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Effectiveness of Online Teaching from Teachers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has been posing substantial challenges to every aspect of human society over the last two years. In Vietnam, all educational institutions have struggled to quickly build and operate their online systems while their teachers have tried their best to adapt to the online environment. Fortunately, the EMVITET Erasmus+ capacity-building project has been punctually and effectively implemented since early 2019 to provide its six partners in Vietnam with significant support to enhance their digital competencies. Several capacity-building activities in the project have been conducted so far. This paper aims at assessing the impacts of the project by evaluating the effectiveness of online teaching at the partner institutions from the teachers' perspectives after about 3 years of project implementation. Based on the responses from 101 teachers collected with a self-completed online questionnaire, it is found that the EMVITET project has greatly supported the partner institutions in successfully deploying an online environment for their teaching-learning activities. Especially, online teaching has proved its effectiveness in improving the diversity of educational activities, collaboration among colleagues, knowledge transmission, faster interaction among lecturers and students as well as the diverse approaches for teachers to evaluate student learning, students' diligence, students' engagement in their studies and research, and soft skills during their study online, among others.

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1. Introduction

The EMVITET (Empowering Vietnamese VET teachers for transformation towards Education 4.0) Erasmus+ capacity building project aims at creating a new learning ecosystem for Education 4.0 in Vietnam, based on student-centered learning, competence-based education, collaboration and networking in digital environments, and sharing knowledge through a community of practice (Kunnari et al., 2019). Digital technologies and environments are core elements in forming platforms and spaces for authentic learning, collaboration, sharing and networking. The first common publication of the EMVITET project explained the core concept of Education 4.0: *"Education 4.0 shifts mindsets and approaches in learning and teaching. Digitalisation enables learning to occur anywhere which makes learners key actors in their own learning. Teachers change their role to facilitators of learning. Instead of focusing so much on degrees, learning concentrates on relevant competences. Education 4.0 refers also to ecosystems of educational institutions and the world of work, which produce innovations and evolve in the change. It means that in education we do not just adapt to changes, but we actively build*

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our own meaningful future. In Education 4.0, the traditional ways of implementing education are not enough, but we need to rethink learning and education to match the needs of the changing world." (Kunnari et al., 2019).

Based on the developed process of the EMVITET project, the educational managers of the Vietnamese institutions visited Finland and built a common vision on how to support the development process in May 2019; then, each institution nominated 6 teachers to participate in a three- weeks intensive and active learning visit to Finland in late September and early October 2019 to learn a wide variety of Finnish educational practices in Education 4.0 and how to form institutional teams, called homegroups, to support collaboration in development. After the study visit, the teachers continued experimenting and disseminating new practices in their own work context together with their homegroups. Since the end of 2019, the Vietnamese institutions collaboratively co-hosted some offline workshops in Vietnam so that the homegroups demonstrated the outcomes and shared their experiences in establishing Education 4.0 development at their own institutions.

In early 2020, the emergence and unprecedented spread of the COVID-19 as a global pandemic has been posing substantial challenges to the practices of everyday life, including higher education. Thus, the Vietnamese partners greatly appreciated the punctuality and valuable contributions provided by the EMVITET project. What was learnt from the study visits, disseminated and shared in the workshops in EMVITET project has been found of great help for the Vietnamese institutions to cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kunnari et al., 2021). Kunnari et al. (2021) and Do et al. (2021) reported that the partner institutions in the EMVITET project had different experiences in using digital tools, applications, management systems and their teachers' digital competences as well as developing online education in the COVID-19 situation and they encountered different challenges in buying new licenses for applications and software, upgrading infrastructure and an internet connection, etc. However, all the partner institutions appreciated the peer learning and support, the co-creation collaboration among their teachers in sharing good practices in Education 4.0 via several training workshops, how to help students improve their study online, overcome key challenges in studying at home environment with distractions and unequal conditions such as a lack of necessary tools like laptops or Wi-Fi connections, motivate them to study in online environments in such an adaptative, responsible, self-disciplined, and active learning manner, etc. Such activities have provided great contributions to the success of the institutions in continuously delivering their online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. To further assess the impacts of the EMVITET project after about 3 years of implementation, this paper aims at evaluating the effectiveness of online teaching at the partner institutions from the teachers' perspectives.

2. Research Methods

This research used a quantitative method with a self-completed online questionnaire to survey teachers from six Vietnamese partner institutions including Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education (HCMUTE), Lac Hong University (LHU), University of Technology and Education - The University of Danang (UTEDN), HCM City Industry and Trade College (HITC), College of Technology II (HVCT), and Hue Industrial College (HueIC). The teachers were asked to assess their perceptions of the effectiveness of online teaching at their institutions. In the dangerous breakout of COVID-19 pandemic, online survey is found more advantageous in terms of safe, fast and efficient response compared to that of face-to-face one. Latkovikj & Popovska (2019) claimed that internet-based surveys have numerous benefits in terms of economical and time-saving aspects, easy access to the research tools, a huge sample size in a wide geographic scope, rapid data analysis with wide-ranging data sources, and avoidance of uncomfortable face-to-face interactions. Moreover, online surveys are relatively easy to tabulate and analyze obtained information (Richards, 2012). However, to have a quality questionnaire for data collection, the first draft of its components was carefully prepared and discussed by the research team. A primary questionnaire was developed and used in a pilot study with six participants to identify ambiguities and evaluate its validity, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence,

and other problems. From such study, we found some problems in terms of terminology, clarification, suitability, and the like. Thus, the items in the questionnaire were accordingly refined to make a formal and comprehensive instrument for data collection in the official survey. Specifically, the final questionnaire consists of structured questions grouped into three parts. The first part includes four items to elicit the participants' demographics, including information about their institutions, specializations and qualifications, and use of tools and platforms in their online teaching. The second part involved 18 multiple-choice items that focused on the teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of online teaching. The last one has four questions to document the participants' overall assessment of the effectiveness of online teaching and the impact of EMVITET on the quality of online teaching. The items in the last two parts are assessed with 5-point Likert scales.

The final questionnaire was designed with Google Forms for online dissemination, located at the link provided in the attached QR code. The link was sent to the managers of the six Vietnamese partners so that they can directly forward it to their teachers across training disciplines. The data were collected from January 1st till January 15th, 2022. For an objective assessment of the impact of the EMVITET project, all teachers were welcomed to join the survey though they might have participated in none of the project activities. Their valuable inputs are carefully considered and analyzed with professional software for data analysis called SPSS v.20.0.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Descriptive statistics of respondents

3.1.1. Institutions

As stated above, this study was carried out at six institutional partners of the EMVITET project, including LHU, HITC, HVCT, HueIC, UTEDN, and HCMUTE. As our data collection was conducted in the first half of January 2022, we failed to attract the active participation of all teachers because they were busy with many activities and schedules before they took their Lunar New year holidays in late January and early February 2022. Specifically, there were only 101 respondents participating. *Table 1* briefly presents the number of respondents from each of the six institutions. Specifically, LHU accounts for the highest portion with about 30%; HITC, HVCT and HueIC account for about 26%, 21%, and nearly 18%, respectively. Though there were few respondents from UTE-DN and HCMUTE, the recorded data of the 101 valid observations can still provide enough insights for this study.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics by institutions*

No.	Institution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	LHU	30	29.70
2	HITC	26	25.74
3	HVCT	21	20.79
4	HueIC	18	17.82
5	UTE-DN	5	4.95
6	HCMUTE	1	1.00
Total		**101**	**100.00**

3.1.2. Devices used in online teaching

Abrahams (2010) indicates that smart devices play an important role in changing people's lives, especially in teaching and learning practices. It is essential to explain and guide students to employ smartphones and other technologies effectively for the appropriate tasks in online education (Doan, 2021). *Table 2* shows that among the listed devices, a laptop is preferably used in their online teaching,

with a percentage of approximately 68%. The figure presents the reality that lecturers tend to deploy laptops more frequently than other devices due to their mobility, flexibility, and special capacity in designing, storing, and conducting different tasks spontaneously. Besides laptops, smartphones are also frequently used in their online teaching, accounting for more than 19% of the listed devices because they provide enough convenience in terms of camera, microphone, speaker and even internet connection when the teachers deliver their lectures via desktops or fail to connect with their laptops due to empty battery, etc. Moreover, some teachers also used desktops, iPad and Smart TV to support their online teaching when they work from home.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics by devices used in online teaching*

No.	Device	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Laptop	99	68.28
2	Smartphone	28	19.31
3	Desktop	13	8.97
4	iPad	4	2.76
5	Smart TV	1	0.68
Total		**145**	**100.00**

3.1.3. Respondents' major

Table 3 briefly shows the teaching majors of the respondents. Most of them are in Engineering - Technology, Basics, Economics, and Foreign Languages disciplines. The variety in respondents' majors, to some extent, provides diverse teachers' perspectives in assessing the effectiveness of online teaching.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics by respondents' major*

No.	Teaching major	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Engineering -Technology	52	51.49
2	Basics	18	17.82
3	Economics	15	14.85
4	Foreign Language	13	12.87
5	Pharmacy	2	1.98
6	Healthcare	1	0.99
Total		**101**	**100.00**

3.1.4. Tools/ platforms used in online teaching

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics by tools/ platforms used in online teaching*

No.	Tools/ platforms	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Google Meet	78	25.00
2	Zoom	61	19.56
3	Zalo	48	15.38
4	Moodle	34	10.90
5	MS. Teams	30	9.62
6	Google Classroom	29	9.29
7	Facebook Messenger	19	6.09
8	Others	13	4.16
Total		**312**	**100.00**

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Table 4 shows the online teaching platforms and tools frequently used by the respondents at the six institutions. Among the listed platforms and tools, Google Meet is preferred the most with a high percentage of 25% while Zoom and Microsoft Teams account for only 19.56% and 9.62% respectively. In the teaching process, because of the popularity and built-in Google support packages for educational institutions, teachers choose to use more Google software than others. Though Zoom or Microsoft Teams have provided many utilities for online teaching, their license premium is not competitive enough and many teachers can't afford to buy licenses to fully use provided features. In the data obtained from the teaching platforms, Moodle accounts for 10.9% higher than Google Classroom, showing that Moodle is a popular and trusted platform to use. Most universities focus on using Moodle because of its superior features, support for learning management, course evaluation, the combination of many utilities for data analysis, research, and improve course quality, whereas vocational colleges often use Google Classroom because it provides enough necessary features to create and manage course management as well as the specificity of the teaching process that focuses on developing vocational skills.

3.2. Assessment of the effectiveness of online teaching

Table 5. *Assessment of the effectiveness of online teaching*

Survey item	*Min*	*Max*	*Mean*
1. Online teaching is found very suitable during the COVID-19 pandemic in the past two years.	3	5	4.72
2. My school quickly implemented an online system to meet the teaching and learning needs of lecturers and students.	2	5	4.46
3. When I first started implementing online teaching, I found it difficult to design lessons, use support tools, etc.	1	5	3.75
4. My school has organized training sessions or provided guides on how to design good materials for online teaching and learning activities (slides, video clips, e-books, etc.)	3	5	4.43
5. My colleagues have actively shared our experiences in teaching online and using digital tools.	1	5	4.33
6. My school has effectively organized training sessions for students to use the online teaching-learning system and other supporting software.	2	5	4.02
7. My school's online teaching-learning system helps maintain the normal teaching and learning of theoretical courses.	3	5	4.45
8. My school's online teaching-learning system helps motivate effective cooperation among teachers.	2	5	4.15
9. My school's online system has helped improve the effectiveness of the teaching-learning activities.	1	5	3.84
10. Online teaching helps improve students' diligence.	1	5	3.49
11. Online teaching urges teachers to actively apply technologies to support their teaching more effectively.	2	5	4.46
12. Online environment helps teachers to organize more diverse teaching-learning activities.	1	5	4.07
13. Online platform helps students be more active in their studies and research.	1	5	3.84
14. Online teaching still ensures the effective transmission of knowledge specified in course syllabi.	2	5	4.02
15. Online platform helps students enhance soft skills such as teamwork, information search, critical thinking, etc.	1	5	3.68

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Survey item	*Min*	*Max*	*Mean*
16. Online platform promotes effective interaction among lecturers and students.	1	5	3.45
17. Online platform helps teachers to respond to students faster.	1	5	4.14
18. Online platform provides teachers with different assessment forms to evaluate student learning more effectively.	2	5	4.00

The teachers from the six institutions were required to assess the effectiveness of their online teaching based on a 5-point Likert scale. Table 5 briefly presents the average values of the level of their agreement on the surveyed statements directly relating to the effectiveness. Most of the values are about 3.5 or larger on the scale of 5 points. These figures show that the teachers are quite positive about the investigating aspects of the assessment. Specifically, it is widely believed that online teaching has been considered the sole approach in education to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in the past two years (Mean = 4.72/5.00). Most education institutions have quickly deployed their digital platforms and trained their lecturers on how to effectively use the platforms to manage their teaching-learning activities, how to use digital tools to design their materials for online teaching, how to transform from traditional pedagogy to digital one, necessary skills for effective presentation and interactions with their students, etc. Such training and immediate support provided by the institutions as well as the workshops to share best practices among the teachers have acted as key determinants of the effectiveness of online teaching, making the teachers become more connected and collaborative to overcome the huge challenges in the online environment due to the social distance in the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a consequence, the respondents believed that the online system has helped to improve not only the effectiveness and diversity of their teaching-learning activities but also the students' diligence, engagement in their studies and research, and soft skills during their study online. Moreover, the online teaching-learning system not only helps maintain the normal teaching and learning of theoretical courses but also ensures the effective transmission of knowledge specified in course syllabi. It also helps to promote effective and faster interaction among lecturers and students as well as the diverse approaches for teachers to evaluate student learning. Though we observed some varied assessments among the 101 respondents, as shown with the Min and Max values, the high values of the means in the range [3.45,4.72] obviously indicate good appreciation of the specific aspects of the effectiveness of online teaching across the six partner institutions. Similar findings can be found in the case of HCMUTE (Do et al., 2021).

3.3. Overall assessment of the effectiveness of online teaching

From the assessment of the above-mentioned specific statements, the teachers were asked to provide their overall assessment of the effectiveness of online teaching via three specific statements, including: (1) *"In general, compared to your own expectations, how do you rate the effectiveness of your recent online teaching activities?"*, (2) *"Through sharing and exchanging among/with your colleagues about the online teaching in your school, to what extent do you evaluate their satisfaction level about the online teaching in general?"* and (3) *"Through sharing and exchanging among/with the lecturers and students, to what extent do you evaluate the satisfaction level of students about online learning in general?"*. In addition, we also asked the teachers who used to take part in sharing seminars, training sessions, and workshops under the EMVIET Project to assess the impacts of the project on such effectiveness of their online teaching. The results for the four statements are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Overall assessment of the effectiveness of online teaching*

Survey item	*Min*	*Max*	*Mean*
1. In general, compared to your own expectations, how do you rate the effectiveness of your recent online teaching activities?	2	5	3.77

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2. Through sharing and exchanging among/with your colleagues about the online teaching in your school, to what extent do you evaluate their satisfaction level with the online teaching in general?	2	5	3.54
3. Through sharing and exchanging among/with the lecturers and students, to what extent do you evaluate the satisfaction level of students with online learning in general?	2	5	3.40
4. If you have ever participated in sharing seminars, training sessions, and workshops under the EMVIET Project, please indicate the impact of those activities on the effectiveness of your recent online teaching-learning activities?	3	5	4.18

Specifically, the 101 respondents believe that their recent online teaching activities are quite effective compared to their expectation (Mean = 3.77/5.00), i.e., the actual performance of the online activities is still lower than expected. It is because teachers fail to have enough preparation and acquaintance with online teaching in the urgent response to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, in that situation, online teaching is found to be the only option available. Similarly, the sudden move from traditional environments to totally online made students fail to properly adjust themselves for quick adaptation. Thus, the satisfaction levels of the teachers and students are only 3.54 and 3.40, respectively, indicating that they are not fully satisfied with the performance of the online teaching and learning environment. These findings are supported by the challenges described by Kunnari et al. (2021). Specifically, Kunnari et al. (2021) pointed out that many students are short of experience with online platforms; fail to have enough skills in adaptation, responsibility, self-discipline, self-study, and learning management; may fail to have a stable Wifi connection or necessary devices such as laptops, desktops, etc. or quiet space at home for their concentration, etc. Meanwhile, teachers found it challenging to motivate students to study in an online environment as well as deliver some study contents that need a hands-on demonstration, etc.

Nonetheless, in this study, among the 101 respondents, there are 83 teachers taking part in the sharing seminars, training sessions, and workshops under the EMVIET Project. Descriptive statistics of the respondents by partner institutions are shown in Table 7. With the impact scores recorded in the range [4.05,5.00], though the impacts of the EMVITET project are different among the institutions, most of the respondents really appreciate the contributions offered by the project. The difference has resulted from the fact that the capacity to build an online environment among the partner institutions is varied as pointed out by Kunnari et al. (2021). Importantly, the grand impact is rated at 4.18/5.00, indicating that the EMVITET project has greatly supported the partner institutions in successfully deploying the online environment for teaching-learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Table 7. *The overall impact of EMVITET project evaluated by each institution*

No.	Institution	Attended in EMVITET activities	Impact score
1	LHU	24	4.21
2	HITC	20	4.05
3	HVCT	19	4.26
4	HueIC	14	4.07
5	UTE-DN	5	4.40
6	HCMUTE	1	5.00
Total		**83**	**4.18**

4. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected human-being behavior and daily-life activities

over the last two years. It has been posing substantial challenges to higher education. Specifically, educational institutions are urged to quickly build online systems with proper digital platforms and technologies to maintain their operations; teachers need to quickly enhance their capacity in digital pedagogy, digital tools, and utilities for their instructional designs, digital materials, assessment techniques, etc. to adapt to the online environment; and students need to adjust themselves to have better resilience and skills in adaptation, responsibility, self-discipline, self-study and learning management, etc. Coincidentally, the EMVITET project sponsored by Erasmus+ has been punctually and effectively implemented since early 2019 to build the capacity of six Vietnamese educational institutions, providing significant contributions to their success in their online teaching so far. The capacity-building activities in the project, such as study visits to Finland, seminars, workshops, internal training, etc. have helped the teachers to actively adapt to the online environment and successfully deliver online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. After about 3 years of project implementation, by investigating teachers from the six partner institutions with a self-completed online questionnaire, we found that the teachers positively assess the performance of their online teaching in terms of diversity of their teaching-learning activities, collaboration among colleagues, the transmission of knowledge specified in course syllabi, promotion of effective and faster interaction among lecturers and students as well as the diverse approaches for teachers to evaluate student learning, students' diligence, students' engagement in their studies and research, and soft skills during their study online, among others. Importantly, the EMVITET project has greatly supported the partner institutions in successfully deploying the online environment for teaching-learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

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