Review of: "Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, lessons learned and what's next?"

Paula Cristina[1]

1 Universidade Aberta Lisboa

The topic of the paper is certainly interesting, although it is outdated, as it seems that the manuscript was written during the pandemic and now, it is necessary to update the content of the paper to integrate new and current events. The timing of this study seems to be late, in fact, publishing the study at the height of the pandemic would have added timeliness and relevance. Although the author provides an interesting and informative review of work related to teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, this review/presentation is done without a categorical structure, and the review fails to reach a goal, becoming a compilation of citations rather than a critical overview of the work that has been done on the topic.

Furthermore, it does not consider the fact that many educational institutions around the world had already incorporated elements of e-learning prior to the pandemic, with some teaching entire courses online, making the full transition to online courses less innovative. As of 2023, with the pandemic slowing down, most institutions have resumed their regular teaching practices, adopting a blended learning approach that combines face-to-face teaching with online learning. However, it should be noted that all of the literature included in the study predates 2021 - many recent articles could have been included in their literature review.

While the manuscript contains interesting and potentially valuable information, there are several issues that need to be addressed before publication can be justified. Here are some of those points that need to be taken into consideration before publication:

1- The problematization should be further clarified and perhaps you could better explain how your research contributes to the literature, what research gaps you intend to fill, and what the real implications of your project are.

2- The paper should be revised in English. Many paragraphs are not linked in a clear and meaningful way, some are too long, and there are also some problems with punctuation, spelling, and reference formats. There are many sentences with missing references.

3- Throughout the introduction, the author has used the terms "online learning" and "online teaching" interchangeably: these are precise and very different concepts that should be corrected and made explicit. In addition, there are concepts such as "online teaching", "online learning", "e-learning" and "distance learning" that need to be defined and clarified.

4- About the main objective of this paper, I have some doubts... are we looking at cross-cultural differences in the way university classes were handled during the pandemic? Are we analyzing the financial constraints on online education? Are

we looking at the social and psychological impact of online education during the pandemic? Are we comparing planned and unplanned changes to online education? All of the above? The paper lacks a hierarchy of ideas and a clearly defined objective and I am not really clear about the main objective of this paper.

5- On the other hand, data collection and analysis need some robustness and to be better outlined. Describing the methodology in a more transparent way and doing a structured and consistent literature review would enrich the work besides giving it rigor and reliability. In addition, there are several gaps in the presentation of the study, namely: there is no methods section, which leaves readers without information about the criteria and process used to select literature and make future suggestions. Incorporating a methods section would provide transparency and facilitate a better understanding of the research process, so research methods should be added and they should be detailed enough to ensure the transparency of the paper.

6- The "future work" section begins the discussions with literature from 2020 and concludes with references from 2021, which suggests a lack of up-to-date sources, and this updating of the literature review with recent publications would reinforce the contemporary relevance of the study. Finally, collecting and presenting actual data, rather than relying solely on student feedback, would increase the empirical basis of the study.

7- The manuscript needs to be better structured, for example: Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion.

8- The discussion needs to be improved. This section is the most critical part of a paper, where you can formulate a deeper understanding of the research problem you have proposed. In other words, you need to interpret and describe the meaning of your findings. Please reflect on the purpose of your paper, since you concluded it without clearly indicating how to bridge the gap between planned online learning and the emergency shift to e-learning.

9- "Best Practices" are also proposed in Table 1, based on existing literature and studies on e-learning in universities during the COVID-19 pandemic, but no references were provided, which makes the credibility of the results difficult. The proposed best practices do not seem to result from the literature review, but rather from the authors' common sense and personal experience. It is also not clear whether the recommendations expressed in the table and elsewhere are addressed to trainers or to institutions (universities).

10- The conclusion section should present its findings, main contributions, limitations and what to do next and needs to be strengthened.

Finally, the quality of English language use is very poor, as there are repeated errors, such as incomplete sentences or the lack of subject-verb agreement. The document also has punctuation and spelling problems.

Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to read this interesting paper.