Face to Face Versus Online Learning: Redefining the Teacher's Role

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Abstract – **The COVID 19 pandemic has driven Samoa and many countries to implement state of emergency plans during lockdown. Unprecedented changes has occurred in many fabrics of the society including education. Within the education system exceptional changes are evident in the modes of teaching and learning where a push for use of online learning platform has become the norm. At the National University of Samoa (NUS) the use of Moodle in addition to other online-learning platforms to facilitate teaching and learning is exceedingly stressed. This study was aimed at finding out participants' perception on the use of face to face versus online as a teaching and learning platform. This qualitative research used an open ended questionnaire to gather information from 40 teachers who were involved in the use of face to face and online platform to perform their studies within the National University of Samoa. Findings indicated that although online learning is beneficial in terms of flexibility, however there is more compulsion towards face to face as a leaning platform. This is due to the opportunity for pupil and teacher to interact in a more dynamic manner in the face to face as opposed to online learning. Interactions using online platforms is impeded by factors such as limited technological knowledge as well as internet connections. Findings indicated a great need to improve teachers' and students' technological knowledge as this seems to affect virtual classroom learning. Similarly, the challenge with internet connection seem to have seriously hindered online learning hence requires serious consideration.**

Keywords – **Online. Teaching, Learning, Virtual, Face- to-Face, Internet, Covid19.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The unexpected advent of COVID 19 in early 2020 placed the world in a total chaos. Many countries in the world scampered to implement state of emergency plans in preparation for a lockdown. Within the education arena, the impact on this lockdown has been a huge challenge not only on educators but students. For many educators they are expected to switch to use of online learning platforms. This transition was quite challenging for those without the requisite skills in online platforms. COVID seemed to have redefined the role of the teacher by turning the teacher into a virtual machine in the likes of moodle, zoom and other virtual platforms. This raises the question-how effective is virtual classroom learning compared to the more traditional face to face learning? This paper will document student teachers' experiences concerning the use of e-learning as compared to that of face to face.

Study Context

The impact of COVID is noted in many aspects of Samoa including education. When the Samoan government announced its state of emergency plans all schools in Samoa were required to utilise online or virtual classroom platform for learning. The National University of Samoa in response to this directive enforced the use of online platform by lecturers and students. This rapid swift to online learning seemed to have caused a lot of challenges not only for lecturers but students especially those who may not be tech savvy. Moreover, this transition seemed to have shifted the role of the teacher from a physical to a computer generated performer. This

begs the question: how effective would students learning be when they learn from a distance using online platforms compared to when they learn face to face with the lecturer in a traditional setting?

Theoretical Framework

The importance of interaction in an individual's learning cannot be overstated. Vygotsky argued that learning occurs in social and cultural contexts than within the individual (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). The social constructivism theory places emphasis on small groups contexts where learning transpires in an interactive environment. This is where exchanges of ideas occur either amongst students themselves or between students and parents likewise between students and the teacher within the classroom. The role of the teacher in social constructivism is that of a facilitator to facilitate discussion (Powell & Kalina, 2009). According to the social constructivist, if successful teaching and learning is to occur, interpersonal interaction and discussion should be highly considered while at the same time ensure that the student is fully comprehending the discussion that is taking place (Prawat, 1992). Vygotsky's social constructivism theory has as one of its core constructs the notion of zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD outlines activities that the student can do on his own and activities the student can do with the support of the teacher. ZPD suggests that an instructor should be guiding the students to the level where the student could master the learning material on his/her own (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Once the student is able to work independently the teacher's support is gradually withdrawn. This theory emphasizes the important role the teacher plays in connection to the students' acquisition of knowledge to develop active rather than passive learners.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Qualities of Online and Face to Face Learning Instructions

In the last decade, the definition of distance education and distance learning has been used inconsistently however, it is worth noting that when one talks about distance education, the type of instruction that transpires will occur at a distance. This is reflected in Wahlstrom, Williams & Shea (2003) definition where they see distance learning as a type of instruction in which the students and instructor are separated by physical distance. In a similar vein Moore, Dickson-Deane and Calyen (2011) refer to it as the process of making learning accessible to those who are 'geographically distant.' Technological advances are influential in the changing modes and sophistication in which distance learning occurs as reflected in its evolving definition. Moore (1990) notes that 'as computers became involved in the delivery of education, a proposed definition identified the delivery of instructional materials, using both print and electronic media'. Simson et al (2009) cited in Osei-Owusu & Awunyo-Victor (2012) defined distance education as "an institutionally approved method of teaching a course using one of more institutionally approved and supported analog or digital communications technologies, which provide synchronize or asynchronise means to deliver and receive text and audio visual course materials and assignments and promote interaction between instructor and student, who are separated by location and/or time of attendance" (p. 222).

Furthermore distance learning moved to another plateau as indicated by the various names such as e-learning, online learning (Moore, Dickson-Deane and Calyen, 2011), and MOOC. These forms and terminologies imply the advanced manner in which the distance learning phenomenon continues to operate. Thus there is an expectation that interaction within the distance learning mode should be more effective given continual

advances in technology. It can be argued however that this is only an assumption since in countries where technology and internet is a problem; distance learning in its more sophisticated mode is often not viable.

On the other hand, the face to face instruction usually known as the more traditional type of learning, involves the classroom instructor in control of the classroom dynamics. For example the instructor imparts the information and learners are expected to listen, write notes and ask questions. This teacher directed nature of the face to face learning is absent in the more student directed nature of the online learning (Salcedo, 2010, in Paul & Jefferson, 2019). The latter requires the teacher to listen and provide feedback while the learner takes control of his/her learning. This concept of student taking control of his/her own learning is often referred to as autonomous or self regulated learning.

Some similarities which exist within the online and the more traditional face to face learning (Paul & Jefferson, 2019), include designing the curriculum contents, tutor and learner and interaction, motivating students in addition to grading students work. These similarities noted, notwithstanding, the two modes differ in the more teacher centered nature of the face to face as opposed to the student centered nature of online instruction. The literature however is divided concerning the efficacy of the two instructional modes where some view one form as superior to the other (Atchley et al., 2013) hence it is crucial to expound on the advantages and disadvantages of these two modes of instructions to determine which learning mode could help enhance student academic performance.

Face to Face Learning Benefits

A number of benefits have been noted in relation to face to face learning platform. For example the opportunity to interact with and receive feedback from lecturers and students is seen as a type of social and emotional support which can enhance learner's confidence in themselves (Keis, Grab, Schneider & Ochsner, 2017). This immediate feedback from tutors cannot always happen in an online situation for if feedback occurs online (Kemp and Grieve, 2014) feedback varies greatly, depending on the nature of the activities and the way a unit is run. For example when it involves completion of individual written activities online, students much preferred face to face class discussion especially when the activities are of a reasonable level of difficulty. In the same vein, Keis, Grab, Schneider & Ochsner (2017) also argued concerning the value of face to face in enabling learners to confidently discuss complicated topics which they may find challenging in using online learning mode. Additionally, Kemp and Grieve (2014) in their study which examines undergraduate students' perceptions concerning face to face and online learning experiences, found students preferring in class discussion to online learning due to opportunity to engage with other students likewise express opinions.

Face to Face Learning Challenges

Some challenges that were noted concerning face to face concerns the lack of flexibility. For example Keis, Grab, Schneider, and Ochsner (2017) found that students in their study viewed e-learning's flexibility of location in a similarly differentiated way to time flexibility. For example the need to be present at a specific location at a specific time and day is impracticable in the face learning hence the students' preference for on-site teaching. Economic constraints can also be a disadvantage for face to face learning especially in relation to financing of learning material such as text books likewise transportation costs.

Online Learning Benefits

The benefits of distance learning lie in its viability to provide instructional programs for students who are separated by time and/or physical location from an instructor. Belanger and Jordan, (2004) noted that regardless of lifestyle or location, distance learners have the opportunity to pursue life long learning at the end of tertiary education. Furthermore, distance learning embraces equity by serving learners who are deemed marginalized; their access is enabled by ODL. Kemp & Grieve (2014) also noted the concept of convenience and flexibility in connection with online learning in the sense that students can study at the time and place of their own choice. In addition to its flexible nature, the economic benefits of online cannot be overstated. For example Zhang and Worthington, (2017) reported on the economic benefits of online over face to face in 37 Australian public universities over 9 years from 2003 to 2012. Maloney et al. (2015) and Kemp and Grieve (2014) also alluded to the significant financial savings of online over face to face in higher education. Similarly, Craig (2015) expounded on the cost efficiency of online learning versus traditional face to face in various studies that have been carried out in the West. At some U.S institution, studies also found that the cost benefits of online learning is significantly higher compared to face to face learning (Agasisti & Johnes, 2015; Bartley & Golek, 2004). In addition to these benefits, the use of online learning (Hobbs, 2002) has the ability to encourage contributions from a wider range of students, specifically, those who might be shy about face-to-face interaction.

Online Learning Challenges

Online instruction although beneficial in some aspects has a number of challenges. Amir, Tanti, Maharani, Wimardhani, Julia, Sulijava, & Puspitawati (2020) noted some internal factors which could impair the use of online learning such as; learner becoming distracted, limited technological knowledge, as well as issues in contacting the instructor. Their findings indicated that a number of students encounter communication problem with instructor and peers during distance learning. Concerning the communication concept, the authors emphasized the importance of student and instructor communication as it develops the notion of trust between learners and instructors. It is worth noting that this peer to peer communication and interaction in a group discussion are not often feasible in the virtual learning method especially when there are frequent internet disruptions in addition to high class numbers. Furthermore, student related factors such as 'student readiness to distance learning, time management and difficulty to stay focused for a duration of time during online sessions can hamper online learning. Similarly, the instructor related factors such as instructor characteristics can also be an impediment. For instance, the instructor's limited pedagogical ability, in addition to lack of confidence and inspiration to apply innovative learning (Amir et al., 2020) can deter online learning. Technical or infrastructural issues (Amir et al., 2020) such as unstable internet in addition to 'extra financial burden for internet quota' can also hinder online learning.

These benefits are noted notwithstanding, the question that continues to haunt researchers concerns with the effectiveness of the two modes of instructional delivery in addressing the needs of learners (Paul and Jefferson, 2019). The literature seemed to provide mixed evidence about the extent to which virtual learning methods might help or hinder students' learning compared to the more traditional face-to-face learning. There is dearth research that has been conducted in Samoa and within the Pacific on the effectiveness or not of these two learning modes in addressing the needs of the learners. This study gears towards this direction.

Aim of the Study

The study aimed at:

(i) Exploring participants views about two modes of learning; face to face and online learning, based on their experience;

(ii) Reporting practices that can facilitate students' learning mainly in the context of COVID related challenges.

Focus Research question:

1. What are participants' experiences in the utilization of online and face to face learning platforms?

Sub questions:

1. What are advantages and disadvantages of online-learning (OL) (e.g. moodle, zooming, emailing?

2. What are advantages and disadvantages of face to face (FTF) learning ?

3. What are student's preferred learning mode and why?

4. What are strategies to address challenges that may have been encountered in both learning platforms?

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This qualitative research design employed the phenomenological approach to capture views of participants concerning their experiences in utilizing face to face compared to online learning in their studies during COVID 19 state of emergency. Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that targets the cohesiveness of a specific group's lived experiences. It aims to describe the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenon in this case is mode of learning which is online learning (virtual) versus face to face learning. As the approach delves into people's perceptions concerning their experiences of online and face to face learning, so it is considered appropriate for the purpose of this study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instruments that were used for gathering data were open ended survey questionnaires and document analysis. Document analysis was used by assessing students use of online such as moodle, email messenger, zoom platforms in their readings, interactions with lecturers, as well as in assignment submissions during the lock down period. Data gathered from document analysis were also utilized to back up results from the questionnaires.

Questionnaire (Sample)

The open ended questionnaire was developed by researchers themselves based on the related literature that has been reviewed. The questionnaire was organized into two parts:

(A) General information about students which include the student's gender, year of study, program of study and age (optional).

(B) Questions pertaining to the a) advantages and disadvantages of face to face instruction, b) advantages and disadvantages of e-learning, c) type of online learning (OL) used, d) most frequently used OL type, e) preferred learning instruction, f) desired improvements.

Participants

Participants were purposively selected and included a mixture of first, second, and third year students who were taking undergraduate and postgraduate education programs within the faculty of education (FOE) at the National University of Samoa (NUS). There were 4 students from the postgraduate in education program, 3 students taking the graduate diploma in education and 33 students from the bachelor in education program. Although participants were requested to participate, it was voluntary and on the basis of their consent. Confidentiality was adhered to and participants' personal identity were well protected.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis technique (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was used to analyze the data and organized it into 9 categories namely: preferred learning platform, online typology, most effective OL type (Table 1) as well as benefits, challenges and desired improvements in connection to Face to Face and Online Learning platforms (Table 2).

IV. FINDINGS

This qualitative study was aimed at exploring experiences of participants about the two modes of learning that of face to face and online or virtual classroom learning. This section presents findings of the study.

Table 1. Preferred and most effective online platform.

Total Participants (n) 40	Preferred Learning Platform	Type Online (OL) used	Most effective Online (OL)
Face to Face Learning	19		
Online Learning	11	Moodle (25)	Moodle (16)
		Email (20)	Email (10)
		Zoom (7)	Zoom (5)
50% OL 50% FTF	10		

Table 1 presents results pertaining to type of learning platform that participants seem to prefer. Moreover the type of online learning that participants in the study used for their studies during the lockdown. It also presents what participants perceived as the most effective type of online learning platform.

In comparing students preference between online and face to face instruction, data revealed that the majority (19) of participants preferred using face to face, while eleven (11) preferred using moodle and another ten (10) participants preferred 50% face to face and 50% online. The rationale for the participants' preference is noted in Table 2.

Although the purpose was to find out students preference concerning face to face and online, however we were also interested to gauge participants' views concerning the types of online learning platforms that they frequently used as well as the type of OL they found to be most effective. In relation to type of online type that is frequently utilized by participants, during their studies, results indicated that moodle was frequently used according to 25 participants. This is followed by email which 20 participants perceived to have used while zoom seem to be the least utilized according to 7 participants.

With regards to the effectiveness of each OL participants indicated the manner in which they perceive each OL platform. For example, the value they see in moodle is the opportunity to view the course notes and the

activities mapped out for them by the lecturers. With regards to email, a number of participants claimed that this works more efficiently than moodle for it scarcely shut down on them especially when they submitted their assessment. Some participants pointed to their limited knowledge using online platforms such as moodle which in turn affects their use of this platform:

"I ask my daughter to use email to send off my moodle task since I have problem using moodle"

When comparing the three types of online platforms, zoom despite its low rating due to recurrent internet disruptions was viewed by some in a positive light. This is due to the nature of interaction which can occur within this online platform and the prospect of an immediate feedback from the instructor as compared to interactions which occur using moodle and email. The fact that the participant can view and interact with the lecturer at the same time in zoom is highly commended as noted by this participant:

I prefer zoom because it enables students as well as teachers to communicate clearly face to face, it is almost the same as face to face learning." (p.30).

The researchers of this paper in describing their own experiences in using the various online platforms indicated that zoom seems much better than noodle. This is because they can actually view and monitor their students' actions and at the same time carry out a live conversation with students.

Table 2. Benefits and challenges of face to face and online learning and desired improvements.

	Benefits	**Challenges**	**Desired Improvements**
Online Learning	➢ Flexibility ➢ Convenience ➢ Cost Effective ➢ Time saver ➢ Student focus	➢ Poor internet connection ➢ Restricted teacher -student interaction ➢ Costly ➢ ICT cachet affordability ➢ Limited technology skills ➢ Distraction	➢ Need for training for OL ➢ Workshop necessity on OL usage
Face to Face Learning	➢ Dynamic peer and teacher interactions - *Opportunity to clarify subject contents* - *Immediate instructor feedback* ➢ Enhance student motivation ➢ Unrestricted time	➢ Rigidity ➢ Costly in terms of commuting to University ➢ Transportation issues (unreliable) ➢ Tutor /instructor characteristic ➢ Student characteristic	➢ Staff development (to improve instructor performance and work ethics)

Table 2 presents results pertaining to benefits and challenges pertaining to face to face and online as well as desired improvements relative to the two concepts. These themes and categories will be expounded on below.

Online Learning Benefits

Some benefits for online learning were categorized under the following: flexibility, convenience, cost-effectiveness, time saver, and the notion of autonomous learning as will be noted herein.

Benefits in connection with online or virtual leaning were viewed in terms of flexibility. According to several participants, the opportunity to learn from whatever location they are at is a bonus. For example the opportunity to learn from home is a greater benefit. This is very crucial especially for older students who are parents. These students applauded the use of online and virtual learning for it gives them the opportunity to learn from home and monitor their children at the same time:

"As a mother who wants to study more, I need to spend my time with my kids and study from home hence I prefer to use e-learning" (p. 10)

"One can learn from home without stress…and when one has to transport assignments especially model project from home to the university, I prefer online" (p. 1).

"Online-learning is more effective for I can work and study at the same time" (p.31).

The notion of convenience is very much in line with the flexible concept noted above. The majority of participants indicated that they find learning through online convenient in that they can do their chores at home such as house keeping while at the same time learn. Additionally, it saves a lot of time travelling to get to the training institutions:

"E learning is more convenient and less mobility. As a part-timer who lives on the outer island miles from the training institution having access to e-learning makes it very convenient and easier for me, as long as there is internet" (p.16).

E learning is the only option especially if one lives in Savaii which is a long distance away from the training institution: (p.15).

Although some find online learning costly, at the same time there were individuals who indicated that learning from home using the online platform cuts costs for them especially if they have to travel to the institution.

"To save money for transportation and paper works. It also allows me more time to spend with the children and family. (p. 31).

For some participants learning online is viewed as a time saver in that they can become more focused hence improve their sense of time management. For example the mere thought that they have limited amount of time allowance to submit work drive some students to be more focused on their online studies. Some also indicated that learning using online is efficient in the sense that there is sufficient time to study the content of what is learnt and to prepare a response, because it can be accessible at any time:

"It is beneficial for students living in isolation, it saves time and money to travel. It is a 24/7 service (p.3).

I find it easy and quick in updating class works since I can access course information at any time (p. 31).

Some participants appreciate the student centered nature of online learning since it provides the students with the freedom to manage his or her own study. This connects it well to the notions of autonomous or self-regulated learning:

Students who study online can plan their own study schedule without having to make personal sacrifice in order to meet the class attendance requirements of teachers and traditional universities. It is also student cente-

-red meaning students are put at the center rather than the teachers. (p.30).

Online Learning Challenges

There were a number of challenges that were highlighted concerning online learning such as; poor internet connection, restricted teacher-student interaction, costly, affordable ict cachet, limited ict knowledge, distracting.

In relation to internet connectivity, the data indicated that one of the highest issues with use of OL concerns with poor internet connection. For example, while using moodle, this student noted that one of the issues that seem to impede her use of moodle concerns with poor internet connection:

"Poor reception and service and limited time to access which is only two hours. When I try and submit my assignment, the internet connection becomes problematic (P. 31).

As lecturers we could very well relate to this dilemma and frustration since this internet disrupting issue occurred several times during our own class discussion via zoom. Before half way through class discussions, internet connecting freezes on us which is very challenging.

One of the strongest opposition against online learning was concerned with the teacher and student interactions. For example several participants opined that there is limited teacher and student interaction when using the online platform. For example, due to poor internet connection, the tutor had to rush through a discussion before internet plays up. Further, if there is a high class number which is normally the case with classes in the current study context, managing class discussions has often been a challenge as not all students get the chance to have their say due to frequent internet disruptions. This however can greatly affect communication with the students:

" ..There has always been limited interactions between the lecturers and students due to poor connection as not all areas of Samoa have good connection" (p. 2).

There is also an online learning issue related to cost. For example participants indicated that in order for one to utilize this learning platform, one needs funds to buy data:

"...There is enough money to buy data, as not all people have money to buy data," p. 2).

Further challenges participants indicated as connected to online learning is inaccessibility to a cachet, such as laptop to undertake one's online study. Many students in this study context can not afford to buy a laptop or ict cachet as noted by this participant:

"Not all students have access to the internet. Some have internet access but do not have devices such as laptops, to do their work" (p. 36).

Lack of knowledge in the use of modern day style of teaching using technology was also a challenge to some teacher participants mainly the older teachers. These participants claimed that they were unprepared to use the modern day teaching approaches such as online teaching and learning. They indicated that their limited technology skills has hampered their use of online learning platforms. These participants commented:

"The transition from traditional to e-learning requires time for adjustment. We were more into a face to face learning approach until COVID hit then there was an enforcement of e-learning usage. Making changes takes s-

-ome time but we will eventually get there." (p.16).

"I ask my daughter to do and send off my moodle assignment tasks since I have problem using this online platform" (p.1).

Some participants indicated that learning from online can be distracting in the sense that some students rather than focusing on academic studies, would tend to procrastinate by accessing other website for their own entertainment:

"... One of the problems with online is when some students use study time to access other sites for their own entertainment. This can result in some students failing their programs" (p. 40).

Online Learning Desired Outcomes

In relation to areas for improvement with regards to online learning, two major areas that were stressed include training and internet connection. For example, data indicated the need for training in the use of online modality. A number of participants lamented that they are not well familiar with moodle usage, hence they indicated the importance of organizing and running training for teachers and students so they are able to use some of these technological devises effectively,

"There is a need to train student teachers on how to use different kinds of online learning platforms because some do not understand to utilize these" (p. 31).

"There is a need to promote the use of online learning for mature students especially for part timers." (p.10)".

Internet connectivity was also viewed as one major issue for online learning, hence participants stressed the need for the training institution to consider providing students with free data to utilize online learning as shown by this comment:

"The NUS should supply data for students to use e learning in the future, NUS should develop a partnership with Digicel to supply free data for students". (p. 1).

"NUS need to address the issue of online learning by providing free data for students from voda phone and Digicel" (p.2).

Face to Face Learning Benefits

Findings (Table 2) also indicated benefits of face to face as they relate to: effectual interactions, minimal distractions, unlimited time and student motivation. Effectual interaction with teacher and other students was viewed by the majority in a positive light. A number of participants indicated that there is ample opportunity for students to share their views with the teacher and vice versa. Moreover, several indicated that there is sufficient time for clarification of subject contents by the tutor-something that is ineffectual during online due to time constraints and internet connection issues.

"An advantage of face to face is you can ask the teacher about issues regarding the subjects which may be missed from online materials. Also the teacher can explain things thoroughly during a face to face interaction" (p. 13).

Face to face interaction is important in that it gives me an opportunity to listen to the teacher clarifying areas

related to the subject contents" (p. 30).

Some participants also indicated their preference for face to face learning due to minimal distractions or interruptions to one's learning. This is due to the teacher-centered nature of face to face, where the instructor is in direct control of the students learning in addition to the variety of teaching resources that normally accompanies the teacher's demonstrations:

"Face to face learning is really an effective way to learn knowledge and skills because it often combines different ways of learning like, writing, reading, discussion, presentations, group projects, demonstration or practice. You will be able to concentrate harder on your leaning because there will be less distraction than if you were at home (p. 30).

One other benefit of face to face learning was noted in terms of sufficient time for teacher and student interaction as compared to online. The latter is normally restricted by time especially with internet accessibility.

"I must say that I prefer face to face because time is not limited or restricted" (p. 6).

For some participants, face to face interaction provides them with the confidence to communicate since it is a mode of learning that they are well familiar with. This sense of confidence seems to stem from the notion of learning together as a community of learners with other fellow students and the teacher:

"I prefer face to face since it is a system that I am familiar with. I feel more comfortable and confident learning in the classroom with fellow class mates with the teachers facing us with available resources ... (p. 30).

Face to Face Learning Challenges

Notwithstanding its benefits, face to face learning also has various shortcomings in the following areas: *inflexibility, costly, transportation issues, instructor and student characteristics*.

One notable issue with face to face lies in its inflexible nature. For example, some participants who are parents indicated that an issue with face to face is finding time to attend while at the same time there are family commitment to be considered:

"Classes are from morning to afternoon but I have a day job thus may not fit into my schedule". (p..33)

"A challenge in face to face is trying to find time and to be excused from work in order to attend classes" (p. 10).

Face to face learning can also be disadvantaged by cost as noted by a number of participants who have to travel to the study venue. This is especially true of those participants from rural areas who live some distance from the training institution.

"With face to face you need to have money to buy petrol or to pay bus fare to travel to university. And if you are a part time student, you do not have enough time to attend classes" (p. 13).

Another issue concerning face to face is technical in nature. This is where one would rely on a public transportation to get to university and if the transport is unreliable, one will likely to miss a class or late arriving hence affects one's learning. This participant commented:

"The disadvantage of face to face is more expenses and when the bus is late I get locked out of the class" (p.

-35).

The data also highlighted the instructor's characteristic as a challenge in face to face learning i.e., when the instructor is non-committed. Some participants lamented that it is frustrating when one has to travel to the training institution from a long distance and found upon arrival that the lecturer is not in attendance:

"One disadvantage of face to face learning is that you can travel from a remote area but when the teacher does not turn up, time and money is wasted." (p. 13).

In addition to instructor characteristics, there are also conditions related to the students themselves. For examples a few participants indicated their lack of confidence to ask the lecturer questions during a face to face situation, as noted by this participant:

"I find face to face learning a challenge since I am too shy to ask questions during a face to face classroom discussion" (p.10).

Face to Face Learning Desired Outcomes

Findings indicated some areas that requires improvement in face to face as connected to the instructor which is also an institutional related issue. For example data indicated the importance for the instructor to be present during classes. As this is an institutional related issue, the importance for the training institution to improve staff development to enhance staff performance.

V. DISCUSSION

This qualitative study was aimed at exploring experiences of participants (teacher trainees) about the two modes of learning; the face to face and online or virtual classroom learning. This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the benefits and disadvantages of the two types of learning platforms.

Although the use of online learning has been viewed globally as a means to facilitate learning especially during the challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic, however there appears to be a high compulsion towards face to face learning according to the literature (Paul & Jeffersen, 2019). Jaggars and Xu (2016) noted that face-to-face instruction has numerous benefits not found in its online counterpart. According to Kemp and Grieve, (2014) face-to-face instruction provides dynamic learning attributes that are missing in Web-based teaching. In the current study, more than half of respondents preferred face to face for a number of reasons and one of the top reasons is the opportunity to interact with the lecturer and other students. The majority of participants indicated that they prefer face to face instruction for it provides them with the opportunity to ask their teachers questions and be provided with an immediate response. Additionally, face to face instructional mode also provides better understanding of a concept for there is ample opportunity for a two-way conversation between the instructor and the learner. Social constructivism suggests that successful teaching and learning is heavily dependent on interpersonal interaction and discussion, with the primary emphasis on the students' understanding of the discussion (Prawat, 1992). One may also associate this preference for face to face to the more collective manner of the Samoan society where there is a tendency to work and do things together as opposed to the more individualistic nature of online learning which is a Western type ideology. The student and instructor interaction can be very challenging in an online learning especially when there is poor internet connectivity which is why what Paul & Jefferson, (2019) said makes a lot of sense. They noted that dependency on online for learning can

be problematic and may hamper a student's learning.

Although in the current study preference for face to face seem to dominate that of online, however face to face is not without limitations. One notable disadvantage of face to face is apparent in its inflexible nature which makes it impossible for the learner to be at two places at the same time. For adult learners who have family commitment, it is desirable for them to be at home and study at the same time. The same can be said for adult learners who work and study at the same time hence face to face learning is not practical in their situation. There is also a problem with the instructor personality when there is a lack of commitment on the part of the instructor to be available for a face to face class.

The notion of convenience and flexibility in association with online learning is an interesting phenomenon. A number of participants especially married students indicated the value of online instruction since they can take care of family matters while studying at the same time. This idea was also supported by other studies (Kemp and Grieve, 2014) where students place value on online learning since they are in more control or their learning space and time and not have to travel to the university to learn. Furthermore, studying from home holds some economic value especially for students who have to travel for an hour or so to get to university which is costly. A number of students who were involved in this study live some distance from the training institution hence, online learning seemed more viable as commuting from and to university is no longer a necessity. The literature highlighted the cost benefits of teaching via a distance compared to face to face instructions. For example, Li & Chen, (2012) in their study conducted in China and Zhang & Worthington (2017) in their study from Australian public universities. Similarly Maloney et al. (2015) and Kemp and Grieve (2014) also found significant savings in higher education when using online learning platforms compared to face to face learning. Furthermore, studies from some US institutions found that online learning is more beneficial than face to face learning (Agasisti & Johnes, 2015; Bartley & Golek, 2004). Moreover, some research studies in the West (Craig, 2015) also noted the cost efficiency of online learning. In the current study, one of the findings related to online benefits, although may seem insignificant but is worth noting, concerns with the notion of autonomous learning. It can be argued that online learning can be utilized as a teaching and learning mechanism to promote self-regulated learning within the Samoan learners. Based on observation and experience, the self-regulated concept does not seem to factor in much in the Samoan child's upbringing. Most children seem to have the tendency to depend on the next person to guide their learning hence the development of the dependent mindset concept within some of these children.

Although online learning seems beneficial in several ways, some disadvantages were also noted. For example, one of the findings in the current study which relates to instructor and student was also noted by Cao, Fang, Hou, Han, Xu, Dong, Zheng, (2020). The authors alluded to students having issues communicating with the instructor and other peers in distance learning due to some student related factors such as 'readiness to distance learning, time management and difficulty to stay focused. Another online learning issue that was found in the current study relates to student procrastination. For example the tendency on the part of the student to use other social media for own entertainment and with minimal focus on their studies cannot be negated. This idea could very well relate to findings in some previous research (Cao et al., 2020) which hinted at the high likelihood of distraction which could impede the success of distance learning.

Overall, while the two types of learning plantrooms appear to have some limitations, however both seem ben-

-eficial for the student's learning. It is crucial therefore for educators and those who are involved in the teaching and learning process to consider integrating aspects of each platform in their teaching and learning if learning is to occur.

VI. CONCLUSION

The research explored the perspective of teacher participants concerning the two learning platforms that of the online learning and the face to face instruction. Findings indicated that both learning platforms have benefits and challenges, however there seems to be a more inclination towards the face to face learning. Although the online learning is considered as a modern type of classroom delivery expected of the 21st century educators, however the current study indicated that the traditional mode of delivery that of face to face is still very much valued due to the nature of interaction that occurs within this learning mode. For example most participants prefer face to face learning for it allows room for fluency of discussion and interaction between the learners and the instructor. Similarly the opportunity for learners to receive immediate responses to their queries was viewed as of most import as this privilege seems to be lacking in online learning.

The significance of virtual learning is noted, notwithstanding, it does not seem to replace the worth of the face to face learning and the active interaction which occurs in the physical presence of the teacher. This high preference for the physical presence of the teacher and interaction within the traditional classroom could very well be attributed to the collective nature of the Samoan culture. The latter is more collective in nature as in all Pasifika cultures hence implies the notion of social constructivism and social interaction. The participants coming from such socio cultural background therefore seem to have more compulsion towards the face to face interaction as epitomized in the face to face learning as opposed to the online learning which is a Western idea that is more individualistic in nature.

Given the era of globalization the world is now living, it is crucial for educators and learner to be on-par with the rest of the world in terms of teaching and learning techniques and approaches. The use of online and face to face learning therefore should both be used in an integrated manner so every learner will not be left behind.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the challenges of the present times, it can be suggested that consideration is given toward the use of both face to face and online learning platforms. Hence there is a great need for the training institutions to carry out workshops and trainings to improve teacher's technological knowledge. There seems to be an assumption that teachers and learners are computer savvy which seems to be not the case based on the findings of the current study. It is catastrophic to enforce a virtual learning policy while teachers and learners are under prepared to embark on this journey.

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