

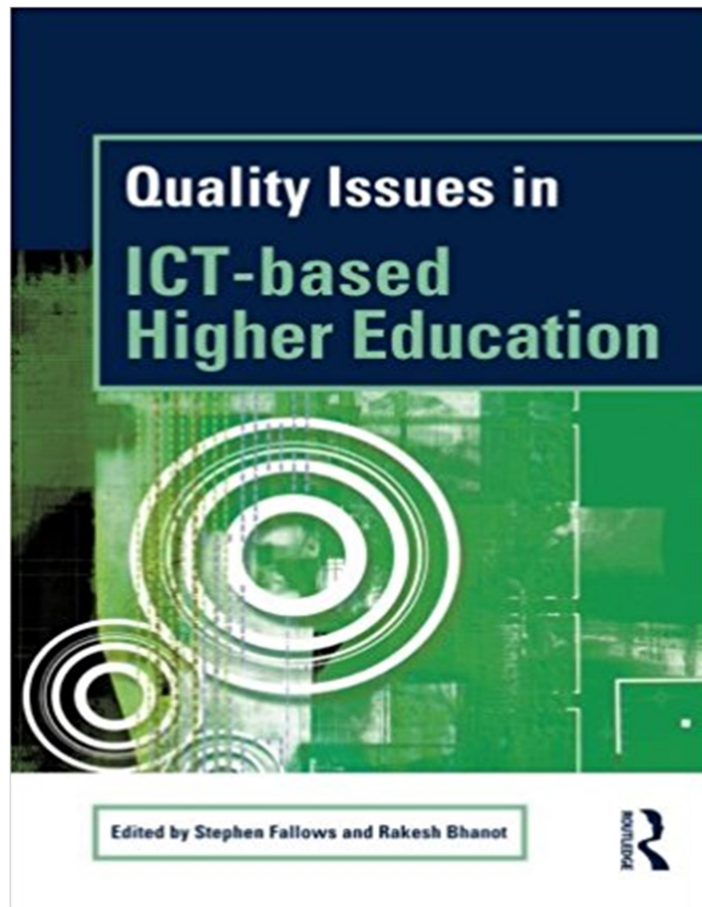
Quality Issues in ICT-based Higher Education

(Book Review)

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Stephen Fallows and Rakesh Bhanot

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Introduction

It is obvious that growing range of *Information and Communication Technologies* are not tools or processes that organizations or *Higher Education Institutions* are simply able to incorporate into their existing practice without significant change. For some institutions, it is beneficial to use the occasions offered by ICT development to stimulate deep and thoughtful review of fundamental principles. Whereas, to some organizations, the changes in ICT in higher education is something to be handled with care, as they may put at risk standards, quality, pedagogy and reputation that has been carefully built up over many years.

This book consists of 16 chapters which present diversity and range of using ICT in higher education system. Using ICT and Quality Issues are matters of concern in all higher education system, and it is vital to develop an international perspective as to using ICTs effectively to deal with the issues due to the emerging development in *Information, Communication and Technologies*. Meanwhile, ICT is affecting all aspects of student experience, challenging the exclusivity of the teaching space and redefining the opportunities for learning.

In this book, Stephen Fallows and Rakesh Bhanot provide various unseen issues that Higher Education Institutions encounter while implementing and effectively putting new technologies in learning and teaching process. Authors of the book also put forward essential solutions to make it available for not only for Higher Education System, but also any fields related to using ICT in learning and teaching practice.

Presentation

Chapter 1: Quality in ICT-based higher education: some introductory questions

In this chapter, not only does the author go into the key concept “quality” in higher education, but also points out some key themes which as writers take “quality” in higher education into their careful consideration as well. Besides, the author mentions how those can be put into the specialist area of ICT based education.

At the beginning of this chapter, the author defines “ICT” as “the coming together of computers with telecommunication technologies”. Then, the author compares the predecessors’ instruction which only dirty chalks and no-technological equipment were used in English language classroom with modern-day instructors’ teaching which is highly equipped with sophisticated ICT tools in higher education.

The author also propounds some key questions which are supposed to be asked by teachers. The questions mainly emphasize if the usage of ICT CAN enhance the quality of learning and teaching; whether the usage of ICT DOES improve the quality of learning and teaching; HOW the usage of ICT boosts the quality of learning and teaching; and at the end, the author puts forward 2 questions on whether we are fully enabled to maximize the quality of benefits which can arise from the usage of ICT and whether we are utilizing expensive equipment to achieve no more than those predecessors who only take advantage of non-technological tools and dirty chalks.

Then the writer presents 5 example situation in order to answer the key questions listed above, which pose challenges to the institution worldwide. These examples comprise the usage of the electronic library; whether technology improves presentation or not; if Email increases ease of feedback; whether ICT opens educational opportunities; whether the ICT is as good as the training offered.

The electronic library: in this example, the writer alludes to the fact that institutions nowadays purchase a large proportion of journals in electronic format which grant students the right to utilize those facilities instantaneously. But later, the writer notes that students’ world nowadays alters from searching for information to focusing on the evaluation of the quality of massive information that is available to them.

Technology improves presentation: in this example, the writer questions the technologies which have been used for preparing presentation such as with Powerpoints and Word format.

The writer also puts questions to the students' work about whether Word-processed document (or other technologies) is better than those hand-written assignments. The answer to those questions remains unresolved.

Email increases ease of feedback: in this example, the author mentions advantages of using email in giving feedback process, and Email is an appropriate means of communication for students to ask questions on a range of issues. Even using email provides fat chances for both teachers and learners, but most of the times have to be spent in response to deal with trivial messages. Using emails could be beneficial for students who reside in the remote area, but it could not be the same matter for on-campus students. The author also argues whether using emails improve the quality of higher education.

ICT opens up educational opportunities: undoubtedly ICT enhances the options and opportunities for a certain amount of learners. Distance learning is given as the outcome of ICT usage. Educational institutions move from face-to-face delivery to online degree or courses widely available to students. Only facilitating institutions with advanced ICT equipment is not effective for improving the quality of education, additional training and orientation programs should be launched and offered in order to use highly advantage of ICT tools. Plus, additional financial outlay could be a burden for institutions and learners.

All in all, it is believed that ICT improves the quality of education. And it is also believed that it is not sufficient to only purchase the equipment; it is also necessary to invest in the development of the people who will use it.

Chapter 2: Moving into uncertain terrain: Implementing online higher education.

This chapter assesses on the experience of over five years of research and development of Coventry's web-based, virtual learning environment "Learn Online". Learn-online is considered as a strategic educational development project. In this chapter, the author also takes four phase of the development process in hand.

Important elements of risk management are also analyzed via the broad issue of space and timing of changes and the interplay between formal and informal management processes. The project, in terms of project management terms, is approached from an action research and development stage.

Then the writer summarizes that certainties emerged from implementing online higher education is far outweighed by the measure of uncertainty. Teaching and learning techniques which underscore the process is the one that seeks to manage rather than control changes in organizations.

Chapter 3: Quality assurance issues and processes relating to ICT-based learning.

This chapter emphasizes on factors such as administration, students' lives and works over large geographical areas and various state-based structures distinguished universities in Australia from those in other parts of the World. Quality assurance of distance learning is not a new concept in Australia. Adopting various ICT types appropriately for flexible delivery poses a new challenge to build on what has been acquired in the past to develop related new processes that are going to satisfy students by delivering high-quality learning outcomes. The author also points out that it is the first time to rely on robust technology which academics and students' are able to adapt and integrate into ways which enhance learning. ICT places on demands on staff development accompany, and they need to rethink ways to assess and assure the quality of the courseware produced using those technologies and assessing and evaluating student learning outcomes.

Chapter 4: External quality assurance initiatives: impact on ICT-based programmes.

This chapter uses several examples of guidelines proposed by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education which considers the influences that external agencies with a quality assurance remit can have on the development and implementation of ICT-based programmes. The recommended guidelines signify distance learning but have understandable application to any use of ICT in higher

education. This chapter identifies various issues that those developing ICT-based programmes need to address.

Chapter 5: Building quality into ICT-based distance education.

In this chapter, Marc Griffiths delivers the education environment at the H.Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC) as a teacher-centered environment. 'Traditional' teaching and learning activities are largely utilized in the classrooms. Lectures are described as dominant content deliverers. This college increases the number of its technological tools, and one of the institutions goal is to have instructors utilize this technology more effectively and efficiently in the process of learning and teaching. The college drives to incorporate technology into education, it is expecting to leverage its existing technology infrastructure to implement a web-based distance education system that suits the college's unusual geographical circumstances. The new venture must make a quality of learning available that is equivalent to or better than that of the face-to-face classroom.

Chapter 6: Unlocking key barriers for staff on the path to an e-University.

This chapter discusses and analyzes key barriers for staff on the path of development from a conventional campus university into the model of delivery based upon ICT- an e-University. The author also alludes to those above-mentioned barriers to be overcome and e-learning is one of the most important competitive advantages a university can possess. While introducing these key obstacles, the author also points out some suggestions to unlock abovementioned barriers. Those key barriers are as follows: institutional distractions; confused perceptions of leadership and decision making; skills and staff-development issues; E-critics, communications and overload problems and quality problems which staff encounter. The author also highlights the identification and unlocking of key barriers with the specific goal of learner achievement in mind.

Chapter 7: Ensuring quality in computer-based assessment.

In this chapter, authors try to define 'quality' which has been an ambiguous concept and there is multitude of both formal and informal definition to be found. The author also demonstrates quality as "hard to define, impossible to measure and easy to recognize"(Kitchenham, 1990) In this chapter, writers take computer-based assessment (CBA) system in hand due to the fact that it can produce an optimum balance of criteria rather than an ideal solution. CBA system is assessed through a pedagogic, operational, technical or financial perspective relying upon their roles and responsibilities in the system. The quality issue is also described by stakeholders as a structural approach such as integration, staffing issue, examination design, system testing and system integrity. All in all, authors also conclude that it is vital that the system generates detailed procedures that are based on risk reduction or elimination so that quality system will be delivered when implemented.

Chapter 8: ICT and Quality in the research process

In this chapter, the writer brings up the fact that modern information and communication technologies have been used in researchers. Personal computers, software tools are freely available to populate cyberspace with sites offering specialized information, software tools, and virtual meeting places. The writer seeks to examine ways in which such developments can influence the quality of research. The author also argues whether these developments can ensure quality in the teaching of research methods or research-related activities. In terms of the quality of subsequent research, the emerging situation is one of the partial gains and potential traps. The danger to be considered is that these technologies called "magic button" can beguile the unwary, and this can be applied to research activities. From data analysis angle, software such as data-minding tools can facilitate the process of analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, and free the researcher from exhausting time-consuming procedures which often involves complex mathematics. If the errors made by human are removed, the quality of research could be enhanced. All in all, the writer summarizes that ICT resources could help to improve the quality of the research process. Not only do these software tools automate certain aspects of

research, but also it approximates the researchers own judgment. It is recommended to researchers that these available ICT tools have limits, and to remind the researcher that the overall quality of a research project depends ultimately upon the application of their own higher cognitive skills.

Chapter 9: ICT: A major steps for disabled students.

In this chapter, Eastwood reviews the benefits which accrue to disabled students via the use of ICT. It is argued from the perspective of someone who has direct experience of this issue over many years of study at three higher educational institutions or organizations and all procedures from BA degree through Ph.D. The author also emphasizes the vitality of using ICT tools to students, especially disabled students such as: transcribing notes or recording from lectures; receive lecture notes or assignments for missed lectures by email, via the Internet and Disc; submit written work via email or discs; use computer for presentations and receive lectures feedback or comments through by email. The author also puts forward different proposals to enable disabled students to use educational technologies and have the equal opportunities like their able-students. With the help of ICT, disabled students do not distance themselves from abled-students or segregate from the general students. From the authors perspective, audio equipment, ergonomic equipment or visual equipment can be utilized in special centers by which disabled students have the equal chances as everyone has. At the end, the author presents that the key to the future of ICT in higher education must be "Integration " rather than "segregation". Otherwise, other forms of discrimination may unwillingly be introduced.

Chapter 10: E-mentoring

This chapter brings up a topic "E-mentoring" which has been implemented and developed by educational institutions in recent years. This chapter looks at mentoring generally; e-conversation; ways in which e-mentoring has been put into practice; raising some issues about e-mentoring, and consider how e-Mentoring could be developed and enhanced in the future. As with various ICT tools within education, implementing an e-Mentoring arrangement requires training, structure,

and review in order to ensure a high-quality service. At the end of this chapter, the author also points out some key elements of e-Mentoring, for example, mentors need support which includes providing support, giving feedback, regular reviews, training workshops etc. The author also underlines that both mentors and mentees should have basic information about each other before they start mentoring relationship. The author also infers that e-mentoring does not suit for everyone, but for those who can develop a positive e-mentoring partnership, the tremendous benefit could be obtained to all involved.

Chapter 11: Networked professional development

This chapter focuses on the emerging role of ICTs in networked professional development. A wide scope of strategies for supporting networked professional development are taken into account including the use of online guests, archiving, mixed models of interaction, pairing and participants, personal projects, mentoring and computer and computer-mediated conference. Using ICTs has been achieved a widening interest in supporting staff development as well as an interest in staff development. The author also gives thoughts to the necessity of using ICTs in higher education, teaching, and learning. Staff development also needs to acquire the in-depth experiential understanding of computer-mediated teaching and learning for themselves to develop and maintain a pivotal role in the dynamic changes occurring in the university sector at the beginning of the 21st century. The author also maintains that using ICTs in networked professional development should be contemplated with care by those who have an interest in the field of staff development in higher education.

Chapter 12: Networked staff development: A case study

This chapter describes an initiative to explore modern practice and professional development needs among staff developers aiming to introduce a new practice of networked staff development, particularly for teaching and learning. The author also carried out a research of an online short course for staff developers and they conclude some finding at the end. The author also describes a work as a part of

provision and support of computer-based collaborative group work project in the school of education. At the end of this chapter, the writer also displays the importance of networked learning and also illustrates that attitudes of participants and colleagues are an issue in the effectiveness of any provision. This issue can also function against any flexibility of provision and also reduce any cost-effectiveness implied in networked staff development. This may infer that an experiential program is also needed for senior management and a study skill program for networked learning. Without aforementioned changes, networked staff development is risky being expensive and ineffectiveness.

Chapter 13: Postgraduate supervisor development through ICT

In this chapter, the author presents the Postgraduate Supervisor Development Program which has been implementing since 1998 in University of Sydney. This chapter also discusses the origin and development of flexible learning program for the academic development of postgraduate supervisors. They support this online program with online materials in which academic staff are freely able to arrange their own progression and retrieve resources at any time that is convenient for them and their supervisory responsibilities. It lays emphasis on the programme's participatory modes of learning which create an environment where supervisors can reflect on their own supervision as a basis for understanding their supervisory practice.

Chapter 14: Cutting out Computer Anxiety (A scissors-and-cardboard approach to learning about computers)

This chapter underscores the innovative teaching of computer technology via the deconstruction of cardboard computers. The author presents the teaching and learning activities and outcomes in relation to this innovation. The writer also discusses bearing on the creation of an effective learning environment. This chapter also concludes the transferable features of this study particularly with regard to “computer-anxious students”. The author also pinpoints various problems in teaching and learning such as impedance mismatch and describes holistic and serialist learner; engaging the tactile, 3-D note-taking. The writer also talks about the

importance of assessment. At the end, he draws a conclusion and lays emphasis on computer anxiety. In a nutshell, the writer has shown that the experiential model of learning that is established provides a novel and effective way of introducing computers to what might otherwise be groups of resistant learners.

Chapter 15: Dealing with Internet Cheating; Countering the online 'paper-mills'

This chapter discusses the effect of the internet on students who take advantage of it for intending to cheat. The availability of enormous free information and quickness of 'cut-and-paste' has created a generation of students who often seem more at ease moving information around than comprehending it. A mathematic professor delivered a 'teaching effectiveness' workshop in Coastal Carolina University entitled 'paper mills and you'. The author points out some important discourses delivered by a professor about the issue of Internet Plagiarism, the current state of Internet 'paper-mills', detection and tracking down of plagiarized papers and solution to combating Internet plagiarism. This chapter maintains expansion on the original presentation to provide guidance to teaching staff, librarians, and administrative staff who are grappling with the issue of plagiarism in a wired environment. At the end of this chapter, the writer also argues if it is true that students can get research papers off the Internet. And the author also provides some solutions to fight against plagiarism in students term-papers or homework.

Chapter 16: Developing a Quality Careers Education Using ICT.

This chapter discusses that using ICT to deliver careers education in higher education institutions which can usually provide favorable conditions, such as easy access to the Internet. The writer articulates some advantages and issues related to the introduction of career management skills online at the University of Reading and more recently at the University of Luton. The author also points out the situation that a number of academic staff have been 'converted', and most departments are now involved in delivering an assessing careers education. The writer also lays an emphasis on the usage of CMS(Career Management Skills) which can improve many situations in many ways. The chapter also maintains that CMS plays an important

role in developing personal and professional development skills as part of the curriculum. Feedback also has continually indicated that students are not passive recipients of CMS information, but active participants in personalized career development learning. The author also draws the conclusion from Reading's success that using ICT to enhance quality career education is very transferable in higher education sector. Not only does CMS boost developing a quality career education, but also it could be adapted relatively easily to other institutions.