

Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning

***Dr. Kamlesh Dhull & **Er. Hardik Dhull**

***Abstract**

Online learning has become an integral part of every student's life. The sudden outbreak of a deadly virus caused Covid-19 Pandemic all over the globe. This situation challenged the education system across the world and forced the educators and students to an online mode of teaching and learning. Online learning is a method of education where students learn in a fully virtual environment. It is an internet based learning that connects the students of diverse backgrounds and takes place across distance and not in a traditional classroom. Online learning is catalyzing a pedagogical shift in how we teach and learn. The paper includes the importance of online learning, its strengths and weakness.

**Key words: Online classes, students, teaching, learning, advantages, disadvantages*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, online learning turns out to be more and more practiced. Many traditional universities started to share their courses online for free. It represents an easy and comfortable method to achieve knowledge in almost every field, from law and accounting, to human sciences, such as psychology and sociology or history. Online learning is a great alternative to traditional universities, especially for people who can't afford the time and money to take real courses. But what are the advantages and disadvantages of online learning?

Online learning is a method of education where students learn in a fully virtual environment. It is an internet based learning that connects the students of diverse backgrounds and takes place across distance and not in a traditional classroom. Online learning is catalyzing a pedagogical shift in how we teach and learn. This is a shift away from top down lecturing and making the passive students to a more interactive, collaborative in which students and

instructor co-create the learning process. This is a student centered approach which empower students as active learners.

Online courses call for a greater amount motivation and self-discipline than a classroom-based course. A classroom has one or more instructors and peers, who can hold a student accountable for their course-work. In contrast, online courses involve setting our own goals, tracking progress and meeting deadlines. One does not learn effectively in isolation so online courses do offer discussion forums, email and one-on-one support. Technology also adds on to the visual experience by incorporating animations that can be used interactively for effective learning and communication.

Many factors impact students' happiness with online learning, according to Roberts et al. (2005). This comprises student-teacher contact, peer-to-peer interaction, content, distribution mode, technological assistance, and support services. Motteram and Forrester (2005) state that technological knowledge and a certain level of familiarity with computer and internet technologies are required for learners to profit from online educational activities. Other elements that impact online learning include computer accessibility and cost, as well as a steady and fast internet connection, as evidenced by several research findings (Billings et al., 2001; Scollin, 2001). According to Thurmond et al. (2002), students' happiness with online classes is dictated by their actual experiences with them. In their study, the researchers Thurmond et al. (2002), Rodriguez, Ooms, and Montanez (2008) discovered that effective teaching and learning in an online setting leads to pleasure. Studies have shown that time is an important component in online teaching and learning, and that students' online learning is influenced by flexible study time and the usage of different sources of media to complement instruction. Students' happiness with online learning is influenced by dynamic and engaging course design combining visuals and text with learners having various alternatives to reply, according to Song et al. (2004). On the plus side, online learning environments enhance access to content and provide students the freedom to learn at their own speed, in their own location, and at their own time (Chizmar & Walber, 1999; Smith et.al., 2005). Students have many alternatives for accessing material and communicating with classmates and teachers through e-learning platforms; this flexibility and control allows them to be self-motivated and self-regulated learners (Limniou & Smith &, 2010). Online learning platforms also

provide richer learning experiences and assist students in becoming self-directed and autonomous learners (Singh, O'Donoghue, and Worton 2005). According to studies, online learning places the onus of learning on students, increasing their sense of responsibility and control over their education (Holley & Taylor, 2008). According to Tao et al (2006), this new environment for learning that is centered on electronic networks has allowed learners in universities to receive individualized support and also to have learning schedules that is more suitable to them as well as separate from other learners. This facilitates a high interaction and collaboration level between instructors or teachers and peers than traditional environment for learning.

Online education in the context of schooling

As students progress to higher classes in school, they seek more autonomy and intellectual freedom. Online learning can help them pursue highly individualised learning programmes, possibly even college level courses. These, combined with hands-on exercises, real world exploration, and thorough assessments, can be highly beneficial to their learning progress. They can explore their options by trying out introductory topics from different fields, before committing to a specialisation. Online learning platforms can help these students become more independent learners, before they make their way into college. I believe that we must not hold back students from pursuing an online course but instead provide them guidance as they navigate through it.

Mobile apps that provide enhanced learning opportunities for school children have become quite popular as of late. Since mobile phones have already found their way into their hands, these apps are being used to supplement classroom learning. Teachers and parents need to act as anchors and mentors, curating the kind of educational content students are exposed to, during this tricky phase of exploring the right career to pursue.

Virtual public schools, that offer full fledged K-12 education have already sprung up in some parts of the world. They even offer a combination of the traditional system with online education. There are programmes that provide support to families that wish to home-school their children in the form of online course material. These programmes bring parents and

teachers into the fold, by involving them in their child's education from the get go. However, their effectiveness in the long term needs to be studied.

Online learning programmes will also open up opportunities for children from the weaker socio-economic communities who have limited access to learning resources i.e. teachers, text books and infrastructure. It will connect them to a global network of online learners, exposing them to new perspectives. The ideas that they receive will not be limited by the number of heads in one classroom.

In Indian context, online teaching is a relatively new phenomenon as compared to traditional classroom teaching and this COVID-19 induced sudden lockdown made the transition to online teaching more cumbersome and unworthy to many learners. Meaningful online learning and teaching needs proper planning to cater diverse needs of students. Compromise in this planning leads to unproductive learning, resulting in non-accomplishment of learning objectives and learning outcomes. This sudden but much needed shift lacked this planning and analysis of students' needs and skills. Affordability and accessibility of computer and internet technology to vast majority of India's population combined, with lack of comfort and support; and familiarity with technological tools, may make learning unworthy, time-consuming and stressful to many learners. Amid this unprecedented crisis, there is a timely need to assess the efficacy of online learning to see whether the intended objectives of using online learning to support students' learning is achieved or not.

As we all know that teaching and learning have to change as per the needs and compulsions of present day. There are many reasons why online programs have been popular form of learning today or we can say it is need of the hour. So there are some strengths and of online learning which I am going to discuss here.

1. **Anywhere** : The main advantage of online learning is that it allows students to participate in high quality learning situations for anywhere in the world provided that they have a computer and internet connection. This gives equal opportunity to all when distance and work schedule makes offline or physical learning difficult and sometimes infeasible.

2. **Anytime** : The virtual classroom is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Students can access their courses at any time. This is even more convenient for those who may need to re-read a lecture or take more time to reflect on some material before moving on to next topic.
3. **Student Centered** : It is student centered approach. Within an online discussion, the individual student can respond is smaller conversations with in the group. In this way students can control their own learning experiences to meet their own specific needs.
4. **High Quality Dialog** : Within an online discussion, the learner may reflect on comments from others before responding or moving on to next topic. This structure allows students to articulate responses with more depth and fore through than in a traditional face to face discussion situation.
5. **Discriminatory Factors** : In online classes, learners are not being judged on factors like physical appearance, age, dress, race gender and disabilities. The entire focus and attention is on lectures and the content of discussion. So each student can concentrate and intelligently contribute to the material provide.
6. **Access to Resources** : students can access to resources and materials that may be physically located anywhere in the world. It is easy to include guest experts or students from other institutions in an online class.

There are some weaknesses also :

1. **Economic Reasons** : All learners belong to different socioeconomic background, many do not have access to the internet facility and other technology, may be because of economic reasons, this might exclude such eligible students from the course in general and in rural parts of the country in particular.
2. **Computer Literary** : If the individual is not having a minimum level of computer literary, he will not be able to gain his knowledge he will not be able to gain his knowledge.

3. **Self disciple** : student should be self-disciple to avail the benefits of online learning because those who remain unengaged can be a challenge as they can not be monitored.
4. **Limitations of Technology** : Availability of user friendly and reliable technology is critical to a successful online program.
5. **Curriculum** : In the present scenario amidst covid-19, online classes were in trend to avert the impact of closed schools and colleges. But the curriculum has not been altered till yet to suit the virtual classroom. The curriculum of any online class has to be meticulously considered and developed keeping in mind the constrains of the virtual classroom. This is very much important to be successful in e-learning.
6. **Cheating and Plagiarism** : Precise methods have to be developed to prevent cheating in online assignments and exams as students are stetting in isolation without being monitored.

Because humans are social creatures who generally love company, the solitary experience of online learning can be a major hurdle for some students. It can be lonely unless you have a friend who is taking the course with you. Many courses attempt to address this by encouraging discussions in course forums which can be general discussion forums where students can introduce themselves, as well as focused discussions on particular aspects of the course. In some courses, participation in discussions is sluggish. Another option is to create students' own support network amongst their family members and friends. Even if they are not studying with the you, you may be able to talk about your study ups and downs. Every little bit of support can help!

Conclusion

Online learning can not cope up with the hundreds of students trying to participate in the discussion. Still, a lot of technologically guided work has to be done to remove the imperfections of e-learning. E-learning should be taken as a supplement or add on extension to traditional physical classes for dependent learners. Online classes can not supersede the personal contact with the teacher and the human relations.

Regardless of personal views and beliefs of online learning and virtual schools, society should be prepared for various modes of education to begin popping up in the virtual and online world. Online learning and virtual schools are becoming an important part of the future. Eventually, education could become completely electronic, eliminating the need for classrooms, learning materials, and teachers.

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