

THE PROBLEM. The purpose of this study was to elicit participants' perceptions of five selected factors known to impact the experiences and attitudes of online learners.

METHOD. A survey research design was conducted, and 56 self-selected participants, 18 years of age and older, completed an online survey consisting of twelve questions. A call for participants was posted at Alliant International University and the online survey development company, Survey Monkey. Ten survey questions were Likert-type questions, two questions were open ended questions. The data was compiled using Survey Monkey.

RESULTS. Five factors emerged from the review of literature that could impact experiences and improve attitudes about online learning. These factors included flexibility, interaction, technology, training and course workload. The factors that participants perceived had the most impact on experiences in online learning were flexibility and technology. The factor that participants perceived that most improved attitudes in online learning was flexibility.

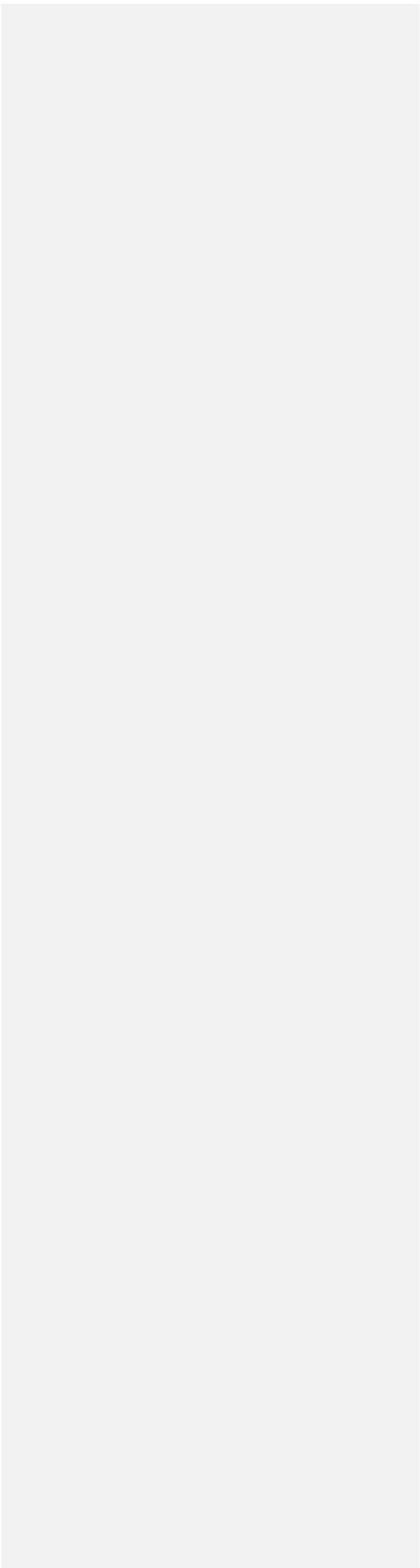
While the results of the study suggest one factor above all other factors impacted perceptions, the results of the study also suggest that there are many variables that can impact perceptions of experiences and attitudes of online learners.

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PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS IMPACTING
EXPERIENCES AND IMPROVING ATTITUDES
FOR ONLINE LEARNERS

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of the
Hufstедler School of Education
Alliant International University

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Kalani, my daughter Solstice, my
parents, Rogelio and Blanca Marengo, and sister, Sharon. You are my inspiration, my
light and my heroes.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Edward Shenk, Dr. Joseph Adwere-Boamah, and Dr. Andrew Shean, for your guidance and supporting me throughout this journey. I would also like to thank the following people and groups who believed in me and helped shape my life. They include, but are not limited to, St. Peter's Parish, the Mission District and Columbia Park Boys'/Girls' Club of San Francisco for teaching me about multiculturalism, perseverance, and facing adversity; the Arguello brothers for helping bring mind, body, and spirit together for me; Sacred Heart-Cathedral Preparatory for instilling in me the value of service and life-long learning; Ramon Bustos for your guidance and mentoring. Dr. Linda James for taking a chance on me to serve the communities in Oakland and for inspiring me to pursue education as my calling; my dear friends (so many to list, you know who you are) from our days in grade school, in high school, in college, and beyond, for always "keeping it real" and for creating so many teachable moments to make me a better person; my cousins, for keeping me grounded and helping build a foundation of love and support; the educators of SFUSD whom I have had the honor of working with through my first decade in education, you have impacted me in a profound way; to the Schimandle, Cole and Vasquez families, for your faith in me to become a great husband and father, to my sister, Sharon, thank you for pushing me to be the best brother I could be; my godchildren for reminding me of my responsibility to be a professional at all times; to family and friends of my parents, for treating me as if I was one of your own; to my parents, nothing I have or will ever do will ever come close to what you have accomplished and sacrificed for Sharon and I. However, it will be fun to try and come close. You both are true visionaries; to my

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loving wife and best friend, Kalani, thank you for your unconditional support throughout this journey. You sacrificed as much, if not more, during these years; this achievement would not be possible without your willingness to give more than you wanted at times, and you gave unconditionally. I do not know anyone else in this world with as big a heart while tolerating those little quirks of mine that test your patience. I owe everything to you and our family; last, to my daughter Solstice, dream big, pursue excellence, and give, because it is the right thing to do.

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CHAPTER I

Problem Statement

Online education has emerged as an opportunity for teaching and learning to reach a larger, non-traditional audience. According to Brooks (2003), attitude towards online learning were the most important elements towards creating a quality online learning program (Brooks, 2003). One could argue that, given the growth in online education, students increasingly gravitate to online learning rather than the traditional classroom face-to-face learning environment. Given the surge in online enrollment, one could view faculty as stewards of online learning. However, given its sharp increase in popularity and usage, the attitude of faculty experiences in online learning can be explored to improve the quality of synchronous and asynchronous learning. Online learning has experienced a steady increase in the number of students enrolled in online courses as well as the number of instructors teaching online courses (Allen and Seaman, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011). While data has demonstrated increases in the number of online learners, one should not assume that such increases are the result of a change in attitude towards online learning for students and instructors. For example, flexibility, access to education alternatives, and cost effectiveness could also be attributed to the rise in online learning as easily as improvements to technology. Regardless of the reasons for the growth of online learning, it is vital to address perceptions of experiences and attitudes in online learning.

The purpose of this research project was to elicit participants' perceptions of five selected factors known to impact the experiences and attitudes of online learners.

Attitudes toward online learning affect quality, resources, and training. Problems can

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arise when school communities are divided about the merits of online learning. The recent growth in online learning may not correlate to positive or negative attitudes towards online learning. Studying perceptions of experiences and attitudes in online learning could help educational leaders improve the quality of online programs and the experiences of students and instructors who participate in online programs. The findings can determine the type of learning management system best suited for students and instructors.

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Issues Leading to the Problem Statement

The issues that led to the problem statement included: state budgets for education, the emergence of distance education, the quality of online learning, the increase in diversity among the student population in online learning, and flexibility in an online learning platform. The following section will discuss each issue as it pertains to online learning.

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Current state budgets in education force educational leaders to do more with less.

The outcomes from budgetary decisions have included: decreases to state budgets resulting in layoffs, a mortgage crisis creating record foreclosures, bank bailouts, and company downsizing (<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org>). In education, many states struggle to provide resources for school districts. Moreover, the distribution of per pupil expenditures in a financial crisis in education create issues of equity. While the national average for per pupil expenditure reached \$10,000, Ed Week (2009) reported that in Vermont, the average per pupil expenditure was approximately \$15,000, which

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ranks number one in state funding per pupil. In California, per pupil expenditure was approximately \$7,500, which ranked fourth from the bottom.

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In the 21st century, **technology is** at the heart of distance education. A growing trend in **studying** 21st century distance education is student and instructor experiences in the virtual classroom. An example of a K-12 institution that has built the capacity for teachers and instructors to experience online education serving students across the state of Florida, the U.S., and the world is the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) (www.flvs.net). The vision of FLVS is “any time, any place, any path, any pace.” **Increases in capacity through technology, staff, and pedagogy has allowed FLVS to serve over 97,000 students in approximately 213,000 half-credit enrollments during the 2009-2010 school year.**

Negative perception of the quality of online courses has impacted online learning as a long-term strategy for some higher education institutions, according to Allen and Seaman (2006). Online learning in the 21st century has allowed for increased access to education for non-traditional students. Non-traditional students include working professionals and students balancing family and work responsibilities. However, resistance by faculty to its implementation, training, and capacity **have affected** the overall success of **institutions’ efforts** to grow online learning programs (Allen and Seaman, 2006).

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Information and communication technologies strengthen student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction (Guri-Rosenblit, 2009). The campus library, research databases, and other information resources that **at one time, were difficult to access, can now be accessed from a distance.** The **online learning experience** allows those students to attend school who, for many different reasons, cannot attend the traditional in class

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school setting. The rise of online learning **is evident** in the increase of higher education institutions offering synchronous and asynchronous online courses, thus increasing the number of participants experiencing online learning. Websites have emerged to assist online learners in developing a positive attitude towards their online learning experience. For example, distance education.org (www.distance-education.org) is an example of an online site that offers users information to make informed decisions about distance education alternatives. Users are able to locate distance education programs by subject and degree level. Universities such as Ohio University, Concord Law School, University of Phoenix, Baker Online College, and Argosy University are highlighted to demonstrate the diversity and explosion of distance education programs in higher education.

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Allen and Seaman (2007) believed that documenting **patterns** over time could impact the conversation about the future of online learning. As trends emerged in online learning, so did findings that discussed the importance of online learning at institutions of higher education. For example, higher education institutions in the **"not interested"** category (18%) were, for the most part, smaller institutions offering little to no online learning (Allen and Seaman, 2007). **These schools did not view online learning as important to their long-term strategy and thus, may have viewed online learning with a negative attitude.**

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As one experiences or utilizes online learning, flexibility can be seen as an important component of a positive online experience. However, **the amount of work in** an online course can also create a negative attitude towards online learning as well as preventing and stifling traditional forms of student-to-student interaction (Allen and Seaman, 2011).

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Given its reliance on technology, specifically the Internet, online learning can be completed anywhere. Much like the motto of the Florida Virtual Schools, this flexibility allows students to complete assignments at their own pace. Students have the option of entering and re-entering at their convenience. Students who benefit from online learning courses include students from K-12 to higher education. Koole, McQuilkin and Ally (2010) suggested that online learning allows for users to choose how and when to interact. In addition, this flexibility enables frequent dialogue of ideas to monitor progress. Online learning enables digital natives and digital immigrants the flexibility to benefit from innovative methodologies for all subjects, at all levels (Prensky, 2001). Prensky defined digital natives as individuals who have acquired an understanding of technology at a young age and digital immigrants as individuals who did not acquire an understanding of technology at a young age but have learned to adopt technology at a later stage in human development. Different systems of online learning can create lots of variability, which in turn, can cause increased variety of attitudes towards online learning based on one's own experience as a student or instructor. Since online learning can increase flexibility for students, type of student who enrolls in distance education programs is similarly diverse. For example, given high dropout rates in inner city schools, online learning has attracted diverse learners such as the credit recovery student, students in search of enrichment, and professionals looking to improve their credentials.

Although more faculty agree to the legitimacy of online learning at their institution than faculty that disagree, faculty who neither agree nor disagree to the legitimacy of online learning are at least twice as many than faculty who agree to the legitimacy of online learning (Allen and Seaman, 2006). This could suggest that, while

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online learning has grown in the 21st century, resistance to online learning remains strong, even at institutions where many faculty view and perceive online learning favorably.

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Graff (2003) attributes part of this view to communication becoming more challenging in online learning. For example, non-verbal cues cannot be detected by online participants, thereby making it more difficult for online learners to interpret non-verbal cues. Students who possess poor information technology skills can also be at a disadvantage in online learning.

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According to Larson, Miller and Ribble (2010), “technology has forever altered the way we learn and teach, and the pace of change is only accelerating” (p. 12).

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According to Graff (2003), students require time to adjust to an online learning platform, thus, impacting one’s attitude from their online experience. Graff also found that students who tended to be more reserved were better able to participate in an online community because fear of spontaneous responses in a face-to-face classroom environment was removed.

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Online learning has emerged as an alternative to traditional in-class instruction. Technology in education has impacted teachers and learners in various ways that are uncommon to most. Colleges and universities are addressing the technology challenge by developing infrastructure to support personal electronic devices such cell phones (Carnevale, 2007). Technology can help facilitate the transition from faculty centered to student centered learning. The implication is that students can develop “personalized learning plans” to increase accountability and flexibility in higher education (Bruff, 2011).

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As educational institutions adapt to the needs of 21st century learners, technology in education can serve as the vehicle for diverse groups of learners eager to engage in an

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innovative approach to education. Online learning has fully embraced technology as the catalyst for the delivery of information. The use of technology in online learning has improved access, institutional capacity, and flexibility. The Florida Virtual Schools model demonstrates the power technology can have on learners. Consequently, teachers and learners benefit from its flexibility and access to information leading to improvements in the online learning experience. Also, online high schools such as www.k12.com allow high school students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that, in past decades, was not offered as a viable option because of limited selection in course offerings. The increase in online options could suggest expansion of the online learning platform and thus, a shift in attitude towards online learning when compared to traditional learning.

According to Allen and Seaman (2006), "online enrollments have been growing substantially faster than the overall higher education student body" (p. xx). The implication is online learning has become a viable alternative to traditional in-class instruction. A report titled, *Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States*, indicated that in 2005, approximately, 3.2 million students in higher education were enrolled in at least one online course; of the total number of students enrolled in higher education, 82% were students enrolled as undergraduates (Allen and Seaman, 2005). This statistic suggests the opportunity to offer more online options for undergraduates as well as opportunities for online learning growth at the graduate level. The improvements to technology could be attributed to the growth in online education. One could argue that given the growth in online learning, students could view online learning as a more enjoyable experience when compared to the traditional classroom setting.

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Allen and Seaman (2012) reported that faculty with more teaching experience were less excited or less positive about online learning than their less experienced counterparts. Defining online learning remains a challenge among professionals. The term “online learning” is but one of many digital technology terms in education circles. Other terms include web-based education, distance education, distance learning, virtual classrooms, and computer-mediated communication (Guri-Rosenblit, 2009). Donohue and Howe-Steiger (2005) claimed that in education technology, there are many terms they call “jargon.” They argued that the variety of terms reflected the ambiguity of job functions.

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Experiences in communication between teacher and student and among students have been received with mixed reviews. Vanides (2007) argued that online learning forces teachers to think differently about discourse where “the facilitation of rich and thoughtful discourse between participants becomes my principal endeavor” (p. 12). He acknowledged that online learning remained challenging to sense feelings of frustrations and accomplishment due to lack of face-to-face feedback. Vanides stated that changes in pitch, increases in the likelihood of confusion, and the need to write clearly and concisely were also obstacles he encountered in online learning. He noted that for online learning to be successful, educators must think differently about areas such as assessment, discourse, and lesson planning.

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Experiences and attitudes about online learning were impacted by the level of engagement in an online community (Armstrong, 2011). Negative perceptions and attitudes towards online learning are obstacles that could stifle growth in online education. According to Ng (2007), “an important issue in online delivery is whether it can provide

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an interactive learning environment for the participants” (p.11). Ng conducted interviews with tutors and students, and found that one challenge students were raising questions through online communication. In addition, tutors reported challenges in checking for student understanding. This type of challenge could contribute to a negative attitude about online learning. According to Edweek.org (2010), studies on the success of online learning remain inconclusive. For example, data fails to suggest that high school and college students fare better in distance education courses than in a traditional in-class settings, according to the Institute for Higher Education Policy (1999). This finding could suggest that online learning, besides its flexibility and potential cost savings, can impact attitudes towards online learning in a positive or negative direction.

While data has demonstrated increases in the number of online learners, one can not simply assume that such increases are the result of a change in attitude towards online learning. Allen and Seaman (2012) reported that 40% of faculty at higher education institutions did not recommend online learning to their students. For example, flexibility, access to education alternatives, and cost effectiveness could also be attributed to the rise in online learning as easily as improvements to technology. Experience in online learning can be a critical factor in developing positive or negative attitudes toward online learning.

Trends Leading to the Research Topic

The downward trend in spending and contraction of the U.S. economy placed education at the forefront during the State of the Union address on February 12, 2013. While much of the address by President Barrack Obama was focused on the economy and

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jobs, education ~~fueled~~ a discussion about the future of the country. Brenchley (2013) highlighted several key points related to education in the presidential address that included: access to early learning, high school reform, and managing college costs and quality of education.

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Shrinking budgets could require educational leaders to develop systems of accountability and maximize student-learning outcomes. Approximately twenty years ago, the U.S. ranked first in education (www.cbsnews.com). Lagorio (2005) argued that while the U.S. led the world in what she termed the “knowledge economy,” Americans ought to worry because the impact of tomorrow’s American leaders on the world stage is shrinking. In an interview with the Newark, New Jersey’s schools Chief Clifford B. Janey (2011), Janey suggested school districts should approach a new round of state budget cuts to include decreasing expenditures and increasing innovation. In the same interview, Allan Odden of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education argued that the key to school districts amid budget crisis is considering “overall strategy for improving performance” as well expenditures in relation to the overall strategy (2011). Jonathan Travers of Education Research Strategies (2010) gave the most comprehensive solutions for school districts that face budget cuts due to reduced state funding. Travers mentioned solutions such as: developing clear strategies, recognizing the political climate, establishing benchmark data, and determining capacity based on available resources. This interview and the manner in which virtually every school district in the country operates demonstrates at least one important point for discussion ~~due~~ to the U.S. financial crisis and reduced state budgets, if education reform does not result in a student centered model, lip service will be paid to student achievement with dollars and cents

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(not reform) as the driving force in education. In a blog on Edweek.org (2010), Cavanaugh reported that although the majority of states have increased education spending, their overall budgets fell below 2008 spending levels. This pressure, as well as the inevitable end of federal stimulus support, could initiate further cuts in education well into 2012 and beyond. In California, however, the recent passing of Proposition 30, a temporary tax to support education, could help alleviate budget concerns in education and continue the push for student-centered learning.

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The 1980's sparked debates regarding the definition of what was coined distance education. Garrison and Shale (1987) argued that distance education implies non-contiguous communication between teacher and student, involves two-way communication between teacher and student, and uses technology to facilitate communication and the educational process. According to Edweek.org (2010), distance education was “generally described as courses for college students, and later high school students, in which the lecture was delivered through classroom television set via satellite” (p.1). As distance education evolved into online learning, other definitions emerged. Garrison (2009) referred to online learning as a form of distance education. He continued suggesting that independent study is the major component of distance education and thus, online learning. To support his argument, Garrison pointed to Larreamendy-Joerns and Leinhardt (2006), who stated that online learning “is a direct descendant of instructional technology and computer based-assisted instruction” (p.572). While there are many common themes in defining online learning, the challenge to develop a universal definition remains. Education professionals use phrases such as e-learning, online education, online learning, distance learning, and distance education interchangeably.

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Allen and Seaman (2006) defined online learning in several ways. The authors differentiated between traditional and online learning. Traditional learning did not include any online elements of instruction. An online course was defined as having most or all of course instruction through synchronous or asynchronous learning. In between traditional and online course were web facilitated and blended/hybrid courses. In a web-facilitated course, it is designed as a face-to-face course with online support. In a blended/hybrid course, a large percentage of the course is taught online. However, a smaller percentage of the course is offered in a face-to face format.

While the 21st century has seen an increase in the diversity of students in education, learners continue to be engaged in education when teachers employ effective teaching methods regardless of background (<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/teaching-methods-in-education.html>). With regards to cost savings, Guri-Rosenblit (2009) noted cost savings was determined by the type of technology used to support student learning. Research conducted by the Sloan Consortium indicated a steady increase in the number of students enrolled in online courses (Allen and Seaman, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011). In addition, studies conducted by authors Allen and Seaman (2006), Edweek.org (2010), Garrison (2009), Guri-Rosenblit, (2009), Lagorio (2005), and Ng (2007) showed how online learning has moved the online learning model forward.

Relevance and Significance of the Research Topic

Online learning has become a viable alternative to in-class instruction. Given the current financial climate in education, online learning has evolved as an emerging trend in secondary schools and post-secondary institutions. Technological innovation and the

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use of online alternatives have led to the establishment of virtual schools, and are attracting diverse learners. Online high schools such as www.k12.com allow high school students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that, in past decades, was not offered as a viable option. Online courses offered through Alliant University's Education Leadership and Management program are examples of how online learning has penetrated higher education. There are many reasons online learning has evolved into a popular trend in today's education landscape. Some reasons include, but are not limited to, cost savings, flexibility, and utilizing technology to engage veteran and young learners alike. According to Anderson (2009), "online has always been to a great degree determined by the technologies of the day" (p.111). Online learning initially began as distance education, when the only technology to transfer information was via mail correspondence. Since mail correspondence was the only means of exchanging information between student and teacher, real time interaction was next to impossible. Online learning evolved from mass media, such as television and radio broadcasts, which in the early stages, were referred to as distance education. In the example of mail correspondence and mass media, pedagogical and administrative models evolved to support the effectiveness of each model. Anderson referred to mail correspondence as the first generation of distance education and mass media as the second generation of distance education. The third generation of distance education introduced online learning, which included technology such as video, audio, and text conferencing. The aforementioned examples of technology can be considered current 21st century online learning models. Given this technological trend, the impact of online learning grew to include synchronous or asynchronous learning. In synchronous learning, learning occurs

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at the same time, rate, and pace. In asynchronous learning, learning occurs at different times, rates, and paces. Inherently imbedded in asynchronous learning is flexibility and independent study.

The capacity of information technology and technological trends impact attitudes towards online learning and one's experience in online learning (Bruff, 2011; Carnevale, 2007; Davis & Niederhauser, 2007; Larson et. al, 2010; Ng, 2007). Research in the first decade of the 21st century has focused on perceptions and attitudes toward online learning for students, teachers, and administrators (Allen & Seaman, 2012; Armstrong, 2011; Brooks, 2003). There appears to be no one prevailing reason that shapes attitudes toward online learning (Graff, 2003; O'Malley & McGraw, 1999; Osei, 2010; Sanders & Morrison-Shetlar, 2001; Schiffer, 2002). As more educational institutions rely on technology and online learning, this trend could lead to increased exposure to online learning by students, teachers, and administrators. Studies addressing experience in online learning can shed light on how experience in online learning is related to a user's attitude toward online learning. Such findings can suggest further research to improve the legitimacy of online learning as a viable alternative to traditional, in-class instruction.

Using an online survey of adults, 18 years of age and older, the purpose of this research project was to elicit participants' perceptions of five selected factors known to impact the experiences and attitudes of online learners. Online learning, attitude, and experience are operationally defined to clarify the use of terms in this research study.

Research Questions

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Comment [37]: All people's experiences? Or are you focusing on a subgroup like students, teachers, administrators?

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Comment [38]: Can you say a bit more about this? I keep re-reading it and want to know how you distinguish experience in online learning with attitudes toward online learning.

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Comment [39]: The legitimacy of online learning? Is legitimacy the word you are looking for here or do you mean effectiveness? Or some other word?

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Deleted: An online survey of adults 18 years of age and older elicited responses of perceptions of the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes in online learning.

Comment [40]: Here you should list the operational definitions of these terms.

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Deleted: Current state budgets in education force educational leaders to do more with less. Online learning has evolved to become an emerging trend in secondary schools and post-secondary institutions. As online learning becomes more accessible for learners, it is vital to address attitudes towards online learning. There appears to be no one prevailing reason that shapes attitudes toward online learning (Graff, 2003; O'Malley & McGraw, 1999; Osei, 2010; Sanders and Morrison-Shetlar, 2001; Schiffer, 2002). Online learning has emerged as an alternative to traditional in-class instruction. The rise of online learning can be seen in the increase of higher education institutions offering synchronous and asynchronous online courses. Studies that research attitudes towards online learning could determine if a variable such as experience in online learning is a critica... [2]

Comment [41]: I deleted the above paragraph because it was almost, if not, identical to a previous paragraph I read.

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Two questions were developed to elicit participants' perceptions of five selected factors known to impact the experiences and attitudes of online learners (also known as online participants).

1. Which factors impact students' experiences in online learning?

2. Which factors improve students' attitudes about online learning?

The variables that impact perceptions of participants' experiences in and attitudes about online learning were identified from the literature and are presented below. They provide the basis and rationale for developing the instrument for the study.

1. Flexibility, interaction, technology, training, and course workload can impact perceptions of experiences of online learners.

Methodology

The purpose of this research project was to elicit participants' perceptions of five selected factors known to impact the experiences and attitudes of online learners. The method that was used for this study was a survey research design. An online questionnaire was developed to elicit responses of perceptions of factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes of online learners. This study used data from Alliant International University and an online survey software tool, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) to obtain a sample of students and instructors. Participants self-selected and participation occurred on voluntary basis. All participants were adults, eighteen years of age and older. For the purposes of this study, there was no focus on a particular online course subject; the study focused on perceptions of online experiences. A sample size of approximately 56 participants was collected for this study. Once

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Comment [42]: These are my suggestions for revising your research questions. I found the original ones quite confusing. If my revisions take away from your original intent, then feel free to change them as you'd like. I think these are much clearer.

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participants agreed to participate in the study, participants completed a survey questionnaire consisting of ten Likert-type scale questions. These questions were designed to elicit perceptions of the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes of online learners. Prior to conducting the research study, a pilot study of a similar online participants was completed to strengthen the survey instrument. Demographic information was collected to include gender, age, and ethnicity.

Participants completed an online survey questionnaire using Survey Monkey, the free online software and questionnaire tool. One researcher compiled the data collected for statistical analysis. The results will be presented in Chapter 4 and a discussion will proceed in Chapter 5 to analyze and evaluate the results for further research.

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Definitions of Key Variables

In this research study, it was important to operationally define the key variables of this study. Operational definitions are listed below:

- Attitude - evaluating one's emotional, cognitive, or behavioral bias toward online learning
- Experience - one's personal encounter with online learning for a minimum of two semesters
- Online learning - courses taken over the Internet that meet university graduation requirements. These online courses are not limited to one subject or discipline.
- Flexibility - the ability to adapt, change, and mold into a different shape
- Training - the development of habit to achieve a desired result

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- Interaction - verbal or nonverbal communication with people using an electronic device connected to the Internet
- Technology - the use of electronic devices to connect and communicate with individuals and/or groups on the Internet.
- Course Workload - assignments required to satisfy completion of course expectations.

Definition of Terms in Online Learning

Allen and Seaman (2006) defined online learning in several ways. The authors differentiated between traditional and online learning. Traditional learning did not include any online elements of instruction. A traditional course is one in which the instructors teach using written and oral methodologies with no online platform (Allen and Seaman, 2005). Traditional lecture format can be defined as an instructor providing a lesson in the form of a lecture with students in a small to large classroom activating their listening skills and written notes; whereas an online course is defined as having most of the course instruction through synchronous or asynchronous learning. In between the traditional and online courses were web facilitated and blended/hybrid courses. In a web-facilitated course, it is designed as a face-to-face course with online support. In a blended/hybrid course, a large percentage of the course is taught online. However, a smaller percentage of the course is offered in a face-to face format. Open Education Resources (OER) were defined as “materials offered freely and openly to use and adapt for teaching, learning, development, and research” (<http://www.col.org/resources/crsMaterials/Pages/OCW-OER.aspx>). According to Allen

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and Seaman (2011), Open Courseware is an open education resource where all or a portion of a course from a college or university is offered freely to the public. Davis and Niederhauser (2007) defined virtual schooling as “courses and activities that are offered mostly or completely through digital technologies” (p.11). A credit recovery student is a student, primarily in high school, who, for many reasons, has fallen behind and is not on track to graduate with his/her class (Davis and Niederhauser, 2007). Credit recovery students make up credits by enrolling in additional courses to meet graduation requirements. These courses can be taken in a traditional in-class setting; these courses can also be taken through a non-traditional method, such as online learning. The non-traditional student was defined as one whom as a result of additional life responsibilities, cannot access educational options (Maguire, 2005).

Comment [47]: So is virtual schooling synonymous with Open Courseware? Clarify.

Comment [48]: This seems to come out of nowhere. Insert a transition here to clarify?

Limitations of the Research Study

The limitations of this research study were those elements which could not be controlled. These limitations included:

1. A sample size was not large enough to apply generalizability.
2. Participants may not have answered the survey questions truthfully.
3. Participants may not have interacted with the survey with the appropriate attention.
4. Participants could have sought support to answer survey questions.
5. Flexibility in the location the survey to be completed could not allow for effective monitoring of participants.
6. The sample of participants did not represent a diverse sample population.

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7. The environment, the location where the questionnaire was completed, could impact the results.
8. Distraction and the opportunity to multi-task could skew results.
9. The responses to the questionnaire may have reflected the current attitude towards online learning and not attitudes towards online learning over time.
10. Participants of this study only included undergraduate students, graduate students, and instructors at Alliant International University and from an online survey software tool, Survey Monkey.

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Organization of the Study

This research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one detailed the proposal and overview of the research topic. Chapter one included the factors leading to the problem statement and research topic, relevance of the research topic, methodology, operational definitions, and significance of the study. Chapter two reviews the literature in relation to experiences in and attitudes about online learning. Chapter two documents the relevant research conducted by reliable sources in the area of experiences and attitudes toward online learning. Chapter three details the methodology of the research study. In addition, chapter three answers the who, what, when, where, why, how, and which data was collected and compiled to conduct this research study. Chapter four provides the results of this research study. The results were intended to be reported in a clear manner to avoid ambiguity. Additional details of results are included in the appendix section of this dissertation. Chapter five concludes the research study with a

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critical discussion of the results. Chapter five explains and evaluates perceptions of experience in and attitudes about online learning. Chapter five also identifies, reflects upon, and connects this research study to future areas of research.

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CHAPTER II

Overview of the Literature Review

In the 21st century, online learning has emerged in secondary schools and institutions of higher education. Many reasons exist for the growth in online learning, one of which includes the bandwidth of information technology to support various forms of online learning. Another is flexibility of online learning when compared to traditional, face-to-face instruction. Flexibility has led to an increase in the diversity of online

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learners to include working professionals. Secondary schools and institutions of higher education have experienced various levels of success and challenges in online learning. Students enrolled in online learning and instructors teaching online learning courses can be considered participants of online learning. Their experience and attitude can suggest further exploration because differences exist among participants. The opportunity to maximize revenue in online learning can be a motivator for its growth. Student and instructor training in online learning management systems can have implications for strategic planning at secondary and postsecondary institutions.

Comment [52]: You need a transition between these two sentences.

Comment [53]: All four of these sentences sound choppy. It seems as if each one can be the topic sentence for a different paragraph.

Online learning has seen significant growth from 2005 to 2012 (Allen and Seaman, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012). Given Internet access and information technology, online learning can impact education in educational communities across the world. Improvements in online learning can increase participation. Technology can help or hinder the proliferation of online learning. The growth in online learning can help address issues of access and equity in education. Motivation can be viewed as a factor in one's attitude towards online learning. The success of online learning can be impacted by how institutions prioritize online learning platforms. Mixed reports can suggest many factors associated with attitude toward online learning beyond experience alone.

Comment [54]: How so?

Comment [55]: I realize that you are providing an overview of the literature review here and that is why you are presenting different ideas. However, you must create connections between these ideas, even in the overview. Right now, the sentences read as completely independent from one another.

Introduction

The information age has changed the way people communicate. Some could argue that our interconnected society can be attributed to technology. One can observe this phenomenon by the number of education options available today. Some (citations) contend that the education options available today are a result of a system of learning that

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is in crisis. Gauthier (2009) stated that the education system was broken and needed fixing. Gauthier viewed the Internet as limitless with the capability of providing solutions in education. Attention has been given to faculty and students with regards to attitude towards online learning. In the 21st century, online learning is more typical than an anomaly (Allen and Seaman, 2005).

The report “A Nation at Risk” (1983) stated, “Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world” (Gardner, National Commission on Excellence in Education, & Others, 1983, p.5). Students who struggle in classrooms find educational leaders searching for ways to customize learning. Consequently, technology in the form of online education, has presented itself as a viable solution for student success. The purpose of this literature review is to investigate experiences and attitudes towards online learning through published works.

According to Nassar and Abouchedid (2000), education reform required an understanding of attitude towards online learning. Davis and Neiderhauser (2007) stated “the rise of distance education, online learning, and cyber classrooms is creating new roles and responsibilities for today’s teachers and administrators” (p. 10). Technology seemed to have transformed the world into an interconnected society. Allen and Seaman believed that documenting patterns over time impacted the conversation about the future of online learning. Armstrong (2011) believed that by understanding student perception and attitude towards online learning, institutions of higher education could develop a superior and supportive learning environment.

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Comment [57]: Make a connection between these two sentences.

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Moved up [1]: The information age has changed the way people communicate. Some could argue that our interconnected society can be attributed to technology. One can observe this phenomenon by the number of education options available today. Some can contend that the education options available today are a result of a system of learning that is in crisis. Gauthier (2009) stated that the education system was broken and needed fixing. Gauthier viewed the Internet as limitless with the capability of providing solutions in education. Attention has been given to faculty and students with regards to attitude towards online learning. In the 21st century, online learning is more typical than an anomaly (Allen and Seaman, 2005).

Comment [58]: Can you further clarify what you mean here?

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Comment [59]: Say more about this. Provide your analysis of this quote.

Comment [60]: This seems out of place somehow.

Comment [61]: Documenting what kinds of patterns?

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The research study conducted by Armstrong (2011) produced five key findings.

These five findings include:

(a) the role of communication in shaping perceptions and actions of students, (b) how technology is used not the technology determines its value, (c) the role of course organization for students success, (d) approaches to learning are shaped by students' perceptions as are students' determination of academic quality, and (e) students use nonacademic resources because of ease and familiarity.

Online learning emerged as an alternative to traditional in-class instruction. According to Huitt (1999), "we have created an educational system that, while flawed, is still producing many who can take advantage of the movement to the information age" (p. 8). According to Larson, Miller and Ribble (2010), "Technology has forever altered the way we learn and teach, and the pace of change is only accelerating" (p. 12).

According to Gauthier (2009), "the United States' education system is broken and the same old solutions will no longer fix it" (p. 6). Education reform can cause leaders to consider change in how teaching and learning will be delivered. According to Larson, Miller and Ribble (2010), "technology has forever altered the way we learn and teach, and the pace of change is only accelerating" (p.12). As change continues to accelerate, educational leaders have been given the responsibility to adapt to the expansion and access of technology. This requires administrators and teachers to understand the impact technology could have in the classroom as schools transition into the digital age. Leading change in online learning could include systemic change. Larson, Miller, and Ribble (year) advocated for visionary leadership, a digital age learning culture, systemic improvement, excellence in professional practice, and digital citizenship. The authors

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contended that the five aforementioned considerations could initiate a shared vision that integrates technology into teaching and learning. While they suggested five strategies to consider, Larson, Miller, and Ribble (year) agreed that many educators find it uncomfortable to integrate technology because they find themselves unprepared and unqualified to implement changes in teaching. [This would suggest educators are currently not being trained to properly utilize technology, which can result in little to no improvement.]

Given the attention education is receiving in the U.S., the U.S. Department of Education (2004b) mandated evidence-based instruction. As states struggled to fund education, cost-effective teaching methods and technology seemed to present a solution to rising costs in education. Muhirwa (2009) stated that information technology has been marketed as a cost effective strategy for struggling schools. Farmer (2010) found increases in the number of institutions implementing online learning due to projected cost savings. Keith and Williamson (2009) encouraged the use of bright boards as a cost effective teaching method. Kuriloff (2004) believed software program innovation would improve cost effectiveness. While some have looked at cost effective teaching methods, Eberts (2007) contended that unions are to blame; they drove up the cost of education; therefore, he encouraged a collaborative bargaining model.

Davis and Niederhauser (2007) found that online learning created new opportunities for educators. Larson Miller, and Ribble (2010) believed technology will continuously change the way educators teach and students learn. Vanides (2007) viewed online learning as an opportunity to think differently about discourse. Miller (2010) advocated for educators to diversify methods of communication through social networks

Comment [65]: Why do you use brackets here?

Comment [66]: Follow this sentence with sentences that describe the attention that education is receiving. What kind of attention?

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such as Twitter. Redekopp and Bourbonniere (2009) and Farmer (2010) found online learning as an effective method to engage learners who would normally not participate in a classroom setting. Davis and Dick (2009) noted convenience and flexibility as reasons for the popularity of online learning.

Challenges may prevent an effective integration of online learning in schools.

According to Gauthier (2009), systemic change will become a challenge because teaching has been an isolating field. Sivan (1997) questioned the impact of virtual communities with its impersonal platform. Ng (2007) found that technical difficulties inhibited the impact of online learning. Anderson (2010) contended that teachers lacked skills to implement technology in their lessons plans. Others like Underhill (2006) focused on equity and access as challenges for diverse populations in online education. Farmer (2010) expected integration of online learning to become a challenge. Schacter (1999) acknowledged the value of online learning; yet he cautioned that online learning alone is not the answer. Schacter also encouraged improvements in the infrastructure of online education.

In order for online learning to be effective and provide students with a rewarding experience, online learning faculty must engage with the online community (Armstrong, 2011). Future studies on student perceptions with larger sample sizes than sixteen participants could support Armstrong's findings. Communication, or lack thereof, was suggested as a key ingredient to a successful online learning experience, quality of online instruction, and thus, a more positive attitude towards online learning.

According to Brooks (2003), attitude towards online learning was the most important element towards creating a quality online learning program. Brooks contended

Comment [69]: In a literature review, you need to draw connections between what different scholars say. The literature review should be presented as if scholars are talking to one another rather than separate findings. In other words, how do Vanides and Miller's findings compare and contrast to one another? How do Redekopp and Bourbonniere and Davis and Dick's findings compare to one another? It is your job to make these connections explicit.

Comment [70]: Challenges to what?

Comment [71]: Systemic change to what?

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that shortening the distance between instructor and student in an online learning

environment improved attitude towards online learning. Online learning requires a student-centered approach (Osei, 2010). Arbaugh (2001) advocated for an online learning environment to reflect the teaching and learning of a traditional classroom. Similarly,

Brooks (2003) contended that the attitude of the leadership towards online learning on down to the online instructor and student has had a direct impact on the experience for the online learner. Schifter (2002) believed education has experienced a paradigm shift from teacher to student focused learning. Faculty has been viewed as the driving force in creating a successful online program (Schifter, 2002). Shea (2007) encouraged educational leaders to understand these factors to help online learning sustain a high level of quality instruction. Such shifts to student-centered learning seem to

improve attitudes toward online learning. However, attitude alone does not determine the success of online learning. It is recommended for administrators to assess the attitude of faculty prior to faculty teaching an online course.

The Internet has not only engaged educational institutions but has also emerged as an integral component in many people's lives (Kurtz, Amichai-Hamburger, and Kantor, 2009). O'Malley and McGraw (1999) have described online learning as the "education pedagogy of the future." The evolution of technology has transitioned the American economy from one dependent on agriculture to an economy powered by telecommunication (O'Malley and McGraw, 1999). Some students were found to not want to enroll in additional online learning courses. These students, given their experience in online learning, had a more negative attitude towards online learning.

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Comment [74]: Here, simply by adding the term "similarly," I was able to better connect the two sentences. In other comments where I have highlighted choppiness, try using conjunctions and transitional words like similarly, in contrast, however, in alignment with, contrary to, etc. The idea is to make connections between different researchers' ideas.

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Comment [75]: So I added this sentence. It is sentences such as these that you need to develop and add to your literature review to bring the various topics together.

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However, given many challenges, according to O'Malley and McGraw (1999), "Online learning appears to be the teaching methodology of the future" (p. xx).

While state budget cuts in education may challenge educators to do more with less, this literature review suggests that online learning alone is not the cure for the ills of education in the U.S. Rather, it suggests a careful evaluation of how experiences can impact attitude towards online learning in a positive or negative direction.

Online Learning in a Historical Context

According to Kumashiro (2008),

Public education, after all, is seen by many Americans to be what philosopher Horace Mann called "the great equalizer of the conditions of men," as that which can rectify the unequal conditions in society and give every person a chance for prosperity (p. 6).

Here, talk about the quote you just listed. Introduce online learning in a historical context. Did you intend to talk about public education here?

Teaching Methods

Early teaching methods can be traced back to as far as ancient Greece with a form of discourse called the Socratic Method. Additional teaching methods such as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), scaffolding, and open learning were introduced in the 20th century. Scaffolding in education is where learning is controlled to strengthen student learning (Wood, Burner, and Ross, 1976). Open learning is where

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Moved up [3]: Schifter (2002) believed education has experienced a paradigm shift from teacher to student focused learning. Faculty has been viewed as the driving force in creating a successful online program (Schifter, 2002). Shea (2007) encouraged educational leaders to understand these factors to help online learning sustain a high level of quality instruction.

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Comment [78]: Give a brief explanation.

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flexibility allows for learning to occur at any time, place, and pace

(www.webopedia.com). Teaching methods such as the Socratic Method, methodology, and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English were strategies used for instruction. In the 21st century, teaching methods included tutoring, which involved the entire class where the class could be paired into two teams and then split into smaller groups of two (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010). The “Herman Method[™]” was a teaching method designed to improve reading levels (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010). This teaching methodology incorporated instruction in phonics, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. Gains in reading levels were accomplished in small groups and became useful for struggling readers, English language learners, and learning disabled students. The Herman Method was also a structured teaching system that enabled teachers to utilize their creativity to meet the individual needs of students. Elements of the Herman Method included remedial reading, spelling, and writing curriculum in elementary grades.

The traditional lecture format of learning was the status quo until the 1980’s (O’Malley and McGraw, 1999). Innovations have had an impact on the changing paradigm. In a traditional classroom, instant feedback can be obtained between instructor and student. O’Malley and McGraw argued that at one time in higher education, it was easier to predict the types of students who entered the classroom, 18-23 year olds in higher education. This trend has since diversified to include married, working, unemployed, and commuter students. The 21st century has seen a growth in online learning attracting many types of students including the credit recovery student. In another example of a paradigm shift, females have been found to be more likely to teach online courses (Seaman, 2009). Given the paradigm shift from traditional to blended

Comment [80]: I would avoid citing internet sources such as this one since their reliability can be iffy.

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Comment [81]: So your teaching methods sections seems scattered. How did you choose which teaching methods to focus on and why? Think about the context of online learning. There are so many teaching methods out there. You need to provide a rationale for the ones you have highlighted and make connections between them.

Comment [82]: The changing paradigm? What changing paradigm?

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learning, O'Malley and McGraw (1999) believed that addressing attitude towards online learning was an important component to strengthening teaching and learning. Online learning has become a credible source of learning in institutions of higher education (Osei, 2010). According to Davis and Niederhauser (2007), virtual schooling (VS) has allowed credit recovery students the opportunity to complete coursework and graduate from high school.

While the 21st century has seen an increase in the diversity of students in education, learners continue to be engaged in education when teachers employ effective teaching methods (<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/teaching-methods-in-education.html>). Teachers learn many different teaching methods because students respond differently to different methods of teaching. Basic teaching methods included, but ~~are~~ not limited to: ~~questioning, explaining, modeling, demonstrating, and collaborating.~~ Education reform has introduced other teaching methods in order to provide a quality education. These teaching methods include role-play, story or games, seminars, presentations, workshops, conferences, brainstorming, case study, and education trips. Technology in the form of audio-visual aids (documentary films, computers, and internet) have also increased the pace of learning. ~~This~~ variety of teaching methods ~~exposes~~ students to many learning styles thereby increasing retention of information and improving understanding (~~citation~~).

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Factors Influencing the Emergence of Online Learning

In 2008, the United States experienced some of the highest federal and state spending on education and the highest “per student cost in the history of education” (Lips & Heritage Foundation, 2008, p.1). The Committee on Education and Labor reported

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that approximately two thousand high schools in the U.S. produced over 50 percent of all dropouts (<http://edlabor.house.gov>). A recent study noted by the Committee on Education and Labor suggested that in the 50 largest cities, only 53 percent of students graduate on time. According to the Committee on Education and Labor, “nationwide, 7,000 students drop out every day and only about 70 percent of students graduate from high school with a regular high school diploma” (<http://edlabor.house.gov/newsroom/2009/05/high-school-dropout-crisis-thr.shtml>).

According to Hull (2010), the recession of the first decade in the 21st century compared only to the Great Depression of the 1930s. As unemployment, large drops in housing prices, and credit crunches continue to contract the economy, education also has suffered. State and local funding has caused educational leaders to rethink how to best serve their learning communities. Educational leaders continue to struggle with the long-term impact to students. Methods to balance school budgets can include: increasing class sizes, reducing extracurricular activities, eliminating transportation, downsizing summer school for enrichment and credit recovery, and reducing the number of schools days from five days per week to four days per week. An additional cost cutting measure has included layoffs. Although many are optimistic about an economic recovery, the responsibility of the state to provide financial support for other important initiatives could cause education to endure a longer than expected recession and reduction of resources. With financial support for education in decline or slow to increase, the proliferation of online learning can experience a slower than expected growth, even with the technological capacity to implement such a system (citation). Online learning, when placed in the proper context, can support redistribution of financial resources during

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Comment [86]: What do you mean by “in the proper context?” Can you provide an example?

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budget crisis. It is for this reason that Allen and Seaman (2011) have suggested that educational leaders who place online learning as part of their long-term strategic plan could experience greater support for online learning among faculty and students.

According to Coombs-Richardson (2007), “our society is changing rapidly, and educators must plan to meet the technological needs in education without sacrificing quality” (p. 75). Hershberg and Robertson-Kraft (2010) argued that educational policy leaders have attempted for some time to positively reinforce educators who improve student achievement. This has resulted in states competing for federal grant money through the Race to the Top Fund, a \$4.35 billion allocation for states who can comply with federal mandates in education. Much like “No Child Left Behind,” “Race to the Top” placed emphasis in improving quality of teaching in classrooms. The authors believed improving teacher quality could accelerate learning and narrow the achievement gap. While Hershberg and Robert-Kraft (year) supported using multiple measures for evaluation, building capacity, and empowering teachers as equal partners in reform, there was no mention of how technology and online learning could maximize opportunities provided by Race to the Top. These policies may impact teacher isolation without systemic change or the loss of teachers due to the classroom restrictions required to meet the testing aims of No Child Left Behind.

“A Nation at Risk” (1983) discussed the threat of competition in a global society. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2008), education professionals were encouraged to improve their technological skill sets to prepare them to play an essential role in producing technology-capable students. Technology in education has impacted teachers and learners in various

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Comment [87]: So how are you going to connect these two sentences? What are either the similarities or differences between them?

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Comment [88]: Which policies are you referring to here?

Comment [89]: What does it mean to impact teacher isolation?

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Comment [90]: You need a transition sentence here. You might try something like, “In addition to X, Y.”

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ways. For example, colleges and universities are addressing the technology challenge by developing infrastructure to support personal electronic devices such as cell phones (Carnevale, 2007). The success of the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is an example of a K-12 institution that has innovated learning through technology (www.flvs.net). The vision of FLVS is “any time, any place, any path, any pace.” Its mission is to create a flexible, engaging, and unique academic experience. FLVS employs over 1200 staff members. FLVS offers over 100 courses, which include core subjects, electives, foreign languages, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Increases in capacity through technology, staff, and pedagogy have allowed FLVS to serve over 97,000 students in approximately 213,000 half-credit enrollments during the 2009-2010 school year.

In 2004, online enrollment increased to 2.35 million and grew faster than predicted by the National Center for Education Statistics. As educational institutions adapt to the needs of 21st century learners, technology in education can serve as the vehicle for diverse groups of learners eager to engage in an innovative approach to education. One area of education that is dependent on technology is distance education. In the 21st century, distance education has fully embraced technology as the catalyst for the delivery of information. The use of technology in distance education has improved access, institutional capacity, and flexibility. Flexibility can allow for increases in how teaching and learning is facilitated. For example, The Florida Virtual Schools model have demonstrated the power technology can have on learners. Members of the Florida Virtual Schools community have fully embraced technology. Consequently, teachers and learners benefit from its flexibility and access to information. Also, online high schools such as www.k12.com allowed high school students the opportunity to acquire

Comment [91]: This seems like a random example. Take it out or find a more appropriate place for it.

Comment [92]: Why do you focus almost exclusively on the FLVS for your examples of K-12 institutions that have innovated through learning technology? It sounds repetitive and as if you have no other sources to draw from. Very similar wording to things I have read in other parts of your dissertation.

Comment [93]: That is 10 year old data now. Could you update this with more recent NCES data?

Comment [94]: Again you use the same example.

Comment [95]: What does it mean to fully embrace technology?

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knowledge and skills that, in past decades, was not offered as a viable option because of limited selection in course offerings.

Comment [96]: This sentence also sounds very familiar to another sentence you used earlier in your dissertation. Vary your language.

Student Experience in Online Learning

Lloyd, Byrne, and McCoy (2012) identified several factors that determined barriers to online learning; they included: interpersonal barriers, institutional barriers, training and technology barriers, and cost/benefit analysis barriers. There was a need to understand the relationship between student satisfaction and online learning (Osei, 2010).

Despite challenges in online learning, Davis and Niederhauser (2007) viewed online learning as a factor for place-bound or displaced students. Redekopp and Bourbonniere (2009) found that when students were identified by number, not by name, students who, in a traditional class did not participate, contributed to the class with insightful comments on a teacher blog. Students, using a teacher blog, posted information providing students a platform to interact in a non-traditional way and kept pace with a given course. Redekopp and Bourbonniere concluded that online learning increased student involvement and collaboration, especially for challenged and anxious learners.

Comment [97]: Define ...

Comment [98]: And what were the reasons for this?

Comment [99]: I don't understand this. Students used a teacher blog? What does that mean?

The potential for flexibility increases due to new areas of growth. Students, in general, found online tutoring convenient and placed more importance on convenience than face-to-face learning. They believed questions could be better shaped. However, students also recognized the impact that face-to-face learning had on personal interaction and face-to-face online responses (Ng, 2007). Ng (2007) concluded that a combination of online and face-to-face learning provided the most effective support for learners.

Comment [100]: You need a transition sentence here.

Comment [101]: What do you mean by this? What questions are you referring to?

Comment [102]: And what was that impact?

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Online education can help diversify the delivery of ~~instruction~~. Miller (2010) advocated for the use of social networks such as Twitter to enhance student learning. Barab, Barnett, & Squire (2002) viewed online communities of practice as “a persistent, sustained social network of individuals who share and develop an overlapping knowledge base, set of beliefs, values, history, and experiences focused on a common practice and/or mutual enterprise” (p. 495). Graff also found that students who tended to be more reserved were better able to participate in an online community because fear of spontaneous responses were removed. Knowles and Kerman (2007) pointed to working alone and self-initiative as action steps students can take to be responsible online learners.

Given the emergence of technology and the Internet, online learning has benefitted from this growth (Kurtz et al, 2009). According to Kurtz, Amichai-Hamburger, and Kantor

(2009), “the Internet created a unique psychological environment for the online user” (p. 2). Online learning gives students the opportunity to express their views without the norms of a traditional face-to-face learning environment. Interaction between students and faculty can increase in this online learning platform.

Maguire (2005) agreed that online learning was inclusive of the non-traditional student. These responsibilities included balancing school with work and/or family as well as individuals who preferred an alternative approach to learning. According to Sanders and Shetlar (2001), more students (60%) were comfortable in online learning environments than uncomfortable. Sanders and Shetlar contended that students preferred to communicate face-to-face as opposed to communicating through a chat room. With increased exposure to online learning comes additional experiences (Sanders and Shetlar, 2001). Students improved their level of computer literacy compared to five years prior to

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Comment [103]: This seems out of place. You refer to growth here but the reader doesn't know what growth you are referring to.

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Comment [104]: This is also out of place. Perhaps you might consider creating a section that focuses exclusively on non-traditional students.

Comment [105]: So this seems to contradict your previous statement about students being more comfortable in online learning environments.

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this study. In addition, active participation in online discussion boards led to improved learning experiences among students enrolled in online learning courses (Sanders and Shetlar, 2001). This improvement could suggest a greater likelihood to intrinsic motivation and positive attitude towards online learning. Online learning cultivated independent learning.

Muhirwa (2009) found that while technology had the potential to connect students and teachers from one side of the world to another, there remained obstacles for learners. These obstacles included: unreliable internet connection, poor technical support, limited access to computers, and incomplete infrastructure. Muhirwa concluded by arguing for more traditional technologies such as radio and video because here remained infrastructure to better support student success than with an advanced online model which could increase rather than decrease the cost of learning.

Underhill (2006) revealed that traditional methods of assessment have not evolved as anticipated. While some advocate for the use of computers in classrooms, a research study conducted by Schacter (1999) compared students in Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow (ACOT) to students with little to no computer access. Schacter found that students in an Apple Classroom of Tomorrow (ACOT) did not score any better than students with limited to no access to computers. Schacter contended that online learning alone was not the answer and did not provide the results that were intended. Although online learning has increased the number of schools offering an online learning platform, the infrastructure needed to support online learning remained underdeveloped. Underhill advocated for a synergy of subject matter with online technology to create online learning communities. In an interview with Dr. Penelope Earley (Gauthier, 2009), Earley

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Comment [106]: I deleted the Vanides sentences because they are exactly the same as ones I read earlier in the dissertation.

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Moved up [4]: In addition, active participation in online discussion boards led to improved learning experiences among students enrolled in online learning courses (Sanders and Shetlar, 2001).

Deleted: Vanides (2007) acknowledged that distance education remained challenging to sense feelings of frustrations and accomplishment due to lack of face-to-face feedback. Vanides stated that changes in pitch, increases in the likelihood of confusion, and the need to write clearly and concisely were also obstacles he encountered in distance education.

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Comment [107]: You need a transition sentence between these two sentences

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Comment [108]: I worry about the outdatedness of this reference.

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contended that “we have both too much [information] and too little [information] about what is happening in schools...there is almost so much information that I think as human beings we lack the ability to sort it and filter it” (p. 32). Earley argued that ensuring the quality of information and information reaching the right people was a challenge in online learning. According to Davis and Dick (2009), “students should understand at the onset that online learning courses are typically more time intensive than face-to-face courses (p. 22).” Since correspondence between instructor and student can take more time, students are often challenged with accessing information, even when an online course is available 24 hours a day. This could indicate a negative impact due to time delay.

Farmer (2010) also found integration of online learning has its challenges.

Farmer attributed the challenges to accommodating various learning styles, technical

difficulties, and monitoring an online format. Students who attended online courses with

inexperienced faculty in online teaching found courses to be confusing. Student

expectations included continuity across online courses and technology familiar to them.

Communication with online instructors was more limited than with instructors in a

traditional learning environment. For some students, they believed in exchange for

online learning, they received limited access to instructors and poorer quality of

instruction.

Lack of interaction and student support added to negative attitudes towards online

learning, according to Brooks (2003). Lack of technical skills could also lead to drop out

rates. Graff (2003) argued that searching for data online has become a skill in and of

itself. Graff acknowledged that in a traditional classroom-learning environment,

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Comment [109]: How is this correspondence more time-consuming?

Comment [110]: As I am thinking about your dissertation, I'm wondering if you want to consider incorporating two sections - one would be benefits of online learning and challenges of online learning. Another idea would be to create a chart that outlines the pro's and con's. I'm trying to think of alternative ways to organize your dissertation so your references and ideas fit more tidily.

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feedback was virtually immediate. However, in online learning, the learning environment can vary depending on the structure of the class. In some online learning environments, feedback can be synchronous. This can lead to feedback that mirrors a traditional classroom environment. In other online learning environments, communication is asynchronous. Therefore, communication can travel at a much slower rate. Graff (2003) contended communication to become more challenging in online learning. For example, non-verbal cues cannot be detected by online participants, thereby making it more difficult for learners to interpret non-verbal cues. Students who possessed poor information technology skills can be at a disadvantage in online learning. According to Graff, students required time to adjust to an online learning platform. Students found printing materials to be easier to read through than reading the same materials online. This phenomenon was contrary to the objective of printed materials in an online learning model.

In addition, without physical and verbal cues, interpreting meaning became a challenge and barrier to effective communication. Discipline continued to be a barrier for undergraduate students enrolled in online learning. Online learning allowed schools to attract students not otherwise accessible, according to Allen and Seaman (2007). Other reasons to explain the growth in online learning included, but were not limited to, continuing professional development, student retention, improved a university's rate of completion, and increasing the diversity of the student body. Given the statistics supporting online learning in the 21st century, there remained barriers and obstacles. While online learning can attract a more diverse group of students who would otherwise

Comment [111]: Explain this further.

Comment [112]: Do you see how this is out of place? You went from talking about communication issues in online learning to growth in online learning. Perhaps you can have a section that solely focuses on growth. What I am noticing is that you are listing different things that you are finding in terms of the literature review but they are often not organized into appropriate sections.

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not enroll in higher education, student retention rates have been a challenge to maintain, particularly in larger institutions (Allen and Seaman, 2010).

With regards to workload,

students may not have expected online learning to require more reading and writing. According to Osei, students viewed the workload in online learning to be too much. Students preferred small group work than viewing lecture asynchronously. Consequently, online learning must consider various learning styles among students (Sanders and Shetlar, 2001).

Online learning continues to evolve. Ng (2007) came to this conclusion through interviews of six tutors and eight undergraduate students. Six questions were posed to tutors; seven questions were posed to students. Their answers were transcribed in Cantonese and translated in English. The answers to the questions posed to tutors and students revealed several outcomes. Ng's results revealed challenges students had at raising questions through online tutorials. Tutoring online was often shorter than face-to-face. A second finding was tutors could not determine if students understood course content. One tutor in particular reported that online tutoring made it difficult to check for understanding. While Ng noted challenges in online learning, Farmer (2010) found online learning has encouraged active participation from students who would otherwise have not participated in a classroom setting. Thus, it would seem that online learning may have a greater influence in regards to inclusion of all its participants in an educational endeavor.

Instructor Experience in Online Learning

Comment [113]: Perhaps another section on retention?

Moved up [5]: Students who attended online courses with inexperienced faculty in online teaching found courses to be confusing. Student expectations included continuity across online courses and technology familiar to them. Communication with online instructors was more limited than with instructors in a traditional learning environment. For some students, they believed in exchange for online learning, they received limited access to instructors and poorer quality of instruction.

Deleted: Lack of interaction and student support added to negative attitudes towards online learning, according to Brooks (2003). Lack of technical skills could also lead to drop out rates. Graff (2003) argued that searching for data online has become a skill in and of itself. Graff acknowledged that in a traditional classroom-learning environment, feedback was virtually immediate. However, in online learning, the learning environment can vary depending on the structure of the class. In some online learning environments, feedback can be synchronous. This can lead to feedback that mirrors a traditional classroom environment. In other online learning environments, communication is asynchronous. Therefore, communication can travel at a much slower rate. Graff (2003) contended communication to become more challenging in online learning. For example, non-verbal cues cannot be detected by online participants, thereby making it more difficult for learners to interpret non-verbal cues. Students who possessed poor information technology skills can be at a disadvantage in online learning. According to Graff, students required time to adjust to an online learning platform. Students found printing materials to be easier to read through than reading the same materials online. This phenomenon was contrary to the objective of printed materials in an online learning model.

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Costs can limit the experience of instructors in online learning. Here, add an introductory paragraph.

Eberts (2007) contended that unions, not specific teaching methods, are increasing education costs. According to Ebert, as unions negotiated increases in salary and benefits combined with smaller class sizes, the cost of instruction increased. Therefore, Eberts encouraged unions to move from an adversarial bargaining model to a more collaborative bargaining model. Eberts (2007) argued that costs associated with “traditional” teaching methods can decline and increase student achievement. A traditional teaching method can be defined as a student entering a classroom where a teacher teaches a series of lesson plans using such strategies as scaffolding and pacing. Muhirwa (2009), however, claims the opposite view, stating that “Distance education and information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been marketed as cost effective ways to rescue struggling educational institutions” (p. 1). Muhirwa utilized video analysis and interviews with teachers, students, and tutors to analyze the impact of distance education between students in Mali and Burkina Faso and their teachers located in France and Canada.

According to Kuriloff (2004), software program innovations improved data collection, assessed student performance, and provided students appropriate guidance. He believed these developments maximized instructional time for students and eased the burden on instructors and improved cost effectiveness. Due to an increase in convenience, the role of the teacher could change to revolve around keeping students focused and responding to student work. Kuriloff contended that instructors would feel more comfortable teaching more students through technology-enhanced writing instruction than in a traditional writing class. Davis and Niederhauser (2007) found that

Comment [114]: Add at least one more sentence which explains what you mean by this rather than going directly into talking about unions. In fact, I would suggest that you dedicate a paragraph to explaining what you are about to discuss. In other words create an introductory paragraph that outlines what the reader should expect then create paragraphs that follow that outline. Make sense?

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Comment [115]: And what were Muhirwa’s findings?

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the increase of online learning or virtual schooling (VS) created new practices for teachers and administrators. Virtual schooling challenged educators to be highly organized in order to provide the appropriate structure in an online learning community.

In addition to the cost savings, online learning has provided educators an opportunity to explore creative curricular solutions. Online learning was maximized when modules focused on goals and objectives. In order to make online learning effective, Davis and Dick (year) encouraged educators to understand their course management system (CMS) and system limitations so that online courses become both rich in content and technically savvy. In addition, the use of discussion boards is not to be underestimated because Davis and Dick (year) argued that these tools helped to connect and engage students in a dialogue. Discussion boards allowed for instructors to gauge the level of comprehension while building an online community. Davis and Dick (year) suggested that teachers can become effective online educators if they became an online student first, leveraged professional experience, created a curriculum vitae (CV), and networked.

Vanides (2007) argued that online education forced teachers to think differently about discourse where “the facilitation of rich and thoughtful discourse between participants becomes my principal endeavor” (p. 12). Graff (2003) believed there were advantages in online instruction. These advantages included flexibility, self-paced learning for students, student-centered learning, and materials available with relative speed. Graff found various structures of online learning. The structures Graff focused on included: literature searches, online discussion, and online assessment. With the use of technology, faculty can provide additional support to students exposed to online learning.

Comment [116]: Using transitional phrases such as this one will highly increase the quality of your dissertation. Here's a website that I find helpful when I'm stuck - <http://www.studygs.net/wrtstr6.htm>

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The growth in online learning has grown at a faster rate than the faculty selected for teaching and training. According to Maguire (2005), he stated that “Degree programs via distance education offered a variety of benefits to faculty, students, and school administrators” (p. 1). Active participation by the instructor in an online learning environment impacted the quality of instruction (Sanders & Shetlar, 2001). While faculty reported teaching online is more time consuming (64%), student needs and access were motivators for teaching online (Seaman, 2009).

Technological advances supported the practicality of online learning, and technology partnerships helped sustain a thriving online learning model (Totaro, Tanner, Noser, Fitzgerald, and Birch, 2005). School leaders are under tremendous pressure to implement the use of Information Technology (IT) (Mojgan, Bakar, Luan, Samah, & Fooi, 2008). For example, Davis and Niederhauser (2007) noted that virtual schooling could be challenging because teachers, administrators, and virtual school providers must understand the distribution of responsibility to avoid confusion and uncertainty in a virtual school model. An additional challenge noted by Davis and Niederhauser was the U.S. education system was not adequately preparing educators in virtual schooling.

Anderson (2010) believed teachers lacked skills to effectively utilize technology in the classroom. This could indicate that teachers are ill prepared to integrate technology in their delivery of lesson plans. According to Anderson, “it is not unusual for teachers and administrators to become frustrated when they cannot articulate how they would like to see technology integrated into their curriculum” (p. 22). Given these challenges, Anderson conceded that providing teacher training to incorporate technology into their lessons can no longer be seen as an option. As more information became

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Comment [117]: Can you explain what you mean by this?

Comment [118]: I deleted the text below because you had already used a couple of paragraphs above.

Deleted: Is the communication between teacher and student and between students really effective? Vanides (2007) argued that distance education forced teachers to think differently about discourse where “the facilitation of rich and thoughtful discourse between participants becomes my principal endeavor” (p.12). Vanides (2007) noted that for distance education to be successful, educators must think differently about areas such as assessment, discourse, and lesson planning.

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available to educators, it became difficult to determine what was valuable and what was not. Online learning can remain a challenge if educators are not trained in the education technology trends of the 21st century. Harris (2008) believed that it was important to align what is being evaluated to the stated goals thereby determining the efficacy of design. Gauthier (2009) suggested that educators are too burdened with heavy workloads to take on the challenge of incorporating online learning into everyday practice. This study could indicate that there may be an unwillingness to transition from the status quo.

Comment [119]: Because ...

Gauthier (2009) contended systemic change is compromised because education, particularly teaching, is an isolating field. Teaching is an isolated field because ... Methods utilized by districts to combat this physical and professional isolation included professional and staff development as well as periods of collaboration. Time constraints can prevent educators from leading change in online learning because schools must comply with local, state, and national standards as mandated by “No Child Left Behind.”

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Sivan (1997) questioned the leadership of virtual communities given its impersonal platform. However, these same leaders believed that since faculty must make adjustments to teach online courses, faculty may not see value in online learning and acceptance of online education is in doubt. While educational leaders incorporated online learning in their long-term strategy, resistance by faculty to its implementation, training, and capacity can affect the overall success of an institution’s effort to grow online learning programs. Although more faculty agree to the legitimacy of online learning at their institution than faculty that disagree, faculty who neither agree or disagree to the legitimacy of online learning is at least twice as many than faculty who agree to the legitimacy of online learning (Allen and Seaman, 2006). This could suggest

Deleted: While opportunities existed to engage in meaningful discourse online, Vanides (2007) acknowledged that an online community remained challenging to sense feelings of frustrations and accomplishment due to lack of face-to-face feedback. Vanides stated that changes in pitch, increases in the likelihood of confusion, and the need to write clearly and concisely were also obstacles he encountered in online learning. .

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that while online learning has grown in the 21st century, resistance to the online learning experience has been received with less than a positive attitude. Additionally, online learning can require specialized training. Consequently, Allen and Seaman (2011) noted training and professional development has taken the form of formal mentoring, informal mentoring, an internally run training course, certification program, and an externally run training course. Yet even with training, Allen and Seaman (2012) acknowledged that their findings in online learning did not imply causality. They reported that faculty with more teaching experience were less excited or less positive about online learning than their less experienced counterparts. This finding could suggest increased experience in online learning alone does not correlate to a more positive attitude towards online learning. Allen and Seaman (2012) reported faculty were more likely to view online learning as inferior to traditional, face-to-face learning than their administrators. The quality of education suffered when faculty did not communicate consistently with their students, according to Armstrong (2011). It can be argued that online learning was more difficult because more typing and reading was required in an online course.

While online learning has evolved in the first ten years of the 21st century, many administrators and faculty continue to be leery of the quality of instruction (Knowles and Kerkman, 2007). Personality traits are important factors when evaluating Internet behavior and in an e-learning environment (Kurtz, Amichai-Hamburger, and Kantor, 2009).

Additional barriers to online learning included: limited pay increases for class sizes, additional responsibilities, challenges identifying student feedback, quality of curriculum, limited training and resources, added workload, impact to tenure, minimum

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Comment [121]: This seems like an unfounded conclusion here, given the evidence you presented.

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Comment [122]: Do you plan on expanding upon this point? You leave it hanging but without anything to back it up or analyze. It seems that the sentence before it is the conclusion to your previous section and that the personality traits section begins something new.

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experience teaching online courses, lack of support for campus leaders, and a shift in institutional objectives (Bower, 2001; Haber & Mills, 2008; Lyons, 2004; Panda & Mishra, 2007, Ryan, Hodson-Carlton, & Ali, 2004, 2005; Schifter, 2002, Seaman, 2009; Shea, 2007; Singh & Pan, 2004). Faculty also expressed concerns over the lack of standards in online learning (Maguire, 2005). Lloyd, Byrne, and McCoy (2012) found faculty who were less exposed to online learning reported more barriers to online learning than faculty who were more exposed to online learning. This finding could suggest a relationship between experience and attitude towards online learning. Growth in online learning has not translated to the same growth among faculty with regards to attitudes towards online learning. For example, Maguire (2005) reported a lack of recognition as a barrier to teaching online. Training was found to be a key component for proper implementation of online learning, according to Nassar and Abouchedid (2000). Active participation by the instructor (or lack thereof) in an online learning environment impacted the quality of instruction (Sanders and Shetlar, 2001). Instructors must consider gender differences in online learning. Sanders and Shetlar contended that instructors should understand gender differences in attitudes toward web-enhanced instruction. The findings by Sanders and Shetlar could not be generalized across all disciplines because their findings were the result of a study from an introductory biology course. A more compelling argument can be made when studies can look at attitudes towards online learning coming from participants of various disciplines. One cannot presume younger faculty would acquire a more positive experience and positive attitude towards online learning; competing needs prevented this group of faculty to maximize their excitement and experience with technology, according to Schifter (2002). Faculty, which have little

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to no experience in online learning were more likely to conclude that online learning was inferior to traditional face-to-face instruction (80%) (Seaman, 2009). For example, Seaman (2009) found faculty rated support for online learning as “below average.” In addition, faculty rated their experience with teaching online learning as lowest with regards to incentives for teaching online courses, which can negatively impact attitude towards online learning.

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Adjunct faculty appeared to comprise the majority of online instructors (Seaman, 2009) which could suggest a slow growth of institutions of higher education improving their attitude towards online learning. More faculty (64%) believed it required more effort to teach and prepare for an online course than a face-to-face course (Seaman, 2009). Faculty who had less experience in online learning were more likely to display a less than positive attitude towards online learning (Shea, 2007). For example, faculty reported limited technological experience had negative attitudes towards online learning. In addition, there are mixed views of the impact of online learning on career or tenure.

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For example, very few instructors would choose to teach another online course (citation). There was no surprise that attitudes towards online learning were negative based on the experience of instructors as well as the labor-intensive nature of teaching an online course. In addition, Totaro et al. (2005) found faculty who believed online learning was inferior to traditional face-to-face instruction. According to Harris (2008), awareness, curriculum integration, change in instructional practice, reform, cultural change, and social change were goals that can be addressed through educational technology and professional development.

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Positive and Negative Attitudes Towards Online Learning

The benefit of convenience in online learning has come with a price. According to Brooks (2003), it is inaccurate to describe online learning as easier than traditional instruction. A successful online learner is one who accepts additional responsibility for their learning (Knowles & Kerkman, 2007). Interconnection and communication between instructors and students and among students is encouraged in an online learning environment and the speed at which technology has evolved has grown faster than expected, (Kurtz et al., 2009). The financial crisis and dwindling support from state budgets have also motivated educational institutions to consider online learning as an additional revenue stream. Maguire (2005) believed further research in online learning could deepen understanding of attitude towards online learning. Nassar and Abouchedid (2000) identified online learning as one of the most important issues facing the emerging information economy.

Performance can lead to positive attitudes towards online learning. A meta-analysis of ..., released by the U.S. Department of Education (2009) found that on average, students in online learning conditions performed modestly better than those receiving face-to-face instruction. The average effect size was reported as +.20 in favor of online conditions with a mean difference statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. Blends of online and face-to-face learning, on average, had a larger advantage than online or to face-to-face instruction alone (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The mean effect of blended instruction was +.35, $p < .001$. It should be noted that online and face-to-face conditions generally differed on many levels, including time spent on tasks. The observed advantages for blended learning conditions may not have been necessarily

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- Deleted: The 21st century has seen an increase in the demand for online learning (Lloyd, Byrne, and McCoy, 2012).

Comment [123]: Is this still connected to your introductory sentence that the convenience of online learning comes at a price? If so what is the connection here?

Comment [124]: What kind of performance?

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based on the technology used but may have also reflected differences in content, pedagogy and learning time.

Farmer (2010) found that many institutions have been motivated to incorporate online education due to cost savings. In addition to meeting the needs of students and education professionals through online education, there emerged a benefit to online education, flexibility. Davis and Dick (2009) stated that “Convenience and flexibility have made online courses increasingly popular across the education spectrum, from higher education to professional development to K–12” (p.18).

Comment [125]: Let me suggest that you dedicate a section to cost-savings.

Communication reduced the distance online between the online instructor and student (Brooks, 2003). Brooks believed timely communication increased a student’s positive attitude towards online learning. Brooks suspected online course evaluations to be skewed in favor of a positive attitude towards online learning in large part to flexibility, even when the learning experience was not the quality of a traditional classroom environment. McKenna, Green, and Gleason (2002) described four areas unique to online learning that are not as prevalent in traditional face-to-face interaction. They included greater anonymity, diminution of the importance of physical appearance, greater control over time and pace interactions, and finding similar others. According to Kurtz, Amichai-Hamburger, and Kantor (2009), they stated that “Students’ self-esteem was positively related to attitudes toward online learning” (p.7).

Comment [126]: Communication

Attitudes toward online learning are impacted by training, the development of an online communication structure, and upgrades to reflect innovation in an online learning management system, according to Nassar and Abouchdid (2000). Attitudes towards online learning can affect the quality of instruction. Nassar and Abouchdid reported

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convenience and time as a factor to the spread online learning. Training was necessary for proper implementation of online learning (Nassar and Abouchedid, 2000). In the study by Nassar and Abouchedid (2000), while attitude towards online learning was not viewed favorably, Nassar and Abouchedid agreed that with a structure to educate faculty about online learning, this experience could alter their attitudes towards in online learning.

Comment [127]: Faculty professional development.

According to O'Malley and McGraw (1999) online learning was not attributed to the increase in knowledge exclusively. Training in recent technological trends was required to maintain proficiency and adaptability. Competition for students has increased the amount of opportunities for students in higher education. The decrease in the cost of computers and speed at which information travels has led to advances in online learning. O'Malley and McGraw (1999) reported advantages in online learning, which included time-savings, flexibility, and the opportunity to enroll in more courses. Online learning provided access to higher education for the non-traditional student such as those who are employed fulltime and those with family responsibilities (Allen and Seaman, 2006).

Comment [128]: You are addressing so many different topics here – training, competition for students, the decrease in costs for computers, advantages to online learning. I'm lost! At the end of the editing process, I will give you suggestions on how to organize your literature review so that it makes more sense.

Developing a greater understanding of online learning can help strengthen online learning programs. Student attitudes toward online learning can determine the direction of web-based instruction and learning management systems. Online learning can be lumped into traditional learning in that the attitude of one's educational experience can be influenced by experience and quality instruction (Sanders and Shetlar, 2001). Sanders and Shetlar noted that a student's learning style can determine one's attitude toward online learning. Attitude towards online learning was impacted by the amount of student-to-student interaction in an online learning environment. Sanders and Shetlar (2001) found no significant difference in attitude towards online learning among racial groups.

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Participants in online learning have been found to acquire a better attitude towards online learning because their experience led to feelings of comfort with the technical skills required to be successful in online learning, according to Schifter (2002). Attitudes towards online learning was seen more favorably by females than males because females showed more extrinsic motivation, according to Schifter. This finding might suggest motivation and not experience as a primary factor in attitude towards online learning.

The internal motivation, not the experience, determined attitude towards online learning, according to Schifter (2002). According to Seaman (2009), faculty with less than five years' experience obtained a more positive attitude towards online learning due to personal and professional growth as motivation. However, faculty at institutions where online learning support appeared strongest had improved attitudes towards online learning (Seaman, 2009). One factor to substantiate this phenomenon included faculty believing that there was no additional time or effort needed to teach online when compared to teaching in a traditional face-to-face classroom. When evaluating gender differences in online learning, females were more likely to have a more positive attitude towards online learning primarily due to teaching online allowing for better accommodation of family and work responsibilities, according to Shea (2007). Shea also found mature faculty to have a more positive attitude towards online learning than younger faculty.

In other studies, attitudes towards online learning were influenced by additional factors, according to Shea (2007). Attitudes towards online learning can be determined by not only experience, but by compensation, or lack thereof (Shea, 2007). Flexibility

Comment [130]: Gender differences

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can enhance one's online experience. However, some can argue that flexibility can cause quality of learning to suffer. Shea encouraged ongoing professional development in online learning to improve the online learning experience for participants; thus improving attitudes towards online learning. Shea argued that in addition to professional development, policies could help improve attitudes towards online learning. The policies Shea referred to included policies that demonstrate that online learning is a long-term priority of the institution.

With regards to cost savings, Guri-Rosenblit, (2009) noted that cost savings did not occur across all campuses. The issue of cost became more evident in countries where funding sources were scarce leading to a prolonged digital divide, technical difficulties, and issues with flexibility Ng (2007). Lack of infrastructure led to challenges downloading course materials, slow or ineffective networks, poor audio, limited interaction, and lack of proficiency by educators to maximize system capabilities.

Allen and Seaman (2011) highlighted teaching online versus teaching in a traditional setting as more time consuming as one barrier. Other barriers included student discipline when taking an online course, widespread faculty acceptance of online learning, higher costs to develop online learning, and lack of acceptance of online learning by employers. Allen and Seaman reported one out of three faculty found online learning as valid and reliable. This trend has remained relatively the same since 2002. This finding could suggest that regardless of online experience, a percentage of online learning community members could perceive online learning with an unfavorable and negative attitude. While online learning has grown at rates above expectations, attitude towards online learning by faculty has not changed significantly (Allen and Seaman, 2010, 2011).

Comment [131]: I deleted the Edweek paragraph because you had already included it elsewhere, verbatim, in the dissertation.

Comment [132]: Here, again, you are covering too much ground. Are you attempting to summarize Shea's findings overall? The thing is that the key to a successful literature review is that you are the instrument by which scholars talk to one another. What I see you doing is piling up one researcher's studies after the other without making the connections.

Deleted: According to Edweek.org (2010), studies on the success of online learning remained inconclusive. In addition, there remained disagreement among professionals regarding the use of terms relating to distance education. The term online learning is but one of many digital technology terms in the study of online learning environments. Other terms included web-based education, distance education, distance learning, virtual classrooms, and computer-mediated communication (Guri-Rosenblit, 2009). Donohue and Howe-Steiger (2005) claimed that in education technology, there are many terms they call "jargon". They argued that the variety of terms reflected the ambiguity of job functions.

Comment [133]: Cost savings

Comment [134]: Challenges/Barriers to online learning.

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Capacity to successfully operate an online learning management system can become a barrier to the growth of online learning, according to Nassar and Abouchedid (2000). Attitudes toward online learning are impacted by training, the development of an online communication structure, and upgrades to reflect innovation in an online learning management system, according to Nassar and Abouchedid. Nassar and Abouchedid reported convenience and time as a factor to the spread online learning. Nassar and Abouchedid reported negative attitude towards online learning has been attributed to lack of experience, which has led to lack of familiarity of online learning. Experience in online learning alone did not lead to a more positive attitude towards online learning, according to Nassar and Abouchedid (2000). The capacity to incubate online learning can be viewed as a major barrier in developing a positive attitude towards online learning. However, O'Malley and McGraw, (1999) found students, given experience in online learning, did not perceive online learning as significantly more beneficial than traditional face-to-face instruction. Overall, students, having experienced online learning, did not have a more positive attitude towards online learning as evidenced by students' findings that did not show a significant in preference for online learning, the effectiveness of online learning, and learning in an online course.

Online learners were found to download materials from learning management systems (72%) (Sanders and Shetlar, 2001). Some could argue that downloading of materials defeated the purpose of posting instructional materials online. The online experience promoted a negative attitude towards online learning when the time spent on online teaching impeded research, especially for universities heavy in research (Schifter, 2002). Negative attitudes towards online learning experiences persisted when faculty

Comment [135]: Challenges/Barriers to the perceptions/attitudes of online learning.

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viewed teaching online learning as more work and time consuming (Seaman, 2009). Attitudes towards online learning were impacted by student discipline, inadequate compensation, lack of acceptance by potential employers, and teaching online not counting towards tenure and promotion. The reason for their less than positive attitude towards online learning included lack of training, lack of observation, and lack of compensation. Faculty at four-year institutions were more likely to have a negative perception towards online experience than faculty at two year institutions; primarily because of the perception of lack of recognition for tenure.

Attitudes towards online learning were influenced by many factors such as one's computer experience (Shea, 2007). In another example, many faculty who acquired a positive attitude towards online learning were part-time faculty, according to Shea. Shea noted that while the overall negative attitude towards online learning has been low, subgroups demonstrated differences in attitude towards online learning. For example, younger faculty was more likely to have negative attitudes toward online learning because of its lack of impact on tenure and career advancement. Part-time and non-tenured professors also were more likely to have a negative attitude towards online learning due to compensation and not their online experience. The data reported by Shea (2007) did not report data from various states. This limitation can compromise the opportunity to generalize the results. The data reported by Shea suggested that traditional faculty also had a negative attitude towards online learning. The negative attitude was primarily a result of not prioritizing online learning, not as a result of the online experience. [This finding suggests current policy towards online and not experience was a possible root cause for negative attitudes towards online learning.] Negative attitudes

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towards online learning have been reinforced by lack of recognition by many institutions of higher education and exclusion from what has been known as “mainstream” academia, according to Shea (2007). Shea contended that professional development and compensation, or lack thereof, has been found to impact the experience and attitude towards online learning. Negative attitudes toward online learning have been influenced by instructors, which are unfamiliar teaching online courses. This can lead to an inadequate student online experience, which could lead to increased negative attitudes toward online learning, both for student and instructor.

Online learning has been labor intensive for students and instructors (Totaro et al, 2005). Faculty teaching online courses in business have had a negative experience and thus reinforced a negative attitude towards online learning (Totaro et al, 2005). Thus, experience can impact perception. The perception of online learning among potential online users is an obstacle that could stifle growth in education.

Longitudinal Report by Allen and Seaman

Allen and Seaman (2005) reported 63% of schools in higher education that offered traditional undergraduate courses in a classroom also offered online courses for undergraduate students. The percentage climbed to 65% when compared to graduate school courses. Many schools where professors taught traditional courses also taught online courses. In 2005, approximately 50% of higher education institutions reported online education as part and parcel to the school’s long-term strategy. According to research conducted by Allen and Seaman (2006), enrollment in online courses grew to 5 million in 2005, faster than in any previous year. Online students are, for the most part,

Comment [136]: Contributors to negative perceptions/attitudes of online learners.

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undergraduate students. Enrollment in at least one online learning course has increased to 3.5 million (Allen and Seaman, 2007). The amount of experience in online learning has increased nine times the projected rate of increase. In 2006, one fifth of students in higher education were exposed to a minimum of one online course. Allen and Seaman (2007) reported two-year higher education institutions as those with the largest increases in online enrollments. Allen and Seaman suggested a correlation between increases in online experiences and institutions engaged in the online platform.

Online learning has crossed along many disciplines. According to Allen and Seaman (2006), educational leaders believe evaluating online courses is no more challenging than traditional courses. In 2005, education leaders believed online learning was equal to, or superior to traditional learning. Less than five percent of education leaders believed there were large obstacles to implementing online learning according. Online education addressed access and equity by enrolling many students who would not otherwise enroll in a traditional college course. Less than six percent of educational leaders surveyed believed students who would otherwise not have enrolled in a traditional college course would have enrolled in an online learning course (Allen and Seaman, 2006). Research conducted by Allen and Seaman (2006) suggested that there are limited obstacles to increasing online learning programs. Cost savings were not viewed as the primary motivator for increases on online learning; increasing student access to courses has been documented as the main driver of increased options for students in online learning, according to Allen and Seaman. Allen and Seaman (2007) suggested that the increase in online learning experiences was due to an increase in the number of higher education institutions offering online courses. Allen and Seamen reported higher

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education institutions in the “engaged” category (18%) have a positive attitude towards online learning; they believed online learning and traditional learning are of equal quality.

They believed online learning could continue to grow, given the increase in demand.

Higher education institutions in the “fully engaged” category (35%) offered online learning courses and incorporated online learning into their formal, long-term strategy.

These institutions of higher learning provided students the largest variety of online learning opportunities. These schools have the most positive attitude towards online learning. Schools that were identified as fully engaged tended to be the larger of the higher education institutions. Evidence of the positive attitude from these schools included support from faculty with regards to the value of online learning when compared to traditional classroom instruction. This would suggest a positive correlation between the experience of students to online learning and attitude towards online learning. These findings could also suggest online learning is most successful in larger institutions of higher education because the capacity to develop a robust and diversified online

learning program is greater. Another reason for the growth in online learning was the opportunity for institutions of higher learning had to increase their student base.

Allen and Seaman (2010) reported that in 2008, enrollment in online classes in higher education surpassed enrollment in overall higher education. This could suggest a more positive attitude towards online learning. Allen and Seaman (2007) concluded the larger than expected growth in online learning was attributed to institutions beginning an online learning platform and existing institutions expanding the number of online learning opportunities.

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In their 2007 study, Allen and Seaman identified five categories to identify attitude towards online learning for all higher education institutions. These five categories included: not interested, non-strategic online, not yet engaged, engaged, and fully engaged. Higher education institutions in the “engaged” category (18%) offered online learning courses and incorporated online learning into their informal, long-term strategy. In 2008, approximately 4.5 million students were enrolled in at least one online course. In addition, one in four students were enrolled in an online course. Allen and Seaman (2010) reported that as the economy worsened in 2008, demand for online learning increased for new and existing online courses.

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When evaluating faculty training for online learning, Allen and Seaman (2010) found the most common method of training for delivering online courses was internal training (65%) and mentoring (59%). Allen and Seaman reported faculty training for teaching online courses consisted of the following: internally run training course, informal mentoring, formal mentoring, externally run training course, and no specific training course provided. Allen and Seaman (2010) suggested a correlation between large schools and having more positive attitude toward online learning. This was due to larger institutions of higher learning offering a variety of training resources. Allen and Seaman suggested smaller institution lacked the resources to allocate large amounts of funding for in-house professional development around online learning.

Comment [139]: Faculty professional development

Allen and Seaman (2007) contended that student access was a main driver to the growth in online learning. By 2010, Allen and Seaman (2010) believed that institutions, which incorporated online learning in its long-term strategic plans, had leveled off. It was found that private institutions viewed online learning less favorably than public

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institutions. Although online learning has increased since 2002, faculty perception towards online has remained constant since 2002. Approximately 20% of institutions reported providing no type of faculty training for online learning. Formal training was not as prevalent as informal training for faculty teaching online courses. Additionally, the economic downturn challenged institutions of higher education to meet the increased demand of traditional and online education.

Allen and Seaman (2010) agreed that online learning attracted an array of learners, which includes people who juggle school with work, family, or additional responsibilities. Allen and Seaman (2010) reported that when compared to traditional learning, educational leaders believed learning outcomes in online learning were about the same (53%). However, approximately one in four educational leaders believed online learning was inferior to traditional learning with regards to learning outcomes.

In the 2011 report, Allen and Seaman acknowledged that online learning failed to outperform traditional learning in student-to-student interaction. Allen and Seaman (2011) also acknowledged that institutions of higher learning with positive attitudes towards online learning continued to employ faculty that are not as accepting of online learning. While the overall growth in online learning has slowed, Allen and Seaman (2011) did not envision an end to enrollment on online courses. However, Allen and Seaman found that not all universities viewed online learning in the same light. While two thirds of higher education institutions believe online learning is “just as good” as traditional learning, there remained one third of higher education institutions that believe online learning is inferior to traditional learning. Educational leaders which were surveyed reported that two thirds of students obtained “about the same” satisfaction from

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online learning as from traditional learning, according to Allen and Seaman (2011). Allen and Seaman (2011) reported that when surveyed, educational leaders chose to incorporate online learning because of greater flexibility, not just for faculty but also for the institutions themselves. This finding could suggest a relationship between flexibility and student access to online learning.

Training of online courses existed for most institutions, according to Allen and Seaman (2011). Allen and Seaman suggested a link between the attitude towards online learning and the extent of training in delivering online courses. Allen and Seaman (2011) discovered more training available for an online course than a blended teaching model or the traditional teaching model. In a blended teaching model, teaching and learning occurs online and in a classroom according to Allen and Seaman. Thus, blended learning is a combination of online learning and traditional learning. The largest institutions (above 15,000 student enrollment) were more likely to utilize internal training resources because it was discovered that the larger institutions of higher learning had the capacity to run this type of training. The smaller institutions (below 15,000 student enrollment) were less likely to utilize internal training resources. Instead smaller institutions of higher learning utilized external training resources because generally, these schools did not have the capacity to operate an internal online training model.

Awareness of Open Courseware and Open Education Resources have evolved since 2002. Open Education Resources (OER) was defined as “materials offered freely and openly to use and adapt for teaching, learning, development, and research” (<http://www.col.org/resources/crsMaterials/Pages/OCW-OER.aspx>). According to Allen and Seaman (2011), Open Courseware is an open education resource where all or a

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portion of a course from a college or university is offered freely to the public. Allen and Seaman (2011) hypothesized that the institutions of higher learning that were most invested in online learning were very aware of Online Education Resources. There was no pattern of Online Education Resources found; Online Education Resources were offered across online, blended, and traditional teaching and learning platforms.

According to Allen and Seaman (2011), online learning occurred due to the extent that technology has infiltrated everyday life. Open Courseware and Open Education Resources are options that have continued to evolve since 2002. Open Education Resources can be accessed and shared in print form, online, or via DVD CD-ROM. A related term and element of Open Education Resources is Open Courseware (OCW). Institutions of higher learning offering Open Courseware include, but are not limited to, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University (iTunes), University of California at Berkeley, University of Notre Dame, and Yale University.

Faculty and administrators in higher education differed in their attitude towards online learning. The surveys conducted by Allen and Seaman (2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012) highlighted the expansion of online learning and the support online learning has received from education leaders, namely chief academic officers. Professions and Applied Sciences were the departments where faculty most frequently recommended online learning to their students (74%) compared to the faculty in the Natural Sciences (53%).

In their most recent survey, Allen and Seaman (2011) reported 65% of educational leaders acknowledged the importance of online learning to their long-term strategy. The largest growth came from for-profit institutions; they grew 18% to 69% for

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for-profit institutions acknowledging that online learning was part and parcel to their

long-term strategy. This could suggest that attitude towards online learning is improving

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due to additional experience, financial gain, and demand. Online learning continues to

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grow at a faster rate than the total student population. In 2011, approximately one third

of students were enrolled in at least one online course. Institutions that offered online

learning have a more favorable view of online learning than those institutions that do not

offer online learning. This finding could suggest a positive correlation between

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experience and attitude to online learning. According to Allen and Seaman (2011), the

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attitude of faculty towards online learning is determined by type of institution. Seaman

(2011) suggested a positive relationship between the number of online learning

opportunities and a positive outlook of expected learning outcomes in online learning.

This finding could suggest a positive correlation between attitude towards online learning

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and the amount of online learning experiences.]

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According to Allen and Seaman (2011), fewer institutions reported little to no

training for faculty in teaching an online course. Allen and Seaman (2011) recognized

that online learning was made possible because of the technological capacity of early 21st

century life. The evolution of online learning can be seen by its impact in various areas

of education. For example, an emerging trend in online learning is Open Education

Resources (OER). Allen and Seaman (2011) reported that educational leaders (57%)

believed Open Courseware was valuable asset for the campus community. According to

Allen and Seaman (2012), faculty who have attained more experience in online learning

have a more positive attitude towards online learning than faculty who are less

experienced in online learning. This could suggest a correlation between one's

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Comment [140]: Try to use some variety in introducing paragraphs rather than repeating the same phrasing ("According to ...") each and every time. For example, in the introductory paragraph you can simply state that, unless otherwise noted, all of the information you are reporting comes from Allen and Seaman (2011). This will avoid the continuous repetition which really takes away from the readability of your dissertation.

experience and attitude towards online learning. Attitudes towards online learning were most positive with faculty who taught in a blended teaching and learning model (online plus traditional face-to-face). Allen and Seaman (2012) reported that two thirds (66%) of faculty had a positive outlook with regards to learning outcomes in online learning. This finding could suggest an upward trend in online learning. According to Allen and Seaman (2012), there seemed to be a correlation between the number of online offerings at higher education institutions and their attitude towards online learning. According to Allen and Seaman (2012), faculty who had experience in online learning and have taught at least one online learning course had a more positive attitude towards the type of assessment tools for online learning in determining the quality of instruction. A third of faculty believed that there was a fair system for payment of online instruction, according to Allen and Seaman (2012). Conversely, over half of administrators (59%) agreed that there was a fair payment structure of faculty in online learning. When faculty was asked whether or not they recommended online learning to their students, Allen and Seaman (2012) reported that 60% of faculty at higher education institutions recommended online learning to their students.

According to Allen and Seaman (2012), 87% of teachers who taught online recommended online learning to their students. While some faculty continued to believe online learning as inferior to traditional learning, many of these same faculty members were recommending online learning to their students. Allen and Seaman (2012) were intrigued by this phenomenon; they surmised that although a percentage of faculty believed online learning to be inferior to traditional face-to-face learning, for some faculty, they believed online learning was one of a limited number of options for their

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students. Allen and Seaman (2012) suggested faculty recommending online learning to students based on faculty vetting of the specific online course to determine its worthiness. Armstrong (2011) found students having a better attitude towards online learning when directions ~~were~~ clear and concise. The participants in the Armstrong study believed that online learning provided the flexibility they were looking for in a learning environment. Students tended to be most satisfied and obtained a more positive attitude towards their online learning experience when communication with students (i.e. email, message, telephone, face-to-face) and faculty was present and consistent. Students viewed the aforementioned more important than the use of technology and any innovative functions within the online course. Higher education institutions in the “not interested” category (18%) were, for the most part, smaller institutions offering little to no online learning. Higher education institutions in the “not interested” category (18%) did not view online learning as important to their long-term strategy and thus, viewed online learning with a negative attitude, according to Allen and Seaman (2007). Higher education institutions in the “non-strategic online” category (23%) offered online learning but did not view online learning as essential to their long-term strategy. Consequently, these schools also viewed online learning with a negative attitude; few accepted the validity of online learning. Higher education institutions in the “not yet engaged” category (5%) saw value in online learning, had a somewhat positive attitude towards online learning, but have not offered online courses at their school. Cost was a major concern for this group. However, this category of schools was reported to believe in the benefits of online learning.

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Allen and Seaman (2012) reported that the institutions of higher education may not be aware of the quality of online learning at other institutions. This finding could signal a need to focus on collaboration with a greater online community that shares strategies and best practices. Apprehension seems to exist towards the quality of instruction at for-profit institutions offering online learning courses; approximately 80% of faculty have concerns about the quality of online education at for-profit institutions. As online learning continues its growth, some faculty (30%) expressed concerns about the number of online course offerings at their institutions. Conversely, administrators (less than 10%) believed online learning is being incorporated more than it should. Allen and Seaman (2012) contended that traditional methods of assessment may not be applicable for online learning models. For example, approximately 50% of administrators believed that they had strong systems in place for traditional, face-to-face instruction. However, only 25% of administrators believed there were strong systems in place for online instruction. There remained a growing concern that as online learning increased, systems for assessment have not kept pace, according to Allen and Seaman (2012). They reported that more time is required to teach an online course, and contended that regardless of experience in online learning, a lack of reward system for faculty furthering online learning could reduce the momentum and growth of online learning at an institution. Allen and Seaman (2012) expected faculty who taught online to recommend online learning in a more favorable way than faculty who did not teach online courses. For faculty who did not teach an online course, the recommendation to enroll in online learning fell to 49%. Allen and Seaman (2012) described faculty who, while not teaching online courses, recommended online courses to their students, as a

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“paradox.” However, there was some faculty who continued to believe online learning was inferior to traditional learning.

Online Learning in Higher Education

Access to higher education has been viewed as one factor in the growth of online learning (Allen and Seaman, 2007). Countries, including the United States, have viewed online learning as narrowing the access gap in higher education. For example, Osei (2010) found online learning tended to better include non-traditional learners 30 years of age and older. According to Sanders and Shetlar (2001), college students understand the importance of computer skills for college success. They also contended that computer literacy is prevalent in corporate America and relevant in education and believed students expect the use of technology in college courses. As such, faculty have sought methods of incorporating technology in their courses to enhance the learning experience.

The U.S. Department of Education (2004b) argued that instructional practice must be evidence-based. Technology can provide educators with opportunities to diversify instruction not available in previous decades. Technology can help facilitate the transition from faculty centered to student centered learning. The implication is students will then develop “personalized learning plans” to increase accountability and flexibility in higher education (Bruff, 2011).

Given these pressures, educational leaders have searched for efficient, cost effective teaching methods to increase student achievement (Farmer, 2010). Some argue that technology could provide a solution to the rising costs in education. For example, according to Keith and Williamson (2009), one cost effective teaching method is

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engaging learners through a bright board. Keith and Williamson believed any computer could connect to a projector and any software could be projected onto a wall. Using a wireless pen tablet, a teacher can control the laptop from anywhere in the classroom. Students can engage in the lesson using multiple pen tablets for individual or group work. The laptop and pen tablets can enable teachers to construct lesson plans while floating around the room. Keith and Williamson contended that, while the bright board does not incorporate all the “bells and whistles” of an interactive whiteboard, there was considerable cost savings. The authors noted that the cost to supply classrooms with bright boards was substantially less than supplying classrooms with the more expensive, stationary whiteboards. Keith and Williamson also suggested that the cost savings be used to provide teachers with professional development in their area of discipline.

While Eberts (2007) argued for change in unions to facilitate cost effective teaching methods, Kuriloff (2004) saw technology challenging basic assumptions about writing and teaching. Kuriloff called this teaching method technology-enhanced writing instruction. This teaching method was argued by the author to “remove the tedium of editing and managing student text to identify patterns of errors and ensure correctness” (p. 38). According to Gauthier (2009), the Internet has few boundaries and has become an innovative and inexpensive method to create solutions in education. In addition, the internet allows teachers and administrators across the country can collaborate and communicate best practices with each other. At the grassroots level, change can be slow, according to Gauthier (year). Often there is limited technology in areas of low socio-economic status. Underhill (2006) concluded that online learning offered new opportunities to access education, but can be seen as contrary to traditional assessment.

Comment [141]: Such as ... ?

Comment [142]: What teaching method are you referring to?

Comment [143]: What change are you referring to here?

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Diversity in Online Learning

While cost savings is an issue that educators face, leading change in online learning could also address the challenge of increasing diversity in positions of educational leadership. Men are promoted with more frequency than women. Representation on federal committees that address education remain mostly male. According to Gauthier (2009), women are still relatively underrepresented in leadership positions, both at the administrative level, and the legislative level. However, females have been found as more likely to teach an online course (Seaman, 2009).

Crisis can lead to opportunity and change in online learning. Systemic change in online education can be achieved through what Wheatley and Frieze (2006) described as “emergence.”

Emergence is a description of large-scale change. These Systems of Influence have broad reach and affect behaviors throughout the system. Yet emergence does not start big. It begins with small local actions. Large-scale change emerges from connections among these local efforts, from the exchanges of learning and the forging of relationships... At the start, these small efforts seem impotent, puny in the face of the dominating culture. And by themselves, they are insufficient... The work of educational leaders is to encourage local experiments, to watch for and nourish supportive beliefs and dynamics, and to sponsor faculty and staff to connect with all the kindred spirits now working in isolation. This is how we intentionally work with emergence to create the future we desire... We believed

Comment [144]: I'm not following your argument here. Are you saying that the use of online learning methods will increase females in leadership positions? If so, state that from the very beginning then provide more evidence to support this claim. As of now, you have not made your case.

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that large-scale changes require large-scale efforts. But with emergence, it's not critical mass we have to achieve; it is critical connections (p. 36).

Online learning programs have been designed to provide educational opportunities to meet the needs of diverse students (Watson & Gemin, 2008). Enrollment in online courses have grown at a faster rate than the total student body, according to Allen and Seaman (2006). The implication is online learning has become a viable alternative to traditional in-class instruction. Underhill (2006) underscored the potential of online learning on diverse populations. Online learning was an alternative to satisfy the educational needs of a more diverse type of student, according (Shea, 2007) and as diverse populations flocked to online learning, the issue of volume and integrity of information came into question. Racial groups and social-economic status could detail differences in attitudes towards online learning (citations).

Motivation in Online Learning

Flexibility can be viewed as a main motivator for choosing online learning. according to Knowles and Kerkman (2007), motivation was a key ingredient in a positive attitude towards online learning. They suggested measuring motivation as a first step in evaluating attitudes towards online learning. Knowles and Kerkman acknowledged motivation can be discussed by various elements:

Literature on motivation in student learning pointed to factors of individual interest, external motivation, intrinsic motivation, transformation of information of knowledge, and depth of study processes to determine how student motivation can be measured (p. 71).

Comment [146]: So here you just described that little steps lead to big changes so follow this up with examples of how online learning does this.

How does this paragraph relate to diversity on online learning since this seems to be the subject matter you are addressing at this point?

Comment [147]: I deleted the paragraph below because the exact wording appears on page 20 in your dissertation.

Deleted: A report titled, *Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States*, indicated that in 2005, approximately, 3.2 million students in higher education were enrolled in at least one online course; of the total number of students enrolled in higher education, 82% of which were students enrolled as undergraduates (Allen and Seaman, 2005). [This statistic could suggest the opportunity to offer more online options for undergraduates as well as opportunities for growth in online learning at the graduate level.]

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They found that, with regards to online learning, internal motivation was more prevalent in students than external motivation. The study conducted by Knowles and Kerman found that while students wrote and read more than they expected, there was a more positive attitude towards online learning.

- Deleted: Knowles and Kerkman
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Reviewing information online can be more challenging than listening to an instructor in class. Knowles and Kerkman (2007) suggested increases in rigor in an online course than in a traditional face-to-face course. They suggested that a student who exhibits responsible qualities via self-initiative could be more successful in an online learning environment than students who are less responsible and do not display self-initiative. Their study found that students do not miss interaction with an instructor in an online learning environment, as once believed. This conclusion could suggest the structure of the online course enhanced the experience in online communication and thus a more positive attitude towards online learning. In addition, feedback by the instructor was provided more than expected in an online learning environment. These factors, more than one's experience alone, can contribute to a more positive attitude towards online learning.

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Maguire (2005) found that, similar to Knowles and Kerkman's (2007) study about students and online learning, intrinsic motivation was key to faculty teaching online. Extrinsic motivation provided some motivation to teaching online. Peer pressure has been found to be a motivator for faculty in online learning. This is due to the community at large associating online learning with cutting edge educational alternatives.

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- Comment [149]: You just said that intrinsic motivation was the key. Now, you say extrinsic motivation provided some motivation. You need to make clearer connections between sentences. So, are you saying that intrinsic motivation was the primary key to faculty teaching online and extrinsic motivation was only secondary? If so, you need to state that. Otherwise, the students read as independent, unrelated statements.

Motivation was a key component in one's online experience, according to Schifter (2002).

- Comment [150]: Now you state that peer pressure plays a role. Are you wanting to list factors that motivate faculty teaching online? If so, then state that accordingly.
- Moved (insertion) [6]
- Comment [151]: This could be a separate paragraph where you solely focus on motivation.
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Online learning can reinforce globalization. Online learning can be viewed as the bridge to social, economic, and political equity among people across continents; its impact has yet to be fully understood. According to Nassar and Abouchedid (2000), “It is assumed that those who may be involved in distance education programs consider that literacy, awareness, and interest are powerful agents for curricular change and alternative means to the traditional methods of instruction” (p. 1).

Shifts in Attitude Towards Online Learning from Institutions of Higher Education

According to Armstrong (2011), “developing effective online learning environments is becoming a challenge for many universities” (p. xx). These challenges include: budget constraints and competition among universities, lack of faculty voice in developing online learning, and demand for online learning resulting in shifting institutional priorities to meet societal needs. Attitudes towards online learning can be influenced by the institutions’ view of online learning and the culture in which online learning has grown, therefore Online learning has broadened the reach of institutions. Some higher education institutions viewed online learning as a “quick fix” for enrollment challenges (Allen and Seaman, 2007). Other higher education institutions viewed online learning as contrary to the vision of their institutions. In each category, Allen and Seaman (2007) found varying attitudes towards online learning. In addition to varying attitudes towards online learning, Allen and Seaman (2007) reported various levels of implementation and course offerings. Flexibility can also be a challenge for traditional universities due to changes in the strategy of their academic frameworks (MacKeogh & Fox, 2009, p. 147). Insufficient professional development and resources to support

Comment [152]: This is a completely separate topic. Consider moving this toward your conclusion where you give the reader a sense of the overall importance and connectivity of online learning. It doesn't belong here.

Moved up [6]: Motivation was a key component in one's online experience, according to Schifter (2002).

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Deleted: had higher education institutions searching for an additional long-term strategy. In addition, it was found that students believed faculty were the “missing voice” in the online conversation. [This finding suggests limited depth in learning without faculty participation

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online learning **also hindered** the ability to effectively implement an online learning model.

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Enrollment in online learning has increased in the 21st century and thus, more learners are being exposed to online learning. Negative perception of the quality of online courses has impacted online learning as a long-term strategy for some higher education institutions. **According to Allen and Seaman (2007), small school and private**

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non-profit colleges were less likely to incorporate online learning in their long-term strategic planning because ... They reported that private for-profit institutions had the most faculty acceptance of online learning and private non-profits were reported as having the least faculty acceptance of online learning. The study by Allen and Seaman also looked at retention of students in online learning. Larger institutions reported having greater challenges retaining students in online courses compared to students in traditional courses, according to Allen and Seaman (2010). **The aforementioned challenges in online learning can lead to issues of retention at institutions of higher education.**

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Competition for students can improve access to higher education, according to O'Malley and McGraw (1999). **Administrators who do not understand faculty attitude towards online learning can experience additional challenges towards a successful online learning model. The culture of an institution could also be a factor in attitude towards online learning. Attitudes towards online learning can be impacted by the infrastructure of online learning at higher education institutions (Seaman, 2009).**

Comment [155]: What's the connection between these two sentences?

Comment [156]: Read these sentences aloud. You will see that they are very choppy. You need to work on making connections between sentences.

Summary

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According to Kutz et al. (year), the growth in online learning can continue with support for students and instructors. Information technology, the Internet, and alternatives to traditional face-to-face instruction can be seen as conduits for the emergence of online learning. The growth in online learning in education can be seen in the number of institutions of higher education offering online courses. As online learning grows, so can the experiences and attitudes of online students and instructors. As this chapter has suggested, there are mixed reports regarding students' and faculty experiences with online learning and whether these experiences may or may not lead to improved attitude toward online learning. The review of literature underscored factors that could impact experiences and improve attitudes in online learning. After review of the literature, at least five factors emerged in the experiences of (?) online learning; these factors will be the focus of this research study. The five factors that will be explored further in the methodology and research study of experiences and attitudes in online learning include: flexibility, interaction, technology, training, and course workload.

While the number of online learners continues to increase at rates beyond predicted, there remain institutions of higher education which have no interest in online learning. While online learning can support flexibility of online community members, lack of training and technology support can cause negative experiences, which could lead to negative attitudes towards online learning. One's experience in online learning may not translate to a better attitude towards online learning because Therefore, exploration of the factors impacting experience and improving attitudes in online learning can lead to further discussion and research. The result of continued research could have

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implications for online learning in K-12, higher education, improvements in instruction and satisfaction, and technology support.

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CHAPTER III

Methodology

Online learning has emerged as a trend in 21st century teaching and learning. The purpose of this research study was to elicit participants' perceptions of five selected factors known to impact the experiences and attitudes of online learners. Chapter three

describes the methodology of this research study. This chapter is organized in four parts.

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Part one focuses on the participants of this research study. Part two focuses on the

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selection procedures of this research study. Part three focuses on the instrument that was

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used for this research study. Part four focuses on the administration of the survey for this

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research study. This research study was organized in such a manner to allow for

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replication of this research study and research design.

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Comment [159]: Why do you want it to be replicated? How do you see it being replicated?

Two questions were developed to explore the experiences of those who have completed or taught online classes (also known as online participants) and their attitudes towards online learning.

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1. Which factors impact students' experiences in online learning?

Comment [160]: These are my suggestions for revising your research questions. I found the original ones quite confusing. If my revisions take away from your original intent, then feel free to change them as you'd like. I think these are much clearer.

2. Which factors improve students' attitudes about online learning?

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These questions were used to elicit responses of perceptions on the factors that impact experience and improve attitudes of online learners. The method that was used for this study was a survey research design.

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The variables that affected participants' experiences and attitudes in online learning were identified from the literature are presented below. They provided the basis and rationale for developing the instrument for the study.

1. Flexibility, interaction, technology, training, and course workload can influence experiences in online learning.

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Operational definitions of the following key factors of this study were intended to provide consistent understanding for participants of this study. These factors were developed by the researcher based on the review of literature with respect to experiences and attitudes in online learning.

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- Attitude - evaluating one's emotional, cognitive, or behavioral bias toward online learning
- Experience - one's personal encounter with online learning for a minimum of two semesters
- Online learning - courses taken over the Internet that meet university graduation requirements. These online courses are not limited to one subject or discipline.
- Flexibility - the ability to adapt, change, and mold into a different shape
- Training - the development of habit to achieve a desired result
- Interaction - verbal or nonverbal communication with people using an electronic device connected to the Internet

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- Technology - the use of electronic devices to connect and communicate with individuals and/or groups on the Internet.
- Course Workload - assignments required to satisfy completion of course expectations

Participants

Participants in this research study were students and instructors over the age of eighteen with a minimum two semesters of online experience. The reason for this delimitation was to capture data from students and instructors in online learning only. Participants who met the criteria were invited to complete an online survey about their perceptions of the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes of online learners. As part of this survey, participants were asked to complete demographic information including ethnicity, gender, and age. Those potential participants who were invited to fill out the survey included undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty and staff at Alliant International University and from an online survey software company, Survey Monkey.

Selection Procedures

The participants were self-selected from a group of undergraduate and graduate students and instructors with experience in online learning. Students and instructors over the age of 18 selected to take part in this research study by responding to an electronic, email invitation. Participants were based on the number of responses from an online survey from Alliant International University and from an online survey software company Survey Monkey. Alliant International University and Survey Monkey were

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selected for this study because access to these online learning communities was more accessible and convenient for the researcher than other online learning communities. A call for research participants was requested through the university's Campus Services.

The researcher also recruited participants via Survey Monkey. An online request was completed with pseudonym and Survey Monkey to gain access to the appropriate and pertinent population of participants. After permission was granted, Alliant International

University and Survey posted a call for participants. An example of the call for participants can be found in Appendix A. The researcher did not have access to participant email addresses, therefore campus staff sent out the email invitation (?). The

electronic message sent to potential participants specified the minimum requirements to participate in the survey. The expectation was a sample size of 50 responses minimum to the survey request. The actual number of respondents was. Participants with no online

experience were asked not to continue with the survey. However, there was no reliable mechanism in place to prevent one who has no online experience to participate in this research study.

As a method to encourage participation in this research study, incentives were utilized to increase the sample size of students and instructors. Rather than offer incentives for each participant that completed a questionnaire, each participant was entered in a lottery or drawing for gift cards to be used for instructional supplies. The lottery or drawing incentive was chosen instead of providing each student and instructor because there was a limited budget for rewards for participants. In addition, it was presumed that a lottery or drawing provided enough incentive to generate an acceptable sample size.

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Comment [167]: You keep stating that Survey Monkey posted a call but that is inaccurate. Do you mean you posted a call through Survey Monkey?

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Comment [168]: Therefore, what implications did this have on the reliability of your study?

Deleted: The goal was to collect responses for a self-selected sample population of 50-100 participants. Support from the university's Campus Services of Alliant International University and Survey Monkey helped develop a sample group of participants.

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Instrument Development

The instrument used in this study was a survey designed by the researcher to elicit information about perception of the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes of online learners. The instrument design was consistent with other surveys designed to elicit information from participants. There were ten Likert-type questions concerning online learning and related statements, where participants could describe their agreement or disagreement (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Uncertain; Agree; Strongly Agree). There were also two open ended questions that allowed respondents to discuss additional perceptions with regards to experiences and attitudes about online learning. The instrument was also accessible through an online data collection service, Survey Monkey. Participants were asked to rate their responses regarding their perceptions on experiences and attitudes based on the following themes in online learning that were highlighted in the review of literature: flexibility, training, interaction, technology, and course workload. Six questions were designed to elicit perceptions of participants in relation to their experiences about online learning. Six questions were designed to elicit perceptions of participants in relation to their attitudes towards online learning. The complete description of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B. Prior to an email being sent to potential participants, the researcher imported questions into the Survey Monkey program for participants to respond to. An online survey and data collection system, Survey Monkey, tracked the number of participants and recorded the responses. A pilot study was conducted to test the instrument. Participants of the pilot study did not participate in the final study.

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Administration of the Survey

The Campus Services of Alliant International University and Survey Monkey posted a call for participants. Permission was granted by Campus Services at pseudonym to invite potential participants to participate in this research study. Potential participants accessed the survey on the university website. The email introduction discussed: the purpose of the research study. presented the researcher. provided potential participants the questionnaire instructions to complete the survey, and specified the number of questions in the survey, the approximate amount of time that was required to complete the survey, and reassured participants that their identity was to be kept private and confidential. There was a two week period that elicited 56 individual responses. Once the researcher collected responses for the participants, the researcher ended access to the survey. The email that was sent to potential participants described the nature and purpose of the research study. Participants were able to access the results of the study and received feedback (at the request of the participant) once the research study concluded.

Participants were able to complete the questionnaire within the given timeframe and on any electronic equipment with access to Internet. Participants completed demographic information after completing the questionnaire. Participants could use the following to complete the questionnaire: a desktop computer, laptop, Smartphone, smart television, iPad/kindle, mini iPad, iPod, smart board or other technological device. Participants had the flexibility to complete the online questionnaire in any setting, location, and at any pace. Participants had the flexibility to complete the online questionnaire in locations such as home, school, work, place of business, or place of

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leisure. Given the anonymity of completing an online questionnaire, this study attempted to limit risk or harm in a physical or emotional manner; there was no more risk than one would experience in everyday life. Therefore, little to no harm was be done to participants of this research study. Participants were informed of the nature of the study and understood that their participation, while important, was completely optional, voluntary, and anonymous. Participants were also protected by explicitly stating in the introductory email that information provided was to be kept in strict confidence and identification of participants was not going to be revealed before, during, or after the study had concluded.

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Participants were advised to complete no more than one questionnaire per participant for this research study. Participants were not able to change their responses once the survey had been submitted. For this research study, instructions for participants remained the same. No participant obtained an advantage over another in completing this survey. It was important to provide participants the same set of instructions and protocols at all times. This ensured standardization and limited subjectivity of the researcher towards participants or participants towards the researcher. A description of the introduction for participants can be found in Appendix A.

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Data Analysis

A survey was developed to elicit responses of the perceptions of the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes of online learners. Initial data collection began with Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey provided the responses to the ten survey questions and two open ended questions. The answers were formatted as distribution of

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frequencies; answers were organized as a summary of responses by survey participants. Survey Monkey aggregated the data based on the ten Likert scale questions and two open ended questions. Survey Monkey calculated the total responses for each survey question and displayed the results as percentages while displaying the number of respondents for each survey question.

Limitations

Based on the review of literature and the researcher's experience exploring this research topic, the researcher identified ten limitations. First, while participants were invited from two institutions of higher education to participate in this study, the sample size was not large enough to generalize the findings. Second, participants of this study may not have answered truthfully when asked to complete the survey. Third, participants may not have treated the survey with the appropriate value or attention thereby impacting the results to change. Fourth, since participants were allowed to complete this questionnaire at any time and place during the questionnaire period, participants could have sought support to complete the questionnaire. Fifth, flexibility in completing this questionnaire did not allow for effective monitoring to reinforce complete compliance with the protocol of the research study. Sixth, the research study did not represent a diverse sample population. Seventh, the environment in which the questionnaire was completed, could have impacted the results. Eight, distraction and the opportunity to multi-task could have contributed to skewed responses. A ninth limitation, the responses to the questionnaire may have reflected the current experiences and attitudes towards online learning and not a comprehensive view of experiences and attitudes towards online

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learning over the course of one's online learning history. Last, the study only targeted participants who were undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty from Alliant International University and from Survey Monkey.

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Expectation for Chapter Four

The expectation for a sample size was greater than 100 participants. The large number of participants was important to further strengthen the research study. The results were supposed to suggest that each factor extracted from the literature review was perceived by participants as factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes in online learning. However, flexibility was expected to be a key factor in perceptions most impacting experiences and improving attitudes in online learning followed by interaction. Another expectation was that the data was going to show small percentages of respondents that "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with each of the statements that were intended to elicit responses on perceptions in online learning.

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Expectation for Chapter Five

After having collected and analyzed the data, I expected the results to suggest that there was no one factor impacting experiences and improving attitudes towards in learning. I would have expected that each of the five factors of focus for this research study was perceived to have impacted experiences and improved attitude in online learning. For example, it cannot be assumed that in every educational institution, flexibility is the factor people perceive as most impactful to experiences and most improves attitudes in online learning. I expected to discuss many variables that can

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influence perceptions of one's experiences and attitude in online learning. They could include, but are not limited to, reliable technology, formal student and instructor training in negotiating an online platform, consistent communication between students and between students and instructor, access to the instructor, relevant coursework, curriculum meeting the needs of various learning and teaching styles, and online learning tied to the long term organization's strategic plan. I expected to express that further study in perceptions of experiences and attitudes in online learning will allow educational leaders to cast a larger net and explore which areas to target to improve their online learning programs which can have lasting impact in course offerings and enrollment. A mixed methods approach to further exploring experiences and attitudes in online learning could also help reveal areas of focus. While a quantitative approach was important to suggest a form of measurement, a quantitative approach combined with a qualitative approach can enable researchers to determine if two different methods of collecting data can provide similar findings on attitudes towards online learning.

Comment [171]: So, I assume that you want to now delete these and include the actual chapters?

Summary of Chapter Three

A quantitative survey research design elicited responses of perceptions of the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes in online learning. The survey was made accessible systemwide at Alliant International University through Survey Monkey. Potential participants self-selected; the objective was to solicit a minimum 50 participants for this research study. The actual number of participants was 56. Participants were able to complete the online survey in approximately five minutes. The survey was arranged in a Likert-type structure focusing on five factors that were

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extracted from the literature review. These factors included flexibility, interaction, technology, training, and course workload. Ten limitations were identified in this research study that could have impacted the results. A pilot study was conducted to test the survey instrument prior to the official launch of the actual survey.

CHAPTER IV

Data

This chapter describes the research findings for the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes about online learning. The purpose of this research study was to elicit participants' perceptions of five selected factors known to impact the experiences and attitudes of online learners. The research study focused on five factors including flexibility, interaction, technology, training, and course workload in online learning. The aforementioned factors were identified from the review of literature in Chapter two. Two questions were developed to elicit responses of perceptions of the factors impacting experiences of those who have completed or taught online classes (also known as online participants) and their attitudes towards online learning.

1. Which factors impact students' experiences in online learning?
2. Which factors improve students' attitudes about online learning?

The study's findings could allow educational leaders to further address quality of instruction and strategic planning to expand the scope of online learning.

Study Population

The population for this research study were self-selected. An online survey research design collected responses from students 18 years of age and older and

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instructors who had participated in online learning courses. Participants were obtained from Alliant International University. In addition, an online survey company, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) was utilized to post a call for participants.

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Participants who were excluded included those under 18 years of age and those without a minimum two semesters of online learning experience. A total of 56 surveys were collected for this research study. Prior to a call for participants, a pilot study with 40 participants was conducted to test the survey instrument. Participants of the pilot study were not included in the final version of the survey.

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Data was collected utilizing the online survey software tool, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). All responses were collected online. Participants had the option of completing the survey from any device with access to the Internet. There was no direct contact by the researcher with any of the participants, therefore, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that there was no risk to participants. The distribution of participants' responses to all the questionnaire items have been presented in Appendix C, E, and F.

Results

The distribution of respondents by ethnicity is presented in Table 1. Table 1 shows an uneven distribution of participants based on ethnicity. For example, 5.8% of participants identified as African American and 11.5% identified as Hispanic of Latino whereas 82.7% identified as White (Non-Hispanic). Table 2 also shows an uneven distribution of participants by gender. Females constituted 61.5% of respondents while males were 38.5 % of respondents. Table 3 again shows an uneven distribution of

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respondents based on age. The majority of respondents (58%) indicated their age between 26 and 45 years of age; 39% of respondents were 46 years of age and older; 4% percent of respondents were between 18 and 25 years of age.

Table 1

Demographic Information: Ethnicity

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
African American	5.8%	3
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.9%	1
Asian	3.8%	2
Filipino	3.8%	2
Hispanic or Latino	11.5%	6
Pacific Islander	1.9%	1
White (Not Hispanic)	82.7%	43
Other (please specify)		2
Total	111.4%*	60*

* Some respondents identified with multiple ethnicities

Table 2

Demographic Information: Gender

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	61.5%	32
Male	38.5%	20
Transgender	0.0%	0
Bigender	0.0%	0
Trigender	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		1
	100.0%	53*

* 3 respondents skipped this question

Table 3

Demographic Information: Age

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18 to 25	3.8%	2

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Perceptions of the Factors Impacting Experiences and Improving Attitudes for Online Learners

26 to 30	13.5%	7
31 to 35	13.5%	7
36 to 40	15.4%	8
41 to 45	15.4%	8
46 to 50	5.8%	3
51 to 55	13.5%	7
56 to 60	7.7%	4
61 to 65	5.8%	3
66 to 70	5.8%	3
71 to 75	0.0%	0
76 and over	0.0%	0
	100.0%	52*

* 4 respondents skipped this question

Five factors were identified as factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes about online learning for online participants. These factors included: flexibility, training, interaction, technology, and course workload. The aforementioned factors were identified from the review of literature in Chapter 2 of this research study. Tables 9 and 10 show the rank order of participants of the impact of the five factors on respondents' experiences and attitudes in online learning. Tables 9 and 10 provide summary data on participants' perceptions of the impact of the factors on their experiences and attitudes. Column 3 of Tables 9 and 10 show the percentage of agree or strongly agree responses or endorsements of the impact of the factors on their experiences and attitudes. Column 2 of Tables 9 and 10 show the number of respondents' who indicated the factor they perceived as an impact on their experiences and attitudes. Table 9 shows that of the five factors of focus for this study, flexibility (86%) was the factor that respondents perceived as most impactful of experiences in online learning. In Table 9, technology (84%) was perceived by respondents as an impact on experiences followed by interaction (61%), training (57%), and course workload (56%). In Table 10, respondents perceived flexibility (81%) as improving attitudes in online learning most. Technology (70%) was perceived by

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respondents as a factor improving attitudes in online learning followed by interaction (50%), training (46%) and course workload (46%).

The frequency of distribution for each of the five factors can be found in Appendix D and E. Questions 1 and 2 below will be addressed by showing the key factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes on online learning. The results will be shown as a percentage of respondents that provided answers based on their perceptions on experiences and attitudes. Respondents were asked to select one of five options describing their opinion to the statement on flexibility; the five options to select from were: 1. Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Uncertain, 4. Agree, and 5. Strongly Agree. The middle column in Tables 4 through 8 show the percentage of respondents providing their opinion to the statements provided. The right hand column in Tables 4 through 8 show the number of responses to each option selected by respondents. The analysis will underscore perceptions of the factor(s) that most impacted experiences and improved attitudes of online learners.

Research Question #1: Which factors impact students' experiences in online learning?

The factor that participants perceived had the most impact on experiences in online learning was flexibility. Table 6 below shows the survey responses to flexibility as a factor impacting the experiences in online learning for participants of online education. In Table 4, respondents provided their opinion to the statement, "Flexibility in online learning has impacted my online learning experience." While each factor impacted experience in online learning, in Table 4, respondents that "Agreed" or "Strongly agreed" showed that flexibility (86%), when compared to the four other factors, showed strong perceptions and was the main factor impacting experiences in online

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learning for participants of online education; 3.6% strongly disagreed, 1.8% disagreed, and 8.9% of respondents were uncertain about the impact of flexibility on their online experience. The findings in Table 4 could suggest that flexibility is a key factor impacting experiences in online learning. The high percentage of answers supporting flexibility can be tied to students developing personalized learning plans (Bruff, 2011). Technology (84%) was also perceived as main factor impacting experiences in online learning. The findings could also suggest that respondents perceived technology as important a factor as flexibility in online learning. The frequency of distribution for technology can be found in Appendix F.

Table 4

Flexibility in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	3.6%	2
Disagree	1.8%	1
Uncertain	8.9%	5
Agree	53.6%	30
Strongly Agree	32.1%	18
Total	100.0%	56

Table 5 shows the results for respondents with regards to their perception of course workload impacting their experiences in online learning. While 56% of respondents “Agreed or Strongly Agreed,” 39% of respondents were “Uncertain” on the impact of course workload on their online experience. The findings could suggest that a large percentage of respondents were uncertain about the impact of course workload in online learning experience because students can perceive online learning as too much work (Osei, 2010). The data also shows that for this sample population, there were various factors that impacted perceptions of experiences in online learning. For

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example, respondents' also perceived interaction (61%), training (57%), and course workload (56%) as factors impacting experiences in online learning; they are noted in Appendix F.

Table 5

Course workload in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	3.7%	2
Disagree	1.9%	1
Uncertain	38.9%	21
Agree	38.9%	21
Strongly Agree	16.7%	9
Total	100.0%	54

* 2 respondents skipped this question

Research Question #2: Which factors improve students' attitudes about online learning?

The factor that participants perceived that most improved attitudes in online learning was flexibility. Table 6 below shows the survey responses to flexibility as a factor improving the attitude in online learning for participants of online education. In Table 6, respondents provided their opinion to the statement, "Flexibility has improved my attitude towards online learning." While each factor improved attitude in online learning, in Table 6, respondents that "Agreed" or "Strongly agreed" showed that flexibility (81%), when compared to the four other factors, showed strong perceptions and was the main factor improving attitudes in online learning for participants of online education; 1.9% strongly disagreed, 3.8% disagreed, and 13.2% of participants were uncertain about flexibility improving their attitude towards online learning. The findings suggest flexibility in online learning could be considered a high priority to help improve attitudes in online learning. As was the case in Research Question 1, the data shows

Comment [175]: These are my suggestions for revising your research questions. I found the original ones quite confusing. If my revisions take away from your original intent, then feel free to change them as you'd like. I think these are much clearer.

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respondents also perceived other factors improving their attitudes in online learning. For example, respondents' perceived technology (70%), interaction (50%), training (46%), and course workload (46%) as factors improving online learning; they are noted in Appendix F. Based on the data presented in this research study, it can be argued that there appears to be no one prevailing reason that shapes attitudes toward online learning as also noted in other studies (O'Malley & McGraw, 1999; Sanders and Morrison-Shetlar, 2001; Schiffer, 2002; Graff, 2003; Osei, 2010).

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Table 6

Flexibility has improved my attitude towards online learning.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	1.9%	1
Disagree	3.8%	2
Uncertain	13.2%	7
Agree	41.5%	22
Strongly Agree	39.6%	21
Total	100.0%	53*

* 3 respondents skipped this question

Table 7 shows the results for respondents with regards to their improved attitude based on perceptions of training in online learning. While 46% of respondents “Agreed or Strongly Agreed”, 39% of respondents were “Uncertain” about how they perceived training as improving their attitude towards online learning. This finding could suggest that uncertainty of perceptions of training on attitudes in online learning may not be seen as important and a key tool in online learning.

Table 7

Training has improved my attitude towards online learning.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
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Perceptions of the Factors Impacting Experiences and Improving Attitudes for Online Learners

Strongly Disagree	3.7%	2
Disagree	11.1%	6
Uncertain	38.9%	21
Agree	38.9%	21
Strongly Agree	7.4%	4
Total	100.0%	54*

* 2 respondents skipped this question

Table 8 shows the results for respondents with regards to their improved attitude based on perceptions of course workload in online learning. While 46% of respondents “Agreed or Strongly Agreed”, an almost equal number of respondent 42% were “Uncertain” about how they perceived course workload as improving their attitude towards online learning. This finding could suggest that heavy workloads can play a role in improving attitudes in online learning (Gauthier, 2009).

Table 8

Course workload in online learning has improved my attitude towards online learning.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	4.0%	2
Disagree	8.0%	4
Uncertain	42.0%	21
Agree	38.0%	19
Strongly Agree	8.0%	4
Total	100.0%	50*

* 6 respondents skipped this question

Table 9

Rank Order of Participants of the Impact of the 5 Factors on Their Experiences and Attitudes in Online Learning

Factors	Perceived Impact on Experiences (n=56)*	%**
Flexibility	48	86%
Technology	46	84%
Interaction	34	61%
Training	32	57%
Course Workload	30	56%

*Some respondents chose to skip a question

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**Respondents Agreed PLUS Strongly Agreed

Table 10

Factors	Perceived Impact on Attitudes (n=56)*	%**
Flexibility	43	81%
Technology	38	70%
Interaction	27	50%
Training	25	46%
Course Workload	23	46%

*Some respondents chose to skip a question

**Respondents Agreed PLUS Strongly Agreed

Limitations of this Study

The limitations of this research study may have affected the results of this research study in either a positive or negative direction. A sample size of 56 participants was not large enough to make a generalization from the findings of this research study; the 56 participants were derived from Alliant International University and collected from the online survey company, Survey Monkey. The researcher could not ensure that participants would answer each survey question truthfully. Since survey participants were allowed to complete the survey anywhere with an Internet connection, it is not clear if participants interacted with the survey with the appropriate attention. Therefore, variability in the location the survey was completed did not allow for effective monitoring of participants. The results were not inclusive and representative of a diverse ethnic population. For example, over 80% of respondent identified with the ethnicity of White. It is also not clear if the responses to the survey reflected the current experiences and attitudes towards online learning and not the experiences and attitudes towards online learning over time.

Comment [176]: pseudonym

Summary

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Based on the review of literature, five factors emerged and were identified that could impact experiences and improve attitudes in online learning. The results suggested varying viewpoints of the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes about online learning. Interaction, technology, training, and course workload were factors of focus in this research study that were perceived to have an impact on experiences and improve attitudes in online learning. Based on the results of this research study, of the five factors of focus of this research study, flexibility was perceived by respondents as the factor that most impacted experiences and improved attitudes in online learning. Further analysis of these findings will be discussed in Chapter 5. This finding is supported by others as discussed in the review of literature (Graff, 2003; Knowles & Kirkman, 2007; Davis & Dick, 2009; Allen & Seaman, 2011).

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CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Discussion

This research was designed to investigate the perceptions of online learners of factors which impact their experience and attitudes. The five factors of focus in this study included: flexibility, interaction, technology, training, and course workload. Participants self-selected for this study; participants were 18 years of age and older. The self-selected sample was obtained from Alliant International University and via a web survey development company, Survey Monkey. A total of 56 surveys were collected for this study. Prior to a call for participants, a pilot study was conducted to improve the reliability of the instrument.

Comment [177]: Pseudonym?

This study was conducted because of the emergence of online learning as a disruptive educational model in the 21st century. Online learning is an educational platform that has and will continue to have a tremendous impact in education. Online learning is a key element driving global education. As such, educational institutions must make strides to address experiences and attitudes. Students, whether they express this verbally or not, enjoy the social networking component and variety of options that comes with technology. Consider the following real world example: I once worked at a school site that served middle and high school students. At lunchtime, the middle and high school students immediately ran to the library and computer lab. Why? Because forty computers occupied the library and another sixty computers occupied two additional computer labs. Students utilized this time to play interactive games with others, communicate via email or blogs, complete class assignments, or browse the Internet. Another interesting phenomenon occurred at this school site with regards to the school

Comment [178]: Disruptive? How about innovative? Disruptive has a negative connotation.

Comment [179]: You need a transition between these two sentences.

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and district policy on electronic devices, specifically cell phones. With the use of phone calls, text messages, and direct links to social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, students were in constant communication with others; they clearly enjoyed it.

Comment [180]: So what was the policy?

Online education in the 21st century includes social networking and the use of technology as means of communication and collaboration. Interaction between diverse people within an educational institution's learning management system is an essential component of online education,. Today's students are the digital natives. We, as educators, are the digital immigrants. It is time for instruction to include more extensive use of technology, which, in turn, may provide the impetus for school improvement and the proliferation of online education. Innovation in education can include addressing the five factors addressed in this research study. If educators are going to meet state content standards and develop tomorrow's leaders, we must focus on student-centered learning; online learning can be a key component of a student-centered model where we can increase the impact of experiences and attitudes.

Results

The results were based on survey participants' responses to a series of questions in relation to their experiences and attitudes about online learning. The factors that impacted perceptions of online learners included: flexibility, interaction, technology, training, and course workload. These factors emerged from the review of literature. Each factor will be discussed further in this chapter to address perceptions impacting experiences and attitudes in online learning.

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The first research question was, "Which factors have an impact on the experiences of participants of online education?" The factor that participants perceived had the most impact on experiences in online learning was flexibility (86%). Technology (84%) was also a factor that had as much an impact on experiences and attitudes as flexibility. Respondents also perceived interaction (61%), training (57%), and course workload (56%) impacting experiences for online learners. The second research questions was, "Which factors improve the attitudes of participants of online education?" The factor that participants perceived that most improved attitudes in online learning was flexibility (81%). Respondents perceived technology (70%), interaction (50%), training (46%), and course workload (46%) as factors improving attitudes for online learners.

Comment [181]: Change to the research question I suggested if you'd like.

Comment [182]: See comment #5.

Flexibility in Online Learning

Although institutions should be careful to base an online learning platform on flexibility, we must acknowledge that flexibility in online learning continues to attract learners. The results of this study suggest that flexibility is among the more popular reasons as to why learners continue to access online learning. Flexibility for online learners can increase the type of students accessing online learning. However, diversity did not materialize in this study, over 80% of respondents identified as White. Teaching and learning can be more student-focused. The flexibility that online learning provides can accommodate the busiest of individuals. This could explain why over 80% of respondents perceived flexibility as the main factor in reference to experiences and attitudes is online learning. The results of

Comment [183]: Why should they be careful about this?

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this study suggest flexibility of online learning caters to the needs of learners and not the other way around. For example, participants can read notes, listen to lectures, complete assignments at their pace and based on their schedule. This is especially true for individuals who balance the demands of home life with work and those looking to pursue additional career opportunities. As a result, flexibility in online learning has helped this online learning to become increasingly popular, according to David and Dick (2009). Face to face, “brick and mortar” learning environments continue to struggle implementing flexible learning environments. Given the large percentage of respondents’ perception of flexibility in online learning, the results can suggest further development of online learning platforms in activating multiple intelligences.

Today’s learning environments not only include educational institutions; today’s educational institutions include libraries, coffee shops, outdoor venues, one’s home, or one’ personal space, be it indoors or outdoors. Flexibility in online learning allows for one to learn from others with a wide array of experiences. Flexibility leads to more options and with more options, participants can customize their learning experiences. However, not everyone functions at their optimal level in a flexible learning environment. The data from this research study suggests that careful evaluation of perceptions of flexibility can support the acquisition of knowledge for all online learning participants. In todays, multi-task environment, it makes more sense for online learning to highlight its flexible structure; this can lead to educational institutions increasing their enrollment and thus, their bottom line.

Comment [186]: The concept of multiple intelligences comes out of nowhere. It’s a great claim but you will need to provide support for it. I would say you could devote an entire paragraph to this if you wanted to.

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Interaction in Online Learning

The data suggested that participants did not perceive interaction as impactful as flexibility. In addition, 23% of respondents were uncertain about their perceptions in relation to interaction in online learning. This could suggest some online learners may prefer a more isolated online experience. If this is the case, it will be interesting to observe how learning management systems balance those online learners who prefer interaction with those who do not prefer interaction.

One of the benefits of online learning is the variety of teaching and communication styles that are incorporated. Each course has its own culture of interaction that is facilitated by the instructor. In some cases, interaction in an online course is limited to minimal communication with the instructor and students. In other cases, interaction in an online course is expanded to include interaction through multiple methods of learning in an online platform. These methods include, but are not limited to: webinars, blogs, social media, and blended learning. While online learning is a viable option for a diverse group of learners, a major complaint of online learning is the lack of interaction and connection students have with instructors and with other students. However, the data suggests that not all online communities perceive factors impacting experiences and attitudes similarly. Many students do not fully realize how much they value interaction until they experience a course where interaction is limited either by the learning management system or the limitation of the instructor. A blended learning model can reinforce interaction in a face-to-face and online learning model.

Comment [187]: This might be a more appropriate place to mention multiple intelligences. See comment #10.

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Training in Online Learning

For many, training is a barrier to online learning (Lloyd, Byrne, and McCoy, 2012). Much like enrolling in a new course in a face-to-face learning platform, participants must learn how to successfully navigate through the course. This is no different in online learning. However, perceptions of training impacting experience and attitude were not as important as perceptions of flexibility; 34% of respondents were uncertain about perceptions in relation to online training. Lack of training in online learning can lead to negative perceptions. Experiences and attitudes in online learning can decline or improve based on how prepared participants are in utilizing the tools in an online learning platform. Training was not as high on participants' list of factors they perceived as impactful to experiences and attitudes. That said, a training course in how to successfully interact in an online learning platform would help students and instructors maximize the learning experience. Mandatory training courses in online learning for all participants can positively impact experiences and improve attitudes in online learning. Anderson (2010) viewed training as non-optional. Online learners may not fully realize the role of training in experiences and attitudes in online learning if training is not part and parcel to impacting experiences and improving attitudes in online education.

Course Workload in Online Learning

Five factors were identified from the literature review in chapter 2. One of the factors impacting perceptions' of experiences and attitudes in online learning was course workload. The findings of this study showed that many respondents

Comment [188]: Five factors that ... were identified ...

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were of uncertain (39%) about their perceptions of course workload on experiences and attitudes in online learning. Course workload was a factor worth discussing because many individuals enter an online course only to realize that the course workload is more than expected. Course workload has been viewed by many as an obstacle to experiences and attitudes in online learning (Bower, 2001; Schifter, 2002; Lyons, 2004; Ryan, Hodson-Carlton, & Ali, 2004, 2005; Singh & Pan, 2004; Panda & Mishra, 2007; Shea, 2007; Haber & Mills, 2008; Seaman, 2009). The data showed lots of uncertainty regarding perceptions about course workload. Inherent in online learning is having certain skill sets to be successful. These skills sets include independent learning, becoming a self-starter, time management, and discipline. Without most of these skills, participants in online learning may not be as successful given the course workload. A common comment by those new to online learning is, "I did not realize that it would be this much work." The results can imply that more education in online learning is needed to navigate successfully in an online learning platform. The results of this study with regards to course workload suggest more outreach and awareness is needed to prepare online participants for the rigor of online learning. More outreach and awareness in online learning could lead to improvements in perceptions based on course workload.

Technology in Online Learning

Participants of this research study perceived technology positively, more so with regards to experiences than in attitudes. Regardless of how participants of this research study viewed technology in online learning, the improvements in

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technology can account for the proliferation of online learning across educational institutions. Many sectors in our society rely on current innovations in technology; online learning should be no different. Enhancements in technology can help participants learn through multiple intelligences. For example, without the ability to stream video, participants are limited in access to their audio and visual intelligences. In another example, the ability to conduct webinars provide participants the flexibility to engage in asynchronous and synchronous learning. Without improvements in technology, online learning cannot grow.

Comment [189]: This should go in the section about multiple intelligences.

The data from this study suggests that technology is a factor impacting perceptions in experiences and attitudes of online learners. The more online learning embraces technology, the more technology can impact experiences and attitudes in online learning (Larsen, Miller & Ribble, 2010). This was evident in the percentage of participants who indicated technology impacted their experience (84%) and improved their attitude (70%) toward online learning. These findings can push educational leaders to think differently about learning outcomes. The data on technology in this study suggests perceptions in the factor technology could lead to more innovative approaches to engage online learners. For example, universities such as MIT, Harvard, and Stanford use open courseware to expose more people to their educational communities. YouTube and innovative apps help engage learners who could otherwise not continue their educational goals. Collaboration becomes easier when you have the option of communicating with others through a variety of methods.

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There are more barriers in widely implementating online learning in K-12 than in higher education. These barriers include: educational policy, curriculum differentiation, and scheduling considerations. Institutions who do not view online learning as an option for students could limit their population of students. The emergence of iPads and other like devices have ushered in the age of portable learning, a product of technological advancements. In order for education to continue to evolve, the educational system must work closely with leaders in the area of technology in order for learners to successfully adapt trending innovations.

Considerations to Sustain a Thriving Online Learning Model

While flexibility was perceived by participants as the main factor impacting experiences and attitudes in online learning, we must be careful to prioritize flexibility as the most important factor in online learning for all online learning platforms. For each educational institution currently implementing or considering implementing an online learning platform, a comprehensive approach to sustain a thriving online learning model should be developed. It is essential to first consider how online learning aligns with the vision and mission of an educational institution. Negative perceptions of the quality of online courses has impacted online learning as a long-term strategy for some higher education institutions. Perception can impact long-term strategic planning (Allen & Seaman, 2006). In order to successfully implement an online learning model, educational institutions must incorporate online learning as a key component to their strategic plans and thus, impact experiences and improve attitudes in online learning.

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Further Research about Online Learning

Perceptions of experiences and attitudes in online learning require further studies beyond flexibility, interaction, training, technology, and course workload. A larger sample size than the 56 respondents could further validate the findings of this research study. A random sample, rather than a self-selected group of participants could improve the reliability of the findings. The limitation of a self-selected sample size could include bias towards the topic of focus. Based on the data on training, research is still needed to determine if instructors need support, such as mentors, to help guide them through online learning. Schools must investigate if they should require students to complete an online learning training course. Educational leaders should consider assessing students to determine if a student will be successful in an online learning environment. Given the lower percentages of perceptions with regards to interaction, a careful analysis of access and communication with the instructor and among students is essential to help drive meaningful discourse. Educators must evaluate if instructors are establishing enough of an online presence in their courses. Educators can explore how diverse course offerings impact perceptions of experiences and attitudes in online learning.

This study did not include a sufficiently diverse sample population based on ethnicity, gender, or age; investigating perceptions by subgroups can help address experiences and attitudes for diverse online learners. For example, a research study with a more diverse ethnic population could show patterns with implications on future online learning platforms. The results of this study can also lead to further

Comment [191]: meaningful discourse about what?

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study about flexibility in online learning, helping students lower the cost of education by accelerating their schooling and certification. This flexibility helps reinforce learning through multiple intelligences and personalizes learning as noted by Bruff (2011).

The data suggests that participants did not perceive interaction as impactful as flexibility. If further studies are inclusive of interaction in online learning, there can be opportunities to improve experiences and attitudes. Technology in education is evolving at a faster rate than we realize. As such, online learning can cause educational leaders to think differently about best teaching practices. In this study, technology was perceived as an important factor with regards to experiences and attitudes in online learning. While online learning is becoming a viable option for 21st century education, these findings suggest that technology can impact perceptions. Additional research in the area of technology can determine the degree of influence technology can have on perceptions.

Comment [192]: Perceptions about ... ?

Comment [193]: See comment #16.

Summary

This study focused on five factors impacting perceptions about online learning for online learners. The data showed that flexibility, interaction, training, technology, and course workload impacted perceptions for online learners by varying degrees. In addition, this study showed multiple factors impacted perceptions about online learning with flexibility impacting perceptions most. While this study showed flexibility as the factor impacting perceptions most, this was not the case across all online learning platforms. Other factors impacting

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perceptions can emerge that were not accounted for in this study. As educational institutions develop and sustain online learning platforms, it will be important to consider the impact perceptions play with respect to experiences and attitudes about online learning. Identification of the factors impacting perceptions about online learning could influence the direction of online learning management systems and how such factors influence experiences and attitudes for online learners. Continued research in perceptions of experiences and attitudes online learning could lead to more successful learning outcomes for online learners.

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Appendix A

Email to Potential Participants of this Research Study

Hello,

This message is from Dennie Marengo. I am a doctoral student at the Hufstedler School of Education – Alliant International University, San Francisco.

As part of my research in the Educational Leadership and Management program, I am conducting a survey on the topic of experiences and attitudes in online learning of students (18 years of age and older) and instructors. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes in online learning.

Participation in this research study involves completing a brief questionnaire and should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. No identifying information will be collected and all responses will be kept private and confidential. The email correspondence via the university's Campus Services will explicitly state that participants will be free to choose to participate in this research study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older. In addition, you must have a minimum 2 semesters of online experience to participate in this study.

Your feedback on the survey will be used to inform further study on addressing attitudes towards online learning for students and instructors. Participants who have chosen to participate in this study will be able to learn about the results once the research study has concluded at the request of the participant.

The survey can be found at this link:

Link to Survey Monkey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q7FWCCS>

To be entered in a drawing for gift cards for instructional supplies, please forward the last page of your completed survey to dmarengo@alliant.edu. Your contact information will only be used to draw winners and contact you if you have won a drawing. If you have any questions about this study or would like to be informed of the results of the survey, please feel free to contact me at dmarengo@alliant.edu.

Thank you for your time.

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Appendix B

Please complete this survey by checking your agreement or disagreement with the following statements below to explore the factors impacting experiences and improving attitudes in online learning using the corresponding Likert scale. Definition of key terms is available for your reference. Thank you for your participation.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

Flexibility – program ability to adapt, change, and mold into a different shape

Training – development of habit to achieve a desired result

Interaction – verbal or non-verbal communication with people using an electronic device connected to the Internet

Technology – use of electronic devices to connect and communicate with individuals and/or groups on the Internet

Course Workload – assignments required to satisfy completion of course expectations

Experiences in Online Learning

1. Flexibility in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.
2. Training in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.
3. Interaction in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.
4. Use of technology in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.
5. Online course workload in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.
6. Other factors impacting experiences in online learning (please explain briefly):

Attitudes in Online Learning

1. Flexibility has improved my attitude towards online learning.
2. Training has improved my attitude towards online learning.

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Perceptions of the Factors Impacting Experiences and Improving Attitudes for Online Learners

3. Interaction has improved my attitude towards online learning.
4. Use of Technology has improved my attitude towards online learning.
5. Online course workload has improved my attitude towards online learning.
6. Other factors improving attitudes towards online learning (please explain briefly):

Demographic Information

What is your gender? Male Female Transgender

Bigender Trigender Other (specify)

Age Range (Please select one):

18-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50
51-55 56-60 61-65 66-70 71 and over

What is your ethnicity?

- African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Filipino
- Hispanic or Latino
- Pacific Islander
- White (Not Hispanic)
- Other (please specify): _____

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Appendix C

Distribution of Participants' Responses #1

Demographic Information: Ethnicity

What is your ethnicity?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
African American	5.8%	3
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.9%	1
Asian	3.8%	2
Filipino	3.8%	2
Hispanic or Latino	11.5%	6
Pacific Islander	1.9%	1
White (Not Hispanic)	82.7%	43
Other (please specify)		2
Total	111.4%*	60*

* Respondents had the option to identify with multiple ethnicities

Distribution of Participants' Responses #2

Demographic Information: Gender

What is your gender?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	61.5%	32
Male	38.5%	20
Transgender	0.0%	0
Bigender	0.0%	0
Trigender	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		1
	100.0%	53*

* 3 respondents skipped this question

Distribution of Participants' Responses #3

Demographic Information: Age

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What is your age?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18 to 25	3.8%	2
26 to 30	13.5%	7
31 to 35	13.5%	7
36 to 40	15.4%	8
41 to 45	15.4%	8
46 to 50	5.8%	3
51 to 55	13.5%	7
56 to 60	7.7%	4
61 to 65	5.8%	3
66 to 70	5.8%	3
71 to 75	0.0%	0
76 and over	0.0%	0
	100.0%	52*

* 4 respondents skipped this question

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Appendix D

Rank Order of Participants of the Impact of the 5 Factors on Their Experiences and Attitudes in Online Learning

Factors	Perceived Impact on Experiences (n=56)*	%**
Flexibility	48	86%
Technology	46	84%
Interaction	34	61%
Training	32	57%
Course Workload	30	56%

*Some respondents chose to skip a question

**Respondents Agreed PLUS Strongly Agreed

Factors	Perceived Impact on Attitudes (n=56)*	%**
Flexibility	43	81%
Technology	38	70%
Interaction	27	50%
Training	25	46%
Course Workload	23	46%

*Some respondents chose to skip a question

**Respondents Agreed PLUS Strongly Agreed

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Appendix E

Distribution of Participants' Responses #4

Flexibility in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	3.6%	2
Disagree	1.8%	1
Uncertain	8.9%	5
Agree	53.6%	30
Strongly Agree	32.1%	18
Total	100.0%	56

Distribution of Participants' Responses #5

Flexibility has improved my attitude towards online learning.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	1.9%	1
Disagree	3.8%	2
Uncertain	13.2%	7
Agree	41.5%	22
Strongly Agree	39.6%	21
Total	100.0%	53*

* 3 respondents skipped this question

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Appendix F

Distribution of Participants' Responses #6

Training in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	1.8%	1
Disagree	7.1%	4
Uncertain	33.9%	19
Agree	44.6%	25
Strongly Agree	12.5%	7
Total	100.0%	56

Distribution of Participants' Responses #7

Interaction in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	7.1%	4
Disagree	8.9%	5
Uncertain	23.2%	13
Agree	48.2%	27
Strongly Agree	12.5%	7
Total	100.0%	56

Distribution of Participants' Responses #8

Use of technology in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	1.8%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
Uncertain	14.5%	8
Agree	47.3%	26
Strongly Agree	36.4%	20
Total	100.0%	55*

* 1 respondent skipped this question

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Distribution of Participants' Responses #9

Course workload in online learning has impacted my online learning experience.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	3.7%	2
Disagree	1.9%	1
Uncertain	38.9%	21
Agree	38.9%	21
Strongly Agree	16.7%	9
Total	100.0%	54*

* 2 respondents skipped this question

Distribution of Participants' Responses #10

Other factors impacting my online experience:

Answer Options	Response Count
	17*

* 39 respondents skipped this question

Number	Response Text
1	Availability of internet to my home and the cost
2	Web site load speed
3	N/A
4	Availability of help
5	Ease of interface
6	N/A
7	Participation of classmates in online discussion
8	The instructor and reference material
9	Learn at my own pace.
10	N/A
11	Flexibility
12	Convenience
13	Not enough time
14	Not fun, I don't retain online learning much
15	Inadequate technology or wireless issues
16	Time lag to answer questions
17	My job

Distribution of Participants' Responses #11

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Training has improved my attitude towards online learning.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	3.7%	2
Disagree	11.1%	6
Uncertain	38.9%	21
Agree	38.9%	21
Strongly Agree	7.4%	4
Total	100.0%	54*

* 2 respondents skipped this question

Distribution of Participants' Responses #12

Interaction has improved my attitude towards online learning.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	5.6%	3
Disagree	13.0%	7
Uncertain	31.5%	17
Agree	37.0%	20
Strongly Agree	13.0%	7
Total	100.0%	54*

* 2 respondents skipped this question

Distribution of Participants' Responses #13

Use of technology has improved my attitude towards online learning.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	3.7%	2
Disagree	5.6%	3
Uncertain	20.4%	11
Agree	42.6%	23
Strongly Agree	27.8%	15
Total	100.0%	54*

* 2 respondents skipped this question

Distribution of Participants' Responses #14

Course workload in online learning has improved my attitude towards online learning.

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Perceptions of the Factors Impacting Experiences and Improving Attitudes for Online Learners

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Disagree	4.0%	2
Disagree	8.0%	4
Uncertain	42.0%	21
Agree	38.0%	19
Strongly Agree	8.0%	4
Total	100.0%	50*

* 6 respondents skipped this question

Distribution of Participants' Responses #15

Other factors improving my attitude towards online learning:

Answer Options	Response Count
	5*

* 51 respondents skipped this question

Number	Text
1	Low cost internet, variety of internet choices available
2	Ability to schedule according to my other obligations
3	If it is free and I get to choose the course, if topic is engaging, learning from quality teachers
4	Prefer of face to face instruction vs. online
5	Knowing that online class sometimes is the only option

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