

A 360 Degree View of Web Based Learning

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: September 07, 2022</p> <p>Accepted: April 09, 2022</p> <p>Keywords: New Normal, Web Based Learning, And 360-Degree View</p> <p>DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6426334</p>	<p><i>This paper aims to explore the views of stakeholders about the web based learning. Data were collected from 201 students, 124 faculty members, 191 parents and 71 employers. Four separate summative content analyses were used for analyzing the data. Results indicated that students were happy for securing good marks during online exams and were not concerned about the learning opportunities. Whereas, majority of parents were concerned about the learning of their children. However, both parents and students consider online education to be the waste of money but consider it to be a good mechanism for continuing academic activities during the pandemic. Results also indicated that majority of faculty members were concerned about the learning of students. Plagiarism during online exam was the greatest concern of the faculty members. Lastly, it is also found that the potential employers consider online teaching methods to be inefficient and the quality of future labor supply was their biggest concern. Hence, the concept of zone of proximal development cannot be ignored while imparting education.</i></p>

Introduction

The world has not witnessed a pandemic as widespread as Covid-19 since the end of the last major pandemic over a century ago (Trilla, Trilla, & Daer, 2008). A century is certainly a long time especially when it comes to the human life, this certainly means that there must be a very few people who had witnessed the last major pandemic and are still alive today. Furthermore, if there are any people who had witnessed that, they must have been too young to get hold of the knowledge of whatever was happening at the time of that pandemic, and must be very old now to guide us about the ways of dealing with the situation that pandemics bring with them. Moreover, the world we are living in today is quite different than the world a century ago. For instance, the increased level of population density, the relative ease in traveling from one place to another and the emergence of big cities where people from different countries of the world come and work together have certainly reduced the chances of containing the disease and made the Covid-19 a truly global pandemic which has not spared any city, town or even the most remote areas of any country in the world. Hence, for the very first time in the recorded history, the mankind has faced such a lethal pandemic where nearly every individual has suffered the consequences of the pandemic. Therefore, governments across the globe have also desperately tried to prevent the pandemic; hence, the resultant lockdowns are also unprecedented (Koh, 2020).

However, another thing that distinguishes the overall situation during this pandemic is the technological advancements that the world has witnessed during the last one hundred years. Advancements in telecommunications have made it easy to interact with one another even without having remained physically present at a given place. This has certainly helped the people in carrying out some of their activities in the lockdowns. Since, the core of academic activities is the transfer of knowledge, which certainly depends on communication; therefore, educational institutions across the globe tried their best for remaining operational by going online during this pandemic. Hence, web-based learning became the primary sources of education during this pandemic. On one hand, web-based learning methods have provided the students and academics around the world with the much needed ability to remain connected with each other (Iqbal, 2020). However, there have been some concerns about the web based learning as well. Hence, there arises the question that what aspects of web-based learning needs immediate change for better functioning of the educational institutions and what aspects of the web-based learning should be continued once the pandemic is over. Hence, there requires a 360-degree analysis about the web-based learning so that concerns of each stake-holder can be addressed. Therefore, this research study seeks to explore the 360-degree view about the web-based learning. Furthermore, the study also seeks to develop instrument for measuring attitudes towards web-based learning.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This research study is based on the theoretical principles of Vygotsky's Theory of Learning. The theory suggests that the cognitive development of students is limited to a certain range at any given age and the full cognitive development requires social interaction. Furthermore, Vygotsky's Theory of Learning also acknowledges the concepts of the presence of Zone of Proximal Development which suggest that the social environment in which children learn has a massive impact on how they think and what they think about. In other words, the theory suggests that learning has certain limitations. There are certain elements of knowledge that humans can acquire without the help of anyone. Hence, this sort of ability to acquire knowledge is limited to a certain range. However, if somebody wants to learn beyond this range, he/she requires assistance of someone who is more knowledgeable and the extent to which he/she can learn with the help of this more knowledgeable other is called the zone of proximal development. Hence, one can argue that the zone of proximal development defines the extent to which an individual can learn with assistance. Furthermore, the concept of zone of proximal development also suggests that there are certain elements that individuals cannot learn without the assistance. Since, the present research study aims to have the 360 degree views about the web based learning which a mode of distant learning is without having any social interaction, therefore, the study aims to see that if learning is possible without having any social interaction. In other words, the study seeks to explore the possibility of learning if the principles of Vygotsky's Theory of Learning are violated. Hence, the present research study is based on the concepts of Vygotsky's Theory of Learning.

Covid-19

The world has witnessed a number of contagious diseases throughout the ages. The last major pandemic that the world has witnessed was over a century ago. However, one may suggest that Covid-19 is more lethal than any of the pandemics that the world has witnessed. Covid-19 first came to surface in the Chinese city of Wuhan (Koh, 2020), and soon it spread in a number of countries. The ease of movement of people from one place to another acted like a catalyst in spreading this contagious disease and very soon it became a truly global pandemic which has spread to nearly all corners of the world. The resultant lockdowns and the mandatory social distancing policies further deteriorated the situation and triggered an unprecedented economic crisis (König& Winkler, 2021). Hence, this has become one of the worst pandemics of all time and has affected the mankind in a way that none of the other pandemics in the human history has been able to affect.

Web Based Learning

Although, online learning is a relatively new phenomenon but is not an entirely new phenomenon (Moore, Dickson-Deane, &Galyen, 2011), and has been considered as a popular medium of learning for quite some time. Though, it seems difficult to gain learn in the absence of physical interaction, however, it has been made possible by the fact that advancements in telecommunications have made it easy to interact with one another even without having remained physically present at a given place. However, there has been a debate over the effectiveness of online teaching and learning ever since the inception of the concept of online teaching and learning (Ni, 2013). This is primarily because of the fact that people believe that there are certain things that cannot be learnt in the absence of proper social interaction as suggested by the concept of proximal development of Vygotsky's Theory of Learning.

However, there has been a renewed interest when it comes to the online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is because of the fact that strict and prolonged nature of lockdowns during the pandemic had made it almost impossible for the educational institutions across the globe to continue imparting education in a traditional manner. Furthermore, transfer of knowledge is the core element of academic activities, which certainly depends on communication, and the advancements of telecommunication have made it possible to communicate without being present at a particular place. Therefore, educational institutions across the globe tried their best to remain operational by going online during this pandemic. Hence, web-based learning became the primary sources of education during this pandemic (Wirani, &Manurung, 2020).

Stakeholders of the Educational Institutions

This section of present research study discusses the stakeholders of educational institutions. Following are the stakeholders of educational institutions:

Students

Mainardes, Alves, and Raposo (2010) argued that students are the stakeholders of educational institutions. In this regard, one can argue that the students are the primary stakeholders of the educational systems. It is because of the fact that the very reason of the existence of the educational bodies across the globe is to impart education to the students. Hence, students cannot be neglected while talking about the educational institutions (Bodycott, 2009; Zion, 2009).

Parents

Parental involvement is important in the academic activities of children (Avci, Ring, & Mitchell, 2015). This is primarily because of the fact that parents are one of the most important stakeholders. Parents are considered to be the important of academic activities of the children because of two reasons. The first reason is that parents are the ones who actually kick start the educational process for a child when he/she is unaware about the importance of education. The other important reason is that parents are the ones who actually pay for the academic activities of their children. Hence, one cannot deny the importance of parental involvement in the education of a student (Bodycott, 2009; Lui, Sin, Yang, Forlin, & Ho, 2015; Idu&Ojedapo, 2011; Su, Guo, & Wang, 2020).

Faculty Members

Krainer (2014) argued that teachers are the key stakeholders when it comes to the educational institutions. In this regard, one can argue that the primary task of educational institutions is to impart education to the students. They primarily do so with the help of faculty members. If we take the omnipotent view, teachers are directly responsible for the quality of educational institutions. On the other hand, if we talk about the symbolic view, even then the importance one cannot deny the fact that teachers are responsible for the quality of education at least to some extent, if not fully responsible. Hence, one cannot deny the importance of faculty members. Therefore, faculty members are the key stakeholders of when it comes to the educational sector (Idu&Ojedapo, 2011).

Potential Employers

Rodman, Biloslavo, and Bratož (2013) consider potential employers to be the stakeholders of the educational institutions. Small, Shacklock and Marchant (2018) argued that taking employers' perspective is important for educational institutions. It is because of the fact that the very success of the educational institution is often measured through the ability of its students to secure jobs in the industry. Furthermore, if we closely analyze the causes of spending money on the academic activities, the hope of getting a good job in the industry is the most important reason is to spend money on academic activities. In the other words, students or their parents pay for academic activities in the hope of getting paid back from the industry in the later stages of their lives. Hence, one cannot neglect the importance of potential employers while discussing the stakeholders of educational institutions (Sultana, 1997; Hesketh, 2000).

Methodology

Since, this research is an exploratory research and seeks to explore the 360-degree view about the web based learning, therefore, it was decided that data will be collected from all major stakeholders of the education sector. In this regard, it is decided that since students, faculty members, parents and employers are the major stakeholders of the educational institutions; therefore, data are collected from these four stakeholders of the educational institutions. Furthermore, since the study seeks to explore the dynamics of a relatively new phenomenon, therefore, qualitative data are collected in the hope of exploring all the expectations, concerns and other type of views about the web-based learning methods.

In this regard, open-ended questionnaires were developed for collecting the qualitative data. A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed among various stakeholders. From these 700 instruments, 250 instruments were distributed to the students, 150 instruments were distributed to the faculty members, 200 instruments were distributed to the parents of such students who are taking online classes, whereas, 100 instruments were distributed among the possible employers. From among these 700 instruments, 201 filled instruments were received from the students, 124 filled instruments were received from the faculty members, 191 filled instruments were received from the parents and 71 filled instruments were received from the employers. Hence, a total of 587 filled instruments were received from the total of 700 distributed instruments.

It should be noted that purposive sampling technique was employed as the sampling technique and the data were collected only from those students who have studied at-least one semester during the Coovid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, while collecting the data from the parents, it was made sure that the data were collected only from those parents who have sent and paid for at-least one of their children for studies during the pandemic. Whereas, while collecting the data from the faculty members, it was made sure that the data were collected only from those faculty members who have taught at-least one complete semester through online/ web-based systems during the pandemic. Similarly, while collecting the data from the potential employers, it was made sure that the data were collected only from those employers who have hired at-least three employees during the pandemic. This is done so to make sure that data were collected only from those respondents who are well aware about the dynamics of web-based learning mechanism.

For the purpose of analyzing the data, summative content analyses were applied on the data collect from each stakeholder separately. Hence, four separate summative content analyses were applied. Hence, in order to perform the summative content analysis, data collected from each group of stakeholders were analyzed separately. In this regard, the data were manually analyzed and in the first stage of the analysis, the direct word counts for the emerging themes were counted. However, it should be noted that if the analysis was concluded at this particular stage, it would have simply been considered as the quantification of the qualitative data and the analysis would have been considered as the manifest analysis rather than the summative content analysis. One of the issues related to manifest analysis is that it ignores the importance of indirect words or phrases which makes the researchers unable to identify the true magnitude of the phenomenon. Hence, in order to make sure that all the necessary pieces of information are considered during the analysis phase, it is recommended that in addition to the direct word counts, the direct words and phrases should also be counted and analyzed for generating the themes. Therefore, in the second stage of the analysis, the indirect words or phrases were also counted and analyzed for analyzing the emerging themes. Furthermore, in order to increase the reliability of results obtained through summative content analysis, consistent with the technique used by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020), a member check procedure was used where respondents were requested to confirm that if the interpretations of the data consistent with the intended answers of the questionnaires they had filled. After using the summative content analysis for the purpose of exploring underlying attitudes towards the web-based learning, a sixteen item instrument was developed and exploratory factor analysis was used to explore the underlying attitudes towards the web-based learning using quantitative methods.

Results

Results of First Summative Content Analysis

The summative content analysis was first done on the data collected from the students. Table 4.1 presents the results obtained through the first summative content analysis:

Table 4.1 Results of First Summative Content Analysis.

Results of Summative Content Analysis of Data Collected from Students				
	Wastage of Money	Concerns about the Learning / Future	A Mechanism to Continue Academic Activities	A Chance to Secure Good Marks
Direct Word Count	191	32	174	187
Indirect Words/ Phrases	214	84	165	224
Total	405	116	339	411

Respondents concerned about this theme	194	91	187	198
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The above table presents the results of the first summative content analysis. The first summative content analysis was done on the data collected through a sample of 201 students. As per the analysis, the most important theme is the chance of securing good marks. In this regard, we can say that a vast majority of students consider online education to be a good chance for securing good marks. Interestingly, at the same time the very same students consider who consider online education to be a good chance for securing better marks also considers online education to be the waste of money. Results also suggest that students consider online education to be a good mechanism for continuing the academic activities during the pandemic. It is also found nearly half of the students were not concerned about the learning opportunities or the future.

Results of Second Summative Content Analysis

Table 4.2 presents the results obtained through the second summative content analysis:

Table 4.2 Results of Second Summative Content Analysis

Results of Summative Content Analysis of Data Collected from Parents			
	Wastage of Money	Concerns about Learning / Future of their Children	A Mechanism to Continue Academic Activities
Direct Word Count	195	204	89
Indirect Words / Phrases	324	194	97
Total	519	398	186
Respondents concerned about this theme	190	188	141

The above table presents the results of the second summative content analysis. The second summative content analysis was done on the data collected through a sample of 191 parents. As per the analysis, majority of parents were concerned about the learning of their children and consider online education to be the waste of money. However, majority of the parents consider online education to be a good mechanism for continuing academic activities during the pandemic.

Results of Third Summative Content Analysis

Table 4.3 presents the results obtained through the third summative content analysis:

Table 4.3 Results of Third Summative Content Analysis
Results of Summative Content Analysis of Data Collected from Faculty Members

	Concerns about Learning / Future	Non-Serious Attitude of Students	Plagiarism
Direct Word Count	88	80	75
Indirect Words/Phrases	97	91	94
Total	185	171	169
Respondents concerned about this theme	99	113	123

The above table presents the results of the third summative content analysis. The third summative content analysis was done on the data collected through a sample of 124 faculty members. As per the analysis, majority of faculty members were concerned about the learning of students. The faculty members were also concerned about the non-serious attitude of the students towards the learning. Plagiarism during the online exam was the greatest concern of the faculty members.

Results of Fourth Summative Content Analysis

Table 4.4 presents the results obtained through the fourth summative content analysis:

Table 4.4 Results of Fourth Summative Content Analysis
Results of Summative Content Analysis of Data Collected from Potential Employers

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		Non-Serious Attitude of Students	Non-Serious Attitude of Educational Institutions	Quality of Future Labor Supply
Direct	Word	68	53	70
Count				
Indirect		74	75	95
Words/Phrases				
Total		142	128	165
Respondents				
concerned		68	53	71
about	this			
theme				

The above table presents the results of the fourth summative content analysis. The fourth summative content analysis was done on the data collected through a sample of 71 potential employers. As per the analysis, the employers are not very much happy from the online academic activities, they consider that both the educational institutions and the students have not shown any seriousness towards the academic activities during the pandemic and consider online teaching methods to be inefficient in making the students learn as per the expectations of the industry. The biggest concern for the potential employers was the quality of the future labor supply.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

After using the summative content analysis for the purpose of exploring underlying attitudes towards the web-based learning, exploratory factor analysis was used to explore the underlying attitudes towards the web-based learning using quantitative methods. The KMO value for the EFA applied on the data collected from the respondents was 0.80, the chi-square approximation of Bartlett's test was 5427.38 with sig value 0.00 which are considered satisfactory for running factor analysis.

Table 4.5 Rotated Component Matrix

Items	1	2	3	4
I am unable to learn anything in online classes.	0.876			
We can't learn much in online classes.	0.799			
It is difficult to learn in online classes.	0.844			
I don't want to pay for online classes.		0.721		
Online classes are the waste of money.		0.861		
Online classes are helpful in continuing education.			0.901	
We would be able to continue education without online classes. ®			0.888	
My GPA has gone up during the online classes.				0.705
Online exams are a good chance to improve exam results.				0.784
It is difficult to score good marks in online exams. ®			0.801	
I can score more marks in online exams in comparison to traditional exams.			0.841	

® represents the reverse coded item(s).

The above table suggests that there are four basic underlying attitudes towards the web-based learning. These attitudes include the feeling that money is being wasted, concerns about learning, feeling that online education is the mechanism for continuing education during pandemic and the feeling that online exams provides the chance of scoring good marks.

Reliability Analysis

In order to test the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach alpha test was used. Results of Cronbach alpha test are given below:

Table 4.6 Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Wastage of money	2	0.765
Concerns for learning	3	0.711
Mechanism for continuing education	2	0.865
Chance for securing good marks	4	0.738

Since, the Cronbach alpha values for all variables are greater than 0.7, therefore, it is concluded that the explored attitudes are reliable in nature.

Discussion

As per the results of four different content analyses, it can be argued that students were happy to have the chance of securing good marks during the online exams, whereas, the same students consider online education to be the waste of money. This is consistent with the results of Adnan and Anwar (2020) that students are not happy with the online education. However, as per the study of Adnan and Anwar (2020), the inability to access the internet due to technical or monetary reasons was the major reason for the dissatisfaction among the students with respect to online teaching and learning. This suggests that online learning is acceptable for the students provided that they have stable internet connection.

Therefore, to test whether the dissatisfaction or frustration among the students is caused by the inability to access the internet connection, a question has been added in the qualitative study that seeks to inquire about the availability of stable internet connection. Upon analyzing the summative content analysis, it is found that students are capable enough to differentiate between the quality of education and the nuisance caused by unstable internet connection. It is further found that most of the students who suggested that their money is being wasted due to online education had previously reported that they had stable internet connection and they don't face much issue due to internet connection. Hence, in contrast to the study of Adnan and Anwar (2020), the present research study suggests that students are frustrated with the quality of education rather than due to some external factor such as quality of internet connection. This points to the fact that students believe that there are certain things that cannot be learnt in the absence of proper social interaction. This is related to the concept of proximal development of Vygotsky's Theory of Learning.

Results also suggest that students consider online education to be a good mechanism for continuing the academic activities during the pandemic. This is consistent with the study of Allo (2020) where students were happy to continue online education during the pandemic. However, Hamid, Sentryo and Hasan (2020) suggested that students were not satisfied with the online teaching and learning. In this regard, results of present research study suggests that majority of students are content with the online education only because of the fact that there is no other option than continuing their study through online mediums. Furthermore, results of summative content analysis suggested that majority of students would not choose online education once the pandemic is over. Hence, the present research study reconciles the contradictory results of Allo (2020) and Hamid et al. (2020) and provides a model where one can evaluate that under what circumstances online teaching and learning are acceptable to different stakeholders. It is also found nearly half of the students were not concerned about the learning opportunities or the future.

On the other hand, majority of parents were concerned about the learning of their children and consider online education to be the waste of money. However, majority of the parents consider online education to be a good mechanism for continuing academic activities during the pandemic. This is consistent with the views of Allo

(2020), however, as the case of students is, parents only found online education to be acceptable only as a desperate measure during the pandemic and they would not prefer that this be continued for a longer period of time.

Whereas, majority of faculty members were concerned about the learning of students. This is consistent with the results of Ward, Peters and Shelley (2010). In this regard, it is found that the faculty members were also concerned about the non-serious attitude of the students towards the learning. Plagiarism during the online exam was the greatest concern of the faculty members. This is consistent with the suggestion of researchers (Ison, 2014; Nwosu, & Chukwuere, 2020) that online education promotes plagiarism. Moreover, the employers were not very much happy from the online academic activities, they consider that both the educational institutions and the students have not shown any seriousness towards the academic activities during the pandemic and consider online teaching methods to be inefficient in making the students learn as per the expectations of the industry. The biggest concern for the potential employers was the quality of the future labor supply.

Lastly, after using the summative content analysis for the purpose of exploring underlying attitudes towards the web-based learning, a sixteen item instrument was developed and exploratory factor analysis was used to explore the underlying attitudes towards the web-based learning using quantitative methods. In this regard, four basic underlying attitudes towards the web-based learning were explored. These attitudes include the feeling that money is being wasted, concerns about learning, feeling that online education is the mechanism for continuing education during pandemic and the feeling that online exams provides the chance of scoring good marks.

Conclusion

From the in-depth content analyses of the data collected from four different groups of stakeholders, it observed that all four groups of stakeholders have shown concerns about the quality of education. Hence, it can be concluded that there are certain issues with the online teaching systems and the stakeholders perceive it to be ineffective in comparison to the physical classes. It is also concluded that the stakeholders are highly dissatisfied with the quality of education imparted through web based learning mechanism (Allo, 2020). This is primarily because of the fact that the stakeholders believe that there are certain things that cannot be learnt in the absence of proper social interaction. This is related to the concept of proximal development of Vygotsky's Theory of Learning. However, the stakeholders agree to the fact that continuation of academic activities would not have been possible during the pandemic without web based learning (Hamid et al. 2020). However, apparently it seems that stakeholders would not prefer to continue education on web based systems once the pandemic is over. It is also concluded that seriousness of the students towards online programs and plagiarism are the major concerns of the stakeholders.

Recommendations

From the in-depth analysis, one can conclude that seriousness of students towards the academic activities and the plagiarism are the major concerns about the online education. Therefore, it is recommended faculty members should focus on making classes more interactive as the delivering the lecture online in a traditional manner is not a workable solution. In this regard, educational institutions and faculty members should come up with the ideas of developing self-serving courses where students can learn on their own pace. Hence, educational institutions should work on developing platforms that can cater the demands of online learning. The other major concern of the stakeholders is the plagiarism; hence, educational institutions should come up with unique ideas about the ways of conducting exams where fair examinations could be conducted.

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