Online Learning: The times they are a-Changin'

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Abstract

This paper looks into the fear some educators have toward online or distance learning. Statistics are presented verifying the growth of online learning while attempting to address concerns of online learning. Furthermore, information is provided validating the rigorousness, convenience and financial advantages to online learning. With growth in internet usage worldwide, online learning provides learning opportunities to all. The question is why the resistance to it.

Among some teachers is a conviction that learner's continuous use of technology is impeding their length of attention as well as their ability to interact one-on-one with people. The associate director for research at Pew, Kristen Purcell, suggests that these finding might be better viewed from a different perspective. Perhaps our educational systems need to better accommodate themselves to the learning methods of the twenty-first century student. "What we're labeling as 'distraction,' some see as a failure of adults to see how these kids process information," Ms. Purcell said. "They're not saying distraction is good but that the label of 'distraction' is a judgment of this the generation" (Richtel, M., 2012). It is interesting to note that scholars who have studied the function of media in our society indicate that long-term research has not been done demonstrating how and to what degree student's attention span has altered because of technology. In fact, there are some findings that appear contradictory. "In the Common Sense report, for instance, some teachers said that even as they saw attention spans wane, students were improving in subjects like math, science and reading" (Richtel, M., 2012). However, there seems to be escalating secondary data inferring that continuous

use of technology in minors may affect their behavior due to "heavy stimulation and

rapid shifts in attention" (Richtel, M., 2012). But researchers also conclude that these

conflicting and offsetting views may be the result of the observer's bias and subjectivity

(Richtel, M., 2012). Could it be the twenty-first century student does learn differently

than previous generations? If this be so, why are we still teaching them the same way?

Need educational methodologies change? If it be true that students are more visual,

tech savvy and possess shorter attention spans, should we not capitalize on those

elements as educators?

 In 1963, Bob Dylan recorded a song entitled *The Times They Are A-Changin*.

How apropos this title is as we consider its relevance to online learning. The times they

are changing.

 Most "baby boomers" and those who preceded them were educated in the

"traditional" manner. Students trekked to brick and mortar structures, entered them, and

proceeded to their classrooms. As students entered, they viewed the desks positioned

in rows, facing the teacher's desk and blackboard. As Dan Lips (2010), a Heritage

Expert, stated "traditional schools involve school buildings, classrooms with rows of

desks and a teacher standing next to a chalkboard".

Since the 1920's, how have the schools changed? They have evolved from a one

room school house to a larger edifice. Yet, basic teaching methods have remained the

same. The teacher stands next to the black, green or white board, lecturing to a

captured, and oftentimes, bored audience.

In today's academia, many desks have been modernized and arranged in

varying designs. Black or green boards have been replaced with white or smart boards.

Notes, which were hand-written on the board, are presented through the use of

PowerPoint presentations (often referred to as using technology). But in essence, how

has educating a learner changed? Do PowerPoint presentations or movies shown

during class time validate the statement: "technology is being used in this classroom

setting? Some educators have resisted the use of technology in their classrooms. Could

any other business remain a viable entity in today's markets with as little, superficial

change as has occurred in the field of "education"?

Some institution as Phoenix, Capella, and Kaplan Universities have challenged

this status quo approach and have ventured onto a less traveled road. Resistance to

this avant-garde approach has been met with skepticism and disdain. Why do we

continue to shackle students of the 21st century with our use of outdated modes of

teaching? Because teachers refuse to be updated in their use of technology, need

students pay the price? Could it be that we as educators have forgotten the purpose of

education? "The objective of education is learning, not teaching" (N.A., 2008).

This road which is less traveled by the majority of academic institutions is called

Online Education or *Distance Learning.* What is online learning? According to Sabri G.

Bebawi (N.D.)

> "online education is defined as the creation and proliferation of the personal
> computer, the globalization of ideas and other human acts, and the use of
> technology in exchanging ideas and providing access to more people. Audio,
> video, computer, and networking technologies are often combined to create a
> multifaceted instructional delivery system. The fundamental method to unite the
> distance learning instructor with the distance learner is the network. Networks
> suitable for distance learning implementations include satellite, cable modem,
> digital subscriber lines (DSL), and wireless cable, (Collins, 2002)."

Online learning has also been defined as "the delivery of a learning, training or

education program by electronic means. E-learning involves the use of a computer or

electronic device (e.g. a mobile phone) in some way to provide training, educational or learning material" (Derek Stockley, 2003).

There are numerous expression used to name *online learning.* Virtual education, internet-based education and web-based education are just a few. However, there are characteristics which connote *online learning.* First, there is a disconnection of the face-to-face form of education prevalent in traditional learning. Second, courses are structured and organized which distinguishes them from tutoring or self-study programs. The computer is the primary tool used to present instructive material, return assignments and interrelate with faculty and student peers.

Online education is distinguished as being synchronistic or asynchronistic. Let us begin by defining these terms. A synchronistic online educational system is a technique which models itself after a traditional school structure. "Universities like NYU operate under synchronous which means students and teachers participate at the same time in a virtual classroom or chat session via the web. An individual who has the time to attend a virtual session but cannot commute to a college campus would find this a great option"

(Carron, 2006). Another mode of presentation is known as an asynchronistic

presentation. An asynchronistic online system is a technique which permits education to

be self-paced. Although self-pacing allows for individuality and independent learning, it

demands focus by the student due to the numerous distractions which surround an

individual.

Online classes exist in various forms. Not only can classes be presented in a

synchronistic online educational system or through an asynchronistic online

presentation, a third model is also possible. A third model, known as a blended-form. A

blended form of education attempts to merge both the traditional and online methods.

"Blended education combines the intimacy and face-to-face interaction of a physical

classroom with the flexibility and convenience of an online one" (Bird, K., 2014). Many

schools enjoy using a blended model (Spencer, 2010). It offers an up-to-date tutoring

software to the student while providing flexibility for teacher planning and creating

syllabi. Many students enjoy this blended model since it offers them a reprieve from

textbooks and mundane lectures. "Through 'blended learning,' students will absorb

concepts through videos or online programs and will follow up with teachers to get a

deeper understanding of the material" (Boss, 2012). Blended classes are attempting to

combine the best of both worlds: the face-to-face interaction of a physical classroom

with the convenience of online learning. Many schools enjoy the blended model. As Liz

Pape (N.D.) in her article on blended learning states,

> "In the Millis, Mass., Public Schools, Grace Magley, the technology
>   director, uses blended learning to make online resources available
>   in a one-to-one learning environment. She says it is a more effective
>   means of delivering instruction and managing the learning environment.
>
> The 1,400-student Millis district, which is located 19 miles southwest of Boston,
>   experienced early success through a pilot project offering course electives in art,
>   technology and video production in grades 5-12. This led to the adoption by all
>   high school teachers of a project-based, blended learning model. Over the last
>   three years, Millis teachers have used blended learning to cover more content with
>   students and at a higher level than in a traditional classroom. They are better able
>   to differentiate their lessons for different kinds of learners with Web 2.0 tools,
>   freeing up class time for more applied learning through projects".

 Blended instructions allow school systems to maintain a traditional mode of teaching

while introducing new elements.

      One theme, which proponents of Blended classes propose, is providing students

with courses which otherwise would be unavailable. Teachers appreciate the reception

of "near-instant assignments" and their ability to provided individual instruction as

needed. Michael Spencer (2010), an advocate of blended learning and senior vice

president of American Education Corporation states "the technology component

inherent in a blended learning environment isn't merely an attractive distraction, but an

integral approach to acquiring knowledge and engaging in curriculum that's simply

second-nature for today's 21st-century learner."

A concern of traditional learning is the rigor of online education. "Do the online

courses have the rigor offered by something on the order of a small-class sized, intense

summer seminar at a well-regarded university? Or are they a diploma-mill style money

machine for capitalizing vultures" (Spencer, 2010)? Known and trusted results will

disclose the truth.

Questions have been raised through news media and academic circles that

technology, by itself, appears to be dumbing down the education of learners. Are

online instructions dumbing down learning?

Several elements of a blended learning system are precisely what is contained and presented through online asynchronistic education. Asynchronistic education is capable of providing numerous curricula, access to numerous resources which would be cost probative to most if not all traditional systems. Asynchronistic education with its use of technology presents the world to a learner. Students can not only read and see possibilities and realities existing world-wide, but they can also penetrate the depths of individual elements, becoming experts in those areas.

Advocates of a blended learning system appear to be advocates of traditional learning methods. Issues raised against asynchronistic learning is a byproduct of the physical efforts of a teacher. Instant feedback to a student is not a byproduct of technology but an indication of the performance of the instructor. Furthermore, the rigorousness of programs can be tested. Schools are accredited, and the accreditation of an institution ought to be considered prior to a learner's enrollment. Just because a teacher is physically present in a classroom neither ensures the rigorousness of a program nor learning occurring. Fewer distractions occur in asynchronistic education

than in a traditional or blended setting. There are no notes passed around, misbehavior,

or non-purposeful discussion happening in an asynchronistic setting. I am not

advocating the removal of faculty from a classroom. I am questioning if the role of an

educator in a classroom setting may need to change? Would it not be a great idea to

have every learner hear and learn from Albert Einstein? Possibly a new role for the

teacher will be that of a facilitator, clarifier and/or an enhancer of concepts.

Due to students continued experience with traditional forms of learning, the

following questions surface. Is online education as productive as traditional education?

Is the interaction and discussions between instructors and learners or among peers

diminished? What about the social aspects of learning?

Research shows that online education has benefits which traditional education

lacks (Table 1). "In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education released a study showing

that, in higher education, online education has some definite advantages over traditional,

face-to-face education" (N.A., 2011). It has been evidenced that those learners

exposed to and completing online educational classes had out-performed learners who

only engaged themselves in a "traditional" manner of learning. "These results applied to

both undergraduate and graduate higher education in almost every discipline of study"

(N.A., 2011).

Remember when Texas Instruments, Incorporated (TI), invented the hand-held

pocket calculator. It was 1966. It was developed by a team which included men such

as Jerry D. Merryman, James H. Van Tassel and Jack St. Clair Kilby. In 1974 the tether

was cut, a patent was obtained and the personal-sized, battery-operated calculator was

available to the public. Today, calculators are used by all math students. Yet, at its

conception, the use of calculators in a classroom setting was viewed by many as

demonic.

Table 1: Online Education Statistics (Akanegbu, N.D.)

64% of full-time faculty at community colleges teach distance education classes; part-time faculty teach 35%.
72% completion rate for online classes at community colleges, compared to 76% for traditional face-to-face courses.
150% increase in the number of students selecting distance-learning courses as a part of their regular college curriculum between 1998 and 2008.
18% of undergraduate students are predicted to receive 80% or more of their education through online courses by 2013.
25% of students enrolled in at least one online course at the associate's degree level, compared to 17% at the bachelor's degree level.
71% of leaders of for-profit colleges and universities report that their institutions offer

classes online, and more than half (54%) say these classes offer the same value as classes taken in person.
61% of the presidents of four-year liberal arts colleges report that their institutions offer classes that are taught exclusively online, compared to 79% of presidents of research universities and 82% of those at community colleges.
15% of college students who have taken a class online have earned a degree entirely online.
39% of all adults who have taken a class online say the format's educational value is equal to that of a course taken in a classroom.
65% of students have taken online classes.
71% of students believe that virtual learning provides increased flexibility to take classes.
62% of students believe that virtual learning provides the opportunity for professional adults to take classes while working full time.
72% of university IT staff believe that virtual learning is essential to a 21st-century classroom, compared to 63% of administrators.
59% of college IT managers surveyed say their institution offers online learning.
48% of faculty members believe that virtual learning is essential to a 21st-century classroom, compared to 53% of students.
51% of college presidents say online courses provide equal value to classroom experiences. .
29% of the public says online courses offer an equal value compared with courses taken in a classroom.
77% of college presidents report that their institutions offer online courses.
89% of four-year public colleges and universities offer online classes, compared to 60% of four-year private schools.
60% of four-year private colleges and universities offer online classes.
23% of college graduates report that they have taken a class online.
50% of college presidents predict that 10 years from now most of their students will take classes online.
91% of two-year colleges offer online courses.
58% of college and universities that offer online courses grant degrees for which all the course work can be completed online.
88% of residential colleges and universities offer online courses to students who live on

campus.
15% of college presidents report that more than half of their undergraduate students have taken an online course.
90% of online institutions based at community colleges use student evaluations.
64% of online institutions based at community colleges use some type of administrative review.
75% of community colleges develop their own content for online courses
18% of community colleges use publisher content for online courses.
5% of community colleges use contract or license materials from content providers.
40% of community colleges own and maintain their own servers for their online classes.
36% of community colleges outsourced their server needs to a third party, such as a learning management system provider, publisher or IT provider.
20% of community colleges shared servers with others, such as a state system, district or consortium.
70% of community colleges currently offer an online student orientation for distance education classes.
54% of community colleges currently offer online plagiarism evaluations for distance education classes.
90% of community colleges offer a dedicated website for their distance education program and students.
85% of community colleges offer online admission.
91% of community colleges currently offer online registration for their classes. 40% of institutions reported that they charge students an additional per-credit fee to take distance education classes — the minimum collected was $2, the maximum was $80, with a median average of $22.
15% of community colleges offer blended/hybrid courses.
3% of community colleges offer interactive video (IAV) courses.
53% of community colleges continue to increase the number of blended/hybrid courses each term.
6.52% growth of distance education enrollments from fall 2011 to fall 2012.
40% of community colleges have deactivated their interactive video (IAV) courses or have never offered IAV courses.
26% of community colleges are continuing to increase the number of IAV courses each term.
60% of faculty members at community colleges believe that faculty participation in training programs for distance education is mandatory.

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|---|
| 28% of community colleges limit the number of online class sections a full-time faculty member can teach each term. |
| 52% of students at community colleges who take online courses are traditional students. |
| 63% of students at community colleges who take online courses are female and 36% are male. |
| 27% of distance learners are employed full-time. |

Developed myths inferring that students would be incapable of doing math if they

relied upon calculators infiltrated academic institutions. When calculator first appeared

on the educational scene, some educators inferred that calculators would be crutches

for learners. They would be used because students would be too lazy to solve the

answer for themselves. Math would no longer be challenging for students since the

calculator did all the work. People would be rendered helpless without one. What if the

batteries die? I would suggest buy new batteries or have spare batteries.

Today, few true educators cling to these statements. But why did it take the

department of education so long to allow technology to be used in the classrooms?

What was the great fear? Could it be that instructors would have to familiarize

themselves with something new? Did they fear having to use technology in their

classrooms?

Mathematics is a field of study which could easily be enlivened and enriched through the use of technology. This course lends itself well to online learning. Mathematics is not about memorized calculations, drill or boring manipulations. "It involves discovery, pattern recognition, applications, concepts, construction of relationships, reasoning from data, problem solving, and abstract thinking" (Pomerantz, 1997). Why were so many roadblocks created to prevent technology in areas of education which could benefit the learner in its use?

Learners of the 21st century have not grown up with a silver spoon in their mouth. They have grown up affixed to the internet. Twitter, blogs, instant messaging, iPods, IPads, e-mails, google, laptops, tablets etc. are as familiar to the 21st century learner as were calculators to the last generation and paper, pencils and typewriters were to the generations before that (Table 2). Why is it that educator assume they can "corner the market" on how an individual learns? Why are many of us in the learning profession so fearful of technology? Do we view technology as a rival to ourselves? Are we fearful of losing our jobs? Are we afraid to learn new things? Experts in the field of education

Table 2 Global Internet Users, (Hongkiat.com, N.D.)
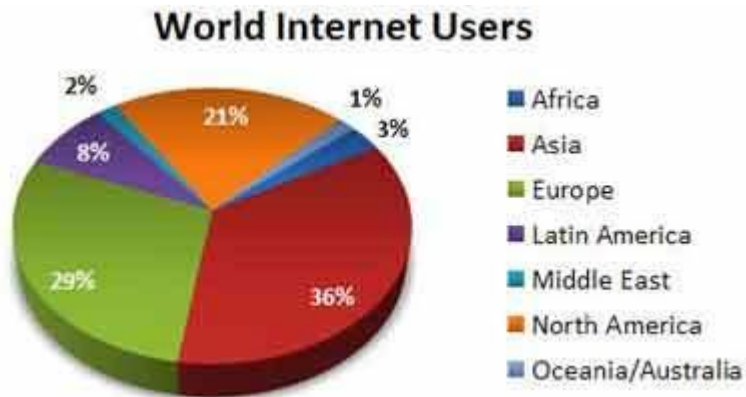
have indicated, through research, that online exams and audiovisual learning do not

automatically improve an individual's knowledge. However, it has been demonstrated

that technology which permits individual control of their own interactions most certainly

does have a positive influence in their learning development (N.A., 2011).

How have students and the general public responded to online education? Are

learners fearful of enrolling in classes? Is traditional learning considered more

advantageous?   Are there advantages in taking online classes?

In the fall of 2011, 6.7 million students enrolled in one or more online classes in

the United States (Table 3). This amounted to an increase of 500,000 students from the

previous year (Bird, 2014). There must be something that is drawing more and more

individuals to online learning in the United States.

Table 3 Growth of Online Learning

The study, "Going the Distance: Online Education in the United States, 2011," reports that more than 6.1 million students took at least one online class during fall 2010—a 10.1 percent increase over the year before.
Still, the growth of online education far exceeds the growth of higher education overall: Total enrollment in higher education increased by nearly 120,000 students during fall 2010, a mere 0.6 percent increase over the year before. And, 31 percent of all students participated in an online class during the semester—up from 9.6 percent in fall 2002, when the survey was first administered.

There are numerous advantages to enrolling in classes online. The first

advantage may be addressed through a simple question. Is it more convenient for you

to attend college full-time or do you require flexibility due to your demanding work

schedule? One certain benefit in preferring online courses to traditional courses is the

flexibility online learning offers the student. Consider the following: the individual's

hectic work schedule, factor in where they live, where they work, and the proximity to

the campus. Geography has always been an important factor in determining where a

learner pursues his or her continued education. Time, fuel, potential boarding, and

meals must be considered in the cost equation of one's education. Online learning

options are breaking down these barriers.

A second advantage of online learning flows from the statement "know thyself".

Socrates was a classical Greek philosopher and is one of the founders of Western

philosophy. He lived between 469 BC – 399 BC. Socrates reasoned that wisdom

always begins with wonder. One is unable to know anything without knowing one's self.

So the question arises, how much can you discipline yourself? Are you an individual

who needs structure to be a successful learner? Do I need to-do-lists? If you

responded positively to those questions then an online course rather than traditional

learning may be the path to follow. Pursuing online studies works well for those

learners who are self-motivated, focused and possess good work ethics. Learners,

capable of setting deadlines, organizing and prioritizing one's school schedule, should

experience success.

An aspect constantly raised in a pejorative manner is the lack of social interaction.

Do you need interaction from your peers and instructors to succeed? Or are you

possibly someone who can thrive in an independent study environment? Be honest and

consider all those social interactions. When a lecture is being presented by one's
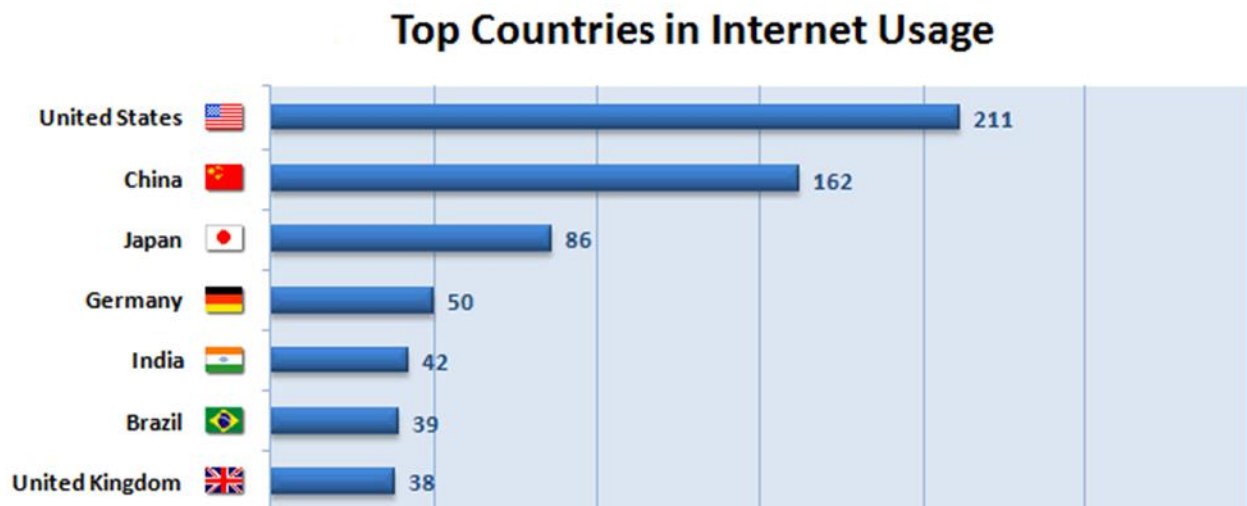
instructor, how often is there real social interaction? Most learners are too busy taking

notes to interact with the instructor let alone their peers.   As an online student,

interaction with the instructor and peers will occur. It occurs differently. It happens

through videos, emails, and postings to name a few. In fact, many online classes

require interaction with your instructor and peers, as part of the class curriculum. More

importantly, online classes support the learner in becoming an independent learner.

This may result in many of your classes being free from the distractions of a traditional

classroom setting.

This brings us to the next advantage of online learning. Online learning provides

the learner with flexibility.   In online learning courses, learners may complete their

assignments from just about anywhere, provided a computer, table or smartphone

exists and an internet connection is provided. Classes may occur in any state, nation,

selected eatery or even at home (Table 4). Where class will be held on a given day is

sole up to the independent learner.

Consider once again the constraints imposed by geography. Brick and mortar

institutions are located in specific geographic areas. It is incumbent upon the learner to

physically attend. There are only two choices offered to the learner: live on campus or

live off campus. Although living on campus may provide some proximity to the

Table 4 Top Countries in Internet Usage

Top Countries in Internet Usage

Country	Value
United States	211
China	162
Japan	86
Germany	50
India	42
Brazil	39
United Kingdom	38

classroom, it is countered by its added expense. Living off campus is not without its

woes. There is the commuting either from work or home. Even with the ebb and flow of

gasoline prices, an added expense is incurred by the learner who commutes, whether it

be gas or fares. With online learning courses, there is no commuting. Students can

often complete their class assignments from the comfort of their homes. This not only
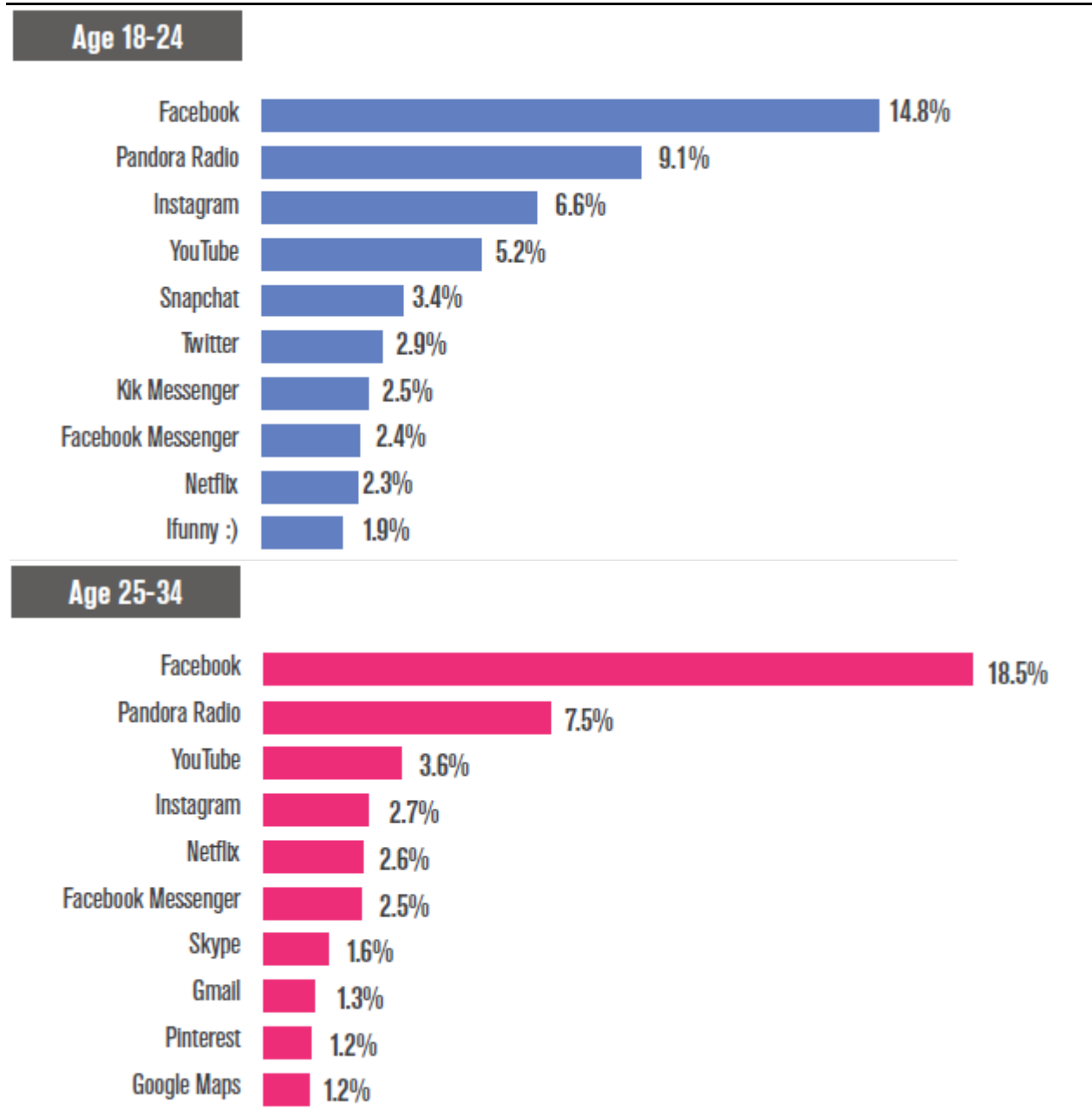
saves the online learner both time and money, and eliminates trips to and from class,

but provides another advantage for the online learner.

Within a given geographic area, a limited amount of educational facilities can

exist. Limitations may be due to numerous factors: availability of land, qualified and

engaging teachers, economic support, and the population. With traditional learning,
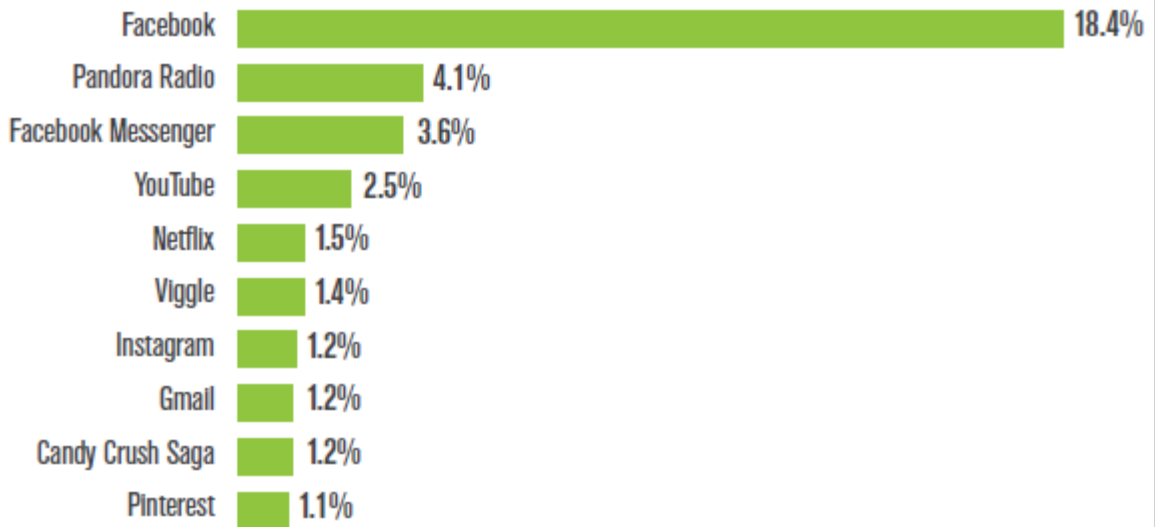
choices may be limited.

Online education enables a learner to choose from an array of institutions

regardless of the learner's geographic location. Choosing from a variety of institutions

allow the learner to select that which best suits the learner's needs and pocketbook

(Tablet 5).

Research indicates that online learning costs less than attending traditional brick

and mortar institutions. In today's economy, the cost to improve oneself academically

may be crucial. Can I afford to stop working and become a full-time student? What

about my current responsibilities?

Table 5 Use on the Internet over Paper (Villapaz 2014)

Age 18-24

Service	Percentage
Facebook	14.8%
Pandora Radio	9.1%
Instagram	6.6%
YouTube	5.2%
Snapchat	3.4%
Twitter	2.9%
Kik Messenger	2.5%
Facebook Messenger	2.4%
Netflix	2.3%
Ifunny :)	1.9%

Age 25-34

Service	Percentage
Facebook	18.5%
Pandora Radio	7.5%
YouTube	3.6%
Instagram	2.7%
Netflix	2.6%
Facebook Messenger	2.5%
Skype	1.6%
Gmail	1.3%
Pinterest	1.2%
Google Maps	1.2%

Age 35-54

Facebook	18.4%
Pandora Radio	4.1%
Facebook Messenger	3.6%
YouTube	2.5%
Netflix	1.5%
Viggle	1.4%
Instagram	1.2%
Gmail	1.2%
Candy Crush Saga	1.2%
Pinterest	1.1%

Age 18-24

Facebook	14.8%
Pandora Radio	9.1%
Instagram	6.6%
YouTube	5.2%
Snapchat	3.4%
Twitter	2.9%
Kik Messenger	2.5%
Facebook Messenger	2.4%
Netflix	2.3%
Ifunny :)	1.9%

Is there any guarantee a job will be waiting for a learner after a degree has been

conferred? Will I be assuming a debt which I may not be able to repay?

Statistics inform us that online courses are generally less expensive than the

same class offered in a traditional setting. Learners need not concern themselves with

issues such as commuting or moving to a campus, boarding or campus meal plans.

Aspects of traditional learning have a way of requiring inessential items of the learner.

Their tally impacts the cost of higher education.

Finally, a learner may continue to work while attending school online. This is one

of the crucial elements of online learning. Consider how this issues impacts the learner.

Retaining one's job permits the learner to amass more of an income. From a

psychological view point, experience and stability lessen financial worries allowing the

learner to focus on their studies. U.S. Department of Education (N.A., 2011) stated

"Any innovations in online learning technology that allow the student to self-monitor and

reflect upon what he or she has learned makes that form of learning more effective".

J. Carron points our other advantages to online education. He maintains that

"online education teaches you how to multi-task unlike a regular classroom setting.

Online you have to use several programs, maintain files and email in order to succeed

in that type of institution. The course work is distributed online through email or posted

on websites. The Internet is ideally suited to bring together all kinds of learning tools.

Papers and assignments are submitted by email. The entire operation is done online"

(Carron, 2006).

Although the advantages to online learning are stellar, there are disadvantages

as well. To begin, an online format is not perfect for all learners. Individuals who are

not self-motivated may have difficulty succeeding in an online learning environment.

Procrastination has been the death knoll of many an online learner. Individuals who

need prodding and personal attention from an instructor may want to think prior to

enrolling in an online program. But for self-motivated and focused individuals, online

courses are a "no brainer".

Another possible disadvantage is the degree not being accepted by some

employers. Although most employers today will accept and recognize online degrees,

there are still some employers attaching a stigma to online learning. These are few but

these individuals still exist. Individuals who have taken online learning soon realize that

these courses are often more intense and demanding than the so-called "traditional"

courses. Online learners do not have their instructors at their beckon call. The onus for

learning is squarely placed on the shoulders of the learner.

Use of new technologies may be seen by few as a disadvantage. Individuals

who are fearful of working with technology will probably acquire less from an online

course than those who enjoy the challenges and creativity which online courses

demand from a learner. With online education, the demands placed on a learner may

be intense. They must be more than a tape-recorder, transcribing notes. The individual

must research, analyze and evaluate throughout the learning process. But is this not

what learning is all about? For individuals wishing only to regurgitate information,

higher learning may not be for them, let alone online learning.

Finally, there is the perennially implied lack of social interaction shortcoming.

This shortcoming is usually presented by an individual who has never participated in an

online learning environment. Unlike traditional educational settings where the learners

are engaged in note taking, the online learner is engaged in dialogue with their

instructors and peers. Interaction is a crucial element of online learning. This may

occur through emails, discussion blogs, video and/or audio conferencing etc. Granted,

dances or sports are not elements of online learning. But is it imperative that academic

institutions participate in either activity? Dances and sports events are in abundance.

There is nothing to preclude an individual from attending these events. For me,

arguments such as these are bogus. Although the medium may be different, interaction

does occur, and possibly more so than in a traditional setting.

I would suggest another question. Do parties, sporting events and dorm night

gatherings add anything substantial in one's study of physics? Extra-curricular events

are enjoyable, but are they a necessary ingredient to the learning process? In fact,

sports in educational settings have been referred to as the minor leagues for the

professional arenas. Questions by non-athletes as to why their tuitions are contributing

to athletic scholarships and non-educational paraphernalia are valid. What should be

the focus of an educational organization? Should learning be an excuse to flee one's

parents or geographic area, to find oneself; going to extracurricular activities or

socializing; or is it perhaps be to learn?   I can recall times in Ohio when I would just

give up on studying because a party was occurring in my room, thrown by my dorm

mate. An online learning environment may fit perfectly into an individual's schedule and

make one feel more comfortable leaning in the privacy of their homes.

J. Carron (2006) again states, "Seeing the number of parties on campuses, the

local bars jammed to the rafters on weekday nights, and the incredible amounts of time

students spend on extracurricular activities, I wondered how much time these students

were devoting to their studies (pg. 57)." Could it be time to reevaluate our concepts of

learning and traditional education, eliminating many of the extraneous items which have

crept in the learning systems?

This paper does not claim to address each concern raised about online learning.

Evaluating a student's comprehension or their diligence in reading materials or watching

vignettes and PowerPoint presentations are such a concern. But how do these

concerns differ from the traditional teacher, having assigned material to be read,

discover the next class that few have read the assignment?

Online learning is not a panacea. One major complaint concerning online

classes is that they are boring. Indeed, some classes may be.   But is that not also true

of "traditional" learning?   Poorly planned and applied course designs are the reasons

for such occurrences. Often, boring traditional lectures have been filmed and posted

online. Online learning which lacks creativity will always end in boredom. To surpass

traditional presentations, online learning must harness the full power of technology.

"Still, even in these early primitive forms, current research shows that online education

is already more effective than traditional face-to-face instruction" (Losey, 2010). Current

learners recognize this truth although many academicians struggle believing this fact.

As "'Dear Abby' or her sister 'Ann Landers' who advises clueless people [says]

"wake up and smell the coffee" (Williams, 2002). Are many educators so out of touch

with reality that they are unable to realize that the internet is just another tool? If we can

build a better mouse trap, why not use it. Change is not necessarily bad or evil. It is only

different. Those educators who are able to change, adapt, and go with the

times, will prosper, despite the foot dragging and complaining. Those individuals

who are unable to adapt will go the way of the newspaper. As educators our task is

to instruct the learner in an enriching and exciting manner. The search for

knowledge should not be a labor of drudgery and boredom. Learning should be exciting. It is our job, as Jean-Luc Picard so often says, "to make it so".

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