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The Lived Experiences of Seasoned Teachers Teaching in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

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Introduction

The rapid move to digital presentation and connectivity has posed difficult roadblocks for the teaching staffs, particularly those seasoned teachers who entered their practice at what were largely conventional face-to-face learning sites (Trust & Whalen, 2020). They now are charged with the task of adapting well-established pedagogical practices to the demands of technology-mediated instruction while simultaneously managing sometimes unfamiliar digital tools and instructional methods (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2019).

Seasoned teachers can be identified by large amounts of teaching experience, strong pedagogical content knowledge and prolonged classroom practice. Although these positives create a strong base for instruction, adapting to digital teaching environments is difficult for teachers who are less comfortable with technology and did not get much exposure to online tools at the beginnings of their careers. And, thus teachers' ability to integrate technology is affected, not only access to resources, but confidence, beliefs about technology and experience of professional development (Buschmann & Fiore 2025).

Research also suggested that with the sudden transition to digital and blended mode, it has caused teachers' added instructional burden and prolonged tension (Enarsao, 2023). This issue is prominently concern among seasoned teachers who feel ill-prepared and unsupported for technology supported teaching. Such experiences are often charged with tension, frustration and fears of inadequacy-illustrating the emotional and professional aspects of teaching in a digital age (Macrohon et al., 2023).

In the case of the Philippines, Dep-Ed has pursued policies that support technology integration, blended learning and lifelong professional development (De Los Reyes & Paglinawan, 2025). These endeavors are embodied in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers and reflected in Dep-Ed Order No. 21, s. 2019 (Dep-Ed, 2019). In spite of these measures, it showed that teachers in schools at the rural and coastal scales still face persistent challenges such as restricted use of digital devices, poor internet connection. Lack of technology-oriented professional development is another concern that emerged.

These contextual limitations exert considerable influence on how seasoned teachers approach and react to digital teaching requirements. Their professional development is not only based on what the institutions expect but also on the context in which they teach, available support systems and personal confidence in internet use. Existing research offers useful insights into technology use in teaching and learning, but the literature tends to focus on technical skills or student results. Very little is known about the personal, professional and emotional experiences of seasoned teachers who are teaching in a digital age, particularly within local contexts where resources are limited.

These lived experiences are important to the capturing of the human face of education change. Understanding how seasoned teachers understand digital teaching requirements can help to design more responsive models of professional development, school-based support structures, and policy that values teacher expertise, while at the same time responds to teachers' changing technological needs. Hence, this study aims to explore the experiences of seasoned teachers teaching in the digital age at Jimenez District, Misamis Occidental. Through their struggles, coping strategies, and professional reflection, the study seeks to provide perspectives that can inform teacher support, improve instructional practice, and inform educational policy on the ground in digital changing learning environments for seasoned teachers.

Methods

The study investigated the lived experiences of seasoned teachers in navigating technology-mediated instruction in the digital age. Using a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design, the study involved 13 purposively selected seasoned teachers from public elementary, integrated, and secondary schools in Jimenez District, Misamis Occidental, who had at least ten years of teaching experience and limited exposure to digital technologies. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, allowing recurring experiences, challenges, adaptation strategies, and professional growth to emerge as meaningful themes. The study provides insights into how seasoned teachers respond and adapt to the increasing demands of digital teaching, highlighting their resilience, coping strategies, and continuing professional transformation in technology-mediated learning environments.

Results and Discussions

Theme 1. Digital Struggles and Challenges in Technology Integration

The experiences of seasoned teachers reveal that adapting to digital teaching involves interconnected technological, emotional, generational, and instructional challenges. Participants reported difficulty operating laptops, preparing and presenting PowerPoint presentations, connecting laptops to televisions, and resolving connectivity and device problems. These difficulties were intensified by limited prior exposure to digital technologies, causing some teachers to depend on colleagues whenever technical problems occurred. One participant recalled struggling with a laptop and PowerPoint during the first attempt, while another described how the signal would suddenly disappear when connecting the laptop to the television. Such experiences demonstrate that digital integration requires more than simply providing technological devices; teachers also need sufficient knowledge, confidence, and practical skills to operate them independently. The manuscript supports these findings through Ramos and Flores (2022) and Gudmundsdottir and Hatlevik (2021), which associate limited digital exposure with difficulty in technology use, while Dela Cruz (2021) emphasizes how limited resources and infrastructure further complicate technology integration in the Philippine setting.

The challenge is also deeply emotional and psychological. Participants experienced nervousness, sweating, frustration, discouragement, and lack of confidence when technology failed during instruction. For example, ST8 stated, “*Samot nako nakulbaan kay nagtuyok-tuyok naman dayon, nagloading,*” describing nervousness when the device continued loading, while ST10 admitted becoming discouraged when unable to return to the PowerPoint presentation. Some participants consequently preferred traditional teaching because it provided familiarity and a greater sense of control. These experiences suggest that resistance to technology should not automatically be interpreted as unwillingness to change; rather, it may emerge from repeated stressful experiences and uncertainty in using unfamiliar tools. The manuscript relates these experiences to technostress and cites OECD (2021), World Health Organization (2022), Oducado and Estoque (2021), Selwyn (2021), and Gudmundsdottir and Hatlevik (2021), emphasizing that technological adaptation involves both technical competence and emotional confidence.

These difficulties also affected teachers’ workload and actual classroom instruction. Preparing digital lessons, setting up equipment, practicing procedures beforehand, and troubleshooting devices required additional time and effort. When technological problems occurred during class, teachers sometimes returned to chalk-and-talk, books, or printed activity sheets so that instruction could continue. One participant explained that connecting the laptop to the television was “time consuming,” while another reported practicing before class to avoid problems during the actual lesson. Teachers therefore carried a dual responsibility: they had to deliver the lesson while simultaneously managing the technology needed to support it. The manuscript connects the increased workload associated with digital instruction with the World Bank (2021). At the same time, the participants’ immediate return to alternative teaching materials demonstrates that traditional methods continued to serve as important backup strategies when digital systems failed. Thus, the central issue was not simply whether seasoned teachers accepted technology, but whether they had sufficient skills, infrastructure, time, and confidence to integrate it consistently into classroom practice.

Theme 2. Gradual Adaptation Through Self-Learning, Collaboration, and Resilience

Despite their difficulties, seasoned teachers demonstrated strong adaptive capacity through self-directed and gradual learning. Participants developed practical strategies suited to their individual learning needs, including repeatedly practicing procedures, writing technological steps in notebooks, exploring applications independently, and learning through trial and error. ST3 explained that a notebook containing the steps for using PowerPoint was always brought along, while ST13 described continuously exploring technology and asking questions whenever procedures were forgotten. These practices indicate that the participants were not passive recipients of technological change. Instead, they actively constructed ways of learning that enabled them to overcome memory difficulties, unfamiliarity, and lack of confidence. The manuscript connects these practices with OECD (2021) and Koehler et al. (2021), which recognize self-directed learning as important in developing teachers’ digital competence. The experiences suggest that seasoned teachers may benefit particularly from learning environments that allow repetition, hands-on practice, written guides, and sufficient time to master one skill before proceeding to another.

Adaptation was further strengthened through technology-assisted learning and collaboration with others. Participants searched YouTube, explored online tutorials, and used internet searches whenever they needed guidance. Technology therefore served not only as a teaching tool but also as a means for teachers to develop their own technological competence. At the same time, participants frequently sought assistance from colleagues, ICT teachers, family members, and even students. One teacher stated, “*Mangutana na pud kos akong mga kauban,*” while another said, “*Patudlo pud ko sa akong mga anak.*” These statements illustrate that digital adaptation became a social and collaborative process rather than an entirely individual undertaking. The manuscript cites UNESCO (2021), Koehler et al. (2021), Dela Cruz (2021), Falloon (2020), and Oducado and Estoque (2021) in supporting the value of online learning resources, peer learning, and mentoring for developing teachers’ digital competence. The findings therefore show that accessible human support can help transform moments of technological difficulty into opportunities for professional learning.

More importantly, these coping strategies demonstrate resilience, professional commitment, and a gradual transformation in teachers’ attitudes toward technology. Participants preferred beginning with simple and familiar tools, particularly PowerPoint, laptops, televisions, and YouTube, rather than immediately attempting complicated applications. This incremental approach allowed them to learn without becoming overwhelmed. As they gained experience, fear and hesitation gradually shifted toward acceptance and confidence. Teachers repeatedly expressed their determination to continue learning, improve their skills, and adjust because technological change had become part of contemporary education. The manuscript links gradual exposure and manageable learning experiences with OECD (2021) and Handayani et al. (2023), while its discussion of resilience emphasizes teachers’ persistence despite technological difficulties. Ultimately, their willingness to adapt was strongly connected to their responsibility toward learners: participants recognized that digital tools could improve visual presentation, student engagement, and understanding. Thus, adaptation emerged not merely as compliance with technological change but as a professional commitment to remain relevant and effective educators in the digital age.

Theme 3. Sustaining Digital Teaching Through Professional, Collaborative, and Institutional Support

The findings demonstrate that successful and sustainable digital integration among seasoned teachers requires continuous professional development and capacity building. Participants repeatedly expressed the need for basic ICT training, hands-on workshops, webinars, and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions. Importantly, they emphasized that training should be practical and conducted at a pace appropriate to their level of technological competence. ST5 specifically requested more training in basic computer operations, while ST1 emphasized that training should be delivered at a “comfortable pace.” These responses suggest that one-time or highly technical training may not adequately respond to the needs of seasoned teachers. Professional development should instead begin with foundational skills, provide opportunities for actual hands-on application, permit repeated practice, and progressively introduce more advanced digital competencies. The manuscript supports this position through OECD (2021), UNESCO (2022), DepEd (2023), and Cabero-Almenara et al. (2024), emphasizing that ICT professional development should be practical, inclusive, continuous, and responsive to teachers’ contexts and learning pace.

Equally important is the establishment of strong collaborative and personal support systems. Participants viewed technologically capable colleagues and ICT teachers as readily available sources of guidance. Some teachers divided responsibilities in preparing PowerPoint presentations, while others sought immediate assistance from colleagues whenever technical problems occurred. ST3 explained, “*Magsabot mig kinsay mohimo og PPT, dayon magpuli-puli mi,*” showing how shared responsibility can reduce workload while simultaneously facilitating peer learning. The manuscript cites OECD (2021), Moralista (2021), and Hargreaves and O’Connor (2022) in emphasizing the contribution of peer collaboration and mentoring to digital competence and confidence. Support also extended beyond the school environment, as spouses and children helped participants learn unfamiliar technologies. Such experiences demonstrate that the digital development of seasoned teachers occurs within a network of professional and personal relationships. When teachers feel comfortable asking questions without embarrassment or fear of judgment, technological learning becomes more manageable and sustainable.

Finally, teachers’ willingness and training must be supported by adequate technological resources and institutional conditions. Participants emphasized the importance of having functional laptops, televisions,

projectors, and other instructional technologies rather than relying on borrowed or insufficient equipment. ST3 directly expressed the need for laptops to be provided, while other participants identified school-based resources such as laptops and televisions as essential for implementing technology-supported lessons. The manuscript notes that inadequate technological resources remain an important barrier to digital teaching and supports this finding through Baticulon et al. (2021), UNESCO (2022), and World Bank (2023). Stable internet connectivity is similarly essential because teachers depend on online resources for both instruction and their own learning. Taken together, the findings indicate that sustainable digital teaching cannot depend solely on the individual perseverance of seasoned teachers. Schools and education authorities need to create an enabling environment characterized by appropriate training, peer mentoring, accessible ICT assistance, functional equipment, reliable connectivity, sufficient preparation time, and a culture where continuous learning is encouraged. In this way, digital transformation becomes a shared institutional responsibility rather than an additional burden placed solely on individual teachers.

Conclusions

Drawing from the findings, this study concludes that the lived experiences of seasoned teachers in the digital age are characterized by complex, multidimensional challenges that extend beyond mere technological integration to encompass emotional, instructional, and systemic dimensions. Persistent gaps in digital literacy, coupled with increased workload and generational differences, significantly shape teachers' capacity to adapt to digitally mediated instruction. However, these constraints are mitigated by teachers' demonstrated resilience and agency, as evidenced by their engagement in self-directed learning, collaborative practices, and sustained participation in professional development. Adaptation is therefore not a linear or immediate process but a dynamic, iterative progression grounded in experience, motivation, and reflective practice. Furthermore, the study underscores that effective and sustained adaptation is contingent upon the availability of robust support structures, including institutional backing, capacity-building initiatives, accessible technological resources, and a collaborative professional culture. Thus, the findings affirm that teachers' successful navigation of the digital landscape is a function of the synergistic interplay between individual competence, professional commitment, and systemic support mechanisms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations are offered. Seasoned teachers are encouraged to continue practicing self-reflection and engaging in peer conversations to recognize their progress, strengthen their confidence, and remain resilient in adapting to technological changes. Teachers with limited technology skills are encouraged to approach digital learning gradually, participate in relevant training, seek assistance from colleagues, and continuously develop their digital competencies without fear of making mistakes. School heads are encouraged to establish supportive systems through targeted professional development, mentoring, peer collaboration, and recognition of teachers' emotional and professional needs. Policymakers and educational authorities should develop flexible and context-sensitive programs that respond to teachers' varying technological competencies, particularly those working in rural and coastal areas, while improving access to reliable internet connectivity, appropriate devices, digital tools, and manageable workloads. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to further investigate technology integration, teacher resilience, self-efficacy, and professional adaptation across different educational settings and through various research approaches to deepen understanding of teachers' experiences and contribute to improved teaching practices in the digital

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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