ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

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In the article the characteristics of distance learning are studied. This paper presents the overall analysis of advantages and disadvantages of distance learing. This paper also considers its main forms, types and its importance in the educational process.
Key words: distance learning, advantages, disadvantages, students, the Internet.

Distance education is different from the traditional education. Distance education is that educational information and instruction is taught to learners who are physically distant from the source of that information and instruction. Distance education, also called distance learning, provides learning chances to people who could not afford time or money for traditional classes or who lived in remote areas far from schools. Because of the expansion of the Internet in recent years, the Internet has become the most important tool for delivering distance education.

The main purpose of the article is to define the main advantages and disadvantages of distance education.

So what exactly is distance learning? Distance learning occurs when there is a separation between the teacher and the student, usually due to geographical or time concerns that prevent the student from attending an on-campus course. Often, electronic means are used to bridge this gap and distribute educational material though distance learning programs using printed and mailed materials have existed for well over a hundred years. These programs have usually been specially designed to help best meet the needs and requirements that arise when learning is taking place outside of a traditional classroom setting.

The majority of distance education today takes place using the Internet, now readily accessible for the vast majority of students whether in their own homes or at facilities such as local libraries. These electronic means are used to distribute the learning material, keep students in touch with teachers, and provide access to communication between students. Of course, distance learning can use other technological formats as well including television, DVDs, teleconferencing, and printable material, but the immediacy and functionality of Web learning has made it a first choice for many distance learners. Online programs often take advantage of a number of emerging technologies to make keeping in touch and effectively communicating ideas easier and more efficient than ever before and students may find themselves using interactive videos, e-mail, and discussion boards to complete their lessons [2].

Distance learning makes it much easier for some students to complete a degree or get additional job-training while balancing work and family commitments. Because the hours when class work can be completed are flexible, as most distance learning programs allow students to work at their own place and on their own time, many students can complete their work during times when they are free, rather than scheduling their lives around a set classroom time. With more flexibility comes more responsibility on the part of the learner. Students must learn to work well independently and without the constant guidance and monitoring of an instructor, making distance learning a challenge for those who are not easily self-motivated [2].

Distance learning is also a great tool to help reach students who are in geographically remote areas and may not have readily available access to educational facilities or who want to explore opportunities not offered by their local schools. Of course, schools are not the only people who are taking advantage of distance learning, as many businesses have found it a valuable tool in making employee education and training quicker and more cost efficient.

Surrounding technologies and supporting the hunt of lifelong learning for all age-groups, distance learning has become a growing vogue for many students who pursue higher education. It gives you the chance to further your education in any stage of your life but like any other style of teaching, distance learning has some advantages and disadvantages too.

Like any kind of educational program, distance learning comes with a host of pros and cons. Before you enroll in any kind of distance learning program, make sure to carefully consider these in order to be sure you'll be getting an education that meets your personal needs, strengths and career goals.

Differing to what most of us feel, the advantages are much greater than the disadvantages in distance learning. There are some advantages of distance education.

One of the primary advantages of distance education is the flexibility it provides to students. Distance education provides opportunities for people who may have trouble attending a traditional institution such as stay-at-home mothers, people working full time or members of the military. Many online educational programs allow you to work at your own place, so you can fit your education into your schedule. Flexibility in distance learning program gives chance to study without interfering in your personal life. If are working then you can always plan learning around other features of your life, without effecting any disturbing to personal nor professional life. With distance learning courses, students can complete their course work from just about anywhere, provided there's a computer and internet connection. This allows students to work when and where it is more convenient for them without having to squeeze in scheduled classes to an already busy life.

Choosing education of your choice and numerous choices for schools. The most significant advantage of distance learning is that one can pursue his choice of education during any time of his life. There is no control about city, college, etc. One can live and study from anywhere while choosing for distance learning programs. What is necessary is the most convenience to a computer and a good speed Internet connection. You may find online schools that specialize in your particular field or one that can provide a great general education. Either way, your options for education will be greatly expanded.

Money saving as no commuting: This program did not require regular classes, it saves time in commuting. It also saves money.

Attend classes at your suitability. In distance learning, one need not to attend class exact time and place, so students can finished their classes at their own time and suitability.

Get more knowledge. One more advantage is that more knowledge of computer and Internet skills that one gain in the process of distance learning experience can also be moved to other sides of life.

Availability. Many people while taking traditional classes come across physical availability problem because of inadequate mobility issues. But through online classes overcome the problems and by using own comfortable furniture in the home. Thus an ambition to further education can be satisfied while enjoying free movement at home. For both slow and quick learners, options are available. This reduces stress and increases learners' complete fulfillment.

Learn while working. As distance learning can usually be completed on your own schedule, it is much easier to complete distance learning courses while working than more traditional educational programs. Keeping your job gives you more income, experience and stability while completing your degree giving you less to worry about and more time to focus on your studies.

Seeing the above mentioned advantages of distance learning, it becomes a little uncertain if this method of learning has any disadvantage or not. But to be frank, there are some problems too.

One of the main disadvantages of distance education is the loss of interaction with other students in the classroom. In distance learning, study in a group is difficult, one just have to do by himself which becomes publicly one-off as there is no communication with other classmates. No chance for communicating with classmates and teachers orally. Though, a chat, e-mails, conferencing and bulletin boards, this problem is lessening gradually. The interactions help to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Many distance eduction programs have developed online forums or chat rooms for students to share ideas and communicate, but it is only a partial substitute for the interaction you get in the classroom with a teacher and other students. If the classroom environment is what you like most about learning you may want to take a step back and reconsider distance learning. You'll likely get some interaction on chat rooms, discussion boards and through email, but the experience will be quite different than traditional courses.

Difficult technology and accessibility. It is true that distance education provides good chances to learn new things and technologies but it is complicated. It comes as challenge for people who are frightened of technology. A computer with continuous Internet facility is required for distance learning.

Also, it needs careful planning and big costs to set up for tools and facilities like live video communications which is a must in this form of education.

Unseen costs: Some unseen charges cannot be escaped. For instance, if a student lives or works in a outside area where irregular supply of things then the study material need to be mailed in advance. There will be sure extra charges and other costs which comes another point in bringing uneasiness to many. In distance learning, student and instructor also need to make proper plan much in advance to get the good and best result. Virtual courses can save money on constructing classrooms, dormitories and the overhead. However, starting a high-tech distance learning programs still can be expensive. Once the course or program is operational, the costs for keeping the technology current, developing new materials, updating courses, and marketing the courses still must be figured into the annual budget. Therefore, the provider usually should have the funds and technical support readily available to meet today's needs, and also should have the resources to expand their technical capabilities as the Internet expands its services [1, p. 69].

No feedback immediately. Distance learning is not like a regular classroom. One does not get the feedback immediately, instead they have to wait for their teacher's reviewing the task and send them for comments.

Format isn't ideal for all learners. Not everyone is an ideal candidate for online learning. If you know you have problems with motivation, procrastination and need lots of individual attention from a teacher you may want to think long and hard before enrolling in an online learning program.

Some employers don't accept online degrees. While a majority of employers will, there are some who still see a stigma attached to distance learning. Realize that your online degree may not be the ideal tool for some job fields or for future learning.

Requires adaptability to new technologies. If you've never been one to like working with technology you will probably get less out of an online course than your more tech-savvy counterparts. Make sure you feel comfortable working with computers and with online programs before you sign up for a class.

Depending upon one's own situations, one can match up and decide what he should choose for providing the educational and professional qualifications. For providing distance education the use of the Internet is the best way.

Technology the Internet and World Wide Web

Distance learning programs involve many kinds of technology. The Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) are the primary means of presenting educational information. Once learners have subscribed to, or signed up for an Internet provider, they gain access to the educational materials and services designed for the Internet and WWW. The educational information is stored electronically, thus learners with access to the site can download or use the information as long as it is stored there. This makes it easy for learners to work at their own place and to visit the site as frequently as they like.

The Web can provide learning information in many different interesting formats. It can present information in sound bits, such as music, voice or special effects. Graphics may be also presented in a special type of artwork such as animation or video. In addition to working with the Web, the learners may be asked to send e-mail messages, subscribe to mailing lists or participate in newsgroups, and online videoconferencing.

How does distance education work.

First of all, the learner should decide what kind of distance learning program he wants to take. There are many web sites providing plentiful distance education resources, and the potential learners can link to each resource mentioned. When the learner links to the Web site that he is interested in, he can see the goal, content, policy, and tuition of the educational programs. He also should notice the hardware and software requirement and should set the equipment before starting his distance learning. The lectures are presented online, and teachers may pose questions to begin the discussion. Teachers frequently place course readings on the Web enabling students to print entire lectures or take notes. Sometimes teachers also choose some books or journals as textbooks. These textbooks are often supersedes by information available electronically on the Web sites. Teachers also assign homework, and students should complete it by scheduled deadlines, just as they would be on campus. Sometimes students may be deviled to several groups to work together for a group project. At that time, they can use e-mail, subscribe mailing

list or participate in an electronic conferencing or a newsgroup to seek for information and comments about their assignments.

When learners or faculty want to lean back or relax, they can meet via 'chat room,' which serves as an informal chat station. If learners need assistance, they can call or e-mail their teacher. Some teachers even have teaching assistants assigned to each course to answer questions by e-mail (Ryan1997, p.76). This kind of interaction can lead to more personal help and attention than that afforded by a traditional lecture classroom setup. Some teachers may also ask students to take online quizzes or exams to evaluate their performance. Most educational computer systems can keep track of each student's progress and can make reports to the teacher [3, p. 143].

The Internet is one of the least costly approaches to provide interconnection. Furthermore, through the Internet, the distance learning community can access hundreds of libraries and databases. It is very convenient. Moreover, the educational material can be stored on a Web site. Students and teachers also have a written record of what everyone in the class says during the discussion. There is a greater potential for sharing information through the Internet than through other means of transmitting and receiving information.

Not everyone can be well suited to distance learning programs. Successful participants must be highly motivated and self-disciplined. Because the course may be unmonitored, the learners themselves have full responsibilities for proceeding with the course and evaluating their mastery of a skill or subject [4, p. 142].

Although distance education is very flexible and convenient, it still cannot provide the 'college experience.' Working with other learners, being part of a total educational environment, and collaborate closely with academic mentors is still valuable to many learners. In addition, some courses cannot be taught on the Internet and this causes some limitations of distance learninig.

There is another problem and it is related to technology. Not every student knows how to attend virtual classrooms well. Most of them do not have the hardware and software capability to receive video via the Web. Many teachers are also reluctant to switch from the traditional methods of teaching to technology-oriented approaches.

In addition, the performance of distance learning programs through the Internet cannot be guaranteed. Because the bandwidth for the average student is still low, while the requirements for audio and video are high. These technological issues need to be resolved.

Thus, the role of the traditional academic institution is changing, colleges and universities will have to compete with a growing number of other educational providers. This trend should promote more collaboration among business, industry and academia to provide high-quality, innovative education.

The future of distance education depends primarily on the creative use and development of new technologies. As learners become more aware of the potential developing knowledge and skills more easily and conveniently, the need for new materials and presentation media should continue to increase.

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Analysis of Ukrainian food processing industry

Ukraine enjoys a long food industry tradition, robust transportation and technical infrastructure, rich natural resources, strong secondary and tertiary education, a broad network of research and development institutes, and a large pool of technically skilled labor. It is important to analyze analysis of economic attractiveness, as well as comparative characteristics and undiscovered opportunities in Ukrainian food processing industry.

Food processing has an annual turnover of USD 19.496 min 2011, making up 15% of total industrial output. It generates direct employment for 13% of working population.

Food processing has been less affected by the economic crisis than other manufacturing sectors in Ukraine even registering, on average, positive growth of 5% during 2008 − 2011. Export of food processing industry makes up almost a quarter of total country exports. This is the highest level among neighboring countries. Industry import is 10% of total imports, which is similar to the share of food import in total imports of the Eurozone. Significant part of the processing industry export is production of cheese, confectionary, vodka, and beer.

As Ukraine moves towards the free trade zone with the EU − high competitiveness of domestic products in this context promises to open new perspectives for food and processing industry and the economy as a whole. Stabilization of the country's economic state has allowed food and beverage companies to attract more long-term loans on the capital market. The volume of loans to food and beverage companies amounts to 6% of all loans of Ukrainian banks.

This industry is the third principal choice for FDI in Ukraine (after financial sector and metallurgical production). In 2011, FDI in Ukraine grew by 10% compared to 2010, and amounted USD 49,362 bn. At the same time, about 4% (USD 2,07 bn) of the total FDI in Ukraine were invested in food, beverages and tobacco products production and confectionary sector especially.

Food processing industry is active with mergers and acquisitions. The crisis put some manufactures on the verge of bankruptcy which provided some companies with the opportunity to strengthen and expand their market position.

So, Ukrainian market is at the development stage. There are many niches and opportunities for introducing new players and strengthening the positions of existing ones. However, food industryin Ukraine lack investments, though international investors are highly interested in them. We believe that foreign investments will be very successful and promote economic growth if a favorable investment climate is created in Ukrainian food processing industry.