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TEACHER'S TEACHING EXPERIENCE DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY OF KAMPALA DISTRICT, UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The advent of COVID-19 posed a great challenge to teaching-learning process across the various educational system globally. The pedagogical challenge was characterized with many issues as regards teachers, students, parents and various stakeholders. This study explored the teaching experience of teachers in Kampala District, Uganda during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews were conducted using unstructured questions with 15 teachers from different schools in the district to gain insight into their experiences and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings reveal that the pandemic has presented teachers with unique challenges, such as difficulties in student-teacher engagement, lack of access to technology, and lack of school support and facilities to aid teaching and learning. Additionally, it found that teachers have had to adapt to using new technologies, such as virtual classrooms, to facilitate learning. Finally, this study identified need to strengthen teacher training and pedagogical skills, and provide them with support in order to better equip them for the challenges of teaching in the face of any threatening situation such as pandemic. The findings of this study can be used to inform policies focused on developing teacher capacity in the wake of the current pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19, Teacher's experience, Teaching-learning, Technologies

INTRODUCTION

Globally in July 2021, the world health organization reported around 188,058,728 COVID-19 cases which created enormous challenges in all educational institutions at all levels. Covid-19 brought the global lockdown,

disturbing around 1.6 billion students in 190 countries. Since most countries were heavily disturbed by the pandemic thus most education sectors had to adapt to blended learning methodology which binds together

face-to-face and online learning using different tools like Moodle, google classroom, and many others (Munyaradzi Zhou 2022). E-learning evolved to improve the levels of education delivery with a target to penetrate and access large numbers of students globally which is seamless and efficient to deliver content to students via e-learning platforms (Bassam Al-shargabi 2021).

E-learning was the only obvious way to continue learning during the pandemic. However, e learning was used for teaching during the lockdown in many countries globally, and this include Uganda, but it was obvious that users had little skills required to run classes online. This posed a great challenge on teaching-learning system in various educational disciplines. It was more pronounced in some health related disciplines because the learning contents in these area need more physical contacts with realities than e-learning. The willingness of some health professional programmes to continual use of e-learning for pedagogy could not be ascertained the pandemic because most of their classes required practical sessions which were not easy to be huddled with teachers while teaching online (Alimah Komuhangi 2022; Lawrence & Fakuade, 2021).

In many regions, including Kampala, Uganda, like many other countries the closure of schools during the pandemic, necessitate teachers to adapt to remote teaching methods. They had to quickly transition from traditional classroom teaching to online or distance learning platforms (Fakuade & Amoran, 2022; Uzorka & Olaniyan 2021). This shift required teachers to learn new technologies and develop digital skills to

deliver lessons and engage with their students remotely. This new experience was a challenge to teachers and students because they might have had limited access to reliable internet connections, computers, or smartphones. This lack of technological infrastructure made it challenging to conduct online classes effectively and engage students in remote learning activities.

Similarly, remote learning required teachers to adapt their teaching materials for online delivery. However, not all teachers had access to digital resources or textbooks that were compatible with remote learning platforms (Bamidele & Fakuade, 2023). They had to find or create appropriate digital content, which could be time-consuming and challenging, especially without proper support. Therefore, many teachers and students may not have had reliable internet access, computers, or smartphones, making it difficult to engage in online learning effectively.

Review of Literatures

Uswatun Hasanah 2023 mentioned that science teachers had no competencies in digital literacy during the pandemic thus leading to online training of teachers in science topics so that they can use digital-based facilities while teaching. The teachers had a negative perspective towards online teaching because 71% lack communication with learners while using online platforms to teach, they are of the opinion that this makes it hard for teachers to understand students' emotional and psychological requirements while in physical classes, also during e-learning, it's hard to successfully dispel students' doubts. In addition, teachers highlighted that there are also some difficulties associated with online teaching

like students' retention in classes (Tuba Kamal, 2021).

Zafarullah Sahito (2022), highlighted that 64% of teachers in Pakistan perceived that e-learning classes are not the best option mode of teaching to replace physical teaching because there is greater communication between teachers and students which is an opportunity for discussion between teachers and students than in online classes. In Portugal during covid 19, Teachers resorted to distance classes which required them to have technology skills. This also led to a change in the pedagogy by reorganizing the study materials such that they can fit into the remote learning platform. Although this was achieved, teachers in Portugal highlighted that e-learning requires tools and technology skills that must be in place for it to run smoothly (Sara Cruz, 2022). In another related, it was found that male teachers' perception of e-learning dominated female counterparts during the pandemic. And the study also proved that the faculty members with less teaching experience had a greater perception than those with more than 10 years of teaching experience with seemed to have a level of effect on teachers' perception of the adoption of learning during Covid-19. (Sankar Kar, 2020).

In the study of Balqis Husain (2020), it was reported that a number of teachers were ready to use e-learning during the pandemic because the majority of teachers in different areas of Indonesia had the skills to use the platforms for online teachings to gain maximum results in instructional activities during the pandemic. Fakuade, Olaniyan & Aremu, (2022) asserted that teachers level of awareness about online instruction,

especially teaching-learning that goes beyond face-to-face classroom experience is very important. As consciousness, of online or social media instructional platform help them to prepare their online instruction and to gain more experiences. This led to self-confidence and self-knowledge among teachers and students since they can teach as well as learn autonomously with the help of e-learning platforms.

Melikhaya Skhephe (2022) and Uzorka, Namara and Olaniyan (2023), revealed that education facilitators lacked enough knowledge of conducting online classes and how it was to be employed during a pandemic. It was added that most teachers have technology tools but they lacked the empathetic relationship that is related between technology and mode of teaching which was to be embedded into the program distribution in schools during Covid-19. According to S. Saripudin (2020), vocational teachers perceived online learning as a learning medium that uses an internet network. Thus 60% of teachers in vocational schools in their perception they never had issues with online teaching, however 73% of teachers stated that e-learning mode of teaching consist some content which is sometimes difficult for students to understand because the content is always in summarized formats. Also subjects that consists practical sessions are hard to be conducted online since students may not have the equipment's in their homes to conduct lab sessions (Nawangwe, Muwagga, Buyinza, & Masagazi, 2021) (Wang, Richard Ouma & Sirui, 2021).

Problem Statements

The covid-19 resulted in many teachers losing interest in their profession, and being unable to progress professionally. It appears the whole world had abandoned the process of teaching, especially in Uganda where many teachers left their profession for other things to do elsewhere in order to sought for survival and since after Covid-19, many of these teachers have refused to return back to work as a result of their experience during pandemic period. Reimers (2022) asserts that by 2030, close to 49 million teachers worldwide will be needed to replace those who leave the workforce due to multiple reasons. Uganda is not exceptional in this likely calamity. Nevertheless, It is important to note that the specific experiences and approaches during Covid-19 varied across educational institutions, regions, and socio-economic factors in Uganda. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote learning, pushing educators and students to adapt and find creative solutions to continue the teaching and learning process despite the challenging circumstances. Therefore, this study set to explore teachers experience during Covid-19 in Kampala district of Uganda.

Methodology

A qualitative exploratory approach was used during data collection. In-depth individual interviews were employed in order to make comprehensive analysis of teachers teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, a non-probability sampling technique of snowball where identifying initial participants who meet research criteria and then refer or "snowball" additional participants who also meet the criteria, this method of sampling

was adopted since teachers were not often in school because of the school closures. In all, fifteen (15) teachers were interviewed using unstructured interview questions and analyzed using thematic analysis, a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It means, this method can be used to analyse non-numerical data such as audio, video, text, etc. Four (4) thematic themes of teachers difficult experience during covid-19, impact of covid-19 on teaching-learning, integration of technology as well as mode of evaluating learners during Covid-19 were used to guide the study.

Results and Discussions

The findings focused on the experience of teachers during the challenging times periods of COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers analyze most difficult aspect of teacher's profession as well as their experiences in relation to level and process of teaching-learning activities. Attention is also given on impact of Covid-19 on teaching learning and integration or adoption of technology into processes of teaching. Thus, process of learning assessment during Covid-19 were also examined.

What is the most difficult aspect of your job today as a teacher?

Teachers Difficult Experience during Covid-19

The experience of individual during covid-19 is one thing that can never fade away in a hurry because it is one pandemics that humanity has had to experience with fear of death been so pronounce, as a result of daily report that people are dying in alarming numbers every day. This fear of loss, coupled

with social distancing, lockdown, economic instability and uncertainty, will result in a strong psychosocial impact that will have to be addressed (Brooks et al., 2020). Teachers face a lot of difficulties during this period they worked through partial school closures, and this affects not only teachers' profession also teachers wellbeing. From the interview, the teachers mentioned their experience as ...

*..We no longer have a source of income as a teacher in this pandemic,
 ..In this pandemic, I can't keep track of my student,
 ..Currently we are emotionally discouraged and the zeal is dying because we don't know if we shall be paid for the wastes time,
 ..Challenges in the payments and lack of concentration from students.
 ..Because of the pandemic I don't know if I will be able to continue as a teacher because most schools have completely closed.,
 .. Am bored because I am used to teaching and talking to students,*

Nevertheless, some of the respondent (teachers) responded that because of the lockdown they are now jobless because all schools were closed. They were not sure, when the school will be re-open, many of them were concern about how to repay their loan, while some concern about their limited skills that can fetch them money during the lockdown. These among other challenges are experience of teacher during Covid-19. However, it was reported by the education sector strategic plan (ESSP), education sector in Uganda is constrained by many challenges during covid-19, these include among others weak school level management structures,

inadequate availability of learning materials, teachers emotional and psychological down. A major issue is lack of concentration on the part of student and socio-economic factors on the part of parent especially in disadvantaged areas such as hard to reach areas in eastern Uganda (ESSP, 2021)

It was noted according to National monitor (2020), Uganda private teachers union is dismayed on disheartening report about their unpaid salary that heavily hit most of their colleague during covid-19 pandemic. Many workers from private schools have since February 2020 not received salaries and they are exempted from the Government food relief programme. Many teachers abandoned their profession and resorted to offering casual labour in the communities they live in and also predicted that its likely many will opt out of the teaching profession (The Guardian, 2021).

Impact of Covid-19 on Teaching-Learning

As regarding the way pandemic affected the teaching-learning activities, the pandemic forced a sudden shift from physical class to remote and online learning. This exposes disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity. Many students from underserved communities or rural areas in Uganda lacked the necessary devices and reliable internet connections, hindering their ability to participate in online classes effectively (Alonso-García et al, 2021). Nevertheless, a lot of teachers were jobless, having no students to teach, no place to work for them to earn a living. From the interview, the teachers give account that;

"We no longer meet the students physically, Being jobless, The government

advised us to resort to online classes but I teach in a village setting where Data availability and network is poor, We can't fully assess the students because the physical aspect is lacking"

"The schools closed and we couldn't continue, I stopped teaching because the students are back at home, We shifted from physical classes to online classes, The students went back home and classes stopped"

"The classes stopped and the students had to go back home, We had to shift to online classes but the attendance was few..."

It was evident that teaching experience was quite difficult for teachers during the pandemic. The report shows that many schools were closed down, students were sent home and teaching-learning activities were shifted to remote or online experience which was not prepared and adequately planned for by the teachers. More so, learners could not be assessed, especially learners in hard to reach environments.

Similarly, the shortage of internet and data connection is another major setback for accessing learning activities by the students, and where there is the internet, teachers experience very few students in attendance. Hence, the report is in line with the study of Alonso-García et al, (2021), that the situation during covid-19 forced the teaching-learning experience to transit to emergency remote teaching, online teaching. However, the method of teaching was greatly affected because many teachers experience worse teaching skills as a result of unprepared situations they find themselves in. similarly, the report also support the findings of

Nwokeocha, (2021) study on impact of covid-19 on teaching and learning in Africa. The study stated that, massive disruption of education, exacerbated educational inequalities, teachers' poor digital skills and lack of infrastructure, and increased vulnerability of the marginalized learners shut out of school are major factors that characterized the teaching-learning process during covid-19 pandemic.

Integration or Adoption of Technology into Processes of Teaching-Learning

The adoption of technology, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into the teaching-learning process allows the construction of new spaces where students consult the information at any time, take online exams, and communicate with the participants of the educational process from anywhere. In Uganda, teachers had no option than to adopt use of ICT into the teaching-learning process. When asked the teachers if they did resort to using technology during covid-19 pandemic, the response was; yes!

"We tried WhatsApp but not all parents have WhatsApp",

"The university has an E-learning platform LMS and Zoom"

"I personally looked out for learners that are interested in continuing with studying via Zoom and what app,"

"No, because the students couldn't afford"

The report indicated that teachers were adopting technology such as WhatsApp to reach out or communicate with their learners. However, they also revealed that not all parents could afford WhatsApp, this connotes that some parents were socio-economic down and could not afford to use

smartphones. More so, this corroborates the assertion of Fakuade (2021), in a study of the effects of the social media platform on pupils' social interaction, that the use of WhatsApp is not only for social engagement but rather used to improve learners' social interaction. Furthermore, some participants reported that they used school learning platforms such as learning management systems and Zoom. While some teachers looked out for learners that were interested in continuing study using Ict. Yet, teachers encountered many challenges using ICT for teaching-learning like lack of face-to-face interactions, lack of socialization, distraction by social media, technology-related issues etc. thus, during this period of COVID-19 pandemic, one must embrace the alternative to classroom learning to keep up with one's academic development and this integration can be considered and build upon after the pandemic (Sandeep Shetty, Shilpa, Debayan Dey, & Kavya, 2020).

Nevertheless, learning activities were been evaluated by giving an assignment, quizzes, and multiple-choice questions (MCQs) to learners;

"We evaluate learners through test and assignments and quizzes and use excel to record and compute the results"

"We give them take home via their emails which they send back, we record the results using the excel sheets"

"The results are recorded manually and submitted to the department,"

Learners were been assess by given assignments, and quizzes via emails since the situation was emergency learning and there was a pressure of educational deficiency if there is no drastic steps taken to mitigate the

education gap. On that note, teachers can only send assessments to their learners and results were recorded using Excel sheets and submitted to the departments. Therefore, it should be noted that the adoption of technology should be carefully examined and trialed prior to integration within an educational system, with a focus on pedagogical goals rather than technological pressures (Christopoulos & Sprangers, 2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

While there is much being published about the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning, the experience of teachers in Uganda, as a case study will be unique in that it will expose researchers to many factors that constitute the development of a teaching-learning process. The pandemic has severely tested and exposed the preparedness of the educational system and policy makers against any unexpected pandemic, while the educational agency is well aware of the need to prepared for natural disasters. Many teachers lost their job, and there is a huge setback in the teaching-learning process that necessitates the adoption of technology into the teaching-learning process. Thus, the scope and complexity of the pandemic has been unprecedented considering teachers accounts, because of its sudden impact, the very limited time available to make preparations, and the extended period of time that it has lasted in Kampala, Uganda. With this in mind, this final chapter of the study offers recommendations that, Uganda Educational Policy maker should promote and give support for teachers' to start practicing remote pedagogical way of facilitation especially with the use of technology, and

have access to the internet at home. Finally, there must be a capacity building workshop

for teachers to keep them update on use of ICT for teaching-learning purposes.

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