

E-learning – A Plan for Success, By Mary M. Krieg, PhD, RNC, President, Quality Management Consultants, Inc. ©

Improving access to education through the use of E-learning offers many benefits. Flexibility for working individuals, as well as autonomy, collaboration, and critical thinking are benefits derived from the use of E-learning (Palloff & Pratt, 2003). E-learning is interactive, engaging the learner much more than the present-day passive lecture methods. Information changes so rapidly that information is needed in an instant. In offering technology-based learning programs, learners are better prepared to face the challenges ahead. To achieve success, desired learning outcomes, and learner needs must be fully understood. Educators must do the following:

Energize and empower the learner

Facilitate knowledge acquisition

Encourage self-direction

Collaborate with their peers (Conrad and Donaldson, 2004)

Develop critical thinking skills

E-learning can challenge the status quo and provide an opportunity to give up the traditional teacher-centered role and move to a more learner-centered approach. The changing concept of the instructor role to that of facilitator opens a whole different perspective to teaching (Halstead & Coudret, 2000). The increased intellectual interaction between peers and instructors that E-learning brings is truly a positive aspect of the process. This type of professional socialization provides a synthesis of constructionist perspective and theoretical knowledge. It changes perspective.

Some learners experience barriers that could be addressed through the proper use of E-learning (Bristol 2005). E-learning can reach learners who would otherwise not be able to participate because of geographic and time constraints (Bristol 2006). Online courses may open educational opportunities, provided learners have a computer with internet access.

Additional advantages of e-learning include a greater variety of programs and courses, lower total costs, a more comfortable learning environment, convenience and flexibility, work and family balance, enhanced focus and concentration in a quiet environment, professional improvement, savings on transportation, time and costs, as well as enhanced computer skills

Continuous Evaluation

Educators must determine that the E-learning program meets the same high standards present in traditional formats. Outcomes should be well documented and followed throughout implementation.

Conclusions:

With e-learning participants must be flexible and willing to try new things and make adjustments as the process unfolds. Having an open optimistic mind is essential, as learning outcomes are attainable with an E-learning environment.

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