

*The Lived Online Education Experiences and the E-Competencies of  
the Teacher Education Institutions*

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**Abstract**

The sudden shift into online education has greatly affected the Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) since they were forced to move to the virtual classroom without preparations. Thus, using concurrent nested mixed-method research, this study investigated the lived experiences of 59 teachers of the 4 TEIs in their conduct of online learning. An open-ended questionnaire was used to gather data on the respondents' lived experiences. Also empirically studied was the level of knowledge and extent of competence of 64 teachers on professional responsibility, digital pedagogy, community building, learner engagement, digital citizenship, diverse instruction, and assessment and measurement. Correlation between level of knowledge and extent of competence on the e-competencies was also determined using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The status of the TEIs, the support they provided to their teachers, and their solutions to the problems were also investigated using an open-ended questionnaire. The teachers' lived experiences were of diverse themes, mostly positive, showing that they were eventually able to cope with. They also had good level of knowledge and moderately high extent of competence. However, their level of knowledge and the extent of their competence were not significantly correlated. In addition, the four TEIs adjusted to the needs of the time, showed support to their faculty, and created contextualized solutions to the challenges of online learning.

Keywords: Lived Experiences, Online Education, E-Competencies, Support, Leadership

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## Introduction

As technology advances, there is a need for the field of learning to make some adjustments. Gone are the days when students learned only inside the "brick-and-mortar" school. With the advancement of technology, there have been changes affecting the field of teaching-learning. At the onset of the pandemic, every 'brick-and-mortar' institution was forced to adopt the online mode of learning. As nation after nation mandated everyone to stay at home, every field of learning was forced to deliver the lessons to the students through technology. CHED COVID Advisory No. 5 and No. 6 declared the suspension of classes in all levels starting March 14, 2020 (CHED, 2020). Thus, regardless of qualifications, teachers and school administrators were mandated to facilitate online learning.

Teachers are among the vulnerable workforces in the implementation of online classes since teaching online is far different from the traditional teaching. According to Tavakol (2012), teaching online transfers knowledge from a teacher to a student without face-to-face interaction through various ICT media. Many of the teachers in the traditional classroom find online teaching difficult. In fact, Softic (2018) emphasized that the increasing number of tools and technologies make teachers fail because they cannot cope with all the updates, cannot acquire knowledge about these technologies, and do not know how to use them in teaching. Some teachers consider technology an obstacle to their profession (Lu, 2018). The new environment of knowledge transfer made the teachers face various experiences, both positive and negative. For instance, Roblyer et al. (2009) stated that 75% of the traditional teachers who taught online claimed that they felt that their experiences helped them improve their face-to-face teaching. Teachers also consider the new modality as a chance to show creativity and exert more effort for themselves and their students (Rosanes, 2020). Moreover, in the Study by Klein (2022), he mentioned Mr. Distefano, a kindergarten teacher. The latter initially struggled with technology but exerted effort to navigate it and found out later that it was wonderful. In addition, De Vries (2021) found online teaching to be fun, especially during breakout rooms. Isla (2020) also considered online teaching advantageous as the teacher does not need to travel from home to school. In addition, Frazer et al. (2017) revealed that teachers perceived facilitating learning, connecting with students, being amicable, sharing experiences, establishing reciprocated comfort, and responding to the needs of the learners as effective online practices. However, the study by Moralista and Oducado (2020) and Chin et al. (2022) discovered more disadvantages than advantages of online learning. In his Study, Clark (2016) discovered that teachers had a hard time finding out whether there was authentic learning on the students' part or none. Moreover, Kamal and Illiyani (2021) noted a teacher-respondent who had difficulty making students answer questions. Also, Selvaraj et al. (2021) discovered that 95% of the teacher-respondents did not find satisfaction in online classes. The teachers were dissatisfied may be because their skills were inadequate for online teaching (Chin, 2020). Comas-Quinn (2011), on the other hand, found that as regards teachers' experience in the use of online tools, the evaluation was dependent on the functions of the tools giving a higher rate to tools used for peer collaboration and information sharing. Many of them also experienced technological and technical problems. For instance, in the Study of Selvaraj et al. (2021), 44% of the teachers had a problem with connectivity.

Hence, the transmission of information using ICT demands competencies from the educators (Awouters & Jans, 2009). Kola and Sunday (2015) emphasized the importance of the qualification of teachers in any system of education. Aside from the seven domains referring to the specific dimensions of teacher practice presented in DepEd Order No. 42, series 2017, online teachers need to acquire additional skills. Tu et al. (2003) in De Cagne and Walters

(2009) said that current pedagogical skills plus a good grasp of the characteristics of virtual education and its learners, the structure of courses online, and various online teaching techniques are a must in online teaching. Sun and Chen (2016) also underlined the importance of giving attention to the connection between "cognitive and teaching presences" to establish the most commendable methods and techniques for virtual teaching.

Furthermore, Gulbahar and Kalelioglu (2015) believed that virtual education's success lies in the competencies of online teachers. Valencia-Molina et al. (2016) emphasized the needed competencies for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Williams (2003) in Gulbahar and Kalelioglu (2015) identified communication and instruction, instruction and learning, management and administration, and use of technology as the essential e-competencies teachers should acquire. Guasch et al. (2010) presented design/planning, social, instructive, technological, and management as the necessary e-competencies. Furthermore, Arinto (2013) identified content development, design of learning activities, teaching strategies, and assessment as the proposed skills to be developed for online teaching. Adnan (2018) also said that online learning of greater quality requires focusing on the demand to pay attention to "changing roles, competencies and additional skillsets of prospective online instructors." Also, Zweig and Stafford (2016) discovered a need for the virtual educator to undergo supplemental education to become more effective to the students, especially in the areas where traditional and online classrooms differ. Unfortunately, teachers are not well-trained and not well-prepared to teach in higher education (Palloff & Pratt, 2013; Albrahim, 2020). The Study of Zweig and Stafford (2016) also documented inadequacy in formulating online lessons given in "preservice education," even though virtual teachers handled more than two million students. Also, teachers in the Study of Ma et al. (2021) experienced burnout because of the low academic performance of students. Yuksel (2019) also said that online teachers should possess instructional, technical, and technological expertise. However, in their study, Wang et al. (2019) found that the online teaching competencies of the eighty-nine Chinese beginning online instructors required improvement, especially in preparation and assessment. Carril et al. (2013) also found that the 166 faculty participants were also low in the aspect of assessment. However, they had the highest proficiency in content drafting. In short, e-competencies means not only the professional and instructional skills of the teachers but also their technical and technological expertise.

In this study, the aforementioned e-competencies were compiled based on the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching 2019 (QM Quality Matters and Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance, 2020) as follows: **Professional responsibilities, Digital pedagogy, Community building, Learner engagement, Digital citizenship, Diverse instruction, Assessment and measurement, and Instructional design.**

Like teachers, school administrators also play a very important role in implementing online learning. They must be knowledgeable and skillful to succeed in their online programs (Rupp, 2016). Beaudoin (2003) emphasized that "effective distance education leadership" can draw the line between victory and defeat during challenging times. Furthermore, Tipple (2010) found that leading the part-time online faculty is essential for distance education universities to succeed. In addition, Barefield et al. (2013) emphasized the important role of leadership in delivering sufficient and suitable support for online learning success. There is also a change in the role of the school administrators from being the manager to being an initiator to the part-time online teachers. There is a need for the school administrators to trust their online faculty in delivering the service to the students. Also, a "high degree of trust, empathy, empowerment, and mentorship" is important to work together effectively online

(Kayworth & Leidner, 2001; Rupp, 2016). Tipple (2010) concluded that changing leadership style from being just the manager to leading by modeling, inspirationally motivating, intellectually stimulating, supporting, and mentoring the followers is crucial in achieving the institutional vision. The demands posed by online learning also need school administrators who can assist the faculty achieve collective and individual work (Hershey & Johnson, 2008). However, the sudden declaration of holding classes online (CHED, 2020) caught the school administrators off-guard. They were not ready to implement online learning (Aytac, 2020; Asio et al., 2020). Thus, the new mode of leading their faculty and staff tested them as they embarked on a new mode of leading their faculty and staff. The administrators were challenged to find ways to continue to deliver the goods at their best quality despite the circumstances. Lorenzetti (2021) argued that distance learning leaders must always manage technology and student access challenges. Education leaders were forced to immediately create contextual answers (Reimers et al., 2020). However, addressing the challenges of e-learning cannot be done overnight because even those who have been doing e-learning before the pandemic have not perfected their turf yet. In fact, Leem and Lim (2007) found that most large universities and colleges in Korea did not provide a significant "support system" to their faculty and learners. This statement contradicts Barefield and Meyer's (2013) findings in their study on the importance of faculty and student support systems and meticulous preparation. However, Bautista Jr. et al. (2021) discovered that the government adequately supported Filipino teachers.

Because of the urgency of the need to conduct classes online, schools deployed their teachers from the traditional classroom into the online realm of teaching and learning, where everyone did the tasks in a trial-and-error method (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). Because school administrators were not ready, they did not train the teachers, and the decision to go online was sudden. They did not also evaluate the teachers' competencies in the conduct of online classes. Strauss (2020) admitted that teachers in the sudden online classes were also deployed in a new environment. In addition, Brooks and Grajek (2020) claimed that teachers were not ready to deliver their lessons through a virtual classroom. Because of these dilemmas, this study was conducted.

Nonetheless, unlike the other studies where schools had established online classes, this study investigated the lived experiences and e-competencies of the teachers who responded to the sudden shift from traditional to online.

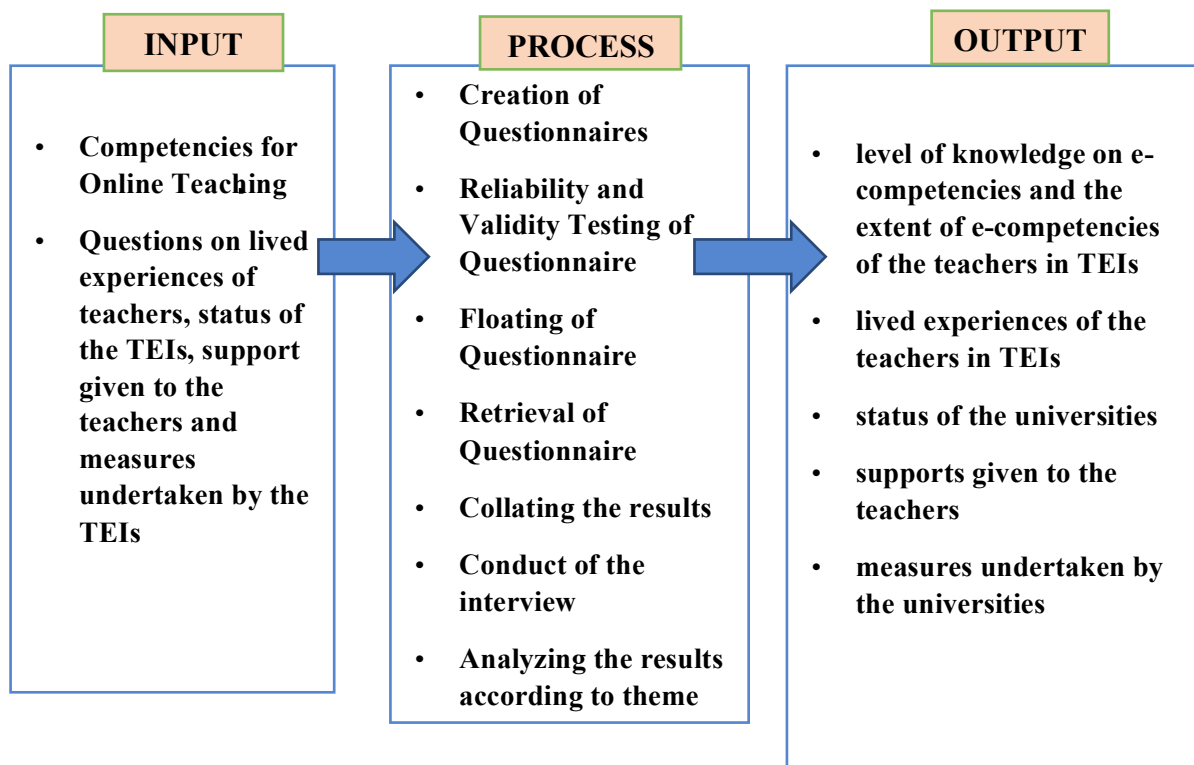
Furthermore, this study investigated the reactions of the TEIs in Baguio City and La Trinidad, Benguet, and the measures they had taken to address the challenges posed by the sudden implementation of online learning, given the urgency of the matter, unlike the mentioned studies where online learning had already been in place when they were conducted.

This study will help school administration design a program on e-competencies to be incorporated into the existing curriculum of Teacher Education and draft a separate e-competencies training program for their current faculty. Furthermore, the result will also serve as an eye-opener for the teachers on the need to be updated in their competencies. In addition, the results of this research will encourage the researcher and other writers to write materials on developing e-competencies both for seasoned teachers and new ones.

## Research Paradigm

The lived experiences of the teachers in the four Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), the level of their knowledge in e-competencies, the extent of their competence in the e-competencies, the correlation between the level of knowledge and the extent of competence in the e-competencies, the status of the TEIs, the support provided by the TEIs to the teachers and the solutions of the TEIs to the challenges to online education are the outputs of this study. These outputs were established by creating the questionnaires based on the Competencies of Online Teaching. Included in the questionnaire were open-ended questions to gather data on the lived experiences of the teachers and the administrators of the TEIs. Then the questionnaires were tested for reliability before it was distributed to the respondents. Interviews (in-person and virtual) were also conducted. Data were then analyzed and organized. These are encapsulated in the paradigm that follows.

**Figure 1: The Paradigm of the Study**



## Statement of the Problem and Hypotheses

This study aimed to investigate the e-competencies and the lived experiences of the teachers of the Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the universities in Baguio City and La Trinidad. This study specifically sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the teachers' lived experiences in their conduct of online classes?
2. What is the level of the teachers' knowledge in the following areas of e-competencies during the implementation of online classes?
  - a. professional responsibilities
  - b. digital pedagogy
  - c. community building
  - d. learner engagement
  - e. digital citizenship

- f. diverse instruction
  - g. assessment and measurement
  - h. instructional design
3. To what extent are the teachers competent in the following e-competencies during the implementation of online classes?
- a. professional responsibilities
  - b. digital pedagogy
  - c. community building
  - d. learner engagement
  - e. digital citizenship
  - f. diverse instruction
  - g. assessment and measurement
  - h. instructional design
- 3.1 Is there a significant correlation between the teachers' level of knowledge on e-competencies and the extent of their e-competencies?
- Hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between the teachers' level of knowledge of e-competencies and the extent of their competence in the e-competencies.
- 4. What is the status of the TEI in the conduct of online classes?
  - 5. What support is provided by the TEIs to their teachers?
  - 6. How has the TEI been addressing the challenges in conducting online classes?

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

The teachers' lived experiences with online education were positively and negatively diverse. However, their positive experiences with online education were more evident, showing that they could eventually adjust to the demands of online education given sufficient time and training.

The level of knowledge of the teachers on e-competencies was good. Thus, they were aware of what was required to deliver their content online effectively.

The extent of competence of the teachers on the e-competencies was moderately high, showing that the teachers were adequately competent to effectively accomplish their tasks in delivering content to their students online.

However, though the teachers had good knowledge of e-competence and moderately high-level extent of competence, knowledge and competence had no significant correlation. Thus, the teachers' understanding of the e-competencies did not have anything to do with how competent they were in performing their tasks as online educators.

The TEIs were able to meet the initial demands of online education since they could adjust, implement new learning modalities, and subscribe to appropriate LMS.

Since the TEIs provided their teachers with professional development, a flexible work set-up, minimal financial assistance, and emotional and psychological support, it can be concluded that they cared and encouraged their faculty despite their inadequacies in providing financial aid for electric and internet fees.

The TEIs successfully hurdled the challenges they faced to meet the demands of online education as seen in their exercise of flexibility, effort to reach out virtually, insurance of the availability of content materials and guideline manuals, and employment of virtual internships as immediate solutions.

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