



e-ISSN: 2319-8753 | p-ISSN: 2347-6710

IJIRSET

International Journal of Innovative Research in
SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

Volume 13, Issue 8, August 2024

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 8.524



9940 572 462



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Online Course and its Impact on Students in Knowledge Sharing

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ABSTRACT: Online coursework is now an integral element of mainstream higher education. Online courses often lack face-to-face interaction, peer interaction, faculty feedback, and a lack of community. Engagement of the learner is essential for learning and promoting student satisfaction. There are online teaching strategies that could enhance a student's perception of engagement. 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 en- engagement with the class material, improved perception of learning and of the online format, and a stronger sense of community among students.

KEYWORDS: Distance Learning, Online, Engagement, Teaching Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1974, Regents External Degree was the first online program that was created in 1974, and many educators believed that the distance-learning model was inappropriate for nursing education. Distance learning (DL) has been utilized since the early 1990s, especially with the development of the Internet. In 2002, 1.6 million students took



courses on-line across the United States. In 2003, the number of online course students rose to 1.97 million, succeeded by 2.33 in 2004, and in 2011 it was found that a third of all the students enrolled in postsecondary education had taken an accredited online course. Online course work is now an integral element of mainstream higher education [1]. About 63% of schools that offer undergraduate traditional classes also offer programs online. Nursing schools have also adapted to this mode of course delivery. According to American Association of College of Nursing, there is a current shortage of qualified nursing faculty and the number is expected to grow within the next decade. Online programs have allowed colleges to offer courses needed; however, schools still need qualified online faculty that can engage the student that will improve retention, satisfaction, and student outcomes. Online courses are revolutionizing formal education, and have opened a new genre of outreach on cultural and scientific topics. These courses deliver a series of lessons to a web browser or mobile device, to be conveniently accessed anytime, anyplace[2]. Online courses and MOOCs may be a poor substitute for in-person learning with a charismatic teacher, but they are light-years better than nothing, and are particularly relevant for higher education and specific skills, when students are self-motivated Its a directed learning process, comprised of educational information (articles, videos, images, web links), communication (messaging, discussion forums) and some way to measure students achievement.

II. ONLINE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Educators role is to facilitate online discussions and providing structure. Learning outcomes for the student is essential. There are online teaching strategies that could enhance a students perception of engagement, increase retention, and satisfaction.

- Open the course at least one week prior to traditional classes starting.
- Post a brief introduction of yourself, with a current picture. * Provide links.
- Discussions should be weekly, informal or formal.
- Use rubrics for grading online discussions and assignments.
- Provide syllabus, course schedule, and your expectations of the student.
- Online office hours.
- Provide the student with campus office hours and your email.

The above strategies is found in many different articles, however the above is also based on this educators personal experience with the peer review process for online courses. By opening the course at least one week prior to regular classes starting, allows the student ample time to review the setup of the online course. The course needs to be complete with a course syllabus, schedule with assignment due dates, and a grading rubric. If learners have positive perceptions of their interactions with the technological tools of the learning environment [3], it is likely that they will also have positive perceptions of their interactions with faculty and other learners. By posting a brief introduction of yourself, just like what you would state in your classroom and a picture(s) will also provide the student with a visual connection. Encourage the students to post their picture in the discussion forum. Pictures allow the student to have face-to-face interaction and promote the sense of community. Students should also introduce themselves and post a peer response. There would be several advantages to reviewing an entire program of study in terms of offering hybrid and online courses throughout that curriculum [4].

These advantages would include:

- Accelerate time to degree by current students
- Create synergies among interested faculty to support each other
- Allow for a program review in terms of determining the best courses to be offered in either online or hybrid mode
- Potentially reduce bottlenecks for particular in-demand courses
- Allow greater flexibility in scheduling and classroom utilization, and
- Increase access and convenience for students and instructors.

Every concept map possesses four core elements: a) Patterns The overall structure of the map, e.g a circular, central hub structure; a top-down hierarchical structure, a mandala, a flow chart pattern, and so on.

Nodes The geometric shapes such as ovals or rectangles used to represent the individual concepts. Often these nodes are colour coded to signify importance of or relationships between the various concepts

Connector Links The lines, arrows, curves used to indicate the relationships between concept nodes. Often a solid line is used to show a distinct relationship; an arrow refers to a causal relationship; while a dotted line shows a weaker, secondary relationship. An arc often represents a circular flow between concepts.

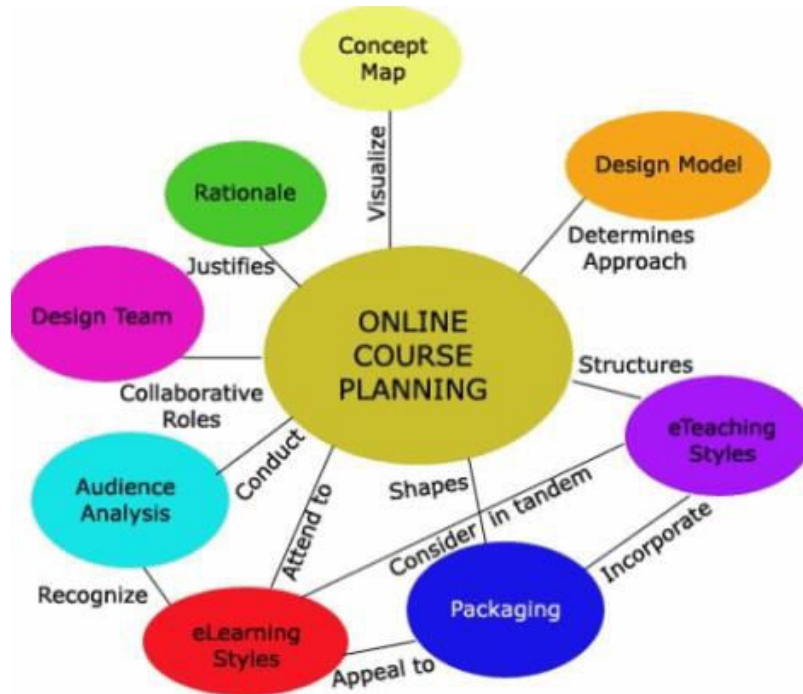


Figure 1: Online Course Planning Concept Map

Connector words Help to clarify the relationships between concept nodes. Common connector words include: based on, controlled by, including, may lead to, recognizes, part of, next step, recognizes, validates, stored in. Your concept maps will also feature a fifth characteristic meaningful wee graphics or icons to help illustrate the main concepts.

III. ONLINE COURSE PROCEDURE

Programmes are delivered in courses that you can complete at times convenient to you. A variety of platforms to deliver content and allow you to interact with other students. Platforms may include one or more of the following:

- Virtual learning environment, e.g. Moodle, Learn or Blackboard Collaborate.
- Wikis
- Blogs.
- Discussion Boards and Forums.
- Video Streaming Services e.g. Youtube
- Virtual Worlds e.g. Second Life

Many organisations are now transforming their learning and development pro-

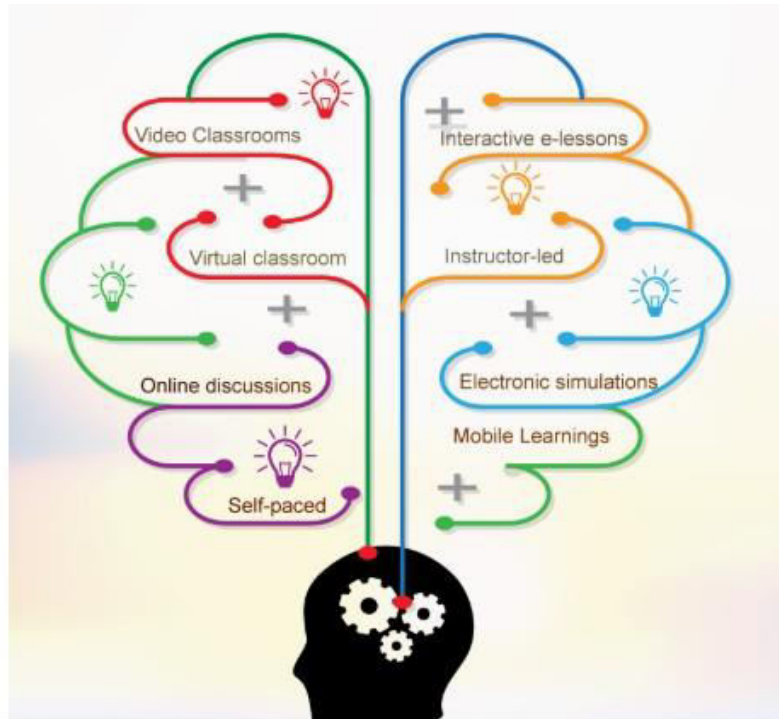


Figure 2: Self Learning Process

grams to the eLearning domain. But choosing the right methods for their business based on their needs is still a challenge. Choosing the right eLearning programs depends upon many factors like proper need analysis, target audience analysis, task analysis, topic analysis, and evaluation methods [5]. Apart from these analyses there is the very important principle of Learning Pyramid created by the National Training Laboratories. Choosing the right delivery methods directly impact effectiveness and cost benefit for the organisations.

IV. ONLINE COURSES AND ITS DESIGN ISSUES

How are online courses delivered? Will I ever need to visit a campus? Will I get to talk to other students in my online course? What kind of support is available for online students? What's the difference between online and distance learning? What are the benefits of studying online? **How are online courses delivered?** Online courses are delivered entirely online. As an online student, you'll be able to log into an online learning system. Through the online learning system you'll receive all your study materials and instructions, and submit your assessments. You'll also be involved in conversations with other students and your tutors through virtual classrooms and discussion boards.

You will be able to watch lectures, complete readings and participate in tutorials, just like an on-campus student. The difference is you'll do this online, when it suits you.

Will I ever need to visit a campus?

When you study a course that is 100% online, there will be no travel involved and you will never have to visit a campus. You'll complete and submit all of your course work online. As an online student, you may still have the option to use the facilities available at your campus.

Some online courses, such as Skillsoft courses, may require you to sit an external exam which you will need to take at a designated location. If one studies a course that is delivered via a combination of online and on-campus learning - also known as 'blended' learning - you may need to attend some classes or workshops at a campus. Depending on the course, you may also need to complete a work placement at a particular location.

Will I get to talk to other students in my online course?

Online courses are designed to encourage interaction and make you feel part of a learning community. Though you may not meet your teachers and classmates in person, you will be communicating with them regularly. Some courses include group work, and tasks that encourage you to collaborate with other students online. You can also contact education staff by phone or email at convenient times. They'll answer any of your questions and give you the support you need to be a confident online learner.

What kind of support is available for online students? If you're studying with a provider that offers both on-campus and online study, you can usually access the same support services as on-campus students. For other education providers, specialist online advisors can help you develop successful study skills, discuss your course direction, or provide technical assistance.

What are the benefits of studying online?

One can get a qualification without having to take time off from work, go part-time or put your kids in child care. One doesn't need to live near a particular education institution that offers your preferred course; you can choose from a multitude of courses that are based across Australia. One can study from anywhere with an internet connection in your backyard or bedroom, on a train or at your local cafe. Not necessarily need to be sitting at a computer to study [6]. You can read course materials, watch podcasts and comment on forums from your tablet device or smart phone. Rather than attending all classes at set times, you can study when it suits you. Online students can choose how they fit their study time around work, families and other things going on in their lives. Many of SEEK Learning's online courses can be studied at own pace, and most have flexible enrolment dates, so you can get started right now.

V. ONLINE OVERVIEW

If you have never taken an online course before, this section is specifically for you. The following will help you see the difference between online and face-to-face classes [7].

1. Online Courses Preparation
2. Time Management
3. Managing your own Learning

Preparing for your online class Online courses are a great (and convenient) way to advance your education. Online courses are much like face-to-face courses because they have to meet high standards of instructional design quality and instruction. The major difference is that online courses are presented using online tools and interaction occurs via discussion boards and online conferencing tools.

Steps are followed to help prepare for online class Ensure everything working fine.

A physical Space.
Online Landscape.
Courses Layout

Time Management Time management is the process of organizing and planning how to divide one's time between specific activities. By using the time-management techniques in online learning, one can improve their ability to function more effectively even when time is tight and pressures are high [8].

Time Management Guides: Time can be planned and managed effectively by using the following ways:

- Available Hours in a Week.
- Procrastination Quotient.
- Weekly Planning Guide.

VI. TECHNOLOGIES ENTRENCHED

Whether taking a fully online course or a hybrid course, a student will most likely use some or all of the following technologies:

1. E-Mail
2. Blackboard (Learning Management)
3. Adobe Connect (Web Conferencing)
4. Panopto Lecture Recording and video Streaming

KEY COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE ON- LINE TRAINING

The best online training has the following six key components:

1. Clear Expectations
2. Concise Instructions
3. Engaging, Robust Content
4. Guidance and Support
5. Quality Feedback
6. Expert Educator

Clear Expectations Students need to understand WHY. Why are they completing this lesson? Why will this be valuable to them in the future? Because I said so just doesn't work with today's students. Even though we require them to do so, not all students have a burning desire to take science, learn algebra or study history [9]. A quality online lesson clearly outlines the goals of each lesson, expected learning outcomes, and why this science, algebra or social studies activity is helpful in the real world.

Concise Instructions

Students need to understand HOW. How should this lesson be completed and how will they know when it is done? How many points is this worth if it is for credit? Is there a standard rubric for submission? Ideally, if this is a complete online course, lesson overviews should be consistent from module to module so students can become familiar with the course format and learn to better track their work over time.

Engaging, Robust Content

Information is everywhere. Videos and sound bites are the rule, not the exception. Online instruction must be able to capture a student's interest and convey concepts using tools that are engaging and easy to use, but ultimately content is key [10]. Tools should not be used unless they are delivering educationally sound, standards-based curriculum at the correct academic level for the students being served. I believe we must reach higher to achieve our fullest potential.

Guidance and Support

Guidance and support includes technical support and access to online help, as well as face-to-face oversight and support. We all know middle and high school students are still developing time management and other organizational strategies. Having a responsible adult available to assist with logistics in addition to the online instructor can be the difference between learning and failure [11]. Sometimes this additional support can be a subject matter expert, but often just having an extra professional resource monitoring student work will help keep students on track.

Quality Feedback

Quality feedback addresses not only the type of feedback a student receives, but also the frequency. A student must know that although their online teacher is not physically present, they are available and paying attention to them. Sincere, thoughtful feedback on student discussions not just on graded assignments can help build a sense of community in an online classroom and ultimately advance student understanding of course concepts.

Expert Educators

WHO is delivering the online instruction? Does the student have frequent access to the course instructor? Is the instructor readily available both in the classroom space and on an individual basis? An experienced educator who is a subject matter expert and has completed training in effective online education techniques is key to facil-

itating student understanding of course material. Ideally each student should have a private one-on-one communication area with their online teacher in case there are issues or grading questions that cannot be addressed in a public forum.

VII. CONCLUSION

The roles instructors play in facilitating productive online discussions can include managerial, social, pedagogical, and technical. Educating our students via online format is expected in many colleges today. Educators need to take the time to develop courses that utilize the most current technology that enhances the students learning. By following teaching strategies, this will enhance the online learning environment and provide student engagement, retention, and satisfaction will increase. Upon exposure to theories, participants noted the importance of recognizing the developmental level of the age group being taught and particular methods of supporting differences in developmental ability at varying phases. Participants recognized the importance of shaping the activities for interaction and exposure. Participants recognized the necessity of shaping the environment for schema development and assessing the state of student knowing for supporting assimilation and accommodation in schema development.

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