Research Article

TEACHING AND TECHNOLOGY: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF SELECT FILIPINO TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE NEW NORMAL

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Abstract

This phenomenological study investigates the experiences of select Filipino teachers on teaching in the new normal. Through an online qualitative survey, the teachers were asked open-ended questions on their experiences in online classes. Consequently, the transcendental analysis on the gathered responses revealed three main themes—the challenges teachers encountered, the coping strategies they employed, and their use of technology. The said themes answered the research questions in the study and guided the researcher to imply several suggestions for stakeholder support, teacher training, and school administrators.

Keywords: Teacher Experience, Online Classes, Transcendental Phenomenology, New Normal

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the Country, particularly the education industry. In the Philippines, both public and private educational institutions expeditiously redesigned and transformed their teaching and learning processes into mostly online synchronous and asynchronous strategies requiring technological or digital competence among teachers. In the diaspora of traditional face-to-face classroom practices to a more flexible online learning, several researchers have pointed out some ideas to understand teachers' dilemmas in using technology (Marek, Chew, & Wu, 2021; Watson, 2020). However, in the context of the Philippines, little is known about this challenge faced by the teachers. Hence, this research aims to understand the experiences of select Filipino teachers as they embark on the new way of teaching and learning.

Challenges of Teachers in the New Normal

The COVID-19 pandemic forged the education landscape into the 'new normal' processes. Petzold (2020) particularly described that the pandemic triggered the rapid and drastic change of school processes to flexible modalities, while Watson (2020) agreed that the pandemic compelled schools to transform the curriculum into online learning. The phenomenon is not proper to only one country but is 'ubiquitous' internationally (Kim, 2020). In the Philippines, such a dilemma has also been felt.

However, the expeditious migration of traditional teaching-learning processes in the classroom to flexible modalities assailed different stakeholders with challenges. Marek et al. (2021) pointed out that the migration confronted both teachers and students with problems in technology. Watson (2020) notably identified that the challenge for teachers is to maintain the development of the socio-emotional competencies of students even in virtual classrooms. Rachmadtullah et al. (2020), in their case study of 68 teachers, described that student conditioning and motivation to online learning was one of the most significant challenges of teachers. Indeed, it appears that teaching in the new normal is challenging for both teachers and students.

Nevertheless, teachers play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of the pandemic in schools. Marek et al. (2021) narrated that teaching in the new regular required higher workloads among teachers. Even if teachers are in work from home setup, the challenging transition adds stress to teachers (Watson, 2020). Moreover, the survey conducted by Espino-Diaz et al. (2020) among 10,000 teachers revealed that teachers in the new normal "suffered emotional exhaustion, unprepared instruction, stress, anxiety, anguish, and lack in support and teleworking." With the challenges pointed out by the different researchers, school administrators and policymakers must look into the situation to determine ways to help the teachers. Therefore, Watson (2020) called for support for teachers in the new learning environment.

Interestingly, Marek et al.'s (2021) survey among 418 teachers showed that teachers are more favorable than neutral in their 'readiness' even though their struggles to prepare instructional materials are evident. If teachers have the support they need, they can improve their professional-digital skills (Sánchez-Cruzado et al., 2021); effectively deliver the curriculum competencies to students (Kim, 2020); and be motivated to pursue still quality and effective teaching (Rachmadtullah et al., 2020).

Teachers and Technology

Different researchers and educators across the globe called to integrate technology in classrooms even in the pre-COVID era. However, now more than ever, the said call intensified. Kim (2020) reiterates that the role of technology is indispensable in the conduct of online teaching and learning. Technology has been a partner of teachers in the drastic shift of traditional classroom procedures to online modalities (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020). Therefore, it is imperative to help them understand how to use technology to facilitate meaningful learning to help students construct knowledge that they can apply to real-world situations. In the conduct of their classes during the pandemic, Lepp et al. (2021) stressed that teachers get confronted with scenarios that challenge their decision-making skills, particularly the use of technology. In the said process, teachers need to exercise their professional wisdom and competence in their technology use. Hence, the technological or digital competence of teachers matters.

Different researchers corroborate that teachers' struggle is related to their competence in technology. Espino-Diaz et al. (2020) emphasized that teachers need to develop their technical competence more than the training. Sanchez-Cruzado et al. (2020) agreed that competence is fundamental to literacy and encompasses other technological skills. Portillo et al. (2020), in their survey of 4586 teachers, found that their technological competence affects their performance in class. Thus, they suggest supporting programs that can improve teachers' competence. Falloon (2020) explained that digital competence involves an intricate connection of

technology skills, attitudes, and values. Digitally competent teachers consider the sensible and healthy use of technology which needs a particular knowledge and perspective on legal and ethical aspects, privacy and security, and the role of society in technology. In his study, Falloon (2020) developed a digital competency framework for teachers, identifying two main pillars: personal—ethical and personal professional. The personal-ethical competencies require teachers to "understand, model and where relevant, include specific teaching content, to assist their students in accessing and using digital resources in a sustainable, safe and ethical way" (Falloon, 2020, p. 2460). The personal-professional competencies are teachers' operational skills to use technology, employ strategic engagement measures, and exhibit good dispositional and functional attitudes.

The Present Study

In this study, the researcher attends to the gap in Filipino teachers' experiences in the pandemic. Through transcendental phenomenology methods, the researcher aims to specifically answer the questions: (1) What are the challenges experienced by teachers as they teach in the new normal?; (2) What coping strategies did they employ to adjust to the new normal; and (3) How do teachers describe their use of technology in their online classes?

The current research considers the self-determination theory. Kaiser et al. (2020) posit that learning and contentment are affected by conditions of the learning environment and the extent of satisfying an individual's need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. With the ideas of self-determination in mind, this study aims to understand teachers' experiences using technology in the classroom and how it affects their perception of their digital competence.

Research Methodology

Participants

To participate in the study, the researcher identified teachers teaching online as their mode of instruction in place of their face-to-face classes. Purposively, 25 Filipino (5 males & 20 females) teachers participated in the study. The number of respondents appears to be sufficient for the suggestion of Dworkin (2012) for qualitative studies. The age range of the participants is from 20 to 54 years old, while their range of teaching experience is 1 to 30 years in service. The participants come from various schools such as DepEd public schools (n=12), private schools (n=11), and state universities or colleges (n=2). Also, the participants are different in terms of the level they teach: elementary (n=13), junior and senior high school (n=8), and tertiary level (n=4). Though teachers come from varied backgrounds, the researcher identified that all of them have experienced remote teaching through online class. Hence, the researcher assumes that the teachers involved in the study can share their experiences on teaching and technology as investigated in this study.

Procedures

With the quarantine restrictions and the connection challenges in the Country, the researcher decided to use an online survey. Braun et al. (2020) suggest that an online survey is a potential tool for qualitative studies since technologies are available. They also commend the flexibility of online qualitative surveys and their ability to help researchers ask questions that directly answer their studies. Following the procedures

suggested by Braun et al. (2020), the researcher developed a Google form with several sections: (a) information on ethics and consent, (b) demographics, and (c) open-ended questions on teacher experiences and their use of technology. Some sample open-ended questions are: "How do you find the current educational setup? What were the specific challenges that you have experienced? How did you cope with the challenges you encountered?"

Upon validation of the interview questions, it was piloted among five teachers. Results of the validation and pilot testing revealed some corrections on grammar and provisions for the ethical conduct of the study. Finally, the researcher sent the link for the Google Form to the research participants, and it took them about 10 to 15 mins to answer the questions. As described, the researcher informed the teachers that their participation is voluntary. The researcher sought participant consent as part of the Google form questionnaire sent to them. All participants signified that they were willing to participate in the study and understand that they will not receive any financial or any form of remuneration.

Data Analysis

Since the study aims to understand the teachers' experiences in online classes, the researcher used a transcendental phenomenology research design. Following Moustaka's (1994) procedures, the researcher identified a potential bias in analyzing the data or the epoche. Subsequently, this study involves only one researcher; thus, he invited his pre-service teachers and his research assistant to assist him in coding and analyzing the responses gathered. Before the coding process, the researcher discussed his personal views in an online class from the perspective of a teacher and school administrator. The pre-service teachers also gave their perspectives on the phenomena as they also had their online classes in their practicum course. The research assistant narrated minimal exposure to online classes as he is not a practicing teacher. The researchers and the invited coders took note of the concerns raised in the discussion and agreed to be constantly aware of them to reduce bias in the participants' responses.

Initially, the researcher and the pre-service teachers read through the responses, identified significant transcripts, and labeled them appropriately. As the essential transcripts were identified, the researchers and his pre-service teachers independently coded responses into themes. Afterward, the researcher and his pre-service teachers meet to identify the common themes they found and agreed on some concepts that need a common understanding. They then proceeded to the final coding process. The research assistant acted as auditor of the process and determined the alignment and parallelism of the coded responses for the themes. Following the agreements on the meaning of the themes and units, a textural-structural description of themes was made. In the said process, the researcher observed phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation. According to Moustaka (1994), a phenomenological reduction is a process of creating a detailed description of the participants' practical experience through their voices. Meanwhile, imaginative variation is a process of meaning-making or describing the 'essence' of the participants' experiences and taking note of significant ideas inferred from the transcripts analyzed.

To validate if the data analysis is correct and appropriately represents the participants' answers to the questionnaire, the researcher emailed a copy of the results to the respondents. Some of the respondents confirmed the results presented to them, while others did not respond.

Results and Discussion

Upon analyzing the experiences of teacher-participants, three themes emerged—the challenges in the changes they encountered, the coping strategies they used, and their use of technology in their online classes. In the first theme, the teachers narrated the challenging circumstances they encountered in their online classes and some factors contributing to their dilemma. In the second theme, the teachers shared their initiatives to cope with the rapid change in the educational process and the support they received. The last theme explicitly describes the use of technology of teachers and the areas they need further training. The subsequent sections further explain the identified themes with quotations of teacher responses.

Challenges of teachers

The challenges that assailed teachers in teaching in the new normal are classified into five subthemes. These are teaching-learning processes, professional dilemmas, student readiness, parental involvement, and personal predicaments. With teaching-learning processes, the researcher means teacher experiences that describe how they deliver the curriculum components in online modalities. On the other hand, the professional dilemma of teachers describes their teaching abilities to teach online. Student readiness describes their class participation, while parental involvement is the extent to which parents interfere with their children's classes. Lastly, personal predicaments are the challenges of teachers while they are in work from home setup.

Primarily, most of the challenges described by the teachers are in the teaching-leaning processes (n=11). As such, Teacher 2 struggled with her observations on the validity of the released most essential learning competencies of the DepEd as, according to her, the released competencies are *"[n]ot relevant in the pandemic*." Meanwhile, other teachers are worried about how to teach online and encourage student participation. For example, Teacher 25 said, *"I am challenged in finding new ways to motivate and keep learners focused on their tasks…"* while Teacher 17 struggled to promote *"authentic engagement"* in his class. As they prepare for class, other teachers (n=3) indicated that it took them time to prepare their instructional materials, such as instructional videos and other interactive online materials. Teacher 19 elaborated that taking videos, editing them, and uploading them to her YouTube channel took almost all of her time. She further added that *"…the efforts, sleepless nights I'm giving to all my videos are the most difficult challenges I encountered in this current educational setup."* Notably, among the responses gathered for the subtheme on teaching-learning processes, it is an assessment that had the most frequency (n=6). Five teachers indicated that they had difficulty conducting an assessment to determine the reliability of students' answers as Teacher 24 questions *"…if they are really the ones answering the test"*. Some teachers also struggled with the on-time submission of student outputs. Perhaps with her challenging online assessment experience, Teacher 19 called to develop new assessment procedures. She said:

"What we need is to develop an assessment that fits the new normal" - Teacher 19

With their experiences in the teaching-learning process, several teachers relayed their professional dilemmas. Teacher 3 teachers felt the need to revisit her college courses on pedagogical content knowledge to determine effective strategies in teaching with technology. Teacher 12 corroborated the need for professional updating of teachers. She said that "[r]eskilling and upskilling of teachers are needed (and are still essential) to respond to the changing educational landscape."

The teachers also found their student readiness and ability to participate in the different teaching-learning processes challenging. For instance, Teacher 5 said that *"The real challenge lies on the students. Some of my students are not capable of adjusting to the needs of the current education platforms."* Specifically, students' attitude towards their online classes was cited by most teachers to affect student readiness. They found it hard to sustain student interest in their classes and even engage them. For example, Teacher 23 described that *"…the challenges that I have experienced…sustaining the interest and attention of the students in an online class."* Adding to the challenge on student readiness are the resources of students. For example, Teacher 13 narrated that she took the effort to upskill herself professionally, but she found her students' preparedness to be 'frustrating.' She explained that *"…my teaching tools are ready, but my students are not…they don't have gadgets and have very limited data or internet connection"*. Three other teachers shared the same sentiments as Teacher 13 on the lack of students' financial resources and even the availability of gadgets.

Interestingly, parental involvement is another factor found problematic by teachers in their online classes. In contrast to the optimistic notion of parental involvement, the teachers perceived it as taxing rather than a benefit. Some responses appear that parents tend to get in the way of teaching-learning processes. Teacher 18 observed that the parents of her class seemed to have an 'untoward' way of communicating their concerns to her. She said, *"…parents who want to meddle with how teachers deliver instruction online…."* Teacher 23 narrated that, *"…very challenging…when you know that most of the answers came from the parents."* One recorded response suggests parents should also get training on technology use to assist their children in school tasks better.

Finally, as teachers migrate to work from home setup, they were also confronted with personal predicaments. Some teachers pointed out their limitations, such as their physical well-being and financial situation, to be challenging. For instance, Teacher 17 enumerated *"…financial, emotional, and health challenges"* to have affected her. Additionally, time management is another factor that was pointed out by two teachers to affect their preparations for teaching in work from setup as relayed by Teacher 20, who said her challenge is *"to balance my time as a work from home teacher and as a homemaker."* Adding to their work-from-home setup, some teachers identified internet connection as also a problem. Teacher 16 described her obstacle in getting a 'strong' connection because it is 'expensive' for her.

Coping Strategies

To survive the challenges that confronted them, teachers employed coping strategies. These are professional upskilling, positive attitude, and collaboration, and community support.

Among the subthemes that describe the coping strategies of teachers, professional upskilling yields the most coded response. Professional upskilling means teachers exerted effort to update their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and learned new ways to manage teaching and learning in the new normal classroom. Some teachers (n=9) undergo professional updating processes such as reviewing PCK courses, reading literature, learning new digital skills for fun and engaging classroom interaction, and exploring pedagogies to facilitate online and offline activities. A sample response is given by Teacher 7, who said, *"I need to study using tech in teaching, select which is the most appropriate."* Other teachers (n=5) reported attending webinars to learn more about effective teaching in the new normal. For instance, Teacher 14 said, *"[i]n terms of conducting lessons via online platforms, training and attending webinars help a lot to equip me with the necessary skills."* A teacher signified that her school administration supported them in attending the different webinars. Lastly, teachers (n=3) also suggested that they watched online videos to keep them abreast of the challenges of the new teaching and learning processes. They mostly watched YouTube videos to learn classroom technology strategies such as *"video tutorials about online classes, video making, online quiz, etc."* said Teacher 8.

More importantly, an effective coping mechanism employed by some participants (n=13) of the study is possessing a positive attitude towards their tasks even if it is challenging. The response of Teacher 18, who said that *"I embraced the change wholeheartedly and looked for its silver lining,"* best exemplifies the said positive attitude. Similarly, other teachers' (n=9) described their adjustment to the current situation. Such strategy involves self-teaching, understanding of the situation and circumstances, rapid response and preparation for change, management of time and resources, and even employing spiritual measures. Also, some teachers (n=4) have prepared themselves mentally for the different challenges of teaching in the new normal. Specific actions such as setting clear expectations of oneself and accepting the circumstances were employed by teachers. Example responses are:

"I adjust with this change of educational setup with enough courage, endurance and financial allocation sacrificing the family's food budget just to respond to my students' needs." - Teacher 19

Mentally, I needed to condition my mind that what's done during the face-to-face may not be applicable today, so I needed to become flexible. - Teacher 15

Finally, some teachers acknowledged the essence of collaboration, support among their co-teachers, stakeholders, and even their community to cope with the dilemma. Three responses described teachers' initiative to collaborate with their co-teachers. In effect, they were able to share their best practices and work together as they confront the challenges of online teaching and learning, e.g.:

"I adjust by...collaborating with colleagues and building professional networks..." - Teacher 17

On the other hand, some teachers were able to establish support strategies from their communities. Teacher 2 narrated that she could get support from her Local Government and other schools while Teacher 12 is grateful for *"the presence of support groups (professional and personal)."* The response of Teacher 20, which was *"I also had to seek the help of friends and family,"* also coded in cooperative strategy for it seemed she was able to let her family support her with her teaching tasks.

Finally, some teachers (n=4) acknowledged the essence of collaboration and support among their co-teachers, stakeholders, and even their community to cope with the dilemma. Teachers described their initiative to collaborate with their co-teachers. In effect, they could share their best practices and work together as they confront online teaching and learning challenges. As Teacher 17 said, *"I adjusted by...collaborating with colleagues and building professional networks...."* On the other hand, some teachers were able to establish support strategies from their communities. Teacher 2 narrated that she could get support from her Local Government and other schools while Teacher 12 is grateful for *"the presence of support groups (professional and personal)."* The response of Teacher 20, which was *"I also had to seek the help of friends and family,"* also coded in cooperative strategy, for it seemed she was able to let her family support her with her teaching tasks.

Technology use of teacher

The experiences of teachers in their use of technology in online classes can be classified into three subthemes. First, they described their level of competence or their abilities to use technology in their online classes. Second, they identified the forms of technology they have used in their classes. Lastly, they recognized some digital skills that can further enhance or focus on teacher training on technology.

Teachers generally described their perceived level of technological competence as advanced or averaged. With advanced competence, the researcher means that some teachers (n=5) perceived that they could efficiently use the different technologies or applications in their online classes and know the other teaching and learning technologies. For example, Teacher 14 said that "*I can use technology well. I can also do simple video editing for my lessons.*

However, not all teachers were confident in their technological competence. Some responses (n=9) were coded averaged because even if teachers signified knowledge and skills on technology, they were not so optimistic about it. For instance, Teacher 19 said that *"[a]s to using different applications on the computer I could assess myself 6 out of 10...".* Also, other responses seem to describe that some teachers perceive themselves as literate of technology but just of 'functional' level. At the same time, some acknowledge that they know the basics and are sufficient for classroom use.

When asked what forms of technology they used in their online classes, teachers identified the school management tools (n=16) and classroom instructional tools (n=50) to be most utilized. Most teachers (n=10) indicated that they used Google Classroom, like Teacher 16, who reasoned that it is "*...more known, easy to use and accessible...".* Perhaps due to the lack of an online school management system, some teachers (n=2) relied on social media to communicate with their students.

Most teachers (n=22) used video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Google meet to facilitate learning online. To promote interaction in their classes, some teachers (n=11) explored the use of interactive tools such as Jam Board, Quizziz, Mentimeter, Slido, and Nearpod. They also used interactive online activities such as Kahoot and Scholastic pro. Some teachers (n=8) acknowledged using more advanced Google Slides and Microsoft 365 applications to make their presentations more appealing and functional. However, some teachers would like to improve their presentation skills by learning more online presentation programs like Canva and Prezi.

Remarkably, among the different uses of technology in the classroom, it is the development and publication of videos that most teachers (n=14) are interested in learning. Several teachers (n=14) indicated their interest to be efficient in making videos for their classes. For instance, Teacher 15 said that *"I personally would like to enhance my skills in video making and editing*." Others were interested in making YouTube videos, while other teachers said they used video editing programs such as Filmora. Finally, some teachers (n=6) narrated their use of online assessment tools in their classes. "*I use Google form because it is easy to obtain records of students,"* said Teacher 7.

With the teachers' experiences in using technology, the researcher asked them to identify technology skills that teachers need to improve. Consequently, most teachers (n=10) have identified content and creation skills and online classroom management skills as the two most essential needs in online teaching.

The content and creation skills refer to the ability of the teachers to select appropriate applications and develop their online instructional materials. Specifically, the teachers relayed their desire to learn more on selecting an application that they can use to create videos that will effectively promote learning. As Teacher 13 said, *"[t]eachers need to learn different video editing tools to help with interactive delivery of the lessons."* Another notable response is given by Teacher 24, who pointed out that teachers should possess the skills to observe *"copyright knowledge* properly." She is the only one who was able to give such a response.

On the other hand, the online classroom management skills refer to the teachers' needs to develop their abilities in their classes, such as the asynchronous activities in their learning management system (Teacher 5) and find ways to make it interactive (Teacher 9). Also, some respondents recapitulated the need for teachers to develop their skills in facilitating learning using different video conferencing applications. To cite, Teacher 2 said, "*I think teachers should explore more on the use of Zoom or Google Meet and how it can be maximized in teaching and learning."* Teacher 5 also stressed the importance of improving the skill to develop *"contextualized assessments for online teaching"* in terms of assessment. The most notable response in this category is that teachers should learn how to practice online security measures. The answer is given by Teacher 24, who described that *"[a] technical skill that teachers should have based on my opinion is knowledge of computer security."*

Meanwhile, some teachers (n=13) signified the enhancement of basic technology skills. For teachers to employ technology successfully, they must know the basics of computers and strive to improve them. However, a teacher-respondent described that knowing more than the basics is needed in the current classroom setup and exploring new technology applications can help. Teacher 10 said that *"[b]asic skills in computers will do but what is important is the willingness to learn and try new things.* In addition, internet use is essential in conducting online classes, and some teachers identified the need for web navigation skills. Thus, some respondents (n=8) indicated that teachers must select appropriate materials and programs for online classroom instruction and use. For instance, Teacher 6 said that *"[t]eachers must explore and familiarize themselves with the different learning platforms available online...to make the teaching and learning experiences relevant and engaging.* Also, some respondents pointed out that teachers should learn how to apply efficiently and appropriately what they have learned from the internet. As Teacher 11 said, *"A teacher must be proficient*

enough in dealing with online, digital and website/social media platforms." Lastly, other respondents identified that teachers should act on the knowledge they have learned from the web, such as sharing it with other co-teachers and students. For example, Teacher 3 said, *"[u]tilizing online applications, integrating into the lessons, training sessions for my co-teachers."*

Implications for stakeholder support

The challenges encountered by the teachers are perhaps due to their readiness for the task of teaching online. In this time of COVID-19 pandemic, motivation is essential for teachers to be ready, and thus, it is crucial to reflect on self-determination theory. The study results indicate that teachers' readiness for remote teaching is affected by their personal and professional predicaments. As inferred from the theme on challenges, teachers need to meet their physiological, safety, and esteem needs to develop self-actualization in this new normal way of teaching and learning. Thus, school administrators should think of programs to assist teachers with their needs to teach online. The researcher posits that any assistance (e.g., internet connection allowance, hard wares, software, etc.) can help ease the concerns of teachers as they prepare

Apparently, it appears that not only teachers' needs should be met about the students' as well. The results on students' dilemma on their resources may explain their lack of motivation for their online classes. Therefore, for the teaching and learning in the new normal to succeed, schools should make sure that the students can also adapt to the adjustments being implemented. While it is true that technology can help remote teaching and learning, schools should think of more inclusive methods to assist students in succeeding. School programs and initiatives to assist students with their technological dilemmas are also encouraged.

Lastly, the study results seem to reveal another aspect of parental involvement as influenced by the changes in the educational landscape. While Cahapay (2021) posited that parental involvement is needed, particularly in the current teaching and learning context, the study challenges these ideas. The teachers struggled with parental participation, for they have meddled with their children's school activities and requirements. In contrast with Sari and Maningtyas's (2020) study, the teachers disagree that parental involvement is good. This observation on parental involvement suggests a need to 'professionalize' the role of parents in their children's schooling at home. If parents are to be partners of teachers, they should also be equipped with teaching principles and share the goal of the teaching-learning process. Hence, it is suggested for schools to develop a program that can also prepare parents to become their children's teachers at home.

Implications for teacher-training

Notably, teachers pointing out their difficulties on the curriculum and the teaching-learning processes seem to call for programs that can help them address the challenges. For teachers to succeed successfully in the new normal, they should be equipped with the skills to do it.

The general perception of having an 'average' digital competence appears to be supported by indicating teachers' desire to know more about the different digital tools. Mainly, the results show that the respondents want to learn more about developing instructional videos and interactive materials. According to Lepp et al. (2020), the COVID-19 challenges confronted teachers in the rapid transition to distance learning exposed them to novel situations requiring decision-making skills. Perhaps, in the context of the respondents,

where they signified that internet connection is a struggle for them and the students, they opted to develop videos in which they can discuss the concepts of their discipline and upload them to the internet sites where students can watch at their pace. Hence, such initiative requires skills support. Therefore, the researcher encourages schools to support teachers in these endeavors since the unique educational setup during these times requires effort to motivate students more than just teach the subject matter's content.

Notably, most of the respondents are inclined to develop their personal-professional competencies on digital competence. The responses for teachers' use of technology in their online classroom reveal that teachers could use different digital tools, but they still want to improve their knowledge and skills. According to Falloon (2020), teachers' positive operational digital competence can support students in their struggles with online learning. For teachers to vigorously develop their digital competence, a program to support such development is urgently needed. Such will enable teachers to reach optimal levels of digital skills, undergo a true paradigm shift, and ultimately combine methodology and educational strategies effectively.

However, while the pillar for personal-professional competencies appears strong, the pillar for personal-ethical competencies shows otherwise. Falloon (2020) described that the pillar on personal-professional competencies aims to develop teachers to be good digital citizens and inform them on supporting safety and security in their online environment and promoting health and well-being in using devices. The personal-professional competencies are identified to respond to the pressing cybersecurity issues such as identity theft, cyberbullying, and even predatory online behaviors. Simply put, the personal-professional competencies describe teachers' ability to practice ethical standards in their classes. The responses in the study showed less on personal-professional competencies but more on promoting technological skills. The respondents implied that teachers should enhance their basic technological skills in the new normal, develop their content and creation skills, possess online classroom management skills, and reinforce web navigation skills. In all the responses coded for the said skills, only one teacher realized the need for ethical and security measures in online classes. No teacher described the need to observe copyright regulations in developing videos and instructional materials nor cited the need to follow security measures in online classes through their preferred platform.

Therefore, schools must plan how to inform teachers on how to improve their personal-professional competencies to observe measures that will not negatively impact people, society, and even the environment. Falloon (2020) posited that teachers' personal-professional competencies could help them not be victims of any cybercrime, not be taken advantage of professionally, and effectively protect their students from online harm. More importantly, teachers should model the responsible in the use of technology among their learners. Thus, efforts to support the development of teachers' personal-professional competencies are highly encouraged.

Implications for school administrators

Further, the study results showed that while teachers acknowledged using the different digital tools in their online classes, only a few responses indicated that such use was part of a school plan. The said observation appears to be similar to the study of Perifanou et al. (2021). They described that while teachers

are into the use of digital tools to address the needs of their classes, their actions do not support the school's long-term plan. Therefore, school administrators should consider planning not just for what emergency curriculum to implement but on 'how to implement them will help. The researcher believes that schools will never go back to the old normal. Hence administrators should prepare for the changes ahead. The initiative of teachers on learning different online tools can inform schools how to proceed effectively in the post-COVID era.

Conclusions

The phenomenological analysis of the teacher experiences revealed four themes. These themes extend the results of the different studies reviewed on teacher challenges in the new normal and their use of technology. In the first theme, it can be inferred that the rapid changes in the educational system brought about by the COVID-19 overwhelmed the teacher-respondents. However, such observation is expected to happen because any change in the educational processes is always a challenge for teachers (Sokal et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the challenges described in the first theme lays different foundational concepts for training and support.

For the second theme, it has been evident that teachers employed coping mechanisms to counter the challenges that assailed them. Consequently, the participants in the study appeared to have a positive attitude towards online classes. However hard the challenges they face, some teachers looked for the 'silver lining' while others 'embraced change.' Sokal et al. (2020) described that teachers' beliefs and attitudes matter because they can be barriers and can lead to burnout if not addressed. Therefore, they concluded that the pathway to coping with technology challenges in online classes begins with behavior or attitude towards it. This positive attitude is noteworthy for, according to Espino-Diaz et al. (2020), the right attitude of teachers can promote positive emotion among them that can eventually result in better schooling experiences for children. While other researchers (Sokal et al., 2020) found that burnout and resilience are related to teachers' attitudes towards technology, the teachers in this study seemed to argue that they are resilient for change as to the different actions they take to help them address their challenges in teaching online. Perhaps, such observations are due to the characteristics of Filipino teachers, which Bongco and David (2019) described as being flexible and adaptable to change.

The last theme described the use of technology of teachers in their classrooms. The study results ascertain that teachers' perception of their digital competencies needs to improve since most respondents indicated an 'average' rating for the question. Portillo et al. (2020) warned that teachers' perception of their digital competence could affect their teaching performance, particularly in the current remote learning setup. Nevertheless, teachers' acknowledgment of their level of digital competence is relevant to take measures to help them (Portillo et al. 2020). Looking at the demographics of the respondents, it can be observed that they are widely varied from very young teachers too much senior ones. Hence, it can be inferred that the digital gap exists, which may lead to variations in their perception of competence. Such observation calls for schools to develop programs that can help bridge the digital gap among teachers. Mentoring programs on technology are encouraged to help teachers who are having challenges in technology.

As a limitation of the study, the researchers acknowledge the varied background of the teacher participants. Though the study presents a collective picture of teacher experiences on teaching and technology in the Country, it is recommended that further investigation be conducted. It would be interesting to know if the experiences of the teachers vary as to the type of school they teach and even to the nature of the course they are teaching.

Acknowledgments

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