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Effects of Online Learning on Student Participation

Online learning encompasses learning experiences facilitated by the internet and electronic devices such as laptops and smartphones. It provides a platform for making the education process creative, student-centered, and flexible (Janse van Rensburg 73). Online learning has helped meet the educational needs of large groups of students at the same time. Online learning has also made education accessible to students in rural or remote areas. It is anticipated that online learning will transform the traditional model from teacher-centric to student-centric, providing enormous opportunities for cost-effective learning. When discussing the effects of online learning on learner participation, one should note that participation is a critical factor in determining online learning success. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how online learning affects student participation or engagement, especially the outstanding, meaningful experiences that learners obtain.

Online learning provides a flexible, learner-centered approach to learning. It offers a medium for dealing with the students' needs to improve educational standards. Online learning takes students away from their comfort zones, with demands from educators forcing them to undergo additional training and master new skills (Janse van Rensburg 74). Students need to become active participants to co-construct knowledge in the online environment. Their involvement with peers in online learning platforms enhances student participation and allows sharing of ideas and knowledge. In addition, online learning enhances participation by

encouraging students to become independent learners and work independently to gain knowledge from contents online (Janse van Rensburg 78). Online systems also motivate students to be interactive, allowing them to connect with others, communicate their ideas, and explore additional content. This approach has transformed learning, with students being exposed to a broad viewpoint from their peers.

Online learning positively impacts student participation by enhancing access to resources and interactivity irrespective of barriers such as geographical distance. This mode of learning has positive influences on student participation because it encourages synchronous communication (Gopal et al. 6928). An example can be seen from a virtual classroom involving a live video conference or an internet chatroom. Such an environment is likely to encourage student participation; communication will occur simultaneously regardless of the learners' geographical location. For instance, incorporating tools such as prompt feedback improves the learning experience, thus improving participation (Gopal et al. 6928).

Lower learner participation has always been a major problem associated with online learning. This is due to a lack of face-to-face interactions with peers and instructors. Regardless, online learning is widely recognized as an approach for enhancing peer and collaborative learning (Palvia et al. 238). It is student-centered, providing a platform for active learning and engagement by all students. Even students who tend to be quiet in a classroom setting will be comfortable participating in class dialogue via online platforms without being recognized, thus increasing their participation (Paul and Jefferson 3). Online settings allow individuals to interact extensively with peers, instructors, learning content, and learning environment. The setting provides learners with a wide range of interactive activities and engagement tasks. The tasks are purposefully designed to enhance student participation and collaboration (Song et al. 47). Thus,

online learning environments are designed to enhance meaningful interactions and subsequently promote learners' participation.

In conclusion, as online learning is increasingly becoming a helpful tool in education needs, especially in the face of pandemics such as Covid-19, it is necessary to examine its effects on learner participation. The discussion reveals that the acceptance of online learning is associated with positive effects such as collaboration, meaningful interactions, satisfaction, and motivation. Online learning should be designed to accommodate students' differences, consequently encouraging the active participation of learners.

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