



Faculty and Student Perceptions of Online Learning: Moving from Emergency Practices to Effective Teaching Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

During the Spring 2020 semester amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic, faculty at universities worldwide were forced to transform face-to-face coursework into virtual delivery¹. For many instructors, this was an introduction to online learning. Higher education scholars quickly categorized this time as emergency remote teaching (ERT), assuming that the quick transition may not allow instructors to include best practices in online learning for students and create a negative perception of all online learning².

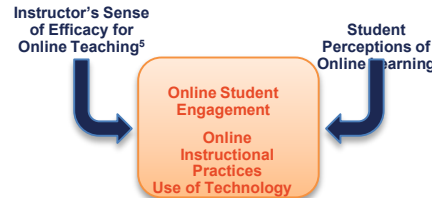
Scholars have documented the impact and experience of ERT during the Spring 2020 semester on students³ and instructors⁴. As online learning continued into the Fall 2020 semester, more research is needed to compare the experiences during the ERT Spring 2020 semester and a semester when instructors had more time to prepare content specifically for online environments.

DATA ANALYSIS

The instructor's sense of efficacy for online teaching and students' perception of online learning surveys included 25 items in the three categories. All questions were answered on a scale of 1 to 9 (1=Not at All; 9=A Great Deal). Scan the QR code below to access the data.

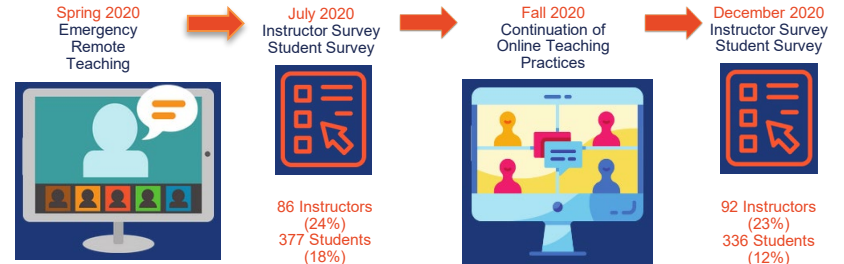


CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Instructors who practice effective teaching strategies are more likely to report a higher teacher sense of efficacy. This study's goal was to glean information to better prepare instructors for a future of online teaching. Asking instructors' how confident they are in their abilities provides a better measure of need for professional development, and can still compare to students' perceptions of these skills in their courses.

METHODOLOGY



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

OBJECTIVE 1:

Understand how students' perceptions of online learning changed between Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters.

Student perceptions minimally changed between semesters. In the three constructs, means for most items were not significantly different between the two time periods.

Student Engagement

Students' perceptions changed little between semesters:

- Most likely to report safe learning environment for collaboration.
- Least likely to report instructors motivated students who showed low interest in online work.

Instructional Practices

In Fall 2020, students were:

- Less likely to say instructors were responsive to individual student questions through emails, phone calls and/or texts.
- More likely to say instructors provided timely feedback on assignments and used a variety of instructional strategies to address varying learning styles.

Use of Technology

In Fall 2020, students were **more likely** to:

- Receive links to resources to enhance understanding of material.
- Report instructors utilizing advanced features of the LMS.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Understand how instructors' online teaching sense of efficacy changed between Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters.

Instructor sense of efficacy minimally changed between semesters. For most items were not significantly different between the two time periods.

Student Engagement

Instructors rated the items in the same order as students:

- Most likely to report structuring a safe learning environment.
- Least likely to report motivating students who showed low interest in online work.

Instructional Practices

In Fall 2020, instructors were slightly more confident with all concepts. The following were statistically higher:

- Establishing learning objectives
- Responding to individual questions during synchronous class.

Use of Technology

No significant changes between Spring 2020 and Fall 2020.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Compare students' perceptions of online learning to instructors' online teaching sense of efficacy in Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters.

Between Spring 2020 and Fall 2020, for most items, there was not a significant difference between the mean responses of students and instructors.

Student Engagement

The difference between student and instructor mean responses decreased between Spring 2020 and Fall 2020.

Instructional Practices

Between the two semesters, the mean difference increased for instructors responding to student questions during non-meeting times.

Instructor mean responses were significantly higher than students for:

- Establishing learning objectives
- Measuring / assessing learning objectives
- Providing timely feedback on assignments

Use of Technology

No significant changes between Spring 2020 and Fall 2020.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Increased Negative Perceptions?

This study contradicts the claims that ERT during Spring 2020 would lead to negative perceptions of online learning for students. Students found similar levels of best practices in online learning during the Spring 2020 semester when instructors had little time to prepare and Fall 2020 when instructors had more time to prepare.

Student Motivation

Instructors expressed the least efficacious beliefs in motivating students with low interest. Students were least likely to see their peers motivated in courses. Motivational theories support the need for connection and empathy. Even in online spaces, instructors should provide shared time for conversation and connection.

Responding to Student Questions

During both semesters, students were less likely to report instructors being responsive to individual questions during non-class meeting times compared to their instructors. Students also reported that a reasonable amount of time for instructors to respond to emails is 18 hours. Instructors should manage expectations by communicating an anticipated response time to students.

Learning Objectives and Assessments

The challenges identified in online learning mirror those in face-to-face courses: instructors struggle with establishing and measuring learning objectives in ways that are clear to students. Additional training in these skills could benefit instructors in all instructional settings.

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