

Comparison of Higher Education Student and Teacher Perceptions of E-Learning

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This paper builds upon an earlier study on higher education teachers' perceptions of utilizing distance learning (Ålander & Karukka, 2016) and a recent survey conducted among higher education students in Northern Finland. The aim of the study was first to find out teachers' and students' experiences of and views on e-learning. The second aim was to compare these results in order to create an up-to-date analysis of how e-learning activities should be further developed to ensure the high quality of learning outcomes also when electronic applications and learning environments are utilized.

RESEARCH METHOD

The survey for teachers was sent via email to teachers working in higher education in Oulu UAS (n=51). The students' questionnaire had a virtually similar structure as the questionnaire that was sent to teachers and it was published in the Oulu UAS school intranet (n=147).

The questions were related to learning experiences, usefulness of e-learning tools and the possible challenges teachers and students had encountered while using these tools. They were also asked what kind of support would best enhance their educational activities in e-learning environments.

RESULTS

	 Teachers	 Students
Perceived advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - flexibility concerning time, place and individual preferences - students can tailor studies according to own preferences - for some students e-learning may be more activating than traditional learning methods in terms of increasing presence, participation, and both individual and collaborative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - flexibility concerning time, place and individual preferences - possibility to tailor studies according to one's own preferences - saving resources (time, money)
Perceived challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - technical issues related to non-functioning data connections and software - e-learning activities require specific pedagogic skills - teachers'/students' insufficient (technological) skills - students' problems in self-directing the learning situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - technical issues related to non-functioning data connections and software - interaction between students and teachers - problems in self-directing the learning situation - receiving constructive and motivating feedback

Figure 1: The most mentioned e-learning advantages and challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

High quality learning outcomes in e-learning require:

- Continuous and relevant training and peer support for educators and students.
- The interaction between teachers and students as well as that between peer students should be improved.
- Enhancing the user experience of e-learning platforms and environments.
- Course materials and the content of the courses should be designed carefully and the content should be supportive and appropriate for each group.

Interest of future work: field study observing the usage of e-learning tools in practice to gain deeper understanding of possibilities and challenges of transferring skills and knowledge by means of different e-learning applications.

