ONLINE LEARNING VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Conference Report

ABSTRACT

Addressing the main prospects, the challenges and the change in concern within Online Learning the virtual event was organized.

GLOCAL AFTER SCHOOL

Executive Summary

Glocal After School hosted 2 days long Online Learning Virtual Conference on June 28 & June 29 with an aim is to build a platform for researchers, industry experts to share their novel ideas, experiences, impacts, and results on the application of Online Learning practice. This conference was able to address the main prospects, the challenges, and the change in concern within Online Learning covering both technical as well as the non-technical aspects of learning. The conference introduced some pioneer speakers from different fields and provided a discussion forum about Online Learning, technology, the future of learning, and the need for it in the present context.

The conference was inaugurated by an opening session with Hon. Giriraj Mani Pokharel, Minister, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Nepal. For both the conference days, there was a panel discussion with national and international panelists on topics like - Embracing the Online Learning Eco-System, The Ins, The Outs and The Affordance to Online Learning and Maximizing Accessibility for Online Learning. We had amazing panelists for this discussion who were policymakers, Ed-Tech initiatives, academia, and journalists to address various aspects of the Online Learning Mechanism.

Also, there was a side event on Adaptability of Online Learning delivered by Prof. Ujjwal K Chowdhury, Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Adamas University, India regarding the change of the learning process from conventional learning to E-learning in the rapidly changing world. Finally, it was ended with a closing remark by Mr. Ana Prasad Neupane, Joint Secretary, Department of Education Ministry of Education, Science & Technology.

The conferences offered extensive topics relevant to Online Learning to academia, government and industry, and included distinguished panelists for different topics of a panel discussion which created an interdisciplinary venue to contribute and discuss the ongoing innovations, applications, and solutions to challenging problems of learning mechanisms.

It is fair to conclude that the conference was a great success! So many people have contributed in so many ways to turn this event into a smoothly running meeting with many interesting panel discussions and a very good atmosphere for learning about the online eco-system.

Thank you for all your excellent work!

Asish Thakur,

Executive Director,

Glocal Pvt. Ltd.

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Calls to Action

Through this white paper for Call to Action, We would like to put forward discussion from all the speakers in an actionable format that can be taken forward by all the stakeholders; Government, Private Sector, Development Sector, Educational Authorities, and Institutions. How can we make an Online Learning better?

1. An effective approach should be directed to every aspect of online education: curriculum, theory, practice, teaching, administration, technology, and institutional culture to leaving a positive impact on the overall method of learning.

2. The 3E's standard framework which is Engagement, Exploration, and Exhibition needs to be implemented in the learning process.

3. Result-Oriented Assessments, for effective learning by adopting a conglomerate multiple assessment systems online learning to evaluate the learners. Formative assessment throughout the course and summative assessment at the end of the course needs to be practiced.

4. Teachers need to be provided with training the use of digital forms for the ease of teaching process. Embracing The Power Of Communication in Learning Mechanism.

5. As digital videos witness enormous popularity, incorporating them into the eLearning process would bring a versatile and convenient flare to education.

6. Virtual Reality (VR) is a relatively new technology that has taken over the world of eLearning at an incredible speed. Embracing Virtual Reality in Education and making it accessible.

7. Decentralization of online resources required for Online Learning maintaining its qualitative aspects.

8. Implementation of the personalized data-driven way of teaching inclusive of content and platform that ensures interaction.

9. A public-private partnership with government, Rural digitization should be the major focus on regard to infrastructural development.

10. The biggest strength to cope up with these challenges can be bringing all stakeholders together to exercise a new form of learning making it affordable and accessible in every nooks and corner of the country.

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11. Introducing & adopting a new domain in the learning process – Phydigital learning: a combination of both physical and digital learning.

12. Aware people regarding the importance of education and being strict with implementing the policies and plans created can expand uniformity in the education sector in Nepal.

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Introduction:

Society today is developing at a greater pace and academic learning in schools and colleges is not enough. The market demands something more, something to be developed and packaged to meet the demands of the market. It is important to be competitive in every field whether it's in the job, entrepreneurship, politics, or any field competitiveness. For which skill development, capacity building, and knowing the new is important.

With the concept to develop what the market demands and creating an exceptional and well skilled human resource, we are here as Glocal After School (GAS), Fuel your skills and knowledge. GAS e-Learning is a cloud-based e-Learning focusing live learning platform that intends to develop skills of youths and which might not be accessible in schools/colleges.

Online Learning Virtual Conference by Glocal After School:

The Online Learning Virtual Conference was organized for 2 days, June 28 & June 29 with an aim is to build a platform for researchers, industry experts to share their novel ideas, experiences, impacts, and results on the application of Online Learning practice. Through this conference, an interdisciplinary venue was developed to contribute and discuss the ongoing innovations, applications, and solutions to challenging problems of learning mechanisms. This conference also was able to address the main prospects, the challenges, and the change in concern within Online Learning covering both technical as well as the non-technical aspects of learning. The conference introduced some pioneer speakers from different fields and provided a discussion forum about Online Learning, technology, the future of learning, and the need for it in the present context.

The objective of the Conference:

- To understand the global practices and their impact on the new age of online learning;

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- To discuss ways to build effective online learning through better interaction and engagement between the learner and teacher communities;
- Mutual learning & Collaboration with industry leaders, government to design, transform and implement better online experiences for skilling and online education;
- To share ideas and ways to implement Online Learning mechanism in the country;
- To address the main prospects, the challenges, and the change in concern within Online Learning.

Program Segments:

Online Learning Virtual Conference: Day 1 (June 28, 2020)

For the first day, the conference was inaugurated virtually with an Opening Remarks by ***Hon. Giriraj Mani Pokharel,*** Minister, Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, Government of Nepal, followed up with a first-panel discussion for the day on the title – '***Embracing Online Learning Eco-System'*** and a Side Event titled- ***Adaptability of Online Learning***.

1. Opening Remarks

2- days Online Learning Virtual Conference started with an introductory note by the Executive Director at Glocal Pvt. Ltd, ***Mr. Asish Thakur***. He shared the motive behind launching this conference as reflecting on ideas to enable the online learning community in Nepal. Glocal After School is dedicated to developing the skills among people using various methods, events, courses, and training and aims to bridge the gap between industry and academia by curating and initiating different demand-oriented learning opportunities. Adapting the new global learning

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techniques and strategies yet being local, Glocal After School is working to create skilled human resources as it believes to help people in learning and skilling.

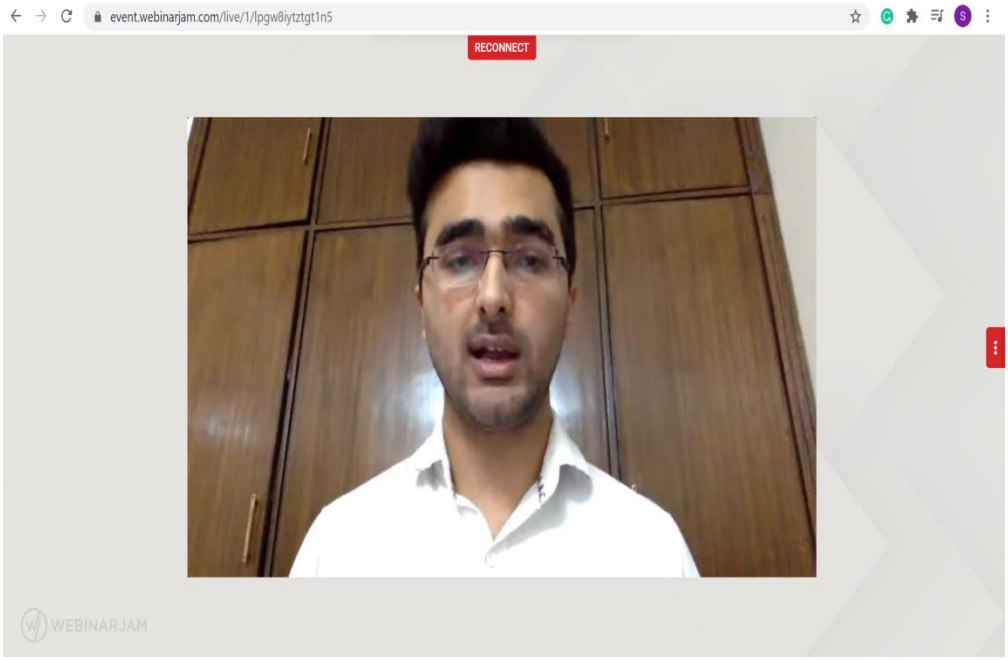

Figure: *Mr. Asish Thakur, Executive Director, Glocal Pvt. Ltd*

He added that Glocal is now heading towards building the effective practice of learning among people by collaborating with Online Gurus, Educational Institutes, Corporates, and of course Learners. They have learned the importance of Online Learning in Nepal. So, to discuss different areas of Online Learning, the conference idea was created which includes three-panel discussions. He informed the participants about the events on both the days of the conference. The panel discussion was held on topics like –

a. *Embracing the Online Learning Eco-System,*
b. *The Ins, The Outs and The Affordance to Online Learning*
c. *Maximizing Accessibility for Online Learning*

The panelists for this discussion were, policymakers, Ed-Tech initiatives, and academia, to address various aspects of the Online Learning Mechanism. He also introduced the Side event at the conference which would address the Adaptability of Online Learning Mechanism.

He welcomed all the participants and introduced ***Hon. Giriraj Mani Pokharel***, Minister, Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, Government of Nepal to put on his opening Remarks.

Hon. Mr. Pokharel addressed the conference and thanked the Glocal team for organizing such an important event. He also shared that he felt glorious to participate in the conference as it is very contextual in this pandemic period and is beneficial as it emphasizes learning and sharing of ideas. He wished for the success of the conference and added that the government is concerned with coping with this pandemic period bringing more learning platforms and opportunities.

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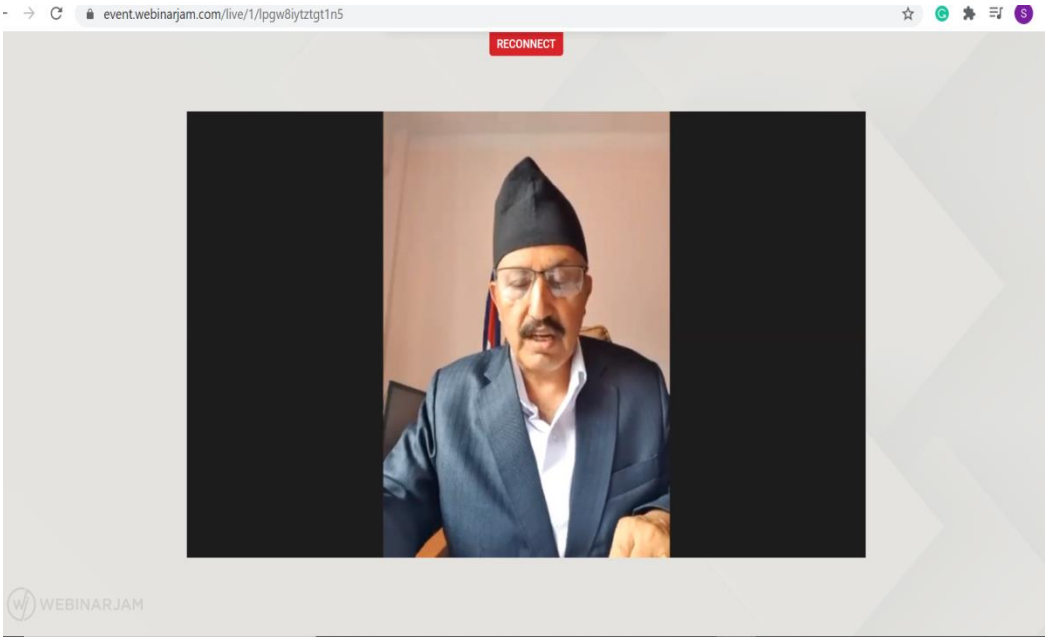

Figure: Hon. Giriraj Mani Pokharel, *Minister, Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, Government of Nepal delivering opening remark on the conference.*

He explained the education system today is being upgraded with advanced technologies that make traditional education even more effective. It is giving students the flexibility to learn with alternative study options and unlimited access to information. E-learning is an effective tool in the teaching and learning process today. Glocal After School (*venture of Glocal Pvt. Ltd*), which has been establishing the Online Learning Community and providing different Online and Offline Skill Building activities in the country. He expressed happiness upon initiation of such event which focuses on the present scenario of the learning process and he believed that the conference would be an amazing platform to bring leading Ed-Tech initiatives, academia, policymakers, journalists to share their novel ideas, experiences, impacts and, results on the application of Online Learning practice and community development. He also explained that Glocal After School has developed e-Learning as a cloud-based e-Learning focusing live & recorded learning platform that intends to develop employability skills of youths, which might not be accessible in schools/colleges. Moreover, he mentioned supporting Glocal's initiation of developing the Online Learning Eco-system in the coming days.

He was delighted to know the aim of the conference to address the main prospects, the challenges, and the change in concern within Online Learning covering both technical as well as the non-technical aspects. He lastly wished for the successful completion of the conference.

Discussion 1: Embracing the Online Learning Eco-system

The Online Learning ecosystem consists of a learning and teaching community, where it plays the role of three components as building blocks of the ecosystem. The discussion was framed to

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provide rich insights into the dynamics of various critical success factors embedded in an Online Learning ecosystem. Embracing the online system is simplistic as embracing the magic. This platform not just connects people all over the world but provides youth with the right opportunity to broaden their minds in terms of Online Learning.

The first-panel discussion comprised of panelist*;* ***Mr. Vipul Redey***, Head of School, Khan Academy; ***Ms. Kajol Jha Thakur***, Associate Director at Glocal Pvt. Ltd., and ***Mr. Sakib Bin Rashid,*** Chief Strategy Officer at Robi 10 Minute School from Bangladesh and Moderator; ***Prof. Ujjwal K. Chowdhury,*** Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Adamas University.

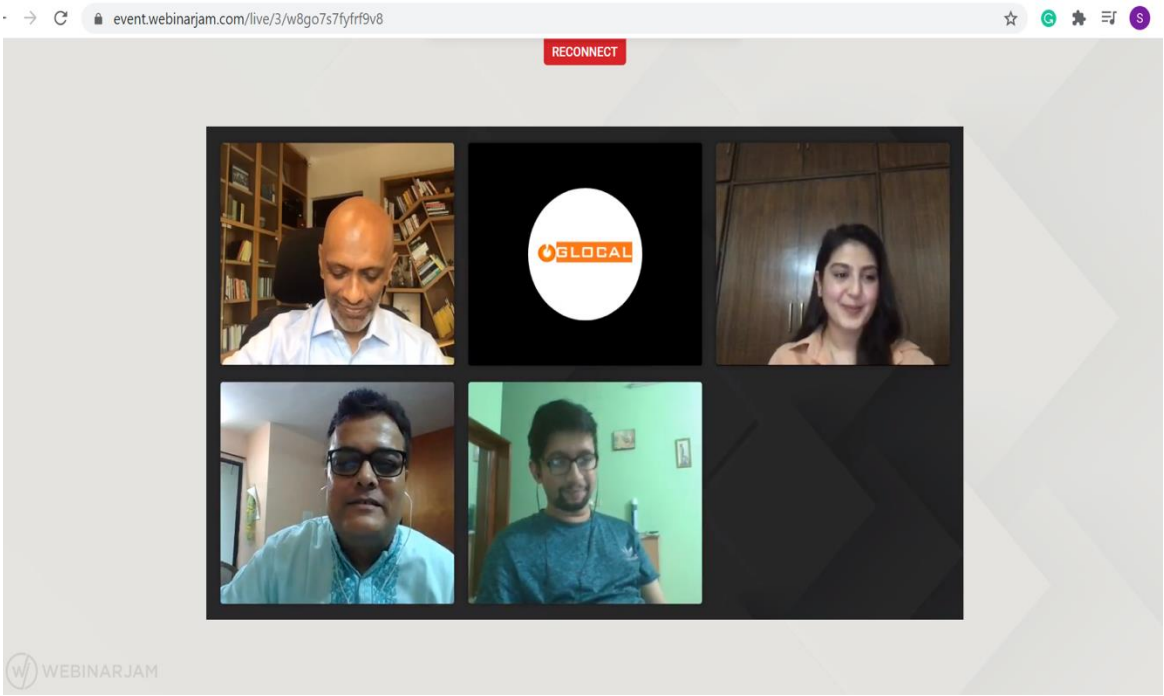

Figure: *Speakers and a moderator of the discussion on- Embracing the Online Learning System.*

Mr. Chowdhury started the discussion by describing what makes online learning effective. The discussion was based on how the quality of education can be improved and online learning is embraced to enlighten the effective learning process. He added that online learning is a peripheral of the life. Online has created avenues not just to interact, not just to make friends but to learn and implement it for life.

Mr. Sakib Bin Rashid, Chief Strategy Officer at Robi 10 Minute School started his opening comments on the theme– ***"Embracing the Online Learning Eco-system".*** He explained that it is a time we are all trying to connect to learn and empathize together because everyone's problem has never been more similar to this as all are stuck at

home trying to figure out how to solve the emerging problems differently.

He mentioned that education needs to be dimensional. There is always a need to find out alternatives. In that regard, online education has become so relevant.

He shared that we have understood the future of education probably has a lot to do with how to become digitally self-sufficient. The first thought of conversion in education is required and it has triggered those people who have been saying education needs to be physical and needs to be in a classroom. He added some points to give information about 10 Minute School. To mark his points, he figured out that good quality education was only available in the capital which is a challenge. However, better digitization and the internet with digital conversion can help solve the problems.

Mr. Vipul Redey, Head of School, Khan Academy described how Khan Academy was formed; how it's revolutionizing school education and explained how school education can be radically different when online content comes in.

He mentioned that when we use online learning there's a couple of things that we have seen and starting to get to the tipping point in terms of quantity. So, everyone is using online resources to learn but there is also a qualitative aspect of it. Teachers, parents, and kids are starting to understand. Online education is a personalized tool. Secondly, there is a massive growth mindset to what Khan Academy has to offer, pushes you to do more with yourself and it doesn't let you give up easily and it is encouraging. Lastly, it's data-driven; so, it's not based on someone's opinion or subjective point of view. It is very much based on your performance and in terms of where you stand and what you need to do next to grow.

***Ms. Kajol Jha Thakur*, Associate Director at Glocal Pvt. Ltd.**

Talking about Nepal's specific experience and discussion in online learning, Mrs. Thakur shared, since 2014 with the inception, they have been working in bringing the stories of people, with the achievements and failures and a lot of other efforts. Throughout all these processes, we realized and recognize the importance of skills and learning in different capacities. This is something that needs to be addressed, which led us to start Glocal After School.

Glocal is dedicated to developing the skills among people through the use of various methods, events, courses, training, and the ultimate vision of GAS is to bridge the gap between the industry and academia by curating and initiating different demand-oriented learnings and training.

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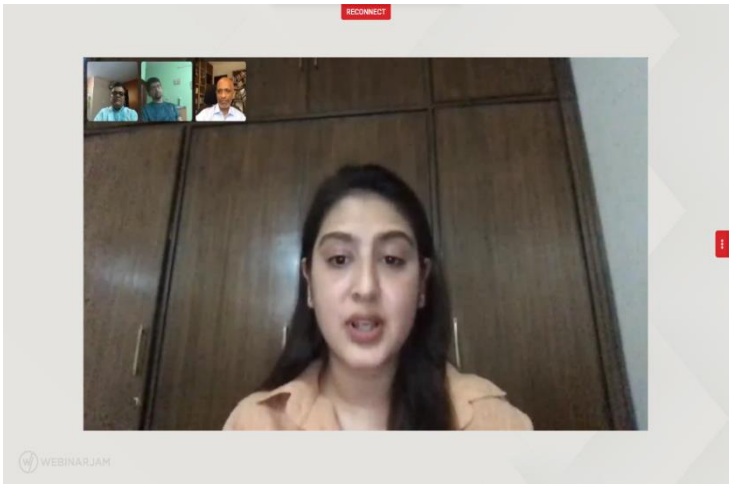
We have been providing skills, training on physically with the collaboration with educational institutes. We also added a tagline- ***"While Isolated, Let's get skilled"*** and initiated Online learning practice connecting the dots and we are majorly focused on developing the Online learning community.



She added- "We have developed different courses, collaborated with different teachers, trainers and we refer them as Online Gurus. The collaboration was led with a thought to bring different courses, online training, Activities, engagements to develop skills not just for their personal life, but these types of online engagement do favor them in setting their career goals, in their professional life too. This is how the journey has gone and day by day it has been increasing and now the online learning concept has been embedded.

In the present scenario, there are realizations in people's mindsets regarding utilization of time. Therefore, an online learning approach can be adopted as per their feasibility, to gain skills. There are no barriers and that is what GAS has been trying to do and adapting to all the new global techniques. We strategized on building a skilled manpower community here in Nepal.

Questions:

Moderator: How to get enrolled in Khan Academy? What are the ways?

Mr. Redey: Mr. Redey explained that there is no concept to enroll in Khan Academy. There is a concept to create a free account just to enable the personalization of entering your email address. After creating an account, one can access personalized factors where Khan Academy gives an idea of how it is done. In terms of navigating the content one needs to master or consume, there is a couple of ways. He added Khan Academy curated content for India, Peru, the US, and boards in Brazil, Peru, Chile, etc. He explained that to use Khan Academy, one needs to identify the content they are looking for, go through similar problems in Khan Academy and bookmark it so that they can use it in the future.

Moderator: The content in Khan Academy is country neutral or syllabus Neutral as per subjects like Science, Mathematics, and so on and how do you plan to make the content relevant to each nation's syllabus requirement?

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Mr. Redey: Mr. Redey clarified that the prime focus for Khan Academy in the future is in Maths and Science. He gave an example. He said- "In some syllabi, you may teach Ratio and Proportion in grade 8/9/10, some syllabi 5/6/7 or other. You will not find syllabi where it is not taught. So essentially what you will find is that the bulk of the content on Khan Academy is the benchmark as we have 60 million people in 190 countries using these resources as it covers all the requirements of learning and common syllabi across the countries which are very universal. You get to learn about Amoeba, learn Algebra Geometry, and the same chemical reaction. All these things are fairly generic regardless of which syllabus you are in."

Given that fact, learners can find out what they are seeking. There are exceptions as well. The students also can come to Khan Academy and request specific content that is not available in Khan Academy. Cathy, the other participant of the conference acknowledged Khan Academy and shared that it has helped her to the extent that she never felt board exams were a pressure.

Moderator: What are the facilities that one can get from Khan Academy?

Mr. Redey: Upon being asked about the facilities, one can get from Khan Academy, Mr. Redey explained that the most important thing that one comes in Khan Academy is for content. Content is in two forms. One is when you learn something for the first time. It's usually videos and few articles, that also in a very short form way. There are practices, sort of examples, unit tests, quizzes, that will help you to drill concepts. As far as content is concerned, there is one layer on top of that where you will be able to get an understanding of what you have mastered; one needs to work to fill the gaps in the learning process.

He also shared that Khan Academy has good tools for teachers as well. Khan academy is available in 40 languages. He explained that in India, English content is incredibly popular. For some schools that are not much polished in English, there are other language preferences. Mr. Chowdhury added language should be generic.

Moderator: What impact do you think emergency emerges Online Learning and what can be the long-term impact of this online emersion?

Mr. Rashid: Mr. Sakib from 10 minutes school urged that the biggest necessity is the emphasis on research. Even the biggest organization that initiated eLearning platforms started of own experiences. He explained that his team tried and tasted changes where some worked, and some did not work. He believes Online Education urges academia people to focus on online mechanisms. The demand created 10 minutes because a lot of people outside Dhaka understood that they needed that platform, as a result, a lot of people were flocked to it very immediately.

He highlighted that delivering a lesson online is simple, but the difficult part is the assessment. They need to work on what kind of assessment is needed, what technology to use. However, they

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push their teachers to be more transparent to students and accountability needs to be taken care of.

Finally, he added that shifting to online learning and education creates more accountability for teachers and educators which leads to making them more prepared and accountable.

Moderator: Are there any ways to collaborate with Khan Academy? If yes, how?

Mr. Redey: He said there are ways to collaborate with Khan Academy. They believe most localized efforts for Khan Academy are grassroots efforts. One can create content for Khan Academy. He added Khan Academy will give them some guidelines, quality checkpoints and if it is good enough, meets quality check, Khan Academy is always happy to link to you. If you want Khan Academy in Nepal, we always welcome you. We will provide you expertise, guidelines, and learning's to make this process a very effective one.

Moderator: What been your challenges of creating, delivering, and engaging the learner in your 10 Minute School? What's your business model?

Mr. Rashid: Mr. Sakib from 10 minutes school was asked about his business model. For answering this question, he had a story to share. He shared that at initiation days, his team was extremely inspired by Khan Academy. They collected a few teachers together, either coaching tutors or academic teachers. They created a Facebook account and a YouTube channel through which they made the teaching-learning process more accessible among the students. Slowly, the demand created, people understood that they need this, and they could grow.

He also shared their business model runs in Sponsorship. They have few online platforms and the Government has been their biggest support. They have an alternative revenue stream so that they can keep learning platform free of cost. They charge services for mobile applications, as they have built a complete online training solution.

He explained that they have created alternative revenue streams so that they can keep the mainstream learning platform free of cost. The services they charge for; when we develop a mobile application for students with a lot of critical algorithms, learning algorithms e.tc. We figured these algorithms to create training platforms for corporations. Apart from that, all the mainstream courses will remain free and will have business to business and will have some courses. For in the paid model and that's how we make money. The most interesting part is our human resources are mainly led by students. The incentive for students for working here is first they get to learn a lot of things.

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Moderator: How you are developing online content for courses? How you are planning to involve your content, training, and would you be partnering with established players already in this domain of online training. So, what is your strategy moving ahead?

Mrs. Thakur: Collaboration is always good we are always positive towards it. We have already collaborated with the Eton-X school in London. They have online ventures of learning. We have brought some basic schooling, basic skills that can be brought and taught to the students at a very minimal price. The prices are high, but we have tried our hard to reduce it into a minimal cost to bring it into our market. We are still looking for other collaborations.

Second, about the course; we have a course curation team that researches what are the needs of the learners in the present time. We have been working in the field of training, initiating Glocal After School since 2017, through different events and engagements. We have learned that there are a lot of students who are lacking basic skills; E.g. MS word skills, CV making skills, email etiquettes, as such. They are good at Academics but still, they have poor skills of public speaking, creative writing. In our traditional teaching methodology, students are lacking these things, so we are trying to provide these skills. Our team researched it, searched out the professional who could provide such training to the students who need it. We connect the person who needs it with the one who can help them to gather knowledge about these things.

We make content from the basic level to a higher level and help them to use them in real life. We collect the people who have used the knowledge in real life so that they could help the students to share their ideas, their mistakes on using the skills in life.

We, in these past two months, have run live classes going on with professionals and students with minimal cost. The lockdown has been loosened up somewhat, so we are trying to create a recorded course so that we can share it with the students who can easily access it from home.

Moderator: What would you suggest to Nepal? What support and role can Khan Academy bring in for Nepal and youth to ease their hunger to learn?

Mr. Redey: Khan Academy is a platform to learn and a platform to teach. Some of the things you get when you use this platform include a sort of personalized data-driven way of teaching which is very different in a way. It is providing a platform that can scale almost infinitely.

If you think about the education problem from the standpoint, not enough people are getting a quality education. Then you start to find the platform that can ease your hunger to learn. If you think about how this might be brought to bear in making a difference, and moving the needle in terms of the quality of education imparted in Nepal, you might think about how you can take this broad. It does not have to be just schools that use it, it could be organizations that go on their own and start and teach quality education.

He said- “Girls whole school got bombed by Taliwans & Afghanistan are still studying in Khan Academy, refugees in Syria, where there are no schools, they can attend are using Khan

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Academy. I am sure there are lots of people in your country that need education, they can be benefitted using this platform." There needs to be a smooth linkage between those that need and those who provide.

Moderator: How can you bring in the experience in 10 Minute School and the best practices you are putting in the Nepal context?

Mr. Rashid: We have been thinking about shifting & going international for quite a while now and the first country that we wanted to work in Nepal. We would very glad to know that we have already been talking to local investors and local donors on how to set that up. We have been talking to a few schools as well if they would contribute in terms of teacher support or their classroom support as well. Other than our contributions, we should be able to share our experiences on how a platform was built, how the technology works and these are the things that should be free to use. 10-minute school would be glad to share our experiences and build our system.

Mr. Chowdhury concluded his points by saying there is a need for maturing the experiences going ahead and sharing of your mutual experience is always very important to grow and achieve goals.

Conclusion

The panel discussion vocalized the efforts and prospects of Online Learning in a wider perspective.

Discussion 2: The Ins, The Outs and The Affordance to Online Learning

The Online Learning ecosystem has already undergone a visible transformation in recent years, but the platforms have not fully embraced in Nepal. With evolving technologies and shifting priorities, the traditional approach to Learning is hard to compete with modern learners' needs. Effective learning techniques must be thought of and implemented. This discussion, therefore, seeks to analyze more on the INS, outs, and affordability to Online Learning in today's world.

The second-panel discussion comprised of panelists; ***Mr. Parag Shrestha***, Director, Fuse Classroom; ***Mr. Narottam Aryal***, President, King's College, and ***Mr. Pavitra Bahadur Gautam***, CEO at Karkhana and Moderator; ***Ms. Sushila Shrestha***, Operations Manager at Glocal Pvt. Ltd.

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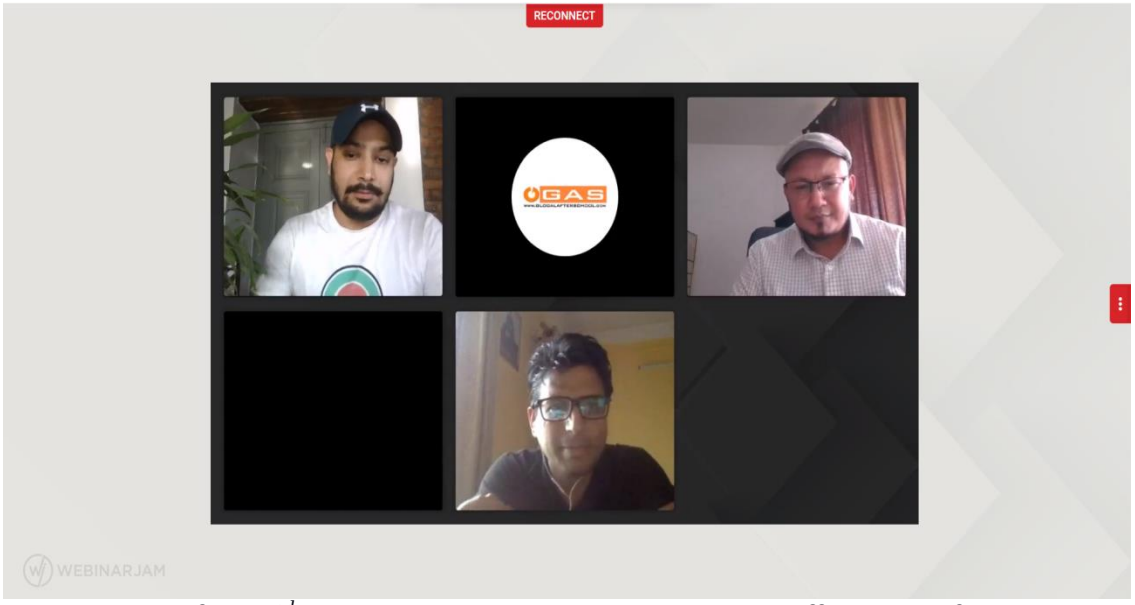
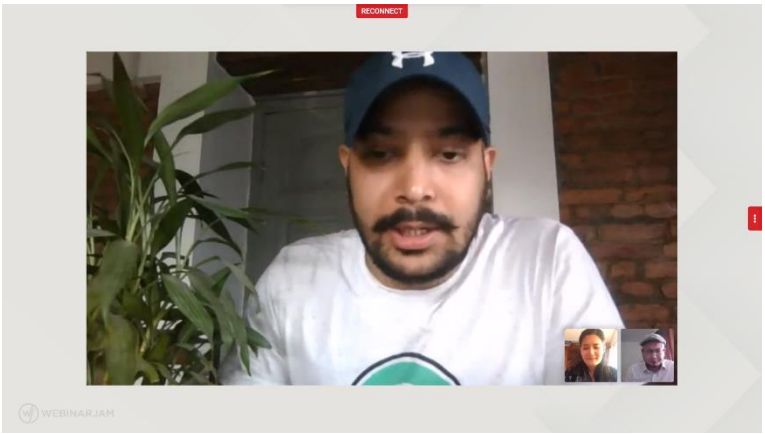


Figure: *Speakers of the 2nd discussion on The Ins, The Outs, and Affordance of Online Learning.*

Ms. Shrestha started the session by introducing the scenario of online learning in Nepal and highlighted the aim of discussion to come up with the ways to make Online learning affordable.

Moderator: What would be interactive online learning for all of you?

Mr. Shrestha highlighted his perspective about online digital learning and added that that focus should be on the content and platform that ensures interaction. Online digital is a new modality in Nepal. There is different interaction in the online education prospective. Firstly, the online content; the content must be rich and later need to figure out ways to make content interactive. Secondly, it's about the platform; how can the digital platform make interactive in terms of reminders, announcements, and kind of help. Learning happens not just in a classroom or not just in a place, but it happens everywhere. These both aspects; interactive of content, richness, and interactive at the features of the platform that is delivering on the content must be thoughtful to the education perspective. Thus, online learning can be very interactive.



Mr. Gautam addressed his point regarding online or offline learning; each frame is important. The 3E's standard framework which is Engagement, Exploration, and Exhibition important role in the learning process. As he mentioned some examples regarding these three aspects. Firstly, engagement in the learning process is necessary. Until and unless if you are not properly engaged, it's difficult to

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learn anything. When it comes to empathic, it refers to understanding the relationship between students and a facilitator in an online medium. Secondly, an exploration comes from various mediums. Learning must be very physical which helps to make exploration rich. Not only experiences but a lot of exploration can be done to the discussion. There should be plenty amount of learning important processes. Thirdly, learning is never complete without a proper reflection or a proper exhibition. The exhibition could be presentations, assignments, or feedback from students or teachers.

May be online or offline, interactive learning should involve Engagement, Exploration, and Exhibition. In an online medium, more online engagement is limited. Eventually, ideas, assignments, and different discussion platforms make the online learning system interactive.

Moderator: You have been in the sector of STEM learning for school kids. How do you find the shift or conjunction of convention education to online education?

Mr. Gautam clarified the term "STEM"- is not a different subject, it's just an approach or methodology of combining all these different ideas into a single set. Also, he clearly defined Science and technology express through the engineering and arts with the language of mathematics. So, stream education is not different through which we look at the educational experience. Learning only through the stream is limited, until and unless the learning goes beyond the stream.

More and more we use the digital tools that expand our capacity to express high-quality material, high-quality instructors, and high-quality platforms. He expressed his thought that technology can never replace a good teacher. It can always meet a teacher barrier that supports. When a good teacher combines good technological intervention than it's limitless. He addressed challenging points regarding stream, explained online learning opportunities, and added parent's responsibilities to children for their online learning.

Moderator: Within the learning ecosystem, what kind of gaps or barriers do you witness, and what are the factors that are limiting this shift?

Mr. Shrestha agreed to the points on what Mr. Gautam said regarding Karkhana being thoughtful in terms of advantages and challenges. It's essential to address every move rock. Without change, comes challenges as well. In some ways, Mr. Shrestha explained that the learning ecosystem is most likely to head towards a dual-modality. Hopefully, we get back to normal. Within the

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concept of a new normal, the thing that lacks is human connection. Ultimately technology is just a platform. The ways to elaborate, adopt the platform, and make it accessible and inclusive is important. If we combine these properly, a dual-modality has lots of possibilities.

He added that the greater challenges in Nepal for digitization is infrastructure. We need internet devices, connectivity which is normally accessible in urban. But those people in rural areas may not have the same accessibility. Therefore, proper plans should be made to collaborate and contribute to addressing these challenges. Some discounted data packages of the internet by NTC & Ncell, a public-private partnership of government, infrastructure development are some ways. The biggest strength to cope up with these challenges can be bringing all stakeholders together.

He said we need to digitize and develop an interactive, holistic approach, and provide engagement in the community which ultimately builds up a momentum and we will redirect, as we go long. The challenges need to be addressed at the national level. Technology is here getting cheaper, therefore stakeholders coming together to develop online learning configuration can add great value. The present scenario needs to be visualized through the Opportunity perspective and create a healthy balance of physical and virtual learning.

Moderator: There is a perception that Skills cannot be developed via online, it needs to have physical schooling for skills, how do you take it as Karkhana has been working with schools' students in enabling them for STEM Skills?

Mr. Gautam shared the whole concept of learning to be dependent on skills. There are certain skills difficult to improve via online. In the present context, the digital collaboration skills in people are increasing, but dialogue, debate, critical thinking skills have limitations as the amount of communication we do is limited. There are some challenges as well as benefits being in this kind of environment. Many learning resources are available online for free, online courses have become more affordable. Digital learning is developing better than the physical environment in skills.

The skills are important today and tomorrow as the world will be more and more digital. As digitization is concerned, there will be some blend between physical and digital worlds. One needs to critically think about what kind of learning environment is needed. There are still some places in Nepal where there are no digital facilities available. He stated Education must be viewed as a spectrum.

In schools, they have planned to teach students from primary level a basic AI. This will create an environment to produce good programmers in the future. There is a need for technological intervention in the learning environment to ensure effective learning.

Moderator: How is it possible to make the schools digital so that we are ready to cope with such pandemic situations, and how can we keep on enabling?

Mr. Gautam urged that we must figure out the socio-economic background, the demography of the children. If we are talking about Kathmandu, Pokhara, or places where there is the affordability of technology, there would not be difficult to move in the digital platform. Whereas in other places, we must be very careful about digital engagement. We need to understand and empathize with the situation.

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He added education is different than other sectors; In other sectors, there is a provider and receiver. But in education, it is complicated because there are different kinds of demographics; there are teachers, parents, students, and school management. To manage the four elements *(teacher, parents, students, school management,)* of proper dynamics is challenging. These four elements need to be ready to go digital. He said without the proper engagement of parents, a good education experience is not possible.

Finally, he addressed challenging points regarding online learning. We must be aware of digital education with digital literacy, digital citizenship, and cybersecurity. He also focused his points on online safety, digital distraction on online learning, children's participation in Digital learning, and eligibilities that comes within.

Moderator: You will have been practicing online education with a mix of classroom learning for quite two years nowadays. Let's say blending learning how do you see this development taking shape?

Mr. Aryal shared – We see the technology has been practicing around the world but not be adopted or accepted in the context of Nepal. The pandemic crisis has helped to initiate the learning platform. He stated a quote - *"Necessity is the mother of invention"*; the creative efforts need to implement to learn and adapt; the adaption also increases and has a lot of opportunities. He said technology makes education more affordable and accessible.

He addressed we should think of how we can take technology in benefits; what could be a better alternative direction, and this may help to accomplish great opportunity.

Moderator: Those online learning comes with more cost or does it make effective learning efficient cost. What are your views on that?

He said we can make online learning cost-effective, and efficient. In our society, there are different needs of people, different conditions of people and for these; different solutions are important. Some might prefer physical learning. So, there is no need to replace on-campus learning, yet can still co-exist. Some might be interested in blended learning as well. Some might be interested to take classes online. These kinds of engagement can be open options for students. Kathmandu is more developed for the latest knowledge and skills. But this

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boundary can be dismantled now with the use of e-learning. Technological interventions in learning are a need. There are wide opportunities, lots of potentials.

Moderator: Can we make parents engage in class on a particular topic?

Mr. Gautam shared that the parents are the prime facilitator who can take care of students. Parents can be engaged skillfully in lower grades. They can be also involved in guiding the students in technological use and applications.

Moderator: What are the ways to enhance the online learning practice in the country?

Mr. Parag Shrestha in conclusion shared that the ultimate approach should be to identify the perspective and it is important. In basic, he explained that technology is just a platform, but its effective utilization brings lots of opportunities. To enhance online learning practice, all the stakeholders should come together to develop. He said that it is most important to bring the latest technology in the education sector. Physical education can co-exist and has opportunities. Globally education is going to be redefined, which doesn't mean it replaces the physical world but will grow eventually during the time.

Mr. Aryal added that government policies need to address the education context in the country. Rural digitization needs to be carried out and lastly, the use of technology is the other way. It was an amazing discussion on ways to make Online Learning affordable in developing the eco-system of learning.

Discussion 3: Maximizing Accessibility for Online Learning

A discussion among three of the well-known, hardworking and insightful panelists; ***Mr. Sishir Khanal***, Founder of Teach For Nepal, ***Mr. Bijaya KC***, Dean of Kathmandu University and Mr. ***Anoj Bhattarai***, Director of the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) was held on Monday, 29 June 2020. The discussion was moderated by ***Ms. Nishma Dhungana Choudhary***, Marketing and Public Relations Manager at Himalayan TV.

The one-hour discussion revolved around the idea as to how online learning has helped people all over Nepal at times of crisis, the challenges we are facing due to this, what an institution and the Government can do to make it accessible to everyone, and bring uniformity in Nepal. Discussion among the experienced panelists certainly helped us learn a lot and gave an insight into the solutions to the prevalent problems.

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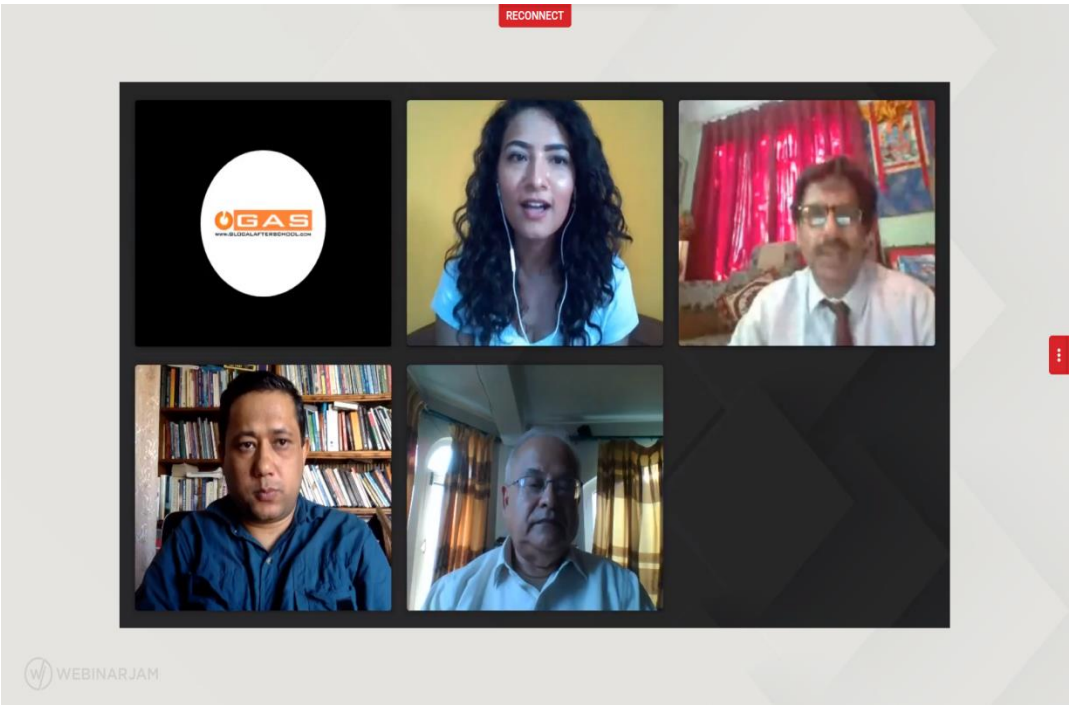

Figure: *Moderator along with the speakers of the discussion on- Maximizing Accessibility of Online Learning.*

Moderator of the discussion Ms. Nishma started the discussion with the questions for the speakers.

Moderator: Mr. Khanal being the founder of Teach for Nepal that aims at maximizing the accessibility of education to the students in the rural areas of Nepal was put forth a question concerning how online learning can help these students because of Teach for Nepal.

He explained that in rural areas, internet access experienced by students is not the same. It is tough not only in the places they work at but in almost all the rural areas of Nepal. He said that they may have access to Radio or Television, but Internet access is next to impossible given the kind of environment they are at and various issues such as transportation, financial and infrastructure have affected than in having Internet access.

He further mentioned that only about 17% of Nepalese can access a home-based (WiFi) that too primarily in the urban area. Therefore, the initiative is in an arduous circumstance when it comes to providing online education in the rural area.

Moderator: How KU is taking an initiative to make the Internet available to all the students?

Mr. KC mentioned the faculty in KU has taken their classes online immediately after the lockdown was imposed and it has been quite comfortable to run these classes. The issue,

however, was that they had to train the faculty initially and the instructiveness of in-person classes is not the same in an Online class. Students are not able to learn and interact with their friends and teachers the way they used to in a live classroom or even in the cafeteria is not the same anymore.

Regarding the response of students when it comes to Internet accessibility, Mr. KC had to say that approximately 10% to 15% of students are unable to access learning simply because they were not in the valley, but the majority can access, nevertheless.

According to the aforementioned answers from both the panelists, we can apprehend that only those not living in Kathmandu city are inadequate of Internet access to which Ms. Nishma beautifully pointed out and asked the panelists if the Internet was only for the rich/elite of the country. Furthermore, Mr. Khanal rightly explained that there is a huge disparity among the rich and the poor not only in terms of Internet access but in terms of education in general. He concluded with an example that students in private schools (who are more likely to be rich or middle-class) are more likely to graduate SEE than those in the public school in Nepal.

Ms. Nishma said that education should be uniform and asked about the role of the institute to make education uniformly available to everyone. Mr. Khanal answered to bring uniformity, the public education sector especially should be very strong academically. Otherwise, uniformity is next to impossible.

Mr. Bhattarai added that if a student wants to study, then they never lack education. He further mentioned that there has been a huge expansion in uniformity as we see different educational programs being conducted by the government of Nepal that provides around 500 to 1000 Nepalese a Tibetan education targeting the minorities residing in Nepal with a full ride. This, however, may not make a huge impact and bring a total uniformity when it comes to education but is nevertheless a right approach to uniformity.

The final question raised in the discussion was, "***What can the government do to bring uniformity in education?***"

Mr. Karki urged the government should be very transparent regarding their plans and must not hide anything from the public. He further stated the huge step can be not commercializing the private sector and that is something the government should work towards to address the existing problems. Mr. Bhattarai clarified that inaugurating new schools by the government in rural areas is the main option to maximize the accessibility of Online Learning. Awaring people regarding the importance of education and being strict with their rules can expand uniformity in the education sector in Nepal.

All in all the panel discussion was indeed very informative and was able to focus on the core problems of accessibility of Online Learning Nepal and was able to draw out the solutions as well. It was indeed an intense yet powerful discussion.

Side Event: Adaptability of Online Learning

The most interesting part of Day 1 was the side event on Adaptability of Online Learning which was facilitated by ***Prof. Ujjwal K. Chowdhury***, Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Adamas University, India where he shared how online learning shows the door to increase student collaboration, a better interface with instructors and abundant availability of resources with more productivity in the learning process.

He clarified he is not an advocate of pure digital learning but highlighted few essences of both the learning patterns. He explained that Face to face learning has its certain benefits; benefits of having friends, meeting and interacting with teachers, impactful learning getting your queries explained, clearing doubts face to face and much more impactful relation between students teachers, peer groups, social life and many more are some good essence of traditional learning's. Physical education has a one-time cost of shaping large structures, costs for teachers but once it is set up, people come and learn, learning is moderated, supervised, and monitored. Challenges on physical education are it is more costly, as there are structures, teaching faculties bound to be generally more expensive. It also bounds to make the learning in stress because there is a system including examination, respect, and discipline to be exhibited on campus, imposing personalities of people who run education.

He added learning in real sense is voluntary, needs to be self- governed, self-disciplined. Learning must be internalized and therefore there is an element of a problem in physical learning.

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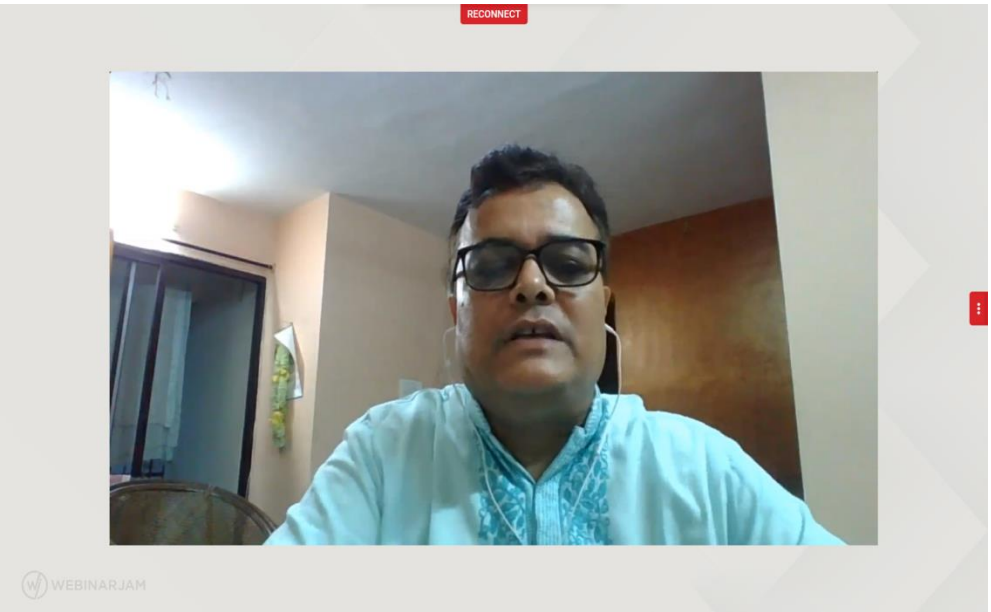

Figure: *Prof. Ujjwal Kumar Chowdhury sharing his words on the Adaptability of Online Learning.*

Therefore, online learning brings out many options for making learning voluntary. Physical learning depends too much on teachers and students. The teacher sets the syllabus, introduces the syllabus, teacher examines the syllabus, and runs with rules and patterns that determine for evaluation. In the case of an alternative model, the teacher becomes replaced as mentors. Mentors do not necessarily frame the syllabus; it organically evolves taking the opinion of learners, mentors, and various other stakeholders like people who hire industry and all. They are mentors, not necessarily teachers. Mentors introduce the topic and hunt aggregate lessons from different sources, preparing effective learning resources for the students that favor the learning patterns, and increase learner's engagement towards gaining knowledge and developing their skills. A learner then goes through these learning materials and meets mentors for clearing associated doubts. He also introduced the concept of the flipped classroom which requires aggregation of learning, and aggregation learning materials transform the role of teacher into mentor and students into learners.

He then highlighted the major difference between learners and students. He said students' study in the classroom but a learner studies inside and beyond the classroom. Students study with a fixed syllabus but learners begin with the structured syllabus but goes beyond, with a proper understanding of the learning materials and this is called organic learning. Students studies for marks and degrees but for a learner, the lesson is for lifetime application. Students focus on one domain but a learner focuses on multiple domains like physical learning, online learning, self-learning because today's world is not for one specific career, there may be a need for multiple careers. There may be one subject we are studying out of necessity for jobs, but there can be some other subject one might be interested in. For that one needs to be a learner, not a typical student.

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He also urged there is a need to adopt conglomerate multiple assessment systems in online learning to evaluate the learners. Formative assessment throughout the course and summative assessment at the end of the course. There are different learning patterns adopted in the world, blended learning, and hybrid digital learning a combination of both physical and digital learning. Online Learning will introduce a new domain in learning patterns. Young people can adjust to changing tracks in learning. The world today has changed into digital learning. This will soon be adopted and make an impact. There might be a transition problem when moving from physical learning to digital learning. One needs to blend their creativity with the knowledge material. We need to adapt to ensure effective learning with the use of digital learning materials like Wi-Fi connection, internet, a laptop that leads to social connectivity. There are online courses delivered by e-learning platforms like Coursera, Khan Academy. Let's adapt to technology now. Let's adapt to learning

Restricted habits create adaptability. Therefore, Learning should be with multiple resources in multiple ways, multiple times.

Closing Remarks

2- Days Online Learning Virtual Conference ended successfully with a closing Remark by **Mr. Ana Prasad Neupane**, Joint Secretary, Department of Education Ministry of Education, Science & Technology.

Firstly, the Executive Director at Glocal Pvt. Ltd, Mr. Thakur summarized the whole conference regarding the discussion and views of experts on various topics in Online Learning.

Mr. Neupane explained about the present education system in Nepal. He explained when the lockdown started, that was the time when almost all school's regular studies had ended. From Baisakh, the new academic session was to begin. But it got halted, due to the COVID pandemic. There come a crisis and the problems sometimes open room for new opportunities.

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Figure: *Mr. Ana Prasad Neupane, Joint Secretary, Department of Education Ministry of Education, Science & Technology along with Mr. Asish Thakur, ED, Glocal Pvt. Ltd.*

In this context, e-learning has been one alternative to continue the learning process. On this contrary, the Ministry of Education had defined 5 types of mediums & technology as an alternative for learning. Online learning, computer, laptop and Internet access, radio, television can be used as an alternative for learning. However, Internet & Network access is not everywhere available. Therefore, we have been discussing different alternative measures to ensure learning systematically.

With the past of decades, higher educational institutes were facing more challenges by the increasingly global, digital, and dynamic environment. There were certain barriers associated with E-learning these days and the core challenge is to overcome these barriers. In Nepal, there is no consistent technological development in all parts of the country. There are no online learning infrastructures, no phone, mobile, etc. While working for the right to education to all students, we are on the verge to prepare plans to make education accessible for all.

Virtual Learning is popular when it is two-way communication. One-way communication cannot be effective. Learning needs to have interaction; two-way communication. There should be discussion and planned ways of learning. So, the teaching-learning process as two-way communication is necessary.

He also explained that the government is trying to prepare learning materials, online systems, and processes via collaboration. They are trying to find out the ways to ensure effective interaction, fill the gaps between learners and mentors, ways to comply with the curriculum, and prepare feedback, assessment process as per the needs. Time management is another issue in online learning, so they are working to manage that as well.

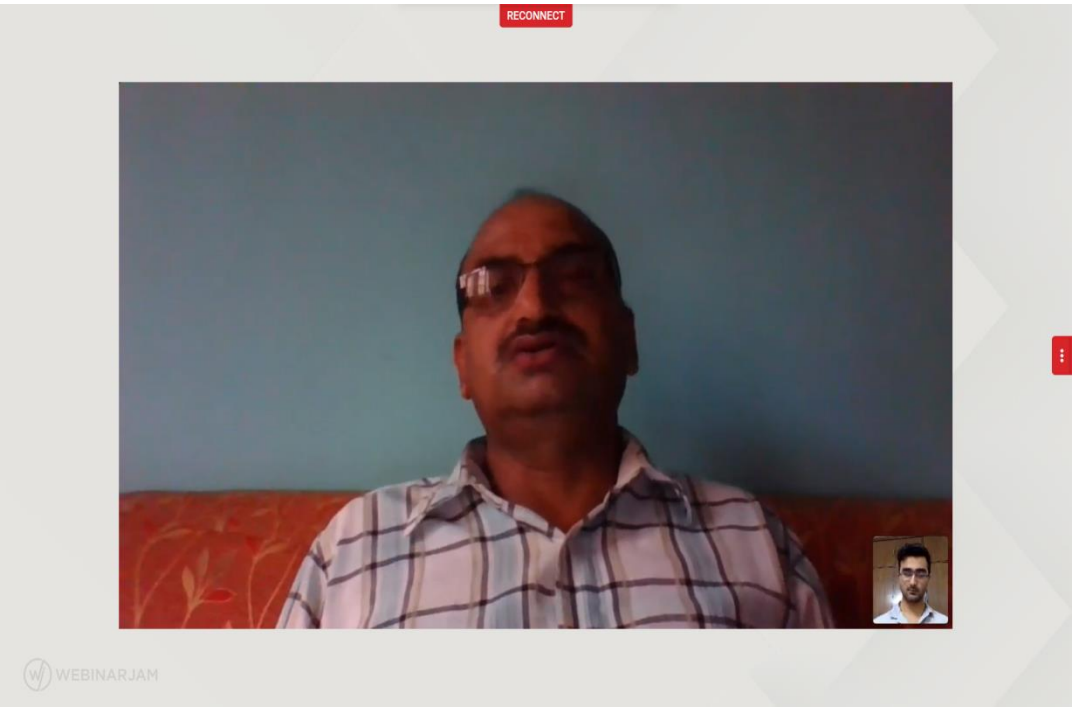

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Figure: *Mr. Neupane sharing his words on the topic.*

He explained one of the biggest question marks in Online Learning is How to evaluate? How to give feedback and record? These things need to be decided. Teachers need to be trained. Everyone in this process needs to be wholeheartedly involved in the learning environment. Even though one finds online learning easier, needs to face several networking issues that we will address soon.

He added Online virtual learning can be tedious for students who escape this learning with negligence. Online learning teaching discipline, security issues are another major challenge. All children's learning ability needs to be developed with the support of family and teachers. Individual evaluation and learning teaching process also need to be developed with interaction and guidelines.

Having said that Mr. Thakur added although online learning is vulnerable in Nepal, there can be several ways to improve this learning process. Firstly, it depends on students how strictly and honestly, they are learning utilizing resources in online learning. Certain guidelines for ensuring cybersecurity measures have been adopted and skilling in online learning can be made personalized. Online Learning, therefore, has lots of possibilities. There are lots of possibilities.

Despite numerous challenges in Online Learning, Government of Nepal has plans to address these issues. Mr. Neupane stated that challenges that arise can be overcome by ones who take the initiation. Cybersecurity can be strengthened; guardian & teachers' awareness needs to be a prime focus as they are the major stakeholder to make virtual learning effectively take its pace and shape. Parents and Teachers both are liable to monitor their students and evaluate them.

E-learning being the most desired, effective, and cheaply available tool for learners, it is more resourceful for learners as they can acquire more information accessing the internet. With the advancement of technology, many educational institutes are offering online learning or distance education using E-learning materials. Those people who were unable to give full time for learning in a higher educational institute due to their circumstances, E-learning has made easy learning for them by themselves using different web-based technologies or seeing the tutorials on a computer or mobile on accessing the internet. As many universities in Nepal now offering distance education with internet technologies, students were getting more opportunities for multiple options of flexible learning. Therefore, basic skills to use the internet and e-learning platforms must be clarified to students and teachers both.

Mr. Neupane explained e-learning to be an opportunity led by the problem. Now the role is upon us to increase its effectiveness and utilize it consistently. The focus should be developing online learning in a better way with more interaction, development of curriculum, time management, development of effective recording and assessment modules and guidelines, and preparedness for the future. The government is now aware of the essence of digital learning, so have come up with a Teachers training module where they will be taught about how we can utilize e-learning to make education system consistent and more effective with the availability of learning resources.

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To sum up, the education system is upgrading these days with advanced technologies that are from conventional learning to E-learning and this is relevant for learners as it is providing flexibility in learning with optional choices for study to the learner with unlimited access to information.

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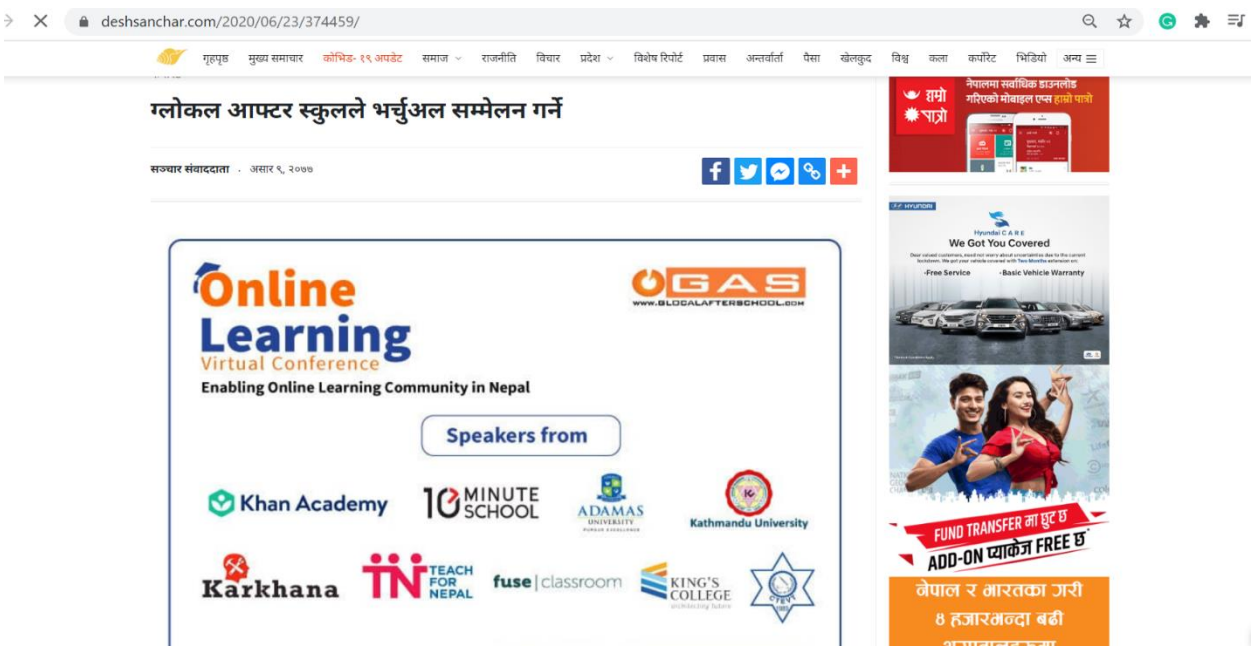

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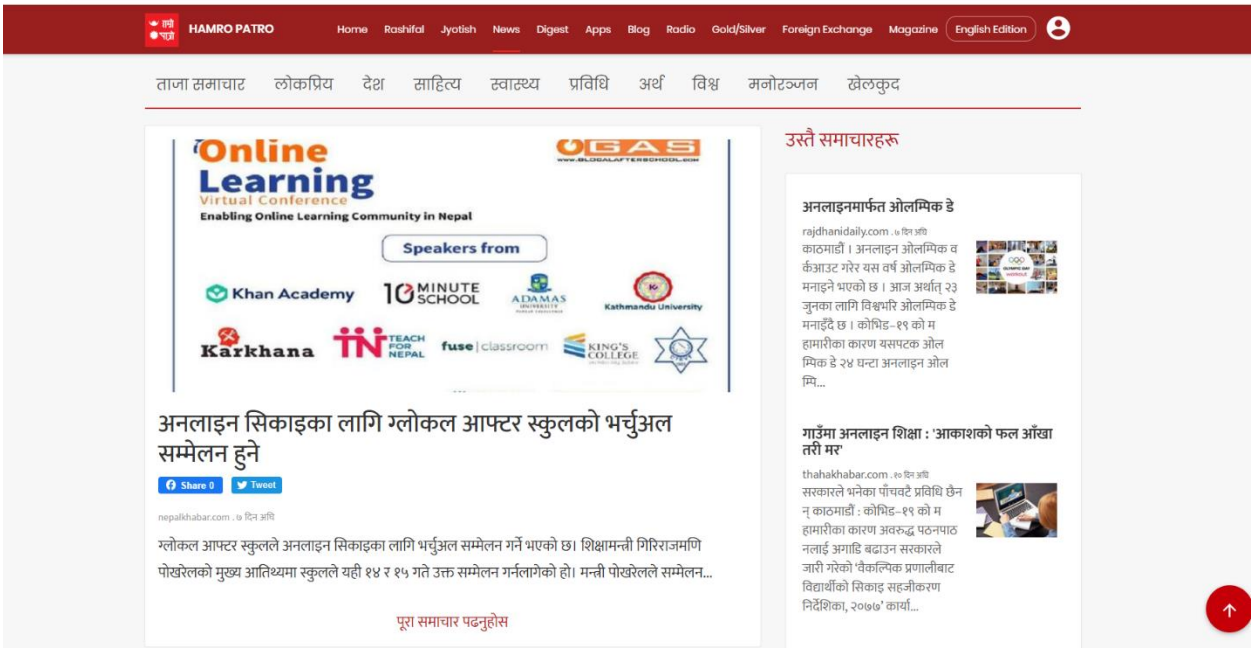

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