2022

Literacy Faculty Perspectives During COVID: What Did We Learn?

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Recommended Citation

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Abstract

In this multi-institutional survey research, we investigated graduate literacy faculty's experiences and perceptions of teaching online during COVID-19 in the U.S.A. A Likert-type survey with open-ended questions was distributed to literacy faculty teaching in campus-based and online environments. Results indicated faculty did not perceive limitations in these online learning environments. However, they encountered various challenges, and handling field experiences became the greatest challenge. Also reported were the faculty mental and physical health concerns (i.e., experiencing anxiety, feeling pressured, and suffering from screen fatigue). Faculty participants realized they needed to be more student-centered with their online teaching. As faculty move toward post-pandemic course design and teaching, lessons learned during the pandemic can help build stronger and more equitable graduate literacy education programs.

Key words: graduate literacy faculty, online teaching, COVID-19

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many previously in-person graduate literacy courses shifted to online formats to accommodate students' needs. While Gallagher and Palmer (2020) reported this transition to online learning was necessary even before the pandemic, COVID-19 accelerated the transition. Earlier research revealed teaching online is influenced not just by the virtual format but by pedagogical practices of the content area (Voithofer & Nelson, 2021). As a collaborative team of literacy researchers, we wanted to know more about faculty perceptions on teaching literacy online master's programs. Our research journey began with an examination of literacy master's students' perceptions of online learning prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Van Wig et al., 2022). As student data were analyzed this elicited questions regarding the

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perspectives of faculty who were teaching these online classes around the U.S. What practices were they using to teach these students online? How comfortable were faculty teaching online? What types of tools did they use to teach their online courses? What could be transferred to post-pandemic literacy instruction? What were the social and emotional challenges for the faculty during the COVID time online teaching? These questions were of interest to us because there is limited research on literacy faculty's perceptions of affordances and challenges in literacy coursework. While some faculty were already teaching in programs that were fully online, there were also programs that were forced to go completely online due to COVID. We sought to investigate graduate literacy faculty's experiences and perceptions of teaching online during the pandemic in the United States. As a team of researchers, we recognized that not only did the context of teaching changed for many literacy instructors, but the lives of our students changed as they dealt with the context of COVID in multiple aspects of their lives and work.

Theoretical Framework

As we analyzed faculty perceptions, we thought about the knowledge and dispositions instructors need to implement and demonstrate in literacy teaching in an online environment. In starting with knowledge and context of the faculty we were studying, we examined the TPACK framework (Mishra & Kohler, 2006). We designed questions that asked about technological knowledge and experience, pedagogical understandings within the field of literacy education, and the aspects of the literacy curriculum addressed by each of the faculty respondents. However, we knew we needed to go beyond TPACK to examine the Metacognitive Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (M-TPACK) Framework (Wilson et al., 2013) to guide our study of faculty perceptions. We needed to examine the dispositions and thus the metacognitive adaptability of the faculty.

M-TPACK centers the metacognitive teacher as the expert in content, technology use, curriculum integration, and students within the TPACK framework (Wilson et al., 2013). The teacher supports the use of technology during teaching and learning and sees technology as the "major vehicle for teaching and learning" (Wilson et al., 2013, p. 9) while keeping students learning central. As an active user of technology, the teacher is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of technology and learns to adapt the orchestration of the varied instructional decisions to maximize learning. As we sought to understand teacher's perceptions about online literacy master's programs it was important to look beyond their thinking about technology, self and text to examine their perceptions of the need to be adaptable in their teaching. This was particularly important with COVID, as a metacognitive teacher is "disposed to responding to unanticipated and complex situations in an adaptive manner" (Wilson et al., 2015, p.92).

Literature Review

Study participants were metacognitive teachers engaged in online teaching during a global pandemic. Survey questions were posed to them to learn their perceptions of online teaching versus in-person teaching, the dispositions, the contexts of the online environment (during a pandemic), as well as their experiences in online teaching and learning. Teaching online classes is "challenging but is also rewarding" (Esani, 2010, p. 187). Instructors' dispositions and their perceptions of teaching online classes impact students' success and retention in online classes. Karkar-Esperat (2021) suggested the "triple A" approach to ensure instructors are responsive to their students and act with urgency by being "accessible, accountable, and adaptive" (p. 21). Being conscious of their role leads instructors to maintain positive dispositions and a strong teaching presence and employ effective instructional practices.

Instructors' Dispositions in Online Classes

Instructors' professional dispositions refer to the "habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie an educator's performance" according to Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation ([CAEP], n.d.). Carroll (2012) defined dispositions as teachers' behaviors that promote student learning and well-being. Positive dispositions include friendliness, patience, enthusiasm, tolerance, caring, and fairness (Shepherd & Alpert, 2010). With the growing number of students enrolling in online courses, there is a need to ensure instructors employ effective professional teaching practices to enhance their efficacy in the online environment (Welch & Napoleon, 2010). In a study examining student and instructor experiences of the transition to remote instruction during the pandemic, Motz et al. (2020) indicated two thirds of the instructors were disconnected from their students, and three quarters of the students felt isolated from their university's community. Instructors exhibiting positive attitudes lead to student satisfaction and increased engagement (Shepherd & Alpert, 2010). While instructors' dispositions were the same in both online and in-person classes, the instructors' role differs in the two types of classes.

Online Versus In-Person Classes

The instructor of an online class is required to adopt online pedagogical practices that encompass technical skills and teaching presence (Redmond, 2011). Such practices were not equally required for in-person teaching. Teaching presence is comprised of three activities: instructional designing and organizing (designing and organizing curriculum and course content); facilitating discourse (setting the learning environment and encouraging and facilitating student engagement); and directing instruction (presenting content, addressing misconceptions,

and confirming understanding through assessments and feedback(Garrison et al., 2000; Redmond, 2011). Instructors must complete these activities when teaching online courses.

As a result of this pedagogical transition, instructors feel they need to re-identify themselves as they start teaching online classes. "If educators are changing teaching places, they need to redefine themselves in light of the change in landscape" (Meloncon, 2007, p. 37–38). In in-person classes instructors have regular contact with students, enabling them to assess their students' prior knowledge, needs, and cognitive knowledge (Esani, 2010). However, teaching online courses requires instructors to invest more time in developing and designing than what is required for in-person classes and spend time giving explanatory feedback to students to answer their questions, concerns, or misconceptions (Esani, 2010). Visser (2000) studied his own experiences as an educator moving from teaching a regular class to teaching online courses. His results revealed teachers of online classes start planning online courses long before they start teaching. The development, design, and planning of online classes is labor intensive. They require hours of computer screen time to plan, communicate, and give feedback to students versus the time associated with communicating verbally in in-person classes. Instructors' social presence in online classes is crucial. They need to be intentional in directly addressing students' concerns and needs and create an engaging environment to ensure students have positive professional and personal experiences (Esani, 2010; Van Wig et al., 2022).

Prior to COVID-19 online delivery of courses became popular due to flexibility in scheduling to reach distance students, students employed full time, and nontraditional students. Online learning programs have important benefits for higher education institutions (Cleary, 2021; Sun & Chen, 2016) and have an increased financial cost effectiveness for institutions (Ghazi-Saidi et al., 2020; Graham, 2006). For 14 years, enrollment has increased in online

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programs (Seaman et al., 2018). Many graduate literacy programs offer graduate courses synchronously and asynchronously or a hybrid of both types. However, there are many different factors including socioemotional and financial considerations that instructors need to be aware of to support students.

Contextual Influences of Online Teaching

Some of the socioemotional aspects of online learning have been overlooked, and without acknowledging the challenges students encounter in online classes, their success in completing online classes is at risk. Many students and instructors experienced stress and anxiety with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bao, 2020; Cao et al., 2020; Chiu, 2021). Some students struggled in maintaining their motivation and engagement in online classes (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2020), and other students encountered financial challenges due to the economic recession, which exacerbated their existing mental health problems (Singh et al., 2020). Other challenges both instructors and students encountered were the public health crisis, social isolation, and discouragement (Hall & Batty, 2020; Singh et al., 2020; Yamin, 2020). In these critical circumstances, the instructor's role and disposition in online classes is paramount in helping students stay on task (Hartnett, 2016) and fostering student motivation (Allen et al., 2013; Van Wig et al., 2022).

Effective online teaching experiences are shaped by the instructor's course development and content knowledge, the instructor's communications with students, and opportunities in the course for students to construct and confirm meaning around the course materials through dialogue and reflections (Garrison, 2009). One way to predict students' performance in online classes is in their interaction with their peers and instructor (Jaggers & Xu, 2016). Instructors' personalized communication and instruction increases student satisfaction in online classes

(Means & Neisler, 2021). Even in an online environment it is crucial for instructors to support the socioemotional outcomes of their students through sustained communication and building a sense of belonging in the online community (Crow & Murray, 2020). Instructors play an integral part in the success of online classes, and it is important to identify the challenges they encounter so administrators can support them in addressing student needs.

Instructors' Experiences Impact Their Perceptions of Online Classes

Instructors encounter personal and professional challenges in online classes, much like those encountered by the students. The two challenges Furman (2021) examined, which instructors identified, were time and technology. The time instructors spent on their computers, teaching and responding to students, and the technology they had to use to communicate and share with family members during the pandemic presented a challenge. Instructors must be competent in managing technology and creating and uploading materials (Rasheed et al., 2020). However, a study by Brown (2016) revealed several challenges instructors encounter in online classes: technological anxiety, illiteracy, and teachers' resistance to technology. Some instructors had difficulty in using technology to create and manage online courses (Lightner & Lightner-Laws, 2016). Other instructors believed technology was a barrier in teaching, and they questioned the effectiveness of online activities in advancing student learning (Lightner & Lightner-Laws, 2016). Some instructors felt designing and managing synchronous and asynchronous courses and troubleshooting technical problems was a waste of time (Bower, 2015). In the 2010 decade, researchers examined ways for literacy instructors to integrate technology in their instruction (Hutchison & Beschorner, 2015; Hutchison & Woodward, 2014, 2018).

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Following the previous studies, this research asked literacy graduate instructors about the technological tools they use in their online instruction to inform their teaching practices. Tools are constantly changing with the development of new applications, but it is crucial for literacy instructors to understand the pedagogy of integrating technologies in instruction to ensure success and learn about effective digital tools used in literacy instruction (Hutchison & Woodward, 2014). Hutchison and Woodward (2014) proposed the technology integration planning cycle for literacy and language arts, and they identified the critical elements that impact the instructor's use of digital technologies. These elements focus on the instructor's identification of the instructional goal and then the best approach when using digital technology; the instructor's selection of the suitable tools to support instruction; the instructor's identification of the constraints of using the digital tool and determining if they can overcome these constraints; the instructor's vision of how instruction will be delivered using these tools; and the instructor's reflection on the instructional tool used and what, if any, changes need to be made.

Methodology

This study began with seven researchers' shared interests in literacy education faculty's experiences and perceptions of online literacy instruction since the advent of COVID-19 in spring 2020. Our experiences as faculty teaching online literacy education courses at different higher education institutions range from novices to 15 years. Our respective graduate literacy education programs have existed online for a range of first time-implementation to 22 years. Each of us develop and teach online courses, as well as belong to committees supporting online learning. The purpose of this multi-institutional collaborative research project was to discern graduate literacy faculty perceptions of their online instructional experiences in literacy coursework before and after COVID-19. Our goal is to better understand how literacy faculty

engage graduate students in online literacy instruction. Online coursework is defined for the purpose of this research project as instruction delivered as hybrid (in-person and online) or fully online.

Procedure

Together, we developed a survey with multiple choice and open-ended questions. The 27-question survey collected demographic and institutional information, perceptions of online literacy instruction as related to efficacy, technology influences, and challenges, especially as they related to field experiences. The survey was a combination of 5-point Likert scale (1–*strongly disagree*, 2–*disagree*, 3–*neither agree or disagree*, 4–*agree*, and 5–*strongly agree*), multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Each researcher secured IRB approval following their institutional guidelines.

The survey went through an iterative process. In phase one, researchers met via video conferencing to discuss and create initial survey questions. The focus of these meetings was to align survey responses to the research questions of graduate literacy faculty's experience and perceptions of teaching in an online environment. As the researchers in this study were all faculty teaching graduate literacy courses, the goal was to discern if this move to online teaching impacted literacy instruction. The survey was then entered into Qualtrics for ease of distribution and analysis. In phase two, the research team members individually completed the survey to ensure alignment to the research questions and theoretical perspective. Upon revisions, the new pilot survey was given to graduate literacy faculty in one of the researchers' institutions, for additional input on question clarity and ease in completing the survey. Comments received from the pilot survey were used by the research team to improve question clarity and final edits were then completed.

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In phase three, the survey was distributed to faculty associated with each team member's institution, who taught graduate literacy courses hybrid and/or online and did not participate in the pilot study. In addition, a call was emailed through the Literacy Research Association Listserv and literacy program coordinators and faculty for assistance in sharing the survey with their online/hybrid graduate literacy faculty in the United States. Consistent with snowball sampling procedures (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) faculty participants were encouraged to share the survey link with colleagues that met the survey demographic requirement. In the final phase, six additional open-ended questions were sent to 31 participants who shared their email addresses and agreed to do a follow-up survey via a Google form. Eight responses were received. These six questions focused on (a) learning from literacy teaching this past year during the pandemic including teaching, students, well-being, workload, and such; (b) particular literacy instruction/assessment techniques that were different when teaching online vs. teaching in person; (c) the transferable and non-transferable aspects in literacy teacher education from pandemic teaching to the future; (d) learning about students and how they handle stress that will impact future literacy teaching; (e) elements of literacy teaching that worked online (e.g., social practice, field component, course work) and did not work during the COVID period; (f) perceptions and definitions of learning modes (e.g., hybrid, online) before and after COVID-19.

Participants

One-hundred participants from 32 states completed the survey; though 101 participants logged in the survey, one person did not reply to any questions. A response rate is unable to be determined because this survey was distributed as a convenience sample through the research teams' institutions, the Literacy Research Association Listserv, and literacy program chairs and/or coordinators in the United States. The responses then came through snowball sampling as

literacy faculty were encouraged to share the link with other literacy faculty. These results

attained through a convenience sample while not generalizable, do allow for a gathering of

faculty perceptions. These perceptions become the foundation for the researchers to reflect on

practice and consider how to best meet the graduate literacy instructional needs.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data sources include 100 respondents' answers to the 27-item survey of 22 multiple

choice questions and five open-ended questions, and eight respondents' responses to the open-

ended six-question follow-up survey. SPSS was employed to conduct quantitative analysis. The

open-ended and follow-up interview questions were analyzed through inductive analysis

(Saldaña, 2021) and categorized for patterns and themes. The six stages of an inductive analysis

guided the process: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, identifying and

reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report (Saldaña, 2021).

Findings

Analysis of the survey results and follow-up responses revealed that regardless of the

participants' backgrounds in terms of academic ranks, years of employment in different types of

institutions, and length of online courses, teaching online was not new during the COVID-19

pandemic to most of them. Participants faced various challenges last year, and field components

appeared to be the most challenging in their teaching. Meanwhile, the pandemic enabled

participants to develop new understanding of students, tech tools and themselves as literacy

teacher educators. Based on what they learned from the teaching experience during the

pandemic, participants reflected on what can be transferred and/or not transferred to the post-

pandemic instruction to better literacy teacher preparation programs.

Participants' Background

All of the participants (*N*=100) ranged in teaching experience and location but also in academic ranks with assistant and associate professors comprising 85% of the participants. In addition, numbers of years teaching in higher education varied with 13% teaching three or less years, 38% teaching for 4–9 years, and 49% teaching in higher education 10 or more years. Eighty-nine percent were employed in public 4-year institutions with 11% from private 4-year institutions. Responses were analyzed for inferential statistics comparing years of experience teaching in higher education with questions on instructional challenges, modeling, and guided practices. In conducting an independent t-test, there were no areas of significance in these identified categories.

Participants also varied in their focus of higher education instruction with 9% teaching content targeting Grades 6–12, 23% in Grades Preschool–6, with the majority of participants teaching a broad range of coursework for Preschool–12 grades (68%). The qualitative analysis revealed the online courses reported by over 10 participants included literacy assessment, children/young adult literacy, research/action research, writing, literacy theory to practice, literacy foundations, content area literacy, and language arts.

Seventy-eight participants reported teaching coursework that is 14–16 weeks in length. There was a mix of how courses were taught with faculty reporting teaching prior to COVID with 35% being fully online, 43% delivering instruction in a hybrid format, and 22% in face-to-face instruction (see Table 1). At the time of Spring 2021 when the survey was completed, 86% of the respondents were working at home teaching live synchronously or asynchronously and 14% worked at campus.

Table 1

Graduate Literacy Program Delivery Mode and Online Teaching Prior to COVID-19

Graduate Literacy Program Delivery Mode Prior to COVID-19		Whether or Not Taught Online Graduate Literacy Classes Prior to COVID-19	
Fully Online	35%	Yes	80%
Hybrid	43%	No	19%
Face to Face	22%	Missing Data	1%

Teaching Online Was Not New During the COVID-19

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents reported their graduate literacy programs were either online or hybrid, and 80% of them had taught graduate literacy courses online prior to COVID-19. Therefore, teaching online was not new to them. The participants were also asked about the abilities to model literacy components, teach assessment, and provide guided practice during COVID-19. Inferential statistics comparing years of experiences teaching in higher ed with questions on these instructional challenges suggested no significance between the abilities to teach online and number of years of experience. At once, the respondents reported a strong comfort level in each of these components: modeling, assessment, and guided practice though they primarily delivered these topics asynchronously.

In the follow-up interview, respondents shared online teaching overall went well, such as coursework/readings, small/whole group discussion, online icebreakers, and relationship building. One replied, "Presenting and sharing readings online worked, and many of my students found that, even though they never met the kids they worked with, they still built relational connections." Most participants reported they had engaged in online teaching before COVID and they were comfortable in using digital tools and platforms.

Field Components Brought the Greatest Challenge and Opportunity

Participants shared their graduate teacher candidates' literacy clinical experiences at the start of COVID-19 (Spring 2020), and during Fall 2020 and Spring 2021with multiple choices (see Table 2). At the shut down in March 2020, 25% of the respondents reported their clinical was canceled, 34% moved to synchronous remote, 22% asynchronous remote, 16% hybrid and 8% remained in person. In Fall 2020, the literacy clinical experiences mainly stayed online based on the reports of the respondents. Ninety-five percent reported either synchronous or asynchronous remote or hybrid in online and in-person clinical experiences. Fourteen percent chose to do their clinical in person and 6% canceled their clinical experiences. In Spring 2021, respondents reported similar results to Fall 2020 with the majority staying online or hybrid. The in-person increased to 16% and only 3% canceled their clinical experiences.

Table 2

Candidates Literacy Clinical Experiences

	Canceled	Synchronous Remote	Asynchronous Remote	Hybrid (Both)	In Person
Spring 2020 at the Start of COVID-19	25%	34%	22%	16%	8%
Fall 2020	6%	39%	27%	29%	14%
Spring 2021	3%	40%	26%	27%	16%

Of participants who had transitioned to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 38% identified field practicum as the literacy area that created the greatest challenge. Responses that received lower ratings for challenges included assessment (7%), writing (3%), and fluency (1%). No participants identify challenges in the area of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading

comprehension, or vocabulary. When asked how they currently managed the field components in their online graduate literacy courses, the respondents reported with a high frequency on "supplement with videos from external resources or created on their own," and "virtual observation/practicum." The qualitative analysis demonstrated many instructors required their students to submit video-recorded teaching or tutoring sessions for feedback, and some used rehearsals or role plays. However, remote or virtual teaching and discussion were widely used during the COVID-19.

As to the differences of particular literacy instruction/assessment techniques between teaching online and teaching in person, some respondents have "maintained the assignments used in the past with some modifications," but most have faced various challenges in courses with field components when teaching online. One respondent struggled to "conduct observations because the interns didn't do much differentiation or interactive small groups." When literacy instruction was "relegated to whole group settings," it "didn't help struggling or advanced readers." Among those challenges, "group discussion (was) the most different" because "turn-taking (was) much more difficult in video teaching as people tend to mute their microphones and not interject," which happened to both graduate students and their K-12 students. They reported, "reading conferences (were) incredibly difficult," but "writing conferences less so."

Another challenge when teaching online is to "make tutoring interactive," in literacy clinical courses. Respondents reported, "publishers' generosity of resources helped," such as the EPIC and Flyleaf books, word sorts and other lessons in SeeSaw, Nearpod, and Google Jamboard, which "provided more opportunities for various ways for K12 student(s) to interact with our candidates." Teacher candidates found combinations of synchronous and asynchronous

lessons worked well for some K-12 students. The analysis indicated the most common technology tools used were Zoom, videos, Google products, Flipgrid, and Padlet.

Assessment was challenging in literacy clinical courses mostly because of the copyright issue when publishers did not give permission to scan the assessments such as informal reading inventory booklets and post them in our online course for teacher candidates to use virtually with students. Writing and word study assessments were less challenging as parents could scan or take photos with their phones and send in their child's work, though "assessing from a photo was challenging." Respondents reported, "Most things (assessments) are more difficult online because they take longer and there are endless technological challenges." For example, the auto-correct features make writing/spelling assessment tricky, and hands-on techniques required in some assessments were hard to do over a computer.

Internet access and service has made the assessment piece in assessment courses of some respondents most challenging. "Some candidates could not complete their projects with their partner teacher because their partner did not have internet access at home," or "because the service was not good." One respondent wrote, "It is apparent that internet access has become a citizens' right and service should be available everywhere in a state."

Reflecting on what they have learned from literacy teaching this past year during the pandemic, respondents shared moving courses online was difficult considering the real engagement with students. They felt there was no substitute for in-person interaction. One wrote, "While meetings were easier and more convenient, connecting with interns and helping them see the importance of these literacy assessments and techniques was more difficult online."

Participants shared different opinions as to whether online literacy teaching worked well. One respondent stated online field experiences and everything worked "surprisingly successful,"

but others reported practicum or field components were challenging: "The practicum was challenging, since students did not want additional remote schooling." One respondent specified teaching to a group of kids virtually without their cameras on was "stressful." Only one respondent mentioned assessment but reported, "assessment is challenging but doable."

Faculty participants also provided other responses. Three of the participants noted the need for in-person learning to support literacy as a social practice and that "face tiles on screen" were not sufficient to "sit and discuss, jump up to write on the board." One person noted it was difficult to demonstrate lessons and include the authenticity of reading conferences.

Faculty and Students Voiced Physical, Social, and Emotional Concerns

Besides the challenges encountered in their teaching practice, when reflecting on their experience of teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants also shared their own and students' physical, social, and emotional concerns.

Faculty Concerns

When checking their personal and/or professional challenges related to teaching online due to COVID-19, respondents reported their biggest challenges were screen fatigue (M=4.16), followed immediately by physical concerns due to sitting all day (M=4.03) and anxiety and stress (M=3.91). Some other concerns reported with high frequency were children learning at home (M=3.44), family/personal illness/loss (M=3.32), childcare (M=3.31), and teaching children at home (M=3.30). Challenges for technology (M=2.8), motivation to teach (M=2.90), technology (M=2.90), and engagement in material (M=2.70) demonstrated the least concerns for teaching online due to COVID-19.

Students Concerns

When the respondents were asked about their student concerns related to teaching online due to COVID-19, their replies revealed anxiety was the most reported issue (M=4.04) by the students and it was followed by job responsibility (M=3.90) and completion of coursework (M=3.88). Student concerns reported to faculty also included family/personal illness/loss (M=3.70), technology (M=3.38), children learning at home (M=3.24), childcare (M=3.19), teaching children at home (M=3.19). The lowest concern student reported to the respondents was engagement in material (M=2.96). When respondents were asked to identify the technology issues their students had encountered, the highest was Internet issues and the second was not tech-savvy (e.g., uploading a video, google docs). Some also reported their students lacked devices.

In the follow-up interview, the respondents expressed concerns about the workload and well-being of students and their own. Their "workload seemed heavier" because "keeping track of all that's required takes a lot of time," and sometimes they had "one zoom meeting after another with no break." Consequently, "it has been difficult to get away from the screen and is often exhausting." They understood that students, mostly teachers, were "INCREDIBLY stressed out," and learned to check in on students' well-being. They "have developed a greater level of patience and understanding towards students."

Impact of The Concerns

In the follow up interview, some participants mentioned "digital fatigue" and students "not tech savvy." Reflecting on their learning about students and how they handled stress that will impact future literacy teaching, respondents found the biggest challenge for their students was time management skill and their social emotional considerations and well-being. One

respondent wrote, "compassion, empathy, patience and a willingness to compromise are also key factors in how I run my class today." Another respondent wrote, "there is a huge degree of trust AND humility needed" when teaching online because they needed to "trust that assignments are being completed AND trust that people will ask for help." They believed, "good communication and relationship building is more important than ever in todays' world." Respondents reported the impact on their teaching in general with "empathy, patience, willingness to compromise" and "they have a LOT going on--I need to aim for quality over quantity," and "social-emotional check-in."

Transferability to Post-Pandemic Instruction

Realizing "expectations are not what they were before the pandemic and might never be exactly the same again," respondents learned "flexibility is key" and "people are very resilient and will adapt to any situation." Most graduate courses were already online before the COVID-19 pandemic; through the pandemic graduate literacy faculty have explored more tools to better their teaching. They learned they could "have online practicums and... a farther reach with tutoring through zoom." They also "create[ed] interactive and lessons with manipulatives in person and online." They "have learned a lot about facilitating discussion successfully and fostering engagement using synchronous video platforms [Zoom]." They found "it's possible to keep... student-centered and literacy-centered virtual environments." One respondent explicitly pointed out they were becoming more deliberate and intentional in classification for what can be delivered synchronously and asynchronously. They specified "moving some content to asynchronous contexts, such as, threaded discussions of reading, (and) short 5–10 min video lectures."

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Reflecting on what is transferable in literacy teacher education from pandemic teaching to the future, respondents reported the pandemic has forced them to grow as a society and as literacy educators. All of the takeaways could be transferable, for example, the ability to find resources and use technology in coursework, such as the use of breakout rooms, videos, screen sharing, etc., digital tools to give students space to write and create, and multiple ways to respond in various apps such as SeeSaw. One respondent wrote, "Some people needed a pandemic to get them to participate in the 21st century." Another respondent wrote:

> The pandemic forced me to put a pause on my plans and reevaluate what was most important for me and my students (as people, as teachers), allowing me to recenter humanizing teaching that accounts for a diverse set of emotional responses to social and professional turmoil. (Follow-up Interview)

Respondents realized "the need for differentiation has emerged in ways that are not necessarily present in face-to-face settings." "Seeing tutoring clips on a regular basis was informative in ways that do not exist in face-to-face classes," which enabled respondents to "become more aware of the specific needs of many students." Meanwhile, many teacher candidates opted to pre-record rather than present live as "teaching examples felt much different" in writing assessment due to the auto-correct features.

There were also many parts that cannot be transferred from pandemic teaching to the future. One respondent wrote, "transitioning to all digital or video teaching is NOT feasible or equitable for K-12 students (or higher education)." Another echoed, "I think we have learned a lot about how robust online instruction can be...with a balance for off-screen time...it was more a choice. The emotions and need to do all online hopefully will not transfer." One respondent

thought "the tangible parts of reading instruction like working in small groups or doing word hunts in picture books is not transferable" as they lack transition in online teaching.

Interestingly, when respondents were asked about their choice of graduate literacy course delivery when it would be safe to return to face-to-face teaching and if they were allowed to choose, 40% chose Hybrid, 25% face-to-face, 13% chose to teach from home asynchronously. There were 9% who chose the option to teach at campus live synchronously, 8% teaching at home live synchronously and less than 5% chose to teach at campus asynchronously.

Discussion and Implications

This study voiced the perceptions of graduate literacy faculty's experience of teaching online before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, of which many aspects were rarely heard. Lessons learned from these experiences and perceptions will transfer to future planning and teaching online literacy courses to create more effective practices and better graduate literacy education programs. Faculty participants realized they needed to be more student centered with their online teaching. As faculty move toward post-pandemic course design and teaching, lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic can help build stronger and more equitable graduate literacy education programs.

Comfort Level of Teaching Online

While some literacy master's programs were forced to go completely online due to COVID-19, many faculty were already teaching in fully online programs. Brown (2016) and Lightener and Lightner-Laws (2016) found some instructors had encountered challenges in using technology to create and manage online courses. However, the findings of this study demonstrated that most of the faculty respondents were comfortable teaching graduate literacy courses online. Online teaching was not new or created undue stress from the mode of

instruction. The faculty respondents also reported having full capacity to employ different Learning Management Systems to create and manage their online courses. (e.g., Canvas, Edmodo, Blackboard).

The findings of the study suggested that the faculty respondents were adaptive to move out of their comfort zones for new challenges brought up by the pandemic. During the emergency remote instruction in Spring 2020, faculty managed to move their teaching within a short notice. In the rest of the spring semester and in the fall, they were able to make use of extant resources and created new resources of their own by using various tech tools that were available. They were open and willing to experience new modes of teaching to engage their students. They were ready to equip themselves with the most up-to-date content knowledge, tech tools, and develop their pedagogical practices to meet the needs of online teaching and learning. This was particularly important with COVID-19, as a metacognitive teacher is "disposed to responding to unanticipated and complex situations in an adaptive manner" (Wilson et al., 2015, p. 92).

Field Experiences

Limited research has been found on literacy faculty's perceptions of affordances and challenges in online literacy coursework. Results from this study indicated that field experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic were the most challenging, mainly due to the difficulties of maintaining student engagement in an online environment, interactions during tutoring sessions, and virtual observations of differentiated instruction in classrooms. Assessment and reading conferences were more challenging than other areas of literacy instructions due to copyright and technology issues.

Yet, faculty participants adapted quickly to accommodate various needs, for example, making assessment doable by providing flexible and elastic ways for online assessment; conducting observations, tutoring, and online discussions by integrating multimodal resources; and exploring and implementing new technological tools such as breakout rooms, videos, screen sharing, interactive apps. Clearly, graduate literacy faculty were resilient and responsive "to unanticipated and complex situations in an adaptive manner" (Wilson et al., 2015, p. 92). They turned the challenges into opportunities to expand their teaching knowledge, skills, resources, and strategies.

This implies that as education faculty, we must keep open-minded to learn new platforms, course delivery modes, and emerging technological tools to respond to varying situations and better help our students. Meanwhile, as Hutchison and Woodward (2014) proposed, literacy faculty must evaluate and select the effective digital technologies to use in literacy instruction. During the searching, selecting and implementing process, faculty must be flexible when unanticipated situations emerge and often need to modify the selected technologies or decisions. In this process, students' needs should be one of the most decisive factors as after all the ultimate goal of instruction is student learning.

Physical, Social, and Emotional Needs

The findings of this study revealed that graduate literacy faculty developed an in-depth understanding of their students and themselves regarding physical, social, and emotional needs with online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The student-centered learning was highly promoted.

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Students' Physical, Social, and Emotional Needs

Faculty have come to a deeper understanding of their students, which confirms other researchers' findings that many students experienced stress and anxiety with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Boa, 2020; Cao, 2020; Chiu, 2021; Van Wig et al., 2022). Graduate literacy faculty respondents shared the highly concerned issues reported by students were physical and emotional struggles. It indicates faculty maintained open and effective communications with their students during the Pandemic as the students were comfortable to share their stress, anxiety, and challenges with their instructors. Faculty behavior thus promoted student learning and well-being (Carroll, 2012). Crow and Murray (2020) suggested it is crucial for instructors to support the socioemotional outcomes of their students through sustained communication and building a sense of belonging to the online community. The results of the study demonstrate these faculty respondents not only exhibited their expertise in the content area, but also practiced their pedagogical beliefs about meeting the needs of every student, making an inclusive online learning community. These results imply that future online teacher education programs and courses must consider students' physical, social, and emotional needs in the design and implementation process in order to better help teacher candidates.

Faculty's Physical, Social, and Emotional Needs

Similar to students, many faculty respondents encountered physical, social, and emotional challenges. They managed their best teaching practice and communication with students to their utmost. However, their own physical and emotional struggles were unvoiced, and often neglected by students and administrators.

Furman (2021) reported that instructors identified time and technology as the two major challenges when teaching online. Results of this study indicate that the faculty respondents

themselves did not encounter technology challenges during COVID; rather, they had to deal with

students' tech issues such as internet failure, lack of digital devices, problems with sharing a

document or uploading a video. Consequently, faculty respondents in this study reported

spending a huge amount of time assisting their students to access appropriate materials online

and/or submit their assignment online during the pandemic. They may need to help their students

reach out to the technology assistant in their institution to solve issues. All the time spent on

helping their students in technology issues added on top of their own time for online teaching

preparation, gradings and communications with students via emails or virtual meetings.

Long hours of working during COVID-19 impacted faculty respondents' mental and

physical health concerns (i.e., experiencing anxiety, feeling pressured, emotional well-being, and

suffering from screen fatigue), which little research has explored. Severe physical concerns

expressed by faculty caused by sitting for a long time in front of the computer for online

synchronous teaching and meetings included but may not be limited to body stiffness, back pain,

vision syndrome, screen fatigues, zoom fatigue, and the like. Though faculty were asked to be

flexible to their students' performances during COVID-19, they were expected to maintain the

high quality for their online teaching: smooth transfer from in-person to online teaching, prompt

replies to students' emails, flexibility to meet the students' needs while at the same time dealing

with their own and/or family members' health issues, anxiety, stress, and uncertainties about the

COVID-19.

During COVID-19, both instructors and students encountered the public health crisis,

social isolation, and discouragement (Hall & Batty, 2020; Singh et al., 2020; Yamin, 2020).

Their combined efforts promoted teaching and learning in this unprecedented time. Faculty did

their best to maintain high quality online instruction as well as social and emotional support to

students. The results of this study called attention to faculty's physical and psychological concerns of the public.

Transferable Elements

One significant implication of this study is the lessons from the online teaching experiences before and after COVID-19 that literacy teacher educators can transfer to post-pandemic literacy graduate teacher education and how we make this transferability happen. Moving forward, we know we have been doing great because the majority of our programs had been online; however, the pandemic gave us a new understanding of our students, technological tools and ourselves, and this understanding will definitely help us build stronger and more equitable graduate literacy education programs.

We have developed a better understanding of the critical role students' and instructors' socioemotional well-being plays during the online learning process. In future practices, we should implement a social emotional learning model taking both students and instructors' needs into consideration. Much research has addressed students' social emotional well-being because students' social and emotional skills positively affect their academic success (Hymel et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2020). However, instructors' social emotional well-being is important for quality of life, and impacts classroom practices, relationships with students, and student learning (Lang et al., 2020). Our study calls for more research to explore how to integrate both instructor and students' social emotional needs in designing, planning and implementing teacher education programs and courses.

Technological tools are constantly changing due to technological advancements. This study suggests when we select instructional/technological tools, teacher educators need to be more student-centered with online teaching and choose effective instructional/technological tools

that help cultivate student interests and increase student engagement in the content learning process. For example, we need to provide choices in ways for students to respond to course materials such as web annotation (Chan & Pow, 2020; Zhu et al., 2020).

From this study, one can also draw implications for courses with field components in teacher education. This study recommends that as teacher educators we need to consider equitable ways for students to participate in field experiences. Many graduate literacy faculty participants recommended hybrid courses which include both synchronous and asynchronous sessions. Recorded teaching and tutoring sessions for feedback worked well in online literacy teaching. However, fully online field experiences are not recommended, and more research is needed to investigate various alternative modes of field experiences.

Professional Development

To transfer what we learn to future teacher education practices does not happen automatically. As Sun and Chen (2016) indicated, faculty teaching online needs adequate professional development and sufficient professional training to implement these aforementioned lessons, while in reality few instructors have received this type of training. While teacher educators are resilient, adaptive, and constantly learning; still, they need professional support from their institutions and professional fields. This study implies that professional development can use resources from social media such as Facebook and professional groups, Twitter, TikTok, Webinar, and LinkedIn Learning. Collaborative learning groups can be powerful in which members share with and learn from each other tools, strategies, and techniques while emotionally supporting each other. Yeh and Lo (2009) suggested colleagues support each other by offering their observations and comments.

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Professional development for teacher educators may want to focus on both P-12 and higher education online teaching and learning, thus teacher educators can better support their students—pre- and in-service teachers—and improve their own practices in college classes. The Graduate literacy faculty participants reported technical issues in our study. Other instructors believed technology is a barrier in teaching, and they questioned the effectiveness of online activities in advancing student learning (Lightner & Lightner-Laws, 2016). Therefore, technological tools should be introduced frequently, and tech support should be available online and/or in person. Crow and Murray (2020) stated that it is crucial for instructors to support the socioemotional outcomes of students through sustained communication and building a sense of belonging to the online community (Crow & Murray, 2020). It is also important for instructors to learn how to take both their own and their students' well-being into consideration when designing and implementing online courses.

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Appendix A

Graduate Faculty's Perception on Teaching Literacy Courses Online

Q1 Please indicate your primary teaching location:

▼

Q2 Your institution type:
- 4 year public institution
- 4 year private institution
- 2 year public institution

Q3 Your academic rank:
- Distinguished/emeritus professor
- Full professor
- Associate professor
- Assistant professor
- Lecturer/Instructor
- Adjunct
- Other: Specify _____

Q4 Your total years of teaching experience in higher education in U.S.
- First year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10-12 years
- 13-15 years
- Greater than 15 years

Q5 Please list the LAST term you taught online (e.g., Summer 2020 or Fall 2020).

_____

Q6 Have you taught in K-12 schools in the U.S. or abroad?
- Yes
- No

Q7 How many years did you teach in K-12 in the U.S. or abroad?
- 3 years or less
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10 years and more

Q8 What are the focused grades of your literacy courses? Choose all that apply.
- P-6
- 6-12
- P-12

Q9 Please write the focus of the GRADUATE courses you teach or have taught ONLINE. Please separate each entry with a comma. (e.g., Intervention, assessment, children's literature).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q10 The typical length of your online courses by number of weeks, excluding summer or winter short terms. Choose all that apply.
- 5-7 weeks
- 8-10 weeks
- 11-13 weeks
- 14-16 weeks
- Other: Specify _____

Q11 How was your GRADUATE PROGRAM delivered prior to Covid?
- Fully online
- Hybrid
- Face-to-face

Q12 Did you teach any online graduate classes prior to Covid-19?
- Yes
- No
- N/A

Q13 Currently how do you teach graduate literacy courses online? Choose all that apply.
- Teaching from home live synchronous (class meets together at an assigned time)
- Teaching from home asynchronous (no specific meeting time)
- Teaching at campus live synchronous (class meets together at an assigned time)
- Teaching at campus asynchronous (no specific meeting time)

Q14 When instruction pivoted to online at the start of Covid-19 around March/April 2020:

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	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt ready to provide instruction online.	•	•	•	•	•
I felt comfortable with the technology for teaching online.	•	•	•	•	•
I was aware of equity issues.	•	•	•	•	•
I took actions to address the equity issues.	•	•	•	•	•

Q15 If you began teaching online due to Covid-19, which component of literacy instruction was most challenging to transition from in-person to online teaching for you? Choose only one.
- Field experiences-practicum
- Fluency
- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Reading comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Writing
- Other: Specify _____
- NA-I taught online prior to Covid-19

Q16 In the graduate class(es) that I teach or have taught online since March 2020, I feel confident in modeling instruction in the following areas:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A - Not taught during Covid-19
literacy intervention practices.	•	•	•	•	•	•
how to use diverse texts.	•	•	•	•	•	•
literacy coaching practices.	•	•	•	•	•	•
early literacy instruction.	•	•	•	•	•	•
comprehension instruction.	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q17 In the graduate class(es) that I teach or have taught online since March 2020, I feel confident in modeling assessment in the following areas:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A - Not taught during Covid-19
early literacy assessment.	•	•	•	•	•	•
fluency assessment.	•	•	•	•	•	•
vocabulary assessment.	•	•	•	•	•	•
comprehension assessment.	•	•	•	•	•	•
writing assessment.	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q18 In the graduate class(es) that I teach or have taught online since March 2020, I feel confident in providing guided practice in the following areas:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A - Not taught during Covid-19
early literacy.	•	•	•	•	•	•
how to use diverse texts.	•	•	•	•	•	•
fluency.	•	•	•	•	•	•
vocabulary.	•	•	•	•	•	•
reading comprehension.	•	•	•	•	•	•
writing.	•	•	•	•	•	•
integrating digital technology.	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q19 How do you CURRENTLY manage the field components of your online graduate courses? Choose all that apply.
- Read the textbook
- Supplement with videos from external resources
- Supplement with videos created by myself and/or colleagues in my institution
- Virtual observation/practicum
- Physical in-school sessions
- Other: Specify _____

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Q20 How did/do your candidates engage in literacy clinical/practicum experiences in
_____?

	Cancelled	Synchronous remote	Asynchronous remote	Hybrid (in person and remotely	In person
Spring 2020 at the start of Covid -19	•	•	•	•	•
Fall 2020	•	•	•	•	•
Spring 2021	•	•	•	•	•

Q21 Please describe how CURRENTLY students in your graduate online literacy program complete practicum or field experiences:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q22 Personal and/or professional challenges related to teaching online due to Covid-19:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	NA
Motivation to teach	•	•	•	•	•	•
Engagement in material	•	•	•	•	•	•
Family/personal illness/loss	•	•	•	•	•	•
Childcare	•	•	•	•	•	•
Children learning at home	•	•	•	•	•	•
Teaching children at home	•	•	•	•	•	•
Anxiety/stress	•	•	•	•	•	•
Screen fatigue	•	•	•	•	•	•
Physical concerns due to sitting all day	•	•	•	•	•	•

Technology	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other: Please specify	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q23 Student issues reported to me when teaching online due to Covid-19:

	Never	Rarely	Occasional	A moderate amount	A great deal
Job responsibility	•	•	•	•	•
Completion of coursework	•	•	•	•	•
Engagement in material	•	•	•	•	•
Family/personal illness/loss	•	•	•	•	•
Anxiety	•	•	•	•	•
Childcare	•	•	•	•	•
Children learning at home	•	•	•	•	•
Teaching children at home	•	•	•	•	•
Technology	•	•	•	•	•
Other: Please specify	•	•	•	•	•

Q24 Please specify the technology issues your students have encountered (choose all that apply):
- Lack of devices
- Internet issues
- not tech-savvy (e.g., upload a video, Google docs, etc.)
- Other: Please specify _____

Q25 Please name the tools you find most helpful to prepare literacy teachers. Please separate each entry with a comma.

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

Q26 Choose one area literacy instruction that you teach online and describe the tools and/or practices that you implement to introduce, reinforce and assess in your online class.

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Q27 Please leave your email if you are willing to be expand upon your responses in a follow-up interview.

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Appendix B

Consent Information: Perceptions of Online Teaching

Purpose
Graduate coursework is increasingly being offered via an online format, replacing the traditional campus-based courses. This survey is part of a research study that is investigating perceptions of literacy faculty teaching in an online learning environment. Our goal is to better understand how literacy faculty engage graduate students in online literacy instruction.

Procedures
We are hoping you will take a few minutes to answer the questions on this survey. The survey is consisted of 27 questions long and it will take you about 10 minutes to complete the survey. We will be asking you questions regarding your

perceptions of teaching online literacy courses. Sample questions include how you implement field components in online literacy courses. The survey will be conducted confidentially. This means that your name and the name of your institution/school will not be recorded or connected to your responses. If you provide your e-mail address, you may be contacted at a later date for participation in a follow-up interview.

For easy access, we recommend you take the survey from your laptop/desktop.

Participation
Your participation in this survey is voluntary and your responses are confidential. You may refuse to take part in the survey or withdraw at any time without penalty. All information that can identify you will be removed from the data. This data will then be stored for possible use in future research studies. We will not ask for additional consent for those studies.

Benefits and Risk
There are no foreseeable risks with your participation in completing the survey beyond those experienced in daily life. All information that can identify you will be removed from the data. This data will then be stored for possible use in future research studies. We will not ask for additional consent for those studies. Risks are considered minimal.

Other Information
This is a multi-institution research project. If you have questions or concerns or would like to withdraw from the study at any time, please contact any of member of the research team: Ann Van Wig (avanwig@ewu.edu), Nancy S. Wilson (nance.wilson@cortland.edu), Chelsey M. Bahlmann Bollinger (bahlmacm@jmu.edu), Shuling Yang (yangs2@etsu.edu), Kathryn Pole (kpole@uta.edu), Xiufang Chen (chenx@rowan.edu), and Tala Esperat (tala.esperat@enmu.edu).
To access the survey, please click "I agree" to indicate your agreement with both of the statements below.

Approved by Campus IRB / Approval Date: January 26, 2021
I am 18 years old and older I have read and understood this information, and I agree to participate in this study. I teach or have taught **GRADUATE** literacy coursework **ONLINE**.

Please click "I agree" and the arrow to go to the survey or "I don't agree" If you don't want to participate in the survey.