

Adult learners and online education essay

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Adult Learners and Online Education

Introduction

The adult online education has become a very popular system of education among the adults. The paper will outline the principles which govern online adult education and challenges, which adult learners encounter when taking online courses. The paper also will explore the reasons why adults' learners prefer taking online courses over the formal education and reasons why some adult learners drop online courses after they have started. Lastly the paper will discuss the strategies needed to be implemented in order for the learners to succeed in their education and meet their needs (Coben, 2000).

Adult Learning Principles

The adult online education is a technological advancement in field of education in the world; however, most adult learners and instructors are used with the traditional and classroom form of education. Online education among the adults, has confronted adult learners and instructors with new challenges, which need, to be addressed. The learners and teachers need to embrace new technology and learn how to use the medium. There are seven principles which govern adult online education, which need to be understood by the instructors and those who provide adult online education, to make it more successful. The first principle is that adult learners need to learn when they are inherently motivated, to attain new skills and information. The second principle on online adult learning, states that the adult learners learn when they believe that they need to learn new ideas.

The third principle is that adults learn best by being actively involved in the

learning process, which means that they learn best by acting on the situation. The fourth principle is that adult learners in online education learn better when they focus in challenging situations and finding solutions, particularly in online education, which is characterized by many challenges. The fifth principle on online adult learning is that, adult online education poses rich experiences, which enable them, to build future for their families and themselves. The sixth principle, which governs online adult learning, is the fact that adults obtain better information and facts through unofficial learning. The last principle, which dictates the learning of adults, is that adults search for knowledge that will direct them and promote their lives and that of their families, so the online education should provide adults an opportunity to improve their lives. (Porter, 2006).

Challenges Faced by Adult Learners

Adult learners face many challenges when they are pursuing online education. Online education, gives adults challenges, since the adults are well acquainted with traditional and classroom form of education. Online education also poses technological challenge to adult learners, because the learners need to embrace new techniques and acquire new online devices, which are relatively expensive. This means that the learners cannot acquire basic online technological materials such as computers and internet services. Adults also have limited literacy skills due to their advanced ages, lack of computer skills, which are skills that play a key role in online education. The adult learners, lack basic skills needed for success of online education, which include organizational skills, numeracy skills, and literacy skills. The adults have inadequate funds needed to purchase computers and internet support

materials like routers, which contribute to the success of online adult education among adults are inadequate, because online these online support materials are expensive. The issue of finance also to adults is eminent, because they have a lot of obligations at home as they take of their families. Institutional barriers also undermine efforts to effect the adult online education program (Porter, 2006). This is where the institutions offering online courses to learners have not developed a comprehensive online curriculum which will address the needs of the adult learners. The institutions offering online education have inadequate number of trained personnel (Porter, 2006).

Advantages of Online Education

Online education has many advantages which enable it to be embraced by adult learners. The online adult education is affordable as compared to classroom education or the formal education. This is because; online adult education eliminates the logistics of attending formal classes and travelling from one point to another. The only requirement in online education is possession of communication facilities between the learner and the instructor. Online education is accessible to many especially to adult learners who have responsibilities in the society. This means that the system is flexible as compared to classroom education because it does not demand the element of age. Research done in Canada, regarding the advantages of online education indicated that online education presented the adults with distance delivery and flexibility. The online education according to the report, points out that it is effective with adults with low literacy skills and specifically those who reside in remote places of Canada (Benfield, 2000).

Reasons Drop-Out by Students in Online Education

The report which was released in Canada on the state of online education on adults indicated there was increased enrolment, but according to the report, this was short lived since there were high cases of turnover (Benfield, 2000). Lack of motivation in the online education program, has made many adults to abandon the adult education. This is contributed by the distance of the instructor who cannot be face-to-face to motivate the student. The drop out in online education among the adults, is also fuelled by increased responsibilities back at home, thus they need more time back at home. The increased drop-out in the online education is its failure to offer adults environment to build their confidence to develop their goals and the experience they need to succeed. Some learners also find that the online education is not relevant to their needs and not interesting to undertake (Shaw, 2005).

Supported Needed in Online Education

The online education needs numerous improvements to make it effective and meet the expectations of the adult learners. There online education program for adults need time and experimentation to determine its workability. There is the need for developing proper mechanism for financial investment in the online education program. The faculty, learners, and other potential stakeholders need to be trained on the use of the online training program to make content delivery effective. Instructors also need to be equipped with technological skills, given the necessary instructional materials, and strategies, which are specific to online education. The online education for adults will be effective when the instructors develop effective

and reliable assessment programs when the students enroll for the program and during the orientation session. Instructors should be facilitators of the content and not transmitters of knowledge as they provide content, which is captivating, interactive, and should entail multi-media (Benfield, 2000).

Conclusion

This paper has presented the principles which govern online education, advantages, reasons for drop, and recommendations, which will enable the success of the adult online education. It is clear from the discussion that there is need for comprehensive changes in adult online education and there are some challenges which need to be solved to make the program successful. The online education providers, needs to focus on developing modern strategies, which include financial programs, technological strategies, and institutional changes. The recommendations should be implemented and challenges addressed, to make the adult education online program successful (Shaw, 2005).

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