Is There Anybody Out There? Faculty and Student Perceptions of Distance Learning

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IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE?

Faculty and Student Perceptions of Distance Learning

Moderated by members of the Professional Clinical Counseling Research Team, Psychology

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An Old Concept

Early 1700s
1st known form of Distance Education: Prospective clergymen obtain training through mail correspondence (Albrektson, 1995)

1858 University of London offers Distance Learning degrees (http://museumofdistanceeducation.com)

1873 Society to Encourage Studies at Home (Robey, 2010)

1921 Latter Day Saints’ University issues the first educational radio license (Robey, 2010)

1958 Survey examined validity of national organizations claiming to provide training in psychotherapy via correspondence courses
  • Catalyst for what would eventually be known as diploma mills (Brophy & Durfee, 1960)
Technology Develops

1976 *Journal of Computers and Education* (Baepler, 2010)

1983 *Reconsidering Research on Learning from Media* (Clark, 1983)
Results yielded: *No significant difference*

1996 University of British Columbia:
first successful virtual learning environment, “WebCT” (Clark, 1983)
Today...

69% of Academic Leaders report that online learning is critical to their long-term plans.

6.7 million students are taking at least 1 online class (or 32% of all students)

– Allen & Seaman, 2013
77% of 4–year colleges offer online classes

29% of the public think online learning is a good value
– Pew Research, 2011

30% of Academic Leaders think that their faculty value online learning
– Allen & Seaman, 2013
56% of Employers prefer applicants from traditional classrooms

61% of Students think online learning requires more discipline

18% of Students think online learning is easier

– Public Agenda, 2013
So You Want a Degree From the Internet...
College in Your Pajamas!!!
Cost

- Cost of a Master’s degree in counseling
  - Regent: ~34K
  - Walden: ~41K
  - Capella: ~44K

- Time to complete: 2 ½ years
Admissions Standards

- Generally speaking, they’re lower.
  - Capella: 2.7 GPA or higher, no GREs, no interview
  - Regent: 2.7 GPA or higher, no GREs, no interview
  - Walden: Bachelor’s degree
Classes

- All classes are conducted online
- Contact with other students/faculty is limited
- Courses are primarily graded online discussions and papers
- Unofficial honor system
- Residency requirements
Discussion Questions

- Is this – mental health counseling – a training model that can be converted to online? Would you want to see a therapist that was trained in this way?
- Are their specific programs (graduate or undergraduate) that would fit well with this approach?
A Well Educated Cat
Our Initial Findings

- Convenient, convenient, convenient
  - But feeling a bit disconnected from others
    - Yet *still able* to find ways to connect with classmates

- Forced creativity & mastery of new tasks
  - Heightened sense of self-efficacy

- Satisfied with the knowledge gained
  - Disappointed by the skepticism
What might be the potential advantages of online education?
Is anything really lost?

Or is this simply a fear of the new?
Just because we can, does that mean we should?
Students want it, but faculty (and employers) remain skeptical.

How should this dissonance be quelled?
For those of you with experience in online courses: How did it go?
Assuming online education is the future, how do we improve its reputation?

Specifically, how do we take a tier 4 school and make it a tier 1 school?