

# The Lived Experiences of Public High School English Teachers in Technology Utilization in The New Normal

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*Abstract* — This study aims to describe and understand the lived experiences of purposively selected public high school English teachers in technology utilization within the "new normal" educational landscape of Cabuyao City, Laguna, Philippines. Employing a transcendental phenomenological research design, the investigation specifically explores the participants' direct experiences with digital tools and how they navigate the associated challenges and demands. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed using Moustakas's systematic approach, which involves bracketing, horizontalization, theme clustering, and the development of textural and structural descriptions to reach the overall essence of the phenomenon. The results reveal that technology is viewed as an inexorable means that facilitates creative, interactive, and engaging remote instruction, although its effectiveness is often hindered by the digital divide and insufficient technical support. Key findings highlight that teachers cope with these challenges through adaptability, collaborative expertise, and self-directed upskilling, ultimately viewing technological know-how as a critical component for enhancing student motivation and achieving desired learning outcomes. The study concludes that while technology utilization presents significant hurdles, it serves as a powerful catalyst for a "teaching competency renaissance," driving educators toward greater innovation and resourcefulness in their professional practice.

*Keywords* — English teachers, lived experience, new normal education, technology utilization

## I. Introduction

Technology integration in the modern classroom is defined as the strategic application of digital equipment to facilitate instruction, though its impact on student learning is mediated by the quality of teacher support and pedagogical implementation. While approximately 90% of K-12 teachers view technology as vital for student success, a significant 60% feel unprepared and lack sufficient training (Roland, 2015, as cited by Aldred, 2020), a figure bolstered by Bolkan (2017), who found that nearly 78% of educators reported a lack of effective technical training. Modern learning technology researchers view the internet not merely as a delivery medium but as a transformative tool to enhance learning quality through "participatory" educational approaches (Riel & Polin, 2018; Barab, Squire, & Dueber, 2020). Despite global investments in digital infrastructure, such as those noted in Vietnam (Pham, 2019), the digital divide persists as educators

often struggle to keep pace with the technological fluency of their students (Friedman & Alley, 2010; Gibson, 2001; Groff, 2013, as cited by Aldred, 2020).

In the Philippines, educational leaders recognize the urgent need for alternative instructional approaches like flipped learning and blended models (Westermann, 2018; Barshay, 2019). However, substantial concerns remain regarding the support provided to educators navigating the "new normal" and post-pandemic landscape. Effective technology utilization is now recognized as a critical factor in Project-Based Learning (PBL) success and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), requiring teachers to align digital tools with specific competencies and instructional goals (Rahmawati et al., 2020; Sana et al., 2016).

The researchers of this study identified a critical gap in the existing literature: while technology usage is widely studied globally, there is a dearth of research investigating the lived experiences of English teachers within the specific context of the new normal in the Philippines. Furthermore, no phenomenological research on this phenomenon has been conducted in the locale of Cabuyao City, Laguna. Consequently, the researchers of this study conducted this investigation to describe and understand the essence of technology utilization among public high school English teachers. This study is timely as it seeks to provide a deeper qualitative analysis of how educators navigate technological demands to achieve positive learning outcomes during a period of unprecedented educational transition.

### **Research Questions**

This phenomenological study aims at describing and understanding the lived experience of selected public high school English teachers in technology utilization at Cabuyao Integrated National High School, Cabuyao City, Laguna in the new normal education. Specifically, it addresses the following central questions:

1. What are the public high school English teachers lived experiences in technology utilization in the new normal?
2. How do public high school English teachers face the challenges and demands in technology utilization in the new normal?

## **II. Methodology**

### *Research Design*

The researcher of this study adopted a transcendental phenomenological research design to capture the depth and essence of the participants' personal and professional narratives, specifically following the psychological phenomenology approach expounded by Moustakas (1994). This design was selected to explore technology utilization as a "phenomenon" through the eyes of those who experienced it firsthand. Transcendental phenomenology emphasizes the "epoche" or

bracketing of the researcher's own experiences to achieve a fresh and unbiased perspective on the participant's reality.

#### *Locale of the Study*

The study was conducted at Cabuyao Integrated National High School in Cabuyao City, Laguna, Philippines. This setting provided a representative environment of a public high school navigating the transition into the "new normal" educational landscape.

#### *Participants and Sampling*

The researcher of this study used purposive sampling to select eight (8) public high school English teachers. The selection criteria focused on teachers who were directly involved in utilizing technology for English instruction during the Academic Year 2022-2023. All participants were non-native English speakers who primarily used Tagalog as their first language, but they were encouraged to express themselves in whichever language they felt most comfortable with to avoid communication barriers.

#### *Instrumentation and Validation*

The primary instrument used was a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide protocol. The interview protocol was designed to address two central questions regarding the participants' lived experiences and how they faced associated challenges.

- *Structure:* The guide consisted of open-ended probing questions designed to elicit detailed narrative accounts.
- *Validation:* Preliminary interviews were conducted to ensure participant accessibility and to refine the clarity of the questions.
- *Verification:* To ensure validity and credibility, the researchers utilized a verification step where synthesized responses were returned to the participants for confirmation of the "essence" obtained.

#### *Data Gathering Procedure*

Data were collected through online and face-to-face in-depth interviews. Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with an Informed Consent Form detailing the study's background, rationale, and confidentiality protocols. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate representation of the participants' voices.

#### *Process of Analysis*

The researcher of this study followed Moustakas's (1994) systematic approach for thematic analysis:

1. *Bracketing (Epoche)*: Setting aside preconceived notions and personal experiences.
2. *Horizontalization*: Listing significant statements from the transcripts and giving them equal value.
3. *Theme Clustering*: Grouping significant statements into clusters of meaning or themes while removing repetitive data.
4. *Textural Description*: Writing a description of *what* the participants experienced.
5. *Structural Description*: Writing a description of *how* the context influenced their experience (imaginative variation).
6. *Overall Essence*: Synthesizing the textural and structural descriptions into a composite description of the phenomenon's "essence".

### *Scope and Limitations*

The scope of this study is limited to the lived experiences of eight English teachers at only one public high school in Cabuyao City during the Academic Year 2022-2023. While the study provides deep qualitative insights into technology utilization in the "new normal," the small sample size and specific geographic focus mean the findings are not intended for broad statistical generalization. Additionally, the study relies on the participants' honesty and ability to articulate their subjective experiences.

## **III. Results and Discussion**

### **RESULTS**

The findings of this study, derived from the transcendental phenomenological analysis of the narratives provided by eight public high school English teachers, are presented through a comprehensive narrative organized by the central research questions.

#### *I. Lived Experiences of English Teachers in Technology Utilization*

The participants' experiences revealed a landscape where technology has transitioned from an optional tool to an inexorable means of instruction. Teachers described a shift where digital platforms such as Nearpod, Quizziz, and Wordwall have become essential for delivering creative and interactive lessons that "disconnect" students from conventional learning methods. This transition facilitated remote instruction and synchronous collaboration through tools like Google Meet, allowing for real-time engagement and resource sharing.

However, this transition was not without significant friction. A primary component of the lived experience involved navigating system support and access barriers. Participants frequently cited the "digital divide," where both teachers and students lacked stable internet access or the necessary hardware to participate fully. Furthermore, the experience was often "overwhelming and confusing" due to the sudden requirement to manage multiple unfamiliar platforms simultaneously.

Despite these hurdles, technological know-how emerged as a critical factor for instructional success. Teachers realized that their proficiency directly influenced their ability to achieve desired learning outcomes and boost student engagement. Those who felt more competent described technology as a powerful tool that facilitated personalized instruction and accommodated diverse learning styles, ultimately yielding a more enjoyable and interesting teaching-learning process.

## *II. Navigating Challenges and Demands*

To overcome the obstacles of the "new normal," the participants employed several coping mechanisms and mindsets:

- *Adaptability and Flexibility:* The majority of participants identified adaptability as the "pioneering reason" they were able to continue teaching effectively. This involved a constant willingness to adjust strategies to meet the evolving needs of students in a dynamic digital landscape.
- *The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Approach and Collaboration:* Facing a lack of formal institutional training, teachers took personal initiative for their professional development. This included self-study, attending various webinars, and engaging in "collaborative expertise" where they learned from tech-savvy peers to improve their digital literacy.
- *Turning Roadblocks into Opportunities:* Rather than being deterred by technical difficulties, teachers viewed these challenges as catalysts for growth. This mindset allowed them to explore modern technologies and integrate current trends into their pedagogy, which they believed improved their holistic well-being and productivity.
- *Harnessing Student Engagement:* A core strategy was the use of interactive games and multimedia resources to counteract the isolation of remote learning. By creating aesthetically attractive resources, teachers were able to trigger heightened participation and improve motivation among learners who previously struggled with academic performance.

## *Overall Essence: A Teaching Competency Renaissance*

The synthesis of these experiences reveals an overarching essence: the "New Normal" has sparked a professional renaissance among English teachers. While initially characterized by struggle and technical unreadiness, the journey through technology utilization resulted in educators

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who are more creative, innovative, and resourceful. The participants concluded that technology, when paired with a resilient and committed mindset, serves as a "competence booster" that elevates their confidence and effectiveness in delivering 21st-century education.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a profound understanding of the lived experiences of English teachers navigating the digital shift in Cabuyao City. The following discussion synthesizes the identified themes with existing literature and the theoretical frameworks that grounded this inquiry.

### *The Inexorable Necessity of Technology*

The results indicating that technology is an "inexorable means" and an "empowering facet" (Themes 1 & 4) align with the views of Riel and Polin (2018), who posit that the internet is a potential means to enhance the quality of learning experiences. The researchers of this study interpret this as a shift in teacher perception: technology is no longer a peripheral tool but the core infrastructure of the "new normal." This consistency with Barab, Squire, and Dueber (2020) suggests that the participants successfully moved toward "participatory" educational approaches by utilizing interactive platforms to build digital communities.

### *The Persistence of the Digital Divide*

Despite the empowering nature of these tools, the theme of "system support and access barriers" (Theme 2) remains a significant concern. This finding is consistent with the warnings of Friedman and Alley (2010) and Groff (2013), as cited by Aldred (2020), regarding the digital divide. The researchers of this study observed that while teachers are willing to innovate, the lack of infrastructure— noted similarly by Pham (2019) in developing contexts—acts as a deterrent. This highlights a gap between the "perceived usefulness" of the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and the "perceived ease of use" hindered by external technical limitations.

### *The Renaissance of Teaching Competency*

A critical outcome of this study is the emergence of a "teaching competency renaissance" (Theme 11). The researchers of this study interpret this as the practical application of the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). By navigating challenges through "collaborative expertise and DIY strategies" (Theme 8), teachers moved beyond simple knowledge of content to a sophisticated integration of technology and pedagogy. This evolution supports the findings of Rahmawati et al. (2020), who emphasized that a teacher's ability to guide the learning process through technology is paramount for success.

### *Impact on Student Engagement and Performance*

The themes of "reinvigorating student involvement" and being a "galvanizing instrument for performance" (Themes 5 & 10) reinforce the ideas of Barshay (2019) regarding the importance of introducing students to blended learning to prepare them for future advances. The researchers of this study found that when teachers leveraged challenges into possibilities (Theme 9), they were able to meet the standards of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) as described by Sana et al. (2016). This confirms that technology utilization, when executed with teacher ingenuity, directly influences student motivation and academic exit outcomes.

### *Interpretation through the Fusion of Horizons*

Finally, the transition from being "overwhelmed" to achieving "resourcefulness" illustrates Gadamer's (1975) theory of fusion of horizons. The researchers of this study interpret the participants' journey as a process where their initial "horizons" (limited digital skills) expanded and fused with the demands of the new normal. This dialectic process allowed them to see beyond their immediate surroundings (Vessey, 2007) and adopt a more globalized, tech-savvy professional identity.

In conclusion, the results are largely consistent with the literature regarding the necessity of training and the barriers of the digital divide, yet they offer a unique optimistic insight into how public school teachers in the Philippines transform these systemic challenges into a catalyst for professional rebirth.

## **IV. Conclusion**

Based on the synthesis of the textural and structural descriptions provided by the participants, the researcher of this study has formulated the following conclusions regarding the essence of technology utilization:

1. Technology has transitioned from a supplementary aid to a fundamental infrastructure within the "new normal" instructional landscape. It serves as a potent instrument that empowers educators to transcend traditional delivery methods, facilitating seamless peer communication and the systematic distribution of learning activities, assessments, and feedback. The researchers of this study conclude that the efficacy of learning engagement is no longer dependent solely on content, but on a multidimensional synergy of factors. These include the teacher's digital instructional guidance, the robustness of the learning framework, and the student's technological self-efficacy and interests (Rahmawati et al., 2020). By providing unprecedented access to information and accelerating cognitive acquisition, technology enables students to navigate complex conceptual terrains and achieve higher levels of practical application (American University's School of Education Online, 2020).

2. The navigation of systemic challenges by high school English teachers reveals a profound shift from passive adoption to active, strategic resilience. The researchers of this study conclude that adaptability and iterative adjustment serve as the essential prerequisites for digital survival. Rather than viewing technological demands as insurmountable barriers, educators have reframed them as catalysts for innovation and high-impact professional performance. This transition is characterized by a "Do-It-Yourself" (DIY) ethos and a culture of collaborative expertise, which function as critical coping mechanisms for technical deficiencies. By internalizing these difficulties as opportunities for self-improvement, teachers have harnessed technology not merely as a delivery medium, but as a "competence booster." This process has effectively sparked a professional renaissance, reinvigorating student participation and ensuring that English language instruction remains relevant and engaging within the contemporary digital milieu.

## V. Recommendations

Considering the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher elicited the following recommendations for expected actions and future directions:

1. Technology utilization is a tremendous challenge for teachers; therefore, they must arm themselves with the fundamental knowledge to provide more interesting and interactive lessons using various online platforms such as, but not limited to, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Nearpod, Word Wall, and so on.
2. The school administration and the Department of Education, in general, should and must lay down a solid foundation in terms of providing system support and technology access by increasing the budget for teachers' professional development necessary for constant and continuing technology upskilling programs.
3. Technological knowledge is imperative among teachers in this age of technological advancements, hence a professional development program at the school level must be initiated by the school administration to harness their full potential being a crucial element in the effective learning delivery to students.
4. Technology is a decisive instrument in the teaching-learning process. Therefore, teachers must devise techniques to overcome challenges to accomplish the targeted learning outcomes of the lesson. It can be done through investments in training, intensification of research, and self-study.
5. Teachers should make the teaching and learning process more fascinating, dynamic, engaging, and enjoyable to improve students' academic performance using technology by exhausting their potential and utility to enhance students' poor performance.

6. Teachers should acknowledge that adaptability and flexibility to effectively utilize technology are key aspects in creating a learning environment that meets the requirements of students. Technology tools should be an integral part of the lesson. Teachers must remain competitive to deliver the finest, if not the best, service to their students.

7. School administrators and supervisors should provide technical assistance to increase teacher productivity and student engagement.

8. Teachers must take time to explore new technologies to capacitate themselves through investment in training, collaborative expertise, and DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Strategy as coping mechanisms.

9. Regardless of the complexity of technology use, teachers must view it not as a hindrance to their competency, but rather as an impetus to equip themselves with the necessary tools and knowledge to develop their craft as teachers.

10. Teachers must ensure technology usage is strengthened to increase student engagement and become more productive, and creative.

11. Technological knowledge is a gamechanger in education specifically as a teaching competence booster. Teachers developed and maintained an orderly environment that fosters a learner-centered and learner-friendly climate as they delved deeper into technology utilization.

12. Future researchers should do a follow-up study utilizing alternative research methods or components to examine deeper into the context of understanding English teachers' lived experiences with technology utilization in the new usual context. Similarly, another study should be undertaken utilizing various research approaches to analyze how teachers cope with or manage the demands and challenges of technology use to improve learning engagement and the delivery of desired learning outcomes for students.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

The researchers of this study strictly adhered to established ethical protocols throughout the duration of this research undertaking. Prior to the commencement of data collection, informed consent was formally obtained from all eight participants, ensuring they were fully apprised of the study's purpose, procedures, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Every respondent was explicitly informed of his/her freedom to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or prejudice. To ensure the integrity of the data and protect the identities of the educators involved, strict anonymity was maintained by using codes or pseudonyms, and all personal information was kept highly confidential. The researchers prioritized the participants' well-being, ensuring that the

interviews were conducted in a supportive environment that safeguarded their emotional and professional welfare. Furthermore, the researchers declare that no conflict of interest exists in the conduct of this study, as the investigation was driven purely by academic inquiry and the desire to contribute to the field of educational technology. Intellectual honesty was paramount; plagiarism was strictly avoided through the meticulous citations and the accurate attribution of all scholarly works. All results and narratives generated from this study are used purely for research purposes, aimed at shedding light on the lived experiences of teachers for the betterment of the academic community.

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