Readiness to Online Learning: to be a Smart University

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Abstract: Accessibility, inclusiveness, diversity play a great role to promote smart society in terms of equality for every citizen. Today's crises, is defined as pandemic times and therefore adaptations of education systems to make diversity and connectivity is essential. In this respect, challenges of adaptation to the relevant society tools and barriers of involving online learning were considered in this research study. This research study aims to evaluate the readiness to online learning and barriers of adaptation process in reaching out being smart society. Qualitative research was employed in this research and online interview forms were conducted to get data from 10 academicians and 5 head of departments as research participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Research results revealed that academicians are aware of accessible services and applications to being smart university through online education tools for the quality but still there is much to do in applications. In addition, establishing strategies and policies for the smart university and services are intensified need for the learners in terms of managerial and instructional skills. Barriers in online learning and roles of instructors, managers were revealed.

Keywords: *accessibility; online learning; services; smart university; roles; quality.*

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1. Introduction

Today's pandemic situation, the world is trying to find solutions to catch the satisfaction of communication, safety and learning needs. The better way to make people connected to Web 2. Tools and this case require analysis of sustainability of this kind in connection in a long term (Kaplan, 2016).

Needless to say that advancements at information and communication technologies facilitate the lives of people as well as present them healthier and more secure environments. To be more accurate, advancements at information and communication technology fueled the accessibility of services for people. Online learning environments and tools become a chance for accessibility, communication and learning. Therefore, at pandemic times and challenging way of life, it is important to satisfy learning needs. This fosters smart life and it could fuel the level of socialization (Hegarty, 2015; Anez, Güell & Giffinger, 2018). Online learning becomes a smart solution to facilitate global skills for global citizenship. The dimensions of open pedagogy by underlying the merits of strategy, quality, technology and leadership provides sustainability for open pedagogy through online learning. In addition, content, access, research, collaboration, recognition and pedagogy enrich the practice of online pedagogy and learning (Altınay, Altınay, Dagli & Altınay, 2018; Ossiannilsson, 2018).

During pandemic times, it is the time to internalize connectivity theory, it is the time to internalize CHAT theory in order to make connected society and learning needs. In this respect, reaching out quality standards in online learning process, it is important to socialize learners and make them engaged to the course activities. Using different tools in learning management system is crucial to make connected learning (Sozudogru, Altınay, Dagli, Altınay, Altınay, 2019). We can take the chance to revamp education systems based on accessibility for everyone. With this regard, mission parts of human values become integrated with these crises and challenge. Every person is considered equal within equal access (UNESCO, 2019). This research study aims to foster adaptation process of higher education institutions to online learning and determine barriers in online learning regarding to management and instructional dimensions for smart universities. Questions are examined as research questions; How higher education institutions are ready for online pedagogy and learning?, What are the barriers in online learning?, What online learning fosters in this crisis's

time within quality standards?, What is the role of online learning for making smart universities?, What are roles of instructors and managers?.

2. Methodology

The present study used qualitative research method to transcribe findings. The main characteristics of qualitative research is to see the point of views, reveal the semantic world and to see the world with the eyes of the participants” (Creswell, 2003).

Online interview form was administered as a data collection tool that composed from 5 open-ended questions. Research was conducted with 10 academicians and 5 head of department as managers to evaluate the readiness to online learning in higher education institutions through barriers and adaptation process in reaching out being smart universities at Northern part of Cyprus. Data was analyzed by the researchers and main themes and categories were formed.

3. Findings and Interpretations

Findings and interpretation about each finding are given based on themes and dimensions.

In the first dimension readiness to online learning, 78% (14) participants underline that a technological infrastructure, preparation status for online learning is not in the desired state, 81%(12) participants focuses on Insufficient trials and studies beforehand and 88%(15) of participants stated that there is lack of sufficient knowledge of faculty and students. In the second dimension, situation of barriers in online learning, 78% (14) of participants underlined that the application has not been done in sufficient time is an obstacle for the process. 81%(12) of participants responded that students and academicians may experience difficulties in the first attempts. In addition to this, 90%(11) of participants underlined that some academics do not have sufficient knowledge and experience in uploading videos or documents, and students in accessing this uploaded information. In the third dimension benefits of online learning in crises times, 78%(13) of participants underlines that an online learning process will be done well and will be productive will contribute to the minimization of efficient education and lesson losses during this period of health problems. 81%(11) of participants focus on academic knowledge, it will contribute to the students to evaluate their time well during the crisis and to find an occupation to be busy and to contribute to keeping their psychological status in balance. In the fourth

dimension, 78%(13) of participants mentioned about roles and being smart university that in this century when technology has entered so many people's lives, both students and families can realize that education can be done by using technology with online learning. 81%(11) of participants underlined that with online learning, it was ensured that families complained about technological tools such as phone, computer, tablet and students were able to see that they could use these tools for education. Moreover, 70%(12) of participants stated that all individuals who need education and training can be reached through online learning.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

The aim of the research is to evaluate the barriers experienced in the situation of adaptation to the online learning applied in the developing crisis environment. In this context, this research is aimed at evaluating the administrative and instructional dimensions and compliance with quality standards. In this context, the results and suggestions obtained in the research are presented. Within the scope of the results obtained according to the findings of the research; it is understood that it is not ready to learn online, but the lack of sufficient experience has led to some difficulties. It can be said that especially the technological infrastructure is not enough, the internet infrastructure should be improved. In addition, it is understood from the opinions and thoughts taken from the participants that both faculty members and students do not have sufficient information and accordingly the course contents and processes are not prepared accordingly (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). The application has not been done in sufficient time can be an obstacle for the process. Students and academics may have difficulties in the first attempts and some academics do not have enough information and experience in uploading videos or documents, and students do not have sufficient knowledge and experience in accessing this loaded information. Based on the findings, it is understood that an online learning process, which will be done well and will be productive, can be an efficient education in times of crisis and can contribute to the minimization of course losses. This contributes to the students to evaluate their time well in the crisis period and to find an occupation to engage in (Altınay, Altınay, Dagli & Altınay, 2018; Sozudogru, Altınay, Dagli, Altınay & Altınay, 2019). Based on the findings obtained, it is important for both students and families to realize that education can be made by using technology through online learning. With online learning, all individuals who need education and training can be

reached. It is understood from the opinions and thoughts received from the participants that the importance of this application, which will create awareness in terms of the perception of the society, that everyone who is at home, with disabilities, in a remote country and who wants to benefit from this education is well understood (Neirotti, De Marco, Cagliano, Mangano, Scorrano, 2014) and within the scope of the findings within the scope of roles for teachers, there is a need for teachers who will improve themselves and use the process well and managers who will support these teachers in order to realize online learning. Teachers should be able to reach all students and ensure that all of them benefit from this application. The training and documents prepared should be understandable and meaningful. Administrators should be able to offer the necessary infrastructure and motivation support to both students and teachers. Concentrating four hats of metaphors in online learning is essential. Therefore, instructors should pay attention to their managerial, social, technical and pedagogical roles in online learning process (Maor, 2003).

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