

Annotated Bibliographies of articles relating to graduate online education

Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2004, November). *Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States*. Needham, MA, USA: The Sloan Consortium.

This research report was conducted by Allen and Seaman in order to assess fundamental concepts such as quality and the extensiveness of online education within the United States. Although geographically specific, this report demonstrates the unrelenting growth of online education, particularly in large universities (i.e. those with more than an enrollment of 15,000). The data was gathered by surveying Chief Academic Officers from over 2,500 colleges and universities. Through their extensive review of quantitative data, Allen and Seaman answer questions pertaining to quality, demand, and students' perceptions of online education. This carefully crafted report assists in identifying factors considered to be high-quality in online programs. It also demonstrates the continual need for online education.

Lieblein, E. (2001). Critical factors for successful delivery of online programs. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 3(3), 161-174.

Lieblein uses his 10 years of administrative experience in online education to outline factors that will facilitate the successful delivery of online programs. Drawing from his own programs' experiences, the author details 12 factors he feels are critical in an online program: issues of on-campus visits by online students, approaches to pedagogy, timing in respect to the chronology of how a course should work (e.g. response times by faculty to discussion questions), synchronous versus asynchronous methods, the threaded discussion board, assignment submissions, learning resources, administrative and technical support, faculty issues, the role of technology, measurement of student performance, and finally copyright protection and ownership in respect to materials created by faculty. Within each category, the author further elaborates on his

points by drawing from experience and research. This article helps in establishing a baseline from which foundations of successful (i.e. quality) online programs can be built.

Mariasingam, M., & Hanna, D. (2006). Benchmarking quality in online degree programs: Status and prospects. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, IX(III)*. (Available from <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/fall93/mariasingam93.htm>)

This article is of particular interest to those seeking a working construct of quality. Mariasingam and Hanna transcend conventional arguments of quality by being one of the first to help define quality in terms of online education. In their article, the authors provide a multiple dimension concept of quality followed by a well thought-out explanation of the various levels and measurements of quality. They then provide an extremely detailed outline of what they feel is successful benchmarking of online degree programs found in all levels of institutions. The article closes by acknowledging that further research is needed in the field of benchmarking quality in online programs.

McGorry, S. (2003). Measuring quality in online programs. *The Internet and Higher Education, 6(2)*, 159-177.

In *Measuring quality in online programs*, McGorry seeks to be the first in establishing a model from which quality and learning in online courses in respect to issues of flexibility, responsiveness, interaction, student learning, technical support, technology, and student satisfaction can be measured. The author conducted a questions analysis in efforts to develop a model to evaluate quality in online programs, to test the reliability and validity of the model, and provide recommendations for further research in quality in online learning. No hypotheses were given. Results yielded that most questions retained a high initial reliability. At the same time, the author found that the questionnaire may prove to have a higher rate of reliability should some of the questions be deleted from the survey. The author concludes the article by stating additional research is needed in order to strengthen this form of quality assessment. She also gives recommendations

on what kind of research should be conducted. This article serves as the beginnings of a strong questionnaire from which quality in online learning can be assessed.

Mullen, G., & Tallent-Runnels, M. (2006). Student outcomes and perceptions of instructors' demands and support in online and traditional classrooms. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 9(4), 257-266.

In this article, Mullen and Runnels interviewed graduate students in efforts to obtain their perceptions of instructors' demands in online classes compared to traditional face-to-face classes. 187 graduate students were interviewed. The results yielded a significant difference between instructor affective support in an online environment and a traditional classroom. Further, the article gives readers an interesting perspective into the minds of graduate students. In this study, it was shown that the perception of faculty demands is directly correlated with students' motivation, satisfaction, and learning. If faculty are more demanding, then students' motivation, satisfaction, and learning decrease, and vice-versa. However, the more supportive faculty were, the more satisfaction was experienced by students. This article provides faculty with an understanding of how important it is to establish a balance between demand and support in their classes, particularly in the online arena.

Reeves, C., & Bednar, D. (1994). Defining Quality: Alternatives and implications. *The Academy of Management Review*, 19(3), 419-445.

Defining Quality: Alternatives and implications is an article that clearly and adequately addresses the problems in defining quality. In this article, Reeves and Bednar discuss the roots of quality in respect to excellence, conformance to specifications, meeting and/or exceeding customers' expectations. Strengths and weaknesses of each definition are critically reviewed. The authors close by acknowledging the difficulties in ascribing quality a sole definition.

Truluck, J. (2007). Establishing a Mentoring Plan for Improving Retention in Online Graduate Degree Programs. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, X(1).

In *Establishing a Mentoring Plan for Improving Retention in Online Graduate Degree Programs*, Truluck contends that student retention is becoming increasingly important in online education. The author furthers that retaining enrollment in online courses is extremely difficult because of the uncountable circumstances that can occur which will prohibit students from continuing on. Needless to say, this situation is not without a sense of irony. Those factors (e.g. having a family, accessibility, etc.) that attract students to online education can be the very factors that force them to quit their online programs. The author provides her readers with 9 ways in which to increase student retention: offering the program asynchronously rather than synchronously, structuring the program in a cohort-based way, telephoning each student prior to the beginning of the program, using tools to establish an instructional relationship, requiring coordinators to teach the first courses of the programs, opening a virtual coffee shop in each course, establishing virtual office hours, telephoning students mid-semester, and conducting exit interviews. Truluck closes the article by reiterating the most salient points from each section of her proposed retention program. This article serves as a wonderful example of how to curb the high amount of online “drop-outs”. It also furthers the need for better quality online programs that can retain their students longer and keep them more satisfied.

Young, A., & Norgard, C. (2006). Assessing the quality of online courses from the students' perspective. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 9(2), 107-115.

This article serves the purpose of creating a quality online program by using students' perceptions in the decision-making process. Young and Norgard gathered data from 233 completed end-of-course surveys. They yielded several interesting results which included convenience as the number one reason students take online courses. Another result showed that 92% of students prefer a consistent structure from which all online classes be built. In other words, all online courses should be set up similarly (e.g. asynchronous discussion boards, similar grading structures, etc.). The authors concluded the article by recommending further research in refining the survey and alluding to conducting a survey of how faculty and their perceptions can also be used in creating quality online courses.