

# Online Teaching and Learning: Experiences of Teachers and Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Kathmandu

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## ***Abstract***

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has created havoc in the human world and affected every part of human life. The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 immensely affected the education sector. Governments everywhere imposed lockdown restrictions such as COVID-19 demanded social distancing and isolation measures. Against this backdrop, colleges, universities, and schools in Nepal have switched to online mediums from face-to-face classes so that the education sector won't be disrupted. Online learning is in the nascent stage in countries like Nepal. This study explored the teacher-student experiences of the sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education. The researcher has combined the use of questionnaires and interviews to gather data on challenges teachers and students face in online teaching experience and their experiences of the use of the online approach. At first stage, the survey was conducted with a pre-structured questionnaire, then the in-depth interview was assessed with faculties and students who were engaged in online classes during the pandemic period. The research revealed teachers' and students' preferences for face-to-face learning over online learning which also reflects post-covid scenario and suggests the return to physical classrooms after COVID-19.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, ICT, Online learnings, face-to-face learning, post COVID-19

## **1. Introduction**

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has created havoc in the human world and affected every part of human lives. The World Health Organization (WHO) stated the "virus an international public health emergency on January 31, 2020 (WHO, 2020) and declared it as a pandemic". Social distancing was being imposed in over 109 countries across the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Mahaye, 2020). As a protective measure against COVID-19, governments across the globe had mandatorily imposed the rules of social

distancing and social isolation policy and as a result of this many countries had to be locked down until the situation gets better.

The ravaged pandemic has affected the education sector widely. "During this time, most of the universities have shifted to online mode using Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or others (Muthuprasad et al. 2021). Technology-based pedagogy is thus introduced to avoid curriculum disruption and to ensure that learners have access to learning materials while staying at home (Mahaye, 2020). "The Mode of teaching-learning activities was forced to be transformed from classroom teaching to online around the globe to the outbreak of COVID-19 and Nepal is no exception" (Gautam & Gautam 2020). Almost all the private schools and colleges and universities initiated online classes in Nepal due to COVID-19. This new strategy has brought a change in the routine of students, faculty, and people concerned.

## **2. Objective of the study**

The main objective of the study is to explore the teacher-student experiences of the sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education.

## **3. Literature Review**

### *3.1 Online Learning in Global Scenario*

The 21st century has brought about a dramatic change in the world of education where teaching is no more limited only to the confines of a classroom. The internet has brought about a shift in paradigm which has taken learning into the palms of everyone (Sarkar, 2020).

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 (Kulkarni, 2020). 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).

"In 1989, The University of Phoenix became the first institute of bachelor to launch an online college program to offer both bachelor's and master's degrees. In 1996, Jones University became the first accredited fully web-based University. In 2003 WebCT announced over 6 million students and 40,000 instructors teaching 150,000 courses at 1350 universities in 55 countries. In 2008 a school in London was the first to use virtual scenarios in an immersive environment as training for its para-medical students. In 2009 President Barack Obama pledged \$500 million in federal fund for creation of new online courses and training (Online school). Currently, the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India is the largest in the world with around 4 million students enrolled, most of whom currently receive education via online methods" (Sarkar, 2020).

Online education has been a promising tool in Asian countries. The two most populous countries in the world, China and India have set up a national e-learning portal for parents, teachers, students, and education administrators using a national repository of learning resources. Furthermore, China is adapting flexible online teaching methods to facilitate learning. In addition, it has strengthened online security in collaboration with all service providers and created a provision of psycho-social support to ensure 100% online education (Azzi-Huck & Shmis, 2020).

Indonesia and Malaysia have adopted the same approach. In Indonesia, Education TV, 'Learning House' and online education system programs are providing access to educational resources. Similarly, Malaysia has launched a new TV channel to provide education to all students, especially through TV programs without internet access. These programs are also live-streamed on the ministry's online learning platform which provides access to on-demand content as well as digital textbooks (IAU, 2020).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, India was in a nascent stage of this online learning. Digital education before the pandemic grew at 55 percent. The learner can access the best learning material and the best teachers. Various concepts are better understood by audio visual aids, interactive, educational simulations.

"In 2017, Indian digital education industry was growing at 55 percent, which has grown steeply during and post COVID-19 scenario. Two years back the E learning market was 3 billion. It was 39 billion in 2018 and is expected to reach 360 billion in 2024.' Online learning has taken a good market in regional scenario too However online learning in Nepal was in the nascent phase before covid 19 pandemic.

### *3.2 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 students are 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. Distance Education Centre established in 1994 and its 2007 and 2014 amendments supported to establish Nepal Open University in 2016.

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).

Rapidly we have leaped forward from the traditional concept of learning to virtual learning as an alternative means of teaching because of the pandemic. Nepal, following a global pattern has made it mandatory for the closure of classes due to COVID-19. Kathmandu University has started online classes using, inter alia, Moodle, Zoom, Google Hangout, and Google Meet platforms (IAU, 2020).

COVID -19 pandemic urges the university to implement online education in all faculties and departments. As a result," Tribhuvan University has introduced online classes guidelines, provided it domain email account for the teachers and students, and also trained both teachers and students in using MS Team as an official software for teaching, learning, emailing and doing any tasks related to the university" (TU, 2020, Quoted by Paudel, 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 (Tribhuwan University2020, quoted by Karki, Mahat & Poudel, 2021).

Similarly, Nepal Open University, which used to have online mode of teaching and learning even before the pandemic promoted its technological competencies and running its regular programme. Other universities like Kathmandu University, Pokhara University, Mid- Western University, Far-Western University and almost all the schools and colleges have been practicing online teaching and learning to keep and run educational activities functional and not to make possible academic loss created by the closure as preventive measures against COVID-19 (Paudel, 2021).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, all our schools, colleges and universities of Nepal (except one - online mode university) and almost all the program had no infrastructure and preparedness for online classes. Faculties and students were not mentally and technically prepared for the online mode of teaching (Gautam & Gautam, 2020).

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.

### *3.3 Teacher and Student Experiences Regarding Online Learning in Developing Countries*

Teacher and Student have their own experiences regarding online learning. The experiences also differ between developed countries and developing countries. Developed countries had good practice in online learning before COVID-19.

Faculty considered online education to result in more academic dishonesty, impersonal and lack feeling compared to face-to-face classes, and difficult to manage in terms of technology (Moralista & Oducado, 2020).

Aboagye in his similar study on Ghana asserted that "many educational institutions in Ghana shifted the mode of delivery from a face-to-face pedagogical approach to online learning. Although tutors at colleges of education accepted the shift in pedagogy, many of them were not prepared for the new experience. The researchers identified problems associated with accessibility, social, lecturer and generic issues and proposed that a blended approach should have ushered the learners to complete online." (Aboagye, 2020).

However, Paudel (2021) has different findings. In his research work, Online education: Benefits, challenges and strategies during and after COVID-19, the research findings revealed that the participants found online education beneficial though it was their first experiences. They found that "online education is highly beneficial promoting online research, connecting the practitioners to the global community, getting huge and authentic resources of knowledge required for professional and academic endeavor, and make them self -disciplined " (Paudel, 2021).

In industrialized countries, online learning enables learning and working together which is in favour of capitalism. Online education is thus the outcome of changing social structure, the industrialization and is the demand of capitalism. So online classes are appropriate option in developed countries but in country like Nepal where technology is in nascent stage, conducting smooth online class is challenging. However, it should be taken as an opportunity brought by the crisis.

Universities in our country are producing graduates at a faster rate than the market gives employment. So Nepalese students do not feel the necessity for learning and working together and our school and college follow the mostly traditional ways of teaching.

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.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

The study employed an exploratory research design using both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' and teachers' experiences with online learning compared to traditional face-to-face education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was conducted at Bernhardt College, a private institution, and Pasang Lhamu College, a community-based institution, selected for accessibility and diversity, covering 1,378 students across humanities, social sciences, and management

programs. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 118 students selected as cluster sampling and 15 faculty members, alongside in-depth, standardized open-ended interviews with 10 faculties and 5 students, selected purposively to provide deeper insights. The combination of surveys and interviews allowed the researcher to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative perspectives, ensuring a rich and nuanced understanding of online teaching and learning experiences during the pandemic.

## 5. Data Analysis, Presentation and Results

### 5.1 Background Information of Students

Table 1: Background Information of Students

Faculty	Male		Female		Total	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Management	10	29.4	24	70.6	34	28.8
Humanities	20	23.8	64	76.2	84	71.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>74.6</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field Study, 2021)

Table 1 clearly discloses that there were 84 students from humanities whereas students from management were only 34. The total number of students studying humanities was more than the student's studying management. The number of female students is higher than male students in both management and humanities faculty. In this study, 88 female students and 30 male students were surveyed.

Table 2: Experience of online class before COVID-19

S.N.	Online Class before COVID-19	No.	%
1	Yes	10	8.5
2	No	104	88.1
3	No Response	4	3.4
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field Study, 2021)

Our teaching-learning method to date is the face-to-face method. Our course structure and exam pattern are all designed for face-to-face classes. Therefore, the online class before COVID-19 was negligible. Nearly 89% of students in my survey said that they had no prior online classes before COVID-19. While 8.5% said they had experienced online classes somehow before COVID-19, 3.4% of students did not respond to this question. Due to Pandemic, the online class was disturbed for a long time, as we were not technically prepared for an online class. In the last three decades, big physical buildings were made for physical class, but our academicians had

little idea about how the pandemic would crush our education sector. We did not have adequate infrastructure for online learning. The table below shows the duration of class disturbance due to COVID-19.

Table 3: Duration of class disturbance due to COVID-19

S.N.	Duration	No.	%
1	Less than 1 Month	8	7.7
2	1 to 2 Months	7	6.7
3	2 to 3 Months	3	2.9
4	More than 3 Months	84	80.8
5	Do not Response	2	1.9
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field Study, 2021)

Table 3 indicates the regular class disturbances due to COVID-19. The majority of the students (80.8%) reported that their class was disturbed for more than 3 months while a few of them (2.9%) experienced class disturbances for 2 to 3 months. Only eight students (7.7%) experienced class disturbances for less than 1 month. As classes were heralded for a couple of months in many colleges, education was switched to the online medium. Therefore, respondents were asked where they learned more, and their response is summarized in the Table 4.

Table 4: Where students learned more

S.N.	Response	No.	%
1	Face to Face Classes	111	94.1
2	Online Classes	5	4.2
3	No Response	2	1.7
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field Study, 2021)

The majority of the students (94.1%) assumed that more learning occurred in face-to-face classes. Only a few (4.2%) students thought more learning occurred in online classes. Our education system, class structure, course design, exam pattern, administrative tasks all are designed for a face-to-face class. Therefore, we are more used to regarding face/face classes. We are more comfortable with it as we are more accustomed to it.

One of the students from the management stream respondent shared,

Online classes are easy to access but being a student who is used to traditional classrooms, I find face-to face class learning-orientated as teachers are present in the same room physically with students and there is direct interaction on the subject matter. She added many of the

students had difficulty staying focused in online classes, as there was no proper supervision as in the physical ones.

Similarly, another interviewee from humanities mentioned:

“...I miss my class, those face-face discussions, presentations among teacher & student. .... class environment provides more opportunities for learning things". Though students preferred face-to-face class, learning should go continuously in the pandemic and it's important that they could ask their concerns/questions to teacher easily in an online class.

Table 5: Comparison of experiences

S.N.	Description	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Do not Response		Total Response
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
1	I found the face- to-face/physical classes more effective	91	77.1	10	8.5	2	1.7	2	1.7	1	0.8	12	10.2	118
2	There are more group discussions and interactions in face to face/physical class	88	74.6	10	8.5	2	1.7	2	1.7	0	0.0	16	13.6	118
3	Online classes are helpful for this COVID-19 pandemic time	89	75.4	10	8.5	2	1.7	2	1.7	1	0.8	14	11.9	118
4	I am satisfied with the content of online/virtual classes	89	75.4	10	8.5	2	1.7	2	1.7	1	0.8	14	11.9	118
5	There is more workload in online classes	87	74.4	8	6.8	2	1.7	2	1.7	1	0.9	17	14.5	117

(Source: Field Study, 2021)

Table 5 represents the comparative differences of the experiences of students in face-to-face classes and online classes. The highest response rate was 77.1% concerning learning process effectiveness of face-to-face classes. Majority of the students (74.6%) strongly agreed that there were more group discussion and interaction in the face-to-face class. Similarly, about 8.5% of students agreed with this statement. The second highest response rate was (75.4%) concerning the statement that Online classes are helpful during this COVID-19 pandemic



time. Students reported that they were satisfied with the content of online/virtual classes, similarly (74.4%) shared that the workload is more in an online class.

One student studying for a master's degree in management also added, it is good to give continuity to learning and studying rather than not studying at all. Nevertheless, face to face/Physical classes is my choice, as it is easy to understand and practical. In Face-to-Face Classes, we can easily explore our knowledge and thoughts. Though online class was helpful to be engaged in study somehow, it was hard for practical subjects. He says in face-to-face classes we can frequently ask the same questions unless we understand. But in online classes there is a one-hour time limit and the problem of the network.

Similarly, another student said, online classes are easy to access but being a student who is used to traditional classroom, I find face-to face class learning-orientated as teachers are present in the same room physically with students and there is direct interaction on subject matter. She added many of the students had difficulty in staying focused in online classes as there was no proper supervision as in the physical ones.

Students were also asked about their preference for an online class in the future and their response is summarized below.

Table 6: Demand for an online class in future

S.No.	Response	No.	%
1	Yes	18	15.3
2	No	96	81.4
3	No Response	4	3.4
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field Study, 2021)

Table 6 presents the demand for an online class in future. As the majority of the students thought more learning occurred face to face, their predilection for online classes in the future is very negligible. Only 15.3% of students reported that they wanted online classes in the future while 81.4% of students said they do not wish to have any online classes in the future. When asked why they did not like to have online classes in future, they reported the points given.

- Internet issues/problems
- Technical issues
- Lack of experience in both teacher and students
- No proper study environment at home, distractions.

To my question, were you motivated to take online classes regularly during the pandemic time? One of my student respondents replied, no. She said she was in Mustang, her home due to lockdown and she had no

adequate reading materials with her, as she had not guessed of prolonged consequences of COVID-19. The internet service in Mustang was very slow which made it hard for her to attend classes regularly. Therefore, she was always stressed.

In the context of Nepal, 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. In that situation, classroom or face-to-face teaching is required.

Economically weaker students are unable to bear the cost of efficient electronic gadgets, the internet, and accessories. Moreover, it may develop a fear of falling behind and ultimately lead to depression and mental illness in those students. (Gaur et al. 2020). It is essential for both teachers and students to have some technical skills to learn online class effectively.

### *5.2 Experiences of Teachers towards Online Learning*

This study explored teachers' experiences with online learning compared to traditional face-to-face teaching in Nepal, where educational institutions had been primarily designed for physical classrooms and were largely unprepared technically and mentally for online education. The sudden shift to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges, including unreliable internet and limited infrastructure. The 15 faculty members were surveyed, where there were eight from humanities and seven from management, including five women and ten men who shared that they had expertise in face-to-face teaching and only adopted online methods out of necessity. The study combined survey and interview data to capture their perspectives, highlighting both the difficulties and adaptations teachers experienced in transitioning to online education.

### *5.3 Is Online Teaching Helpful during COVID-19?*

In this survey, I asked if online teaching was helpful during COVID-19. All the respondents were thankful for the initiation of online teaching, as it was helpful during COVID-19. One of the respondents shared "yes online class was helpful during this pandemic. The social distancing measures disrupted our education for several months. To give continuity to education we switched to the online medium. As we were following lockdown restrictions, there was less chance of transmission. Online learning worked as a precaution and at the same time did not interfere with the continuity in education".

Purnima Hamal (name changed), who has been teaching Nepali for humanities for 22 years says we didn't see any flaws in the face-to-face methods until this pandemic. Now this pandemic has made us rethink the laggings of face-to-face methods in education. Now we have learned that the classroom can be the zone of infection and

spread of contagious diseases in such pandemics. Therefore, for social distancing, online education was a good choice.

#### *5.4 Faculties Preferred Method for Teaching-learning*

Teachers in this survey preferred face-to-face learning to online learning as a better method for teaching. In my survey, 10 out of 15 teachers preferred face-to-face classes while about four preferred uses of the combined method. One English teacher, Sita Sedhai (name changed) preferred online teaching. She said that if circumstances related to technology and the internet go fine and if everything becomes sound, I would prefer the online method for teaching. However, in the context of Nepal, she preferred face-to-face learning where we are still lagging in ICT. But online teaching is also better provided adequate infrastructure.” In my opinion, Students should have options for both an online class and face-to-face class. Then working students would benefit. Moreover, in strikes, pandemic situations studies could go on continuously and smoothly.

To my question, which mode of learning do you prefer once the situation gets normal? Face to face or online learning. Suman Subedi, one of my respondents replied, “I would prefer a combined method: face-to-face and online learning. In six credit hours weekly subject, I would enjoy 4 hours face-to-face (4 days) and 2 hours online (2 days)

Though we have switched to an online medium due to COVID-19, Subedi has little hope of a Paradigm shift at present. There are many challenges. According to him, teachers, students, and academicians all are change-resistant in Nepal. In the end, we must please adapt to new technology but at present, it is not possible. In his opinion, it is better to bring online learning partially into practice in the coming days. For that, he said there should be:

- Training for Teachers
- The commitment of academicians, promoters, founders to adapting online learning
- Online friendly policies by the government
- Orientation to students is necessary

Another respondent, Mrs. Sarika Chhetri (name changed) teaching Psychology for 6 years in the private college in Kathmandu says that face to face is better in her subject as students can engage directly and feel their presence in the classroom. Whereas 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.

Ram Chandra Sigdel (name changed), principal of a private College said, “We also closed our college for ensuring the safety and health of our students and faculty. In our college, we have a Microsoft team for platform servers and internet facilities. Students doing BSCIT have been using the online platform since 2073. During the lockdown, we soon requested faculties to run online classes.

Sigdel said that for effective learning there should be blended or hybrid learning in which-to-face to face learning is 70 percent and online learning is 30 percent. Online learning provides more flexibility in terms of time and comfort to both teachers and students. However, there are many challenges Nepalese schools, colleges, and universities must 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.

Teachers who preferred face to face reported that face-to-face learning has greater advantages as face to face helped in deeper learning. More interaction participation/group activities made face-to-face class livelier. Teachers said that face-to-face class is a learning with motivation as there are more engagement and continuous monitoring of students. They said that certain explanations need gestures and physical demonstration. Though face-to-face mode was the preference of most faculties, they did not find online classes difficult too.

### *5.5 Is It Difficult to Teach Online Class than Face-to-Face Class?*

As teachers were not trained and exposed to teach in an online class, it was a new experience for them. However, my respondents did not find it difficult to take the online classes, but they reported it was difficult to engage students, to read their expressions, behavior, and psychology. It was also difficult to teach subjects like Math, Nepali and prepare the slides.

A Nepali subject teacher articulated, “It took me almost two weeks to be comfortable in integrating technology into teaching. Having limited knowledge and skills of the technological device also caused many hurdles in effective online teaching. She said, I am a Nepali teacher. I even do not know Nepali typing. Now I have begun to learn typing and learning to make slides from my daughter. It is taking a lot of time for me to make a few slides a day. In face to face we used a marker to write on the board and made students understand. Therefore, I take online learning as an opportunity. For the effective conducting of online classes, we require some skills to handle the app. I am excited to explore zoom, google meets to connect with my students. However, I feel that there are many other things we need to explore in the use of technology”

The online class was desired during pandemic times but very few respondents regarded it as an equivalent or better alternative to a face-to-face class.

### *5.6 Online Class Effectiveness. (Equivalent or better alternate to face to face class)*

Most of my respondents shared that online learning can be considered a better alternative only in periods of crisis and it can never replace face-to-face learning.

In my survey, four respondents considered online class equivalent or a better alternative to face to class only for the pandemic time as we can give continuity to the teaching-learning process. Eleven respondents felt that

online classes never could be a better alternative to face-to-face classes. One faculty teaching humanity stated ‘online class is not equivalent but yes, it is a better alternative during COVID-19’. However, I am not satisfied with this technique because schooling does not mean making you informed about things or making you literate, it is also molding you, shaping you”.

Sigdel, one of my teacher respondents added that our course and exam pattern are designed in such a way that it is suitable for only face-to-face learning. When I asked about the drawbacks of online teaching, he replied, in online teaching students miss extra-curricular activities like sports, field visit, educational camps that broadens their outlook and increase their exposure. Students of BSW third year have 4 days of theoretical class and 2 days of practical class. Every Thursday and Friday, they work as volunteers in different organizations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students missed such things. From our college Sigdel said, we take students of B.S.W (bachelor’s in social work), third year, to neighboring countries like Bangladesh, India as part of educational camps. Students from the first year to the second year visit different parts of Nepal. Students miss all these things in an online class. Even I am getting complaints about subjects like maths, nepali, and statistics from students. They say they do not understand those subjects in online classes compared to physical class.

Prakash Thapa (name changed), a teacher who has been teaching English in a private college in Kathmandu for 10 years says, only having access to information and knowledge is not sufficient in life. Moreover, in classrooms, it is easier to discipline and motivate students and they can be kept under the teacher’s monitoring. There is always a fixed schedule and routine for everything, class time, exam, and assessments are all structured and scheduled. However, the feeling of self-determination, motivation, willingness to learn, self-involvement, and competence are required in online learning.

Thapa, further said, online learning can never be real learning though we have switched to it due to the pandemic due to the following problems.

- Infrastructure - electricity, power backup
- Connectivity - network issues
- Material Resources - digital content/teaching and learning materials
- Human Resources - teacher trained to learn ICT and use ICT
- E-Literacy – knowledge and skills about ICT means and uses
- Language and Culture - English dominant software tools - Domination of western culture in e-contents and design of ICT tools
- Total Cost – Cost for ICT services, equipment and devices in the long run
- Digital divide - when students come to higher education

However, if challenges can be succeeded online learning overall helps in Personalized and student-centered learning which is the need of twenty-first century needs and skills. It not only connects people but also connects learning through innovation and change in pedagogy. Moreover, it allows flexibility as Teaching and Learning can be done anytime from anywhere. For students engaged in the job, online learning is like a bonus as earning and learning can go together.

Another teacher respondent Suman Subedi (name changed) assumed that COVID-19 gave a new alternative or a choice to teachers, students, and academicians in Nepal. The positive aspect of this pandemic is that we have an opportunity to learn a new skill and technique of online pedagogy. In the west, it was already in practice but in Nepal, it came by force or as a crisis-bought alternative.

However, he believed that online classes itself could never be a better alternative to face-face classes as there will be a lack of classroom discussion/interaction, group activities, and presentations. In my interview, he said, online learning was very helpful during this COVID-19 pandemic time in two ways: Firstly, it helped the students to engage in teaching-learning activities so that their potential does not get distracted in absence of regular classes. Secondly, online education met academic requirements to complete the stipulated course in time, for the evaluation of the students. Besides, he added online learning enables both teachers and students to adopt new learning methods. It provides time flexibility to both the teachers and students. Unlike regular fixed times, they can manage mutually. It also saves time for both of them, as they do not need to prepare for college online. The course content is also identical and the online classes have an advantage in sharing online sources for varieties of content on a single topic than in face-to-face notes and lectures. Despite all these, he said, high-quality learning cannot take place without interacting with your students face-to-face. Face to face, the method is more effective as we can use more varieties of teaching-learning techniques such as group activities, observation, and demonstration.

When comparing physical class with virtual classes, Subedi found physical class more comfortable, vibrant, and exciting than online. He also faced some problems with online teaching in his subject. There were disturbances due to power interruption, or internet service providers. He said 'Regular uninterrupted power supply is necessary for online learning. I missed 3-4 classes in one month due to a power supply.'

This study revealed that online classes itself could never be a better alternative to face-face class as there will be a lack of classroom discussion/interaction, group activities, and presentation. However, online learning was very helpful for this COVID-19 pandemic time.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study explored the teacher-students' experiences with the sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education. The findings of this current study were largely consistent with

previous literature on online teaching during the pandemic. Unlike some works of literature, which preferred blended learning or online learning beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic, my study showed preferences towards face-to-face learning. It reflects the return to physical classes in higher education in post-Covid Nepal.

Many of the respondents preferred face-to-face classes in my study due to circumstances related to technology, internet issues, and student-teacher convenience. 'Something is better than nothing' was the most common statement of the participant students. Though all the participants preferred face-to-face mode they think online learning should go continuously during the pandemic time. They showed a strong willingness to continue their course online and build their IT skills.

In the situation of COVID-19, switching to online classes was very appropriate, otherwise if steps were not taken, then education sector would be jeopardized. In a context of Nepal also, there was lockdown for social protection and school/colleges were shutdown closing the physical classes.

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.

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