

'Discuss the expectations of **FE/HE** students in an increasingly interconnected, digital world and examine the potential implications of these expectations for teachers in the twenty-first century.'

1 The modern world is one of rapid economic and technological change. Digital
2 technologies play a large part in daily life and have considerable influence on
3 not just how we communicate and access and provide information but also
4 have considerable influence on how we learn and teach (Kear, 2011). This
5 essay will briefly discuss the expectations of **FE/HE** students in an
6 increasingly interconnected, digital world. Research will be outlined, which
7 demonstrates the potential implications for teachers in the twenty-first century.

8 Individuals bring a wealth of experience gained from a technologically
9 enhanced world. Younger learners draw from their experience of using mobile
10 phones, games consoles and other electronic equipment for both
11 entertainments as well as for communication. Mature learners may also gain
12 experience from using technology at work and are increasingly likely to have
13 internet access from home. Growing up and living in a technology- enabled
14 world impacts upon how these students learn enabling different expectations
15 of teachers in terms of content, delivery and of flexibility of access to such
16 resources. Learners therefore expect to be able to access such technologies
17 in their choice of institutional environments, be it a traditional university or an

18 institution more typically associated with distance learning such as the Open
19 University (Kear, 2011).

20 Savin-Baden, Gourlay, Tombs, Steils, Tombs and Mawer (2010) propose a
21 number of implications to arise for the role of teachers in FE/HE education
22 as a result of the growing use of Information and Communication Technology
23 (ICT) in helping to develop knowledge and skilful practices. School methods
24 of delivery have heavily influenced the present-day student and the move
25 from education being essentially teacher-centred, textbook driven, pencil and
26 paper schooling has resulted in an expectation of the teacher as being a
27 facilitator who guides and helps students to turn information into knowledge
28 (HMSO, 2009). Students also expect the personal element in study. Whilst
29 some staff may see this as being easily transferrable to virtual learning
30 environments, training in developing such expertise has additional time
31 implications for teaching staff (HMSO, 2009).

32 The use of technology in learning and teaching has therefore increasingly
33 altered the role of staff in education and whilst some support is available to
34 offset the technical challenges of using ICT, Savin-Baden et al (2010) suggest
35 a focus on how students perceive learning in such environments has resulted
36 in minimal advice to be found in terms of pedagogic structuring. A changing
37 role to being one of a mentor or facilitator presents a potential dilemma for
38 teachers as they attempt to balance the requirement of giving students what
39 they expect in terms of personal contact whilst lessening the teacher-student

40 bond and increasing student independence through affording them the
41 freedom to create and develop knowledge (Maier and Warren, 2000).

42 A further significant issue worthy of consideration is the time required for
43 online work as additional time is required when teachers are new to using
44 such technologies or when uploading resources in setting up new courses. A
45 qualitative study by Coppola, Hiltz and Rotter (2002) reported the large
46 amount of time involved in the planning and running of an online course. Their
47 findings showed online teachers considered this to be particularly noticeable
48 when getting students started. However, advance preparation can highlight
49 some tacit practices, which serves to enable us to question more deeply what
50 we are trying to achieve and why (Kear, 2011).

51 In conclusion, it can be seen that different expectations highlight the need to
52 develop twenty-first century skills through adjusting the way we teach to meet
53 such needs and expectations. While the use of technology in twenty-first
54 century education can be flexible, creative and afford opportunities for
55 teachers to enhance practice, it is also challenging and complex and as such,
56 educators face an ongoing challenge in determining how far we go to meet
57 them.

References

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