Effectiveness of using Online Teaching Platforms as Communication Tools in Higher Education Institutions in Oman: Stakeholders' Perspectives

Professor Hesham Magd
Associate Dean & Head, Faculty of Business & Economics,
Modern College of Business and Science, Oman
Email: hesham.magd@mcbs.edu.om

Dr. Shad Ahmad Khan
Assistant Professor, College of Business,
University of Buraimi, Oman
Email: khan.shadahmad@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Communication is an important tool in the education sector to ensure its effectiveness. During the Covid19 pandemic, the communication process across the globe undergone a major shift, i.e., from conventional (face-to-face) teaching to online/remote teaching. The communication effectiveness of online teaching has been the talk of the town since its adoption in Oman, major share of the users, adopted it as there was no alternative available. As higher education institutions (HEIs) in Oman are preparing for the post covid era, reflecting on the effectiveness of online teaching would be an area of study so that the HEIs can deliberate on the format of effective communication regarding its teaching learning process. On these lines, the present study is conducted on the faculty and administrative staff of the HEIs who are involved in the decision making of their respective institutions. This study is based on qualitative analysis of the responses based on open ended questions. The findings revealed that the online teaching in Oman suffered many deadlocks like network connectivity in remote areas, low motivation to use among users, students' participation, peer learning among students, lack of proper training to use online platforms etc. In light of these challenges the online teaching was found to be moderately effective and requires attention to improve its effectiveness as a communication tool. This study has an implication of HEIs of the middle east region, governing and accreditation bodies, education allied agencies and policy makers.

Keywords: Communication, Covid 19, Higher Education Institutions, Online teaching, Online platform, Oman.

1. Introduction

Covid19 pandemic led to disruption on various fronts, to the extent that countries were forced to close their border and impose lockdown restricting the movement of the people (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Alon et al., 2020; Bocar et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2021). This forced universities i.e., Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to close their routine activities and perform teaching-learning process including assessments through online platforms (Ratten, 2020; Liguori and Winkler, 2020; Khan & Magd, 2021). This has led to the need to study the change in communication between instructors and students (Bocar et al., 2021; Khan and Magd, 2021). In simple words education in transfer of information from one person to another person or group through an online mode is referred as online teaching (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020; Magd & Khan, 2022). The communication is considered to have an ability to improve learning experience of the students along with creating positive setup (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020; Saleem et al., 2022). The process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and information to fulfil the desired purpose or intention is referred as effective communication. If the recipient understands the sender's expression in a way that sender wanted, the purpose of communication is complete. Whether the communication happens through face to face or through any medium, the definition and purpose remains the same (Khan & Magd, 2021; Kamal et al., 2022). This applies to the online communication as well. In the

education sector, communication revolves around the element of exchanging information, building relationship (bonding), being heard, and being understood. Instructors communicate students for the purpose of offering knowledge or having information to gain understanding and develop relationship irrespective of online or face to face communication. Communicating with students require planning and proper preparation on the part of the instructor, however, communicating through online environment required a little extra thought and planning as the elements like gestures, body language, eye contact etc are lacking in the process. The weakness in terms of using online environment further adds advert issues to the communication process (Saleem et al.,2022). It is important for the instructor to plan and establish appropriate communication methods to interact with students online to ensure effective transfer of knowledge.

During the present times when the world is preparing for the post Covid19 era, there are mixed opinion in the academic world about whether returning to the face-to-face teaching, continue with online teaching or adopt a blended type of learning (Magd and Khan,2022; Bocar et al., 2021). Thus, in the present study the opinion of educators who are involved in the decision-making process in universities and colleges in Oman has been explored and analysed in the form of a qualitative analysis. The following paragraphs throw light on the purpose and objective of the study.

1.1. Purpose of the study
As the educational institutes are planning to start new academic year, this study intends to assist them with the findings from the stakeholder's perspective. This study addresses the issues like challenges and benefits experienced during online classes, preference of the students, status of relationship between instructor and students, motivation for online classes, future of online classes in Oman, and satisfaction from online classes.

1.2. Objectives of the study
i. To explore the benefits and challenges experienced from the online classes.
ii. To analyse the status of relationship between the instructor and students through online classes.

iii. To identify the motivation in conducting the online classes for the instructors and students.
iv. To get an idea about the future of online classes in Oman.
v. To check the effectiveness of the online classes from the satisfaction point of view.

2. Literature review
2.1. Communication and its effectiveness in education
Studying communication is important in education sector as it involves the transfer of information from one person or group to another person or group. Students' and instructors need to be actively involved in communication process (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). The communication skills of everyone are responsible for personal and organisational effectiveness (Summers, 2010). Lack of effective communication can be considered as a hindering force for organisational effectiveness (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010; Singh et al.,2020). Communication is defined as a process of transferring information from one person to another (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). Keyton (2011) describe it as the process of transmitting information and popular understanding from one person to another. The communication process involves verbal, non-verbal and electronic means of human interaction (Velentzas and Borni, 2014). Cheney (2011) mentions that communication cannot happen unless a shared understanding emerges from the exchange of information. One can utilise gestures, signs, signals, expression or writing in this process of exchange of thoughts and ideas (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). Velentzas and Borni (2014), suggest that communication is exchange of information irrespective of being written or oral. It's essential to highlight that the purpose of communication is also to remove the elements of miscommunication from the process. This can be achieved by way of building healthy relationship, and developing a sense of community (Velentzas and Borni, 2014).

Effectiveness in communication is an important element for effective transferring of any information. For an instructor it is important to have good communication skills, as it is one of the primary factors that makes him a successful teacher (Weast,2008). Thus,

achieving effectiveness in communication is important and should be a priority for a good teacher (Hilliard and Newsome, 2013). Effective communication can be identified when the desired result of communication is achieved through exchange of information, and the intended message doesn't suffer any distort (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). In other words, when the sender can communicate his/her ideas to the receiver, and the receiver receives and understand the information as desired by the sender, the state of effectiveness in communication is achieved. An instructor utilises the communication to create awareness, to educate, to convey some idea or perspective (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). Suter, et.al., (2009) consider collaboration as a tool for effective communication. Education institutions need to gain knowledge on the value of responsibilities of the sender and receiver and adhere to the active listening skills to increase communication effectiveness (Lunenburg, 2010).

The teaching effectiveness of an instructor is to a greater extent linked to the way he/she communicates (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). The instructors express their ideas, information, and expectations in several ways i.e., by speaking, gestures, body language and written words (Duta et al., 2015). If an instructor communicates effectively in the class, he/she can motivate students and can encourage learning. There are many unintended messages that can be sent to the students by way of body language, in modern times, new technologies are creating new opportunities to interact with students (Duta et al., 2015). Communication is an integral part of teaching and learning process (Majid et al., 2010; Moore, 2007).

Instructors can adopt three steps i.e., feed-up; feedback; and feedforward to improve on their communication strategy for the students with regards to evaluation (Lambrechts et al., 2013). In all the three steps, the role of communication becomes indispensable. In feed up, and instructor is expected to give an idea about the evaluation to the students by way of explaining evaluation and assessment criteria to the students. Under feedback, the instructor gives feedback to the students so that students' can learn from their evaluation. This is followed by the third step i.e., feed forward, where the students get input about the ways they can go further in their learning process (Lambrechts et al., 2013). In the study by Jurik et al. (2014), the importance of teacher-students interaction along with student learning and motivation was explored, where the results revealed that teacher-students interaction can influence the student learning and motivation. Different learning and study strategies can enhance the academic performance of the students (Yip,2012). This different learning and study strategies can be done by way of adopting variation in the way of communication with the students.

2.2. *Online teaching and face-to-face teaching*
Online teaching can be understood as a form of teaching employed for online learning of students, i.e., delivering learning experience by using certain technology (Benson,2002; Conard,2002). In the today's environment, it is perceived as a mode of distance education (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020; Benson,2002; Conard,2002). On the other hand, face-to-face teaching revolves around the traditional form of teaching that requires the teacher and students sitting together and communicating to each other from the same location (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). The sessions in face-to-face teaching are synchronous (Caner,201) whereas, in online teaching a blend can be achieved in the form of synchronous as well as asynchronous teaching (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). The online teaching and learning are discussed in relation to connectivity, mobility, and interactivity (Ally, 2004). In terms of use of technology, online teaching requires a technology or online platform to conduct classroom teaching, whereas such is not a requirement for a face-to-face teaching. Both, online and face-to-face have their own benefits and challenges (Naik et al., 2021). However, the online teaching is more dynamic as the instructor is assisted with additional tools to enhance his communication and making it effective (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). There has been a significant improvement in the digital media that has improved the teaching and learning experience for the teacher and students in online learning (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020; Paechter and Maier, 2010). The Covid19 pandemic has also added fuel to the adoption of the online learning (Ratten,2020). The online platforms too have improved themselves by adding new features, enhancing the overall experience in the teaching learning process.

The learning environment within face-to-face teaching is bound by the location and requires presence of the instructor and students in real time, however in online teaching is free from such limitation as it is dynamic and enables asynchronous communication as well (Dabbagh and Ritland, 2005). Online learning environment enables diverse educational practices that are student centric and can facilitate active learning (Keengwe and Kidd, 2010; Khan and Gurung, 2019). Online learning has witnessed improvement in test scores, students' engagement, enhanced learning, increased connectivity, and stronger sense of community among students (Nguyen, 2015). It further offers versatility in participation, accessibility, and convenience, that appeals to a large section of students (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020; Nguyen, 2015). According to Croxton (2014), online learning will continue to be an integral part of higher education and is going to remain as a strategy in higher education. It is becoming essential for the teachers to learn and get trained in technology so that they can handle online education effectively, since technology keeps on changing, training, and retraining is the need for the knowledge society (Berge,2007; Kamal et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2022)

2.3. Online teaching in the present context

The covid19 pandemic made online education the new normal (Bocar, et al, 2022; Khan & Magd,2021). As the countries were compelled to close their border and implement lockdown/shutdown restricting the movement of the people (Alon et al., 2020), higher education institutes were forced to shift to online education. The routine activities along with students' assessment was shifted to online platforms (Ratten,2020; Liguori and Winkler, 2020). According to Ratten (2020), higher education institutions were not equipped to handle the health crisis like Covid-19. Educational institutes were majorly dependent on the government's directives and had little to do with the strategic implementation of online teaching. In such situation the innovation in education is needed (Ferreira et al., 2018). The covid19 had a significant health and workplace crisis for the educators (Bocar et al., 2022; Bacq et al., 2020). Before the pandemic working and learning from home were used to be considered as a luxury and optional, the same became a necessity during the pandemic

(Ratten,2020). Online teaching often requires instructors to work from home, and availability of the appropriate devices and other facilities are needed to implement any work via online (Scott, 2020; Khan & Magd, 2021; Bocar, et al., 2022).

One of the benefits that online teaching brings is convenience, as students do not have to be physically present in a location for attending classes, online platforms enable direct communication between students and instructors (Magd & Khan, 2022; Fedynich,2013; Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). Another, benefit is participation, according to Morrison et al. (2019), students can participant in the chat room in real time or asynchronously by posting their message to the chat rooms or forums. This is a great tool for students who are introvert and hesitate to raise their queries in a face-to-face class (Garnham and Kaleta,2002). Students' participation increases in the asynchronous environment, as there is facility to post, read and respond to message privately (Kupczynskiet al., 2008). Further, the instructor gets time to reflect on the query raised, and improve on his/her feedback (Fedynich, 2013). The online teaching is also cost effective for the Higher education institutes, as universities can target a greater number of students' enrolment leading to increase in student population to grow. This has an impact in reducing the students' withdrawal rates too (Steen, 2008). According to Cavanaugh (2009), online education has little or no cost in terms of educational facilities, transportation, and associated staff. This can help the universities to cut their budget and transfer the cost benefit to the students' by reducing their enrolment fees.

On the other hand, there are challenges associated with the online learning. Online learning is viewed as individualising learnings and limiting interactions with others (Boling et al., 2012). Online education students are found to be isolated from their teachers, course content and their classmates (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020; Antony et al, 2022; Khan et al., 2019). The peer learning is missing in the online learning as the students are not engaging in conversation with each other and often consider online atmosphere to be impersonal (Vonderwell, 2003). Kear (2010) referred the interaction as a "computer to

computer interaction" instead of "person to person interaction". Instructors are also not able to establish the personal touch that they were able to offer in face-to-face teaching environment, thus, the teacher-student relationship seems to suffer a turmoil in the online education. Further, Online education has suffered serious motivation issues. Motivated learners are more likely to participate in challenging activities, show active participation and enjoy deep learning, leading to increased performance (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2012). If the communication is ineffective on the part of the instructor in the online atmosphere, there are high chances that students would not be motivated to learn subsequently the purpose will fail (Magd & Khan, 2022).

2.4. Online teaching and communication

Online teaching is a type of teaching communication mediated by a computer or device (Khan & Magd, 2021). In an online setup it is necessary to build avenues for interaction and communication between instructors and their students (Hung et al., 2010). Shy students appear to be more comfortable in the online learning as compared to traditional face to face teaching, similarly the active students can make online forums given the opportunities to have deeper dialogue and insightful discussion with their instructors (Hung et al., 2010). The online platforms are also enabling students collaborate with other online students in their learning process. This collaboration opportunity is also available to instructors who can collaborate with other instructors and bring more dynamism in their teaching. There are four factors related to the students' satisfaction in online courses i.e., interaction and communication; time spent on task; active and engaged learning; and cooperation between classmates (Bangert, 2006; Gray and DiLoreto, 2016). The purpose of online education is to attain institutional productivity, being a determinant of the degree of performance, quality, and effectiveness (Alawamleh, et.al., 2020). Quality and effectiveness of education falls on the shoulders of instructors who need motivation to deliver in their classroom session to achieve the desired educational productivity. At the same time, the role of administrators and management can be undermined in the teaching communication process (Getange,

2016). Successful and efficient motivational approaches are needed to be implemented by the institute administration to ensure the effectiveness of teachers in the education system (Getange, 2016; Magd & Khan, 2022).

3. Methodology

The current study is based on qualitative research approach. For this purpose, 50 respondents working at teaching with administrative profile in the higher edification institutes in Oman were approached. An open-ended questionnaire was given to them to refer and record their responses. Out of the respondents approached, the researchers were successful in receiving 20 complete responses. Thematic analysis has been performed on the opinions drawn as the data qualifies to be qualitative in nature. Based on the analysis of the gathered data, meaningful conclusions and recommendations have been drawn.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1. Satisfaction from the courses offered online

Out of the total responses, at an overall level, an orientation was seen towards being moderately satisfied to satisfied with the way courses were offered online in the HEIs. Some of the responses have been capture in the table 1.

At an overall level, the respondents appear to be moderately satisfied to satisfied with the way online teaching were conducted in their institute. Most of the respondents were found to have concerns, when the online teaching and learning process was further deliberated. The online tool was found to be appropriate given the situation of pandemic. Some of the respondents as visible above also praised the online teaching because of the features it has as discussed in the studies of Naik et al. (2021); Fedynich (2013); Alawamleh, et.al. (2020); Garnham and Kaleta (2002); Kupczynskiet al. (2008); Fedynich (2013); Steen (2008); Cavanaugh (2009); Magd, et al. (2022) etc.

4.2. Challenges encountered in online teaching

The respondents were asked about the challenges they faced in the online teaching; they were supposing to give three to five challenges they experienced. The responses have been analysed and have been assigned under the themes considering homogeneity in responses. The snapshot of the same is presented in the form of the table 3.

Table 1: Selected responses on Satisfaction from the courses offered online

Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Not satisfied
– With the platforms provided to us, I am more than satisfied with offering courses online" – "I am satisfied on online form of learning and development" – "Online courses are highly satisfactory in that teaching material is loaded, recorded and gives students the chance to refer back" – "Overall, I am satisfied with the online teaching as it gives flexibility to the students in terms of class attendance sharing of teaching resources but in the case of assessments and interaction, the online system has its limitations".	– "Moderately satisfied. From one side, it gives more flexibility and allows to save time for other responsibilities. From another side, lack of face-to-face contact significantly decreases overall efficiency of the process", – "Though online courses are not comparable to the efficacy of face-to-face or on-campus courses, it is the requirement of the hour looking into the prevailing critical situation of the pandemic disaster. Satisfactory level can be defined as 'average' which means that we are able to manage a minimum required level though it is not the best as expected." – "Satisfied to some extent considering of the exploration and learning on newly shifted platform from GoToMeeting to MS Teams. There are certain features and commands that need to be explored which was not clearly discussed during the virtual workshop in a short period of time and you need to cope all of those which caused dilemmas and work stress"	– "Courses offering online has its own pros and cons. In my opinion, I would prefer having courses offline for the purpose of making every single student an effective learner. The extent of reaching the minds of every learner in the online mode is really challenging. Majority attend classes online just for the sake of attendance with non-application of mind." – "Not really, as students' knowledge is not satisfactory (Measure through Viva) even though they score well during other assessments." – "I am not very much satisfied with the courses offered through online, but due to the preventive measures due to the pandemic there is no other feasible option."

Table 3: Challenges encountered in online teaching

S. No	Challenges encountered in Online teaching	Frequency
1.	Student engagement & Participation	14
2.	Internet Connectivity	13
3.	student-faculty interaction	8
4.	Technical difficulty & know how	7
5.	Online Examination and assessment	6
6.	Students' interaction with other colleagues	6
7.	Devices related issues	2
8.	Motivation of students	2
9.	Health or life Risks	2
10.	Attendance issue	2
11.	Cultural issues	2
12.	Feedback from students	2
13.	Maintaining Quality	2
14.	Numerical analysis	1
15.	comfortable environment for learning	1
16.	Plagiarism and unfair practices	1
17.	Duration of the session	1
18.	Impersonation	1
19.	Presentation and communication skills	1
20.	Increased work for a teacher	1

As visible from the table 3, the most frequent challenge evolved in the online teaching has been students' engagement and participation. The literature review suggested that students have more opportunity to participate and engage in the classroom/course activity. Contrary to that, engagement has emerged as a leading challenge, one of the respondents mentions, "*As a course faculty, I often need to rethink the course design and use different*

strategies for teaching, engagement and assessment in the online environment. Unlike a campus course that meets twice per week, an online course is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and learning happen continually in the asynchronous environment. It is challenging to build a comfortable environment for learning."

Table 4: Benefits experienced for online teaching

S. No	Benefits observed during Online teaching	Frequency
1.	Reduction in infrastructural requirements	6
2.	Overcoming Time based restrictions	5
3.	Cost effective for the university	5
4.	Flexible way of attending classes	5
5.	Increase in students' enrolment	4
6.	Opportunities to attend training and workshops	4
7.	Wider audience	4
8.	Transportation cost	4
9.	Saving Commuting time	4
10.	Internationalisation (international students)	3
11.	Overcoming place/location-based restrictions	3
12.	Availability of more resources for students	2
13.	Asynchronous session	2
14.	Faster assessment and feedback	2
15.	Opportunity to launch additional program	2
16.	Convenience for students	2
17.	Convenience for instructors	2
18.	Personalised teaching	1
19.	Revisiting teaching material and discussion	1
20.	International Collaboration	1
21.	Continuity of education	1

One of the responses, worth reporting is, *"Online teaching at the institution has provided affordability to those students who cannot bear travel or accommodation costs. To some extent,*

online teaching is more personalized, flexible to the learning style of each student and allowing communication easier to each student or group. Instructors and students at the institution have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills by attending trainings/webinars/seminars through the online mode of education."

4.3. Relationship between Instructor and Students

One of the purposes of communication is to strengthen the relationship between the sender and the receiver. Selected responses on whether the online teaching has improved the relationship between the instructor and students is highlighted in the table 5. It is evident from the responses that the relationship between teacher and students used to be better in the face-to-face setup. In online, many a times, the instructors are not even aware about who their students are, and what they are doing. However, some respondents' opinion is worth mentioning here *"The student teacher relationship building is a skill which can be achieved in both formats of teaching"*, thus, the format doesn't matter in some cases if the instructor is skilled to handle the situation and motivated to support students in any circumstances. The individual skills of the instructors do play a major role in forming or enhancing their relationship with their students, it seems from the responses, that the instructors at an overall level have not been able to utilise the online platforms effectively.

4.4. Motivation for students and teachers

The communication effectiveness is also measured in terms of motivation. If communication can motivate involved individual, it is termed as effective, if not, then it is believed to be ineffective form of communication. The responses of the respondents suggest that at an overall level, the motivation was found to be low towards online teaching. HEIs need to work on motivating the instructors and the students towards the effective usage of online platform and online teaching.

4.5. Future of Online teaching in Oman

At an overall level, the respondents' feel that online teaching is the future of education in Oman, some of the respondents have mentioned it as *the new normal*. One of the respondents mentions, *"Oman will encourage*

Table 5: Whether relationship has improved with online teaching

Relationship has improved with online classes	Relationship was better in the physical classes
- In my opinion, the relationship between the teachers and students has been enhanced with the help of the various LMS platforms available - In my opinion, I should say yes because students have the open freedom to speak, respond and communicate without any barriers in online classes than physical classroom. The provision of chat messages, advising sessions etc. through online mode has improved the acquaintance between the instructor and student. - Yes, it has improved recently with the added new features from MS Teams - In my opinion yes, especially when the instructor dedicates an extra time to communicate with the students	- I would say not entirely, student-instructor relationship was better during physical classes - Offline form of education develops better relationship. - Not really. Physical classes are more appropriate for building a better relationship between the instructor and students. - I have not observed any strong relationship between the teacher and students with online classes. Few students interact and actively participate in online classes. Students also miss the social networking skills - In my view, this can never happen!!! Virtual is always fake in comparison to face-to-face which is 100% natural. Virtual relationships cannot be effective & can't be retained. Therefore, virtual, or online classes can never improve the instructor vs. students' relationship - Not really, as instructor we don't know students as they don't interact during online classes. - Definitely not, there is no room for establishing/developing rapport with students. - In online classes, only the active students are usually in touch with the faculty. They interact directly with the faculty in case of any query or issue and maintain sound relationship with their faculty as well as peers. But the students those who are not active, don't participate, don't interact with their peers, stay in isolation are not connected well with their instructors. - No, not at all. In online classes, there is very little personal connection between students "Students tend to ignore decency limits and you can expect demanding messages from their side in unreasonable timings. Instruments of remote communication is just a substitution for face-to-face contact, which is limited only to verbal communications. Other modes of delivering the message – body languages, gestures, eye contact, tone, etc. are out of the equation.

online teaching if covid continues otherwise as a society Oman does not support online teaching in near future as still it is believed that learning is not taking place in online classes. This is my personal opinion and may be wrong". However, significant number of the respondents were found to be advocating the use of blended learning instead of being completely online or offline format, "I don't think online teaching will replace physical classes, but it will remain for few courses as hybrid model." Another respondent suggests, "Am sure that institutions in Oman will move forward with incorporating blended mode of teaching & learning into its curriculum. This process will also ensure that everyone is equipped with advanced technological skills & resources to cope up with any such future pandemics. Technological skills & resources will boost paced development for the nation". If one observes the changes in the global scenario, online education has received a boom, and if Oman will not continue to work towards it, it might lag in the arena of higher education.

5. Implications of the study
As the online learning is expected to remain in the post covid era. This study has an implication on the higher education institutions, governing and accreditation bodies, and other allied agencies. Online

Table 6: Motivation for Students' and instructors with regards to online teaching

Status of Motivation	Issues and steps to improve motivation level
– "Online Teaching is effective and can be beneficial for both students and the instructors especially for core courses in the discipline. Technical courses should be delivered offline" – "Online learning is a self-directed learning approach which requires the full participation of students. I have no doubt that some students would simply log in and leave the class. Where there is no physical contact, students can do anything because they are not motivated to be in class all the time." – "For a temporary short period, it would work fine but with severe limitations. Motivation cannot be effectively sustained via online mode, both for either instructors or the students." – "The application of different online teaching tools or techniques has encouraged participation. It has also motivated students to be more critical in their thoughts." – "Overall I feel, online mode of teaching offers less motivation to students as well as to the instructors, because teaching and learning involves multifaceted approach to be effective" – "We have introduced online classes in response to the pandemic as a Emergency Remote Teaching option. Knowledge of technology and various online platforms motivate staff to engage in online classes. For students, they find it more comfortable, as they can join classes from wherever they are." – "Cannot be generalized as it depends on the background of students (working / married / other responsibilities) and the subjects being taught by instructors." – "It is a good emergency tool for pandemic times. It also can help in granting better accessibility to education opportunities to those who are in remote places. Still, it is just a substitute."	– "After some time, student and instructor motivation decrease if the right pedagogy isn't implemented" – "Students may be asked to open webcam during the lecture and the class size should not be more than 30 so teacher can manage the class well." – "When you're not surrounded by classmates and instructors in a physical setting, it may be tempting to procrastinate, and the momentum is totally affected. Some online learners may start out fully engaged and then discover later that their motivation gradually going down. When this happens, they may fall behind and they will take the change of taking it in an instant manner which will result to poor academic integrity." – "We can motivate the students with regard to online teaching by combining online teaching with face-to-face assessments." – "The instructor must be trained about new tools and technologies that can enhance online teaching and improve student's engagement." – "Online learning requires more self-regulation and independence from the learner than the physical classes." – "To motivate the students towards online teaching and learning, the engagement must be improved by using advanced technologies in teaching to give them a real sense about the practical world. Using right kind of tools is the key in improving student's as well as instructor's motivation."

education is found to be an excellent tool because of the variety of benefits it brings for the stakeholders, however, better training and orientation to use online platform is required to harness the technology effectively. The issues like the internet availability, network connectivity and other infrastructural requirements may require the involvement of the respective government agencies and telecom service providers. Also, the teachers training institutions need to have a dedicated module to deal with online teaching pedagogy, giving an attention to the elements of motivating students and teachers would be a plus. As many nations are in the process to have a new education policy, the need for the present study becomes even more pervasive (Kaurav et al., 2020; Kaurav et al., 2021; Magd and Khan, 2022)

6. Conclusions and recommendations:

At an overall level, the online teaching has been found an effective tools. There are many features and tools available on the online platforms that has potential to enhance the communication process between the students

and instructor. However, in context of Oman, it appears that the country was not psychologically prepared to shift online. The internet penetration, especially in the remote areas has been a challenge for the online educators. The cultural influence appears to be responsible for the non-interaction or participation of students in the class, as most of the time, the camera of the students is turned off due to cultural issues, wherein the instructor cannot figure out whether they are fully engaged in the class or not. The motivation level to use online platform for teachers and well as students was also found to be low, and HEIs management is expected to take cognizance of it. The teaching staff as well as students, are required to be trained and retrained to use the online tools effectively. As the new technologies are evolving each day, the existing tools are also expected to get improved or replaced with better version of platform in near future, that will again require re-orientation of the instructors and students. For the new academic year, the blended learning would be recommended as a takeaway from this study is it fosters the benefits of both online as well as face-to-face teaching. This study can be generalised to the middle east region, as Oman and other middle east countries share almost the same ethnicity, taste, and preference

6.1. Limitations of the study
This study is qualitative in nature, despite having benefits of the qualitative studies, the items cannot be measured in the quantitative terms. Further, the respondents were mainly the represented the opinion of those respondents who were working on administrative positions in addition to their teaching commitments. Since, these respondents were also having a significant role on the way HEIs are administered, there responses could have biasness in favour of online teaching. The responses of the full-time teachers or pure teachers dealing with online sessions is expected to be slightly different. Further, this study is based on the responses gathered from Oman's HEIs, thus, the findings cannot be generalised to many of the regions and countries across the globe.

6.2. Guidelines for future research
The present study being qualitative, can be transformed into a quantitative study by exploring the factors extracted from the thematic analysis. Conducting comparative studies on different countries might be able to bring better versions of cases, practices and theories with regards to online teaching.

References
Aggarwal, P. J., Kaurav, R. P. S., & Gursoy, D. (2022). Effects of Covid-19 pandemic on tourism business in India: Operational and strategic measures undertaken for survival. *Tourism Culture & Communication.*

Alawamleh, M., Al-Twait, L.M., Al-Saht, G.R. (2020). The effect of online learning on communication between instructors and students during Covid-19 pandemic. *Asian Education and Development Studies,* https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-06-2020-0131

Ally, M. (2004). Foundations of educational theory for online learning. *Theory and practice of online learning*, 2, pp. 15-44.

Alon, I., Farrell, M. and Li, S. (2020). Regime type and COVID-19 response. *FIIB Business Review,* pp. 1-9.

Antony, T.A.A., Suresh, N., Khan, S.A., Rabgay, T., & Yezer, K. (2022). The mediating effect of university image on the relationship between curriculum and student satisfaction: an empirical study of the Royal University of Bhutan. *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education* [In press]

Bacq, S., Geoghegan, W., Josefy, M., Stevenson, R. and Williams, T. (2020). The COVID-19 virtual idea blitz: marshalling social entrepreneurship to rapidly respond to urgent grand challenges. *Business Horizons*, 63(6), pp 705–723.

Bangert, A.W. (2006). Identifying factors underlying the quality of online teaching effectiveness: an exploratory study. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 17(2), pp. 79-99.

Benson, A.D. (2002). Using online learning to meet workforce demand: a case study of stakeholder influence. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 3(4), pp. 443-452.

Berge, Z.L. (2007). Barriers and the organization's capabilities for distance education. Distance Learning, 4(4), p. 1.

Bocar, A. C., Khan, S. A., & Epoc, F. J. (2022). COVID-19 work from home stressors and the degree of its impact: employers and employees actions. *International Journal of Technology Transfer and Commercialisation*, 19(2), 270-291

Caner, M. (2012). The definition of blended learning in higher education. in Panagiotes, S. and Anastasiades (Eds), *Blended Learning Environments for Adults: Evaluations and Frameworks*, IGI Global, New York, pp. 19-34.

Cheney, G. (2011). *Organizational Communication in an Age of Globalization: Issues, Reflections, Practices,* Waveland Press, Long Grove, IL.

Conrad, D. (2002). Deep in the hearts of learners: insights into the nature of online community. *The Journal of Distance Education*, 17(1), pp. 1-19.

Coughlan, J., and Macredie, R. (2002) Effective Communication in Requirements Elicitation: A Comparison of Methodologies. *Requirements Eng* **7,** 47–60 (2002). https://doi.org/10.1007/s007660200004

Croxton, R.A. (2014). The role of interactivity in student satisfaction and persistence in online learning. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching,* 10**(**2), p. 314.

Dabbagh, N. and Bannan-Ritland, B. (2005) *Online Learning: Concepts, Strategies, and Application,* Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, pp. 68-107.

Duta, N., Panisoara, G. and Panisoara, I.O. (2015). The Effective Communication in Teaching. Diagnostic study regarding the academic learning motivation to students. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 186, pp. 1007-1012

Fedynich, L.V. (2013). Teaching beyond the classroom walls: the pros and cons of cyber learning. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*,13, pp. 1-7.

Ferreira, J.J., Fayolle, A., Ratten, V. and Raposo, M. (Eds) (2018), *Entrepreneurial Universities*, Edward Elgar Publishing.

Garnham, C. and Kaleta, R. (2002). Introduction to hybrid courses. *Teaching with Technology Today*, 8(6), pp. 1-5.

Getange, K.N. (2016). Motivational strategies and teachers' productivity: lessons of experience from public secondary schools in Kisii county, Kenya. *IOSR Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 6(4), pp. 33-38.

Gray, J.A. and DiLoreto, M. (2016). The effects of student engagement, student satisfaction, and perceived learning in online learning environments. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 11(1), p. n1.

Hilliard, A.T., and Newsome, E. (2013). Effective communication and creating professional learning communities is a valuable practice for superintendents. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 6(4), pp. 353-364.

Hung, M.L., Chou, C., Chen, C.H. and Own, Z.Y. (2010). Learner readiness for online learning: scale development and student perceptions. *Computers and Education*, 55(3), pp. 1080-1090.

Jurik, V., Gröschner, A. and Seidel, T. (2014). Predicting students' cognitive learning activity and intrinsic learning motivation: how powerful are teacher statements, student profiles, and gender? *Learning and Individual Differences*, 32, pp. 132-139.

Kamal, S., Naim, A., Magd, H., Khan, S. A., & Khan, F. M. (2022). The Relationship Between E-Service Quality, Ease of Use, and E-CRM Performance Referred by Brand Image. In *Building a Brand Image Through Electronic Customer Relationship Management* (pp. 84-108). IGI Global.

Kaurav, R. P. S., Narula, S., Baber, R., & Tiwari, P. (2021). Theoretical extension of the new education policy 2020 using twitter mining. *Journal of Content, Community & Communication*, *13*(1), 16-26.

Kaurav, R. P. S., Suresh, K. G., Narula, S., & Baber, R. (2020). New education policy: qualitative (contents) analysis and Twitter mining (sentiment analysis). *Journal of Content, Community and Communication, 12*(1), 4-13.

Kear, K. (2010). Social Presence in Online Learning Communities, *Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on*

Networked Learning 2010, 3-4 May 2010, Aalborg, Denmark.

Keengwe, J. and Kidd, T.T. (2010). Towards best practices in online learning and teaching in higher education. *Merlot Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 6(2), pp. 533-541.

Keyton, J. (2011), *Communication and Organizational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experience,* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Khan, S. A., & Gurung, M. (2019). Green public procurement through lens of practicality and policies a study on royal university of Bhutan. *Delhi Business Review*, 20(1), 23-32.

Khan, S. A., & Magd, H. (2021). Empirical Examination of Ms Teams in Conducting Webinar: Evidence from International Online Program Conducted in Oman. *Journal of Content, Community and Communication*,14, 159-175.

Khan, S. A., Epoc, F., Gangwar, V., Ligori, T. A. A., & Ansari, Z. A. (2021). Will Online Banking Sustain in Bhutan Post COVID-19? A Quantitative Analysis of The Customer E-Satisfaction and E-Loyalty in The Kingdom of Bhutan. *Transnational Marketing Journal*, *9*(3), 607-624.

Khan, S. A., Sharma, P. P., & Thoudam, P. (2019). Role of attitude and entrepreneurship education towards entrepreneurial orientation among business students of Bhutan. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, *8*.

Kupczynski, L., Brown, M. and Davis, R. (2008). The impact of instructor and student interaction in internetbased courses. *Journal of Instruction Delivery Systems*, 22(1), pp. 6-11.

Lambrechts, W., Mulà, I., Ceulemans, K., Molderez, I. and Gaeremynck, V. (2013). The integration of competences for sustainable development in higher education: an analysis of bachelor programs in management. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 48, pp. 65-73.

Ligouri, E., & Winkler, C. (2020). From Offline to Online: Challenges and Opportunities for Entrepreneurship Education Following the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy,* 3(4) 1–6. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/25151274209 16738

Lunenburg, F.C. (2010). Communication: the process, barriers, and improving effectiveness. *Schooling*, 1(1), pp. 1-10.

Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2010). *Destructive Organizational Communication: Processes, Consequences, and Constructive Ways of Organizing*, Routledge, New York, NY.

Magd, H., & Khan, S. A. (2022). Strategic Framework for Entrepreneurship Education in Promoting Social Entrepreneurship in GCC Countries During and Post COVID-19. In *International Perspectives on Value Creation and Sustainability Through Social Entrepreneurship* (pp. 61-75). IGI Global.

Magd, H., Khan, S. A. K., & Bhuyan, U. (2022). Social Entrepreneurship Intentions Among Business Students in Oman. In *International Perspectives on Value Creation and Sustainability Through Social Entrepreneurship* (pp. 76-93). IGI Global.

Majid, N.A., Jelas, Z.M., Azman, N. and Rahman, S. (2010). Communication skills and work motivation amongst expert teachers. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, **7**, pp. 565-567.

Moore, J.L., Dickson-Deane, C. and Galyen, K. (2011). e-Learning, online learning, and distance learning environments: are they the same?. *The Internet and Higher Education*,**14**(2), pp.129-135.

Morrison, G.R., Ross, S.J., Morrison, J.R. and Kalman, H.K. (2019), *Designing Effective Instruction*, John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Naik, G. L., Deshpande, M., Shivananda, D. C., Ajey, C. P., & Manjunath Patel, G. C. (2021). Online Teaching and Learning of Higher Education in India during COVID-19 Emergency Lockdown. *Pedagogical Research*, 6(1), em0090. https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/9665

Nguyen, T. (2015). The effectiveness of online learning: beyond no significant difference and future horizons. *Merlot Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 309-319.

Paechter, M. and Maier, B. (2010). Online or face-to-face? Students' experiences and preferences in e-learning. *The internet and higher education*, 13(4), pp. 292-297.

Ratten, V. (2020). Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the entrepreneurship education community. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*,14(5), pp. 753-764. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEC-06-2020-0121

Saleem, M., Khan, S. A., & Magd, H. (2022). Content Marketing Framework for Building Brand Image: A Case Study of Sohar International School, Oman. In *Building a Brand Image Through Electronic Customer Relationship Management* (pp. 64-83). IGI Global.

Schunk, D.H. and Zimmerman, B.J. (Eds) (2012), *Motivation and Self-Regulated Learning: Theory, Research, and Applications.* Routledge, New York.

Scott, E. (2020). How to Handle the Stress of Working from Home. Available from: https://www.verywellmind.com/the-stress-of-working-from-home-4141174. Accessed: 21 July 2020

Singh, E. H., Wangda, S., Khan, S., & Khan, S. A. (2020). Exploring the obstacles for start-ups in Bhutan: From a prevented entrepreneurs perspective. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 4.

Steen, H.L. (2008). Effective eLearning design. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 4(4), pp. 526-532.

Summers, D.C. (2010). *Quality Management: Creating and Sustaining Organizational Effectiveness, Prentice Hall,* Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Suther, E., Arndt, J., Arthur, N., Parboosingh, J., Taylor, E., and Deutschlander, S. (2009). Role understanding and effective communication as core competencies for collabourative practice. *Journal of Interprofessional Care, 23 (1), pp.* 41-51 https://doi.org/10.1080/1356182080233 8579

Velentzas, J.O.H.N. and Broni, G. (2014), "Communication cycle: definition, process, models and examples", *Recent Advances in Financial Planning and Product Development*, *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Finance, Accounting and Law (ICFA '14)*, Istanbul, Turkey, 15-17 December 2014, pp. 117-131.

Vonderwell, S. (2003). An examination of asynchronous communication experiences and perspectives of students in an online course: a case study. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 6(1), pp. 77-90.

Yip, M.C. (2012. Learning strategies and self-efficacy as predictors of academic performance: a preliminary study. *Quality in Higher Education*, 18(1), pp. 23-34.

***