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Identifying the Teaching-Learning Process in Electronic Platform of Tehran University: A Phenomenological Study

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Over the past few decades, the integration of modern technologies into education has sparked considerable debate among educators and policymakers. The introduction of new technologies into higher education has significantly transformed the landscape. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the necessity of E-Learning as a viable alternative during crises, compelling educational institutions to adapt and innovate (Islam et al., 2015). While some advocate for the potential benefits of E-Learning, others express concerns about its effectiveness. E-Learning, as a pivotal advancement, has undergone extensive research. The present study aims to identify the criteria and components of the teaching-learning process within the electronic platform at the University of Tehran. This investigation is crucial as it highlights the transformative impact of technology on educational practices and seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the new dynamics introduced by E-Learning. In the context of the University of Tehran, which traditionally relied on face-to-face education, the shift to online learning during the pandemic presented unique challenges and opportunities.

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative and descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of students and lecturers at the University of Tehran. Purposive sampling was used, with eighteen students and twenty-five lecturers participating in semi-structured interviews. The interview questions, grounded in the theoretical framework of the study, underwent refinement through three iterative stages. Data were analyzed using the seven-step Colaizzi method. This method consists of seven stages (Shosha, 2012). The first stage is data review, where the written data from the interviews were read several times to understand the overall content. The second stage involves extracting important sentences, words, and paragraphs from the interview texts and keeping them by highlighting and underlining them. The third stage is creating extracted meanings, coding, and conceptualizing. In the fourth stage, after repeatedly re-reading the codes, the meanings were formulated, and the concepts were categorized as themes. The fifth stage involves creating a concise yet comprehensive narrative description, in which the key concepts of the data were summarized and categorized more generally. The sixth stage is validation, where the validity of the research results was confirmed by some of the participants. The seventh stage was dedicated to determining traceability, where the interviewer's personal experience in dealing with the participants was recorded and documented.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the research data, the criteria of qualitative research by Lincoln et al. (2011) were used. Finally, several participants confirmed the research findings, indicating that the findings accurately represented their true experiences (Hayes & McKibben, 2021).

Findings

The components identified through coding the interviews were categorized into 11 themes and 28 sub-themes. Upon examining commonalities and differences, three main axes—institutional, technology, and pedagogy—emerged for the teaching-learning process in the electronic platform of Tehran University.

Institutional Axis: This pertains to the characteristics of the institution, including continuous monitoring of virtual classes, provision of services for students and teachers, and support throughout the teaching-learning process.

Technology Axis: This involves electronic tools and technologies used in teaching and learning, such as infrastructure, internet connectivity, and accessible software. Regular and comprehensive training on these technologies is provided and updated (Maatuk et al., 2022).

Pedagogy: Focuses on teacher and student characteristics, class structure, teaching methods, and content delivery. Emphasis is placed on prior experiences and intrinsic motivation. Greater experience in both online and traditional teaching enhances the learning process. At the undergraduate level, especially in the first year, students are guided on self-regulated learning to foster deep learning and maintain motivation, thereby enhancing their learning outcomes (Hoshyar et al., 2020). Professors are encouraged to adopt a constructivist approach, acting as facilitators and supporters. Classrooms are designed with specific objectives, flexible lesson plans, and ongoing assessments rather than relying solely on end-of-semester exams. Educational content is designed to be multimedia-rich, engaging, meaningful, and supplemented with additional resources for deeper learning.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal significant challenges encountered by the University of Tehran during the transition from face-to-face to electronic education on a large scale. The novelty of online education posed difficulties for many students and professors, particularly since Tehran University has traditionally operated as a face-to-face institution with limited prior experience in electronic teaching.

However, with improvements in institutional support, technology infrastructure, and pedagogical approaches, better learning experiences can be achieved on the electronic platform for both educators and learners. The perception of institutional and teacher support plays a crucial role in achieving successful teaching-learning outcomes in the online environment (Khan, 2019; Sailer et al., 2021). Continuous institutional backing and emotional and cognitive support from teachers significantly contribute to enhancing the teaching-learning process at the university.

Keywords: Teaching-Learning process, E-learning, Phenomenology, University of Tehran.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles related to data collection and processing were strictly observed in this study. Participants provided informed consent, and their personal information was kept confidential throughout the research process.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest associated with this study.

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