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## **The Pros and Cons of Online Education: Iranian Language Teachers and Learners Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

Online learning has recently turned to one of the most well-known channels of education; however, the controversy over the quality and outcome of such online medium is still a concern. This study sought to determine the pros and cons of online courses as perceived by Iranian language teachers and learners. Two tailor-made questionnaires, along with a semi-structured interview, were used to collect the data. The participants were 71 college students who have experienced online educations and 31 language teachers who taught web-based classes in the Department of English Language Education at three universities in Iran, Isfahan, Sheikhbahaee, and Ashrafi. An overall analysis of questionnaires and interviews revealed that students and teachers could not find online education easier than its conventional counterpart. Online education provides teachers with a precise image of applying the appropriate teaching methodology in their online classes as well as enhancing their autonomy. The research recapped that online educators and administrators of faculties ought to lay the foundations for making the benefits of online education bold for learners. The findings may be a contributing factor for teacher educators to create the climate for professional development.

*Keywords: Distance Education; E-Learning; Online Education; Technology*

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak brought about the digital revolution in education via applying online presentations, digital or E-books, teleconferences, video conferences, and classrooms in cyberspace (Kapasias et al., 2020; Sutton and Jorge, 2020). The pandemic has made it compulsory for tutors or educators to adopt and apply the technology during this challenging period of time. Despite the growing requirements in online platforms as venues for web courses, which is a brand-new experience for everyone, little is known about how teachers interpret their online education and how students utilize and absorb the lessons. The context in Iran required the tremendous urge to hold web courses and how to get a correct perception of holding online courses.

Mandatory remote education would be a way different, and the headquarters of the colleges and universities should be cautious about evaluating this factor and build the foundation of their online courses with regard to emergency and compulsory distance education. One way of summarizing this would be to say that colleges and universities are dealing with making decisions about how to improvise a quick way out from this crisis and make online education less stressful and reduce the temptation of face-to-face learning in this circumstance and keep educational center, faculty staff, teachers and students safe from this public health-threatening pandemic.

The pandemic has made it compulsory for tutors or educators to adopt and apply the technology during this challenging period of time (Oyedotun, 2020). Many educational centers have mandated that all face-to-face courses turn into online courses. That is, many colleges and institutions have chosen to cancel all conventional and face-to-face courses, including labs, workshops, and others, and move them all to web-based courses. Hodges et al., (2020) explored the difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. The authors claimed that a well-scheduled online learning course is exclusively different from courses suggested online urgently in an emergency situation or a crisis. It is significant that due to COVID-19, colleges and universities should make a decision about how to keep on educating process while keeping students, teachers, and the whole staff safe from this pandemic.

## 2. Literature Review

Despite the growing requirements in online platforms as venues for web courses, which is a brand-new experience for everyone, little is known about how teachers interpret their online education and how students utilize and absorb the lessons. Grabinski et al., (2020) interrogated the benefits and challenges which result in engagement or drawbacks from e-learning among 79 educators in Polish universities. Based on the conducted survey through the questionnaire,



the research findings proved that e-learning is not widely applied by the students of Poland. Furthermore, web-based courses incorporated the progression of flexibility in the teaching process. At the same time, teachers who applied online methods perceived this as more practical than traditional classes. This last point leads directly to the next more serious objection that willingness to apply e-learning courses is assimilated by the teacher's attitudes and their personal background on this issue. Meanwhile, learners should be motivated by the university or the institute to use this brand-new education.

What needs stressing is that online learning is totally biased against students who cannot afford the essential tools and gadgets for online education. In developing nations and societies that have low standards, many students cannot afford a strong internet connection or vital gadgets for online learning. COVID-19 lockdown has significantly hindered the teaching-learning process by applying web-based apprehending. It is crucially vital to thoroughly absorb the teaching-learning process, to take part in online courses during the lockdown process (Kapasia et al., 2020). Most governments around the world have set the law of Quarantine by imposing lockdowns, social or physical distancing, avoiding face-to-face education, and prohibitions on immigration and traveling (Gonzalez et al., 2020). This temporary closure resulted in an inevitable effect on learners as all of a sudden, they are asked strongly to turn their face-to-face education into distance learning (Abidah et al., 2020).

Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020) claimed that initially, it might seem plausible that Google products are functional under such crises and difficult circumstances like COVID-19; they are (a) Gmail, (b) Google Forms, (c) Calendars, (d) G-Drive, (e) Google Hangouts, (f) Google Jam board and Drawings, (g) Google Classroom, and (h) Open Board Software (not a Google product, helps in recording meetings in the form of files). These tools are crucially practical and might be applied as a replacement for face-to-face courses. Moreover, the authors stated that within this pandemic, such online platforms are required where (a) video conferencing with at least fifty learners is possible, (b) interactions with learners can be done to keep courses synchronically, (c) internet connections are strong, (d) Presentations are accessible through cell phones as well and not just laptops, (e) it is possible to watch already recorded speeches, and (f) getting feedback from learners can be reached and assignments can be taken.

Sindiani et al. (2020) dissected online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak as a cross-sectional study among medical learners in North of Jordan. The authors interrogated four parameters within online courses: class experience, students' and educators' interactions, online learning merits and demerits, and students' preferences. The survey was conducted via Google Forms platform. The result depicted that social distance was the most practical and beneficial of

distance learning which is too vague. It would be more accurate to say that poor technical setup and no direct contact were left out. With regard to their major, there are other ways of looking at this, such as the incapability of having actual clinic access, which is taken to consideration as a significant problem. Alternatively, learners opt for the traditional face-to-face method per se than taking part in online learning. The paper brings a crucial fact to light that obviously, a basic and fundamental structure should be founded in involving online teaching.

[Adnan and Anwar \(2020\)](#) expounded on the views of Pakistani higher education towards mandatory digital and distance learning within university courses in the middle of a pandemic. The survey was conducted on both undergraduates and postgraduates to get to know their perspectives on online education in Pakistan. The outcomes declared that e-learning or distance education could not lead to the desired results in an underdeveloped country such as Pakistan, where the majority are unable to access the Internet due to technical issues. This study addressed the impact of web-based learning against face-to-face education. Apart from the technical and financial complications, students also faced other complexities, such as a lack of interaction with teachers and traditional classroom socialization. The authors also came to the conclusion that educational organizations need to improve their pedagogical content for online courses.

[Dhawan \(2020\)](#) put some light on the significance of the descriptive study of online learning and its Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Challenges (SWOC) analysis in the time of crisis such as a pandemic. The author also epitomized the growth of EdTech during the pandemic for academic institutions of how to face challenges involved with e-learning. And finally, Dhawan offered some recommendations for being successful in online learning during the COVID-19 crisis. In order to make online learning effectively in a crisis, it is better to concentrate on the use of technology precisely. What this paper claim is that institutions and educational centers have to conduct research and distinguish the proper technology for different educational initiatives.

[Qazi et al. \(2020\)](#) examined the satisfaction of both Pakistani and Bruneian students with online learning along with parameters that impact satisfaction level. The authors came to the conclusion that there is a relationship between students' satisfaction and access & use of online learning. The outcomes revealed that Bruneians are more content with online learning than Pakistanis. Urban life is also a major and effective factor contributing to satisfaction. Correlation analysis suggests access and use of online learning within COVID-19 were positively associated with satisfaction among both populations. Hence, Bruneians are more satisfied with internet access and the affordability of gadgets than Pakistanis. This shows that underdeveloped nations need more attention



and support. That is, the authors depicted that online learning has come in to save the academic year of many learners. On the other hand, educational institutes around the world should carry out an online learning program into their systems to deal with unpredictable situations.

Especially significant is the fact that the use of technology is crucially vital because of its noticeable liaison with satisfaction. It is just as convincing to argue with the best of our comprehension that [Qazi et al. \(2020\)](#) focused on the very premier study which assesses student satisfaction with the use of online learning resources amid COVID-19 via applying well-established literature for the development of a satisfaction scale.

[Sadeghi \(2019\)](#) discussed the history and theories of distance learning and its merits and demerits. He claimed that within online education, interaction occurs, and it can be counted as an opportunity that facilitates learning. Another merit was communication with other students on distance learning programs. This type of education entails boosting the use of asynchronous video communication, at the same time lack of personal contact, which is necessary for the improvement of trust ([Dennenet al., 2007](#)). Correspondingly, [Zounek & Sudický \(2013\)](#) highlighted some merits and demerits of e-learning that constantly occur in pedagogical contexts. The paper calls our attention to the complexity of online technologies in the educational hierarchy. It's also admitted that there are many factors that need to be assessed in applying web-based courses, such as the matter of instruction, the type of the course, and technological and methodological support. It's also outlined that a friendly learning environment enhances the course impression for both teachers and learners—moreover, the method which the lecturer or the teacher applies matters and impacts on educational hierarchy crucially.

E-learning in Iran is still in its infancy and what this paper turns our attention to is a rapid assessment of the pros and cons of online education with respect to Iranian learners' and educators' perspectives. This study also seeks to recommend some conducive offers in order to improve web-based educations, especially through challenging periods of times such as pandemics or any other disastrous crisis.

### **3. Methodology**

The participants of the study included 71 college students taking part in online courses and 31 language teachers with the experience of the online classes in the Department of English Language Education at three universities, Isfahan, Sheikhbahaee, and Ashrafi. Convenience sampling was used for selecting the participants. Two exclusive questionnaires consisting of 40 likert scale questions were adopted: [Yaghoubi et al. \(2008\)](#) and [Fetzner \(2013\)](#)

questionnaire was used for students and Walters (2017) questionnaire for teachers. 20 participants were interviewed as well regarding the advantages and disadvantages of online learning amid COVID-19.

The primary source of data was an electronic questionnaire which was set on the Google Forms platform. At the premier stage, the link was sent through WhatsApp groups, emails, and Facebook forums to students and teachers. The secondary source of data was a semi structured interview where students were asked to share their perspectives on how they felt and whether they met their needs in their online classes. On the other side of the survey, teachers were asked if they were technologically fluent and how they taught in their online classes. The inclusion criteria contain educators and learners who experienced web-based teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the first phase of the study, students and teachers were given the questionnaires. Regarding their responses to the questions, the merits and demerits of online courses were dissected. In other words, the survey was designed into two parts: the positive and negative viewpoints towards online learning and teaching by 71 students and 31 teachers. Students were asked about general questions, level of students' satisfaction, and students' attitudes towards online learning.

On the other hand, the teachers' questionnaire included 4 scales measuring general questions. Satisfaction, as the first scale, measured resource effectiveness, reliability, and the accessibility of the class. The following, institutional factors assessed faculty perception of the institution's value on online instruction and the resources they allocate to it (including technical support, instructional support, hardware, and software). The third scale, personal factors, contained confidence and enjoyment with online teaching and concern about instruction effectiveness in their course, including feedback, building relationships, and providing students' access. Students' engagement/ active learning factors as the last scale, measured the perception of students' participation, motivation, and collaboration in online education. Table 1 shows the frequency and frequency of demographic variables of 71 students participating in this study. For example, 49 (69%) were female students and 22 (31%) were male.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Qualitative Demographic Variables*

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	49	69



	Male	22	31
University	Ashrafi University	4	5.6
	Isfahan University	31	43.7
	Sheikhbahaee University	36	50.7
Degree	BA	33	46.5
	MA	33	46.5
	PHD	1	1.4
	missing	4	5.6

Table 2 shows frequency of demographic variables of 31 language teachers participating in this study. For example, 16 (approximately 52%) were female teachers and 15 (approximately 48%) were male.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Quantitative Demographic Variables*

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	16	51.6
	Male	15	48.4
Degree	BA	3	9.7
	MA	20	64.5
	PHD	8	25.8
University	Ashrafi University	7	22.6
	Isfahan University	12	38.7
	Sheikhbahaee University	12	38.7

**4. Results**

From the obtained data, this study covers English educators and learners' viewpoints toward online learning. Based on the findings through the result section, the pros of online learning are balanced with the probable cons of E-learning through the eyes of both Iranian students and teachers in higher educations:

#### *4.1. Teachers' perspective*

The following table describes the descriptive indicators of the 3 areas of the teachers' questionnaire, including the number of respondents, the number of items in each area, the lowest and highest scores in each area, the mean and standard deviation, and Cronbach's alphabet.

**Table 3**

#### *Descriptive Indicators of the Areas of the Teachers' Questionnaire*

	N	N Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Internal Consistency
Online Environment Factors	31	5	2.00	4.00	2.7355	.45427	.481
Institutional Factors	31	8	1.75	3.88	2.6613	.53052	.767
Personal Factors	31	7	2.00	3.71	2.8065	.35866	.400

As shown in the following Table, Flexibility, effectiveness and accessibility of online classes were the factors that most teachers found as the merits of online classes. Based on the average, reliability of online environment got the lowest rank (2.45) which depicted that teachers did not find online courses reliable enough. On the other hand, accessibility of online courses for teachers got the highest average score (3.16) which revealed that educators had positive view towards the accessibility of online classes for themselves. The second highest average score was the accessibility of online courses (2.77) for students based on the teachers' point of views.

**Table 4**

#### *Descriptive Statistics of Online Environment Factors*

Frequency





	N	Mean	1	2	3	4
<b>Flexibility of the online environment</b>	31	2.71	0	12	16	3
<b>Reliability of online environment</b>	31	2.45	4	11	14	2
<b>Effectiveness of communication tools</b>	31	2.58	5	7	15	4
<b>Accessibility of online class for students</b>	31	2.77	2	9	14	6
<b>Accessibility of online class for me</b>	31	3.16	0	6	14	11

Online teaching for the first time might be a hardship and might not work for all professors the same way as others. Some teachers believed that despite the flexibility of time and place in online courses, there might be some critical situations you might be encountered for the first time. Facing the lack of self-motivation and self-direction in students was the most salient hardship that most teachers experienced in their online courses.

One of the teachers stated that:

*Unsurprisingly, within the process of switching from the conventional to online courses, professors go through some possible challenges, pleasant or unpleasant. As soon as I began teaching online, I faced with inability to observe my students in person and solve their problems. Before I run my class online, I thought that might be a pleasant experience and I would encounter an entirely different world throughout the cyberspace while I got that the reverse is true.*

Teaching Online made students find out that technology was not just for entertainment but could be applied as a tool to anchor their learning. One of the professors who had a long experience in online courses claimed that:

*From what I have experienced in my online courses, I understood that learners do a lot more collaborative learning. They discuss with their friends and it is no longer passive learning in that sense. Which is the good part, however, we are actually contending with a lot more noise in the class.*

In addition to environmental factors, analysis of institutional factors revealed that teachers did not value online teaching. On the other hand, they did not disagree with provision of hardware and software resources and the technical support for both parties which could be depicted as merits of online courses through the eyes of educators.

**Table 5***Descriptive Statistics of Institutional Factors*

	Frequency					
	N	Mean	1	2	3	4
<b>Online instruction is valued</b>	31	2.32	4	14	12	1
<b>The quality of online courses is important to this university.</b>	31	2.9	3	7	11	10
<b>Adequate/ reliable technical support is provided to instructors.</b>	31	2.65	4	9	12	6
<b>Adequate/ reliable technical support is provided to students.</b>	31	2.45	5	11	11	4
<b>Adequate/ reliable technical support is provided to help me design my online courses.</b>	31	2.55	3	12	12	4
<b>Appropriate hardware and software resources are provided.</b>	31	2.65	3	10	13	5
<b>The technology involved in online teaching is not confusing.</b>	31	3.03	0	7	16	8



<b>The campus administration does not value online teaching.</b>	31	2.74	2	9	15	5
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Online classes were widely used during the pandemic and teachers should go beyond the regular teaching practices. Many educational centers modified their schedules to add online classes so that they could deal with the pandemic and stay safe in lockdown. Moreover, when it comes to structuring the content of online classes, institutions ought to organize all their courses and simultaneously teachers should create all that information in their brain to an actual lesson. The professors at the selected universities believed that:

*Our college initiated an online training workshop for all of us in order how we confront this online course technically and how to structure the course precisely. However, the way I structure my web-based classroom is entirely different than what I went through in my brick-and-mortar class. Some learners take a long time to warm-up, so I actually talk to them about stuff, specifically what I need them to do and over time, after taking some more courses I got better at this.*

Analysis of the personal factors, as the third category, demonstrated that teachers entirely felt confident in their abilities to teach online although they might be concerned about giving feedback to students quickly enough which was depicted as merits in online courses based on teachers’ perspectives. They also did not deny that familiarity with effective tools and tailored made methodologies for online teaching counted as an advantage of their online courses.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics of Personal Factors*

	Frequency					
	N	Mean	1	2	3	4
<b>I feel confident in my ability to teach online.</b>	31	3.45	1	1	12	17
<b>I worry about giving feedback to students quickly enough.</b>	31	2.55	2	13	13	3

<b>I enjoy teaching online.</b>	31	2.65	2	13	10	6
<b>I feel my online persona is an accurate reflection of who I am as an instructor.</b>	31	2.65	2	9	18	2
<b>My colleagues talk negatively about online teaching.</b>	31	3.06	0	7	15	9
<b>I am familiar with effective pedagogy for online teaching.</b>	31	2.87	1	9	14	7
<b>I have concerns that online courses may reduce the quality of our university's reputation.</b>	31	2.42	4	11	15	1

Every institute in developed countries is focusing on finding fascinating new ways of applying information technology to enhance the educational process and make the platforms vast for students' accessibility. Currently, in many universities of developing countries like Iran, they are willing to enlarge the virtual courses or create an independent cyber space in the campus which is totally conventional. One of the teachers expressed his idea in the same line as:

*I think the grading system in online education should be changed, because taking exams is very old-fashioned and boring for the students and it is very easy to cheat on an online exam.*

*As a matter of fact, Iran's educational hierarchy ought to be aware of this issue that when a course is called online, it means that even their final tests should be different than conventional courses.*

In the online process, basically what we are missing is the social element that both teachers and learners need for learning to occur. Even those students who hate the educational aspect, love the social aspect of education. In order to improve virtual learning, we should take care of the students' social interactions which is greatly missed in the web-based learning.



Creating collaboration is vital for enhancing online courses and learners' social activities. This contains giving them tasks to do like involving them in a project. Moreover, creating a virtual community is another essential item for educational success. On the other hand, E-learning is known as anytime and anywhere however, Iran's educational system ought to be more convenient and enhance the chances of life-long learning. Some of the interviews underlined that poor Internet connection need to be fixed and the government must empower their substructure for online educations.

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Third Part of the Questionnaire*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Ease and quick share of updating educational material</b>	3.77	1.045
<b>Your technological knowledge</b>	3.76	0.978
<b>Professors technological knowledge</b>	3.72	0.944
<b>Flexibility in time and place</b>	3.65	1.196
<b>Self-directed in learning</b>	3.56	0.922
<b>Possibility of working with online learning</b>	3.52	1.067
<b>Your awareness of learning style in virtual space</b>	3.45	0.807
<b>Quick feedback from professors</b>	3.44	1.18
<b>Readiness in professors</b>	3.35	1.07
<b>Online education enhances your self-esteem</b>	3.32	1.144
<b>Professors give you constructive feedback on your assignments.</b>	3.27	1.028
<b>Accommodates different types of learning styles</b>	3.24	1.035
<b>Appropriate content and assignments</b>	3.24	0.87
<b>Access to higher education for all applicants</b>	3.18	1.073

<b>More focused on the learner (Learner-Centered)</b>	2.86	1.291
<b>Technological and Internet connections</b>	2.86	1.199
<b>Social and cultural interactions</b>	2.8	1.142
<b>Financial problems</b>	2.72	1.098
<b>Improved collaboration and interactivity among students</b>	2.62	1.113

Obviously, the students did not consider any progress in collaboration and inactivity in online educations while ease and quick share of materials was marked as the highest rank. They saw themselves and their professors entirely tech-savvy. Almost 36% of students somewhat found working with online learning possible and practical and the same time almost more than half of them got quick feedback from their professors. Although most students agreed on enhancing their self-esteem and were more self-directed through web-based courses, they did not notice any focus on themselves as learners. That is, the courses were more of teacher centered.

Quick feedback and readiness in professors throughout the cyberspace were marked as the high rank by learners. Moreover, the students believed that professors gave constructive feedback and simultaneously they were aware of learning styles in virtual space. Based on the low average score, of social and cultural interaction on online educations, students found this item poor. Furthermore, the Internet connection and financial issues were scored as the lowest average which declared that students found these 2 items a stumbling block in web-based courses.

Students believed that communication through the online classes and feedback from the professors are substantive. Based on the following narrations by the students, a teacher ought to be able to stay tuned and keep connected with their students and provide sound instructions in a way student can understand well. One of the students indicated that:

*First of all, there is no substructure in our educational society for online courses. We do not find any inspiration and attraction in their courses. So, mostly we ditch the classes. Conspicuously, that is much easier in online classes. On the other hand, we cannot connect with the teacher truly. It is like there is a wall between us and it gets back to what I say at first. No planed base and no virtual literacy.*



The most significant feature of an online teacher is patience. In our online educational hierarchy, this feature among teachers is known by students.

*Personally, I do appreciate my professor who gave me frank and constructive criticism about my online homework. The more I am challenged in an online class, the more I get intrigued to keep pace or go ahead the web-based course.*

*It was really nice of my teacher whenever there was a disconnection or a bad network connection, she explained the content all over again offline or through the social media applications. And that is considered as an inspirational practice which I could mention.*

Most students' expectations from online courses were being able to learn a lot of knowledge and capabilities and how to handle and run the business. Moreover, they can learn about the business research as the best way to learn things. This is a crucial fact to learn how to establish material concepts and skills within a particular discipline.

*Above all, we need a great change in the system and its teachers. With this traditional perspective, there is no way to improve. What is really urgent in our online courses after pandemic is the combination of online and offline education.*

Another expectation they mentioned was towards their professors to provide them with the opportunity to learn and understand the concept and discourse in a way that they can give adequate feedback on their abilities in order to apply this knowledge and achieve their goals. In addition, they expect some help from their instructors to solve the challenges in order to adapt the online course to accomplish the mission.

#### 4.2. Pros and Cons of Online Courses for Students

##### **Pros:**

- 1) The faculty give credit to the online courses: Based on the students' response that they received instructions from the university, it would be understood that the institutions value online learning.
- 2) Flexibility and ease and quick sharing of content: Students believe that online courses can be accessible at anytime and anywhere. Moreover, they mentioned the convenience in sharing the materials and the quick accessibility of content.

- 3) Quick and constructive feedback from professors: Most learners claimed that their professors reach out to respond and solve their problems immediately within the online class.
- 4) Online education enhances the learners' self-esteem: Most students who were shy within the conventional courses found online courses a place for building and boosting their confidence. "Even the timidest students were open and eager to communicate, almost joyous with the freedom to be themselves. No one was looking at them, assessing their appearance, or applying any of the other tests of belonging that sometimes hold a shy student back (Thomson, 2010, p.690)."
- 5) Most professors are technologically fluent: Based on the students' responses, professors are experienced in how to use technology.
- 6) Self-directed in learning: All students believed that online learning makes them autonomous in learning the content. They follow the course at their own pace without any restrictions of conventional classes. One of the major merits of online learning is that it teaches students responsibility. On the other hand, a virtual environment might give this permission to learners to be more direct, open, and more of themselves. Simply put, it motivates students to speak out while they run away from face-to-face discussions and were timid in conventional classes (Thomson, 2010).
- 7) Applying the appropriate teaching style by professors: The learners disclosed in their responses that the teaching styles that their professors use in online courses are approachable enough.

**Cons:**

- 1) Poor internet connections: internet and technological problems and the connectivity are difficult for students. Those students who live in villages sometimes cannot access the internet properly and this might include concerns. This can cause restriction in learning online. Even little problem in conventional classes can be a major one in online because it decreases satisfaction and participation in a virtual course (Cook, 2007).
- 2) Social and cultural interaction: collaboration and social interaction are significant points while it is greatly missed in a web-based course.





- 3) Not learner-centered: Surprisingly, based on the students' viewpoints, virtual courses are not learner-centered. They believe that online courses are not focused on the learners.
- 4) Getting behind and difficult to catch up: One of the major issues which is diagnosed as a demerit of online learning through the eyes of students is that due to their lack of experience in online classes, they get behind and it is absolutely hard to keep their pace with the class and other students.
- 5) Willing to drop out within COVID-19: Based on most students' responses, sudden transition to online course had made learners to become reluctant in continuing their educations.
- 6) Heavy homework like conventional class: weaving through the students' views, it is comprehended that professors expect their learners to do the tasks and homework like traditional courses and this is so heavy for them.

#### *4.3. Pros and Cons of Online Courses for Teachers*

One of the most significant pros in online learning was asynchronous nature of online platforms where learners can go back and revisit the covered materials which can give them a second opportunity. That is, the materials can be reviewed by the students anytime, anywhere, and possibly any number of times. Another important benefit of moving to an online space is the flexibility that it provides for the professors as well. Seen in this light, professors believe that learners learn better when they have control over designing courses with the preferred kind of methodology and pedagogical approach. Professors, admittedly, claimed that being able to provide that measure of control to students is appealing to them not only in terms of motivation towards a course but also in terms of ensuring and helping them learn more meaningfully and more deeply (Lyons, 2019). Online learning creates a climate for professors to have professional development, which is considered a significant merit.

Conversely, professors confessed that active learning factors is disregarded through online education are . They believe that it is difficult to keep students motivated and even though teachers facilitate the situations for learners' collaboration.

### **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings of the present study are in line with Liu (2014), Adnan and Anwar (2020), Oyedotun (2020) and Qazi et al. (2020). Liu (2014) claimed that E-

learning within the higher education is changing really fast and it is gaining most students' attentions of all ages. "The main benefit of online education is both faculty and students that allows time and place independent access. The issues of online education tend to vary significantly between institutions, professors, students, and employers. Professors and students have issues with student self-regulation and written communication, with more emphasis. Online education has long had its proponents and naysayers (p.461)." According to Thomson (2010), online education provides some drawbacks for both students and teachers as well as several kinds of benefits. The merits and demerits of online learning bring the potential of a web-based environment to light.

The unexpected transition to web-based learning due to COVID-19 in developing countries such as Iran has revealed some inconsistencies and drawbacks as well as bringing some advantages. Within the crisis, providing convenience ought to be a priority for both learners and educators. The pandemic and the lockdown caused an exclusive disruption within the educational system. Education is surely important but, in the future, it is not the only thing that matters. Educational system needs to be aware that online learning is going to be vital for both professors and learners.

Students also need to interact with others to develop their social skills. E-learning does not mean they all learn by themselves, but they can also make a study group. Furtherly, those who study through E-learning has more time to sharpen their social skills and to explore more on themselves. On the other hand, both classroom learning and E-learning have their own benefits and costs. Simply put, E-learning does give more free time for students to explore themselves and at the same time for teachers to develop their profession. E-learning cannot be said to be a substitute for classroom learning because they depend on one another, and combining both might give a better result.

Online education in Iran is still in its infancy. The current condition in Iran is unique; unlike common technological learning which is accurately crisis learning. Nowadays both students and teachers look for the information they need on screen and that could be on their cell phones or their tablets, and their televisions. This has developed into a way of teaching for professors and getting accustomed to the circumstance in order for students to become more self-directed. Students must take a certain level of responsibility in terms of facilitating their own learning. That is, the idea that students need to meet learning objectives in which they themselves navigate through the materials and set a path for themselves to achieve the learning objectives of the course.

In sum, the present research indicated that E-learning has great potential for both students and teachers in Iran. That is to say, the current study presented that there are numerous pros that E-learning environment might provide for both



groups beyond what conventional environment offers. To recapitulate briefly, instead of attempting to prepare the ground for the face-to-face courses again, online educators and administrators of faculties ought to lay the foundations on making the benefits bold for learners. It is unequivocal that we do not expect online educations mirror the traditional courses, yet, there are strategies and practices that are applicable for both circumstances and we should be alert for the truth that E-learning clear the space for acquisition.

Hopefully, COVID-19 threat will be a memory soon for the world and our country. When this happens, Iran's educational system ought to keep that in its mind to not quickly return to its old school, and its old traditional courses.

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