

How Does Online Education Compare to On-Campus with Respect to Skills Attainment Required for Employment in The Sphere of Business and Management of The Private and Public Sectors?

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ABSTRACTS

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to emphasize the requirement of online education as compared with on-campus education for employability skills attainment in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors. The increase in virtual education has provided the opportunity and impetus for the Guyanese government to invest in online education (Guyana Online Academy of Learning-GOAL) for the development of employability skills.

Method: The use of secondary qualitative data from different articles and websites relevant to Guyana has been considered in this study in our data collection method. The data was analyzed using the content analysis technique.

Findings: The study findings suggested that the increasing technological trend globally has provided significant attention to online learning. Many programs have been introduced, specifically to aim at increasing the technical skills of individuals. However, soft skills are of greater significance in today's world. The focus on virtual learning environment resultantly has also increased with respect to soft skills in Guyana. Therefore, the analysis concluded that online education is also required along with on-campus education to increase the soft skills of the youths to make them more employable in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors.

Recommendations: It is recommended that the Guyanese government increase its focus on soft skills development through both online and on-campus contexts. The universities are also advised to focus on soft skills education more through these settings.

Keywords- Online learning, on-campus learning, soft skills, employment skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

Technology advancement has caused a rapid transformation in the educational landscape. A more accessible and open learning environment has lately emerged as online learning has grown in popularity (Butcher, 2015). It is a passionately discussed topic among educators and students whether online education can rival on-campus education, especially in the sphere of business and management of the private and public

sectors where practical skills are highly valued. As the need for skilled professionals grows, it is crucial to evaluate the extent to which online education prepares students for careers in business and management (McMurray et al., 2016). In this study, the ability to acquire the skills required for employment in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors is studied between on-campus and online education. Due to the growing cost of higher education and the growth of remote jobs, online learning has

become a popular option for many students. Meyer et al. (2015) implied that it has still to be shown if online learning can produce the same level of skill development as on-campus learning, particularly in terms of the practical skills that are highly prized in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors.

This study seeks to address this question by comparing the similarities and differences between on-campus and online education in terms of skill acquisition. By contrasting the learning outcomes of online and on-campus education, this study aims to provide light on the effectiveness of online education in preparing students for careers in sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors. As the world becomes more interconnected and technology advances, it is essential to understand how online education influences the development of skills in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors. Both teachers and students will gain from the research's findings as they navigate the changing higher education landscape and work to build the skills required to succeed in the dynamic sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

E-learning or online education has been part of normal lives during the Covid-19 period in most countries. The individuals were forced to stay at home and hence this led educational institutions to shift towards online education (Maatuk et al., 2022). Therefore, there has been increasing research on online education and its effectiveness for students. It has massively attracted the attention of researchers, academicians and policymakers. Online education has also been researched to evaluate its importance and impact on the development of employability skills in the sphere of business and management of the public and private sectors.

According to Singh and Singh (2017), e-learning plays an important part in being the classroom teaching tool and self-study platform for the development of skills due to the rapid growth of digital technology and the increasing number of virtual learning centres that are providing online degrees to students. The study evaluated the specific e-learning factors for developing job-specific skills. The statistical analysis outcomes indicated that flexibility in E-learning is indicated to be the major factor that develops job-specific skills in the students.

Moreover, the study of Beraza (2018) indicated that the fourth industrial revolution is the phase that indicates current and future developments for the technology use and usability capable to transform the workplace. However, the impact that these developments

have on the employment opportunities of graduates has been unclear, the fourth industrial revolution will probably provide new job opportunities and unemployment in an equal proportion. Furthermore, it is also seemingly impacting mostly low-skilled and lower-educated individuals. However, the study of Chui et al. (2016) indicated that none of the sector or employment classes will be excluded from the fourth industrial revolution impact which tends to imply positive for the current and future graduate students.

The study of Teng et al. (2019) further indicated that the industrial revolution changed the requirement of employability skills from that of the technically focused towards the social and soft skills. Hence, the study implied that educational institutes are more required to enhance the soft skills in the students as compared to the hard skills. The students must be capable to interact, communicate and coordinate with others. The social interaction and the self-confidence of the students must be encouraged to make them skillful for the current employment conditions. In this regard, the effectiveness of online education is the arguable aspect to develop the required soft skills for employability.

The research of Brennan et al. (2023) provided that the pandemic led institutions to change from on-campus to online mode. The disruption has provided a significant challenge for acquiring the hard and soft skills of the students. The higher mobility of the employees has increased the focus on developing soft skills, specifically the skills which can build employability such as creativity, leadership, innovation, communication, time management, self-motivation and teamwork. The study findings have implied that online classes have been effective in building soft skills. It has been indicated that online learning tends to increase the development of soft skills.

The study by Barak et al. (2016) evaluated the self-regulation skills needed for online learning and attributed the cognitive transfer of the online and on-campus students. The study involved undergraduate students' group that studied similar courses but in a different context such as online learning and on-campus. The study used an online survey and interviews for collecting the data which indicated that cognitive strategies and regulations are important for the success of online learning. It has further reflected that online students have been highly aware of learning and information processing as compared to their on-campus peers. Online students have provided significant planning, controlling and evaluation skills for comprehensive learning while on-campus students indicated limited communication skills being the barrier to distance learning.

Lindsey and Rice (2015) further compared the interpersonal competencies of online students with those

of traditional students by analyzing the emotional intelligence from the Situational Test of Emotional Management (STEM). The study evaluated the relationship between online courses and the student's EI capabilities. The study found that students that have completed at least one online course tend to have a significantly higher score on the STEM survey. Therefore, it indicates that online learning can help in establishing soft skills.

Although the studies conducted to provide an extensive evaluation of the impact of online learning on the employability skills of the students, there are certain gaps found in the literature related to the comparison of online classes with on-campus in providing students with employability skills. The literature does not provide extensive evidence to compare both these modes since not many studies have been conducted on the phenomenon. However, considering the increasing industrial revolution shifting focus to soft skills and increasing trend of online classes provide significance to study the comparison of both these modes for their effectiveness to attain skills related to the employment in sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The task follows a qualitative research design that is based on the expression of meaning through words and the collection of results in non-standardized data that is required to be classified. Moreover, data used in a qualitative research design is based on the use of conceptualization. According to Tenny et al. (2022), qualitative research is referred to the type of research that provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Additionally, qualitative research contributes to the generation of hypotheses and further investigation and understanding of the acquired data. The application of the identified methodology is justified based on the study conducted by Paul and Jefferson (2020) in a similar context having an overarching purpose for the determination of the type of teaching method that proved more effective over the eight years. This allowed the researchers the achievement of desired study outcomes. This encouraged the researchers of this study to apply the same research design to ensure the achievement of effective outcomes.

3.2. Data Collection

Data collection for this study was based on the use of secondary sources that have been acquired based on the use of a variety of databases, including Google Scholar, Springer, and Frontier Journals. This was of relevance to Guyana and has been considered in this study for data collection. The inclusion/exclusion involved that the selected articles are required to have a

publishing date in the last five years, and they must be published in English, while all the articles published in other languages were excluded from the search. In addition to this, the articles were required to include information related to the comparison of online education to on-campus with respect to skills attainment required for employment in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors. Articles with any other information are considered irrelevant and excluded from the search. The keywords used included information, online education, on-campus education, skills attainment, employment, business and management of the private and public sectors.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis technique applied for this study is content analysis. This is justified as the utilization of content analysis for research purposes has been observed in a wide variety of research applications, such as in information and library science (ILS) (Krishnan and Kennedy, 2016). This has also been found to be justified based on the study conducted in a similar domain by Barak et al. (2017) that was aimed to identify the self-regulation skills that are necessary for online learning for the students that allows them the characterization of the cognitive transfer of on-campus and online students. The use of content analysis in the identified study allowed the researchers the achievement of effective outcomes. This also encouraged the researchers to use content analysis in their study as it may also assist them in the achievement of enhanced outcomes.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Guyana has been focusing on online education for many years with its focus on online learning platforms, online university education, and professional certifications. Figure 1 below shows the online education trend in the different markets in Guyana for the years 2017 to 2022 with the forecasted value till 2027. It shows that online education in Guyana has been increasing indicating their focus on e-learning. Furthermore, it is indicated that most of the revenues are generated from online university education which indicates a higher proportion of individuals prefer online education rather than on-campus education. The revenues from online education have been forecasted to arrive at US\$166.60 billion by 2023. It further indicated the revenues expect showing an annual growth rate of around 9.37% which results in the forecasted market volume of around US\$238.4 billion by the period 2027. The largest segment of online university education has seen a projection of a market volume of around US\$103.80 billion in 2023 (Statista, 2023). It indicates the higher focus of Guyana on online education as compared to on-campus learning.

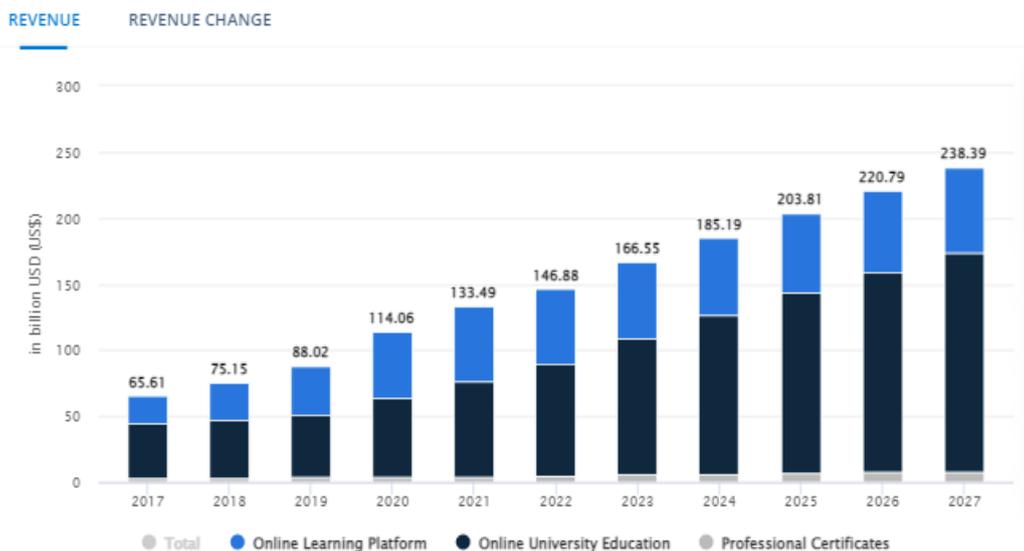


Figure 1: Online Education in Guyana

Source: Statista (2023).

The figure below further indicates the number of students that have been enrolled in Guyanese public schools by their education level. It indicates that most of the students are enrolled in the nursery and general secondary level of education. There are very few

students enrolled in the technical and vocational levels of education (Stone et al., 2021). There are very few students who pursue their studies to a higher level and a proportion of the individuals are focused on technical education.

Level	Number of students
Nursery	26,595
Primary	8,115
Secondary department of primary	5,398
General secondary	56,635
TVET	3,539
Tertiary	7,800
Total	181,622

Figure 2: Number of students in Guyanese public schools by educational level, 2017

Source: Stone et al. (2021)

The government of Guyana has been increasingly focusing on the education and skill attainment of individuals. It has introduced several initiatives for fostering the education and skills of Guyanese individuals. The increase in virtual education has been expected soon and the Ministry of Education in Guyana has called for the training of one thousand teachers simultaneously procuring around one thousand devices to supplement the effort. The initiative with a cost of around GYD. 174 million has been executed via the collaborative effort with the ministry, United Nations Children’s Fund, and Global Partnership for Education. Information and communication technology (ICT) has

been the focus of the Guyanese government for increasing the effectiveness of the education sector (Ramnarine, 2021). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has provided a series of ICT strategies for promoting higher efficiency, supporting teaching and learning activities at different levels. These strategies have provided strong goals to increase learning from the increasing ICT access, training and support activities (Bleeker and Crowder, 2022). Moreover, it has launched the SKYE project which is aimed at meeting the objective by working with youth directly and by developing structural support. The initiative involves the training of the youth in the form of a formal training and

mentorship program developed for increasing life and employment skills. Youth has been engaged with the coach for mentoring and guiding them from the livelihood plan development. Youths are enrolled in soft skills training that is aimed to build their capabilities to apply for the job, construct the resume, prepare for the interview and interact with the supervisors and managers properly (USAID, 2023).

The figure below obtained from the USAID (2023) indicated the development of the skills of the individuals in Guyana. It has indicated that the students have reported an increase in their confidence in their employability skills. It has provided that online education has been effective in providing employability skills such as job search, CV writing, career planning, interaction and communication to the youth.

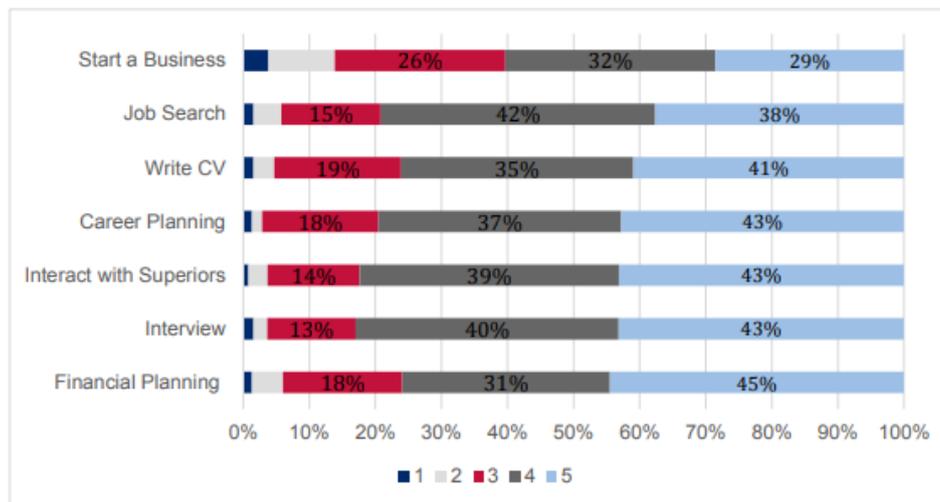


Figure 3: Self-Reported Confidence in Employment Skills

Source: USAID (2023)

Based on the above analysis conducted, it is highlighted that the increasing technological trend around the world has also increased the focus of the Guyanese government toward online learning. It has focused on many programs that are aimed to increase the technical skills of individuals. However, soft skills are of greater significance in today’s world. The focus on virtual learning environment resultantly has also increased with respect to soft skills in Guyana. Therefore, the analysis concluded that online education is also required along with on-campus education to increase the soft skills of the youths to make them more employable in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of the study was to emphasize the requirement of online education as compared with on-campus education for employability skills attainment in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors. The increase in virtual education has also provided the opportunity and impetus to the Guyanese government to invest in online education (Guyana Online Academy of Learning-GOAL) for the development of employability skills. The use of secondary qualitative data from different articles and websites relevant to Guyana has been considered in this

study to collect the data. The data was analyzed using the content analysis technique. The study findings suggested that the increasing technological trend globally has provided significant attention to online learning. Many programs have been introduced, specifically to aim at increasing the technical skills of individuals. However, soft skills are of greater significance in today’s world. The focus on virtual learning environment resultantly has also increased with respect to soft skills in Guyana. Therefore, the analysis concluded that online education is also required along with on-campus education to increase the soft skills of the youths to make them more employable in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors. Therefore, it is recommended that the Guyanese government increase its focus on soft skills development through both online and on-campus contexts. The universities are also advised to focus on soft skills education more through these settings.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

Although this research provides insightful information on how successful online education is when compared to on-campus education in terms of helping students acquire the skills required for employment in the sphere of business and management of the private and public sectors, several limitations need to be

considered. The material acquired relied on previously published papers, articles, and research because this study, to start, employed a secondary qualitative technique. As a result, it is impossible to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data, and the results may be biased as a result of the sources utilized. Another issue is that because this study only concentrates on the business and management of the private and public sectors, its findings could not apply to other academic sphere. Additionally, this study ignores any advice from business and management employers of the private and public sectors or professors and just considers the opinion of the students.

Future studies should compare the effectiveness of learning that takes place both online and on-campus using primary research methods like questionnaires or interviews. Researchers will be able to get data directly from instructors, companies, and students, therefore, leading to a more detailed understanding of the effectiveness of online learning. Future research should examine how networking, professional development, and socialization are impacted by online learning in higher education.

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