

Using a Teaching Framework to Identify Resilient and Persistent Teaching Practices During the Pandemic

Ma. Monica L. MORENO*, Johanna Marion R. TORRES, Timothy Jireh GASPAR,
Jenilyn A. CASANO & Maria Mercedes T. RODRIGO

Ateneo Laboratory for the Learning Sciences, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

**mmoreno@ateneo.edu*

Abstract: This paper uses the Framework for Teaching (FFT) by Charlotte Danielson as a lens to examine intra-pandemic educational practices of instructors at a higher education institution in the Philippines. It highlights teaching practices that have shown resilience and persistence over the nearly three years of the pandemic, during which education shifted from in-person delivery to one entirely online. Data from faculty surveys and interviews obtained in 2020 and 2023 showed a persistent set of practices that addresses all dimensions of teaching. Implications for post-pandemic education are briefly discussed.

Keywords: COVID-19, higher education, teaching framework, teaching practices

1. Introduction

Although the world has now returned to normal, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational practice has been far-reaching (Govindaraju et al, 2023). Yet, with or without the use of technology, sound teaching practices remain the same (National Research Council, 2000). Frameworks that assess teaching practice imply effectiveness regardless of teaching environment (White, 2017). The Framework for Teaching (FFT) (Danielson, 1996) breaks teaching practice into four domains: (1) planning and preparation; (2) the classroom environment; (3) instruction; and (4) professional responsibilities. Using the FFT, this paper highlights teaching practices that have shown resilience and persistence during the almost three years of the pandemic (March 2020 – 2022), when onsite education shifted entirely online. Resilience implies adaptability, allowing individuals to overcome challenges, and persistence can be described as a steadfast action pushing forward regardless of setbacks. Both traits are embodied in the ability to work continuously regardless of change in the environment (Raghunathan, Singh & Sharma, 2022). This study attempts to answer the following research question: How did faculty in a Philippine university adapt their pedagogy to accommodate the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the online teaching environment? Implications for post-pandemic education are briefly discussed.

2. Literature Review

From March 2020 onwards, literature has documented the increasing sophistication of online educational practices by which higher education institutions have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic (Govindaraju et al, 2023; Rasli et al, 2022). Many of these studies have highlighted the critical role played by a teacher's knowledge and skills in effective online learning (Chaturvedi et al, 2021; Long, 2023). However, although studies on online educational practices over the pandemic have continued to grow, information about the quality of these practices or best practice principles for online instruction has been lacking (Crawford et al, 2020; Echevarria et al, 2022).

Frameworks for professional standards specify areas of competence that teachers need to exhibit for successful student achievement (White, 2017). One such framework, the Framework for Teaching (FFT) (Danielson, 1996), has been successfully used for teacher evaluations globally (Griffin, 2013; The Danielson Group, 2022). The FFT divides teaching competencies into four domains. *Domain 1, Planning and Preparation*, describes how teachers plan and organize instruction for learning. *Domain 2, Learning Environments*, focuses on establishing a safe and respectful class environment and a culture of student wellbeing. *Domain 3, Learning Experiences*, highlights student engagement and responses to student needs. *Domain 4, Principled Teaching*, focuses on deliberate professional growth and development. Through the FFT, one can gain insight into effective teaching practices that have shown persistence and resilience during the pandemic.

3. Methodology

The data used in this study was collected as part of two research endeavors. The first endeavor took place in 2020 as part of a multi-institutional and multinational study that investigated the experiences of faculty, students, and administrators with ERT when COVID-19 first emerged (Bartolic et al, 2021). The second research endeavor occurred in 2023, concentrating exclusively on data from a higher education institution in the Philippines. It aimed to investigate faculty experiences during the academic years of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, which featured PFOI. The second study built upon the 2020 version and used the same data collection instruments; however, some items were modified and additional questions were included to help better understand the two school years in focus. The current paper uses faculty responses from both the 2020 and 2023 data sets to highlight teaching practices that persisted throughout the nearly three years of the pandemic, when teaching and learning were exclusively delivered online.

3.1 Participants

In both the 2020 and the 2023 studies, participants included faculty members and students from selected departments: Computer Science, History, Psychology, Political Science, and Chemistry. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to ensure proportional representation from each department. In the 2020 iteration, 112 faculty members were invited, with 45 agreeing to participate; 45 completed the survey and 31 consented to be interviewed. For the 2023 follow-up, faculty who had taught in both AY 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 were prioritized. Eighty-one (81) faculty members were invited to join the study, and 31 consented. All completed the survey and 24 were interviewed. Table 1 shows a summary of participants.

Table 1. Participants in the study

Online Delivery Mode	Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT)	Planned Fully Online Instruction (PFOI)
School Year	March – May 2020	2020-2021 2021-2022
Total Participants	45	24 31

3.2 Research Instruments

Participants were asked to accomplish a web-based self-administered survey questionnaire and a virtual semi-structured interview. Both research instruments asked teachers to focus only on one course they had taught during AY 2020-2021 and AY 2021-2022, during which PFOI was implemented. The questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes to complete, and

contained 70 core questions about course features, course content, assessment, communications and student engagement. A scheduled interview then followed, in which additional questions about changes made to the course, teacher training takeaways and opinions on the impact of PFOI experience on post-pandemic education were asked.

3.3 Procedure

Eighty-one (81) faculty members were originally sent an email invitation to participate in the study. Thirty-one (31) consented to join and were automatically provided a link to the self-administered web-based survey questionnaire. All participants completed the survey. The researchers were also automatically prompted to arrange individual interviews. Twenty-four teachers (24) were interviewed. Each lasted 30 minutes to 1 hour, were recorded and later transcribed. Data from both survey questionnaires and interviews were tabulated and summarized. The questions from the 2020 and 2023 data sets were then fed into the FFT according to the various components and domains that were most closely addressed. In this way, educational practices seen to address the various dimensions emerged.

3.4 Limitations

Virtual interviews were conducted due to their flexibility and convenience. However, this meant that the research team was unable to note any extralinguistic cues and behaviors that could have added to the richness of the data (Hewson, 2015). Another limitation is that the small sample size prevents findings from being generalized across faculty in the higher education institution. Finally, the study does not aim at comparing faculty responses per department; rather, it looks at general teacher experiences during the online teaching period.

4. Results

This section answers the question: How did faculty adapt their pedagogy to accommodate the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the online teaching environment?

The first dimension of the FFT, Planning and Preparation, describes the teacher's work of understanding the curriculum and preparing activities to help students learn important content, skills, mindsets and habits. Both 2020 and 2023 data sets highlighted three components – demonstrating knowledge of resources, designing coherent instruction, and assessing student learning. A demonstration of knowledge of resources implies systematic search and use. The participants mostly agreed with the statements “I knew how to find good teaching materials online” and “I used teaching materials that I found online”, with this number increasing significantly by Year 3 of the pandemic (SY 2021-2022). Prior to the pandemic, instructors were generally more comfortable using physical handouts in class, rather than real-time websites and other online materials. To prepare for PFOI, faculty had to look online for resources. The study's results show that most teachers were victorious in finding useful online teaching materials during the pandemic.

Another evident component of planning and preparation was the design of coherent instruction. Nowhere was this practice more evident than during the ERT period, when teachers used multiple approaches to prepare their students for the pivot to online learning, such as written instructions, online interactive sessions, and self-made videos. These practices persisted when students were oriented on PFOI for SY 2020-2021, and carried on during SY 2021-2022.

The months after ERT gave teachers enough time for training to properly modify and curate their courses for PFOI. Faculty were taught how to maximize features of an LMS such as discussion forums and video integration. They were also instructed to partition their course into modules. Students had to complete one module to move to the next. As noted by a teacher, *“the modular setup...was most beneficial to student learning.”* Another said, *“It kind of solidified you in progression.”* This practice helped teachers streamline course content and allow longer periods for students to produce better output.

Planning and preparation also entails the assessment of student learning to check the degree to which lessons target instructional goals. 2020 data showed that once ERT was mandated, faculty had difficulty meeting instructional goals. Pivoting from onsite to unplanned online teaching caused the elimination of academic topics and assessment tasks that could not be shifted online, such as field work. Consequently, during ERT, over half of the faculty cohorts (24, or 53%) disagreed with the survey item “I was able to stay true to my original teaching goals and objectives.” However, in 2021, this number decreased to 12.5% (3/24) and 10% (3/31) in 2022. Module use was instrumental in discarding non-essential assessment tasks and helping teachers adhere to their original teaching goals. As one teacher put it, *“we trimmed the assessments that we were going for in order to ensure we were adequately giving time to discuss also and to give inputs.”*

The second dimension, The Classroom Environment, describes how a teacher sets up a learning environment that makes students feel safe to express themselves. Most faculty responses highlighted one major component -- the creation of an environment of respect and rapport. To maintain interaction with students, teachers used a variety of communication channels – LMS bulletin boards and email blasts, social media and video conferencing. Teachers also practiced *kamustahan* or wellbeing check-in sessions and deliberately reached out to students more frequently than before the pandemic. They also exercised leniency and consideration for students’ emotional welfare. One teacher noted, *“I was more lenient with them in terms of submissions; even if they submitted late, I really didn’t deduct grades.”* Faculty continued to practice leniency in requirements and deadlines over the pandemic; they gave higher grades than they normally would during this period.

Dimension Three, Instruction (or learning experiences), describes student engagement in purposeful and success-oriented learning experiences. 2020 and 2023 interviews revealed the presence of three components under this dimension: (1) active participation through questioning and discussion techniques, (2) the engagement of students in learning, and (3) the demonstration of flexibility and responsiveness. Prior to the pandemic, most instructors encouraged student participation through class discussions, collaborative work and demonstrations. These activities ceased with ERT; synchronous discussions became lectures due to lack of student responses. In 2021, some teachers began to supplement synchronous classes with regular consultations to increase student participation. Originally optional prior to the pandemic, students were now made to work in groups and then asked to present current work during these consultations. The practice of combining collaborative learning and small group consultations stimulated lively discussions. As one teacher put it, *“I think the consultation time for [each] group is really supportive. We were able to give feedback real time after the presentation.”* Moreover, the online consultations also afforded teachers more flexibility in terms of scheduling. As a result, according to one teacher, *“We were not limited in terms of scheduling availability. So the limits/barriers to consultation were lessened in a way.”*

The fourth dimension, Professional Responsibilities or Principled Teaching, describes a teacher’s deliberate professional growth. To help with the transition to PFOI, faculty members were invited to attend university-wide training on learning design and the use of an LMS. Teachers were also retooled in student-centered skills such as active listening and facilitation. Most teachers felt that their professional skills were enhanced by such training. An additional component, reflecting on teaching, highlighted instructors’ insights on the most beneficial changes they made to their courses when these moved online. ERT and PFOI interviews revealed a variety of beneficial online teaching practices. One teacher said, *“The online setup oriented me with additional tools, which I can employ even in an in-person setting.”* Other teachers cited the injection of more student-centered activities such as guided note-taking – worksheets which helped students take notes as they played back instructional videos. Another beneficial practice was a support system in the form of group work, chat groups and group consultations. Next, a pastoral approach in the form of the check-in or *kamustahan* sessions was seen to have helped students’ wellbeing immensely (*“I make it a point to ask each of them how they were...”*). The check-in sessions gave the faculty opportunities to act not only as teachers, but also as mentors and friends. Some teachers also pointed out that the modular approach helped them streamline course content and allowed longer periods for

students to produce better output. Finally, the use of learning hours helped students learn to manage their time. Table 2 presents a summary of these practices.

Table 2. Changes in practice to support student learning

“In your judgement, after the move to a fully online setup, what were the most beneficial changes you made to <course> to support student learning?”	
ERT (March – May 2020)	Planned fully online instruction (AY 2020-2021; AY 2021-2022)
Teaching approach: check-in (<i>kamustahan</i>) sessions before the start of class, leniency	✓
Online tools: student engagement apps, podcasts	Add: LMS, video conferencing platforms Activities: reflection prompts, guided note-taking Content: use of modules, programmed assessments Support system: group work, chat groups, group consultations Learning hours: estimated time needed to finish a module

5. Discussion

This study offers insights into how faculty at a higher education institution in the Philippines adapted their pedagogical practices over the pandemic years, during which education was first delivered through ERT and then through PFOI. Using the FFT (Danielson, 1996), it highlights practices that showed persistence and resilience online.

Planning and preparation strategies showed resilience by migrating from traditional physical resources to more digital-enabled teaching. Objectives in course syllabi were redesigned as modules. Efforts to create respectful and secure spaces persisted online with the adoption of various digital communication platforms for interaction. Wellbeing check-in sessions were much appreciated and were held frequently before the start of class. Group work, group consultations and flexible consultation hours showed persistence and resilience, while the practice of leniency in deadlines and grades was adopted for student wellbeing.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of professional growth. Over the pandemic, teachers underwent critical skill training and showed continuous learning and adaptation to class situations. This emphasizes the significant role of teacher training in ensuring that faculty in the broader community are well-equipped to adapt to student needs. Regular faculty upskill programs and support systems can ensure that all are prepared for future educational challenges.

6. Conclusion

The intra-pandemic experiences of faculty at a higher education institution in the Philippines, explored through the Framework for Teaching (FFT), shows how teaching practices persisted and adapted to suit the online environment and achieve meaningful student learning. From the expansion of digital resource use to the creation of supportive online learning environments, such practices formed the core of innovative and flexible pedagogy during the

pandemic. It is essential to continue encouraging these adaptive teaching methods, supporting faculty through training to ensure they are prepared for educational challenges and opportunities in the future and beyond.

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