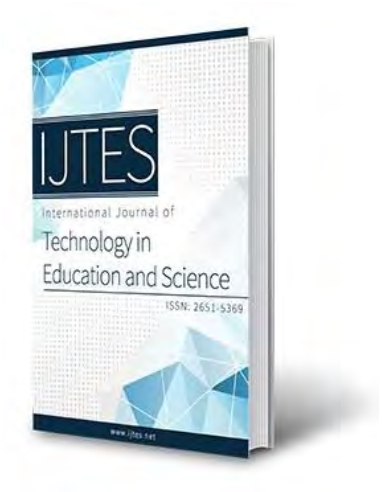

www.ijtes.net

Perspectives on Online Education in Higher Education

Afam Uzorka
Kampala International University, Uganda

To cite this article:

Uzorka, A. (2024). Perspectives on online education in higher education. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science (IJTES), 8*(1), 111-120. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijtes.523

IJTES International Journal of Technology in Education and Science
2024, Vol. 8, No. 1, 111-120 https://doi.org/10.46328/ijtes.523

Perspectives on Online Education in Higher Education

Afam Uzorka

Article Info

Article History

Received:
30 June 2023
Accepted:
03 December 2023

Keywords

Online education
Higher education
Uganda
COVID-19 pandemic
Perspectives
Benefits
Challenges

Abstract

This inquiry explores the opinions of lecturers and students on the advantages and difficulties of switching from traditional face-to-face mode to online mode of delivery in Ugandan higher education institutions during and even after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study investigates participants' perspectives and experiences regarding the benefits and downsides of online learning. The study's results shed light on the advantages of online learning, such as its adaptability and accessibility, more learning chances, improved engagement and interaction, and promotion of self-directed learning abilities. The inquiry also reveals concerns with technology, pedagogical adaptation, motivation and engagement, evaluation and academic integrity, equity, and inclusiveness. Based on the findings, suggestions are made for improving online education in Uganda's higher education institutions, including investing in technological infrastructure, fostering pedagogical adaptation, encouraging student engagement and motivation, improving assessment procedures and academic integrity, promoting equity and inclusion, and continuously assessing and improving the online learning environment. These suggestions can help higher education institutions in Uganda maximize the advantages of online learning while minimizing its drawbacks, resulting in a more inclusive, interesting, and productive learning environment for students in online settings.

Introduction

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on education systems, prompting educational institutions to change their methods of delivery from face-to-face instruction to online ones (Ghosh et al., 2022; Uzorka & Makeri, 2020; Xhelili et al., 2021). Higher education institutions in Uganda have been particularly affected by this change, as it has become crucial to maintain learning continuity while also prioritizing the health and safety of both students and teachers.

Online learning, commonly referred to as e-learning, is the process of learning new information or developing existing abilities using digital tools and resources (Hermawan, 2021; Mokhtar et al., 2023). It entails using the internet to access educational resources, take part in online classes or lectures, and conduct interactive activities (Cubillas et al., 2023; Daher et al., 2022; Justo et al., 2022). Teachers and students in Uganda's higher education industry have benefited from the abrupt change to online learning as well as faced problems. Understanding these viewpoints is essential for assessing the viability and effectiveness of online learning as a substitute for traditional

classroom instruction, both during the pandemic and after it has ended. Examining the advantages and drawbacks of the online method of delivery from the viewpoints of educators and students will highlight its advantages and drawbacks, offering useful insights for decision-makers and educators to enhance learning opportunities and educational outcomes.

To better understand the advantages and drawbacks of teaching and learning online, this inquiry will look at the viewpoints of both professors and students in higher education institutions in Uganda. We may acquire a thorough grasp of the advantages and disadvantages of online education in the Ugandan setting by examining the experiences and viewpoints of these important stakeholders. The results of this inquiry will add to the body of knowledge already available on online learning in higher education settings, with a focus on the Ugandan context. Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of online learning can help educational policymakers, administrators, and institutions make more informed decisions and develop more effective strategies for future educational planning.

Overall, the goal of this study is to provide a thorough understanding of the advantages and difficulties of switching from traditional face-to-face instruction to online learning in Ugandan higher education. We want to add to the conversation on effective online pedagogy by examining instructors' and students' points of view. By doing so, we can help create plans that will improve teaching and learning both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the landscape of education around the world, requiring a quick transition from traditional face-to-face instruction to online means of delivery. In Uganda's higher education institutions, where the pandemic's consequences have compelled teachers and students to adjust to new teaching and learning contexts, this transition has been particularly obvious. Effective educational techniques throughout the pandemic and afterward must be developed, and this requires an understanding of the advantages and difficulties brought about by this shift.

When teachers and students interact meaningfully, online teaching and learning become successful and productive. In this context, discourse in the classroom that is built on the conversation between the teacher and students might promote effective learning (Hennessy et al., 2023; Marinenko et al., 2021; Uzorka et al., 2021). Interactive learning highlights the change from a high level of instructor control to more student-centered learning. According to Chen & Chan (2022), classroom interaction between teachers and students enables the teachers to assess whether the students have understood the concepts they have been taught. It also gives the students a chance to practice and improve their proficiency in the target language and their understanding of how to think. ICT tools give students interactive learning opportunities. Dahal et al. (2022) assert that ICT offers several benefits, both necessary and coupled, that help to widen and define the practices utilized inside the classroom while describing this reality. ICT, as an interactive tool, enables students to witness brief sequences of phenomena and may aid in their comprehension. ICT use strengthens teachers' pedagogical views about interaction, which can lead to tactics

that are ideal for facilitating higher-level attainment because teaching is defined as a sociocultural activity and contextualized in the specific environment by the instructor (Ali, 2020; Kukul, 2022).

Students may access course materials and complete coursework whenever it is convenient for them thanks to the flexibility that comes with online education in terms of time and location (Abidah et al., 2020; Uzorka et al., 2023; Yessenova et al., 2023). This adaptability may improve accessibility, especially for students with physical, financial, or geographic limitations. Students gain significant technical skills through interaction with online learning platforms and digital technologies, which are becoming more and more important in today's linked society. These abilities can improve employability and equip pupils for a job market that is dominated by technology.

To effectively present knowledge online, teachers must modify their teaching tactics and create new ones (Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Archambault et al., 2022; Nurdauletova et al., 2023). This transition needs time, resources, and training, and some instructors may find it difficult to create meaningful and compelling online learning experiences (Jebbour, 2022; Simamora, 2020; Yilmaz & Korur, 2021). The lack of in-person encounters in online learning can result in social isolation and fewer opportunity for impromptu conversations and interactions (Batmang et al., 2021; Dinçer & Yavuz, 2023; Kunaviktikul et al., 2022). The pupils' motivation and engagement could be impacted by this lack of personal connection (Berestova et al., 2022; Dinçer & Yavuz, 2023; Poon et al., 2022).

In Uganda's contextual factors, the implementation of online education is severely hampered by Uganda's poor infrastructure, which includes restricted access to electricity and the internet (Eton & Chance, 2022; Kakumba, 2022; Ouma, 2021). To guarantee that all Ugandan students have fair access to education, these issues must be identified and resolved. Students' access to technology, internet services, and digital resources may be hampered by socioeconomic inequalities and affordability difficulties. For creating focused interventions and support systems, it is essential to comprehend the unique difficulties faced by Ugandan students and instructors.

Method

The quantitative approach used in this study attempts to collect empirical information on teachers' and students' perceptions of the advantages and difficulties of online learning in Ugandan higher education institutions through questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed electronically via online survey platforms. 320 invitees from 10 universities in Uganda responded. This comprises of 140 students and 180 lecturers. The surveys' quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS 29.

Results

Advantages of Online Education

Participants indicated the advantages of online education. Convenience, flexibility, increase independency in learning, and develop self-discipline were indicated by more than 80% of the participants. Cost-effectiveness and

promoting online research and resources were indicated by more than 70%.

The development of essential digital skills was pointed out by 64.29% of the participants as advantage of online education. Personalized learning experiences, promote lifelong learning, and provides learners with access to a diverse range of courses and programs were indicated by more than 50% as the advantage of online education. Facilitates interaction and collaboration with peers and instructors from diverse backgrounds and fosters the use of cutting-edge educational techniques and resources were indicated by more than 50% as the advantage of online education as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Advantages of Online Education

Advantages of Online Education	**Percentage**
Convenience	86.73
Flexibility	86.21
Increase independency in learning	83.52
Develop self-discipline	83.52
Cost-effectiveness	74.60
Promoting online research and resources	71.22
Aid the development of essential digital skills	64.29
Personalized learning experiences	55.67
Promote lifelong learning	55.67
Provides learners with access to a diverse range of courses and programs	55.82
Facilitates interaction and collaboration with peers and instructors from diverse backgrounds	48.74
Fosters the use of cutting-edge educational techniques and resources	45.51

Difficulties in Online Education

Table 2 shows the difficulties in online education. Majority of the participants (85.62%) indicated time-management skills as the difficulty in online education. 81.75% of the participants indicated reduced social interaction and networking opportunities and digital literacy and technological barriers as the difficulties in online education.

More than 60% indicated assessment and academic integrity, unstable internet at home, equity and inclusion, and self-motivation and discipline as the difficulties in online education. 42.83% indicated lack of hands-on practical experience and limited and delayed feedback as the difficulties in online education. 40.7% indicated completing the assignments by the due date as the difficulties in online education. 38.65% indicated create habit of plagiarism/cheating and adaptation to different learning styles as the difficulties in online education.

Table 2. Difficulties in Online Education

Difficulties in Online Education	Percentage
Time-management skills	85.62
Reduced Social Interaction and Networking Opportunities	81.75
Digital Literacy and Technological Barriers	81.75
Assessment and Academic Integrity	74.63
Unstable internet at home	72.43
Equity and Inclusion	70.84
Self-Motivation and Discipline	65.35
Lack of Hands-On Practical Experience	42.83
Limited and delayed feedback	42.83
Completing the assignments by the due date	40.72
Create habit of plagiarism/cheating	38.65
Adaptation to Different Learning Styles	38.65

Attributes Necessary for Online Learning

Table 3 shows the attributes necessary for online learning. Majority of the participants (88.56%) indicated technically competent. 85.53% indicated strong communications Skills. 82.75% indicated time management skill. 74.82% indicated good work ethics. 71.83% indicated a self-starter and self-discipline. 67.24% indicated persistence and resilience and collaborative skills. 55.62% indicated openness to feedback and continuous learning. 54.94% indicated critical thinking and problem-solving. 53.65% indicated dedicated to achieving goals.

Table 3. Attributes Necessary for Online Learning

Attributes Necessary for Online Learning	Percentage
Technically Competent	88.56
Strong Communication Skills	85.53
Time management skill	82.75
Good work ethics	74.82
A self-starter	71.83
Self-Discipline	71.83
Persistence and Resilience	67.24
Collaborative Skills	67.24
Openness to Feedback and Continuous Learning	55.62
Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	54.94
Dedicated to achieving goals	52.65

Discussion

The current study looked at the advantages, difficulties, and tactics of online learning during and after COVID-19 in Uganda's higher education from the viewpoints of teachers and students. More than 80% of participants agreed that online courses are advantageous for them because it give them flexibility in terms of time and space for teaching and learning, increase independency in learning, and help them develop self-discipline that helps them identify what and how they should work. Online learning, according to Abidah et al. (2020) can be beneficial since it gives both students and teachers the freedom to attend courses whenever it is most convenient for them. It also allows for subject and content need modifications. In this way, online learning satisfies the demands of an increasing number of students who are unable to participate in traditional classroom settings. When they must juggle obligations to their families, work, and studies, many adult learners could appreciate the flexibility. Additionally, because of the anonymity offered by the online setting, more students who are unable to attend face-to-face classes due to other commitments could be able to take part in online education. More than 50% of the participants thought that taking online courses will advance online research, give them access to real and extensive resources of materials needed for academic and professional endeavors, and provide access to a wealth of knowledge. This finding supports the claims made by Williamson (2021) that online education may present opportunities for higher education institutions to enter new markets. More than 40% of the participants thought that taking online courses will link practitioners to a worldwide community. This agrees with the claim made by Ali (2020) that online education increases opportunities to collaborate with expert professionals around the world and saves time and money on travel.

Regarding the difficulties participants have encountered when pursuing an online education, the findings indicate that the biggest difficulties are time management abilities. Simamora (2020) assert that time management is a major problem in online education, which is consistent with this conclusion. More than 70% of the participants indicated that digital literacy and technological barriers, assessment and academic integrity, and dependable internet access are the difficulties they encounter when pursuing an online education. According to Ouma (2021), many teachers and students in Uganda's higher education institutions do not have reliable internet access, which supports the findings of the current study.

These results are consistent with Dinçer and Yavuz (2023) research findings, according to which students who receive their education online often struggle with time management, exam-related issues, traditional educational practices, a heavy workload, and a lack of interaction and communication. Like delayed feedback, cases of plagiarism, lack of hands-on practical experience, completing the assignments by the due date, and adaptation to different learning styles were challenges faced by fewer than half of participants in online education.

The third area of the study that was investigated dealt with the characteristics of the participants that were needed for online education. Most of the participants stated that time management skills, skillful communicators, technological readiness, and computer literacy were the essential qualities for practitioners who wanted to receive online education. In a similar vein, more than 60% of participants identified strong work ethics, a self-starter, self-discipline, persistence and resilience, and collaborative skills, while more than 50% of participants believed

openness to feedback and continuous learning, critical thinking and problem-solving, and dedicated to achieving goals are the attributes necessary for online learning. According to these findings, the ideal online education makes use of interactive computer tutorials, online learning activities, simulations, and manipulatives; it also uses online learning's dimensions to foster positive attitudes in students; and it supports a variety of learning scenarios (Daher et al., 2022; Hidayat et al., 2022; Justo et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This study looked at teachers' and students' perceptions on the advantages and drawbacks of switching from traditional face-to-face instruction to online instruction in higher education institutions in Uganda during and after the COVID-19 outbreak. The results shed light on the various facets of online education and offer insightful information about participant experiences. The flexibility and accessibility of online learning, more learning possibilities, better engagement and interaction, and the development of self-directed learning abilities are all advantages that this study has found. These advantages illustrate how adaptable and welcoming learning environments that can accommodate students' various demands can be provided by online education.

The investigation did, however, also point up several difficulties with online learning. These difficulties include assessment and academic integrity, engagement and motivation, technological difficulties, and issues with equity and inclusion. To ensure fair access, uphold academic standards, and support the achievement of all students in the online learning environment, it is essential to acknowledge and solve these problems.

Investing in technological infrastructure, fostering pedagogical adaptation, encouraging student engagement and motivation, improving assessment procedures and academic integrity, promoting equity and inclusion, and continuously assessing and improving the online learning environment, online education in Uganda's higher education institutions can be improved. These suggestions can help higher education institutions in Uganda maximize the advantages of online learning while minimizing its drawbacks, resulting in a more inclusive, interesting, and productive learning environment for students in online settings.

References

Abidah, A., Hidaayatullaah, H. N., Simamora, R. M., Fehabutar, D., & Mutakinati, L. (2020). The Impact of Covid-19 to Indonesian Education and Its Relation to the Philosophy of “Merdeka Belajar.” *Studies in Philosophy of Science and Education*, *1*(1), 38–49. https://doi.org/10.46627/sipose.v1i1.9

Akour, M., & Alenezi, M. (2022). Higher Education Future in the Era of Digital Transformation. *Education Sciences*, *12*(11), 784. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12110784

Ali W. (2020). Online and remote learning in higher education institutes: A necessity in light of COVID-19 pandemic. . *Higher Education Studies*, *10*(3), 16–25.

Archambault, L., Leary, H., & Rice, K. (2022). Pillars of online pedagogy: A framework for teaching in online learning environments. *Educational Psychologist*, *57*(3), 178–191. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2022.2051513

Batmang, B., Sultan, M., Azis, A., & Gunawan, F. (2021). Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers on Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology (IJEMST), 9*(3), 449-461. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijemst.1595

Berestova, A., Burdina, G., Lobuteva, L., & Lobuteva, A. (2022). Academic Motivation of University Students and the Factors That Influence It in an E-Learning Environment. *Electronic Journal of E-Learning, 20(2), 201-210.*, *20*(2), 201–210.

Chen, G., & Chan, C. K. K. (2022). Visualization- and analytics-supported video-based professional development for promoting mathematics classroom discourse. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, *33*, 100609. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2022.100609

Cubillas, T. E., Cubillas, A. U., Amor, C. J. M., Comon, J. B., & Jamorol, M. C. G. A. (2023). Level of Challenges in the Implementation of Online Learning Classes among the Teachers. *International Journal of Studies in Education and Science (IJSES), 4*(2), 195-214. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijres.46

Dahal, N., Manandhar, N. K., Luitel, L., Luitel, B. C., Pant, B. P., & Shrestha, I. M. (2022). ICT tools for remote teaching and learning mathematics: A proposal for autonomy and engagements. *Advances in Mobile Learning Educational Research*, *2*(1), 289–296. https://doi.org/10.25082/AMLER.2022.01.013

Daher, W., Anabousy, A., & Alfahel, E. (2022). Elementary Teachers' Development in Using Technological Tools to Engage Students in Online Learning. *European Journal of Educational Research*, *11*(2), 1183-1195.

Dinçer, P., & Yavuz, H. (2023). Behind the screen: A case study on the perspectives of freshman EFL students and their instructors. *Education and Information Technologies*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11661-4

Eton, M., & Chance, R. (2022). University e-learning methodologies and their financial implications: evidence from Uganda. . *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal*, *17*(3), 229–241.

Ghosh, M., Jansz, J., & Ghosh, A. (2022). Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Traditional Teaching. *International Journal on Studies in Education (IJonSE), 4(*2), 107-129. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijonse.63

Hermawan, D. (2021). The rise of e-learning in covid-19 pandemic in private university: challenges and opportunities. *IJORER: International Journal of Recent Educational Research, 2*(1), 86-95.

Hennessy, S., Calcagni, E., Leung, A., & Mercer, N. (2023). An analysis of the forms of teacher-student dialogue that are most productive for learning. *Language and Education*, *37*(2), 186–211. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2021.1956943

Hidayat, S., Lovita, I. D., Zakiyah, Z., Mimin, & Nupratiwi, A. (2022). The Effectiveness of Online Learning Using Zoom Meetings at Elementary Schools. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science (IJTES), 6*(4), 559-568. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijtes.367

Jebbour, M. (2022). The unexpected transition to distance learning at Moroccan universities amid COVID-19: A qualitative study on faculty experience. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *5*(1), 100253. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2022.100253

Justo, E., Delgado, A., Llorente-Cejudo, C., Aguilar, R., & Cabero-Almenara, J. (2022). The effectiveness of physical and virtual manipulatives on learning and motivation in structural engineering. *Journal of Engineering Education*, *111*(4), 813–851. https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20482

Kakumba, R. M. (2022). *Limited access to electricity and digital technologies a barrier to e-learning in Uganda.*

Retrieved from africaportal.org

Kukul, V. (2022). Evaluation of Digital Storytelling in terms of Pre-Service ICT Teachers' Perceived TPACK Levels and Teaching Proficiency Self-Efficacy Levels: A Mixed-Method Study. *International Journal of Technology in Education (IJTE), 5*(3), 411-422. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijte.240

Kunaviktikul, W., Ang, E., Baridwan, Ns. S., Bernal, A. B., Dones, L. B. P., Flores, J. L., Freedman-Doan, R., Klunklin, A., Lee, W. L., Lin, C.-C., Luk, T. T., Nguyen, A. T. H., Nurumal, M. S., Setiawan, A., Sumaiyah Jamaluddin, T. S., Huy, T. Q., Tungpunkom, P., Wati, Ns. D. N. K., Xu, X., & Shorey, S. (2022). Nursing students' and faculty members' experiences of online education during COVID-19 across Southeast Asia: A Photovoice study. *Nurse Education Today*, *111*, 105307. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2022.105307

Marinenko, O. (2021). Assistance and Support Provided to International Students by University Teachers. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES), 7*(3), 580-592. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijres.1551

Mokhtar, S., Hilaluddin, T., & Nik Nazli, N. N. N. (2023). Challenges Impacting Students' Intention to Effectively Use E-Learning Method in a Virtual Learning Environment. *International Journal of Technology in Education (IJTE), 6*(2), 310-325. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijte.407

Nurdauletova, B., Aimukhambet, Z., Saparbaikyzy, S., Kamarova, N., & Tolegenuly, B. (2023). The Effect of Traditional and Online Learning Approaches on the Survival and Transmission of the Oral Culture, Students' Attitude and National Values. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology (IJEMST), 11*(1), 133-155. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijemst.2922

Ouma, R. (2021). Beyond "carrots" and "sticks" of on-line learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: A Case of Uganda Martyrs University. *Cogent Education*, *8*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1974326

Poon, W. C., Kunchamboo, V., & Koay, K. Y. (2022). E-Learning Engagement and Effectiveness during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Interaction Model. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2022.2119659

Simamora, R. M. (2020). The Challenges of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: An essay analysis of performing arts education students. *Studies in Learning and Teaching*, *1*(2), 86–103.

Uzorka, A., Ajiji, Y., Osigwe, M. U., & Ben, I. N. (2021). An Investigation of the Teaching Needs of Faculty Members with regard to Technology. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science (IJTES), 5*(1), 70-107. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijtes.152

Uzorka, A., & Makeri, Y. A. (2020). Academic challenges faced by students in higher education during COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS), 4*(7), 421-425.

Uzorka, A., Namara, S., & Olaniyan, A. O. (2023). Modern technology adoption and professional development of lecturers. *Education and Information Technologies,* 1-27.

Williamson, B. (2021). Making markets through digital platforms: Pearson, edu-business, and the (e)valuation of higher education. *Critical Studies in Education*, *62*(1), 50–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2020.1737556

Xhelili, P., Ibrahimi, E., Rruci, E., & Sheme, K. (2021). Adaptation and Perception of Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic by Albanian University Students. *International Journal on Studies in Education*

(IJonSE), 3(2), 103-111.

Yessenova, K., Baltabayeva, Z., Amirbekova, A., Koblanova, A., Sametova, Z., & Ismailova, F. (2023). Investigating Competencies and Attitudes towards Online Education in Language Learning/Teaching after COVID-19. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology (IJEMST), 11*(4), 862-880. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijemst.3348

Yilmaz, E., & Korur, F. (2021). The Effects of an Online Teaching Material Integrated Methods on Students' Science Achievement, Attitude and Retention. *International Journal of Technology in Education (IJTE), 4*(1), 22-45. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijte.79

Author Information

Afam Uzorka

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4653-1619

Kampala International University

Kampala

Uganda

Contact e-mail: *afamuzorka@gmail.com*