from fully online courses. And those who belong to large organizations such as universities, big communities, large and medium-sized businesses that can reduce their training costs and improved learning standards. In the final analysis, to remain competitive in the global workforce the Philippines has to give total attention to e-learning development and be used by business professionals, students, administrators and government offices.

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Authors

Reynato C. Arimbuyutan

Received a B.S degree in Science in Agricultural Engineering from Central Luzon State University, Philippines, 1980 and M.S. degree in Science in Information Technology from Central Luzon Polytechnic College, Philippines, 1983.
In 1991 he joined the faculty of College for Research & Technology of Cabanatuan city, Philppines where he is currently a president and head, IT department in College for Research & Technology of Cabanatuan city. His research interests include Multimedia systems, System Architecture.

Seoksoo Kim

Received a B.S. degree in computer engineering from Kyungnam University , Korea, 1989, and M.S. degree in Information engineering from Sungkyun-kwan University, Korea, 1991 and Ph D. degree in Information engineering from Sungkyun-kwan University, Korea, 2002.
In 2003 he joined the faculty of Hannam University, Korea where he is currently a professor in Department of Multimedia Engineering. His research interests include Multimedia Communication systems, Distance learning, Multimedia Authoring, Telemedicine, Multimedia Programming, Computer Networking. Information Security. He is a Member of KCA, KICS, KIMICS, KIPS, KMS, and DCS.

Jae-gu Song

Received a B.S. degree in Multimedia from Hannam University , Korea, 2006. And currently, On the M.S course in Multimedia engineering from Hannam University. His research interests include multimedia network system, Ubiquitous system, Medical information system, Network security.

Wooyoung Soh

Received a B.S. degree in Computer Science from Jung-Ang University 1979, and M.S. degree in Computer Science from Seoul National University 1981 and Ph D. degree in Computer Science from Maryland University 1991.
In 1991 he joined the faculty of Hannam University where he is currently a professor in Department of Computer & Multimedia Engineering. His research interests include Nueral Networks, Information Security, and Computer Networking. He is a Member of KIPS, KIISC, KMMS, KIAS, and DCS.