

Lived Experience of Business School Faculty in post COVID-19 New Normal

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Abstract

Two years of COVID-19 pandemic was a unique experience for many of us. The impact of the pandemic in the academic sector was distinct. This study explored the impact of pandemic on business schools and business school teaching through the examination of the lived experience of business school faculty members. The Hermeneutic phenomenology was used to capture the lived experience of the faculties who were involved in online teaching during pandemic and are teaching in the post COVID-19 new normal at graduate and undergraduate level in different business schools in Nepal. The data were collected through in depth interviews. The analysis of the data revealed four themes: (1) *Not ready for hybrid mode*, (2) *Possibility opened up by online experience*, (3) *Challenge to maintain academic standard*, and (4) *Measures to tackle behavioral change among students*. The findings suggest that COVID-19 and the time after directed business education towards transformation. However, the Nepali business school and business school faculty members have a long ground to cover. The implication and limitation of the study have been indicated.

Keywords: post COVID-19, new normal, business school faculty, hermeneutic phenomenology, lived experience

Introduction

From ancient times academia has faced a number of physical, emotional, and psychological conditions. COVID-19 is one of the unique situations that the academic community faced recently. Never in the history of academia has it so happened that millions of students all over the world were forced out of their educational institutions for a long duration. At the peak of the pandemic, all other sectors closed down to prevent spread of the deadly disease. But, academic institutions came forward with alternative modes of teaching (Toquero, 2020) such as online synchronous mode, asynchronous mode using social media, TV, radio, etc.

The concept of online learning is not new in the context of Nepal. Universities (e.g., Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University, National Open University) have been running online and distance learning programs (Devkota, 2021). However, the educational delivery during COVID-19 could not fail to raise eyebrows of both faculty and students. Digital divide appeared even more prominently in the education system (Govindarajan & Srivastava, 2020). Only a small percent of educational institutions in cities could continue synchronous and asynchronous mode of teaching (Dawadi et al, 2020), while a majority of students especially in rural Nepal remained devoid of the opportunities despite the fact that various radio and television channels made a genuine effort to reach them. Even in cities, teachers and students faced a number of challenges related to technology, skill, network, etc.

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(Shrestha et al, 2022). Faculties across universities struggled to learn and manage the teaching-learning process (Shrestha, 2022). This built varied perceptions in the minds of the users about online modes of teaching (Gautam, 2021).

After surviving the two years of pandemic, the faculties were back to what seemed like a normal era. How was the university faculty's perception about the condition of post-Covid-19? Do we have a memory of the effect of year-long online teaching and learning in our education system? Has there been any effect of the teaching learning process on our way of working? Have the faculty realized a change in the classroom and teaching in a new normal? Have the faculty been able to change their working style, using their learnings from the crisis teaching-learning process? This phenomenological study attempted to answer these questions.

Literature review

The outbreak of COVID-19 in December 2019 changed the lives of millions and affected almost every sector. The impact on the education sector was unique. During the lockdown enforced to prevent spread of COVID-19, online mode of teaching-learning process evolved as an alternative mode across all streams and levels. Online teaching during pandemic that lasted for about two years had been a unique experience for both the teachers and students. This alternative mode of teaching was believed to have a long term impact on the education system in the post-pandemic era.

Raghavan et al. (2021) defined a new normal as a state where the organizations and employees have changed in response to some external conditions like COVID-19. New normal is a situation after an acute change (Urban Dictionary, 2009 as cited in Cahapay, 2020). Thus, post COVID-19 era can be described as the new normal era. Researchers have anticipated hybrid, blended learning as the future of the education system in the post-COVID new normal. For example, Pacheco (2021) discussed that blended learning was a foreseen future of education system even before COVID-19, which was reinforced by the adverse conditions of COVID-19 (Tomé & Gromova, 2021). Researchers (Benito et al., 2021; Rana et al., 2020) had anticipated hybrid mode of learning, technology aided teaching learning process as the new normal for the education sector. However, technology aided teaching could not earn much applause from its stakeholders. Faruk and Bulent (2021) found only 52 percent positive rating for digital learning.

From the year 2020, many researchers joined in to study the phenomenon of post COVID-19 new normal from different aspects. Researchers during the pandemic envisioned transformation of the education system to blended mode in post pandemic new normal and discussed challenges and measures to address them. Zhao and Watterston (2021) presented the post COVID-19 era as an opportunity to reform the education system. Scholarly works before the outbreak had also focused on this aspect. For instance, Gyawali (2020) had identified different forms of online teaching learning models based on their learning and challenges faced during the online teaching; and Anoba (2020) had found readiness of business school faculty members for blended mode of teaching. Being optimistic on the note, Neuwirth et al. (2021) projected online teaching as the future of the education sector. Gupta (2021) raised issues about transformation of management education in the Post COVID-19 era and challenges in making the transition smooth. Other studies like Stevens et al. (2021) compared the efficacy of online against face to face delivery mode of teaching.

Methodology wise, different researchers have used different methods in their inquiry into post-COVID teaching, qualitative (Goyal et al., 2021) to quantitative to mixed method studies (Benito et al, 2021). However, most of the studies are qualitative in nature. Most of the qualitative studies used semi-structured interviews with open ended questions for data collection (e.g., Gupta, 2021; Lei, 2021).

Researchers from the year 2020 to 2022 pointed out mixed experience of both parties (teachers and students) in the remote or online teaching-learning process. For instance, Benito et al. (2021) found high satisfaction with remote education and highlighted the relevance of expanding digital components in higher education. Xie et al. (2020) indicated a possibility of embracing hybrid mode in teaching learning process. While other studies, reflected terrible experiences during COVID-19, mentioned some positive effects and alluded improvement opportunities in higher education like hybrid mode of teaching, redefining teaching pedagogy, newer resources along with an opportunity for self-reflection (Rana et al., 2020) and learning different skills and competencies (Iping, 2022). In the same line, Zhao and Watterston (2021) presented the post COVID-19 new normal as an opportunity to bring in transformation in every aspect of the education system, developing a new curriculum that imparts competencies for a new era actively engaging students in hybrid mode. Irrespective of the experience gained from online teaching, all the studies indicated that hybrid or blended learning is the future of the education system.

Recent literature from 2022 have presented instances of transformation in the education system. Many studies have emphasized the different modes of student centric teaching-learning process and discussed various issues and benefits. Mardesia (2023) proposed play based pedagogy as an alternative method in the new normal. Studies like Ruiz-Jimenez et al. (2022) and Dallal (2022) explored the effectiveness of flipped classrooms as a student centric teaching method and pointed to its lack of popularity due to heavy workload on both students and teachers in implementation of flipped classrooms. Likewise, Ohatkar and Deshpande (2022) presented outcome based education as an alternative for increasing creativity and engagement of students. Li and Wang (2022) found that students demonstrate better performance in the blended mode of learning than in a traditional form.

Other researchers focused on developing a suitable environment for transformation of learning system. For example, Schering (2022) emphasized on improving student assessment with Student-Centric Learning Contracts (SCLCs) where students and instructors work collaboratively to outline the learning content, the process and evaluation system. Zhao and Watterston (2021) advocated for a new curriculum to impart competency demanded by new eras involving students as partners to change and implement pedagogy to engage students in the teaching learning process. Likewise, Yang and Xin (2022) recommended the need for transformation in the assessment system from Assessment of Learning to Assessment for Learning, and to Assessment as Learning. Farooq et al. (2022) stressed on improvement in curriculum. Bizami et al. (2022) summarized education 4.0 innovative pedagogy. Ratten (2023) claimed that the education system has moved to the phase of interactivity from 2022 with emphasis on gamification tools. Thus, hybrid or blended mode of learning is found to cater the changing needs of students, who have just come out from a yearlong pandemic. However, Stevens et al. (2021) from a scoping review found that online mode of teaching could not mark significant better output against face to face mode of teaching. Yet Devkota et al. (2021) indicated increased readiness of faculty members for online mode of teaching after COVID-19.

Studies have captured experience and challenges in the education system during COVID-19, discussed challenges of hybrid mode of learning, and given recommendations for the post COVID-19 learning environment. However, there are very few studies that captured the perceived reality of major stakeholders in the post COVID-19 new normal. For example, Yunus et al. (2023) found positive

effects of pandemic on students' attitudes toward online learning. But the experience of teachers in the frontline has not captured due attention, which would be the one of the important aspects to study. They were the one to suffer most in terms of adjustment to sudden transition to online mode at the time of crisis; the one to transform themselves in terms of teaching pedagogy and the one struggling to bring the education system back to normal. Like other streams, business school faculty have been facing issues of increased competition, changed performance demands, expectations of students and many more in the post COVID-19 environment. The learning from yearlong online teaching and learning is irreversible. Permanent change in certain aspects of the teaching learning process along with behavior, thinking pattern and way of working can be expected. This leads to a pertinent question, "What is it like to be in the role of faculty in business school in the changed environment of post COVID-19 new normal after a yearlong lockdown and teaching in crisis mode?" To learn from the experience of teachings of business school faculty in the post COVID-19 era, hermeneutical phenomenology was used. According to Van Manen (2016), hermeneutical phenomenology guides us to learn a phenomenon through lived experience of those who have experienced the phenomena.

Phenomenology as a Methodology

von Eckartsber (1998), as cited in Sloan and Bowe (2014) defined phenomenology as the study of a phenomenon through lived experience of people and that reduces human experience to description of phenomena (Cresswell, 2007). Philosophy of phenomenology evolved from Germany during the First World War. There are several types of phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology developed by Edmund Husserl and interpretive phenomenology developed by Martin Heidegger are two prominent ones. Husserl's phenomenology is based on the descriptive philosophy of Brentano (Dowling, 2007), which talks about immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life. Heidegger's phenomenology also deals with lived life experience like Husserl. However, Heidegger stresses on understanding experience rather than describing it (Dowling, 2007). The credit of converting philosophy of phenomenology to a research method in the context of educational research is given to Max van Manen (Barnacle, 2004).

Hermeneutical Phenomenology by van Manen

Hermeneutical Phenomenology is an interpretive phenomenology. This interprets the meaning found in a phenomenon as interpreted by those who have experienced it. It interprets texts about lived experience. van Manen's phenomenology has a hermeneutic aspect that includes a process of understanding a text with reference to individual parts along with researcher's understanding of each individual part and further reference to the whole document. Van Manen applied phenomenology to pedagogy and parenting and concluded that hermeneutic phenomenology is best for research in education, health and nursing. Researchers have used hermeneutic phenomenology in capturing lived experience of nurses during pandemic (Gunawan et al., 2021), teaching (Rawson, 2021), and health (Beitz, 1999). It has been used extensively in studying different aspects of business education: from both faculty and student perspective (Marschall, 1994; Saghafian & O'Neill, 2018). Some researchers found hermeneutic phenomenology relatively less applicable in other aspects of business and management. However, Pernecky and Jamal (2010) found its use in the tourism sector in capturing experience of tourists and visitors while Jedličková et al. (2021) in capturing experience of managers.

Methods

Study Setting

Study area selected for this study was Kathmandu Valley, the capital city of Nepal. Being the capital city, Kathmandu has remained a preferred location for opening business schools. The business schools located at Kathmandu Valley are affiliated to different Nepali as well as foreign universities. Almost all the business schools within the Valley facilitated teaching online during COVID-19, which might not be the case in other parts of the country.

Participant Selection and Sample

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Faculty who taught in online mode during COVID-19 pandemic and are continuing teaching in physical mode after the pandemic were eligible to be participants for the study. Eight participants were selected such that there was representation of faculty members from the major universities in Nepal, offering business education. The areas of specialization of participants include general management, finance, economics, and social sciences.

Interview Participants

Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. Interview guide was prepared before the interview. However, during the interview, the flow was largely guided by the participants' response.

Face to face interviews were conducted with three participants. For the remaining five participants, researcher could not schedule in-person interviews, thus an online interview was conducted through Google Meet (one), WhatsApp (four). All the interviews were recorded with the consent from the participants. Verbal field notes were recorded immediately after completion of the interview. Denaturalized transcripts were prepared for each interview before analysis.

Data Analysis

For data collection and data analysis, the steps suggested by van Manen were used. The six steps suggested by van Manen (2015, p. 30-31) are:

1. Turning to an interesting phenomenon - Hermeneutic phenomenology is trying to make sense of certain phenomena related to human life. This is done through being involved, paying attention and deep questioning about the phenomena.
2. Investigating experience as lived - It involves describing the experience as they are lived by the respondents. It intends to establish connection to or learn about the phenomena through exploring experience as they are lived.
3. Reflecting on essential themes - In this phase, themes are generated from the reflections on the lived experience as shared by individuals in relation to the phenomena under study.
4. Writing and rewriting phenomenon - This uses techniques of writing and refining through re-writing to bring thinking of individuals to language as precisely as possible.
5. Maintaining relation to phenomenon - Hermeneutic phenomenology demands strong orientation of the researcher with the phenomena.
6. Balancing through parts and whole - This suggests that researchers always need to consider the overall objective of the research while taking into consideration the details of the lived experience.

To generate themes, thematic analysis suggested by Barun and Clarke (2006) was used. This is a method used for identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns of themes within qualitative data. It is widely used in qualitative research due to its flexibility, in-built two stage review process, accessibility, and is useful across small and large data sets and for both inductive and deductive analysis (Clarke & Barun, 2017).

Results

van Manen's Hermeneutic phenomenology was used to uncover lived experience of business school faculty while teaching in post COVID-19 new normal. The interpretation of lived experience generated four themes: Not ready for hybrid mode, Possibility opened by online experience, Challenge to maintain academic standard, and Measures to tackle behavioral change among students. A number of complementary and contrasting codes were collated to form each theme. The themes are discussed in detail below.

Not Ready for Hybrid Mode

The theme "Not ready for hybrid mode" signifies the faculty's unpreparedness to initiate a blended mode of teaching learning process and their preference for the physical mode of teaching. This theme includes the codes such as comfortable with physical mode, comfortable with whiteboards, can see students' expression, peer learning, immediate feedback, better in classroom activities, difficult to nurture skills in online, face to face understanding of students, easy to deal with numericals, learning difficulty in online even for good students, online being time consuming, classrooms can't ensure internet, can't depend on online content. These codes reflect a high level of comfort in the physical mode of teaching and learning.

The respondents unanimously marked physical mode of teaching as a better option, highlighted its benefits, and expressed the experience of students performing better in physical mode. Almost all the respondents explained their bitter experience of unavailability and unstable internet connectivity while trying to use online content in classroom delivery. They shared their pleasant experience of meeting their fellow students face to face allowing to understand how the peers compared in their grip of the course content. One of the respondents shared:

In physical classes we can have eye contact with students and quickly say if they have understood or not and adopt alternative ways of explaining if they give expression of being lost in the content.

In the above excerpt, the faculty expressed his/ her level of comfort in physical mode. The faculty seemed happy to evaluate the understanding of the students in physical mode and satisfied by the transfer of learning to the students. At the same time, the faculty is referring to his/her own feedback in terms of delivery and possibility of quickly addressing the feedback in physical mode. The faculty also proposed using multiple ways of explaining. By saying so, the faculty is indirectly communicating his/her mindfulness in different learning needs of students and vouched for his/her commitment to cater the differential needs. The faculty seemed unaware of and uninterested in learning techniques that could be used in online mode for the same purpose.

While explaining their experience of physical mode, the respondents shared the wide possibility they experienced in physical mode of teaching as compared to online mode. The possibility of

classroom-based activities, learning from peers, group works, learning skills on top of knowledge are not effectively practiced in online mode of teaching. They felt the students also shared similar feelings for physical mode of learning. One of the participants explained experience with physical mode of teaching as:

I could do so much in physical mode. I can explain difficult problems by writing on the board..... I can see from their expressions that students are saying now only we have understood..... Online mode was not effective at all, especially in numerical courses like mine.

In the above excerpt from an interview, the faculty is referring to the different pedagogical approaches that could be used in delivery of course content and its effectiveness in physical mode. The severe dissatisfaction of the faculty handling in numerical based courses is visible from the above conversation. The respondent seems unable to effectively include classroom-based activities during online teaching. Inability and unwillingness of faculty in learning digital based classroom handling techniques can be interpreted from the extract. From the tone of voice, the faculty is happy talking about face to face classes. The faculty was happy that he/she could interpret that the students are understanding the concepts in in-person mode of teaching.

Carrying on, the respondents shared the problems they faced due to lack of infrastructure support from the institution. They shared that the classroom could not ensure uninterrupted internet supply which prevented them from using innovative interactive teaching methods. One of the participants shared:

Classrooms have internet issues.... We cannot show them then and there.... We need to take in pen drives....

Here, the faculty shared that he/she was unable to adopt technology based mode of teaching due to the lack of infrastructure support from the institution. The faculty shared that he/she has been acclimatized to using online content during classroom sessions and the practice has been effective. However, unstable internet connection in classrooms is preventing him/her from using online content effectively. The faculty shared the hassle of downloading the content at home and taking them in pen drives to the classroom and being ineffective due to missing parts. Discouragement of the faculty in using innovative pedagogical approaches aided with online resources during classroom delivery can be interpreted from his/her sharing. The awareness and willingness of faculty in stepping towards technology aided classroom delivery can also be interpreted. The faculty wish for using the online content for effective classroom delivery while learning opportunities are ineffective due to infrastructure constraints.

The respondents seem largely happy to be back to the usual form of teaching from the year long struggle with online teaching. It can be interpreted from the sharing that the faculty have learned new techniques of using online content for making sessions effective. However, they have not been able to use them effectively due to unstable internet content. Thus, the institutions are pulling the faculty backward in this transition.

Possibility Opened by Online Experience

The theme “possibility opened by online experience” represents the wide prospects that the faculty visualized and used in teaching learning process in the post COVID-19 new normal. The theme is developed from the codes: comfort with technology, skill developed in online, development of content suitable for online delivery, understanding students through informal talks, realization on delivery flaws, content of classroom includes videos, google classrooms, easier assignment collection and

sharing resources, opportunities of international participation, opportunity of guest sessions from foreign faculty, online make up sessions, online resources, possibility of self-learning. The participants shared improvement in their teaching process including the possibility of using online content in the classroom, possibility of online sessions and their own dependency in using technology-based teaching. The faculty also shared enhanced learning opportunities as experienced by students with use of online learning content.

The respondents shared that they have themselves started to become over-dependent on the use of technology in teaching as compared to before COVID-19. Almost all the faculty told that internet and internet based resources have become indispensable and they have seen positive change in the quality of their teaching. Faculty shared their experiences about the practice of using online platforms like Microsoft Teams for resource sharing, assignment collection, online quizzes to use of online videos and interactive material from the internet for better management of classroom teaching. One of the respondents shared:

I used Microsoft Teams while teaching online. Now also I use it for sharing resources and collecting assignments. It is convenient for students as well. They need not be physically present to collect course resources and submit assignments.

The faculty highlighted an advantage of using Microsoft Teams for sharing resources. There was no requirement in-person meeting for sharing resources which was found to be convenient for the students as well as the faculty. They can access the session resources despite their absence due to various reasons. Thus, the experience of online teaching has broadened the possibilities in current face to face mode of teaching and have urged faculty members to think from the perspective of student needs. Acclimatization of both students and teachers in using technology can be interpreted from these statements. They are somehow carrying their practice from online teaching to physical mode of teaching. This shows that the teaching learning process is being dragged towards a student centric hybrid mode of teaching where newer internet-based technology has a heavy role to play in facilitation of in-person learning.

The participants shared that the experience during COVID-19 pandemic has widened the possibilities within the teaching-learning process. The faculty shared their experience of inviting guest speakers online from foreign universities in class and serving as a guest speaker in international workshops which is something beyond consideration before COVID-19 pandemic. One of the faculty members in his own words:

We have invited foreign speakers in our course..... I have served as resource person online in workshops which would not have been if have not been familiar with online platforms

The joy of wide prospects portrayed by a yearlong online teaching can be interpreted from the sharing of the faculty member. The faculty member was happy to be able to participate in international programs like workshops, conferences online, which is something no one has thought of before the pandemic. The faculty also enriched his course with guest speakers from abroad. The range of online workshops, webinars and hybrid mode of conferences organized by international educational institutions has bestowed us with such a huge learning opportunity. Such an opportunity was not something thought of before the pandemic. Broad thinking of faculty and the ready to incorporate change in their pedagogy can be interpreted from the sharing. Thus, the faculty is indicating the start of transformation of the business education system towards a blended mode of learning.

Faculty also explained that the exposure to online mode during COVID-19 pandemic has increased competency of students in exploring and built the habit of self-studying through online content. They expressed an ease in teaching the students as they quickly grasp and explore further themselves. At the same time, they expressed their worries of decreasing creativity of students as being over-dependent on the internet content and solutions. A faculty shared:

Students are skilled to use advanced technology.... they explore and learn concepts easily from online platforms..... I am also worried. Overuse of technology can kill their creativity

In the above snippet, the faculty seemed happy to experience students with high technological aptitude. The students learn technology quickly and are able to explore and learn through online content. This habit is to a large extent the result of a yearlong online teaching. The self-learning capability developed among students is likely to have a long term positive impact on the development and capability of students. The experience of faculty in terms of the need for change and the demand of students for transformation in the education system can be interpreted from the sharing. At the same time, the faculty shared about overdependence of students on technology. The students are searching for online assistance for each and every issue. From the experience shared by the faculty, the students have given up going through self-reflection and self-thinking process. This might have long term implications on the students' creativity.

Overall, the faculty have experienced a positive impact of their online experience during COVID-19 pandemic. They have signaled to the possibility of transformation towards a blended mode of teaching-learning. They have seen positive self-learning behavior among students, although with caution to overdependence.

Challenge to Maintain Academic Standard

The theme "challenge to maintain academic standard" means that faculty and institutions are finding it difficult to follow the rules and regulations of the program and the institution. The theme covers the experience of faculty struggling to maintain code of conduct in the classroom, in implementing academic and administrative regulations, using measures to improve classroom conduct, practicing rigorous assignments and their evaluation. The theme also covers the impact of shallow understanding of students and their capacity of retention.

The respondents shared instances of preparing a perfect course plan that they were unable to achieve in reality. They shared that they experienced a casual approach by students and were unable to make them work rigorously as used to and the assignments and course plan remained in paper only. In addition, the faculty have experienced issues even in maintaining minimum attendance requirements for the program. One of the respondents shared:

Students are taking a very casual approach towards their studies.....we are having problems following 80% attendance requirements in a semester, which was not an issue before COVID-19....

From the above excerpt, the faculty member expressed his/her concern on the conduct of students and the value system being developed in the new generation. Exploring further, the faculty interpreted this issue as an impact of over a year lockdown and isolations they went through. The faculty interpreted that the students got into the inertia of casual approach they used to have during online classes, so they got into the habit of arriving late and remaining absent from classes. The faculty also deduced the decreasing value of formal education for the students and the changing nature of relationship between students and teachers from their behavior. Teachers are no more experts,

knowledge dispensers in the field. They are just facilitators. Students have realized this and their relationship with their teachers has also changed.

All the respondents agreed that the learning during COVID-19 pandemic was shallow and they are now facing the effect of the shallow learning in terms of spending extra time in face to face teaching for explaining those fundamental concepts that were covered in online mode. One of the respondents shared:

Students have not understood well during the online classes.... And now we are having problem... they have not understood the fundamental concepts and now having difficulty catching up with new concepts. Now we have to spend extra time in explaining those concepts from earlier semesters

In the above statement, the faculty shared his/her discontent on the disparity in actual learning from expectation. The faculty member is taking this as a waste of time as they need to go through the basics. As a result, the time available for dealing with real course content of the current course is shortened. The faculty also associated this with the ineffectiveness of teaching and learning in online mode. Thus, the faculty are not recommending a move forward to blended mode of learning.

The students have not learned what they are expected. This gap in the knowledge and skills are likely to have a long-term impact. One of the faculty shared the experience of interacting with graduates during a job selection process and explained that the knowledge and skill gap is likely to have a direct impact on their career. Another faculty expressed deep concern for the lack of even basic skills among the students during classroom interactions, assignments etc. Thus, there is a challenge to maintain academic standards as planned.

Measures to Tackle Behavior Change among Students

The theme, “measures to tackle behavior change among students,” means that the students have developed new habits from the online learning and the faculty have realized the need to change their own behavior. The theme summarized experience of faculty captured in codes: relaxed mode, less focus on conceptualization, studying for degree only, mobile indispensable, do not get mixed up, try to remain hidden, restricted focus, passive role in studies, over-exposure to social media, confidence on online resources, technology dependency, no social obligation.

All the respondents experienced some behavioral changes among the students. All of them mentioned casual attitudes and high affiliation towards technology and mobile devices. However, some of the faculty shared closer observations on more subtle aspects like their interpersonal interactions among themselves, their presentation etc. The respondents shared measures they used.

Extensive use of mobile devices and overdependence on technology is something all the respondents echoed while sharing their experiences. The faculty shared both positive and negative impacts in their classroom activities, assignments and learning process. They shared that they are happy to see the self-learning habits of students due to mobile devices. But at the same time, the faculty experienced lots of distraction and disturbance in classroom delivery due to mobile devices. They shared measures they have adopted to reduce distractions. One faculty shared:

Mobile has become indispensable... more valuable than breathing air... mobiles remain on during sessions..... I have informed them that the mobile will be confiscated if found using in

classroomI turn the mobile off and put in my bag at the beginning of the class intentionally so as to urge them to follow the same...

In this excerpt from the interview, the faculty shared the overdependence of students on mobile phones and measures that he/she adopted to decrease its impact in the classroom. The faculty shared an instance of actually confiscating the mobile for a week and shared that the incident made the class conscious in using mobile phones. They echoed that the use of mobile phones has drastically increased after the pandemic. They shared incidents of students using mobiles time and again to check for notifications etc. even during sessions. From the sharing of the respondents, it can be inferred that the distractions in the classroom are largely caused by the extensive use of mobile phones.

Another faculty shared positive impact of use of mobile phone in classrooms as:

I allow them to use it during group works ... and that has improved the quality of output...

The faculty in the above extract shared how mobile phones can be used for betterment of students. The faculty tactfully allowed the students to use mobile phones where they can explore to enrich their work. Therefore, rather than prohibiting students, he/she allowed partial use to motivate them during lectures and discussions. From this, the realization of faculty for incorporating student preference can be interpreted. Thus, the education system has started transition towards a student centric teaching learning process.

Most of the respondents shared their experience of struggling to maintain classroom code of conduct. They shared instances of eating in class, casual chit chat with friends in class, looking for mobile notifications etc. One faculty made a valid comment on the more relaxed sitting posture in the classroom. The faculty shared it as a hangover of online sessions, where they used to be in class keeping themselves muted with videos off. The faculty shared that they have experienced slight improvement with continuous feedback. One of the respondents shared:

They used to be hidden before with turned off videos and now behind the mask...they start to chit chat, check mobile notifications and even eat I keep reminding them time and again in a lighter vein that they are not in mute mode....

The snippet from the interview renders the behavior of the students as a by-product of isolations and online classes during the pandemic. They used to remain hidden behind their computer screens and do multitasking. Now in in-person class also, they have carried that habit and take the opportunity to chit chat with each other. Thus, hiding is not over, just the mask has changed. Consequently, teachers are obliged to spend time to remind them what is permissible in the class. The faculty appeared concerned about the changed behavior of students, and worried about the lost charm of the classroom, and the loss of respect for classroom decorum. As shared by the faculty members, the issue is worth pondering upon. Are the students inadvertently doing that or have stopped respecting the classroom etiquette and the overall teaching learning system? Thus, the demand for modification in the behavior of faculty can also be interpreted from the sharing.

Discussion and Implications

The current study intended to capture the experience of faculty while teaching in the new normal after a yearlong online teaching. The faculty observed changes in learning habits and working style of their students. At the same time, they see transformation in their own teaching. In a broad sense, the post COVID-19 new normal has demanded transformation in the business education and presented

challenges to adapt blended mode of learning, to maintain academic standard, to manage the changed behavior of students and to capture the opportunities presented by online teaching. The learnings from their struggle during online teaching have also made them mindful to improve their teaching practices aligned with the findings of Yunus et al. (2023) on positive learning attitudes.

This study generated four themes: “Not ready for hybrid mode”, “Possibility opened up by crisis teaching”, “Challenge to maintain academic standard”, “Measures to tackle behavioral change among students”. The experience shared by faculty from different universities signaled a shift of teaching learning process towards learner centric, hybrid and technology heavy mode as predicted by Benito et al. (2021), Rana et al. (2020), Neuwirth et al. (2021). The study also reflected on the need to corroborate innovative learning strategies (Bizami et al., 2022), and proper assessment strategies (Yang & Xin, 2022) with technology intensive teaching.

From the experience of faculty members, following implications for business school can be derived:

Prepare Faculty for Unprecedented Conditions

The faculty have survived online teaching for almost two years. The challenges brought by the crisis persuaded them to transform quickly by embracing available technology for online pedagogy. However, as the effect of the pandemic faded, the faculty are seen happy to return to their original mode of teaching, forgetting the learnings from the crisis. It becomes academia's responsibility to motivate the faculty to retain their learning and keep them prepared for future challenges. It is the responsibility of the educational institutions to create space to seminars and workshops to encourage the faculty in keeping themselves updated and enabling them to move with the recent trend in education. The webinars, e-workshops, conferences and seminars at national and international levels will help faculty to appreciate and adopt the practices elsewhere.

Preserve New Realization of Faculty Members

Faculty have realized wide possibilities in hybrid mode of teaching- use of foreign expertise, webinars, participation in international conferences etc. The realization is beneficial for teaching and learning process for improving the process as well as for increasing their visibility. It is the responsibility of institutions to maintain and utilize the awareness. For this, institutions can take initiative in developing technological capabilities for incorporating technology intensive teaching methods and modifying pedagogy suitable. Institutions can also support faculty in exploring, planning, organizing and participating in technology intensive programs like webinars, conferences etc.

Joint Effort in Maintaining Academic Standard

All faculty shared that they are facing challenges in maintaining academic standards. The faculty and institutions can take joint responsibility in improving the situation. Institutions can have regular problem solving meetings which could offer a platform for sharing issues. Through discussion and brainstorming, faculty can generate innovative solutions to the problems at hand. Such initiative can help in developing innovation and problem solving culture in the institutions that can help their long term growth.

Joint Effort to Tackle Behavioral Changes

All the respondents have experienced issues due to behavioral changes among students in terms of technology dependency, low attention span, and interpersonal communication and so on. The behavioral change is difficult. The change cannot be realized only through strict rules. However, the combined effort of parents, teachers and institutions can bring in positive changes among students. Efforts can be made to bring awareness among students regarding the impact of their overdependence on technology and help them become more responsible and demonstrate a matured behavior.

The institutions can organize parent-teacher regular meetings (at least at the beginning of each semester) to create awareness among parents as well and to include them in the process. Institutions can support faculty members to take initiative in developing themselves and develop innovative measures to tackle issues related to students.

Interpreting Using the Theory of Change Management

The experience shared by faculty can also be related to the pushing and restraining forces as described by Kurt Lewin in 1958 in the theory of change management. The change management model visualizes any situation to be in status quo by balancing two opposing forces - pushing and restraining forces. The set of pushing forces tend to change the status quo and attain a new state while another set of restraining forces tend to maintain the status quo. Kurt Lewin suggested to identify these two types of forces. And increase the strength of pushing force and reduce the strength of the restraining force in order to attain change in any context. The newer opportunities visualized and realization for need of improvement in delivery modality instigated by the experience of online teaching, exploring and self-learning habits of students, wider availability of resources, knowledge sharing among faculty are examples of pushing forces. These aspects of the teaching learning process can be reinforced to contribute to transformation. On the other hand, the institutional constraints in terms of interrupted internet, availability of proper devices, weakness of students in terms of attention span, reduced creativity among students, lack of comfort with new technology are examples of restraining forces experienced by the faculty in transformation of the education system. An attempt to reduce these experiences can carry forward to transformation. Thus, business schools need to be able to enhance the realization of positive change, newer opportunities, self-learning habits, and try to reduce instances of interrupted internet, lack of devices etc. The implication of this study is that knowingly-unknowingly we have already stepped towards technology intensive transformation of the education system. The galaxy of YouTube teaching lectures, hybrid mode of workshops, hybrid mode of conferences, webinars are examples of this initiation. However, the management of change is always difficult. It is now for the business schools to prepare themselves and their members. Following are a few examples of areas that business schools can focus on as preparation for the transformation.

Faculty Development

Only a handful of the faculty in most of the business schools in Nepal have acquainted themselves with newer pedagogical approaches and technical skills during the pandemic. Rest of the faculty took the approach of completing the course syllabus and waiting for a face to face mode of teaching. Thus, the business schools can focus on development of their faculty by including innovative student-centric learning as well as making them acquainted with newer technology and their use in course delivery.

Flexibility in Course Structure, Delivery and Evaluation System

The student centric learning as envisioned by different researchers and experts demands radical shift from traditional course content, delivery and evaluation system. Thus, the business schools can orient

their faculty and provide them due flexibility and autonomy to handle their course and support them in using it. With authority, comes responsibility. Business school need to groom their faculty to deliver with highest academic integrity.

Adjustment in Course Delivery to Cater Changed Nature of Students

In view of the changing demand of the situation, business schools can rethink their curriculum as well. Business schools might not be able to capture the attention of the changing students with the traditional programs and courses. Thus, business schools can take a step forward to keep their programs and curriculum dynamic.

Make Students Mindful of their Duties and Responsibilities

The advancement in artificial intelligence and its impact on students has been a matter of concern of most of the faculty members. The new generation today is capable of learning and taking advantage of those tools for their benefit. It is the responsibility of both business school and its faculty to counsel students about their duties and responsibilities and motivate them to demonstrate integrity in their behavior.

Infrastructure Support

Without the required hi-tech infrastructure support at the institute, the envisioned transformation is impossible and is one of the major restraining forces as shared by the faculty members. Thus, business schools can take a step by step approach in developing required infrastructure in the institute.

Conclusion and further work

The main objective of the research was to unravel the lived experience of business school faculty teaching in post COVID-19 new normal. The research drew learning for the Nepali business schools from the lived experience of their faculty that would be helpful in paving the way forward in the new normal. The study also presented challenges ahead of the Nepali business schools as the world has already moved towards a blended learning mode. The transformation in the education system is inevitable. The important question today is how and when we would embrace the change.

The major limitation of the study is the concentration of participants in Kathmandu Valley. A wider picture could be created in further extension by including participants from the different parts of the country who could be interviewed. Another limitation is that the study visualizes only one side of the coin. Perspective of students is also equally important in paving the way forward. Likewise, the voice of other stakeholders in the education sector such as parents and government bodies are also equally important. Further studies are needed to capture their perspectives in order to gain insights on choosing relevant mode of teaching and creating a meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences to the students.

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