

Academic Challenges of Full Professors in Bicol University at the Time of Pandemic

Melinda D. De Guzman

Bicol University Open University, Legazpi City, Albay, 4500, Philippines
Correspondence: mddeguzman@bicol-u.edu.ph

Abstract

This study investigates the multifaceted academic challenges faced by full professors at Bicol University during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their readiness for online teaching, the encountered obstacles, and the strategies employed to surmount these challenges. Using total enumeration, study selected respondents which full professors of Bicol University. Study employed a standardized tool, the Faculty Readiness for Online Crisis Teaching Scale during the COVID-19 Pandemic, complemented by semi-structured interviews. Quantitative analysis included frequency, percentage, and weighted mean calculations, while qualitative data analysis (QDA) was utilized for in-depth interview data. Respondents provided informed consent. Study was conducted between March 2021 and May 2021. Results of this study showcase a nuanced landscape. Majority of respondents (69.05%) procured their own laptops, while 28.6% received institution-provided laptops. In terms of connectivity, 57.10% enjoyed strong and stable internet access, while 42.90% grappled with intermittent to poor connectivity. Similarly, 90.50% benefited from uninterrupted electricity, with 9.52% facing intermittent to poor power supply. In evaluating readiness for online teaching, findings yielded a composite mean of 4.24, signifying preparedness. The academic challenges reported encompassed a range of issues including technology constraints, environmental hindrances, faculty-student interactions, content-delivery concerns, and logistical difficulties. To overcome these challenges, full professors adopted diverse coping strategies, such as self-paced learning of new applications, optimizing teaching environments, seeking peer advice on faculty-student interactions, embracing trial-and-error methods to enhance teaching efficacy, and requesting support to streamline research and extension activities. In conclusion, despite the academic challenges posed by the pandemic, full professors at Bicol University demonstrated resilience and adaptability in transitioning to online teaching. Their collective optimism and willingness to further refine their teaching strategies underscore a commitment to continuous improvement. This study sheds light on the importance of ongoing institutional support and professional development to empower educators in navigating the evolving landscape of higher education.

Keywords: *Online Teaching, Self-Paced Learning, Teaching and Learning Strategies, Hybrid Modality*

Introduction

Global health reports, as of January 21, 2023, indicate that there are more than 600 million of COVID-19 confirmed cases and more than 6 million fatalities worldwide. These statistics reveal that over the past two years, the cumulative number of cases has surged by more than sixfold, while deaths have nearly tripled (Polatoğlu et al., 2023).

The vast majority of cases and deaths are now outside mainland China, where the outbreak began. Moreover, according to one commentator, COVID-19

can be described as having overwhelmed the United States and brought the most influential nation on Earth to its knees. These challenges have endured throughout the pandemic and were not restricted to a specific timeframe or political leader. In each year of the pandemic, the United States has consistently reported some of the highest COVID-19 death rates and confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection rates (Yong, 2022). As the pandemic spread across the globe, the virus left a trail of deaths in its wake. Deaths in Europe and North America outnumber Asia. In Latin America, South America, and the Caribbean, the share of global deaths is still rising.

The COVID-19 pandemic also reached the Philippines. In fact, according to WHO (2023), from January 3, 2020, until September 6, 2023, the Philippines has reported a total of 4,110,205 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 66,661 related deaths. Additionally, as of March 18, 2023, a cumulative total of 189,317,158 vaccine doses have been administered. These numbers remain constant the entire pandemic era because as the days and weeks went on the numerical figures would also increase (WHO, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered widespread social unrest and brought about unprecedented shifts in people's lifestyles, work patterns, and social interactions. The implementation of social distancing measures has significantly strained human relationships (Hosseinzadeh et al. (2022). This environmental virus is not the first of its kind, but it is the first to spread globally at such a rapid rate. This virus and the global COVID-19 pandemic have reverberated through societies and economies worldwide, prompting inquiries into epidemic readiness and broader developmental concerns spanning the past, present, and future (Leach et al., 2021).

All this has led to the shutdown of global economies, forcing governments to implement stringent lockdown measures affecting both the economy and society (Ocampo & Yamagishi, 2020). A lockdown has been put in place, and business, religious and education activities in the Philippines almost stopped. The big offices, the huge malls, and the 5-star hotels stopped their functions. Cathedrals, churches, and chapels stopped their spiritual activities, and universities and colleges stopped their teaching and learning process.

Universities big and small closed and teachers and professors were made to stay home, hence the students had no choice but to stay home as well (Barrot et al., 2021). After a couple of months, both Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Department of Education (DepED) decided to allow the classes to continue, but this time, through online or modular classes, or flexible learnings made possible through synchronous and asynchronous mode. This unexpected turn of events brought stark changes in the everyday existence of students and their professors. Professors and students became overwhelmed with work while at home (Barrot et al., 2021). They found it too complicated to juggle virtual lessons and other work responsibilities with family and household tasks.

Teachers and other full professors who are in advanced age and who are so-called not "tech-savvy" found great difficulties in adjusting to the new mode of teaching and learning process (Rapanta et al., 2021). As these measures have taken their toll, issues

unrelated to COVID-19, particularly the mental and physical well-being of individuals under lockdown, have become increasingly prominent concerns (Ocampo & Yamagishi, 2020). Hence, this study is about determining the academic capability and work-related challenges of professors at Bicol University at the time of the pandemic.

The study aimed to focus on the full professors as the primary respondents due to several compelling reasons. Full professors represent a distinct and highly experienced cohort within the academic community. They have reached the pinnacle of their academic careers, typically possessing extensive teaching experience, advanced subject matter expertise, and significant leadership roles within their institutions (Hamman, 2019). These attributes make them uniquely positioned to provide invaluable insights into the academic challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, full professors often serve as role models and mentors to junior faculty members, playing a critical part in shaping the future of higher education. By understanding their experiences and challenges during the pandemic, the study can gain valuable insights into how to better support faculty at all career stages and enhance the resilience and adaptability of academic institutions.

Henceforth, this study aimed to explore the academic challenges of full professors at Bicol University at the time of pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced unprecedented challenges to academe. Investigating how full professors cope with these challenges can provide insights into adapting to future disruptions or changes in the academic landscape. Furthermore, exploring the academic challenges of full professors is essential for enhancing the quality of education, supporting faculty members, and ensuring the continued success of both individual professors and the institution as a whole. More specifically, it determined, the availability of appropriate instructional materials, determined the readiness of the professors for the online mode of teaching, assess the academic challenges encountered while teaching during the pandemic, describe the coping strategies applied by the professors to overcome the challenges and propose possible interventions for professors to cope with the challenges.

Materials and Methods

Research Design. This study utilized mixed methods of research, both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the quantitative part, it adopted a standardized survey tool available online titled, Faculty Readiness for Online Crisis Teaching (FROCT) Scale during the COVID-19 Pandemic which was

developed and originally utilized by Cutri and Mena (2020). For the qualitative part, a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide.

Respondents of the Study. The population of the study included the full professors of Bicol University from Professor I to Professor VI. The group of full professors from Bicol University is selected as the respondents because the academic challenges they have gone through during the pandemic offers a rationale based on their difficulties, extent of technology knowhow, extensive experience, leadership roles, and ability to provide valuable insights into the topic. These full professors were selected through total enumeration, following a set of inclusion criteria such as: 1) They are full professors from BU main campus, East campus, and Daraga campus, 2) They have at least 6 units or more teaching load, and 3) They are willing to participate in the data gathering process.

Data Analysis. In the analysis of data, along the quantitative part, frequency, percentage, and weighted mean were employed, while in the qualitative part, qualitative data analysis or simple QDA was done to analyze the data gathered from the

in-depth interviews. The respondents initially signed an informed consent to affirm their participation. The details of the informed consent were explained first to the research participants and they were requested to affix their signature to affirm their willingness to participate. The study took place from March 2021 to May 2021.

Results and Discussion

Availability of Appropriate Instructional Materials

These gadgets or instructional materials used during the pandemic are smartphones, laptops, tablets, desktops, power banks, and headphones. Findings on Table 1 reveal that the availability of instructional materials utilized for the online teaching depended on the circumstances surrounding the professors. Some were lucky to have been provided by the institution with their gadgets, others made use of what was available at their homes. And as the findings show, a higher number of professors personally acquired their instructional materials or learning resources.

Table 1 Availability of Appropriate Instruction Materials or Learning Resource

INDICATORS	PERSONALLY ACQUIRED		BORROWED FROM A FAMILY MEMBER		PROVIDED BY THE INSTITUTION	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Smartphone	38	90.48	2	4.76	2	4.76
Laptop	29	69.05	1	2.38	12	28.6
Tablet	6	14.29	1	2.38	1	2.38
Desktop	3	7.143	2	4.76	2	4.76
Powerbank	22	52.38	5	11.9	1	2.38
Headphone	13	30.95	1	2.38	1	2.38
Iphone	1	2.381	1	2.38	-	-

INDICATORS	STRONG & STABLE		INTERMITTENT TO ALMOST POOR		PREPAID CONNECTION MODE	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Internet Connectivity	24	57.1	18	42.9	2	4.76
Electricity	38	90.5	4	9.52	0	0

One professor mentioned that she was so used to teaching through the traditional way, using whiteboard and whiteboard marker that she found it difficult to teach through online mode, using her laptop. Nevertheless, she added that she was grateful that she has previously bought a laptop for herself, months before the pandemic, hence, she did not have a problem acquiring one.

Another professor added that she repeatedly asked her son how to use Google Classroom and Google Meet until she finally learned to do it herself. These perspectives can be related to the study of Lapitan et al. (2021) where they advanced that faculty members had to modify their lesson plans, teaching strategies, evaluation techniques, and the materials they use, as a result of the abrupt switch to full online instruction. In the context of higher education, students also had to

face the task of quickly adjusting to the “new normal.” As can be gleaned from the result of the study, it can be surmised that a little over 50% are having problems with internet connectivity. This is quite disheartening knowing that all teachers are doing online teaching, yet they have connectivity issues.

Readiness of the Professors for the Online Mode of Teaching

Findings on Table 2 show the readiness for the online mode of teaching. Findings are evidently noteworthy with the results revealing a 4.24 composite mean with a verbal interpretation of *Ready*. This is

found to be a worthwhile result because even if there were many difficulties at the start of the online mode of teaching, the full professors still marked themselves as *Ready* for it.

Remarkably, three indicators were marked as *Highly Ready*. These are: *Feel a different sense of happiness when online teaching goes undisturbed by the power outage and Wi-Fi connectivity*, with a weighted mean of 4.62, *I am willing to implement novel teaching practices (e.g. online, blended, etc.)*, with 4.57, and *I am interested in learning from experts in online teaching to transition my course and content to an online format (e.g. entirely online, blended, etc.)* with 4.52.

Table 2 Readiness of Full Professors for the Online Mode of Teaching

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Adjective Rating
I am willing to implement novel teaching practices (e.g. online, blended, etc.)	4.57	Highly Ready
I am comfortable when I teach outside of my regular mode of delivery (e.g. in-person, online, blended)	4.24	Ready
I can imagine myself trying new teaching technologies in my class before I personally have fully mastered them	4.19	Ready
I can imagine creating new methods of teaching that utilize the affordances of online teaching	4.31	Ready
I have strategies to help manage any fears and concerns I might have when I teach outside of my regular mode of delivery (e.g. in-person, online, blended)	4.38	Ready
I can acknowledge any fears and concerns in a safe professional environment when I teach outside of my regular mode of delivery (e.g. in-person, online, blended)	4.36	Ready
I am interested in learning from experts in online teaching to transition my course and content to an online format (e.g. entirely online, blended, etc.)	4.52	Highly Ready
I am comfortable with students relying LESS on direct instruction from me to learn class learning objectives	3.71	Ready
I am willing to lessen the amount of traditional teacher- directed instruction (e.g. lecturing with slides, textbook reading, etc.) that are common when teaching in-person	4.45	Ready
Instead of relying on synchronous instruction, I imagine creating opportunities to increase student autonomy regarding when and how they learn (e.g. student self-pacing of learning and selection of learning material)	4.40	Ready
I imagine creating opportunities to increase student autonomy regarding what they choose to learn from a selection of topics chosen by me (e.g. choice boards)	4.26	Ready
It is important to use instructional time to foster and nurture relationships with students in online classes	4.36	Ready
I feel prepared to attend to students in an online setting who are having difficult times in their lives	4.05	Ready
It is important to adjust my course assignments and requirements to accommodate students’ potential inequitable access to online learning necessities (e.g. internet access; device access; safe place to learn, etc.)	4.40	Ready
I feel prepared to identify students’ potential inequitable access to online learning necessities (e.g. internet access; device access; safe place to learn, etc.)	4.19	Ready
Transitioning my courses to another mode of delivery (e.g. online or blended) positively influences my university-based and academic community service duties	4.24	Ready
Transitioning my courses to another mode of delivery (e.g. online or blended) will negatively impact my scholarship productivity	2.95	Moderately Ready
I feel a different sense of happiness when online teaching goes undisturbed by power outage and Wi-Fi connectivity	4.62	Highly Ready
I feel a great sense of fulfillment every after online class, even if it is tiring	4.43	Ready
I look forward with eagerness to the next schedule of my online class	4.19	Ready
Composite Mean	4.24	Ready

It is a positive outcome that the research participants feel a different sense of happiness when online teaching goes undisturbed by power outage and Wi-Fi connectivity. This proves to show that despite it all, teachers are always passionate about their jobs no matter what mode they employ and that with the online mode, they rely heavily on internet connectivity and electricity, and are delighted if these two become steady and strong. Moreover, this study also revealed that the research participants are also willing to implement novel teaching practices (e.g. online, blended, etc.).

Although the pandemic caught them by surprise, even if they were promoted with the sudden change of teaching modalities, it is good to note that the research participants are very much willing to do innovations and unique teaching strategies for their students. And as there are difficulties in the process of teaching and learning process, the professors are so intent to continue to learn from the experts in online teaching to transition their courses and content to an online format which they can utilize in a hybrid mode of teaching, both online and face to face.

These findings are most important especially since the professors are indeed expected to innovate and make teaching and learning interesting for the students. As it is postulated in the study of Beteille et al. (2020), they underscored that the students' attitudes and personalities are shaped by faculty who also play a key part in helping them pass. COVID-19 definitely drove changes to the teaching and learning process, however, all teachers, even those full professors were ready to meet the task of teaching effectively despite the circumstance. That is why it is good to know that the Bicol University full-time professors are very willing to undergo continued learnings to innovate and to receive additional mentoring from the experts.

The indicator, *Transitioning my courses to another mode of delivery (e.g. online or blended) will negatively impact my scholarship productivity*, got the lowest weighted mean of 2.95. It is the only indicator that got a verbal interpretation of *Moderately Ready*. This proves that the transition they were going through would not necessarily lead to unproductivity, hence, they marked this indicator with the least weighted mean. It may also be because, even if there were changes, Bicol University professors can adapt to changes even in most difficult times. This is affirmed in the study of Martín-Sánchez et al. (2022), where they pointed out that the COVID-19 health crisis has changed many social and personal domains and is requiring institutions and persons to adjust to a new reality. Many of these adjustments have provided a chance to implement fresh dynamics and get rid of old inconsistencies

Academic Challenges Encountered While Teaching During the Pandemic

The in-depth interviews were able to gather salient data, and important themes emerged. These themes on the academic challenges the full professors encountered are the following: *Technology Issues, Environmental Issues, Faculty-Student Interactions, Learning Content Delivery Concerns and Issues on Other Functions.*

Theme 1: Technology Issues

The theme that first emerged is about issues with technology. Research participants shared that they really found it difficult to start teaching through online mode, especially since they were not so in the know about most of the commands on their laptops. Written are statements shared by the key informants as they were stated:

Professor #1: Many students have poor internet connection, and many others students lacked gadgets for on-line learning.

Professor #2: I had problems with connectivity and that of my students. Electricity problems too were often.

Professor #3: I am not so technically inclined, and so, yes, since I am not so technically inclined, it is sometimes challenging for me to prepare materials that would be more engaging to students in an online platform.

Professor #4: Preparing the materials is quite tedious specifically for an asynchronous class where there is a need for recording.

Professor #5: Lack of knowledge & skills on the use of the computer and laptop, the capability of creating different platforms in the teaching-learning process for flexible learning

As verbalized by the research participants, most of them had difficulties in technology, whether going through synchronous or asynchronous mode. They stated that they lack skills in the use of gadgets, they had difficulties in preparing learning materials and circumstances that there's a need for help from the school administration. This is also pointed out in the study of El Firdoussim et al. (2020), who elucidated that to improve and encourage distance education, recommendations were made at the teaching and technical levels, such as the need for technical support and training. This paper's contribution is based on data analysis from a survey conducted at a few well-known Moroccan universities, and this recommendation of technical support and training to enhance online learning can also be done in the university.

Theme 2: Environmental Issues

Professor #1: The learning and teaching spaces for both teachers and students are not really set up for an ideal teaching or learning environment. It causes distractions on the part of the teachers and students.

Professor #2: Freedom from distraction is always a challenge during synchronous class meetings. The noise of the household could be heard.

Professor #3: The noises around affect the teaching and learning process between teachers and students. These noises include the dogs barking, or some of their family members. Some of my co-teachers said that it affects their mental health. On my part, I am okay I could handle it.

Professor #4: I can always hear the chickens at the background, the students would say that those chickens are their neighbors', but the noise seemed so near.

Professor #5: Sometimes, I get distracted when members of the family can be seen at the background, some of them are not wearing upper garments.

Everyone was caught in a haze of changes, nobody thought that both professors and students would have to stay home to do classes through online mode. Their houses, more specifically their dining rooms, living rooms, or their bedrooms were turned into make-shift classrooms with all the household people within hearing distance, with all the noises in the neighborhood loudly audible which brought distractions during online class sessions. Some have been so distracted affecting their social and mental health that they would need more rest periods in between classes.

This can be related to the study of Bergefurt et al. (2022) where they utilized a route analytic approach and discovered that noise and having a small desk at home caused employees to become distracted. They postulated that a dedicated workroom made people less easily distracted and that while personal traits directly influenced mental health, distractions mediated the majority of interactions between home-workspace features and mental health. They posited that employers might use these findings to update their home-and-office working practices to provide a positive work environment.

Theme 3: Faculty-Student Interactions

Professor #1: No feedback or delayed responses from are some administrators, non-teaching staff and students.

Professor #2: On the part of students, communication process is a problem for a few due to poor internet connection.

Professor #3: Sometimes communication protocol is no longer observed. Whoever gets first the communication or link uploads the same even before the concerned college officials read it.

Professor #4: communicating with students is so difficult especially those with problems in internet connections during synchronous classes.

Professor #5: It is difficult to communicate with students especially if they do not give feedback right away whether they already received the learning material or not yet. They do not verbalize if they have questions regarding the content.

It has been apparent that the teacher-student relationship during the time of pandemic has been affected. There were no physical, face-to-face class sessions and social interactions were very limited. As elucidated by Vagos et al. 2022, several challenges appeared associated with online teaching, one of which named by both teachers and students has to do with restricted interaction opportunities. These are exactly what the professors and their students experienced. They had difficulties due to the restrictions brought about by the sudden changes in the mode of instruction.

Theme 4. Learning Content Delivery Concerns

Professor #1: It is hard to record a video presentation as a learning material. It is so tedious, you have to repeat, rewind, and re-start over and over.

Professor #2: It was so tiring. I have to make videos, PowerPoint presentation and turn it into PDFs. I needed mentoring all the time.

Professor #3: Looking for materials which the students would find exciting was difficult, their attention span seemed very short. We have to do innovations and be flexible always.

Professor #4: Students always opted to put their cameras off which made me wonder if they were still listening during class discussions on synchronous mode.

Due to the striking changes to the instructional delivery of the teaching and learning process, difficulties on the part of the professors were experienced. According to one professor, she learned to pre-record a video for her lessons, but she added that creating one was not easy. This can be related to the study of Roddy et al. (2017), who underscored that there are some significant disparities between online and on-campus study options. Students from

all over the world can access course materials online with previously unheard-of levels of flexibility and accessibility, overcoming any geographic restrictions that could prohibit them from enrolling in on-campus courses. Because of the nature of the online learning environment, asynchronous communication techniques were used more frequently during course delivery to make up for the absence of immediate physical infrastructure.

Theme 5. Issues on Other Functions

Professor #1: We had difficulties to travel for our research and extension works.

Professor #2: I had to be resourceful in doing activities with the college-based organizations where I am the adviser

Professor #4: We used to travel for paper presentations before the pandemic. During the pandemic, all paper presentations were online. Meaning, the pandemic brought both advantages and disadvantages.

Professor #5: The research process of the university became much slower during the pandemic.

As verbalized by the research participants, the issues on the other functions they shared meant roles in research and extension activities and others like being an adviser on college-based organizations. These tasks add to their academic challenges because, as full professors, they are mandated to do research and extension.

Doing data gathering during the pandemic was difficult, and even risky. Innovations must be done

to be able to do data collection and these practices entailed more budgetary requirements. Other tasks under research include paper presentations. As verbalized by one research participant, they used to travel to other places to attend conferences and to do their paper presentations. All these things also changed during the pandemic. All conferences were done online mode. Paper presentations were then done through pre-recorded videos.

These were advantageous to some and disadvantageous to others. Overall, according to the study of Almahasees et al. (2021), online education is helpful during the epidemic for both academic staff and students. Nevertheless, despite the online learning hurdles, adjusting to online learning were both done by the professors and students.

Coping Strategies Applied by the Professors to Overcome the Challenges

For coping strategies applied, findings revealed that full professors learn new applications through one-on-one tutorials, fix rooms to be conducive for teaching/learning, consult colleagues regarding faculty-student interactions, do trial and error until effective delivery is achieved, and request support for easier mechanisms on research/extension activities.

During the in-depth interviews, research participants enumerated the strategies they employ in coping with the challenges they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. On Table 3, around 41 (97.61%) mentioned *fixing their rooms and/or offices at home to make them more conducive for their teaching and learning activities.*

Table 3 Coping Strategies Applied by the Professors to Overcome the Challenges

INDICATORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Fix rooms to be conducive for teaching /learning	41	97.61
One-on-one tutorial	40	95.24
Do trial and error until effective delivery is achieved	37	88.10
Consult colleagues regarding faculty-student interactions	26	61.90
Request for support for easier mechanisms on research/extension activities	15	35.71

One research participant said that, at first, her bed could be seen during her online classes, she then re-arranged her room and had her back on the wall. Her background then became more formal and less homely. Another one mentioned that she used to work at the dining table, but the noises of her household could be heard during online classes and meetings, she then found another area in her house, away from the dining room, and found it more peaceful and more appropriate for virtual class discussions.

With regards to *the one-on-one tutorial*, around 40 (95.24%) verbalized that it made them learn a lot through tutorial done by significant others like their sons and daughters, their colleagues, or some experts from the Information, Communications and Technology Office (ICTO). One professor verbalized that the director and staff of the BU ICTO have been readily available when requested for help in the online teaching methodology. Another professor pointed out that she would always ask his son to teach her how

to make quizzes through Google forms, and how to record through PowerPoint presentations.

Doing trial and error until effective delivery is achieved was also done by 37 (88.10%) of the research participants. According to them, they would try a particular strategy and test whether the students' interests are intensified. If it does, then she would apply it to the other classes. If it does not, then she tries another strategy. As postulated by Mohr et al. (2018), trial-and-error learning is a universal strategy for establishing which actions are beneficial or harmful in new environments. Moreover, according to them, it has been proven effective to learn rewarded stimulus-response correlations through trial and error in tough learning tasks.

Possible Interventions for Professors to Cope with the Challenges

Findings revealed that possible interventions for professors to cope with the challenges can be achieved through the Bicol University administration and the professors themselves. This was ascertained from the in-depth interviews utilized during the data-gathering process. A **University Hybrid Teaching Mentorship Program** and **An Academic Guide for Bicol University Professors and other Faculty Members** highlighting the strategic implementation of the teaching and learning modalities for all teaching and non-teaching personnel and a mentoring program emerged as two possible interventions.

First, the University Hybrid Teaching Mentorship Program is proposed the global educational landscape has undergone a significant transformation, with an increasing demand for flexible learning options. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online and hybrid teaching modalities (Alshamrani et al., 2023). As universities adapt to these changes, there is a pressing need to support faculty in all ranks and those with various designations, in effectively transitioning to hybrid teaching, which combines in-person and online components.

Hybrid teaching and learning offers opportunities for a more student-centered approach to education (Fish & Snodgrass, 2020). It allows for greater flexibility in scheduling, increased access to resources, and a variety of learning experiences. To fully realize these benefits, faculty need guidance and mentorship to design and deliver engaging hybrid courses that meet the diverse needs of today's students. More importantly, the quality of education is maintained which is paramount. Ensuring that hybrid courses are pedagogically sound, technologically proficient, and align with institutional goals is essential. A mentorship program provides a structured framework for faculty to develop and improve their hybrid teaching

skills, ultimately enhancing the quality of education delivered. Additionally, in hybrid teaching, the faculty members play a central role in the success of any educational institution. By investing in their professional development, universities can empower faculty to excel in the evolving educational landscape. A mentorship program offers a structured avenue for faculty to enhance their pedagogical knowledge, technical skills, and adaptability in response to changing educational paradigms.

More importantly, this program will not only help professors but also their students on success in a rapidly changing world which would require them to be adaptable, technologically proficient, and skilled in remote collaboration. Hybrid teaching can develop these competencies in students, aligning with the university's mission to produce future-ready graduates who will work for humanity.

The **University Hybrid Teaching Mentorship Program** is proposed as it is a proactive response to the evolving changing times, to the changes brought the pandemic, and as an answer to the fast evolution in technology. It not only addresses the immediate needs of professors and students but also positions the institution for long-term success in the digital age. By investing in this program, the university demonstrates its commitment to excellence in education and the well-being of all its faculty and students.

Second, due to the drastic changes as a result of the urgent requirement to digitalize the education process, the challenges of professors became evident due to their lack of intrinsic technological skills for online instruction. Therefore, another intervention this study proposes is an all-inclusive **Academic Guide for Bicol University Professors and other Faculty Members**, highlighting the strategic implementation of the teaching and learning modalities. This guide may underscore technology tools, such as synchronous and asynchronous learning tools, online textbooks, and the learning management system. It may include a detailed step-by-step process on how they are utilized in a hybrid mode of teaching. This will greatly help the full professors and the other teaching personnel to become more competitive and deliver high-quality education in the face of digital transformation, disruptive technological advancements, and fast change where the university system must comprehensively work to overcome this dilemma.

Finally, the result of this may be shared through paper presentations at regional, governmental, and worldwide fora. It can also be forwarded to peer-reviewed publications with local, national, or international circulation for publication.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study then concludes that full professors are optimistic and adaptable in their approach to online teaching despite pandemic-related academic challenges. They are open to further improvement to enhance their teaching and learning strategies.

To support them in this endeavor, the following recommendations are made:

The university should ensure that IT experts are available to assist professors who face technology-related challenges. Improve digital technology support to facilitate a smoother transition to online teaching.

Ensure that all professors have access to necessary technology, including providing laptops to those who do not have them. A reliable internet connection should be installed in all colleges to support online teaching.

Address workload issues by filling vacant teaching positions within departments, allowing for a more equitable distribution of tasks among professors.

Streamline and expedite the evaluation process for research and extension proposals. Enhance support for research and extension activities, including revising compensation schemes for professors.

Use the research findings to assess the implementation of flexible learning methods during the pandemic. This data can guide administrators and professors in improving teaching modalities. Consider policy recommendations for more effective teaching and learning.

Enhance the IT department in both the university and its colleges to better support online teaching and address technology challenges.

Ensure that officials at the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and university administration are aware of the challenges faced by professors during the pandemic. Encourage the crafting of memoranda and school policies to provide assistance to faculty members.

Continue to offer academic and psychosocial support to all faculty members to help them navigate challenges effectively.

It is then deduced that the study's findings and recommendations can guide Bicol University, CHED officials, and other stakeholders in addressing the challenges of online education during and beyond the pandemic, benefiting professors and all teaching personnel in various teaching modalities.

References

- Almahasees, Z., Mohsen K., and Amin, M.O., (2021). Faculty's and Students' Perceptions of Online Learning during COVID-19, *Front. Educ., Sec. Digital Education*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.638470>
- Alshamrani, K. M., Ghulam, E. M., Alattas, M., Aljaddani, H., Alhakami, M., Al Nufaiei, Z. F., & Althaqafy, M. S. (2023). Transition to remote/hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic among Saudi students of the College of Applied Medical Sciences: a cross-sectional study. *Frontiers in medicine*, 10, 1257589. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmed.2023.1257589>
- Barrot, J. S., Llenares, I. I., & Del Rosario, L. S. (2021). Students' online learning challenges during the pandemic and how they cope with them: The case of the Philippines. *Education and information technologies*, 26(6), 7321–7338. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10589-x>
- Bergefurt, L., Appel-Meulenbroek, R., Maris, C., Arentze, T., Weijs-Perrée, M., & de Kort, Y. (2022). The influence of distractions of the home-work environment on mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Ergonomics*, 1–18. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080>
- Beteille, T., Ding, E., Molina, E., Pushparatnam, A., and Wilichowski, T. (2020). Three Principles to Support Teacher Effectiveness during COVID-19. Three Principles to Support Teacher Effectiveness During COVID-19. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Fish, L., & Snodgrass, C. (2020). A preliminary study of changing business student perceptions of individual factors in online versus face-to-face education. *BRC Acad J Educ.* 8:61–83. doi: 10.15239/j.brcacadje.2020.08.01.ja03
- Hamann, J. (2019). The making of professors: Assessment and recognition in academic recruitment. *Social studies of science*, 49(6), 919–941. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312719880017>
- Hosseinzadeh, P., Zareipour, M., Baljani, E., & Moradali, M. R. (2022). Social Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic. A Systematic Review. *Investigacion y educacion en enfermeria*, 40(1), e10. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.iee.v40n1e10>
- Lapitan, L., Jr., Tiangco, C. E., Sumalinog, D., Sabarillo, N. S., & Diaz, J. M. (2021). An ineffective blended online teaching and learning strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education for Chemical Engineers*, 35, 116–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ece.2021.01.012>
- Leach, M., MacGregor, H., Scoones, I., & Wilkinson, A. (2021). Post-pandemic transformations: How and why COVID-19 requires us to rethink development. *World development*, 138, 105233. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105233>

- Martín-Sánchez, M., Cáceres-Muñoz, J., & Flores-Rodríguez, C. (2022). The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Educational Communities: Evidence of Early Childhood Education Students. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(8), 4707. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19084707>
- Mohr, H., Zwosta, K., Markovic, D., Bitzer, S., Wolfensteller, U., & Ruge, H. (2018). Deterministic response strategies in a trial-and-error learning task. *PLoS computational biology*, 14(11), e1006621. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1006621>
- Ocampo, L., & Yamagishi, K. (2020). Modeling the lockdown relaxation protocols of the Philippine government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: An intuitionistic fuzzy DEMATEL analysis. *Socio-economic planning sciences*, 72, 100911. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2020.100911>
- Polatoğlu, I., Oncu-Oner, T., Dalman, I., & Ozdogan, S. (2023). COVID-19 in early 2023: Structure, replication mechanism, variants of SARS-CoV-2, diagnostic tests, and vaccine & drug development
- Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2021). Balancing Technology, Pedagogy and the New Normal: Post-pandemic Challenges for Higher Education. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 3(3), 715–742. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00249-1>
- Roddy, C., Amiet, DL., Chung, J. Holt, C., Shaw, L., McKenzie S., Garivaldis, E., Lodge JM., and Mundy, ME. (2017). Applying Best Practice Online Learning, Teaching, 600 and Support to Intensive Online Environments: An Integrative Review, *Front. 601 Educ.*, Sec. Digital Education, <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2017.00059>
- Vagos, P., & Carvalhais, L. (2022). Online Versus Classroom Teaching: Impact on 604 Teacher and Student Relationship Quality and Quality of Life. *Frontiers in 605 psychology*, 13, 828774. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.828774>
- WHO (2023). <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/>
- Yong E. (2020). How the pandemic defeated America. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/coronavirus-american-failure/614191/> Accessed 11/29/2022

Recommended Citation:

De Guzman, M.D. (2023). Academic challenges of full professors in Bicol University at the time of pandemic. *Bicol University Research and Development (BU R&D) Journal*. 26 (1), 90-99. doi: 10.47789/burdj.mbtcbbs.20232601.8