

Title – Online TESOL Education

Paper

Even though online TESOL education has been around for less than two decades, it has experienced consistent growth. Online TESOL programs are emerging from all corners of the world due to the increased demand for English language teacher training; the demand for English teacher education is evident in communicative mediums such as online discussion forums, topics in conferences, job listings, and buzz among foreigners teaching English as a second or foreign language. Thus, with increased demand comes the increase in questions about online TESOL education. Questions such as, “*Are all online TESOL programs structured the same? Is online TESOL education the same as distance TESOL education? How does a person decide in which program to enroll?*” are often asked by prospective students. In this article, answers are offered in hopes of allaying any concerns experienced by those seeking to further their education in TESOL.

Online TESOL programs are not structured the same. There are several different variations of Online TESOL education: web-facilitated programs, hybrid programs, and online programs (Allen and Seaman, 2007). Web-facilitated programs utilize mediums such as Blackboard (a web-based program through which online courses are conducted) to deliver content. These programs still utilize face-to-face discussion as a means to facilitate learning. However, assignments, syllabi, and other pertinent materials are posted on the Internet for students to download. Hybrid programs have most of the program’s components online; there is very little required in terms of face-to-face interaction. Online programs do not require any face-to-face student-teacher interaction; the entire program is conducted online. Thus, the question one must ask himself is, “which program will suit me the best?” Determining the type of graduate TESOL program one will enroll in is important; it is imperative that prospective students understand the differences between programs that are offered completely online and those that are offered partially online.

There is a common misconception that online education is the same as distance education and can therefore be used interchangeably. On the contrary, online education is subsumed by distance education; not vice versa. Distance education is defined as “formal instruction in which a majority of the teaching occurs while educator and learner are at a distance from one another”

(Verduin & Clark, 1991, p. 19). Online education is defined as “courses provided online that constitute at least 80% of material being delivered online” (Allen & Seaman, 2007).

The final and most quintessential question is, “How do I know if a program is right for me?” The answer is quite complex and can easily take up several pages, but in short, it all depends. Prospective students need to decide what is most important to them, for instance, say a student wants to go to The United States and teach English as a second language. In The U.S., accreditation is extremely important. Therefore, they may want to enroll in a program that is not only based in the U.S., but also at a university that is accredited by one of the seven regional accrediting bodies in the United States. Accreditation, in this particular region of the world, is considered a valid measurement of quality.

Additionally and as aforementioned, there are several different types of graduate degree programs available in TESOL. Do prospective students want to enroll in a brick and mortar institution or do they want to further their TESOL education through an institution that is based solely online? Do they care if they are required to attend the university at some point of the program (as found in hybrid programs) or do they want to complete the program completely online? Although just a few examples of myriad questions that should be considered when determining one’s future course, these questions need to be asked and answered by prospective students. Further, future program applicants should not rely on conjecture found in discussion boards, biasness given by strangers, or even friends’ advice. Rather, those looking to complete a graduate degree program in TESOL should carry out their own research in order to find answers to their questions. In the end, it is the future applicant that will be investing time and money in their education, not an anonymous person over the Internet, not a friend, and not an acquaintance.

The previously addressed questions are just an introduction to the complexities prospective applicants experience when searching for a graduate degree program in TESOL, especially when looking for a distance education program in TESOL. With hard work, diligence, and a critical analysis of the facts, prospective applicants can find answers and ultimately enroll in a program that suits their needs.

Works Cited

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Biography

Rafael Sabio is an assistant professor at Yonsei University and has been teaching English in South Korea for almost 4 years. He is currently serving as Vice-President of the KOTESOL Gangwondo chapter. Rafael has published in several different mediums including academic journals and national newspapers. Along with 4 of his colleagues, Rafael presented at the 2008 TESOL conference in New York on online TESOL education, communities of practice within a graduate online TESOL program, and qualities that exemplify a high-quality online graduate TESOL program. Rafael has also made several presentations on using authentic materials in classrooms in KOTESOL meetings throughout South Korea and recently at a symposium in Cheongju. His main interests lie in online TESOL education and creating practical lesson plans. During his free time, Rafael enjoys reading and spending time with his wife.



