



# **‘A Whole New World’: Lived Experiences of Beginning English Language Teachers from E-Practicum to In-person Classes**

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**Abstract**— This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach in describing the lived experiences of beginning English language teachers in the private schools, LUCs, and SUCs in the province of Pampanga, Philippines as they abruptly transitioned from e-practicum to in-person classes. There were seven (7) participants selected from this study through the utilization of the purposive sampling technique. Through the utilization of deductive thematic analysis, six (6) major categories with corresponding themes emerged: e-practicum challenges; e-practicum opportunities; first year of teaching challenges; first year of teaching opportunities; e-practicum to professional teaching adaptive mechanisms; and learnings and realizations. In the final analysis, the participants viewed their lived experiences as challenging yet advantageous opportunities for flexibility and versatility. Overall, it was suggested that education supervisors and administrators should assist and support the beginning teachers from, during, and after their transitional phase.

**Keywords**— beginning teachers, e-practicum, English language, transition.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The unimaginable speed of urgency of in-person instructions transitioning to online modality imposed pressing issues—specifically to education institutions. Originating from Wuhan, China, during the last quarter of 2019, Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has been bringing detrimental changes to human lives until now (Subekti, 2020; Al Abiky, 2021; Ersin et al., 2020).

As a quick response to these existing adversities, several education institutions worldwide abruptly shifted to online distance learning (ODL) since they were forced to halt their physical operations (Ugalingan et al., 2021; Park & Yi, 2022; Carillo & Flores, 2020).

Despite the serious toll COVID-19 has brought that made traditional learning digitized, ODL, otherwise, has existed actually among other schools even before the pandemic (Subekti, 2020). To demonstrate, it was revealed that ODL pertains to receiving instructions remotely through the utilization of Internet-based learning platforms (e.g., Learning Management System) (Polianovskiy, et al., 2021; Nariyati et al., 2020) where students do not physically attend classes in a campus (Subekti, 2020; Rasmitadila et al. 2020; Batmang et al., 2021).

Consequently, it cannot be neglected that ODL has brought serious, adverse effects against teachers, learners, and other stakeholders (Carillo & Flores, 2020; Rospigliosi, 2020). First, a number of education institutions were not ready yet to switch rapidly toward the aforementioned modality due to COVID-19’s unexpected impacts where there were no investments made for digital instructions and learning (Zhang et al., 2020; Cahapay & Rotas, 2020), no well-planned



teacher trainings (Carillo & Flores, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020), and no sufficient budget for learners' instructional needs (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020).

Meanwhile, Teacher Education in the Philippines is one of the programs in higher-level education where aspiring college students train and develop holistically. As stated in a Joint Memorandum Order No. 39 of 2005 released by the Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED), internship or practicum is an essential course where students in their final year, also known as pre-service teachers, practically demonstrate conceptual principles in education they learned during their previous years in the above-mentioned program (Department of Education, 2005).

Moreover, traditional practicum (in-person) ceased to operate among higher education institutions due to the threats brought by COVID-19 (Munoz-Najar et al., 2021). As argued by Ugalingan et al. (2021), parallel to other countries' implementation, the Philippine educational system had to plan an outline and blueprint while making adjustments in the delivery and mode of instruction, including Teacher Education's practicum.

To define, e-practicum is a new-fashioned, coined term and concept in the field of pre-service teacher education where the culture of typical in-person demonstration of teaching was relocated online while the interface between cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers does not need to be conducted in any particular geographical area (Ersin et al., 2020; Osman, 2020; Kadir & Aziz, 2021).

Akin to the previous literature above, it is unarguably understood that an e-practicum may pose significant challenges and opportunities to curriculum developers, administrative officials, mentors, and, not to mention, pre-service English language teachers as this modality hurriedly took place in most education institutions in the Philippines (Carillo & Flores, 2020). To enumerate a few, these particular institutions needed to advance and restructure their existing infrastructure to complement the online delivery of education (Ugalingan et al., 2021); recalibrate programs and courses aligned to ODL platforms (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Huertas-Abril et al., 2021; Rospigliosi, 2020; Van der Spoel et al., 2020).

Consequently, it was found that a number of pre-service teachers are found to be digital immigrants who struggle to navigate computers and the Internet (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020; Ersin et al., 2020).

In like manner, pre-service teachers claimed that insufficiency in professional and hands-on mentoring affected their progress while in an e-practicum whereas they were given administrative and clerical tasks instead of exposing them to the actual teaching field (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020; Sethusha, 2020).

In spite of the presence of these dilemmas burdening pre-service teachers, it was investigated that an e-practicum bears essential benefits in developing and equipping them with the requisite teaching skills they shall possess (Ersin et al., 2020).

Although the aforesaid modalities may have patched the holes in the educational system in the Philippines brought by the pandemic, the DepEd in 2022 initiated by Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones, still pursued other modalities such as Limited In-person classes (DepEd, 2022).

Notably, the graduation of the pre-service English language teachers marks another milestone in their journey as professional teachers—specifically, becoming a beginning teacher in the field. As defined by Kim and Roth (2011), beginning teachers are similarly acknowledged as beginning teachers or neophytes with a practical teaching experience of less than five years.

As an illustration, there are three theories proposed by Vonk (1995) and another one injected by Schleicher (2020), as cited in Dvir and Schatz-Oppenheimer (2020). Firstly, the personal-emotional includes the student-becoming-teacher transition period where the beginning teacher has to recalibrate his professional identity and self-efficacy (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Vdir, 2014); as likewise explained by Antilla et al. (2017), this chapter encompasses the presence of overwhelming positive and negative emotions. This has also included the following: pedagogical-didactic, ecological-systemic-organizational, and technological knowledge.

While there are existing literature and findings that focus their lenses toward the experience of pre-service English language teachers during their practicum (before pandemic) (Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Carillo, 2020; Ersin et al., 2020; Ugalingan et al., 2021; Kosar, 2021; Aguilar-Cruz & Medina, 2021; Brillantes, 2022; Park & Yi, 2022), it can also be observed that there is a blank spot among present studies that must qualitatively address issues and concerns as these participants abruptly transitioned from being trained and developed through an e-practicum. Hence, the researcher sets a direction for this study by magnifying the participants' lived experience as a beginning, full-fledged English Language teacher.

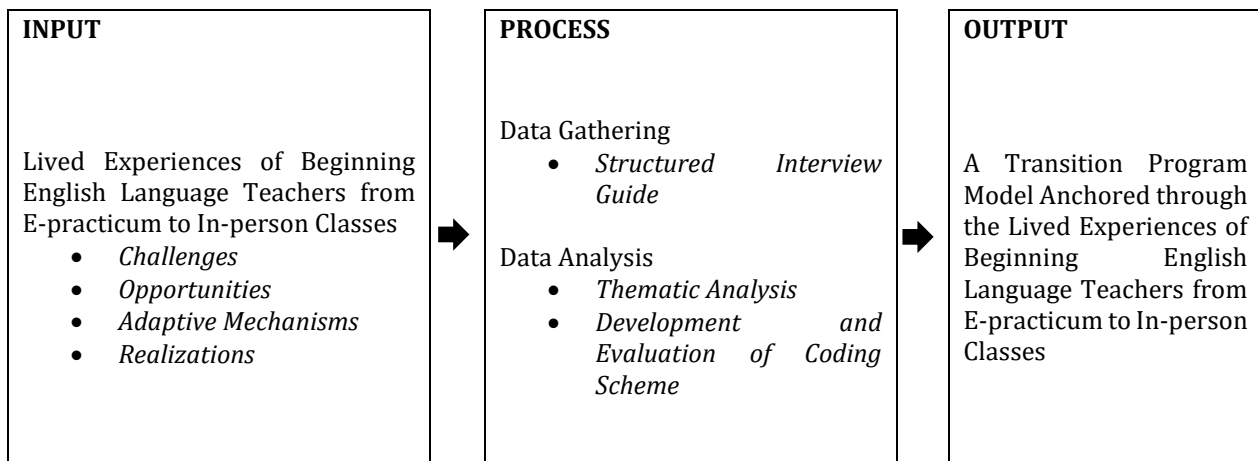
## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In accordance with this study's purpose, this qualitative research formulated a comprehensive framework by recognizing the beginning English language teachers' lived experiences during their e-practicum and likewise their conduct of actual and in-person instructions after graduation. Specifically, this study provided in-depth answers to the following questions:

1. What were the challenges the participants encountered during their e-practicum as a pre-service English language teacher?
2. What were the opportunities the participants gained during their e-practicum as a pre-service English language teacher?
3. What were the challenges the participants encountered as beginning English language teachers conducting in-person classes?
4. What were the opportunities the participants saw as beginning English language teachers conducting in-person classes now?
5. How did the participants adapt and cope with the challenges as they teach in-person classes from being trained or immersed in e-practicum?
6. What were the participants' learnings from being trained or immersed in e-practicum and then conducting in-person classes now?

## PROCESS FRAMEWORK

This process framework guided the researcher's study in formulating the critical procedures in this study.



**Figure 1. A Process Framework toward a Transition Program Model anchored through the Lived Experiences of Beginning English Language Teachers from E-practicum to In-person Classes.**

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study stressed the lived experience of the beginning English language teachers during their e-practicum and in-person instructions as professionals after their graduation.

Commission on Higher Education. Commission on Higher Education may utilize this study's transition program model as to how the pre-service teachers will adapt to the challenges and overcome a number of potential struggles imposed.

Department of Education. The DepEd also opts to provide continuous training to its newly hired teachers. For this reason, beginning teachers may be provided and equipped with adequate skills.

Educational Administrators. Through the findings of this study, educational administrators may realize the significance of school systems that may or may not help the beginning teachers' (in any area of specialization) development.

Curriculum Developers. Results from this study help curriculum developers engineer and recalibrate the pedagogical system if there are any adversities that need to be addressed, reviewed, or magnified.

Cooperating Teachers. It is indispensable to keep in mind that this study's results encompass the influence of cooperating teachers on their pre-service teachers (mentees).

Pre-service and Beginning Teachers. This study's findings will significantly benefit the education and professional development of pre-service and beginning English language teachers.

Future Researchers. As this study projects a blank spot aspect, future researchers may refer to its findings, conclusions, and recommendations as a basis for their academic endeavors.



## SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

The scope of this study underscored the lived experience of the beginning English language teachers who have undergone e-practicum. With careful attention to the aforementioned scope, it detailed their experiences during their e-practicum; their experiences during their conduct of in-person classes; their adaptive mechanisms while teaching in-person classes; and their realizations acquired as they switched from e-practicum to in-person classes as a beginning English language teacher.

## METHOD

### *Type of Research*

This study utilized a phenomenological approach as it aims to explore the challenges, opportunities, motivations, adaptive mechanisms, support systems, and realizations of the pre-service English language teachers.

As elaborated by Groenewald (2004), adopting the phenomenological approach in qualitative research seeks to describe as accurately as possible a particular phenomenon without being restricted by any pre-given framework, yet still remaining true to the facts. With one voice, Qutoshi 2018 noted:

It implies that phenomenology is an approach to educate our own vision, to define our position, to broaden how we see the world around us, and to study the lived experience at a deeper level. It, therefore, holds both characteristics of philosophy as well as a method of inquiry. (p. 126)

### *Participants and Sampling Technique*

In determining the participants of this study, the researcher utilized a purposive sampling technique. Patton (2006) discussed that the purposive sampling technique is broadly used in qualitative studies for the selection of information-rich cases in effectively using limited resources. In line with this, the purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to identify and select participants who have pertinent knowledge and experience with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Meanwhile, seven (7) participants in this study were selected based on the following qualifications: (a) must have completed a degree either in Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd-English) major in English or Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies (BAELS) from a recognized higher education institution during the academic year 2021 - 2022; (b) must have undergone an e-practicum during internship; and (c) must be conducting in-person classes as a beginning English language teacher. Originally, the researcher was inclined to focus the study only on those participants whose program is BSEd-English. However, due to a lack of participants in the aforementioned program, the researcher carefully considered BAELS graduates whose courses are also aligned with teacher education. Likewise, the participants have not yet taken their Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) since all of them had just recently graduated from college during the data collection procedure.

Furthermore, this study revolved around the locale of Pampanga specifically in its private universities, local universities and colleges, and state universities and colleges.



### ***Research Instrument***

The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide as the primary instrument of this study. Semi-structured interview guide refers to a qualitative data collection strategy where participants are asked a set of predetermined but open-ended questions (Given, 2008). As a matter of fact, Cohen and Crabtree (2006) illustrated:

Semi-structured interviews are often preceded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing in order to allow the researchers to develop a keen understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions. The inclusion of open-ended questions and training of interviewers to follow relevant topics that may stray from the interview guide does, however, still provide the opportunity for identifying new ways of seeing and understanding the topic at hand. (paras. 4-5)

### ***Data Gathering Procedures and Ethical Considerations***

Upon the permission of the participants, the data gathering procedure proceeded to attain the objectives of this study. Step by step, the following procedures are as follows:

- **Informed Consent.** The participants of this study were handed in with informed consent asking for their participation. However, if participants did not volunteer or agree to engage, the researcher will not force them to.
- **Interview Process.** By means of a semi-structured interview guide, the sets of data were collected and saturated.
- **Data Transcription.** With the supposed collected data from the participants, the researcher listened to the audio or video recordings and transcribed them verbatim to ensure the accuracy and relevance of every participant's statements.

### ***Data Analysis***

Since this study utilized a phenomenological approach, the researcher employed deductive thematic analysis in interpreting the collected data to support this study's objectives. Nowell et al. (2017) reported that thematic analysis could be used in a wide array of epistemologies and research questions in terms of qualitative study. In parallel with the claim of Braun and Clarke (2019), thematic analysis denotes the process of identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes that are plucked out from a set of data.

**Data Preparation and Organization.** Primarily, collected data through a video or an audio format were transcribed verbatim to accurately extract potential codes and themes.

**Familiarization with the Collected Data.** Through a tabular format, computerized were clustered based on the categories exemplified by the interview questions.

**Identification of the Unit of Analysis.** By carefully reading and scrutinizing the participants' responses, the researcher is encouraged to underscore emerging and substantial content embedded in the collected data.

Development of Categories and a Coding Scheme. Correspondingly, the researcher took the succeeding procedures to finally identify codes.

Evaluation of Coding Scheme. Through a Rater Form, the researcher systematically sorted out and compiled the surfacing themes and categories examined from the previous steps.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Their lived experiences documented in-depth, and brand-new results which may significantly fill the gaps of the studies conducted by Rasmitadila et al. (2020); Carillo, (2020); Ersin et al. (2020); Ugalingan et al. (2021); Kosar, (2021); Aguilar-Cruz and Medina, (2021); Brillantes, (2022); and Park and Yi, (2022) as theirs focused more on the pre-service and beginning English language teachers' experiences during the pre-pandemic context. The researcher believes that the participants' transition period during the pandemic and post-pandemic settings may bear unique yet contributory results to patch any blank spot of this study.

In respect to the results emerging from the scope of this qualitative study, there were six (6) categories and 20 major themes that were found to be predominant during the participants' e-practicum and first year of teaching.

### **E-practicum Challenges**

Primarily, e-practicum challenges were extracted from the pressing struggles stressed by the participants. Generally, their lived experiences in this category reflected the studies of Carillo and Flores, (2020); and Rospigliosi, (2020). Themes under this first category such as the personal aspects investigating the participants' mental readiness, classroom management, multitasking, intellectual and communicative competence, and digital competence set drawbacks that affected their growth and advancement during the internship. Notably, these predicaments were also projected through the studies of Almusharraf and Khahro, (2020); and Rasmitadila et al. (2020). At the same time, these repercussions corroborated with the findings from Carillo and Flores, (2020); and Huber and Helm, (2020) whereas its implications magnified the dearth of supposed well-planned teacher training during the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another major theme that materialized from the aforementioned category was the administrative and organizational aspect that highlighted the capacity and effectiveness of an education-related institution toward the welfare of its pre-service teachers. In line with this, the participants noted that there were inconsistencies and unclear communication in terms of their internship deployment and schedule. These then may lead to pre-service teachers being unprepared due to inconsistent policies that organizational management struggles to come up with. Moreover, they also handled subject matters that were not aligned with their area of specialization since they needed to religiously follow the topics assigned by their cooperating teachers during that time. At the same time, the class size in an ODL modality examined the participants' classroom supervision since most of them had it for the first time without any prior experience in managing a large number of students per classroom. Given this circumstance, the pre-service teachers may not cater to every student's changing needs, not to mention that

today's learners are diverse. Finally, they also revealed that the schools' capacity failed to provide pertinent learning materials teacher training, and webinars needed for their internship. It has been suggested in the previous literature and findings that the availability of learning materials assists pre-service teachers in performing their roles efficiently. Since their internship was contextualized digitally, a lack of teacher training and webinars related to the parts and parcel of an ODL modality is essential. By and by, these challenges were aligned with the arguments of Zhang et al. (2020); and Cahapay and Rotas (2020) where there were no investments made for digital instruction and learning during the abrupt shifts in the education system caused by the pandemic.

Meanwhile, another major theme such as the supervisory aspect was manifested through the participants' challenges during their e-practicum. They underscored the availability of their cooperating teachers' feedback which, at times, were not provided—these were supposedly fundamental 'recipes' for the participants' progress as they dwell in an ODL modality during their internship. Evaluations from cooperating teachers allow pre-service teachers to improve their strengths and eliminate common, ineffective practices. Similarly, the participants struggled in terms of their cooperating teachers' commitment since there were times when these mentors put the participants in charge while overseeing classes without any supervision or assistance at all. This is not just an alarming drawback for the pre-service teachers but also for the students since the delivery of instruction and depth of subject content can potentially be compromised. As documented in the studies of Cobb et al. (2018); and Selcuk and Yontem (2019), cooperating teachers' presence and guidance are vital toward the holistic growth of their pre-service teachers while flying under their wings.

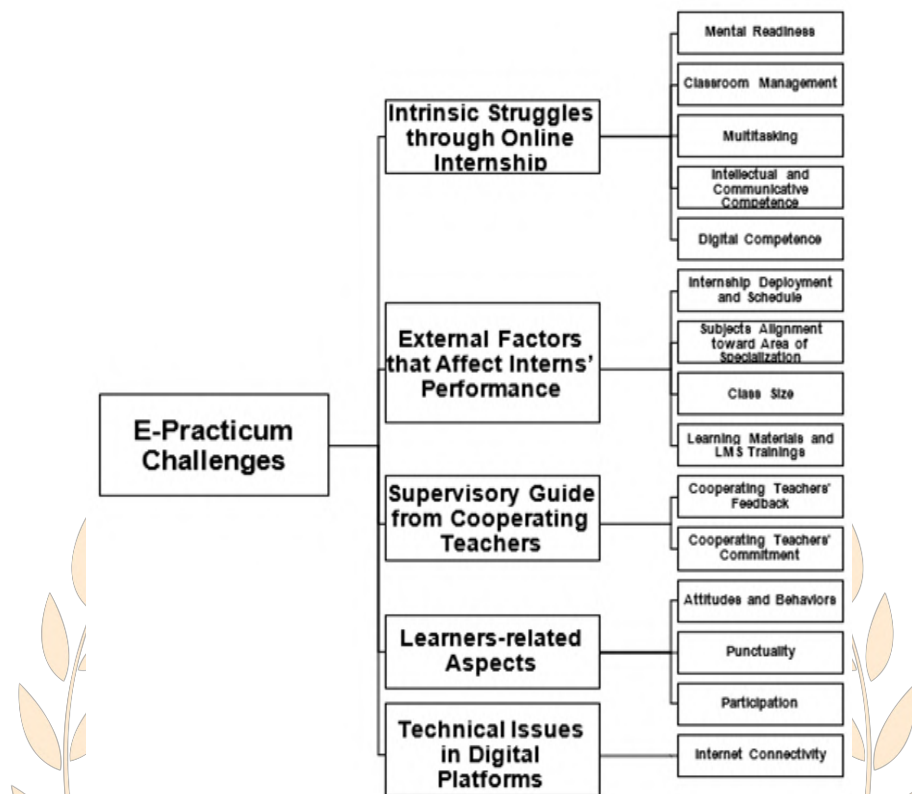
The learners-related aspect has surfaced, too, as a major theme under the aforementioned category. The effects brought by the pandemic such as reengineering modes of instructional delivery shaped the students' attitudes and behaviors toward their pre-service teachers: this has negatively affected their level of respect toward the participants' authority. In parallel to students' attitudes and behaviors, the participants observed students' punctuality which underlined frequent absenteeism during online synchronous meetings. As a result, a meaningful connection between them may not be established throughout their internship period. Moreover, teachers in an ODL set-up do not have total control of students' devices; thus, students preferred to turn off their cameras which later resulted in a low level of participation during an interactive discussion. Conspicuously, these all boiled down to one, important factor: the pre-service teachers' level of authority inside a classroom contributed to students' attitudes and behaviors, attendance, and obedience. These complications in terms of teacher-student connection were also viewed in the study of Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison (2020); and Özkanal et al. (2020).

Lastly, the theme of the technical aspect completed the list of the participant's challenges during their e-practicum. In particular, Internet connectivity was found to be an issue during their instructional delivery through an ODL setting. The participants mentioned that the bandwidth of their Internet connection was too slow.

Consequently, this may interfere with the communication between them and the students while achieving a smooth flow of discussion, especially while in a live conference. With these in mind, it can be assumed that the education-related institutions, during the COVID-19 pandemic, encountered delays and complications in investing



to competitive Internet Service Providers (ISP) and educational software and materials as implied in the studies of Adedoyin and Soykan, (2020); Huertas-Abril et al. (2021); Rospigliosi, (2020); and Van der Spoel et al. (2020).



**Figure 2. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing E-Practicum Challenges. See Data Analysis Matrix Responses by Themes in Appendix D.**

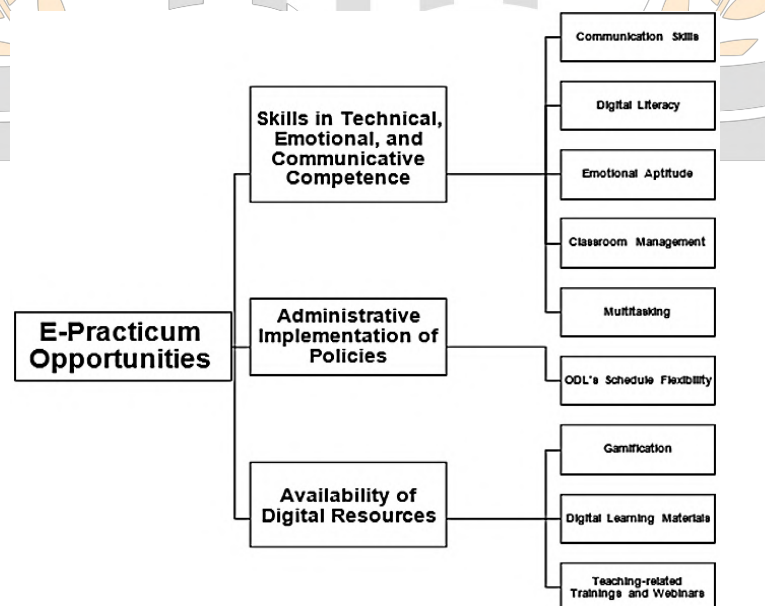
### ***E-practicum Opportunities***

While it may be true that an e-practicum may pose challenges to the participants due to its unanticipated implementation in the Philippine context, it was then elaborated that an e-practicum provides advantageous opportunities for pre-service teachers until they flourished as full-fledged professionals as proffered through the findings of Ersin et al. (2020). This category, e-practicum opportunities, outlined the following major themes: aspects in personal, administrative and organizational, and technical.

First, the personal aspect encompassed the participants' communication skills where the practical application of learned, theoretical concepts was put into use. This has proven that pragmatic teaching should be in constant exercise when fostering pre-service teachers' language competence. Concurrently, the participants added a new feature to the bank of their skills which is their digital competence; as a matter of fact, they were successful in incorporating technology into their instruction such as employing gamification and maximizing more online resources.

A teacher utilizing technology while teaching may far exceed one who is perennially traditional, considering that technology incorporation is a global trend in the 21st century. In like manner, the participants nurtured and

cultivated their emotional aptitude as they witnessed students' diversity and individuality first-hand, not to mention their attitudes and behaviors in their classes. Aside from intellectual competence, their emotional aptitude may also serve as a 'primary ingredient' in empathizing with their students more, thus stimulating frequent classroom participation. At the same time, the participants managed to supervise actual classes during their e-practicum while carefully attending to students' unique demands, specifically those who underwent an ODL modality. Over and above that, task and time management turned out to be an advantageous component to the participants. This may provide a chance for any pre-service teacher to juggle their duties and responsibilities simultaneously as it was not a prerequisite to be physically present when, for example, conducting classroom discussions. In relation to this, the participants were able to administer online and offline activities asynchronously while accomplishing other necessary tasks (e.g., household chores)—leading to a higher percentage of productivity. Second, the administrative and organizational aspect was enlisted under the category of e-practicum opportunities. In line with the previous subtheme (multitasking), the ODL schedule's flexibility, specifically the implementation of synchronous and asynchronous sessions, lets the participants fulfill other obligations aside from their internship. Finally, the technical aspect under this category covered gamification that allowed them to fuse interactive, game-like prompts in discussing their lessons; and maximize digital learning materials that highlighted the use of Canva, Google Slides, and other digital tools in addition to the classic PowerPoint presentation and; take advantage of free teaching-related training and webinars proliferating online. Taking advantage of these digital learning resources may allow pre-service teachers to become versatile, and even creative in their instructional delivery. In agreement with this, the findings of Ersin et al. (2020); Yurkofsky et al. (2019); and Gruenhagen et al. (1999), as cited in Kosar, (2021) shed a light that an online type of internship may let pre-service teachers discover versatility and flexibility when confronted with potential drawbacks along their way—allowing them to fully develop their potential as future, professional teachers.



**Figure 3. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing E-Practicum Opportunities. See Data Analysis Matrix Responses by Themes in Appendix D.**

## *First Year of Teaching Challenges*

As the participants shifted from e-practicum to in-person classes after their graduation, it was inescapable that they were more likely to run into different hurdles while in their probationary period. The first year of teaching challenges, particularly the third category in the statements of the problem, surveyed the personal, administrative and organizational, learners-related, and collegial aspects. In the light of the personal aspect, the participants pointed out their situations toward the establishment of classroom management as it was their first time to step foot in the actual field of this profession: teaching. As an illustration, they found obstacles when imposing authority inside the classroom. This may be viewed to be a key point in weaving a meaningful, long-lasting connection between them and their students. Moreover, their emotional capacity also tested their capability to endure and survive an environment which they were not familiar with yet. Emotional adroitness, a beginning teacher's mental stability especially, is also a pivotal component of being an effective and flexible professional. Since it was also the participants' preliminary year to single-handedly oversee a class in a face-to-face set-up, social anxiety became apparent among them. For this reason, these may have negatively influenced their relationships with their students which could possibly compromise the teaching and learning process. The participants further admitted to being more self-conscious regarding the maturity of their appearance compared to the, for example, height of their students. In fact, this may then leave varied impressions on the students since professional teachers are seen to be attired in an authoritative aura. Another key point is that unlike during their e-practicum—wherein they were assisted by their cooperating teachers—the participants now had the sole responsibility of completing all their tasks without any supervision. Undeniably, the participants can be prone to committing potential mistakes during their beginning year—resulting in a trial-and-error process. Correspondingly, as they specialize in the English language, they were expected to exhibit competent skills in teaching the language with ease. However, they must also review and evaluate the level of their students' proficiency in language learning and language acquisition. To this end, revisiting and recalibrating the participants' communicative and linguistic competence may considerably complement their students' language needs. Given these pivotal points, these specific challenges are noted to be similar to the findings of Smagorinsky et al. (2015), as cited in Stewart and Jansky (2022); and May (2022).

With attention to the administrative and organizational aspects, there were several stumbling blocks that impeded the participants' success during their beginning phase. First, their institutions seldom assess the existing conditions of their digital learning tools such as their flat-screen monitors and HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) cords per classroom. Hence, this may lead to a delay in the efficient delivery of instruction; they spend more time fixing and looking for these specific tools instead of jumpstarting a lesson straightaway. Significantly, the participants noted that their schools during the post-pandemic era aimlessly accommodated a large number of enrollees for the implementation of in-person classes while there was still a scarcity in the capacity and number of their physical classrooms. This may invariably result in their administration plotting broken class schedules whereas they shall not just house a huge quantity of students in a single, small-spaced room; a conducive learning environment shall be in priority after all. In the same manner, these broken class schedules may be exhaustively tedious for the beginning teachers to handle. Furthermore, it was disputed that the training for the proper

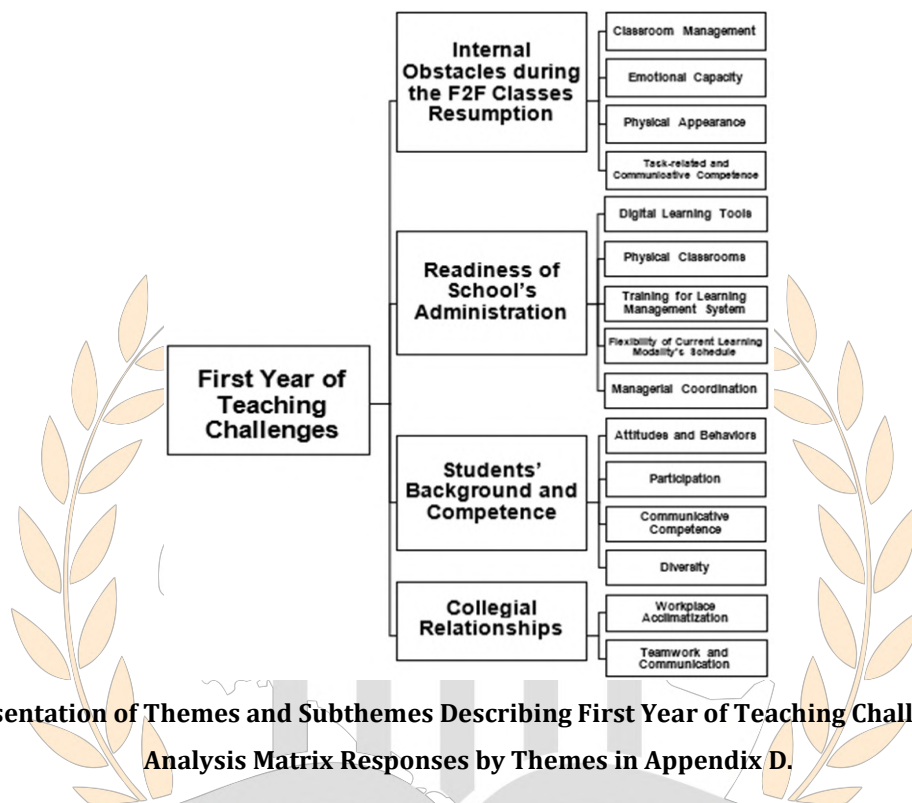


utilization of the LMS was not readily provided to the participants. For instance, they need to spend more time outside their working hours exploring the features of their selected LMS (e.g., unlocking Google Forms' complex features for students' formative and summative assessments) considering that these participants did not have prior and intensive training toward the application varying LMS features. In consonance with the pressing issue pertaining to the number of physical classrooms, complications in class schedules finally surfaced. That is to say, there were times when the participants needed to attend in-person classes in the school while having to simultaneously conduct online classes at the same time, at the same location. For this reason, the concept of multitasking has become more challenging since they need to frequently jump from two different modalities every time: knowing that this issue was brought into place during their first year of teaching. Due to the inadequacy and budget insufficiency toward the learners' instructional needs, it can be implicitly assumed that these education-related institutions have the possibility to acquire dire repercussions in terms of their operations as hypothesized in the study of Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020).

Learners-related, the third major theme under the category of first-year teaching challenges, enumerated the students' attitudes and behaviors, participation, communicative competence, and diversity. First and foremost, the participants struggled in dealing with their students' attitudes, behaviors, and their treatment of their teachers. Their students were disruptive therefore affecting the discussion's flow; they were socially anxious causing a low amount of interest in collaborative projects and; they were more online-dependent in terms of prompts that cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving. Unquestionably, these factors may significantly slow down the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, the level of engagement and participation of the students was emphasized: it was proven that many of them are in the atmosphere of passive, shallow learning, resulting in little interaction and communication with their teachers. It was stressed that the students' communicative competence was an alarming concern that the participants, as teachers, needed to address. In detail, it entailed the intricacies of the English language whereas the participants needed to revisit and re-elucidate even the most basic foundations of the language—instead of advancing to the supposed content required by the syllabus. Finally, students' unique personalities shall likewise be prioritized by the participants during their first year of teaching as it may serve as a crucial step in building connections with the students before instructing them. As has been noted, it was found out that the teachers were surprised because these issues tend to be real-life, pragmatic, and context-based, compared to the limited experiences they had been through during their e-practicum.

Lastly, a major theme among the challenges of the participants under the aforementioned category was the collegial aspect. Since they are not yet fully exposed to the teaching profession, it is observed to be mandatory to acclimate themselves to the physical and atmospheric working environment while taking in the layout of facilities, familiarizing themselves with rules and regulations, and even its conventional, long-standing practices. Nurturing their social skills may aid them to interact with their colleagues harmoniously. To put it another way, they realized the different degrees and levels of seniority based on organizational positions and credentials; this, too, obstructed them in terms of assistance- and help-seeking whenever they needed to, as they were hesitant to converse with their co-teachers. Given that case, the teamwork and communication procedure may be put in the line of sacrifice due to the preceding limits and perceived barriers. In essence, these results conformed with the theories proposed

in the works of Vonk (1985) and Schleicher (2020), as cited in Dvir and Schatz-Oppenheimer (2020) where there are crucial components to consider when the beginning English language teachers immerse in their initial years of teaching namely: personal-emotional, pedagogical-didactic, ecological-systemic-organizational, and technological knowledge. Similarly, the participants' abrupt shifting to in-person classes may suggest activities of fine-tuning, rebooting, and recalibrating their skills as manifested in the studies of Hill (2021); and Brillantes (2022).



**Figure 4. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing First Year of Teaching Challenges. See Data Analysis Matrix Responses by Themes in Appendix D.**

### ***First Year of Teaching Opportunities***

Meanwhile, the return of the beginning English language teachers and the students to in-person classes did not only create struggles through such a period as illustrated in the previous category. In particular, the opportunities during the participants' first year of teaching emerged during this phase as these laid out pertinent aspects delineating personal, learner-related, and collegial relationships.

Primarily, the personal aspect showed the participants' capability to integrate their prior teaching experience which they fostered during e-practicum. Given the pressing circumstances that occurred, the participants still managed to utilize learned skills that later they would be able to apply in their profession.

Upon scrutiny, it can be noted that the pre-service teachers' endurance toward arduous tasks during their e-practicum prepared sets of skills that can be useful even in the context of in-person classes. For instance, the participants' digital literacy during their e-practicum was found to be applicable to blended learning modality during their neophyte episodes such as when they blend and integrate LMS, online educational resources, and



digital assistive tools into their pedagogy. Emphatically, the participants found worthwhile opportunities, at the same time, to express themselves more as full-fledged professionals compared to when they were interns.

Consequently, self-expression may open several doors to try new approaches, methodologies, and techniques while exploring their true identity as teachers. Additionally, the participants' pedagogical competence improved while giving adequate importance to mastery of the lesson.

Respectively, this suggests that frequent immersion of teachers, such as supervising actual classes instead of merely observing, allows them to reach, and even surpass, their full potential.

Lastly, their inclination toward extra-curricular activities was highlighted during this period. To demonstrate, the participants performed brand-new, unfamiliar roles such as being lead advisers of different school organizations, which, again, substantiated the aforementioned concept that circumstantial immersion in the teaching field inarguably contributed to the participants' growth.

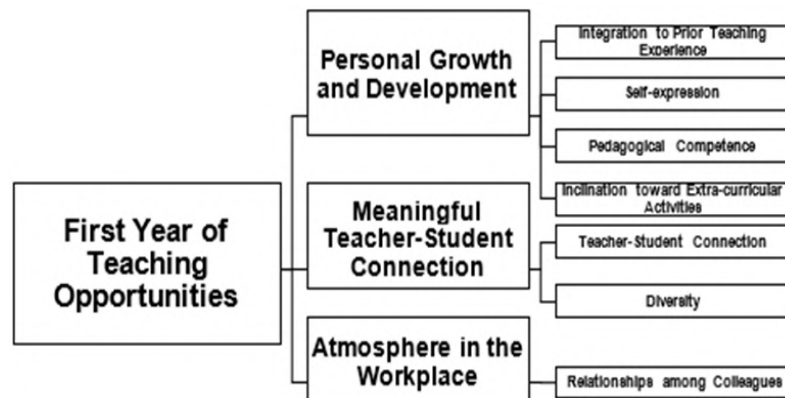
Conversely, these findings contradicted the results acquired through the works of Evagorou and Nisiforou (2020; and Boakye and Ampiah (2017) where they argued that there were existing perceptions from a number of pre-service teachers that their endeavors in the program of Teacher Education did not yield relevant skills and attributed in preparation for actual teaching.

Next, an aspect toward learner-related was underlined, too, as one of their opportunities during this stage. Firstly, the participants were finally able to see and mingle with their students physically.

Therefore, it can be deduced that in-person interaction establishes a deep connection between the teacher and the learner whereas an ODL modality could not potentially replace it. By the same token, the participants witnessed their students' diversity first-hand, specifically their distinct personalities; subsequently, they were able to recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate students with an in-depth sensitivity.

In line with this, 'touching the lives' of the students is a contributory factor to their learning process, instead of just relying on pure, rigid delivery instruction. Significantly, this theme supported the suggestions in the studies of Driel and Berry (2012); Darling-Hammond (2017); and Mante-Estacio and Ugalingan (2018) where teachers' physical interactions within a brick-and-mortar classroom were a salient component in the establishment of teacher-student relationships.

Finally, another opportunity was manifested during their probationary year: the collegial aspect. As previously indicated, the participants struggled to build worthwhile relationships with others while undergoing an ODL set-up. Hence, the re-implementation of the in-person classes permitted them to create meaningful bonds with one another. This, if looked upon closely, can be a crucial element toward a teacher's flexibility, productivity, and success.



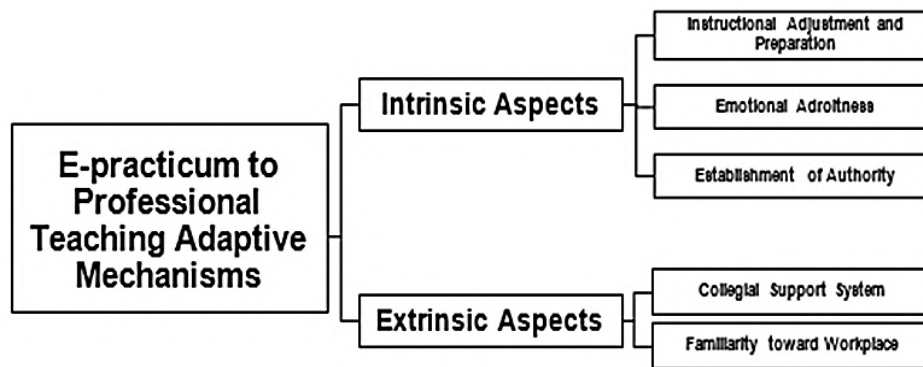
**Figure 5. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing First Year of Teaching Opportunities. See Data Analysis Matrix Responses by Themes in Appendix D.**

### ***E-practicum to Professional Teaching Adaptive Mechanisms***

The fifth category that was obtained from this study's objectives was the participants' e-practicum to professional teaching adaptive mechanisms. Interestingly, this category laid out two (2) major themes: intrinsic and extrinsic. To begin with, the intrinsic aspect contained the participants' instructional adjustment and preparation. Specifically, their classroom management, actual readiness, and attention to learners' individuality appeared to be their coping mechanisms as they were amid a transition period. As observed, a teacher's thorough preparation before engaging in classroom discussions eliminates any difficulty or failure while teaching. Meanwhile, their emotional adroitness helped them also survive the profession as they needed to possess mental fortitude while socializing with students and other colleagues. Unquestionably, this implied that intellectual quotient (IQ) (ability to maximize cognitive skills) is not only the primary requirement for a professional teacher; emotional quotient (EQ) (ability to regulate feelings) and social quotient (SQ) (ability to maintain relationships) are indispensable in solving any predicament that may come along their way, especially now that the students and other teachers' generation is unique. Lastly, they found that the establishment of authority inside the classroom was an adaptive mechanism, too. Implicitly, this suggests that teachers, in any context or situation, must have total control of the circumstances inside the classroom to immediately discard all potential problems that may arise.

The extrinsic aspect in terms of the participants' adaptive mechanisms was respectively underscored. First, it showed that the collegial support system alleviates work distress and difficulty. Second, the participants' familiarity with the workplace permitted them to acclimate with ease without any major adjustment at all. For these reasons, it may be argued that the aforementioned subthemes significantly add to the productivity level of the beginning English language teachers since they can seamlessly ask for immediate assistance from their superiors and colleagues—without becoming reluctant because of perceived barriers.

Generally, these adaptive mechanisms concurred with the principle of Vonk (1995) where an 'ecological-systemic-organizational' element is pivotal for beginning teachers as they blend with the institutions' expectations and policies, not to mention the development of their collegial relationships.



**Figure 6. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing E-practicum to Professional Teaching Adaptive Mechanisms. See Data Analysis Matrix Responses by Themes in Appendix D.**

### ***Learnings and Realizations***

The sixth and final category culled from the qualitative analysis of this study is the participants' learnings and realizations. In total, there were three (3) major themes that surfaced: aspects personal, integrative, and reflective. First, personal aspects highlighted the participants' adaptability; it is assumed that the abrupt transitions in the Philippine education system unleashed their resiliency and versatility. Thus, it can be noted that their lived experiences, especially their adversarial situations, helped these professionals discover a new set of soft skills, aside from communicative and technical. In relation to this, they also cultivated their prowess in terms of emotional management when faced with unfamiliar, pressing circumstances; this means that the pre-service and full-fledged teachers are more likely to survive the 'huge waves' of this profession if adroit in terms of emotional regulation. Too, the participants realized that their personality, including their integrity, consistency, and self-esteem, remarkably affect students' perception toward them. Therefore, an exercise of true professionalism may essentially contribute to their teaching success.

Furthermore, the participants assessed and evaluated their pedagogical approaches toward learners' individuality. With an emphasis on flexibility, teachers may not settle for only one, single teaching approach since a new school year may also connote a new set of diverse learners. To complete their learnings and realizations in terms of the personal aspect, they magnified the truth about teacher-student interaction and rapport. Even though the establishment of intimate connection with students is vital for teachers, it is also as important as drawing the line between them: a constant setting of boundaries. Overall, these themes with their subthemes complemented the findings of Schatz-Oppenheimer and Vdir (2014); and Antilla et al. (2017) the chapter on student-becoming-teacher encompasses the presence of overwhelming positive and negative emotions.

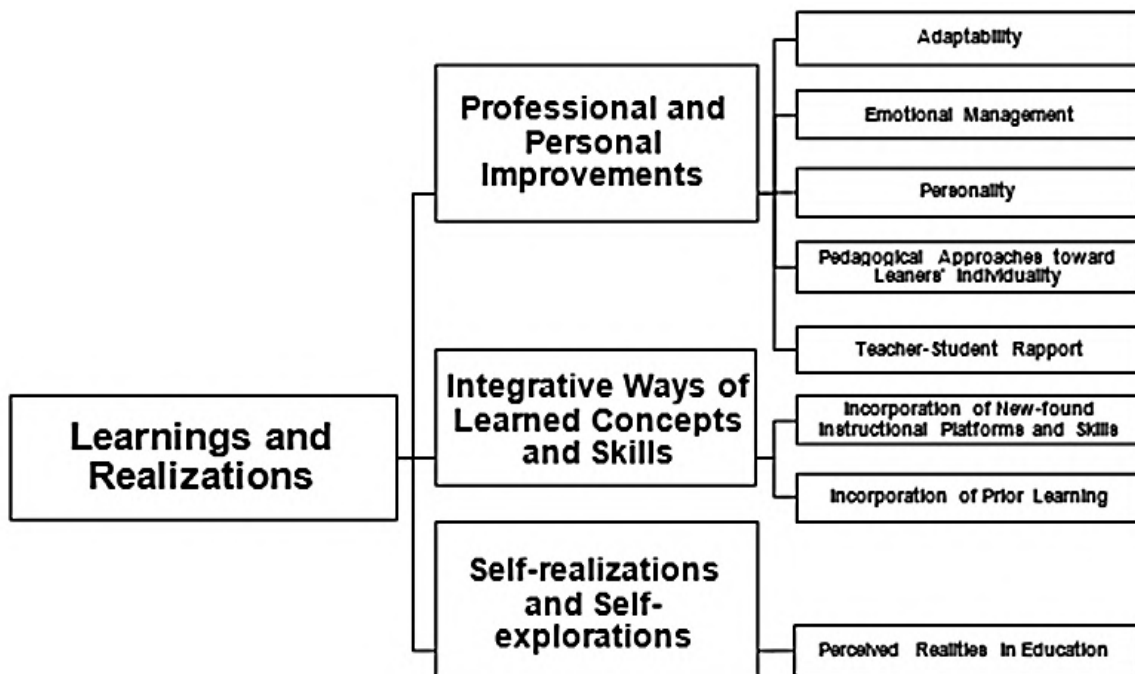
The next major theme exhibited the participants' integrative aspect which outlined the incorporation of new-found pedagogical platforms and skills and the incorporation of prior learning. First, the incorporation of new-found pedagogical platforms and skills became a trend among the participants.

It can then be inferred that the integration of newly-discovered digital tools and competence is a primary ticket that secures one to stay in teaching while in this contemporary world with contemporary learners. Second, the



incorporation of prior learning, such as during their e-practicum, was found to be beneficial and rewarding for the participants while in their neophyte year as teachers. Therefore, this may prove that advanced preparation and readiness during an internship are paramount in fostering a teacher’s work efficiency. Given these points, it substantiated the study of Schleicher (2020), as cited in Dvir and Schatz-Oppenheimer (2020) where technological knowledge is pivotal for beginning teachers in adapting to 21st century trends in education.

Finally, the participants reinforced the impact of a reflective aspect under the aforementioned category. Particularly, this subtheme pointed out their perceived realities in education. The participants contemplated those concepts and principles as theoretical by nature; it is the actual exposure that gives more sense and value to teaching instead. In conclusion, experience, an evaluated one, is still the ‘best teacher’ after all.



**Figure 7. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing Learnings and Realizations. See Data Analysis Matrix Responses by Themes in Appendix D.**

**Conceptual Model**

This framework outlines the lived experiences of the participants as they transitioned from e-practicum to in-field teaching as beginning teachers. The topmost gear in this model summarized the participants’ challenges and opportunities during the two significant phases of their becoming as professional teachers: during their e-practicum and during their beginning year.

From that, the second gear was created to describe their adaptive mechanisms which were formulated based on the first gear. Finally, these working gears stimulated the movement of the last gear which pertains to their overall learnings and realizations, hence, the logic behind its distinct size.



**Figure 8. A Model of Beginning English Language Teachers' Transitional Phase from E-Practicum to In-field Teaching.**

## CONCLUSIONS

In the final analysis, the summary of the discussion of these findings revealed that the participants' transition period may have generated numerous challenges and opportunities.

As has been noted, most of the findings of this study were viewed as similar to those existing literature, yet during the pre-pandemic years. In terms of the positive aspects, the results underlined that several challenges from the participants' lived experiences are a 'double-edged sword' as it turned out to be an advantageous opportunity toward their growth as English language teachers. Remarkably, the abrupt shift of their e-practicum from conventional to digitalized modality made the participants discover. In line with this, this certain competence



learned from their e-practicum was still found to be relevant during their in-field, face-to-face teaching as beginning teachers, as the technology has been a salient 'recipe' during a blended learning modality.

While it may be true that a few of these insights from other related literature already existed before the pandemic, they must still be reviewed and reevaluated not only for the in-field teachers but as early as with the pre-service teachers—upon their metamorphosis of becoming professionals. Overall, this study bridges the knowledge gaps within the transitional phase of the participants; whereas, their practicum was conducted through an ODL modality yet applied their training to in-person classes after graduation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Upon thorough analyses conducted by the researcher, 20 major themes emerged from the qualitative statements of the participants. Notably, the participants in this study were the pioneer graduates as the K-12 curriculum took its place in the Philippines. For this reason, it is important to lay down pertinent suggestions and recommendations with respect to the participant's attainment of success as they prepare and later venture into the teaching world.

Firstly, this study revealed a number of predicaments concerning the schools' management and organization. The CHED may consider the findings herewith where they may encourage Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to provide annual training programs on various pedagogical approaches and hybrid instructional techniques exclusive for pre-service teachers. Most importantly, the CHED may implement a transition program every summer which the pre-service teachers would be required to attend.

Secondly, private schools may review their policies and guidelines. First, they may allow a considerable amount of budget in building more physical classrooms. In terms of collegial relationships, the educational administrators may also suggest to their principals to organize annual team-building activities for their teachers. Additionally, educational administrators may conduct faculty development programs (FDP) to refresh the teachers in their pedagogy. Meanwhile, the Guidance and Counseling Office of the school may provide intervention seminars for both teachers and students as they cope with unfamiliar situations.

Thirdly, curriculum developers may reassess and reevaluate the schools' curricula down to their teachers' learning plans. For this reason, it stimulates and strengthens a teacher's resiliency when the latest technology (e.g., Internet connectivity) and power supply are unavailable or down.

Additionally, a seminar for cooperating teachers may be employed prior to the pre-service teachers' deployment.

Finally, this study is limited to the private schools, LUCs, and SUCs of Pampanga. Therefore, the acquired results and findings are unique only among the participants in this province. It is then recommended for future researchers to situate this study into different contexts, advisably using quantitative approaches, in order to reveal more distinct findings that may significantly contribute to the gaps of other existing literature.



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