

Postgraduate Students' Perception of Online Learning and Face-to-Face Learning

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The COVID 19 pandemic has had an impact on higher education in Sri Lanka since March 2020. With principles of social distancing, all face-to-face classes were suspended and transformed in favour of online learning. The objective of the study was to examine the Postgraduate students' perceptions of online learning and face-to-face learning amid Coronavirus (COVID-19). The mixed method was used to conduct this study. In this study, an online questionnaire was distributed among all the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) students (500) and 275 students who responded. In order to understand the situation, focus group interviews were conducted. The quantitative data were analysed using computer-based data analysis package and the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. The results evidenced that the majority of students preferred online learning to face to face classes (63%) as online tools are easy to use (82%), comfortable (82%) and flexible (84%) in participating in online learning. A considerable number of students (26%) agreed that online learning is difficult than face to face learning. The majority of students (58%) like to participate in online lectures than face-to-face lectures after COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the most of the students (72%) perceived online teaching methods as effective than face to face learning whereas a less number of students (15%) negatively perceived online teaching methods. The interview data suggested that Postgraduate students perceived online learning as an easy mode of learning as they are adult learners and have other commitments. However, they were in the view that online learning mode for PGDE programme is not as successful as face-to-face learning as they lack social interactions and they are unable to acquire skills required for teachers. In conclusion, blended learning could be a better option for the PGDE programme as it provides both theoretical and practical components in the PGDE curriculum.

Keywords: COVID 19, Pandemic, Online learning, Blended learning, Face to face learning