

# The Online Education in the Higher Education, a Complete System Rather Than Just a Platform

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## Abstract

The online education in the higher education is a complete system rather than just a platform. The participants for this research study included twenty enrollees in distance learning programs. The respondents got online instruction from two distinct higher education institutions (the University of Florida and the Florida State University). The qualitative research design chosen for this study was conducted through observations, and interviews. To begin the study, each respondent had a formal structured interview recorded and transcribed. The interviews with each respondent lasted around 60 minutes on average. Depending on the respondents' preferences, interviews were done at a convenient location, such as their workplace, the university library, or dorm room. Interviews with each participant were performed in an unstructured manner. The following were among the favorable experiences: ease of connection, availability of technical help, self-paced learning, convenience, cost-effectiveness, and adaptability of the program. The difficulties included: a feeling of isolation, self-motivation, and self-regulation, inability to get help from the teacher, and a delay in seeking feedback. The following factors contributed to participants' positive interactions: accessibility to the internet and technology, a well-designed instructional format, easily accessible technical help from the institution, immediate grade filings following assessments, and a flexible learning participative timetable. Untimely or ineffective communication from the educator was among the variables that contributed to participants' unfavorable experiences. Other factors were boring educational approaches, a lack of technical assistance, a lack of interpersonal connection, and an inadequately-designed course interface.

**Keywords:** governance, digital learning, online education, online learning, e-learning

## 1. Introduction

To suit the growing demands for educational opportunities, higher education (HE) establishments are continuously broadening their offers. Adult students (transitioning and traditional) specifically require novel means of learning knowledge and training in order to remain afloat in the profession. The global economy has spawned a new breed of potential students who want access to the entire spectrum of learning choices. Globalization and quick technical improvements have been shown to produce generational shifts in values affecting the way higher education students see education in general (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010). The opportunities for improvement of the innovation era have totally revolutionized how higher education (HE) is regarded, given, and even studied. There are numerous terminologies that characterize the online class. According to Moore (2016), distance learning comprises a distant and reciprocal relationship between student and teacher. Alternative equivalents for distant education involve e-learning and online learning. Both expressions allude to two-way interaction between a teacher and a student, with the intention of supporting learners in studying through the use of the internet in an effort to enhance and assist the learning system. The online learning context, which encompasses the course content, teachers, and students, demands the use of technological tools for access (Rapanta et al., 2020). Deployment of a remote learning program in education, especially at the university level, is gradually becoming a realistic and tempting solution because it enables eligible learners to study on their own schedule. The cornerstone of distance education is technology and communication. Distance education suggests that the majority of educational communication between the students and their instructors occurs noncontiguously at different times and in diverse places. The online education in the higher education is a complete system rather than just a platform.

## 2. Research Issue

### Africa

African countries lack enough ICT-related infrastructure which makes them unable to compete on a global stage (Kayange, 2019). Following the findings of a research undertaken by the "African Virtual University (AVU)," it has been determined that internet coverage at higher education institutions throughout the continent is inadequate and unmaintained (Twinomugisha et al., 2004). Therefore, the three elements of digitization, namely connectivity, capacity, and content, have not yet been fully achieved in Africa. Despite having internet speeds comparable to that of a broadband household connection available in Europe, African universities spend 50 fold as much their throughput as their counterparts in other parts of the world, and they fail to oversee, let alone manage, the current bandwidth resources available in their countries (Gunga & Ricketts, 2007). Therefore, what little frequency band is available becomes even less helpful for educational and research purposes (Steiner et al., 2005).

On a broad scale, the problem in Africa is the shortage of e-learning courses and the complexity for learners in obtaining entry to even the limited number of programs that are accessible owing to a lack of facilities. A seemingly insurmountable need for tuition rates at higher education institutions in Africa, particularly in Ghana, seems to be surpassing these universities' ability to meet the demand.

Alternative means of distributing their curriculum to satisfy the increased need are being developed by institutions to fulfill this demand, and they are equally eager to do so. High-quality understanding of how the traditional education platform and online teaching and learning modes measure up in terms of attributes of their company operations, informational methodologies used by teaching staff in the two modes, and the facets of interaction between students and instructors, among other things, would be beneficial for higher education institutions currently in the choice process on which alternative to choose. It is worth noting, however, that there is a scarcity of empirical material in the Ghanaian context that compares online and face-to-face teaching approaches of imparting instruction, particularly in distance education. Especially in the case of higher education, this is the point to be made.

As a result, there is less information available on the state of online education compared to traditional face-to-face delivery in terms of learning strategies, student-educator engagement, and student/student involvement (Redmond et al., 2018). The concerns that will be answered in this project are important for students, faculty, and administration.

### Middle East

Online students often experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation which can come from a lack of peer contact. This case can lead to individuals opting out of the program and adversely impact learning (Fazza & Mahgoub, 2021). Human engagement can assist students in coping with the sentiments of being left behind in the classroom. It is widely believed that student-to-student contact is essential for increasing interest and keeping students in distance learning (McGuinness et al., 2019). Famularsih (2020) concludes that anxiety, a lack of interaction, and poor internet connection when speaking in the target language (TL) — in other words, the language becoming learned, were the most significant challenges faced by the participants. In a similar vein, Đorić et al. (2020) pointed out that a bad internet access was one of the obstacles that ESL enrollees in Pakistan were encountering at the time of their research. A study conducted under Covid-19 by Bailey and Lee (2020) identified problems such as the use of new technology in learning, fear of over-sharing information and the significance of identifying the most suitable Learning Management System (LMS) or framework to meet students' requirements.

The efficacy of faculty communication while dealing with language obstacles, as well as communication through different technology modalities, is all issues that must be addressed. The shifting function of instructors has an influence on the communication that takes place between them and their students (Ng, 2020). During face-to-face classes, the classroom environment provides indications for instructors, who use students' vocal and nonverbal exchanges to direct their education (Ng, 2020). When faculty members are unable to view the faces of their students, it is impossible to discern these emotive signals. Coppola et al. (2001) did a study of 20 online teachers and observed that there were no suitable review controls in place and that those that were in place were equivalent to programs available in the way of distance or related learning. In distance learning, the review is delivered by conventional (snail) mail, and it is sometimes not received as promptly as is necessary for corrective actions (Spinks & Bedi, 2012). To be successful, online instructors must be familiar with the technology and know-how to utilize it effectively. Consequently, it becomes vital to offer enough training for faculty members on the newest advancements while also including them in the creation of online courses and courses on the internet (Kebritchi et al., 2017). Using mass communication theories, another set of researchers came to the conclusion that online lectures presented in multimodal forms such as audio and text led to more pleasant student experiences when contrasted to lectures delivered in just one modality (Limperos et al., 2015).

## Legal Challenges

As a result, because distance education involves operations that are not governed by the country's current copyright law, such as the logical use of limits in creations of others, teachers who use distance learning copyrights become lawful blind spots, which must be addressed by enhancing the copyright law in the nation (Zhang, 2019). Also, this case could be improved by specifying and implementing long-term education plans and strategies. Copyright law is the legal recourse of an original piece that has been fixed in a physical form; the work must be incorporated in a material form such as the book pages, a painting, or a computer storage system, in order to be protected. These forms include multimedia, computer software, and poem items are examples of works that are protected by intellectual property rights. In an academic context, copyrightable compositions include scholarly publications, web-based course materials, presentation files, and books, to name a few types of resources. In spite of the common misconception that copyright is concerned with the preservation of ideas, copyright is only concerned with the expression of those concepts as embodied in the actual work (Lorenzen, 2021). It is crucial to remember that as per the fair use clause of the United States copyright law, individuals are permitted to paraphrase and quote original works without the authors' consent. However, individuals must appropriately attribute the source to prevent copyright infringement. It is critical not to trample on copyrights in a virtual learning setting since practically all educational resources are copyrighted from the minute they are generated, even if there is no copyright note on the page where the item is being used. The most prevalent infringement of intellectual property rights is the unlawful copying of a large portion of a piece of work (Trimble, 2019). It is illegal to replicate intellectual property without the owner's authorization, and those who do so are subject to legal consequences. Because any misunderstanding about the roots of copyright laws and their consequences could jeopardize the development of productive online teaching and learning experiences, online educators must educate themselves on the subject of copyright laws and their ramifications.

## Research Questions

RQ1: Is the online education in the higher education same as a governance system?

RQ2: Has the online education platform assisted in ensuring students of higher education obtain the best education they need?

RQ3: How can the online education be compared to the face-to-face kind of system?

## Hypothesis

- ✓ H<sub>0</sub>: The online education in the higher education is not same as a governance system.  
H<sub>1</sub>: The online education in the higher education is same as a governance system.
- ✓ H<sub>0</sub>: The online education platform has not assisted in ensuring students of higher education obtain the best education they need.  
H<sub>1</sub>: The online education platform has assisted in ensuring students of higher education obtain the best education they need.
- ✓ H<sub>0</sub>: The online education platform cannot be compared to the face-to-face kind of system.  
H<sub>1</sub>: The online education platform can be compared to the face-to-face kind of system.

## Research Objectives

Objective 1: To discuss the online and the traditional education platform in the higher education level.

Objective 2: To do quick comparison between the traditional education platform and the online education in the higher education level.

Objective 3: To focus on the online education as a governance system.

Objective 4: To understand online education as a creative and smart platform in higher education level.

## Importance of the Research

The research study will help answer the research questions. The research study plays a central role in understanding whether the online education in the higher education is a governance system (Gong et al., 2021). It also helps comprehend whether the online education platform assisted in ensuring students of higher education received the best education they need. Readers could also know how the face to face and the online education are compared.

## Theoretical Framework

The online collaborative learning (OCL) hypothesis, suggested by Harasim (2007), concentrates on the application of the Internet's resources to create a learning atmosphere that encourages cooperation and knowledge acquisition. Ideas

are generated during the brainstorming process, during which different ideas are collected and analyzed. Ideas are contrasted, examined, and classified during the idea structuring phase, which is carried out via conversation and argumentation. Intellectual convergence is the period in which intellectual synthesis and agreement are achieved, along with the ability to agree to disagree, generally via the completion of a shared project, assignment, and perhaps other masterpieces (Harasim, 2012). Since students are urged to address issues via discourse collectively and that the teacher serves as both a facilitator and a part of the educational community, OCL is also derived from social constructivism. This is a distinguishing element of OCL, but it is also valid of other constructivists, in which the teacher is not inherently different and except for the students, but rather an active participant of the education process in which the students participate. The difficulty in scaling up OCL is attributed to the focus placed on the responsibility of the instructor (Picciano, 2021). Compare this with the importance of connectivism in higher education, which is why object-centered learning is better suited for smaller-scale curricula. If one is looking for parallels across diverse concepts about online education, this last aspect is critical to remember.

Additionally, Naicker et al. (2021) use the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) paradigm to teach South African students about online learning. COIL is a cutting-edge method of learning and teaching that allows instructors and students to interact and cooperate with peers all over the world via the use of the internet (Rubin, 2016). COIL facilitates meaningful conversations between students and instructors with peers who are located in physically distant areas and come from various linguistic and cultural contexts by utilizing internet-based technologies and new online pedagogies (Guth, 2013). COIL enables unique learning experiences where learners could engage, cooperate, and take part in the learning process, hence increasing chances for transnational and intercultural learning.

### **Literature Review**

Sun and Chen (2016) claim that online education is here to stay and is expected to continue to increase in the future. A look at the past of online education reveals that it has grown at a rapid pace, bolstered by internet connectivity, technologically advanced, and a large and growing marketplace. It is reasonable to expect that online education will keep expanding its footprint and affect higher education via a robust restructuring, refining, and reshaping phase. It is highly improbable, however, to completely replace traditional higher education, but rather to serve as a complementary option (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). However, because of its versatility, accessibility, and convenience, online education is becoming more popular, among those with geographical distance, scheduling difficulties, or inability to pay for it otherwise. While researching for this project, the major emphasis was on examining how various theories, practices, and evaluations could be applied to the online learning environment. Sun and Chen (2016) investigate how the ideas offered have been used to different online course development and design elements. After that, they looked into how things have changed over time, how they have evolved, and their technological impacts on online education. Researchers in online teaching are concentrating their efforts on the interactions between teaching and cognitive presences to find out the effectiveness and preferable methods and policies for online pedagogy. Inside the domain of online learning, Sun and Chen (2016) concentrate their efforts on developing an online learning group through the promotion of collaboration, interactions, and social presence between instructors and students and among students.

Specifically, Paudel (2021) says that the pandemic COVID-19 has forcibly transformed the style of learning and teaching in Nepal's higher education from exclusively face-to-face to online, which represents new perspectives and experiences for several of the students and instructors. In this context, the author studied the views of instructors and students on online education at the connection to its advantages, problems, and tactics during and after COVID-19 in India-based institutions of higher learning. In order to accomplish this goal, an online survey research strategy was used. The viewpoints of 280 instructors and students from five institutions in Nepal were gathered using a survey questionnaire, which was employed in the research to gather data. The findings reveal that the respondents consider online education to be valuable chiefly for championing online research, linking individuals to the international society, and obtaining a vast and authentic resource of insight, despite the fact that they considered time-management capabilities, more independence for learners and teachers, and dependable internet to be severe challenges. According to the findings of the study, time management abilities, technical preparedness, and computer literacy are the most important characteristics for individuals who choose to pursue online education (Kim & Bonk, 2006). Participants indicated that ICT objectives are clearly defined and that modules should be produced in accordance with this policy. Because just online modes of learning and teaching are ineffective in the context of Nepal, the participants favor mixed learning over online alone modes. For this reason, the education process in countries such as India would be far more successful and effective if a hybrid approach were to be applied.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The qualitative research design chosen for this study was conducted through observations, and interviews. The goal of

qualitative research is to get an understanding of the context of phenomena in order to express the narrative rather than to make inferences. Triangulation, which is the process of bringing together different sorts and bits of information, could help in making a better analysis or assessment of a situation (Nancy Carter et al., 2014). Interviews and observations and interviews are simply two components of the whole process of discovery. It is not required, but it is ideal for supplementing the knowledge gathered from interviews and observation with other information. The observations structured and unstructured interviews were the data collecting procedures employed in this research, and they were all recorded.

### **Participants**

The participants for this research study included twenty enrollees in distance learning programs. The respondents got online instruction from two distinct colleges (the University of Florida and the Florida State University).

### **Data Collection**

The following approaches were used to gather information: interviews and observations. Researchers will be able to utilize diverse data sources to confirm and corroborate their results if they employ a range of data for data collecting. Each group of students took part in two interviews with the researchers. There were two types of interviews: one that was organized and one that was not. In an attempt to gather additional qualitative information, two observations were carried out (Jamshed, 2014). The observations were placed over a period of roughly 60 minutes. The assessments were carried out in the same environment in which the participants generally did their online schoolwork, which was a computer lab. Using the data, researchers were able to answer the research questions as well as identify commonalities and differences among the survey respondents.

### **Interviews**

Fraenkl et al. (2012) stated that conducting interviews is a critical step in determining the correctness of perceptions that a researcher has received via observations. When conducting interviews, a range of approaches are possible, including the use of pre-set questions, following a methodology or interview handbook, and even doing interviews as an unforeseen event. Each of these questions serves as a guide for the researcher as he or she attempts to comprehend the phenomena (Patten, 2016).

To urge respondents to share their impressions of the value of online education depending on personal experiences, this research used a range of questioning tactics (refer to Appendix A) to solicit their responses. To begin the study, each respondent had a formal structured interview recorded and transcribed. The interviews with each respondent lasted around 60 minutes on average. Depending on the respondents' preferences, interviews were done at a convenient location, such as their workplace, the university library, or dorm room. Interviews with each participant were performed in an unstructured manner. The unstructured interviews lasted roughly 45-60 minutes in total, including preparation time. Each respondent was subjected to both a structured and unstructured interview procedure.

### **Data Analysis**

The transcribed verbatim interviews were compared to the actual recordings to ensure that they were accurate. In addition to data collecting, data analysis was carried out at the same time as well. The transcripts of the interviews and observations were subjected to extensive categorization. For the purpose of analyzing qualitative data from multiple sources throughout time, the continuous comparative approach was used. In order to better understand the students' experiences who were attending online courses as well as the elements that influenced those experiences, data was sorted around each study question and grouped together by topic. Comparing and contrasting the observations, interviews, and archive data was a major focus of the study. Following that, the material was organized into two key categories. These were both beneficial and unfavorable aspects of online education, depending on their perspective. The following were among the favorable experiences: ease of connection, availability of technical help, self-paced learning, convenience, cost-effectiveness, and adaptability of the program. The difficulties included: a feeling of isolation, self-motivation, and self-regulation, inability to get help from the teacher, and a delay in seeking feedback. The following factors contributed to participants' positive interactions: accessibility to the internet and technology, a well-designed instructional format, easily accessible technical help from the institution, immediate grade filings following assessments, and a flexible learning participative timetable. Untimely or ineffective communication from the educator was among the variables that contributed to participants' unfavorable experiences. Other factors were boring educational approaches, a lack of technical assistance, a lack of interpersonal connection, and an inadequately-designed course interface.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

Educators lacked the necessary technical competencies. They were unable to change their teaching approaches or adequately communicate with students, making it impossible to maintain best teaching practices in the online context.

Learners can actively participate in video conferences because instructors can designate them as moderators, which demonstrate the analytical teachers' competence (Candarli & Yuksel, 2012). The desire to employ different features given by the e-learning platform to acclimatize their teaching methodologies to the digital setting, for example, demonstrates the teachers' competence, as earlier stated. As part of these technical skills, instructors must be able to articulate topics through real-time collaboration, use instantaneous chat during lectures, provide students with the option of working in groups during meetings, post numerous links on the forum that point toward various resources, and create short videos for specific research facilities or seminars that are then posted on the website.

As a result, certain instructors were successful in finding answers, but others were unwilling to put up the work necessary to discover how to educate online. Regardless of the fact that now the e-learning framework fulfills the basic tenets for educators to grab it (easy of use, usefulness), learners are able to choose alternate solution platforms owing to the small number of technical challenges they experienced when utilizing different sites (Sitzmann et al., 2010). Regrettably, learners misconstrued technical faults with the system's overall potential. As a result, given the short length of time that instructors had to adjust to the new teaching settings, the majority of them were able to effectively meet the obstacles, albeit there is still space for growth. It was discovered that teachers rather than students dominated the educational approach and that attempts to implement a much more student-centered method failed because students felt excessive pressure due to a large number of activities they were obliged to do. As part of a student-centered instructional experience, teachers assign educators more tasks and responsibilities; however, because students are not accustomed to this aspect of teaching, they feel pressured. As a result, they are more prone to developing unfavorable emotions toward online learning.

In an attempt to make their courses more appealing, instructors employed a variety of techniques while delivering them online. However, feedback from students was occasionally delayed, assignments were not succinct, and professors sometimes failed to clarify their expectations effectively. The conventional approach professors used to present the operational portion of the program was no longer appropriate for the online environment, is one of the primary reasons why the virtual learning curriculum experienced so many difficulties during its first stages. Consequently, since they could not adjust and provide a solution quickly, instructors caused confusion and doubt among their learners in the process.

## 5. Limitations of the Study

One drawback is that the population was non-probabilistic and that the study was limited to just two universities, which is a significant constraint. It is thus impossible to extrapolate the findings to the whole higher education system. To generalize results, it would be beneficial to diversify the sample to include other higher education institutions from the United States. This would allow for correlations across universities, fields of study, prior knowledge of online learning at the institutions, and the presence of teacher education programs during this transition phase. Moreover, it would be useful to perform a longitudinal study that would help other scholars see how universities adjusted to solely e-learning, whether and how teachers conformed, and whether or not students' attitudes toward web-based learning improved.

## 6. Conclusion

The factors contributed that contributed to participants' positive interactions: accessibility to the internet and technology, well-designed instructional format, easily accessible technical help from the institution, immediate grade filings following assessments, and a flexible learning participative timetable. This means that after a prolonged duration of acclimation and hands-on experience with the online environment by teachers and students, the changes in the educational process could improve (Mishra et al., 2020). It is also possible that students' perceptions of online courses will become more positive, consistent with the findings of other studies that are previously discussed in this paper. For diverse higher education systems to correctly and effectively transition to online learning, a set of measures that could stimulate and support the system's adaptation to this new style of teaching and learning must be implemented. In this context, colleges could offer sessions for instructors or programs whose purpose would be to improve the performance of instructors and, indirectly, the overall quality of the instructional experience in the classroom.

Additionally, the establishment of an international accreditation institution that could be under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) titled: The International Education Accreditation Organization – IEAO, which can be able to take responsibility for the acknowledgment regulatory requirements for certification bodies globally that are working whether it is in online education or face-to-face education accreditation, whether programmable or institutional. This action will enhance both platforms and inspire nations to go through them with ease due to the move. Cohesive legal systems are being built at the international level and in individual countries, with the underpinnings for higher education institutions functioning in the e-learning system being defined first (Kosseff, 2018). This case includes the educational hierarchy, the terms of electronic channels, the security systems and protection offered, and the educational standards, and other issues that guarantee the

implementation of this sort of education and its causal link between countries.

Technical concerns continue to be the most difficult to resolve, owing to the limited capacity of the systems maintained by academic institutions. Universities, without a doubt, have made significant efforts to address these issues and increase the efficiency with which e-learning systems operate. Despite this, students continue to have technical difficulties such as inadequate internet connections, signal interference, and a lack of sufficient digital equipment, particularly for students who live come from low-income households. Colleges and universities could develop programs to fulfill these sorts of demands, therefore making the learning process easier for individuals who find themselves in these kinds of scenarios.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

1. As a scholar, how would you contrast your access to online school curricula to your experience with conventional in-class education? What do you think of it? Do you detest or like it?
2. How would you assess the overall value of the distance classes you receive as a student? What do you think: excellent, good, average, or poor? Why?
3. What considerations might cause you to prefer online curriculums rather than conventional in-class instruction?
4. What do you believe are the most significant aspects impact the effectiveness of the online training you earn?
6. As a learner, what could users do to enhance the quality of distance classes?
7. How does the quantity of program of study in your virtual learning program vary with conventional in-class instruction?
8. How do you see your online school experience? For instance, aspects such as the craftsmanship of visuals, layout, user friendly, navigation?
9. How do you feel about the comments you get from your teacher as a scholar? Is it delivered in a reasonable amount of time? Constructive? Do provide some specific instances.
10. As a scholar, do you believe that online education can help you achieve your learning objectives? If so, why? How?
11. To what extent, as an instructor or a student, do you believe in the importance of accreditation to the online education especially for the worldwide recognition and evaluation as well?

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