

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS FROM ONLINE CLASSES TO FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES POST PANDEMIC

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### **Abstract:**

*The COVID-19 pandemic is almost finished, and most of the universities in Ecuador are coming to face-to-face classes again. Although some universities have decided to continue in a Hybrid form, it means some online classes and some face-to-face classes, such as Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena. The objective of this study was focused on students' perceptions in order to get information on how they feel after online classes if they have all the requirements and knowledge for continuing in their studies and semesters or if they think they need to be leveled up. Qualitative research was applied, with a survey as a tool that the researchers used for this project.*

**Keywords:** hybrid, online, face-to-face classes, students' perceptions, knowledge.

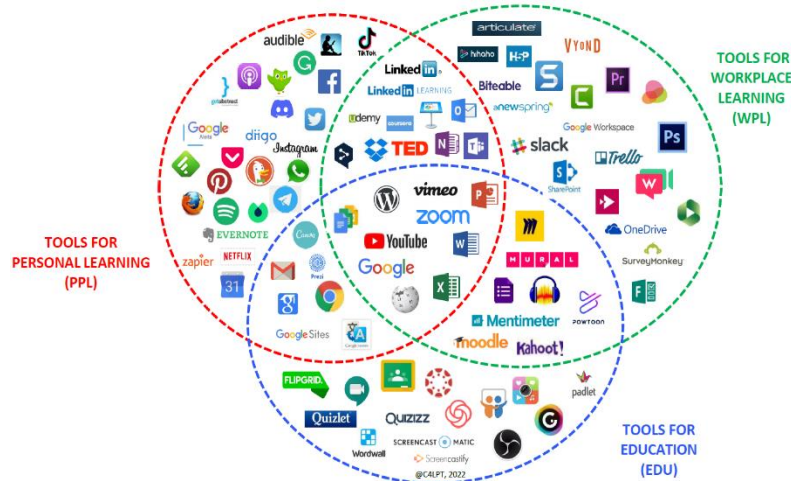
### **Introduction**

In March 2020, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. Affecting all areas of life, including education. The pandemic caused some schools and universities to close, as mentioned by [4] "Never in history has there been a universal closure of face-to-face educational facilities like the one that occurred due to the pandemic." This closure has placed a significant burden on academic institutions to cope with the unprecedented shift from traditional to online learning. As cited by [6], many institutions, such as public and private, have decided to cancel face-to-face classes and move into online classes. The pandemic has created new ways of teaching online.

Most countries have introduced restrictions, and the medium of education has changed to synchronous or asynchronous mode. The educational systems of more than 190 countries worldwide have suffered the most severe damage in history, also cited by [4], where around 200 countries closed educational centers. Academic closures affect students from low- and middle-income families around the world. The Covid-19 outbreak has led to partial or complete lockdowns, with people forced to stay home. Higher education students require online learning that offers course materials. For example, in Ecuador, face-to-face learning has been replaced with online learning platforms to control the spread of the epidemic, as cited by [2] Estatal Peninsula de Santa Elena University had invested money in buying Zoom platform licenses for teachers in order to continue with the process of teaching and learning. The government has imposed a nationwide lockdown, closing universities, colleges, and schools.

Figure 1

Most useful platforms during the pandemic COVID-19



Source. <https://www.toptools4learning.com/>

Most global institutions choose to use synchronous and asynchronous online learning methods. Synchronous is when teachers and their students meet at a pre-scheduled time in an interactive learning session, while asynchronous methods are when teachers do not communicate with them, meaning there is no interaction between teachers and students. The asynchronous mode of online learning allows students to access online materials at any time. The role of teachers is to make learning fun, develop students' attitudes and personalities, and help them pass exams. Covid-19 is spreading the culture of online learning throughout the culture. Covid-19 has forced people to switch to online learning, but some universities in underdeveloped countries do not have enough facilities to teach online effectively. In addition, teacher education varies across the world in high-, middle-, and low-income countries. Another major barrier is access for poor students without Internet access. In fact, face-to-face teaching is more effective than online teaching, and a full transition to online learning during Covid-19 requires examining student perceptions of online learning to identify strengths, learning weaknesses, and challenges. Despite all the challenges the world has faced in recent years and months, the world has fought back, and online learning has hit workers and students hardest. Online learning has many advantages, but it also poses some challenges. It makes the learning process convenient for students due to the flexibility of study time, as cited by [2] learners at Estatal Peninsula de Santa Elena University thought a good advantage to receive classes at home instead of going to the university because they can save money and time. But online learning has become a barrier for students to engage in real classroom activities. These challenges also affect the personality of the students and prevent them from changing. In addition, teachers are responsible for the training, preparation, and academic and personal advising of students. The current crisis, COVID-19, has highlighted the role of the Internet and technology in all areas of life, including education. The pandemic has highlighted the role of online education in responding to sudden crises, so it is important to understand how students feel about their online classes post-pandemic.

### Online learning

Education has come a long way, and learning models have shifted from teacher-centered to student-centered education. In teacher-centered education, teachers are the source of education, and students are the recipients of knowledge. By contrast, learner-centered teaching emphasizes the role

of students in creating knowledge in the classroom. In a student-centered approach, the teacher's role changes to "helping students develop and implement their own rules. Teachers respond to student work and encourage additional responses.

Social isolation and the great uncertainty that the world is experiencing as a result of the spread of 'Covid-19', have generated a high level of stress and anxiety in citizens, as cited by [1], "Traditional class, body language, facial expressions, and teachers' voice are all important tools. However, once a course is switched to online teaching, body language and facial expressions are under restrictions as it is difficult to use these tools through screens". This pandemic comes at the most important moment of technological development. For this reason, the rulers have prioritized the use of the Internet during the crisis, and the same institution of Higher Education, the Estatal Peninsula de Santa Elena University, continues with subjects for more than 40% of their careers virtually. Although virtual classes were the only alternative in times of coronavirus, it has their pros and cons. The benefits of this are that the teaching continues, but the disadvantages come. Not all have technological devices to connect to receive virtual classes, and taking into account that not all have a good internet connection and even some do not even have internet, as mentioned by [2], the COVID-19 epidemic created some problems in students with their virtual classes, one of them when they are receiving their classes, and the internet disconnects them, causing them to miss classes and then do not understand what the teacher has taught.

New technologies, well-known as digital devices that can be connected to a computer or the Internet, are probably the most powerful, versatile, and ubiquitous tools that society has ever known. However, the field of education in the Spanish-speaking world has rarely been a pioneer in exploiting the potential of these tools in its teaching activity. Unfortunately, there are not many public institutions in Ecuador that can offer a complete virtual academic experience, with students equipped with electronic devices, teachers who know how to design functional online lessons, and a culture based on learning technology, as mentioned by [2] one of the biggest problems that learners faced when they have classes was when teachers presented their PPT slides and began to read causing some tiredness, boredom by listening to the teacher reading the slides. The reality is that most institutions are not prepared for this change, which allows us to recognize that unequal access to the Internet is just one of the many problems facing our educational system globally.

Nowadays, student-centered learning uses many new technologies through the internet and other devices in order to share information and improve knowledge. Thanks to the use of online platforms, online learning has become part of the 21st century. Online learning is known as the use of the Internet and online platform technologies to enhance learning and provide users with access to online services and services. Reinforcement learning makes extensive use of technology to provide innovative and interactive learning. Blended learning combines face-to-face and online learning. Online means that the course content is delivered online. Online education is convenient for students who have 24-hour access to online materials.

### **Technological development in education**

The rapid expansion of COVID-19 has set off all the health alarms worldwide, not because of its fatality rates but because of the overwhelming capacity for transmission and contagion. Added to this last fact is an issue that puts the medical community in check, and that is that this virus can be present in totally asymptomatic people, who are carriers of it and can transmit it to the rest of the population. This makes it more difficult to stop its spread. Given this scenario, it was expected that the main countries that are leaders in technological development would use the multiple uses and applications that can be extracted from new technologies to try to stop the rapid expansion of the new coronavirus

COVID-19. While it is true that at first, China and South Korea were the main promoters, researchers, companies, and innovators in Europe, the United States, and around the world, they have quickly joined and developed technological solutions.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

Students from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Major at Estatal Peninsula de Santa Elena University participated in the study. From this group, 102 students were randomly selected, which is important to provide useful feedback on how students feel after online learning. To carry out the study, surveys were used virtually to maintain anonymity and collect the information without any inconvenience.

### Results

The researchers applied some surveys in order to have a clear path on how students feel after COVID-19 pandemic, and the questions were:

**Table 1: Based on your experience after online classes, how much has your learning process improved?**

Items	Students	Percentage
Much	40	39.2%
A little	50	49%
Nothing	2	2%
The same	10	9.8%
Total	102	100%

Source. Students from Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Major

Note. Half of the students said the process of learning was not the same, which means they did not improve as they should be. This information worries to the professors because students need to reach proficiency at least B2 level according to the CEFR (Common European Framework).

### Figure 2

As a student and future professional, do you think you need remediation in the subjects studied online during the pandemic. Why?



Source. forms.office.com

### Figure 3

Note. Most of the students decided to attend face-to-face classes due to many factors, such as having interaction among students, having interaction among students and teachers. On the other hand, students could ask as many questions as they can because the teachers are across from them, and they can give them an answer without any problems, and [8] mentioned: “meeting the teacher, students can immediately get feedback from the teacher on the achievements they have made.”

But the sudden shift to virtual reality reveals the fragility of policymaking in the digital age; economic crisis (normal time), lack of digital devices, lack of connectivity, little knowledge of ICT use, the limited cultural capital of parents, most people find it difficult to fit into such learning scenarios, etc. In addition to the health emergency, the situation is worsened by mass layoffs of permanent workers and restrictions on informal workers, aspects that somehow affect the education process; as cited by [7], students' perceptions of online education are not good, and several factors need to overcome including finances, poor connectivity, and low-quality internet signal, teaching methods, and teaching aids.

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The university students who were the subject of this study generally felt that virtual education was disadvantageous, especially regarding the role of teachers in each of their courses and subjects. Therefore, it is safe to assume that university teaching staff have little knowledge of using educational platforms. Advanced research shows that teachers are not ready to replace online teaching with face-to-face teaching. On the other hand, students want to be in a classroom with their classmates and teachers where they can communicate with each other without any inconveniences, such as a lack of power and online learning on the Internet.

It is very necessary to try to work extra hours with students who feel they need to learn more because in the Pandemic time online classes were not enough. They need to be leveled in most of the subjects which were dictated online. On the other hand, teachers must be capacitated in the use of many platforms in order to have a variety of them for their students and know how to use them, as cited by [8], "During the implementation of online learning, there were several obstacles experienced by lecturers at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the lack of mastery of technology".

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