The Evolution of Online Learning

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Option 2: News Flash

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I have decided to research an article to discuss this week’s topic on changes in online education. The article I found that directly relates to our lesson objectives was written by Starr Roxanne Hiltz and Murray Turoff (2005) in *Communications of the ACM* titled, “The Evolution of Online Learning and the Revolution in Higher Education.” The article discusses how online learning is evolving and growing in our society. It goes into detail on blended courses within “bricks and mortar” schools as well as the changes online courses have made in our education systems.

The article begins by discussing online courses as a substitution for the traditional face-to-face classes. The authors think that online education is a revolutionary concept that in 50 years will take over our traditional schools completely (Hiltz and Turoff, 2005). They discuss blended courses in many universities today that allow students in-class and online to receive the same education through the use of technology. Each student receives the same lectures and assignments. In addition to these, every student is required to participate equally.

Hiltz and Turoff go on to discuss the different technologies that have been introduced into online courses and how they will continue to advance over the years to come. Some of the specific examples they discuss are Wikis, blogs, virtual marketplaces, and Dynamic Delphi systems (Hiltz and Turoff, 2005). The use of these systems allow a large group of online students to collaborate on the topics being taught.

The end of the article details the driving forces and consequences of online learning. Not all students have the ability to attend school fulltime and therefore must find another way to earn an education. This is through online courses that offer flexibility while still learning the valuable lessons being taught at “bricks and mortar” universities. Because of increased enrollments in online programs, universities will need to adapt to this new learning environment in order to stay relevant. Hiltz and Turoff (2005) sum up what might happen if schools fail to evolve,

Once most courses are available in digital formats as well as on campuses, geographic monopolies and barriers that have sustained thousands of different colleges and universities in the U.S. and around the world will weaken.

This article did a great job discussing how online education has impacted our society. Online courses have given students the flexibility to earn an affordable degree while still working fulltime and raising children. Online programs are becoming more and more popular. In 2012, the National Center for Education Statistics polled the number of students who attended online courses during the fall. Their results showed that one out of every four students, 5.4 million total, took at least one online course (Haynie, 2014). This is a large group of students attending online programs. I agree with the article, “The Evolution of Online Learning and the Revolution in Higher Education”, in that schools who choose not to evolve and include online courses and programs will lose students to competitors.

Another interesting study done by the National Center for Education Statistics that ties into how online education is evolving was regarding graduate students. The study concluded that more students pursuing a graduate degree were likely to go to an online school. Of 2.9 million students polled, 22% studied exclusively online (Hayne, 2014). In many ways our education systems are moving towards virtual classrooms. Even K-12 students have begun to receive computers to do their school work. It would not be a surprise if online education became a social norm in the future.

The article I discussed and the added information from the studies the National Center for Education Statistics performed prove that online education is on the rise. Online courses provide the same learning objectives and interaction with other students as “bricks and mortar” schools. Schools who accept this evolving way of learning will thrive compared to those who do not. I will end this paper with the same quote by Charles Darwin, Hiltz and Turoff ended their article, “It’s not the strongest of the species that survives, not the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change” (Hiltz and Turoff, 2005).

References

Haynie, D. (2014, June 12). New government data sheds light on online learners. Retrieved December 14, 2014.

Hiltz, S. R., & Turoff, M. (2005). EDUCATION GOES DIGITAL: The Evolution of Online Learning and the Revolution in Higher Education. *Communications Of The ACM*, *48*(10), 59-64.