Online Teaching Readiness: Exploring Readiness of Kindergarten Private School Teachers and The Challenges of Teaching in The New Normal

Janaye K. Villanueva[1], Angelica Joy G. San Buenaventura[2] and Anne Marie R. Ramos, PhD[3]
De La Salle University - Manila

Janaye K. Villanueva: janaye_villanueva@dlsu.edu.ph
Angelica Joy G. San Buenaventura: angelica_sanbuenaventura@dlsu.edu.ph
Anne Marie R. Ramos, PhD: anne.ramos@dlsu.edu.ph

Abstract: The purpose of the study was to explore the online teaching readiness of twenty-two (N=22) Kindergarten teachers in selected private schools within Metro Manila. It investigated the factors that contribute to participants' online teaching readiness, such as teacher ability, adequacy (online training, time management and time commitment) , school partnership and assistance, and attitude. The challenges that participants faced towards online teaching were also looked into. The study employed a mixed-method research design through a Likert questionnaire and semi-structured one-on-one online interviews. Major findings of the study revealed that being technology-competent plays a huge role in the readiness of the participants in online teaching. The schools' use of learning management systems to collect assessments and documentations, as well as post learning tasks and activities served helpful in online teaching. Also, communication with parents through a learning management system or social media applications fostered parent-teacher partnership. It was recognized as a vital factor in online teaching and learning as well. The challenge that was commonly experienced by the participants was the unstable internet connection. Despite the challenges of online teaching, the participants generally have a positive attitude towards online teaching. It is recommended that schools help their teachers more in translating their curriculum to fit the online mode and provide teachers with more support that would help ease their online teaching experience and make it more meaningful for both teachers and students. It is evident that the selected Kindergarten teachers in Metro Manila are competent and ready to teach online in the new normal of education.

Keywords: online teaching; online teaching readiness; challenges; Kindergarten teachers

INTRODUCTION

The education system during the COVID19 pandemic has shifted to an online setting. The situation brought by the pandemic has resulted in having a new normal of education, which involved teachers teaching and students learning through a screen. As technology has now become an important part of education, it can be utilized in order to enhance practice beyond the traditional classroom. The powerful potential of this technology, however, can only be used by teachers if they are knowledgeable and purposeful in its utilization (Misieng, Ramanair & Rethinasamy, 2018). Phan and Dang (2017) and Ventayen (2018) stated various factors that contribute to online teaching readiness, along with some challenges that may arise in this type of setting. With that, the researchers of this present study have aimed to gather information that can determine what factors contribute to the readiness of Kindergarten private school teachers when online teaching, together with the challenges they face in this setup. In addition, the data collected during this study can provide further information for school administrators to consider when providing support to their teachers.

METHOD

The research designed for this study was a mixed research method, as the researchers wanted to seek

further reasons or examples to support the quantitative data they have collected. The researchers adapted a survey from Ventayen (2018)'s study "Teachers' Readiness in Online Teaching Environment: A Case of Department of Education Teachers". The quantitative instrument is a Likert scale that consists of four sections: Ability, Adequacy, Attitude, and Assistance. The fourth has been added by the researchers of the present study, as it has been brought to their attention that past researches (Ventayen, 2018; Kyei-Blankson & Keengwe, 2011 as stated in Kebritchi, Lipschuetz, & Santiague, 2017) have also mentioned it as a factor. In addition, two open-ended questions were also asked towards the end of the survey, in order to find out the challenges faced by the Kindergarten private school teachers. This was then further discussed by the participants, through an online one-on-one interview. While 22 Kindergarten teachers have answered the survey questionnaire, 13 of them were interviewed by the researchers, in order to provide more information on their answers from the quantitative data collected.

To analyze the quantitative data, frequency of responses for each statement was obtained. In identifying the level of readiness of the teachers towards online teaching, the average weighted mean for each factor was computed. For the qualitative data obtained from the interview, content analysis was used. Transcribed responses were coded and clustered into themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What are the factors that contribute to online teaching readiness of Kindergarten private school teachers?

The weighted mean of each category was derived after all the values were tabulated. Following a Likert scale, interpretation of values show 1 being strongly disagree, the lowest indicator of readiness, 2 being disagree, both showing that the teachers are not ready to teach online, 3 being neutral, 4 being agree and 5, the highest indicator of readiness showing the teachers are ready to teach online.

Table 1. Factors and their Weighted Mean

Factors		Weighted Mean
Ability	*Technical Skills* - I have a computer available to me at home. - I access the Internet frequently and can search the Internet for what I need. - I am competent in using e-mail. - I am competent in using word processing software. - I am able to download files from the Internet and can attach files to an email. - I am competent in using presentation software such as PowerPoint. - I am familiar with and can create a blog. - I am familiar with and can create wikis or Web sites. - I am familiar with and can use social networking technologies, such as Facebook and Twitter. - I am familiar with my university's learning management system. - I have used technology to support my face-to-face teaching.	4.41
Adequacy	*Experience with Online Teaching and Learning* - I have experienced at least one online course as a student. - I have received training in online instruction. - I have used online quizzes in teaching my classes. - I have used online discussions in teaching my classes. - I have used virtual classroom tools like GoToMeeting, Adobe Connect, WebEx, Skype, Google Classroom, or Zoom in teaching my classes. - I have used chat in teaching my classes. - I have used a published web site in teaching my classes. - I have used my school's learning management system to supplement my classroom teaching.	3.78
Adequacy	*Time Management and Time Commitment* - I am able to log in to an online course at least once a day. - I am able to post my online class	4.14

Category	Item	Mean
	at least four to five times per week. - I am able to manage my time well. - I am flexible in dealing with students on such issues as due dates, absences, and makeup assignments. - I am fairly organized and tend to plan ahead in my teaching. - I am responsive to my students, responding to them within 48 hours and assignments within one week.	
Attitude	*Attitudes Towards Online Learning* - I believe that online learning is as rigorous as classroom instruction. - I believe that high quality learning experiences can occur without interacting with students face-to-face. - I support the use of discussion as a means of teaching. - I support learner-to-learner interaction and collaborative activity as a central means of teaching. - I encourage students to bring life experiences into the classroom and create activities that draw on those experiences. - I feel comfortable communicating online and feel that I'm able to convey what I'd like to relay. - I am a critical thinker and can develop assignments that encourage critical thinking in my students.	4.05
Assistance	*Partnership and Support* - I believe it is important to partner with parents when it comes to online teaching. - I believe it is important to communicate actively with the parents of my students. - I practice building rapport with the parents of my students. - I have stable wifi connection to implement online teaching at home.	4.65

Ability (Technical Know-How and Technological Skills)

Phan and Dang (2017) acknowledged that for teachers to be good at online teaching, they need to be well-versed in technological skills, as well as knowledgeable of basic computer operations and technical issues relating to internet usage such as knowing how to search the web and operate learning management systems. In this current study, it is revealed that the majority of the teachers believed that they are ready and competent in the use of technology. As the teachers scored a weighted mean of 4.41, it is shown that they are confident when it comes to using technology. Majority expressed that they are well-versed when it comes to downloading data, using email and different social networking sites in their teaching.

Adequacy (Experience with Online Training and Time Management and Time Commitment)

Experience with Online Teaching
Most of the teachers received training in online instruction and experienced at least learning in an online course. From the interview, it is important to note that some teachers expressed the importance of applying what they learned from their online training in actual experience. Some of them shared during the interviews that more hands-on workshops on how to use the applications are needed. At the same time, it is also important that they learn how these are applied in light of current online context and serve useful in being effective teachers online.

In the study of Phan and Dang (2017) ICT training provided to teachers was not effective since they were only taught how to operate the tools, and not how to integrate it in their teaching. Additional training may be helpful. On top of that, however, they also expressed how important it is for teachers to receive not only technological training but pedagogical training as well.

Time Management and Time Commitment
It is important to note though that preparation for online teaching is something new to them. As such, time management was one of the challenges that teachers faced in online teaching. They would spend a lot of time and effort preparing lesson plans suitable for online teaching, creating videos, brainstorming for new ways of teaching and learning that are engaging, appropriate for students, and can be applied in an app like Zoom.

"There are some days that we need to work beyond work hours because there's a lot to do." - Teacher D

"What takes most of my time… looking for activities that will really work. Because there are activities that look nice but it's not suitable for Kindergarten." - Teacher H

As noted by Phan and Dang (2017), time constraint is a factor that affects online teaching readiness. But despite the challenges most of the teachers were able to post their online classes, as well as attain flexibility when dealing with students on various issues (eg. due dates, absences, and makeup assignments), and respond to their students promptly. In addition to this, teachers have also stated that the professional development training they had were helpful for online teaching. According to Zweig & Stafford (2016), opportunities to build on the professional development of teachers should also be used to determine practices that may be effective for online teaching, so that teachers will be ready to implement what they think would work best and what would be the most beneficial practices for the students in their online classrooms. It is important to note, however, that though teachers found these training helpful, they expressed that having more workshop-type training which helps them navigate through the different applications and apply what they are being taught is more beneficial for them rather than lecture-type training.

<u>Attitude (Motivation and Engagement)</u>

Findings of the study show that most of the teachers expressed confidence toward online teaching and learning. It is important to note though that some teachers were concerned about curriculum adjustments that they need to do.

"How long will the class, how long should the class be? You have to consider their age and then yung screen time, you also have to consider that." Curriculum needs to be lessened. And then the number of kids you're going to consider, as a teacher that since it's online, can we still do twenty kids in one sitting? Things like that were thoughts in my mind."* - Teacher A

"We had to immediately think about dumbing down the expectations. We're not going to know that the kids are gonna learn 100%, and the majority of the learning will come 50-50% from the teachers and then the parents. So it's really working well with the parents." - Teacher M

In addition, the teachers also expressed that online teaching was not only challenging for them, but also for the families of their students. According to Khurana (2016, in Dong, Cao, & Li, 2020), one of the major problems of online learning include the lack of interaction and participation among students. This was also tackled in the present study, as some teachers mentioned that it was a struggle for them to keep the attention of children as everything is done through the screen.
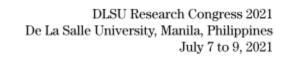
"At first I was thinking na [that] I think it would be really challenging to teach online kasi minsan [because sometimes] even face-to-face and teaching, it's hard to get the children's attention." - Teacher D

<u>Assistance (Partnership and Support)</u>

Kyei-Blankson & Keengwe (2011, in Kebritchi, Lipschuetz, & Santiague, 2017) stated that providing support and a learning community for instructors is beneficial in improving the online teaching experience. As revealed in the current study, the majority of the Kindergarten teachers strongly agree that it is important to build partnership with parents, more so that education is delivered in full online mode. It is important to have constant communication with parents. Majority of the teachers do actually build rapport with the parents. Notably, some of them expressed the need for more organized personal development and mental health initiatives from their schools as a lot are starting to experience Zoom fatigue, which is contributing to their stress and feeling of burn out. As one teacher said, *"I'm tired. I find it hard to sit still and stay focused, what more the kids? It's also hard to need to be on your highest energy the whole time. At first I was excited and took this as a challenge, but now, it's becoming really tiring."* - Teacher L

Research Question 2: What are the challenges of online teaching?

Internet disruption was the common response noted by the teachers. Because of this challenge, teachers have also expressed the importance of having partner teachers with them in the classroom during online teaching as they can fill in for each other should the need arise and collaborate with each other as well. Having other teachers with them was seen to also make online teaching more bearable and meaningful. McKee & Day (1992, p. 184 as stated in

Buzzetto-Hollywood, 2007, p. 185) also says that "having the opportunity to plan, teach and evaluate the class with another experienced professional really heightens the pleasure of teaching."

Other challenges that were revealed in the survey were as follows:
- quality of gadgets or devices used in teaching online,
- limited guidance,
- limited social interaction,
- difficulty of forming healthy relationships,
- getting children's attention,
- limitations in crafting learning activities that are engaging and retain students' attention on-screen, as well as activities that promote experiential learning,
- the time spent to search for updated applications and learn how to use them,
- and the perceived uncertainty whether students performed or completed the asynchronous tasks on their own and not the parents or adults

Some teachers expressed that they still prefer the face-to-face setting because online teaching for them is very limiting and that there is only so much one can do. However, the teachers also expressed that they need to adapt to the times and work with what they have.

"I really think it's a necessity kasi [because] *all the teachers, we need to adapt to these times because yung* [the] *face-to-face teaching is not an option, so it's really important that we have to adapt to all these changes na nangyayari* [that is happening] *when it comes to education, so we really have to study these new methods of teaching." - Teacher D*

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Kindergarten teachers who participated in the study are ready to teach online. Throughout the collection and analysis of data, it has been found that knowledge and skills needed for technology, and training and capability of managing time, are factors present when it comes to the online teaching readiness of the teachers. In addition, the researchers have also noticed that the participants emphasized on the factors attitude and assistance. Teachers have shown their perseverance and motivation amidst challenges. The partnership of teachers and parents have also presented to be a factor in the success of online teaching. Despite disruptions due to unstable internet connection and other challenges that come with adapting to the online setting, the researchers have realized that the willingness and determination of teachers to power through online teaching is definitely what makes them thrive and survive the new normal. This new normal of education brought by the COVID19 pandemic has given teachers the opportunity to get out of their comfort zone, and constantly learn new things, and improve themselves as teachers and as professionals brought about by their love for their students. With that said, the researchers recommend that schools continue to provide support to teachers as they adjust, in order to provide both the students and their teachers a more efficient, effective and fruitful online teaching and learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

(N. Dela Rosa, personal communication, July 6, 2020).

Boone, Jr., H.N., & Boone, D.A. (2012). Analyzing likert data. *Journal of Extension, 50*(2). https://www.joe.org/joe/2012april/tt2.php

Buzzetto-Hollywood, Nicole. (2007). Principles of Effective Online Teaching.

Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* USA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Dictionary.com. (2021). New normal. *Dictionary.com.https://www.dictionary.com/browse/new-normal*

Dong, C., Cao, S., & Li, H. (2020). Young children's online learning during COVID-19 pandemic: Chinese parents' beliefs and attitudes. *Children and Youth Services Review.* doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105440

Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2017). A hands-on guide to doing content analysis. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine, 7*(3), 93-99. https://doi.org/10.1016 /j.afjem.2017.08.001

Gillett-Swan, Jenna. (2017). The challenges of online learning: Supporting and engaging the isolated learner. *Journal of Learning Design.* 10. 20. 10.5204/jld.v9i3.293.

Kebritchi, M., Lipschuetz, A., & Santiague, L. (2017). *Issues and challenges for teaching successful online courses in higher education. Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 46(1), 4–29.* doi:10.1177/0047239516661713

McCauley, C.D. & Douglas, C.A. (1998). Developmental Relationships. In McCauley, C.D., Moxley, R.S., & Veslor, E.V. (Eds.), *The center for creative leadership: Handbook of leadership development* (Chapter 5). USA: Jossey-Publishers.

Misieng, J. & Ramanair, J., & Rethinasamy, S. (2018). Measuring teachers' readiness to use technology: Pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK) pilot study. *Journal of IT in Asia, 8,* 7-13. https://doi.org/10.33 736/jita.852.2018

Phan, T. & Dang, L. (2017). Teacher readiness for online teaching: A critical review. *International Journal on Open and Distance e-Learning, 3*(1).

Redmond, P. (2011). From face-to-face teaching to online teaching: Pedagogical transitions. In G. Williams, P. Statham, N. Brown & B. Cleland (Eds.), Changing Demands, Changing Directions. Proceedings ascilite Hobart 2011. (pp.1050-1060).

Sepulveda-Escobar, P., & Morrison, A. (2020). Online teaching placement during the COVID-19 pandemic in Chile: Challenges and opportunities. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(4), 587-607. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.182 0981

Stevens, M., & Borup, J. (2015). *Parental Engagement in Online Learning Environments: A Review of the Literature. Exploring Pedagogies for Diverse Learners Online, 99–119.* doi:10.1108/s1479-368720150000027005

Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology; How to choose a sampling technique for research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management, 5*(2), 18-27. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3205035

Ventayen, R.J.M. (2018). Teachers' readiness in online teaching environment: A case of Department of Education teachers. *Journal of Education, Management and Social Sciences, 2*(1), 94-106. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3331115

Wallace, R. (n.d.). The challenges of effective online instruction and student learning. Retrieved from https://www.famu.edu /coeaccreditation/ncate/Standard%205/T he%20Challenges%20of%20Effective%20 Online%20Teaching%20and%20Student%2 0Learning.pdf

Zweig, J.S. & Stafford, E.T. (2016). *Training for online teachers to support student success: Themes from a survey administered to teachers in four online learning programs. Journal of Online Learning Research, 2*(4), 399-418. Retrieved from https://files.eric. ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1148594.pdf