

EDTC 7330 Final Project Reflective Statement

The Project

The overall goal of this project was to choose whether to complete a research paper or a research proposal on a topic directly related to distance learning administration. I chose to write a research paper on the topic of how online learning no longer follows this quasi-permanent absence of group learning. I wanted to look into how collaborative online learning has become. I highlighted the benefits and tackled some of the myths of online learning in regards to online learning not being as social as traditional learning.

Project Development

One of the first things that struck me was on page three of the Shelton and Saltsman text (2005) that was required for this course. I realize that Desmond Keegan's formal definition is quite old (1996), but I still disagree with the last bullet point which states that online learning fosters a quasi-permanent absence of group learning. From my personal experience, I do not find that there is a quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the length of the learning phase. I do not view my online education as individual learning. I believe that collaboration and communication in distance education has excelled in delivery, content, and purpose over the last few years or even the last decade, to where I feel part of a group or a class. One actual advantage of feeling and being part of an online distance education group is that I do not have to wait to be called on. All ideas that want to be presented can be presented in the format in which our classes are taught. Shy students or students with language barriers can benefit from online group collaboration and communication more than in a classroom and therefor feel included in the group. Debates or discussions can last a lot longer than a class period, allowing students to learn more from other students and their views that are presented.

This project consisted of four phases. First, we had to develop a topic and present a proposal. Second, we had to write a brief plan of action with a timeline for how we intended to complete our project. Third, we had to submit an annotated bibliography. Lastly, we had to submit our final paper.

Professional Goals and Objectives

My decision to write about this topic was pretty much set in stone after I attended a panel at the North Carolina Museum of Art on the Future of Learning. One thing that was presented was about how the NC university system wants more money so they can build more buildings. The UNC board always comes back with "why"? Education is changing with more and more students taking all online classes. The panel member's response was that online learning lacks the social aspect of learning. I really wanted to stand up and disagree, but I needed to formulate my argument and I did not have the time. Then, I started thinking about how maybe he was talking about being social physically - as in another warm body or being able to stand next to the same piece of art and talk about it face to face. I can understand his point, but I do not think it is a major disadvantage to online learning. It certainly does not make online learning quasi-individual by not having it. The way online classes are built can distinguish online learning from being collaborative and social or more of independent studies - like I feel community college courses "taught" online are set up. It is all in the management, design, and delivery of the instruction and the ways to implement and use what has been learned. I also feel the diversity of classmates' backgrounds and experiences are also learning tools for me as well as other students. By keeping all of this in mind, I can excel in my current place of work at North Carolina Virtual Public School because group interaction and work is an essential part of a child's identity. I can

ensure that group components are included in each content module of each course that is offered in our virtual learning environment for sixth through twelfth grade students in North Carolina.

References

1. Shelton, K., & Saltsman, G. (2005). *An Administrator's Guide to Online Education*. Greenwich, CT: IAP-Information