BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

Facultad de Lenguas

Maestría en la Enseñanza del Inglés

ELT professors' perceptions towards their E-teaching performance in times of global crisis: A comparative study

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages for the degree of

Maestría en Enseñanza del Inglés

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Puebla, Pue.   Enero, 2022

"ELT Professors' Perceptions Towards Their E-Teaching Performance in Times of Global Crisis: A Comparative Study"

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of the requirements for the degree of

MAESTRÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

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Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
Puebla, Pue.
January 2022

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore and compare ELT professors' perceptions from two Higher Education institutions about the challenges and strategies they have encountered regarding their digital performance experience during the pandemic lockdown. This research intends to find out similarities and discrepancies between these Higher Educations Institutions in central Mexico. A qualitative method approach was used to analyze the data to identify the challenges and strategies that were used by the professors during the pandemic lockdown. The results from this study could contribute to a better comprehension of how professors embraced uncertainty to accomplish their teaching practice in times of contingency and raise awareness through personal insights of language teachers concerning their competence in using technical materials and attitudes toward the use of digital technology to achieve their learning objectives in online language instruction.

Keywords: *COVID-19, E-teaching, ELT, HEIs, and Digital literacy.*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background issues

The current educational system has experienced a unique and revolutionary moment since the COVID-19 outbreak spread around the world. Since this pandemic was announced by the World Health Organization (WHO), it inevitably raised considerable concerns for the challenges the abrupt change to online learning made teachers and students adapts themselves to the only channel to deliver the missing contents of their courses.

Society is always evolving along with economy, politics, communication, and culture. Therefore, paradigms within education need to change along the way and focus on the development and improvement of citizens' capabilities that are required from a knowledge society (Catelly, 2011). To change education, teachers are essential to play the role of agents of change, who can act as leaders, advisors, guides, impact several aspects of the world community (Bourn, 2016).

Fullan (2001) firmly asserts that a change "consists of great rapidity and non-linearity on the one hand and equally immense potential for creative breakthroughs on the other. The paradox is that transformation would not be possible without accompanying messiness" (p.1). Hence, several types of crises, such as natural disasters, wars or pandemics have the tendency to mess around and transform different areas of people's lives as it is education. It is undeniable that a recent example can be the Coronavirus pandemic, which has provoked different effects in institutions from all educational levels

around the globe as they had to cease in-person courses indefinitely, regarding the concerns about its spread to contain the virus rates down, confirming that "society needs flexible and resilient education systems as we face unpredictable futures" (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2020).

According to Hughes (2005), extraordinary and critical situations have led education into a crucial juncture where governments and educational leaders have had the necessity to incorporate resources, devices, and tools within reach along with the experience and continuous learning perspective from in-service teachers around the world. Hence, it is critical to scrutinize how educators have embraced this teaching transition, expecting them to surmount the difficulties through a "constructive and iterative process in which the person interprets events based on existing knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions" (Borko & Putnam, as cited in Hughes, 2005, p.278).

The current chapter will describe the research problem in detail through a precise justification, which will lead to the aim of this study; later, the research questions will be displayed along with the scope, design, content, and organization to conduct a thorough understanding of the investigation.

1.2 Introduction to the problem

The UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) estimates the pandemic closure has affected "approximately 23.4 million higher education students…and 1.4 million teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean; this represents approximately more than 98% of the region's population of higher education students and teachers" (IESALC, 2020).

Even these numbers reveal the dimension of this severe situation, it is not visible how educational stakeholders have been affected in numerous aspects of their academic and personal lives. Because of that, professors from the English language teaching (ELT) area will be under the spotlight for this research since these pandemic times have "added to the stresses and workloads experienced by university faculty and staff who were already struggling to balance teaching, research and service obligations, not to mention the work-life balance" (Rapanta et al., 2020, p. 2)

Nonetheless, language educators had to put aside possible remarkable obstacles derived from this "unplanned and rapid move to online learning – with no training, insufficient bandwidth, and little preparation" (Li & Lalani, 2020) and "put greater effort into preparing for online courses, innovating, and designing lessons that will improve the attention span of the students…through interactive question and answer sessions, tests, presentations, and open discussions" (Sun et al., 2020, p. 687).

Considering this, the interest to conduct this investigation does not only rely on raising awareness within the impact of this global crisis but displaying institutional administrators "the personal insights of language teachers concerning their competence in using technical materials, as well as their attitudes toward the use of digital technology in language instruction" (Çelik & Aytın, 2014, p. 4), and which are valuable to be overlooked.

1.3   Origins of the research/justification

According to Thanasoulas (2002), teaching exact sciences such as Physics or Mathematics has remained the same over the years, contrary to what has happened to

language teaching. Possibly, more than any other field, the ELT field has been inevitably transformed throughout the time, especially during the last century, in which language teachers have adapted their practice according to the historically situated context they had to live and teach.

Within the history of ELT area, several types of crises have hit its ongoing course and changed it permanently. Wartime, for example, has shown its abilities to change language as it conveys "new words, changes attitudes, shifts dialects, and contributes to a larger, public sense of the evaluation of linguistic meaning" (Lerer, 2007, p. 246). Therefore, teachers have been aware of these drastic modifications in and how their role is continuously developing "their own path to teacher leadership, covering in turns - but also simultaneously - the roles of learner, adopter, colearner, reaffirmer or rejecter, leader" (Catelly, 2011, p. 131).

Currently, the concern of the coronavirus disease and its impact on education is a growing discussion topic worldwide. According to Chan (2020) "online education and distance learning', followed by 'international mobility' and 'public health', are currently the three most critical issues and topics facing scholars and practitioners as a result of the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic" (p.1).

Moreover, within this transition from face-to-face to digital teaching, it is expected that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) methodologies and tools are not just seen as something trendy in the teaching field, but as an essential requirement for current teachers' professional development around the world. In the English language teaching field, professional development has the power to influence distinct aspects of

educators' knowledge, competences, beliefs, and values that can potentially assist students in achieving their learning objectives successfully (Bautista & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015).

From this mindset, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) stress on the importance of professional development as the essential process which embraces teacher's knowledge and practice to promote significant modifications in their career growth, attitudes and beliefs throughout activities, formal and informal experiences (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). In addition, Hughes (2005) concretely asserts that "the goal of professional development, then, is to help teachers make meaning of new constructs and experiences (technology, in this case) to determine its impact on education, including learning processes, access to content, and instructional methods" (p.279).

Likewise, other significant key concepts to be examined thoroughly are digital literacy and digital competence, as they are the "kinds of skills and knowing people should have in a knowledge society, what to teach young people and how to do so" (Ilomäki et al., 2018, p. 2). Thus, such concepts are beneficial to allow the "access to a broad range of practices and cultural resources…to make and share meaning in different modes and formats; to create, collaborate and communicate effectively and to understand how and when digital technologies can best be used" (Hague and Payton, as cited in Son et al., 2017, p. 78).

It is worth mentioning that even different research work has been conducted in this field based on this pandemic event (Bravo et al., 2020; Rapanta et al.,2020; Sun et al., 2020; Tzifopoulos, 2020), none has focused on professors and been developed in the

Mexican higher education yet. Furthermore, this research expects to contribute to providing a better comprehension of how professors embraced uncertainty to accomplish their teaching practice in times of contingency.

1.4. Aim of the study

Despite the existence of previous research related to e-teaching and e-learning in the ELT area, the pandemic circumstances have highlighted the significance of a continuous professionalization in the use of technological tools and methodologies not just as a job requirement, but to produce meaningful learning in the digital classroom environment.

Therefore, this study explores and compares ELT professors' perceptions from two higher educational contexts about the challenges regarding classroom management, assessment, feedback, materials, and others, related to teaching experience during the first months of COVID-19 lockdown, and the strategies used to overcome these issues during this unexpected teaching situation.

1.5 Research questions

The current study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the perceived challenges ELT professors from Facultad de Lenguas struggled with the most regarding classroom management, assessment, feedback, materials, and others, related to their digital performance during the quarantine?

RQ2: How have these ELT professors overcome these challenges during their digital teaching experience?

RQ3: What are the perceived challenges ELT professors from BINE struggled with the most regarding classroom management, assessment, feedback, materials, and others, related to their digital performance during the quarantine?

RQ4: How have these ELT professors overcome these challenges during their digital teaching experience?

RQ5: What are the similarities and differences stated by the professors from these institutions about their e-teaching throughout the quarantine?

1.6 Research scope and design

The context of this research is two public higher education institutions in Puebla, Mexico, which had to close their doors and interrupt face-to-face courses as the rest of the HIEs across the globe; thus, the primary goal of this research is to explore professors' perceptions through a qualitative method to "empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and…understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Afterward, it is intended to perform a comparison between the salient results to understand the significance of the phenomenon, increase awareness within the causes and consequences within it, avoid overgeneralization based on the researcher's opinions or background, set relativism since points of view can be subjective without any universal validity, and recommend possible solutions to enable similar strives in the future (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017).

According to the nature of this study, the first source to gather data is Likert-scale questionnaires to get a general panorama of professors' attitudes, to be subsequently

triangulated with guided reflective narratives to explore certain issues in-depth. Consequently, the data analysis is conducted through detailed classifications and descriptions to determine and compare the similarities and differences to pose a discernible understanding of the data presented (Creswell, 2007).

1.7 Research content and organization

As seen, the current chapter presented the general outline of this investigation, as it focuses on exploring and comparing professors' diverse stances about their virtual teaching experience to comprehend their significant challenges and policies resulted from the unanticipated epidemic situation.

Henceforth, this qualitative research will move forward in the following manner: In the second chapter, the literature review will be presented to provide a theoretical framework that sustains the methodological procedures that this study employed. Subsequently, the third chapter displays the methodology thoroughly, regarding the instruments and participants from which data was gathered. In the fourth chapter, a description of the results derived from the analysis and its interpretation are presented. Finally, in the fifth chapter, the conclusion of this study is presented by answering the research questions, emphasizing the limitations of the study, and offering directions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Abstract

The following chapter deals with the theoretical foundations of the various fields on which this study is based. The chapter is divided into three main sections with different subsections each: 2.1 ELT professors' perceptions: Describing the English language teaching field, ELT in Higher education in Mexico, Teacher cognition, and Previous research on professors' perceptions in the Mexican HEIs. 2.2 E-Teaching: Towards a definition of E-teaching, E-teaching as part of professional development, Defining digital literacy, Delineating Teachers' Digital competences, and Previous research on Teachers' Digital competences. 2.3 Higher education in times of global crisis: The impact of COVID-19 within teaching in HEIs, a general overview of E-teaching in Mexican HEIs, and Previous research on ELT professors' perceptions about their e-teaching during the pandemic lockdown.

2.1   ELT professors' perceptions

2.1.1 Describing the English language teaching field

To start describing this scholar area, it would be worth defining what English language teaching (ELT) is, and for that Alnajami (2019) it is "the result of the subject-matter knowledge and intuitive decisions based on teachers' experiences and beliefs about how the subject-matter should be taught" (p.23). Within this definition, we may see different key words that relate to the significance of the ELT discipline, and that will be discussed later in this chapter, but now the question would be whether the importance of ELT has always been recognized and valued as other scholar fields throughout the time or not.

About twenty years ago, if someone decided to become an English teacher, it was just required to know and speak the language fluently or that he or she was an English native speaker as they were considered the most suitable and qualified person to teach the language (Khani & Hajizadeh, 2016).

In 2001, David Nunan presented a thought-provoking reflection on the significance of being an English language teacher to be considered as a genuine profession. He pointed out the growing impact of English language as potential programs and courses were developed to meet the needs of current society through appropriate instruction "for people to teach English as a foreign/second/additional language has become a huge industry" (Nunan, 2001, p. 5).

From this pivotal perspective, the English language teaching (ELT) field has been evolving throughout the past few decades, "resulting from a combination of factors and variables of different nature: sociological, economic and pedagogical among others" (Cal et al., 2010, p. 15). Thereby, these ongoing changes have assuredly influenced and reshaped the notions and impressions of the ELT area that has been "gradually transformed from an occupation to a profession" (Khani & Hajizadeh, 2016, p. 972).

Within the assertion of the ELT professionalization, as it is the constant intellectual progression (Lange, as cited in Khani & Hajizadeh, 2016) through high-quality education and the expertise of diverse skills required by the discipline (Nunan, 2001), Burns and Richards (2009) emphasize the idea of pondering the significance of entailing certain kinds of pedagogical knowledge and experiences, and not only the ability to speak the language with proficiency.

As seen, the ELT area has assumed the form of an academic discipline, due to its "strong dynamism and continuous evolution and development" (Cal et al., 2010, p. 15). As evidence, the rising quantity of institutions, articles, journals, certifications, resources, organizations, lectures, and events that have emerged to demonstrate its strong presence and influence in favor of creating, revolutionizing, and adjusting the distinctive features of it within the current educational context.

This general overview has portrayed how the English language teachers have reached the goal of professionalization through various stages during the past twenty years. It is significant for this research project to delineate the perspective in which professors from this area should be seen, along with the pedagogical skills and practices that are essential to develop such educational labor. Moreover, throughout all the distinctive research work that has been conducted, it is noticeable the relevance of ELT's growth and how not all has been said or written yet; in other words, the pandemic times we are experiencing now and the higher education context are the convenient settings to keep on discovering and discussing different issues to enrich and expand this scholar field.

2.1.2 ELT in Higher education in Mexico

Even though the situation of ELT professionalization has been in constant improvement, this would not have been possible if some scholars from the field had not raised their voices (Nunan 2001; Pennington, 1992) to highlight the undervalue and reluctance in which this was seen by the academic sight. In fact, Pennington (1992) captured the struggle to include ELT within the Mexican tertiary educational programs

which "in many cases led to its marginalization within academic practice and scholarship" (p.12). Although this might seem like a bad start for the inclusion of ELT, we should identify other phases and factors that were involved in its implementation and how these have led us to the present context in which language teaching is being developed.

Grounds (2017) recapitulates this process since in 1990, the Secretaria de Educación Pública (SEP) began to act by creating a professionalization program in which ELT university teachers were trained to get a certification to valid their qualifications as language professors. This Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English (COTE) was co-designed and approved by the British Council and the University of Cambridge and became the minimum professional requirement to teach English in public schools and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) around the country.

While this strategy was a wise decision, it inevitably triggered the high necessity for more ELT professionals as teaching the language was included as a subject within the HEIs curriculums. Thus, as the universities' population was growing, the "capacity to offer English classes in the faculties and language centers was not able to supply this new, nationwide and rapidly increasing demand for English" (Grounds, 2017, p. 6), and just a few local HIEs could offer ELT within their programs.

Throughout the time, other strategies were implemented to fill this urgent gap in HEIs and generate a feasible access for everybody to learn English. Hence, stakeholders considered to include different educational tactics in the upcoming programs which would integrate other features such as technology and independent learning to encourage

students to learn the language under other conditions and take advantage of them (Grounds, 2017), but did they really work?

In 2008, Paul Davies argued about the possibility to transform the ELT instruction in HEIs from General Purposes (EGP) to Specific Purposes (ESP), as he described how most of students entered to the university presenting an academic disadvantage with the language since most of them possessed beginner or low elementary level after six years of previous formal English formation during Secondary and High School.

Moreover, he described some other features about the reality of Mexican HEIs related to ELT; one of these features pointed out that not all the college students needed to prove a certain level of their English language proficiency at the end of their BA programs; and if so, the tests used to validate this proficiency are varied in terms of origin, validity, reliability and criteria that unsurprisingly led to no concrete results in identifying whether the undergraduate students achieved or not an worthwhile English level at the end of their education (Davies, 2008).

Furthermore, Borjian (2015) complemented this view with his study as he found that most of the HEIs educational goals, within the ELT curriculums, are not necessarily compatible with real college students' purposes; thus, they need to look for external and private language schools to fulfil the lacks that were not covered in their programs to finally meet their needs with the language (Mora et al., 2013).

Until this point, it is undeniable that many Mexican HEIs have tried to offer their students a successful English language learning through different plans and strategies during the past decades (Mora et al., 2013). However, we have seen that it has not been

enough and efficient at all, in despite of the inclusion of new frames, infrastructure and abroad assistance whether "all these efforts undergo a series of social and political difficulties that prevent them from consolidating" (Mora et al., 2013, p. 15), along with other urgent concerns and challenges that must be analyzed thoroughly.

2.1.2.1 Issues and challenges of ELT in Higher education in Mexico

Considering the general portrayal mentioned above, it is appropriate to emphasize some issues that are currently affecting the ELT area within the Higher Educational background in our country. Ramírez-Romero and Pamplón (2012) asserted that different issues emerged from two main categories which are "the teacher's working conditions, and the level of preparation and educational background of teachers" (p.7) as the lack of fixed administrative policies and few opportunities for teachers' professional development are overlooked.

From Mora et al. (2013), the main concerns related to the failure of ELT in HEIs derive not only from "technical factors such as the use of inappropriate language teacher methodologies or lack of teacher preparation" but "a broad range of socio-political issues" (p.3) that are commonly presented in most of the Latin American countries.

Therefore, another challenge that is worth mentioning is the perceived absence of motivation and interest from students to learn English due to their perceptions on the complexity of the language which affected their learning process to become proficient successfully (Borjian, 2015). However, Sidury et al. (2017) suggest that educational stakeholders and administrative staff should look for abroad exchanges and programs to improve the quality of the teaching and learning processes within the HIEs curriculums.

Even the ELT issues and challenges in higher education are not simple to solve, Grounds (2017) firmly asserts that "it is equally important to understand that it takes years of consistent and concerted effort to create appropriately qualified bodies of professionals, on a national scale, at any level of education" (p.19); consequently, the continuous professionalization from ELT professors is totally required to create well-solid decision makers in and outside the classrooms.

Overall, the most recent study conducted by Paul Davies (2020) strongly argues about the huge responsibility not only from teachers' pedagogical skills and development, but from the lack for creating "favourable contexts and conditions, which simply cannot be created in public schools and other public institutions, or even less privileged private ones, all around Mexico" (Davies, 2020, p. 10).

As we have searched into the general panorama of HEIs, teachers are also a crucial part of this study, thus, it is also intended to explore some of their characteristics in depth that are clearly related to their performance inside their lessons.

2.1.3 Teacher cognition

Since the late 1960's, a new subfield within the ELT area emerged and whose focus was on "the investigation of the hidden side of teaching to illuminate teaching behaviors and classroom processes" (Çimen & Daloğlu, 2019, p. 754); this subarea was called teacher cognition. Many years later, Borg (2003) acknowledged the significance of this area in ELT professionals' lives as it is an essential strand to "refer to the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think" (p. 81).

Crookes (2015) reaffirms the previous statement as he claims the teacher cognition's interest in "the thought processes of the expert teacher, teacher problem solving, and moment-to-moment decision making" (p. 484) has two clear purposes: the first one related to classify the kinds of cognitions presented in educators' minds, such as beliefs and knowledge, and the second one that is charge of explaining the connection between these cognitions and the real teaching in practice inside the classroom (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Furthermore, to be clearer in this assertion, Borg (2003) found three diverse sources where cognitions could come from:

a) *Schooling* or experiences derived from teachers as learners that are still present in their daily teaching activities and decisions.

b) *Professional education* derived from formal teaching training and courses.

c) *Classroom practice* derived from day-to-day experiences in teaching practices

In fact, it is the latter in which this research project is more interested in as classroom practice and teacher cognition work symbiotically since educators are seen as active agents for being "thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81).

2.1.3.1 From teacher's beliefs to perceptions

Succeeding the previous background, we have arrived at a point that is crucial for this study; the definition of perceptions, but is it possible to define them without understanding the nature of the word belief? In an interview with Simon Borg, he clearly pointed out that "beneath the behavior there are beliefs and knowledge and related

constructs which influence what teachers do, and… we need to understand what they believe, what they know, their attitudes, their feelings. (Birello, 2012, p. 88).

In the words of Fang (1996) teachers employ their beliefs as personal guidance to validate everything that they perceive, understand, and interiorize upon distinct factors that are given by classroom's specific characteristics, information, and events. In addition, Pajares (1992) stated how these educational or teacher beliefs have a more potential influence rather than knowledge as they are concerned with ""the nature of knowledge, perceptions of self and feelings of self-worth, confidence to perform certain tasks" (Ertmer, 2005, p. 28) presented in their daily teaching practice.

Likewise, according to Mardali et al. (2019), something favorable from teacher beliefs is that these can be reoriented and transformed by the type of input or activity they are exposed since they are "halfway between information and activity; between people and their performance" (p.2). Therefore, these can be classified into different 'self-categories' related to the inner motivation, stimulus, acceptance, impression, concern, and efficacy (Fairbanks et al., 2010).

Consequently, what is the relationship between beliefs and perceptions? Pajares (1992) simply claimed that both terms are the same concept expressed in different names since perceptions are "influenced by the totality of this generic knowledge structure- schemata, constructs, information, beliefs--but the structure itself is an unreliable guide to the nature of reality because beliefs influence how individuals characterize phenomena, make sense of the world, and estimate covariation" (p.310).

In other words, beliefs can be placed within the same level of perception (Galvis, 2012) as they delineate what teachers perceive around them, their students and context to understand the teaching-learning insights and outcomes (Alexander & Dochy, 1995) through "the existent world where conscious experience is formed through traditional knowledge and living through temporal flow of life" (Nawaz, 2017, p. 46).

Hence, from the definitions above, it is irrefutable the significance to comprehend the connection between the notions of belief and perception as this study concerns with the possible effects the current educational phenomenon is causing on ELT professors and that will be explored carefully later this chapter.

2.1.4 Previous research on professors' perceptions in the Mexican HEIs

The interest to research on ELT professors is not as wide as thought at the beginning; however, this study relies on three different studies that were conducted during the past five years in the Mexican context, and they are presented chronologically below:

In 2015, Borjian conducted a survey-based study in which 76 teachers participated from all over the country. The premise of his research was to collect the teachers' perspectives related to the obstacles they saw in their students to learn the language and recommendations for refining the education in Mexico. Even though this research was not totally focused on ELT professors from Higher Education, most of his participants who worked in universities gave voice to some of the most critical issues and challenges that were already presented before.

Sidury et al. (2017) presented a study in which the role of language ideologies was explored to discover the impact on three educators and returnees about their decision to become ELT professionals, and their ideologies of their bilingual identities and practices. Even though not all the participants are currently working on the ELT field actively, the narratives used to inquire their perspectives were useful to portrait their beliefs and attitudes beneath their actions, practices, and ideologies within the Mexican context.

Finally, the doctoral dissertation carried out by Ronzón (2019) is closer to the purpose to this research as it focused on three similar key elements: HEIs, teachers and their perceptions. In fact, the goal of this investigation is to investigate the perceptions and practices in teachers and students about their intercultural communication and the notion of intercultural communicative competence through interviews, observations, focus group and a survey.

As seen, it exists a gap in which professors' perceptions have been overlooked within the Higher Education background in Mexico; however, in the following topics, we will look in detail at some other specific purposes to investigate this type of belief to make the sight narrow according to the upcoming key terms.

2.2   E-Teaching

2.2.1 Towards a definition of e-teaching

Besides the significant-former exploration of the ELT situation in our Mexican context, another fundamental term for this investigation has to do with the understanding of the combination of teacher's instruction and the technological tools and resources that are continuously increasing in the online environment. Nonetheless, it seems that the

spotlight is on students' learning rather than instructors' teaching as learners are the core of educational processes, research, and policies, which inevitably lead the little attention given to the essential role of teachers in virtual environments and their adaptation within HE fields worldwide (Guri-Rosenblit, 2018).

Likewise, Mohammad (2012) states that finding a suitable definition for e-teaching can be complicated due to the lack of literature that can be a result from a subjective contextual dependence between effective e-teaching and successful e-learning. However, the synergy between e-teaching and e-learning could promote different opportunities to create not simply better interactions between the teacher and learners, but a feasible "collaborative engagement, access to information, interaction with content, and individual empowerment" (Mohammad, 2012, p. 408) through a wide diversity of digital tools and means that are currently accessible on the web.

For Guri-Rosenblit (2018), the concept of e-teaching should be considered as a basic requirement to foster e-learning within a classroom at any educational level; nevertheless, it also exists different conditions and factors such as teachers' lack of digital literacy, adaptability to new teaching roles, absence of continuous training, and weak support systems that could impede this synergetic relationship to enhance effective online teaching-students' encounters.

Another thought-provoking perspective about this e-teaching and learning relationship is the one stated by Bjekić, Krneta, and Milošević (2010), which claims that both processes share an interconnection as part of teachers' professional development: on the one hand, as e-learners when professors may learn from others to acquire and

master their digital skills; on the other hand, as e-teachers when assisting other colleagues to improve their digital abilities and students to develop the university's contents curricula through electronic tools and environments.

From this perspective, different authors stress on the importance of reconsidering constructivist and socio-constructivist roots to pose the bases of effective e-teaching and e-learning practices, as similar as current face-to-face instruction, to generate successful educational processes depending on "individual activities and experience in collaborative environment…to guide the students to construct their own knowledge and to be aware of the situational context this construction takes places" (Bjekić, Krneta, & Milošević, 2010, p. 203). Also, Mohammad (2012) suggests an upcoming advantage that is resulting from combining technology with teaching practices that will certainly benefit educational stakeholders as they will "become active participants in a teaching and learning community in a virtual environment, and can subsequently improve the course after each edition in a constant pursuit of quality" (p.408).

According to Nakajima (as cited in Bjekić et al., 2010), the term e-teaching needs to be primarily focused on educators since it is not just a crucial requirement to settle e-learning, but a valuable starting point to innovate the educational area. Therefore, considering the previously discussed implication and the outline of this study, the most convenient definition for e-teaching entails "the system designed to improve teachers' performance, and their self-regulation and motivation. Its service designs are aimed at supporting teachers to teach effectively in an e-learning environment" (Nakajima, as cited in Bjekić et al., 2010, p. 203).

This definition should not be taken for granted whether the fundamental conditions have not been settled appropriately; for instance, the teachers' adaptation to virtual backgrounds must be developed through constant practice to build up a genuine proficiency on digital skills along with the non-stop technological evolution (Guri-Rosenblit, 2018). Otherwise, the expected role of professors as experts could not impact as desired whether the goal to enhance meaningful and efficient digital teaching-learning processes does not focus on teachers' need to expand and improve their new required abilities within the electronic classroom environment.

2.2.2 E-teaching as part of professional development

At some point, while defining the term e-teaching, the connection between e-teaching and professional development emerged clearly under the spotlight. In this section, we will go in-depth with the close relationships and implications from one to another. Day (1999) asserted that "growth involves learning which is sometimes natural and evolutionary, sometimes opportunistic and sometimes the result of planning" (p.1). For Villegas-Reimers (2003), this assertion was a keynote to describe the concept of professional development (PD) and interpreted it into something simpler as somebody's progress in their life-long career.

In the specific case of educators, the teaching nature requires from them to "engage in continuing career-long professional development, but particular needs and the ways in which they may be met will vary according to circumstance, personal and professional histories and current dispositions" (Day, 2002, p. 1). According to Day (1999), these ways can be raised by formal and informal activities to encourage teachers to endure their renewal processes of "enhancement of thinking and practice, and, importantly,

commitment of the mind and heart; and that these will focus upon personal and professional purposes, individual and collective, inquiry-based and technical needs" (p.1).

Even this definition may seem obvious, as we are talking about professionals in charge of education, Lieberman (as cited in Day, 1999) and Villegas-Reimers (2003) complement the previous definition as they point out the significance of experiences within the teaching PD. Thus, everything that professors do to overcome unexpected challenges and difficulties within their lessons and to become competent in different areas of teaching expertise is part of the core of PD, which becomes evident when educators look back thoroughly and "examine the content of the experiences, the processes by which the professional development will occur, and the contexts in which it will take place" (Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p. 11).

Furthermore, the benefits of this PD on teachers' lives are not only visible inside the classroom with their students' progress, but in changing and working on positive and feasible goals, strategies, and attitudes that will lead to distinct aspects within other professional areas.

Considering the previous discussion about the inclusion of technology within the teaching performance, Guri-Rosenblit (2018) emphasizes on the necessity from teaching faculties to take this responsibility for their PD to adjust their teaching practices to the recent technologies and acquire new types of roles, literacies, and skills to combine them with the essential ones related to pedagogy, course content and communication competencies. (Bjekić et al., 2010).

Hence, Anas and Musdariah (2018) highlight the connotation of being an ESL educator within a digital world and the imperative necessity to become an effective e-teacher who can "get engaged and involved in an online learning space…to access information…processed by the teacher's critical thinking and pedagogical knowledge to make a right mix of strategies using ICT tools" (p.43).

Besides that, the development of new roles within the virtual classroom background is fundamental to intervene in different crucial moments in and outside the session in which the e-teacher becomes a content, metacognition and process facilitator, advisor, evaluator, technologist, and resource provider, guided not just from technological skills, but pedagogical, communicative, and interpersonal skills (Anas & Musdariah, 2018).

From this stance, Anas and Musdariah (2018) consider that digital literacy and digital competence are essential parts in the development of the previous teaching roles within this online educational environment; however, it is still a debatable topic on the existing difference between these two terms. In the following section, both concepts will be analysed to find out what makes them different in terms of definition and their significance within the e-teaching.

2.2.2.1 Defining digital literacy

Before getting digital literacy explored, we need to look back at the 1980s when the technology was spreading its presence in different areas of society; consequently, the term of 'information society' emerged, provoking a revolution in the teaching-learning field, which transformed the former term into 'knowledge society' as the way of promoting knowledge changed through the use of technology (Bjekić et al., 2010; Gisbert & Lázaro, 2015; Spante et al., 2018; Falloon, 2020). Consequently, in 2008 UNESCO formally

introduced an ICT policy in which encouraged educators to embrace the new technological tools within their classes as a pivotal start to digitalize education; however, inside of this document, concepts such as teacher education and digital literacy were not even defined (Spante et al., 2018).

From this event, Spante et al. (2018) assert that it is understandable to find problematic to define and differentiate the conceptions of digital literacy and digital competence, even though their presence and use in public investigations and school policies are noticeable to establish the type of knowledge and abilities teachers should possess to teach them to the upcoming generations; but how to do it whether a clear digital literacy definition is absent?

Some authors have been into defining what digital literacy is, and we will see how these have been evolving to have the necessary one to be part of the core of this study and the first attempt was made in 1997 by Gilster (Gisbert & Lázaro, 2015; Spante et al., 2018; Falloon, 2020), which was more focused on the use of computers and the connection among basic assessment technical accessibility and information management skills "to properly use and evaluate digital resources, tools and services, and apply it to lifelong learning processes" (Falloon, 2020, p. 2).

Furthermore, other authors aimed to include some other missing aspects to the former digital literacy description; on the one hand, in same year of Gilster's definition, Pool affirmed that it was a virtual adaption of several skills through the use of our own internet's experiences to achieve particular technological competencies (Spante et al., 2018); on the other hand, in 2010 Covello redefined this term by adding seven essential components which have to do with "identifying training needs, accessing information in

digital environments, using ICT tools…to manage information, interpreting and representing information, evaluating information, and transmitting information" (Gisbert & Lázaro, 2015, p. 115).

Nevertheless, from Spante et al.'s work (2018), the assembly from Beetham and Sharpe (2011) and Chan et al. (2017) definitions precise the appropriate description for this investigation as digital literacy is stated as the "functional access, skills, and practices necessary to become a confident, agile adopter of a range of technologies for personal, academic and professional use…with emphasis on critical thinking" (p.7). In other words, it is necessary to understand digital literacy as a concept that not only focuses on the technological use but as an inclusive "combination of a set of technical and procedural, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills which are necessary for living, learning, and working in a digital society (Gisbert & Lázaro, 2015, p. 115).

Also, Falloon (2020) asserts that these previous definitions have been evolving due to the outcomes resulting from continuous research, which has been shaped by diverse cultural, societal, and technological aspects throughout time. However, he also claims that recent studies have decreased their interest in the reconceptualization of this term due to the emergent emphasis on expanding digital competency frameworks to guide current and future teaching practices through the search of a diversity of knowledge, the acquisition of digital skills, and the improvement of pedagogical methods to enhance learning collaboration between teachers and learners (Yazon et al., 2019).

Considering the current teaching focus, Yazon et al. (2019) declare that not only teachers, but students need to be digital literate individuals who can manage the technological, cognitive, and social dimensions of digital literacy to apply it successfully

into their daily-life activities (Dedebali, 2020). Likewise, the significance of having digital literate professors within the HE contexts demands not only to have the primary skills to teach inside online environments but to "perform the four-fold functions such as instruction, research, extension and production" (Yazon et al., 2019, p. 1735) in an effective manner.

2.2.2.2 Delineating Teachers' Digital competences

At this point, the term of digital literacy was described in detail to delineate the path for digital competences (DC). It was in 2006 when the European Commission first attempted to define them as the involvement of "confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication…by basic skills" (Spante et al., 2018, p. 2). Thenceforth, Spante et al. (2018) took back Ranieri's definition from 2009, which stated that digital competences are the abilities to endure and discover new technological means that will allow the analysis, selection, and assessment information to "solve problems and build shared and collaborative knowledge, while fostering awareness of one's own personal responsibilities and respect of reciprocal rights/obligations" (p.8).

From this perspective, Falloon (2020) determines the general evolving nature of DC that not only implies the technological familiarity and abilities but the appropriation of "a wider socio-cultural stance by signalling the need to understand and consider broader implications and effects of digital technologies on individuals and society" (p.3). Moreover, from the teaching viewpoint, this nature operates between self-awareness and proficiency (Spante et al., 2018), and that will intrinsically impact educators' professional development as they should be in continual reflection about their skills, necessities, and opportunities to improve throughout this non-stop changing educational field (Falloon, 2020).

The latter stance could work in retrospection from previously discussed topics within this study: the significance of being digital competent to support the successful development of e-teaching. Bjekić et al. (2010), claim that, for the educational area, this mastery of skills should be called e-teaching competence as it is the "synthesis of the didactical, technological, personal and organizational components that are necessary for effective e-learning and e-teaching modeling and realization" (p. 204). Thus, this e-teaching realization entails the teachers' commitment to master a wide variety of competencies to enhance the expected goals through the highest levels of knowledge, expertise, and abilities (Bjekić et al., 2010).

In his literature review, Falloon (2020) presents two common frameworks to delineate the desired digital competences within the development of courses and programs related to digital teacher education.

The SAMR framework has the purpose of drawing education routes when using technology in the classroom. Its acronym represents the four levels of progressive actions that are carried out by the professor "from substitution ('doing digitally' what has traditionally been carried out using conventional resources) through to Redefinition (curriculum, pedagogy, and practice reconceptualised through digital technologies" (Falloon, 2020, p. 4). However, these routes do not provide a clear description of the types of tasks that should be included in each level since the lack of supportive designs in pedagogy, Tech technology, and learning.

The technological pedagogical content knowledge or TPACK framework includes the deficiencies presented by the SAMR model as it strongly focuses on learners to achieve the suitable leaning outcome through the inclusion of the relationship among

technology, pedagogy, content, and knowledge within the curriculum to foster an efficient curriculum elaboration along with the appropriate integration of technology. In words of Harris (Falloon, 2020), the TPACK model's success depends on educators' skills "within each domain, and their capacity for flexibility, willingness to update, and readiness to explore how the domains interrelate to support effective technology use in a range of different situations" (p.5-6).

Overall, Anas and Musdariah (2018) assert that the previous concepts locate teachers in the core of a globalized era in which not only ESL educators could improve their professional development and innovate their teaching practices through a conscious mastery of digital competences. In other words, it is the perfect moment to empower ESL teachers to involve technology in class and adapt new roles during this educational process by providing them with the facilities, tools, and training that will make them digital competent in and outside the classroom.

2.2.3 Previous research on Teachers' Digital competences

As seen, the rapid growth of technology and its integration within the educational context have triggered the purpose of some research to explore how digital competence has evolved from the teachers' side. For this investigation, four studies were chosen to delve into the current situation related to teachers' digital competences.

Addressing to the Higher education context and the discrepancies related to the definitions of digital literacy and digital competence, the study conducted by Spante et al. (2018) targeted to determine the differences between these concepts through a systematic literature review analysis. In their results, they found out that most of these definitions were used in HE research, changing the description of these terms according

to the primary source as this can be from a policy or an investigation, providing a different focus between technologic features or social practices.

A keynote from this investigation is that in the further research section, the authors demand to pay special attention to the origins of these concepts according to the necessities and objectives to use them to facilitate clarifications and avoid misunderstandings when defining digital literacy or competence for Higher educational purposes (Spante et al., 2018).

Following this suggestion, Guri-Rosenblit (2018) noticed the null attention that professors were receiving while implanting technology inside their lessons and the overlooked roles that they have to perform within online learning backgrounds; however, this was the pivotal point for this study since it was focused on students' lack of autonomy in their construction of learning, the obstacles teachers were facing with their digital literacy, and the unwillingness of some professors to fully include the ICT in their teaching practice.

From these stated issues that were developed and discussed in this research, the significance of essentials roles needed to enhance effective e-teaching was highlighted to emphasize effective e-teaching as a requirement for successful e-learning as both parts (teachers and students) displayed a lack of digital literacies and competencies (Guri-Rosenblit, 2018).

In the case of an article presented by Falloon (2020), considering the existence of misconceptions between digital literacies and digital competences, he proposed a conceptual framework to increase the viewpoint of the significance of teacher digital

competence (TDC) and its interdisciplinary implications for students that "need to function ethically, safely and productively in diverse, digitally-mediated environments" (p.1). Thus, the emphasis made on understanding the necessary competencies learners require to develop from their professors' roles, planning and implementation took a crucial part in creating awareness of e-teaching in times when technology is in constant progress (Falloon, 2020).

Therefore, the intention of the author was not to make evident the lack of teacher digital competences within his HE context, but provide a central viewpoint to create a policy review to change and implement a new course of actions that could lead an improvement in preparation, not just for undergraduate students but their teaching faculty members as well (Falloon, 2020).

Finally, the most recent study conducted by Dedebali (2020) considered the idea of investigating teacher candidates' perceptions about their conceptions about the digital literacy term and their digital skills through a digital literacy scale. In this sense, most of them shared similar words to create metaphorical definitions, such as integrity, complexity, and guidance. However, a worth noting result from this study was the implication of daily technological activities developed by mobile phones to enhance diverse levels of competence instead of using a computer.

In other words, the current influence of technology is visibly observable in our society within a digital world, in which "the ability of individuals to navigate digital resources in different ways improves users ' familiarity with digital technologies" (Dedebali, 2020, p. 143).

2.3 Higher education in times of global crisis

2.3.1 The impact of COVID-19 within teaching in HEIs

According to the UNESCO-IESALC (2020) universities around the world "like any other social institution, have had to face devastating epidemics that have impacted their daily functioning. And they have survived and continued their mission even with their doors closed" (p.9). Even the recent existence and use of SWOC (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Challenges) analysis to evaluate the impact of online learning within times of crisis (Dhawan, 2020), it is quite evident that the Coronavirus pandemic emerged unexpectedly to affect the entire facets of daily people's lives around the globe, and the tertiary education scholars, practitioners and students were not an exception (Chan, 2020).

When the WHO classified the COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, different public sectors of society were shocked to cease personal contact in their workplaces and stopped operating normally to prevent the spread of the virus just as the sanitary polices required, including the educational system (Chan, 2020; Dhawan, 2020). In the case of Latin America, the UNESCO-IESALC (2020) reported that 23.4 million college students and 1.4 million professors were affected by the massive lockdown, and which represent the 98% of the total population of HE students and teachers. However, leaving aside the numbers for a moment, the impact of this pandemic event over the HE context has become in a trending discussion topic worldwide since it has generated massive feelings of anxiety and uncertainty by "imposing what seems likely to be an online only start in many countries next academic year…travel bans, quarantines, and

suspending face-to-face teaching…to mitigate the public health effects of COVID-19" (Chan, 2020, p. 2).

In other words, HEIs around the world have been struggling with finding suitable options to cope with this mandatory online learning, which needs to solve different issues related to "accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning, and policy are some of the arguments related to online pedagogy" (Dhawan, 2020, p. 6) through careful organization and planning. Besides that, Dhawan (2020) claims that even when there were some reluctance and resistance in using technology efficiently into the classes, these unpredicted pandemic times forced the educational organizations and institutions to exploit it, considering online teaching-learning as the 'panacea' for COVID era.

According to Chang and Fang (2020), the essential features that surround effective e-teaching/learning environments rely on the authenticity of interactive systems and networks to promote quality in the construction and delivery of contents, tasks, and activities. Thus, educators are the key since "they must be well-trained and technically comprehensive in order to apply and integrate technical tools to achieve the success of online learning and teaching" (p.1). From this stance, Dhawan (2020) emphasizes on even when the situation has been complicated for the whole teachers' side, the reputation of global education is put under the spot to analyze whether institutions' behaviors, manners, policies, and actions have been compelling and sufficient while adapting amidst the sanitary crisis.

However, the professors' digital skills and competences totally depend on each personal teacher's experience and how they have managed their professional development through formal practice, such as courses, training programs, pedagogical workshops, among others (UNESCO-IESALC, 2020). Under the objective lens, this can be considered as one top of the educators' challenges, that can be translated as the lack of TPACK framework (Falloon, 2020) to teach effectively online, and which combines the technological means with pedagogical bases and assist them to decide the suitable tactics not to only broadcast knowledge but "to design for, and facilitate, meaningful online learning experiences" (Rapanta et al., 2020, p.2).

It is undeniable that the way global citizenship receives or delivers education has been reshaped forever, as in a matter of weeks, teachers and students had to migrate from physical to virtual classrooms through the use of technological devices and services that were available at their homes (Dhawan, 2020). However, Vieyra et al. (2020) argued that in Latin America, this adaptation was not fully accomplished even when "some students smoothly transitioned to online classes, many continue to face challenges due to the lack of digital readiness at home and a drop in household income" (p.2). This latter complication also affected teachers as they could not enable all their students to practice and refine their skills at the same time as they used to achieve it in face-to-face instruction (Dhawan, 2020).

Rapanta et al. (2020) pointed out another key issue about how this sudden educational movement has caused added stress and several amounts of workloads under teachers' shoulders as they have been "struggling to balance teaching, research and service obligations, not to mention the work-life balance" (p.2). This without considering

the uncertainty that some of them may be experiencing anxiety and concern as "not all HEIs have strategies for the teaching continuity activity…and in this instance, temporary contracts may be terminated" (UNESCO-IESALC, 2020, p. 6).

As seen in this segment, HE education has endured several implications and impacts which have been present in the aftermath of the COVID-19 event. Nonetheless, this could be a tremendous opportunity to reform all the gaps related to innovation and the efficient management of TPACK methodologies, which can be adequately enhanced through "international collaboration and share experiences, knowledge and resources to build global online education network" (Sun et al., 2020, p. 687).

2.3.2 A general overview of E-teaching in Mexican HEIs

The Coronavirus disease has pushed government, health, economy, and educational systems against the wall derived from different complex circumstances. For the purposes of this research, Mexican HEIs will be under the spotlight as it is not the same when teaching to any other educational level due to the number of enrolled students and the complexity of the contents, programs, skills, methodologies, and expected learning outcomes that are required for HE (Sánchez et al., 2020).

Before the COVID-19 emerged and caused affections in our world, there was a pressure for Mexican universities and colleges across the country to increase the admission enrolment numbers by offering diverse distance courses according to the interests and necessities of learners. Even this premise to implement online learning courses was not inadequate, most of the people's false belief of online learning involved low quality, little effort and effectiveness compared to face-to-face learning process, which

was not an appropriate previous background for the pandemic e-teaching in Mexico (Sánchez, et al., 2020).

From this stance, Miguel (2020) posed a question related to the significance of knowing whether students and educators were apt to receive or deliver online classes when the predominant experience was the traditional face-to-face approach. Hence, it is from this viewpoint where the real impact would be better appreciated as there is the possibility to explore what they have undergone, thought, and overcome during these difficult moments and how this could help to cope with similar situations in the uncertain future.

From the standpoint of Lloyd (2020), this extraordinary pandemic event just exposed very well-known educational inequalities in Mexico and other countries around the world. Even the educational system offered to switch traditional classes for digital ones, this offer has been facing limitations, problems, and ethical concerns derived from critical factors, such as social status, geographical location, genre, ethnicity, and the type of HEIs which contribute to increasing the general inequality in online education.

All these factors construct the digital gap, which refers to the inequality to access to ICT properly, as well as the remarkable difference between the people who can use and take advantage of ICT and the ones who cannot. Within the 2018 report done by *INEGI*, 18% per cent of college students do not have access to internet services to attend to online sessions properly, which unfortunately fits with the *Unión Internacional de Telecomunicaciones'* report that places Mexico in the 87th position worldwide and the 8th place in Latin America related to the citizens' access to ICT benefits (Lloyd, 2020).

Moreover, it is also valid to highlight this digital gap is also affected by the differences among the types of subsystems of HEIs, which imply considerable support for both teachers and students to a different extent. In the case of professors, Lloyd (2020) asserts that for some of them this was their first formal experience in using technology and transfer his lesson planning and evaluation to virtual environments which needed a certain degree of digital competence, flexibility, and familiarity, without forgetting to keep the balance of their own personal issues and situations inside their homes.

Sánchez et al. (2020) locate the latter problems inside the 'socio-affective' category as they are related to emotional, healthy, and affective aspects that surround teachers along with the pandemic lockdown. Besides, these authors summarized and categorized the other problems stated by other authors into 'logistic,' which are related to time, place, and communication management within their e-teaching; 'technological,' the ones connected to internet access, availability of computer gadgets and knowledge about platforms and tools; and 'pedagogical,' which are interconnected to effective e-teaching, its assessment, virtual classroom management, among others.

Even though these categories are quite worthy to bear in mind, Miguel (2020) states that there are some other issues professors have had to cope with within their digital performance. However, these challenges are more closely related to their students and their necessity to develop and regulate their sense of responsibility, their autonomy within their learning process, and their capacity to keep a balanced socioemotional competence to finally transform all the weaknesses into strengths required by the uncertain condition of future society.

As seen, educational times have changed tremendously according to the needs and demands of current society. Besides that, it is undeniable that all educational organizations and institutions need to be supported and heard from stakeholders' voices to redesign and adjust the curriculum, strategies, proposals and plans to overcome the lived challenges and difficulties within the HE context (Miguel, 2020).

According to Sánchez et al. (2020), teachers should see e-teaching as an opportunity to pause and reflect on the divergent risks and challenges that are becoming part of the 'Nueva Normalidad' in the educational field. Besides that, it is crucial to consider all the things they have left behind within their traditional face-to-face classroom to renew them and include all the technological, pedagogical, and didactic implications in terms to maintain a genuine professionalization in HE students. Thus, the significance of transforming professors' testimonies into warning sights for governmental organizations and institutional authorities to generate a meaningful change into education.

2.3.2.1 Institutional responses from public and Normales HEIs

In his investigation called "Higher Education in Times of Pandemic: A View from within the Training Process," José Antonio Miguel (2020), asserts that the political policies that guided governments' educational movements could take two different directions; the one that just provided suggestions to continue the online teaching and the other which assumed total control of the situation. According to UNESCO-IESALC (2020), Mexico was an example of the former, as its government just emitted the official cancellation of face-to-face classes on March 14 to give some time to, HE systems and subsystems to decide what would occur later.

In this sense, Malo et al. (2020) claim that institutional responses have been created and delivered differently according to a wide variety of Mexican HEIs that integrates this educational system with five million student's population, and sixty thousand professors across the country. In other words, each type of college, according to the subsystem it belonged to, would decide the following steps, strategies, and resources they would use to maintain educational processes remotely, based on four modalities, such as teaching-learning, research, correlation, and organization-planning (Malo et al., 2020). Because of the scope of this investigation, it will focus on just two varieties of HE subsystems, which are the public and the "Normal" institutions that are in Puebla, Mexico.

In correspondence with the former subsystem, public universities received from the *Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior* (ANUIES) the *Acuerdo Nacional por la Unidad en la Educación Superior* to face the pandemic contingency through the settlement the pertinent strategies to assist their own faculty members during this rough time (Miguel, 2020). Generally speaking, a report made by the Secretaria de Educación Pública (SEP), displayed that the main actions that were undertaken by public colleges to maintain education from homes, such as the availability of digital classrooms and platforms to endure classes, the rapid e-teaching training, the constant campaigns to orient faculty members in technical issues, supportive websites to assist the e-teaching-learning processes and the flexibility added in academic-administrative services (Malo et al.,2020).

In the case of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP), within his third work report, dean Alfonso Esparza emphasized on the different beneficiary actions

taken to preserve the continuity of distance classes during the lockdown. For instance, he pointed out the creation of diverse programs to assist students, such as the *'Programa de Apoyo tecnológico y de Conectividad,'* which oversaw a loan of six thousand computers to during the school year (BUAP, 2020). For professors, the *'Apoyo Económico Único'* was managed to assist the six thousand educators that are part of the teaching faculties with five thousand pesos to improve their computers and the internet services that would allow them to enrich their digital performance (BUAP, 2020).

Besides these programs, this public institution has provided his faculty members with a wide variety of online events, workshops, platforms, resources, and courses to promote not just professional development among its educators, but to create awareness of the pandemic situation all the university community is facing and how to deal with it as successful as possible (BUAP, 2020).

After the first cancellation statement, in the case of 'Escuelas Normales (EN),' SEP opened a virtual agenda where different and rapid courses were offered to in-service teachers related to the use of ICT through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) (Miguel, 2020). In April, some policies were stated through the 'Lineamientos de acción COVID-19' to establish the features, structures, organization, and procedures to endure online sessions until the end of the school year. Hence, the 'Dirección General de Educación Superior para Profesionales de la Educación (DGESPE)' was another support for this process to assist 10, 207 professors and 89, 634 students who belong to 262 public EN (SEP, 2020).

Among the policies implemented for these ENs, we can find that it established distinct types of strategies to keep the sanitary measure to stop Coronavirus spread and contribute to the economic sector in the diverse local areas in which EN are located. Moreover, principals and professors were encouraged to keep on the line of research and provide quality contents in their classes through the use of communicative and technological tools, working platforms, remote repositories, digital libraries, and materials, giving some extra emphasis on the creation of ongoing courses and webinars for professors, solid channels of communication among faculty members and the need of flexibility in assessment processes for students (SEP, 2020).

In the specific cases of the ENs located in Puebla, this was an incredibly challenging event which required from teachers their full commitment to provide their educational contents remotely, but also because it unveiled different problems and concerns ENs were facing related to the professors' digital literacies and competencies along with some infrastructure and training lack inside the institutions regarding the pandemic situation (Marín & Luna, 2020).

In words of Malo et al. (2020), we can infer from these Mexican HEIs policies is that all of them did not have a specific plan to face this type of crisis, contrasting to what other countries have done to prevent such hard consequences in their educational systems, as Dhawan (2020) affirmed previously in the Indian context. However, many Mexican universities responded positively by following the sanitary statements, managed the basic requirements of online education, and tried to support all the educational stakeholders involved in these processes (Malo et al., 2020).

From this, it is highly desirable that these pandemic times should be seen not only as an image of disgrace and an awful set of consequences for all areas in our daily lives but also as a significant breakthrough within Mexican education. In other words, it is expected that the Mexican HE system would be concerned with the improvement of the delivery of quality teaching-learning processes inside digital backgrounds through genuine collaboration and sustenance (Malo et al.,2020) to transform passive educational beholders into active and innovative educational stakeholders.

2.3.3 Previous research on ELT professors' perceptions about their e-teaching during the pandemic lockdown

With the Coronavirus arrival, e-teaching has become the prime focus for academic stakeholders around the world, as all the educational levels have switched into digital instruction to fill "the necessity to deliver such rapid online education to their students, possibly without sufficient preparation" (Şener, Sağlam Ertem, & Meç, 2020, p. 340) or in some cases, with their own persona experience with educational technology, some colleagues' advice and institutional prescriptions and instructions (Silas & Vázquez, 2020).

According to Pevneva and Edmunds (2020), it is quite evident that most of the global educational institutions and organizations have forced this swift adjustment into online teaching and learning, overlooking the difference between creating effectiveness in digital environments and just placing the teaching-learning process by using virtual tools remotely. Thus, the UNESCO General-Director, Audrey Azoulay, declared that, as people responsible for education, "we are entering uncharted territory and working with countries

to find hi-tech, low-tech and non-tech solutions to assure the continuity of learning" (DeAlwis & David, 2020, p. 145).

With this objective in mind, educators have been struggling with not their own hurdles and issues, but their students' because of the absence of experience in technological tools and resources, the lack of technical infrastructure and internet connectivity services which provoke diverse limitations to hamper the learning success in digital backgrounds (Mishra, 2020). Nevertheless, from the perspective of language teachers, "this situation seemed extremely stressful and unveiled some hidden challenges for…teacher-student interaction traditionally only presupposed personal offline interaction in class" (Pevneva & Edmunds, 2020, p. 1).

Şener et al. (2020) claim that "there are not many studies which solely focus on teachers' experiences regarding the issue" (p.342) compared to situation the studies related to students' or both students and teachers' experience in e-teaching. Hence, this section is looking forward to collecting previous research to enrich the outline of this study and providing readers with the valuable information that will invariably assist the understanding of this compelling situation to set efficient strategies to overcome these obstacles with the digital ELT field.

The following studies presented here were categorized from two viewpoints: from personal and from other ELT professors' experiences.

In the case of Poudel (2020) portrayed a description of his incomes and outcomes derived from his first weeks of lockdown's online teaching activities; emphasizing how he could improve the interaction among his learners through collective conversations, and

the how hard was realizing that several things and features he used to include in his traditional classes were unsuitable for online sessions.

For Mishra (2020), she described her experience in teaching English communication skills, the obstacles she faced and the strategies she used to overcome and create opportunities for an effective e-teaching, like her previous face-to-faces sessions. Thus, she defined five challenges that she identified to thrive them, such as 'nuances of technology,' 'passive students,' 'handling intelligent/attentive/talkative students,' 'conducting collaborative and group activities' and 'ensuring consistent cognitive and emotional engagement.'

To complete these personal and meaningful experiences, a 'Normal' professor from Nayarit, Mexico, illustrated his annotations and actions taken during his teaching performance in digital platforms and environments. Berecochea (2020), was concerned about the six sessions per week he had to accomplish within his teaching progra and how they worked well with the combination of different face-to-face and virtual tools; however, he rapidly noticed that would change due to the digital gap and limited experience most of his students were undergoing at that moment. He concludes his paper by reflecting on the opportunity to reaffirm teachers' vocation, renew teaching practice and develop new and fresh strategies to cope with the contemporary educational environments.

Focusing on compiling different ELT professors' perspectives in a study, and the premise of the significance of challenges and issues during the development of e-teaching, Pevneva and Edmunds (2020) displayed an analysis to determine the effectiveness of this educational virtual switch or 'extreme learning' as they call it. Among the challenges, they found out that most of the professors noticed the increase of

workload, an inadequate organization for the transition from traditional to digital education, the need of support to cope with technology efficiently, as well as "technical equipment of their workplace (outdated equipment, a slow Internet connection), lack of methodological knowledge, technical knowledge and computer skills" (p.3).

Likewise, Supriadi et al. (2020) conducted a descriptive case study which involved four ELT teachers unveiling their beliefs and practices through the development of 'Technology-Enhanced Language Learning' in their classes. The interesting stance of these authors is the importance of implementing suitable frameworks to guide effective e-teaching, such as the TPACK model, previously discussed on the teachers' digital competencies section. Moreover, they emphasized on that even teachers have changed their position towards the use of technology in times of COVID-19, they would still prefer to face-to-face sessions as most of them were unsatisfied with their learners' outcomes and achievements.

Like the investigation above, DeAlwis & David (2020) determined the challenges from eight university language professors and how they could surmount them through positive outlooks, the availability to digital devices, resources and services, and pedagogical knowledge to perform their sessions in online backgrounds. Furthermore, the fact that this study was conducted in a public university opens the support for the upcoming methodology of this study as the thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected by interviews.

Finally, the study conducted by Şener et al. (2020), explored the perceptions of thirty-nine English language teachers from a private university in Turkey in terms of technical, pedagogical, and institutional complications they have experienced during the

confinement, using an online survey to go into particular issues in depth. Besides the problems that have been described before by previous studies, these authors unveiled some other aspects to be considered relevant, such as the decline on professors' well-being "due to job related stress, financial insecurity and increase in workload found in online teaching" (p. 344). Furthermore, the required intensity of e-teaching, that seems to be more laborious than traditional teaching, the passive interaction among students and the deficiency of learner's autonomy were also reported as notable challenges educators had to cope with and overcome to achieve a successful online teaching-learning process.

As seen, there is a diverse variety of issues derived from ELT experiences, causing not only technical or pedagogical but institutional and personal obstacles "to draw necessary conclusions from this 'global experiment' and organize systematic work on the weaknesses in order to avoid them in the future" (Pevneva & Edmunds, 2020, p. 6). To achieve that all the educational stakeholders, organizations and government from different countries must join forces to create suitable environments for students, as well as for teachers, to interact with ease and flexibility through the mastering of digital pedagogies and promote satisfactory conditions in and outside the digital classrooms to ensure the development and well-being of learners and professors.

Besides the significance of these issues and factors, this study has reinforced its niche as the lack of research on Mexican HEIs in-depth, in relation with the ELT field to fill the gap and provide the readers with valuable outcomes derived from the overcome challenges within the pandemic times we are currently living.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the methodology employed for this study. Since the purpose of this research is to explore and compare ELT professors' perceptions from two public Higher Education institutions about the challenges, strategies, and implications they faced regarding their teaching experience during the pandemic lockdown, the presented research design describes in detail the nature of this qualitative method approach. Therefore, the research context, the participants, the procedure of the study, the instruments' design, the data collection, and the data analysis of this investigation are described.

3.1   Research design

This study falls within the category of qualitative research as Creswell (2009) asserts this is "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem…a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation" (p.4). To extend the former definition Leavy (2017) claims this type of research is mostly employed in descriptive and exploratory studies due to the subjectivity within people's lived experiences and how they construct meaning through daily situations, routines, events, places, and actions. Therefore, this approach will "rely on inductive designs aimed at generating meaning and producing rich, descriptive data" (Leavy, 2017, p. 124) from participants' responses.

Likewise, the key features of this approach have to do with the interest to explore in depth to develop a full comprehension of the central issue, to state the research aim

and questions towards participants' experiences, to collect the data needed from a few participants' points of view, to examine and interpret possible several resultant meanings through a flexible description's structure that includes the investigator's reflection and stance (Creswell, 2012).

Despite these characteristics, Tracy (2013) emphasises on three core concepts that are the bases for this kind of research:

- Self-reflexivity- or the emerged awareness in which own researchers' previous knowledge or 'baggage,' perspectives, experiences and judgements affect the way they relate and interpret from the research setting to approach and carry out the study.

- Context- or the conditions which lead the researcher to get immersed in the environment or scene to examine with thorough eyes the particularities, specifications of a social situation or event and comprehend the rationale behind participants' actions or responses and their probable future trajectories.

- Thick description or the inevitable result from the researchers' context immersion to construct substantial conclusions, based on decoding extensive assertions from participants' perceptions, and predict if the beliefs or behaviours will seemingly happen in the future.

Besides the importance of understanding the features within the qualitative approach for this investigation, it is also quite essential to grasp the nature and purpose regarding comparative studies.

According to Herrlitz et al. (2007) "the field of language education for instance seems to be characterized by generalization strategies that, in a perspective of meaningfulness, are highly problematic" (p.7). In this sense, comparative studies seem to be a good option since they aim to consider and analyze similar cases to make a comparison based on several crucial issues of interest, they share among them (Cohen et al., 2007). In other words, a comparative study is convenient to establish particularities and differences to understand the reality of the situation, the nature of the participant, the interactions and relationship among them through an objective lens (Monje, 2011).

Furthermore, the results derived from this kind of study could avoid the problem of overgeneralization and misinterpretations and provide validity instead (Herrlitz et al., 2007) to broad and diverse insights from different perspectives of a particular event.

3.2   Research context and participants

There are two well-recognized HEIs in the state of Puebla; the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma De Puebla (BUAP) and the Benemérito Instituto Normal del Estado "Juan Crisóstomo Bonilla" (BINE). The former institution was founded in 1578 by Jesuits. Throughout time, this college has encountered different historical events and situations until it became the current university we know nowadays. From this macro university, the ELT program from the faculty of languages was selected as it oversees preparing teachers who will give the continuity of this language's instruction. The latter institution was funded in 1879 as the first 'Normal' higher education college that would oversee training teachers for the elementary education system in the state. It contains six BA programs (Initial, Preschool, Primary, Tele-secondary, Physical, and Inclusive education) in which English is taught as a foreign language within the curricula.

The participants for this research project are eleven professors who were classified into two groups, according to the institution they belonged to. All of them have been working in these HEIs as English language teachers (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 ELT professors' demographic information

Number of participant	Institution	Gender	Age	Years of teaching experience
P1	BUAP	Male	43	Over 10 years
P2	BUAP	Female	48	Over 10 years
P3	BUAP	Male	52	Over 10 years
P4	BUAP	Male	41	Over 10 years
P5	BUAP	Male	47	Over 10 years
P6	BUAP	Female	50	Over 10 years
P7	BINE	Female	36	4-6 years
P8	BINE	Female	53	Over 10 years
P9	BINE	Male	42	Over 10 years
P10	BINE	Male	48	Over 10 years
P11	BINE	Male	31	Over 10 years

3.3 Data collection

As mentioned in the first chapter, a Likert-scale questionnaire and a narrative were considered for the data collection process. Both instruments followed a qualitative

approach as their designed structure provides participants with the flexibility to behave and express themselves freely and naturally (Monje, 2011).

3.3.1 Questionnaire

For the first stage of this investigation, questionnaires were used to collect data. Although this instrument is commonly related to quantitative types of research as survey design (Creswell, 2012), these "can be developed to provide quantitative or qualitative data, or both…Items anchored by words are more qualitative in nature" (Davidson-Shivers, Rasmussen, & Lowenthal, 2018, p. 359)**.**

Due to this attribute, the selected format to apply a questionnaire within this study is the Likert scale. In words of Joshi et al. (2015), this type of ranged questionnaire was designed to measure attitudes, as they are "preferential ways of behaving/reacting in a specific circumstance rooted in relatively enduring organization of belief and ideas (around an object, a subject or a concept) acquired through social interactions" (p. 397). Therefore, the design of this scale has to do with providing a set of statements with the same number of positive and negative answers and avoiding ambiguous or overlapping responses within the items (Leavy, 2017).

Regarding this previous information, a PCOIGCQ-Professors' challenges in online instruction during global crisis questionnaire- was designed, based on the structure provided by Tapia (2010) and the adaptation of statements given by Şener et al. (2020). This survey was written in English to make teachers feel comfortable and confident in choosing between agreement and disagreement options as each item was rated on a 1 to 5 response scale. This Likert-scale included the items 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree; hence the higher score reflects a

higher level of agreement, and the lower scale reflects the higher level of disagreement of each item.

After its design, this survey was piloted and tested with a smaller identical population of participants with similar characteristics to what this study required. These participants were also teaching English as a foreign language online in public and private institutions. Two women and a man volunteered to answer the questionnaire, and it only took them 10 minutes to do it. After that, they made some suggestions about some statements and feelings that emerged from answering it. Hence, some questions were improved and rearranged for the last version of the survey (see Appendix 1 PCOIGC Questionnaire).

Since questionnaires were the primary data source for this thesis project, the need to obtain more information emerged to triangulate it objectively. Therefore, triangulation is necessary to "provide a clear answer to the question, what is happening here? ...considered worthwhile because a key concern for good research in this paradigm is its reliability and formal generalizability" (Tracy, 2013, p. 40).

Due to this triangulation need, it was crucial to conduct guided narratives with some participants, who voluntarily agreed to write them after the questionnaire's administration. These written narratives focused on revealing other details of their pedagogical struggles, strategies, and implications of their digital performance during the lockdown.

3.3.2 Narrative

As mentioned above, the second instrument was a guided narrative. For Cohen et al. (2007), narratives are stories that take an essential part inside the qualitative inquiry

as they can be an extension "that allow people to ascribe meanings to their experiences" (Leavy, 2017, p. 158), providing meaningful and authentic data. Additionally, Rejnö et al. (2014) assert that narratives can be seen as retrospective constructions or "representations of things that have happened, including the narrators ordering of events into sequence and the effort to interpret and make something out of those events" (p.619).

Such events represent a kind of relevance for the participants' lives that must be thoroughly examined, arranged, linked, evaluated, and interpreted by the researcher who pursues "to explore both the meanings within individual narratives and to gain a general overview of subjective experiences" (Rejnö et al., 2014, p. 618).

As HEIs' professors are the expected participants, Huchim and Reyes (2013) recommend that narratives are a suitable way to know and comprehend how educational processes work from inner perspectives. Since educators could reflect on their own lived experiences and practices related to their professional development through narratives, they can enhance self-criticism to modify and improve those unsuccessful occurrences they faced and transform them into meaningful outcomes for future professional situations.

As done with the questionnaire, the narrative was also piloted to spot some issues that might arise from the formal application of it. In this case, just two of the three pilot's participants handed them in days after their survey's responses. After delivering them, they reported by a phone call how they felt when writing it, what could change or eliminate from its structure and whether the central purpose of it was achieved at all or not; thus, some prompts were improved and rewritten for the definitive version of the narrative (see Appendix 2 Written narrative).

3.4   Data analysis

This section describes the methods to analyze the collected data for the purposes of this study. It presents a description of the analysis carried out to answer the research questions:

1. What are the perceived challenges ELT professors from Facultad de Lenguas struggled with the most regarding classroom management, assessment, feedback, materials, and others, related to their digital performance during the quarantine?

2. How have these ELT professors overcome these challenges during their digital teaching experience?

3. What are the perceived challenges ELT professors from BINE struggled with the most regarding classroom management, assessment, feedback, materials, and others, related to their digital performance during the quarantine?

4. How have these ELT professors overcome these challenges during their digital teaching experience?

5. What are the similarities and differences stated by the professors from these institutions about their e-teaching throughout the quarantine?

To analyze the Likert-scale questionnaires, tables were functional to read, register, count, examine, and classify to find patterns of agreement and disagreement statements (Tapia, 2010). In the case of narratives, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) assert that content analysis is suitable for qualitative research methods as it is the "process by which the 'many words of texts are classified into much fewer categories'…to reduce the material in different ways" (p.475). Finally, from narratives, coding seems to be useful as it aims to comprehend the obtained data by dividing and

labelling data to scrutinize it to avoid redundancy or overlapping information to decrease the themes from the extremely broad to the very concrete ones (Creswell, 2012), specifically related to the strategies and implications professors faced during this quarantine.

3.5 Conclusion

The current chapter has outlined the research design followed for the investigation and described as well as the research procedure used in detail. A qualitative approach was employed to explore ELT professors' perceptions emerged from their digital teaching derived from the global health contingency. Likewise, this considered the characteristics of a comparative study since the participants were two groups of professors from two public HEIs in Puebla. An online Likert-scale questionnaire and written narratives were used as instruments to data gathering with the purpose of validating and enriching the results for this study. In the following chapter, the research processes and results are presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4.0   Introduction

This chapter displays the results derived from the questionnaire and narratives

set for this study. The data provides relevant qualitative information that is described in

the following sections of this chapter to identify the challenges, strategies, and

implications professors from two HEIs encountered regarding their digital performance

experience during the pandemic lockdown. The results obtained from the questionnaire

are presented in tables to support their understanding visually related to the professors'

quarantine challenges. For narratives, coding is used to label data that focuses on the

professors' strategies and implications, using tables and direct participants' quotes.

In the last part of this chapter, comparative charts are used to portray the

similarities and differences regarding the most salient challenges and strategies stated

by both institutions.

4.1 Research questions

Before presenting the mentioned results, it is worth reminding that the research questions

addressed for this study are:

1. What are the perceived challenges ELT professors from Facultad de Lenguas
   struggled with the most regarding classroom management, assessment, feedback,
   materials, and others, related to their digital performance during the quarantine?

2. How have these ELT professors overcome these challenges during their digital
   teaching experience?

3. What are the perceived challenges ELT professors from BINE struggled with the most regarding classroom management, assessment, feedback, materials, and others, related to their digital performance during the quarantine?

4. How have these ELT professors overcome these challenges during their digital teaching experience?

5. What are the similarities and differences stated by the professors from these institutions about their e-teaching throughout the quarantine?

Likewise, research questions one and three are responded to with both instruments (the online survey and the narratives), and questions two and four are answered just with the narratives. The last part brings about a comparison of both institutions' outcomes.

4.2 Questionnaire designing

Within the online questionnaire, the most perceived challenges by this institution's participants were identified in the following areas: technical, institutional, personal, and pedagogical issues; into the last one, the subcategories of classroom management, assessment, feedback, and materials were also included. The main findings are shown in tables 2 and 3 below. To better understand this results' analysis, the answers are presented in order of importance: first statements that obtained more consensus in each agreement and disagreement scale correspondingly.

For the agreement chart, this consensus is indicated by the three numbers that appear next to each statement: the first one represents the number of agreement answers in total, including both 'strongly agree' and 'agree' options; the second one is the number of responses in the 'strongly agree' option and the third one is the number of answers belonging to the 'agree' choice.

For the disagreement chart, the consensus is also indicated with three numbers that appear next to each statement: the first one represents the number of disagreement answers in total, including both 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' options; the second one is the number of responses in the 'strongly disagree' option and the third one is the number of answers belonging to the 'disagree' choice (see Table 4.1).

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Professors' challenges from Languages Faculty at BUAP

As we can see in Table 4.1, the challenges' predominant categories belonged to evaluation and feedback concerns. As assessment has been done by digital means, professors have felt that it has become less reliable and more complicated during this lockdown period. Besides, professors agreed with the need to find and implement extra tools to provide learners with enough feedback, especially in speaking and writing skills, as they perceive giving effective feedback within online instruction can be very demanding.

In the case of technical issues, although most of the educators have concurred that they have had good internet connection quality at home, they struggled with the necessity to buy, at some point of the quarantine, new electronic devices to be capable of delivering their distance classes. Another salient concern relates to institutional expectations about workload, as most educators have believed this has increased from traditional face-to-face instruction. Yet, they also asserted that they used to combine digital materials in their sessions before the pandemic and that they received the essential technical training related to their digital classrooms, platforms, and tools to deliver their courses as planned.

Table 4.1 BUAP professors' perceptions in terms of assessment, feedback, institutional and technical issues

	Agreement responses
1. Evaluation is less reliable when it is done by digital means.	5: 3-2
2. E-teaching is more difficult in terms of assessment.	5: 2-3
3. Need of extra tools and resources to provide students with enough feedback on productive skills.	4: 1-3
4. Need to buy a new electronic device to deliver my online classes amid the lockdown.	3: 3-0
5. E-teaching has been more difficult in terms of giving effective feedback.	3: 2-1
6. Institutional expectations have increased compared to face-to-face teaching workload.	3: 1-2
7. Having good-quality and fast internet connection available at home.	3: 0-3
8. Being accustomed to combining digital materials with traditional ones in classes before the pandemic.	3:0-3
9. Being provided with the necessary technical training (how to use online tools, virtual classrooms, video-conferencing platforms, etc.).	3: 0-3

Table 4.2 shows the most salient disagreement statements, where classroom management and institutional issues were predominant. On the one hand, they coincided on not being fully aware of all the features and characteristics video-conferencing platforms offered them since the beginning of the lockdown; on the other hand, not being emotionally supported by their institution, as well as being concerned because of the lack of measurements against the potential increase of workload were mentioned at the top of this chart's ranking.

This chart also reveals other classroom management points that have to do with their little knowledge about using these online platforms to deliver their courses and the derived complications when posting files, materials, tasks, and due dates on the digital platforms. Likewise, other institutional matters related to the complexity of e-teaching in terms of workload and not being emotionally supported by colleagues were also stated within the survey.

In the end, the perceptions about online materials are under the spotlight as some teachers disagreed with the ease of managing them, the interest and effectiveness these could have on their students.

Table 4.2 BUAP professors' perceptions in terms of classroom management, materials, and personal issues

	Disagreement responses

1. Being aware of all the features the video-conferencing platforms offered to monitor students in online sessions before the pandemic.	5: 5-0
2. Being emotionally supported by my institution.	5: 5-0
3. Feeling relieved of measurements against the potential increase in teachers' workload	5: 4-1
4. Knowing quite well how to use different video-conferencing platforms to deliver classes before the pandemic.	5: 3-2
5. E-teaching is easier in terms of workload.	5: 3-2
6. Being emotionally supported by colleagues.	4: 2-2
7. Complications for posting materials or files and setting tasks or deadlines in a digital classroom platform.	4: 2-2
8. Ease to manage digital materials and resources for online classes during the lockdown.	3: 1-2
9. Digital materials are more effective and interesting for students' learning.	3: 0-3

To supplement the data provided before, coding the participants' narratives was valuable to discover other salient challenges that were not contemplated by the questionnaire. Three of the six participants who belong to this institution volunteered to write a narrative and reflect on the central struggles they have experienced within their e-teaching.

Table 4.3 condenses these problematic situations according to the salient topics from the coding. Professors emphasized the difficulty of teaching online due to their little knowledge or experience with virtual platforms, tools, and gadgets, likewise the connectivity, attitude, commitment from learners. In other words, besides the teachers and students' technical problems with the internet, most of the challenges had to do with other aspects related to their communication, interaction, commitment, and involvement within the sessions. Thus, this means educators could perceive problems when trying to establish and maintain real communication and interaction with students, focusing on their lack of active participation, commitment to show their faces or voices in front of a camera or a microphone and their attention paid to other academic or non-academic activities rather than the ones developed in class-hour.

Moreover, professors pointed out as a challenge the extra time they have invested after their work schedule to learn and polish their digital skills to use tools or apps to improve and implement this into their sessions; as well as the consequences for their health, derived from the time spent seated in front of a computer, affecting their physical and emotional well-being.

Table 4.3 BUAP professors' perceived challenges from their narratives

Other significant challenges found in professors' narratives
a) Difficulty to work online due to little knowledge and/or experience with digital environments
b) Difficulty to establish and maintain contact and real interaction with learners during the session.

c) Difficulty encouraging active participation of the entire class.

d) Students' lack of willingness to turn on their microphones and cameras.

e) Students' connectivity problems.

f) Not full students' involvement and attention with the class due to other academic/non-academic activities.

g) Extra time investment to learn how to use technology by themselves.

h) Health issues due to the several hours to be seated.

4.3.2 Professors' strategies from Languages Faculty at BUAP

- Taking extra courses about specific platforms or issues to implement them into their classes

Participant 2: *"I took a Microsoft Teams diploma course. For me, this was an excellent opportunity to put into practice what I had learned in the diploma course immediately with my students."*

Participant 3: *"I have been shared lately some online courses that can help me prepare for my online English teaching".*

- Planning activities' time carefully for learners to answer them timely

Participant 2: *"I give them sufficient time to respond or to carry out the activities I provide"*

- Organizing students' turns to participate during the class in advance.

Participant 2: *"when I ask for their participation, I give them the order in which they will participate, so they know in advance their turn… If they don't answer, I just move on with the next student and give them the chance to participate later."*

- Providing students with the course syllabus to take advantage of the topics in advance.

Participant 2: *"I gave them a chronogram of all the topics with specific dates from the beginning till the end of the course. This can help them to continue studying the topic on their own if they cannot reconnect to the videoconference."*

- Being open and adapting themselves to online education environments

Participant 1*: "it is possible to adapt to online learning, but many things, such as personal understanding of students' needs, are inevitably weakened… certain obstacles can be overcome, and a class can be made to function more or less smoothly".*

Participant 2: *"…we are able to adapt to different teaching and learning conditions".*

- Being patient and sympathetic with students' issues.

Participant 2: *"The strategies that have been helpful for me to overcome these challenges are being patient and sympathetic with my students".*

- Giving confidence and support to students when dealing with technology

Participant 2: *"I think that giving them that confidence helped me and them to pull through".*

- Being autonomous and constant to solve difficulties with technological resources

  and gadgets.

Participant 3: *"…apart from learning myself from tutorials found in YouTube…The strategies that have been helpful for me to overcome these challenges are being autonomous learner, being consistent, practice, practice and practice what I am learning".*

- Maintaining an open and resilient attitude towards possible technological fails and

  mistakes

Participant 2: *"I have to recognize that I made some mistakes, I didn't know how to use it very well, but still I tried and learned from my mistakes in the platform… we just have to be confident that we can learn from our mistakes and take actions that will prevent us from making the same mistakes".*

Participant 3: *"I am still learning to use new applications, the way how other platforms work, I haven't solved completely, but I am on my way through… I still need a lot to learn practice and enjoy the teaching experience online."*

4.3.3 Professors' challenges from BINE

Table 4.4 presents the salient agreement statements from this HIE's professors. Contrary to the previous institution, challenges are not visible at first sight, as these educators highlighted positive outcomes instead of challenges within the first positions: they have all agreed, for instance, with having both good-quality internet services and available electronic devices at home during the quarantine, which has not represented an issue for them; moreover, they stated a positive viewpoint about digital materials and their effect on their student's learning, as well as the efficiency they have had to manage their online sessions.

Afterward, we can identify actual issues as educators assented to the need to find extra tools to give learners enough feedback on productive skills and the necessary technical training to manage digital gadgets and platforms, even though they stated that they used to combine online materials within traditional classes.

At the end of the chart, we can find that most of the professors concurred that evaluation is less reliable when done by digital means, and that workload has increased, compared to the face-to-face instruction, from their institution's expectations. Number 8 is not contemplated as it points out a positive outcome related to being emotionally supported by their colleagues during this quarantine.

Table 4.4 BINE professors' perceptions in terms of technical, institutional, classroom management, assessment, feedback, materials, and personal issues

	Agreement responses

1. Having good quality and fast internet connection available at home.	5: 1-4
2. Digital materials are more effective and interesting for students' learning.	5: 1-4
3. Ease to manage online classes.	5: 0-5
4. Having a good-quality and available electronic device (computer, tablet, laptop) since the pandemic lockdown started.	4: 1-3
5. Need of extra tools and resources to provide students with enough feedback on productive skills.	4: 1-3
6. Being provided with the necessary technical training (how to use online tools, virtual classrooms, video-conferencing platforms, etc.).	3: 1-2
7. Being accustomed to combining digital materials with traditional ones in classes before the pandemic.	3: 0-3
8. Being emotionally supported by colleagues.	3: 0-3
9. Evaluation is less reliable when it is done by digital means.	3: 0-3
10. Institutional expectations have increased compared to face-to-face teaching workload.	3: 0-3

Although Table 4.5 shows disagreement statements, we can see three actual challenges these educators faced during the lockdown. The first one reveals that most

educators accepted that they were not completely aware of all the platforms' characteristics to track their students before the pandemic. The second one displays that they did not feel relieved due to the lack of their institution measurements against the increase of teachers' workload, and the last one uncovers their disagreement with the ease of E-teaching in terms of workload.

Table 4.5 BINE professors' perceptions in terms of technical, institutional, classroom management, assessment, feedback, materials, and personal issues

	Disagreement responses
1. Being aware of all the features the video-conferencing platforms offered to monitor students in online sessions before the pandemic.	4: 2-2
2. Feeling relieved of measurements against the potential increase in teachers' workload	3: 1-2
3. Complications for posting materials or files and setting tasks or deadlines in a digital classroom platform.	3: 1-2
4. Complications for setting an exam or an evaluation through digital means.	3: 0-3
5. Taking a lot of time to assess students' online work due to issues with the platform.	3: 0-3
6. Being worried about losing their job at any moment during this lockdown's months.	3: 0-3
7. E-teaching is easier in terms of workload.	2: 2-0

8. E-teaching has been more difficult in terms of giving effective feedback.	2: 1-1

As done with the other institution, narratives were considered to uncover other challenges stated by this HEI's professors. In this case, two of the five participants volunteered to write about their experiences. Hence, from the analysis of them through the use of coding, other matters arose that can be considered as challenges, as Table 4.6 shows below.

Although one of these issues relates to the constant changes professors had to apply to their lesson activities, most of these matters are around learners and their online classes performance. For instance, these educators asserted they have found it difficult to encourage and promote active participation from all their students since they do not usually want to turn their cameras and microphones on during the classes; likewise, the complexity to engage all the students with the class topic and enhance their full involvement with the activities have become an issue. Thus, this struggle becomes evident because not all learners are visible or heard in the class, then one may think they are doing other academic or non-academic activities during the class time, which affects their comprehension and performance in the sessions.

Table 4.6 BINE professors' perceived challenges from their narratives

Other significant challenges found in professors' narratives
a) Constant changes when planning sessions' activities.
b) Difficulty encouraging active participation of the entire class.

c) Students' lack of willingness to turn on their microphones and cameras.

d) Difficulty engaging students with the class topic.

e) Not full students' involvement and attention with the class due to other academic/non-academic activities.

4.3.4 Professors' strategies from BINE

- Taking extra courses about specific platforms or issues to implement them into their classes

Participant 4: *"a google course I recently took online showed how much I have to learn that would really enhance my lesson delivery and feedback".*

- Leading students' participation directly during the session

Participant 4: *"…encourage greater direct participation by calling out names"*

- Assigning specific roles and activities within the group work

Participant 4: *"assigning specific roles in group work…"*

- Using other platform's features to enhance class communication and interaction during the session.

Participant 4: *"…using the chat facility for shy students to type answers and assigning video homework for shy speakers".*

- Reducing the number of learners to increase students' oral participation.

Participant 5: *"I have solved this because I was able to work with smaller groups to increase student participation… I had to find the strategies to reduce the number of students at the same time to increase their participation, and their speaking time during class."*
- Institution's flexibility to allow changes into the schedule and group arrangement.

Participant 5: *"My school gave me the flexibility to change my 2-hour class for 40 students to two 1-hour classes for 20 students each… This also helped me to finally divide my group into levels."*

- Being aware of students' different learning styles and characteristics to approach

  different tasks.

Participant 4: *"I have learned that different people respond differently to tasks, so some people are shy online but talk when in front of a video camera, are interactive in class but don't much like homework tasks, others produce good writings online but are reluctant writers in the face-to-face class".*

Participant 5: *"I have to reflect on what's working and what's not—I ask my students what is working for them and what they need…how important it is to reflect on our teaching process and to get feedback from our students to see what is working and what isn't".*

- Activities' adjustment according to what students have at hand to develop various

  kinds of activities

Participant 5*: "We also need to find useful resources that are available to all of our students…I also continue changing resources, seeing what has worked and what hasn't and trying new resources all the time…Since we don't have breakup rooms available in Meet or Zoom, this has forced me to find other resources. I use smaller groups through WhatsApp doing video calls of up to 4 students…Students also use phone calls, Meet sessions and even sharing audios through WhatsApp to work with smaller groups and practice speaking…also work on shared documents in smaller groups and this helps me to check on their writing".*

- Being creative to develop interesting online activities for students

Participant 5: *"I have learned that working in smaller groups requires creativity…. I also see the importance of being creative and find ways to motivate our students to have a successful online learning experience."*

4.4 Similarities and differences between participants

In the following paragraphs, similarities and differences between these professors are displayed, emerging from the charts' survey and the narratives. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 focus on the similarities and Figure 4.3 concentrates on the main differences the online questionnaire brought up for this investigation. Afterward, this comparison is complemented with extracts from participants' narratives to go on deep with the outcomes to answer the research questions within this exploratory study.

When we look at Figure 4.1, we can see those professors from both HEIs concurred with some statements; thus, identical sentences were colored to make them more visible for the reader. The concurred stances professors agreed with were:

a) Evaluation is less reliable when it is done by digital means.

b) Having good quality and fast internet connection available at home.

c) Need of extra tools and resources to provide students with enough feedback on productive skills

d) Being provided with the necessary technical training (how to use online tools, virtual classrooms, video-conferencing platforms, etc.

e) Institutional expectations have increased compared to face-to-face teaching workload.

f) Being accustomed to combining digital materials with traditional ones in classes before the pandemic.

As seen above, educators from both institutions have coincided that they have faced with technical and institutional challenges at some point of the pandemic lockdown; however, pedagogical issues involved with assessment, feedback, classroom management, and materials were the major concern from professors as they have been the key to develop online instruction during these tough times worldwide.

Figure 4.1 Similarities found in professors' agreement responses related to challenges

BUAP	BINE
1. Evaluation is less reliable when it is done by digital means.	1. Having good-quality and fast internet connection available at home.
2. Online instruction is more difficult in terms of assessment.	2. Digital materials are more effective and interesting for students' learning.
3. Need of extra tools and resources to provide students with enough feedback on productive skills.	3. Ease to manage online classes.
4. Need to buy a new electronic device to deliver my online classes amid the lockdown.	4. Having a good-quality and available electronic device (computer, tablet, laptop) since the pandemic lockdown started.
5. Online teaching has been more difficult in terms of giving effective feedback.	5. Need of extra tools and resources to provide students with enough feedback on productive skills.
6. Institutional expectations have increased compared to face-to-face teaching workload.	6. Being provided with the necessary technical training (how to use online tools, virtual classrooms, video-conferencing platforms, etc.).
7. Having good-quality and fast internet connection available at home.	7. Being accustomed to combine digital materials with traditional ones in classes before the pandemic.
8. Being accustomed to combine digital materials with traditional ones in classes before the pandemic.	8. Being emotionally supported by colleagues.
9. Being provided with the necessary technical training (how to use online tools, virtual classrooms, video-conferencing platforms, etc.).	9. Evaluation is less reliable when it is done by digital means.
	10. Institutional expectations have increased compared to face-to-face teaching workload.

Other significant correspondences between these two groups of professors come from both HEIs' disagreement charts. Figure 4.2 also points out similarities by using specific colors to make the reader find them on the scale easily. Opposite to the previous chart's explanation, here we can see how these educators coincide on one specific statement with the same position; in the first place, both disagreed with being aware of all the features that video-conferencing platforms offered to track their students during online classes before the pandemic struck the global educational system.

Likewise, other statements in which both groups disagreed were:

   a) Feeling relieved for measurements against the potential increase in teachers' workload.

b) Complications for posting materials or files and setting tasks or deadlines in digital classroom platforms.

c) Online teaching is easier in terms of workload.

As seen, professors from these HEIs asserted that they did not have problems when posting files, materials, or due dates within the online platforms, which cannot be considered as a struggle for both groups. However, they declared they have concerns due to the increase of E-teaching workload and the lack of measurements from their institutions to reduce or maintain it.

Figure 4.2 Similarities found in professors' disagreement responses related to challenges

BUAP	BINE
1. Being aware of all the features the video-conferencing platforms offered to monitor students in online sessions before the pandemic.	1. Being aware of all the features the video-conferencing platforms offered to monitor students in online sessions before the pandemic.
2. Being emotionally supported by my institution.	2. Feeling relieved for measurements against the potential increase in teachers' workload
3. Feeling relieved for measurements against the potential increase in teachers' workload	3. Complications for posting materials or files and setting tasks or deadlines in a digital classroom platform.
4. Knowing quite well how to use different video-conferencing platforms to deliver classes before the pandemic.	4. Complications for setting an exam or an evaluation through digital means.
5. Online teaching is easier in terms of workload.	5. Taking a lot of time to assess students' online work due to issues with the platform.
6. Being emotionally supported by colleagues.	6. Being worried about losing their job at any moment during this lockdown's months.
7. Complications for posting materials or files and setting tasks or deadlines in a digital classroom platform.	7. Online teaching is easier in terms of workload.
8. Ease to manage digital materials and resources for online classes during the lockdown.	8. Online teaching has been more difficult in terms of
9. Digital materials are more effective and interesting for students' learning.	

To state one of the major differences, it is necessary to go back to Figure 1 and notice that for the first HEI (Higher Education Institutions), evaluation became a top-issue for professors as they perceived this might not be reliable at all online; contrary to the other HEI teachers who placed this statement at the end of the ranking, portraying it not

as a problem for them. Similarly, 'having good quality and fast internet connection available at home has been a problem for some of the educators from the first institution, for the second one was not a problem to deliver their classes during the pandemic lockdown, as we can see it in purple color.

Therefore, if we look thoroughly, we can discover that even when both HEIs mentioned five pedagogical issues within their responses (in the case of BUAP, they are statements number 1, 2,3,5, and 6, and for BINE, they are 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9), the first institution leans more towards assessment and feedback struggles; rather than the balanced challenges among materials, classroom management, feedback, and assessment stated by the second one.

At this point, we can recognize visible discrepancies between both institutions' responses, including the ranking in which these responses were located within the former charts. However, Figure 4.3 recovers previous-mentioned statements from clear opposite stances, comparing them through agreement-disagreement charts and using colors to make them noticeable for the reader.

From this chart, we can notice that professors from the first institution concurred that providing effective feedback through online classes was more complex for them than in face-to-face sessions; however, educators from the second HEI differed from this statement as they did not perceive it as something difficult within their digital teaching practice. Furthermore, another remarkable difference is the positive perspective the second HEI has displayed for digital materials as they consider them more effective and engaging for students' learning; yet most of the professors from the first institution have disagreed with this assertion. Lastly, most of the BINE professors coincided that they have

felt emotionally supported by their colleagues during the confinement, contrary to the BUAP professors, who mostly disagreed with this position.

Figure 4.3 Major differences found in professors' agreement-disagreement responses related to challenges

BUAP (AGREEMENT)	BINE (DISAGREEMENT)
1. Evaluation is less reliable when it is done by digital means.	1. Being aware of all the features the video-conferencing platforms offered to monitor students in online sessions before the pandemic.
2. Online instruction is more difficult in terms of assessment.	2. Feeling relieved for measurements against the
3. Need of extra tools and resources to provide students with enough feedback on productive skills.	3. Complications for posting materials or files and setting tasks or deadlines in a digital classroom platform.
4. Need to buy a new electronic device to deliver my online classes amid the lockdown.	4. Complications for setting an exam or an evaluation through digital means.
5. Online teaching has been more difficult in terms of giving effective feedback.	5. Taking a lot of time to assess students' online work due to issues with the platform.
6. Institutional expectations have increased compared to face-to-face teaching workload.	6. Being worried about losing their job at any moment during this lockdown's months.
7. Having good-quality and fast internet connection available at home.	7. Online teaching is easier in terms of workload.
8. Being accustomed to combine digital materials with traditional ones in classes before the pandemic.	8. Online teaching has been more difficult in terms of giving effective feedback.
9. Being provided with the necessary technical training (how to use online tools, virtual classrooms, video-conferencing platforms, etc.).	

BINE (AGREEMENT)	BUAP (DISAGREEMENT)
1. Having good-quality and fast internet connection available at home.	1. Being aware of all the features the video-conferencing platforms offered to monitor students in online sessions before the pandemic.
2. Digital materials are more effective and interesting for students' learning.	2. Being emotionally supported by my institution.
3. Ease to manage online classes.	3. Feeling relieved for measurements against the potential increase in teachers' workload
4. Having a good-quality and available electronic device (computer, tablet, laptop) since the pandemic lockdown started.	4. Knowing quite well how to use different video-conferencing platforms to deliver classes before the pandemic.
5. Need of extra tools and resources to provide students with enough feedback on productive skills.	5. Online teaching is easier in terms of workload.
6. Being provided with the necessary technical training (how to use online tools, virtual classrooms, video-conferencing platforms, etc.).	6. Being emotionally supported by colleagues.
7. Being accustomed to combine digital materials with traditional ones in classes before the pandemic.	7. Complications for posting materials or files and setting tasks or deadlines in a digital classroom platform.
	8. Ease to manage digital materials and resources for online classes during the lockdown.
8. Being emotionally supported by colleagues.	9. Digital materials are more effective and interesting for students' learning.

If we consider the information provided by Tables 4.3 and 4.6, which portrayed other significant challenges stated by educators in their narratives, we can emphasize these three topics which are shared by both institutions:

a) Difficulty encouraging active participation of the entire class.

b) Students' lack of willingness to turn on their microphones and cameras.

c) Not full students' involvement and attention with the class due to other academic/non-academic activities.

Even though this is a quite significant finding, the differences stated by the participants could provide us with a distinct perspective related to other vital aspects such as self-extra-invested time, limited online teaching experience, constant lesson plan changing, reduced student-teacher interaction, students' connectivity problems, and issues. Figure 4.4 brings about this information visually by using colours to point specifically at the similarities and differences mentioned before.

Figure 4.4 Contrasting similarities and differences related to challenges

Perceived challenges from BUAP professors	Perceived challenges from BINE professors
a) Difficulty to work online due to little knowledge and/or experience with digital environments	a) Constant changes when planning sessions' activities.
b) Difficulty to establish and maintain contact and real interaction with learners during the session.	b) Difficulty to encourage active participation of the entire class.
c) Difficulty to encourage active participation of the entire class.	c) Students' lack of willingness to turn on their microphones and cameras.
d) Students' lack of willingness to turn on their microphones and cameras.	d) Difficulty to engage students with the class topic.
e) Students' connectivity problems.	e) Not full students' involvement and attention with the class due to other academic/non-academic activities.
f) Not full students' involvement and attention with the class due to other academic/non-academic activities.	
g) Extra time investment to learn how to use technology by themselves.	
h) Health issues due to the several hours to be seated.	

In the case of the proposed strategies, the one that both groups corresponded as the most important for them to overcome most of the challenges remarked on their answers was related to taking extra courses about specific platforms or issues to implement them into their classes. From an objective perspective, we can see that most of them looked for alternatives to solve their didactic technological issues, conducted by their self-initiative and autonomy as an essential part of their professional development.

However, the other suggested strategies done by professors are not used to contrast but to construct a valuable set of tactics that complement each group's suggestions in this pandemic situation and assist other educators in enhancing their teaching practice. Figure 4.5 displays these strategies visually, indicating at the top the one that both share and include the others which can complement other professors' online teaching practice.

Figure 4.5 Contrasting Strategies from Professors' narratives

Strategies from BUAP professors	Strategies from BINE professors
a) Taking extra courses about specific platforms or issues to implement them into their classes	a) Taking extra courses about specific platforms or issues to implement them into their classes
b) Planning activities' time carefully for learners to answer them timely	b) Leading students' participation directly during the session
c) Organizing students' turns to participate during the class in advance.	c) Assigning specific roles and activities within the group work
d) Providing students with the course syllabus to take advantage of the topics in advance.	d) Using other platform's features to enhance class communication and interaction during the session.
e) Being open and adapt themselves to online education environments	e) Reducing the number of learners to increase students' oral participation.
f) Being patient and sympathetic with students' issues.	f) Institution's flexibility to allow changes into the schedule and group arrangement.
g) Giving confidence and support to students when dealing with technology	g) Being aware of students different learning styles and characteristics to approach different tasks.
h) Being autonomous and constant to solve difficulties with technological resources and gadgets.	h) Activities' adjustment according to what students have at hand to develop different kinds of activities.
i) Maintaining an open and resilient attitude towards possible technological fails and mistakes	i) Being creative to develop interesting online activities for students

4.5 Discussion

As seen, results have been presented according to the research questions that have been delineating this investigation; nevertheless, some discussion is needed in some remarkable points regarding the professors' challenges section:

a) Teachers and students' low digital literacy and competence

As mentioned in Chapter 2, digital literacy has become a vital skill for educators and everyone who wants to use technological resources and tools within the learning process appropriately and efficiently (Falloon, 2020). Therefore, once a person becomes digital literate, he needs to perfect this skill and other abilities that will allow him to be part of

21st-century society and resolve different concerns through critical thinking, collaborative knowledge, self-evaluation, and awareness when using technology (Spante et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, most of the challenges mentioned within the online survey and the narratives had to do with the low digital literacy and competence shown by professors and students during the first stages of the pandemic lockdown. This result can be contrastive as most participants highlighted their previous experience implementing technology in the classes but encountered many issues and constraints when the remote learning sessions formally started in 2020. This disparity just portrayed the little digital competence when their face-to-face classes turned into virtual, which displayed their lack of preparation, their limited opportunities and consciousness about technological training within their teaching practice, which led them to act by self-learning through online courses or diplomas (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020).   .

b) Experience Vs expertise

In the words of McGee et al. (2017), educational stakeholders need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their faculty members. These researchers proposed distinguishing between the terms novices and experts when technology is present inside the classroom. On the one hand, novice E-teachers can be described as those educators who probably have had experience in implementing technological resources in their sessions could probably face problems when encountering new apps, websites and tools that can be complex to be used; on the other hand, expert E-teachers are the ones whose experience goes beyond theoretical knowledge to the in-context application through the use of effective praxes in everyday teaching situations (McGee et al., 2017). The intention to make this distinction is not to discriminate educators' weaknesses but to ensure

teamwork support among the faculty members to provide them with new opportunities to learn in a collaborative environment inside their institutions (Day, 2002).

c) Resistance to change

When some opposition exists from one of the sides involved in the teaching-learning process (either professors or students' side), the term barrier seems to be the appropriate name for the core issues of remote instruction. According to Al-Naabi and Al-Abri (2021) and McGee et al. (2017), E-teaching barriers "are those factors at the core of resistance to online teaching and may be personal traits, institutional infrastructure, or professional constraints" (p. 333). For Nugroho and Mutiaraningrum (2020), there are two types of E-teaching barriers: The first-order barriers related to physical and environmental factors and the second-order barriers that concern professors' cognition, thoughts, and beliefs. The latter category is the fundamental basis for this thesis project as teachers are educational action beings who make instructional decisions based on their training, judgment, practice, experience, perceptions, and context to propose and solve scholastic situations efficiently (Borg, 2003).

Hattangdi et al. (2010) assert that these barriers have been evolving since 1999; however, the resistance to change has been a constant within the list of difficulties educators have faced inside online instruction, without regarding its subjective nature that has mainly affected the efficacy of virtual teaching-learning processes in the language classroom (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020).

d) The required (but unexpected) proficiency of teacher's roles in E-teaching

When discussing the use of technology within their everyday teaching practice, we refer to the technological techniques per se and the professor's different instructional roles. Smith (2009) considers that educational stakeholders must be aware of these virtual roles that must be undertaken before, during and after a lesson to allow them to implement, design and communicate new pedagogical paths by enhancing collaboration to fit in diverse directions and environments.

4.6 Chapter conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter presented the results and discussion of the obtained data that was fundamental to answer the research questions. For this, qualitative data was crucial to comprehend the nature of professors' challenges, their unexpected strategies' implementation, and the similarities and differences between educators from these two HEIs during these contingency times.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

5.0   Introduction

This last chapter aims to provide the salient conclusions using the following structure: first, we can find a general overview of the study and the limitations found during the data collection stage. Later, a summary with the main findings is given, including a discussion on the initial research questions proposed for this investigation. After that, the implications are also presented with suggestions for further research. Finally, the chapter closes with a brief conclusion and personal thoughts that emerged from this thesis writing process.

Additionally, the purpose of this study was to explore and compare ELT professors' perceptions from two HEIs about the challenges and strategies they encountered regarding their digital performance experience during the pandemic lockdown. This investigation provided meaningful information for understanding professors' problematic states of affairs related to their E-teaching in terms of pedagogical, technical, institutional, and emotional issues. Moreover, an important outcome from this study is the list of strategies teachers form both institutions provided that have been helpful for them to overcome those issues throughout the pandemic quarantine.

Although one of the aims of this research was to compare both HEIs' e-teaching perspectives, the essential idea is not to dictate what has acted the better but to correlate present issues within the higher education field to provide a wider picture of this event and the solutions that can be useful to implement in virtual, physical, and blended educational settings.

5.2   Summary of main findings and discussion

The salient challenges professors faced during this pandemic lockdown were:

- Difficulty working online due to little knowledge and/or experience with digital environments

- Difficulty to establish and maintain contact and real interaction with learners during the session.

- Difficulty encouraging active participation of the entire class.

- Students' lack of willingness to turn on their microphones and cameras.

- Students' connectivity problems.

- Not full students' involvement and attention with the class due to other academic/non-academic activities.

- Extra time investment to learn how to use technology by themselves.

- Health issues due to the several hours to be seated.

- Constant changes when planning sessions' activities.

- Difficulty encouraging active participation of the entire class.

- Students' lack of willingness to turn on their microphones and cameras.

- Difficulty engaging students with the class topic.

- Not full students' involvement and attention with the class due to other academic/non-academic activities.

However, the proposed strategies by these educators are:

- Taking extra courses about specific platforms or issues to implement them into their classes

- Planning activities' time carefully for learners to answer them timely

- Organizing students' turns to participate during the class in advance.

- Providing students with the course syllabus to take advantage of the topics in advance.

- Being open and adapting themselves to online education environments

- Being patient and sympathetic with students' issues.

- Giving confidence and support to students when dealing with technology

- Being autonomous and constant to solve difficulties with technological resources and gadgets.

- Maintaining an open and resilient attitude towards possible technological fails and mistakes

- Leading students' participation directly during the session

- Assigning specific roles and activities within the group work

- Using other platform's features to enhance class communication and interaction during the session.

- Reducing the number of learners to increase students' oral participation.

- Being aware of students' different learning styles and characteristics to approach different tasks.

- Institution's flexibility to allow changes into the schedule and group arrangement.

- Being creative to develop interesting online activities for students

- Activities' adjustment according to what students have at hand to develop distinct kinds of activities

It was thought that educators from both institutions could have the same technical, institutional, and pedagogical issues. On the one hand, the first institution stated visibly their challenges related to pedagogical issues in terms of evaluation, feedback, class

interaction, students' involvement, and commitment with the class, as well as the extra-time investment and health issues. On the other hand, the second HEI did not show their concerns at first sight; however, they showed concern with providing effective feedback, evaluation, active participation, and students involvement in the class.

Both institutions totally agree with the struggle with students' lack of willingness to turn on their cameras and microphone.

In the case of strategies, the first HEI showed its tendency to change their attitude towards technology rather than pedagogical approaches; Contrary to the second one, which mostly focused on pedagogical ones. This happened because their attitude has already changed and not like the first one which still presents some reluctance towards e-teaching.

5.3 Implications

Even we all are eventually coming back to face-to-face classes, HE professors and principals need to keep in mind that technology is staying with us permanently. Thus, they need to consider other options for teaching as flipped classroom or blended learning to integrate them into their curriculum and teaching practice, considering not just uncertain future events but specific situations students' needs will require from the institutions, their curriculums, and their educators.

5.4 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations could be found when participants were asked to participate in this investigation, as the initial expected number of participants was twenty (ten for each institution); however, due to professors' e-teaching workload and their lack of free time, only eleven agreed to participate in it. Another limitation was to find a literature review regarding online struggles directly related to the ELT field in Mexico. However, essays

and articles from other parts of the world were valuable to present possible difficulties and complications to design the digital survey implemented in chapter three. The third limitation was the insufficient narratives received by the participants. Whether the implementation of this second instrument was optional for participants, it would have been great if all had written theirs as these personal texts were a more open resource to explain better what they have faced during these tough times; yet, some of them justified themselves as this was a time-consuming task for them and their limited time out of work duties.

5.5   Suggestions for further research

As mentioned before, one of the limitations that were present in this study was the small number of participants due to different personal or job situations. As this was an exploratory study, the number of participants cannot be seen as a problem for conducting qualitative research on the area; however, one of the suggestions for further research is to invite other participants from other HEIs across the country. Thus, as the number may increase, this study could turn into a quantitative one just with the implementation of the questionnaire or a mixed-method one if both instruments are contemplated for the data collection process.

Another suggestion is to continue working with the same participants and turn this investigation into a longitudinal one, as they can be approached right after they go back to face-to-face classes and after a school year or two, to go in-depth with the technological implications they may or may not keep in their future practice. Also, other instruments could be valuable to be implemented as interviews and focus groups that are rich in generating qualitative data.

One of the most salient topics related to professors' challenges was the lack of willingness most students showed to turn on their cameras and microphones during the online sessions. As we are eventually going back to face-to-face environments, this particular event must be telling us a key issue related to students' digital identity in terms of attention, comfort, disposition, preferences, etcetera in online-educational settings and their undeniable shift when being in a physical classroom. Thus, it is quite relevant to state that technology will remain among us, and this kind of matter needs to be revised to make educators aware of the other different distance or blended methodologies that can be implemented in their institutions formally.

One final recommendation to conduct further research is connected to a concern stated by teachers and the relevance of their well-being during times of crisis they experienced during the COVID-19 lockdown. As mentioned in chapter two, professors' perceptions and attitudes have a significant impact on their teaching performance, no matter if this virtual or face-to-face; thus, this means that there will be sequels derived from these situations, educators will have to deal with while reintegrating themselves to the new normality. Nowadays, it is not a secret that well-being has to be a priority in everyone's life and look for assistance whether it represents an obstacle for people to live a decent and happy life.

5.6   Conclusion

The goal of this study was to know the struggles professors from two macro HEIs faced during the Coronavirus pandemic, as they continued delivering their courses through digital platforms, sources, and tools. The findings revealed that participants' main challenges were concerned with pedagogical issues such as evaluation, feedback, active

participation, interaction, planning and students' willingness and connectivity. Even when the panorama seemed uncertain and problematic, positive outcomes emerged from these experiences. The findings also indicated a list of different strategies that could help other teachers in the future, and with this I am not referring to another pandemic event but the inclusion of technology properly in the classroom from this moment. As we know, pedagogical strategies are crucial to solve complex situations when using technology; however, the ones related to teachers' attitudes and emotional support for students are also essential to build a bond with students through empathy and resilience to overcome several types of obstacles. Moreover, it is imperative to mention the contribution this study can provide to the field of ELT in Mexico, as there are not enough studies related to this field specifically. These studies may be developed to be published soon, but if not, I hope this investigation can be useful to encourage other researchers to examine these experiences and improve the ELT Mexican classrooms within higher education contexts.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

<u>INSTRUMENT 1:</u> PCOIGC Questionnaire

(Adapted from Şener, Sağlam Ertem, & Meç, 2020)

This questionnaire is aimed at collecting data regarding the experiences of ELT professors in online teaching during the quarantine. Your responses will only be used for research purposes and will not be shared with any third parties.

PART 1: Demographic information and previous teaching background

Email address

Choose your institution

Gender

Age

Place of birth

Number of years of teaching experience

Have you ever taught online before the pandemic?

Number of years of online teaching experience

(1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, and 5: Strongly Agree)

Since the lockdown started, I was very familiar with most of the digital tools and resources I am currently using for my classes.

Within my online classes, I have mostly experienced _____ that have affected my digital teaching performance.

[Technical issues]

 [Institutional issues]

 [Pedagogical issues]

 [Personal issues]

PART 2: Challenges related to technical issues

(1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, and 5: Strongly Agree)

1. I have had a good-quality and available electronic device (computer, tablet, laptop) since the pandemic lockdown started.

2. I have had good-quality and fast internet connection available at home.

3. I had to buy a new electronic device (computer, tablet, laptop, cell phone) to deliver my online classes amid the lockdown.

4. I had to purchase internet service or change my internet supplier during the lockdown.

5. I have experienced a constant electrical power failure.

PART 3: Challenges related to institutional issues

6. My institution has offered to provide me with the necessary technical equipment (internet connection, laptop, camera, etcetera).

7. My institution has provided me with the necessary technical equipment (internet connection, laptop, camera, etcetera).

8. My institution has provided me with the necessary technical training (how to use online tools, virtual classrooms, video-conferencing platforms, etcetera)

9. My institution has provided me with pedagogical and academic support regarding how to teach online.

10. My institution has taken measures against the potential increase in teachers' workload (reducing class hours/office hours, offering extra help with administrative paperwork, etcetera).

11. My institution's expectations from me have increased compared to face-to-face teaching workload.

12. I feel I have been financially well supported by my institution.

13. I feel I have been emotionally supported by my institution.

PART 4: Challenges related to pedagogical issues

14. It has been easy for me to manage my online classes

15. Before the pandemic, I knew quite well how to use video-conferencing platforms (zoom, meet, hangouts, skype, teams, etcetera) to deliver my classes appropriately.

16. Before the pandemic, I was aware of all the features the video-conferencing platforms offered me to monitor my students during the online sessions.

17.   I have faced constant problems when creating a meeting, sending the invitation, or allowing my students to our online classes through the video-conferencing platform.

18. When posting materials or tasks in a digital classroom platform (Google classroom, Teams, Edmodo, Schoology, etcetera), I have faced problems to set the deadlines or posting the format files.

19. I have taken more time than I told my students to upload class materials or a task.

20. It has taken me a lot of time to assess my students' online work since I have had issues with the platform.

21. It has been difficult for me to set an exam or an evaluation through digital means.

22. I feel that evaluation is less reliable when it is done by digital means.

23. It has been easy for me to evaluate receptive skills (reading and listening) in digital environments.

24. It has been easy for me to evaluate productive skills (speaking and writing) in digital environments.

25. I think online instruction is more difficult in terms of assessment.

26. Giving feedback for productive skills has been easier in online classes.

27. Giving feedback for receptive skills has been easier in online classes.

28. I have needed to look for more tools and resources to provide my students with enough feedback on productive skills.

29. I think online teaching has been more difficult in terms of giving effective feedback.

30. It has been easy to manage digital materials and resources for my classes during the lockdown.

31. Before the lockdown, I used to combine digital materials with traditional ones for my sessions.

32. I consider digital materials are more effective and interesting for my students' learning.

33. I think online teaching is easier in terms of workload.

PART 5: Challenges related to personal issues

34. Derived from my lockdown teaching experience, I have frequently suffered from higher levels of stress.

35. I have been worried about losing my job at any moment during this lockdown's months.

36. I feel I have been emotionally supported by my colleagues.

37. Whenever I have had a personal difficulty during this quarantine, my institution has supported me.

Appendix B

INSTRUMENT 2: Written Narrative

Instructions: Write between a page or a page and a half about your digital experience while teaching English during this quarantine. Use the following prompts to guide your narrative, and remember that your responses will not be shared with any third parties as they will be only used for research purposes. Do not spend undue amounts of time either writing your narrative or worrying about style.

My online teaching experience during the lockdown has been _____ because...

I really feel/don't really feel changes in my online sessions comparing the first to the current ones because…

I believe that the most difficult pedagogical issue(s) I've faced is/are…

I consider that I have/haven't solved this/these issue(s) because…

The strategies that have been helpful for me to overcome these challenges are _____ and with them, I have learned that…

After living this online teaching, now I see…