

**Challenges and Opportunities of Digitalization of Higher Education:  
Student Perspectives (Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya)**

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With the outbreak of the pandemic, universities had to find alternatives to continue their education instead of relying on conventional methods. Digitization of education may be the most effective way of tackling this challenge, which has eventually become a new trend world-wide. Since the requisite conversion was sudden and unexpected; all stakeholders have been exposed to different types of challenges along with benefits. This study examines student perspectives on challenges and opportunities of Digitization of education in study programmes in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences in the University of Peradeniya. The Study attempts to address the following research questions. 1. What are the challenges and opportunities that students face in the process of digitizing education? 2. How do the students experience the process of digitizing education? Involved methodology for the study is a mixed method and quantitative data were collected using google form questionnaires, which were distributed among all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students and, 12.28% (n=231) responded out of 1881 students. Qualitative data were collected using focus group discussions through semi-structured interviews from students (n=30). Quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS, and thematic analyses were used to evaluate qualitative data. Out of the participants, 63% of students depicted good ICT knowledge while 3.1% exhibited poor ICT knowledge. 79% responded that the poor signal strength and constant interruptions in the internet connection as main disturbances pertaining to online learning. Apart from that, 59% stated that the students face difficulties in being able to pay internet bills. Majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with online learning due to its absence of social components of teaching and learning. Although students agreed that digitization of education opens up a number of opportunities for them to connect to global demands, 63.7% and 48.7% of students preferred F2F and blended teaching methods, respectively.

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