Going beyond borders after a pandemic: Preparedness of teachers to embrace E-learning in a small Philippine university

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Article info.	ABSTRACT
	The global pandemic posed considerable challenges to education, necessitating educators to adopt various teaching methods, particularly those conducted through online platforms. To do this effectively, teachers needed readiness, skills, and dedication. A study was undertaken with 119 higher education teachers from different fields in a state institution, using both surveys and interviews to collect data. The findings revealed that these instructors were prepared for online teaching as they had the necessary devices, such as cell phones and laptops, access to wireless internet, and moderate internet speed, though it sometimes became slow when multiple devices were connected. The faculty exhibited proficient technological skills, making them competent in using technology. Despite difficulties, they displayed a positive attitude and efficient time management. The study suggests that teachers' readiness to adopt e-learning as an alternative to traditional classroom teaching could be a powerful solution to the significant challenges posed by the pandemic. Teachers' ability to adapt and embrace online teaching, supported by their technological proficiency and positive mindset, is seen as a potential remedy to the educational obstacles during the pandemic. Their preparedness to navigate this shift may offer a way to overcome the difficulties encountered in the education sector during these unprecedented times.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly posed an unprecedented global threat, fundamentally altering the landscape of education delivery and challenging educational institutions and leaders worldwide (Ipapo et al., 2021). As the virus spread, schools and universities around the globe were compelled to close their doors, leaving millions of learners grappling with disrupted education (UNESCO, 2020). This crisis demanded rapid adaptation and decision-making from academic leaders, who had to navigate the transition from traditional face-to-face instruction to alternative learning modalities (Tria,

2020; Crawford et al., 2020). In this tumultuous environment, e-learning (also known as digital learning) emerged as a shining beacon (Ray, 2020).

Studies have shown that e-learning has had a positive impact on student motivation, autonomy, and participation (Reyes-Chua, 2020). The digital devices utilized for e-learning have unlocked valuable opportunities for the teaching and learning process (Chauhan, 2017), which explains its popularity across all educational levels. Notably, e-learning garnered positive feedback and acceptance, as it was perceived as the most viable solution to the

educational challenges wrought by the pandemic (Khan et al., 2021).

The new protocols for distance learning, whether online or otherwise, forced educators to dramatically revolutionize their daily tasks, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms (UNICEF, 2020). These changes have also compelled lecturers and students to adapt their communication styles, summative assessment practices, and content delivery methods (Reyes-Chua et al., 2020). Furthermore, they have challenged both educators and learners to innovate and develop new alternative approaches to ensure that the quality of education remains uncompromised (UNICEF, 2020). This rapid shift to remote instruction has raised concerns about the academic integrity of the online learning environment (Barber, 2021), given its swift rise in prominence during the pandemic.

Amid these transformative shifts in the educational landscape, the challenge of inexperienced teachers conducting online classes further complicates the situation (Reyes-Chua et al., 2020). Additionally, studies have highlighted various issues surrounding online teaching, such as deficiencies in online teaching infrastructure, limited exposure of teachers to online pedagogy, information gaps, non-conducive home learning environments, and concerns about equity and academic excellence, particularly in higher education (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Therefore, readiness should be considered a critical factor in determining the success of the implementation of online education (Almaiah et al., 2020). The educators' active engagement in online transitions can provide a competitive advantage for universities in today's higher education marketplace (Buckenmeyer et al., 2011).

In essence, online teaching holds the promise of bringing educational experiences to life and making lessons come alive for both teachers and students. It can serve as a virtual substitute for face-to-face instruction, fostering collaborative and cooperative learning activities. However, realizing this promise necessitates careful consideration of the readiness of higher education instructors to embrace this modality fully. Through a comprehensive assessment of readiness, universities can effectively plan and strategize how instruction is delivered and how teaching and learning are conducted. It is essential to recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for online teaching and learning, making adaptability and preparedness key elements for

success in the evolving educational landscape shaped by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods design encompassing both quantitative and qualitative methods, utilizing an explanatory sequential design. The research data collection was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved the quantitative data collection, with a validated research instrument was used. The second phase, involving qualitative data collection, was done through utilizing interviews among participants.

The quantitative research design was instrumental in assessing the readiness of higher education instructors concerning online teaching and learning. It delved into factors such as the availability and ownership of digital devices, the accessibility and sources of internet connections, and internet speed. Conversely, the qualitative research design aimed to provide a more in-depth understanding and interpretation of various aspects, including technological capabilities and technical skills, attitudes toward online teaching and learning, as well as time management and commitment among the respondents.

To ensure comprehensive insights, the quantitative results were expounded upon through detailed qualitative discussions. The study comprised a total of 119 randomly selected respondents for the quantitative segment. These respondents included both male and female instructors with diverse appointment statuses, teaching across different year levels, and specializations offered by the university.

Simultaneously, the qualitative part of the research involved a total of 10 instructors selected based on their willingness to participate in interviews and focus group discussions. They were chosen because of their affiliation with the university and their ability to articulate their thoughts effectively.

The primary data-gathering instrument was a survey questionnaire, meticulously crafted based on related literature and studies, which underwent validation by experts to ensure accuracy and alignment with the study objectives. Additionally, a reliability test was conducted to ascertain the instrument's consistency. Subsequently, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a group of instructors (non-respondents) to gauge their comprehension of the items. The analysis of responses revealed commendable Cronbach's Alpha values: 0.887 for

technological capabilities and technical skills, 0.791 for attitudes, and 0.895 for time management and commitment. These values indicated a high degree of internal consistency, affirming the questionnaire's suitability for the research. The questionnaire was administered through an online platform, with data extracted and imported into statistical software for analysis, primarily using frequency counts and mean calculations.

Concurrently, qualitative data underwent thematic analysis techniques, and the findings were integrated with the quantitative data to present a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives. This comprehensive approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of the readiness of higher education instructors for online teaching and learning within the context of the university and the broader educational landscape.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Availability of Digital Devices

The shift towards online teaching has underscored the importance of digital devices, including laptops, smartphones, desktop computers, tablets, and other technological resources. These tools are essential for facilitating effective remote education. In this context, a survey was conducted with higher education instructors regarding the availability and ownership of these gadgets.

The results of the survey revealed that nearly 93% of instructors personally owned smartphones, while approximately 77% possessed personal laptops. Fewer instructors had tablets/iPads, and roughly 40% had either personally owned or shared desktop computers. A minority of respondents reported having other technological devices at their disposal. This data suggests that when the university eventually transitions to online teaching and learning, instructors are adequately equipped with the necessary devices. The prevalence of smartphones and laptops among instructors is particularly noteworthy, as these are versatile tools that can fulfil various educational needs.

Smartphones, in particular, are regarded as potent learning tools that can enhance distance education's teaching and learning process. They offer flexibility, accessibility, and opportunities for interaction among users (Darko-Adjei, 2019). When information and communication technology (ICT) devices are appropriately integrated, they have the potential to improve significantly the quality of educational content and pedagogy (Anderson, as

cited in Chirwa, 2018). The judicious use of such devices in online teaching can expand access to education for non-traditional and underserved students, providing a wealth of educational resources and experiences that may not be readily available in traditional on-campus higher education (Dziuban et al., 2018).

In the Philippine context, the educational system has faced numerous logistical challenges and issues. However, Filipinos' unwavering commitment to education has spurred them to embrace the rapid advancement of ICT. This embrace of technology has been instrumental in transforming the teaching and learning process (Garcia, 2017). These observations further underscore the imperative of having digital or technological devices readily available for educators engaged in online teaching and learning. These devices are not just tools but enablers of quality education, facilitating access and interaction in an increasingly digital educational landscape.

3.2. Availability of Internet Connection

Internet connectivity has become an undeniable necessity, particularly at a time when conducting face-to-face classes is not feasible. The ability to connect with students through various online platforms relies heavily on the reliability of internet sources.

This study sheds light on the availability and sources of internet connection among higher education instructors. The findings indicate that the majority of these instructors have wireless connections, which may either be personally owned or shared with family members. Impressively, about 82% of respondents reported using cellular data for internet access, while approximately 36% were connected through cables. These results signify that online teaching can indeed be effectively pursued using the current internet connection sources available to instructors, as they can utilize both cellular data and wireless connections for this purpose.

The advent of internet facilities has ushered in transformative changes in virtually every aspect of human life, profoundly altering the landscape of education delivery (Alfawareh & Jusoh, 2017). It's imperative for those responsible for online teaching to be adequately prepared by taking into consideration various factors that may either facilitate or hinder faculty's experiences in this modality (Cutri & Mena, 2020). Among these

considerations, one of the foremost is the quality and reliability of their internet connectivity.

In fact, a robust and dependable internet connection serves as the backbone of effective online education. It not only facilitates communication and interaction with students but also ensures the seamless delivery of educational content. As such, institutions and educators must continue to prioritize and invest in internet infrastructure to support the evolving landscape of education in an increasingly digital world.

3.3. Internet speed

Internet speed is undeniably a critical factor in the effective delivery of online instruction. The findings of this study underscore the importance of internet speed in the context of online teaching.

The results of the study revealed that a significant majority of participants reported having slow to moderate internet connection speeds. In practical terms, moderate speed allows for activities such as moderate high-definition streaming, online gaming, and downloading, provided there is a moderate number of connected devices. On the other hand, slow internet connections are suitable for basic activities like web surfing, sending emails, occasional streaming, and online gaming with a few connected devices. While slow to moderate internet speed can still serve the purpose of online teaching, it may require some adjustments, such as reducing

the number of connected devices and selecting online platforms that are not data intensive.

Notably, only a minority, approximately 16%, indicated that they have fast to very fast internet speeds. These higher speeds enable heavy to hardcore streaming, gaming, and downloading, even with a substantial number of connected devices. As a result, they can accommodate online teaching without significant disruptions or limitations.

In the current global pandemic, where traditional face-to-face classes have been largely replaced by online education, the availability of information technology equipment and reliable internet coverage and speed have become paramount (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). However, it's important to acknowledge that in many developing countries, internet bandwidth is limited, access points are scarce, and data packages can be costly in comparison to the average income of the population, making accessibility and affordability significant challenges (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

In the Philippines, there have been efforts to improve internal telecommunications and internet infrastructure. Still, the growing number of internet users places additional strain on the existing infrastructure, potentially affecting internet speed (Salac & Kim, 2016). Therefore, addressing these challenges and improving internet speed is vital not only for the effective delivery of online education but also for ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities in an increasingly digital world.

Table 1. Technological capabilities and technical skills of higher education instructors

Statements	Mean	QD
1. I have a computer available to me at home.	3.67	SA
2. I access the Internet frequently and can search the Internet for what I need.	3.38	SA
3. I am competent and using e-mail.	3.64	SA
4. I am competent in using word processing software.	3.65	SA
5. I am able to download files from the Internet and can attach files to an e-mail.	3.65	SA
6. I am competent in using presentation software such as PowerPoint.	3.61	SA
7. I am familiar with and can create wikis or Web sites.	2.18	D
8. I am familiar with and can use social networking technologies, such as Facebook and Twitter.	3.60	A
9. I am familiar with my university's LMS.	3.07	A
10. I have used technology to support my face-to-face teaching.	3.36	SA
Mean	3.38	SA

Higher education instructors found themselves possessing high technological skills or capabilities as revealed by their responses in the survey conducted. They believed they were competent in using word and presentation software which are

needed in online teaching. Further, they used the internet frequently for emails, searching and social networking which can be advantageous when engaged in teaching online. The only statement that they disagreed with is the one which asked if they

can create web sites or wikis that can be done by those who are more technologically and technically equipped.

The sudden change in the learning modalities due to the pandemic has challenged all key players in the educational system, including teachers, to look for available resources that can be used in teaching. Their capabilities to teach online are also tested and their ability to adopt to the complexities of online teaching is also urged.

In the interviews conducted, two themes emerged that revealed teachers' capabilities and skills technologically and technically:

Technologically advanced. The study's results align closely with the statements made by respondents, which were further corroborated during the interview validation process. These findings collectively paint a picture of higher education instructors who exhibit a high level of technological competence and readiness.

Respondents reported feeling of being technologically capable, and this feeling was reaffirmed during the interviews. They expressed confidence in their ability to navigate technological resources with ease. Notably, they highlighted their mastery of social media platforms, proficiency in utilizing computer software, competence in performing basic troubleshooting activities, and adeptness at using mobile devices.

These insights highlight the adaptability and preparedness of these instructors for the digital era of education. Their comfort and proficiency with various technology-related tasks and tools reflect a crucial readiness factor for effectively delivering online instruction. As education continues to evolve in an increasingly digital landscape, having instructors who are technologically savvy and confident bodes well for the successful integration of technology in the teaching and learning process.

"I have my own laptop since college. I used Word and Excel applications for my college requirements. When I was already teaching, I use PowerPoint in my classes." P7.

"I cannot live without my gadgets. Aside from food, this I couldn't live without. Those who are young really consider internet as a necessity because one can do almost anything in the net. I use it for social networking. I also use it for my class even before LMS was introduced to us here

in the university. I use it to shop. Because I always use it, I am adept to it." P4

"I found that internet connection is not anymore a luxury, it's actually a need especially in this trying time. My kids use it for their online classes. As a parent, I have to learn using it. It's easy to use as long as you can read and is willing to explore things. You will be able to appreciate its beauty if it can give you the things you need. And as for me, it satisfies me since I do not find difficulty using it." P8

"When I encounter problems using my gadgets, I search Google for some simple troubleshooting tips. At time, I am reached out by my friends." P1

Indeed, faculty engaged in online teaching are expected to possess a fundamental grasp of basic computer operations. These skills, including the ability to create and edit documents, manage files and folders, and navigate computer systems, constitute a significant portion of the foundation for designing and facilitating an effective online course and achieving desired learning outcomes (Keramati et al., 2011).

The importance of technological competencies among faculty cannot be overstated in the realm of online teaching (Gay, 2016). Such competencies serve as the bedrock upon which successful online instruction is built. Faculty members need to be proficient in using various technology tools and platforms to create engaging and interactive online learning experiences for their students.

Moreover, these competencies extend across multiple domains of virtual teaching and learning, as outlined by Guasch et al. (2010). Faculty members are expected to demonstrate competence in the design and planning of online courses, including structuring content effectively and creating meaningful assessments. They also play critical roles in facilitating social interactions among students in the online environment and providing instructional support when needed. Additionally, they are responsible for managing the technological aspects of online teaching, such as troubleshooting technical issues and ensuring the smooth operation of digital tools and platforms.

In reality, technological competencies are integral to the multifaceted role that faculty members play in the online teaching and learning landscape. As online education continues to evolve and expand, educators' proficiency in technology will remain a

cornerstone of their ability to deliver high-quality instruction and support the diverse needs of online learners.

Technically skilled. The observation that higher education instructors are not only technologically capable but also technically skilled is a significant asset in the context of online teaching. These technical skills encompass a deep understanding of the full potential and advantages of their technological resources, which empowers them to perform specific tasks effectively and efficiently in the online teaching environment.

Having technical skills means that instructors not only know how to use technology but also understand how to leverage it to its fullest extent. This proficiency allows them to harness the capabilities of various technological tools and platforms to enhance the online teaching experience for their students.

In the realm of online education, where the reliance on technology is paramount, these technical skills are invaluable. Instructors who possess a certain degree of understanding of the potential of their technological resources can design engaging and interactive learning activities, troubleshoot technical issues adeptly, and optimize the use of digital tools to achieve specific educational objectives.

Ultimately, the combination of technological capabilities and technical skills among higher education instructors positions them as effective and resourceful online educators. Their ability to harness technology's full potential not only benefits their teaching but also enhances the learning experience for their students in the digital learning environment.

One revealed,

"My background in IT helped me lot in my everyday life. This probably is my advantage especially now that we are on our way to online teaching and learning." P7

Another uttered,

"I actually use other available online educational platforms such as Google Classroom, Moodle and Edmodo even before

pandemic. I found them very useful and user-friendly." P10

Others claimed,

"Other instructors use 98, 90, etc. to grade their students. Then, their final grades are just converted to their equivalents such as 1.0 or 1.25. Conversion of grades is easier when we use excel. You just need to program it. Life becomes easier." P2

"I do vlogging. I can edit videos. I actually have made my own website, and I am trying to have my own YT channel." P2

"Even if I am education graduate, I was trained to the use computer software." P4

"I can be of help to others when their gadgets are not working well." P1

Technical skills are specific to the use of the technology, independent of pedagogy (Varvel as mentioned by Martin et al., 2019). But the use of appropriate and applicable pedagogies for online education is dependent on the expertise and exposure of users on available information and communications technology. Among the online platforms used for online education include Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Canvas and Blackboard, which allow the teachers to make educational courses, and offer training and skill development programs (Petrie, 2020) for learners. Thus, those who are technologically backward faculty who are involved in teaching online require appropriate professional development or training to be oriented about the different pedagogies devised for online and distance education (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Students also viewed that technically incompetent instructors could not make classes interesting and effective (Muthuprasad et al.,2021).

The results imply that teachers are technologically and technically ready to embrace online teaching especially now that the pandemic hampers the holding of face-to-face classes. Being technologically advanced and technically skilled could be an advantage for teachers to conduct online classes as these give them sufficient instruments and mechanisms to tackle the glitches that this modality could bring.

Table 2. Attitudes of higher education instructors toward online teaching and learning

Statements	Mean	QD
1. I believe that online learning is as rigorous as classroom instruction.	3.26	SA
2. I believe that high quality learning experiences can occur without interacting with students face-to-face.	2.75	A
3. I support the use of online discussion as a means of teaching.	3.26	SA
4. I support learner-to-learner online interaction and collaborative activity as a central means of teaching.	3.24	A
5. I recognize that community building is an important component of online teaching.	3.34	SA
6. I encourage students to bring life experiences into the online classroom and create activities that draw on those experiences.	3.35	SA
7. I believe that lecture is the best way to convey content in mind discipline and can be done online.	3.19	A
8. I feel comfortable communicating online and feel that I'm able to convey who I am in writing.	3.02	A
9. I am a critical thinker and can develop assignments that encourage critical thinking in my students even when done online.	3.21	A
Mean	3.18	A

Shifting from traditional to online teaching and learning may pose significant challenges, but a positive outlook or attitude toward online teaching and learning could help hurdle all challenges. In this study, it's evident that higher education instructors possess a positive attitude toward online learning, recognizing its potential to enhance the quality of education and support various aspects of the learning process.

These are rooted in the instructors' understanding of the usefulness of online learning in several key areas, including:

Positively driven. Instructors can be described to be positively driven or optimistic on the use of online teaching during the time of pandemic since their interest, motivation and self-perceived engagement towards this modality is high. These attitudes can be *vividly deduced from their utterances.*

"...that is exciting! Finally, we could migrate to online teaching. I find it hard to just modular approach in class; it is good that we can use virtual classrooms to meet our students." P2

"Online teaching could be fun. I believe our students also missed being in the classroom, so online teaching could be the best alternative to doing classes especially that we cannot do it face-to-face." P10

"Even if I am one of the seniors in the University, I can go online e we will have a training on this. I am willing to learn." P4

"I tried using Google Meet in class. I also settle using internet at home. Since the university has very open about the idea of using online platforms for the delivery of instruction, I know many are interested to try." P8

There may be overwhelming challenges and obstacles for schools, universities, educators, learners and the government on education, but there were also several opportunities created due to the pandemic to which plans towards online learning and teaching were put forward. Teachers are expected to create innovative initiatives and possess boosting motivation to embrace online teaching methods and strategies. They are expected to collaborate actively with one another, provide creative solutions to problems, and display willingness to learn and try new tools (Doucet et al., 2020).

Salmon (2011) also revealed the need for faculty to possess characteristics such as empathy, creativity, confidence, and flexibility. They should be willing to "try new ways of thinking and acting" which requires "intellectual courage" (Redmond, 2015).

In recent years, the number of instructors who are willing to integrate digital technologies in their classes increased. They found it cost-effective and enhanced students' learning outcomes (Süleyman & Özlem, 2014).

Negatively chased. Negative attitudes among instructors were also observed from the replies of respondents to various questions thrown regarding

online teaching and learning. Some of their responses were,

> *"The internet connection is very slow. How can we go online?" P3*

> *"Our students cannot have online learning frequently. They do not have the resources for this purpose."P2*

> *"I doubt if this could prosper. Probably, it will be alright to just upload the files in available platforms but submissions of students' outputs via online could be hard." P5*

> *"I believe it's difficult for the oldies to teach online. If this will be required, I can just retire anytime and just rear my grandchildren." P6*

> *"My laptop can't be used for online teaching. The specs are too low." P9*

A study about the topic *Examining faculty perception of their readiness to teach online* showed that faculty with little to no experience on online teaching portrayed low perceptions on their ability to pursue this modality (Martin et al., 2019). Thus,

faculty with more online teaching experience are more proficient in performing pedagogical competencies. When online education is offered, there is a need for the educational system key players to be mindful and well-prepared in its implementation since a lack of understanding of this modality could result to the failure the educational programs offered (Phan & Dang, 2017). Further, for online teaching to be successful, several key areas need to be considered such as the access and familiarity with technology use, creation of guidelines and procedures, generation of significant inputs among others (Simonson et al., 2014). As such, being positive about this modality helps a lot in its success.

A change in how education can be offered during pandemic can be recognized with optimism or pessimism of various players. Those who enthusiastically embrace online learning as a modality would use the available resources, their innate abilities and their feelings to adopt to changes. However, those who resist indulging themselves in teaching online have speckled reasons to offer so as not to get into it.

Table 3. Time management and commitment of higher education instructors towards online teaching

Statements	Mean	QD
1. I can log in to an online course at least once a day.	3.23	Agree
2. I can post my online class at least four to five times per week.	3.01	Agree
3. I can manage my time well.	3.16	Agree
4. I can be flexible in dealing with students on such issues as due dates, absences, and makeup assignments.	3.32	Agree
5. I can fairly organize and tend to plan ahead in my teaching.	3.25	Agree
6. I can be responsive to my students, responding to e-mail within 48 hours and assignments within one week.	3.20	Agree
Mean	3.19	Agree

Being able to commit and manage time for online teaching is tantamount to using it successfully. Higher education instructors could be able to manage their time wisely and were committed to engaging themselves in online teaching as per their answers. Further, they revealed that they can fairly organize and tend to plan for their teaching and so with online teaching since they commit to handle their time efficiently to address concerns of students.

These results confirm the various utterances of respondents during the interview and were thematized into:

Committed, Steadfast and Dedicated. Commitment is a big word as it embraces a lot of encouraging and optimistic vibes in the field of teaching.

Respondents were affirmed to be steadfast towards their teaching, and these were observed in their responses.

> *"I work even if I am at home and I do overtime when it is necessary." P2*

> *"I have been in the service for almost 15 years and I believe my commitment to teaching never ceased. It has become my bread and butter." P4*

> *"I started using Google Meet in class to complement my modules. It was not required but I found it as a necessity." P10*

> *"I answer queries even during nigh time. I have a heart for my students. I see to it that I still have*

time to answer their questions even beyond office hours." P7

Being steadfast towards providing uncompromised education to learners amidst the pandemic is a challenge that every teacher needs to face and hurdle. It is necessary that teachers let students know that they are not alone in the learning process and that the faculty member is there to support them (Kelly, 2014). The transition may be an entirely different experience for both teachers and students, but adopting the "education in emergency" necessitates teachers to use available resources that they know and are compelled to know (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). These tests further their dedication and commitment towards teaching.

Time-Efficient and Conscious. Efficiency in time management can contribute to the success of teaching, be it online or face-to-face. Thus, instructors are necessitated to handle time well so as to deliver instruction that students deserve. In this study, as revealed by responses, instructors are time-efficient and conscious.

"I have to plan ahead of time, what to include in the lessons, in the assessment, etc. Due to the bulk of works we have; I manage my time well. I got to prepare 4-5 modules in each semester and these call my time management skills." P7

"I make it a point that in a day, I contact my students. There are times that I need to remind them of the things they are required to submit. I contact them through socmed (social media), they can be reached here more." P1

"I do not bring my works at home. Everything has to be done in school. No dull moments, everything for academics, research and all." P10

"I make sure that my students submit requirements on time." P2

The skills on managing time seemed to be contributory to becoming a competent faculty (Martin et al., 2019). These are faculty spending time outside of work to help students who are educationally struggling and technically stressed (Napier et al., 2011). One of the best practices for time management is the timely response to students' questions, ideally within 24–48 hours (Miller, 2012). Additionally, online faculty should allocate more time for grading, setting aside weekly hours for grading assignments to provide timely feedback for students (Martin et al., 2019).

The developments in the educational system, especially that of technological advancements, necessitate faculty members to adopt new ways and strategies to prepare, organize and deliver courses and learning materials to students. The sudden change in the teaching modality due to pandemic has challenged more the commitment, dedication and efficiency of teachers to deliver the quality of education that students deserve. Teaching online requires them to reconstruct their roles, responsibilities, and practices. It also urges them to consider the instructional time and space, the online teaching management techniques, and the ability to engage students in the online learning process.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The emergence of online teaching in higher education became a critical response during the pandemic when traditional face-to-face classes were no longer feasible. This transition has pushed the practice of online teaching into the forefront of education to a point where faculty members have found it increasingly challenging to resist its adoption. However, as higher education institutions make this shift, it is essential to assess comprehensively the preparedness or readiness of faculty members.

The primary aim of this study was to gauge the readiness of higher education instructors within a state university. The assessment encompassed various dimensions, including the availability and ownership of digital devices, access to internet connections and their sources, and internet speed. Additionally, the study delved into the technological capabilities and technical skills of instructors, their attitudes toward online teaching and learning, and their ability to manage time and commit to online teaching. The findings offer valuable insights into the state of readiness among these educators.

The study revealed that a significant number of instructors possess digital devices, such as laptops and smartphones, which are instrumental in facilitating online teaching. In terms of internet connectivity, the majority relied on wireless sources, while internet speed ranged from slow to moderate. Despite these varying speeds, it was found that online teaching activities, such as slow to moderate streaming, online gaming, downloading, email communication, and web surfing, could be accommodated, particularly when reducing the number of connected devices.

Instructors were described as well-equipped with the necessary skills, both technological and technical, to effectively engage in online teaching. They exhibited a high level of technological proficiency and technical competence based on their responses. Moreover, they displayed positive attitudes toward embracing online teaching, although some showed resistance to this strategy. These educators were noted for their commitment to their roles and effective time management, both during and beyond scheduled class hours.

It is worth noting that not all faculty members may be required to transition to online teaching, as this demands specific skills, competencies, attitudes, and commitment. Identifying the constraints affecting faculty readiness is crucial in this context. This information allows institutions to develop targeted faculty development programs and informs the creation of necessary plans and procedures for conducting classes while addressing the ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic.

In conclusion, this study illuminates the various aspects of preparing faculty for teaching online in a higher education setting. It highlights the importance of evaluating and understanding faculty readiness in order to support a smooth transition to online learning during these challenging times.

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