

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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# Students' Perception on Online Classes at the University of Prizren during the Covid-19 Lockdown

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the effectiveness of online teaching methods during COVID-19 pandemic due to the closure of educational institutions. Online classes were introduced as a strategy of bridging the learning gap created by the pandemic, with the goal of maximizing learning opportunities and reaching remote areas. The University of Prizren "Ukshin Hoti" (UPZ) faced the challenge of adopting online teaching methodology due to the changing needs of the students. The learning process at UPZ during the period as it was organized through virtual platforms resulted not satisfactory. Main challenges were found out to be virtual classrooms, internet network, computer equipment. A quantitative survey was conducted from 153 students from a group of English Language and Literature students for determining the usefulness of online classroom. This survey reveals the limitations and inadequacy of online classroom based teaching.

**Keywords:** Effectiveness of online learning, COVID19, Teaching online, Students' perception, lack of motivation.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional teaching was replaced by digital teaching methods to address the learning gap created by Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic (Coulthard, 2020). The pandemic affects had been adverse as it caused deaths, sickness and weakened immune system of humans (Klapkiv & Dluhopolska, 2020). The government responded to the pandemic by closing schools for minimizing transmission of virus through increase of social distancing. The schools and educational institutes were unable to provide learning opportunities in the students in the traditional classrooms. China adopted online teaching framework for responding to the health and educational needs of the children and youth (Ding, Zhao & Wang, 2022).

Given the situation created, educational institutions of all levels in the Republic of Kosovo began to adapt new teaching model. It was challenging for the institutions to ensure delivery of the lectures through online platforms efficiently (Hortz 2020). Virtual platforms have proven to be the only solution to in offer teaching facilities. The teachers had identified the challenges of using a new methodology and modifying the teaching material for conveying the lectures appropriately. The institutions of China and teaching faculty was unfamiliar with the digital teaching methods due to their inexperience. Yu points out that conventional teaching methods are far from meeting the requirements of the modern century due to the rapid increase in awareness and rapid technological growth (Yu, 2021).

teaching also posed challenges for the students as it was new experience. Ding, Zhao & Wang agree that this imbalance between online teaching strategies and teaching development may affect teaching performance, which is detrimental to students' learning capacities (Ding, Zhao & Wang 2022). Fen points out that the learning environment changed radically compared to the face-to-face classes with the virtual reality

suggesting learners need an autonomous learning environment combining the Internet and teaching strategies (Zhou Fen, 2021). The students need more focused learning environments for making best of the online platforms (Muhammad & Kainat, 2020). Future online teaching might introduce 5G live class, ultra HD video interaction, holographic live, VR live, and AI teacher (Yu, 2021).

The study of Mailizar et al., (2020) identifies potential challenges faced by students in online classes such as lack of motivation and distraction. They struggle to remain focused during teaching thus undermining their participation. These results are also supported by the studies of Harrison and McTavish (2018) by presenting distraction as the major challenge in online classes. Basar et al., (2021) accepted the challenges of online education make it less appealing for the students. They consider online teaching least effective and prefer physical learning in schools.

There is research gap as existing studies have determined the effectiveness of online teaching methods solely on the basis of students perceptions and experiences during COVID-19. These studies have neglected the fact that pandemic created

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**How to cite this article:** Jusufi J, Kurejsepi E, Cupi B (2023). Students' Perception on Online Classes at the University of Prizren during the Covid-19 Lockdown. Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2023, 136-139

**Source of support:** Nil

**Conflict of interest:** None.

**DOI:** 10.47750/pegegog.13.04.16

**Received:** 06.07.2022

**Accepted:** 15.03.2023

**Publication:** 01.10.2023

tense environment suggesting it might not be appropriate to evaluate online teaching method's efficiency during tense situation. The studies have not compared students' responses to online education during pandemic and normal conditions.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process at the University of Prizren "Ukshin Hoti" from the students' perspective. It also explores the challenges that the newly established university faced during this extraordinary situation. The study offers a clear picture of effectiveness of online teaching/learning process from the student's perspective during the COVID19 period. Primarily it is significant for the target university, University of Prizren to plan its further development in terms of organizing teaching/learning online. The study can serve also for the higher education in Kosovo and other forms of education aiming to offer classes online. Stakeholders including international organizations aiming to support education in Kosovo with a focus in higher education can also use the information for further support of education in our country. Finally, it shares feedback and recommendations for further development of the university in terms of organizing virtual classes in the future.

## METHOD

### Research Design

Quantitative and analytical method has been used to conduct this research paper. These cross-sectional design enabled complementation and data assurance. It has been appropriate in the measurement of data and determination of relationship between variables. The number based research is used for measuring attitude, behavior and performance of numbers. The data received from quantitative methods is converted into graphs and charts that is interpreted easily.

### Population and sample

The questionnaire was eligible for students who have had online classes and have been students of University of Prizren. A total of 153 students have responded to the online questionnaire. This research sample is representative of the students' population taking online classes during COVID-19. The perceptions of the targeted group can therefore be applied for understanding the students' views at larger level.

Random sampling has been used to collect data from the targeted sample by emailing questionnaire to the students of University of Prizren. This sampling technique represents equal chances of selecting all university students. Random number of generators are used for assuring selection of individuals is based entirely on chance.

### Data collection tools

The link of the questionnaire was sent to students to their official university emails. The questionnaire was designed

using survey monkey which is quite user friendly and could generate satisfactory data analysis for the research. Questionnaire was designed to generate data on effectiveness of the online teaching and learning process. To the best of my knowledge this was the first study of this kind conducted on the effectiveness of online teaching during the CORONA period at our university. Questionnaire was user friendly and easy to answer. Students could submit their answers by using any digital device including their smart phone, computer, tablet. Questionnaires were anonymous which were self-analyzed by the survey application.

It was designed and get information on practicality and functionality of the platform that was used by the university, the possibility of students to join virtual classes. The questionnaire also generated data on interactivity of classes and the teaching methodology that was used by professors. At the very end students are asked to give their opinion if they would like to be offered online classes in the future.

The feedbacks obtained from the participants of the survey through monkey survey was transformed into graphical data. The frequency represents the count of participants response for each question. Percentages are computed for providing meaningful results in graphs and charts that are can be interpreted easily.

## FINDINGS

Based on students' responses on effectiveness of attending online lectures, a lower number of them rate online learning as very effective or about 8.5%. Most students think that teaching is not effective or 26.8% as completely ineffective 17.6%. If we focus on the graph presented, the evaluation is almost average in terms of the effectiveness of attending online learning. This fact is worrying because this form of lecturing at UPZ has

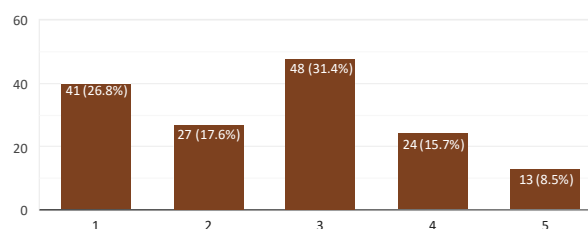


Fig. 1: Effectiveness of online teaching process

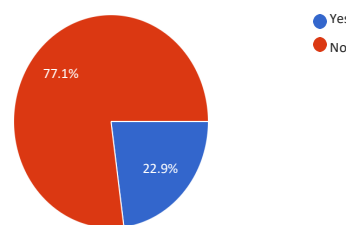


Fig. 2: Online teaching as a future learning option

lasted for a long period, almost two years, and has directly affected students' professional development.

When asked if students want online learning to continue to be offered as an option even after the pandemic is over and they return to normal, the vast majority of students or 77.1% of them do not want to. This is to be expected, as most students feel that the form of online learning offered to them is not effective and of course that providing this form would result in their academic and intellectual stagnation and development.

The vast majority of students stated that they face difficulties in catching up while taking classes online. This could be due to many factors. The vast majority of students have encountered difficulties in connecting to the platform and this may be due to the electronic devices they use, network, platform speed, overload as a result of too many students connecting at the same time, etc. Only 26.1% of students stated that they did not face difficulties in catching up while taking classes online.

**On the question:** Do you find online learning practical? Absolut majority or 83.7% do not share this opinion, and this is really worrying and shows that the learning process has stalled in many aspects. Considering unprecedented technological and communication development, when many people have established their home offices and offer services and work from home, when meetings conferences, presentations are held online on different meeting platforms, UPZ should make an in-depth analysis of the process and must necessarily offer this opportunity and choice.

The learning platform is one of the main issues that needs to be advanced. A user-friendly platform, which provides all the necessary tools and easy to use would create a more enjoyable study atmosphere and consequently the learning process would be more efficient. About half of the students found it impossible to express their opinion during the lectures. All this led almost 70% of students to think that offering the opportunity of online learning should not exist, which is an absurdity of its own kind considering the time in which we live.

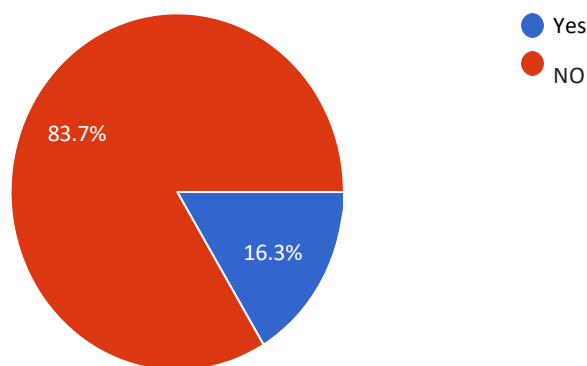


Fig. 3: Practicality of online classes

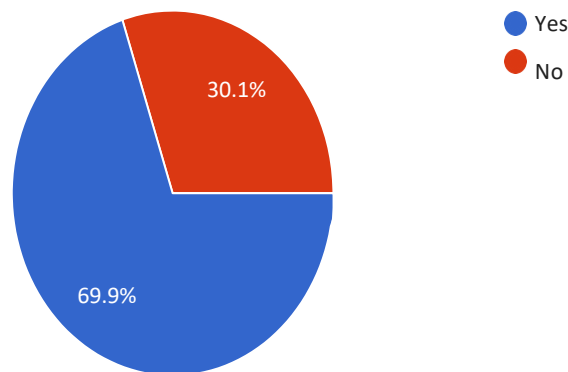


Figure 4: Integration of adequate methodology in online classes

In regard to teaching methodology, majority of students or around 70% think that professors have used adequate forms and techniques in lecturing. This is quite surprising taking in consideration that the time to adapt to this new reality was very short. It would be interesting to have a closer look at the factors that have impacted a satisfactory performance of teachers during this state of emergency. The use of ICT tools in the classroom and information technology devices on daily basis can be indicators in the use of appropriate teaching methodology by the academic staff at UPZ.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this survey are supported by previous studies on the perceptions of students about online classes and complexities faced during COVID-19. The survey results show majority of the students believed online teaching is ineffective and inappropriate for students. These findings are supported by evidence from previous studies as Almendingen et al., (2021) identifies the challenges faced by students in online learning during COVID-19. The experiences of the students confirm they encountered difficulty in understanding lectures representing inefficiency of the online teaching methods.

The students were not willing to avail online teaching option in the future, representing its complex nature. The study of Khtere et al., (2021) also states students are least motivated to choose online teaching. The experiences of the students attending online classes also reveal their disinterest and unwillingness for attending online classes in future (Basar, Mansor, Jamaludin, & Alias, 2021). Previous studies confirm online teaching is not an ideal method for teaching students. The results further stated students encountered difficulty in catching up with the teacher in online classes. These findings are supported by the study of Mailizar et al., (2020) identifying difficulties of students in following instructions faced via online platforms.

The survey findings also show students found online classes least practical compared to the face-to-face teaching. The study of Harrson et al., (2018) offer evidentiary support

to the findings of survey by confirming students incapability of building proper understanding through online methods. However students accepted that teachers adopt adequate methodology for the preparation of online lectures. These results are supported by literature as Lili et al., (2020) confirms preparing material for online lectures is convenient for the teaching faculty. Online teaching methodology give adequate time for managing course resulting in efficient management of material (Bryan et al., 2020). These results are also supported by the research of Muhammad and Kianat (2020).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm online teaching is ineffective in replacing the traditional teaching. The survey from 153 students depict adoption of online teaching during COVID-19 pandemic involved several challenges for the students including difficulty in understanding instructions, following lecture or participating in the classroom. The responses also state majority of students are not in the support of online teaching.

## SUGGESTION

This study suggests performing a quantitative survey by considering a larger population size for determining students perceptions and challenges associated with online teaching method and the possibilities of replacing it with traditional teaching. It also suggests choosing reliable data analysis tool for sharing reliable results proving the effectiveness of the online teaching.

## LIMITATION

There are some limitations of this study as it relied on online survey from 153 respondents, the results might be inadequate in estimating responses of a larger population. Another limitation is reliance on an online survey collection tool Monkey Survey indicating difficulty of avoiding input errors affecting the reliability of data.

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