Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent Movement Control Order (MCO) has resulted all formal classroom learning for 4.9 million students at all levels of education in Malaysia was suspended since March 2020 till date. Educators were advised to shift from traditional face-to-face classroom meetings to distance learning mode; online or offline platforms. However, the reality is, the majority of the students are still grappling with e-learning, inadequate equipment, and an und conducive environment making the adoption of home-based e-learning even harder. There is no evidence on how Diploma engineering students are experiencing this new normal. Having realised the importance of getting first-hand information regarding online distance learning (ODL) experiences, this study investigated Diploma engineering students’ ODL experiences amidst COVID-19. An online survey using Google Forms was utilised to collect data for three weeks from 486 Diploma level students in a university from the southern region of Peninsular Malaysia. Using descriptive quantitative and qualitative analysis, the distribution of study participants, learning experiences, and expectations on educational decisions of ODL was investigated. The findings highlight the need to transform education for more tech-based lessons for the millennials and there is a need to a properly planned ODL implementation with full support from all involved in ODL mode. As classes move online in the foreseeable future, the findings of this project will benefit UiTM and the government in restructuring digital education post-Covid-19 to develop employability and the productivity of the future generation.

Keywords: Online Distance Learning (ODL); Students’ Perceptions; Covid-19 Pandemic, E-Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented changes as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic have hit students and lecturers in higher education institutions intensely as all teaching and learning activities have to be conducted virtually (Sim, Sim, & Quah, 2021; Chung, Mohamed Noor & Mathew, 2020). Many prestigious universities around the world have completely embraced online learning as a way of maintaining educational continuity. The Ministry of Higher Education declared that all Malaysian public and private universities have to conduct teaching and learning activities through online learning until the end of December 2020 (Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, 2020), which was later announced to continue until the first quarter of 2021.

Different modes of delivery have grown into online distance learning (ODL), such as online learning, open learning, web-based learning, computer-mediated learning, blended learning and m-learning. Online distance learning is viewed as learning interactions using various devices (e.g. cell phones, tablets, etc.) with internet connectivity in synchronous or asynchronous environments (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Within two weeks, lectures, assignments, group work, presentations and assessments were all planned and carried out with the assistance of technology. There are many studies looking into the efficacy of implementing ODL (Vitoria, Mislinawa Nurmasiyatih, 2018, Aggarwal, Comyn & Fonseca, 2020) and resulted many universities promoting and encouraging online distance learning even before the pandemic. ODL offers flexibility, time saving, ease of use, and better control of the environment (Paul & Jefferson, 2019). However, in spite of all the benefits, the reality is, majority of the students are still grappling with e-learning, inadequate equipment, and an und conducive environment making the adoption of home-based e-learning even harder. (Sim, Sim, & Quah, 2021).
This study is underpinned by online distance learning theory focusing specifically on the limitations of online learning from the perspectives of the students. It is important to investigate the limitations of ODL from the students’ perspective so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning in this new normal for education sector. Most past studies reported ODL in terms of students’ experiences in relation to undergraduates or postgraduates. Very little was investigated on Diploma course students’ perceptions of ODL. When ODL has been implemented fully for almost a year, majority of the Diploma students have just embarked into tertiary education. This transformation from secondary school education to tertiary level education and from face-to-face traditional learning to ODL surely would have impacted the students. Thus, this paper investigated the Diploma course students’ perceptions of ODL mode amidst COVID-19. Besides, the expectations of the students on the educational decisions of ODL was also explored.

Research Questions
This study addressed the following research questions:
1. What are the perceptions of the Diploma engineering course students in relation to their learning status on ODL during Covid-19 pandemic?
2. What are the expectations of the Diploma engineering course students on the educational decision of ODL during Covid-19 pandemic?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Distance Learning

As has been previously reported in the literature, there are many definitions and interpretations of Online Distance Learning (ODL). Some define as distance learning, others as e-Learning, and online learning environments (Moore, 2010). Based on the Transactional Distance Theory by Moore (1980), distant learning is when the instructional delivery from an instructor who is physically located in a different place from the learner providing the instruction at disparate times. The term e-Learning most likely originated during the 1980’s though some are not certain, with conflicting views of the term. Tavangarian et al. (2004) included the constructivist theoretical model as a framework for many earlier definitions by Ellis (2005), Nichols (2003), Benson (2002), and Clark (2002), of that e-Learning is not only procedural but also shows some transformation of an individual's experience into the individual's knowledge through the knowledge construction process.

Online learning, on the other hand can be the most difficult to define compared to the counterparts. Some studies distinguish the variance by describing online learning as “wholly” online learning (Oblinger, Oblinger & Lippincott, 2005), while others relate to technology as the medium it is used (Lowenthal, Wilson, & Parrish, 2009). Most studies describe as access to learning experiences via the use of some technology (Benson, 2002; Carliner & Boswood, 2004; Conrad, 2002) and further discussed as not only the accessibility of online learning but also its connectivity, flexibility and ability to promote varied interactions (Ally, 2004; Hiltz & Turoff, 2005; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005).

Thus, it is clear that the terms are often interchanged, and the commonalities found in all the definitions are that some form of instruction occurs between two parties (a learner and an instructor), it is held at different times and/or places and uses varying forms of instructional materials.

Theories Related to ODL

Seminal contributions have been made by several theories to ODL. Constructivism Theory promotes autonomous learning in which learners are active constructors of knowledge meaning and they construct understanding through their own learning experience (Wang, 2014). This was later further developed by John Dewey who stated that learning is a set of practical social experiences and in the process, learners learn by doing, collaborating, and reflecting with others (Picciano, 2017).

Similarly, in more recent years, where online learning has become prominent, Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) theory proposes collaborative learning, knowledge building and the internet usage in reconstructing formal, non-formal and informal education (Harasim, 2012). The concept of the facilitator (teacher) should be in charge of the knowledge building process and the three phases of knowledge construction; idea generating, idea organizing and intellectual convergence, received a great deal of discussion and interaction among the social community members. Reviewing major learning theories help to scaffold the selected literature to understand the focus of the current study.

Students’ Perceptions of ODL

A large number of existing studies in the broader literature have examined students’ perceptions of ODL ever since the spread of Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of physical classes (Mathew & Chung, 2021; Sim, Sim, & Quah, 2021; Demuyakor, 2020; Khan, Vivek, Khojah & Tahir, 2021; Singh & Thurman, 2019; Lau & Shaikh, 2012; Lee, 2020).

Mathew and Chung (2021) conducted a comparison study to a total of 608 diploma and degree university students throughout Malaysia using convenient sampling method investigating perspectives on ODL amidst COVID-19. The study stated that some students have positive perceptions on ODL implementation while others indicated that ODL should not be continued in the future semester, due to problems such as poor internet connection, budget constraints and time management issues.

Sim, Sim, and Quah (2021) investigated the level of acceptance, factors and challenges of online learning among 156 university students in the state of Sarawak. Results showed that students have moderate high level of acceptance of online learning; while enthusiasm, self-efficacy, satisfaction and enhancement of English language skills were the four main factors that facilitated learning. However, the speed of teaching and learning delivery, students’ attitude, struggles and stress were among the stated challenges of online learning.

Demuyakor (2020) in a study covering 360 Ghanian international students showed that students perceived online learning as beneficial. Most of them strongly agreed to the effectiveness of online learning and they were also satisfied with the learning resources used online as compared to those from their conventional classes.
Another study of 184 university students of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi revealed that students experience a feeling of freedom and connected with their teachers during ODL mode. It was noted that, flexible learning mode and time of study period benefit individuals of different types of learning styles. In fact, it was found that over half of the total number of respondents are comfortable with learning in an online platform; though they are away from any physical interaction (Khan, Vivek, Khojah & Tahir, 2021; Singh & Thurman, 2019). In fact, findings also revealed that the majority of the students have positive perceptions towards e-learning and the effectiveness of the communication between educators and students without any face-to-face interaction. This is because the fast responses that students receive during online learning discussions acts as a ‘catalyst’ in the learning process (Khan, Vivek, Khojah & Tahir, 2021).

Another similar study was conducted by Sit, Chung, Chow and Wong (2005) towards 198 nursing students in Hong Kong revealed that students felt ODL is convenient because they could decide their own learning and felt responsible towards their studies. Lau and Shaikh (2012) in a study found that students’ computer and internet efficacy, and personal characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, course year level, and financial aid status are the factors contributing to the students’ online learning readiness. Another similar study reported that about 52% of students in Sabah, Malaysia do not have the access to the internet due to the inadequate online learning infrastructures and limited accessibility to the internet (52 Peratus, 2020). This makes the students experience difficulty in communicating with lectures, interaction with friends, and laboratory access. Lee (2020) highlighted that students in rural areas of Malaysia perceive ODL as hard due to the limited accessibility to the internet and this affect their studies.

Besides, studies also revealed that factors such as age, gender, prior knowledge of computer literacy and the preferred learning styles of individuals contribute towards technology acceptance among students as the more knowledgeable they are about technology, the more receptive they would be of their online learning classes (Demuyakor, 2020; Bali & Liu, 2018).

There are also other studies investigating ODL in various perspectives. Some other drawbacks stated were inefficacy of internet connections and support technology for students and staff (Rasheed, Amirrudin & Nor Aniza, 2020; Anderson & Perrin, 2018; Chuang, Weng, & Chen, 2018), lack of interaction with lecturers and peers (Vanslambroucka, Zhu, Lumbaerts, Philipson, & Tondeur, 2018; Bali & Liu, 2018) and increased stress and study load (Vanslambroucka, Zhu, Lumbaerts, Philipson, & Tondeur, 2018; Ravi, 2014).

A closer look to the literature on the perceptions of students’ learning experience on ODL, however, reveals a number of gaps and shortcomings. Not many studies have investigated how students who embarked to tertiary level education after secondary school traditional face-to-face learning perceive ODL, in this case Diploma course students. Besides, most of the studies only focused on quantitative research method. In order to properly address this question, more studies needed to investigate students’ experiences during Covid-19 in the context of Malaysia, especially for Diploma course students. Thus, the aim of this paper is to study the perceptions of the Diploma course students’ learning experiences in relation to their learning status and expectations on the educational decisions of ODL during Covid-19 in Malaysia. The findings provide insight to the educators, curriculum designers, universities and the government in assisting the implementation of ODL in Malaysian universities.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for the current study embarked upon receiving approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the University. The target population of this research was all the Diploma course students in Universiti Teknologi MARA Johor, Pasir Gudang Campus. The total population of all Diploma engineering course students was 1490. Based on Krejie and Morgan’s (1970) Table of Sample Size, a minimum of 306 participants should be targeted as samples of the study. However, since the study utilised random sampling method and the questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms through WhatsApp groups and email for data collection, 486 responses were received. Therefore, the number of sample size of this study is sufficient to represent the population.

The instrument of this study was adapted from Bačzek, et al. (2021); Selvanathan, Hussin, and Azazi, (2020); and Kapasia, et al., (2020). The questionnaire consists of 30 items all together with five sections which are Demographics information, Online Distance Learning Mode Experience, Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning Experience, ODL Learning Environment and ODL in the future with the Cronbach alpha of 0.57, 0.78, 0.77, 0.58, and 0.83, respectively. The scale was based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 as the lowest end and 5 as the highest end. 2 items of the questionnaire covered demographics, one item was to determine the gender and their course of study in their Diploma course, 5 questions studied the ODL learning mode of the participants which covered the choice of gadgets and mode of assignment submission, 10 questions on the synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences, 8 questions investigated their ODL learning environment and finally 6 questions on their expectations for future learning using ODL. There were also 2 open-ended questions related to ODL mode experience and future expectations to allow students to express perceptions freely.

Using the formula below in Microsoft Excel, the internal consistency of the items were calculated and a Cronbach alpha value of 0.78 was achieved which indicates an acceptable consistency of the items in the questionnaire (Täber, 2018).

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} (1 - \frac{\sum V_i}{V_r})$$

The questionnaire was distributed through email and students’ WhatsApp groups by the English lecturers in the department for the collection of data. Written informed consent was also taken from the participants.
Descriptive statistics were carried out to understand the distribution of study participants. Simple frequencies and percentages were computed for the analysis of mode of learning, learning environment and opinion on the future of ODL. Results are presented in the form of charts and tables in the following sections.

IV. RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondents

The characteristics of the Diploma course students are summarized below. Table 1 presents the distribution of gender and Figure 1 highlights the respective courses of the respondents.

| Gender     | n  | Percentage (%) |
|------------|----|----------------|
| Male       | 278 | 57.2           |
| Female     | 208 | 42.8           |

Based on Table 1, among 486 students, 57.2% (n=278) were male and 42.8% (n=208) were females. While Figure 1 below shows that the majority of the respondents were from the Diploma of Mechanical Engineering (37%), followed by Diploma in Business Management (23.7%), Diploma in Electrical Engineering (17.7%) and only 9.7% students of Diploma in Civil Engineering.

Figure 1 Distribution of Courses

Table 2 presents some background information of the respondents ODL learning mode status. Five questions were investigated to gauge the respondents’ background information related to the ODL mode.

| ODL Learning Mode | %   |
|-------------------|-----|
| 1. Platforms used for ODL |     |
| Zoom              | 2.8 |
| Google Meet       | 52.7|
| Padlet            | 7.4 |
| Microsoft Teams   | 24.4|
| YouTube           | 6.9 |
| Other platforms (Telegram, Google Classroom, Webex, Skype, WhatsApp, UFuture) | 5.8 |
| 2. Attend all the online classes that lecturers conduct |     |
| Yes               | 92.4|
| Sometimes         | 5.6 |
| No                | 2.0 |
| 3. Gadgets used to attend to online classes |     |
| Android mobile phone | 23  |
| iPhone            | 9   |
| Laptop            | 66  |
| Personal Computer | 1.3 |
| iPad              | 0.5 |
| Friends’ laptop   | 0.2 |
| 4. Mode used for submission of assignment |     |
| Google Drive      | 36  |
| Microsoft Teams   | 39  |
| YouTube           | 2   |
Based on Table 2 above, five questions were asked to understand students’ ODL mode during Covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, it was noted that 52.7 percent of the students used Google Meet as their main platform to interact with lecturers and peers. This is followed by Microsoft Teams (24.4%) and YouTube (6.9%). The least preferred was Zoom with only 2.8 percent. This is in contrast with the findings of Mathew & Chung (2021) where they found that Google classroom and YouTube were more favourable to Diploma and Degree students.

Secondly, it was important to note whether students attended all the ODL classes that the lecturers conducted. It was evident that majority of the students (92.4%) attended all the classes conducted by their lecturers. However, it was a surprise to note that 2 percent of the respondents did not attend to classes conducted by their lecturers.

The third and fifth questions were about the gadgets used in ODL. It was reported that the most frequent gadgets used by the respondents for ODL were laptops (66%) and android mobile phones (23%). 93.6 percent reported that the gadgets they used were their own, followed by 3.8 percent were using their parents’ and another 2.6 percent used gadgets that belong to other family members.

The fourth question was about the mode for assignment submission in ODL. Even though the main platform used for learning was Google Meet, the students submitted their assignments mainly on Microsoft Teams (39%). Only 36 percent reported that they submitted their assignment through Google Drive and the least frequent mode used for submission was YouTube (2%).

**Expectations on Educational Decisions of ODL**

It is vital to investigate the perceptions of the students regarding their expectations on the educational decisions of ODL during the Covid-19 pandemic. The last section of the questionnaire tempted to find out how students perceive ODL in the future and Table 3 below presents the results.

| Expectations of ODL in the future                                      | n   | %  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| ODL should not be continued in the future                            | 60  | 23.3 |
| ODL helps to shape me into a better person                           | 16  | 6.2 |
| Lecturers should give extra consideration with the students         | 10  | 3.9 |
| It is hoped that there is no external constraint to occur in the future | 16  | 6.2 |
| The implementation of ODL should be improved                        | 46  | 17.9 |
| The learning institution should play a greater role in making sure ODL runs smoothly | 3   | 1.2 |
| ODL should help me to get good grades                               | 45  | 17.5 |
| Students have to be well prepared for ODL in the future              | 10  | 3.9 |
| It is good to be back to physical classes                            | 28  | 10.9 |
| It is hoped for ODL to improve my understanding towards the lessons better | 8   | 3.1 |
| I have positive expectation of ODL as future way of learning effectively | 15  | 5.8 |

Table 3 shows the participants expectations on educational decisions of ODL. It was found that there are three main expectations of the students related to ODL. The main concern of the respondents was to discontinue ODL (23.3 percent; n = 60). This is self-explanatory when in item 9 on Table 3, students expect their studies to be back to physical classes (10.9 %). Most of the students were dissatisfied with the implementation of virtual learning mode during this pandemic and were hoping for improvement. It was noted that 17.9 percent of the respondents (n = 46) expects ODL implementation should be improved. This is followed with the expectation that ODL should be helping them in getting good grades (17.5%; n = 45).

These perceptions of the respondents were further substantiated when in the open-ended questions students reveal their perceptions towards ODL in the future by providing reasons. Table 4 presents direct quotes of the students regarding the expectation of ODL in the future.
When asked on their agreement that ODL will be the future for their learning, it was noted that respondents hope that ODL will no longer be implemented in the future or in the upcoming semesters when they used phrases in No 1 to 7 above.

Table 5 presents the direct quotes given by students for the reasons ODL to discontinue in the future. Extract No. 8 highlights students perceive ODL as fully ineffective for students and No 9 shows the frustration of the respondent towards ODL until a kind of warning is given, that is if ODL continues, the student might withdraw from studies. Among the reasons that students perceive for discontinuation of ODL in the future is the difficulty for students to adapt with ODL learning method (No 11) and also hard to understand subjects during ODL(No 10).

The second highest expectations for future ODL as perceived by the students is to improve the implementation of ODL as presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6 presents the direct quotes of the respondents’ reasons on ways to improve ODL in the future. It was noted the majority of the students are bored and need variety in the lessons. Most of them highlighted the word ‘fun’, ‘interesting’, ‘relax’ ‘lively’ and ‘enjoyable’ to show they needed some variety in the teaching mode. Besides, Extract No 19 shows clearly the expectations towards lecturers to ‘be more creative’ when approaching students. Another expectation of students was to be flexible with assignments and reduce assignments by providing more hands-on assignments instead of just recording video presentation which could lead to stress.

Furthermore, another concern of students during ODL is their study performance. Students also expect good results although they are in ODL mode. Their expectations to get good grades show that they have great concern over the study mode. Table 7 show students’ perceptions towards expecting good results in the examination.
As shown in Table 7, students are really hopeful to get good grades during this ODL as to ‘not upset their parents’, ‘not to repeat subjects’ and ‘still in the dean’s list’. Most of the respondents put high hopes towards ODL in the future to help them with their grade and to avoid any failure as the questions and quizzes that was tested in the examination were perceived as ‘quite hard’. Besides, some of the respondents hoped that their result will not be affected by ODL as they have done well in physical classes before.

| Responses on ODL Should Help the Students in Getting Good Grades |
| --------------------------------------------------------------- |
| 23 “I hope I won’t fail each semesters that are using ODL method as it is my greatest fear. I just don’t want to upset my parents.” |
| 24 “I hope i can get pass the final with flying colour” |
| 25 “I hope that i can pass all semester without repeat” |
| 26 “I hope ODL will help many student in achieve their studies” |
| 27 “I hope ODL can give me a good results based on my efforts” |
| 28 “I hope I will get As for my ELC231 because in my semester 1 and semester 2, I always get B+ only” |
| 29 “I hope the output that i can get from ODL will be the same as normal class” |
| 30 “Getting pass as face to face learning” |
| 31 “i hope i still can get a great pointer eventhough learning in ODL.” |
| 32 “To get a better results” |
| 33 “Get the best results” |
| 34 “I hope the I will get a better result in ODL as the questions for tests and quizzes are quite hard.” |
| 35 “i hope i can survive odl and get dean list for this current semester.” |

V. DISCUSSIONS

Results gathered from this study revealed that students face different experiences while adapting to the new learning approach in ODL mode. In this current study, the respondents reported that the most frequent medium used to attend classes in ODL was through Google Meet. The majority of the respondents attended all the classes despite the platform they use to interact. In addition, it was reported that the most frequent gadgets respondents use for ODL were laptops and mobile phones and majority had their own gadgets for ODL purposes. Only a very small number of respondents used other family members’ gadgets. Yeoh (2020) claims that Malaysia as a whole is not ready for virtual system since most students in rural schools do not have their own phones and faced difficulty in e-learning during MCO. Contrary to the findings of Yeoh (2020), this study found that all the students have their own technological gadgets for studying and only a small number uses parents or family members’ gadgets.

It is also noted that the mode for assignment submission in ODL was mainly on Microsoft Teams, followed on Google Drive though the main platform used for learning was Google Meet. Another finding from the study was the participants’ expectations on educational decisions of ODL. It was found that there were three main expectations of the students related to ODL; mainly to discontinue ODL and revert to face-to-face.

This is consistent with what has been found in previous study where it was found that students were dissatisfied with the implementation of virtual learning mode and hoping for improvement (Abbas, Ayoob, Malik & Memon, 2020). However, opposing views were reported by other studies (Khan, Vivek, Khohaj & Tahir, 2021; Singh & Thurman, 2019) claiming that respondents are comfortable with learning in an online platform, though they are away from any physical interaction.

Among the extracted reasons reflected that respondents perceived ODL as ineffective. They were frustrated over the ODL mode and some perceived it was difficult for them to adapt to ODL mode. Some even perceived that they might discontinue their studies if ODL continues, besides having difficulty understanding subjects in ODL and hope less stress from the types of assignment they receive from lecturers. This is opposed to findings by Sit, Chung, Chow and Wong (2005) who found that students have the ability to understand concepts taught in subjects. Furthermore, the current study found that students are still grappling to adapt ODL and understand their courses and this result ties well with the previous studies that highlighted confrontation with computer technology was stressful (Chung, Weng & Chen, 2018) and difficult to understand subject matter (Vanslambroucka, Zhu, Lomaerts, Philipsen, & Tondeur, 2018; Bali & Liu, 2018; Chung, Chow & Wong, 2005) and ODL increase workload (Vanslambroucka, Zhu, Lomaerts, Philipsen, & Tondeur, 2018; Ravi, 2014).

VI. CONCLUSION

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the current study is that students use various platform during ODL such as Google Meet, Microsoft Team, YouTube and Zoom. However, the most preferred platform is Google Meet. Another promising aspect that is worth highlighting that Malaysia is ready in terms of moving towards ODL because the majority of the students have their own technological gadgets for study purposes and very small number uses their parents or family members’ gadgets.
However, there are improvements to be made as students are not happy with the implementation of ODL and they perceive ODL should not continue in the future because ODL is ineffectice, difficult to adapt and difficult to understand subject matter. Students are hopeful that ODL lessons will be more interactive, creative and less stressful.

Results in the present study have several implications for educators, curriculum designers and universities to improve ODL experiences for Diploma course students. Educators need to design lessons creatively so as to not overload students with boredom, assignments and group activities while in ODL. In line with, this students as the new generations despite surrounded with technology, need creatively designed lessons to retain their attention span on subject matter and reduces mobile data usage (Sim, Sim, & Quah, 2021) to less income families. Lecturers can include some games to make lessons more interesting. The delivery of lessons can also be livelier and attracts full attendance to ODL classes.

Educators can also allow flexibility in submission of assignments by providing choices of tasks, mode to conduct the tasks and allow mutual agreement for submission of assignment datelines. Allowing the students flexibility of assignment guidelines will tap the creativity within the millennials. This is in line with the ODL theory of Constructivism views where ODL promotes autonomous learners who construct their own knowledge by exploring through experience in ODL mode.

As on the part of the higher learning institutions, proper management of internet facilities, technical support and training of staff and students need to be conducted for efficacy of ODL implementation. Even though the students have their own gadgets, they have different expectations for ODL in the future. Each of the expectations should be considered seriously as they can have implications during the lessons. Lecturers can include some games to make the lesson more interesting.

Broadly translated, the findings from the present study contribute to the existing literature on ODL as the future more of learning for tertiary education especially for Diploma course students. The findings provide a basis to meet the aspirations of the government in the Education Blueprint, 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013) on the need to transform education for more tech-based lessons for the millennials. Thus, there is a need to properly planned ODL implementation with full support from all involved in ODL mode.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

The findings of the present study cannot be generalised to the whole population of Diploma course students in Malaysia or globally since it is confined only to the participants involved in this study. Hence, it is recommended that future research on ODL should be conducted on different samples with a larger group of respondents as it may produce different and interesting responses. Future research should also consider the investigating the potential effects of ODL on students’ performance looking more carefully into the achievement of the students in respective courses and suggest appropriate measures to be taken to ensure the effectiveness of ODL mode.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would also like to express gratitude to UiTM Cawangan Johor, Pasir Gudang Campus for the support through Bestari Grant Phase 2/2021. A special appreciation also to all students who participated as respondents of the study for their willingness to share their valuable feedback for the completion of this research.

REFERENCES

1. Author, 52 peratus pelajar Sabah tiada akses internet (2020, May 8). Berita Harian Online. Retrieved. https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2020/05/686499/52-peratus-pelajar-sabah-tiada-akses-internet (accessed 8 March, 2021)
2. Abbasi S, Ayoob T, Malik A, & Memon SL (2020). Perceptions of students regarding E-learning during Covid-19 at a private medical college. Pak J Med Sci. 36(COVID19-S4):COVID19-S57-S61. https://doi.org/10.12669/pjms.36.COVID19-S4.2766
3. Aggarwal A, Comyn P, & Fonseca PM. Discussion: Continuing online learning and skills development in times of the COVID-19 crisis. 27 March 17 April. Retrieved https://www.skillsforemployment.org/KSP/en/Discussions/EDMSP1_25662
4. Aiman, A (2020, June 11). Improve online learning for pupils still stuck at home, say activists. Retrieved: https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/na-tion/2020/06/11/improve-online-learning-for-pupils-still-stuck-at-home-say-activists/ (accessed 16 June, 2020).
5. Ally, M. (2004). Foundations of educational theory for online learning. Theory and practice of online learning, 2, 15-44.
6. Anderson, M., and Perrin, A. (2018). Nearly one-in-five teens can’t always finish their homework because of the digital divide. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/26/nearly-one-in-five-teens-cant-always-finish-their-homework-because-of-the-digital-divide/.
7. Bączek, M., Zaganieczyk-Bączek, M., Szpringer, M., Jaroszyński, A., & Woźakowska-Kaplon, B. (2021). Students’ perception of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: a survey study of Polish medical students. Medicine, 10(7).
8. Bali, S. & Liu, M. C. (2018). Students’ perceptions toward online learning and face-to-face learning courses. Journal of Physics: Conference Series 1108, p. 1-8. DOI:10.1088/1742-6596/1108/1/012094.
9. Benson, A. D. (2002). Using online learning to meet workforce demand: A case study of stakeholder influence. Quarterly review of distance education, 3(4), 443-52.
10. Carliner, S., & Boswood, T. (2004). Genre: A useful construct for reseaching online communication for the workplace. Information Design Journal, 12(2), 124-136.
11. Chuang, H. H., Weng, C. Y., & Chen, C. H. (2018). Which students benefit most from a flipped classroom approach to language learning? British Journal of Educational Technology, 49(1), 56–68.
12. Chung, Chow and Wong, 2005 and ODL increase workload I
13. Chung, E., Noor, N. M., & Mathew, V. N. (2020). Are you ready? An assessment of online learning readiness among university students. International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 9(1), 301-317.
14. Clark, H. (2002). Building Education: The Role of the Physical Environment in Enhancing Teaching and Research. Issues in Practice. Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL, England.
15. Conrad, D. L. (2002). Engagement, excitement, anxiety, and fear: Learners’ experiences of starting an online course. The American journal of distance education, 16(4), 205-226.
16. Demuyakor, J. (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Online Learning in Higher Institutions of Education: A Survey of the Perceptions of Ghanaian International Students in China. Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies, 10(3), e202018. https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcmt/8286
17. Ellis, R. (2005). Principles of instructed language learning. System, 33(2), 209-224.
18. Gonzalez, T., de la Rubia, M. A., Hincz, K. P., Comas-Lopez, M., Subirats, L., Fort, S., & Sacha, G. M. (2020). Influence of COVID-19 confinement in students’ performance in higher education. arXiv preprint arXiv:2004.09545.
19. Harasim, L. (2012). Learning theory and online technologies. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
20. Hiltz, S. R., & Turoff, M. (2005). Education goes digital: The evolution of online learning and the revolution in higher education. Communications of the ACM, 48(10), 59-64.
21. Kapasia, N., Paul, P., Roy, A., Saha, J., Zaveri, A., Mallick, R., ... & Chouhan, P. (2020). Impact of lockdown on status of undergraduate and postgraduate students during COVID-19 pandemic in West Bengal, India. Children and Youth Services Review, 116, 105194.
22. Khan, M.A.; Vivek; Nabi, M.K.; Khohaj, M.; Tahir, M. Students’ Perception towards E-Learning during COVID-19 pandemic in India: An Empirical Study. Sustainability 2021, 13, 57. https://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su13010057
23. Křejčie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and psychological measurement, 30(3), 607-610.
24. Lau, C. Y., & Shaikh, J. M. (2012). The impacts of personal qualities on online learning readiness at Curtin Sarawak Malaysia (CSM). Educational Research and Reviews, 7(20), 430-444.
25. Lee, S. (2020, 16 June). Sabah student stays overnight in tree to get better Internet connection for online exams.Retrieved: https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/06/16/sabah-uni-student-stays-overnight-in-tree-to-get-better-internet-connection-for-online-exams (accessed 8 March, 2021).
26. Lowenthal, P. R., Wilson, B., & Parrish, P. (2009, October). Context matters: A description and typology of the online learning landscape. In AECT International Convention, Louisville, KY.
27. Ministry of Health Malaysia. (2020). Covid-19 Malaysia: Distribution of Covid-19 cases according to date of confirmation. http://covid-19.moh.gov.my/
28. Mathew, V., & Chung, E. (2021). University Students’ Perspectives on Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Implementation Amidst COVID-19. Asian Journal of University Education, 16(4), 152-160.
29. Paul, J., & Jefferson, F. (2019). A comparative analysis of student performance in an online vs. face-to-face environmental courses. Moore, M. 2010. Independent study. In Redefining the Discipline of Adult Education, eds. Boyd, R., J.W. Apps and Associates, 16-31. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
30. Murphy, M. P. A. (2020). COVID-19 and emergency e-learning: Consequences of the securitization of higher education for post-pandemic pedagogy. Contemporary Security Policy, 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2020.1761749
31. Nichols, M. (2003). A theory for eLearning. Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 6(2), 1-10.
32. Ohbinger, D., Ohbinger, J. L., & Lippincott, J. K. (2005). Educating the net generation. Boulder, Colo.: EDUCAUSE, 2005. 1 v. (various pagings): illustrations.
33. Paul, J., & Jefferson, F. (2019). A comparative analysis of student performance in an online vs. face-to-face environmental science course from 2009 to 2016. Frontiers in Computer Science, 1, 7.
34. Pelmin, M. (2020).Readings on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Higher Education Institution (HEIs) Emergency Preparedness in the Philippines. Available at SSRN 3573896. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3573896
35. Piccinno, A. G. (2017). Theories and frameworks for online education: Seeking an integrated model. Online Learning, 21(3), 166-190. doi: 10.24059/olj.v21i3.1225
36. Rasheed Abdubakar Rasheed, Amirrudin Kamsin, & Nor Aniza Abdullah (2020). Challenges in the online component of blended learning: A systematic review. Computers & Education, 144, 1-17
37. Ravi Seethamraju. (2014). Effectiveness of Using Online Discussion Forum for Case Study Analysis. Educational Research International, 1-11.
38. Selvanathan, M., Hussin, N. A. M., & Azizi, N. A. N. (2020). Students learning experiences during COVID-19: Work from home period in Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions. Teaching Public Administration, 0144739420977900.
39. Sim, S. P. L., Sim, H. P. K., & Quah, C. S. (2021). Online Learning: A Post Covid-19 Alternative Pedagogy For University Students. Asian Journal of University Education, 16(4), 137-151.
40. Singh, V., & Thurman, A. (2019). How many ways can we define online learning? A systematic literature review of definitions of online learning (1988-2018). American Journal of Distance Education, 33(4), 289-306.
41. Sit, J. W. H., Chung, J. W. Y., Chow, M. C. M. & Wong, T. K. S. (2005). Experiences of online learning: students’ perspective. Nurse Education Today, 25(2), 140-147.
42. Taber, K.S. The Use of Cronbach’s Alpha When Developing and Reporting Research Instruments in Science Education. Res Sci Educ 48, 1273–1296 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2
43. Tavangarian, D., Leybold, M. E., Nölting, K., Röser, M., & Voigt, D. (2004). Is e-Learning the Solution for Individual Learning?. Electronic Journal of E-Learning, 2(2), 273-280.
44. Vanslambroucka, S., Zhu, C., Lombarts, K., Filipsson, B. & Tondeur, J. (2018). Students’ motivation and subjective task value of participating in online and blended learning environments. The Internet and Higher Education, 36, 33-40.
45. Vitoria, M Mislinawai, N Nurmasiyat. Students’ perceptions on the implementation of e-learning: Helpful or unhelpful? J Physics. 2018:1088. science course from 2009 to 2016. Frontiers in Computer Science, 1, 7.
46. Wang, H. (2014). Learner autonomy based on constructivism learning theory. International Journal of Cognitive and Language Sciences, 8(5), 1552-1554.
47. World Health Organization (2020, October 17). COVID-19 in Malaysia. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#region=asia-pacific.
48. Yeoh, A (2020) MCO: as lessons move online, local teachers and students struggle with uneven Internet access. Retrieved from: https://www.thestar.com.my/tech/tech-news/2020/04/27/mco-as-lessions-move-online-local-teachers-and-students-struggle-with-uneven-internet-access (accessed 20 January, 2020).

AUTHORS PROFILE

Dr Aminabibi Bte Saidalvi, is an Associate Professor from the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Pasir Gadang Campus. Her 28 years of teaching experience equipped her with vast teaching approaches and methodologies to mould students’ English language proficiency at all levels of education. Her mission is to share her vast knowledge and expertise to help students be successful in standing out from the crowd and build strong self-confidence in using the English language when facing the world, especially in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

Maisarah Noorezm, joined UiTM in March 2014 as an English Lecturer in the Academy of Language Studies. Her areas of expertise include applied linguistics, Teaching English as Second Language (TESL), and discourse analysis.

Nursyuhada Zakaria, is currently teaching at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Pasir Gadang, Malaysia. Her research interests include teacher education and curriculum and assessment.

Nadzraha Sa’adah, has been teaching English for 7 years. Passionate in learning and teaching english as a second language. Her areas of research interest are English language teaching, language learning, reading and computer assisted language learning.
Wan Farah Wani Wan Fakhruddin, is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Her research work includes exploring the ways language is used to perform social functions in academic and professional contexts from a Systemic Functional Linguistics perspective.

Nurul Nadiah Rasdi, is currently teaching at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Pasir Gudang, Malaysia. Her research interests include Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) and learning styles.

Sharifah Amani Bte Syed Abdul Rahman, is a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Pasir Gudang, Johor Bahru. She holds a Master in TESL and has been lecturing in UiTM for the past 12 years. Her areas of research interest are English language teaching, language learning and materials development.