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]. 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.

- Cost Effective

- tuition was lower and expenses related to travel and lodging could be avoided

- assembling and disseminating instructional content more cost-efficiently, or

(From *A qualitative study of physicians’ experiences with online learning in a masters degree program: Benefits, challenges, and proposed solutions)*

**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:

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[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.

*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>