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Issues of Participant Retention in an Online Course for English as a Foreign Language Teachers

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Abstract

Online courses are popular around the world these days as people can access learning being in different times and spaces. At the same time, the retention of participants in any online course is always challenging. This qualitative case study investigated the issues related to participant retention in an online course and explored the effective ways to retain the participants in such courses. The data were collected through the interviews conducted with 12 teachers who partly or wholly participated in a year-long online course. Teacher participants' online communication exchanges on Edmodo and Viber platforms during the course period also served as data for this study. The Edmodo and Viber extracts were originally in English while the interviews were conducted in Nepali; therefore, in the process of analysis, some key extracts were translated, especially focusing on the message they communicated. The findings based on thematic analysis reveal that the issues related to retention include facilitators' delayed response, poor activity design and inappropriate selection of web tools, and need for additional time among others. This study is expected to assist course designers, institutions, and organizations that run online courses as well as teachers who plan to run and join online courses as they can be informed of the issues that play a role in the retention of participants in online courses.

Keywords*:* English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, online courses, retention

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1. Introduction

In education, there is an increase in the reliance on technology as "the Internet has made access to information and the distribution of educational content available to a large portion of the world's population" (Datt & Singh, 2021, p. 2). Learning in an open, participatory, and distributed way as per learners' convenience (Khalid et al., 2020) is gradually coming to the fore, thereby making online courses more popular. Despite the popularity of such courses, there is still the issue of participant retention as the attrition rate can be high (Padilla Rodriguez et al., 2020; Shakya et al., 2016). As only a few researchers, that too only on Massive Open Online Course (MOOC, e.g., Shakya et al., 2016) have explored low participant retention in online courses held in Nepal, the authors decided to add to the limited knowledge available on this area.

This paper introduces online courses, discusses the literature focused on retention issues, and presents findings and discussions in relation to data collected from the participants involved in the course titled 'Exploratory Action Research (EAR) Online Training for Nepalese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers.' This free course was developed for the professional development of EFL teachers. In this study, the authors explored the issues that influenced the participants' retention and dropout by analysing their communication footprints available in digital tools and by asking the participants why they continued with or dropped the course.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Delivering education via online courses is a growing industry that provides online support, knowledge, and employment to a global community (Bawa, 2016; Willging & Johnson, 2004). Online courses can use both synchronous and asynchronous communication means, the balance of which can be determined by the hosts of the program. In synchronous communication, there is always a live interaction in real time, while in asynchronous communication, there is no real time interaction, and the response is delayed. Online courses can be self-paced or instructor-led (Samuel, 2020). In self-paced courses, students decide the pace of their study and independently access the course materials. In an instructor-led course, instructors have an active role in facilitating the course. The instructor-led courses may be more interactive and can have both synchronous and asynchronous interactions (Samuel, 2020).

Online courses are widely popular and have the potential to make quality teaching and educational resources available to students who live anywhere in the world (Hone & El Said, 2016). Though the emergence of the online courses has significantly changed the way we think about education (Otto et al., 2018), inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and access to online facilities in developing and the least developed countries limits the realization of the full potential of ICTs (Shrestha et al., 2021). Liyanagunawardena and Adams (2014) argue that due to various complicated factors, such as access to technology, language, computer literacy and others present in developing countries, online courses may not be a good solution for a large group of people in these regions. Moreover, the retention rate of online course participants, particularly MOOCs varies from 7 percent to 52.1 percent (Jordan, 2015).

In the context of Nepal, Bainbridge (2013) explored features and success rates of Nepali participants in a series of online courses to create a pedagogical model for an open university in Nepal. Her comprehensive research was the first of its kind to propose a pedagogical model that could potentially serve as a construct for open university initiatives in developing countries. As part of her study, she offered 4 two-week online courses. Eighty-six participants showed interest in the course. However, only 26 participants managed to register and continue to participate in 1 of the 4 courses. Bainbridge ascertained that personal issues, work commitments, and Internet access were the primary reasons students dropped out of the online course. However, her study did not explicitly focus on participant retention issues as she had aimed to develop a pedagogical model for an open university. This shows that there is only limited research that discusses the effectiveness and retention rates associated with online courses in Nepal.

In this backdrop, a yearlong non-accredited online course was run by the authors targeting Nepalese in-service EFL teachers. This course aimed to introduce EAR to the teacher participants and involve them in conducting research to explore their own classroom issues. The course started with a brief orientation on the program and the platforms the course was going to utilize to ensure that the participants would comfortably attend the sessions and complete the tasks assigned. In course of delivery, the authors faced the challenges of retention as out of the 100 plus participants who showed initial interest in enrolling in the online course, 74 joined the course site registered in Edmodo and eventually only 27 successfully completed the course.

This result instigated the authors to explore the issues that impacted participants' retention in such courses. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the challenges of retaining the participants in this online course conducted in Nepal and how the course was perceived by the participants. The following are the research questions that this study aimed to answer.

(1) What were the issues related to participant retention in the online course?

(2) How did those issues impact retention in the course?

2. Review of the Literature

2.1 Retention Issues

The number of participants in an online course is likely to decrease as the courses progress resulting in a low completion rate (Padilla Rodriguez et al., 2020). In this regard, the researchers in this study considered participant retention as a state in which participants were active and engaged in different sessions, submitted all their assignments, and received a certificate of participation at the end of the course. A study by Padilla Rodriguez et al. (2020) found that a three-week version of a modularized course "doubled the amount of learner participation, enhanced the depth and quality of that engagement, and quadrupled completion rates" (p. 59). They concluded that shorter online courses have higher engagement and retention rates.

Addressing this issue, Packham et al. (2000) suggest that educators can influence retention rates by addressing technical issues and the nature and quantity of assessments. They claim that retention rates are also affected by students' academic profile, the socio-economic status of the family, their employment status, the nature of their job, and the time available for them to take part in the course. Other factors that affect retention rates are insufficient time to study, unexpected events and distractions, and social integration, such as family support and support from employers (Bornschlegl & Cashman, 2019). In the same vein, Pierrakeas and colleagues (2004) list the reasons for dropping out of online courses as follows: 1) professional, such as students' underestimation of the time required to balance their academic and professional obligations, 2) family/personal, such as reasons related to marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, child-rearing, 3) health, such as personal health issues or family health challenges, and 4) academic, such as the lack of assistance from tutors, improper learning materials etc. Burns (2013) stressed that the greatest factor impacting attrition or persistence in any course is the absence or presence of face-to-face interaction. The dropout rate will be lower when learners engage in social interactions repeatedly and frequently (Sunar et al., 2017).

Through an online survey administered to dropout students, Willging and Johnson (2004) compiled a list of reasons why students dropped out. The list includes personal reasons such as the lack of time to complete the assignments, schedule conflicts, job-related problems such as job responsibilities changed during the program, program-related problems such as too-many low-level assignments, the lack of one-to-one interaction between teachers and students, and technology-related problems, such as the lack of technical preparation and difficulties students encountered while working in groups.

As noted above, there are a variety of factors that influence the dropout rate of students. Friðriksdóttir (2019) reports that the majority of online and blended students consider the following as motivational elements: a set syllabus, private interaction with the tutor, detailed introduction of the program, and a tutor's overall support. In Zou's (2020) study, nearly 69 percent of the participants claimed that student-teacher interaction is an essential part of a successful online course, and nearly 61 percent participants mentioned that student-student interaction is necessary in online teaching. These findings suggest that most course participants want frequent interactions with either tutors or their colleagues. Similarly, Petronzi and Hadi (2016), in a qualitative study, reported that "engagement and retention of learners was also increased due to academic involvement and peer collaboration" (p. 145). The discussion above establishes that the issue of participant retention in online courses is pertinent and crucial for the success of such courses.

2.2 Online Courses in Nepal

With the advent of digital technologies, some higher education institutions (HEIs) in Nepal are running distance education programs, due to which students are getting more opportunities for flexible learning (Shakya et al., 2017). These HEIs have implemented open e-learning as it facilitates traditional teaching and learning activities in a more productive way (Bastola & Ameen, 2017; Pangeni, 2016). The major challenges of open distance learning in Nepal are lack of electricity and the cost of Internet connectivity (Pangeni, 2016). Nepal Open University, Tribhuvan University, and Kathmandu University commenced the delivery of online courses in the last decade.

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Though not in a big number, online course deliveries are a familiar phenomenon in Nepal, so it is high time that studies were conducted to see their modalities, successes, and impact etc. The researchers explored available research literature and came across a limited number of them which comprised either MOOCs or university formal programs but not of short-term facilitated courses. The findings of the survey conducted with 227 college students in the far-western region of Nepal by Shakya and his colleagues (2016) showed that 94.3 percent of the students never participated in a MOOC. However, the researchers did not delineate the factors related to the low participation in online courses and did not investigate the retention issues.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

Since the authors faced high attrition in the online course they ran over a year, they took the course as a case to look into the issue of retention in this qualitative study. Simons (2009) defines a case study as "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a 'real life' context" (p.21). As per Flyvbjerg (2011), "The drawing of boundaries for the individual unit of study decides what gets to count as case and what becomes context to the case" (p. 301). In this design, the phenomenon in the case being studied is the low retention in the EAR online course delivered by the authors.

3.2 Participants

The research participants were those who enrolled in the EAR Online Course for Nepalese EFL teachers. The EAR online course ran for a year from February 2019 to March 2020, and the objective of this course was to guide participant teachers as they conducted EAR in their classrooms. The participants were the teachers teaching EFL in several academic institutions located in different regions of Nepal. There were three Nepali facilitators who were in three different locations - Dublin, Sydney, and Kathmandu. Altogether, 6 webinars and 6 meetings were held during the program – the first six sessions were run as webinars and the next six sessions were meetings. While the webinars were one-directional and provided limited opportunities for participants to interact with the facilitators, the meetings were more interactive and dialogic. In the meetings, the participants had more technical controls and could interact orally or via texts/chats.

3.3 Instruments

In order to collect data, online interviews were conducted based on semi-structured questions. In addition, the online communication artifacts viz., Viber text messages and Edmodo posts were collected and used as data. It is to note that Edmodo platform was used as a learning management system which is run free of cost, and Viber was used for collaboration and communication as the participants were familiar with it.

3.4 Data Collection

Online interviews were conducted to gather information about the challenges the participants faced in attending the course, the level of motivation they had, and the kind of support they received from facilitators. Purposive sampling was used ensuring that participants keen to provide information for the study were contacted for interviews. Of the twelve participants who volunteered to provide information, ten had successfully completed the course, and 2 had quit the course in the middle of the program. The authors were aware of the fact that non-completers would give them more information about why they quit. Only the completers would be able to share their insights how they were able to stay despite the challenges. This is the reason for having more completers than non-completers as research participants in this study. In order to collect the online artefacts, the researchers scanned Viber text messages and Edmodo posts and selected the posts and exchanges representatively. As far as the language of data collection is concerned, the Edmodo and Viber extracts were originally in English while the interviews were conducted in Nepali.

3.5 Data Analysis

Since it was a qualitative case study, a thematic analysis approach (Patton, 2014; Saldana, 2015) was used to code, derive the broader categories, and finally arrive at 6 themes. While collecting the data from Edmodo and Viber communication, specific extracts were given priority and the number of participants was not considered. Further, the authors also did not take into account whether the posts were made by completers or non-completers. The authors only focused on their posts related to retention issues. In the process of analysis, important extracts from interviews were translated into English, especially focusing on the message they communicated. The data from three different

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sources -- interviews, the Viber, and Edmodo exchanges -- helped to triangulate the findings. The participants' details have been anonymized, and pseudonyms have been used in the discussion presented below.

4. Findings

Through the analysis of the data, these 6 themes were identified: immediacy and regularity of facilitators' response, activity design and selection of e-learning tools, time management, course content and mode of delivery, course length and technical concerns. The data were analysed under these themes with interpretations linking to the available literature.

4.1 Immediacy and Regularity of Facilitators' Response

Irregular or delayed responses of the facilitators to any kind of queries made by the participants can discourage them and negatively influence their retention. The interview data indicated that the facilitators in this project responded to the participants' queries, but the attention and the frequency have not been enough. For example, one of the participants expressed his frustration thus,

> I was frustrated a little bit as there was a delay in response from the facilitators and other participants were also not active. The Viber group was also not active. I also used to check Edmodo. I used to check it regularly, but I would not see the status there as well. (Puran)Another participant went further and expressed his anguish to the point that he thought of quitting the course when facilitators did not comment on the work that he had submitted.
>
> I felt like dropping out of the course a few times when the facilitators did not respond to the content that we submitted. I feel that it was a missed opportunity. (Jay Ram)

He also mentioned how lack of feedback on the work that he submitted could also bring confusion as he/she was not sure whether he was following the right procedure. Lack of feedback is also seen in Edmodo correspondence. In the following case, a facilitator posted an assignment on March 31, participants made queries on April 15 and 16, and a facilitator responded to the query on April 27, after 11 days.

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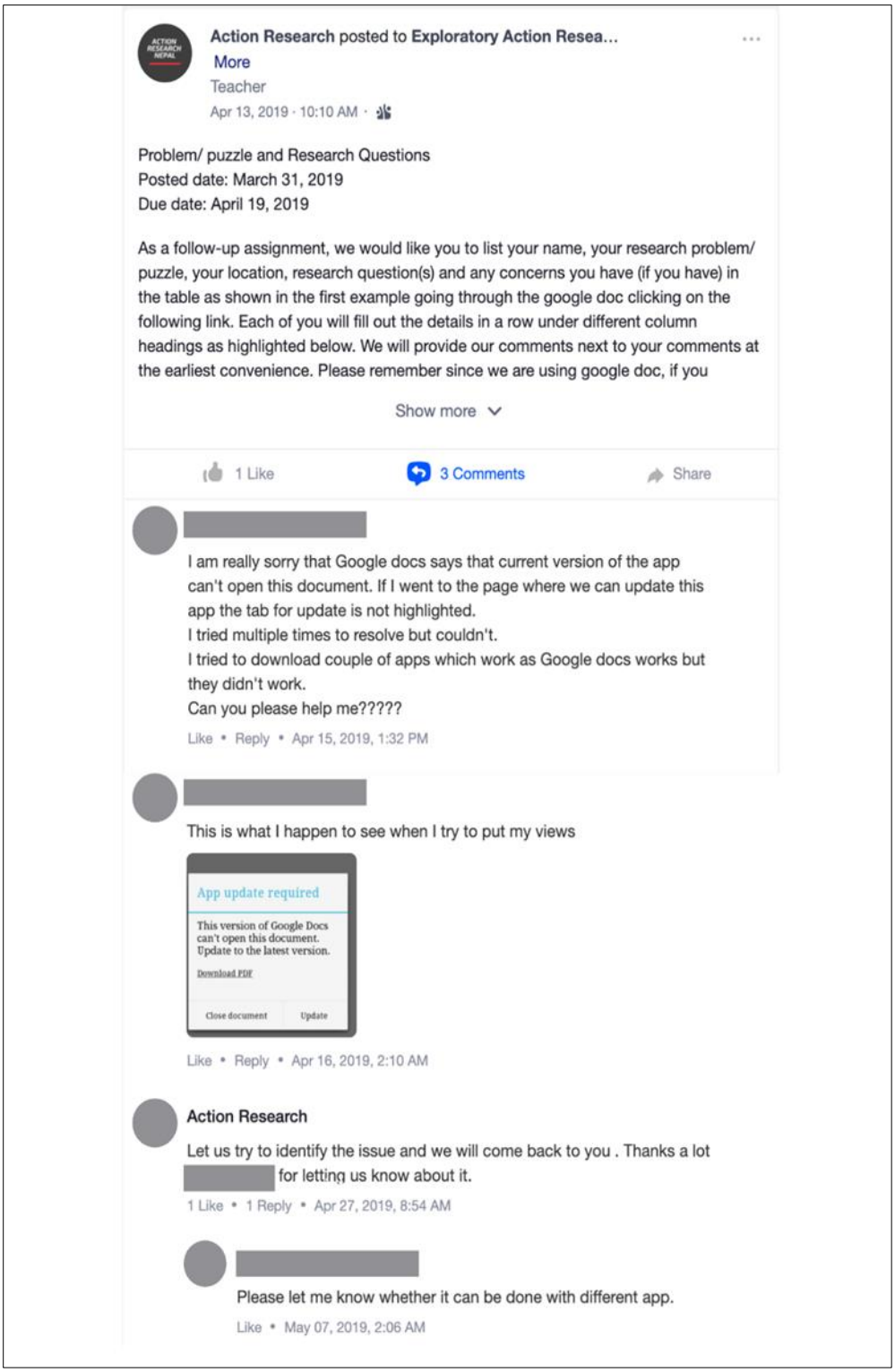


Figure 1. An extract of communication in Edmodo

When the facilitators, who set the deadlines themselves, do not respond, participants get anxious. For example, in the post above, the participant expressed her anxiety about whether the facilitator received her assignment as there was no reply. A quick response by the facilitator would have removed or lessened her anxiety. Delayed responses of the facilitators and course providers can seriously affect the retention of the participants in online courses as such situations can make the participants anxious or stressed. Prompt responses can help participants feel that the course facilitators are always there with them during the course. It also encourages participants to engage in communication as indicated in the following figure.

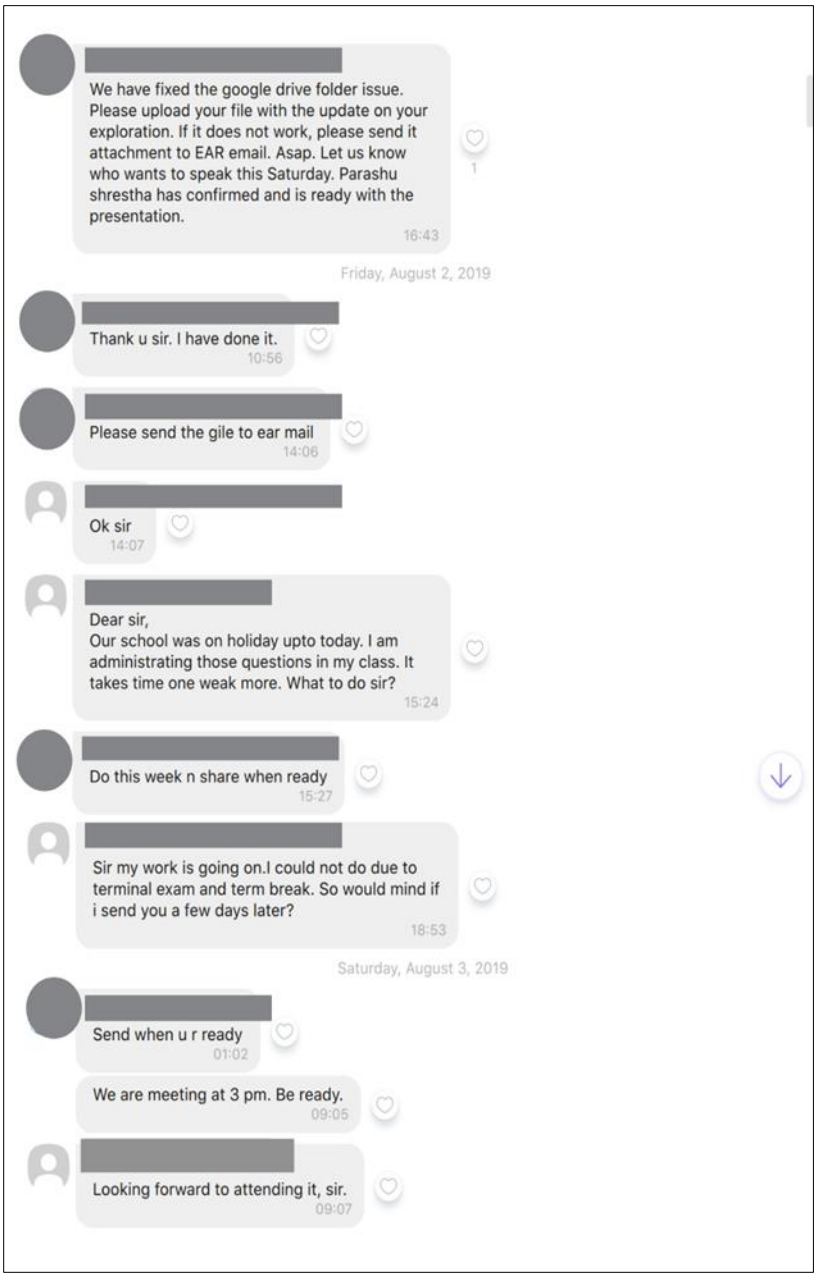


Figure 2. An extract of Viber communication

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The extract above shows that the communication was started on August 1 by the facilitator, and there was a series of interactions between the facilitator and the participants until August 3. During these interactions, the participants reported the issues they were experiencing as the course progressed. Thus, the facilitators were able to understand how the participants were conducting their projects and the feedback provided by the facilitators encouraged the participants to continue with their work.

4.2 Activity Design and Selection of e-Learning Tools

The design of the activities and the selection of the e-learning tools have a major role to play in the retention of participants during an online course. If the activity is designed well, and if the tools that are used in the online course are simple and easy to use, it is more likely that students will complete the course.

In an online course, most of the time, the participants work on their own; therefore, they may look forward to opportunities to work in groups or in pairs. These types of activities enabled them to share their progress with each other and to learn from one another. Many participants highlighted the necessity of group work and other collaborative activities to promote interaction and bring some life to their work. Puran, in the interview, firmly complained that participants' collaboration such as in group work was not happening in a way they expected. He also focused on the necessity of interaction as shown in his response below.

> Group work and pair work is less in this course. The interaction between participants was also lacking. It was more like facilitators vs participants.

Some participants also pointed out the importance of frequent live meetings in the course. One of the participants mentioned that the frequent interaction with mentors made her feel that she has to complete the given tasks. As regards the e-learning tools, one of the participants pointed out that Edmodo, the learning tool introduced at the beginning of the course, was not used throughout. For example, Edmodo was not updated frequently and became almost dormant. Thus, course facilitators may need to explain why certain e-learning tools were selected and should explain why a particular tool may be discontinued.

One of the participants suggested that common platforms such as Facebook or Twitter could have been used to promote interactions between the participants. Another participant also mentioned his unfamiliarity with Edmodo impacted their participation in the course. Some virtual tools introduced in online courses can be new or unknown to the participants. Thus, course providers should be prepared to orient students to use such tools and provide students with links to online resources that cover the use and troubleshooting of those tools and resources.

4.3 Course Content and Mode of Delivery

Having prior experience and knowledge of the content being discussed in the course can help the participants. Because the course required students to conduct classroom research and write reports, participants lacking experience in research and writing found it challenging. For instance, Chhatra explicitly mentioned

> There was difficulty in writing, such as how to write a report, how to prepare, how to make the issue specific and so on. I would feel that I didn't know, and I would stop doing it for some time. This is due to the lack of knowledge related to research.

Moreover, mode of delivery of the course can also impact the participant's level of engagement. Participants may not be comfortable using the mode of delivery that they are not familiar with. They may hesitate and not fully engage. If the level of engagement decreases due to the delivery modality, the chances of the participants quitting the course increases as Samip aptly pointed out,

> … It was a new experience of remote learning. In the first two/three meetings, I was hesitant to express my views. I felt more comfortable later as I understood the EAR and my tasks better.

The responses and posts of the participants suggested the unfamiliar content and mode of delivery, and lack of presumed skills impacted students' engagement in the course and may have contributed to the drop out. Therefore, it is important to state the prerequisites for the course and what is expected of students.

4.4 Time Management

This course was an additional element to the participants' professional and family responsibilities. Therefore, they expressed how demanding it was for them to find time required to engage in and complete the course. Difficulties

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with time management can ultimately lead participants to quit the course. The participants expressed their anxiety and pressure that they were not able to learn as they expected due to the lack of time.

> I could not devote my full time as I had some work at home, and I also had to teach so I could not learn a lot. (Chhatra)

> There was also a kind of pressure and sense of anxiety as the research added some more workload. (Puran)

The competing priorities of the participants were that they had to focus on teaching, marking assignments, and participating in extracurricular activities organized by the school. One of the dropouts of the course, who only completed three out of 12 live sessions, stated that time was a major challenge for her. Because she could not manage time, she gradually lacked motivation in the course, which led her to quit.

> Timing was the major challenge - I could not attend webinars and could not even watch the recorded sessions on YouTube, I lacked motivation. I did not want to continue it just for the sake of completion. (Manisha)

Online course facilitators may not have much information about the course participants' life and commitments. They may not be open to adjusting assignment deadlines. Course participants either adjust to the course timelines or quit. Though the nature of a course may not allow deadlines to be negotiated, the facilitators can explicitly state at the beginning of the course how much time students will need to spend on each portion of the course and to complete assignments.

4.5 Course Length

The length of the online course can affect student retention rates. If the course is too long, the chances are higher that participants might quit the course as they encounter other activities that may require their attention. The data indicate that participants had to deal with competing priorities in their professional and personal lives. Because the EAR course was designed to run for a year, several participants found it challenging to persist actively in the course.

Ghrisma mentioned how her work remained incomplete (particularly, she could not produce the report) as she changed her job during the course. She shared,

> … I changed my school in April/May. Due to this, there were some challenges. I could no longer continue my research because I did not have the same students all throughout.

As she moved to a new school, she could not complete the research she started at her previous school. If the course had been shorter, the change of school may not have affected her capacity to complete the research. Thus, if a course runs for several weeks or months, participants are more likely to drop out of the course.

4.6 Technical Concerns

Most online courses may encounter some kind of technical issues. Managing the course online is challenging because of hardware and software and Internet issues. The majority of participants faced problems such as unstable Internet connections and frequent power outages, and this impacted their engagement in the course.

> ...due to the problem in the Internet connection again, which is because of a power cut, I also missed some sessions. (Chhatra)

> Because of the poor service from the service providers, I have missed a few online sessions. These days we do not have a very serious issue of power cut as power will be back in 5 to 10 mins if there is a power cut, but Internet speed is too slow in Nepal. (Bhojraj)

The data also showed that the participants did not have access to quality devices, as a result of which, they faced difficulties while joining the live sessions or taking part in the course in general. For example, Jibika revealed,

> Some technical glitches in my electronic gadgets such as there were several occasions when you could not hear what I spoke during the courses.

One of the dropouts of the program also mentioned that the technical issues, such as difficulty in joining the course due to Internet connection, led her to discontinue the course. So, hers and other participants' experiences have shown that technical issues become big barriers in successfully participating in online courses.

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5. Discussion

This qualitative case study explored issues related to participant retention in an EAR online course by analysing the participants' views and exchanges recorded by digital tools that were used during the course. Willging and Johnson (2004) contend that each online program is unique, and the views we obtain from the participants may be specific to a particular case of the online course or program. Consequently, finding a set of very common reasons for retention may be a difficult task.

The facilitators' irregular or delayed response appears to be a key factor that affected the retention of students in this course. This finding aligns with the view of Pierrakeas et al. (2004), who argue that the lack of a tutor's timely assistance can influence participant retention in online courses. The data showed that the participants wanted regular feedback and guidance which could encourage them to complete their learning activities. Conversely, the lack of response from the facilitators or course providers can discourage students. Consequently, they may quit a course.

Group activities can engage students and increase the likelihood that they will remain in a course. Group activities make the online experience meaningful and lively, and provide the opportunity for the participants to share their work and learn from one another. Close to this finding, Willging and Johnson (2004) highlight the lack of one-to-one interaction with the instructors and students as one of the reasons for leaving the course.

It is found that the participants need additional time to attend the online course, and lack of sufficient time can also lead to dropouts as Bornschlegl and Cashman (2018) claim, insufficient time, unexpected events and distractions are significant factors to influence the retention of the participants in online courses. Facilitators also need to consider if the e-learning tools they will use in an online course can be used easily by participants. Other questions that should be considered by online course developers and facilitators are:

- can the e-learning tools be run on a variety of hardware with different operating systems?
- are the online tools accessible and user-friendly? and
- does the operation of these tools require a lot of Internet bandwidth?

If the use of any e-learning tools is discontinued during the course, the participants should be informed immediately. Also, an explanation could be provided to explain why the tool will no longer be used and to inform the participants how to remove or delete their work from the tool.

The course facilitators can benefit if they know the level of familiarity of the participants with the content and mode of delivery of the online course. In this study, one of the participants mentioned that he was hesitant to express his views in the first two or three live sessions as the course content was new to him. This reveals that the facilitators need to think of ways to make participants familiar with the nature of the course as much as possible, so participants are less likely to quit the course. Participants also highlighted the need for additional time to complete the work during the course. At the beginning of the course, course facilitators should highlight the estimated number of hours required each week or month to complete various portions and/or assignments required to complete the course. Thus, participants can determine if they have the time to complete the course and how to manage their time over the next few weeks or months.

Though not overtly expressed in the participants' interviews, motivation seems to play a role in retaining participants in an online course. Salmon (2004) claims that "participants learn because they are happy to take part in the activity for its own sake" (p.18). This is referred to as intrinsic motivation. The majority of the participants in this study were intrinsically motivated as they got an opportunity to enhance their digital skills and to learn how to conduct small scale classroom research. Surprisingly, no participants during the interviews mentioned that they were motivated because they would receive a certificate of course completion. Facilitators need to consider ways to sustain learners' motivation throughout the course. As Packham et al. (2004) contend, "successful students can be categorized as being able to integrate the programme with their working and family commitments" (p. 340). The study participants mentioned that the sessions during the EAR course clashed with other personal and professional activities. This suggests that the course facilitators should encourage participants to share if they are facing any difficulties due to work and family commitments.

The course facilitators also need to consider the length of the course (Jordan, 2015). Many participants hinted that the shorter the courses are, the better the chances that participants will remain in the course. This finding corroborates the

study by Padilla Rodriguez et al. (2020) which revealed that shorter online courses have higher levels of engagement and higher retention rates. In developing countries, if online courses are held, the accessibility and reliability of electrical power (Bainbridge, 2013; Sharma 2020) and Internet connection and bandwidth (Bainbridge, 2013; Khan, 2020) must be taken into account. Providing participants with recordings of live sessions (if the courses comprise any) coupled with ample asynchronous communication can help the participants retain in the course.

6. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that delayed responses from facilitators, poor activity design, the selection of inappropriate tools, course length and technical difficulties faced by participants can impact participant retention in an online course. Also, the level of participants' familiarity with the content and mode of delivery as well as time management may play crucial roles in the effective delivery of online courses. It can be concluded that prompt feedback on a participant's work, appropriate activity design including group/pair work and promoting interaction amongst learners and/or facilitators would help retain online course participants. Participants' familiarity with the content and mode of delivery can help them complete the course. The facilitator's awareness of the participants' family and work commitments can help determine workable course timelines and the design of relevant activities.

The focus of this study was on a single program with a small number of participants; therefore, the generalizability of this study is limited. It can, however, inform online course designers and facilitators to foresee some of the issues involved in retaining students in an online course in a developing country like Nepal. Still, there are some questions that remain unanswered. For example: what elements can help learners to be intrinsically motivated in online courses, what type of responses from the facilitators help participants persist in the course, and to what extent interactive synchronous sessions (live meetings) help to retain participants in such courses. This warrants an in-depth study to inform this growing industry.

6.1 Pedagogical Implications of the Study

The findings of this study imply that a teacher who is planning for an online course needs to emphasize regular and immediate feedback on learners' work, and they also need to design tasks that ensure learners' collective participation and their meaningful interaction to ensure learners' regular presence in such courses. An awareness of learners' family and work circumstances as far as possible can help teachers design appropriate online course activities and reasonable timelines that are within the control of course participants.

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