Pros and Cons

Advantages of Online Tutoring Platform

**1. Flexibility and convenience**

With online tutoring platform, instructors and students are able to access the content at any time from any place. With this flexibility, the platform increases the availability of learning environment for students who are constraint to attend on-site learning [1]. According to the survey of University of Illinois at Chicago Masters of Health Profession Education Program in [2], online learning allows their students to participate in the Master’s program, which would have been prohibited if not because of online courses due to personal circumstances. For instance, some of the factor that may constraint learners from attending on-site learning are on-site programme are too far from home, work-related constraint such as employment and family demands such as childcare [2]. According to [3], economic pressure cause difficulty for learners to take break from work to attend university. It is clear that online courses provide greater availability to both students and instructors compared to traditional approach of onsite learning, primarily due to the the flexibility of course schedule and location. Furthermore, online learning enables instructors to handle more students as it is not limited by physical spaces and attention needed to be given to student. [1] also state that the learning quality in online learning environment is equivalent compared to face-to-face learning while handling more students.

**2. Cost effective**

Compared to traditional way of learning approach, online learning is more cost effective. In [3], the author mentioned that employers significantly reduce their training cost with online courses, especially when remote locations are involved. Furthermore, it is stated that since online learning platform allow learners to learn remotely, employers found that employees can spent more time in the office, thus lead to an increase of productivity and lower management cost, while employees continually improve their skills and knowledges through online tutoring platform. In a survey carry out by University of Illinois [2], some students prefer learning online due to the lower tuition fees and avoidance of expenses related to commute and accommodation. From a financial standpoint, learning online is cost less compared to traditional face-to-face education approach. From an investigation in Nigeria [4], the result concluded that online learning institutions are cost-effective, considering it establish a general framework in the education system. While the initial stage of creating an online course is costly, [4] stated that it is steadily cheaper due to economies of scale. Additionally, creating and distributing educational content online is also more cost efficient in online learning platform [1]. Online learning platform utilizing the latest technology is able to provide synchronous audio and video interaction to the learners. This allow online tutoring platform accommodate scheduling demands without any costs incurred from new facilities [5]. To conclude, the cost of distribution and creation of online course is more cost effective in long term for online tutoring platform compared to the traditional approach.

**Disadvantages:**

**1. Asynchronous communication environment**

In an online learning environment, the tutors or students may come in a different background than what we are used to. Hence, students may not completely understand what the other party is saying and discussion can be quite difficulty [2]. People from different country may use different vocabulary for a similar meaning or similar word for a different meaning. Besides, in an online discussion, students may lose contextual cues, inflection in voice, pauses and body languages [2]. This may lead to an ineffective collaboration that may hinder the progress in completing group projects. For some students [2], they felt like the lack of face-to-face interactions is hindering them from building relationship hence contributing to adverse effect on learning, completing tasks and satisfaction. [3] stated that an asynchronous communication environment is preventing an immediate discussion to get going. Students may feel the need to get immediate response to their questions while they are motivated. This is because students may originate from time zone hence it may be difficulty to get everyone online at the same time.

**2. Technical issues**

With online tutoring platform, individuals learning is coming from different country and time zone, meaning there is a difference in the hardware and network. According to the survey of University of Illinois at Chicago Masters of Health Profession Education Program in [2], students reported that the common problems are related to personal technical issues such as slow internet speeds or unavailable internet access, older computer hardware and insufficient computer skills. While facing these technical issues, students may be left frustrated and demotivated to continue learning. Besides, [2] students also complain online tutoring website with unintuitive functions, complicated navigation, the number of board sites and discussion area used and difficulty in tracking progress. This problem lies entirely on the platform, some platform may not follow design guidelines and sacrifice intuitiveness for aesthetically pleasing designs. Some platform may not even provide accessibility features to help people with disabilities to use the platform more easily. Lastly, students also faced difficulties in tracking, viewing and responding to long, complex discussion threads [2]. This is because the information on the bulletin board is not laid out in order.

**References:**

[1] Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., & Jones, K., “Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies”, *US Department of Education*, 2009

[2] Dyrbye, L., Cumyn, A., Day, H., & Heflin, M., “A qualitative study of physicians’ experiences with online learning in a masters degree program: Benefits, challenges, and proposed solutions”, *Medical teacher*, *31*(2), e40-e46, 2009.

[3] Appana, S., “A review of benefits and limitations of online learning in the context of the student, the instructor, and the tenured faculty”,*International Journal on ELearning*, 7(1), 5, 2008.

[4] Ojo, D. O., & Olakulehin, F. K., “Attitudes and perceptions of students to open and distance learning in Nigeria”. *The international review of research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 7(1, (2006.

[5] Bartley, S. J., & Golek, J. H., Evaluating the cost effectiveness of online and face-to-face instruction. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, *7*(4), 2004.

*A qualitative study of physicians’ experiences with online learning in a masters degree program: Benefits, challenges, and proposed solutions* <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01421590802366129>