

Learner Autonomy in Distance Learning under the Circumstance of Corona virus: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract .After the spread of Corona virus, the Algerian government like many other countries has closed its universities. This crisis has led the ministry of higher education and scientific research to adopt online-courses. Formal learning has, most of the time, been associated to inside classroom practices and activities; however, little attention is given to learning outside the classroom in the absence of the teacher. Thus, this paper attempts to explore the effectiveness of distance learning as an alternative option to cope with this unprecedented situation and to develop learner autonomy. Two questionnaires were administered to 22 teachers and 72 students at Ahmed Zabana University of Relizane-Algeria- via email and Facebook. The respondents of this research include 10 teachers and 38 EFL students. Results have shown that though distance learning is an appreciated method to make students experience autonomy during this time, it is still difficult and challenging due to students' psychological instability, teachers' lack of online teaching experience and bad network quality.

Keywords. Learner autonomy; Distance learning; Coronavirus; Higher education; Technological tools.

المخلص .بعد انتشار فيروس كورونا، أغلقت الحكومة الجزائرية على غرار العديد من البلدان الأخرى جامعاتها. وقد دفعت هذه الأزمة وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي إلى اعتماد التعليم عن بعد. من ناحية أخرى، ارتبط التعلم في معظم الوقت بممارسات وأنشطة داخل القسم؛ في المقابل، يتم تخصيص القليل من الاهتمام للتعلم خارج القسم و في غياب المعلم. و بالتالي، تحاول هذه الورقة استكشاف فعالية التعلم عن بعد كخيار بديل للتعامل مع هذا الوضع غير المسبوق ولتطوير استقلالية المتعلم. تم إجراء استبيانين على 22 معلماً و 72 طالباً في جامعة أحمد زبانا في ولاية غليزان بالجزائر عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني و الفيسبوك. بحيث أجاب على هذين الاستبيانين 10 معلمين و 38 طالبا بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. أوضحت النتائج أنه على الرغم من أن التعلم عن بعد هو طريقة فعالة لجعل الطلاب يجربون التعلم الذاتي خلال هذا الوقت، إلا أنه لا يزال صعباً بسبب عدم الاستقرار النفسي لدى الطلاب وافتقار المعلمين إلى تجربة التدريس عبر بعد وضعف جودة شبكة الانترنت **الكلمات المفتاحية.** استقلالية المتعلم, الدراسة عند بعد, فيروس كورونا, الأدوات التكنولوجية, التعليم العالي

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1. Introduction

By end of 2019, the world has witnessed a universal health crisis; it is a pandemic that has been widely spread in different parts of the globe. Malik et al (2020) “During the first week of December 2019, a few cases of pneumonia appeared in the city of Wuhan, Hubei province of China” (p.70). It started in China as an epidemic and then it has reached and affected other countries. Thus, now, it is known as a universal disease called Coronavirus (Covid-19) which is defined by Cambridge Dictionary (2020) as “a type of virus that causes diseases in humans and animals. In humans, it usually causes respiratory infections (= in the nose, throat, or chest) that are not serious, but that can sometimes cause more serious infections that can kill people”. This curse has completely changed the lifestyles of the whole world. It does not only cause health problems but also economic and educational crisis and obstacles. Yet it has resulted in closing many public and private institutions and universities around the world.

The Algerian government has adopted the same decision. Now, students are no longer at university, in the meantime, the learning syllabus has not yet been completed. For this reason, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Chems-Eddine Ben-Chitour on March, 17th, 2020 sent a ministerial decree in which he argues that being under the current epidemiological situation has forced us to adopt distance education. He then invites the university staff (presidents, teachers and administrators) to supply online courses in the university platform. This platform would ensure keeping teachers in contact with their students and make it accessible for all students across the country. (Correspondence number 288/ Dated on February, 29th, 2020).

As a matter of fact, in Algeria, most of the time learning is done inside the classroom and in the presence of the teacher. This latter is an important element in different stages of learning. In few learning situations such as projects and home assignments, learning is done outside the classroom and in the absence of the teacher. This does not mean that learners are learning without the teachers' help and interventions; but rather being physically absent; however, in certain cases students are required to cope with the needs of time and the nature of the circumstance being in. Coronavirus is one of the sudden situations that has imposed itself on the ministry of higher education and scientific research and obliged both teachers and students to go on holidays before time. Hence, adopting distance learning and teaching has led to raising the following questions:

- a. To what extent does distance learning develop EFL learners' autonomy during the time of Coronavirus?
- b. Are EFL learners at Ahmed Zabana University of Relizane able to grasp the learning content without their teacher's physical presence in the current situation?

It is hypothesized that:

- a. Distance learning perhaps is a good opportunity to develop learner autonomy.
- b. EFL learners may not effectively comprehend the learning content in the absence of their teachers.

Sintema (2020) claims that “There is currently little or no literature on COVID-19 in relation to educational studies”(p.1). Thus, this study is one of the recent researches that stress the current pandemic of coronavirus and its relatedness to distance learning and learner autonomy. It seeks to identify the importance of distance learning in developing autonomous learning. Also, the uniqueness of this research paper lies in its attempt to well use this critical

situation to raise educational policy makers' awareness regarding the effectiveness of taking all possible precautions for future encounters and to digitalize the educational system.

1.1. Literature Review

1.1.1. Learner Autonomy in the Time of Coronavirus:

In this paper; the researcher endeavours to examine learner autonomy in an unexpected time where learners are expected to act autonomously in the physical absence of their teachers. Autonomy is attributed to a situation in which “the learner is responsible for the decisions concerned with his or her learning, and the implementation of these decisions.”(Dicknison, 1987: 81). In the same view; Benson and Voller (1997), use the term autonomy “for a situation in which learners study entirely on their own”(p.2). For them the circumstance is likely to determine the degree to which learners are autonomous, students may act differently in different situations. Some situations require the presence of the teacher to achieve the set learning goals; others need partial presence as in the case of Coronavirus (distance teaching) or in a given situation of complete detachment and self-reliance.

Learner autonomy is a universal educational goal with different layers and aspects. It has been first introduced in language education by the father of learner autonomy Henri Holec in 1981. In one of his most renowned definitions in the literature, defines autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one's own learning... To take charge of one's learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning” (p.3). This definition has received many criticisms. It is criticized for its association with technical autonomy in which the learner assumes complete responsibility without the teacher's presence or supervision. This may sound difficult because not all learners can hold this responsibility as they have different learning styles, preferences, and abilities. In addition to that, it belittles and diminishes the crucial role of the teacher in guiding and facilitating the learning process.

Benson (1997) goes further and deeper than Holec; in which he divides autonomy into three major versions, technical, psychological and political autonomy. The focus of this paper is given to the former; it means that learners have complete detachment and self-dependent attitudes without the teacher's intervention. Be it inside or out of class autonomy where learners learn entirely on their own requires certain skills and techniques. It is illogical to expect learners to learn on their own without being ready for such a situation of the absence of the teacher (be it partial or complete absence). The teacher's role remains necessary and of paramount importance regardless of the situation the learners are being in.

It is quite important to consider the psychological aspect of learner autonomy in terms of learning process and content, this includes “a capacity of detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action” (Little, 1991: 45). Yet, psychological well-being and emotional stability (mental health) matter a lot in a certain state of fear as it is the case of many students during the period of Coronavirus. For this reason, one may wonder if learners will be able to use effectively these psychological capacities stated above to learn independently while watching hundreds of thousands of dead people around the world. Being in this situation of fear, panic and uncertainty may distract the learners' concentration. Hence, it may result in a mental cognitive disorder and being less motivated to assume responsibility.

Motivation is then another aspect to consider during this time. Autonomous learning has also been defined in relation to motivation in the sense that motivated students are more autonomous. In this respect, Ushioda (1996) states that "...developing effective motivational

thinking is an integral dimension of learner autonomy" (p.3). In this definition, Ushioda believes that learner autonomy is determined by the degree to which students are motivated. Less or demotivated students may not hold responsibility and work effectively either alone or in collaboration with others (with their classmates and teachers).

Though the time of Coronavirus has certainly made students less motivated to act autonomously in distance learning, it has left no other choice for teachers and learners but to teach and learn online. Accordingly, distance learning and teaching remain the only an alternative solution for such an urgent case despite the difficulties and challenges.

1.1.2 Distance Learning

Santos and Camara 2010 claim that the origin of Distance Learning (DL) appeared first in the United States of America during the 19th century. They argue that "The first formal version of DL took place in the USA at the end of the XIX century through a correspondence course offered by Chicago University and gradually spread worldwide" (Santos and Camara, 2010: 2).

Distance learning may refer to a situation in which both teachers and learners are no longer at the educational institutions but are still in touch with each other and with the learning/teaching processes. Distance learning has been defined as "a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both" (Honeyman & Miller, 1993: 68). According to Moore and Kearsley (1996) this distance "is filled by using technological resources" (Moore & Kearsley, 1996 cited in Casarotti, Filliponi, Pieti & Sartori, 2002: 28). By the source of information is meant the teacher. Both teachers and learners are outside the classroom for a reason or another. The main reasons here are time and distance. As for the former, it means that in a given period of time, learning in the institution becomes difficult as in the time of Coronavirus. In the latter, learning is impossible to happen inside a real classroom because of the geographical space.

In the same line of thought, Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines distance learning as "a method of study where teachers and students do not meet in a classroom but use the Internet, e-mail, mail, etc., to have classes". The need to study online out of the educational setting varies accordingly. Learning does not always happen in the classroom, but rather at anytime and anywhere by using different technological tools.

To ensure the success of distance learning, certain conditions should be met such as the availability of high flow speed of internet, learning materials (computers and smartphones) and social distance interaction through web-conferences using different tech tools such as Skype or Zoom applications. Moreover, learner motivation and autonomy are important aspects to consider in distance learning.

1.1.3 Learner autonomy and distance learning

Distance learning requires certain attitudes of independent actions and autonomy. Consequently, distance learning and learner autonomy are interrelated entities in the sense that autonomous learners are likely to succeed in distance learning. In this view, Sadeghi (2019: 82) believes that "self-learning is vital for distance education students". In other words, students who possess some skills of self-learning will effectively use distance learning to achieve their learning objectives. The success or failure of distance learning is determined by the learner's ability to be accountable for their own learning. On the other hand, distance

learning may also make students autonomous since their teachers are no longer with them. Being in such an environment encourages students to work on their own to meet their needs. Thus, distance learners are autonomous learners. Furthermore, Murphy (2007) confirms that “Distance learners are often assumed to be learning autonomously because they control a number of aspects of their learning, such as the time, the pace, what to study and when to study” (74).

In distance learning, a variety of technological tools are put at the disposal of both teachers and learners. Condrat (2014) proposes a set of device to enhance autonomous learning such as: Emails in order for teachers to get in touch with learners and receive feedback, Blog where teachers can explain different points in relatedness to the language components, Skype is mainly used for live discussion and interaction. As far as assessment is concerned, Condrat (ibid) suggests online testing; this allows learners to test their language skills and progress.

It is true that distance learning allows students to study anytime and wherever they are; its main challenge lies in the lack of social interaction with teachers. Even though student can reach their teachers using email or other available contacts, they may not get answers on the spot. It is worth saying that in all cases, the teacher remains irreplaceable element in the academic development of the learner.

2. Method and Tools.

2.1. Data Methods and Administration .This research has used two questionnaires for both teachers and students. Both questionnaires consist of 6 questions, since both teachers and students are on holidays, both research tools were sent online either via E-mail or on Messenger depending on the availability of the participants. The questionnaires were sent in a Word format, this idea is stemmed from the fact that all online courses documents supplied in the university platform are available in a Word or PDF format. Using this type of format aims to identify whether students will be able to download the questionnaire.

The teachers' questionnaire was sent collectively via e-mail; whereas, the students' questionnaire was sent collectively in a group messenger created by the researcher and answers were received on the private account of the researcher.

The online questionnaire is a helpful instrument in certain situations where it is not possible to hand it face-to-face. Additionally, it is easy to transmit and get the respondents' answers back. Most of the teachers sent back their answers via e-mail, whereas, the majority of students used Messenger to submit their answers. It is worth to mention that the researcher is a teacher at Ahmed Zabana University of Relizane, Algeria. This is why, it was easy to contact his colleagues via e-mail and reach his students on Facebook.

2.2. Participants

2.2.1. Teachers' Profile

The participants of the current research are 22 teachers working at the same setting in the department of English. Only 10 teachers filled in the questionnaire (4 males and 6 females). 12 teachers did not reply to it maybe due to network problems.

2.2.2 Students' profile

Table (1): Students' profile

Level	Number participants	Number of respondents	Undeceived answers
First year	27	13	15
Second year	21	14	06
Third year	24	11	13
Total number	72	38	34

As shown in table 1, the questionnaire was administrated to 72 students of English at Ahmed Zabana University of Relizane. It includes 14 males and 58 females. 52.78 of participants fill in the questionnaire. However, 47.22% of them could not reply to it and send back their answers. It is almost half of the sample did not answer the questionnaire due to bad internet quality, lack of materials (Students do not have computers) and inability to download the questionnaire in a Word format as illustrated below:

“Sir I haven't connexion to answer the questionnaire”

“So sorry I wish I could help but I'm using free facebook”

“Sir I just wanted to apologize because I kept trying to fill in the questionnaire but it didn't work... I don't have any laptop with me”

“so sorry, bcz of the network”

2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

Question1: What is your opinion about the latest ministerial decree about online courses?

In this question, teachers show different opinions and perceptions about online lecturing and distance learning. Some see it as a good initiative for the time being. Yet it is still challenging and efforts demanding. In this view, some teachers believe that it is:

- ✓ *“Good initiative but still demands more efforts and huge work to implement ICT in teaching.”*
- ✓ *“Quite interesting. They are prompted from the actual constraints”*

There are other teachers who have slightly different viewpoint concerning this issue. Generally speaking, the majority of teachers think it is somehow difficult due to many reasons mainly: a) bad network quality *“I think we can't apply e-learning because we still face problems of good internet networks”* b) lack of students' interest *“in my opinion online learning or distance learning will not have positive outcomes, and this comes from my personal experience with my students using discord app”* and c) lack of online teaching training as shown in the following quotes:

- ✓ *“It is supposed to be part of standard training for teachers to acquire and master these new literacies...”*
- ✓ *“Very good idea, but too hard for those who were not already trained”*

Question 2: Do you have any online teaching experience?

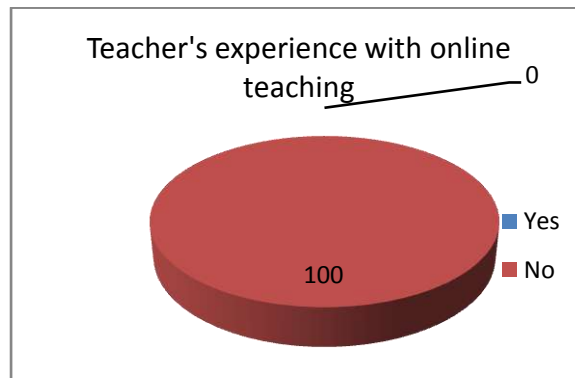


Figure (1): Teachers' experience about online courses

This question aims to identify teachers experience in online teaching. As displayed above, all teachers without any exception (100%) have never experienced online teaching before this educational crisis.

Question 3: What challenges you may face with online courses?

The teachers state different challenges as follows:

- Inaccessibility of internet for students living in rural zones.
- Financial problems to pay the internet for students.
- Lack of materials (computers)
- Absence of direct contact with students

Question 4: Do you think that your learners are able to learn on their own without the teacher physical presence?

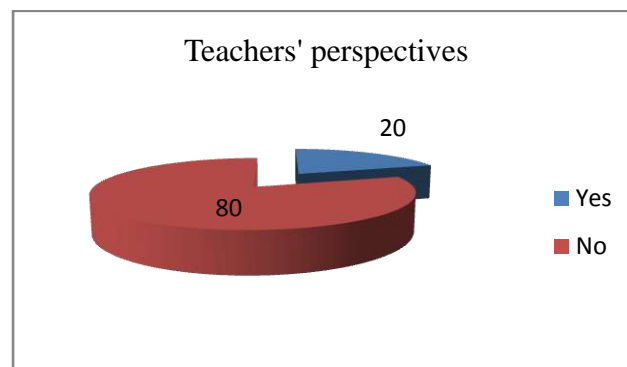


Figure (2): Teachers' perspectives about learners' ability to learn without their teachers' physical presence

Figure (2) demonstrates that the minority (20%) of teachers see that their learners are capable of learning online without the presence of their teachers. This is due to availability of online resources and clarity of learning content explained by teachers in different tech tools such as YouTube channels. It also indicates that the vast majority of teachers (80%) have negative attitude towards their students' ability to learn own their own in the physical absence of their teachers. The main reasons are: a) lack of autonomy (students' are used to spoon

feeding), b) students' dependency on their teachers and c) poor language proficiency. To illustrate the point some teachers state that:

- "...I believe that the majority of my learners seem to be the depending type and not the autonomous one..."
- "... the majority tend to depend a lot on the teacher presence".
- "They are much dependent on their teachers' presence. First, they are not accustomed to distant learning. Second and worse than that, they are not competent enough to achieve autonomous learning (deficiency in the different mechanics of language: vocabulary, grammar, spelling, style,...etc)"

Another reason is related to lack of students' training about distance learning in which one teacher argues that "... they [students] are not enough trained to do that. They kept spoon fed during their whole process of learning" Another teacher stresses the positive influence of teacher physical presence and guidance; she argues that "...Students can interfere at any moment and express their misunderstanding, add some new insights about the lesson..."

Question5: do you think that distance learning is an opportunity to make students experience autonomy at home during this period?

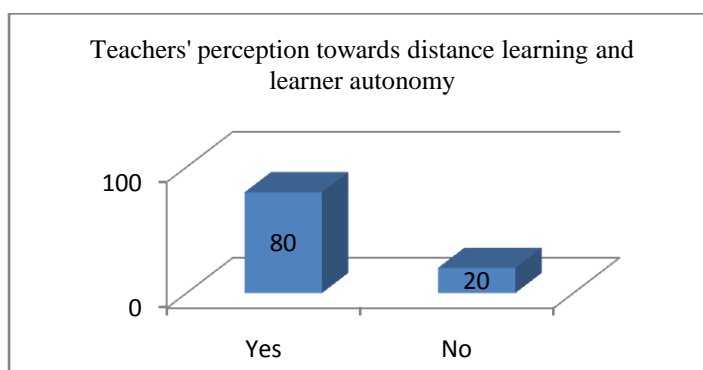


Figure (3): Teachers' attitudes towards developing learner autonomy through distance learning

As shown above, 80% of informants have positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of distance learning in the development of learner autonomy. 20% of them believe that being under the current situation distance learning will not help learners to become autonomous.

2.3.2. Students' Questionnaire

Question 1: After the spread of Corona virus, how would you describe your state of being?

The great majority of students share the same feeling of fear, psychological disorder and emotional instability but they are still hopeful for better future. Below are some extracts taken randomly from students' responses:

- "To be honest, I'm feeling so bad about this fact"
- "Actually I'm bored; tired and depressed."
- "Feeling very frustrated and threatened is something that we have never experienced before, but by being united I'm sure we can overcome this crisis"
- "I'm extremely afraid"

- “I am trying to stay positive but I am disturbed bored and super scared about myself my family my friends and my society”
- “I have no motivation”
- “I’m afraid about my parents and my grandma more than myself.”

Question2: The ministry of higher education has recently announced that you will have your courses online, what is your opinion about this decision?

The students have received the news with varying degrees of agreement and disagreement. Some students welcome the decision and describe it as a good solution for the time being since there is no other option but they are still wondering about students’ learning styles and how assessment will take place (tests and exams). Other students have largely disagreed with the idea of online courses and considered it as being extremely unworkable. This latter is mainly due to the following reasons:

- Students are not convinced that online courses are as beneficial as the classroom.
- Students are not used to distance learning (lack of experience)
- Students are going through the feeling of fear and stress of losing their lives and families. Thus, lack of focus and concentration
- Bad network quality and lack of materials

Question 3: Have you experienced distance learning before?

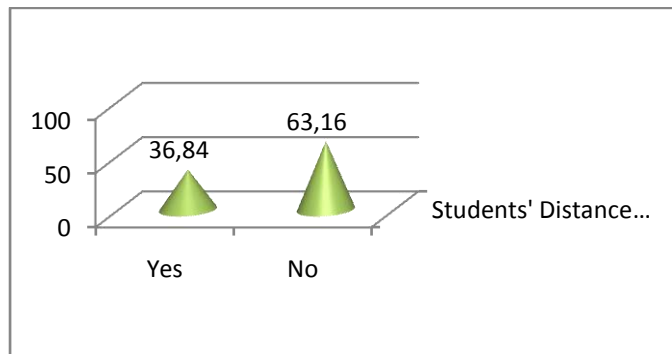


Figure (4). Students’ experience in distance learning

This question aims to figure out whether or not students have experienced distance learning before. Figure(4) displays that the majority of students (63.16) are inexperienced in distance learning; and about (36.84%) have experienced distance learning before this educational crisis.

Question4. Are you able to understand the learning content on your own without your teachers’ physical presence?

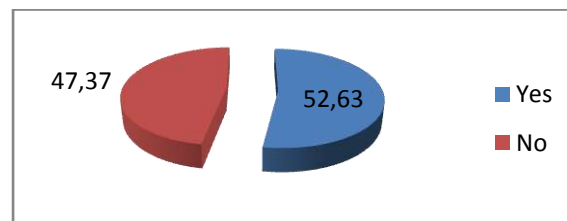


Figure (5). Students’ ability to learn without their teachers’ physical presence

As shown in figure 5, it seems that there some sort of uncertainty among students about their ability of learning without their teachers' physical presence. About 52.63% of respondents view themselves capable of understanding the learning content alone; however, 47.37% of them think that the teacher presence is quite important in understanding the lessons.

Question5: What challenges you may face to learn online (distance learning)?

Students seem to share in common some problems with their teachers. Students set different difficulties. They vary from one learner to another based on their experiences. Many students argue that the main challenges are:

- Bad network quality
- Lack of motivation
- Being stressed and lost
- Lack of materials and technological devices
- Lack of understanding and interaction with teachers
- Limited contacts with teachers
- Too much information available online

Question 6: Do you think that being under the current circumstance is an opportunity to develop your independent attitude towards learning?

In this question, almost all students think that being under the current circumstance is an opportunity to experience and develop independent attitudes towards learning for the following reasons:

- Doing without being told
- Feeling more responsible
- Aware of their duties
- Develop self-learning and self-development
- Being completely autonomous
- Doing more research on their own

3. Discussion and Results

The vast majority of the students in question 1 affirm that being under this circumstance has distracted their concentration and psychological stability. Students are having the feeling of fear, anxiety, and boredom; this has affected their ability to learn outside the educational institution. This goes in parallel with Brooks et al (2020) examination of some empirical studies in which they sum up that during the quarantine "Most reviewed studies reported negative psychological effects including post-traumatic stress symptoms, confusion, and anger." (p.912). Adapting distance learning in such hard times is not an option but rather a necessity and obligation even though it is still quite stressful and difficult.

In questions 1 and 2 in teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire respectively, participants show a positive attitude towards the adaptation of online courses (distance learning) to carry on their studies, they expressed their inclinations with varying degrees of certainty and reluctance about its effectiveness and workability. Some have partially agreed with the idea and others have completely disagreed. None of us would

entirely deny the fact that in such unexpected situations there is no other solution to adapt but distance learning. As a result, one may wonder if teachers and students are ready to play new roles in distance learning. Are they experienced? Do they have enough materials and facilities? In this respect, Basilaia & Kavadze conclude that “The lesson learned from the pandemic of 2020 will force a generation of new laws, regulations, platforms and solutions for future cases, when the countries, government and population will be more prepared than today”(7)

Question 4 shows that the majority of teachers believe that many students are unable to understand the learning content on their own without their teachers’ presence because they are not autonomous. Whereas, about more than half of the students think that they are able to learn outside the educational institution in the absence of their teachers. This result contradicts students’ responses in question 3, in which the majority of students claim that they did not experience distance learning before and in question 5 where they declare that the teacher absence, lack of interaction with teachers are among the challenges of distance learning.

It seems that there is a discrepancy between teachers and students and among students themselves concerning the negative influence of teacher physical absence on the students’ comprehension of the learning content. This is perhaps due to students’ lack of awareness with regard the challenges of distance learning in such stressful time. To this end, lack of distance learning experience, teacher physical absence, lack of interaction and lack of autonomy are among the main reasons behind students’ inability to comprehend the learning content without their teachers.

Analysis of question 2 indicates that all teachers participating in the current research affirm that they have never experienced online teaching before. Thus, it is unreasonable to expect teachers to teach online if they lack such literacy in the 21st century. In the same way, Huang et al (2020: 39) conclude that “Several instructors and learners do not have the appropriate digital skills to teach and learn online. This can make the online teaching/learning experience inconvenient for them”. In addition to that, 34 of students and 12 teachers were unable to fill in the questionnaire due to internet problems. Being in such situation makes distance learning especially challenging.

In spite of the challenges and the difficulties both teachers and students face in distance learning, they still see that the current situation is an opportunity to make students experience autonomous learning. More importantly, teachers confirm that the process requires time, training and efforts. To this end, distance learning cannot be done overnight but rather should be considered as a starting point towards evaluating our educational system in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Hence, this situation must be seen more as an opportunity to get ready for future educational emergencies.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that students suggest that teachers may create YouTube channel to explain lessons and Zoom application to interact with their students and answer their questions. On the other hand, teachers in question 6 also recommend getting in touch with students using Facebook or Email to provide them with online resources and feedback.

4. Suggestions: Distance Learning Tools

Despite the pain and panic Coronavirus may cause to both teachers and students, being under this circumstance should positively be exploited. It is high time to realize the need of using technology not only in such difficult times and but also in normal situations. It certainly

remains an alternative which will not replace the crucial role of the physical presence of the teacher.

Djoub (2020) on her “EduLearn2Chnage” blog suggests ten (10) tech tools for distance learning, these tools are used to make learners engaged in their learning and “promote students’ discussion, assess and track their learning progress” (Djoub, 2020). She divides the tools into three main categories as follows:

- 1) Live lectures and discussions for example:
 - streamYard (<https://streamyard.com/>)
 - Screencastify (<https://www.screencastify.com/>)
 - OBS (<https://obsproject.com/>)
 - EdPuzzle (<https://edpuzzle.com/>)
 - Flipgrid (<https://info.flipgrid.com/>)
- 2) Formative assessment for instance:
 - Edulastic (<https://edulastic.com>)
 - Formative (<https://goformative.com/>)
 - Peardeck (<https://www.peardeck.com/>)
- 3) Staff meetings such as:
 - Google meet (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_ywOjB1c4Q)
 - Zoom (<https://zoom.us>)

The aforementioned are some suggestions to save the academic year and be ready for future encounters. It is worth mentioning that both teachers and students should gain some understanding about the use of these tools through a training to make distance learning possible. In such emergencies and exceptional cases, technology can play a greater role in keeping students in connection with their teachers and the learning process.

5. Conclusion

This research is an attempt to shed light on the current educational crisis due to Corona virus. It aims to explore the effectiveness of distance learning in developing student autonomy during the time of this pandemic. A shift from a classroom to distance learning is effort demanding and time consuming. In the absence of social interaction, learning is not as effective as in the classroom where students interact directly with their teachers. It is undeniable that distance learning is an appreciated method to cope with the current situation and make students autonomous. Yet, it is confronted with many obstacles such as bad network quality, psychological instability and lack of training for both teachers and students.

There is an interchanged relationship between distance learning and learner autonomy. The former is one way to develop learner autonomy and the latter is a necessary skill in the success of distance learning. Furthermore, online education should not be seen only as an immediate momentum solution necessarily though it is, but also as a support to ensure the quality of education and develop learner autonomy inside and outside the educational setting in the future. This crisis should be well invested to digitalize higher educational system to follow up the demand of modern time.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 : Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire investigates the effectiveness of distance learning in learner autonomy development during the time of Coronavirus. It aims to explore teachers' attitudes towards distance learning. Thank you for your time.

- Please tick to the corresponding box. (you can underline or highlight the answers)

1. Background Information

Gender: Male Female

2. Learner autonomy and Distance learning in the time of Coronavirus

Question1: What is your opinion about the latest ministerial decree about online courses?

Question 2: Do you have any online teaching experience?

Yes No

Question 3: What challenges you may face with courses online?

Question4: Do you think that your learners are able to learn on their own without the teacher physical presence

Yes No

Please justify?

Question 5: Do you think that the distance learning is a chance to make students experience autonomy at home during this period? Please justify?

Question 6: How would you contribute to make your students autonomous in distance learning during this period?

Appendix 2: Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire deals with the effectiveness of distance learning in learner autonomy development in the time of Coronavirus. Answering this questionnaire would be of great help to give new insights and contribute to the current literature. Thank you in advance.

Please tick of the corresponding box (You can underline or highlight the answers)

1. Background information

Gender: Male Female

Level: 1st Year 2nd Year 3rd Year

2. Learner autonomy and Distance Learning in the time of Coronavirus

Question 1: After the spread of coronavirus, how would you describe your psychological state of being?

Question 2: The ministry of higher education recently announced that you will have your lectures online, what is your opinion about this decision?

Question 3: Have ever experienced distance learning before?

Yes No

Question 4: Are you able to understand the learning content on your own without your teachers' physical presence?

Yes No

In both cases please justify?

Question 5: What challenges do you face to learn online (distance learning)?

Question 6: Do you think being under the current circumstance is an opportunity to develop your independent attitude towards learning?

Yes No

If "Yes", please justify?