

Iberciencia, vol. 1, núm. 1, 2021, pp. 1-4.

# How university students perceive Virtual Education?.

Ramírez Ivonne, Jaliri Carla, Méndez Roca Bernarda, Orlandini Ingrid y Ávila Beatriz.

Cita:

Ramírez Ivonne, Jaliri Carla, Méndez Roca Bernarda, Orlandini Ingrid y Ávila Beatriz (2021). *How university students perceive Virtual Education?.* *Iberciencia*, 1 (1), 1-4.

Dirección estable: <https://www.aacademica.org/ivonne.fabiana.ramirez.martnez/13>

ARK: <https://n2t.net/ark:/13683/ph5g/xqs>



Esta obra está bajo una licencia de Creative Commons.  
Para ver una copia de esta licencia, visite  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.es>.

*Acta Académica es un proyecto académico sin fines de lucro enmarcado en la iniciativa de acceso abierto. Acta Académica fue creado para facilitar a investigadores de todo el mundo el compartir su producción académica. Para crear un perfil gratuitamente o acceder a otros trabajos visite: <https://www.aacademica.org>.*

## How university students perceive Virtual Education?

Ivonne Ramírez, Carla Jaliri, Bernarda Méndez Roca, Ingrid Orlandini

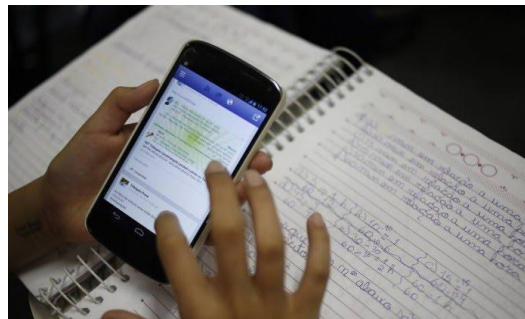
Educators Community of the Teachers Network IB (*University of San Francisco Xavier, Bolivia*)

Beatriz Avila Peducassé

Independent English teacher

### Abstract

*Due to the COVID 19, the Bolivian government ruled the total confinement with suspension of educational activities at all levels; this fact has given way to the e-learning model, posing many challenges. This study sought to understand the perceptions of university students towards virtual education. The data from the online survey express the strengths and weaknesses that university students see in this new scenario.*



**Key words:** *virtual education. COVID-19, perceptions, university.*

### Introduction

After the total quarantine, decreed by the Bolivian government in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, public higher education, specifically at the University of San Francisco Xavier, was suspended in its regularity for three months, applying preventive health measures such as staying home, social distancing and the suspension of all activities, including academic ones. After June 2020, when virtual classes officially restarted, there have been numerous difficulties for teachers and students in the new space where the curriculum designed for face-to-face education is no longer valid.

The COVID-19 pandemic has marked not only new dynamics in health, economy, and social dynamics, but also in education at all levels. That is why this study is interested in reflecting on the perceptions towards virtual education of the students who develop higher-level educational activity in the careers of the University of San Francisco Xavier. During this period, the careers in the universities have applied the virtual work, looking for to solve through electronic mail or meeting by virtual way the administrative emergencies; nevertheless, the academic subject is still more complex by multiple factors that will be analyzed. The objective of this article is to know the perceptions of university students in relation to virtual education, identifying the strengths and weaknesses in this new scenario.

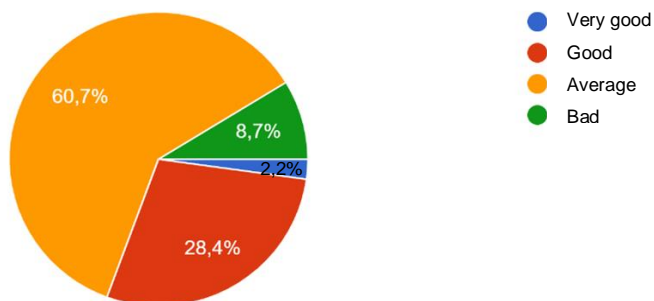
### Methodology

The study was based on quali-quantitative data by applying an online survey to collect university students' perceptions of virtual education. Among the quantitative categories, the thoughts and feelings generated by virtual education were considered, and the analysis of qualitative data was complemented with open questions to understand the reason for their perceptions. The instrument used was an online questionnaire designed with ten questions; five semi-structured and five open questions about the strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, tastes and preferences about virtual education and the whys and wherefores of their answers, looking for the reasons they refer. The sample considers 183 students from the second and third courses of architecture, interior design,

graphic design, physical therapy, kinesiology, tourism, commercial engineering, business administration and economy from the University of San Francisco Xavier in Sucre.

## Results

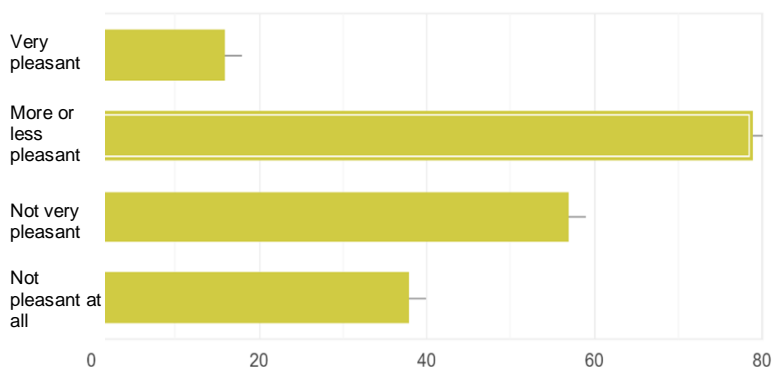
Figure 1. Perception: Cognitive level (What do you think about virtual classes?)



Considering the sample of our study, the first perception that university students have about virtual education qualifies 60.7% of the virtual classes as average and 28.4% as good, being the lower percentages of 8.7% that perceive virtual education as bad and only 2.2% of the students perceive it as very good. These data indicate that for students the practice of virtual

education is new and demands a greater autonomy in learning which is difficult for them to understand and execute.

Figure 2. Perception: Emotional level (Do you like virtual classes?)



Regarding the emotional level expressed by the students in terms of their satisfaction with virtual education, 8.7% say that it is very pleasant, 43.2% say that it is more or less pleasant, 31% say that it is not very pleasant and 38% say that it is not pleasant at all.

As for the qualitative analysis of the perceptions about virtual education, the data have been organized by 4 factors related to connectivity, economy, methodology, and teaching media.

### 1. Connectivity related factors

<b>Connection</b>	<i>The disadvantages are: we don't have Wifi and we live in the province, the signal is terrible, because many of us came to the province and we don't have access like in the city as we do in my house in Sucre where I had Wifi.</i> (Economics student)	<i>The issue of internet connection and equipment, since the internet does not reach all corners of the country, and if it does, there is no equipment needed which perhaps (this could be solve through an investment made) by the municipal, departmental, regional and national authorities to open centers with equipment and support virtual education.</i> (Student of social studies)	<i>In my personal opinion, (the problems are) I don't have Internet and the bad signal that occurs in the sector where I live, since it is far away.</i> (Technology student)
-------------------	--	--	--

The perception of satisfaction also depends on the conditions in which the virtual classes are carried out, that is to say, the material means available and the pedagogical methodologies received. The first refers to the technological device used that can generate a better connection or that hinders the teaching process in the virtual platforms. This fact is closely linked to economic factors that determine virtual education, since the family economy has a direct impact on

educational processes (Medina, 2019). The second depends on the teacher's practice in virtual education; it is important that the teacher is a virtual resident and not a virtual visitor (Pulido, 2017).

**2. Factors related to the economy**

<b>Economy</b>	<i>The cost of virtual education is high, because of the quantity of megabytes spent to have classes online. Doing papers and sending them, or there is no equality as many students do not have the proper economy. (Technology Student)</i>	<i>A lack of established schedules, an expense in the purchase of Internet packages, lack of economic resources on the part of the students; in order to access the virtual classes, there is poor listening and interference; and you spend a lot of money. (Economics student)</i>	<i>The internet is very expensive, you spend a lot of megabytes when you use Zoom, even more if you have to watch videos or download documents sent by the teacher; besides, in my house we are several brothers and there is not enough economy for everything, we don't have computer equipment, we pass classes from our cell phones. (Health student)</i>
----------------	---	--	---

The relationship between education and economy is highly significant; a strong relationship of dependence is evident: an individual's education is related to his family economy and his income depends on his training.

**3. Factors related to teaching methodology**

<b>Methodology</b>	<i>Time; even though the class is in the established schedules, the teachers accelerate the explanation to be able to teach everything that was proposed, but that is a disadvantage because you can't take notes, then they say they will send recordings of the class but many don't have the memory to download or simply don't send...(Technology Student)</i>	<i>Many disadvantages; face-to-face classes are more creative and even more productive than attending on a screen, you don't feel like doing, while in a face-to-face class, you interact, it feels more dynamic, it's more competitive and you can participate, and some subjects that need practice in the field, in a face-to-face class have many advantages to solve doubts, ask questions; Discussions in virtual classrooms cannot be possible. (Social student)</i>	<i>The disadvantage is that you do not learn the same thing from a screen than directly by watching the teacher, because it is not the same to explain only from the slides than on a blackboard; Besides, a virtual practice is not the same as doing homework and not learning anything at the end. In face-to-face education, teachers are much more understood as they look for other ways and examples to make you understand. (Health Student)</i>
--------------------	--	---	--

The teaching methodology is fundamental, the migration from a purely face-to-face education to a totally virtual one has been traumatic, both for teachers and students; that is why in view of the emergency, the face-to-face curriculum has been adapted to e-learning, having a consequent effect on the students' perception of this aspect.

**4. Factors related to the teaching media**

<b>Media</b>	<i>The disadvantage according to my career is not being able to get information from the library since they are totally different from what you find on the Internet, also not having that security of being able to consult the teacher the doubts that one has. (Health student)</i>	<i>It is harmful in practical terms, since it cannot be carried out, because in my career you need equipment, which in our houses we do not have in order to be able to carry out certain practices of different subjects. (Health student)</i>	<i>It is not the same to do the exercises on a screen, they must be with real situations. (Technology student)</i>
--------------	--	---	--

It is important this aspect perceived by the students, because it is the teaching means during the practice that consolidate the learning, for this group it is important the demonstration and the experience in the classroom.

**Discussion**

Students' perceptions of virtual education are not good, due to several factors that must be overcome, including economics, poor connectivity and low internet signal quality, teaching methodologies and teaching media.

A quality virtual training must respond to technical and methodological requirements that satisfy the needs of the users; that is to say, that provide the possibility to access quality didactic materials that contribute to the construction of knowledge and not only as information mediators that during

the synchronous classes do not satisfy the expectations of the student. In this regard, the Organization of American States (OAS) in 2014 proposes for virtual education, to take into account the processes related to content management in terms of quality in the design of materials, teaching coherence in relation to a proposal that has a good balance in terms of resources, study aids, repertoire of interesting activities, consistent academic resources, self-assessment and evaluation systems, appropriate use of synchronous and asynchronous communication tools.

For Garcia (2020) in the academic activities, you can continue using tools such as Google Meet, Zoom, Skype among others, which have shown stability and confidence for multiple participants in the revision of topics, lectures ..., and given the problems of the moment have increased their use in this new mode, but it is noteworthy that these tools have not had greater acceptance by students possibly because the use they gave was social and not educational.

With respect to economic factors, a fundamental aspect is the fact that the process of virtual education, pushed forward by the COVID-19 confinement crisis, has not taken into account the socio-economic conditions of the students. Neither the family units nor the governments have foreseen the financing of the e-learning model; training institutions have overlooked the development of strategies that take into account the local economic environment. As stated by Medina (2019) and Escalante et. al., (2010) education funding must be a fundamental pillar of governments to foster proper management, otherwise perceptions will continue to affect adherence to this system.

About the tools and teaching methodology, students perceive them unsatisfactory, because on the one hand it has not been understood the autonomous character that the e-learning model demands from them, but neither can we say that teachers have adapted their methodology and tools to this new scenario. It is important to point out that virtual education is based on learning, as opposed to face-to-face education, which is based on teaching. Thus, it is not only a matter of transferring material from the face-to-face classroom to the virtual classroom (Yong, 2017), but also of generating adequate material to guide student learning that responds to the demands of this new educational scenario.

The outlook is challenging; it is important to improve the understanding of users' perceptions for their pleasant and comfortable inclusion in the digital society, promoting methodologies, conditions and teaching means that contribute to the current pedagogical environment. Virtual university education must make possible the incorporation of new simulation technologies, gamification and mixed reality resources that lead students through new paths towards the knowledge society of this new historical period.

## **Bibliography**

Escalante, A., Ibarra, L., y Mercado, J. (2010). *Convergencia en investigación regional: sociedad, educación y economía*. México D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, S.A. de C.V.

Medina Alvarado, I. L. (2019). *Economía y educación, dos conceptos determinantes en el desarrollo de la sociedad latinoamericana*. *Contribuciones a las Ciencias Sociales*.

Morocho, M. Rama C. (2014). *Las nuevas fronteras de la Educación a distancia*. OEI.

Pulido, J.E. *Actitud hacia la educación virtual de los alumnos de postgrado de la UPEL*. *Razón y Palabra [en línea]*. 2017, 21 (98), 606-623.

Yong, É., Nagles N., Mejía, C., Chaparro, C. *Evolución de la educación superior a distancia: desafíos y oportunidades para su gestión*. *Revista Virtual Universidad Católica del Norte [en línea]*. 2017, (50), 81-105.