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Online Learning

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Online Learning

Introduction

The Internet has forced technology to offer convenient options to learning. Online learning or eLearning has become a popular alternative for students providing a variety of learning platforms to the academic arena. Courses and complete programs are being offered online or as a distance learning option to receiving a degree. There are hybrid and blended course offerings that take advantage of the best features of face-to-face and online learning.

Online learning has evolved into virtual interactions, learning and thinking experiences. This paper will explore the features of online learning with comparison to the face-to-face learning experience. Specific advantages and challenges to learning online will be revealed.

Disadvantages of Online Learning

Face-to-face interactions between the learner and the instructor and among the learners is difficult to replicate in an online environment. The face-to-face experience offer visual and auditory instruction with instant feedback and confirmation. Face-to-face interaction present natural opportunity for networking among learners. Building relationships with the instructor and fellow classmates require more effort when interacting or engaging through distance learning.

Results from a survey-based research study at the University of Wyoming confirmed the importance of student engagement in online learning. Online courses that emphasize student engagement with other students, the instructor and course content. The relationship between student and instructor were most important to the students who participated in the survey (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

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Self-direction is necessary to making choices and proceeding through distance education programs. Learning styles and motivation are important to self-assess when making a decision between face platforms. Individuals usually have a preference for how they process new information. The three primary learning style are visual, auditory, and tactile*. A *sample* Learning Style Assessment can be found at the Education Planner website (PHEAA, 2011).

Online learning usually requires more reading to complete assignments and understand the course requirements. The online learning experience for a student require self-discipline and attention to time-management and organizational skills. Interpreting assignment objectives and instructions may involve asking questions. Receiving timely responses to questions require a student to take the initiative to be prepared to learn through discussion, reflection and collaboration.

Advantages of Online Learning

Online learning offers convenience and flexibility. It eliminates transportation and scheduling obstacles for learners. Stay at home parents can continue their education. Full-time employed individuals can obtain their degree online without interrupting their work schedule. Students can take advantage of their peak learning time of the day or night to complete their learning assignments.

Online courses provide learners with opportunity to develop experience with technology that can enhance their employability skills. The distance learning environment require navigating learning platforms or learning new software applications and mobile apps. It can involve creating and sharing content or incorporating audio/video materials

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into assignments. Other skills that can be developed include organizing and planning course
requi others, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating self-
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Responding to questions through online discussion forums provide learners with more
time to compose and edit a response. Online discussion forums offer shy students more
opportunities to participate in class discussions. Sharing responses online can inspire more
participation by students taking more risks to respond without an audience.

Distance education offers self-paced learning enabling continuous access to materials
with repetitive practice available. Learners have the opportunity to study the course materials
until they have developed a confident level of understanding without feeling distracted or judged
from classmates.

Additional Challenges

Educational institutions that offer distance learning platforms are constantly faced with
new technology. Learning management systems must be compatible with a variety of devices
and adaptable to accommodate learners with disabilities. Online courses must be designed in
accordance with accreditation standards.

Finding a legitimate, accredited distance learning program with courses that provide a
high level of quality education is the challenge to learners. Learners are challenged to realize
their potential for contributing to learning online and succeeding in an online environment.

Conclusion

Online learning has increasingly become a popular platform to obtaining an education.
There are disadvantages and advantages to both online and face-to-face learning. Understanding

the interaction, learning and thinking differences between the options is crucial when considering an online education.

The convenience and flexibility offered to learners appears to outweigh any disadvantages to learning at a distance. Academic leaders and potential students continue to embrace the challenges to offering and obtaining a legitimate, accredited distance learning credential.

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References

Martin, F., & Bolliger, D. (2018, March 20). Engagement Matters: Student Perceptions on the Importance of Engagement Strategies in the Online Learning Environment. *Online Learning*, p. <https://olj.onlinelearningconsortium.org/index.php/>

Bibliography Style
APA Sixth Edition

PHEAA. (2011). What's your Learning Style. *Education Planner*. Retrieved from <http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles.shtml>

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