

ADVANCED MEMO

Analyzing the Effectiveness of Online Learning in a College Setting through Interviews with Current College Students.

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This study was based on my speculation on whether or not online learning has affected ones responsibilities as a student. The initial question was formed in hopes of better understanding the role that online learning has, both in the classroom and outside, but soon realized that online learning in general, plays a big enough role. From that distinction, the research became more focused on the idea of how effective online learning is, if at all.

As a fellow college student, similar to my peers, I know that this experience and new reality of online learning isn't ideal and has played a tremendous part in my college education. And had a feeling that this was a universal experience amongst many of my peers, and possibly even professors.

Early onto the interviewing and researching, it became clear that online learning was not nearly as effective as in-person. This being determined by a number of factors, but three lines of code came up the most across both of my interviews. Those lines are as follows: less personal, unfamiliar learning environment, and lack of engagement/presence. These are able to encompass the overall feeling that both my interviewees were feeling and outweighed the two common lines from the effective viewpoint: sense of independence and cutting self 'some slack'. Even though a lot of these answers were not as surprising, finding myself agreeing with the words of my peers, they were able to help me understand why online learning can be so unenjoyable at times. In doing that, one must familiarize themselves with the red flags, the not effective aspects, in hope of having a more enjoyable learning experience.

'NOT EFFECTIVE' ELEMENTS

- 1.1. **Less Personal:** Referring to the overall feeling one expresses when asked to reflect on feelings towards online learning. This was a more generalized line of code and can be

contributed to the environment of the class, the content of the class, the motivation/drive towards the class, and outside factors as well. By using 'less personal', instead of maybe just distant, allows one to acknowledge that there is a personal side to learning and that there is a need for it. This is able to go into a various subcategories, but revolves around the idea that there is something off, that even though this is a new learning experience, it is not like most learning.

1.1.1. **Arises**: Less personal emotions and feelings arise right away for the individual, not being completely familiar and possibly prepared for the online learning, they have an uneasy hesitancy. Examples of this can be seen when thinking of ones attitude and actions in the first days of class, strangers on computer screens and many of them blank, doesn't feel as personal or welcoming as before.

1.1.2. **Maintained**: This concept is then maintained throughout ones experience because often there is little change in ones routine. The continuation of online, the draining and often dreaded zoom sessions just add to the burden that is online, and add to the distance between the student and the class. With class being online, the lack of interaction amongst peers and professors is crippling to ones mentality and drive in the course.

1.1.3. **Changes**: There are only few moments of rupture for this particular category. Changes only occur if the individuals feel guilty for their part in this doing, not feeling as if they are doing enough or becoming the student they know they are not to be.

1.1.4. **Consequences**: The consequences with online learning being less personal are easy to come to, the lack of familiarity and comfortability that comes from tradition

learning don't make their way in the online space. Ultimately hurting the student and professor's relationship, and the individual.

1.1.5. **Excerpts:**

1.1.5.1. “You know, people are more willing to participate in a room together.

The learning feels more available.” This links the idea of students not feeling that called or encouraged to participate within the classroom. For this interviewee in particular, they rarely feel the need to participate because they don't feel as strong of tie to these classes.

1.1.5.2. “Because I feel like zoom is like I get performance shy, for some reason, it seems more intimidating to have to like unmute yourself and say something...”

This can be the reason why individuals don't participate in online class at all.

1.2. **Unfamiliar Learning Environment:** The importance that the environment of the classroom has in ones learning experience is extremely overlooked. With most of these environments looking like a traditional classroom, led by a professor, and surrounded by your classmates, makes for certain expectations of all classrooms. The flexible, intangible form that online learning takes is one that does more to a student that expected. Unfamiliar environment, not meaning in a foreign place but rather in spaces that do not initially seem conducive for learning, such as your childhood bedroom or backyard. Even though there is thanks to be given for its flexibility, it's in that flexibility that one's learning experience is altered, and possibly not at its potential it could be.

- 1.2.1. **Arises**: The unfamiliar learning environment arises once the online learning has begun, not being in the same space from the starting point, establishes a feeling of uncertainty throughout the course of one's experience.
- 1.2.2. **Maintained**: This is then maintained while one continues to take classes in settings once unfamiliar to their learning. Not only the physical space of the class affecting one's learning, but the space that is created between them and the professor, seemingly growing as the class goes on.
- 1.2.3. **Changes**: This only occurs when and if the individual realizes that the environment is not the most appropriate space for them as a student.
- 1.2.4. **Consequences**: Even though there could be a realization of unfit environment, the individual is still left with the unfamiliarity because of the lack of physical presence. Not being guaranteed in-person interaction can set the stage for the student before the class even starts.
- 1.2.5. **Excerpts**:
- 1.2.5.1. "I'm doing school where my like family members who I've never done my like never done school with before it's just a weird thing to do, and with like younger siblings." This is the reasoning as to why the unfamiliarity of the environment and its situations prove online to be ineffective.
- 1.2.5.2. "...like when you're in the classroom it's just like there's one thing to pay attention to and it's the professor and then when you're in your room, it's a lot more distracting." Not being in the physical space of a classroom, creates far more space than initially intended for the class.

1.3. **Lack of Presence / Engagement:** The importance of presence and engagement as a student is crucial if wanting to take something away from experience. Presence, being either your physical attendance, your participation or lack thereof, your commitment and responsibilities to the class, etc. These not only help ones grade and effort in the class, but allow them to have an overall more personal experience, and keep them excited for experiences to come. This category is different from the others because this is solely dependent on the individual, in order to have a more engaging experience, one must be present and partake in the exchange.

1.3.1. **Arises:** This occurs and will continue to occur based on the individuals' actions.

If one feels called to participate or to attend class, one will. There are outside factors that contribute to the start of ones distancing: enjoyment with class, content of class, outside circumstances, etc. but ultimately this occurs once one choses to act or not.

1.3.2. **Maintained:** This is maintained through one's attitude and decisions throughout their time as a student. Specifically, they are maintained through actions of not participating on zoom with cameras and mics off, not attending office hours, and simply not attending class.

1.3.3. **Changes:** Changes occur when an individual feels disappointed in their actions leading up to either moment of confrontation by professor or self.

1.3.4. **Consequences:** This makes for an unenjoyable learning experience and ultimately leaves the students feeling little connection to the course as a whole.

1.3.5. **Excerpts:**

1.3.5.1. "...these classes I've been in in-person, this year, I feel like have been a lot more like interactive and you know, people are more willing to participate

in a room together...” This shows that the lack of engagement is connected directly to whether or not classes are in-person or not, with online courses making it far less interactive and engaging.

1.3.5.2. “...and it's just a lot easier to be more engaging when you're surrounded by classmates who are also trying to be just as engaging and it's just so awkward on zoom when you have a question. And like half of the time the chat box is hidden, so the professor doesn't see it...” The framework that is online learning, the lack of proper interaction contributes to one's engagement.

EFFECTIVE ELEMENTS

1.1. Sense of Independence: Online learning leaves one with a great deal of responsibility and accountability, having to learn at times, independently, contributes to one's overall feeling of independence. Even though a lot of the responsibilities that come with online learning contribute to a lot of its downfall, the remote learning aspect, there are still moments that strengthen one. Taking control over one's education and taking in account the outside distractions, makes it easy for one to feel lost and burdened by all the responsibilities of online learning. But it is through the delegating and prioritizing that individuals are able to be proud of themselves and their actions.

1.1.1. Arises: One's sense of independence from online learning arises once they take their learning and their potential into their own hands, and for their advantage. It is from the conscious efforts towards bettering one's learning experience, and the success that comes from that.

1.1.2. Maintained: A sense of independence is thus maintained by individuals' continued actions and positive thinking of self and work. Being able to be grateful

for the distance, the physical and mental, that allows one to grow on their own as a student.

1.1.3. Changes: The feelings of independence can change when one feels overwhelmed by the demanding responsibilities of both a student and individual.

1.1.4. Consequences: The consequences of gaining a sense of independence are only positive, not only is one able to grow as a student and see it reflective in their work and mentality. But also as an individual, allowing them to grow into themselves and be proud of their achievements and dedication.

1.1.5. Excerpts:

1.1.5.1. “I felt like I was doing it on my own time, which makes learning a little bit more fun when you don't feel like you're forced to go to class or show up to zoom.” This contributes to the idea that having learning be on your time and schedule, not having to stick to the rules of in-person, allows for more time and flexibility throughout ones day.

1.1.5.2. “...you have an exam the next day, and you kind of have to make a smart decision and stay in. It doesn't always feel the greatest in the moment but then the next day you're very grateful that you stayed in and studied instead of going out um I've definitely felt those pressures...” This is the part of independence that comes from the proper prioritizing of school work and free time. This ability to distinguish what's more important is just one way to actively work on ones independence.

1.2. Cutting Self 'Some Slack': As one maneuvers through the turmoil that online learning can bring, it is important to remind themselves that they're doing their best. Or enough.

So often as a college student, or often any times as a student, does one forget to pat themselves on the back, even for the little things. Online learning has allowed individuals the opportunity to do that, and to do it often. The times that we currently find ourselves in make everything seem to need to be exact and perfect and ridiculed for the failures, but it is in those failures that one grows. Everyone in the situation, your peers and professors, are in the same boat as you, so it is essential to do it for yourself or for those around you.

1.2.1. Arises: Cutting one some slack usually arises once one is burnt out, possibly after a long week or work or a bad grade. This usually doesn't happen until prompted to do so by peers or fed up by ones actions.

1.2.2. Maintained: This is maintained by the checking in on self and celebrating even the littlest of accomplishments, from taking the day off for mental reasons or turning in an assignment even though it's a few weeks old. You got it in, you got one thing off your back, now onto the next.

1.2.3. Changes: This changes once one feels as though they are going 'too easy' on themselves or pressured to preform better. Not usually affects the learning experience, seems to follow a cycle of sorts, resorting to this once overworked and abandoning once feeling behind.

1.2.4. Consequences: The consequences of cuttin' self some slack are completely determined by the mindset of the individual. It can either lead them to better confidence and attitude towards themselves and their work. Or it can lead them to feeling as if they are not doing enough.

1.2.5. Excerpts:

1.2.5.1. “...I needed to focus up and work hard and keep working hard, rather than just give myself an excuse to be lazy...” This shows the other end of cutting self some slack, doing it at appropriate times. The interviewee was sharing how their professor reached out to the class to make sure everyone was on same page and made her realize she was taking advantage of the situation.

1.2.5.2. “[in person learning] felt so much better, because everyone was on the same page yeah and the professors, they were just like it's okay like this is weird but we're going to just keep doing what we're doing.” This links between cutting self some slack to everyone, acknowledging that this is a universal experience for most college kids and professors, and that its okay to take it step by step.