

CHALLENGES OF ONLINE LEARNING FACED BY EDUCATORS DURING THE ENDEMIC COVID-19: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to critically review and synthesize the articles on issues or challenges faced by educators during online learning at higher institutions. For the past two years, we have been experiencing a pandemic called COVID-19, which is now endemic and people are slowly adjusting their lives to it. At higher institutions, faculty members are actively finding ways and solutions in making sure the teaching and learning process is kept on track. Educators have realized that face-to-face meetings are no longer applicable during this time, and they need to find another mode of communication promptly. Therefore, online classes, online webinars and all online platforms are options for educators in delivering lectures and disseminating information to their students. Nevertheless, there are challenges, obstacles and issues among educators. The educators' readiness, acceptance of technology among them, and many more are issues that need to be put into consideration in implementing online classes. The review will give a holistic understanding of the online learning challenges among educators for future researchers and aid to identify the research gap.

Keywords: Online Learning, Challenges, COVID-19, Endemic, Higher Institution, Educator

INTRODUCTION

WHO Director, General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated more than 118,000 cases of COVID-19 have been identified in 114 countries. At least 4,291 people have been killed by the virus since it emerged in Wuhan, China, in

December 2019 (WHO, 2020). The disease was spreading at an alarming rate and countries were taking drastic measures to overcome it. Among measures being undertaken by countries were Movement Constraint Order or MCO, shut down businesses, schools and higher institutions and many more. Malaysia was not excluded from this international matter, and the government had decided to shut down businesses and learning institutions, so will government and private business except for those providing essential services in an effort to ensure the disease will not worsen the country's situations (Sipalan, 2020). Now, the pandemic has shifted to endemic, and many things have been changed such as opening back schools and all classes in higher education were moved to online learning (Menon, 2020).

An endemic, meaning that COVID-19 will not be entirely eliminated, but its ability to overturn societies and livelihoods will be dramatically reduced (Hadfield, 2022). Since COVID-19 occurred, most of the educators and students have experienced the new way of teaching and learning method which is called as online learning method. Practically, changing platforms from physical class to online class is not easy yet not too difficult to be applied.

However, it is not easy for all people to adjust to this method of teaching and learning in a blink of an eye. It takes a lot of effort, input and readiness from both educators and students. The technological constraints, digital divide, insufficient data pack to access the material to attend the class, poor connectivity, lack of device, poor learning environment, technophobia, delayed response, and inability of the teacher to handle the material and communication machineries efficiently, online classes may be more challenging than traditional classrooms (Rouf et al., 2022). Therefore, this review paper is focusing on the challenges and issues of online learning faced by the educators at higher institutions.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used a review method in literature searching and reviewing, to identify, select, appraise and analyze research studies on this topic. The objective of this review paper was to identify challenges of implementing online learning faced by the educators in higher institutions post pandemic of COVID-19. In order to accomplish the objective of this paper, the authors reviewed the empirical research papers which are ranged between the years of 2004 to 2022. The articles were comprehensively searched through several databases, such Emerald Insight and Google Scholar. The results of the review are written in subsequent such as issues that need to be considered in implementing online classes during the endemic of COVID-19.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

There are five points that will be discussed in this section: definition of online learning; online webinar; institution's effort; educators' challenges; engagement between educators and the students; and technology and resources needed in online learning.

i. Online learning

The growth of information technology has brought about new forms of teaching and learning. A modern form of education has emerged recently, which is known as digital learning, E-learning, or online learning. The term E-learning (electronic learning) refers to methods of learning through the use of any electronic medium. E-learning is also known as virtual education, online training, open training, and web-based learning where the Internet is the primary tool in implementing learning (Baker & Unni, 2018).

However, online learning is not an entirely new type of learning (Alshauibi, 2021). In general, online learning is usually defined as opposed to face-to-face (F2F) learning (Ryan et al., 2016). Its most notable aspect is the absence of a physical classroom, which is substituted by the use of web-based tools that allow for out-of-class learning regardless of time, place, or speed. Learning management systems (LMS) or virtual learning environments (VLE) are commonly used to launch online learning environments such as Moodle and Blackboard (Pellas and Kazanidis, 2015).

According to Ali (2004), students enrolled in open and distance learning (ODL) programmes in Malaysia are introduced to e-learning. Malaysians are not unfamiliar with the concept of distance learning. Many people, particularly those who are still working and want to advance their careers, enrolled in external degrees offered by reputable universities in the 1960s or earlier. The author claims that awareness, low adoption rate, bandwidth issue and connectivity, computer literacy and digital divide, lack of quality e-content, difficulty in engaging learners online and language barriers are among challenges in implementing e-learning in Malaysia.

ii. Online webinar

As online learning has been more incorporated into higher education, the way it is created and offered is changing according to the needs, limits and resources of the university. The online programme was generally well received by students. The webinar promoted participation in some aspects of the online workshop and was thought to complement other online learning options. The webinar was particularly praised for giving the course a "face," promoting communication between educators and students, and assisting students in feeling like they were a part of the university. Students also mentioned that the webinar provided an opportunity for social contact. (Warren et al., 2015).

iii. Institution's effort

The faculty must provide support to the faculty members in ensuring productive methods of teaching and learning by the educators to their students. Without proper support from the faculty, the educators alone can jeopardize their teaching methods. They need resources including technological support, internet connection in order to allow them to do remote teaching (Fajardo, 2014) (Alshauibi, 2021).

Moreover, faculty and students must be knowledgeable and comfortable with both pedagogical and technological aspects of online and learning. Faculty's competency in online assessment and student difficulty in transitioning to online learning are identified as key hurdles to successful e-learning transition in a study on challenges to online learning (Lassoued et al., 2020). This lack of mastery of online teaching and learning methods is worsened by a poor skill possessed by faculty and students in the use of online technology, as discovered in a study conducted by Sales et al. (2020), among students and faculty at a Spanish university. Mouchantaf (2020) suggested that this problem should be addressed by the higher institutions, where they not only encourage educators to keep up to date with new e-learning tools, but also give opportunity for them to learn about best practices in teaching and curriculum development for their courses (Schmidt et al., 2016).

iv. Educators' challenges

Online programmes have grown in popularity in Saudi Arabia since the 1990s (Alshauibi, 2021). Saudi universities, on the other hand, have faced a number of difficulties in introducing online learning. The absence of educators training in online teaching skills is a big barrier. As a result, teachers have struggled to keep up with the continuously changing nature of learning technology. As a result, a few instructors have remained skeptical of online learning, and the results have been disappointing. (Alshauibi, 2021).

Irfan et. al. (2020) conducted a study that examines the challenges of implementing online learning during the pandemic faced by lecturers. It is difficult for educators who are accustomed to teaching in a classroom setting to transition to online learning. Several issues identified are the availability of features in the academic portals, limited interaction with the students, and limitation in exploring in specific courses such as mathematical symbols. This certainly can be used as further research on the challenges and obstacles faced by students in using online learning, the development of online learning systems of each tertiary institution, and also the resolution related to mathematical symbols that tend to be difficult if written on several eLearning platforms (Irfan et. al., 2020).

According to the report, the COVID-19 situation produced varied levels of stress among academic staff in Jordan's higher institutions (Haider & Al-Salman, 2021). They cited fears and concerns about getting the virus, as well as

social isolation, lockdowns, the time and effort required to complete online assignments, and the inability to resume their research activities, all of which had a negative impact on their psychological well-being.

v. Engagement between educators and the students

The presence of competent educators who are committed to student support must be a priority in the pedagogy of online teaching as online learning continues to be integrated into the foundations of higher education. (Levy, 2017). The web course, web centered course, and web enhanced course are three alternatives in the construction of an internet-based learning system, as indicated by the growth of online learning (Sudarsana et al., 2019). Learning or online learning is also inseparable from various advantages and disadvantages. But behind it all, learning through online learning is very supportive in the current learning process. Interaction is another factor in determining the success of the teaching and learning process.

Insufficient communication between educators and students can influence the comprehension, motivation and engagement from the students. According to Mehall (2020), lack of interpersonal communication can be harmful. As a result, students will feel frustrated or not capable of comprehending and this leads to demotivation. However, problems in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) among educators and students can be avoided through course structure, regular feedback, discourse technique and facilitation factors (York & Richardson, 2012). Synchronous learning is another important way in engaging good interaction with students in online learning. McBrien et. al., (2009) found that participation in a virtual classroom using synchronous online learning affects the elements of transactional distance theory. Still, the problem is to ensure the students participate in online learning at the same time as the educators.

vi. Technology and resources

Unsurprisingly, many of the issues in online learning stemmed from the fact that students and educators were not in the same physical location at the same time. When these classes' projects required complicated, multi-step skills, a good technique is to break the assignment down into smaller, intermediate deliverables, giving the instructor several opportunities to assess the students' progress and provide relevant feedback. Educators need to use synchronous technologies when and where they are suitable. Synchronous technology such as telephone, text chat, and web conferencing allow for real-time interaction between parties (Kearns, 2012). Adding to that, a study by Baber (2020) found that the interaction in the classroom is one of the factors in influencing student's satisfaction during online learning. The need for reliable technology in supporting online learning cannot be denied. Educators as well as the students require proper technology to create an effective online learning environment. A

study conducted by Rahayu and Wirza (2020) among teachers in Indonesia also proved that teachers realized the significance of technology in their classrooms.

Apart from technology, learning resources also become one of the concerns when it comes to online learning. To create and operate a comprehensive online learning environment, a lot of resources are required. Special activities, smart classroom or spaces, and tools that support interactive learning are referred to as learning resources. Administrators, personnel, and technical support who are easily accessible and knowledgeable are critical in assisting learners and educators in acclimating to online settings (Dringus, 1999).

Table 1: Challenges of Online Learning

Era	Focus	Educational Characteristics
1975 - 1985	Programming; Drill and practice; Computer- assisted learning CAL	Behaviourist approaches to learning and instruction; programming to build tools and solve problems; Local user-computer interaction.
1983 - 1990	Computer-based Training Multimedia	Use of older CAL models with interactive multimedia courseware; Passive learner models dominant; Constructivist influences begin to appear in educational software design and use.
1990 - 1995	Web Based Education and Training	Internet-based content delivery; Active learner models developed; Constructivist perspectives common; Limited end-user interactions.
1995 - 2005	eLearning	Internet-based flexible courseware delivers; increased interactivity; online multimedia courseware; Distributed constructivist and cognitivist models common; Remote user-user interactions.
2005 - present	Mobile Learning and Social Networking	Interactive distance courseware distributed online through learning management systems with social networking components; learning that is facilitated via a wireless device such as a PDA, a smart phone or a laptop; learning with portable technologies where the focus is on the mobility of the learner.

Source: Keengwe & Kidd, 2010

Table 1 provides a brief historical context of online development as well as the changing focus of educational technology over the past 30 years (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010).

It is clearly shown that the emergence of online and distance learning has already started since 2005 and the researchers stated learning with mobile technology enables people to learn from remote places and this trend is still going until today. Not to be argued, the endemic has even forced people around the world to embark on this online learning phase.

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

After reviewing the past research ranging from 2004 to 2022, it was found that there are few past studies that examined the challenges faced by educators during online learning. In ensuring engagement between students and educators, both parties should play an active role during online classes. Not only them, faculty also should give proper guidance and technological support to both students and educators. Workshop and training should be given to the educators in ensuring that they are able to deliver their courses well.

This review paper opens up the opportunities for future research, in which researchers could do qualitative research in searching broader views and opinions from the respondents. In that way, we might find another issue on online learning and can solve the problem in the future.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that educators had faced many challenges and issues regarding online learning after the outbreak of COVID-19. Review of previous literature showed strong evidence that these stated challenges are really affecting the educators' productivity and motivation. Nonetheless, people around the world are adapting their best to suit this endemic as well as the educators and the higher institutions. Now, faculties are providing more solutions on the issues faced by the faculty members, such as providing adequate resources and technological support to their faculty members. More studies on issues at higher institutions should be done to enhance the shaping of our future. The result of this study could be used by higher institutions to strategize to overcome the issues, and to put concern on the well-being of the educators and the productivity of its institutions.

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