

ONLINE EDUCATION: Effective or Harmful? By İrem Bıyıklı & Nilay Şebnem Yaren

Online education is a teaching method consisting of computerized lectures and assignments which began to popularize slowly, with the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Now, people are discussing whether this type of education can be used after the pandemic or not. To answer this specific question we have to look at the effectiveness of online education by analyzing its advantages and disadvantages. We, as university students who currently have online classes, feel the need to talk about if this method is beneficial or not in both technical terms and considering the psychology of the students which should be the priority of us all at the moment.

As far as the importance of education goes, human psychology has been one of the crucial elements of both teaching and learning. The area of Pedagogy, which deals with understanding the mental processes of the subject when teaching, has been included in the curriculums of teaching to better the experience of learning for students. Thus, the in-person education method that we are used to was specifically designed by professionals years ago to cater to the mental and emotional needs of the students so that the learning process serves its sole purpose rather than acting as an obstacle for the student during their university life. Therefore, it is evident that the mental state of the student holds the utmost importance during this unfortunate period of online education as well.

Online Education and Its Efficiency

First things first, the biggest difficulty of online education is, of course, accessibility to a proper Internet connection and required technological devices. Unfortunately, not all students are lucky enough to have them. As a solution, most of the universities donate technological devices and give a specific scholarship for Internet access fee but if this period goes on, I doubt whether they can cover the requirements for all students in need. Another problem with Internet access is a disconnection during and/or before the lessons. Students are missing what is told in the lesson. In order to solve this issue, some instructors are recording their lessons which contains both conveniences and difficulties in itself. Their intellectual property should be secured, these records should not be shared without his/her permission. On the other hand, these records allow learning what is told for the students who were not able to be in the online class

at the lecture time and give a chance to repeat the lesson for the students who did not understand what is told during the lesson.

Secondly, It is believed that the most important benefit of online education is the possibility of removing quota restrictions. The nonexistence of physical classes will allow the instructors to accept more students. Students are going to be choosing their lessons according to their interests, not because of the aim to complete a certain number of credits. Even though this situation seems wonderful, it has undesired outcomes as every wonderful thing has. For example, the classes will be less interactive. We can explain this situation with simple math: an increase in the number of students will cause a decrease in instructors' effort per person. Thus, the possibility of removing quota restrictions will not be a Pareto efficient solution, yet instructors may seize upon the idea of flexing the quota restrictions.

Thirdly, exams are an indispensable part of education. Whilst education is online, the exams will be the same as expected. Online exams come with a problem: Whether they are fair or not? Cheating in online exams seems much easier compared to physical ones. There are some applications to prevent it but the students have unimaginable creative thinking skills when it comes to cheating. It would be more useful for humanity if they use these skills in art instead of cheating yet this is not our point in this article. Besides, online exams are mostly answer-oriented rather than solution-oriented, especially in natural sciences. It is believed that learning its logic is more essential than writing down a number consisting of several digits. Thus, giving assignments such as asking them to write short/long essays on specific subjects is believed to be more effective and instructive.

The continuity of online education in the post-pandemic period is still uncertain. Overall it is believed that there is still a long way to go if it will replace traditional education. As a result, the efficiency of this type of education will change regarding students' socioeconomic and most importantly psychological states.

Online Education and its effects on Student Psychology

One of the most challenging factors of this quarantine probably is the responsibility of school on many of the students' shoulders. We need to consider both the positive and negative effects of online education on students but it should not be ignored that while the world is literally turning upside down, most businesses are at a standstill, no production except for food sector and healthcare services; most students cannot find the motivation to go ahead and study like all is well. Demanding students to act as if everything is fine and join video-lectures; take their exams, quizzes and do their homeworks is just an inconsiderate and unrealistic expectation as a whole when the thought of even going out to buy bread and returning home with a deadly virus takes a toll on their mental health and well-being. Thus, most students choose to spend their days trying to stay safe and sane as possible by not worrying about ordinary-time responsibilities and spending time on what gives them joy whether it may be reading, watching movies or playing instruments. To sum up, regular actions during irregular times cannot be expected since students cannot be expected to be in the right headspace when there are many of them out there whose families, neighbors, close friends or even themselves are battling this lethal virus and it might not be the most comforting thing to receive an email about an upcoming online exam or lecture from their professor in the middle of all that.

With all that being said, online education has its perks for our psychology as well. During this duration of having to stay at home, most of us do not even show effort get out of bed as long as we are not obliged to; however online school at least makes some of us get up, get ready, freshen up and focus on something other than the current crisis even if it is for half an hour. It might seem as an unnecessary burden but it keeps a lot of us from picturing unhealthy scenarios with the pessimistic outlook on life that most of us are acquiring as each day goes by and it makes us feel like we are being productive instead of just passing time which really serves as a mood booster because of the pressure of a hypothetical 'productivity race' that social media, unfortunately, puts us all in. Consequently, it essentially keeps us busy from worrying or thinking about the unusual situation that we are all in. Whether we give in to the pressure of online school or not, we need to acknowledge that these are difficult times for us all no matter the distinction of professions and although it comes with all its challenges, we need to accept that online school is just an

element of this process that we have to deal with and try to make the most of it to try and keep our heads up with the belief that nothing lasts forever and that we in fact will, be fine eventually.