

## CHALLENGES THAT LIBYAN PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS FACED IN MANAGING VIRTUAL CLASSES

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### ABSTRACT

Managing classrooms remotely requires effort and the use of specific strategies. Some teachers face difficulties in managing their virtual classes, especially those without experience. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate these difficulties and determine what strategies teachers use to overcome these difficulties. The study employed a qualitative case study with the thematic analysis of the data obtained through Semi-structured interviews with ten teachers giving online classes in November 2021 in a Libyan primary school. The results of the study revealed the fact that the teachers experienced many challenges with the Management of their virtual classes, such as the student's reluctance to participate in the virtual classes, the noises surrounding the students, internet connection issues, student's lack of motivation, some strict rules conducted by the school's principles that affect some teachers negatively in managing their virtual classes. The teachers used some strategies as solutions to overcome these challenges. For managing virtual classes, an initial education plan must contain sufficient solutions to overcome all these difficulties. **Keywords:** Virtual Classroom, Management, and Challenges.

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

An online learning environment is a virtual classroom containing all required course materials. The rapid and sudden appearance of covid 19 pandemic made governments impose social divergence. The educational system radically changed from public to virtual education, so education became online. Infrastructural preparation, including technology and internet access capabilities, as well as backing and cooperation from all relevant parties, including the government, schools, teachers, and parents, as well as the readiness/planning abilities of teachers, all played a role in the success of online learning in West Java during the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, conduct online learning activities (Mutqinah & Hidayatullah, 2020).

Online courses are referred to as being taught in a "virtual classroom." It is an educational setting within a system of computer-mediated communication. It is a procedure in which teachers and students collaborate actively to design and carry out learning activities with one another, such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and debates, and share answers to homework issues through emails, message boards, chat rooms, and conferences. It consists of a variety of group communication and work areas and facilities that go beyond those of the traditional classroom (Sufeng, Y., & Song, R.2013). One of the most recent developments in education is the virtual classroom, and teachers are adjusting to it to remove obstacles to teaching and learning. A virtual classroom is a collection of teaching-learning resources designed to enhance student's educational experiences using various technology tools (Biswas &Nandi, 2020).

The challenge of lifelong learning is thinking about ways to enable people to engage in engaging learning experiences at any time in upper secondary school, higher education, and vocational training. In our globalized and linked culture, it is increasingly harder and harder to be expected to be present at one central point. Additionally, as the student body evolves, finding a balance between studies, employment, and family obligations becomes more important. Therefore, it is crucial to promote flexibility within the learning trajectory and make education less dependent on place and time (Lakhal, De Sherbrooke, & Bateman, 2017). A fantastic resource for organizations looking to develop high-quality online learning is The Realities of Online Teaching (Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. 2013). The remote learning environment has undergone substantial changes as a result of recent technology advancements, giving students more options and flexibility in how, when, and where they learn (Falloon, G. 2011). Online learning and its implementation have impacted learning activities in schools and classrooms. These changes need rapid adaptation from both educators and pupils. The virtual classroom requires both teachers and students to participate in learning activities. What is a virtual classroom? Learning that is facilitated by portable technology, including smartphones, tablets, and laptops, which allows access to knowledge anywhere, anytime (Gikas & Grant, 2013). The virtual classroom offers students a live, contextual, and interactive environment while delivering course materials. Additionally, teachers have the same level of control over the teaching and learning process in a typical classroom (Yang & Liu, 2007).

Everything a teacher does to arrange pupils, classrooms, schedules, and resources to facilitate learning for children (Wong & Wong, 2005, p. 84). "A virtual learning environment with the necessary course materials (Rufai et al., 2015, p. 27).

A separate strategy known as virtual pedagogy is needed for a virtual classroom. Students who employ virtual learning pedagogical frameworks improve higher-order learning skills and critical thinking. These qualities may be attained via reflection and group work as well as examinations using online resources like chat rooms, discussion forums, online classes, and conference rooms are also available.

Comprehensive training, well-designed mentorship programs, and new teachers' attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and teaching abilities all increase retention rates for new teachers. Classroom management has been listed as one of the obstacles for starting teachers (Headden, S 2014). Many empirical studies examine how teachers manage their physical classrooms, but many fewer look at how they manage their virtual classrooms. In a traditional classroom, lessons are often taught using textbooks, in front of the class, with students seated in rows and practicing activities (Setyowati 2017).

(Mardiani, & Azhar, 2021) Claim that the instructor used a mix of democratic and lax classroom management techniques. They also suggest Maye's Conceptualization Model as a novel method for managing virtual classrooms. From the viewpoints of the instructor and the student, Virtual learning environments can present both internal/subjective and external/objective challenges. An obstacle is a difficulty in creating study materials that are appropriate for the method of education (for instance, making vernacular-language virtual learning materials) (Biswas, R. A., & Nandi, S. (2020).

During the Corona pandemic, education in Libyan schools changed from face-to-face education to virtual education without prior notice. This was the first experience for most teachers and students; they faced many difficulties and challenges that hindered the educational benefit. Among these challenges and the most important of which is how to manage virtual classrooms to provide a suitable learning environment for the student, therefore, This study's objective is to find out the challenges that Libyan primary school teachers face in managing their virtual classes and what are the solutions they are following to overcome these difficulties, so this study presents a clear picture for the researchers, teachers and those interested about the difficulties that teachers faced in managing virtual classrooms and what are the solutions to overcome these difficulties.

### **1.2. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS ARE:**

Q1-what is the main challenges Libyan primary school teachers face in managing their virtual classes?

Q2-How teachers overcome the difficulties of managing virtual classrooms?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology that this study used is a qualitative case study design to comprehend ideas, views, or experiences better; the collection and evaluation of non-numerical data are necessary for qualitative research (such as text, video, or audio). It may be used to learn comprehensive information about a subject or generate original research ideas (Mesias, J. C. M 2022). Data were collected from ten teachers working at a Libyan primary school. The semi-structured interview technique was by the teachers who have to teach online experience. The semi-structured interview is an exploratory interview most frequently used in the social sciences to obtain data for qualitative research or medical purposes. Although it typically follows a guide or strategy prepared before the interview and is focused on a key problem to give a basic framework, the semi-structured interview allows for exploration with room to pursue thematic trajectories as the discussion unfolds (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). The teachers were between the ages of 29 to 45, 6 males and four females with at least one year of experience, each teacher was interviewed individually, and the interview time was around 30-40min. The information was gathered via the interview questions. The teachers' codes were created for all teachers to reflex a good finding explanation for all the participants' answers, they were ten codes related to 10 teachers as T1, T2.... T10. Using codes will make it easy to interpret the findings related to each teacher. Content analysis technique was used to analyze the research data according to Miles and Huberman (1994); it has used to interpret the findings written by using codes related to the participants.

## **3. FINDINGS**

The findings were collected from ten teachers by interview questions to find answers to the following two research questions.

**Q1-what are the main challenges that teachers face in managing their virtual classes?**

**Q2-How to overcome difficulties in the Management of virtual classrooms?**

### **3.1. Virtual classroom management challenges:**

Some students do not participate in virtual classrooms as much as in a live classroom because they feel invisible. Therefore, they do not participate in discussing and answering the lesson exercises. In this case, the lesson becomes boring without the participation of students in discussing topics, and all the burden remains on the teacher without the students; activities. (T-1).

Because students are living with their families, there is occasional noise in the area around the students. Alternatively, the noise from the students themselves because they lack the rules to participate during the online lesson, such as asking permission to participate by raising their hand at the bottom of the screen. (T-2)

Some students live in houses with no Wi-Fi or, at most, spotty coverage. Alternatively, with a weak connection, some do not have their own computer, so they share the class with one of their classmates, they will not be comfortable using one computer with two or more students during the lesson. Moreover, frequent power outages are one of the challenges that impede virtual class management. (T-3)

The challenge of identifying the students who have a weak concentration in online learning environments, students concentrating is an important matter of understanding, participation and discipline. Moreover, it helps to manage the virtual classroom well. (T-4)

The problem of indiscipline among some students some students move a lot, like eating and drinking during the lesson, and some are busy with their phones, not focusing on the computer screen. (T-5)

Students' attendance and commencement of the virtual lesson sometimes take much time because of many inputs, such as students' readiness for the lesson, turning on the devices, opening communication links and poor network connection; all of this makes it difficult to manage virtual classes time. (T-6)

Students' lack of motivation, one of the challenges that make virtual class management more difficult is the students feeling bored during the lesson because they do not feel the active student like the traditional classes. (T-7)

The control rules the school principal imposes that every teacher must follow, such as student evaluation, mandatory attendance, lesson time, the number of classes imposed, and the curriculum, negatively affect my class management. The coordinators mostly dictate to me to be on the fixed syllabus they have created, but mentors should apply during a semester, so the pressure becomes too much on me (T-8).

I find it difficult to manage students' behavior in a virtual setting, especially if students are not physically in the same location; managing students' behavior remotely is difficult. (T-9)

I find it challenging to manage a crowded virtual classroom with students. The number of students in one class reaches 30, so the noise and gossip increase; it is difficult for me as a teacher to communicate with all the students to participate in the lesson's activities because that takes a lot of effort and time (T-10).

### **3.2. OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF VIRTUAL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

As an experienced online teacher, to solve non-interactive students' problems, at the beginning of the class, explain to students that participation is expected and essential for their learning, and have online video conferencing classes to create a chance of face-to-face interaction between learners and the teacher and motivate them to follow me and call the students by name and ask questions and told all of them to switch on their cameras except the ones who genuinely had technical problems(T-1)

To control the calmness of my virtual classes, at the beginning of the class, I explain to students the importance of maintaining a calm and respectful environment, with the need to take permission before speaking, and establish consequences for disruptive behavior, So Students joining my class are to use a headphone that filters/prevent noise within a specific range. Moreover, during the lecture, students are advised to stay in a room with no other individuals.

Also, I mute all student microphones and unmute the microphones when they have made an indication to speak using the google meet button(T-2).

To solve technical problems, I would record each teaching session for my students to share for whom they are absent or may face a poor connection and provide alternative assignments or activities that students can complete offline if they cannot participate. Many virtual learning platforms offer data-saving options in the virtual class that can help reduce the amount of data needed to participate in the class. So, I always encourage my students to use these options if they have limited data (T-3).

To overcome the problem of students not concentrating during the lesson, I engage my students in interactive activities and start the lesson by asking a question to catch students' attention. Such as discussions, group projects, and breakout rooms, to keep them actively involved in the learning process, and sometimes show them educative and exciting videos to gain and retain their attention. I also sometimes promised to give them gifts if they performed well in the class (T-4).

To maintain student discipline in the classroom during the lesson, at the beginning of the class, I explain to my students the importance of respecting others and following the rules. Moreover, establishing consequences for disruptive behavior and ensuring students understand the expectations. I always encourage my students to use the "raise hand" function if they need to speak or ask a question rather than interrupt the class. I announce a set of rules on the teacher-student platform that all the students abide by during the online lectures. Failure to abide by these rules can result in students being penalized or reported to the school disciplinary committee.

Moreover, by setting some reinforcement and punishment to make them punctual, organized and motivated. Moreover, I use cold-calling, randomly calling on a student to answer a question or participate in a discussion. This is an excellent approach to get everyone in the class involved and cut down on disruptive behavior. (T-5).

To solve managing time problem, I tried to get prepared ahead of the lesson time in case of any eventuality and sent the google meet link 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the lecture, and encouraged my students to turn on their devices and connect to the internet before the start of the class to minimize delays. (T-6).

To increase my student's motivation, I simplify the concept in the lecture as much as possible by using various teaching aid such as online google forms, graphic tablets, graphs, and charts, as well as sharing pdf and using power points documents. I also use animated cartoons using the Doodle platform as well as 3D animations to encourage my learners to learn English with less difficulty and consider offering incentives, such as extra credit or rewards, for good attendance and participation in class discussions or group activities. (T-7).

To overcome any adverse effects of controls imposed by the school principal, I sought help by contacting them to discuss my concerns and brainstorm solutions. While it may not be possible to change the controls imposed by the principal, I work within these guidelines to find creative solutions that meet my needs and my students' needs. Moreover, consider finding ways to adapt my teaching style or lesson plans to fit better the virtual classroom setting and the controls imposed by the principal (T-8).

To solve and Manage students' behavior difficulties, I set clear expectations for student behavior, establish consequences for misbehavior, and create a sense of community by using virtual icebreakers and encouraging students to participate in online discussions and activities. Moreover, virtual office hours and one-on-one sessions provide individualized support for students needing extra help. Furthermore, I use assessment techniques like quizzes, projects, and papers to assess my students' progress in a virtual setting (T-9).

To manage the crowded virtual classes, I keep the students busy and actively participating by asking a question at the beginning of the class to get their attention and keep order in the classroom. If the classes are more than 30, I divide the crowded class into two classes during the day, thus, there will be a limited number of students in the classes, thus facilitating the process of managing and controlling these classes (T-10).

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The study investigated the challenges Libyan primary school teachers face in managing virtual classrooms. The results of an interview with ten teachers with at least one year of online teaching experience showed that Libyan primary

school teachers faced many challenges and difficulties during their virtual classroom management. These difficulties are Technical difficulties: Teachers and students may encounter issues with their devices, internet connectivity, or software; limited engagement: It can be challenging to engage students in a virtual setting, especially if they are not physically present in the exact location, Time management: Managing a virtual class requires careful planning and organization to ensure that all students have access to the necessary materials and support, Limited resources: There is a chance that teachers might not have access to the same tools and assistance that they would in a typical classroom. It can be challenging to manage student behavior in a virtual setting, especially if students are not physically present in the exact location; maintaining a sense of community: Virtual classes can feel isolating for both teachers and students, and it can be challenging to create a sense of community and connection, Providing adequate support: It can be challenging to provide individualized support and accommodations for students in a virtual setting, and assessing student progress: It can be challenging to assess student progress in a virtual setting, especially if teachers do not have access to the same tools and resources that they would have in a conventional classroom. As a comparison, this study's results align with the results of the study conducted by Mardiani and Azhar (2021). This study was carried out as a case study in a vocational school in the West Bandung area of West Java, Indonesia. One English instructor and a class of 27 pupils were chosen as the research participant. The study aimed to ascertain teachers' difficulties in managing a virtual classroom. The findings showed that the teacher faced numerous difficulties in the virtual classroom, including the students' lack of readiness to participate, an unstable internet connection, a time limit that forced the teacher to teach the essentials right away, students who turned off the camera and the sound, inattentive learning, a lack of interaction, and ineffective class management.

There are several strategies that teachers used to overcome these difficulties of managing virtual classrooms, including: Ensuring technical readiness: Before starting a virtual class, teachers should ensure that all students have the necessary equipment and technical skills to participate, Engaging students actively: To engage students in a virtual setting, teachers can use interactive activities, such as group discussions and collaborative projects, to keep students actively involved in the learning process, Creating a schedule and structure: Providing a clear schedule and structure for virtual classes can help students stay on track and ensure that all necessary materials and assignments are covered, Utilizing available resources: Teachers can use online resources, such as videos, podcasts, and interactive games, to supplement traditional teaching methods and keep students engaged, Managing student behavior: Teachers can set clear expectations for student behavior and establish consequences for misbehavior, Building a sense of community: Teachers can create a sense of community by using virtual icebreakers and encouraging students to participate in online discussions and activities, Providing individualized support: Teachers can use tools such as virtual office hours and one-on-one sessions to provide individualized support for students who may need extra help, and assessing student progress: Teachers can evaluate student progress in a virtual environment using a range of assessment methods, including tests, projects, and papers.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS STUDY:**

There are several strategies teachers can use to overcome the difficulties of managing virtual classrooms, including:

- Ensuring technical readiness: Before starting a virtual class, teachers should ensure all students have the necessary equipment and technical skills to participate.
- Engaging students actively: To engage students in a virtual setting, teachers can use interactive activities, such as group discussions and collaborative projects, to keep students actively involved in the learning process.
- Creating a schedule and structure: Providing a clear schedule and structure for virtual classes can help students stay on track and ensure that all necessary materials and assignments are covered.
- Utilizing available resources: Teachers can use online resources, such as videos, podcasts, and interactive games, to supplement traditional teaching methods and keep students engaged.
- Managing student behavior: Teachers can set clear expectations for student behavior and establish consequences for misbehavior.
- Building a sense of community: Teachers can create a sense of community by using virtual icebreakers and encouraging students to participate in online discussions and activities.
- Providing individualized support: Teachers can use virtual office hours and one-on-one sessions to provide individualized support for students needing extra help.
- Assessing student progress: Teachers can evaluate student progress in a virtual environment using various assessment methods, including tests, projects, and papers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Managing a virtual classroom has many challenges, and this paper tried to find out the challenges that Libyan primary school teachers faced in managing their virtual classes and what solutions teachers followed to overcome these challenges. The common challenges teachers faced were related to the internet and technical issues. The challenges related to the students like weak interaction in the virtual classes, difficulty concentrating and indiscipline among some students, and student's lack of motivation, also the noise from the environment surrounding the students constitutes an obstacle for the teacher to manage the virtual classes, some teachers have a difficulty to manage their virtual classes time and the rules imposed by the school principal effect some teachers to managing their virtual classes negatively and the solutions that teachers used to overcome these challenges were to Use online resources, such as videos, podcasts, and interactive games, to supplement traditional teaching methods and keep students engaged, set clear expectations for student behavior and establish consequences for misbehavior. Create a sense of community by using virtual icebreakers and encouraging students to participate in online discussions and activities. Provide individualized support for students who may need extra help.

Moreover, the teacher Provides a clear schedule for the virtual class, including start and end times. At the beginning of the class, the teacher gave the students some advice for maintaining a calm, educational environment, like Using the "raise hand" function if they need to speak or ask a question rather than interrupting the class and using headphones or earbuds to reduce distractions and improve focus. These solutions will help the teachers control and manage their virtual classes well and help the students understand more.

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## **APPENDIX**

The interview questions are:

Q1- Some students are not interactive in the virtual classes because they think they are invisible, unlike in the physical classroom. How do you manage your class to overcome this problem?

Q2- students are living with their families, and sometimes there is noise emanating from the environment surrounding the students, how do you control the calmness of your virtual classroom?

Q3- Some students live in homes without Wi-Fi or limited access at best; how do you overcome this problem to share the lesson with all students?

Q4- The problem of distinguishing students who have difficulty concentrating is not only in regular classes but also in virtual classes. What is the best teaching method (s) you follow to attract students' attention in the virtual class?

Q5- The problem of indiscipline among some students, how do you maintain discipline in the virtual classroom?

Q6- Students' attendance and commencement of the virtual lesson may take much time because of many inputs such as turning on the devices, opening communication links and poor network connection; how do you manage your virtual class time to overcome all these problems?

Q7- Is students' lack of motivation a challenge that makes virtual class management more difficult? If yes, how do you motivate your students to overcome this problem?

Q8- Virtual classes associated with schools have specific controls that every teacher must follow, such as student evaluation, mandatory attendance, lessons' time, the number of classes imposed, and the curriculum. Do the controls imposed by the top school affect you in managing your virtual class positively or negatively? If negative, how can you overcome this problem?

Q9- Do you have other difficulties or challenges in your virtual class management experience? If yes, what are these, and what immediate steps could you take to overcome these difficulties and challenges?