

## Improving online learning: Student perceptions of useful and challenging characteristics

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### Abstract

Online courses and programs continue to grow in higher education settings. Students are increasingly demanding online access, and universities and colleges are working to meet the demands. Yet many questions remain re: the viability and veracity of online learning, particularly from the learner perspective. The purpose of this study was to gain insights into learners' perceptions of online learning. Seventy-six (76) graduate students were surveyed to identify helpful components and perceived challenges based on their online learning experiences. Results of the study indicated that most learners agreed that course design, learner motivation, time management, and comfortableness with online technologies impact the success of an online learning experience. Participants indicated that technical problems, a perceived lack of sense of community, time constraints, and the difficulty in understanding the objectives of the online courses as challenges. Suggestions for addressing the challenges are provided.

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*Keywords:* Student perceptions; Online learning; Implication strategies

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### 1. Introduction

What makes a learner successful in an online environment? What creates barriers or challenges? Answers to these questions, among others, gain increasing importance as Internet technologies become more readily available and accessible, in formal and informal contexts (Hofmann, 2002). By the year 1997, there were more than 762 institutions in the United States alone that offered courses at a distance (Gubernick and Ebeling, 1997, as cited in Cereijo, Young, & Wilhelm, 1999). The Making the Virtual

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# Improving Online Learning Student Perceptions Of Useful

**L Darling-Hammond**



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