

Improving Students' Self-Study Capacity in Online Teaching at the University of Technology, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City: A Discussion

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Self-study capacity, online teaching, students

Today, the strong development of information technology has led to important changes in education in general and higher education in particular, associated with the development of the Internet and the formation of the E-learning teaching method (online teaching). Online teaching is becoming the new training trend in many Vietnamese universities. Online teaching is a form of transmitting knowledge through an Internet connection for studying, exchanging materials, and communicating among students and between students and lecturers. The practice of online teaching over the years shows that the E-learning method can only be highly effective when students' self-study ability is promoted because students' self-study capacity is a combination of students' self-study abilities to dominate knowledge in the best way. Within the framework of this article, the author shares some measures to improve students' self-study capacity in online learning at the University of Technology, Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City.

Introduction

Online teaching is a form of knowledge transmission through the use of an Internet connection to conduct learning, exchange documents, and communicate between learners and teachers. This teaching method is being evaluated as quite convenient and suitable for university and college levels compared to other levels in the education system. Compared to traditional classes, when participating in online classes, learners can be completely proactive in terms of time and space to study. This is more suitable for busy people who find it difficult to arrange a time for classes within a fixed time frame. Especially before the complicated developments of the Covid epidemic, online teaching is the most optimal choice and increasingly promotes many outstanding advantages. Online learning is a big challenge, but it is also an opportunity for learners to practice an extremely necessary skill for learning – self-study skills. It can be said that the essence of online learning is "guided self-study". In the university environment, the lecturer is only the one who guides and supports the students; Students play a central role in their learning. The teacher is the one who poses the problem, using the suggestive method for the students to approach and find a solution to that problem. Students will complete the assigned exercises by applying self-study skills and self-exploring knowledge through many learning means. Finally, lecturers and students will discuss together to come to a common conclusion

for the problem posed. The current promotion of online education is an opportunity to foster and provide tools to help students develop their self-study skills. The online teaching model creates conditions for students to demonstrate their self-determination and autonomy, create conditions for learners to choose their own learning methods, actively create discussions, and work in groups with you to complete assignments. As a result, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and technology mastery are cultivated. However, self-study in online teaching does not mean that learners always have to complete everything alone. Students need support from faculty and learn from friends. The spirit of self-study helps students not need to be supervised, but they actively set goals and plans for their learning, independently and consciously, to achieve the best knowledge. Therefore, it is extremely necessary to equip students with academic knowledge, study orientation, and promote self-study capacity.

Some studies on online teaching and factors affecting students' self-study effectiveness when learning online

About online learning: Online learning is one of the advanced and developed learning models in many countries around the world, so many studies on online teaching have pointed out the factors affecting online learning. Students online learning, as well as students' self-study when studying online. Andersson and Grunlund (2009) analyzed the challenges in implementing e-learning in developed and developing countries. The research results grouped challenges into four dimensions: learners, technology, course, and context. The research results also show that technology will be less of a challenge for developed countries because the technology platforms in those countries are already highly developed, meeting the technological requirements of the implementation of learning online. Research by Ali and co-authors (2018) looks at 259 works related to factors that hinder the success of e-learning, published in reputable journals between 1990 and 2016. By mixed analysis method, the research has identified factors that can hinder the success of online learning, including pedagogy, technology, and learners. Research by Musa and Othman (2012) surveying 850 undergraduate students also found technology to be the most important factor, along with three other factors: learner participation, the role of the teacher in promoting promote interaction, discussion, and timely delivery of learning materials on the system. Xaymoungkhoun et al. (2012), using the technology acceptance model framework and AHP hierarchical analysis method on empirical interview data, have shown the importance of organizational factors, technology, and learners' motivational and attitude factors in contributing to the success of online learning.

Also, based on the technology acceptance model, while expanding to include cultural, support, and teacher factors, Ahmed (2013) looked at the issue from a narrower angle: readiness for teacher involvement in the use of e-learning. Using multiple regression to analyze a sample of 281 observations, the author found that cultural factors have the strongest impact.

In addition, the research results showed the factors affecting learners' online learning. For example, Renu Balakrishman et al. (2015) research has shown four psychological, economic, social, and technical barriers. Meanwhile, Wong's (2018) research has pointed out some curriculum limitations: "Technological limitations, limitations related to individual learners and other limitations. For individual learners, the use of new technologies can be a disadvantage or barrier in an online learning program. The lack of information, communication skills, and technology can be barriers to online learning as learners may experience frustration from this unique learning environment." In general, studies on the difficulties and barriers of online learning are quite popular, but not many topics have been implemented in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic.

About self-studying students: For university students, self-study plays an important role. This is a self-conscious and active study action under the instruction of the lecturer for knowledge acquisition to achieve the study goals. There are many ways to describe the self-study concept. In this article, the author agrees with the concept "self-study is an independent personal study strategy, does not directly depend on lecturers or certain education systems. The learners decide everything from goals, contents, behavior, means, environments, study condition to plans and study resources" (Dang Thanh Hung, 2012).

Competency is construed as the ability to carry out certain activities successfully, also known as execution ability. Competency is personalized. It can be formed and developed through training, fostering, and experiencing reality. Self-study capacity is the ability to study by oneself to master knowledge and complete study tasks. Self-study capacity is a component of learning capacity, allowing individuals to learn independently and voluntarily in the true sense of the self-study concept, achieving the study results as desired, and expressing the effective study process. According to Science et Vie (France) magazine wrote: "Whoever self-study the strongest, that person accumulates the greatest creative potential. On the contrary, whoever has a more creative need, is more motivated and has a higher will to self-study."

In our current university training system, instructing students how to study and self-study in order to promote students' internal resources in the study and research process, has become an inevitable trend. Especially in online teaching, it is very necessary to apply appropriate measures in the teaching process in order to form and develop self-study capacity for students. Many studies have been on student self-study, such as new research by experts from RMIT University and the University of Economics in Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh City addresses the pressing needs of online learners and suggests how universities can build engaging online learning environments. The team's research has just been published in the book "COVID-19 and Education: Learning and Teaching in a Pandemic-Constrained Environment" by Informing Science Press. The study is based on a qualitative analysis of a group of students at a Vietnamese university who switched to fully online learning in the first half of 2020 due to COVID-19. Through focus group interviews with 20 undergraduate students, the study explored students' experiences and views about online learning and the limitations that need to be overcome in the future. However, up to the present time, the topics and research works on promoting self-study capacity for students in online teaching are still limited.

Overview of Online Teaching

In the world

Online learning has become a popular learning model in the world. There are many different concepts of online learning, such as: According to Karl (2001), online teaching is communication in a learning environment where the teacher and the learner have a difference in time or space or both. Instructors provide course content through learning management applications (LMS, LCMS), multimedia resources, the Internet, webinars, etc., while learners receive course content and interact with the teacher through the same technical means. The concept of online learning varies, but all revolve around the basics of learning, technology, and connectivity. According to Elliott and Healy (2001), online teaching is "the application of technology to provide, select, administer, support and extend traditional learning". In addition, some other authors argue that online teaching is a concept often associated with technology elements. According to Welsh et al. (2003), online learning is the use of technology connecting computer networks on the internet environment to provide information and guidance to individuals in need. Rosenberg (2001) also introduced a similar concept of e-learning as using

internet technologies to provide different solutions to learners. Holmes and Gardner (2006) define e-learning as providing us with access to resources that promote learning anywhere and anytime. Research by Oliver and Towers (2000) has shown that, without a connected environment, suitable equipment, and easily accessible, it will be difficult or impossible to conduct online learning.

Online teaching (E-learning), hybrid teaching (Hybrid), a combination of online teaching and face-to-face teaching (blended) are the solutions chosen by many countries and educational institutions in the world during the Covid-19 pandemic. Accordingly, online teaching is an effective teaching method that lecturers and students need to apply in an oriented way to transmit knowledge to students flexibly, help learners follow the lecture route, and achieve the lesson and subject objectives. Online teaching has been and will become a strengthened and consolidated trend and gradually become an inevitable one and a main task in implementing the school year to adapt to the new situation. This is the teaching method in which teachers and learners use the Internet via electronic devices to access content and complete teaching tasks in order to achieve goals. This teaching method has flourished over the past decade all over the world. Although there are certain limitations relating to time, student engagement, and technology requirements, the effectiveness of online teaching has been proven to have no difference from face-to-face teaching. It may even increase the learning outcomes of learners. Nowadays, with the strong development of science and technology, the knowledge economy, distance learning, and blended teaching with a combination of face-to-face and online activities, online teaching is being widely deployed at all levels and types of training.

In Vietnam

In Vietnam, being aware of the integration in the context of globalization with the strong development of information technology, the Party and the State have policies to promote the application of information technology in teaching through Directive No. 58/CT –TW dated October 17th, 2000. It clearly states, "Promoting the application of information technology in education and training at all levels, grades and branches". On April 22nd, 2016, the Ministry of Education and Training issued Circular No. 12/2016/TT-BGDĐT to stipulate the application of Information Technology in the management and organization of online training. After that, in 2017, the Prime Minister approved the project "Strengthening the application of information technology in management and supporting teaching-learning activities and scientific research, in order to improve the quality of education and training period of 2016-2020, with orientation to 2025" in Decision No. 117/QĐTTg. In response to this project, the Ministry has issued Circular 21/2017/TT-BGDĐT to regulate the application of information technology in online training activities for teachers, staff, and managers. On May 23rd, 2017, the Ministry of Education and Training issued Plan No. 345 to implement the project "Strengthening the application of information technology in management and supporting teaching-learning and scientific research activities in order to improve the quality of education and training in 2016-2020 period, with orientation to 2025". From these guidelines and orientations, many activities and methods in information technology application have been applied in teaching in many schools and at different educational levels, especially at the university level.

In November 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic appeared, and there were unpredictable developments. In order to protect the learners, training and teaching activities were temporarily suspended. Facing the prolonged absence from school, the Ministry of Education and Training has sent the official dispatch to the Department of Education and Training to direct the increase of online teaching activities to adapt to the development of the pandemic and ensure students learning progress. Following this direction, many training institutions have applied online

teaching methods. In addition to teaching via television and providing students with electronic lessons/lectures in high school, online teaching methods with the application of Zoom, Google Classroom, or the professional online training system LMS (Learning Management System)... are commonly used in university teaching. Its purpose is to create opportunities for students and learners to continue their studies more easily and safely when they cannot study directly. Islam Asim Ismail (2022) states, "recent literature shows that the educational institutions' quality and service succeeded in continuing the learning process at home". Besides that, Pham (2022, cited in Islam Asim Ismail, 2022) claims that "teachers who experience e-learning can deliver exciting lessons via e-learning."

At the University of Technology, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City

In the integration with the development of education in the world, the education system in Vietnam has also made important changes. The University of Technology, Vietnam National University- Ho Chi Minh City is one of the first universities in Vietnam to take the lead in applying information technology in education and training. The project of building an E-learning system combining teaching method innovation at the University has been implemented since 2008. This project aims to innovate teaching and assessment methods that help improve students' autonomy in learning and combine traditional teaching methods with activities organized on BKE learning. Thus, it can be seen that the University of Technology had plans for implementing online teaching and Blended E-learning quite early, although this phrase was not commonly mentioned at that time. From the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year, due to the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the motto "*Pause going to school, don't stop studying*", the University has quickly and proactively promoted online education on BK E-learning. The University of Technology always focuses on developing self-study capacity for students, considering self-study as a form of individual cognitive activities in order to master knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed by learners themselves on their own. The self-study process of students is a direct factor in determining the quality of education, a necessary condition to help them develop awareness and satisfy the need to receive information anytime, anywhere. Therefore, the school clearly identifies the need to equip learners with basic learning skills in a modern environment by identifying and building appropriate teaching methods.

The University of Technology carries out online teaching according to the Blended Learning model, an online training method that combines four components:

Component A: The online study guide on BKEL includes instructional videos and online multiple-choice tests (Quiz).

Component B: Livestream lecture

Component C: Online interaction with students through BKEL: Chat, Forum, Assignment, and Google Hangout Meets

Component D: Regular learning materials on BKEL as regulated by the University.

In the urgent and difficult circumstance of the recent Covid-19 pandemic and the requirement to ensure high-quality teaching and learning at the University, the Blended Learning model, which supports online teaching via the Internet at the University of Technology also meets the requirements of reality, ensuring the learning progress, maximizing the roles of the lecturer and the self-study capacity of the students. Although there were some limitations that need improvement, such as Internet connection, control of student attendance, digital resources for teaching, and quality of video clips, in the process of implementing the Blended Learning teaching method, all of the above factors have made an important contribution to solving the difficulties of current teaching activities, and at the same time promote the sense of self-

awareness and self-study capacity of students, bringing many practical effects to the online teaching process, meeting practical needs and making an important contribution to the comprehensive reform of education in Vietnam today.

Achievements in improving students' self-study capacity in online teaching at the University of Technology

With the blended teaching model in online teaching, many methods are combined to maximize students' awareness and self-study capacity through building learning resources on BK - Elearning and online teaching activities via Google Hangoutsmeet software.

The diverse learning resources fully developed and provided by the lecturers on the BK E-learning website include:

Lecture slides: From the course outline, the lecturer designs each chapter's lecture slides with clear and detailed diagrams. In the chapter, there are topics and headings.

Tutorial videos: Each video is 7-10 minutes long, and each section has 2-3 videos. They will cover all the basic contents of the subject and help students refer to the material themselves, make logical inferences of learning content, and prepare well for the live stream lecture. Each video consists of three main parts: Introduction, detailed content; main ideas summary will help students get an overview of the knowledge to be achieved at the end of the video and end of the lesson. Along with the content, there are always illustrations with dynamic models so that students can easily visualize the lesson knowledge in the video. The use of video lectures allows lecturers to create better interactive content. Interactive videos are used to help students study some theoretical content at home before going to class. This increases students' active learning.

Quiz after each video: Test activities (Quiz) allow lecturers to create test questions in different formats to achieve the goal of helping students test and evaluate their knowledge by themselves. Lecturers allow students to take the test many times with shuffled or randomly selected questions from the question bank. Depending on the difficulty of the test, the lecturer can choose an appropriate time to take the test. The test's scoring method selected in this study is to take the average score unlimited times. The quizzes are set up unlimited times, with the scoring method being the average of the test scores. This setting is to help students re-do the test many times until they understand the content of the lesson. The time limit for doing Quiz is specifically regulated to force students to learn by themselves first through videos, then self-review and self-test the knowledge they have learned by completing the Quiz before moving on to the next content. Students' completion in previewing the videos and achieving the required score for the Quiz will be recorded in the self-study score column, and this is the bonus point used to add to the "Assignment of module outline" column. Those who do not complete the Quiz will not have access to the study material of the subsequent content. This binding condition is necessary for students to have a reasonable study plan.

This helps students self-study some theoretical content at home before class. Students can take the initiative and arrange their time to watch video clips, view lecture slides and complete the assignment on E-learning. At the same time, students can study, test and assess the level of knowledge acquisition presented in each video and grasp the basic knowledge of the subject by themselves.

Supporting materials: Lecturers upload on the BKEL system the supporting materials, including Course outline, method of course assessment, discussion topics for preparation before discussing with lecturers in interactive learning or on forums; topics and instructions for writing essays for students to work in groups; materials related specifically to the subject content in files or links.

Interactive activities with students on BKE-learning and Google Hangout Meet, specifically through building discussion forums and interacting with students through specific timetables.

Discussion Forum: From the basic resources of the course provided, the lecturer creates forums on BKEL to increase interactions with students. According to the subject plan, the lecturer spends at least one session (1-2 periods) each week conducting a discussion on the forum with students, exchanging and answering students' questions, as well as having a discussion among students on the forum. On the basis of the topics that need to be solved in each lesson content, the lecturer requires the students to actively study the materials to present, exchange, and discuss with the whole class and the lecturer. In order to create excitement for students in each interaction session, the lecturer builds assignment situations relating to the lesson content to make students see the meaning of the lesson content, create a sense of closeness from that and create comfort in interacting, exchanging, or asking questions with lecturers.

Lecturers interact directly in real-time with students via BKEL: Chat, forum, and Google Hangout Meet. The lecture creates a link to the course, provides it to students on the BKEL website, and interacts with them like an online class following a prescribed timetable. The lesson's duration is between 2 to 3 periods. Online teaching duration in a virtual classroom is used to organize activities such as presenting, reporting students' group works' results and products, correcting homework, and answering questions from the students and the lecturers. And then, the lecturer will summarize the main contents of the lessons, extend the knowledge and help students explain, relate and apply the lessons to solve real-life problems. Besides, in online classes, a lecturer can use active teaching strategies such as presenting, playing scientific games (crossword, blank filling, quick multiple choice...) by using supporting software such as Kahoot!... and encouraging students to participate, record plus points in the midterm score and, at the same time, increase the attractiveness of the module and help students to remember the lessons better. Thereby, the lecturer can check the self-study activity of individual students and groups and can evaluate students' understanding and abilities to apply the lessons to real life. On the other hand, thanks to information technology (IT), the interactive lessons are all recorded clearly and uploaded to BKEL right after the course so that students can actively review the lessons. Parvin and Salam (2015, cited in Nguyen, 2022) claim that "in this day and age, using technologies in a classroom setting is proliferating around the world. Teachers and educators have a high tendency to utilize mobile-assisted teaching and learning systems to facilitate students' learning". Parvin and Salam (2015, cited in Nguyen, 2022) claim that "in this day and age, using technologies in a classroom setting is proliferating around the world. Teachers and educators tend to utilize mobile-assisted teaching and learning systems to facilitate student learning". This helps students review, record videos, and self-review every time and everywhere. This is considered one of the mandatory regulations in the online teaching of University Technology. It is really useful and effective in improving the quality of the lecturer's lectures as well as the actual learning efficiency of the students. With the lecture recording, lectures and students can review their lectures from which to plan their lessons for the next class. Students can easily review the lecture's content whenever, as many times as they like, without having to worry too much about the transmission quality and the health status at that class. According to the results of a quick survey on student comments when participating in online learning at some faculties of the University, more than 80% of students think that learning efficiency is high when reviewing the lesson records. Students can access to view the lesson content an unlimited number of times. This is especially necessary at the time of exam preparation when students are preparing for a midterm or final exam, helping students achieve high results in their studies.

Realizing the importance of applying E-learning in teaching, the lecturer actively learns and researches the IT's effect on teaching and studying through one of the best online learning software today. The approach and implementation of this teaching method have initially brought certain results, especially in promoting students' self-study capacity through the learning management system.

Proposing some solutions to improve students' self-study ability in online teaching at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology, Vietnam National University

Maximizing students' capacity in online learning will have opportunities to continue developing and promoting the results that have been proven after a period of implementation. This activity requires a nearly complete change in the teaching models. Therefore, in order to promote the best students' self-study, it is necessary to solve a number of problems as follows:

Firstly, the response of sources for online teaching and studying. These are big problems that directly influence the application of E-learning in teaching. In the age of science and technology, in order to use active online teaching and studying methods, in addition to the human factor, facilities and equipment for teaching and studying such as Internet connection, computer room, projector, printer, multimedia room, e-learning management support platform, teaching software is absolutely necessary. The University of Technology's learning management platform, particularly BKEL, must be frequently upgraded and made perfect for implementing online learning. With a huge number of students studying and exploiting documents on the BKEL platform simultaneously, it is necessary to have a stable Internet network system to ensure the connection process goes on continuously without interruption. This is a big limitation that needs to be overcome so that the process of actively searching for documents and self-study of students is convenient.

Secondly, the role changes of lecturers changed – from the one with a traditional way of transmitting knowledge to the instructors and facilitators. The lecturers are the teachers, instructors, and facilitators who help students with their self-directed learning. In the current state of science and technology development, students can search for knowledge and skills themselves through the Internet. Therefore, if teachers do not enhance their knowledge, the effects will make lecturers lose their leading roles. This is a great pressure for the lecturers. Moreover, in this digital era, they have to improve their teaching methods to meet the requirements of the digital era. The lecturers are not only good at their professional field and at a high level of reasoning but also have the strong technical knowledge to apply in each electronic lecture, and at the same time, have to guide learners on how to apply IT and technology when performing group assignments, discussions, presentations as well as discussion of lessons between lecturers and students; otherwise, students will not be able to know how to start their self-study. That means teaching methods must also be changed more in online teaching. This is probably a big issue for some seniority teachers because of limitations in their knowledge, approach skills, and use and application of IT in teaching.

Thirdly, students' self-consciousness. The nature of the Blended learning model that the University of Technology is implementing is that lecturers must be open in their teaching styles, getting rid of the old frameworks to be harmonious with the learner-center method. This requires students to have a high sense of self-control to be able to promote the positive benefits of the blended learning model. In fact, social network sites today are developing brilliantly, dominating most of the time users interact on the Internet environment. Therefore, online learning is also partly dominated by these networks, and self-study awareness is not high enough in students' ideology. The saying "No one can be successful without teachers" has long been deeply rooted in learners' minds. All learning activities are supported and coordinated by

the teachers. For those reasons, it is difficult for students to change their thinking toward being more proactive in learning within a short period of time. Instead, they are still dependent on teachers/lecturers. This leads to slow adaptation to new learning methods, which is a significant factor in limiting the form of online teaching. Therefore, raising students' consciousness cannot be done at the same point in time. It takes time for students to change their thoughts, adjust their behavior, gradually improve their sense of self-study and adapt to new learning styles.

Islam Asim Ismail (2022) states, "recent literature shows that the educational institutions' quality and service succeeded in continuing the learning process at home". Recently published studies have shown that online learning can be effective in the learning process when students and teachers collaborate to maximize its benefits. Besides that, Pham (2022, cited in Islam Asim Ismail, 2022) claims that "teachers who experience e-learning can deliver exciting lessons via e-learning," so students need to develop a clear and specific self-study plan. In order to have an effective self-study, a detailed and specific study plan with focus points are practical and necessary. If students do not plan their entire self-study process, learning is spread through time as well as long-term and short-term plans are mixed together, they will not be able to focus on the knowledge to be achieved and lose directions when learning. So, in the process of online learning, students' self-study activities are extremely important. A student without self-discipline will not be able to learn effectively online. Studying the research results of schools on students' self-study when studying online shows that setting up a study plan is an important step. The study plan is the foundation for online learning that helps students easily control what to do. Therefore, after determining learning goals, students need to make a scientific study plan, set a specific timetable for each subject, and estimate the most appropriate online learning time. In addition, students need to clearly identify their learning progress and barriers to online learning and plan to overcome them. For active learning, students should prepare lessons to firmly grasp the knowledge and easily understand the lesson after listening to the instructor in the online class. The mind mapping technique will be a great tool for students to do this. Online learning needs a route, so creating a timetable will help you remember all the important milestones, like routine exams or assignment deadlines. Students should try to finish deadlines on time and build a high sense of responsibility when studying online.

Conclusion

Professor Ta Quang Buu emphasized: "*Self-study is the source of self-training style, and at the same time a cradle for nurturing creativity. Those who study well by themselves will still go far*" (Nguyen Tu Thanh, 2008). Entering the 21st century, in the era of internationalization and global integration, each person's progress shows the achievements of education, in which the ability to self-study will exist as one of the development capabilities. It is important to help each individual assert himself and raise his or her own value in the leaping trend of the knowledge society era. So, the online teaching model using an Internet connection has helped create a modern, professional, and dynamic appearance, catching up with the international trend of universities in particular and other education institutions in general. This model helps students to have a basis for choosing subjects, be easy to follow the study program, visualize the learning content, get lecturers' teaching styles, and share and get information timely. The sources provided by the lecturers, the orientation of the lecturers and the University's online teaching support tools, as well as the self-awareness of the students, will maximize the self-study capacities of students, help students significantly improve their thinking capacities and self-study capacities; therefore, achieving the best learning results.

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Biodata

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