

## **ONLINE LEARNING VS PHYSICAL LEARNING**

Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. In December 2019, the whole world was shaken by the emergence of the Covid-19 virus which started from Wuhan, China and most of the countries have declared emergency and lockdown to prevent the virus from getting to spread widely. Malaysia is no exception to announce Movement Control Order (MCO) since 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. However, after 12 months the virus break, we still cannot see the end path of this tough journey. Despite being worried about the widespread of the virus, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM) has issued statements and guidelines for conducting online teaching and learning sessions after few weeks MCO started.

There are many platforms that can be used for online learning such as Skype, Zoom, Google Meet and Cisco Webex. However, considering the popularity of online learning, large numbers of people primarily because of prejudices, deliberately stay away from such techniques. Around the same time, in the midst of the increasing use of online learning, physical learning is fighting back and trying to introduce new ways to sustain students’ interest. Two sides of a coin still exist. For certain learners, online learning is more appropriate, whereas physical learning for others is the preferred delivery type. What makes these students thought of comparing these two methods? Here are some advantages and disadvantages of online learning and physical learning.

One of online learning's greatest advantages is that students can study from anywhere. During family holiday? From a bed of theirs? A staff space on their work break? If they have a strong Internet connection or a quiet space, they can learn from their laptop and smart phone. Every day, they do not need to waste time commuting, or move their whole life to a new place. In the long run, this might save their huge sums of money and tension, so it is certainly a benefit to consider. Students can find some spare time to take a class or prepare for it, even with a busy schedule.

Less peer pressure from other students is another added advantage to online learning. Students will be free to follow their own timetable and will not have to worry about what other students think about their thoughts or learning pace, as their learning environment will be more private, unless of course students want to discuss about any topic on class forums or social media.

As mentioned before, there is now more available ways and platforms for online learning. Institutions such as Universiti Teknologi Malaysia which allow students, regardless of where they are in the world, to get an easy access to classes and provide softwares such as Microsoft Office, EndNote, antivirus and few more for students while obtaining an all-important, prestigious degree just by referring to students' portal and e-learning. From laptops to live-streamed lectures, online learning requires daily interaction with technology. So, students will be improving their technological literacy even without them realizing it. This is a great transferable ability that for the future will keep you in good stead.

All these versatilities and freedoms, on the flip side, mean that students need to be self-motivated and self-disciplined to get results. Studying online means that they may have less social contact with other students and lecturers, so there is a greater risk of becoming alone during the course. So, they may find it quite difficult to ask their online lecturers if there is any questions they want to ask, as the lecturers may be busy with other works and have no time to check the messages or they have too many chat groups and overlooked the student's messages. However, these classes such as online forums, emails, lecture videos and chat rooms, also provide alternatives to live query resolution. It can be useful for people to get their questions answered by using these alternatives. Students also assume that the best way to learn is to communicate with a live lecturer, since it is engaging and allows for two-way communication. Synchronous online learning would be more suited for certain types of students.

Another disadvantage to consider is online learning seems to have a cheating and deceiving attempts through different methods. Compared to in physical class, students can cheat on examinations and tests more easily because they take the assessments in their own surroundings and by using their laptop or computer or smart phone.

Students cannot be specifically tracked during the examinations without a video feed, making the cheat detection more difficult than physical examination which usually being held in class or examination hall.

According to Kiran Dham, in his article wrote that online learning is depending on technology to make it happen. More than 90% of Malaysian owned smartphone and laptop but not many of them have a strong internet connection. These numbers do not paint the whole picture. The rates of computer literacy are still far from ideal despite the booming growth in technological capabilities, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average percentage of computer illiterate individuals hover about 25%, which means that a quarter of the population would have significant problems accessing online learning as an educational tool. These statistics are proven that a number of students and lecturers from all over the place are having difficulties on network connection during class session which makes their learning are disturbed and cannot gain a better understanding in class compared to physical learning.

Moving on to physical learning. Physical learning in the classroom offers a framework and routine for students' lives. It will help them to develop a consistency with taking classes at a set of times and the obligation to meet deadlines and attend classes face to face. Of course this is a very helpful transferable capacity that when they graduate, workers would respect, so getting used to the ebb and flow of classroom life will keep them in good shape for the future. In addition, students taking online tests may be able to let a third party take the exam instead of themselves without a proper identity authentication system in place, resulting in a completely fraudulent test result.

Moreover, students will have regular contact with other students and lecturers as well. They will have a schedule that tells them exactly where and when they need to be per semester, even if it is only a few hours per week and this routine will help them move forward with their studies and remain mentally healthy. Students can also throw themselves into college life as a physical learner, whether that means joining the football team, playing in a game, or advocating for good causes they believe in with

other students. It is all available on campus, which could provide a real boost to their confidence and social life. It will definitely make it more interesting to learn.

Furthermore, physical books and classroom or lecture notes are quite useful at most of the time while doing revisions and for passing examinations. It could be more helpful for students to learn with their own handwriting and note taking method compared to the generalized online notes that available on many sites on the Internet. This might be easy for them to get used to answer past year questions that are given by their lecturers using the notes and format in answering tests that they had jotted down in class.

Physical learning in classroom encourages students and lecturers to understand each other in a better way. This allows the lecturers to give attention to the students that faced troubles in any topics and analyze their strengths and weaknesses, serve as mentors, and help them in their career opportunities. Students will openly express their thoughts in a physical class and explain their own queries with the lecturers, thereby having their questions answered immediately.

Despite of all the advantages mentioned, there are still a few disadvantages on physical learning. One of the disadvantages is punctuality and attendance are important in attending class as it is part of learning manners and etiquette. It will work against students if they are late or absent, as their scores can be reduced to reflect this. Equally, the mark might be lower if they are expected to show anything face-to-face and they do not make a good impression. Physical learning is more immediate, as a lecturer might hand some works or assignments at the students in a class and expect them to respond appropriately, and they will not have as much time to practice their responses.

Another disadvantage of physical learning is no flexibility. A learning experience based on campus means that the class schedule is set and not subject to change. Rather than the other way around, students must form their personal schedules around college. If plans change suddenly or an emergency occurs, the student cannot alter the schedule of the class to turn in the work at another time. Students are forced to choose

between having an education and getting a rain check if a scheduling conflict occurs between work and college.

For physical learning, students have to attend the courses physically in order to obtain attendance credit. Those who need to travel long distances to get to schools or classes have to allocate ample time to arrive on time, particularly in cases where there is bad weather. A long commute can also mean spending more money on gas for a long period of time, which can present a problem for financially disadvantaged students when combined with the cost of college.

It can be incredibly tricky to try to decide between online learning and physical learning which one is more convenient. On one side, it is already 2020 and most of the students and lecturers nowadays have the technology in their pockets to access on-the-go details, so why would they commit to a campus college experience that needs us to go for many years to the same place every week? On the other side of coin, though, there is something magical about college registration, buying a new backpack, going to campus with armfuls of books, and maybe a packed social schedule. It sounds interesting, it feels genuine, and even the least can feel the vibe and experience the student's life as well.

## ***References***

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