



DISTANCE LEARNING AS A VALUE OFFERED IN THE EDUCATION SERVICE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF POLISH STUDENTS MAJORING IN ECONOMICS

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This paper presents an attempt to show e-learning as added value to the didactic process in the opinion of Polish students majoring in economics. For the realisation of this purpose a survey has been carried out. Taking into consideration a wider context of research assumptions and their scope, limitations to interpretation of the presented partial results have been recounted.

Keywords: e-learning, Opinion, Students, Value, Survey.

E-learning as a Constituent of Business Model of Higher Education in Poland

Both the form of conducting classes within the framework of the education process realised within higher education and the use of the latest tools for learning are matters of interest for many prospective students. It causes these matters to gain in strategic importance for higher education institutions and the use of distance learning methods itself becomes essential for creating by universities added value for students.

The possibility to create added value to the education process which is created thanks to e-learning is, above all, related to two problems. Firstly, the form of classes (including also the possibility of using distance learning solutions) should be adjusted to the nature of the subject being taught (Nakajima, 2014). Secondly, realisation of classes by means of distance learning methods must meet formal requirements. Formal requirements, in turn, do not only refer to what requirements must be met by conducted classes but they also demand that students be trained within the scope of using tools for distance learning. In Poland, realisation of these requirements is contained in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of November 2, 2011. The realisation of these requirements is, in turn, followed by university regulations regarding organisation of and supervision over the course of such classes.

These observations may examine the issue of realisation of the didactic process with the use of e-learning as a constituent of the business model, namely higher education. E-learning and benefits resulting from its application may be regarded as a value which distinguishes educational offers of particular higher education institutions. However, it is necessary to lay down that formal requirements imposed by legal regulations regarding the course of such form of classes may be considered a meta-model, whereas solutions put into practical application by particular groups of higher education

institutions (e.g. economic, technical or medical ones) as well as by particular individual universities as downstream models (Osterwalder, Pigneur, & Tucci, 2005).

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to recognise the correlation of students' opinion regarding experiences they gained while participating in distance learning in three key aspects for the purposes of interpreting this form of education as added value to the educational process and defining correlation between them. Firstly, the usefulness of this form of classes (e-learning) for various types of classes (variable A). Students' opinion on this matter appears to depend on the way in which these classes have been hitherto prepared. Secondly, the opinion regarding interest in further participation in distance learning classes (variable B). Thirdly, the level of training of students within the scope of using e-learning tools within the framework of the realised educational process at the university (variable C). This opinion will point out whether in students' opinion they had a chance to take full advantage of distance learning.

It should be emphasized that variables A and C (apart from the assessment of the actual course of classes) express also students' opinion on how higher education institutions meet formal requirements of conducting e-learning classes, whereas variable B expresses the opinion regarding added value generated by the use of distance learning methods within the framework of educational process at the university.

Applied Method and Results of the Analysis

The results of the research have been analysed in total on the basis of 133 questionnaires. The respondents were students of four higher education institutions located in the Silesia Voivodeship: two public higher education institutions and two non-public education institutions. The respondents were undergraduate and graduate students (in case of the bachelor degree: students in the second and third year) majoring in management and logistics. The research sample selected in the way described above causes that generalisation of the analysis of gathered empirical data cannot be extended on the general population.

As a result of what had been theoretically established, respondents were asked three questions, which they were supposed to answer by marking one of the answers available in the questionnaire. Within the framework of the conducted data processing appropriate values from the assumed measurement scale were then assigned to the answers given. The questions read as follows:

- Question no. 1 - I think that e-learning classes (variable A):
 - are a good solution for all the subjects (value 2 was assigned);
 - are a good solution for selected subjects (value 1 was assigned);
 - are not a good solution for subjects realised within the framework of the didactic process (value 0 was assigned).
- Question no. 2 - I am interested in comprehensive e-learning classes within the framework of the didactic process (variable B):
 - to a high extent (value 2 was assigned);
 - to a certain extent (value 1 was assigned);
 - to a low extent (value 0 was assigned);
- Question no. 3 - Training within the scope of using e-learning tools (variable C):
 - has been completed by me and I regard it as sufficient (value 2 was assigned);
 - has been completed by me and I regard it as insufficient (value 1 was assigned);
 - has not been completed by me (value 0 was assigned).

An illustration of the replies received shows a graph showing the dominants and medians value for each variable (figure). It should be noted that in the case of variable C respondents most frequently pointed to answer: "Training within the scope of using e-learning tools has not been completed by me". Therefore, the median and dominant values are zero for this variable.

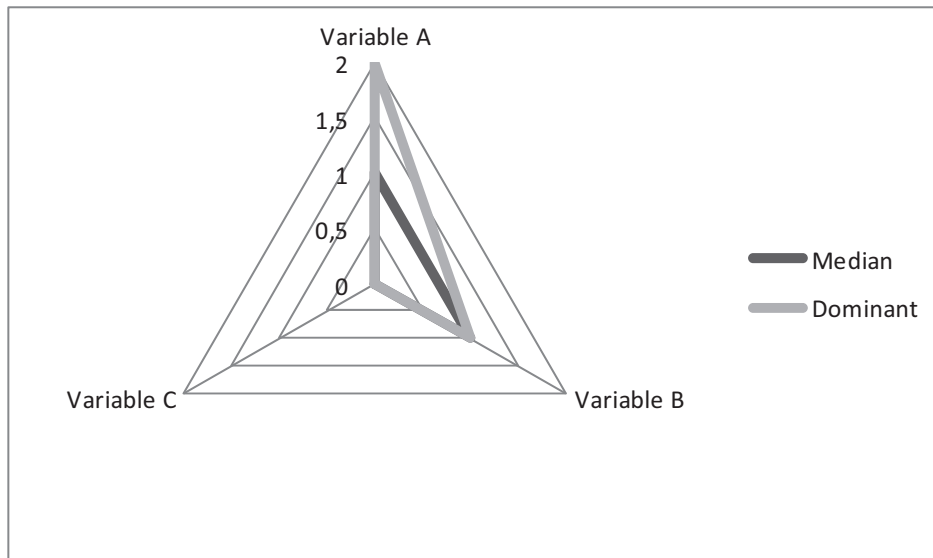


Figure. Dominants and medians in responses for each variable.

Due to the fact that data subjected to statistical analysis were obtained thanks to the application of the measurement scale, the Kendall's tau-b correlation was used for the purposes of defining the correlation between the variables. In order to conduct the analysis IBM SPSS Statistics (PS Imago) programme was used. The following results for the Kendall's tau-b correlation for the pairs of variables were obtained (in the table).

Table. The Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficients for the pairs of variables

		Variable A	Variable B	Variable C
Usefulness of e-learning as teaching method (Variable A)	Correlation coefficient	1.000	,578**	,128
	Significance (bilateral)	.	,000	,101
	N	133	133	133
The interest of students in e-learning (Variable B)	Correlation coefficient	,578	1.000	,054
	Significance (bilateral)	,000	.	,492
	N	133	133	133
The level of training of students within the scope of using e-learning tools (Variable C)	Correlation coefficient	,128	,054	1.000
	Significance (bilateral)	,101	,492	.
	N	133	133	133

** . Significant correlation at the level of 0.01 (bilaterally).

In case of variables A and B (the level of significance is lower than 0.01), the obtained results make it necessary to reject the null hypothesis which assumed lack of relation between them. Thus, it shall be stated that there is a positive correlation between the opinion about e-learning as a teaching method and interest in participation in e-learning classes. In this case, the value of the bilateral Kendall's tau-b correlation amounts to 0.578 and may be considered moderately strong.

In case of researching the relation between variable C and variable A, the value of the bilateral Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient amounts to 0.128 (level of significance 0.101, i.e. $p > 0.05$). Whereas, in case of researching the relation between variable C and variable B, the value of the bilateral Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient amounts to 0.54 (level of significance 0.492, i.e. $p > 0.05$). In both cases there are no grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis which assumed lack of relation between the variables. Therefore, no correlation between the level of training regarding the use of e-learning tools and opinion about e-learning as a teaching method has been established. There has also been no established correlation between the level of training regarding the use of e-learning tools and interest in participation in distance learning classes.

Conclusions

The presented results point at a positive correlation between the level of interest of students who were respondents in the research in e-learning classes and assessing e-learning as a teaching method as useful in the educational process during studies in economics. However, the relation between these two variables and level of training of students within the scope of the use of distance learning tools could not have been established. Lack of these relations may be possibly accounted for, as other partial results of the conducted research point out, by the fact that the majority of students at public higher education institutions who were respondents in the research (53.63%) has never dealt with the forms of distance learning, and 94.2% of them have not completed any training within the scope of the use of e-learning tools, which is one of the formal requirements that must be met for such solutions to be implemented. In comparison, only 9.4% of students of these non-public higher education institutions have not completed such training (Komańda, 2014).

The results of the analysis of students' opinion that have been mentioned point out that the results of both studies enable to claim that there are opposing attitudes towards regarding distance learning methods as added value for a student in the educational process between public and non-public higher education institutions. The correlation between variables A and B that has been indicated may, in turn, result from the convergence of students' views on major advantages and disadvantages of e-learning, despite the fact that in case of students of non-public higher education institutions these opinions were based on actual experiences, whereas in case of students of public higher education institutions they were based mainly on conceptualization (Komańda, 2014).

References

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