

Experiences of Instructors in Online Teaching: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

The abrupt shift to online distance education as a result of COVID-19 pandemic resulted to the diversification of teaching modalities and pedagogies. This study explored the lived experiences of instructors in online teaching during the SY 2020-2021 using Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological design. Purposive sampling was used to select the twenty-five participants for the study. In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with all the participants to gather information from the teachers. Data analysis was employed using the six components of hermeneutic phenomenological design and with the aid of NVivo software. Results revealed that the instructors' experiences in online teaching were identified in five themes: preparation of learning materials, realization of learning outcomes, stability of internet connection, availability of technological resources, and difficulty in the conduct of assessment activities. The instructors encountered positive and negative experiences in online teaching. Online teaching enhancement program is recommended in this study.

Keywords: assessment strategies; enhancement program; internet connection; lived experiences; online learning

1. Introduction

Due to the sudden school closures in the middle of the semester caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, tertiary institutions were forced to make an abrupt shift to online distance education. However, many teachers in the Philippines are having difficulty with this "live" online teaching. For starters, it necessitates access to bandwidth, which many homes do not have. For example, an online survey conducted during the lockdown at one of the University of the Philippines' regional colleges revealed that up to 41 percent of undergraduate students do not have access to the internet. A similar survey of the same college's faculty found that, while all but one faculty member has internet access, 51 percent have data caps, indicating that they are using mobile network-enabled internet.

Live online teaching requires teaching shifts in pedagogy. Online tends to replicate traditional lecture formats where learners are often passive receivers of information being "delivered" by the teacher (Teräs et al., 2020). Teachers play an important role in teaching. They faced challenges and experiences as they are expected to plan, deliver and update online courses via active learning and meaning-making using new technology, prioritizing a student-centered pedagogical approach. This includes a wide range of hard-to-achieve experience, technical abilities, and pedagogical skills (Scoppio & Luyt, 2017).

In Florida, the award-winning faculty in an online class identified the factors necessary in an online class (a) authentic and applicable course materials that relate to practice, (b) the use of multimedia tools, (c) the individual and collaborative production of digital content by students, (d) the reflection on learning by students, and (e) the clarification by the instructor of the pure content. In addition, he stressed the importance of using data and evaluation practices and reflecting on course offerings in developing an online course learning, using a wide range of techniques, data, analytics, and quality improvement (Kumar, Martin, Budhrani, & Ritzhaupt, 2019). Also, the online teacher needs to be an expert in one's field, both pedagogical and technical aspects (Adebisi & Oyeleke, 2018).

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Administrators offer online courses in Turkey to meet certain requirements and demands. Education support task, infrastructure readiness, teaching staff as well as material applicability, overcoming the shortage of classroom space and teachers, earning money, and gaining prestige were all factors that influenced the administrators to offer online courses (Özcan & Yıldırım, 2018). Therefore, policies and practices regarding online teaching and learning in higher education should be in place. These include (a) time allocation for online teaching; (b) high-quality course content; (c) instructors who can teach online and have a passion for teaching, learning, and technology; (d) institutional support; (e) students' intrinsic motivation; and (f) skilled instructors who can create an inclusive environment and incorporate lessons using discussion boards (Hulett, 2018).

Not all teachers teaching online courses are contented in the job. They met different experiences and challenges. In Nigeria, the intimate, attitudinal, institutional, and societal challenges behind the unwillingness of Technical Education (TE) teachers to use the online platform were investigated and found out that they were reluctant to use the online platform (Ifeanyi, & Chukwuone, 2018). Instructors were frustrated on the “essential elements of online learning that include flexibility and balance, academic freedom and autonomy, professional relationships, and professional growth (Mansbach & Austin, 2018).

Some online teachers described their experiences teaching fully online universities into three: happiness, relief, and enjoyment. First, they were happy and satisfied with their role in online teaching in the academic context and the number of online teaching hours. Second, they were relieved in the approach of content acquisition since, in online learning, teachers assist the learners in searching topics by giving them useful sites (Badia, Garcia, & Meneses, 2019). Third, they rated their job environments as slightly more challenging because they were still new to the online teaching modality (McGhan, McCaughey, Landry, Allgood, & Menachemi, 2016).

Instructors felt the need for support from their institution and technical aspects (Stickney, Bento, Aggarwal, & Adlakha, 2019). In addition, they claimed that they need sufficient guidance and pedagogical support from the administration to improve students' interaction and learning (Bolliger, Inan, & Wasilik, 2014). As in charge of maintaining teaching/learning standards, instructors were encouraged to do their best in helping to achieve quality education since they saw in the practice that students perform better in an online class than in a face-to-face class (Lightner-Laws, 2016).

The instructors encountered challenges in incorporating cultural diversity and multicultural learning content in the online learning environment. Their perceptions of cultural diversity differed among online instructors in different courses and disciplines. They also had various instructional strategies—collaborative online learning activities, incorporating multicultural learning activities, and global learning content, which hinder them from using uniform techniques and strategies. In addition, the perceptions of cultural diversity among online instructors differ depending on their teaching discipline and academic preparation. They also saw the need to provide assistance that improved the online learning experiences of diverse student populations. (Kumi Yeboah, Dogbey, Yuan, & Smith, 2020).

In the physical sciences, instructors lacked a strong understanding of cultural diversity and had little knowledge of incorporating multicultural learning content to help diverse student populations achieve academic success in online education. (Kumi Yeboah, Dogbey, Yuan, & Smith, 2020). Teachers need to have the basic teaching details of all courses, make specific criteria for the scope and content of the courses online, and make comprehensive requirements for the scope and content of the courses online to expand the advantages of high-quality education (Wang & Zhang, 2019).

In online course delivery, instructors who have a good understanding of online learning pedagogies had a good experience in teaching. On the other hand, teachers with inadequate experience, technical expertise, and online pedagogy knowledge experienced difficulties in teaching. This discrepancy in teachers' backgrounds, abilities, and knowledge results in a different inability. Instructional designers can reduce this disparity in theoretical knowledge and practical skills by offering a versatile and interactive model of support for instructors (Scoppio & Luyt, 2017). Effective online teaching requires instructors to develop knowledge and new skills conducive to creating meaningful and successful learning experiences for online students (Ching, Hsu, & Baldwin, 2018).

Instructors need to adjust and learn about the changes in a Learning Management System (LMS) (Johns, 2020). They acknowledged that the planning of lessons included listing their learning outcomes and objectives, modularizing the

course, sequencing content, and creating content. They considered the time element as a constraint in preparing the synchronous and asynchronous delivery of learning. Understanding interactions between student-student and student-teacher in an asynchronous online course was a learning experience for the instructors. They expressed that their experience reshaped many of their existing beliefs, teaching strategies and practices, and pedagogical assumptions regarding student engagement, assessment design, and course facilitation (Chatterjee, Juvale, & Jaramillo, 2018).

Instructors in online classes claimed that it was difficult to teach and create content online due to a lack of knowledge about tools and strategies (Cross & Pollk, 2018). Also, academic staff increasingly require higher levels of technical competency and proficiency on top of their regular academic workload in an online learning environment (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Instructors also experience challenges in inadequate training for new normal education; limited time for the preparation of modules, exams, and other institutional requirements related to instruction due to the limited time of the concerned authorities to conduct and due to the implementing community quarantines (Cacayan, Baua, & Alvarado, 2020).

Instructors also reported that students had low online class attendance because they already had access to online materials. Several teachers favored reducing the online material but felt pressured by students to provide it (Jeffrey, Milne, Suddaby, & Higgins, 2014). In addition, they argued that uploading PowerPoint and other materials as outlines influenced student decisions not to attend class (Heaton-Shrestha, May, & Burke, 2009).

Among the barriers of online teaching was the teachers' reluctance by academics to engage with online learning (Anderson, 2008). Faculty who teach online had conflicting experiences on online teaching modalities. There were faculty who felt that they were pushed too much by their heads. However, some felt the support of their institution by providing quality tools and technology for their interactive strategies in teaching online. Few faculty believed that the learning outcomes are better carried out in face-to-face teaching than online learning modalities (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschik, 2012).

However, some teachers expressed reservations about the role of technology and argued that the teacher should be the central actor, with technology playing a minor support role in online learning. These teachers seemed to view online technologies mainly for access and information delivery efficiency rather than to support students' learning experiences. Increasing student access to these resources was seen as a major advantage of using an online component (Jeffrey, Milne, Suddaby, & Higgins, 2014).

Alternative teaching modalities such as modules, video presentations, and other offline platforms should be encouraged and utilized as supplementary materials for learning by the concerned instructor to address and minimize their long hours of exposure to gadgets. In addition, department heads should quarterly conduct webinars and limited face-to-face seminars for instructors to enhance their skills and teaching methodologies in the new normal education (Cacayan, Baua, & Alvarado, 2020).

Online instructors and instructional designers should enhance their knowledge of cultural diversity and incorporate multicultural resources in their curricula to support diverse student populations in online learning education (Kumi Yeboah, Dogbey, Yuan, & Smith, 2020). In addition, future researchers have to look into the experiences and interactions among students and instructors as these played an important role in student success in an online learning setting (Cho & Cho, 2016).

Since Misamis University is adapting the online teaching modality as a form of distance learning, the researcher would like to identify the experiences encountered by faculty at the tertiary level as they teach online classes.

Misamis University responded to the need for a shift from face-to-face instruction to online teaching. However, this change in the mode of institutional delivery resulted in varying reactions from instructors at an unprecedented speed, which required much-needed retraining of instructors and preparation of online instructional materials. Hence, this qualitative study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of tertiary instructors in their online teaching. This study explored the lived experiences of instructors in their online teaching.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative approach using the hermeneutic phenomenological design of Van Manen. Van Manen's (2016) method is composed of six steps: (1) investigating the nature of the lived experience; (2) investigating the experience as we live it; (3) reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon; and (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting; (5) maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon; and (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. Van Manen's method serves as a guideline for researchers and is useful for conducting hermeneutic phenomenological studies in practice (Van Manen, 2016). The underlying aim of the qualitative phenomenological design was to gain and explore an in-depth understanding of instructors' lived experiences in online teaching at the tertiary level based on the researcher's point of view or interpretation.

2.2. Research Setting

The study was conducted in Misamis University, Ozamiz City. Misamis University was founded in 1929 with its former name of Misamis Institute. In 1955, it was renamed Misamis Colleges, and in 1977 it became a University.

At present, Misamis University offers 29 programs under 12 colleges, including graduate programs, and has complete Basic Education programs. It is the only University that holds Autonomous Status granted by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in Northwestern Mindanao. In addition, it is certified by Det Norske Veritas-Germanischer Lloyd Business Assurance with an ISO 9001:2015 Management System Certification. CHED also granted the University certification for passing the Institutional Sustainability Assessment or ISA by Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and awarded as Centers of Development (COD) for Teacher Education, Criminology, and Information Technology programs. The Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities [PACUCOA] awarded the University for achieving the most number of accredited programs in Region X.

2.3. Participants of the Study

The study participants were the 25 college instructors in Misamis University who were chosen through purposive sampling. The criteria in selecting the participants included: instructors who are teaching, instructors who are teaching full time, and instructors who gave their full consent to participate in online courses at the college level; 2) teachers who are full time currently teaching in the tertiary level; 3) teachers who have learned and adjusted within the LMS; and 4) teachers who gave their full consent to serve as participants of the study. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher met all the criteria.

2.4. Research Instrument

The researcher utilized the researcher-made interview guide (Appendix E) in eliciting responses from the participants using the semi-structured interview guide. Open-ended questions allow for elaboration and follow-up questions during the interview. The approved interview guide by the dissertation committee included the opening question, core questions, and exit questions.

2.5. Data Collection

In gathering the data, the researcher asked permission from the Graduate School of Misamis University to conduct the study. Moreover, after the approval, the researcher secured permission from the office Vice President of the Academic Affairs (VPAA) to interview the selected teacher participants. After the researcher obtained the permits, she secured the consent of the participants through a letter explaining the purpose of the study and obtain their consent. The individual interviews were conducted in face-to-face mode following the strict observance of interview and health protocol. The researcher recorded the whole interview proceedings to capture the participants' responses in their original form manner and the nuances in responding to the interview questions.

After all the participants were interviewed, she transcribed the interview transcripts. The responses were then coded, categorized, and translated into themes based on the six steps of Van Manen data analysis and with the aid of NVivo software. Finally, the themes were analyzed and interpreted.

To gain credibility, the researcher kept in touch with the participants on a regular and close basis and used methods such as taking notes during and after the interviews and careful observation of the instructors' behaviors and nonverbal messages to explore the meaning of their experiences better. In addition, the researcher presented the initial thematic statements and subthemes and the original text of the interviews to the selected participants at a meeting to validate their responses and perceptions. During the analysis process, the researcher then presented the findings to the research team.

Throughout the study, the researcher used documentation to maintain the dependability and confirmability of the responses. During the analysis process, the initial thematic statements and examples of subthemes and excerpts extracted from the interview texts were presented to faculty members in the Graduate School. They were experts in phenomenological research and collected their opinions. In addition, the university research committee met twice to discuss the progress report. To achieve transferability, the researcher attempted to provide a detailed and complete description of the research process to facilitate the future evaluation of the study, and participants were chosen using maximum variation sampling.

2.6. Ethical Consideration

To adhere to ethical standards, the researcher used the Helsinki Declaration (2001) codes. The researcher informed all participants about the study's objectives and significance. Participants submitted their informed consent to participate in the study and consented to their statements recorded during the interviews. She followed the principle of information confidentiality, and the instructor participants were assured that the researcher would not mention their names at any stage of the study. The issues that led to the identification of interviewees were not mentioned. She kept all documents about the participants in a separate folder in a safe file. Participants had the option to resign at any time. When an instructor became tired or refused to continue, she postponed the interview to the next turn. They were always treated with respect. They were also assured that their comments would have no impact on their condition and that all of their comments would be kept strictly confidential.

2.7. Data Analysis

The researcher used N'Vivo, a statistical software tool designed to identify and code responses and support data analysis. First, she applied a horizontal process to group large amounts of texts into significant statements and meanings for each participant individually. The codes were then grouped to formulate the meaning as initial subthemes, themes, and main themes from across all participants.

In the analysis of data, the researcher used the six steps of van Manen (2016). The steps included (1) turning to the nature of the lived experiences or the identification of the phenomenon of interest; (2) investigating experience as the participants live it or investigating the lived experiences of instructors teaching online classes; (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon or the development of central themes from early and sub-themes to gather salient data; (4) Defining the phenomenon in the writing and rewriting arts or explaining the skills in the art of writing and rewriting—revising the written output to describe the experiences of the instructors' teaching online classes vividly; (5) Maintaining a strong and orientated relation to the phenomenon or incorporating the prior observations made and the suggestions received; and (6) Balancing the research context by considering the parts and the whole or observing a balance in the research context through recognizing the parts and the whole, understanding the phenomenon based on the individual and holistic perspectives.

These six steps provide a framework for the research method as a whole. Consideration is also given to the methods for isolating the prominent themes contained in the data. Finally, the application of these six steps and the isolation of thematic statements in this research were further discussed in terms of application within this study that follows:

2.8. Van Manen's Six Components of Phenomenological Research

Turning to the nature of lived experience. This step involved formulating research questions. Before I formulated the questions, I considered first the objective of the study. Here, I explored the lived experiences of instructors in teaching online. The research questions included three parts: opening, core, and exit questions (Appendix D).

Investigating experience as the participants live it. It is concerned with the methods employed to investigate the lived experience in question, such as in-depth interviews for data collection. In the study, I started the interview with a

general conversation about their perceptions/views in online teaching, “What are your perceptions/views on online teaching?”. Then, core questions were asked related to the instructors’ preparation and challenges in online teaching, including “How do you prepare your lesson before going online teaching?”; “Which part in online teaching have you encountered challenges? What are the challenges that you have encountered in the preparation of instructional materials/resources, articulation of learning outcomes, designing of teaching-learning activities, designing of assessment tasks, student engagement, the use of online Learning Management System (MS 365)?” I then followed it with the exit question, “What recommendation/s can you suggest improving online teaching?”

Reflecting on the key themes that define the phenomenon. The emphasis in this step is on the analysis process itself by reflecting on the themes identified from the interviews and endeavoring to capture the essential meaning or essence of the lived experience in question. In this study, I used a holistic and line-by-line approach to identify the thematic statements made in the interviews.

Defining the phenomenon in writing and rewriting arts. It is another important part of the research process, which in particular is the analytic phase. The writing process aims to make the participants' feelings, thoughts, and attitudes visible. After reading each answer several times and proceeding with its verbatim transcription, the researcher wrote down her general understanding of the interviews in a few paragraphs. Then, I re-read the interview text line by line, separated the phrases and sentences relevant to experiences, and transformed them into the initial thematic statements.

Maintaining strong and focused relations with the phenomenon. The researcher, in this step, must strive to remain focused on the research question at hand. I incorporated the prior observations and suggestions to establish a strong relationship with a certain question, phenomenon, or notion. As the study progressed, the initial common themes gradually emerged, and the focus of all subsequent interviews was comparing these themes and combining similar ones. I switched back and forth between the general perception and the initial thematic statements throughout the interviews.

Balancing the research context by taking into account the parts and the whole. During this step, I constantly weighed the overall design of the study/text against the importance of the parts in the overall textual structure of the study. Throughout the interviewing process, the researcher engaged in hermeneutic or interpretive reflection on the topic. I then examined every single theme that emerged and separated the essential ones using free variation in imagination and compared the themes to other phenomenological texts. Finally, the researcher used the notes taken during the analysis stage and after the interviews to provide examples of helpful participant statements.

3. Findings and Discussion

The study used Van Manen’s perspective (2001) to investigate and analyze the lived experiences of instructors teaching online classes and then create a richly detailed picture of these lived experiences. First, each participant provided a richly detailed description of his own experiences in the educational setting. Next, the researcher utilized these descriptions and analyzed them for new meanings through themes and subthemes to create the “best picture” of these experiences.

The study involved 25 instructors teaching online at the tertiary level of Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines. The participants have an average age of 33 years old. Fourteen instructors were female, and eleven were male. They have been teaching in the University for an average of 10 years. Most of the participants used laptops and cellular phones in online teaching. Very few of them used tablets, iPad, and pen pads in their teaching. The majority of them used web cameras and personal computers in the school in doing online teaching.

The researcher analyzed the participants’ responses from an interpretive perspective following the Van Manen six components phenomenological research. Out of 199 statements from the participants, the researcher generated 37 relevant statements after reading and rereading the transcripts and through the help of NVivo software. The relevant statements were used as the basis informing the 37 initial subthemes. Fifteen subthemes were identified from the initial subthemes in the study. Lastly, five main themes emerged. These five main themes defined the experiences of college instructors in online teaching, namely: (1) preparation of learning materials, (2) realization of learning outcomes, (3) stability of internet connection, (4) availability of technological resources, and (5) difficulty in the conduct of assessment activities. The subthemes and the main themes that emerged from the data are shown (Table 1).

Table 1. Emerging Themes

Initial Subthemes	Subthemes	Main Theme
Proper alignment Thorough review of IM's IM's preparation	Ample Preparation	Preparation of Learning Materials
Acquisition of reference materials Creativity and flexibility of instruction	Resources Management	
Time constraint	Time Management	
Preparation of IM's Proper alignment	Planning of Learning Outcomes	Realization of Learning Outcomes
Limited references Scarcity of online resources Time Constraints	Challenges in Synchronous Sessions	
Choosing Outcomes and Activities for Optimum Student Engagement	Designing Outcomes-Based Activities	
Having online learning possible Smooth flow Applicability of online learning	Appropriateness of Online Learning	Stability of Internet Connection
Disconnected during teaching Uploading of IM's Difficulty in Connecting with Students during the Discussion Unstable Internet Connection	Connectivity Problem	
Aiming for Open Access Connection Speeding up the Megabytes Connection Looking for better online Connection	Longing for Better Connectivity	
Through Gadgets, Online Learning is Possible	Presence of technology	Availability of Technological Resources
Good Choice of LMS	Usability of the Platforms	
Difficulty in teaching Math Symbols Students' Inattention Limited knowledge and skills of online platforms	Continuous Training and Mentoring	
Difficulty Navigating the MS team	Planning and Carrying out of Assessment Tasks	Difficulty in the Conduct of Assessment Activities
Using other Interactive Platforms aside from MS365 Crafting the Questions Variations of Assessment to suit Online Learning		
Conduct of Hands-on Assessment		

Initial Subthemes	Subthemes	Main Theme
Ensuring Maximum Participation of Students in the Online Discussion		
Getting the Students' Attention	Giving of Timely Feedback	
Accessing Students' Output Anytime		
Checking of Students' Output	Ensuring of Students' Outputs	
Validity of Students' Answer		

Theme 1: Preparation of Learning Materials

One of the experiences of college instructors teaching online is on the preparation of learning materials. Learning materials represent the teacher's primary teaching resource, providing the basis for the content of lessons, a balance of skills taught, and the kinds of language practice students take part in. In many situations, instructional materials serve as a supplement for the teacher's instruction. Therefore, the preparation of learning materials is a prerequisite to online teaching. The study's main theme on Preparation of Learning Materials was grouped in three subthemes: Ample Preparation, Resources Management, and Time Management.

Ample Preparation. Instructors need ample preparation of the learning materials in online teaching. They have to ensure that instructional materials like syllabi, course alignment matrix, course learning modules, and Powerpoint presentations are properly planned, prepared, and available for use. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

"I ensured that the course modules and constructive alignment in planning are properly and carefully prepared, which fit the course learning outcomes set in the course outcomes in the PSGs" (P1).

"I always review my modules and learning materials, prepare PowerPoint presentation/s and study my topics for the day" (P16).

"I prepared my lessons before doing my online teaching. In our department, we made syllabi before the class's opening" (P8).

Resources Management. Instructors also felt the need for electronic learning resources (e-resources) due to the nature of the learning modality –online teaching that students can access online. The term "e-resources" refers to a broad category of digital materials and collections for learning. They are typically accessed via computers, radio and television sets, mobile phones, etc. E-resources will supplement the teachers in planning activities and content to be included in the course modules. It was presented by Participants 13 and 3 in the interview.

"There is need to have a good number of ebooks, journals, or reference materials" (P13).

"The most important part of the preparation, aside from having enough knowledge of the subject matter, is to prepare informative and engaging presentations and activities. I usually spend a substantial part of my time making presentations and thinking of online activities when preparing for a discussion. Hence, I need supplemental materials like electronic resources" (P3).

Time Management. The instructors find it difficult to prepare the learning materials given the limited time they have. For them, they have difficulty managing their time between the preparation of instructional materials and the actual online teaching since they have many assigned subjects taught in a semester. The responses of Participants 23 and 11 support it.

“It’s good to prepare the instructional resources before going into online teaching. However, the limited time to prepare the materials and the number of subjects taught for the semester make it difficult, especially in making the modules research content and useful resources. Still, the making of modules while conducting online classes at the time makes it difficult” (P23).

“I had a difficulty in time management. I need to review my lessons and make assignments and quizzes for my students before doing online teaching” (P11).

The first theme related to the preparation of learning materials aligned with the study of Wang & Zhang (2019), which stated that teachers experienced challenges in teaching online, especially in making specific criteria for the scope and content of the courses. They have inadequate training for new normal education; limited time for the preparation of modules, exams, and other related instruction due to the limited time of the concerned authorities and the implementation of community quarantines. Teachers need enough time or ample preparation to prepare the course learning materials for online teaching (Cacayan, Baua, & Alvarado, 2020). Teachers saw from their experiences that students benefited much in their online learning since learning resources are sufficiently provided. However, other teachers encountered negative experiences in uploading PowerPoint presentations and other materials as outlines because it influenced student decisions not to attend class (Heaton-Shrestha, May, & Burke, 2009). Thus, teachers need to manage the e-resources well, making sure they supplement the teaching-learning process.

Teaching in an online learning environment necessitates more preparation than teaching in a traditional classroom. The quality of online learning education may be influenced by how teachers are prepared to teach. Thus ample preparation, enough time, and resources should be extended to instructors (Gurley, 2018). Instructors should learn, develop, and model the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions relevant to online learning environments (Williams, & Casale, 2015).

Alternative teaching modalities such as modules, video presentations, and other offline platforms should be encouraged and utilized as supplementary materials for learning by the concerned instructor to address and minimize their long hours of exposure to gadgets. In addition, department heads should quarterly conduct webinars and limited face-to-face seminars for instructors to enhance their skills and teaching methodologies in the new normal education (Cacayan, Baua, & Alvarado, 2020).

Instructors should be given enough time and resources in the preparation of learning materials. In addition, these learning materials should be carefully planned and aligned to the outcomes of the lesson. Students will acquire skills to analyze, synthesize, and develop their logical reasoning and creative thinking through learning materials.

Theme 2: Realization of Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are indicators or statements that describe the knowledge or skills that students should have at the end of a specific assignment, class, course, or program and help students understand why that knowledge and skills will be useful to them. College instructors design instructional materials like constructive alignment matrices based on the learning outcomes. As stated in the instructional materials, they make sure that the plan and the subsequent implementation are geared towards realizing learning outcomes. This theme is composed of three subthemes: (1) Planning of learning Outcomes; (2) Encountering Challenges in the Articulation of learning Outcomes; and (3) Designing Outcomes-Based Activities.

Planning of Learning Outcomes. At the beginning of the semester, when online teaching was implemented, instructors prepared their instructional materials based on a particular teaching cycle. As revealed by one participant, *“Before going online teaching, I check the learning outcome first for the day or week, then prepare the module and other instructional materials” (P23).* The instructors also considered first the outcomes of the lesson and ensured that

the outcomes are aligned with the course outcomes and Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs). It is mentioned by participant 1. *“I ensured that the course modules and constructive alignment are properly and carefully prepared, which fit the course learning outcomes set in the course outcomes in the PSGs” (P1).*

Encountering Challenges in the Articulation of Outcomes. Instructors also faced challenges in the realization of course outcomes. First, they claimed for the lack of references they need to attain the course outcomes. For the instructors to infuse variety and be flexible in their teaching-learning activities, they presented this as a challenge in realizing the course outcomes. This was emphasized in their answers in the interview: *“I am challenged when the subject I taught lacks the references needed for the course outcome attainment” (P24).* The second problem of the instructors was the scarcity of online resources. The instructors felt the need to access e-books for free. Also, they experienced time constraints in designing teaching-learning activities to realize the outcomes of the course. These are emphasized by participants 16 and 19.

“Limited online resources/references such as eBooks are a great challenge for me. It is easy to prepare PPT or handouts, but students need to have some online resources. But some eBooks are not available for free” P16.

“Online teaching brings up screen time problems especially in designing teaching-learning activities to realize the learning outcomes” P19.

Choosing Outcomes and activities for Optimum Student Engagement. The instructors realized that they need to be practical and not too ambitious to design the teaching-learning activities to attain the course and lesson outcomes. They expressed views that the activities or tasks they put in the instructional materials are doable on the part of the students and at the same time call for optimum student engagement. What is essential was to ensure that the learning outcomes are realized at the end of the lessons. As participant 14 quipped. *“I am challenged in making sure that the tasks are appropriate for the learning outcomes and making sure that students will be able to perform or produce the output” (P14).*

The role of teachers in online learning includes identifying the lesson outcomes, designing strategies that fit the learners and lesson outcomes, and ensuring proper assessment of students' performance (Abdollahi, 2017). Teachers are also entrusted to design activities and strategies aligned to assessing the students' work (Bennett, Agostinho, & Lockyer, 2017). Dabbagh, Marra, & Howland (2018) emphasized in their study that the creation of meaningful online learning depends on the lesson outcomes, learners' learning style, nature and intelligence, and the teachers' performance or ability to design effective teaching strategies by themselves. Teachers shared that their experience in online teaching reshaped many of their existing beliefs, teaching strategies and practices, and pedagogical assumptions in terms of student engagement, assessment design, and course facilitation. They considered the time element a constraint in preparing the synchronous and asynchronous learning delivery to realize the course outcomes (Chatterjee, Juvale, & Jaramillo, 2018).

Identifying learning outcomes is a prerequisite to teaching-learning activities, especially in an online learning modality. Instructors must begin with identifying outcomes that are properly planned based on the Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSG's), well disseminated to students, and implemented. Activities used to realize objectives should be learner-centered that allows the students to explore and become more engaged in online and offline learning modes.

Theme 3: Stability of Internet Connection

The stability of the internet connection posed a great challenge for the instructors. Before the advent of the new normal in education, the internet connectivity of the University was sufficient for the University's needs. However, the global effect of online teaching has affected internet connectivities in almost all areas of operations vis-a-vis the University. The challenge of instructors is not only in the use of the internet in the teaching process but also in the students' learning. Internet connectivity constrains the students in attending online classes, meeting the submission of

requirements while on the part of the instructors, the delay that results from these interferences, and the need for varied means of access to meet the requirements of the course. Three subthemes emerged in the quest for the stability of connection: (1) Appropriateness of Online Learning; (2) Connectivity Problem; (3) Longing for Better Connectivity.

Appropriateness of Online Learning. Despite some challenges in connectivity, instructors gave positive feedback about their experiences in online teaching. Through the help of an internet connection, they were grateful for the continued work of teaching. They also experienced smooth transitions of their lessons online. As a result, students receive an education despite the absence of face-to-face instruction and at the same time develop the skills needed for the 21st century. The following participants expressed this positive outlook:

“It is a way of making education possible despite the pandemic. Despite the distance, teachers can still deliver lessons and continue learning through the help of an internet connection or wifi” (P1).

“I think the flow is already fine. We just need to have a better internet connection” (P7).

“It is applicable nowadays since students are not required to go to school. It looks a bit easier than face-to-face, but it requires ample preparation. Internet connectivity is also a huge problem for some students and teachers since much of the delivery of lessons relies on internet data” (P15).

Effects of Connectivity Problem. On the other hand, instructors experienced a problem with an unstable internet connection. There were times that both the students and teachers get disconnected in the discussion. Some students could not respond to the discussion and activities online. For example, when teachers posted video clips or recorded videos in the MS Team, students still failed to watch because of the connectivity problem. One participant revealed that *“Only a few students are engaged in the discussion probably due to poor internet connection. They sometimes got disconnected, or even myself as a teacher got disconnected too. They only responded when called during the discussion” P23.*

Most uploaded teaching materials like videos require high-end connectivity. These are the laments of some participants:

“Encoding the lessons takes more time. If you post a video, the students cannot watch it because of slow connectivity” (P12).

“It was doing the lesson's discussion since students could not respond immediately because of the signal and, of course, the students' surroundings during the online class” (P4).

“Online teaching is difficult at first, but eventually, I got used to it. The major problem is with the unstable internet connection” (P7).

Longing for Better Connectivity. Instructors experienced distraction during the online teaching since only one gadget was allowed to be connected in the school portal. It hindered them in sharing online learning activities if the other gadget discontinues functioning. They realized from their experience that to have effective online teaching, one must have better connectivity by increasing or speeding up the megabytes per second to do online activities without interruption. The participants expressed these longings to their desire to meet expectations to deliver instruction in the best possible way as required of every instructor.

“I also hope that more gadgets will be allowed to connect in the portal because I observed only one gadget is allowed” P16.

“If online connectivity is better and online activity is religious, I think online teaching is effective” P13.

“Improve the Internet connectivity, that is, to speed up the megabytes per second” P17.

The stability of the internet connection is the biggest predictor of success in online teaching. Studies conducted on teachers' experiences in their online teaching have reported similar findings; for example, one of the problems encountered by teachers in a study was related to the need for bandwidth access to synchronous classes that many do not have. Therefore, faculty used mobile network-enabled internet, which needs proper internet connection (Teräs et al., 2020). With the increasing use of technology in education, online learning has become a common teaching modality (Hogan & McKnight, 2007). In higher education, online learning has been widely embraced, as it can help both teachers and students achieve educational objectives through greater accessibility, versatility, and engagement. Hence, the teachers said that the use of online teaching was appropriate to students' learning.

However, as the internet and educational technologies have developed, educators suggest that online education and related technology are more than just a technological concern (Chia-Wen, 2020). Stable internet connections and functional gadgets like laptops, computers, and mobile phones should be considered in the online teaching-learning process as important (Fernandez, 2020). Online educators' pedagogical perspectives also of online learning should be discussed by online educators (Chia-Wen, 2020) as these will give benefits to online learning practices (Pei & Wu, 2019).

Instructors should allow students to access online resources through internet use, which was seen as a major advantage in online learning (Jeffrey, Milne, Suddaby, & Higgins, 2014). Having a stable internet connection helps make online teaching and learning possible. Despite the pandemic, every institution is now doing its best to deliver quality education. However, administrators have to support the teachers in their online classes since sometimes, as they do their teaching, they were disconnected from the wifi connection. Providing more access to wifi in the MU portal may help them solve the disconnection problem during online classes since teachers can use more than one gadget to the school portal.

Theme 4: Availability of Technological Resources

Technological resources are any electronic equipment used to support or foster learning. The availability of technological resources contributes to the success of online teaching. Data revealed that instructors were happy with the presence of technology in online teaching. However, they also experienced challenges in technological resources. Interviews with the instructors revealed three subthemes: Presence of Technology, Usability of the Platforms, Continuous Training, and Mentoring.

Presence of Technology. Instructors said that online teaching is possible through gadgets and online platforms with proper internet connections. They express their joy as they use MS 365 as an online teaching platform. They commend the administration for the good choice of Learning Management System (LMS).

“At first, I thought online teaching is impossible. However, when I did the online teaching, I realize that it depends on the teachers' discretion. It's up to the teacher on how he can make online teaching possible. Gadgets and the internet's proper connection are important factors that teachers must consider before doing the online class” (P17).

“The MS365 is a good platform. I am glad MU adopted the platform for online learning” (P23).

Usability of the Platforms. Technological resources include software and other online resources and platforms. The University adopts Microsoft 365 as the Learning Management System (LMS). Instructors are challenged on the use of LMS and other apps due to limited knowledge and skills. On the part of the students, they used other online platforms, apps, and social media sites during online sessions. In addition, some lessons need sophistications or other complementary devices to carry across the teaching-learning process. For instance, an instructor in Mathematics expressed the difficulty in showing mathematical symbols and computations. These challenges were reflected in the responses of the following participants:

“Challenges encountered in limited knowledge on the use of different apps and limited hands-on activities” (P22).

“The most common challenge in engaging students is when they get distracted from other online apps or social media platforms while having our online class” (P20).

“For math subjects wherein we use math symbols, learning resources is a challenge” (P13).

Continuous Training and Mentoring. The instructors accepted the fact that online teaching was new to them, especially on a full scale. While the Instructional Guides (IGs) already in place, the new modality in online teaching has to be specifically learned and mastered. The University has anticipated the need for retraining teachers in the art of using distance learning modality. The teaching-learning activities, the assessment activities have to be aligned and reflected in the Microsoft Teams. The features of Microsoft 365 had to be designed to suit the needs of online teaching. The University conducted a two-month training and rewriting of modules to shift the traditional way of teaching and assessing online teaching and assessment.

The instructors expressed their views on the kind of training they need to redesign the IGs and use other online resources and software to ease the delivery of online teaching and learning. Some of their thought was expressed in these responses.

“Proper training on the use of LMS like the Student notebook was a challenge for me. There should be personnel from MS 365 who will do the training for us in all the features of MS 365” (P1).

“Let other instructors use the capability of OpenBoard software during the synchronous session. This software allows teachers to write something on the whiteboard during discussions. This is an online whiteboard wherein the instructors can draw, write, and erase its content during discussions” (P12).

In this study, the instructors commended the use of Microsoft 365, as the LMS in online learning. The presence of technology emerged as a subtheme is by the experience of teachers who were happy and satisfied with their role when they do online teaching in the academic context and the number of online teaching hours. They were relieved in the approach of content acquisition since in online learning, teachers just assist the learners in the LMS to explore and search topics through giving them useful sites (Badia, Garcia, & Meneses, 2019). However, in Nigeria, teachers who used the online platform were reluctant to use the online platform (Ifeanyi & Chukwuone, 2018). Others were frustrated with the essential elements of online learning: flexibility and balance, academic freedom and autonomy, professional relationships, and professional growth (Mansbach & Austin, 2018). They experienced teaching and creating content online to be cumbersome due to a lack of support and ignorance of tools and strategies (Cross, & Polk, 2018).

A study in Florida supported the fourth theme of this study: authentic and applicable course materials that relate to practice and multimedia tools are important factors to consider by the instructor (Kumar, Martin, Budhrani, & Ritzhaupt). Also, the online teacher needs to be an expert in one's field, both pedagogical and technical aspects (Adebisi & Oyeleke, 2018). Instructors also experienced inadequate instructor training for new normal education due to the limited time for the preparation of modules, exams, and other related instruction and the implementation of community quarantines (Cacayan, Baua, & Alvarado, 2020).

The instructors' need for continuous training, as emerged from the subtheme of the study, was supported by some studies. The teacher needs to be an expert in one's field, both pedagogical and technical aspects in online teaching (Adebisi, & Oyeleke, 2018), (Stickney, Bento, Aggarwal, & Adlakha, 2019). This includes a wide range of hard-to-achieve experience and technical know-how of the technology used (Scoppio & Luyt, 2017). In addition, schools should quarterly conduct webinars and limited face-to-face seminars for instructors to enhance their skills and teaching methodologies in the new normal education (Cacayan, Baua, & Alvarado, 2020).

Technology cannot replace the role of teachers in teaching. However, technology is a vital support to instruction, especially online teaching. Instructors should be oriented with the other features of the LMS and other interactive

online platforms. Human Resource personnel may plan and design in-service training and workshops using the Learning Management System and other interactive techniques in the online platform.

Theme 5 : Difficulty in the Conduct of Assessment Activities/Tasks

Assessment tasks are instructional strategies used to collect evidence that a student has mastered specific course or unit outcomes. Based on clearly defined lesson objectives or outcomes, instructors were able to assess whether or not learning has occurred. Instructors at the tertiary level experienced difficulty in the conduct of assessment activities/tasks. The instructors also met great challenges in preparing assessment activities and tasks suited for the online teaching and learning that were designed to meet the course learning outcomes. The instructors revealed important concerns in preparing assessment activities: (1) Planning and Carrying out of Assessment Tasks; (2) Giving of Timely Feedback; and (3) Ensuring of Students' Quality Outputs.

Planning and Carrying Out of Assessment Tasks. The big challenge of instructors is whether there is a constructive alignment of the assessment design to materialize the learning objectives. The instructors revealed that the teaching and learning activities integrate assessment which would account for the learning outcomes. Therefore, the instructors are challenged in crafting multiple assessment designs, online testing, and understanding students' learning diversity. Another difficulty in carrying out assessment tasks is the shift from face-to-face setup to online assessment. For instance, when assessment tasks involve manipulating real objects like chemical reagents in laboratory classes, which need hands-on assessment, the instructors are faced with preparing a script of all they want to say and asking to allow maximum participation from students in the interactive discussion.

In addition, instructors are faced with the need to articulate the digital taxonomies of learning outcomes and the assessment tasks to be met. These are expressed in the following responses:

"I am currently challenged in crafting the assessment questions since my subject is a programming subject" (P11).

"It was very hard to think of activities because I am used to activities that work in face-to-face teaching. I started from scratch in making activities that will work even if the teacher is not technically present" (P3).

"In the field of forensic science, especially in using chemical reagent/s, it is very hard to tell if the students have demonstrated the skills when the teacher is not present. Therefore I will now skip those activities involving chemical reagent or intended as laboratory work" (P16).

"I prepare a script or outline on what to say and ask, which serves as a guide for me to teach online since online teaching is not the same as face-to-face teaching, where teachers can allow maximum interactive discussions" (P18).

Giving of Timely Feedback. Instructors experienced difficulty in giving timely feedback on the students' performance, especially if there is a large population in the class and if poor connectivity occurs. The instructors themselves admitted that they lacked access to the students' work, especially at home, since most of them do not have proper internet connection. In the University, the students are provided with mobile data for their online classes. Instructors expressed the hope of a data plan for them to for easily access the students' performance outside of class hours as one response said that *"The school must also provide a data plan for the teachers for them to access and assess students' work anywhere"* (P8).

To be able to provide timely feedback, the instructors mentioned the reduction of class size suggesting about 20 students, to be able to provide feedback at one given time. This was articulated in the response by P1 *"If it is an online class, several students must be considered. (I think 20 or less is enough) as well as the connectivity. We cannot give timely feedback because checking the activity also needs good connectivity"* (P1).

College instructors also encountered problems connecting with students, especially in getting their attention and reaction from the discussion. Most of them have alibis. When asked to answer questions or explain something, varied excuses come in, which instructors cannot turn down. Participants 14 and 17 indicated these in their answers:

“Students are not attentive to discussion since some are asked to do house chores. I have difficulty getting their attention (like some are just logging in for the sake of the attendance. When you share PowerPoint and then pause to ask some questions, everybody seems deaf; they do not listen. There were a lot of excuses on their actions especially when they came in late, or absent)” (P14).

“Increase students' engagement by asking them to pose a question in the chatbox or respond to a question. Also, to provide frequent communication and active learning in our virtual classroom” (P17).

Ensuring of Students' Quality Outputs. Part of the teachers' assessment tasks is to ensure that students produce quality outputs based on the learning outcomes. Instructors encountered difficulties in getting quality outputs. In the checking of students' work and outputs, the instructors found it hard to do manual checking due to the nature of the course. Other instructors also saw the lack of validity of the students' answers; and transparency in the assessment in online teaching and learning. They cannot assure that learners are answering the assessment task honestly.

“For the assessment tasks, it is quite okay, but in the checking of the student's output, it is very hard, especially on my steno subject because some assessment needs a manual checking (Gregg Shorthand outlines)” (P8).

“I think there is a lack of transparency in the assessment system” (P10).

“Maximize interactivity, reduce power interruptions, reduce screen time and provide meaningful activities. Meaningful activities that will reduce cheating in an online classroom” (P23).

Instructors are tasked to develop learning and assessment activities that align with learning goals and objectives and coincide with learners' levels and characteristics (Mulyadi, Wijayatingsih, Budiastuti, Ifadah, & Aimah, 2020). However, in this study, the instructors experience difficulty in conducting the assessment. From planning and crafting assessment tasks, giving timely feedback, and ensuring students' quality outputs, instructors felt the struggle to do online teaching.

Teachers are responsible for ensuring proper assessment of students' performance (Abdollahi, 2017), in assessing the students' work (Bennett, Agostinho, & Lockyer, 2017), and in designing appropriate assessment tasks that fit the lesson outcomes and learners' learning style, nature and intelligence (Dabbagh, Marra, & Howland, 2018). Furthermore, with flexible learning, students gain access and flexibility about at least one of the following dimensions: time, place, pace, learning style, content, assessment, or learning path (Benade, 2019). Hence, an online teacher must create a coherent learning experience for students they may not meet face-to-face. Therefore, they must develop new support strategies that maintain motivation and encourage interaction (Darby, 2020).

Assessment in an online class is inevitably an important aspect of the teaching-learning process. It is an integral part of the lesson, which should be stipulated in the constructive alignment matrix. It is incumbent to conduct multiple and flexible assessments to address students' learning diversities, digital literacy of both instructors and students and give equity for all students across various challenges and difficulties in online teaching and learning.

Because of the difficulties that the instructors faced in conducting assessment tasks, the faculty development program of the University must include training to conduct workshops across disciplines and digital modes. Included in the training are the new strategies in conducting online classes to enhance their skills in teaching online.

The poem on the next page entitled “**Because of You**” provides the overall view of instructors' experiences in online teaching.

Because of You

by: Genelyn R. Baluyos

You came into our lives from the wings of time
Disrupting our unruffled and normal course of life,
The whole world was not spared, unprepared and baffled,
Much more in the halls of the academe.

The instructors tell their lived experiences,
From the confines of the classrooms, teaching –learning face – to- face
To distance learning we call the new normal education,
A whole new world opened in the field of teaching.

Intensive training-workshops redesigning Instructors' Guide
Constructive alignment of LOs, TLAs, and ATs,
Creating Modules for synchronous and asynchronous sessions,
Certainly a hard work, but with excitement and commitment.

From MU-OLE to Microsoft 365 Learning Management System
The need for devices and gadgets compatible with the LMS
Teachers and students poor internet connectivity and lack of time,
Online teaching is indeed a challenge to reckon with.

Students' presence and attendance in virtual classes,
Not turning in activities and tasks on scheduled time,
Students not responding to oral recitations and discussions
Hamper the delivery of online teaching-learning processes.

The dearth of online learning resources and reference materials,
The skills in multiple online assessment and online testing
The strategies to keep students interacting and responding
Are problems met along the way.

Instructors cognizant of online teaching as work in progress,
Devising, researching, creating ways to accomplish the tasks
Learning new things, appreciating the merits of virtual teaching
Stressful but enjoyable, trying but stimulating.

Administrative support in answer to these experiences,
Ongoing training, mentoring and supervising, enhancement of technology
To direct the efforts and skills of instructors to online teaching
And achieve the right fit between Los and Assessment Design.

This unprecedented transformation in mode of teaching
Is brought to fore by global pandemic known as COVID 19
It hastens technological advancement and virtual learning, the challenge of 21st century
We have, after all, answered the call of the times.

4. Conclusions and Recommendation

The instructors have varied experiences in online teaching. They feel the need to prepare the learning materials first, especially the PowerPoint presentations needed to be presented to the students before online classes. Their experience in preparing instructional materials and the proper constructive alignment of outcomes, and the challenges they encountered in synchronous sessions help them realize that all are worth realizing the learning outcomes for each lesson. The claim of the instructors that online learning is made possible through an internet connection and functional gadgets proves that stable internet connection and available technological resources play a vital role in online learning. There is a need for an updated gadget and a stable platform/software for online classes. These may help them especially in synchronous classes. Instructors still need support from the institution as they continue to deliver quality online education to learners, as evident in their experience in difficulty in the conduct of assessment activities in online teaching.

From the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that the administrators continue to upgrade the facilities and software used in online learning in the university; increase bandwidth allocation for online classes to ensure stable connectivity of the instructors while having synchronous classes; send instructors to training and workshops on the new trends in assessing students' performance using online platform/software. In addition, academic supervisors may continue to do mentoring, coaching, and supervision to the instructors teaching online classes. Instructors may also need to attend webinars and training on the new strategies in conducting online classes to keep themselves abreast with the new normal and enhance their skills in teaching online. Future researchers may also conduct researches investigating other factors that may affect the effectiveness of online teaching.

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