

THE PERSPECTIVES OF UROZGAN INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION LECTURERS TOWARD HELMS ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING



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ABSTRACT

This study investigates to find out the attitudes of Urozgan institute of higher education lecturers about the Higher Education Learning and Management System (HELMS). The data was collected from 19 lecturers (masters and bachelors) in survey design. The overall number of lecturer in this institute are forty (only males); nineteen (19) of them are enrolled in the survey and chosen as random sampling. The data has been collected using a questionnaire consisting of numerous closed-ended and open-ended questions. The language of the questionnaire was Pashto, the native language of the participants; later, the results were translated to English. Furthermore, the data were analyzed in the Statistical Package in Social Science (SPSS) program to find out the frequency and percentage of the items. The finding of the study suggests that the lecturers have negative feelings about the HELMS system. They believed that the system was unsuitable in Afghanistan's public universities. The participants added that technical errors, low internet connections, and complexities with portals are the main barriers to the system. They also suggested that using HELMS needs a high-quality internet connection and cost. Besides, the participants stated several common alternative programs instead of HELMS, such as; WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, Zoom meetings, and Google classrooms, which also motivate policy makers to consider.

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INTRODUCTION

Online learning is education that takes place over the internet. It is often referred to as e-learning among other terms. Furthermore, online learning is just one type of distance learning that takes place across distance and not in a traditional (Stern, 2010). In addition, Hadadnia et al. (2012) agreed that in education through virtual instructors, students and teachers physically distanced. According to Mubsalat (2012) the use of technology affects students learning similarly inside and outside of the classroom. In addition, Shahibi (2017) specified that online teaching is very crucial for teachers' perceptions and deep understanding of using technology. Sediqi and Mirzad (2020) stated that online education provides time flexibility and motivation for the learners to perform their tasks autonomously. Everyone promoted from new technology in many ways, particularly; the ones who are interested take the opportunity of being online. Since COVID-19 pandemic spread world widely many public and private universities and schools were closed across Afghanistan. During this lockdown the universities and schools were use different online systems for teaching. In June 2020, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) of Afghanistan come up with a countrywide learning management system called HELMS (Higher Education Learning Management System) which uses as a tool that assists universities in managing, delivering, planning, and tracking the learning and teaching process (Mohammadi & Mohibbi, 2021). Students and lecturers were having users in that portal. Every class were register in that system too. The lecturers were posting teaching materials and were teaching online. The students were having users and can to get teaching materials or attend live classes. Urozgan Institute of Higher Education

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is one of the governmental public institute in southern province Urozgan city of Afghanistan. Established in 2013 and have three faculties Agriculture, Education, and Computer Science and around 1200 students and more than 36 lecturers. Several of the teachers are having master degree and many of them are bachelor. During Lockdown this institute also were using HELMS online system which were launch by MoHE. As this system was the first experience in Afghanistan universities thus, there were many problems and challenges that teachers and students were faced with. Therefore, this research conducted to find out the perspective of teachers toward HELMS. The focus the research was on the challenges that teachers were faced. The aims of this research is to find the answers to following research questions.

- What are challenges teachers faced with using HELMS?
- What are the effects of HELMS system on Students learning?
- Is this program applicable in Afghan context?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online learning and education is a program or course which completes online. The use of technology affects students' learning equally inside and outside of the classroom (Sediqi & Mirzad, 2020). Similarly, Mohammadi and Mohibbi (2021) define online learning as a network phenomenon that utilizes the internet as the medium of distribution of materials and information to reach enhanced performance. Additionally, Huynhi (2019) define online learning as course empowered by a modem, wired or wireless connection that allows access to learning materials from a computer, phone, or handled device. Moreover, technology based learning encompasses the use of the internet and other important technologies to produce materials for learning, teach learners, and regulate courses in an organization (Arkorful, 2014). Similarly, Goyal (2012) believe that online learning is the use of telecommunication technology to deliver information for education and training.

The Role of Online Learning in Education

Online learning is an easy and effective way delivering education to learners and participants. Recently, online learning has come to be more and more important in education. According to Arkorful (2014) the introduction and expansion of a range of online tools has been initiating several changes in higher education institutions, particularly when it comes to their educational delivery and support processes. Similarly, Goyal (2012) agreed that the great advantage of online learning is include of liberating interactions between learners, and instructors, from limitation of time and space through the asynchronous and synchronous learning network model. Online learning is especially useful method in higher education. Like, Huynhi (2019) stated that online learning is an effective and feasible teaching method, and helps students to reduce costs, save time, and build other digital competence, and lifelong learning skills in higher education. Similarly, Nguyen (2015) believed that online learning facilitates a significant improvement of distance education through interactive and collaborative activities in learning as well as learner personalities. As well, he adds that online learning is helpful in higher education for three reasons. First, online learning enables the flexibility in training by removing the spatial and temporal obstacle while decreasing costs. Second, an advantage of online learning is that training programs can enhance professional competence or assist in the transformation of jobs. Third, online learning helps learners build their digital competence, and lifelong learning skills.

Online learning helps students and teachers in teaching and learning process. As, Abed (2019) discussed that online learning is easy access to the teacher. He added that online learning has made it much easier to access and access the teachers as quickly as possible, outside formal working hours, for example through e-mail or web-based discussion forums. Moreover, online increase communication between students and the students and institute, through the ease of communication between parties in several directions such as discussion boards, e-mail, and dialogue rooms. Online education provides time flexibility and motivation for the learners to perform their tasks autonomously (Sediqi & Mirzad, 2020). Everyone is benefitted from new technology in many ways, particularly; the ones who are interested take the opportunity of being online. The students will familiar with the internet and its uses.

Holmes and Gardener (Arkorful, 2014) discussed seven different advantages of online learning. First, they agreed that online learning is flexible when issue of time and place are takes into consideration. Second, online learning enhances the efficacy of knowledge and qualification via ease of access to a huge amount of information. Third, online learning provides opportunities for relations between learners by the use of discussion forums. Fourth, online learning is cost effective in the sense that there is no need for the students or learners to travel. Fifth, online learning always takes into consideration the individual learners differences. Sixth, online learning helps compensate for shortages of academic staff. Seventh, the use of online learning allows self-pacing.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The quantitative research design and survey method used in this research. The aim of the study is to find out the perspective of lecturers toward HELMS (Higher Education Learning and Management System. According to Creswell (2010) Survey designs are procedures in quantitative research in which you administer a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people (called the sample) to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a large group of people (called the population).

Target Population and Sampling

The target population of this study is the lecturers of Urozgan Institute of Higher Education, Afghanistan. The overall number of the lecturer in this institute are forty (male), from them nineteen (19) of them are enrolled in survey. The lecturers are from three different faculties (Education, Agriculture, and Computer Science). The number of lecturers are chosen as random sampling. According to Creswell (2010) Simple Random Sampling The most popular and rigorous form of

probability sampling from a population is simple random sampling. In simple random sampling, the researcher selects participants (or units, such as schools) for the sample so that any individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population.

The academic level of the lecturers is different majority of them are having master degree. The following charts shows the academic level and numbers of the participants

Table 1. The Academic Level and Number of Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Master	11	57.9	57.9	57.9
	Bachelor	8	42.1	42.1	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	100.0	

The Academic Level of the Participants

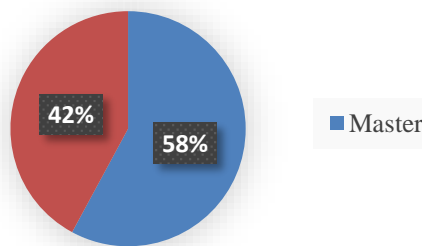


Figure 1. The Academic Level of the Participants

Research Instrument

According to Creswell (2010) instrument is a tool for measuring, observing, or documenting quantitative data. Examples of instruments are survey questionnaires, standardized tests, and checklists that you might use to observe behaviors. Therefore, in this study the data is collected through questionnaire. The questionnaire was consisting of ten (10) closed-ended and four (4) open-ended questions. Questionnaire was in Pashto the native language of the participants, and distribute to everyone. The participants were having three days to answer the questions. In addition, after collecting questionnaires the questions and answers have been translate to English. Moreover, the questions and answers are analyzed in Statistical Package in Social Science (SPSS) program.

RESULTS

The finding of the study described in pie charts and discussed. In Figure 2 the majority of the lecturers believed that HELMS online systems is a beneficial program during the lockdown. 53% of the lecturers agreed to the question. And are strongly agree if they access to strong internet connection. Moreover, 21% of the participants were agree and believed that HELMS is appropriate program.

Is HELMS the best allternative during lockdown?

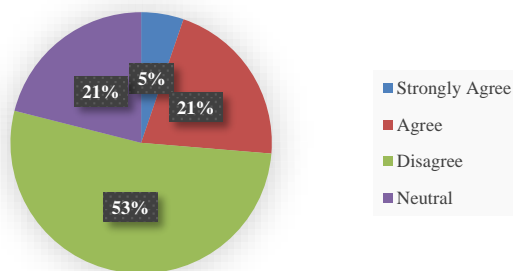


Figure 2. Is HELMS the best allternative during lockdown?

As well, 21% agreed that they do not have any idea about using HELMS during COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, 5% of the participants are strongly agreed to use HELMS. Thus, majority of the participants are believing on using this system.

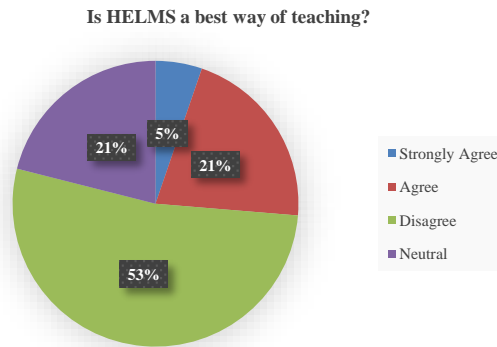


Figure 3. Is HELMS a best way of teaching?

Toward HELMS teaching system the participants were mostly disagree. As Figure 3 shows 53% of the participants were disagree the way of teaching. The way of teaching is a portal in HELMS system which the students and lecturers having users. Lecturers can add the lecturers (power point slides, audio, and video) to every class. Lecturers can also evaluate students' participations and attendances. The students can follow each lecturer's lessons individual. This way of teaching is not appropriate to students what the Figure 3 shows. 21% of the participants are agree, as well, 20% do not have idea about the ways of teaching in HELMS. Moreover, 5% of the population are strongly agree with the way of HELMS teaching and learning.

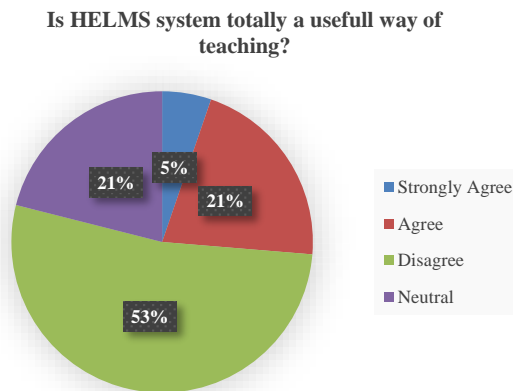


Figure 4. Is HELMS system totally a usefull way of teaching?

In figure 4 similarly question asked from the participants' as in figure 3 showed. Again, the participants are disagreeing with the way of teaching in HELMS. Majority of the participants (53%) are state that they are disagree with way of teaching. 21% of the participants stated that they are agree the way of teaching in HELMS system. As well, 5% are strongly agree how the HELMS delivers teaching. And 21% of the lecturers are having no idea toward teaching online using HELMS system.

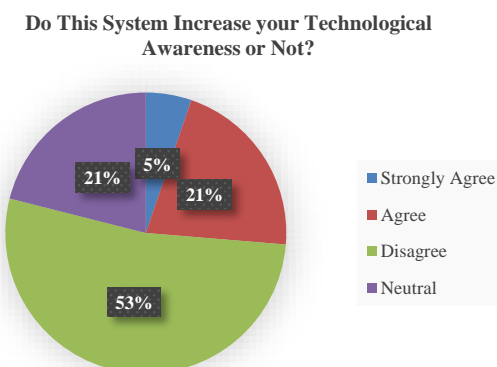


Figure 5. Do This System Increase your Technological Awareness or Not?

In figure 5 the question is asked about the system. Majority of the participants (53%) said that they were familiar with the system and usage of the system. Moreover, 21% participants are agreeing with the idea that they are aware of such online systems. In addition, 21% are state no idea, and 5% are strongly agree. Therefore, the participants are disagreeing with system that increase their technological awareness. Although, use of technology in higher education of Afghanistan was the new issue, but most of the participants are disagree that is new.

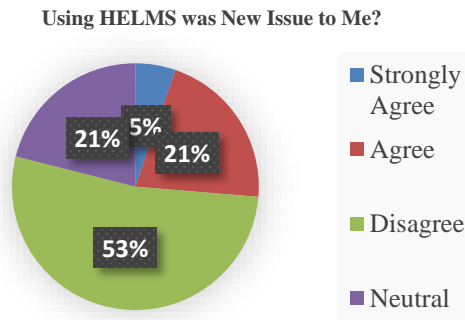


Figure 6. Using HELMS was New Issue to Me?

In figure 6 the participant showed negative responses toward higher education learning management system. Almost all of them are disagree that HELMS is the newest issue that they have ever used.

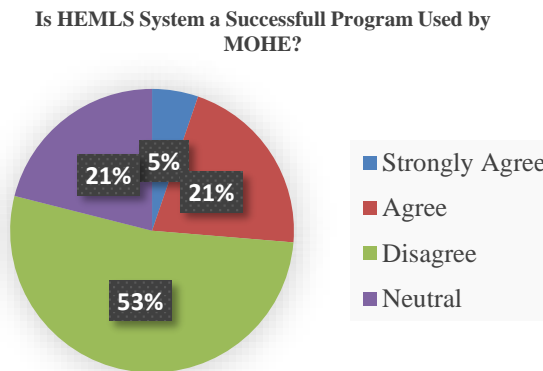


Figure 7. Is HELMS System a Successful Program Used by MOHE?

Ministry of higher education has launched HELMS in 2020. Therefore, all public universities were using this system. The question was asked from the participant that how much is this system helpful and succeed? The majority of the participants (53%) are disagree. And 21% of them are agree, and similarly 21% are having no idea or neutral. As well, only 5% said that they are strongly agree.

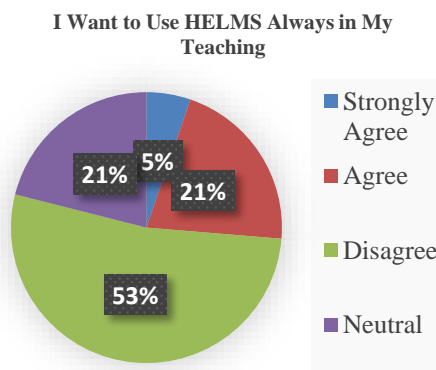


Figure 8. I Want to Use HELMS Always in My Teaching

Figure 8 show that the participants are disagree to use HELMS during lockdown and after lockdown. Mostly all of them are disagree to use this system for assignments and teaching. 53% of the participants are disagree with using HELMS system after COVID-19 (lockdown).

The questionnaire was also consisting of four open-ended questions. The questions were about the alternative instead of HELMS and effectiveness and weakness of the program. Majority of the participants believed that HELMS is useless in Afghan context, and were stated that instead of HELMS the universities must to have strong internet connection instead. As well, all of the participants were agreed that instead of HELMS, WhatsApp groups, Google Classroom, Zoom, and Telegram Channels are really good alternatives. Moreover, the participants also said that they do not able to use this system and do not have plan to use it in any situation.

DISCUSSION

This study is conducted to find out the attitudes of the lecturers about HELMS system. The finding of the study reveals that lecturers have negative attitudes toward HELMS. They believe that the use of this system in higher education is useless and not effective. Lecturers also agreed that students could not use it properly, due to various problems. The problems in using HELMS is related to internet connection. Majority of the lecturers believed that they do not have access to internet connection or they rarely access to internet. Vershitskaya (Mohammadi & Mohibbi, 2021) state that the barriers in online learning in Russia is e-content development and internet connection.

In addition, the use of HELMS system is not an appropriate program to participants. They believe that the program has many weaknesses and poor performance. Similarly, Sediqi and Mirzad (2020) concluded in their research that 72% of the participants of English students uses WhatsApp groups and do not use HELMS. They also discussed that 60% of the students are disagree with online teaching in Afghanistan universities. Moreover, 53% (figure 2) of the participants are disagree with HELMS to uses for teaching. They have negative responses toward the way of teaching that HELMS have in itself. The same results Sediqi and Mirzad (2020) found in their research and discussed that 58% of the students in Afghanistan public universities are believe that online teaching does not provide a good opportunity to learn. In figure 3, 53% of the lecturers are having negative idea about the use of HELMS. They believed that in totally they are disagreeing with the portal and system of teaching.

The perspective of the teachers also showed that HELMS is not a successful program introduced by MoHE (ministry of higher education). 53% of the responses are negative toward the usefulness of the program. Technical errors, low internet connection, and complicated system uses are the main barriers in the system that participants mentioned. Taat and Francis (Mohammadi & Mohibbi, 2021) studied that system usability, lecturers' characteristics, system quality, information quality, and technical support have an impact on the acceptance of online learning. Similarly, Dhawan (Mohammadi & Mohibbi, 2021) explored the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of online learning during COVID-19. The result of research shows that unequal distribution of ICT infrastructure, quality of education, digital divide, lack of well-defined policies, and technological cost were the key barriers to online learning. Sediqi and Mirzad (2020) find out in their research that the main challenges of teaching and learning online in Afghanistan have been the internet quality and expense.

Another important finding of the study explored some alternative programs instead HELMS. The participants suggested that WhatsApp groups, telegram channels, zoom meetings, and google classroom are best programs to use in Afghanistan public and private universities. Through above mentioned programs online learning would be effective. They also suggested that using HELMS need high quality internet connection and cost but the suggested programs are easily used and available to every individual learner.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND LIMITATION

The aim of the study was to investigate the perspective of Urozgan Institute of Higher Education about HELMS online learning and teaching. At this case study 19 lectures (masters and bachelors) were asked through survey (questionnaire). The participants showed negative responses about HELMS systems. They believed that HELMS is not useful in Afghanistan, and the learners and lecturers faces with numerous problems. The main barriers discovered in this study; quality of internet and complication of the system. They believed instead of HELMS other online chatting networks such as WhatsApp groups, telegram channels, zoom meetings, and google classrooms should use.

The result of the study show that HELMS is not proper in Afghanistan public universities. Therefore, it is recommended to policy makers to consider this survey results and suggestions of the lecturers. This case study was including few lecturers thus; it is suggesting other researchers to conduct in highly ranked universities. Moreover, the use of HELMS system in Urozgan higher education were not used properly in lockdown due to lack of internet thus, the result of this study will be quietly different with other public universities. Conducting research is also new issue in most of public institution such, Urozgan institute of higher education. Therefore, the result would not be applicable to all public universities. Also, this study just covers the attitude of teachers toward HELMS, not the students. Therefore, it is need to be conduct to include both students and teachers.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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