Original Research Article
ONLINE BLENDED DISTANCE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS: A PHENOMENOLOGY

ABSTRACT

Online blended learning has emerged as a pivotal tool in the educational sector during the new normal. Hence, this study was conducted to explore the experiences of social study teachers during online blended learning. This phenomenological study explored the struggles, coping mechanism, and educational insights of the teachers using in-depth interviews. A total of thirteen (13) participants were chosen using non-probability purposive sampling method. data was analyzed using Colaizzi's thematic analysis. the findings revealed that teachers from public and private schools in the identified schools in Davao Region struggled during the online blended learning four themes emerged (1) struggles in terms of connectivity and technological issues, (2) difficulty in the delivery of instruction, (3) lack of time in checking the outputs of the students, and (4) challenge in the preparation and modification of instructional materials. their coping mechanism included (1) flexibility and initiative, (2) effective time management, and (3) embracing change and adaptation in the new normal education. lastly, when asked about their educational insights, three themes emerged (1) adapting to changing information and contemporary issues, (2) embracing flexibility and innovation in education, and, (3) enhancing technological proficiency and exploration.

Keywords: experiences, online blended learning, struggles, educational insights,coping mechanisms, phenomenological

INTRODUCTION

In the past years, online education, one of the transformational keys of the educational sector to promoting continued schooling amid the pandemic has been a subject of research. The pandemic has forced the educational institutions to close to ensure safety of students, teachers, and its constituents (UNESCO, 2020). To ensure that institutions are able to maximize learning, this requires basic understanding of online platforms, technology-driving system knowledge both from teachers and students (Balaza et al., 2021). This shift in modality also compromised learning goals of subjects than what was initially stipulated (APTS, 2020). Hence, interest on experiences of teachers specializing in different subjects should be forwarded.

Globally, this shift in educational modality caught the attention of scholars, and it directed their attention towards examining the perspectives of both educators and students. In Greece, teachers prefer to incorporate traditional teaching methods alongside online instruction to ensure that they can adequately address subject's learning objectives and

meet students' needs (Lavidas et al., 2022). Also, recent studies encompass various areas, such as exploring student experiences, their attitudes towards webinars and online learning, as well as the motivations of instructors in utilizing information technologies (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Ismail et al., 2021; Sahin et al., 2021). In the US, the general public held a proactive opinion on online education learning (Asare eta l., 2021). In the US, the general public held a proactive opinion on online education learning (Asare et al., 2021). In Saudi Arabia, university students encounter difficulties in maintaining their motivation and have also encountered technical issues. On the other hand, some students perceive this mode of learning as favorable, as it enables them to feel more at ease when posing questions (Altuwairesh, 2021).

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, it was found that the country is not ready for online distance learning as it postures an enormous challenge in a third world country. Despite this imminent problem, the Department of Education (DepEd) has issued department orders, memoranda, and directives to commence the school year 2020-2021 with two dominant modalities: modular learning and online distance learning. Challenges are limited to the country's structural aspect, but it would also boil down to how the teachers are doing online distance learning. Furthermore, Aralin Panlipunan (Social Studies) teachers, as championed by the AralingPanlipunan Teach Share (APTS) organization, adhere to the belief that learning should remain accessible to all, including educators. In the context of the new normal in education, the traditional approach to teaching history, often considered a dry subject, has evolved. It used to focus primarily on memorizing dates and names while overlooking the significant socioeconomic and sociopolitical context of historical events (APTS, 2020).

Moreover, the researcher has no access to literature that delves into the experiences of social studies teachers with online learning in Davao Region. Asare et al. (2021) concentrated on the general public's perspectives through survey research, Altuwairesh (2021) explored the experiences of physicians, and Adnan and Anwar (2020) collected data from university students, Lavidas' et al. (2022) focused on math teachers. Hence, the researcher conducted this study to address this gap, to delved into the experiences of social studies teachers.

This study can be anchored on the theory Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (2017). It posits that individuals are motivated to engage in activities that are personally meaningful and satisfying. Also, there are three basic psychological needs that must be satisfied for individuals to be motivated and engaged: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the context of online blended distance learning, autonomy pertains to teachers' control over course design and teaching methods, competence involves their ability to use technology effectively, and relatedness relates to their connections with students and colleagues. Applying Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to study social studies teachers' experiences in this environment can help assess how these psychological needs are met or challenged. This includes exploring teachers' autonomy in course design, their proficiency in online teaching, and the quality of their relationships with students and colleagues.

In conducting this study, the researcher intended to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the challenges encountered by the Social Studies Teachers of the Implementation of Online Blended Distance Learning? (2) What are the coping mechanisms of Social Studies Teachers?(3) What educational insights can be drawn from the experiences of Social Studies Teachers?

Lastly, findings of this study may provide and evoke understanding of the experiences and current place of teachers with different specializations. To the Department of Education would gain from this study as this may serve as basis for improving learning delivery modalities during the time of health crisis. For teachers, it will validate their experiences in online distance learning as they would also learn from other teachers' experiences. Students may also benefit from improved quality of education. This current

study can serve as a reference for future research endeavors, offering a blueprint for conducting similar studies across various educational modalities within the country.

METHODOLOGY

Participants
A total of thirteen (13) social studies teachers from Davao Region took part in the in-depth interviews. To ensure diverse perspectives, five secondary schools were purposively selected from three areas in Davao Occidental, Davao del Sur, and Digos City Division. These schools were chosen because of the number of AP teachers and their use of online blended learning.

Instrument
To collect data, the researcher conducted one-on-one in-depth interviews using a semi-structured Interview Guide Questionnaire. The study utilized a thoughtfully crafted series of open-ended questions, which provided participants with the opportunity to freely and comprehensively share their thoughts. The questionnaire was validated by experts before the researcher used it to collect data.

Design and Procedure
This study employed the qualitative method of research utilizing the phenomenological design, upon which, in all of its complex designs and methods of data analysis. This is in line with what Creswell (2013) contended that qualitative studies are often conducted to explore the issues of an understudied population, especially when there are only a few conceptual studies in the area.After data was collected using in-depth interviews, the researcher analyzed the transcribed data using Colaizzi's method of phenomenological analysis.

Ethical Consideration
The researcher adhered to the University of Mindanao Research and Ethics Committee (UMERC).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Challenges encountered by Social Studies Teachers
Amid online blended learning**

Based on the analysis of the transcript, the following themes emerged and described the challenges faced by the participants namely (1) *Struggles in terms of Connectivity and Technological Issues*, (2) *Difficulty in the Delivery of Instruction*, (3) *Lack of Time in checking the outputs of the students*, and *Challenge in the preparation and modification of instructional materials*. Table 1 collates the themes and the associated significant statements.

Table 1.
Challenges Encountered by the Social Studies Teachers on the Implementation of Online Blended Distance Learning

THEMES	Significant Statements
Struggle in terms of connectivity and technological Issues	the challenges encountered by the Social Studies teacher was the internet connections. P2
	internet connectivity, students who lived in the places where there is no signal, P11

	lack of connection;limited technologies P9
	the problems we encountered are the poor internet connection P4
	preparing the lesson with an unstable Wifi connection, P10
	the challenges encountered by the Social Studies teacher was the internet connections, P5
	Internet connection P1
	limited knowledge of applying educational Icons.P9
Difficulty in The Delivery of Instruction	sometimes hard to assess the performance of the students. P10
	it's hard to assess students output and their learning, P13
	how to deliver the lesson in a way that the children will understand my module, P1
	the difficulties are ensuring the quality education and teaching students which is not face to face.P4
	making of modules is really hard P5
Lack of time in checking the outputs of the students	limited time in checking the outputs of the students. P1
	there are also lot of outputs or activities that need to be checked in order to assess the learning of the students.P2
	time management in checking all the outputs of the learners P13
Challenge in the Preparation and modification of instructional materials	organizing the modules (printing, sorting and binding) P9
	books for us to prepare the module and look for alternative activities P9
	the making of modules, designing activities that will catch students' attention. P4
	problem also in preparing adorable video discussion. P2

Struggles in terms of Connectivity and Technological Issues. Some teachers struggle greatly with connectivity and technology concerns when it comes to online learning. It should be noted that residents of places with weak or no internet signal have trouble using online resources and taking part in virtual classes because of unstable connectivity. Another difficulty is the accessibility of necessary gadgets like cellphones, laptops, or PCs. Lacking these resources, students find it challenging to participate in online courses, attend virtual classrooms, and complete assignments, illustrating how the digital divide affects their access to educational possibilities. Participant 11 said:

"*Una, ang koneksyonsa internet samgaestudyantenganagpuyosamgalugarngawalay signal, ug usab ang kakayahansamga smartphone, laptop, o kompyuter.*" (**First the internet connectivity students who lived in the places where there is no signal, and also the availability of smart phones, laptops or computers**.) P11_T1

Similar to this, participant 2 said:

"Ang mgahagitnganatukmangsamgamagtutudlosaKasaysayan ug Kulturamao ang koneksyonsa internet. Gawas niini, pipilasamgaestudyante ang naghimo ug panukat." (**The challenges encountered by the Social**

Studies teacher was the internet connections. Aside from that some of the students are doing research.) P2_T2

Also, according to participant 10, highlights a significant challenge faced in online blended learning. In this context, the teacher is indicating that one of the primary difficulties they encounter is trying to create lesson plans and educational content while dealing with an unreliable Wi-Fi connection.

*"Preparing lesson with unstable Wi-fi connection po."***(Preparing the lesson with an unstable Wi-fi connection.) P10_T10**

The findings are congruent with Wang et al. (2012) who indicated that during online learning, technological-issues are among the many challenges that teachers struggle to resolve. From stability of internet connection to lack of digital skills. This also aligns with Hofmann (2014) who said that big challenge is about how teachers can successfully use the technology and ensuring student's commitment given the individual learner characteristics and encounters with technology.

Difficulty in the Delivery of Instruction. In addition to technological problems, another issue is the difficulty of education. The teaching and learning processes in the new educational system encounter a number of challenges. Although both online and modular learning are mediums to communicate lessons, teachers have difficulties in ensuring that students are able to receive and learnt eh lesson. Participant 5 said:

"Ang teaching and learning process, mej limited because dilitanan*nga topics ma-explain nangmaayotungodsamga limitations sa modular learning, ug ang mga students kay gipa-leave-on nilasilasailangkaugalingonaronmagtuonsamga topics ug mo-ubansamga activities o assessment.*"(**The teaching and learning process is limited because not all the topics are explained well due to the limitations of online learning and the students are left on their own to study the topics and answer the activities or assessment.) P5_T5**

Also, participant 9 said:

*"Sa teacher, parang sakit ng ulo 'yan kung pa'nomaayosnamaipaparating ang mga lessons samga students. Sa K-12 curriculum, bawat subject may mga competencies nakailangang ma-achieve."***(It is a burden to the teacher on how the lessons to be well-delivered to the students. In the K-12 curriculum, every subject has competencies to be attained.)**

The statement underscores the considerable responsibility that teachers bear in delivering effective lessons to their students, especially within the K-12 curriculum framework. In this context, every subject is associated with specific competencies that students are expected to achieve. This places the onus on teachers to meticulously plan and execute their lessons, ensuring that they align with the curriculum's competencies and cater to the diverse learning needs of their students. The successful attainment of these competencies is pivotal for students' educational progress, making it a substantial and essential duty for educators within the K-12 system.

Further, participant 7 indicated when asked what are the problems they encountered, she responded:

> *"Daghan kay ko'g struggles tungodsa bag-ong adopted nga blended distance learning. Usaniini kay kung kinsana lang gyudtingalisaakongmgaestudyantengatinuodgyudngana-learn ang ilanggipangtudlonako."***(There are many problems that I faced due to the newly adapted blended distance learning. One of it is that sometimes in not sure if my students really learned something from me). P7_T7**

Another participant also said that adopting in this new learning style, just like the making of modules, catching the attention of the students to do the activities are just some of the many struggles that teachers have experienced.The response from number seven emphasizes the difficulties they have encountered since switching to integrated distance learning. They describe their teaching experience as being difficult and unclear. Their main area of focus is the efficiency of their instruction. They wonder if the information they are trying to convey to their students via online and distant ways is actually being truly absorbed and understood.This uncertainty reflects a common concern shared by educators in the hybrid distance learning context, where the traditional classroom dynamics are altered, potentially making it more challenging to gauge students' comprehension and participation.

These results align with prior research conducted by Wang et al. (2012), which highlighted that teachers often grapple with technological issues during online learning, ranging from internet connection stability to a shortage of digital skills. This also corresponds with the observations made by Hofmann (2014), who emphasized that a significant challenge lies in educators effectively utilizing technology and ensuring student engagement, taking into account the unique characteristics and experiences of individual learners with technology.

Lack of Time in Checking the Outputs of the Students. Also, one of the challenges that teachers face during online blended learning is it becomes so hard for the teachers to monitor the real progress of the students' learning whether or not learning was there. To assess students' performance is the basis for the learners' promotion to the next grade level. But in reality, tasks, assignments, and other related activities are not a guarantee that the learners themselves answered and did the activities. According to participant 5:

> *"Daghan kaayongkalisodngaakonggipang-agitungodsa bag-onggi-adapt nga blended distance learning. Usaniinimaongakani-adto, diligyud ko kasiguradokonnakatuonbagayodakongmgaestudyanteog something gikannako." (***On the online not all the students can comply on the giving task due to the internet connection or for not having gadgets that will help them prepared their task.)** P5_T5**

Meanwhile, Participant 13 indicated that teachers are struggling with time management. Balancing the demands of producing outputs for modules and online resources, alongside their other school-related tasks, poses a significant challenge.

> *"Ang sapag-manage sa time, labinasapagchecknungmga outputs ng students."* **(Time management in checking all the outputs of the learners.)** P13

Similar to this, participant 1 expressed that teachers only a very limited amount of time to spend on checking the activities answered by the students.

> "**Limited time in checking the outputs of the students**." P1_T1

The statements above bring to light a challenge that teachers in the context of online blended learning frequently encounter. It implies that one of the difficulties teachers have been having insufficient time to evaluate and grade students' assignments, projects, or outputs. Teachers frequently have increased workloads and less time to focus on each student's work as a result of the shift to online and blended learning. This lack of time for proper evaluation may affect the caliber of feedback given to students and may cause grading to be delayed, stressing both instructors and students alike.

Furthermore, like modular learning modality, the findings support Castroverde and Acala (2021). This aligns with the claim that in blended learning teachers prepare, monitor, and create activities they have sent, presented, and will present. Blended learning is an integration of face-to-face and computer-mediated instruction (Graham, 2006; Horn and Staker, 2015), but Graham warns that poorly designed blended learning can mix the least effective elements of both worlds. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) explain that designing effective blended learning requires considerable knowledge and skill. Mazur's (2014) research highlights the limited research on blended social studies courses, but suggests ways in which technology can be integrated into social studies teaching, such as using the teacher as a guide to support students' interactive exploration of immigration issues.

Challenge in the Preparation and Modification of Instructional Materials. This theme indicates that one of biggest challenges faced by teachers is setting up activities for their students. The teachers are required to complete this procedure, which includes printing, sorting, and binding the modules, all at once, usually once per week. This type of online blended learning is time-consuming and challenging. According to participant 9, teachers struggle to choosing the books and the alternative activities.

> *"Books para atongpag-andamsa module ug pagpangita'gmga lain-lain'gaktibidades."***((The) books for us to prepare the module and look for alternative activities)**P9_T9

Similar struggle is also experienced by participant two who added that designing activities that will catch students' attention is challenging. This is addition to preparing and ensuring that releasing of modules and its contents follow educational standards.
> *"Ang paghimosamga modules, ang pag-design ogmga activities ngamakuha ang attention samgaestudyante."***(The making of modules, designing activities that will catch students' attention.)**P4_T4

In the same light, participant 2 said that ensuring that teachers chooses appropriate and adorable videos is also a struggle.

> *"Kalisodusabaningpag-andam ug ka-cute nga video discussion." (***Problem also in preparing adorable video discussion.) P2_T2**

Overall, these insights underscore the multifaceted challenges that teachers face in creating effective instructional materials and activities, which are crucial for engaging students and delivering quality education in the online blended learning environment.

Moreover, the findings align with PISA 2018 results which revealed that teachers are having difficulties in designing performance task and authentic problem-solving activities. Teachers give too many computation tasks and not enough experience in real-life problem-solving. Poor knowledge on student centered teaching strategy fall to misinterpretation of the term facilitating learning (OECD, 2019).

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

From the analysis of the responses, it was found that social study teachers are facing various challenges which makes them struggle with online blended learning. In response to this, teachers applied coping mechanisms to overcome struggles in connectivity and technological issues, delivery of instruction, lack of time, and challenges in preparing and modification of instructional materials during online blended learning.

Table 2.
Coping Mechanisms of Social Studies Teachers

THEMES	Significant Statements
Flexibility and Initiative	flexible and creative especially in making modules P1
	We have to be flexible and resourceful P7
	We need to be flexible all the time in order to abide to the changesP5
	being a flexible and being resourceful individual P11
	be more passionate and innovative in our work. P4
	we need to be resilient, flexible and innovative in our duty P6
Effective Time Management	I really manage my time in making the modules P5
	I make sure that I am able to plan ahead. If my number of tasks permit, I would make sure that all the activities I set for the day is really completed P12
	Through Time management P7
	By way of time management, from preparation to evaluation of students. P9
	Making use of technology is time consuming so really have to manage your time wisely. P11
Embracing Change and Adaptation in the New Normal Education	By means of adapting to the changes of the present way of the new normal education P8
	Adapt to new normal, if needs be, we have to be more knowledgeable about the digital technology that we use P1
	We really need to accept and adapt first and everything will follow P3
	The first step is we need to embraced it and adapt the new educational systemP9
	you need to adopt in the new normal strategies of teaching P2

Shown in table 2 are the three themes that emerged in the analysis: *Flexibility and Initiative*, *EffectiveTime Management,* and *Embracing Change and Adaptation in the*

New Normal Education. The table also displays the significant statements taken from the transcript of the responses of participants during in-depth interviews.

Flexibility and Initiative. Teachers struggle in preparing and modification of their instructional materials. They are experiencing challenges in ensuring that materials they make and choose are suitable, enjoyable, and catches students' attention. In response to these challenges, educators have embraced creativity and pioneered their individual teaching methodologies to effectively navigate the demands of the new normal in education.

> "*Kinahanglan ta mag-flexible ug ma-resourceful.*" **(We have to be flexible and resourceful.**) **P7_T7**

The same coping mechanism was also used by participant 5. He indicated that teachers should always be flexible for them to be able to abide to changes.

> *"Kailangannamaging flexible ta, para maging able to you."***(We need to be flexible all the time in order to abide to the changes.)P5_T5**

Participant 11's perspective highlights the importance of flexibility, imitativeness and resourcefulness in coping with challenges. By being flexible and resourceful, this participant is able to adapt to various situations and make the most of the available resources. This mindset can be valuable not only for students but also for educators.

> *"Pagiging flexible, at paggamitnungmga available namgagamit or resources sa school."***(Being a flexible and being resourceful individual.)P11_T11**

In addition to these statements, participants most of the participants have been very straightforward by saying that as teachers they ought to be flexible in order to initiate activities to better deal with the challenges. Flexibility in teaching can indeed be an important attribute, especially in dynamic learning environments or when dealing with students who have varying needs and circumstances. This approach can help create a more accommodating and supportive educational experience for students. When teachers are flexible and resourceful, they can better support their students' learning needs, whether it involves adapting to changes in the curriculum, finding creative solutions to problems, or making the most of limited resources.

The current findings align with Mansfield et al. (2016) teachers' great creativity in finding ways to teach students located in remote areas with limited internet access, utilizing free data and Facebook, as well as other contextual resources. Such strategies are essential to ensure that teachers can continue to work and exert all possible effort in the face of the ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic.

Flexible learning is aimed at providing students with the freedom to learn at their own pace, location, and preferred style, and all three dimensions can be supported and encouraged by effective pedagogical practices facilitated and improved by e-learning (Gordon, 2014). This approach can be applied both in school and at home. By utilizing technology, a variety of teaching approaches can be implemented based on the mode of delivery of the lesson.Cheung (2015) has found that the use of technology in flexible learning depends on the nature of the learning tasks and the features and limitations of the devices utilized. Thus, careful consideration should be given to the selection of appropriate technologies and devices that can enhance the learning experience and support the goals of flexible learning.

Effective Time Management. One of the challenges that teachers face during online blended learning is lack of time in checking the outputs of the students. According to the analysis of the responses, teachers are able to cope with this struggle by managing their day ahead of time. They do time management, and make sure that tasks or activities intended to be complete for that should be completed. For instance, participant 12 said:

> *"I make sure that I am able to plan ahead. If my number of tasks permit, I would make sure that all the activities I set for the day is completed talaga.*
> **"(I make sure that I am able to plan ahead. If my number of tasks permit, I would make sure that all the activities I set for the day is really completed.) P12_T12**

Similar to this, participant 9 said that time management should be done from preparation of the materials both in modular and online classes, up until the evaluation of students.

> *"Kapagsinabina time management, yuntalaganamulasa preparation ng materials hanggang evaluation ng mgaestudyante."* **(By way of time management, from preparation to evaluation of students.)** P9_T9

Further, participant 11 highlights the value of time management while using technology in order to handle the rigors of online blended learning. Teachers need to master a variety of digital technologies and platforms in order to traverse the current educational environment efficiently. They also need to manage their time between activities like creating online resources, leading virtual classrooms, and grading homework. To keep up with the rapidly changing state of educational technology, this calls for careful planning, work prioritization, and ongoing professional development.

> **Making use of technology is time consuming so really have to manage your time wisely.** P11

Online blended learning poses a challenge for educators in terms of the limited time available for evaluating student work. As revealed through the analysis of responses, teachers tackle this challenge by proactively organizing their schedules. Participant 12 underscores the importance of advance planning and striving for efficient completion of daily tasks. Similarly, participant 9 highlights that effective time management encompasses activities ranging from preparing teaching materials to assessing students' performance. Furthermore, participant 11 underscores the vital role of time management, particularly when integrating technology into teaching to address the demands of online blended learning. This involves acquiring expertise in various digital tools and platforms, judiciously allotting time for responsibilities like creating educational content, conducting virtual classes, and grading assignments, as well as a steadfast commitment to continuous professional growth. Ultimately, adept time management emerges as a pivotal strategy for teachers to navigate the challenges of online blended learning successfully.

Moreover, the findings align with Dias-Lacy et al. (2017) who indicated that school teachers use time management to cope with difficulties. They use to ensure that they maintain balance between their personal lives and their work. Also, it supports the Batac et al. (2021) findings that online modality learning has allowed teachers to develop time management skills.

Embracing Change and Adaptation in the New Normal Education. One of the key struggles that teachers face during online blended learning is struggle in connectivity and technological issues. From the responses of the participants, a clear theme emerges: the importance of embracing change and adapting to the new normal in education. They emphasize that teachers become accepting and are adopting the new educational system and strategies for teaching that have become integral in the current landscape. This theme underscores that teachers must also welcome and embrace the need to learning and spend considerable time in understanding digital technology in order to assist students and conduct their classes.For instance, participant 1 said:

> *"(teachers) adapt to new normal, kailangan kasi, pag-aralan natin yungmgabagong technology na need sa classes."* (**Adapt to new normal, if needs be, we have to be more knowledgeable about the digital technology that we use.)** P1_T1

Participant 1's statement highlights the significance of educators adjusting to the shifts in contemporary education by gaining proficiency in the essential digital technologies for their teaching. This process of adaptation entails not just accepting the alterations in the educational landscape but also demonstrating a readiness to acquire expertise in utilizing these technologies effectively. Essentially, adapting to the new educational norms entails not just embracing change but also proactively equipping oneself with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully engage in the evolving educational setting.

Further, participant 9 indicated that adapting to changes is the first step towards embracing the new educational system.

> *"Unang step talaga is to embrace and adapt sa new educational system.)*(**The first step is we need to embraced it and adapt the new educational system.)** P9_T9

In similar light, participant 8 said:

> *"Ibigsabihin adapting to changes samgabagongpagpapatakbonung new normal naedukasyon."*(**By means of adapting to the changes of the present way of the new normal education.)** P8_T8

Participant 9 and Participant 8 further reinforce that by highlighting the importance of embracing and adapting to changes as the initial step toward integrating the new educational system brought about by the new normal in education. Overall, the theme underscores the necessity for educators to be flexible, open to change, and proactive in their pursuit of knowledge and skills to navigate the evolving educational landscape successfully. In today's ever-changing educational landscape, it is essential to adopt innovative and learner-centered pedagogical approaches that focus on collaboration, knowledge sharing, and intrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Tilbury (2013).

Educational Insights

One of the significant takeaways from the challenges social studies teachers faced in this study is the insights they gained and the lessons learned from those experiences. Based on the analysis of the gathered data, the following themes emerged: (1) *Adapting to changing information and Contemporary issues, (2) Embracing Flexibility and Innovation in Education,*

and, (3) Enhancing Technological Proficiency and Exploration. These insights represent the teachers' deepened understanding and inferences drawn from their learning experiences, which they not only wish to continue applying but also share with their colleagues and peers. These insights can serve as valuable knowledge and guidance for both individual educators and the broader teaching community, contributing to the ongoing improvement of teaching practices in the field of social studies. Table 3 presents the emergent themes and the significant statements

Table 3
Educational Insights Gained from the experiences of Social Studies Teachers

THEMES	SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS
Adapting to Changing Information and Contemporary Issues	I realized it's crucial to improve how we use technology in the classroom. It's something new for a change, but it helps us keep our teaching relevant P1
	Rely in updating the new contemporary issues in the new normal education P2
	Exploring and keeping up with today's contemporary issues is vital; it enables us to tailor our teaching to the real-world challenges our students face P3
	Something new to me for a change P8
Embracing Flexibility and Innovation in Education	educators must first equip themselves with the skills and training relevant to the changing times. P9
	be flexible teacher, and apply flexible learning strategies P2
	trying some new stuffs like online P8
	being innovative and creative in doing different activities P11
	it's about embracing change and using innovative methods to ensure students' continued learning and growth P13
Enhancing Technological Proficiency and Exploration	Equip oneself on how to use technology P1
	Explore more on technology P3
	improve how to use technology P1
	explore different platforms in the internet just to deliver P9

Adapting to Changing Information and Contemporary Issues. This theme highlights the importance of educators staying informed about current and contemporary issues in education and life, and the need to adjust their teaching methods and content accordingly to provide relevant and up-to-date information to their students.

> "*Pag-explore and pagiging updated samga bag o namga issues is kailangan, tungod ana makabalo ta mausabna connected sa real-world challenges namafacesamga students.*"**(Exploring and keeping up with today's contemporary issues is vital; it enables us to tailor our teaching to the real-world challenges our students face.)** P3_T3

Similar to this, participant 1 said:

> *"I realized naimportantejudna improve nato ang unsaonpaggamit ug technology sa classroom. Bag-o siyaperomakatabangjudsiyasapaghimosaatong teaching as relevant samga students."***(I realized it's crucial to improve how we use technology in the classroom. It's something new for a change, but it helps us keep our teaching relevant.)** P1_T1

Also, participant 2 said:

> "*Rely ko sa updated sa new information samga issues, labinasa new normal education.*" (**Rely in updating the new contemporary issues in the new normal education.)** P2_T2

The statements underscore that reliance on continuously updating one's knowledge of contemporary issues in the context of new normal education. In summary, these highlight the need for educators to adapt, remain informed, and regularly update their teaching methods to address the ever-evolving challenges and student needs in the new normal educational landscape.

Embracing Flexibility and Innovation in Education. An effective teacher should first be adequately equipped with skills and trainings that are relevant to the New Normal mode of instruction. This emphasizes the crucial importance of teachers being well-prepared with the necessary skills and training to effectively adapt to the New Normal mode of instruction. This theme underscores the need for teachers to be flexible and open to innovative approaches in order to navigate the ever-changing landscape of education successfully.

> *"Isa samga key takeaways gikansaatongmgaeksperyensyamaongaaronmakadalasaatongkaugalingons aing-ani nga bag-ongkahimtangsaedukasyon, kinahanglanunang mag-ayos ang atongkaugalingongmgakakayahan ug pagtuonngamakasaligsamga bag-ongpanahon."***(One of the key takeaways from our experiences is that to thrive in this new educational environment, educators must first equip themselves with the skills and training relevant to the changing times.)** P9_T9

Adding to this, participant 13 said:

> *"Nahimamatnakonga ang pagkausa ka magtutudlosa New Normal dililamangbahinsapaghatagog content; apil sad sapaggamit ug bag-o ug innovative ways para sa continued learning and growth sa students."* (**I've come to realize that being a teacher in the New Normal isn't just about delivering content; it's about embracing change and using innovative methods to ensure students' continued learning and growth.)** P13_T13

Further, participant 2 said:

> *"Maging flexible tayo as teachers, para maka-apply tayo ng flexible learning."***(Be flexible teacher, and apply flexible learning strategies.)** P2_T2

Overall, the insight highlights teachers being adaptable and using creative techniques to ensure students' continual learning and growth. instructors should understand that their duty goes beyond just delivering material. Participants realized the significance of this adaptation

and flexibility in the face of changing educational problems, ultimately highlighting the fact that teaching in the New Normal requires a diverse skill set and the ability to accept change.

The flexibility of teachers in accepting their weaknesses and follow up with their evaluation results (Alcantara, Enrique & Pangilinan, 2018) and skill for reflection and self-analysis (Griffith, 2016) are both necessary to come up with professional development plan that is fitted to their capacities and needs. Even classroom management and discipline matter inside the classroom are very important to address. Difficulty in Classroom management and discipline due to lack of practice and exposure to actual scenario can be also part of the challenge (Cansiz&Cansiz, 2015).

Enhancing Technological Proficiency and Exploration. This theme underscore how teachers were able to realize the importance of educators improving their technological skills and knowledge, exploring new technologies and platforms, and equipping themselves to effectively use technology for teaching and content delivery. Based on the response of participant 1, they realized that teachers should continue to equip oneself on how to use technology, she said:

> "*Dapat natin namalaman kung paanogamitinyung technology katuladnung how to use different tools" (*Equip oneself on how to use technology, including tools.**) P1_T1

In connection to this, participant 3 said that teachers should aim to explore more on the technology that they are using. This means that teachers should not only take the available materials as it is, but also find ways to learn more on how to navigate it.

> "**Explore more on the technology.**" P3_T3

Furthermore, in relation to the statement of participant 1 and 3, participant 9 said that if teachers have knowledge on how to use the technology, they must seek to explore different platforms in the internet as well. They should not only rely on the current available means or platforms to reach the students, but also find the initiative to find other medium of communication. Other digitalized means to communicate, discuss or present their lessons to their students.

> *"Mag-explore sa internet, maghanap ng ibang platforms para makadeliver ng lessons."***(Explore different platforms in the internet just to deliver lesson.)** P9_T9

The themes underscore the importance of teachers in online blended learning not limiting themselves to what is readily presented but rather taking the initiative to enhance their technological proficiency through exploration, particularly by using the internet. Teachers are encouraged to go beyond the surface and seek out new tools, resources, and approaches to improve their teaching in the digital realm. This proactive exploration and engagement with technology are seen as key factors in ensuring effective and innovative education delivery in online blended learning environments.

Mazur's (2014) research highlights the limited research on blended social studies courses, but suggests ways in which technology can be integrated into social studies teaching, such as using the teacher as a guide to support students' interactive exploration of immigration issues. De Vera (2020) in his study conducted on the teachers' resilience in the new normal classroom posits that based from the teachers' reflections the following are the newest key concepts of effective teacher as of today. First, a teacher must be a technology-adept, an effective teacher should be first adequately equipped with skills and trainings that are

relevant to the new normal mode of instruction. Secondly, he added that an effective teacher shall be a reflective thinker and apply reflective teaching such as empathy, being adaptive to the situation and being flexible in order to convey to the learners the learning teachers want them to achieve.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study provided evidence on the experiences of social study teachers during the online blended learning. This presented relevant root of struggles, from connectivity/technological issues, time spent on doing tasks, and the challenges in making fun and active learning experience for the students. The findings are generally relevant to DepEd, the school administrators, teachers, and the future researchers.

These results provide DepEd the chance to widen the scope of the New Normal Educational Policy. While addressing the physical needs of schools is crucial, recognizing and assisting instructors in the context of online distance learning should also receive equal emphasis. These findings can be used by school administrators to put top-down solutions for teachers' problems into place. This might entail helping with planning, job management, and making sure that responsibilities are divided in a way that is manageable.

To the teachers, the current findings may be used to motivate reflection and perhaps even teamwork. Teachers and their peers can learn from the experiences of their colleagues to enhance their own online teaching techniques and share coping mechanisms for dealing with shared difficulties. From the gathered coping mechanisms, teachers may become informed of ways that they can also use to cope and overcome struggles in online blended learning.

Lastly, the study findings may motivate future researchers to explore different contexts and setups, extending beyond social studies to other fields of expertise. While, this study focused on social studies teachers, future researchers may seek to collect data from teachers with various specializations as well. This can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in online blended learning across various educational domains.

CONSENT
The author has requested and received approval from therespondents. Informed consent has been completed, signed and documented.

ETHICAL APPROVAL
The ethical considerations that have been adhered to in this research include, but are not limited to, the following: voluntary participation, privacy and confidentiality, the informed consent process, risks, benefits, fabrication, falsification, and authorship.

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