

## **STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON DISTANT AND TRADITIONAL LEARNING IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

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Revolutionary chapter of education derived through merging the new advancing technologies with education, which is the distant or online learning. Distance or online learning is form of education in which the foundation principle includes physical separation of teachers and students throughout the learning process and the use of various technologies to facilitate interaction between teacher and student, student and students, student and course content, student and interface. Due to this fact, the teaching and learning process is not bounded to specifically dedicated places like universities and students have countless opportunities to gather much more knowledge. Since the online learning came to life not long ago, it is a completely new experience to most of the students and teachers. The basis of traditional learning consists of face-to-face interaction in a classroom setting with teachers and the learners in which most students are accustomed to. This article analyses the way how students perceive this new mode of education through a psychological perspective while comparing with the traditional learning. In psychological terms perception is defined as the way sensory information is organized, deciphered, and consciously experienced. Based on the above fact, this article explores what kind of materials used in distance or online learning is perceived better from the students' perspective.

An anonymous closed survey was conducted to get an insight into the students' viewpoint. 110 university students took part in the survey which consisted of 19 questions. Among 110 students who participated in the survey, majority (70 %) attended the universities in Belarus which consisted of 65 local students and 12 international students (7 – Sri Lankans, 2 – Nigerians, 1 Egyptian, 1 Moroccan and 1 Uzbek), 25.5 % attended the universities in Sri Lanka which consisted of 27 local students, 2.7 % attended the universities in France which consisted of 3 international students (3 – Sri Lankans), 0.9 % attended the universities in Australia which consisted of 1 international student (Sri Lankan) and 0.9 % attended the universities in United Kingdom which consisted of 1 international student (Sri Lankan). Out of the students participated in the survey, 32 students have obtained both online education and traditional education while 67 students have obtained only traditional learning and 11 students have only obtained online education. Furthermore, considering the majors followed by the participants, majority proceeded by 77 students who study Engineering as their major, 18 following Computer Science, 3 following Architecture, 3 following Medicine, 2 following Physics, 2 following Economics, 1 following Business Management, 1 following Business Administration, 1 following Hospitality, 1 following Business and Finance and 1 following Geneticist.

When conducting the survey, the participants were allowed to convey their outlook on how do they feel about the online education, disregarding the mode or modes of education they have received. Remarkably almost half of the participants (47.3 %) convey that they are comfortable in distance or online education compared to traditional education (68.2 %). Also, the percentage of students who feel that they get distracted the most in traditional learning is 49.1 % while the students who feel that they get distracted the most in online education is 50.9 %. Based on the results, major reasons for preference of online learning compared to traditional learning are time and space flexibility, time saving due to not having to commute from home/hostel to the university, availability of additional time for self-learning and exams being easier in online mode. Considering the perception of study materials used in online education, video materials have the best perception overall, along with the presentations (52.7 %) given for reference. Video materials consisting of animation are well perceived (56.4 %) followed by video materials containing presentation along with audio (49.1 %) and video materials with live lecture (48.2 %) compared to the video materials incorporating the presentation with ability to see the lecturer (37.3 %) and video materials containing transcripts and additional materials (22.7 %). Aside from presentations, notes provided by the lecturer has a considerable acceptance as well. Anomalously, audio materials and audio materials comprising of transcripts and additional materials have a low perception rate compared to both video materials and the presentations. Synchronous method (23.6 %) where teachers and students meet online in a prearranged time for learning imitating the mode of the traditional class, is perceived better than the Asynchronous method (20.9 %) where synchronous sessions are not held while all the reference materials are stockpiled in a learning management system or in the internet. Turning towards the retention of the acquired learning materials, video materials are believed to be retained for a long time compared to both audio and reading materials provided in the online education. Taking into account the retention of audio materials, it is not that well perceived. The main obstacles faced during online education is working on a screen for a long time is tiresome and stressful, struggle to stay motivated, lack of face-to-face interaction, some concepts being hard to follow through and sense of isolation. But students feel that they to actively communicate electronically. Furthermore, both in distance or online learning and traditional learning, students get to clarify their doubts whenever required.

In conclusion, the main goal of this paper is to take an insight into the perception of students regarding the distance or online education and to present to higher education institutions some findings and insights that deserve consideration when implementing new reforms to improve distance learning to be more efficient and to collaborate advancing technologies to traditional learning to make it more perceptible. Identifying the mode of perception helps in better assimilation of knowledge and efficient working. Perception is a basic factor which stimulates self-motivation to acquire more knowledge.

## References

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