

What do Global Researchers Mean When They Say Online Learning?

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ABSTRACT

Apparently, 46 different things! This work in progress poster will present a visualization of the overtime growth of definitions of “Online Learning”. Through a systematic literature review of the past 25 years (1993-2018), we have discovered that 37 peer-reviewed publications defined online learning in 46 different ways. In this poster, we will present these definitions and results of content analysis on these definitions. Content analysis of these definitions revealed 18 different key terms are used to define online learning. We also present temporal and global trends in the use of these key elements while defining Online Learning. We will discuss the similarities and differences in these definitions and elucidate a concept map about essential elements in the definitions of online learning. It is important to understand the growth of the concept of online learning because of the confusion that arises because of a lack of agreement on what constitutes online learning. As is evident from this research, a variety of terms are used to describe teaching and learning that occurs in a nontraditional physical classroom setting. The overlapping definitions, concepts, elements and inconsistent use of terminology causes confusion and leads to a continuation of unsure descriptive narratives from global researchers, further muddying the waters.