



TEACHER EDUCATION
PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA

QUEEN RANIA TEACHER ACADEMY
أكاديمية الملكة رانيا لتدريب المعلمين

Teacher Education Professional Diploma in Jordan

Distance Learning Experience - Successes and
Challenges

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Introduction

Background Information: Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA) was launched in 2009 in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to offer professional development programs for teachers in accordance with the educational needs in Jordan and the Arab World. QRTA aims to lead the advancement in the quality of teaching and the promotion of excellence in education in Jordan, and the region. QRTA's mission is to enable every educator to positively influence the future generation of Jordan and the Arab World by spearheading teacher professional development. Since its inception, QRTA has invested heavily in strategic partnerships with world renowned academic institutions and was able to draw on such partnerships to build capacity and raise the knowledge of an experienced team of academic experts. The team of experts at QRTA is able to develop educational professional development programs that are designed according to world trends and best practices, also they are used to teleworking mechanism since they work with different academic experts who live outside Jordan.

In 2009, QRTA launched its pre-service professional development program the Teacher Education Professional Diploma (TEPD) in collaboration with the MOE, and the Institute of Education-University College London (IOE-UCL) to prepare future teachers by ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to become professional reflective practitioners. This came in response to the National Strategy for Human Resource Development (HRD) that was launched by His Majesty King Abdullah II; were the strategy highlighted the need for a quality pre-service programme for prospective teachers and identified QRTA as best placed to launch one¹. To that end, the 24-credit hour program offered at QRTA and awarded by the University of Jordan combines both theory and practice in three modules that look at Pedagogy for Learning and Teaching, Subject Didactics, and include a practice heavy placement element. Student Teachers (STs) are assessed using two main tools; a rubric for written assessments and the Teacher Standards for assessment of practice and the evidence compiled in the student portfolio.

Rationale: According to UNESCO², COVID-19 pandemic has affected 70% of the world's students and led to a disruption of education globally with either complete or partial closures of educational institutions. Most countries agreed on the importance of continuing learning remotely and using low tech solutions where necessary. The Government of Jordan announced all educational institutions closures starting from 15.3.2020 and announced that learning would continue remotely online for both schools and universities. MOE and most of the education institutions in Jordan have launched e-learning platforms to meet students' needs and resume curriculum delivery. Therefore; QRTA has also decided to mitigate

¹ Jordan, National Committee for Human Development. "Education for Prosperity: Delivering Results: A National Strategy for Human Resource Development." 2015. <https://www.hrd.jo/nationalstrategy> Accessed 12.5.20.

² UNESCO. "COVID-19 Education Disruption and Response." UNESCO, 2020. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse> Accessed 11.5.20.



the effect of the closure on its different training programs and its operation and moved to teleworking and online distance/remote training and learning.

During the lockdown due to the emergency situation, all QRTA trainings, operations and day to day activities were converted to teleworking/ and online distance/remote training and learning. To ensure the success of this experience, QRTA, and prior to official announcement of lockdown, started working on converting its training programs online as well as provided its staff with the appropriate needed tools to be able to complete their work efficiently. These tools for example included Microsoft teams and Zoom as platforms for distance meetings and synchronous interaction based on their advantages of being user friendly and powerful enough to support the team needs. Academic teams at QRTA also used online remote training platforms such as the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that QRTA already use for its pre-service program to deliver more online activities. Google classroom was also used to deliver its in-service programs. In addition, and to ensure equity, fairness, inclusivity, and access to all its beneficiaries, QRTA provided those whom lacked adequate technology with laptops/tablets and/or free internet, therefore; majority of the planned training workshops/activities for QRTA beneficiaries were delivered during the lockdown as planned.

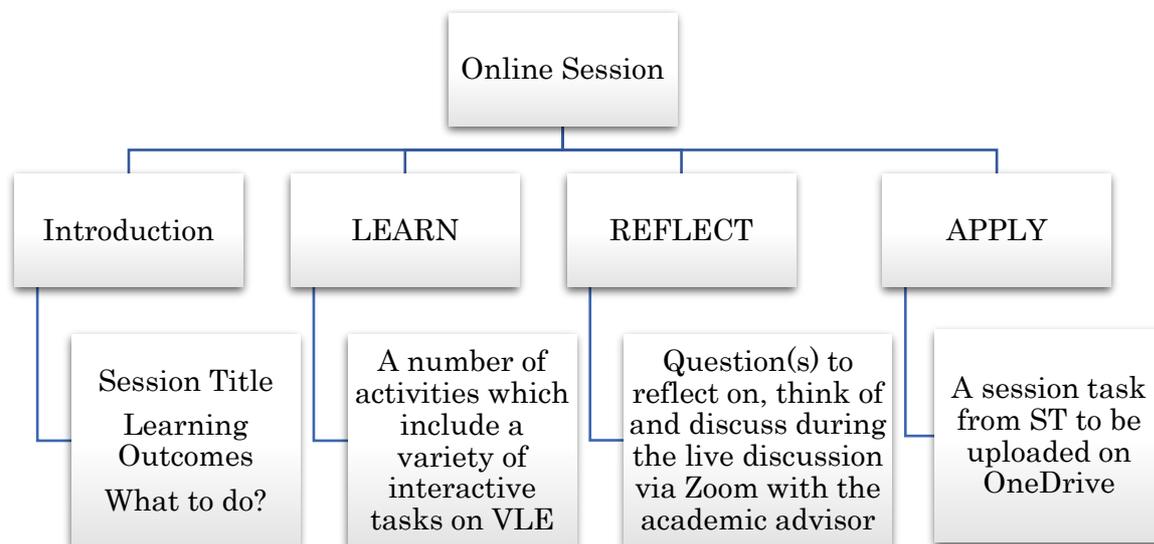
QRTA programs including TEPD has espoused a blended learning approach during the past years, and the online component within QRTA programs has been developing each year with growing focus on getting beneficiaries to become more proficient users of the online platforms and the various applications used in teaching and learning at QRTA. Therefore; converting to online during the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic was smooth where in the case of the TEPD, the diploma leads assessed the stage in which STs at the point of academic institutes closure, outlined and evaluated the curriculum and themes and planned the online phase during lockdown accordingly.

In the first stage, much discussion was done among the TEPD academic team to ensure the best online teaching and pedagogy for the session structure to be adapted based on the available technology infrastructure and learner abilities and access needs. It was agreed to rely on the existing VLE and upload the sessions there as both the staff and STs were already familiar with the platform. Mixed synchronous and asynchronous options were applied. The main session material and activities were offered asynchronously to allow STs to self-pace as this to lead them to deeper and more effective learning while Synchronous learning sessions were scheduled for reflection and discussion of the session material. Zoom was chosen as a platform for synchronous interaction based on the advantage of being user friendly and powerful enough to support team needs. Extensive workshops were done to introduce, discuss, and build the online sessions based on the chosen approach to fulfil what outcomes needed to be achieved.

Thinking about learning design sequences, the online training delivery model began with the approach of: LEARN, APPLY, AND REFLECT as illustrated in figure below then refining this to become: LEARN, ENGAGE, APPLY,



PRACTICE, and REFLECT (LEAR). The choice of focusing on engagement arose from a need to standardize collaborative pedagogy in online task building. Also, the inclusion of practice allowed to include directed activities to be carried out during school placement and better embed professional practice in learning.



The second stage included adapting practicum requirements. Having determined that our processes are robust enough that it is possible to make a judgement on whether an ST has met the Teacher Standards after completion of the second placement, it was decided that Teacher Educators (TEs) can use the performance data from the first two school experiences to award a grade for meeting the teacher standards.

The final stage and measure taken was determining needed adaptations to the assessment process, specifically the remaining written assessments and the assessment of the STs' digital portfolios. Driven by the no detriment approach minimum requirements were set and assessments were modified to ensure program goals were met while making reasonable demands from student teachers and offering them more flexibility in addition to ensuring all needed resources could easily be made available. Adjustments were made to the feedback policy to also accommodate this change to assessment.

This evaluation report will therefore present a summary of the results from collected data to understand how the whole online distance/remote training and learning experience was and be able to design and future plans for online courses.

Importance of the Evaluation: To measure the quality of the online distance/remote teaching and learning experience applied within COVID-19 circumstance. The evaluation aimed to measure how satisfied STs and TEs were from the online learning experience. QRTA collected data from STs and TEs and a continuous feedback cycle was applied to have a clear record and effective reflection on the experience. This evaluation and feedback cycle were planned in



collaboration between the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Department and the TEPD leads through questionnaires that were developed for this purpose.

Evaluation Methodology

Purpose of the Evaluation: To measure the quality of QRTA's online distance/remote teaching and learning experience in the TEPD, which took place during the lockdown period. Quality was measured by STs and TEs level of satisfaction about the experience, identification of areas of success and areas of improvement, as well as the extent to which they benefited from it.

Design of the Evaluation: The evaluation used post training evaluation design. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected from STs and TEs by using post training feedback questionnaires. The quantitative data was collected using a 4 points Likert-scale as well as some Yes and No questions and multiple selection questions. In addition to that, qualitative data was collected through some open-ended questions.

STs questionnaire collected data around the following domains:

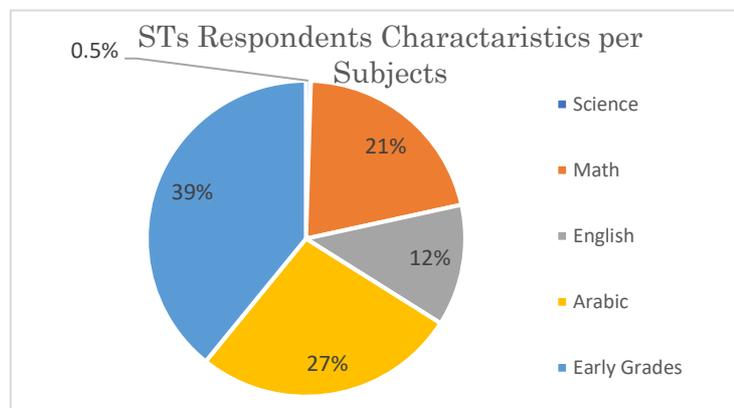
- Quality of the online learning sessions on VLE,
- Quality of the live discussions with academic advisors through Zoom,
- Technical issues STs faced during remote learning,
- Most effective parts of the remote learning.

TEs questionnaire collected data around the following domains:

- Quality of the remote learning experience,
- Technical issues TEs faced during remote learning,
- Benefits of remote learning compared to face-to-face learning.

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive approach of means and frequencies of participants responses to the different questions. Qualitative data was analyzed by identifying main themes among participants responses to the different questions and calculating frequencies of these themes.

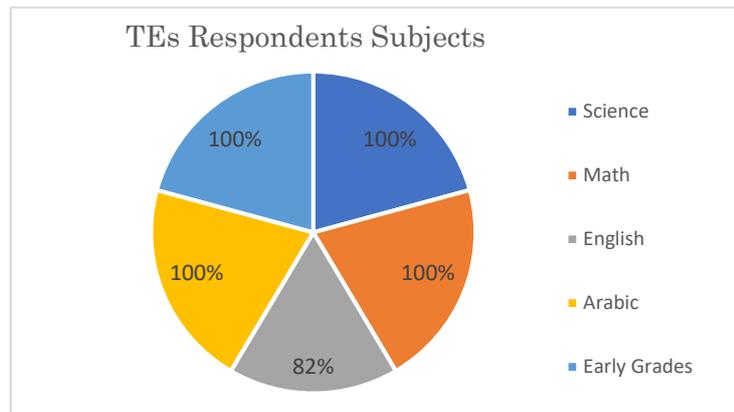
All STs currently enrolled in the TEPD (992) participated in the study including: Science (4), Arabic (257), Early Grades (372), Math (213), English (146). All TEs including: Science (1), Arabic (11), Early Grades (17), Math (11), English (11) also participated in the study.





Out of 992 STs in the TEPD, 812 completed the questionnaire which represents a high response rate of 82%. Response rate among the different subjects was: 100% in Science, 85% in Arabic and Early Grades, 80% in Math, and 69% in English. Respondents of the survey represented the different subjects in the TEPD, 39% were in Early Grades, 27% were in Arabic, 21% were in Math, 12% were in English, and 0.5% were in Science.

In addition, out of 51 TEs in the TEPD, 49 completed the questionnaire which represents a high response rate of 96%. Response rate of the TEs among the different subjects was: 100% of Science, Arabic, Early Grades, and Math, and 82% of English.



Limitations and Constraints:

As any evaluation and/or research study, there are always some limitations encountered and considered. In this evaluation these were:

- Due to sudden change from face-to-face to online as a result of COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, one type of data collection tool, questionnaire, was designed for each of the target groups and used for the evaluation. To allow for both quantitative and qualitative data however, questionnaire's questions were designed to collect both types using closed questions as well as open-ended questions.
- Evaluation data were only self-reported from both STs and TEs and to account for this, both questionnaires were designed to ask about the same domains, as possible, which enabled validation of the results between STs and TEs.
- Cut-off point for the sum of satisfied and highly satisfied for the satisfaction of online distance/remote training and learning and its related measures was identified as 80%. This was to cope with the high-quality standards at QRTA.

Key Findings

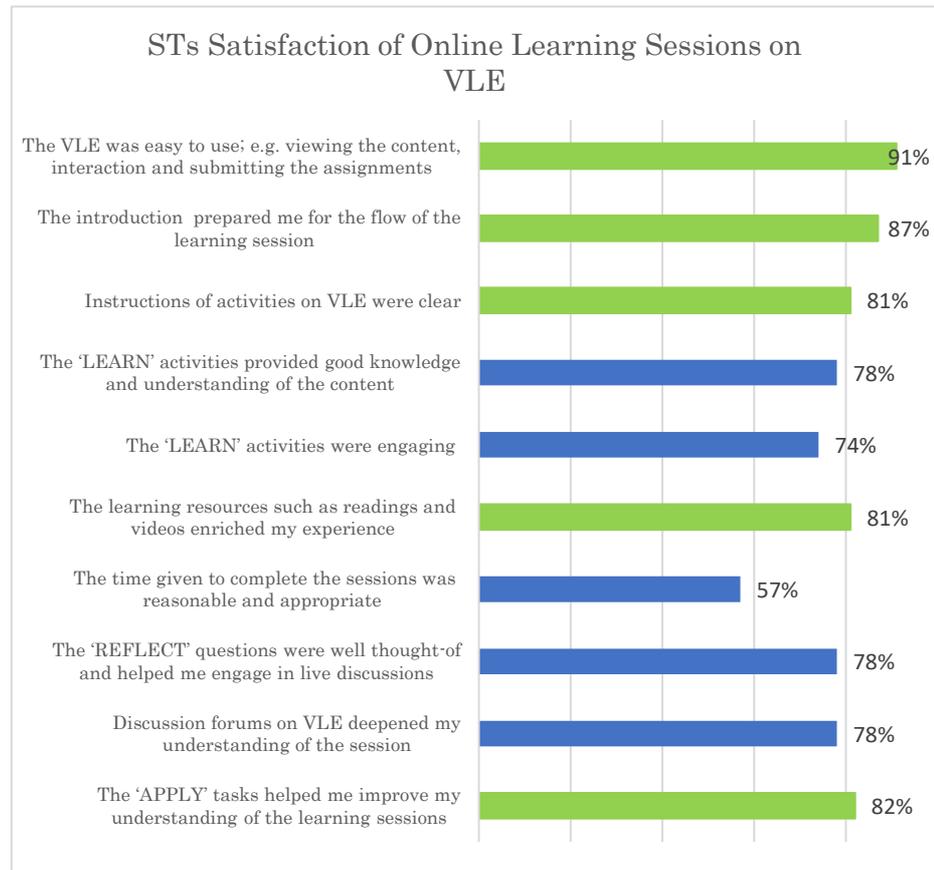
Overall, the results of the evaluation provide compelling evidence that both STs and TEs were satisfied with the quality of the TEPD online distance/remote training and learning experience. They saw it useful and beneficial and they have learned from it regarding online learning despite all the challenges they have faced.

In this section, we provide more details of data analysis results that support key findings of the evaluation.



STs Satisfaction of Online Remote Learning (Sessions on VLE): In general, evaluation results show that STs' from all the subjects reported a high satisfaction with the online learning sessions which ranged between 91% and 57%. Most of the STs (91%) were satisfied and very satisfied with how easy VLE was to use, for example, viewing the content, interaction and submitting assignments.

Also, 87% of STs mentioned that the introduction on VLE prepared them for the flow of the learning session, and 81% of STs mentioned that the instruction of activities was clear for them and the learning resources on VLE enriched their experience. As for the "LEARN"



activities, overall, 78% of STs said that it provided them with good knowledge and understanding of the content, nevertheless; on the subject level all Science STs (all 4 STs enrolled in the TEPD) disagreed with this. While overall 74% of STs mentioned that the "LEARN" activities were engaging, again all Science STs disagreed. 81% of STs were satisfied and highly satisfied with how the learning resources such as readings and videos enriched their experience. On the other hand, STs were dissatisfied with the time given to complete the sessions; all 4 Science STs, 50% of Math and English STs, and 40% of Early Grades STs. 78% of STs were satisfied and highly satisfied that the "REFLECT" questions were well thought-of and helped them engage in live discussions (except for all 4 Science STs who disagreed), and that the discussion forums on VLE deepened their understanding of the session. 82% of STs were also satisfied and highly satisfied with how "APPLY" tasks helped them in improving their understanding of the learning session. Finally, 77% of STs said that the remote learning on VLE was a beneficial experience, except for all 4 Science STs who disagreed.

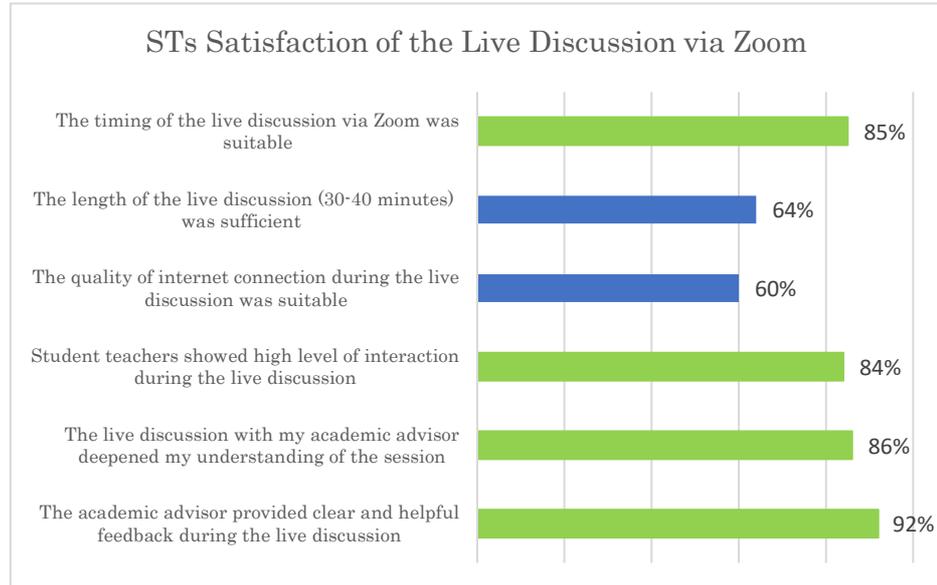
Science STs did not have any previous teaching experience compared to others. They are fresh and not used to self-learning and being dependent on their own learning. Therefore; they needed more support from the TEs to move the STs to become more self-learners as this is one of the main aims of the TEPD. This might



explain why they in general gave lower ratings compared to STs from other subjects.

STs Satisfaction of Online Remote Learning (Live Discussions with Academic Advisor Through Zoom): In general, evaluation results show that STs’ from all the subjects

reported a high satisfaction with the live discussions with the academic advisors through Zoom which ranged between 92% and 60%. 85% of STs were satisfied and highly satisfied with the time of the live discussion, but



only 64% of STs mentioned that the length of the live discussion was sufficient, except for all 4 Science STs who disagreed. 60% of STs were satisfied and indicated that the quality of internet connection during the live discussion was suitable. 84% of STs mentioned that there was high level of interaction between the students during the live discussions, and 86% of STs said that the live discussions deepened their understanding of the content. Moreover; most of the STs (92%) were satisfied and highly satisfied with the academic advisor feedback during these discussions which supported their learning.

TEs Satisfaction of Online Remote Learning: In general, evaluation results show that TEs’ from all the subjects reported a high satisfaction with the online remote learning experience which ranged between 100% and 75%. Overall, majority of TEs (98%) said that their STs attended 90% and more of the training sessions. Also, majority of TEs (94%) said that they were satisfied with the online remote learning experience.

96% of TEs were satisfied and highly satisfied with moving from face to face learning sessions to online learning. 98% of TEs were satisfied and highly satisfied with the creation of ‘LEARN’ activities, 94% with the creation of ‘APPLY’ tasks - expect for 22% from English TEs who disagreed, and 98% of the design of the training material on the VLE. TEs were satisfied with the STs commitment and interaction, where 84% and 88% of the TEs said they were satisfied and highly satisfied with the high level of interaction STs showed on VLE during activities - expect for 27% from Arabic TEs who disagreed, and the high level of interaction during the live discussion on Zoom, respectively. Majority of TEs (94%, 98%) were also satisfied and highly satisfied with the fact that the outcomes of the sessions were achieved by its conclusion, and of STs commitment to submit the “APPLY”



tasks as requested. Similar to STs responses, the quality of a stable internet connection during the live discussion was also an area that TEs did not rate high (76%). Finally, most of TEs (94%) said they gained new skills as a result of online remote learning experience they performed during. Examples and materials in some cases were not subject-specific.

When looking at responses that came under the cut-off point of 80%, analysis of qualitative responses provided a clearer picture. 78% of English TEs expressed dissatisfaction and wished for a wider variety of application, clearer instructions for some ‘apply’ activities, and expressed the need to train TEs on online pedagogy. While TEs who were dissatisfied with level of ST interaction; 73% Arabic TEs and 77% English TEs, voiced the need for more resources originally in Arabic and expressed concern at STs unfamiliarity with using online discussion forums and lack of infrastructure. The latter also appeared to be an issue for 71% of Early Grades TEs and 55% of Math TEs who cited lack of connection as a reason STs could not join live discussion sessions. TEs also voiced concern on need to balance workload requirements emphasizing a need to focus on quality over quantity.

Technical Challenges of Online Remote Learning: Data analysis results of technical challenges STs and TEs reported facing during the online learning experience showed that 62% of STs and 43% of TEs said yes, they faced technical challenges.

Most frequently mentioned technical issues STs faced during the remote learning	Internet connection problems
	Difficulties in using Zoom
	Technical problems with the computer/Microphone/ Mobile
	Problems with the Outlook/ E-mail

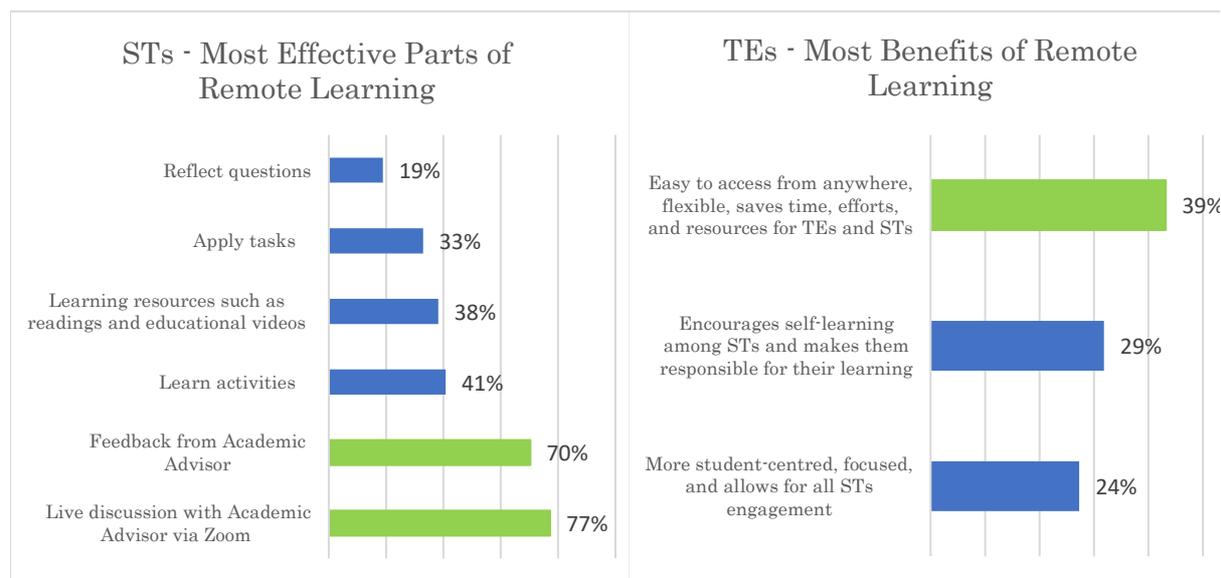
The main challenge that was reported was the availability of stable and proper internet connection (81% STs) and (76% TEs). Some STs said that when they ran out of internet, they could not re-charge because of the lockdown, therefore; this prevented some STs from attending all the live sessions with their academic advisor. Some STs (7%) and TEs (5%) said that using Zoom for online learning was a challenge, and this was expected as it’s something new and had to be suddenly used once lockdown was activated. 6% of STs also reported technical problem with their computers, microphones, mobile being a challenge the faced.

Most Effective Parts and Benefits of Online Remote Learning: Data analysis results of STs and TEs responses to most beneficial and useful components of the online learning show that 77% of STs found that live discussion via Zoom with their academic advisor was the most beneficial. This was followed by feedback



provided to them by their academic advisor (70%), and third the “LEARN” activities they took in the training (41%).

TEs also stressed the benefits of online remote learning. 39% of TEs explained how feasible, easy to access and saves efforts. 29% of TEs also explained how online remote learning encouraged student-centred learning and made STs more responsible for their learning.



Conclusions

Based on the detailed evaluation results as presented in this report, the evaluation study concludes that the online distance/remote training and learning experience was successfully implemented, specifically:

- Evaluation results provides evidence that both STs and TEs found online/remote training and learning more flexible, more student-centred, and made learners become more responsible for their learning.
- Evaluation results also showed that both STs and TEs started developing improved skills in using technology in education.
- In addition, evaluation results indicate that more online distance/remote training and learning activities can be considered as part of the training model at QRTA.

Also, as this was an online distance/remote training and learning solution born out of a sudden emergency response, absence of full readiness for online training and learning as well as the expectation that the only difference might be finding virtual replacements to replicate face to face training and learning activities meant a blur clarity and difficulty coping for everyone. The main challenge was in enabling everyone to affect the mindset change or shift needed to move away from face to face pedagogy and the expectations engendered there to an online pedagogy and a new set of expectations. Therefore; the results of this evaluation provide a learning opportunity to benefit from the emergency online distance/remote



training and learning experience to inform future planning for an online course. In addition, allow to determine main challenges and make recommendations for future online work at QRTA TEPD.

Moreover, the evaluation results show that STs ranked interactive Zoom sessions with TEs as being “most beneficial” and commented that they wanted longer sessions showing the dependence on TEs for explanation rather than adopting self-learning as an approach. This same result might also point to the general need for social interaction to enhance learning and highlight the ideas espoused by the constructivist approach in outlining the essential role played by others in an individual’s learning journey.

The results of the evaluation are expected to lead to several ideas that would feed into future online initiatives at QRTA for TEPD with a final goal of launching a fully online version of TEPD that is accessible to a wider audience and still meets TEPD goals and learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on this evaluation findings, and as a result of the high level of satisfaction STs and TEs reported about the quality of the online distance/remote training and learning experience for the TEPD, this evaluation recommends sustaining the online training model for the TEPD. This would also lead to developing and launching a full online version of TEPD and ensure its quality by carrying out the following:

- Use activity-based learning design and structure sessions to follow the “(LEAR): LEARN, ENGAGE, APPLY, AND REFLECT” model, to build in self-learning skills in LEARN and APPLY activities and include peer and facilitator engagement in the ENGAGE activities.
- Focus on differentiation by including core and optional tasks to cater for different needs in LEARN and APPLY activities.
- Train TEs on online learning instructional design and pedagogy.
- Specify technological knowledge and competencies needed on the part of learners to succeed in the course.
- Create an online learning community through activities to build a peer support mechanism for learners into the programme.
- Clarify expectations and roles of online course facilitators and learners.