

**Online Teaching: Challenges Experienced by Students and Teachers
during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Kathmandu**
SINDHU GYAWALI

*Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Sindhu Gyawali

CSSID Pvt. Ltd.

gyawalisindhu@gmail.com

KEYWORDS

Challenges
Covid-19 pandemic
Face-to-face-class
Online teaching
Opportunities

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic has entirely put the world upside down and has adversely affected the economy, social life, tourism, education and others all around the globe. As there is a prolonged period of lockdown, there is uncertainty everywhere. The ravaged pandemic has affected the education sector widely. Due to the implementation of social distancing, almost all the universities and colleges throughout the world have been closed and are forced to shut down. Realizing the consequences, countries are internationally adopting a practice of online teaching in the pandemic period.

Online learning is in the nascent stage in countries like Nepal. This study aimed to gain insights into pro challenges encountered by teachers and students while transitioning to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education. The study is based on an exploratory research design, following both quantitative and qualitative methods. A survey was conducted with a pre-structured questionnaire. Then the standardized open-ended interview was assessed with faculties and students who were engaged in online classes during a pandemic period.

This current study concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic should be taken as an opportunity brought by the crisis in the education sector. It was necessary for the Nepalese government and concerned stakeholders in education sector for immediate response so that education would not be in halt. However, there were some common challenges highlighted by participants such as limited electricity and unreliable internet, limited infrastructures and technology, and low digital knowledge and skills of teachers, which hampers the effectiveness of teaching-learning activities.

1. BACKGROUND

COVID-19 pandemic has entirely put the world upside down and has

adversely affected the economy, social life, tourism, education and others all around the globe. The World Health

Organization (WHO) declared the virus an international public health emergency on January 31, 2020 (WHO 2020) and declared it a pandemic. Social distancing is being enforced in over 109 countries across the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Mahaye, 2020). As there is a prolonged period of lockdown, there is uncertainty everywhere.

The ravaged pandemic has affected the education sector widely. Due to the implementation of social distancing, many countries are locked down, and almost all the universities and colleges throughout the world have been closed and are forced to shut down and the academic calendar is disrupted. Universities, schools and colleges are facing challenges to provide quality education to their students. Realizing these consequences, countries are internationally adopting a practice of virtual education as they must get the students engaged in the pandemic period and help them in their formal learning.

Most of universities around the world started to teach their on-class courses online through different modes of teaching-learning technologies (Gautam and Gautam, 2020). Online learning has become thus prevalent worldwide. Nowadays," the pedagogy being developed and followed during this health crisis has been named Pandemic pedagogy" (Bari, 2020). With this sudden shift away from the classroom to online learning in many parts of the globe, some are wondering whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic, and how such a shift would affect the worldwide education market (World Economic Forum, 2020).

While, COVID-19 affected the whole world, Nepal also got harshly affected. Because of the prevalence of COVID-19, people took protective and preventive measures against COVID-19, such as staying at home as far as possible, limiting social contact, and wearing protective masks when they are needed to move in a public place. Due to fear of COVID-19, the SEE exam was

canceled and Schools and colleges were closed. This impact has created a breach in the education sector.

The Nepalese government has no control on the education system as schools and colleges have been closed for a long time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In such a circumstance, if appropriate steps are not taken in time with the joint efforts of the government and all stakeholders working in the education sector, the entire education system will be destabilized or heavy efforts may have to be made for its reoperation (Ghimire, 2020).

It has also created an opportunity for the country like Nepal to adopt online teaching as one of the tools of education. During the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the potentiality of distance learning in Nepali Academic institutions has been among the widely discussed topic in the Nepali context. The on-class teaching-learning process in Nepal was suspected from 23 March 2020 by the recommendation of the high-level COVID-19 prevention and control committee of the government of Nepal. The lockdown increased the necessity to change the mode of classes. (Gautam and Gautam, 2020) but faculties and students faced psychological stress, anxiety, and trauma due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many students and faculties were perplexed regarding the scenario. They did not know what is the next; a viable solution to all these ambiguities. There are very few sociological works of literature regarding the challenges students and teachers encountered during online teaching. Moreover, as Nepal is in an embryonic stage of online learning, I felt more research is needed for this, as this is an important subject matter of sociology. The present study attempts to seek the answers of "What are the challenges experienced by students and teachers while transitioning from face-to-face to online learning environments?"

Accordingly, the section that follows this background introduces the literature on online learning. The third

section highlights on methodology part. The fourth section presents the problems/ challenges encountered. The last section provides a conclusion of the discussion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before we become familiar with the term online learning it's pertinent to understand the sociology of Information and Communication Technology first.

2.1 SOCIOLOGY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT stands for Information and Communication Technology. ICT Refers to Equipment, devices and services to store, retrieve, share/disseminate and manage information. Radio, TV, Computer, Internet, Smartboard, Mobile, satellite, websites, email etc. are example of ICT (Turban, 2014).

ICT is important in the education sector. It improves classroom delivery, increases access to learning materials and improves the effectiveness and efficiency of educational governance and management. Commonly used ICTs in the classroom these days are Smartphones, laptop, tablets, interactive whiteboards, multimedia projectors, e-readers, flipped classrooms, email, the internet, cloud storage, AI/Robots, social media, web conferencing etc (Pangeni, 2016).

Manual Castells one of the prominent scholars in the sociology of ICT says that society today is 'informational' because "social attributes of information generation and processing go beyond the impact of information technologies, just as the industrial society could not be reduced to the diffusion of industrial machinery". He contends that information is the key ingredient of our social organization and flows of messages and images between networks constitute the basic thread of our social structure. Castells is of opinion that the " process of structural transformation is underway in most societies. It is the consequences of the combined impact of a major technological revolution based on information technologies, the emergence of an informational/ global economy, and

a process of cultural change "(Castells, 1996).

With these structural transformations and the emergence of informational society as Castells said, the appropriate use of ICT in teaching transforms the learning environment from teacher-centered to learner-centered and makes a more interactive teaching-learning process. We can see various resources and technologies have been used to improve the quality of the educational system.

2.2 ONLINE LEARNING IN GENERAL

Online learning is learning that takes place over the Internet. Online learning is just one type of "distance learning" - the umbrella term for any learning that takes place online and not in a traditional classroom.

Distance education can be traced back to the 18th century in the US. There are many factors such as emerging ICTs, liberalization, privatization and globalization responsible to increase the demand for open and distance learning. Isaac Pitman is recognized as the pioneer of distance education as he began teaching by correspondence in 1840 in Bath, England (Verduin & Clark, 1991, quoted in Kentnor, 2015). The University of London in 1858 became the first university to offer distance learning degrees (Kentnor, 2015).

"Even before COVID-19, there was already high growth and adoption in education technology, with global edtech investments reaching US\$18.66 billion in 2019 but the overall market for online education due to COVID-19 is projected to reach \$350 Billion by 2025. Whether it is language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools, or online learning software, there has been a significant surge in usage since COVID-19 "(World Economic Forum, 2020).

"Online learning is expected to grow rapidly due to the wide availability of high-speed internet, making use of new technologies such as 4G and the soon-to-be-released 5G." The worldwide market size of online learning is approximately

\$187.87 billion in 2019, a 400% increase over what it was just six years ago". (Sarkar, 2020).

After the Covid-19 Pandemic, various countries have adopted various measures to respond to the pandemic depending on their available resources. For instance, technologically advanced countries, such as Italy, France, Germany, Australia, the UK, and the US, have adopted various Learning Management Systems (LMS), and also Cloud Computing based resources to improve the educational process. They quickly enhanced their e-learning platforms and provided students access to e-content and repository through mobile devices. Besides, the two most populated countries, China and India, have both established national e-learning portals for parents, teachers, students, and education administrators. (Azzi-Huck & Shmis, 2020). The countries that are lagging in technology, infrastructure and development have been using Radio, Television, and other means of teaching.

2.3 ONLINE LEARNING IN NEPAL

Education culture in Nepal has been dominated by face-to-face tutoring that has a long history starting from the Gurukul culture to the present formal schooling. Looking back into the history of Nepal, education was limited to the (teacher's home or temple) Gurukul Ashrams (Pangeni, 2016). Our pedagogy was lecture /traditional method, a teacher-centered pedagogy, where student is passive recipients of what teachers say and classroom-based education were the basics that shaped the culture of teaching and learning.

The history of distance learning in Nepal traces back to 1958 with College of Education starting adult education through radio (Pangeni, 2016). It is considered to have been the first initiative towards distance education in Nepal.

Online classes were started by establishing Nepal Open University in 2016 by utilising ICT in distance online learning mode (Nepal Open University 2016). Nepali students connected to the

Internet can access worldwide educational opportunities by joining Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), e-learning, online education and many more offered by various universities around the world (Pangeni, 2016). However, after COVID-19 the importance and necessity of online learning have been realized in the education sector.

Kathmandu University has started online classes using, inter alia, Moodle, Zoom, Google Hangout, and Google Meet platforms (IAU, 2020). Implementation of Tribhuvan University Online-class directives 2077 is also another important milestone towards online learning. There is provision in Online Class conduction directives-2077 to manage and regulate the class in terms of preparation, its stages of conduction, code of conduct and punishment provision to make the class effective for the teaching and learning activities during COVID-19 by academic council of Tribhuvan University (Tribhuvan University 2020, quoted by karki, Mahat and Poudel, 2021).

Though Nepal was making remarkable progress in educational sector, the current COVID-19 pandemic has aroused a big question. It has questioned the capacity of our educational institutions to continue our learning in such circumstances. In these fifty years of formal education in Nepal, educationist thought they have made a remarkable progress in the education sector but this pandemic has taught a lesson that we are still behind to cope with the crisis and we have a long way to go.

2.4 CHALLENGES FOR ONLINE LEARNING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Developing countries are gradually shifting to online mode of classes from traditional face-to-face- classes and they are experiencing many challenges.

The COVID19-Pandemic has forced educators to transform their lessons into online versions in a short period. Rakhi Gaur and her friends have tried to explore the barriers encountered

during online classes among undergraduate nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic in India. They described that, there are" challenges such as lack of requisite digital equipment, reliable internet access, and sufficient technical know-how, improper notification of classes, unavailability of handwritten short notes". They also opined that; E-learning system has exposed the economic differences among the students. Economically weaker students are unable to bear the cost of efficient electronic gadgets, the internets, and accessories. (Gaur et al. 2020). Despite the popularity and benefits associated with online education in the higher educational system, there are many challenges encountered during the period of COVID-19.

Similarly, In Nigeria, teachers and students have continually faced numerous challenges of online learning, which they shared as follows: "Fewer social interaction in online classes, difficulty in acquisition of practical oriented skills, lack of adequate basic skills and knowledge on students-teachers in the use of technology, little self-discipline and commitment in students, difficulty in monitoring student's activities, sedentary life of students and some health challenges, eg. eye sight, cervical issues and headache, administrative hiccups, more issues of piracy and plagiarism and congestion of websites in some areas as there are many users of online learning engagement "(Wordu and Ishia, 2020).

Online Learning is not something we choose to adopt in fact we are structurally led into it. We are bound to practice this otherwise we would lag behind and we have no other better option too. The change from a conventional to an online approach due to COVID-19 to ensure that educational institutions do not incur academic and financial losses has been termed as emergency remote teaching (Gyampo, 2020). Although tutors at colleges of education accepted the shift in pedagogy,

many of them were not prepared for the new experience. To a sociologist, the personal decisions an individual makes do not exist in a vacuum. Cultural patterns and social forces put pressure on people to select one choice over another.

C. Wright Mills defined sociological imagination as the capacity to see an individual's private troubles in the context of the broader social processes that structure them. This enables the sociologist to examine what Mills called "personal troubles of milieu" as "public issues of social structure," and vice versa (Mills, 2005).

Mills was more of a structuralist than an agency-emphasizing sociologist. Mills reasoned that if private troubles are widely shared with others, they indicate that there is a common social problem that has its source in the way social life is structured. At this level, the issues are not adequately understood as simply private troubles. They are best addressed as public issues that require a collective response to resolve. Stress and all the problems, challenges brought on by COVID-19 have been increasingly recognized as a growing problem for both students and teachers today they are in dilemma regarding their everyday schedule, exams, and salary and career opportunities. But this is a common social problem that needs to be addressed.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study is exploratory research design following both methods of qualitative and quantitative procedures. I used exploratory research design so that I can have a rich understanding of the students and teachers 'experiences towards online learning and the challenges students and teachers encountered. I have combined the use of questionnaires and interviews to generate data for discuss the experiences and challenges teachers and students faced in online teaching and learning. The interview was a standardized open-ended interview. The survey was conducted with a pre-structured questionnaire.

The survey was conducted with the students and faculties undertaking online classes during the pandemic period of COVID-19. There were 1378 students from both disciplines of humanities and social sciences; and management programs in total at Bernhardt and Pasang Lhamu colleges. At Bernhardt College, there were 366 students and at Pasang Lhamu College, there were 1012 students in total during my research time. Altogether 118 students of undergraduate (Bachelor), and graduate (Master) levels of social science and management programs and fifteen faculties of social science and management programs from both colleges participated in the survey that fulfills the cross-sectional features within a timeframe of a pandemic. Out of 118 students, 90 students from bachelor final year of both humanities and management were taken in cluster from Pasang Lhamu and 28 students from masters in management were from Bernhardt College. Out of 15 faculties, nine faculties were from Bernhardt and six were from Pasang Lhamu College. A structural survey questionnaire was designed and distributed to the 118 students of social science programs in higher education enrolled in colleges. Data from 15 teachers were collected by random sampling from a questionnaire developed and administered by the researcher. The questionnaire was set to know about the effect of COVID-19 on the learning effectiveness of each participant and the challenges they encountered. I selected Pasang Lhamu college because it is a community-based college located in Samakhusi and Bernhardt college because it is a private college located in Bafal, Kathmandu. I wanted to have the variation in my study and have rich data.

The interview was assessed with faculties and students who were engaged in online classes during a pandemic period. For the depth analysis and screening of ideas obtained from the quantitative survey, the interview was taken with ten faculties and five students.

They were selected through purposive sampling and they were not the ones who participated in survey. After taking interview with fifteen respondents, I found it sufficient as I got comprehensive view regarding my research question. Only, teachers who used the traditional face-to-face pedagogical approach without any online experience were selected to provide information on the challenges they were facing with an online teaching approach.

Qualitative and Quantitative data were analyzed in light of the research questions and were analyzed logically based on the facts. To do quantitative research I did data validation, data editing, data coding and used descriptive statistics. I did an interview transcribing for the analysis of my qualitative data. I have taken into consideration the ethical issues of respondents during research and beyond. I was never engaged in activities that harm the respondents. Confidentiality is maintained where it seems necessary.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

There are serious problems to consider before the adoption of online teaching and learning. Our education sector has been immensely affected due to the sudden outbreak of COVID-19. As we, all were in a transition phase; both teachers and students faced many problems. Though we were in the rush of hosting online education during a pandemic, we have to think out of the box about whether online learning can be equivalent to face-to-face learning or not in our social context.

4.1 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS

The students encountered different problems due to a lack of reliable internet facilities, load-shedding, lack of accessibility to computers, and so on. The following tables and paragraphs present the problems encountered by the students during online classes.

Table 1: Internet Facility Before the Online Class

S.no.	Response	No.	%
1	Yes	90	76.3
2	No	27	22.9
3	No Response	1	0.8
Total		118	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2021

In this study, about 76% of students said that they had an internet facility before online classes while about 23% of students said they had no internet facility before online class. Internet facility is very crucial for the smooth conducting

of online classes. So students were asked if they upgraded the internet facility for the online class after the pandemic or not. Their response is discussed in table number 2 below.

Table 2: Upgrading Internet Facility for the Online Class

S.No.	Sex	Upgraded Internet Facility		Not Upgraded Internet Facility		No Response		Total
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	Male	7	23.3	22	73.3	1	3.3	30
2	Female	36	40.9	48	54.5	4	4.5	88
3	Total	43	36.4	70	59.3	5	4.2	118

Source: Field Study, 2021

The table above indicates that 36.4% of students upgraded internet facilities for online classes while 59.3 % of students did not upgrade internet facilities for online classes. Analyzing the gender-segregated data, only 23.3% of males upgraded their internet facilities whereas 40.9% of females had to upgrade their internet facility for an online class. It reveals that male students already had good access to the internet before the pandemic.

Internet quality plays a major role in the effectiveness of the online class. If the internet quality is low then the online classes become worse. Only upgrading the internet is not enough for an uninterrupted internet facility, there should be 24 hours power supply for that. Nevertheless, in our case, load shedding was also one of the issues faced by students.

Table 3: Load shedding disturbing the Online Class

S.No.	Response	No.	%
1	Yes	87	73.7
2	No	30	25.4
3	No Response	1	0.8
Total		118	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2021

The above table indicates that 73.7% of students have online classes disturbed by load shedding while 25.4% of students stated that load shedding itself did not have much impact on their class. Therefore, load shedding seems a big problem in our country.

Lack of technical skill was one of the problems faced by students. Basic Computer skills are essential to students. My study showed that students have the required a willingness to develop computer skills.

Table 4: Willingness to develop computer skills

S.No.	Response	No.	%
1	Yes	102	86.4
2	No	11	9.3
3	Did not Response	5	4.2
Total		118	100.0

Source: *Field Study, 2021*

The majority of the students (86.4%) in my study remarked that they were willing to develop computer skills while 9.3% of students hesitated to have further computer skills.

Not only the students but also teachers are also required to be capable

to take an online class. Our teachers are more habituated to face-to-face teaching. In my survey, students were asked if their teachers were capable to take an online class. Their response is described in the table below.

Table 5: Teacher's Capability to take an Online Class

S.No.	Response	No.	%
1	Yes	82	69.5
2	No	31	26.3
3	Did not Response	5	4.2
Total		118	100.0

Source: *Field Study, 2021*

Students reported that 69.5% of teachers were capable to take online classes while 26.3% were not capable to take online classes. Some students complained that their teacher did not know how to make slides, or do video presentations.

Some students in my interview noticed that the knowledge and skills to teach online by faculties are not satisfactory. They showed their doubt on the faculty's ability to conduct online classes, as they have no formal experience in teaching online. They

complained some teachers did not know how to use the online app smoothly.

Teachers were also required to have the training to conduct efficient online classes. The education sector has been seriously jeopardized by the current pandemic. To minimize it the alternative of the online class has been initiated which is a good start. However, there are many problems faced by students. That is few students are taking regular online classes, which are reflected in the table below.

Table 6: Students Taking Regular Online Classes

S.no.	Response	No.	%
1	Yes	39	33.1
2	No	79	66.9
Total		118	100.0

Source: *Field Study, 2021*

In the survey above 33%, of students reported that they were taking online classes regularly while about 67% of students said they did not take their online classes regularly. This is a very

shocking figure and it reveals that students were not comfortable with online classes. When asked why they were not comfortable with online classes, students reported that they were not

satisfied with online classes as there is no face-to-face interaction/discussion and boring one-way presentations. They said it is less effective as there is fewer tests/assignments. Practical classes are missed in online classes. Some students found subjects like maths difficult to understand in an online class. Online teaching required more technical skills which are lacking in both teachers and students. Moreover, electricity issues and internet issues are there. Paying full concentration in class and getting motivated is also difficult as there are lots of distracting factors. Some students said they had health issues like eye problems due to the excessive use of smartphones and gadgets.

For effective online classes in the future, the instructors should design online classes in such a way that they can motivate students to focus on online learning enthusiastically and should introduce various appropriate pedagogies to increase the interaction between learners and instructors.

4.2 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY TEACHERS

This study examined the experiences of teachers toward online learning compared to face-to-face learning. The faculties I surveyed and interviewed shared that they have expertise in the traditional mode of teaching, ie face to face than in online mode. Online learning has been thus both a compulsion and a necessity. Therefore, it is pertinent to identify the problems faced by teachers.

For smooth online teaching, institutions should be technically equipped so that they can support the teachers. Our universities/colleges do not have their own online platform. Some even do not have minimum requirements like internet facilities, and multimedia.

In the words of a principal of a private College,

There are many challenges Nepalese schools, colleges, and universities have to face to have effective online teaching. We should have adequate

infrastructure to provide education through online means. We need to be prepared technically and practically for running online classes. Our course content also needs to be modified for an online class. Moreover, in the context of Nepal, as online learnings require a proper application of ICT tools, it is not available to a large part of the Nepalese population yet and has thus increased the digital divide among the students. Many students do not have gadgets like laptops, smartphones, Ipad, etc. that situation, classroom or face-to-face teaching is required.

Similarly, one of my respondents who has been engaged in teaching for more than 22 years said:

I have little hope of a Paradigm shift at present, though we have switched to an online medium due to COVID-19. There are many challenges. Teachers, students, and academicians all are change-resistant in Nepal. In the end, we have to adapt to new technology but at present, it is not possible. Therefore, it is better to bring online learning partially into practice in the coming days. For that, the commitment of academicians, promoters, founders to adapting online learning is crucial. Then providing training to teachers alone is not enough but orientation to students is also equally necessary. Similarly, there should be online friendly policies by the government.

Online classes have both positive and negative aspects. Whereas the positive aspects of online classes are: Flexibility, Time-saving, sharing of varieties of online sources of learning, notes, journals, audio/video clips, and so on, and Comfort and confidence at home or workplace. The negative aspects of

online classes as Lack of physical activities like games, group activities and discussions, Interruption of internet service, Irregular power cuts, Difficult to engage students and others.

Due to the closure of educational institutions on lockdown, classes were interrupted for a prolonged time. After the online classes were used for teaching learning, motivating the students for learning was a big problem as shared by the respondents.

One English teacher responded,

I think 'attention and concentration in class are crucial in learning. Nevertheless, it is difficult to motivate the students for attention and concentration. Students in the college level even do not open the camera. Even I am not sure if they are present or pretending to be present. Some of them simply come online and are engaged in other things. However, in a traditional classroom, we can monitor the students and make them do the assigned tasks/activities.

Similarly, one teacher teaching mathematics felt,

Very few students are smart in my subject. Therefore, I need to give more guidance and practice. Even students demand more extra classes and tuition. They say they understand better, when I teach in the whiteboard. I heard from my students that they could not learn well through online classes. I had to do full revision in a physical class, one month before the exam. Students said they understood better in a physical class. For a few good students online teaching was fruitful but not the below-average or average ones.

Students not attending online class regularly was one of the immense problems encountered by teachers. Even if they attended, it was difficult to ensure

their active presence. One teacher teaching humanity and social sciences says, "Class engagement and behavior observation are not possible in an online class. Only 40% of students joined online classes regularly in my subjects".

Another respondent, teaching Psychology for 6 years in the private college in Kathmandu utters that,

In an online class, because it is virtual, students perceive it differently. In addition, they do not feel they are in an actual classroom which affects their learning process. Internet issues and electricity issues, are the major problems encountered by students and for some the completely virtual class didn't go with their teaching-learning modality. Virtual learning can never go with the environment students get in face-to-face learning. Face-to-face learning and discussion also help to enhance communication skills and confidence.

One of the common questions asked to each respondent was, did you face any problems while teaching online classes. Each respondent shared the problem of unstable internet and interruption in the power supply but they said they do not consider it as a problem and managed the internet using data. They also shared they had less idea/knowledge about online teaching methods. They were dissatisfied with online class as there is less interaction, discussion, and participation of students. It was also difficult to read the stress of student, their psychology, behavior, and expectation. Teachers were tired of Student's negligence, cheating, and ignorance (engaged in other tasks). Similarly, there are late joining and early leaving by students; disconnecting and reconnecting the classes frequently, which is very disturbing.

If these problems encountered by teachers and students can be mitigated,

we can dig out a better prospect for online teaching and practice online teaching and learning, when necessary, especially during strikes or pandemics.

4.3 COMPARATIVE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENT'S EXPERIENCES

The education sector has been immensely affected due to the sudden outbreak of COVID-19. In our context, also teachers and students accepted the shift in pedagogy. Though they went through COVID-19 pandemic at the same time, their experiences are slightly different.

The major difference my research revealed is the problem of the digital divide, which was seen more in students than in teachers. Students lacked digital devices like smartphones, laptops, and other gadgets compared to teachers. In my research, each teacher participant said that they all had minimum requirements to conduct online classes like laptops, smartphones, and internet facilities at home and office whereas students lacked them, which created the problem of the digital divide.

One of the students of the management said,

"I am from Parbat and I have hardly managed to pay the university fees and study at Kathmandu. It is difficult for me to buy electronic gadgets like laptop and smartphone. I use my roommate's smart phone to join my class. I don't know till how long I will have to manage like this"

Therefore, online education and its practice are shaped by wider social structures. As C. Wright Mills points out, "individual and society, biography and history, self and the world are inseparably connected and shaped by each other. Larger structure and history constitute the nature of individuals and individuals constitute society. Individuals' hopes, fears, and troubles do not emerge within the realm of individual, personal, and

local levels but from the realm of public sphere" (Mills, 2005).

Whereas the problems teacher and students encountered in my research were similar during online teaching. The problem of unstable internet and interruption in power supply was shared by each respondent. Both teachers and students were dissatisfied with the online classes as there is less interaction, discussion, and participation of students and there is less use of reward and punishment methods to students. Both teachers and students shared that online class was a new experience for them and they were not prepared for this. They shared they even lacked the technical skills required.

Similarly, both students and teachers were willing to develop their computer skills and they wanted the continuation of an online class during pandemic times because the entire education system will be at a halt and we need the alternative, which is an online class.

Both students and teachers felt that online class is learning from home and it digitally connects with teachers and friends. It is also an opportunity to enhance skills and increase knowledge of technology. Students can see the recorded notes as the online class has the benefit of screen sharing and link sharing. There is also the possibility of prompt completion of the course. It not only saved cost it also saved time so that one can spend more time either at work or with family members. In a time of the pandemic, it worked as a measure of precaution and social distancing. Therefore, it can be one of the good alternatives of a face-to-face class.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to gain insights into problems or challenges encountered by teachers and students during their online teaching during this pandemic. The findings of this current study were largely consistent with previous literature on online teaching during the pandemic. This current study concluded that the COVID-

19 pandemic should be taken as an opportunity brought by the crisis in the education sector. It was necessary for the Nepalese government and concerned stakeholders in education sector for immediate response so that education would not be in halt.

In today's world it's almost impossible to remain isolated and aloof from the social world. Sovereignty of any country is just a theoretical pride. Practically interference by one nation to another has been a common reality. Each action of the global affects the local and individual's life. There is always interconnection between global and local and they shape/reshape each other. Our country Nepal also adopted online teaching and learning as higher education pedagogy following the global pattern so that education sector would not be disrupted. In fact we are all in the same thread of a garland.

With the development of infrastructure and technology, an online class can be used as a supplementary alternative in the teaching-learning process. It has come to practice even in Nepal and has been an unseen benefit brought by the pandemic. Nepal proactively followed the path of international community to initiate online class. However, there were some common challenges highlighted by participants such as limited electricity and unreliable internet, limited infrastructures and technology, and low digital knowledge and skills of teachers, which hampers the effectiveness of teaching-learning activities.

To sum up, Online learning has become quite popular around the globe after the outbreak of COVID-19. In Nepal too, online class should be taken as an opportunity brought about by the crisis. Developed countries are going ahead the technology. if we cannot go ahead the technology at least we should try to go parallel to it.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Sindhu Gyawali

Sociologist, CSSID Pvt. Ltd.

REFERENCES

1. Azzi, H. K. and Shmis, T. (2020). Managing the impact of COVID-19 on education systems around the world: How countries are preparing, coping, and planning for recovery. Retrieved from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/managing-impact-COVID-19-education-systems-around-world-how-countries-are-preparing>.
2. Bari A. U. (2020). Dermatology Residency Training in COVID-19 Pandemic: Transition from Traditional to Online Teaching. *Journal of the College of Physicians and Surgeons-Pakistan: JCPS*, 30 (6), 63-66. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.29271/jcpsp.2020.Supp1.563>
3. Castells, M. (1996). The Net and the Self: Working notes for a critical theory of the informational society. *Critique of Anthropology*, 16 (1), 9-38. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X9601600103>
4. Gaur, R., Mudgal, S. K., Dharni, I. T., Sharma, R., & Suyal, N. (2020). Barriers encountered during online classes among undergraduate nursing students during COVID-19 pandemic in India. *International Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*, 8(10), 3687-3693. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.18203/2320-6012.ijrms20204252>
5. Gautam, D. K and Gautam, P. (2020). Transition to Online Higher Education during COVID-19 Pandemic: Turmoil and Way Forward to Developing Country of South Asia- Nepal. Retrieved from doi: 10.21203/rs.3.rs-59206/v1.
6. Gyampoh, A.O., Ayitey, H.K., Ayarkwah, C.F., Gavor, M., Ntow, S.A., Akossah, J., and Vlachopoulos, D. (August 2020). Tutor perception on personal and institutional preparedness for online teaching-learning during the COVID-19 crisis: The case of Ghanaian Colleges of Education. *African Educational Research Journal*, 8(3), pp. 511-518
DOI: 10.30918/AERJ.83.20.088
7. Giavrimis, P. (2020). Sociological Approaches to ICT Integration in Primary School Through Students' Views. *SN COMPUT. SCI.* 1, 244. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42979-020-00262-4>
8. Ghimire, K. (2020). Problems and Challenges of COVID-19 in Nepali Education and its Solutions. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/43293925/>.

- International Association of Universities. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on higher education worldwide Resources for Higher Education Institutions. Retrieved from https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/COVID-19_and_he_resources.pdf.
9. Karki, T. B., Mahat, D., & Kandel, D. R. (2021). Effectiveness of Online Class and Physical Class during COVID-19 Pandemic. *Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(1), 14–30. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3126/njmr.v4i1.36615>
 10. Kathmandu University. (2020). Guidelines for Online Teaching and Learning. Retrieved from <http://soe.kusoed.edu.np/guidelines-for-online-teaching-and-learning/>.
 11. Kentnor, H. (2015). Distance Education and the evolution of online learning in the United States. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.du.edu/law_facpub/24
 12. Mahaye, E. N (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Education: Navigating Forward the Pedagogy of Blended Learning. *Social Education Research* (researchgate.net) DOI: 10.37256/ser.212021545
 13. Mills, C.M. (2005). "The Sociological Imagination." In the Spirit of Sociology: A Reader. India: Pearson Education. Inc.
 14. Nepal Open University. (2016). Nepal Open University Policy 2016. Government of Nepal. Retrieved from <https://www.nou.edu.np/nou-university-policy>.
 15. Pangeni, S. K. (2016). Open and distance learning: Cultural practices in Nepal. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-learning*, 19(2).
 16. Sarkar, S. (2020). Retrieved from <https://adamasuniversity.ac.in/a-brief-history-of-online-education/>
 17. Turban, R. R. (2014). Introduction to information technology. John Wiley and Sons (Asia) Pvt. Ltd.V
 18. UNESCO. (2020). Adverse consequences of school closures. Retrieved from March 04, 2020
 19. WHO. (2020). WHO Timeline - COVID-19, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/27-04-2020-who-timeline---COVID-19>
 20. Wordu, H., Ishia, C.E. (2020). COVID 19 and Higher Education in Rivers State: Exploration, Utilization, Prospects and Challenges of Adopting Online Teaching and Learning. *Int. J. Innovative Educ. Res*, 8(3):63-68
 21. World Economic Forum. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-COVID-1919-online-digital-learning/>.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Gyawali, S. (2023). Online teaching: Challenges experienced by students and teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kathmandu. *International Research Journal of MMC*, 4(3), 62-75. <https://doi.org/10.3126/irjmmc.v4i3.58961>

Submitted: 3 September 2023

Accepted: 19 September 2023

Published: 2 October 2023

COPYRIGHT

© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY-NC 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

International Research Journal of MMC (IRJMMC) is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Research Management Cell, Makawanpur Multiple Campus, Hetauda

