Education in a global pandemic and online learning: Friend or Foe?

The long-term effects of COVID-19 on Education: has this resulted in a more independent learner or a learner who has lost on a years worth of education?

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Background :

The end of 2019 was met with the start of a novel coronavirus that very soon developed into a global pandemic. The severity of the virus itself soon spread across the world ultimately haltering the way we live life. More than a year in with this new way of life will the changes that this pandemic brought with it only last a few more years or will these changes permanently integrate into our daily lives?

Online learning allowed students to continue their education from the safety of their own homes, curbing the spread of Covid-19.

When it comes to the fine-tuning of this new unexplored platform in the realms of education how well-equipped are we for this to be an efficient medium to deliver education and prepare the generation for this world? When it comes to higher-level education we have learnt a plethora of lessons from having over a year of online-learning there is still an enormous amount that we have not figured out.

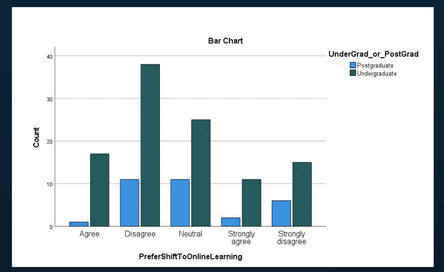
Image 1: showcasing world map with areas in blue highlighting the countries results were collected from.

Aim of study:

- Research how students education experience, mental health,social life and wellbeing has been impacted by the global pandemic
- Gain better insight as to how students feel about these changes to education
- Aid in improving teaching and learning and enrich the body of education.
- Examine the effects on students, their education experiences their motivation and their well-being.

Methods:

- We created a 20 question online questionnaire via google docs with an open-ended qualitative section where students could respond anonymously
- Participants ranging from 1st year undergraduates to postgraduates and from 32 universities' worldwide (shown in image 1 above).
- We examined the students educational experience, the effects on their mental health and how this shift has affected them.
- The questionnaire assess the impact of online learning on their learning experience, assessments online and social and emotional impact of working online.



Graph 1: showcases the contrasting difference of opinion to the shift to online learning between postgraduates and undergraduates

UnderGrad_or_PostGrad

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Postgraduate	31	22.6	22.6	22.6
	Undergraduate	106	77.4	77.4	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Med Indicator

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Med	59	43.1	43.1	43.1
	Non-Med	78	56.9	56.9	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Indicates the educational background of participants

Results:

- 137 students from global universities conducted the test worldwide of which, 23% were postgraduate students and 77% undergraduate students
- Students ranged from a plethora of backgrounds from arts, engineering to medicine, with 57% being of non-medical background and 43% of a medicine background
- 50% of all students that online school affected their performance
- 60% agreed that this shift has added to their anxieties about the future
- More than 75% of our data showcases how students feel like they are missing out on opportunities
- Non-medical students were more neutral to a lot of situations whereas medical students had stronger opinions about the changes.

Quotes from students who took questionnaire

Positive opinions about online classes	Biggest challenges faced by students
"More time to do other stuff like homework, assignments and personal stuff"	"Time management and setting priorities"
"Taught me how to adapt easily to changes"	"Staying focused and motivated"
"saved money on transport costs and some lectures should have always been on online"	"Get distracted easily"
"I can spend more time with my family"	"Staying on top of things and staying motivated "
"Sleeping more"	"burnout, finding it difficult to separate work and personal life"
"Flexibility"	"Technical issues" "Internet connection problems"
"Managing time properly"	"Work life balance"
"Having enough time for studying and the ability to question the teacher more easily"	"No separation from work and free time/home"
"I got to stay home for the semester with my family because they dont live in Ireland."	"Work life balance has been disturbed. So has mental health"

Table 2: Quotes students are giving personal feedback the pros cons about shift to learning

Conclusion:

From the results of this study it can be observed that overall students do stryffle a great deal with these sudden new shift to education and although some would make it work it is something we need to work on more collectively in order to aid students in reaching their maximum potential.

References:

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