

Key Findings

Much of the literature about online learning highlights its flexibility and unique limitations. However, research does not identify barriers to online learning that exist for those who cannot type or write well-structured sentences and paragraphs. This is important because online learning relies heavily upon writing and keying emails and messages. By considering the needs of learners with limited writing and computer skills, we can create a more inclusive learning environment at any level.

Digital immigrants – those who did not grow up with the internet – must become adept at participating in online learning as more and more colleges, universities, and corporations are shifting toward this approach to learning, training, and development.

Recent Census data reports that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are lagging behind in the following areas:

- 15.7 % of those aged 25-64 do not have high school certification compared to 11.5% nationally 8% of those aged 25-34 do not have high school certification which is about the same as the national average of 8.7 percent
- 17.2% of those aged 45-54 do not have high school certification
- 23.75 of those aged 55-64 do not have high school certification (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016).

The literature indicates that lack of social interaction is the often-repeated barrier for students who study online. Even articles that focus on the role of faculty, and course design, all indicate that social interaction is key to success. While real time, or synchronous interaction is

often beneficial in providing social interaction, it is also a hindrance if it impedes upon the flexibility of studying online.

Understanding that adults bring a lot to the classroom can be humbling for teachers of adults; however, it should be welcomed. Students should know their past experiences are valuable and worthwhile to themselves, to their classmates, and faculty.

Ultimately, this study aims to identify barriers for learners with limited writing and computer skills so that they may further their education from their own homes via online learning.

Summary

Through the literature review, we have examined some of the most common and recurring themes that describe the barriers to online learning. The literature discusses barriers that exist for the non-traditional student who is becoming more prevalent in the student population of many colleges and universities. There is very little in the literature that deals with how the lack of key literacy skills affect the online learner, impairing their success.