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Students Perception on Online Learning

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ABSTRACT

Online learning system become the solution for the continuity of education during COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia. This study aims to assess the perception of students from CamEd Business School in online learning during this pandemic. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at CamEd Business school. Year 3-4 and recently graduated students from Bachelor of Accounting & Finance program participated in the study.

A total of 104 responses were received. 34 male and 70 female students participated in the study. Overall, 65% students have positive perception towards online learning.

Students did not prefer online learning over physical classes but they prefer to continue learning through online during this pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, Online Learning, Students, Perception.

1. INTRODUCTION

Online learning became part of the education system worldwide and it is the most famous form of distance learning. Online platforms have made education convenient and provided easy access to students. However, this method can be challenging due to lack of teacher-student interaction and technological limitations. An online learning platform is the only reliable solution for the continuation of education in Cambodia during COVID-19 pandemic.

Education can be effective as teachers and students exchange knowledge from topics and contexts, critically weigh significantly different perspectives, and integrate a number of inquiries. One of the most widely cited examples of teaching effectiveness in traditional classrooms is Chickering and Gamson (1987), who proposed seven standards for good practice in undergraduate education. An effective teacher does the following:

- Encourages contacts between students and faculty.
- Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.
- Uses active learning techniques.
- Gives prompt feedback
- Emphasizes time on task
- Communicates high expectations.
- Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

These principles were written in 1987 for traditional classroom. A years after seven principles were published. Chickering and Ehrmann (1996) wrote the following:

Since the seven principles of good practice were created in 1987, new communication and information technologies have become major resources for teaching and learning in higher education. If the power of the new technologies is to be fully realized, they should be employed in ways consistent with the seven principles. (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996, p.2)

Online education makes possible a new teaching-learning culture by eliminating the barriers of time and distance. Learners choose the time; the place is wherever they happen to be with access to a computer. Online education provides easily accessible, effective and cost-efficient learning opportunities. In 1997, Neil Rudenstine, president of Harvard University mentioned that, “The Internet and Education: A Close Fit”. Seven years later in 2004, most American universities and colleges were offering online classes courses and enrolled around 2 million students. Higher education institutions are continuing to get involved in online learning for many different reasons, including: providing easy access for student who lives far away from campus, creating opportunities for international students and working people who have difficulties to join physical classes (Picciano, A. 2006).

Online learning is the most popular method of distance learning. Students from around the globe

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been using the platform for higher educations. The United States Department of Education has conducted a survey among 4900 higher education institutes and discovered that about 26 percent of student took at least one course which was entirely online, and about 11 percent took their complete education online (McPherson and Bacow, 2015). Online enrollment rates are expanding at much faster rates than traditional classroom enrollment growth, especially in higher education, online enrollments have grown 21%, whereas growth for traditional classroom instruction registers only 2% since 2002 (Elaine Allen & Seaman, 2007).

Moore and Kearsley (2012) defined that "distance education is teaching and planned learning in which teaching normally occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technologies as well as special institutional organization". This big question, why do we need online education? Moore and Kearsley (2012) in their study identified the following reasons:

- increase access to learning and training as a matter of equity
- provide opportunities for updating skills of the workforce
- improve the cost effectiveness of educational resources
- improve the quality of existing educational structures
- enhance the capacity of the educational system
- balance inequalities between age groups
- deliver educational campaigns to specific target audiences
- provide emergency training for key target areas
- expand the capacity for education in new subject areas
- offer combination of education with work and family life
- add an international dimension to the educational experience

Finch and Jacobs (2012) identified the benefits while addressing the best practices of online education: (i) reducing the time and costs for travel, (ii) increasing opportunities to access and collaborate with expert professionals in a global range, (iii) providing students with flexibility to access courses at their convenience, and (iv) allowing adjustments to subjects and content need.

2. INTERATURE REVIEW

The discovery of @ symbol in 1972 for use in email (Maloney-Krichmar & Abras, 2003), and the rise of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1991 for the Internet connectivity (Harasim, 2000) have been the latest adapted technologies by online education. Thanks to the growth of World Wide Web and internet coverage to most of the part of the world, people have easy access to internet. In the past 20 years, there is 1,187% of internet growth and approximately 59.6% internet users in the world ("World Internet Users Statistics and 2020 World Population Stats", 2020). At the same time, internet also became affordable. There are many platforms to create online communities where educational institutes may conduct online classes. The most famous online platform for educational institute is Google Meet (Dalton & Turner, 2020). Docebo, WizIQ, Adobe Captivate, Elucidat, Articulate 360, Shift, Lectora Inspire, Zoom, and Blackboard Learn are also well known tool for online teaching.

Online education provides potential opportunities to open up new markets for higher education institutions. Many adult learners may enjoy the flexibility in balancing work, study, and family responsibilities. The wide range of various technology advancement used by universities' online programs may enhance the interaction between students and instructors (Bell & Federman, 2013). A comprehensive review of online education done by (Wallace, 2013). The Wallace review addressed two questions: (1) what constitutes teaching in online classes; and (2) what difference does the nature of subject matter make in online classes. She identified student roles in online education and how they perceived their online learning experiences. She indicated that social presence and engagement in online courses was the primary focus of student learning. In particular, she emphasized the importance of establishing an interactive relationship between students and instructor and among students, contending that such interactions led to satisfactory learning results.

Many studies have demonstrated that a student's active involvement in the learning process improves learning, a process often referred to as active learning (Benek-Rivera & Matthews, 2004; Sarason & Banbury, 2004). In addition to active involvement, students better understand and apply material when problems and situations are set in the context of real-world issues and situations (Eble, 1988). Authentic situations and scenarios can provide a stimulus for learning, creating greater student motivation and

excitement for learning, representing and simulating real-world problems providing an important structure for student thinking (J. Quitadamo & Brown, 2001).

Several researchers have shown that learning in an online environment requires a significant amount of discipline and self-motivation (Golladay et al., 2000; Serwatka 2003) and learner motivation is one of the key factors affecting student performance and learning, particularly online learning success (Cole, Field & Harris, 2004; Ryan, 2001).

Effectiveness in Online Learning

For the students who have access to internet and required technologies, there is evidence that learning online can be more effective in a number of ways. Some research shows that on average, students retain 25-60% more material when learning online compared to only 8-10% in a classroom (Gutierrez, 2020). The effectiveness of online learning varies between age groups. The general consensus on children, especially younger ones, is that a structured environment is needed, because children are more easily distracted. To get the full benefit of online learning, there needs to be an intensive effort to provide this structure and go beyond replicating physical class through video technologies, by using a variety of interactive resources and interaction strategies that facilitate learning (Li & Lalani, 2020).

Challenges in Online Learning

Some believe that the unplanned and rapid move to online learning without proper training, insufficient bandwidth, and little preparation will result in a poor learning experience that is unconducive to sustained growth, others believe that a new hybrid model of education will emerge, with significant benefits. Wang Tao, Vice President of Tencent Cloud and Vice President of Tencent Education says “I believe that the integration of information technology in education will be further accelerated and that online education will eventually become an integral component of school education” (Li & Lalani, 2020).

There are challenges to overcome. Many students without reliable internet access or technologies struggles to join the online classes. In Cambodia, the situation is very challenging because most families don’t have computers or reliable internet access (“Rapid Response Helps Cambodian Students Learn at Home while Schools are Closed”, 2020).

Impact of COVID-19 in Education Sector

COVID-19 has resulted in schools’ closure all over the world. As a result, education has changed dramatically, with the distinctive rise of e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms (Li & Lalani, 2020). More than 1.5 billion students and youth across the planet are affected by school and university closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO’s COVID-19 Response in Cambodia, 2020).

These nationwide closures impact over 90% of the world’s student population. (UNESCO’s COVID-19 Response in Cambodia, 2020) The COVID-19 response is not the first time that emergency eLearning programs have been considered as appropriate crisis-response measures. A similar strategy was observed in Fall 2009, where 67% of H1N1 contingency plans involved substitution of online classes for face-to-face classes (Allen & Seaman, 2020). The first case of COVID-19 in Cambodia was detected in January 2020. When a second case was detected in early March in Siep Reap province, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports announced closure of schools until further notice (Chansomey & Sornnimul, 2020).

Online Platforms

During the pandemic many online learning platforms are offerred free access. Google is supporting educational institutes during COVID-19 situation by providing advanced features to the subscriber of G Suite for Education. This includes the ability to record meetings, livestream up to 100k people and add 250 people to a Google Meet event. These features were available at no additional cost to all G Suite for Education customers until July 1, 2020 (Lazare, 2020). In Cambodia, some universities are using the Zoom teleconferencing software and Google Classroom online resource, according to Education Minister Hang Choun Naron (“Education Ministry Pushes for Online Classes, as School Closures Extended”, 2020).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this review was to understand the online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rapid growth of World Wide Web (WWW) and technologies made the online education available around the globe. This study explores best practices and methods for greater success in online education,

including eight pedagogical practices designed to achieve that objective and what establishes a well-organized online course. An effective online class requires proper teacher student interaction by using different study tools and assessment.

3. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was used to conduct the study among Year 3 & 4 students taking Bachelor of Accounting and Finance at CamEd Business School, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Online teaching at CamEd Business School began in April 2019 due to nationwide school closure in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

A self-administered questionnaire was developed through a review of related literature and after consultation with a member of CamEd Business School. The questionnaire was organized in three parts:

Part I : Student's demographic

Part II : Online class related characteristics

Part III : Perception of students towards online classes. It included 25 questions using "Yes" / "No" and options to provide additional information.

Sampling

My survey has 104 samples which contains 74 from year 4 students, 12 from year 3 students and 18 from recently graduates. This questionnaire was in English and conducted through Google Form.

Results

According to the survey, the percentage of male responded is 32.7% and female is 67.3%. Majority of the respondents (81.7%) are 20-22 years old.

Table 1: Demographic of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency n=104	Percentage
Age		
17-19 Years	2	1.9%
20-22 Years	85	81.7%
23-25 Years	16	15.4%
More than 26 years	1	1%
Gender		
Male	34	32.7%
Female	70	67.3%
Academic Year		
Year 3	12	11.5%
Year 4	74	71.2%
Recently Graduated	18	17.3%
Status of Study/Work		
Full-Time Student	44	42.7%
Working & Studying Full-Time	44	42.7%
Internship & Studying Full-Time	15	14.6%

Source: Data from Survey

60.6% students did not take online classes before the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though students own several types of gadgets including laptop, tablet and smartphones. 86.5% respondents using a laptop as a primary gadget for online classes. 75% of the respondents says the quality of internet somehow reliable and 83.7% prefer to continue learning through online during this pandemic. 86.5% of respondents are satisfied using google meet for online classes.

Table 2: Online Class Related Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency n=104	Percentage
Taken online class before COVID 19		
Yes	41	39.4%
No	63	60.6%
Types of gadget used for online class		
Laptop	90	86.5%
Phone	9	8.7%
Tablet	2	1.9%
Laptop & Tablet	3	2.9%
Reliability of Internet		
100% reliable	17	16.3%
Somehow reliable	80	77%
Totally unreliable	7	6.7%
Satisfaction on online platform		
Google Meet	90	86.5%
Zoom	10	9.6%
Any platforms	4	3.9%
Should online learning be continued during this pandemic?		
Yes	87	83.7%
No	17	16.3%

Source: Data from survey

Students perception on online class

Table 3 shows perception of students towards online classes. 53.8% of the students says there is no preparation time needed for online classes. Most of them (95.2%) agreed that self-discipline is required. Less than half (39.4%) finds online class is better than physical class.

Table 3: Perception of students towards online classes (n=104)

Statements	Positive	Negative
Online learning system is easy to use	76%	24%
It is easy to manage study time effectively	79%	21%
No specific preparation is needed	53.8%	46.2%
Learning is the same in class and at home on the Internet	47%	53%

It is easy to share ideas with classmates during online class	39.4%	60.6%
Large class size does not affect learning in online class	62.5%	37.5%
Self-discipline is necessary during online studies	95.2%	4.8%
I can ask my teacher questions and receive a quick response during online class	73.1%	26.9%
Online learning improves technical skill in using electronic gadget and different learning platforms	91.3%	8.7%
Face-to-face contact with teacher is necessary to learn	62.5%	37.5%
I learn more through online learning than physical class learning	39.4%	60.6%
There is lack of interaction during online classes	75%	25%
Received sufficient feedback from the professors / lecturers during online class	51.9%	48.1%
Single students dominate during online classes	57.7%	42.3%
I can understand	77%	23%
I can concentrate	31.8%	68.2%
Recorded online class can be useful for future	96.2%	3.8%
Learning environment is better in university than at home.	73.2%	26.8%
Does the quality of internet effect your online learning?	92.3%	7.7%
Are you able to study at home without disturbance?	58.8%	41.7%
I do not get distracted during online class.	37.4%	62.6%
Is online class motivating?	56.3%	43.7%
Too many online classes are not boring	64.1%	35.9%
Do you feel more willing to participate in online class?	65.4%	34.6%
Is it possible to learn online?	85.6%	14.4%
Would you like to continue learning online for a longer period of time?	52.4%	47.6%

Source: Data from survey

Table 4: Overall level of perception of students towards online classes (n=104)

Level of Perception	Percentage
Positive	**65%**
Negative	**35%**

4. DISCUSSION

The present study assessed the perception of CamEd students towards online classes during the pandemic. The study found out that more than half of the student (65%) have a positive perception toward online classes. 60.6% students find that physical class better than online classes and 62.5% students prefer face-to-face contact with their teacher. Almost three-fourth (73.2%) of student says, learning environment is better in university than home. This finding supported by a study conducted among students from Pakistan which showed 77.4% students prefer to study in physical class (Abbasi, Ayoob, Malik & Memon, 2020). This data suggests that even though many students like online classes, they still prefer to study in the physical classroom where they have better interaction with lecturers/professors. Another study also supported this finding, 72% students from a university in Saudi Arabia prefer traditional class over online class (Almaghaslah, Ghazwani, Alsayari & Khaled, 2018).

This study also reveals that 86.5% students prefer to use laptop for online learning. Even though most of them have mobile devices, they prefer laptop due to its large screen. Stability and quality of internet has a huge impact on online classes. 92.3% students find quality of internet will affect the online class. Only 16.3% of respondents have completely reliable internet and 77% says, it is somehow reliable.

76% students find online learning system easy to use and it is easy to manage study time effectively (79%). However, 53.8% students agreed, that is no specific preparation is needed to attend online classes. A study conducted in Indonesia among university students also shows that 42.4% students agreed that, no specific preparation is needed (Daroedono et al., 2020).

Only 39.4% students find that it is easy to share ideas with classmates during online class. However, 73.1% students agreed that they can ask questions to lecturers / professors and get immediate feedback.

Even though 77% students can understand the lesson but 75% of students also find there is lack of interaction. However, 85.6% students can learn through online classes and 52.4% would like to continue learning online for a longer period of time.

5. LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations. First, perception was based on self-report tool. Second, the study was performed only among BA students at CamEd Business School from year 3, 4 and recently graduates.

6. CONCLUSION

Online class was a solution taken by MoEYS (Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports) in Cambodia during COVID-19 pandemic where government announced school closure in April 2020. Based on the survey result 65% of respondents shown positive perception on online learning although there are many negative areas on online learning. More than half of the students prefer to continue learning in online especially during this pandemic. The Majority of students can learn through online but lecturers / professors should find more effective ways to interact with students during online classes

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