LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN BLENDED MODALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGY

ABSTRACT

The pandemic has indeed drastically changed the way education is delivered, and the ways in which teachers creatively hone student's mind based on existing curricula. In particular, the online blended distance learning is a topic of interest, hence, this phenomenological study seeks to probe using in-depth interviews the struggles, coping mechanism, and educational insights of social studies teachers. A total of thirteen (13) participants were chosen using non-probability purposive sampling method and data was analyzed using Colaizzi's thematic analysis. Only Araling-Panlipunanteachers from secondary basic education schools were chosen to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Based on the findings, it was revealed that the participants had faced struggles in the implementation of the online blended distance learning, which are encompassed by the following themes: (i) *Struggles in terms of Connectivity and Technological Issues*, (ii) *Lack of Time in checking the outputs of the students*, and (iii) *Grappling Need for contextualized delivery of modified instructional materials* with its two subthemes, (a) *Design of educational resources (i.e., modules, videos, alternative activities)* and (b) *Delivery of instructions and assessment of performance.*They also utilized coping mechanisms such a *(i) flexibility and initiative, (a) effective time management, and (b) embracing change and adaptation in the new normal education*. Lastly, when asked about their educational insights, the following themes emerged (i) *Be Conversant about Contemporary Issues, (ii) Empower Oneself with Dynamic Learning Environment, and, (iii) Improving Competence in Technology and Internet Exploration.*

Keywords: online blended learning, struggles, educational insights, coping mechanisms, phenomenology

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, 2019). 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. Hence, studies that seeks to provide insight on experience on current online blended distance learning is on the rise.

Globally, this shift in educational modality caught the attention of scholars, and it directed their attention towards examining the perspectives of both teachers 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 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, AralinPanlipunan (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 (Reyes et al.,2018).

Moreover, the researcher has no access to literature that delves into the experiences of social studies teachers with online blended 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. 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 blended 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. Teachers who were (1) current employed as Araling-Panlipunan teachers from secondary basic education schools who had experience with online blended distance learning, (2) teaching for more than 5 years (3) a teacher in either private or public secondary school, (4) currently teaching online blended learning instruction, (5) willing to participate in the interviews, were invited to take part in the study. Excluded in the study were those who were recently hired, did not experience teaching during blended or online learning modality, currently teaching non-AP subjects.

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. According to Turner and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022), this tool will enable participants to convey their ideas, perspectives, and attitudes for the researchers' understanding. The interview guide served as a valuable tool for interviewer, assisting in structuring and directing the interview process. The questionnaire was validated by experts before the researcher used it to collect data. A university validation rating scale was utilized to rate the interview guide.

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 (1978) method of phenomenological analysis. In total, thirteen (13) semi-structured interviews were made.

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) *Lack of Time in checking the outputs of the students*, and (3) *Grappling Need for contextualized delivery of modified instructional materials* with its two subthemes, (i) *Design of educational resources (i.e., modules, videos, alternative*

*activities)*and (ii) *Delivery of instructions and assessment of performance.*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
1) **Unstable Internet connection and resource availability**	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
	we encountered the poor of internet connection, P4
	preparing the lesson with an unstable WIFI connection, P10
	Internet connection, P1
2) **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
3) **Grappling Need for contextualized delivery of modified instructional materials**	
i. Design of educational resources (i.e., modules, videos, alternative activities)	Problem also in preparing adorable video discussion. P2
	the making of modules, designing activities that will catch students' attention. P4
	books for us to prepare the module and look for alternative activities P9
	organizing the modules (printing, sorting and binding) P9
	making of modules is really hard P5
ii. Delivery of instructions and assessment of performance	sometimes hard to assess the performance of the students. P10
	the difficulties are ensuring the quality education and teaching students which is not face to face. P4
	it's hard to assess students output and their learning, P13
	how to deliver a lesson that will be understood by the children through my moduleP1

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, angkoneksyonsa internet samgaestudyantenganagpuyosamgalugarngawalay signal, ugusabangkakayahansamga 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:

"*AngmgahagitnganatukmangsamgamagtutudlosaKasaysayanugKulturamao angkoneksyonsa internet. Gawasniini, pipilasamgaestudyanteangnaghimougpanukat.*"

(**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

It highlights an important problem that teachers on online blended learning encounter. It highlights the challenges teachers have while creating lesson plans and instructional materials while juggling an unstable Wi-Fi connection. Time restrictions are a part of this problem since network problems can make things take longer and make it harder to access online materials, which degrades the quality of training overall. It emphasizes the urgent requirement for better connection and technology assistance to increase teachers' capacity to provide effective instruction in the digital learning environment.

The findings align with Rasheed et al. (2020), who indicated that challenges in blended learning include provision of suitable instructional technology. This includes WIFI issues, lack of knowledge in using digital tools. While crafting resource materials are already difficult enough, the blended learning modality mostly requires internet connections for downloading, uploading, and holding classes.

In addition, Philipsen et al. (2019) also revealed that online blended learning is a modality that requires more than just teachers' use of technology or development of new skills. Hence, challenges in use of technology are bound to be plethora because it also reflects their current beliefs on technology use. Nonetheless, with this learning modality struggle on connectivity and technology use is similar to most students and teachers (Mestan, 2019; Rasheed et al., 2020)
.

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:

> *"Daghankaayongkalisodngaakonggipang-agitungodsa bag-onggi-adapt nga blended distance learning. Usaniinimaongakani-adto, diligyudkokasiguradokonnakatuonbagayodakongmgaestudyanteog 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.

> *"Angsapag-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, the findings align with De Villa and Manalo (2020) who indicated that because of the necessary resources that must be prepared, crafted, printed, and distributed, teachers struggle with a lot of workloads. Because of this, their tasks overlap, leading to more constrained time, in this case, there time to check and evaluate each paper or module submitted by students are compromised. This is associated with the creation, and distribution of modules (Cabardo et al., 2020), while at the same time they prepare for materials for online classes and activities (Therisa Beena & Sony, 2022).

Grappling Need for contextualized delivery of modified instructional materials. Apparently, the online blended distance learning is another methodology that is similarly new to the teachers as it is to the students. As might be expected, teachers have a difficult time meeting the demand for teaching materials that have been customized or adjusted to fit unique situations and student needs. It suggests that instructional designers and teachers have difficulties when it comes to developing resources that are not just content-adapted but also customized to the particular requirements, learning preferences, and histories of a wide range of students. Delivering these resources in a style that makes sense, teachers' struggle in areas of making it and delivering as well as assessing it. These experiences are subdivided into two ways: (i) *Design of educational resources (i.e., modules, videos, alternative activities)*and (ii) *Delivery of instructions and assessment of performance.*

Design of educational resources (i.e., modules, videos, alternative activities). Upon further probing into the hand-to-hand experience and struggle of teachers on the online blended distance learning modality, it was found that crafting, preparing, and even contextualizing educational resources is difficult. Apart from creating a module, teachers must see to it that it matches the needs of their students, they are also tasked to deliver it in a way that suits their students' relative situation. And teachers are required to complete this procedure, which includes printing, sorting, and binding the modules, all at once, usually once per week. According to participant 9, teachers struggle to choosing the books and the alternative activities.

> *"Books paraatongpag-andamsa module ugpagpangita'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 2 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.

> *"Angpaghimosamga modules, angpag-design ogmga activities ngamakuhaang 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 choose appropriate and adorable videos is also a struggle.

> *"Kalisodusabaningpag-andamugka-cute nga video discussion."*

> *(***Problem also in preparing adorable video discussion.) P2_T2**

Overall, these experiences 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.

The findings align with Rasheed et al. (2020), who concluded that in blended learning resource materials are crafted and created using different multimedia tools. Hence, this overlaps with their struggles on provision of suitable technology or tools because module making and resource crafting by nature requires internet. Apart from using online materials, research resources are also more accessible online. Also it supports the findings of Ramirez (2022), social studies teachers struggle in designing and creating materials for classes.

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).

Delivery of instructions and assessment of performance. The teaching and learning processes in the online blended distance learning—particularly in its demand to ensure quality delivery of lessons and assessment of student performance. Though in this

modality, lessons can be communicated online and have printed copies of their lessons, the struggle lay within it. Teachers find that they are limited, because students at the end of the day are left on their screens or their rooms to study lessons. Apart from that, there are lessons requiring more thorough explanation or activities and assessment that requires someone to overlook the students—they cannot do so. As a result, students' performance becomes difficult to assess. Participant 5 said:

> "*Ang teaching and learning process, medjo limited because dilitanannga topics ma-explain nangmaayotungodsamga limitations sa modular learning, ugangmga students kaygipa-leave-on nilasilasailangkaugalingonaronmagtuonsamga topics ugmo-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, parangsakitngulo 'yan kung pa'nomaayosnamaipaparatingangmga 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.**) P9_T9

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 teachers within the K-12 system.

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

> "*Daghankayko'g struggles tungodsa bag-ong adopted nga blended distance learning. Usaniinikay kung kinsanalanggyudtingalisaakongmgaestudyantengatinuodgyudngana-learn angilanggipangtudlonako.*"
>
> (**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 teachers in the hybrid distance learning context, where the traditional classroom dynamics are altered, potentially making it more challenging to gauge students' comprehension and participation.

The current findings support Bruggeman et al. (2021), who indicated that teachers are the heart of educational change and their actions are tied to their emotional feelings. Such that their struggle on delivery of instructional process is inseparable to their emotions. This means that struggles on findings the appropriate instructional resources such as which videos to use, what contents or contextualized book examples can they use to engage students in learning is a reflection of their deeper connection towards teaching. In return, they face difficulties in creating the modules, and wants to make sure that students understand and learn from them. The same challenge was observed by Ramirez (2022), when she delved into the experiences of AralingPanlipunan teachers in the new normal.

In addition to this, human touch between teachers and students are absent. This is significant because, depending on the verbal or nonverbal feedback received from both sides during the learning process, learning may be supported by both verbal and nonverbal communication between the teacher and the student (Therisa Beena & Sony, 2021). Because there is no personal contact component between the learner and the teacher in online learning, it may be difficult for the learner to comprehend the feedback (Hodges et al., 2020). Numerous technological issues might arise for the users, impeding and slowing down the teaching-learning process (Favale et al., 2020). Because the students differ in terms of their aptitudes, self-assurance, and drive, some of them find it difficult to study online, which causes further uncertainty and frustration (Dhawan, 2020). Teachers wanted to be able to assist them with this, but because of the limitations this continue worry them. In similar light, Boelens et al. (2018) said that teachers by nature seeks to ensure that student receive differentiated instruction depending on their needs.

Moreover, among Filipino teachers' instructional delivery is among the major concerns in which they struggle during the blended learning (De Villa & Manalo, 2020). Only about 40% of the 800,000 teachers in the country, according to the Department of Education, received training for distance learning through webinar sessions led by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) unit. However, there were concerns about the department's readiness to conduct online distance learning (Bordey, 2020). Expectedly, struggles are bound to rise in its implementation. Nevertheless, based on Vallee et al. (2020) blended learning has significant knowledge outcomes compared to traditional and online learning. This may reflect that despite teachers' worry on student outcomes and performance during their classes, as a whole, the education sector gains student-outcome.

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

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. The results of this study support the findings of Cabardo et al. (2022) and, De Villa and

Manalo (2020), who indicated that Filipino teachers employ coping mechanisms that allow them to cope during drastic changes on learning modality in the country.

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 changes. P5
	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. P9
	manage your time wisely. P11
Embracing Change and Adaptation in the New Normal Education	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
	accept and adapt first and everything will follow. P3
	embrace it and adapt the new educational system. P9
	you need to adopt in the new normal strategies of teaching. P2

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, teachers 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, paramaging 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 teachers.

"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.

Online blended distance learning is flexible learning modality that seeks to address students' needs amid pandemic. Although faced with difficulties in delivery and creation of instructional materials, teachers continue to show their innate abilities to be flexible as well. Evidently, Vilchez et al. (2021) said that teachers continue to attempt to deliver high-quality education lessons while given the required resources. Teachers spoke on the challenges of redesigning class plans, acquiring new technology, maintaining student engagement, and guaranteeing that every student has equal access to high-quality education. While at the same time, they seek to supplement these areas through using what is available to them (

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 ngmgaestudyante."

(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 teachers 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.

The findings align with Batac et al. (2021) that online modality learning has allowed teachers to develop time management skills. Because of their added task and responsibilities, they needed to comply with the demand and doing so required that they are able to manage their time. Also, the findings align with the investigation by De Villa and Manalo (2020) who found that Filipino teachers during the pre-implementation of distance learning, have used time management to cope. It seems that the same coping mechanisms is used when the online blended distance learning was in place. This reflects that teachers are dynamic in their teaching methodologies yet able to preserve mechanisms that allow them to face difficulties.

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, kailangankasi, pag-aralannatinyungmgabagong 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 teachers 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 teachers 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 adapt innovative and learner-centered pedagogical approaches that focus on collaboration, knowledge sharing, and intrinsic motivation. Online blended distance learning is one of this. Expectedly, teachers who delivers, and as the center of educational change (Bruggeman et al., 2021), they also adapt. The findings of this study are congruent to the findings of De Villa and Manalo (2020), who indicated that as part of teachers' effectivity, they adjust and adapt. They embrace the change, and from there like the education system they become empowered.

Lastly, the findings align with the study by Balaza et al. (2021), who found that AralingPanlipunan teachers are able to cope with struggles in teaching in the new normal by embracing and adapting their struggles and adapting appropriately. In their study, the participants said that the more struggles they faced, the more they find within themselves to embrace it. This provides facts that the findings on embracing change is not uncommon among AralingPanlipunan Filipino teachers. It further strengthens how proactive teachers proactively learn from their experiences.

Educational Insights

One of the significant takeaways from the challenges social studies teachers faced in this
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) *Be Conversant about
Contemporary Issues, (2) Empower Oneself with Dynamic Learning Environment, and, (3)
Improving Competence in Technology and Internet Exploration.* These insights representthe
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 teachers
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
Be Conversant about Contemporary Issues	it is crucial to improve how we use technology in the classroom…it is 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
Empower Oneself with Dynamic Learning Environment	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
	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
Improving Competence in Technology and Internet 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
	trying some new stuffs like online P8

     Be conversant about Contemporary Issues. This educational insight by teachers
encompasses and describes that teachers should be informed about the current issues
faced by students. Apart from being informed, teachers become able to converse about
current student experience. To some extent, involvement and knowledge in these areas
facilitates change in the way they deliver and interact with students be it online or in
traditional classroom setting.

"*Pag-explore and pagiging updated samga bag o namga issues is kailangan, tungodanamakabalo 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 natoangunsaonpaggamitug 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 kosa 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. It is only within the ability to be open and receptive to the events of the world that people continue to learn. Within the teaching profession, this is a lifetime commitment that even as time passes by, and different modalities are introduced in the span of their service, teachers continue to be relevant and timely in their delivery of instruction. Based on Chin et al. (2022), better-informed teachers make sound judgments and decisions, at the same time they contribute relevant improvements of schools and curriculums.

Empower Oneself with Dynamic Learning Environment. This theme centered on the perspectives of teachers on taking charge of one's life and improving one's own aptitudes, competencies, and expertise. It places a strong emphasis on individual autonomy and the proactive pursuit of progress. Teachers must take the initiative to provide high-quality instruction since the education system is a developing and dynamic field. The online blended distance learning is only among the many evolutions that was made to suit the changes in the worldwide, and the participants of this study were able to recognize this. This insight seeks to encourage their colleagues to take charge of their own learning journey, be flexible and embrace change. For instance, participant 9 said:

"*Isa samga key takeaways gikansaatongmgaeksperyensyamaongaaronmakadalasaatongkaugalingons aing-aninga bag-ongkahimtangsaedukasyon, kinahanglanunang mag-ayosangatongkaugalingongmgakakayahanugpagtuonngamakasaligsamga 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:

"Nahimamatnakongaangpagkausakamagtutudlosa   New   Normal dililamangbahinsapaghatagog content; apil sad sapaggamitug bag-o ug innovative ways parasa continued learning and growth sa students."

(**I've come to realize that being a teacher in the New Normal is not 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, paramaka-apply tayong flexible learning."

(Be flexible teacher, and apply flexible learning strategies.) P2_T2

Further, this insight highlights that teacher's inherent ability to understand that their duty goes beyond just delivering material. Teaching is a profession which requires diverse skill set and the ability to embrace change. Being adaptable and using creative techniques to ensure students' continual learning and growth is a goal that is achievable when they themselves make proactive efforts to engage in its dynamic learning setting. This aligns with Deed et al. (2020) who argued that teachers have inherent ability to respond to school's physical, social, and cultural landscape. In return, it allows them to be adapt and become advocates of contemporary flexible learning.

Improving Competence in Technology and Internet Exploration. This theme underscores teachers' experience on the use of technology and their struggles with internet connectivity. Based on their experience, the teachers believe that improving their competence in using technology and digital tools, as well as opportunities spent on exploring the internet for relevant educational materials must be encouraged. Their struggles centered on use of particular online tools or platforms, and internet connectivity. Based on the response of participant 1, they realized that teachers should continue to equip oneself on how to use technology, she said:

"*Dapatnatinnamalaman 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, maghanapngibang platforms paramakadeliver ng lessons."

(Explore different platforms in the internet just to deliver lesson.)
P9_T9

The themes underscore the importance of teachers in online blended distance learning to not limit themselves to what is readily presented but rather taking the initiative to enhance their technological proficiency through exploration. 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 education delivery in online blended learning environments.

De Vera (2020) in his study conducted on the teachers' resilience in the nre 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 have significant implications on the experience of teachers in the modality of online blended distance learning. Apart from this, the results of the study have contributed in the researcher's understanding of her co-worker's struggles amid the pandemic.

Generally, the findings have provided a better input into how teachers make and exert effort to deliver education. Apparently, despite lack of resources or limited access to it, regardless of the type of school, teachers have the same struggle. As a teacher herself, the findings have led her to retrace her experience during the pandemic, from modular learning to online, and then the blended learning modality. Their time, effort, and dedication to teaching was attested, and each of them contributed to the accessibility and successful implementation of this modality on the country. For without its proper implementation, the education system would not strive amid the pandemic.

As an educator and researcher, addressing the needs of teachers calls for the development of an intervention strategy. In addition to acknowledging the problem, it is critical to highlight comparable experiences in order to guarantee that subsequent generations receive thorough development and are adequately equipped. This emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive approach to education professional growth of teachers who are proactive in developing solutions in addition to identifying problems. After all, these struggles are part of their learning experience in their chosen profession.

Further, in the current curricula, the findings may have implications on the current New Normal Educational Policy. The online blended distance learning as a whole is a progressive learning modality, hence studies such as this provide avenue for its

improvement. While addressing the physical needs of schools is crucial, recognizing and assisting teachers 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.

Another, the study has revealed relevant coping mechanisms that allowed the participants of this study to cope. While reading and crafting this paper, the researcher also believes that among these mechanisms she had also practically applied in some way when she struggled with online blended distance learning. To others as well, the study presents how their colleagues are able to cope, and surpass it. To lead by example, and to foster awareness and acknowledgment for their peers' experience is a means towards creating a joint and progressive teaching environment.

Lastly, the results of this study have implications for future researchers. This focused on the current struggles, coping, and insights of teachers only, and there remains more to be explored. Online blended distance learning is a wide topic that extends and affects not just how education is delivered, but also a significant part on a teacher and students' life. Hence, this study is yet another testament of the struggles within the system of education which is progressively seeking to serve quality education for the learners and future generations.

CONSENT

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

ETHICAL APPROVAL

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

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