Chapter 41

Important Issues in Online Education:
E-Pedagogy and Marketing

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ABSTRACT

In our times, many educational institutions are providing online degree programs for learners by supplementing their traditional offline class with web-based online educational devices. This chapter aims at stressing important issues in online education with reference to e-pedagogy and marketing of online education programs. It defines online learning, assesses the benefits and challenges of online education, and illustrates sub-categories of online degree programs to show the richness of these programs in the world of education today. It also expounds the characteristics of successful online learners and instructors as well as the principles of effective online instruction. Further, it places emphasis on the marketing of online education programs. Lastly, it offers some valuable tips for better marketing of online education programs.

INTRODUCTION

Online education has developed immensely during the past ten years. The advanced accessibility of the internet and the World Wide Web has provided tremendous opportunities for non-traditional education via this medium (Karber, 2003). Developments in the IT field have also made

teaching beyond the classroom context available for teachers and have also supplied learners with easy access to course material. Allen & Seaman (2007) state that the number of students in the U.S. registered in distance education courses presented by degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased from 1.6 million in the fall 2002 to 3.5 million by the fall 2006, which indicates clearly, as Koh and Hill (2009) also stress, that online learning is a well-liked delivery method to teach

and learn in higher education contexts. Relevant to the popularity of online education, Karber (2003) listed four crucial reasons by comparing traditional teaching with online teaching. Firstly, individuals with work or family constraints may make use of online learning. Lyons (2004) described three groups of students finding online programs appealing. They are "busy working people, often on shift who want to advance their career, frequent travelers, those who physically find it difficult to attend college and parents who want to, or have to, spend more time at home with their children" (p. 448).

Secondly, online programs are suitable for those students accommodating in crowded cities in that travel back and forth to campus is no longer necessary. Deal III (2002) indicated that online programs are also accessible to the students in remote communities who were devoid of the opportunity before. It is the flexibility of staying at home while getting a good education which makes online education interesting. Thirdly, it is possible for students to select a variety of universities offering online programs as physical distance is not an issue to be considered in the virtual context. Hence, students are not restricted to a few universities near their location, and they have more independence to select the university that they really want to study. Fourthly, interacting with students from all around the globe, students can obtain a wider prospect on different topics. Students' experience and perception would overtly be enhanced. On the other hand, as another important aspect, the marketing of online education is a controversial issue. Despite the fact that the viewpoints regarding the prominence of the educational institution as a product and the students as the customers still remain disputable, the transformation of the instruction process as a student-based model requires that the marketing opportunities be employed (Demiray, Nagy, and Yılmaz, 2007). However, marketing online education faces a number of challenges such as lack of well-qualified admissions counselors

(often referred to as agents), lack of admissions infrastructure, inclusion of the newest technology in the course format and updating and revising current courses on a continuous basis, establishing a separate academic structure for online programs, establishing an internal data management team, and support offices made up of the registrar's office, financial aid, and student accounts (Kennedy, 2008).

This chapter aims at stressing important issues in online education with reference to e-pedagogy and marketing of online education programs. It defines online learning, assesses the benefits and challenges of online education, and illustrates subcategories of online degree programs to show the richness of these programs in the world of education today. It also expounds the characteristics of successful online learners and instructors as well as the principles of effective online instruction. Further, it places emphasis on the marketing of online education programs. Lastly, it offers some valuable tips for better marketing of online education programs.

ONLINE LEARNING

Online courses, according to Allen and Seaman (2008), are those where at least 80 percent of the course content is delivered online. Face-to-face instruction covers those courses where zero to 29 percent of the content is delivered online, which contains not only traditional courses but also web facilitated courses. As for blended (i.e. hybrid) instruction, it includes those courses in which 30 to 80 percent of the content is delivered online. The following table taken from Allen and Seaman (2008) exhibits common course delivery methods used by individual instructors.

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