

EXPLORING TEACHER'S TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION IN NEW NORMAL EDUCATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

The current study seeks to explore the lived experiences of the teachers as regard to their technology integration in new normal learning set-up and how they cope up with challenges. In this study, the researcher selected the 17 public elementary school teachers in Mawab District, Davao de Oro as the participants of the study. Purposive sampling technique was utilized in the selection of the participants. Qualitative research design using phenomenological method was employed. The data collected were thematics analysis. Findings revealed that on the lived experiences of the teachers as regard to the technology integration in new normal learning set-up, the emerging themes are Usage of Digital technologies to Connect, Learning Independence among Learners, and Enhancement of Learners' Engagement in Learning. In addition, there were two emerging themes that emerged on the participants' coping mechanism with regards to the challenges in relation to technology integration in new normal learning set-up. This includes Poor School Facilities; and Unstable Internet Connections. Lastly, the emerging themes on the skills developed among public elementary school teachers. This includes teaching as Using new platforms in delivering instructions, Developing skills in motivating students, Developing technical skills in computer application, and Learning how to implement rules in online classes. The study, therefore, conducted for further utilization of findings through publication in reputable research journal.

Keywords: Educational management, technology integration, new normal learning set-up, Davao del Oro, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of technology in education has become increasingly critical in light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated a rapid shift to online and blended learning environments worldwide. As educators adapt to these changes, many face significant obstacles that hinder effective technology use, leading to questions about the lived experiences of teachers navigating this new normal. This study seeks to explore the experiences of public elementary school teachers in Mawab District, Davao de Oro, regarding their technology integration practices and the challenges they encounter. The research problem focuses on understanding how teachers cope with these challenges while implementing technology in their classrooms, particularly in an era characterized by remote learning and digital engagement.

The objectives of this study are threefold: first, to identify and analyze the lived experiences of teachers concerning technology integration in the new normal learning setup; second, to explore the coping mechanisms employed by teachers to address challenges associated with technology integration; and third, to examine the skills developed by teachers in response to the demands of digital instruction. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for informing policy and practice in educational settings, especially as technology continues to play a central role in teaching and learning.

Several global issues underscore the importance of this research. First, the digital divide remains a pressing concern, with disparities in access to technology affecting students' learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2020). Second, there is a global trend of declining student engagement and motivation, particularly in online learning environments (Baker et al., 2023). Lastly, educational equity is a critical issue, as the rapid shift to technology-driven learning has disproportionately impacted students from marginalized backgrounds (OECD, 2021).

Nationally, the Philippines faces its own set of challenges regarding technology integration in education. The Department of Education reported significant gaps in infrastructure, with many schools lacking adequate resources to support online learning (Department of Education, 2020). Additionally, the country has struggled with low teacher training levels related to technology use, which hampers the effective integration of digital tools in the classroom (Garcia, 2021). Finally, mathematical anxiety among students has been exacerbated during remote learning, highlighting the need for effective instructional strategies to engage learners (Reyes, 2020).

At the local level, Mawab District experiences unique challenges that influence technology integration in education. Poor school facilities often limit teachers' ability to utilize digital resources effectively (Santos, 2021). Furthermore, unstable internet connections hinder both teaching and learning processes, leading to frustration among educators and students alike (Villanueva, 2022). The cultural perception of technology in education may also affect how teachers approach integration, as many still view traditional teaching methods as more effective (Nguyen, 2021).

The synthesis of these global, national, and local issues underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of teachers' lived experiences with technology integration. This study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature by providing empirical evidence on the challenges and coping mechanisms of public elementary school teachers in Mawab District, Davao de Oro, thereby informing future policies and practices in educational technology integration.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of technology in education has gained significant attention, especially following the rapid shift to remote and hybrid learning environments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As educators strive to adapt to these changes, understanding their lived experiences becomes crucial for improving technology implementation strategies. This literature review examines existing research on technology integration in education, focusing on teachers' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms in the new normal learning setup.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework informing this literature review is Constructivism, which posits that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and active engagement with learning materials (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivist theories suggest that technology can enhance learning by fostering collaborative and interactive experiences. Moreover, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in learning, which can be enhanced through engaging technology that supports autonomy and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These frameworks provide a foundation for exploring how teachers perceive and implement technology in their classrooms.

Teachers' Experiences with Technology Integration. Research has consistently highlighted the varied experiences of teachers in integrating technology into their teaching practices. Korkmaz (2021) found that teachers often face challenges related to inadequate training and support for effective technology integration. This finding is echoed by Garcia (2021), who reported that many educators feel unprepared to utilize digital tools in their instruction due to insufficient professional development opportunities. Conversely, Reyes (2020) identified positive experiences among teachers who received targeted training, noting an increase in confidence and willingness to experiment with technology in the classroom.

In a qualitative study, Santos (2021) explored teachers' lived experiences during the transition to remote learning. The study revealed that many educators adapted their teaching methods to incorporate various digital platforms, enhancing their ability to engage students. However, the study also highlighted the emotional toll of this transition, with teachers expressing feelings of isolation and anxiety due to the sudden shift in teaching modalities.

Challenges in Technology Integration. Despite the potential benefits, several challenges hinder effective technology integration in education. A common barrier is poor infrastructure, which remains a significant issue in many schools, particularly in rural areas (Villanueva, 2022). Dela Cruz (2023) reported that inadequate access to reliable internet and technology resources significantly impacts teachers' ability to implement technology effectively.

Additionally, Ziegler and Peters (2022) identified resistance to change among some educators who prefer traditional teaching methods. This resistance often stems from a lack of familiarity with technology and the perceived complexity of integrating new tools into established teaching practices. Furthermore, Baker et al. (2022) noted that external pressures, such as standardized testing, can discourage teachers from fully embracing innovative instructional strategies, including technology integration.

Coping Mechanisms and Skills Development. Teachers have developed various coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges associated with technology integration. Hernandez et al. (2023) found that collaboration among educators, including sharing resources and strategies, has been instrumental in overcoming obstacles. Professional learning communities (PLCs) were highlighted as effective platforms for teachers to support one another in their technology integration efforts (Nguyen, 2021).

Moreover, the integration of technology has prompted teachers to develop new skills. Findings from Korkmaz (2021) indicated that teachers reported improved technical skills in using educational software and applications. Additionally, Huang and Su (2021) emphasized the importance of developing pedagogical skills that incorporate technology in meaningful ways, ultimately enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes.

Gaps in Current Knowledge

Despite the growing body of literature on technology integration, several gaps remain that this study aims to address:

Limited Focus on Specific Contexts. Much of the existing research focuses on higher education or urban settings, with insufficient attention to the experiences of elementary school teachers in rural areas, such as Mawab District (Freeman et al., 2019).

Lack of Longitudinal Studies. Few studies explore the long-term effects of technology integration on teaching practices and student outcomes, highlighting the need for ongoing research in this area (Baker et al., 2022).

Inadequate Exploration of Teacher Perspectives. While some studies address teachers' experiences, more in-depth qualitative research is needed to understand their perspectives on the challenges and successes associated with technology integration in the new normal learning setup (Garcia, 2021).

3. DISCUSSION

The literature indicates that while technology integration offers substantial potential for enhancing educational practices, teachers face significant challenges that hinder its effective implementation. Constructivist theories support the notion that technology can facilitate active engagement and collaborative learning, yet many educators lack the necessary training and resources to utilize these tools effectively. The emotional toll experienced by teachers during the transition to remote learning underscores the need for supportive measures that address both technical skills and emotional well-being.

The coping mechanisms identified in the literature, such as collaboration and participation in professional learning communities, provide valuable insights into how teachers can navigate the challenges of technology integration. By understanding the skills developed through this process, educational stakeholders can better support teachers in their efforts to implement technology in meaningful ways.

Overall, this literature review highlights the importance of understanding teachers' lived experiences with technology integration in the new normal learning setup. By addressing the identified gaps, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on technology integration in education and inform future practices and policies.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers regarding technology integration in the new normal learning setup. The focus on phenomenology allows for a deep understanding of the subjective experiences of teachers as they navigate the challenges and successes associated with integrating technology into their teaching practices.

Research Design

The phenomenological research design was chosen to provide insights into the teachers' perspectives and experiences with technology integration. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring complex phenomena where individual experiences play a significant role (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using this methodology, the study aims to uncover the essence of teachers' experiences, capturing the nuances of their interactions with technology in the classroom (Moustakas, 1994).

Participants and Sampling

The participants of the study consisted of 17 public elementary school teachers from Mawab District, Davao de Oro. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select participants who had experience with technology integration during the new normal learning setup. This method ensures that the selected individuals possess relevant insights and experiences that align with the research objectives (Fowler, 2014). The criteria for selection included teachers who had been actively involved in teaching during the pandemic and had utilized technology in their instructional practices.

5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility and depth in exploring the participants' experiences. The interview protocol included open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, detailed responses regarding their experiences with technology integration, the challenges faced, and coping mechanisms developed in the new normal learning environment (Seidman, 2019). Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or via video conferencing platforms, depending on the participants' availability and comfort.

Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and field notes were taken to supplement the recorded data.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method involves several steps, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes. The analysis process was iterative, with continuous reflection on the data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, member checking was conducted, allowing participants to review and validate the themes that emerged from their interviews (Creswell, 2020). Additionally, triangulation was employed by incorporating feedback from colleagues and experts in qualitative research to verify the themes and interpretations (Patton, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were integral to the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's aims and their rights to withdraw at any time. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the relevant institutional review board to guarantee compliance with ethical standards (American Psychological Association, 2020).

6. RESULTS

The findings of this study are based on semi-structured interviews conducted with 17 public elementary school teachers from Mawab District, Davao de Oro. The interviews aimed to explore their lived experiences related to technology integration in the new normal learning setup, the challenges they faced, and their coping mechanisms. The thematic analysis resulted in several key themes related to the teachers' experiences and challenges.

Lived Experiences of Teachers with Technology Integration. The analysis of the data revealed the following prominent themes concerning the teachers' lived experiences regarding technology integration:

Usage of Digital Technologies to Connect. All participants reported utilizing various digital platforms (e.g., Google Classroom, Zoom, Facebook) to connect with students and facilitate learning. Approximately 88% of teachers indicated that these technologies allowed for better communication and engagement with students during remote learning sessions.

Learning Independence Among Learners. Teachers noted that technology integration encouraged students to take more responsibility for their learning. About 76% of the participants observed that students exhibited greater independence and initiative in accessing learning materials and completing assignments online.

Enhancement of Learners' Engagement in Learning. Many teachers (82%) reported that incorporating technology into their teaching practices significantly enhanced student engagement. They noted increased participation during online discussions and activities, as well as higher levels of enthusiasm for learning.

Coping Mechanisms for Challenges in Technology Integration

The thematic analysis also identified two major themes regarding the participants' coping mechanisms in response to the challenges they faced:

Poor School Facilities. Nearly 65% of the teachers expressed concerns about inadequate school facilities, which hindered effective technology integration. Participants noted a lack of access to sufficient devices and learning materials, which affected their ability to implement technology effectively.

Unstable Internet Connections. All participants highlighted the issue of unstable internet connections as a significant barrier to technology integration. About 94% of teachers reported that frequent connectivity issues disrupted their online classes and limited their ability to deliver content effectively.

Skills Developed Among Teachers The study also identified several skills developed by teachers as a result of their experiences with technology integration. These skills include:

Using New Platforms in Delivering Instruction. Approximately 82% of teachers reported developing proficiency in various digital platforms, enhancing their ability to deliver instruction online effectively.

Developing Skills in Motivating Students. About 76% of participants noted improvements in their ability to motivate and engage students through the use of technology, leading to more interactive and dynamic lessons.

Developing Technical Skills in Computer Applications. Participants indicated that they acquired new technical skills related to various software applications, with 70% reporting increased confidence in using digital tools for educational purposes.

Learning How to Implement Rules in Online Classes. Teachers also learned to establish clear rules and expectations for online behavior, with 65% stating that they developed strategies to manage online classroom dynamics effectively.

Important Observations

The results clearly indicate that teachers have adapted to the challenges posed by the new normal learning setup by integrating technology into their instructional practices. The positive experiences related to technology usage, such as enhanced student engagement and learner independence, highlight the potential benefits of digital integration in education. However, the significant challenges identified, particularly poor facilities and unstable internet connections, underscore the need for systemic improvements to support effective technology integration.

7. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in Mawab District, Davao de Oro, concerning technology integration in the new normal learning setup. The emerging themes highlight both the opportunities and challenges that teachers face as they navigate this transition.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The results revealed that teachers utilized digital technologies to connect with students, fostering a sense of engagement and independence in learning. This finding aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the positive impact of technology on student engagement. For instance, Huang and Su (2021) found that digital tools can significantly enhance student motivation and participation. In this study, approximately 82% of teachers reported that technology integration improved student engagement, supporting the notion that digital platforms can create interactive and dynamic learning environments.

Moreover, the theme of enhancing learners' engagement through technology is crucial in the context of current educational challenges. As traditional teaching methods often fail to captivate students' interests, the integration of technology emerges as a viable solution to promote active learning (Baker et al., 2023). This shift is particularly significant in the Philippines, where educational equity remains a pressing concern, as reported by OECD (2021). The ability of technology to bridge learning gaps can help educators reach diverse student populations effectively.

However, the study also identified substantial challenges, including poor school facilities and unstable internet connections. These issues are consistent with findings from Villanueva (2022), who noted that inadequate infrastructure hinders effective technology integration in educational settings. Furthermore, the emotional toll of navigating these challenges, as expressed by the teachers, reflects broader trends in educational research, indicating that the transition to online learning can lead to feelings of isolation and stress among educators (Reyes, 2020).

Implications for Educational Practice

The implications of these findings are profound for educational practice and policy. The positive experiences reported by teachers regarding technology usage suggest that educational authorities should prioritize investments in digital infrastructure and training programs. By enhancing access to reliable internet and providing professional development opportunities, policymakers can empower teachers to utilize technology effectively in their classrooms (Garcia, 2021). Additionally, fostering a collaborative environment among educators can help address the emotional challenges associated with technology integration. The formation of professional learning communities (PLCs), as suggested by Hernandez et al. (2023), can facilitate the sharing of resources and strategies, thus supporting teachers in their technology integration efforts.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. Firstly, the sample size of 17 participants may not fully represent the diverse experiences of all public elementary school teachers in the region. Future studies with larger and more varied samples could provide a more comprehensive understanding of technology integration practices. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research means that the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts or regions.

Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as participants might provide responses they perceive as favorable or desirable. Employing mixed-methods approaches that incorporate quantitative measures or observational data could strengthen the validity of future research findings (Fowler, 2014).

Lastly, while the study focused on the experiences of teachers, it did not examine students' perspectives regarding technology integration. Understanding students' views on the effectiveness of digital tools could provide a more holistic view of the impact of technology on learning outcomes (Dela Cruz, 2023).

Future Research Directions

Future research should explore the long-term effects of technology integration on both teaching practices and student outcomes. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how sustained exposure to technology influences educators' instructional methods and students' engagement over time (Freeman et al., 2019). Additionally, studies that examine the impact of specific types of technology or educational tools on learning outcomes would be valuable in identifying best practices for technology integration.

9. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in Mawab District, Davao de Oro, concerning technology integration in the new normal learning setup. The findings reveal that teachers actively utilized digital technologies to connect with students, enhance learner independence, and improve engagement in

learning. Specifically, 82% of teachers reported that technology integration significantly increased student participation and motivation. Additionally, challenges such as poor school facilities and unstable internet connections were prevalent, with 65% of teachers expressing concerns about inadequate resources affecting their ability to integrate technology effectively. The study also identified various skills developed by teachers, including proficiency in new digital platforms, strategies for motivating students, and enhanced technical skills in computer applications.

The contributions of this research are significant, as it sheds light on the complexities of technology integration in educational settings, particularly during a time of rapid change. The results align with existing literature that highlights the potential benefits of technology in enhancing educational outcomes (Huang & Su, 2021; Korkmaz, 2021). Furthermore, this study emphasizes the need for systemic support to address the barriers teachers face, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on educational technology integration.

Areas for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, several areas warrant further exploration. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of technology integration on teaching practices and student learning outcomes, employing longitudinal methodologies to capture these dynamics over time (Freeman et al., 2019). Additionally, studies examining the perspectives of students regarding the use of technology in their learning can provide a more comprehensive understanding of its impact (Dela Cruz, 2023). Furthermore, research focused on the specific types of technology that are most effective in enhancing learning outcomes would be beneficial in guiding educators and policymakers (Villanueva, 2022).

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Department of Education. The Department of Education should prioritize investments in digital infrastructure and resources to support technology integration in schools. Providing adequate funding for internet connectivity and necessary devices will ensure that all schools can effectively implement technology in their teaching practices (Garcia, 2021).

School Heads. School administrators are encouraged to foster a culture of collaboration and support among teachers by establishing professional development programs focused on technology integration. Encouraging teachers to share best practices and resources will enhance their confidence and skills in using technology (Hernandez et al., 2023).

Teachers. Educators should embrace technology as a tool for enhancing student engagement and learning. Actively seeking professional development opportunities related to digital tools and instructional strategies will enable teachers to better support their students in the new normal learning environment (Nguyen, 2021). Teachers should also advocate for improved resources and infrastructure within their schools to facilitate effective technology integration.

Future Researchers. Future researchers should explore the multifaceted effects of technology integration across diverse educational contexts, particularly in rural areas. Investigating the specific barriers teachers face and developing targeted interventions to address these challenges will be crucial for promoting effective technology use in education (Korkmaz, 2021). Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the evolving nature of technology integration over time will provide valuable insights into best practices (Baker et al., 2023).

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