Problem of Resistance to the Introduction of Distance Learning Models of Training in the Vocational Training of Educators

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Abstract. This study seeks to specify the factors preventing end-users (learners) from doing the distance learning courses successfully and university management from introducing this mode of study into vocational training of educators in Ukraine. It employed a non-experimental, descriptive study design performed through online and offline surveys. The preliminary data were collected through a self-completion Google Forms-based questionnaire (Course Satisfaction Questionnaire) for the students used at the first stage of our research followed by an interview questionnaire used with a focus group at the subsequent one. The latter developed the evaluation scale and made all necessary adjustments so that the validity of the study was ensured. The Chi-Square method was used to determine whether there were any correlations between *internal* and *external* factors of resistance. This study proved that the issue of resistance to the introduction of distance-learning models of training in the vocational training of educators is mostly a personal perception factor. It raised the issue of training and

assisting lecturers in using distance education tools and shifting their role from being a source of knowledge to being a facilitator of learning.

Keywords: **O**nline education; Vocational training of educators; Resistance to distance learning; Higher educational institutions

1. Introduction

Resistance towards introduction of online education models of training in the vocational training is a shaming case for higher educational institutions (HEIs) in Ukraine (Zolotareva & Brezhneva-Ermolenko, 2015). Though its benefits have been widely discussed and have become obvious for both learners and educators, and the shift from face-to-face instruction to online teaching/training has become trendy, the introduction of this mode of study in the educational process of HEIs in Ukraine has still been put off. Furthermore, it seems of even much greater concern that HEIs providing vocational training for educators 'are leading' this negative trend.

1.1. Literature Review

The typical reasons for reluctance to on-line education found in the literature were bias-based perceptions, negative experiences of both learners and teachers, technical illiteracy or lack of technical skills to manage classroom and build the community, gender-based specifics along with the gap between theory and practice of the e-learning (Uzunboylu & Tuncay, 2010; Lee & Choi, 2011; Bacow *et al.*, 2012; Kintu & Simon, 2019; Mahlangu, 2018; Akmeşe, Demir & Dünder, 2016; Ravhudzulo, 2016; Lederman, 2019; Rost, 2019). While the number of scientific investigations seeking to handle this problem is growing, this has still been a gap to complete that are related to optimal (value-for-money) online course and curriculum design, student-lecturer motivation and engagement.

Theoretical and Practical gaps

Up to now, the studies have examined the problem of resistance to introduction of a distance education mode at HEIs from the students' perspective (Rashid & Rashid, 2011; Fojtik, 2018) but few studies addressed this issue from the perspective of both education seeker and education provider. Additionally, this study found a practical gap between research and educational policy-making for accumulating and sharing best practices in using technology (Biesta, 2007; Conole, 2010).

1.2. Theoretical Model

The theoretical framework used in this study is based on the data obtained from two domains (theoretical and practical) through integration and inference (see it visualized in Figure 1 below).
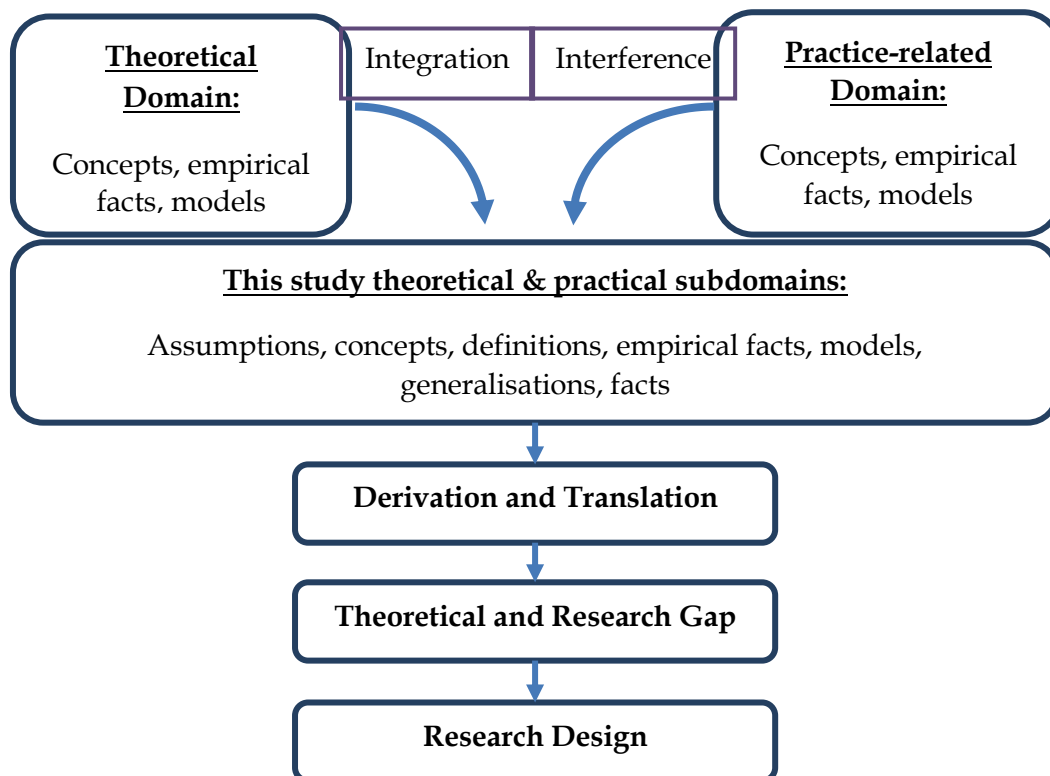
| Theoretical Domain: | Integration | Interference | Practice-related Domain: |
| Concepts, empirical facts, models | | | Concepts, empirical facts, models |

This study theoretical & practical subdomains:

Assumptions, concepts, definitions, empirical facts, models, generalisations, facts

Derivation and Translation

Theoretical and Research Gap

Research Design

Figure 1: The theoretical framework used in this study

1.3. Research purpose
The *purpose* of this study was to specify the factors preventing end-users (learners) from doing the distance learning courses successfully and university management from introducing this mode of study into vocational training of educators.

1.4. Research Questions
Therefore, this study seeks to answer two questions:
1) what internal and external factors/reasons make students and university management representatives resist the online learning;
2) what factors seem to be crucial.

2. Method
This study used methods which are common for quantitative and qualitative types of research (Mehrad & Tahriri, 2019; Streefkerk, 2019). It employed a non-experimental, descriptive study design performed through online and offline surveys. It dealt nothing with assessment of academic performance of the students when they did the distance course. This section provides the highlights of a research model and procedure, a self-completion Google Forms-based questionnaire (Course Satisfaction Questionnaire) for the students, an interview (a semi-structured one) questionnaire for a sampled student group and management representatives, and an overview of sampling and statistical tools. This research is based on both students' self-assessment and management

representatives' views of challenges occurring when a distance mode of studies is introduced at the universities majoring in Pedagogics in Ukraine.

2.1. Research model

It took the members of the research team one semester (4 months) of the academic year of 2019-2020 to complete this study which was a sequence of three stages (see it visualised in Figure 2 below).
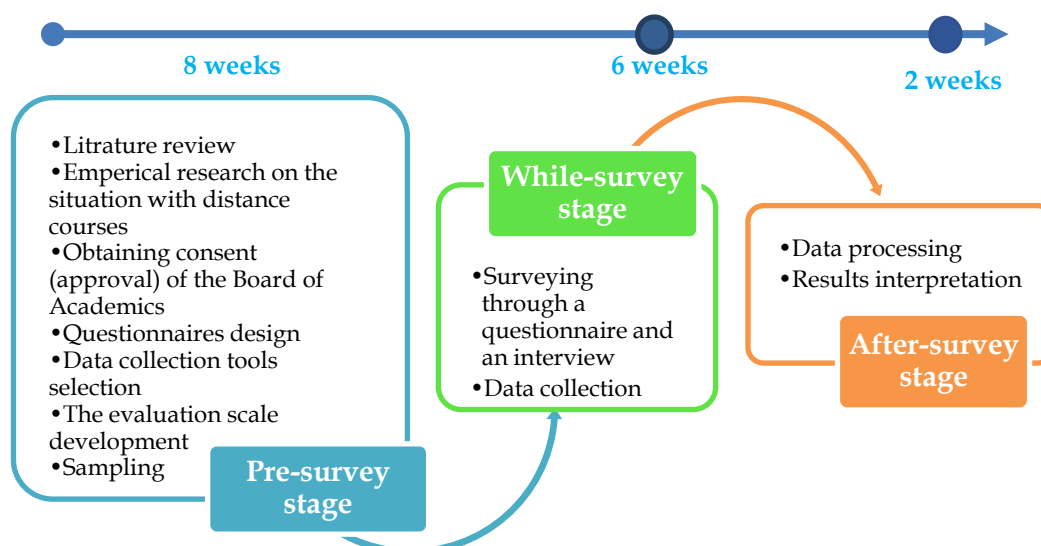

Figure 2: The timeline of the study

At the pre-survey stage, theory and best practices were examined to explore the issues to have been addressed and gaps to complete. Concurrently, peer-reviewed and public domain sources were studied to evaluate the situation with distance courses in Ukraine and abroad. After obtaining the consent (approval) of the Boards of Academics for Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University, M. Drahomanov National Pedagogical University, and Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University to perform this study, the questionnaires and the evaluation scale were developed, data collection tools were selected, and sampling was performed. Additionally, we, among the other things, examined the curriculums of the chosen universities to get aware of the number and topics of the distance courses, and we involve two experts – Oksana Pozhydaeva (Ph.D. for the Academy of Labour, Social Relations and Tourism) and Valentyna Bobrytska (Doctor of Pedagogics for the Department of Educational Policies at M. Drahomanov National Pedagogical University) to check face validity of the questions in the questionnaires.

At the subsequent stage, Course Satisfaction Questionnaire (Google Forms-based) was used to reduce the population of 176 and to sample the subjects for the next stage of this study which was a semi-structured interview.

2.2. Distance Course Satisfaction Questionnaire

This was designed and administered to respond the first half of the research question which was to define the aspects causing educators the resistance to doing the distance learning courses. Additionally, it was used as a filter when

sampling was performed. The questionnaire comprised 11 questions. The questions 4 to 7 used a 5-point Linkert scale (with '*a*' meaning not at all helpful; '*b*' – slightly helpful; '*c*' – somewhat helpful; '*d*' – very helpful; '*e*' – extremely helpful) to respond them.

1. Which device did you use to access the course?
a) desktop computer; b) laptop; c) smart phone; d) iPhone.

2. Which type of internet connection did you use to get access to the course?
a) Wired connection; b) wireless connection; c) Mobile (3G or 4G) internet.

3. Was the course obligatory or elective or optional? Please, choose one.
a) obligatory; b) elective; c) optional.

4. To what extend did the course meet your expectations? It was
a) not at all helpful; b) slightly helpful; c) somewhat helpful; d) very helpful; e) extremely helpful.

5. To what extend were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the content of the course?
a) very dissatisfied; b) dissatisfied; c) unsure; d) satisfied; e) very satisfied.

6. To what extend were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the format of the course?
a) very dissatisfied; b) dissatisfied; c) unsure; d) satisfied; e) very satisfied.

7. To what extend were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the teaching methods?
a) very dissatisfied; b) dissatisfied; c) unsure; d) satisfied; e) very satisfied.

8. How many distance courses have you done so far including this course?
a) 1-3; b) 4-6; c) 7 and more.

9. What is your average grade (ECTS) in your studies?
a) 90-100; b) 80-90; c) 70-80; d) 60-70.

10. What confused or caused you the greatest trouble while doing the course?
11. Are you male or female?

2.3. Semi-structured Interview Questionnaire
This was designed and conducted with the sampled group students and university management representatives to respond the second half of the research question which was to examine the reasons why both students and management representatives are resistant to introducing the distant mode of study into vocational training of educators.

Questions for the sampled students:
1. What are your reasons to feel resistant to the distance learning?
2. What failures or troubles do you associate it with?
3. Who or what should be blamed for your failures or troubles above?
4. Do you link your future job as an educator with the delivery of online courses?

Questions for the sampled management representatives:
1. What seem to be the reasons to postpone introduction the distance learning in your institution? And why do students dislike this mode of study?
2. What failures or troubles do you associate distance learning with?
3. Who or what should be blamed for your failures or troubles above?
4. Do you link the students' future job as educators with the delivery of online courses?

2.4. Sample

The third-year-students seeking a Bachelor Degree in Education at Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University, National Pedagogical University named after M. Drahomanov, and Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University, directors of curriculum and instruction departments and heads for the departments of Methods of Teaching for the above universities were the general population for this study. Upon completion of the Moodle-based 30-hour (1 credit, ECTS) course in "Methods of Teaching/Training", **176** students (64 males and 112 females) were suggested to complete the Course Satisfaction Questionnaire (Google Forms-based) asking, among the other things, whether they were (and would be) ready to do the other distance course in any other subject. **83** students (56 females and 27 males) who answered this question negatively to questions 4 to 7 of the above Questionnaire were chosen to be the subjects to this study. **3** directors of curriculum and instruction departments and **9** heads for the departments of Methods of Teaching were also involved purposefully. The total sample size was **95** people ($n = 95$) and it was an adequate number to meet the purpose of this research.

2.5. Instruments

The preliminary data were collected through a self-completion Google Forms-based questionnaire (Course Satisfaction Questionnaire) for the students used at the first stage of our research followed by an interview questionnaire used with a focus group at the subsequent one. The in-built Google Forms statistical tools were used to roughly process the answers of the student population. The interview responses were both recorded and written down to be analysed and interpreted by the experts in educational technology and educational psychology. The evaluation scale developed by the latter was used and all necessary adjustments were made to it so that the validity of the study was ensured. The Chi-Square method was used to determine whether there were any correlations between *internal* and *external* factors of resistance.

3. Results

The interview responses of the sampled group students and university management representatives for questions 4 to 7 from the Distance Course Satisfaction Questionnaire were to explore the perception of distance learning made by interviewees. Those were the core question intended to discover the perception or attitudes of the respondents to the distance learning.

Question 4. To what extend did the course meet your expectations? Just 3% reported that they found the distance course extremely helpful and 8 % found it very helpful while 43% of the surveyed stated the course was somewhat helpful, 38% evaluated the course as slightly helpful and 8% of the respondents found it not at all helpful.

Question 5. To what extend were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the content of the course? 59% of people experienced significant dissatisfaction about distance course content, 35% were just dissatisfied, while 5% were unsure or satisfied and the rest (only 1%) of the participants very satisfied.

Question 6. To what extend were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the format of the course? 52 % of the *respondents were very dissatisfied, 43% of the surveyed were unsure and 5% of the sampled people expressed satisfaction about the format.*

Question 7. To what extend were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the teaching methods? The majority (73%) of the surveyed were dissatisfied, 20% of people were unsure while 7% evaluated the teaching methods positively (satisfied).

After the semi-structured interview had been conducted, the factors/reasons for resistance were categorised into two broad types like *internal* (or human factors) (personal attitude-related (PA), skills-related (S) and awareness-related (A)) and *external* (objective reasons) (marketing policy-related (MP), technology-related challenges (TC)).

Tables 1 and 2 below provide an account of the interview answers. The figures in the table suggest that personal attitude-related responses of both students and university management representatives dominated all the interview through. The second significant trigger for resistance to distance learning were those related to technology challenges. The next ones were skills and awareness followed by marketing policy-related ones. While there was some contradiction in the respondents' answers concerning who was supposed to be responsible for failures and troubles (Question 4) – both denied their responsibility, students as well as university management representatives reported that computer skills, bad infrastructure and anxieties were quite important triggers to make their mind up to be resistant to distance learning mode.

Table 1: The students' interview answers consolidated (*n* = 83)

#Question	Students	% of respondents (*n* = 83)	*df*
1	a) does not suit my personality (PA) b) is not effective (PA; A) c) robotic education (PA) d) challenges me technologically (TC; S) e) causes anxiety of failure (PA) f) demotivates me (PA)	27 27 7 18 15 6	2
2	a) lack of computer skills (S) b) out-of-dated computer infrastructure (TC) c) general distancing (PA) d) robotic education (PA) e) causes me anxious (PA)	43 37 4 6 10	1
3	a) myself (PA) b) students and lecturers (PA) c) lecturers (PA) d) institution (PA)	11 3 39 53	1
4	a) no (PA) b) unsure (PA) c) yes (PA)	19 56 25	2

Note abbreviations: PA – personal attitude; S – skills; A – awareness; MP – marketing policy; TC – technology challenges.

Table 2: The students' interview answers consolidated ($n = 12$)

#Question	Representatives	% of respondents ($n = 12$)	df
1	a) does not suit everyone (A) b) less effective than the traditional mode (PA; A) c) robotic education (PA) d) challenges lecturers technologically (TC; S) e) challenges a lecturer's reputation (PA; MP) f) challenges the reputation of an institution (MP) g) causes lecturers the feeling of losing power over the students (PA) h) destroys the traditional academic roles – lecture-student (A; PA) i) financial reasons (MP)	9 9 9 19 18 17 5 11 3	2
2	a) lack of computer skills (S) b) out-of-dated computer infrastructure (TC; MP) c) general distancing (PA) d) robotic education (PA) e) causes anxieties (PA)	49 34 2 3 12	1
3	a) students b) students and lecturers (PA) c) lecturers (PA) d) institution (PA)	57 9 9 25	1
4	a) no (PA) b) unsure (PA) c) yes (PA)	2 24 74	2

Note abbreviations: PA – personal attitude; S – skills; A – awareness; MP – marketing policy; TC – technology challenges.

Relative importance of the types of factors has been presented below (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Relative importance of the types of factors

Type of Factor	Regression analysis			Dominance analysis (%)	SD
	β	p	β^2		
PA	.27	.00	.07	39.5	.98
S	0.15	.026	.02	12.5	.71
A	0.11	.017	.02	14.5	.77
MP	-0.3	.606	.00	8.2	.65
TC	.01	.895	.00	25.3	.94
				100	

Note abbreviations: PA – personal attitude; S – skills; A – awareness; MP – marketing policy; TC – technology challenges; $p < .01$. Total $R^2 = .18$

Internal factors prevail over external factors and personal attitude factors dominated the list compared to marketing factor which seemed the least important among the interviewees.

Moreover, the processed data made us certain that the problem of resistance was not sporadic. As can be seen from the above Table 3, the Chi-squared $p < 0.02$ of correlations between *internal* and *external* factors of resistance showed that this study result should be considered suggestive.

Furthermore, three times more students than representatives confessed that their reluctance to distance learning is a result of lack of confidence that this mode of study was effective. Additionally, the majority of students were not certain whether their future job as an educator would be linked with the delivery of online courses. Finally, the university management representatives implied that the issue of resistance to the introduction of distance-learning models of training in the vocational training of educators is related to the image creating (marketing) policy of the tertiary educational institution.

4. Discussion
It was found that the issue of resistance to the introduction of distance-learning models of training in the vocational training of educators is fuelled by human factors and objective reasons. Both students and representatives surveyed articulated lack of personal confidence and technological background to be able to design high standard online courses which might indirectly influence lecturers' and institution's public image.

Additionally, the students were found to experience the atmosphere of boredom and disinterest while doing the distance course. The link between marketing policy and distance learning mode emerged unexpectedly. The university management representatives confessed that they could not allow public access to the distance learning courses because of low quality of their design (professors do not receive any training in online course pedagogics and design), plagiarism issue (very often the content is just ripped off) and over-theoreticity (causes increased anxiety of failure, demotivates).

Some students stated that their reluctance is based on their prior experience in doing the online courses at university in which they suffered from the language used to explain concepts - it was too much complicated for them, the teaching techniques lecturers used to accommodate the learners in the course – a limited number of them, and over-criticizing their mistakes when lecturers provided feedback. Professors claimed that it was more common for students to cheat when studying distantly that when attending a course personally.

 This study contributed to investigation of the problem of resistance to the introduction of distance-learning models of training in the vocational training of educators, specifically: perception of and resistance to online education (Schwartz, 2010; Ghandforoush, 2013; Mitchell, Parlamis & Claiborne, 2015; Arinto, 2016; Lucas, 2016), anxiety and resistance to distance learning

(Uzunboylu & Tuncay, 2010; Parlakkılıç, 2014; Bousbahi & Alrazgan, 2015), and on-line instruction vs. traditional teaching (Sheeja, 2011; Khorsandi *et al*., 2012; McNair-Crews, 2015; Hurlbut, 2018).

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

This study proved that the issue of resistance to the introduction of distance-learning models of training in the vocational training of educators is mostly a personal perception factor. Due to the great proportion of personal perception, it is difficult to assess and evaluate the online course design and its quality as the course which is viewed by some as "good" can be just bookish comprising several types of activities like reading and self-checking (self-testing).

It raised the issue of training and assisting lecturers in using distance education tools and shifting their role from being a source of knowledge to being a facilitator of learning. Institutions in Ukraine should address the issues of computer infrastructure and upgrading it.

The lecturers should help the students to surmount their anxieties, inspire them to succeed, and deal individually with their personal perception problems.
So, are recommendations:

- It should be prerequisite for the educators to take the courses like the computer skills upgrade course, the course in methodology for the development of online learning course for the students.
- The lecturer's computer literacy testing should be a part of the employment procedure.
- An institutional department set up to provide expertise to ensure the quality of the online courses is a newly must-have.

6. Implications & Limitations

This study implied that the current situation in the educational system demotivates both educators and students to self-develop leading to resistance. Both educators' and students' perceptions of distance learning mode are more associated with trouble than with benefits.

There are three apparent limitations to this study which are as follows: first, *time limit* that might be an argument to dispute the validity of its significance, second, *the major* of students which is Education, third, *the number* of institutions and management representatives involved.

7. Acknowledgments

We are cordially grateful to all contributors to this research so that we were able to smoothly run and complete it.

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