

Challenges of Online Learning and Some Recommendations for University Students in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

The 4.0 technology revolution has been affecting most aspects of our lives on the basis of information and communication technology and education is also affected by it. Especially during the current pandemic, most of everything seems to be stalled and students at universities, especially students in Ho Chi Minh City, cannot focus on studying directly in the classroom as always. Therefore, online learning plays a very important role as well as is a temporary solution for this difficult period. Although online learning has been making a significant contribution to the transmission and transfer of knowledge, there are still challenges that those students cannot avoid. In order to improve understanding as well as provide appropriate solutions when studying online, this article will delve into the analysis and survey of students' difficulties as well as reference and give solutions. The article was completed based on the results of a survey and interviews from students in Ho Chi Minh City. The survey results show that although there are still many inadequacies, some suitable solutions will be provided based on the opinions of university students in order that it will help to make online teaching and learning more effective.

Keywords: Solutions, University, online learning, difficulties, students

Introduction

The whole world in general and Vietnam in particular have been suffering and struggling with difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic since 2019. Social distancing is a rare but inevitable measure to limit person-to-person contact in society so that the pandemic does not spread quickly but the pandemic is difficult to control. Although social distancing is the most essential and necessary measure at this time, it also entails many troubles such as stagnation in many aspects of life.

This pandemic has forced us to close some activities including education activities [1]. For example, the education sector of the country cannot avoid this difficult situation. While all students and students are too familiar with the traditional form of face-to-face learning, the online learning solution has been proposed as the most optimal solution for the current situation. The Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training has implemented the motto "temporarily don't go to school, but don't stop learning" to unify teaching and learning solutions to suit and adapt to difficult situations in reality [2].

Online teaching and learning form have been interested and implemented by university in Ho Chi Minh City since the early days of the outbreak to ensure the safety of lecturers and students during the learning and teaching process. It can be said that the convenience as well as the flexibility of time and place to study is an advantage that face-to-face learning cannot

have. However, the change from traditional learning to online learning partially causes difficulties and barriers for students in acquiring knowledge [3].

With the current situation of online learning of students at universities in general and university students in particular, the study "Challenges of Online Learning and Its Solutions for Students at university in Ho Chi Minh City" was carried out to identify and synthesize students' opinions on the difficulties they face as well as their solutions in the current time of social distancing and online learning.

Literature review

Education is one of the foundations for building and developing the country in the present and in the future. What if one day the teaching and learning career was delayed by external factors. Online learning has become one of the solutions to the current difficult situation [2]. However, there are still difficulties for students when initially getting used to a new form of learning. This is also one of the issues that are most concerned by society when the education industry in the country is also significantly affected. There have been many studies that have been carried out in great detail and presented numerous difficulties and inadequacies when learning online, but specific measures for this problem based on the students' point of view have not been clearly stated [4]. Thanh et al (2020) have deployed and used 4 components of the e-learning system evaluation structure including: user interface, content, personalization, learning community" to give a view to be more objective about the barriers to students' online learning. Based on a survey by Hien et al (2020), there are 4 main barriers that directly affect students in the learning process: economic barrier, interactive barrier, psychological barrier and environmental barrier. Besides, according to research by Shirkhani & Arayesh (2016) at Azad Islamic University, the barriers to online learning in this country such as infrastructure, technology, occupation, people and skills education account for 52.53%. According to Berge (2013), he has determined that the biggest factor that makes online learning impossible to develop is the lack of social interaction, followed by factors about lecturers and learners' motivation. This study will go into more depth about the difficulties of online learning and how to overcome it by students at university [5].

The current situation of online learning of FPT University students

So far, the first days of implementing the online learning method, university students have encountered many difficulties and obstacles in the process of absorbing new learning methods. These difficulties may be due to the fact that most students are too familiar with face-to-face learning and have not yet adapted to the online learning method [6].

The passivity in the process of absorbing knowledge at the school makes many students find it difficult to learn and explore on their own without the direct guidance of the lecturer. When studying at home, students must be proactive and manage their own time so that the amount of information is most effective [5]. Therefore, the sense of learning also plays an important role in deciding whether online learning becomes effective or not.

However, not only subjective factors from the student's side but also external objective factors have a great impact on the formation of obstacles in the online learning process. The transmission line has always been an eternal problem when the connection is unstable

during the learning process, the power is out, the connection speed is problematic, there is no Wi-Fi, or costly 3G network. Online learning makes it quite difficult for them to concentrate because the surrounding environment is sometimes noisy or affected by external factors [9]. When students have to study for too long and look at computer screens, too many phones make students easily tired and distracted.

With the difficult situation that university students are facing, it is not easy because they have not been well prepared psychologically as well as have not been fully disseminated knowledge about online learning methods with the help of students. Self-study skills at home lead to many inadequacies [7].

Research method, object and scope

In order to serve the research process of the topic, there are two main research methods used in this article, which are quantitative research methods and qualitative research methods. To increase the authenticity and specificity of research, the subjects for the research were 20 students of university in Ho Chi Minh City. Through the feelings and actual experiences from the students themselves, the research paper would have a more objective and general view and thanks to it, the research paper could be systematically completed as well as provide effective methods to help students to overcome the difficulties they are facing. The research scope selected at university in Ho Chi Minh City creates certain convenience about the research location for the author as well as suitable for the research object supporting this article.

Results and Discussion

After a period of time having to study online, each student will have a different look and feel about this new form of learning. In general, their objective assessments have partly reflected the current state of students' online learning (Figure 1).

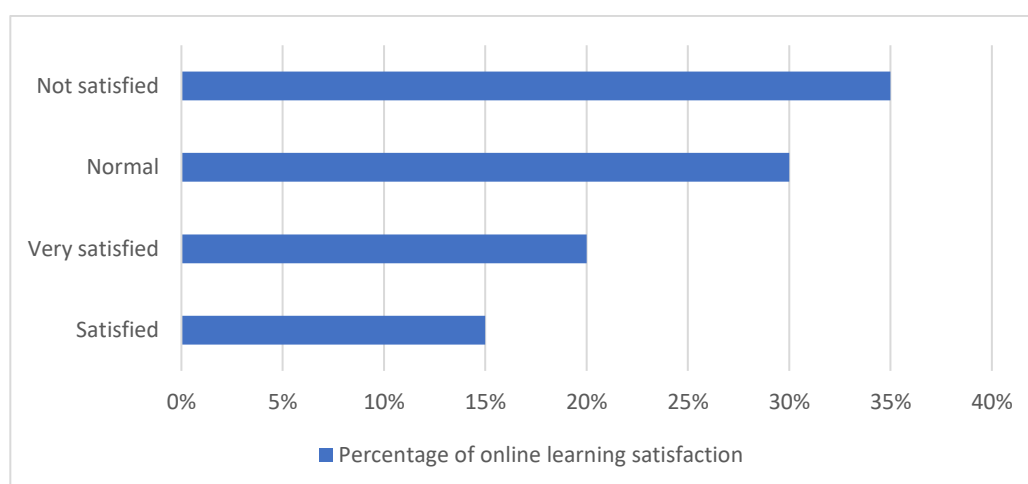


Figure 1. General feelings of university students in Ho Chi Minh City when studying online

In general, the number of students who are very satisfied and find effective learning solutions for themselves during online learning is only 15%. Meanwhile, the number of dissatisfied

students accounted for 35%, double the number of very satisfied students. It can be said that there are still students who are not too familiar with the new way of learning and have not found an effective method to overcome difficulties in the process of online learning. Besides, the number of students feeling satisfied accounted for 20% and the number of students feeling normal accounted for 30% (Figure 1).

Online learning is considered as a current solution during the difficult period because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the actual survey conducted by the students, it can be seen that there are 4 main factors that directly affect and cause difficulties for students during the online learning process such as: speed of internet connection, duration of study, long interaction with computer screen, passive habits in learning (Figure 2).

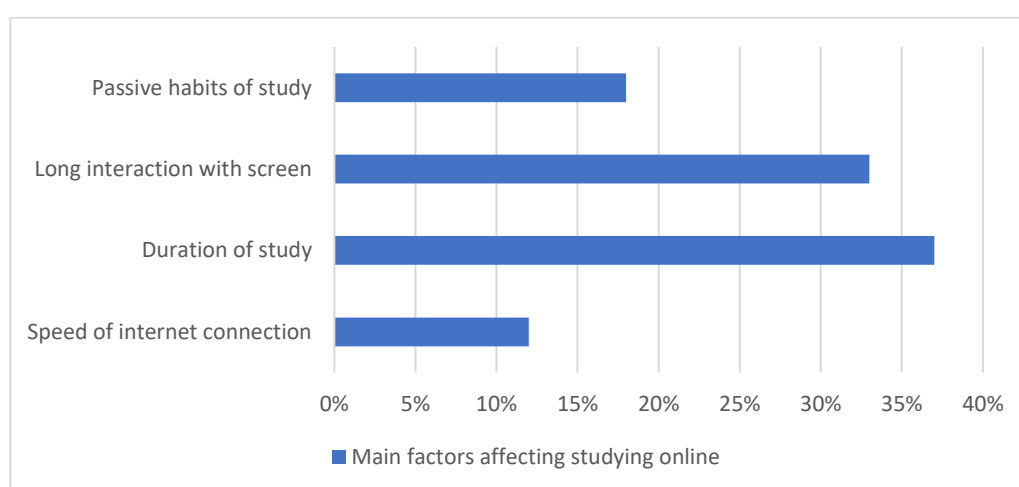


Figure 2. Factors affecting online learning of university students in Ho Chi Minh City

It can be seen that during the online learning process, students have encountered many difficulties, making the acquisition of knowledge more or less affected. Learning time accounting for 37% of the chart is considered one of the most difficult and impactful factors for online learning. When having to study at home for a long day, it is easy for students to be distracted and lose focus, so the amount of knowledge absorbed will not be complete. Moreover, the third- and fourth-year students who are having to study specialized subjects and many subjects need real experience and discussion to easily absorb knowledge, then homeschooling makes they feel bored. Next, the interaction factor through the computer screen for too long accounted for 33%. Constantly looking at the computer screen makes the eyes work too much, causing fatigue and distraction. The habit of passive learning or the habit of absorbing knowledge directly in class with the guidance of a teacher accounted for 18%. Passive in the process of absorbing knowledge for too long leads to a lack of awareness and self-discipline to explore as well as cultivate and expand more information about online lectures. Besides, the transmission speed accounts for 12% of the difficult factors that hinder learning. The percentage according to Figure 2 shows that there are still many shortcomings that have not been overcome, causing many difficulties for students.

Table 1. Solutions to overcome difficulties in the process of online learning

No.	Solutions	Performance level			
		Very necessary	Necessary	Depend on cases	Not necessary
1	Practice self-study	36.7%	46.7%	16.7%	0%
2	Set up a study plan	46.5%	16.6%	15.4%	21.5%
3	Interact with lecturers	26.7%	13.3%	56.7%	3.3%
4	Disseminate necessary knowledge when learning online	44.7%	12.1%	10.2%	30%

According to Table 1, solutions to overcome difficulties in the process of online learning show that the situation of overcoming difficulties of university students in Ho Chi Minh City has not been implemented very well. Some students are still not used to it and are not aware of what needs to be done to improve and overcome the barriers they face when transitioning to a new form of learning.

However, there are still some difficulties when learning online and solutions to overcome. We cannot deny the importance of overcoming these difficulties when there are still students who have not been able to orient themselves in the right way to learn (Table 2).

Table 2. Assess the importance of overcoming difficulties when learning online

Survey content		1	2	3	4	5	Total of answers	Total scores	Average level
The role of overcoming difficulties when learning online									
1	Strengthen the process of receiving ideas	0	2	5	8	5	20	76	0.2
2	Reduce the rate of lazy students	0	1	4	12	3	20	77	0.2
3	Play an important role in deal with the situation of current online learning	0	0	6	4	10	20	84	0.2
4	Solve the problem of distraction when learning online	0	0	7	7	4	20	73	0.2
5	Meeting the need for improvement difficulties in learning	2	3	5	7	3	20	64	0.2
Total								374	1.0

The benefits of overcoming problems when learning online									
6	Make learning easier and more enjoyable	0	4	3	6	7	20	76	0.2
7	Improve the process of acquiring knowledge when studying online	0	1	4	7	8	20	82	0.2
8	Approach and familiarize with the method of learning online	0	2	4	8	6	20	78	0.2
9	Practice self-study	4	5	0	5	6	20	64	0.2
10	Improve concentration	0	0	7	8	5	20	78	0.2
Total								378	1.0
Average total								376	1.0

In the Table 2, we can see the role and benefits of overcoming difficulties when learning online in the current pandemic situation. In the role of "Play an important role in deal with the situation of current online learning", this factor accounted for 84 points, "Reducing the rate of lazy students" accounted for 77 points and "Strengthening the process of acquiring knowledge" accounted for 76 points. Besides the benefits from overcoming difficulties when learning online for students at university in Ho Chi Minh City in particular, "Improve the process of acquiring knowledge when studying online" accounted for 82 points and "Approach and familiarize with the method of learning online" accounted for 78 points. Overcoming and improving difficulties when learning online plays an extremely important and essential role to support and strengthen the problems that students are facing.

Through the interview process in the semi-structured form, the results were with the first question: "What is your general feeling when learning online?" received mixed reviews. In general, some students are satisfied, but there are also some students who are not familiar with the new learning method, so they are not very satisfied. When it comes to the question: "Does interacting through the computer screen for too long make you lose focus?" then received a lot of positive answers, besides some students found it not very influential [10]. However, each person will have a different way of dealing with difficulties in the process of online learning when being asked "What needs to be improved in online learning?" Many students mentioned reducing the study time in a day so that the acquisition of knowledge is more solid. Some students also mentioned that the interaction in the online class needed to be improved to make the class livelier. In general, there are still obstacles as well as challenges and opportunities in the process of adopting this new form of learning [9].

Comparisons

Before coming to online learning, all students are familiar with face-to-face learning in class. Direct learning method has certain advantages, students do not have too many difficulties

with this learning method [8] The biggest advantage is the interaction, when in class we can discuss with the teacher the difficulties we are facing as well as can exchange group study with friends, thereby absorbing knowledge more quickly. Besides, when participating in class, students will have to follow the rules as well as general rules to help practice self-discipline. Under the direct guidance of the lecturer and the classroom learning environment, they will improve their concentration and absorb the transmitted knowledge faster [4].

However, online learning still has some advantages to support students. Online learning also partly solves some problems such as reducing pressure on lack of classrooms, overcrowding of students, etc.” (Rabiee et al., 2013). It is also possible to study with low cost and effective data selection for learning (成田敦博 et al., 2012) on the internet when learning online. This form helps them to be independent in terms of time as well as study space, not being constrained by certain hours. Self-training for self-discipline and a more active spirit help generate a more active learning.

However, when we step over to online learning, we lose more than we gain. Online learning shows that there are still some difficulties leading to lower efficiency than traditional learning (Oanh et al., 2020). Studying at home for hours on end can separate you from the experiences you would otherwise have in a traditional classroom: getting to know each other, meeting friends, etc. When you have to study alone in an extremely quiet place too long, it can lead to distraction as well as fatigue from which the amount of knowledge absorbed is inevitable. A community environment can make students more motivated to learn, help them see problems from many different perspectives, and will receive help from friends and faculty when needed [5].

Recommendations

According to the results of the study, the difficulties of time and having to interact through the computer screen for too long are the barriers that students consider to be the most hindering. Most students commented that they want to return to school after the end of the pandemic and if they still have to continue studying online, they will have to find a way to overcome the difficulties they are facing. From the analyzed results, the study makes some suggestions and suggestions to help support as well as partially overcome the barriers and difficulties that students face in the process of online learning [4].

Firstly, each student must train himself/herself the ability to self-study. The ability to self-study is a significant factor that leads to problems for students during online learning. However, this is an objective factor that depends on the spirit and self-discipline of each person. The best way is for each student themselves is to set a clear and specific goal in the learning process. Whatever we do, big or small, we need to have clear goals. We need to learn for objectives and what the knowledge we are acquiring will serve. Only when that is determined can each person actively learn and self-study to have enough knowledge to accomplish the goals, they have set out for themselves [6].

Second, students must make a clear and specific study plan for themselves. During the online learning process, there will be times when students feel misguided and confused about how to learn. Therefore, it is necessary to make a specific plan to master knowledge and study

more effectively [4]. Planning helps us make the most of our time, knowing what we need to do and how to do it. Determining the goals and direction will support the online learning process more or less [3].

Third, interacting with teachers more is one of the necessary and sufficient factors to help students understand the knowledge as well as get support when they encounter obstacles in the lesson. Online learning makes students face certain difficulties, when having to speak in front of a computer makes them feel dry and disconnected, not having the feeling of learning directly in class. Due to studying at home, there are still some students who are shy and do not actively ask the lecturer, leading to a lack of knowledge. They need to actively interact more to be able to answer questions and consolidate knowledge more accurately after each lesson [6].

Fourth, the school should facilitate organizing a meeting to disseminate necessary knowledge when studying online for students. In the face of the stressful epidemic situation, it will be difficult to focus on studying again. A general knowledge session to serve as a basis for psychological preparation as well as complete knowledge of online learning methods along with self-study skills for students is a necessary element for orientation more clearly for students who are still facing many barriers when learning online [4].

Conclusions

Through the students participating in the feedback, the research results also partly show the feelings of the students in the recent learning process. The results show that the satisfaction level of students is not high because there are still many surprises when switching to a new form of learning too quickly without psychological preparation. Most students face many obstacles in finding a reasonable learning method to adapt to current circumstances and conditions. The habit of studying directly with the guidance of lecturers has had a significant influence on students. It will be very difficult if students are too used to passively absorbing knowledge in class, now they have to raise their awareness, learn more by themselves, requiring a certain self-discipline. The study and analysis of difficulties when studying online and how to overcome them of university students in Ho Chi Minh City has partly clarified the barriers as well as given some appropriate support measures. The results of this study will help students who have been experiencing online learning to orient and overcome the difficulties they are facing during the process of changing their learning methods. Through the survey from the students' actual experiences to have the most general and objective view, thereby finding a more appropriate and effective learning method.

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