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**“ONLINE EDUCATION AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS: A
CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS”**



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1. Abstract

With the development of technological changes, the Internet has made the learning easy as possible and education process also changes to a great extent. Many researchers, educators are interested in conducting online learning rather than class room learning. In the pandemic situations the online education plays a major role and its very helpful and useful to the students to improve their learning and career. Educators should construct the possibilities by providing students opportunities to think more, increase their analytical power, imagination, and self-awareness. The fast development of Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) has made number of benefits to the education. Online education provides a way for higher education institutions with more possible learning outcomes. There is a wide range of online programs, courses that make the students interactions much larger. The technology, software all helps the universities, students, teachers to collect the data, feedback, evaluation regarding online experiences. This paper reviews the overview of trends in the online learning, definitions, concepts, literature reviews, methods and benefits of online learning.

Key Words: Online learning, Concepts, Literature reviews, Methods and Benefits.

2. Introduction

With the fast development of Internet, many institutions, universities, colleges offer wide variety of online courses which is an alternative to traditional face to face learning. According to Harasim (1989), online education is a new method of learning that combines distance education with the use of computerized communication. Online learning is common in many higher education institutions offering hybrid courses along with face to face teaching. , McIsaac and Gunawardena (1996)) defined distance education as “no more than a hodgepodge of ideas and practices taken from traditional classroom settings and imposed on learners who just happen to be separated physically from an instructor” .Regarding the aspects of technology and organization, Moore and Kearsley (2012) defined that “distance education is teaching and planned learning in which teaching normally occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technologies as well as special institutional organization”. Effective online learning consists of well-designed course, interaction between instructor and learners, well supported instructors etc. With this teacher plays a major role in online education.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To understand about the concepts of online education system, their methods and benefits
2. To analyse the importance of online education in higher education institutions
3. To review the online education literature and past studies.

4. Methodology of the Study

This is a conceptual paper developed on the basis of reviews from literature. This helps to understand the concepts, methods and importance of conducting online education programs. Secondary sources such as Websites, Journals, Reports, Publication of professionals and books are referred for drafting the entire paper.

5. Concepts and Origin of the Construct

Distance education was originated in United States in the 1800's when teachers and learners of university of Chicago tried to connect through different correspondence programs (Mclsaac & Gunawardena, 1996).

Years later, the development of radio as a communication medium during World War I opened the door for using that technology for distance education in colleges and schools. With the popularity of television in the 1950s, visual instruction became possible for the first time between teachers and students who were not in the same locations. As computer and emailing technology originated in the 1970s and 1980s, distance education began to expand dramatically. The first fully online course was offered in 1981, and the first online program was established by the Western Behaviour Sciences Institution (Harasim, 2000). The World-Wide Web (WWW) in 1991 was powerful for the expansion and growth of online teaching and learning.

Online education is termed in different names such as eLearning, online learning, blended learning, computer-based learning, web-based learning, virtual learning, tele-education etc. There are quality programs that offer online education. Faculty, students, administrators all must understand the uses of online education programs through learning experiences.

6. Methods and Benefits of Online Programs

Some of the important uses of online learning are its ability to educate students, it is used as a professional development, provides a world class education to anyone anywhere by using

broad band connection. (Bartley & Golek, 2004, De la Varre, Keane, & Irvin, 2011, Gratton-Lavoie & Stanley, 2009, Lorenzetti, 2013).

Moore and Kearsley (2012) in their study identified the following reasons to the need of online programs such as increase access to learning and training as a matter of equity , provide opportunities for updating skills of the workforce ,improve the cost effectiveness of educational resources , improve the quality of existing educational structures ,enhance the capacity of the educational system , balance inequalities between age groups , deliver educational campaigns to specific target audiences ,provide emergency training for key target areas , expand the capacity for education in new subject areas, offer combination of education with work and family life ,add an international dimension to the educational experience.

Finch and Jacobs (2012) according to him it helps to reduce time and costs for travel, increasing opportunities to access and collaborate with expert professionals in a global range, providing students with flexibility to access courses at their convenience, and allowing adjustments to subjects and content need.

Online education programs are divided according to University-Based Online Education, whose users are individuals enrolled in universities for the purpose of obtaining degrees and diplomas and Massively Open Online Courses (MOOC), , whose users are self-motivated individuals and whose programs are based on their learning goals, p knowledge and skills, and similar interests (McAuley, Stewart, Siemens, & Cormier, 2010; Schroeder, 2012).

6. Positive Findings of Online Programs

There are a large number of studies that find positive statistically significant effects for student learning outcomes in the online or hybrid format compared to the traditional face-to-face format. Some of the positive learning outcomes are improved learning as measured by test scores, student engagement with the class material, improved perception of learning and of the online format, stronger sense of community among students, and reduction in withdrawal or failure, (Riffell and Sibley, 2005). Jean-Luc was an archaeologist who needed to fulfil a general science course to graduate. He had not performed well in a traditional science course and when he saw there was a hybrid environmental biology course that included bi-weekly online assignments in lieu of the traditional lecture, he thought this might work better for him. He found that the online assignments gave him time to think and reflect about the materials better than the traditional lectures. This led him to understand the ideas

more thoroughly, which allowed him to participate more during face-to-face active-learning exercises. He also felt that he had more meaningful online and in-person interactions with the professor since he was able to participate more than he usually did in a science class. As a result, Jean-Luc had a deeper understanding of environmental biology and he did well in the class, above the average performance of his face-to-face counterpart and well above what he expected from himself. This simple example illustrates the kind of stories that can be told in these positive studies.

Navarro and Shoemaker (2000) found that student learning outcomes for online learners were as good as or better than traditional learners regardless of background characteristics and that the students were greatly satisfied with online learning.

Rovai and Jordan (2004) examined the relationship of sense of community between traditional classroom and the blended format, and they found that students in the blended format had a stronger sense of community than students in the traditional format. In a study that compares learning outcomes for students who self-selected into the online format for a macroeconomics course, researchers found that after correcting for sample selection bias, test scores for the online format students were four points higher than for the traditional format (Harmon & Lambrinos, 2006).

In a study conducted at Ithaca (Bowen & Ithaka, 2012), students were randomly assigned to the traditional format and a hybrid interactive online learning format that met once a week where students did most of the work online. The researchers found that there are comparable learning outcomes for both groups and that there was the promise of cost savings and productivity gains over time for the hybrid course. Furthermore, these learning improvement and cost saving gains are expected to increase as new tools and software for online learning are being developed and tested continually.

7. Literature Review

Many quantitative studies (Bennett & Bennett, 2002; Goodwin, 1993; Hara & Kling, 1999) have been conducted study to determine the effectiveness of on-line learning.

Petrides (2002) conducted a qualitative study to determine learners' perspectives on web-based learning. The research was conducted in a blended university online class, which means the class was a one-semester regularly scheduled class with web-based technology as a supplement. When interviewed, some participants indicated that they tended to think more

deeply about the subject areas when responding in writing as compared to giving verbal responses. They explained that they were able to continually reflect upon each other's reflections because of the public and permanent display of the discussion postings on the Web. As stated by one participant, "There is something that forces you to think more deeply about subject areas when you have to respond in writing" (Petrides, 2002,). Another participant reiterated this opinion, indicating that the online technology allowed more reflection than in face-to-face classroom discussion.

Vonderwell (2003) interviewed 22 students in regards to their perceptions of their asynchronous online learning experiences. Some participants expressed that the asynchronous environment allowed them to write carefully about their ideas.

Flexibility is an area of strength of the online learning environment that has been identified by researchers (Petrides, 2002; Schrum, 2002). In Petride's (2002) study, he reported that participants revealed that it was easier to work in collaborative groups in an online course, since there was no less needs to rearrange everyone's schedule. In addition to flexibility with time, choices related to the learning experience were also reported as positive.

Chizmar and Walber's (1999) study on web-based learning environments guided by principles of good teaching practice also indicated that the ability to freely pick and choose from the menu of diverse learning experiences enabled them to find the approaches that best fit the way they learn.

Convenience is also an advantage reported in the online learning literature. Poole's (2000) 865 study of student participation in a discussion-oriented online course, the findings indicated that students participated in online discussions at the times which is most convenient to them, such as on weekends. Poole also found that students mostly accessed the online course from their home computers, which was the place most convenient to them. Other researchers have also found similar results that online learners read and respond to instructor's comments in online discussions at times convenient to them e.g. early morning, late evening (Murphy & Collins, 1997).

8. Conclusion

Online education is a growing trend, Institutions should offer more online programs with more students' participation, there are positive benefits for using online programs. With this changing technology the entire nation should be well developed with this online



communication programs. Students, teachers, educators everyone should be updated with the modern trends in online communication. New technologies, the Internet, video, net-meeting, etc makes higher education more accessible and affordable for many students.

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