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THE OPINION OF LECTURERS IN UNIVERSITIES ON ONLINE  
LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC: A CASE  
STUDY IN VIETNAM

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**ABSTRACT**

The World Health Organization has declared that Covid-19 is a pandemic that poses a threat to humanity. This pandemic has forced the global shutdown of a number of activities, including educational activities, and this has led to a change in training forms to cope with the crisis of universities including universities in Vietnam. Faced with the complicated developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, all training courses around the country had to take long breaks, and the Ministry of Education and Training has sent an official letter to educational institutions about improving teaching across the Internet and television. This is a practical option at this time to assist learners in reviewing, consolidating information, and ensuring the standard of learning when they return to school, and online teaching has been introduced since the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year. Thus, this new form of teaching has been carried out due to the pandemic affecting both educational levels in Vietnam in particular and the world in general. In universities, this is the first time, most lecturers are teaching online, so the lecturers can face many different problems. Therefore, identifying teachers' opinions in online teaching is an important job towards perfecting and developing an online training system. The purpose of this study is to look at the opinions of lecturers taking online courses and make suggestions for improvement of the factors related to this form of teaching. For this purpose, interviews with semi-structured questions were held with 20 trainers and the data obtained descriptive analysis. The results of the study show that the instructors support online teaching options, at the same time, the contingent of people who practice teaching in the form of online teaching needs to be fostered to have enough information about online training platforms as well as the

implementation process in online teaching. Besides, it is also necessary to invest in facilities to ensure effective implementation of online teaching.

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to Huang et al. (Huang et al., 2020) a new corona virus, called Covid-19, was discovered in the last month of 2019, at a seafood market in Wuhan. The results of the clinical analysis of the virus show human-to-human transmission (Li et al., 2020) (Abramo et al., 2012) (Wang et al., 2020). The Director-General of WHO in March 2020 (WHO, 2020) declared Covid-19 a pandemic after assessing the rapid spread and severity of the deadly virus globally with additional notification of social distancing as a means to curb the spread of pandemic. Social distancing between people helps limit the spread of the disease. This pandemic forced businesses, sports operations and schools to shut down globally by forcing all organizations to move to online platforms. In the spring of 2020, Vietnamese universities have experienced an unprecedented change from direct education to online education in the traditional classroom. Due to the prevalence of COVID-19 in Vietnam, most Vietnamese universities have begun online education according to the government's requirements for "uninterrupted teaching and learning". Not only in Vietnam but all over the world, with the pandemic becoming more serious, many universities around the world have halted traditional teaching and closed campuses, while others have begun to implement online class models for teaching (Quintana, 2020). As a result, colleges have stepped up their attempts to deploy online learning systems and digital tools to replace traditional classroom instruction with online instruction. In order to meet the learning needs of their enormous numbers of students, the majority of Vietnam colleges and universities have adopted online learning as the most appropriate and safe choice at this time. Despite this, universities and teachers are clearly not equipped for online instruction for such a large number of students due to the pandemic's quick expansion and the disruption it has produced. This leads to the need to have specific research on factors related to online teaching in order to find the factors that effectively organize online teaching.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***The Concept of Online Learning***

Information and communication technologies (ICT) may be useful as a source of innovative instructional materials in the classroom (Duy & Nhật, 2018). It also enables teachers to communicate with one another and form collaborative networks with other schools (Silva et al., 2019). As a result of the changes in student learning processes, emerging digital developments in education necessitate the quest for new teaching techniques and approaches. (Compton, 2009). As a result, incorporating ICT into the teaching curriculum has become a critical pillar in the preparation of future teachers. (Bahcivan et al., 2019). Distance education has become more accessible thanks to rapid technological advancements. (McBrien et al., 2009). "Most of the words (for example, online learning, open learning, web-based learning, machine-mediated learning, blended learning, and m-learning) share the freedom to use a computer linked to a network, which allows learners to learn from anywhere, at any time, in any

rhythm, and by any means.” (Cojocariu et al., 2014). Online learning can be thought of as a platform for making the teaching–learning process more student-centered, creative, and versatile. (Dhawan, 2020) (Yu, 2021). "Learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using various devices (e.g., cell phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access" is how online learning is described(Lê Văn Toán, 2020). Students can learn and communicate with teachers and other students from anywhere (independent) in these environments. (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Students attend live classes, there are real-time interactions between educators and learners, and there is the likelihood of immediate feedback in a synchronous learning environment, whereas asynchronous learning environments are not properly organized(Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020). Learning materials are not accessible in the form of live lectures or classes in such a learning environment; instead, they are available through various learning systems and forums. In such a scenario, instant feedback and immediate response are impossible. (Dhawan, 2020). Synchronous learning can provide a wealth of social interaction opportunities. (McBrien et al., 2009)(Andajani & Wijastuti, 2020). During the spread of this deadly virus, such online platforms as (a) video conferencing (b) To keep classes organic, discussions with students can be held, (c) internet connections are adequate, and (d) lectures are available on cell phones as well as laptops, (e) immediate feedback from students can be obtained and assignments can be completed ; and (g) previously recorded lectures can be viewed ; and (h) previously recorded lectures can be viewed. possibility of watching already recorded lectures(Basilaia, 2020).

### ***The Necessity of Online Learning***

Owing to the extreme outbreak of this global pandemic, a large portion of the planet is under quarantine. Many towns have become phantom cities as a result of Covid-19, and its results can also be seen in schools, colleges, and universities.. (Dhawan, 2020). The Corona Virus has made institutions go from offline mode to online mode of pedagogy. The organizations that were previously resistant to change would be forced to embrace new technology as a result of this crisis. This disaster would demonstrate the financial benefits of online teaching and learning. We can preach to a large number of students at any time and from anywhere in the world using online teaching modes. (Andajani & Wijastuti, 2020). All organizations must juggle various online pedagogical methods and strive to make better use of technology. Many universities all over the world have completely digitalized their activities, recognizing the critical need in this case. In the midst of this turmoil, online learning is emerging as a victor ludorum. (Dhawan, 2020). Online learning is emerging as a victor ludorum in the midst of this upheaval. (Suartama et al., 2021). Following the Covid-19 outbreak, online education in Vietnamese universities has exploded. Educators have changed their entire pedagogical strategy to combat emerging business dynamics and adjust to shifting situations, resulting in an overnight transition of traditional classrooms into e-classrooms(Murphy, 2020). During this difficult period, the main question is not whether online teaching–learning methods will provide high-quality education, but rather how academic institutions will be able to implement online learning on such a large scale(Dhawan, 2020). Any educational institution,

anywhere in the world, would be harmed by resistance to reform. They will be judged on their ability to adjust to changes in such a short period of time and maintain a high level of quality. Educational institutions' reputations are on the line, and they are being scrutinized. Their ability to adapt is shown by how well they act and retain the standard of their education in the face of the crisis. The only option is to switch from face-to-face lectures to online classes. Academic institutions, for example, would not be able to convert all of their college curricula into an online resource in a single day. The three main obstacles to online teaching are distance, size, and personalized teaching and learning (Dhawan, 2020).

Online learning has a number of advantages, including flexibility in terms of when work is completed (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010), which allows students to choose what and what they learn. In addition, research has suggested that online learning is pedagogically promising, since it promotes deeper learning due to its self-paced and student-centred approach (Grieve et al., 2017). Furthermore, online learning has been documented to trigger a sense of alienation among students due to the instructor's separation from the students.

### ***Purpose Of the Study and Research Questions***

When the COVID pandemic is complicated, it is impossible to study directly at school, the online teaching form becomes the most effective solution to maintain the teaching of schools. The hasty implementation, the lack of careful preparation and the immediate mass implementation, has shown a series of problems, a series of difficulties that need to be resolved, needs to be “removed” for this advanced mode of learning to flourish. However, this is also an experience and an opportunity for the society to pay more attention and see more clearly to online teaching, thereby having solutions to promote the strengths and to limit weaknesses to promote this form of teaching, to integrate with the international trend. For this reason, lecturers' opinion on online education is very important. The purpose of this study is to identify lecturers' opinions about online training and propose improvements to the factors related to this form of teaching.

Therefore, this study examined the following research questions:

- (1) What are your opinions about online education due to Covid?
- (2) What is your opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of online education?
- (3) What factors for improvement in online teaching do you have?

### **METHODOLOGY**

For the purpose of the study to examine the opinions of the lecturers regarding Online Learning and the suggestions for improving it, an interview and document analysis techniques from qualitative techniques were used. A descriptive approach of study was carried out by interview method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Creswell, John, and Creswell (Creswell, W. John & Creswell, 2018), stated that the focus of qualitative research is a research model that helps us to understand the participants' own

perspectives on a situation or a subject and their comments on the subject and the subject.

Each note is a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of a personal information sample and 3 open questions developed by the researchers to be used as a data collection tool. Open-ended questions in questionnaires were created by using the materials and experiences of researchers themselves. A personal information form is used to identify the implementer's personal information, and a questionnaire is used to identify lecturers' opinion about online teaching.

Previous to implementation, we tested the survey on: 3 experienced qualitative research experts; interviewed 3 graduate students in the educational science doctoral program; 3 lecturers attended at least 1 online training course to learn about the applicability of questions to the actual survey context, reasonableness and clarity of questions. At the same time, the researchers, post-graduate, and lecturers participating in the test commented on the questionnaire and made comments on the questionnaire, as well as problems in answering this questionnaire. Based on the feedback, the questionnaire has been adjusted to some details, such as the order of questioning, the language expression to make the question clearer, add annotations or remove some unnecessary annotations while editing the questions to better serve the research purpose.

We conduct research with the voluntary consent of 20 lecturers from universities in different fields (engineering, pedagogy, social sciences) in Vietnam. We make clear that the purpose of the survey is purely scientific, not for profit purposes, and the opinions of the survey participants will be kept strictly confidential.

The time of the survey was October, November 2020, at this time lecturers were able to conduct online courses due to the Covid pandemic. Each participant received an equal ballot and answered all questions related to online teaching. The research working group includes educators who have taken online courses. Survey results show positive and negative opinions as well as lecturers' recommendations about teachers, learners as well as technology to support online teaching and learning.

**Table 1.** Personal Information of Lecturers

		<b>F</b>
Gender	Female	12
	Male	8
	<b>Total</b>	20
Age	Under 30	3
	30 – 35	4
	36-40	8
	41-45	3
	46 and more age	2
	<b>Total</b>	20

**Results: Research Question 1**

**Table 2.** Lecturer Views About the Online Education Due to Covid

<b>The supporting comments</b>	<b>Confused opinions</b>
Online teaching is an effective form of teaching in Covid 19 pandemic season (15)	Implementation was hasty with lack of careful preparation, lack of teacher and student readiness (17)
Online teaching is not only for the Covid-19 season, but it could also be a future learning trend (12)	The technological capacity of lecturers is still limited (15)
	The facilities are still in short supply (16)
	For students in rural, economically disadvantaged areas who do not have the essential equipment and facilities to qualify for online study (12)

Some opinions of lecturers about online teaching are as follows: “When the COVID pandemic is complicated, it is impossible to study directly at schools; the online teaching form becomes the most effective solution to maintain the teaching of schools. The hasty implementation, the lack of careful preparation and the immediate mass implementation, has shown a series of problems, a series of difficulties that need to be resolved, needs to be “removed” for this advanced mode of learning to flourish. However, this is also an experience and an opportunity for the society to pay more attention and see more clearly to online teaching, thereby having solutions to promote the strengths and weaknesses to promote this form of teaching, to integrate with the general trend of the world ". Some other comments said that “The implementation of online teaching and learning in the period of social distancing because the pandemic still have problems such as Psychology of learners and teachers is not ready at the highest level, technology platform has not high coverage and is not strong enough and synchronous when deployed on a large scale for the entire education system. In particular, disadvantaged objects may be left behind when online accessibility is limited for a variety of reasons.

**Research Question 2:**

**Table 3.** Lecturer Views About the Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Education

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Flexibility (18)</b>	<b>Technology (17)</b>
<b>Cost reduction (12)</b>	<b>Preparing the lecture (15)</b>
<b>Networking opportunities (10)</b>	School environment (6)
<b>Document (5)</b>	<b>Practice (5)</b>
<b>Access to expertise (7)</b>	

Regarding the advantages of online teaching, most lecturers believe that this form of learning has high flexibility (18 opinions). They say that students have

the freedom to arrange their careers and schools because they are not tied to a fixed schedule. In the traditional classroom, class time is preset and students have no right to this, forcing them to work on a schedule these days. Most people who choose to study online tend to have different commitments and prefer this method of learning as it gives them power over how they will delegate time to their various projects. The second advantage mentioned by lecturers is that this form of teaching can reduce costs for learners in the learning process (12 opinions). According to them, online education may cost less for many reasons. For example, there are no travel expenses. Costs related to traffic, such as fuel, parking, car maintenance, and public transport costs do not affect online students. The third advantage raised by the lecturers is that this form of teaching provides networking opportunities for teachers as well as learners (10 opinions). Accordingly, online teaching also gives students the opportunity to connect with peers across different countries or even continents. This often leads to other opportunities in terms of collaborating with other individuals on a project. At the same time, it makes them culturally sensitive and can easily adapt to other environments when they come into contact with other cultures.

The fourth advantage is raised by 5 opinions of interviewed lecturers, which is that the resource is searched quickly, saving time. They assume that the information you need will be securely stored in an online database. This includes things like live discussion materials, training materials, and emails. This means that if anything needs to be clarified, students will be able to access these documents quickly, saving valuable time. This is especially useful for individuals who need to undertake research for a project and submit their findings to a board. A fifth advantage is raised by the 7 opinions of interviewed lecturers, which is access to expertise. Online teaching can give students access to specialized degree courses that may not be available in a local institution or easily accessible. Online classes that allow the sharing of expertise give more people access to an education that is not available in certain geographic locations.

Regarding the difficulty of online teaching, many opinions of interviewed lecturers (17 opinions) said that: The technological capacities of lecturers and students are still limited. In online teaching, they argue, technical problems are one of the main obstacles. Teaching and learning are highly dependent on devices, transmission signals, and so on. Very common problems like compatibility issues (with operating system, browser or smartphone), courses never starting or students not knowing how to proceed, if someone has trouble with the above, teaching is interrupted or unable to be effectively performed.

Besides, the difficulty of lecturers in preparing lectures for the online course is also raised by many comments (15 opinions). Many teachers find that preparing lessons and teaching online is much more difficult and harder than learning face-to-face. Guiding students to understand, test, or monitor the learning process is difficult. It is also difficult for teachers to create many exciting activities like in traditional classes”.

Also, in online classes, the learning environment is limited (6 opinions). Specifically, the interaction between teacher and student is poor or not high.

This learning environment limits the activeness and creativity of learners, reduces the ability of lecturers to convey as well as the passion and enthusiasm of lecturers to students. Reminding learners is not exhaustive, time passes and students have not yet accessed the training platform or completed the course.

Finally, the difficulty in teaching online is raised by a few teachers (5), that is, the practice of students is still limited. Science has shown that the best way to learn something, they say, is to practice it. Only by practicing what we do and experience (experiential learning) can we understand and recall the content and skills we learn. However, many online courses skip this part and focus only on theoretical content and external lessons. As a result, students limit practice and the learning process does not fulfill its full potential.

**Research Question 3:**

**Table 4.** Lecturer Views About the Factors for Improvement in Online Teaching

<b>Factors mentioned</b>	<b>F</b>
Infrastructure, from computers, software, to transmission lines.	20
Teacher training about online courses	18
Student training about online courses	15
Take control of online lectures by lecturers	11

Finally, the lecturers mention the factors that need to be improved for effective online teaching. In which all (20) lecturers expressed that it is firstly necessary to invest in infrastructure facilities for online courses. This greatly affects the effectiveness of online teaching courses.

The second factor mentioned by lecturers in effective online teaching implementation is increasing training and retraining for teachers participating in online teaching. Besides, it also needs guidance to support students as well as parents about online learning. Because according to them, “have good infrastructure, fierce managers, qualified and enthusiastic teachers but learners with a lack of motivation to study, parents lack sharing and support, then the process of implementing online teaching cannot be successful”.

There are 11 opinions that online lectures of teachers need to be controlled before being conducted on the course. According to them, with online teaching, lessons will be very heavy if teachers do not actively prepare activities in advance. When teaching online, teachers need to understand that changing environments is not being applied in the same way as traditional classrooms.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This article studies lecturers' perspectives on online teaching and recommendations for effective implementation of online teaching. The results show that, in the current context, the Covid 19 pandemic situation is complicated, for schools, online teaching is an effective solution to implement the motto “Pause to go to school but Non-stop learning” for students of all

levels. However, the survey results suggest that, in order for online teaching to be effective, it is impossible to do so hastily, it requires careful preparation of both human and material resources. In the new form of teaching and learning of online teaching, technology has contributed to improving learning flexibility and maintaining educational activities, contributes to the implementation of the learning plan within the time allowed. However, online teaching activities have recently shown some shortcomings of online education in Vietnam. Lecturers and students are not ready for the transition to online learning, in both methodology and thinking. There are a number of lecturers interviewed who claim that: “For traditional teaching, teachers can control all activities of students in the classroom because of limited space, and can interact more directly with students. When doing online teaching, this teaching model is posted to the remote computer, the entire space is narrowed in one screen, the lecturer will lose all viewing angles. However, video conference is still necessary because students still have interaction with their lecturers and help solve other problems. From overcoming difficulties encountered when teaching online, teachers also need to prepare well conditions for facilities to serve teaching, teaching online to achieve the highest efficiency. Specifically, teachers need to prepare in detail activities and supporting materials before and after the online lecture to help learners grasp the topic before joining the lesson and reviewing knowledge afterwards. Check and use teaching equipment and lesson materials that are compatible with online teaching software or not. Learners must also prepare sufficient learning aids such as computers, necessary software, video recording equipment, and conversation equipment to participate in online classes. In addition, it is important to pay attention to online polite principles such as not turning on the video recorder if not dressed properly, leaving silent on the conversation device if there is no need for discussion, respond when asked to answer, actively participate in discussions in the voice room when named, notify those who are participating when they have to stop the class early.... In addition, the investment in essential equipment for online teaching such as computers, internet connection, software, ... should also be interested in implementing online teaching. It is necessary to have a dedicated classroom, with a quiet space, fully equipped. Video and portable recorders should be arranged so that the teacher can freely move to the writing board to explain complex problems, so that learners can feel the teacher's movements instead of only a close-up face can be seen. It is necessary to check and use teaching devices and class materials to see if they are compatible with online teaching software.

With its advantages, online training is not only a popular learning trend in the future, being strongly invested by many universities in Vietnam to diversify training and learning models in the 4.0 era, but also deployed during the student's absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The authors announce that there is no conflict of interest.

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