



Assessing from the Perspective of Students amidst Covid-19: Do the Online Tuition Classes Provide 'Equal Understanding' As to Physical Tuition Classes?

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ABSTRACT

Tuition is considered as a significant factor aiding to a formal education. In the light of the advancement in technology and due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the typical physical tuition class is now transitioning into online tuition class. This change has brought out different opinion especially on the question of 'Do the online tuition classes provide 'equal understanding' as to the physical tuition classes?' in which will be addressed in this research. The aim of this research is to assess whether or not online tuition classes provide equal understanding in terms of understanding the materials taught as to physical online classes from the perspective of students. A survey consisting of dichotomous and open ended questions are directed to 20 students of Year 6, 8 and 11 from three different tuition schools in Brunei Darussalam. It has been found out that even though students prefer to have physical tuition classes with their teachers to maximize the learning involvement, these students have also acknowledged that they still can actually understand the materials taught via online tuition class equally the same as materials taught in the physical class. The future studies are recommended to increase the number of research participants and to conduct proper interview sessions with them to obtain more in depth views on this research area.

Keywords: education, equal understanding, physical tuition, online tuition, students-perspective.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is important for individuals, societies and economies. It enhances the capability in individuals to manage life. It also provides knowledge and skills within a society which enable them to contribute to the development of a country (Idris et al., 2012). According to Javed and Mumtaz (2010), education is vital to economic and social development in any country. A country should ensure it has efficient approaches to make sure quality and affordable education can be easily accessed through the availability of adequate technology.

In addition, education is capable to enhance the economy of a country by providing good quality workforce whereby, education is considered as a supplement instrument for other industries. It provides other industries with information, knowledge and innovation (Economic & Social Research Council, 2005). It basically creates intangible assets which hold the key success for an industry. All in all, education can be obtained from various academic establishments including schools, universities, institutions and also tuition schools.

Tuition is considered as a significant factor aiding to a formal education. Generally,





tuition is seen as an academic instrument to provide quality education which is crucial for the development of quality human resource of a country (Sahito, 2017). Tuition is also known as shadow education due to its operation's nature. It is often takes place parallel with the regular school but it is done outside the school hours (Yung and Bray, 2017).

As stated by Aurini et al. (2013) and Bray (2014), there is a boom in education industry in which tuition is actually demanded globally. Tuition is commonly to be taken in order to ensure students to perform better in their schools. This expansion is also experienced in Brunei Darussalam, where tuition is seen as a supplementary education instrument to aids the performance for the students in primary, secondary and sixth form schools. Currently, there are 116 tuition schools in Brunei Darussalam to cater 433,285 population of Brunei Darussalam (Ministry of Education Brunei, 2020).

In regards to the Covid-19 situation, the population of Brunei Darussalam is forced to adapt online learning and this is inclusive for the tuition schools as well (Roslan, 2020). As a result, tuition schools in Brunei Darussalam are active in helping the students to study after school hours using technology to go online for classes. The students are not required to come to the tuition schools but they are required to use Zoom application as a medium to have classes with their tuition tutors. Consequently, the online tuition classes have been practised by the tuition schools across the country as a compliance act to Ministry of Health's new protocol in order to combat the outbreak of Covid-19.

As of October 2020, Brunei Darussalam has not reported any new local Covid-19 case for more than 160 days (Kon, 2020). Despite the outbreak that is already receding, the Ministry of Education Brunei is still ordering the online learning including online tuition to be retained as an approach to embrace a new development in Brunei's education system. The transition from

physical tuition class to online tuition class has brought out different opinions especially on the question of 'Do the online tuition classes provide 'equal understanding' as to the physical tuition classes?' in which will be addressed in this research.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Why Do Students Enroll in Tuition Classes?

Tuition is known as an additional education instrument and it has been practised outside the school hours to improve the academic level of students. Foondun (2002) and Subedi (2018) have acknowledged that classes that are taken after school hours act as a supplementary input for better academic achievements especially for students who are sitting for any big examinations. Consequently, tuition classes are always seen as a good alternative for the students to enhance their capability in understanding certain subjects to be able to score in exams (Vella and Theuma, 2008; Buhagiar and Chetcuti, 2013). In particular, students who find it difficult to understand the subjects taught in their schools can simply take the tuition classes and therefore, they can directly ask questions to the tuition tutors and hence, most likely, they will receive appropriate solutions and recommendations that they need afterwards (Sahito, 2017).

In addition, often, the tutors from the tuition schools are expert in their fields thus, it is possible for the students undertaking the classes to obtain good grades as the tutors are able to effectively deliver the teaching materials (Sahito, 2017). In view of that, Vella and Theuma (2008) and Suleman and Hussain (2013) concluded that tuition acts as a place to improve the academic performance for students with poor or even good grades. The same has been supported by Ireson and Rushforth (2011) as it was reported that the students perceived tuition as being capable to help them in doing well in schools especially when sitting for the examinations.





Moving towards the Online Tuition

In the light of the advancement in the technological aspect, tuition is now possible to take place by the use of online mediums. Online tuition refers to the additional learning instrument that takes place using technology such as internet, laptop, Zoom application, Whatsapp and many more. Emerson and MacKay (2011) have defined online tuition as a distance education where the learning is done despite the distance - technological means are bridging the gaps in education.

Pei and Wu (2019) stated that online has been widely adopted in tuition educational aspect since years ago as it eliminates the distance, space and time limitations which make tuition can be done anytime and anywhere according to the preference of the students and the tutors. Furthermore, online tuition has become a world phenomenon where tutors and students are having classes from their respective houses without the need to meet and have the physical classes together (Thiruvengadam, 2011). This situation is desirable especially for students who are living quite a distance from the tuition centres and also for part time students who are only available during night time due to their personal careers. Thus, online tuition brings the benefit of time and distance flexibility to deliver the teaching service to the students.

Besides, according to Driscoll et al. (2012), another reason for adopting the online tuition classes is due to students who are demanding to be able to voice out their difficulties in learning the subject contents. Also, the students feel more comfortable to speak out their opinions in regards the subject contents as well. It is assumed that students are feeling shy and uncomfortable to ask questions and even giving out their opinions on what they are learning in the class. Thus, online tuition is a good platform to cater to this situation.

In responding towards the recent world situation, online tuition has become a trend due to the outbreak of Covid-19. A

number of the countries have experienced lockdowns and as a result, physical schools are required to be closed temporarily. Unfortunately however, the same has also been confirmed for countries that do not declare lockdowns but rather, urging for the practice of social distancing, as they have also forced the offline classes to be shut down for a certain amount of time. In particular, schools, universities, institutions and even tuition centres are mandated to be closed to prevent the further outbreak of the virus. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that the academic learning is still carried out via online using the available technological means. Indeed, the world is currently, still adapting to the online learning (Li and Lalani, 2020). Accordingly, the demand for tuition is also spiking up due to the closure of the physical schools - the students are forced to study online instead and as a result, they are experiencing more difficulties to understand the subjects taught. Consequently, it leads to them requiring the extra help by simply taking the tuition classes to be able to better catch up with what has been learnt despite the classes are also conducted online (Batty, 2020). This has proven for the need of online tuition and hence, this "new normal in education" has experienced a drastic increase in the recent days.

Ability to Equally Understand the Subject Contents Delivered: Online Tuition versus Physical Tuition Classes

According to Girik Allo (2020), there are mixed perceptions of the changing teaching delivery method from physical tuition to online tuition. This perception is divided into two groups which are; a group of people who positively accept the online tuition and a group people who actually questioning the effectiveness of online tuition to provide equal understanding as to physical tuition classes.

To start off, currently, the research study on this present research topic is limited, making it difficult to simply prove the assumption on whether or not the students can understand the materials taught via both online and physical tuition classes equally.





Thus, there is a need to do a research on this particular area. Many of the previous researches on tuition classes have majorly concentrated on various topics instead such as firstly, assessing the preference or satisfaction of students between physical and online tuition class (Johnson, et al., 2000; Sun and Chen, 2016; Bailey et al., 2018) and secondly, the level of performance of students after having physical and online tuition class (Ni, 2013; Matin, 2016; Yen et al., 2018) as well as lastly, assessing the effectiveness of these two tuition types in a general manner (Singh et al., 2012; Paul and Jefferson, 2019; Rachman, 2020). Despite the fact that there are similar researches which are also assessing the understanding of students for the subject contents delivered using these two tuition types yet however, there are just few in number and that, the findings are different and the outcomes are mixed as the studies do not simply compare the delivery contents between the physical and online tuition classes to be equally understood by the students but rather, these studies focus more on the pros and cons for each of the tuition type based on the students' understanding level on their tutors' teaching delivery technique.

For instance, a study by Vitoria et al, (2018) has suggested that students actually professed online tuition as a useful education instrument where they are actually able to improve their understanding on the teaching materials delivered. In fact, the preferred interactions via online has contributed to this conclusion. Similarly, a study conducted by Pei and Wu (2019) aimed at evaluating on whether or not the online tuition can offer better learning outcome than the physical tuition, found that online learning is actually better and there is no evidence pointing to physical classes as a better option for delivering tuition service.

Yet, on the other hand, online tuition classes do not always win the positive scores because in a study by Girik (2020), it was found that students are actually facing difficulty in understanding the study materials

delivered using online means. Besides, the instructions given via online are also difficult to be understood by them.

However, Singh et al. (2012) have concluded a different view as they claimed that findings on assessing the understanding level of student on the subject contents delivered via online and physical means is actually mixed. In particular, the study has confirmed that it is possible for online tuition to be more superior compared to physical tuition but it is also possible for the case to happen vice versa.

Αll of the studies mentioned unfortunately do not focus on whether or not the students can understand the subjects taught via both the tuition types equally. Moreover, the results are rather mixed and they are categorised into three different conclusions: students can understand what they have been studying online (Victoria et al., 2018; Pei and Wu, 2019), students do not understand what they have been learning online (Girik, 2020) and also, both online and physical tuition can provide different understanding level for the students (Singh et al. 2020). The previous studies certainly provide some confusions and the statement is further supported by Bray (2014) where the author has emphasised that this research has contradictory findings and that, the future research should take into account into this issue.

Furthermore, stated by Singh et al. (2012), research on online and physical tuition is indeed slowly becoming a significant interest, especially there are still many unanswered questions linked to this research area. Besides, this research area is still unexplored and has yet earned proper courtesy by the researchers (Gafoor et al., 2007). In addition, Mgutshini (2013) has concluded that the research on studying students' contentment with online learning is a worthy research area. Similar to Mgutshini (2013), Hart et al. (2019) have also heavily emphasised for the future research to look into evaluating the online tuition in providing





access to quality teaching as this area is still remained unexplored.

In conclusion, the existing literature has critically highlighted this research area to be relatively new where it is only concentrated on relating online tuition with students' preference and performance but there is only a small consideration has been made on finding out about the students' understanding on the teaching materials delivered via both of the tuition types. Therefore, this research is focusing on finding out whether the students are able to equally understand the teaching materials delivered via online tuition classes as to the physical tuition classes to cater to the calls from the literature review to assess this research area.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In this research, both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used. The chosen analysis instruments are dichotomous questions and open ended questions. Dichotomous question provides only two potential answers (Trochim, 2020) which is also known as closed-ended question. On the other hand, open- ended questions provide a free form answer where respondents are allowed to answer freely based on their knowledge and experiences (Farrell, 2016) in which, enable researchers to dig further into a certain research area. In this research, quantitative data can be obtained from the dichotomous questions whereas qualitative data can be generated from the open ended The survey questionnaire questions. consisting of these types of questions are distributed using Google Forms to reach the research participants.

This research has selected 20 students coming from three different tuition schools in Brunei Darussalam. These students are chosen as research participants due to the fact that they have recently experienced both online tuition classes and physical tuition classes. These students are currently in Year 6,

8 and 11 of the academic school year. According to Gan and Shahrill (2019), this range of schooling years are the transition points in the academic journey of students in Brunei Darussalam where the students in these academic years are going to sit for big and important exams. The authors have also emphasised the importance to assess these students' opinions on education matters. As a result, it is precise for this research to choose Year 6, 8 and 11 students as research participants in finding out whether or not online tuition classes are able to provide equal understanding of the teaching materials delivered as to the physical tuition classes.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section is reported into two themes; Students' preference towards tuition delivery method and the perception of students on 'online tuition classes provide equal understanding as to physical tuition classes'.

The Students' Preference towards Tuition's Teaching Delivery Method

Seventeen students (85%) expressed their views in acknowledging the physical tuition class as the best approach to deliver academic materials. Physical tuition class is chosen as a better teaching delivery method for students understand academic subjects. The students have also stated their reasonings behind this conclusion which are directed towards several aspects; convenience in asking questions, face to face interactions, clear instructions and a longer focus span. On the other hand, some students have expressed their reasonings by mentioning the negativity with the features of online tuition classes such as inconvenience in using devices to study especially in the early morning, exposure of light from the devices makes them feeling uncomfortable and admitting themselves to get extra lazy during online classes. Some quotations are as follows:





TABLE 1 Students' statements about physical online tuition class

Student's statements	Student no.
1. When doing physical classes we can easily ask any question and the explanation we hear from the teacher will be very clear	4
2. Learning physically would make students become more concentrate and it gives easy communication between the students and the teacher/tutor	19
3. I would go for a face to face interaction in case I have questions to ask	1
4. It's easy to understand explanations by the teacher directly as the teacher can point out parts of the subject with a clear voice as well. It also reduces exposure to light from profuse use of devices	5

Whereas, there are three students (25%) who have chosen online tuition class as a better approach to teach students. These students have specified online tuition classes to be convenient in saving one's time and expenses to commute from home to the tuition school. It is also perceived to provide easy access to notes and exercise given by the tutors via online means. In addition, these students have also admitted online tuition is a better teaching method in making sure they understand the academic materials delivered to them through online.

To sum up, the students actually alleged the tuition class as a useful supplementary academic instrument. However, there is a mixed opinion on selecting which tuition mode is the best to

deliver academic materials. Majority of the students have acknowledged that it is better for the tuition to deliver their teaching services using physical class as it offers a convenience and comfortable learning experience to the students. This crucial piece of information may affect their ability to perceive whether or not online tuition classes do provide 'equal understanding' on teaching delivery content as to physical tuition classes.

The Perception of Students on 'Online Tuition Classes Provide Equal Understanding as To Physical Tuition Classes'

According to the second last question inquired in the survey, it is reported that thirteen of the students (65%) are actually declaring they are able to understand the materials taught via online tuition class equally the same as materials taught in the physical class. They have proven the dissimilarity in teaching delivery medium is capable to bring out the same learning experience that enables the students to understand the academic materials delivered to them.

On the other hand, six of the students (35%) are against of this idea. They actually believed that online tuition class is not capable to provide the same understanding level as to physical tuition class. They have argued that online tuition class requires extra effort in making sure similar learning experience can be obtained as to physical tuition class. More to this, they have actually provide a list of recommendations on how to make sure students are able to understand the materials taught via online tuition class equally the same as materials taught in the physical class. These recommendations are quoted as follows:





TABLE 2

Students' recommendations for online tuition class

class	
Student's statements	Student no.
1. To use the virtual whiteboard in the zoom application for subjects that require calculations for example Math	1 and 2
2. To interact as if we are in a class and the teachers shouldn't make students feel left out. give attention equally	1
3. For starters, when teaching it needs to be clear so that the students can understand it. Second, make sure the student need to pay attention when doing online classes.	4
4. Do more exercises in online classes and teachers must explain the topic multiple times so that the students can understand more	14 and 20
5. Although online classes brings a new way of learning to the table, it still needs some tweaks to be able to be as productive as Physical Classes, such as giving students a different and more interesting way of learning via apps/classwork during online classes. (Stick to 1-2 apps so that students won't have a hard time downloading and getting confused) A new way of learning calls for a new way of teaching.	15

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, all the information presented above have shown that even though students prefer to have physical tuition classes with their teachers to maximize the learning involvement, these students have also acknowledged that they can actually understand the materials taught via online tuition class equally the same as materials taught in the physical class. It is also assumed, the negativity towards online tuition class can be altered by injecting some features of the physical tuition class into the online tuition class. These alterations include retaining close communications with the students despite the distance and also to make sure the class is an interactive and a fun class to avoid students getting bored as well as losing focus during the class.

6.0 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

There are several limitations in this study. Firstly, the research participants are actually limited to 20 students due to the time constraint. In addition, the Year 6, 8 and 11 students are currently sitting for big examinations thus, it is difficult to reach them as they have stopped taking tuition classes to on their examinations. recommended for the future studies to conduct a similar research with taking into account a larger research sample to obtain more reliable data. Secondly, the study is only applying qualitative nature by directing open ended questions due to the limitations discussed beforehand. It is suggested for the future research to conduct proper interview sessions in order to obtain more in depth views on this research area.

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