

Strengths, drawbacks, and solutions for improving training efficiency through virtual learning in Vietnam

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Abstract

Currently, virtual learning is being deployed widely in Vietnam and around the world. Significantly, the complicated development of the Covid-19 pandemic has made it be a popular training method in both study and exam. However, virtual learning brings many challenges to both teachers and learners in ensuring the effectiveness of the training process. This research points out some advantages and limitations, as well as giving some suggestions to enhance the quality of the virtual learning applied and implemented in Vietnam.

Keywords: virtual learning, training efficiency

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Introduction:

Currently, the Covid-19 pandemic significantly affects a country or territory and deeply affects socio-economic activities around the world. Educational activities and learning are also in this trend. Therefore, many countries in general and Vietnam, in particular, have taken many measures to mitigate the adverse effects on socio-economics. Education and training are the activities that are paid more attention to in the transformation process to reduce the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The form of virtual learning (e-learning) has emerged as the leading option applied to maintain the learning process of educational institutions and learners.

Virtual learning is a form of instruction carried out in a virtual or simulated environment when the teacher and student are in different locations. In this process, there isn't any direct contact between teachers and learners due to the application of supporting technology platforms, which helps teachers directly or indirectly teach and transmit the lecture's content and lesson's data in many ways such as images, audio, and video.

When conducting by virtual learning, learners possess many opportunities to exchange, discuss, interact, take tests with their teachers and others, as well as accumulating a large amount of information, serving their learning process.

In education and training, virtual learning plays a vital role because it brings a great source of benefits and takes advantage of the modern technology platform flourishing in Vietnam. It helps teachers and learners access lessons and learning materials quickly and effectively, as well as strengthening interaction among them. Moreover, it will create many momentous chances and improve learners' knowledge and skills if they know how to make full use of its advantages.

There are three primary types of virtual learning: synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid.

Synchronous training requires teachers and learners to engage in real-time through internet-connected means such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones by image, audio, chat, and video in a virtual classroom (e.g., via MSTeams, Google Meet, Zoom, etc.)

In contrast, asynchronous training does not require real-time interaction between teachers and learners. At this time, teachers will give instructions and requirements for learners to accomplish the assigned assignments on time actively. Thanks to that, learners conduct discussions, interact through forums, blogs, or email and actively fulfill assignments that their teachers have set out on time.

Hybrid training means applying two training techniques that are asynchronous and synchronous training at the same time. This kind of virtual learning requires and provides meeting in-person as well as computer-based communication.

The survey was given to 189 learners who are learners in university from the first year to the last one by using a google form to collect and analyze the data.

The following tables present the advantages and disadvantages related the most to the research.

Table 1. The advantages of virtual learning

| The benefits of virtual learning | Percentages |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Saving the travel time | 96.5 |
| 2. The new theme of learning | 81.6 |
| 3. Giving efforts to catch plan of the semester | 78 |
| 4. Giving more time for self-study | 62 |
| 5. Ease accessing the resources | 60 |

Table 2. The disadvantages of virtual learning

| The challenges of virtual learning | Percentages |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Countless times on seeing digital screens | 93.8 |
| 2. Keeping too long at the same body position | 91.2 |
| 3. Lack of environment for enhancing social interaction skills | 89.2 |
| 4. Fear of online assessment | 81.8 |
| 5. Problems with concentration | 77.7 |
| 6. Challenge for peer interaction in a virtual class | 74.6 |
| 7. Difficulties in remaining stable connection during class | 73.2 |
| 8. Lack of time and environment to interact with teachers and other learners | 67.8 |
| 9. Difficulties to follow schedules and complete self-discipline | 52 |

Some strengths and drawbacks of virtual learning

Strengths

a. Cost savings

For training service providers:

- Firstly, thanks to the virtual learning, learners and teachers must not spend much money traveling from accommodation to training sites.
- Secondly, education institutions can cut down on the cost of space used for training. In metropolitan regions where the cost of space is rising, virtual learning has shown to be beneficial. At the same time, it

helps training service providers minimize the fixed costs that have to be paid monthly, such as electricity, water, learning materials, etc.

- Lastly, virtual learning content can be stored for re-use, saving much money for the subsequent training sessions. Furthermore, we can modify inappropriate content rather than redeveloping the original training content.

For learners:

Virtual learning helps learners save money on traveling, accommodation, learning materials, textbooks, etc. In addition, virtual courses are usually less expensive than traditional training, giving learners more choices for alternative courses and materials at the same cost compared to other training methods.

b. Time-saving

- i. To begin with, virtual learning helps teachers save time for traveling and performing tasks related to classroom activities such as testing, calling roll, solving problems, marking, etc.
- ii. Besides, learners enrolling in virtual learning programs or courses can save time by actively scheduling study time and other personal activities. Because the learning materials are provided in advance, it takes learners less time to collect and assemble the materials for the training theme.

c. Enhancing the ability to teach and manage learners

Virtual learning plays a crucial part in improving teachers' teaching ability by applying teaching tools integrated into the training system. Thereby, advisors possess more tools supporting creativity, making their lectures more engaging and attractive.

In addition, virtual learning provides many tools for teachers to manage learners more effectively via storing data of learners. Precisely, teachers can appraise, comment, and mark comprehensively throughout the training process.

d. No restrictions on space, time, or training scale

It is considered one of the tremendous benefits of virtual learning. Teachers and learners can conduct educational activities regardless of time, place, or size by applying three primary kinds of virtual learning. For example, teachers build lessons and implement knowledge delivery. It's effortless for learners to access lessons and knowledge at the desired time and place. Thus, both teachers and learners can maximize training effectiveness thanks to the flexibility in choosing the best time, place, and scale to deliver and receive information.

e. Promoting self-discipline and initiative in the training process:

The flexibility of virtual learning makes learners comfortable in the learning process. Therefore, they have great motivation and reasons to develop and demonstrate their abilities, allowing them to proactively and willingly engage in and arrange their learning.

f. Several methods for efficiently conveying knowledge and lectures

Because the virtual learning system is based on technology to spread knowledge and lessons, various tools are available to help teachers and learners access the creative and diverse training content, which brings excitement and enhances learners' thinking ability.

Drawbacks

Firstly, it is arduous to create cohesion among class members. It is considered the most common disadvantage of virtual learning, which is caused by the following reasons:

- i. Learners are not familiar with virtual learning spaces.
- ii. Learners are distracted by things happening around their studying place (such as at home and coffee shops).
- iii. Learners are familiar with the training method, which requires face-to-face interaction.

- iv. Teachers continue applying direct training to virtual learning because they have not adapted to teaching in the virtual environment.

Secondly, the technology platform is challenging to reach or get used to. It plays a vital role in the successful implementation of the training program for virtual learning. However, it is challenging to choose the right one to deploy the courses. When developing a virtual learning program, it is crucial for developers to choose the right platform, which makes the learners' accessibility most effective such as terminals, internet accessibility, and paid copyrighted software. Moreover, the ability to use technological devices of teachers is different from that of learners, causing the efficiency of implementing virtual learning programs to vary.

Thirdly, learners shall be proactive and self-disciplined during the learning process. The efficiency of virtual learning is determined by the attitude and self-discipline of each individual in a classroom, so the monitoring system shall be good enough for learners to follow the schedule of the set program.

Fourthly, it takes a lot of effort and cost in designing and building an effective virtual learning program, such as:

- i. Building initial learning materials: Because the training technique and form differ from direct training, a separate learning material system must be established to match the way of transmitting and providing learning materials to learners. Therefore, it takes a lot of money and resources to re-create and re-design to ensure the quality of the virtual learning.
- ii. Furthermore, developing and maintaining the technical infrastructure to ensure continuity in implementing the virtual learning program requires much effort and money.

Fifthly, learners face difficulty in integrating with their teachers and classmates. The effectiveness of teamwork may be decreased due to the virtual learning environment and the lack of face-to-face interaction among learners and between learners and teachers. At the same time, teachers need more effort to lead class activities such as group activities or answer questions of each learner.

Finally, it is the lack of movement. It's hard for learners to know how long the learning process lasts, so they rarely leave their seats during the learning process, which adversely affects their psychology and physical condition.

Solutions for enhancing the efficiency of virtual learning

Choosing the right technology platform: Currently, many technology platforms can be used in virtual learning. Therefore, teachers need to base on their demands and classroom design to make the right decision. Thanks to that, we can determine the specific goals that teachers expect their learners to reach after the course to prepare for a construction and implementation plan of virtual classrooms from the beginning. For example, before deciding, it is essential to consider the advantages and disadvantages of technological solutions for virtual learning such as Zoom, MSTeams, and Google Meet.

The benefit of virtual learning is that it can quickly and accurately store the learning materials, helping learners access them during and after the learning process. Therefore, the storage system must be paid more attention to when building a virtual learning program so that it helps both teachers and learners check the necessary information if needed.

Selecting how to interact in the classroom: The barrier of virtual learning is the direct interaction between members in the learning process, so teachers shall possess a wide array of plans, expertises, and knowledge to make the interaction between members more vibrant and efficacious. For example, they can consider discussing by commenting on forums or through chat tools.

Fostering technology skills for teachers and learners: Technology plays a crucial part in virtual learning, so teachers and learners shall actively prepare for primary technology skills to plan lectures, teach, and research more successfully.

Following the training process of learners: The technology platform used in virtual learning offers many opportunities for teachers to monitor learners' learning process via assessing assignments and recognizing their participation in the class by utilizing means of communication such as forums, email, chat, and video. It creates cohesion and indicates teachers' care, reducing separation in the virtual learning environment.

Conclusion

Research on the advantages and limitations of virtual learning is needed to improve the effectiveness of this type of training method in the context of the increasing demand for virtual learning. Although not a new study, learning about the advantages and limitations of virtual learning helps to show the role of teachers and learners in improving the quality of training. Through the research, it can be seen that, first of all, the process of managing and evaluating learners in virtual learning can avoid unnecessary pressure on learners. Second, teachers need to design appropriate program content to attract and maintain learners' attention. Third, the content and assessment of training need to be tailored to the devices and technology platforms used by both teachers and learners the use of virtual learning is an inevitable trend to serve training during the covid-19 pandemic and thrive in the future because of the undeniable benefits that virtual learning brings. Therefore, research on virtual learning needs more research investment to attract more and more teachers and learners.

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