
ONLINE LEARNING – PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE EDUCATIONAL SPACE

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Abstract: *IN THIS RESEARCH PAPER ARE HIGHLIGHTED THE MAIN BENEFITS (ADVANTAGES) AND DRAWBACKS (DISADVANTAGES) WHICH ARE INVOLVED BY THE ONLINE LEARNING MODEL, RESULTING FROM THE AUTHORIZED OPINIONS AND SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENTS FORMULATED BY ACKNOWLEDGED EXPERTS IN EDUCATIONAL MATTERS. FURTHERMORE, ARE DEPICTED THE EFFECTIVENESS ASPECTS OF AN ONLINE LEARNING SYSTEM, SUCCEEDED BY THE INVESTIGATION OF THE HETEROGENEOUS RESULTS OBTAINED BY THE PARTICIPANT STUDENTS AT THE DIDACTIC ACT AND OF THE ENDOGENOUS ELEMENTS CORRESPONDING TO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT CHOICE. THE TRADITIONAL CLASSROOMS ARE STARTING TO LOSE THEIR MONOPOLY AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, IN THIS APPROACH SCENARIO. MOREOVER, THE INTERNET FACILITATES ONLINE LEARNING, THEREFORE A LOT OF RESEARCHERS AND TEACHERS ARE INCREASINGLY BECOMING MORE AND MORE INTERESTED OF PERFORMING THE DIDACTIC WORK IN THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT DUE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDENT RESULTS AND TO THE SIGNIFICANT DECREASE OF THE RESOURCES CONSUMPTION WHICH IS CAUSED BY THE CLASSICAL-TRADITIONAL LEARNING MODEL. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR THE PERFORMERS INVOLVED IN THE EDUCATIONAL ACT TO CONSIDER THE ADVANTAGES GENERATED BY THE ONLINE TEACHING-LEARNING SYSTEM IN CONTRAST WITH THE CLASSIC MODEL WHICH SUPPOSES DIRECT INTERACTION, UNMEDIATED PROFESSOR – STUDENT. RELATIVELY TO THE SUBJECT ANALYSED IN THIS STUDY, IT CAN BE STATED THAT THERE ARE EVOKED SOLID ARGUMENTS IN THE DEDICATED LITERATURE, WHICH SUGGEST THAT THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IS AT LEAST AS EFFECTIVE AS THE CLASSIC-TRADITIONAL MODEL. THUS, ONLINE LEARNING UNEQUIVOCALLY REPRESENTS A CONSTANTLY EXPANDING ENVIRONMENT WHICH ALLOWS TO ITS USERS THE FLEXIBILITY TO WORK OUT OF ANY SPACE OR TIME CONSTRAINS.*

Keywords: *ONLINE LEARNING, SELF-REGULATION, EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT, EDUCATIONAL SPACE, ONLINE COURSES*

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent study dedicated to the online learning model it was judiciously considered that online learning constitutes a remote didactic activity form, which eminently supposes courses delivery through internet (Nguyen, 2015, p. 2), manner that had globally become the most widespread form of expression and affirmation in the educational environment, lately, respectively in the pandemic period COVID-19. Online learning can be defined as learning which has as partial or integral support the Internet (Gilbert, 2015, p 3). Likewise, thorough electronic learning environments, it can be maintained professor – student connection regardless of the place and time. Thus, courses completely based on web resources are integrally hold on internet without face to face interactions, all the courses aspects being conducted in an online learning environment. Web resources based on learning environments are as diverse and complex as traditional classroom spaces, so that it can be observed that each learning environment has its own feature, which makes them work differently. Online learning is attractive for the most of the students and is becoming more and more found in the nowadays educational environments.

PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF ONLINE LEARNING

One of the reasons why there are fervent arguments relatively to the online learning model lies in the benefits generated by this system. Thereafter, will be shown some of the most important benefits and practical applications of online learning, which basically are the following ones: increased effectiveness in information and expertise knowledges forwarding to students, its usage self-development and personal purpose, significant decrease of the costs generated by the teaching-learning classic system, the prospect of delivering of a quality educational act for every student which has wideband internet connection. Lately, because of the Covid-19 crisis, a significant attention is given to online learning, in the intern and international learning environment. Likewise, there is an iconic number of researchers which concludes a range of positive significant effects where is highlighted the idea that the results obtained by the students in the online learning format are superior to the ones in the classical traditional environment which supposes direct interaction, unmediated teacher - student. Some of the positive results of online learning is bounced in the score obtained at tests, combined with the increased ease provided to students at informational support, the improvement of the perception regarding the online learning, facility to communicate among students and the decrease of abandonment, failures or setbacks.

Online learning aims to various student categories with different academic needs, for which the classical didactic activity of teaching – learning is deficient or inappropriate. The request for the online courses lies in the idea „to offer quality education to students, despite all spatial and temporal barriers”. Online courses had proved to be beneficial to students which embraces self-regulatory learning. Thus, in the dedicated literature, self-regulatory is considered as been the capacity of students to plan, monitor and evaluate their own behavior, knowledge and learning strategies (Matuga, 2009, p.9). More than that, the students which embraces self-regulatory learning tend to use various „cognitive and meta cognitive strategies which is constituted in a veritable support regarding the achievement of learning goals. The students which are able to improve theirs self-regulatory learning skills frequently use time management, constantly revise the informational material, look for informational support at professors or colleagues, meet the terms and prove meta knowledge abilities which help them to reflect over their own learning. However, self-regulatory on its own it is not enough to have success, so as it is necessary for students to be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated in the purpose of effectively using of self-regulatory strategies which have as goal success achieving on the academic land of online courses. Therefore, self-regulatory is a key component of success thorough online courses (You, Kang, 2014, p.125).

Thus, the students without the self-regulatory capacity tend to prove academic procrastination, increased disorganization, using to a smaller extent cognitive and meta cognitive strategies to achieve their learning goals. Online courses building is at least as diverse as the traditional didactic activities held in a class room. Thereby, the designing and the teaching of an online course for students benefit, in the sense to obtain positive learning results is becoming a complex activity. The attempt to reproduce a traditional classroom in an online environment cannot be imperatively considered as being the most wisdom course of action. Likewise, teachers can „value the benefits offered by the online learning environment” and at the same time „to decrease to minimum the possible shortcomings specific to the online teaching-learning environment” (Thomson, 2010, p.662). Under these circumstances, the courses should be well organized right from the start, offering instructions and detailed information to students. Teachers should anticipate the less understandable parts and to reject the unclear guidelines before the course initialization. The misunderstandings can be decreased with a very detailed program, a courses calendar, useful links and information about courses.

Regarding the flexibility benefit within the online courses, this does not need to be overrated in the light of the reasons for which the students are attracted to online learning. Against this background, online learning allows students to work at the time and place compatible with their learning needs. In addition, it can be noted that a big part of teachers and students values that in online learning they can focus their attention more over the course content and less over the problems related to parking, road traffic etc., which can occur when they take part to a classical traditional learning environment.

On a different note, the students that has some responsibilities or work engagements can participate in some didactic activities in the online form, whenever is more convenient for them depending on the time they have at their disposal. Furthermore, they do not need to move from one place to another to study, but simply they can connect at the virtual environment even from their own home or office.

At the same time, the decreased costs generated by performing the didactic activity in the online-virtual environment means another argument why this model of learning had become such attractive in the nowadays educational environment. Generally, the cost can frequently be an additional motivation which leads some students to not sign up at the courses organized in the classical-traditional format, even though these are of interest and are useful in the professional development process.

Likewise, this is a problem for the corporation that stimulates their employees to follow an additional training, but they do not have a big enough budget for conferences and training courses. In this regards, online courses are becoming more accessible using smaller budgets.

Apart of convenience and costs, a big number of students appeals at online learning courses, because these had become a more efficient manner in reception-assimilation process of information integrated in the scientific content of the didactic material. In this regard, the conscientious students are willing to sign up at those courses which facilitates achieving some valuable skills and competences which they consider relevant in their personal growth and training process. In the following sequences, are going to be highlighted the main practical reasons under which online learning can be more effective than signing up at a traditional course which supposes direct interaction professor – student.

First of all, from the practical prospect it was observed that online learning based on multimedia content is five times more effective for students than classical-traditional learning, because online courses offer to students a total control over their own preparation, which allows them to work at their pace. Generally, this manner of work is more operative because students go faster through some easier sections of the course and they focus more through some more difficult ones, for which they allocate more time to just learn them. (Xu, Huang, Wang, Heales, 2014, p.430).

Secondly, reception-assimilation rates of the informational content are grater in the online learning model. If the courses in the classical format must be elaborated so as to maintain student's attention on their full length, in the online courses case the situation is different according to the American Institute of research in education. Thus, according to the dates offered by the prestigious institute online learning environment has grown the reception-assimilation rates of information, from 25% to 60%, based on exciting multimedia content which generate increased control thorough the manner in which the students manage the informational material and moreover it considerably decreases the risk to occurrence organizational issues.

Thirdly, online learning requires a lower time spending because a big part of students give up subscribing at a classic model teaching-learning course taking into account time they need to spend to travel to the courses. A report Brandon Hall about online learning within the corporations had noted that this style of learning usually requires with 40-60% less time than learning in the traditional settlement based on the direct interaction professor - student. Likewise, it is important remember that essentially, the options of E-learning allow students to manage the time spent at a course, even though they are carrying out a paid activity. In this respect, students no longer need to allocate a big part of their time to the didactic activity, because this model of learning does not require a strict schedule.

Fourthly, frequent evaluations considerably decrease distraction of students. So, as regards online courses one of the important aspects is the fact that evaluation tends to become a continuously process. In these circumstances, continuously evaluation constitutes a positive aspect for students, because intercalating of the multimedia content and of the learning materials with short regular tests can improve the engagement level of the students in the educational act. Within this approach, the Harvard researchers had proof that using some short, regular tests, had decreased half of the distractions for students, because information gathering is done three times faster without affecting the global content of the didactic material. Likewise, should be noticed that when students are frequently evaluated, teachers can easily follow their progress.

Finally, an online learning environment is an option lined up with the goals and wishes of the ecological and sustainable development protection. In other words, online learning is for sure a more effective option for students, but is also more friendly with the surrounding environment. Open University from United Kingdom had discovered that online learning a medium energy consumption decreased with 90% and furthermore 85% less CO₂ emissions per student than traditional learning environments (<https://www.capstonecore.com/5-reasons-why-online-learning-is-more-effective/>). On a separate note, the promoting and involving in this kind of learning can help not only the participants, but also corporations to make sustainable efforts to achieve their personal goals together with the aspects that target the surrounding environment protection.

In conclusion, this theoretical and practical arguments formulated in the economy of the analyzed theme proves unequivocally the idea that online learning followed by a multimedia appealing, intuitive and interactive content constitute a more effective training environment then the classical – traditional format of teaching- learning.

DRAWBACKS OF ONLINE LEARNING

Besides the practical benefits previously outlined, there are a number of shortcomings (disadvantages) or possible issues that students can experience during the didactic activities specific to the online learning environment. A factor which is frequently examined is related to the interaction development between the students as members of a community in a traditional classroom environment, relatively with an online learning environment. The literature suggest that a strong and active social life in campus can be „used even to explain the high level of the reception-assimilation and learning satisfaction rates” among the students, which inevitably leads to the idea that the decreased



assimilation level of the informational content of the courses online learning environment is caused by the lack of community and social connection (Dhull, Sakshi, 2017, p.32). Participating students at an online learning environment have a weaker feeling of connection and affiliation the students from the campus which participates at teaching-learning didactic activities held in the classical traditional format. On the other hand, cultural restrictions constitute another good to consider element when is debated the online learning topic. In this regard, technological education constitutes the sine qua non condition and concurrently the dominant culture which inevitably restricts the access of some participants to the teaching-learning activities in the online environment. Under these circumstances, another restriction which was brought to the foreground is the problem of the ones that have versus the ones that does not have technology access. Technology is a field which can be considered beneficial when is used at a large-scale in everyday life, but for a big part of people, technology in not used largely as a consequence of the impairment of the financial liquidities needed for its acquisition. The growth of the interaction students-computers and another electronically devices will inexorably lead to the differently access in the use of information which are stored on the global internet network. Getting familiar with the technology can constitute a considerably spacing between the richer and the poorer, experienced and beginners. Keeping motivated within the online learning model constitutes another challenge which the students must face. At the end of this section it can be concluded that the students with a lack of independency and self-motivation sense usually achieve low rates of success. In this scenario, the students that does not have the self-regulation ability tend to not allocate enough time to finish the works, so as these have doubtful quality performances showing equally lateness in preparation and solving of home works, problems, exercises, tests etc.

CONCLUSION

Consequently, the online learning environment provides to students an effective support for the valorization of the training and of the personal development opportunities, generating a competitiveness growth in the educational environment. Thus, the students who choose the higher education path using online courses have to be self-motivated, independent and responsible. Furthermore, knowing their own style of learning and their personal abilities allows students to judge if the online learning is a favorable environment for the edification and consolidation of their professional career. At the same time, teachers benefit of a higher level of understanding and attendance from their students at the didactic activities organized in an online learning environment. Also, the communication teacher-student that is reflected in the support commentaries, constructive criticism and promptness in the formulation of questions and answers represents a key component of the online learning environment. Summarizing the arguments put forward in investigating the theme that is the subject of this research it can be stated that the online learning model constitutes an excellent option for the participants in the didactic scenario of reception-assimilation of the fundamental and specialized knowledge, especially while occurring obstacles in the organization and achievement of the educational act in the classical-traditional format, as the recent events spent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic had proved us.



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