

Covid 19 and Remote Teaching: Perceptions of the Teachers at the Lebanese University

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ABSTRACT

Due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic, millions of teachers and students worldwide shifted abruptly to the virtual world and tried to pursue the teaching and learning process from their homes. This may explain why the literature exploring the teachers' views of teaching during this period is scarce. This study aims at investigating how university teachers' perceived the challenges and possible benefits of teaching remotely during the first lock down in spring 2020 in Lebanon. Fifty three (53) teachers took part in this study. They were 39 females and 14 males belonging to four Humanities departments in the Faculty of Pedagogy/Education at the Lebanese University. The participants filled an online questionnaire including closed-ended questions about teachers' experiences with remote teaching and the use of new technologies. Then 9 of these teachers were interviewed individually via WhatsApp for 20-30 minutes. Findings revealed that teachers received limited training to use the Microsoft Teams platform and faced some challenges designing and delivering their courses and keeping their students engaged. Despite the drawbacks the participants pointed out, they admitted they have learned to deliver synchronous and asynchronous sessions and to use various technologies that they would keep using in their traditional classes in the future. However, only five teachers declared that they would not use any of the technologies when back to the traditional face-to-face classrooms. Interviewees concluded that they feel they were ready to teach remotely in the fall semester 2020-2021 in case the Covid 19 pandemic was prolonged.

Key words: teaching presence, remote teaching/learning, course delivery, course design, students' engagement, higher education, Covid 19

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid 19 pandemic started in December 2019 in Wuhan, China before rapidly spreading around the world (Armoed, 2021). It entailed various countries, economies and sectors worldwide to immediate closure as containment measures in an attempt to slow down the rapid rate of transmission among individuals (Truzoli, Pirola, & Conte, 2021). This Covid 19 outbreak has disrupted the educational systems globally and has led to the nearly total closure of schools and universities. Thus, teachers had to move from traditional learning where they used to interact face-to-face with their students to a totally new form of online learning which took place remotely as a screen-based activity. Generally, the challenges teachers have faced were mainly related to designing their courses and delivering them online as well as engaging their students in virtual classrooms. These challenges emerged due to the new remote teaching situation which required teachers to exert additional efforts in an attempt to overcome these new difficulties. It's noteworthy mentioning that adapting to this swift shift to online learning was challenging not only to teachers but also to students (Revilla-Cuesta, Skaf, Varona, & Ortega-López, 2021).

1.1 Challenges Designing and Delivering Their Courses Online

Numerous researchers have been interested in the challenges teachers have faced after moving to the online teaching mode since the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic (E.g. Nugroho, Ilmiani, & Rekha, 2021; Almazova, Krylova, Rubtsova, & Odinkaya, 2020; Chandwani, Singh, & Singh, 2021; Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020; Naqvi & Zehra, 2021; Giri & Dutta, 2021; Motte-Signoret, Labbé, Benoist, Lingart, Gajdos, & Lapillonne, 2021; Huang, 2020). Below are some challenges teachers faced while planning and implementing their courses online.

When they moved to remote teaching overnight due to the pandemic, many poorly trained teachers mainly used the courses they originally planned for the traditional classes in their virtual classrooms (Todd, 2020; Almazova et al., 2020). Researchers also highlighted the need for teachers to include more stimulating activities and technologies in online courses. In addition, a quality designed course requires a higher level of creativity (Todd, 2020) and preparing online learning materials was viewed as highly time consuming by various teachers (Nugroho, Ilmiani, & Rekha, 2021; Hiatt, 2021). Another major challenge facing teachers was to develop their course online while addressing the needs of all students and supporting them regardless their background (Woodle, 2017). To teach remotely, many university teachers had not only to adapt to new teaching approaches but also to learn new skills and competencies to keep online teaching and learning going smoothly (Naqvi & Zehra, 2021).

Besides the difficulties in designing their courses for the online mode, teachers were facing additional challenges linked to delivering their courses synchronously via video-conferencing. Some of these challenges include the unreliable technology, limited personal connection, isolation, and insufficient instruction time (Rehn, 2017). Some practical techniques were used including teachers asking questions besides using video-conferencing and voiceover in PowerPoint presentations (Sonnenberg, 2021).

When addressing teachers' familiarity with new technologies, various studies highlighted the need for additional technical training for teachers. In a study conducted by Chandwani, Singh, and Singh (2021), results showed that teachers' age was negatively correlated with their familiarity with online learning tools. According to Almazova et al., (2020), the lack of readiness for remote teaching for both teachers and students could hinder the implementation of the online education process.

Although numerous teachers had difficulties shifting to remote teaching, some university teachers moved smoothly to the virtual classrooms mainly because they seemed to possess the necessary technical knowledge, social and personal skills (Revilla-Cuesta, Skaf, Varona, & Ortega-López, 2021).

1.2 Low Students' Engagement in Virtual Classes

Designing their courses and delivering them online have been challenging to many teachers during the pandemic as well as emerging difficulties mainly related to the low students' engagement. Through this internet-based education, students would only interact online with their teachers (Harris & Jones, 2020) which resulted in weak relationships between teachers and students. Some university teachers showed high levels of empathy for different students' troubled situations (Revilla-Cuesta, Skaf, Varona, & Ortega-López, 2021) and some shared personal information about their lives with their students (Sonnenberg, 2021) in an attempt to establish a good rapport.

2. STUDY OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In Lebanon, teachers and students at the Lebanese university have been forced to shift abruptly from the traditional classrooms to the emergent remote teaching mode overnight since March 2020. The instructors in the Faculty of Pedagogy/Education at the Lebanese University faced numerous challenges when moving to remote teaching. They had to adopt new teaching approaches and learn new technologies in order to facilitate the online teaching/learning process.

To enhance the efficacy of online teaching and learning activities taking into account the abrupt shift to the virtual classrooms, technological, psychological, and methodological support are highly needed (Almazova et al., 2020).

This study aims at investigating these teachers' perceptions regarding the difficulties they had to deal with as far as course design, course delivery, and students' engagement during the first wave of the Covid 19 pandemic as well as the benefits they drew out of remote teaching.

This study attempts to answer the following two research questions:

- 1- What challenges did the teachers at the Faculty of Pedagogy face while a) designing and b) delivering their courses in addition to c) engaging their students online?
- 2- What were the advantages these teachers perceived while teaching remotely in spring 2020?

3. METHOD

This study adopted the explanatory sequential design. Quantitative data were collected first using a questionnaire followed by a series of individual interviews to deepen the understanding of the topic under study (Creswell, 2011).

3.1 Participants

Fifty three (53) university instructors took part in this study, 39 females and 14 males. The age of the majority of the teachers (41.5 %) ranged between 45 and 54 years while 37.7% and 20.8% were 35-44 and 55-64 years old respectively. Around half of the participants (50.9 %) are part timers whereas 49.1% were full timers.

Most participants (45.3 %) teach in the Languages department. Around one forth (24.5%) belong to the Educational Psychology department while 11.3 % teach in the Social Studies and 18.9% in the Educational Sciences departments. The participants' years of teaching experience at the university level were as follows: 24 teachers had less than 10 years of teaching experience while 17 teachers had between 11 and 20 years. 12 teachers had more than 21 years teaching at the university level.

As for their familiarity with online teaching and electronic platforms before the pandemic, only 8 teachers (15.1%) declared they received enough training by the university administration in private institutions. The teachers at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Lebanese University attended a 90 minute training session on how to teach remotely using the Microsoft Teams platform at the beginning of the spring semester.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The 53 teachers filled the Teachers' Perceptions of Remote Teaching Questionnaire developed by the researchers, which includes closed-ended questions. This questionnaire was piloted using 4 teachers not belonging to the humanities departments. Participants were asked about the platforms and technologies they were using to teach remotely in addition to the benefits and drawbacks they perceived in the virtual classrooms. Question #7 was based on the elements of the Teaching Presence from the Community of Inquiry framework (COI) developed by Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer (2001). The teaching Presence includes 3 categories: a) Design and Organization, b) Direct instruction, and c) Facilitation which were referred to in this study as Course Design, Course Delivery, and Students' Engagement respectively. Participants had to rate 16 statements related to A) Course Design (items 1-4), B) Course Delivery (items 5-10), and C) Students' Engagement (items 11-16) using a 5 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

After completion of the questionnaire, 9 surveyed participants were interviewed individually for 20-30 minutes via WhatsApp. Interviewees were 2 males and 7 females. They were 5 part timers and 4 full timers. These 9 participants belong to the following departments: Educational Psychology (2), Educational Sciences (2), Social Studies (2), and 3 teachers from the Languages department (1 Arabic, 1 French, and 1 English language instructors).

The 9 interviewees were asked about the challenges related to designing and delivering their courses in addition to engaging their students in virtual classes. They also mentioned some advantages and disadvantages of remote teaching and their readiness to teach in virtual classes next fall.

The quantitative data resulting from the survey were analyzed descriptively while the interview data were coded and categorized.

4. RESULTS

The results below show the 53 teachers' perceptions of remote teaching and related challenges.

4.1 E-Platforms and Teaching Methods Used during the Pandemic

The platforms and applications participants mostly used were Microsoft Teams (75.5 %), WhatsApp (73.6 %) and Zoom (71.7 %). More Than half of the participants (58%) used emails to send course materials to students.

Most participants (60.4%) opted for both synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning. Almost 1/3 of the teachers (37.7%) used synchronous teaching and learning i.e. teaching online sessions. Various methods were used in synchronous teaching such as explaining using ppt slides (90.2%), question-answer sessions (72.5%), lecturing (76.5 %), and analyzing case studies (49%). Only one teacher taught asynchronously i.e. sending materials to students to be covered offline.

The majority of participants (88.7 %) prepared their course materials using PDF files and/or PowerPoint slides. Teachers also used links from the internet (60.4%) already existing videos (33.3 %) or recording their own presentations/videos (35.3%).

Before meeting online, many participants requested students to read PDF files/links (80.6 %), watch YouTube videos (41.7%), and search themselves for needed materials for individual/group presentations (47.2 %).

Participants were also asked to rate the degree to which they agree with the following perceived challenges they might have faced while teaching online during the pandemic: The rating of the 16 statements is summarized below.

4.2 Challenges Designing Their Courses Online

In this section, participants rated statements 1-4. They reported various challenges related to designing their own courses online. 71.6% of the teachers considered content course design online somehow smooth. 39.6% agreed that uploading/sending course materials to students on electronic platforms was time consuming. As for finding suitable materials online for their courses, 28.3% of the participants considered such a task time consuming whereas 35.9% did not have a problem finding course materials mainly because they were scanning chapters from books they own. Moreover, 30.2% of the teachers had trouble controlling the progress of their online course.

4.3 Challenges Delivering Their Courses Online

In this section about Course Delivery, participants had to rate statements 5-10. Most teachers (88.7%) said that using various teaching methods benefited their students during remote teaching. Almost all participants (90.2%) explained that they varied their activities and assignments to better help their students understand the course content. 77.3% of the teachers agreed that the poor internet connection and the e-platforms have interrupted the smooth delivery of their courses. Only 20.8% of the teachers admitted that their limited knowledge in technology has negatively impacted their course delivery. Some teachers (32% considered the interaction with their students online limited. A group of participants (19%) declared that their personal/family problems did interfere with their remote teaching.

4.4 Challenges Engaging Their Students Online

In the last section C, statements 11-16 were rated. 22.6% found that students' concentration and focus have decreased in online classes. The majority of the participants (81.1%) believe that e-learning platform/medium were useful for students' learning. Almost 2/3 of the teachers (71.7%) think that they should often ask students for their opinions on what and how to learn during **this pandemic**. More than half of the participants (56.6%) believe that many students have difficulties to apply self-study skills. A large number of teachers (79.2%) find it necessary to give students immediate feedback on their class work and homework. However, 17% of the teachers are not sure about the importance of giving feedback to their students. Also, teachers (43.7%) encouraged students to respect deadlines when submitting their assignments in order to increase their engagement.

4.5 Top Five Challenges of Remote Teaching

When asked to choose the five most challenging items teachers encountered while teaching remotely, almost all participants (96.2 %). said they suffered from the poor/unstable internet connection. The other challenges include designing their own course online (45.3 %), interacting with students online (64.2 %), encouraging students to attend online sessions (54.7%), limited knowledge of online platforms (45.3 %), finding relevant materials for their

courses (28.3 %), having their kids/relative at home (39.6 %), following up with students' progress (49.1 %), correcting students assignments (43.4 %), and sending/uploading different materials on the e-platforms (34 %).

4.6 Top Five Benefits of Remote Teaching

On the other hand, teachers mentioned five things they considered rewarding while teaching online. These benefits include: learning how to use online platforms/media new to them (67.9%), staying comfortably at home during online sessions (75.5 %), saving time to do different things instead of commuting to university (67.9 %), teaching students to respect time by uploading their work on the platform within due times (32.1 %), sharing similar experiences with students being all confined at home due to Covid-19 (41.5 %), helping their students progress in their course due to feedback on their individual/group work (37.7 %), enhancing own course with online materials and Youtube videos (47.2 %), and developing students' critical skills by commenting on their classmates' recorded work (32.1%).

4.7 Transferring Remote Teaching Experience to Traditional Classrooms

Participants were also asked what things they were doing during remote teaching due to Covid 19 pandemic they would keep doing when they meet again with students in traditional classrooms. More than 2/3 of the teachers (77.4%) stated they would keep using the online platform in parallel with the regular teaching/learning that take place in class. 62.3 % would use synchronous and asynchronous teaching/learning. Half of the teachers (50.9%) said they would ask students to upload their work on the platform in addition to uploading videos/links/ppt... that students can watch asynchronously. They would also seek to learn more about technologies they can use in online teaching. Still half of the participants reported they would ask students to submit typed assignments/projects rather than handwritten work. A large number of the participants (60.4%) would upload the course materials on the platform instead of photocopying them. On the other hand, 5 teachers declared they would stop using online teaching and technologies after resuming teaching in traditional classes.

4.8 Challenges Faced by Interviewees When Designing Courses in Virtual Classrooms

Various challenges faced the interviewed teachers trying to design their courses to be delivered on Microsoft Teams.

4.8.1 Poor IT Training

Besides the poor infrastructure in Lebanon, participants declared being insufficiently trained to use the Microsoft Teams platform to teach remotely in spring 2020. Teachers didn't have enough time to plan their courses online because of the abrupt shift to online teaching due to Covid 19 outbreak in February 2020.

4.8.2 Different Activities Needed to Design Courses

According to the participants, developing courses online needed additional and a wide variety of activities than traditional classes. They added that the nature of some courses made it difficult to prepare and teach remotely such as Curriculum, Teaching History, Action Research, Practicum, and Philosophy courses.

One teacher said she mainly used PowerPoint slides to structure her courses and gave more details during the online sessions. Another participant expressed her satisfaction using the course she designed in traditional classes when moving to remote teaching because she has already been using PowerPoint slides (ppt), electronic documents, and a variety of activities.

Due to the electricity cut offs and poor internet connectivity, one of the participants preferred to send the weekly ppt by email to her students ahead of time to make sure her students could view it before she meets with them online, especially that students found this course on History teaching difficult and had trouble developing lesson plans.

4.8.3 Individual/Group Work Prepared by Students

Another teacher asked students to prepare individual lesson plans and to deliver them via Teams or Zoom to be discussed and assessed by peers. The remaining teachers designed their courses by adding projects and research/reflection papers to be prepared by students individually or in groups.

4.9 Challenges Facing Interviewees during Course Delivery in Virtual Classes

Besides the various challenges teachers faced when designing their courses, additional obstacles emerged when delivering the content of their courses virtually.

4.9.1 Poor Infrastructure and Technical Skills

Meeting with students online to deliver course materials was highly challenging. All participants agreed that the power cuts and unstable internet connectivity dramatically affected their relation with students, course delivery, and students' presentations. Due to the lock down, some students had to move to their villages where meeting with these students online was even more challenging due to the poor infrastructure.

Since participants were insufficiently trained, and they found themselves in need to find new innovative ways to deliver their course contents efficiently in the virtual classrooms taking into account their inability to interact effectively with their students..

According to one of the participants, online meetings are best used for small size classes around 10 students or for a thesis defense. He explained that sometimes many students spoke at the same time in the virtual class, which was difficult to manage. Most participants (7/9) insisted that remote teaching require a stable internet connectivity and constant electrical current, which were not available for all students and teachers in Lebanon. Three participants stressed the necessity to have a group of students who are skilled in online technologies as well as motivated in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process in virtual classes. One participant complained about the poor technical skills students had. She had to waste class delivery time to teach her students how to use the major functions of the Microsoft Teams platform. Another participant explained that since students in private universities have learned various technologies to better learn online, the students at the Lebanese University can do the same.

Two participants highlighted the importance of having a board in class in order to facilitate the delivery of the course contents, the nature of some courses and the poor technical training left teachers to search for somewhat effective ways to deliver their courses. For example, two participants delivered information using mainly the lecturing method followed by Question-Answer sessions. "Students and teachers were burnt out during the lock down teaching and learning in virtual classrooms", one teacher highlighted. Therefore, she opted for lecturing mainly because the Action Research course was totally new to her students. Finally, participants expressed the need for training for students and teachers to work more smoothly with online technologies.

4.9.2 Checking on Students' Understanding

The inability to check on students' understanding in online sessions was an additional challenge. One of the participants was raising her voice unconsciously believing that students were not hearing her during video-conferences. Another problem, she added, was related to the speed of course delivery online. In virtual classes, there is a tendency to deliver a high amount of information; however, it is followed by a low level of students' participation because sometimes some students were not able to catch up.

4.9.3 Remote Teaching as Time and Energy Consuming

For one participant, delivering her course in virtual classes was time and energy consuming ("It was difficult to deliver content and make sure students understood it."). She complained that some students were following while others were not able to answer her diagnostic questions, so she had to repeat the explanation every session. This wasted course

delivery time in addition to the constant feedback to improve students' work was highly demanding timewise and energy wise. Moreover, one participant expressed his worry to share his recorded sessions online with fellow teachers.

When asked about assessing online learning, all participants strongly supported having students sit for the final exams in person and on campus mainly because online tests couldn't be closely proctored.

4.9.4 Students' Presentations

One participant requested her students to deliver their individual lesson plans during the online sessions via Microsoft Teams and/or Zoom. She encouraged the students' classmates to assess their peer's lesson using specific criteria/rubric and to suggest different ways for improvement. Two participants insisted that students' cameras should be on especially during online presentations.

4.10 Challenges Engaging Their Students in Virtual Classrooms

Monitoring students' attendance, participation, and interaction during online sessions was highly challenging to participants and quite impossible. Many teachers were worried about their inability to check whether students were absent with their microphones muted, or present but absent minded, or effectively following instruction.

4.10.1 Poor Teacher-Students Rapport

"Dealing with students online is difficult" explained a participant. One of the obstacles hindering the establishment of a rapport between teachers and students was that the cameras were most of the times turned off due to poor connectivity. Although the use of cameras was essential to enhance interaction, teachers were not able to see students' eyes or their body language. They also emphasized the importance to call students by name. Two participants used to start their online sessions with a "Take care talk" during which teachers and students shared information about their personal lives in an attempt to support their students emotionally.

4.10.2 Low Students' Interaction

Interaction among students was low or inexistent because most of the students were forced to work individually during the Covid 19 pandemic. Students were unable to develop emotional relationships that were earlier possible in traditional classrooms. "It was difficult to manage group work and have students interact together", explained one teacher. One of the participants added that establishing rapport with students she previously taught was much easier and that the communication was among the students themselves. Conversely, having groups of students who were totally new to her was highly difficult to manage. "It is difficult to connect with new students at the emotional level", she explained.

4.10.3 Difficulty to Motivate Students' to Attend and Participate

According to 6 interviewees, students' attendance ranged between 80% and 90% when meeting with their students online. In one participant's online sessions, half of the students (50%) attended his classes mainly due to the poor infrastructure and inability to establish rapport. One participant declared that 70%-80% of the students attended her online sessions. She said that the main challenge lied in the ability to motivate and convince students to be present during the delivery of her courses. According to her, students were irresponsible and kept nagging about remote teaching/learning. Some of them even claimed they didn't have electricity or internet to escape online sessions.

In one of the participants' virtual classes, attendance was high (95%) most probably because she did not record the sessions and obliged students to open their cameras.

Another participant elaborated by saying that it was difficult and even impossible to keep track of who was actually attending and participating i.e. who was effectively attending. It was almost impossible to motivate all her students to participate while in real classes such task was easier. She noticed that there was always one student who kept talking and leading the discussion in online classes.

When asked about their readiness to teach online in the fall semester, all participants assured that they were more familiar now with the Microsoft Teams platform and that their course materials were more organized to be delivered in virtual classes.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The quantitative and qualitative data displayed in the Results section are discussed below.

Not only teachers at the Lebanese University faced multiple challenges when moving to remote teaching due to Covid 19 pandemic but also teachers around the globe according to numerous studies (Chandwani, Singh, & Singh, 2021; Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020; Naqvi & Zehra, 2021; Giri & Dutta, 2021; Motte-Signoret et al., 2021).

5.1 Designing and Delivering Courses Online and Engaging Students

The challenges the 53 participants rated on a 5 point Likert scale concurred with the top 5 challenges they faced during the pandemic. Moreover, the in-depth interviews with 9 surveyed participants confirmed the difficulties teachers at the Faculty of Pedagogy faced when designing and delivering their courses online besides engaging their students in virtual classes.

Unlike the findings in a study conducted by Chandwani, Singh, and Singh (2021), the results of the current study showed that teachers, regardless their age, were not familiar with Microsoft Teams and other technologies needed in online classes.

Participants (45.3 %) considered designing their own course online challenging which is similar to the findings by Nugroho, Ilmiani, and Rekha (2021) as well as Naqvi and Zehra (2021). What they viewed as time consuming, as aligned with Hiatt (2021), were finding suitable materials for their courses (28.3%) and uploading course materials on electronic platforms or sending them to students via email or WhatsApp (39.6%). All interviewed teachers explained that they were insufficiently trained to use the Microsoft Teams platform. Also, they didn't have enough time to design their courses online due to the pandemic; consequently, some teachers used their courses previously planned for the traditional classes in online sessions (Todd, 2020; Almazova et al., 2020). According to the interviewees, some research and practical courses were difficult to teach remotely while additional and stimulating activities were needed to design online courses (Todd, 2020). Correcting students' assignments and projects was an additional challenge to 43.4% of the teachers. Almost half of the participants (49.1 %) had difficulty following up on students' progress in online learning. Participants had to adapt to new teaching approaches and to learn new skills/competencies to keep online teaching and learning going smoothly (Naqvi & Zehra, 2021).

Teachers perceived planning their courses online as well as delivering them in virtual classes highly challenging. Generally, participants (96.2 %) complained about the poor internet connection and power blackout which negatively affected the delivery of their courses synchronously via video-conferencing due to the unreliable technology (Rehn, 2017). The poor technical skills and insufficient training for both teachers and students had a negative effect on the delivery of the online courses as also stressed by Almazova et al., (2020).

Participants delivered their courses online mainly by using ppt slides (90.2 %), question-answer sessions (72.5 %), lecturing (76.5 %), and using case studies (49 %). Some interviewees shed light on the difficulty of explaining the content in the absence of the blackboard found in traditional classes. During online sessions, there was a tendency to deliver a high amount of information or to repeat the explanation because in either cases students were not following.

In addition, constant feedback on improve students' work was highly important (79.2%) though time and energy consuming. Interacting with students was considered limited by 32% of the participants mainly because students only interact online with their teachers (Harris & Jones, 2020).

Engaging students in virtual classes was highly important though challenging to most participants (Naqvi & Zehra, 2021). Many difficulties were related to interacting with students as mentioned by 64.2 % of the participants and to encouraging students to attend online sessions (54.7 %). In addition, checking whether students were effectively attending online sessions was quite impossible to all teachers. The interviewees complained about the poor teacher-students rapport due to the inability to constantly see students' eyes and body language. Such low students' engagement and poor rapport are concurrent with the findings by Sonnenberg (2021).

Even a few teachers started with a "Take care talk" in an attempt to support their students emotionally while 41.5% shared similar experiences with their students being all confined at home due to Covid-19 as aligned with the findings in Sonnenberg's study (2021).

To motivate students, most teachers (71.7%) involved students in planning the courses by often asking them what and how to learn during the Covid 19 period. According to 22.6% of the teachers, students' concentration and focus have decreased in online classes.

The aforementioned sections discussed the teaching presence including the challenges participants faced in planning and implementing courses as well as engaging students in virtual classrooms as formulated in this study's research question one

5.2 Some Advantages of Remote Teaching

Most participants (71.7%) expressed their readiness to teach remotely in fall 2020-2021. They assured that they would integrate the technologies they HAD learned during the pandemic in their newly designed courses namely Microsoft Teams, Zoom, YouTube, own recorded videos, and PowerPoint slides with voice over. These courses would be better organized now that participants are more familiar with different modes of online teaching as aligned with the findings by Revilla-Cuesta et al., (2021). Teachers also mentioned that they would keep using Microsoft Teams platform to upload course materials and students' work in parallel with the regular teaching/learning that take place in face to face classrooms. 62.3% would use synchronous and asynchronous teaching/learning in case they need to teach remotely next fall.

This section answers research question two.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Due to the pandemic, teachers and students at the Lebanese university have shifted abruptly to the emergent remote teaching mode overnight since March 2020. Adapting to this swift shift was challenging not only to teachers but also to students (Revilla-Cuesta, 2021).

In addition to the underdeveloped technical skills and poor infrastructure in Lebanon, teachers faced numerous challenges to design and deliver their courses online and to engage their students. Some challenges ranged from finding stimulating activities to using efficiently the Microsoft Teams platform to encouraging students to attend and participate in online classes.

Although remote teaching was highly challenging, participants mentioned some related advantages. 75.5% expressed the benefits to stay comfortably at home and to save time to do different things instead of commuting to university (67.9 %).

Teachers at the Faculty of Pedagogy had to teach remotely during the pandemic in spring 2020. However, all participants strongly supported having students sit for the final exams in person and on campus mainly because it is difficult to proctor online tests.

Finally, participants expressed their readiness to design and deliver their courses online in fall 2020-2021. They also stressed the need for training for students and teachers to work more smoothly with online technologies in case the Covid 19 pandemic was prolonged.

More research is needed to investigate the perceptions of teachers in the different faculties not only at the Lebanese University, the only public higher education institution in Lebanon, but also in various private universities to be able to generalize findings. Additional research can also shed light on how university students and administrators perceived remote teaching and learning during the pandemic.

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