Teaching TLE in Limited Face-to-Face Settings: A Descriptive Phenomenology from a Rural Philippine Secondary School

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Abstract

Background: After extended school closures, the Philippines piloted limited face-to-face classes, which affected skill-based subjects like Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE). Objective: To explore the lived experiences of TLE teachers during limited face-to-face classes in a rural public secondary school. Methods: A qualitative study using Husserlian descriptive phenomenology was conducted at Pilar National High School (Cebu Province Division), SY 2021–2022. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were audio-recorded with consent and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step method; trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability strategies; ethics approval was granted by the University's Research Ethics Committee. Results: Three themes emerged: (1) Limited F2F as a challenge (loss of collaboration and laboratory practice; compressed time; mask-related communication issues); (2) Teachers develop a new paradigm (flexibility, technology-supported instruction, home-based performance tasks with analytic rubrics); and (3) Re-establishing interpersonal relationships (closer teacher–student interaction, immediate feedback, social reconnection). Conclusion: Despite constraints, teachers adapted with creative strategies and valued the relational benefits of in-person contact; findings support practical lesson exemplars

and targeted capacity-building for TLE under constrained conditions.

Introduction

In November 2021, selected public schools in the Philippines reopened via limited face-to-face classes under strict health protocols. TLE—reliant on hands-on practice, collaboration, and laboratory work—was uniquely affected by restrictions on group tasks and shared equipment. This study explores how TLE teachers experienced teaching within these constraints at a rural island public secondary school, aiming to illuminate their lived experiences and distill themes that can inform practical teaching exemplars and school policy during constrained operations.

Method

Design

A Husserlian descriptive phenomenology was employed to bracket preconceptions and foreground meanings of teachers' lived experiences.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Pilar National High School (Pilar, Camotes, Cebu) during SY 2021–2022. From ten TLE teachers, six participated until data saturation was reached. Inclusion criteria: vaccinated TLE teachers delivering in-person classes (Grades 7–12) during the pilot and willing to participate.

Data Collection

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews (40–50 minutes) were audio-recorded with consent, conducted in English and mother tongue as preferred, and supplemented by researcher observation.

Data Analysis

Analysis followed Colaizzi's seven steps: familiarization; extraction of significant statements; formulation of meanings; clustering into themes; exhaustive description; fundamental structure; and member checking for verification.

Trustworthiness

Credibility (member checking), transferability (thick description), dependability (audit trail), and confirmability (bracketing and reflexivity) were addressed throughout.

Ethics

Approved by the University of the Visayas Research Ethics Committee; participation was voluntary, with informed consent, confidentiality, and minimal risk assured. No monetary incentives were provided.

Results

Six TLE teachers contributed 72 significant statements, distilled into 13 formulated meanings, six clustered sub-themes, and three overarching themes.

Overarching Themes

Theme 1 — Limited face-to-face as a challenge: loss of collaborative and laboratory activities, compressed time, and mask-related communication barriers.

Theme 2 — Teachers develop a new paradigm: adapted strategies, technology integration (videos, infographics, online links), individual home-based performance tasks, and analytic rubrics for fair assessment.

Theme 3 — Re-establishing interpersonal relationships: restored real-time feedback and rapport with smaller class sizes, enabling focused support.

Clustered Sub-themes

1) Teaching under limited face-to-face is a challenge; 2) Innovative learning strategies; 3) Home-based task scheme with rubrics; 4) Socio-personal relationships; 5) Technical assistance and esprit de corps; 6) Addressing learning gaps from modular years.

Discussion

Skill-intensive subjects like TLE face distinctive barriers under restricted classroom conditions, yet teachers creatively re-engineered pedagogy with technology, individualized tasks, and structured assessment to sustain competency development. The relational value of limited face-to-face—immediate feedback, motivation, and social reconnection—was emphasized, suggesting that even reduced in-person time can yield affective and instructional gains. These insights informed a lesson exemplar featuring technology-enabled demonstrations, visual scaffolds, and home-task rubrics to approximate laboratory learning ethically and safely.

Implications for Practice

Schools can invest in educational technology capacity-building; standardize rubric-guided performance tasks suitable for home settings; maintain smaller face-to-face groups when possible; and offer targeted refreshers to address learning gaps from modular years.

Limitations and Future Work

Single-site, small sample; teacher perspectives only; reliance on self-report and observation; transferability is contextual. Future work could include multisite samples and learner outcomes tied to rubric-assessed home tasks.

Conclusion

TLE teachers navigated limited face-to-face with flexibility, technology integration, and robust assessment, while valuing the human connection regained in class. Practical, safety-conscious,

and equity-minded exemplars can sustain skill development when full laboratories are not feasible.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Approved by the University of the Visayas Research Ethics Committee; informed consent obtained.

Funding: Self-funded.

Competing interests: None declared.

Data availability: De-identified excerpts available upon reasonable request.

Author contributions (CRediT): R.L.I.—conceptualization, methodology, investigation, analysis, writing.

Table 1

Themes Distilled From Interviews

Formulated meanings (examples)	Clustered sub-themes	Overarching theme
Loss of collaboration; mask-related strain; limited time	Teaching under limited F2F is a challenge	Limited F2F as a challenge
Flexibility; new strategies; tech integration	Innovative learning strategies	New teaching paradigm
Analytic rubrics for home tasks	Home-based task scheme	New teaching paradigm

Interpersonal rapport; student voice	Socio-personal relationships	Interpersonal relationships
Co-teacher support and technical assistance	Technical assistance & esprit de corps	New teaching paradigm

Modular-era learning gaps	Addressing COVID-19 gaps	Limited F2F as a challenge

Note. F2F = face-to-face.

Figure 1

Conceptual Flow of Themes and Sub-themes Derived From Teacher Interviews

This figure conceptually illustrates how significant statements were transformed into formulated meanings, clustered into sub-themes, and organized into overarching themes using Colaizzi's method.

COREQ (Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research) Checklist

Domain / Item	Description	How addressed in this study
Domain 1: Research team and reflexivity	Interviewer/facilitator (Item 1)	Primary researcher conducted all interviews.
	Credentials (Item 2)	Graduate student researcher with supervised training.
	Occupation (Item 3)	Graduate student; teacher-researcher.
	Gender (Item 4)	Disclosed to participants as part of consent.
	Experience and training (Item 5)	Semi-structured interviewing And phenomenological analysis training.

	Relationship established (Item 6)	No prior close relationship; rapport built during consent and briefing.
	Participant knowledge of the interviewer (Item 7)	Participants informed of study aims and researcher role.
	Interviewer characteristics (Item 8)	Reflexive notes kept to bracket assumptions.
Domain 2: Study design	Methodological orientation (Item 9)	Husserlian descriptive phenomenology.
	Sampling (Item 10)	Purposive selection of TLE teachers involved in limited F2F.
	Sample size (Item 11)	Six teachers; saturation achieved.
	Non-participation (Item 12)	Four teachers declined or were unavailable; reasons noted.
	Setting of data collection (Item 13)	School setting; private rooms following health protocols.
	Presence of non-participants (Item 14)	Interviews conducted one-on-one; no others present.

	Description of sample (Item 15)	Grades 7–12 TLE teachers; vaccinated; rural public school.
	Interview guide (Item 16)	Semi-structured guide piloted and refined.
	Repeat interviews (Item 17)	No repeat interviews; follow-ups via member checking.
	Audio/visual recording (Item 18)	Audio-recorded with consent.
	Field notes (Item 19)	Observation and reflexive field notes maintained.
	Duration (Item 20)	Approximately 40–50 minutes per interview.
	Data saturation (Item 21)	Declared when no new themes emerged after six interviews.
Domain 3: Analysis and findings	Transcripts returned (Item 22)	Participants reviewed summaries during member checking.
	Data coding (Item 23)	Significant statements extracted; meanings formulated.
	Number of data coders (Item 24)	Single coder with peer debriefing.

	Description of coding tree (Item 25)	Statements → meanings → sub-themes → themes.
	Derivation of themes (Item 26)	Inductive clustering using Colaizzi's method.
	Software (Item 27)	Manual coding; spreadsheets used for organization.
	Participant checking (Item 28)	Member checking to verify the fundamental structure.
	Quotations presented (Item 29)	Representative quotes included with pseudonyms.
	Data and findings consistent (Item 30)	Themes supported by multiple statements across participants.
	Clarity of major themes (Item 31)	Three overarching themes reported clearly.
	Clarity of minor themes (Item 32)	Six clustered sub-themes summarized.

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