

Elevator speech



Distance Learning I have many internet friends in different countries with whom I have never met but maintain great bonds since we share our problems with each other and try to help in any way possible. Few days back, I and Raj (my friend from Sri Lanka) started talking about the classes that we were taking in our colleges. I told him about the courses that I had opted for and the fact that I spend most of my time at home. Being a friend, he was concerned about my grades being affected if I didn't attend my classes. I laughed and clarified that my class sessions are held online therefore there is no need to make physical trips to the campus to acquire education. He was still perplexed and concerned that I must be falling behind my fellow students in the class. Upon hearing such statements, I understood that he was not aware of the concept of distance learning; therefore, I began explaining how Axia online courses have helped me and the mode of communication that takes place between the participants.

I explained the innovative platform of Axia courses by telling him that the instructor and all the students log-in at the same Forum (specific for every course) which is considered to be our virtual class, however, they might not be online at the same time. I told him that this type of communication is known as asynchronous communication. I even sent him the link for a paper written by Hrastinski (2008) that explained asynchronous communication as the communication that takes place on discussion boards, email, chat platforms etc. Raj was still not convinced as he said that conventional modes of acquiring education involved the valuable interactions between students that helped the students to clarify their concepts. I agreed and stated that such discussions also take place on distance learning platforms. I explained that students post their comments on discussion questions and can even

post comments on other students' responses. I clarified that the discussion builds on the basis of the responses of the participants like any other conversation. I addressed his concern and said that all the messages are posted on the platform in the form of a long threaded discussion which can be easily traversed and followed by everyone.

He seemed impressed with the structured form of communication offered by distance learning. However, he was still confused about the mode of assessments and communication with the instructor. Upon hearing this concern, I told him that assessments take place online and the feedbacks are supposed to be posted after certain duration by the instructor. I stated that the instructor can be contacted via email or phone (during office hours) if a concept or theory is not clear. I said that fellow students can also provide their feedback on the basis of the participation in the threaded discussions and let me know if I am headed in the right direction. I sent him another article written by Kasprzak and Anne (2005) that was related to feedback mechanism; it stressed on the need for personal feedback from instructors. After listening patiently, Raj said that he couldn't wait for Axia online courses to be introduced in his college in Sri Lanka since it sounded like an amazing and helpful mode of acquiring education.

References

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