

Argumentative essay: online learning and educational access

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Conventional learning is evolving with the help of computers and online technology. New ways of learning are now available, and improved access is one of the most important benefits available. People all around the world are experiencing improved mobility as a result of the freedom and potential that online learning provides, and as academic institutions and learning organisations adopt online learning technologies and remote-access learning, formal academic education is becoming increasingly legitimate. This essay argues the contemporary benefits of online learning, and that these benefits significantly outweigh the issues, challenges and disadvantages of online learning. Online learning is giving people new choices and newfound flexibility with their personal learning and development. Whereas before, formal academic qualifications could only be gained by participating in a full time course on site, the internet has allowed institutions to expand their reach and offer recognized courses on a contact-partial, or totally virtual, basis.

Institutions can do so with relatively few extra resources, and for paid courses this constitutes excellent value, and the student benefits with greater educational access and greater flexibility to learn and get qualified even when there lots of other personal commitments to deal with. Flexibility is certainly one of the most important benefits, but just as important is educational access. On top of the internet's widespread presence in developed countries, the internet is becoming increasingly available in newly developed and developing countries. Even without considering the general informational exposure that the internet delivers, online academic courses and learning initiatives are becoming more aware of the needs of people

from disadvantaged backgrounds, and this means that people from such backgrounds are in a much better position to learn and progress than they used to be. The biggest argument that raises doubt over online learning is the quality of online courses in comparison to conventional courses.

Are such online courses good enough for employers to take notice? The second biggest argument is the current reality that faces many people from disadvantaged backgrounds, despite the improvements made in this area in recent years – they do not have the level of basic access needed to benefit from online learning. In fact, there are numerous sources of evidence that claim disadvantaged students are not receiving anywhere near the sort of benefits that online learning institutions and promoters are trying to instigate. Currently there are many organisations, campaigns and initiatives that are working to expand access to higher education. With such high participation, it can be argued that it is only a matter of time before the benefits are truly realised, but what about the global online infrastructure? There is another argument that is very difficult to dispel, and that is the response of different types of students to the online learning paradigm. Evidence shows that there are certain groups of students that benefit from college distance learning much more than other groups.

In essence, students must be highly motivated and highly disciplined if they are to learn effectively in their own private environment.