



## Instructional Delivery And Assessment Strategies For Online Learning In Uzbekistan

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**Journal Website:**  
<http://usajournalshub.com/index.php/tajssei>

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### ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the experience with the online learning of undergraduate students of Uzbek State World Languages University. The aim of the article is to reveal whether online education has positive or negative impact on the achievements of undergraduate students; and what should be done to make it successful and engaging. Data were collected through the students' achievements on the basis of two courses. Moreover, online surveys were done to investigate how the learners evaluate their experience regarding online learning. The results of the experiment have shown that the absence of real interactions between learners and teacher complicated the challenge of understanding the content of courses. The results point out that further development of the course design and assessment strategies are necessary.

### KEYWORDS

Online learning, assessment strategies, instructional delivery, students' engagement, USWLU.

### INTRODUCTION

Due to pandemic situation in the world, distance and online education have become vital globally, gaining popularity as a source of access to education for many learners. The officials of our republic made the decision to launch online delivery in higher education system. Therefore, many universities and institutions in Uzbekistan are expected to create more online and distance education

programmes, changing the content of their courses and making in appropriate for online delivery.

However, a lot of challenges and difficulties have emerged, such as how to change the content of the courses, how to design them, how to instruct and assess learners (Bertini, 2016). Moreover, the observations and studies

held by researches in Western countries illustrate that the major problem refers to “the lack of instructor’s competence” to conduct the lessons online establishing relevant educational environment for the students (Byrnes, 2015).

According to Allen and Seaman (2016), online courses are criticized for their poor quality, and face-to-face instruction appears to be the hallmark of excellence. However, online courses are often tailored to learners' requests and needs for flexibility in time and place. These courses can cater to a wide range of professionals who are seeking a career change. Instructional deliverers design courses to meet the various needs of those taking the courses (Allen & Seaman, 2016). Appropriate learning resources that allow the learner to draw on their experience and skills should also be taken into consideration (Knowles et al., 2015). While the courses must remain flexible, their quality must not be compromised to meet the needs of the student. To benefit instructors in learning technologies to advance online courses, they should receive financial support to attend workshops (Knowles et al., 2015).

The overall purpose of this article is to investigate how the online delivery is held in Uzbekistan, examining strong and weak sides of online education and suggest some instructional delivery (ID) and assessment strategies (AS).

We will then provide answers to the following questions, specifically:

1. How does the use of only ID through course materials affect students' understanding and achievements in distance and online learning?
2. What are the possible ways to develop ID and AS with distance and online learning of undergraduate students to enhance their achievements?

## BACKGROUND

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays significant role in establishing distance and online learning and if learners and instructors are lack of ICT skills online delivery can hardly be successful. Because of the rapidly changing world of technology, universities have a hard time keeping up with technological advances and teachers are not acclimating as fast as students are. According to Schifter (2000), online teachers tend to have large workloads and do not schedule time to advance their technology skills, so they usually return to the same resources they have always used.

It is not doubtful that ICT should be used in ID and AS of all academic programmes and students should have adequate access to it. However, there is obstacle on how ICTs will be made equally available for both the learners and instructors. It means that the challenge in online teaching is course quality and development. The manner in which an online course is designed is important. Converting a high school course to an online format is a significant task for someone who has never done it before (Picciano, Seaman, Shea, & Swan, 2012). Curriculum from a face-to-face course can work online if the academic design and educational tools used have been changed; however, re-inventing course objectives, activities and assessments can initially take substantial time and energy. When instructors are developing a course, they need to reflect on their teaching modalities and decide whether changes need to be made. They need to develop effective curricula that focus on a student-centered education that can be personalized to the individual learner (Muirhead, 2005). The struggle online teachers have involves attempting to create activities that will stimulate interaction, fostering critical thinking skills, and engaging the online learner (Pierce, 2003).

In comparison to western education systems, the education system of Uzbekistan has just turned to online mode of delivery. MOODLE is the platform which is currently used for online learning in Uzbekistan. It is worth mentioning that it was first introduced in 2016. The aim of designating this platform was to provide step-by-step transition to credit-module system in higher education of Uzbekistan. However, it was used neither by instructors nor by learners. It is worth mentioning that course materials in delivery of instruction to the students were uploaded but they were not used. Moreover, students did not have the access to this platform. Notwithstanding the improvements observed in the using of online MOODLE platform, the impact on the distance and online learning is yet to be established. This is not entirely consistent with the mission and vision delivery of materials through this platform. In view of this, a gap is created in the learning and understanding of the course material through this mode.

## METHODOLOGY

We examined the contribution of online delivery on the progress of USWLU learners on the basis of two courses, namely, Integrated course of teaching English and the course of Modern English Lexicology. The observations and test results identified these courses as too practical to be offered through online mode of delivery. Furthermore, from our point of view, lack of consistency in policy implementation, lack of instructors' competency, and poor developed instructional materials are basic problems affecting distance and online learning.

This research provided the collection and analysis of quantitative, followed by gathering and analysis of qualitative data. Consequently, the qualitative data in this study was used to complement and better interpret the results of the quantitative data. As a multiple case

study, purposive sampling was used to select an informative sample of 210 third year students on the course of Modern English Lexicology (MEL) and 60 students on Integrated Course of Teaching English (ICTE). This purposive sampling method was used to ensure that only third year students studying these courses in distance and online modes were selected. The motivation for using these category of students was because they have had two years of experience at university and are not novices in their institutions.

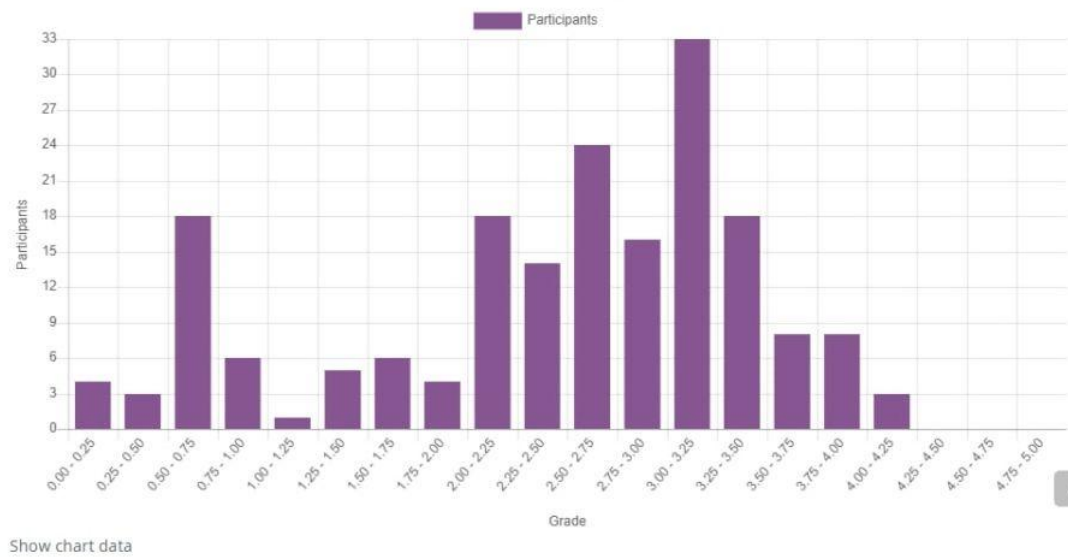
The instruments, largely closed-ended questionnaire with a limited number of open-ended questions, together with midterm test results, were developed. The questionnaire - formulated on a 5-point scale of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree - was administered to students.

## RESULTS

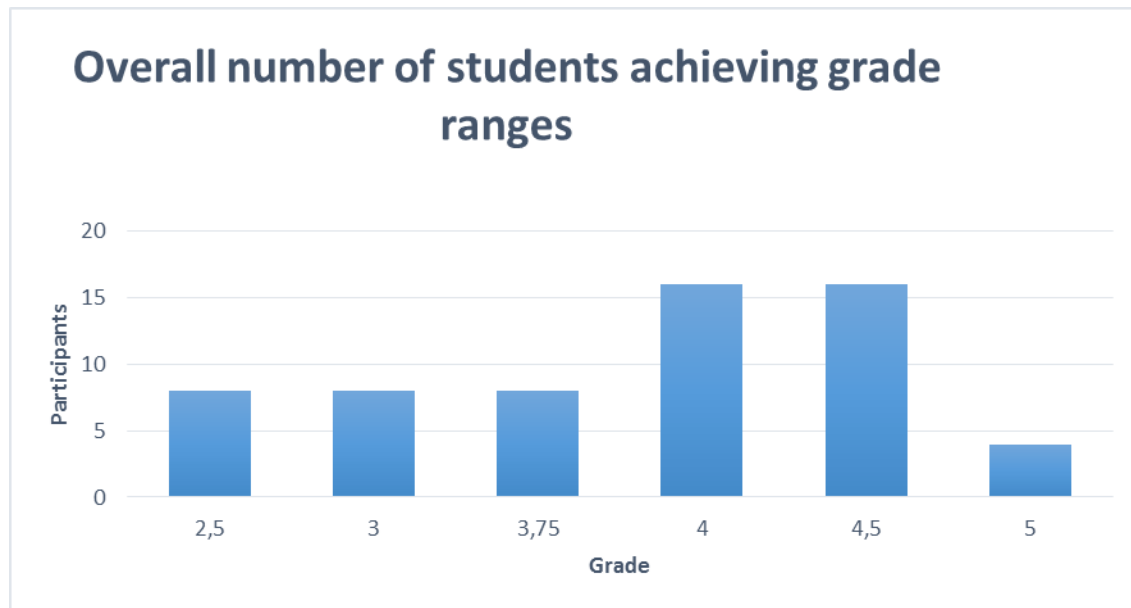
The results of the students' midterm results on both courses were explored and compared. The midterm on MEL was held in the form of multiple choice questions and students were given access to the test for 24 hours. There were 25 test items which should have been completed within 50 minutes. The results of the test are shown on Table 1. It is obvious from the results that out of 210 students 80 student got 3 and higher, while the rest of students failed the midterm. However, the midterm on ICTE was organized in the form of reflective writing (Teach-Scan assignment). Students had to observe some lessons and interview 4 instructors synthesizing their observations and interviews. They were given 12 questions to answer (Table 3) and 7 days to complete the task. The results of the midterm on ICTE show that 52 out of 60 students got 3 and higher points.

**Table 1. The midterm results of students on the course of modern english lexicology (mel).**

Overall number of students achieving grade ranges



**Table 2. The Midterm results of students on the course of Integrated Course of Teaching English (ICTE)**



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### Table 3. Teach-Scan Assignment

You will complete four professor teaching observations and interviews. You will submit a synthesis of what you learned through your observations and interviews; provide at least a paragraph for each of the items below. Each paragraph should include at least one specific example from your observations/interviews.

- 1) What is the role of the instructor and student in the classroom?
- 2) What do instructors find most rewarding about teaching?
- 3) What aspects of teaching frustrate instructors?
- 4) What aspects influence the learning situation and instruction? (ex, grade level, class size, room set up, course level, discipline, etc.)
- 5) What resources and preparation do instructors need before their class begins?
- 6) How do students and their experiences shape instruction?
- 7) What do students enjoy in a learning situation?
- 8) What makes students disengage?
- 9) How do instructors keep students engaged, or respond to student disengagement?
- 10) How is (or should) diversity (be) addressed in teaching?
- 11) What components do you want to make sure you integrate into your teaching?
- 12) What components do you want to make sure you avoid as an instructor?

The results of the students' responses to each of the questions in this paper were explored. The number of the students that agree or disagree on each of the questionnaire items necessitated re-grouping the 5-point scale into agree (consisting of strongly agree and agree; A), disagree (consisting of strongly disagree and disagree; D), and neutral (N). The interest was not whether or not the respondents agree to the items under

consideration, but to understand how ID helps in shaping the comprehending of the course materials of the learners; and as a result the responses were dichotomised into agree and not agree leaving out those that were neutral. This allows for the binomial distribution in the non-parametric form to be considered appropriate for the analysis. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Students’ response to the online learning, instruction delivery and assessment strategies.**

Statements:	1. Disagree	2. Neutral	3. Agree
1. I feel positive about my current online learning practice.	26 %	30%	44%
2. I am broadly satisfied with the support available and the instruction delivery.	28%	12%	60%
3. The majority of lecturers were using online learning as a learning tool (developing learners’ understanding).	23%	15%	62%
4. Assessments are aimed to maximize students’ learning	25%	45%	30%
5. Tracking and monitoring learner progress was done in appropriate way.	25%	40%	35%
6. The abstract nature of MEL is not simplified in the design of the course materials.	15%	55%	30%
7. The practical nature of ICTE is not reflected in the design of the course materials.	24%	55%	29%

Items 1, 2, 3, indicated that the provision of course materials is considered to available and valid, most of respondents feel positive regarding their online studying. The results indicated that students pay more attention when the online course materials are presented with clear guidelines and expectations. Item 1with shows how

determined and resilient the students are in learning in this mode. However, items 4 and 5 regarding the validity and reliability of assessment seemed to have significant biases, indicating students' persistence in learning through this mode. Hence, the result suggests that the abstract nature of MEL and practical nature of ICTE are not completely dealt with in

the design of the course materials. This indicates that the content of the course materials may not be explanatory enough to meet the participants' needs.

## DISCUSSION

The study reveals that that online training can be successful when most instructors can navigate and provide adequate ID and AS. On the other hand, ID in the online learning is significant when a large number of users experienced difficulty in using the course or had complaints about instructional delivery. The participants distinguished between questions about course content, ID and AS as indicative of course success. The findings, therefore, indicated that learners perceived ease of use as an

Important goal for ID and AS

Online learning is highly differentiated and is offered to a variety of users. ID of a course and assessment of learners progress are specialized as we must consider many variables (Cherry & Flora, 2017). Learners require a different skillset in online learning to understand the online learning environment and to follow the instructional directions and feedback from the online instructor (Halpin et al., 2015; Zha et al., 2017). Some participants of the questionnaire alluded to the fact that not all learners are suitable to take online training, especially from a technological viewpoint. The findings of this research indicated an over-emphasis on the ability to follow instructions and perhaps neglecting the need to evaluate the students' success in terms of ID quality, flexibility, and catering for the learners' needs.

The study revealed that most students failed MEL course where the instruction was delivered conventionally and the lack of essential resources for complete course delivery may be affecting them negatively in their studies.. The assessment was organized in the form of multiple choice question which

did not allow them to approach to the fulfilment of the task creatively. However, the findings regarding ICTE revealed that the usage of different technological advances and teach-scan assessment resulted in better outcomes. Based on the results from quantitative and qualitative analyses, the abstract nature of MEL and practical nature of ICTE are not addressed adequately in the materials resulting in the content not being simplified enough to address the challenges.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Society is an ever-changing entity; therefore, it makes perfect sense that methods of teaching should also change. One of the largest growing educational mediums is online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Online learning is a great environment for learning activities that provide

Engagement of learners if the ID is approached and taken into consideration (Powell et al., 2015). Furthermore, the greatest benefit is the ability teachers have to personalize learning activities and assessment types to individual students' needs. This learning environment allows students to actively participate in various learning activities and work at their own pace.

The above findings indicate that teachers should do more than deliver course content. Students have to be engaged when navigating through the

Course in order to learn. This can be accomplished by incorporating the different assessment strategies. Many teachers did not have the necessary skills required to teach online or were not being trained at all. The results of the study also had significant implications for all education takeholders. The most profound implication was the need for teacher training in different areas; for example, how to develop instructional delivery and assessment strategies that

promote engagement, handles student accountability issues, and streamlines the communication process for all stakeholders. In addition, the research findings reveal that an overwhelming majority of teachers expressed the need for continual, more focused professional development. Administrators can help students

Become more engaged in their online studies by providing professional development opportunities to their online teachers with instructional developers and technology professionals to improve online teaching practices.

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