

The advantages and disadvantages of online learning compared with face-to-face learning.

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There is an abundance of well validated research which has provided reliable findings on the value of online learning.

Following is a summary of some key findings. Please note it is highly advisable to read the links in their entirety so as to get a better grasp of the concepts.

At the end of this document are some suggested conclusions from this research summary.

Research

“E-learners must be active and assimilate as much knowledge as possible to reach the necessary level of expertise to pass the exams. Moreover, they must participate in activities, thereby increasing their understanding of the concepts:

“...traditional students may easily assume a passive role during the lesson, in a form of dependence on the teacher”

“...on average, the marks of E-learners are just as good, if not better, than the marks of attendees.”

“E-learning measurement of the learning differences between traditional lessons and online lessons” by Giuseppe Favretto, Giovanna Caramia and Matteo Guardini

http://www.eurodl.org/materials/contrib/2005/Giuseppe_Favretto.htm

“Remarkably, a much higher percentage of online students made A’s, and a greater number of students in the traditional classes made the grade of B.”

“Interestingly, the students receiving “W” in the online class was at a low percentage, which is not always typical of online classes. In fact, when the online class was first offered in 1998, there was a fifty percent dropout rate.”

“Evaluations: Online and Traditional Classes’

<http://www.gcu.edu/education-news/online-degrees/online-classes.htm>

“Online learning environments require the instructor to facilitate extensive written communications. While the hours are long involve posting and responding to threaded questions, evaluating student work and answering concerns and questions, the upside is ‘the learning appears more profound as the discussions seemed both broader and wider’”

“online communications forces the voicing of all the students whereas in a traditional classroom, learners may not contribute to discussions.”

“...due to anonymity, students may feel certain equality with faculty while posting messages.”

“Althaus found that students who were involved in online discussions created responses that were more thoughtful because they had more time to read and think about their responses compared to students in a face-to-face setting.”

“Leasure et. al also discovered that an online forum afforded the student flexibility with various methods of communication, which increased student confidence.”

“Bricks and Clicks: A Comparative Analysis of Online and Traditional Education Settings” by Freda Turner and Jack Crews

http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Apr_05/article01.htm

“...while teams working exclusively through the medium of computers were less satisfied with their projects, they evidenced a higher rate of learning than their traditional counterparts.”

“Another related study conducted by Lantz (2001) reported that professionals working in computer-mediated teams were more task oriented than traditional teams, in support of the earlier study.”

“Online Learning Teams: Indispensable Interaction” by Muhammad K. Betz

http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jun_04/article03.htm

“Neuhauser found that both her online and FTF courses had the same retention rate of 84% (2002).”

“95% of the online students felt the online course was as effective or more effective than the more traditional resident instruction course (Neuhauser, 2002). The students’ responses show that the overall learning environment was conducive to the students’ expectations.”

“As Neuhauser reports, “The average test score was 88.1% for the online group and 86.2% for the FTF group” (2002, p. 110). In addition, the mean final grade for online students was 3.5 and the FTF students were at 3.35 (Neuhauser, 2002). As one can see, both the test scores and final grades were higher for the online cohort, but not significantly higher.”

“Effectiveness of Online Learning”

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/staff/s/j/sjs19/effectivenessonlinelearning.htm>

“In addition to higher performance results, there are other immediate benefits to students such as increased time on task, higher levels of motivation, and reduced test anxiety for many learners.”

“...nearly 30 percent of the studies report that e-Learning programmes had positive outcomes based on student preference, improved grades, higher cost effectiveness, and a higher percentage of homework completion.”

“The majority of 1,002 students who responded to an e-college.com survey said they chose the online format because of the flexibility and convenience of the programme.”

“The survey reports that 75 percent of those students online were employed and 68 percent of the learners worked more than 30 hours per week (ecollege.com 1999). This fact makes this study particularly relevant for corporate trainers who seek to fit e-Learning into an already demanding work schedule.”

“E-Learning Around the World”

<http://www.onlinelearning.unu.edu/Resources/UNU%20OL5-Initiatives.pdf>

The remaining links are to articles discussing other benefits of eLearning.

“On a national level, online classes are providing windows to more educational opportunities for students. Many of these are full-credit courses offered by major universities.”

“Online courses also benefit students who don't live on a college campus or whose schedules prevent them from attending class at regular hours.”

“Downloading the classroom: a look at online courses” By Jinah Kim

<http://www.e-learningcentre.co.uk/eclipse/Resources/acadcasestudies.htm>

- * “Requires student engagement”
- * “Eliminates geographical constraints”
- * “Multiple learning styles can be easily served”
- * “Documents course content”
- * “Students must take a greater responsibility for their education”

“Trends in Online Education: Case Study at Southwest Missouri State University”

By Dr. Lesta A. Burgess and Dr. Shawn D. Strong

<http://www.nait.org/jit/Articles/burgess041403.pdf>

Some suggested conclusions

The advantages of eLearning include:

Students perform better on test scores and have better knowledge retention

Answers are more thought out as well since the students have more time to reflect on the subject.

Online learning reduces the inhibitions of students who might be shy when they are in a group. As a result they participate more and in the process build confidence as they communicate

Online learning can serve different types of learning styles. E-learning enables the instructor to adjust the teaching method that he or she feels would be more appropriate to the student.