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Teaching Practices, Experiences and Challenges of Elementary School Teachers Before and After the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Comparative Study at Cadacad Elementary School

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Abstract: This study examines the teaching practices, experiences, and challenges of elementary school teachers before and after the COVID-19 pandemic at Cadacad Elementary School, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur. Specifically, it compares teachers' instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment practices, utilization of instructional materials, and learner engagement during the two periods. It also identifies the challenges they encounter and the adjustments they make in response to changes in the teaching and learning environment. The study employs a descriptive-comparative research design, with elementary school teachers who have teaching experience both before the pandemic and after the return to regular face-to-face classes serving as respondents. Data are gathered through a researcher-made questionnaire that undergoes expert validation before administration. The questionnaire focuses on the teachers' actual experiences, teaching approaches, and strategies used in managing their classroom and addressing learners' needs. The study also considers how the experiences during the pandemic influence teachers' present instructional practices, professional development, and classroom decision-making. Furthermore, the study recognizes the importance of understanding how teachers adapt to changes in the educational environment and maintain effective teaching practices despite different challenges. Through the comparison of their experiences before and after the pandemic, the research aims to identify areas of improvement and provide insights that may help strengthen teaching strategies, promote effective classroom management, and enhance the quality of elementary education. The findings serve as a basis for recommending appropriate programs, support systems, and professional development activities that respond to teachers' needs in the post-pandemic educational setting.

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I. INTRODUCTION

➢ *Overview*

The COVID-19 pandemic brought an unprecedented disruption to education systems around the world. Before the pandemic, elementary teachers generally conducted instruction through regular face-to-face classroom activities. Teachers planned lessons, facilitated discussions, managed classrooms, assessed pupils, and provided immediate feedback through direct interaction. The availability of printed instructional materials and the familiar routines of classroom teaching shaped the daily work of elementary educators.

When schools were affected by COVID-19 restrictions, teachers had to adjust their usual practices to maintain the continuity of learning. In the Philippines, schools adopted alternative learning delivery arrangements, including modular distance learning and other forms of remote instruction. This transition required teachers to prepare and distribute learning materials, communicate with parents and learners through available channels, monitor learners' progress, and respond to challenges involving access to resources, technology, and family support. Research on Filipino teachers during the pandemic documented difficulties related to remote instruction, technology, and the support needed to sustain teaching and learning (Bautista et al., 2021; Cahapay & Anoba, 2021).

As schools returned to in-person instruction, teachers faced another period of adjustment. They needed to re-establish classroom routines, address learners' varied learning needs, strengthen foundational skills, and adapt instructional and assessment practices to the circumstances

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of returning pupils. Jackaria (2022), in a study of public elementary teachers in the Philippines, reported that teachers encountered challenges involving instructional materials, psychosocial preparation, new teaching strategies, time management, and learners who were not yet academically or socially prepared for the return to school.

The post-pandemic period also gave teachers opportunities to reflect on and retain useful practices developed during the disruption. These may include greater use of digital resources, varied instructional materials, flexible communication, and more deliberate monitoring of learners' progress. Carabuena and Alva (2024) examined elementary teachers' experiences before and after the pandemic and discussed changes in teaching skills, technology integration, professional development, workload, and access to resources. More recently, Mito-on and Naval (2025) found that instructional challenges and teachers' adjustments were associated with teacher self-efficacy during the transition from remote to in-person instruction.

Although studies have examined teachers' experiences during the pandemic and the return to face-to-face classes, the experiences of teachers may differ according to their school context, available resources, professional background, and the needs of their learners. A school-based comparison can provide a clearer understanding of how teachers at Cadacad Elementary School describe their practices before and after the pandemic, what challenges they experienced, and what adaptations they continue to use.

Thus, this study will compare the teaching practices, experiences, and challenges of elementary school teachers before and after the COVID-19 pandemic at Cadacad Elementary School. It will focus on instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment practices, use of instructional materials and resources, and learner engagement. It will also document teachers' experiences and adaptations to provide information that may guide school-level support and professional development.

- *Theoretical Framework*

This study will be anchored on Social Cognitive Theory, the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, and the concept of reflective practice.

- *Social Cognitive Theory*

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory explains that human behavior, personal factors, and environmental conditions influence one another. In teaching, teachers' beliefs about their capabilities, their experiences, and the support or limitations in their school environment may influence the strategies they choose and how they respond to classroom challenges. This theory is relevant because the pandemic changed the environment in which teachers worked and required them to adjust their practices. The study will consider how teachers describe their confidence, adaptation, and responses to changing instructional conditions.

- *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK)*

Mishra and Koehler's (2006) TPACK framework explains the relationship among content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and technological knowledge. Teachers need to consider not only what content to teach and how to teach it, but also whether and how technology can support learning. The framework is relevant to the comparison because the pandemic increased the need to use digital tools and alternative communication methods, while post-pandemic teachers may continue to integrate selected technologies alongside face-to-face instruction.

- *Reflective Practice*

Schön (1983) described reflective practice as the process through which professionals examine their actions and learn from experience. Teachers can reflect on what worked, what did not work, and what adjustments are needed in response to learners' needs. This perspective supports the study's focus on teachers' accounts of their experiences before and after the pandemic and the strategies they developed through those experiences.

Taken together, these perspectives explain how teachers' practices may be shaped by personal beliefs, knowledge and skills, school conditions, and reflection on professional experiences.

- *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

The study will compare teachers' reported practices in two periods: before the COVID-19 pandemic and after the return to regular in-person schooling. The comparison will focus on five dimensions: instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment practices, utilization of instructional materials and resources, and learner engagement. Teachers' experiences, challenges, and adaptations will provide contextual information for interpreting the comparison.

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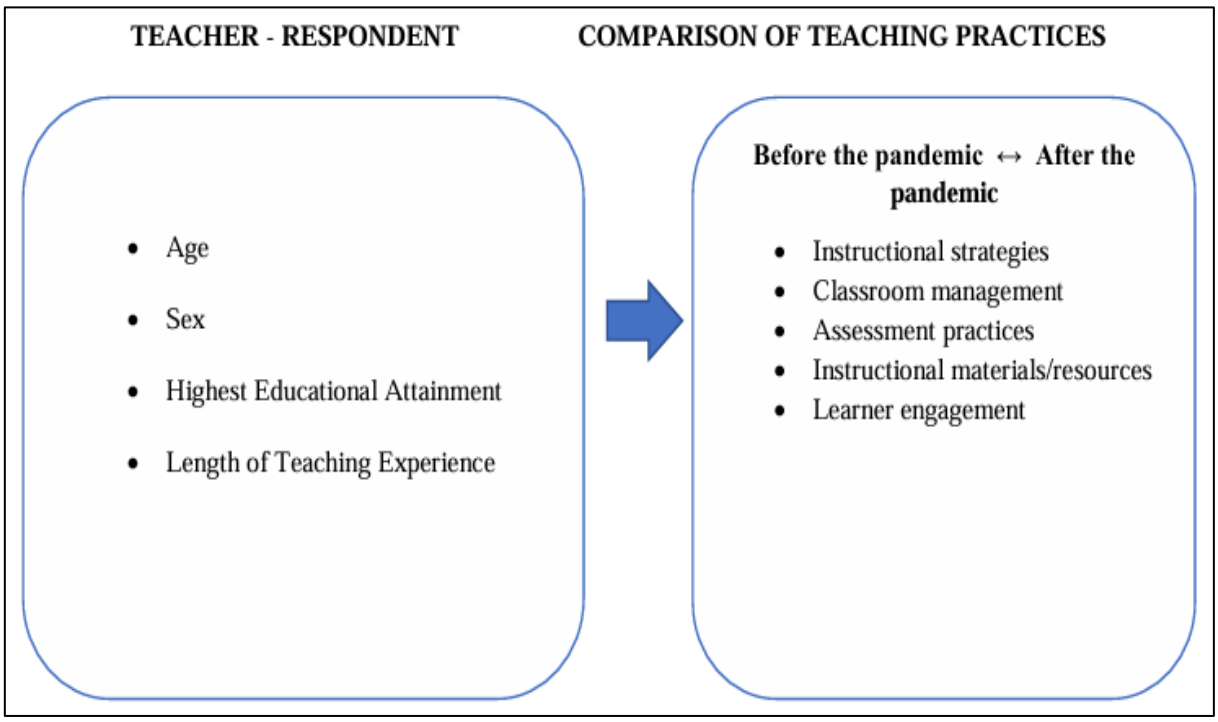


Fig 1 The Research Paradigm

The profile variables will describe the respondents. The two time periods will serve as the basis for comparison across the identified dimensions. Teachers' reported experiences, challenges, and adaptations will be examined to explain the changes and continuities in their practices.

➢ *Statement of the Problem*

Generally, this study will compare the teaching practices, experiences, and challenges of elementary school teachers before and after the COVID-19 pandemic at Cadacad Elementary School.

Specifically, it will seek to answer the following questions:

- What is the profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, and length of teaching experience?
- How do teachers describe their teaching practices before the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of:

✓ Instructional strategies;
✓ Classroom management;
✓ Assessment practices;
✓ Utilization of instructional materials and resources; and
✓ Learner engagement?

- How do teachers describe their teaching practices after the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the same dimensions?
- Is there a significant difference between teachers' reported teaching practices before and after the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What experiences and challenges did teachers encounter in the two periods?
- What adaptations and strategies have teachers developed or continued to use in response to changes in teaching and learning?

➢ *Hypothesis*

The study will test the following null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance:

- H_0: There is no significant difference between the teachers' reported teaching practices before and after the COVID-19 pandemic at Cadacad Elementary School.

➢ *Importance of the Study*

- Teachers. The findings may help teachers reflect on changes in their instructional practices, recognize effective adaptations, and identify areas where additional support or professional development is needed.
- School Heads. The findings may provide school leaders with information for planning teacher support, instructional supervision, resource allocation, and school-based professional development.
- Learners. Although learners are not the direct respondents, improved understanding of teachers' practices may contribute to more responsive instruction and classroom support.
- Parents. The study may help parents understand how teachers' responsibilities and approaches changed and why home-school communication and cooperation remain important.
- Education Stakeholders. The findings may provide local information that can inform decisions on instructional resources, teacher training, and learning support.

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- Future Researchers. The study may serve as a reference for further research on teachers' professional experiences, instructional adaptation, and post-pandemic education.

➢ *Scope and Delimitation*

This study will be conducted at Cadacad Elementary School, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur, during School Year 2026–2027. It will focus on elementary school teachers who have teaching experience both before the COVID-19 pandemic and after the return to regular in-person classes. The final number of respondents will depend on the school's official list of teachers who meet this criterion.

The study will compare teachers' reported practices in instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment practices, use of instructional materials and resources, and learner engagement. It will also gather information about their experiences, challenges, and adaptations in the two periods.

The study will rely partly on teachers' recollection of their pre-pandemic practices. Therefore, responses about the earlier period may be affected by memory and differences in individual interpretation. The findings will be limited to the participating teachers and the context of Cadacad Elementary School; they will not automatically represent all elementary teachers in other schools.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, regular face-to-face instruction provided teachers with direct opportunities to explain lessons, observe learners, facilitate group work, provide immediate feedback, and adjust instruction based on classroom responses. Classroom routines, printed materials, board work, oral recitation, seatwork, and face-to-face assessment were common features of elementary teaching. These practices allowed teachers to monitor participation and respond to learners during the lesson.

The pre-pandemic period serves as the comparison point in the present study. The purpose is not to assume that all teachers used identical methods, but to document the approaches they actually employed at Cadacad Elementary School. Differences in grade assignment, subject area, experience, class size, and available resources may have shaped their teaching practices.

The pandemic interrupted established classroom routines and required teachers to continue instruction under alternative learning arrangements. In the Philippines, teachers had to work with printed modules, remote communication, and other available resources to maintain contact with learners. Bautista et al. (2021) examined the school support received and challenges encountered by Filipino teachers in distance learning, highlighting the importance of institutional support during the emergency transition.

Cahapay and Anoba (2021) examined technological pedagogical knowledge self-efficacy and teachers' intention to continue remote education amid the COVID-19 crisis. Their work is relevant because teachers' ability to use technology for instruction depends not only on access to devices but also on their confidence and knowledge in selecting appropriate tools and teaching approaches.

These studies provide context for understanding why teachers' professional experiences changed during the pandemic. Although the present research focuses on a comparison of the periods before and after the pandemic, the disruption itself is an important part of the teachers' accounts because it helps explain how they came to adopt, modify, or discontinue particular practices.

The return to in-person instruction did not necessarily mean a complete return to pre-pandemic routines. Teachers had to respond to differences in learners' readiness, classroom behavior, foundational skills, and learning progress. Jackaria (2022) studied elementary teachers' experiences during the return to school after COVID-19 closures in the Philippines. The study identified preparations involving health protocols, school facilities, instructional materials, psychosocial readiness, and new teaching strategies. Teachers also raised concerns about non-readers and learners who were not yet academically or socially prepared for regular classroom learning.

Carabuena and Alva (2024) conducted a comparative study of elementary teachers' experiences before and after the pandemic in the San Francisco Districts, Division of Quezon. Their study considered teaching effectiveness, student engagement, teacher training, access to resources, and work-life balance. The authors reported post-pandemic adaptability and increased emphasis on technology integration and professional development, while resource disparities and workload concerns remained.

These findings support the inclusion of instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment, resource utilization, and learner engagement as dimensions in the present study. They also suggest that the post-pandemic period should be examined as a period of continued adjustment rather than simply a return to the past.

Teachers' experiences include the demands of lesson preparation, communication with learners and parents, assessment, classroom management, and responding to varied learning needs. During the return to school, these responsibilities were accompanied by the need to re-establish routines and address learning difficulties that became more visible after periods of disrupted instruction.

Jackaria (2022) reported that teachers encountered challenges related to instructional materials, psychosocial preparation, new teaching strategies, time management, and learners' academic and social readiness. These findings show that teachers' challenges were not limited to the delivery of lessons; they also involved the broader conditions needed to make classroom learning effective.

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Mito-on and Naval (2025) investigated teacher challenges and self-efficacy during the transition from remote to in-person instruction in Philippine elementary schools. Their quantitative study involved 150 teachers from four central elementary schools in Iligan City. The authors reported moderate challenges in classroom management and resource utilization, alongside strong instructional adjustments and high self-efficacy. Their findings indicated that instructional challenges were associated with lower teaching efficacy, while effective adjustments were associated with higher teaching efficacy.

The present study will use these findings to guide its examination of teachers' experiences and challenges. It will give attention to how teachers themselves describe the difficulties encountered in both periods and the ways those difficulties influenced their daily practices.

Adaptability refers to the ability to adjust professional practices when circumstances, learner needs, or available resources change. In the context of the pandemic, teachers had to learn unfamiliar tools, modify lesson delivery, communicate through different channels, and reconsider how to assess learning. These experiences may have contributed to new skills that some teachers continued to use after returning to in-person instruction.

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) provides a useful explanation of the relationship among teachers' beliefs, actions, and working environments. Teachers who believe they can respond effectively to instructional challenges may be more willing to try new approaches, seek support, and persist when difficulties arise. Mito-on and Naval (2025) provide recent Philippine evidence linking instructional adjustments and teacher self-efficacy during the transition to in-person instruction.

Professional development is also important because teachers need opportunities to strengthen their pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, assessment literacy, and use of technology. The present study will therefore examine not only the changes teachers report but also the strategies and forms of support they believe would help them respond to current classroom needs.

Carabuena and Alva (2024) provide a particularly relevant local comparison because their research examined elementary teachers' experiences before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Their focus on teaching effectiveness, student engagement, training, resources, and work-life balance offers a basis for identifying dimensions that may also be important in Cadacad Elementary School. However, findings from another district cannot be assumed to describe the experiences of teachers in Cadacad.

Other Philippine research has focused on particular parts of the transition. Jackaria (2022) examined the return to school after closures, while Mito-on and Naval (2025) studied challenges, instructional adjustments, and self-efficacy during the transition from remote to in-person instruction. Together, these studies show that the pandemic affected teachers' work beyond the temporary use of remote learning. It influenced classroom routines, resource use, teaching strategies, and professional adjustment.

International research also documents changes in teaching practices during COVID-19. The study 'Teachers' practices during COVID-19: Practices and perspectives in elementary and secondary settings' examined teachers' instructional practices, confidence, remote teaching, and professional development (2022). This provides broader context, although its findings must be interpreted with attention to differences in school systems and local conditions.

➢ *Time and Place*

This study will conduct at Cadacad Elementary School, during School Year 2026-2027. Data gathering takes place within the approved schedule and with the permission of the school principal.

➢ *Scope of Delimitation*

This study will focus on the teaching practices, experiences, and challenges of elementary school teachers before and after the COVID-19 pandemic at Cadacad Elemetary School, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur, during School Year 2026-2027. Specifically, it will compare the teaching practices of teachers during the pre-pandemic period and after the resumption of regular face-to-face classes.

The respondents will be teachers who have teaching experience both before the pandemic and after the return to face-to-face classes. The study will use a researcher-made questionnaire to gather data.

The study will be limited to teachers' reported experiences and practices. It will not cover learners' academic performance or parents' experiences. The findings will apply only to the participating teachers of Cadacad Elementary School.

➢ *Definition of Terms*

- After the COVID-19 pandemic. Refers in this study to the period following the resumption of regular in-person classes, when teachers continued their work under post-pandemic school conditions.
- Before the COVID-19 pandemic. Refers to the period when teachers conducted regular face-to-face instruction before school disruptions caused by COVID-19.
- Classroom Management. Refers to the strategies teachers use to organize classroom routines, maintain a supportive learning environment, and guide learner behavior.
- Instructional Materials and Resources. Refer to printed, digital, manipulative, and other materials used by teachers to support lesson delivery and learning activities.
- Instructional Strategies. Refer to the approaches, methods, and activities teachers use to explain lessons, facilitate participation, and support learning.

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- Learner Engagement. Refers to teachers' efforts to encourage learners' participation, attention, interaction, and involvement in classroom activities.
- Teaching Practices. Refer to the instructional and classroom-related actions performed by teachers, including lesson delivery, assessment, classroom management, resource use, and learner support.
- Teachers' Adaptations. Refer to changes or adjustments teachers make in response to new instructional demands, learner needs, and school conditions.
- Teachers' Experiences and Challenges. Refer to the professional situations, difficulties, adjustments, and insights reported by teachers during the two periods.

III. METHODOLOGY

➢ *Research Design*

The study will use a descriptive-comparative research design with supplementary open-ended questions. The descriptive component will describe teachers' reported practices, experiences, and challenges in the two periods. The comparative component will determine whether there are significant differences between teachers' reported practices before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Open-ended responses will provide additional explanations of teachers' experiences and adaptations.

The study will use a retrospective comparison because the pre-pandemic period has already occurred. The same eligible teachers will be asked to report their practices in both periods. The design will identify differences in reported practices; it will not establish that the pandemic alone caused those differences.

➢ *Source of Data*

The primary sources of data are the elementary school teachers of Cadacad Elementary School who have teaching experience before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study gathers information through a researcher-made questionnaire focusing on their teaching practices, experiences, and challenges during both periods.

➢ *Data Gathering Instrument*

The study uses a researcher-made questionnaire based on related studies and existing validated instruments. It consists of two parts: (1) teachers' teaching practices before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, covering instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment practices, use of instructional materials, and learner engagement; and (2) teachers' experiences and challenges during both periods.

➢ *Data Gathering Procedure*

The researcher will seek approval from the graduate school, the appropriate Schools Division Office authority, and the school head before conducting the study. The researcher will identify eligible teacher-respondents based on the inclusion criteria and provide them with an explanation of the study. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants. Participation will be voluntary, and respondents may decline to answer any question or withdraw in accordance with the approved research protocol. The validated questionnaire will be distributed to eligible teachers. Respondents will be given sufficient time to answer the questions independently. Completed questionnaires will be collected, checked for completeness, coded, and prepared for analysis. Open-ended responses will be organized according to recurring ideas and themes. All data will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes stated in the approved research protocol.

➢ *Statistical Treatment Data*

The following statistical tools will be considered in analyzing the data:

- Frequency and Percentage. These will describe the respondents' profile in terms of the identified categorical variables.
- Mean and Standard Deviation. These will summarize teachers' ratings of their teaching practices before and after the pandemic for each dimension.
- Paired-Samples t-test. This will be used to compare the mean scores of the same teachers across the two periods if the paired difference scores meet the assumptions for parametric testing.
- Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. This nonparametric alternative will be considered if the paired data do not meet the assumptions required for the paired-samples t-test or if the measurement level and distribution make it more appropriate.
- Thematic Analysis. Open-ended responses will be read, coded, grouped into categories, and organized into themes describing teachers' experiences, challenges, and adaptations.

The level of significance will be set at 0.05. The final statistical procedure will be confirmed with the research adviser or a qualified statistician after the instrument, sample size, and data characteristics have been reviewed.

➢ *Data Categorization*

The following norms will be used in the interpretation of data.

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Scale	Range	Description	Norms of Interpretation
5	4.21-5.00	Always (A)	Very Highly Effective
4	3.41- 4.20	Often (O)	Highly Effective
3	2.61- 3.40	Sometimes (S)	Moderately Effective
2	1.81- 2.60	Rare (R)	Fairly Effective
1	1.00-1.80	Never (N)	Not Effective

IV. CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes that the experiences of teachers before and after the COVID-19 pandemic provide valuable insights into the changes in teaching practices, classroom management, and instructional approaches. It recognizes that teachers play an important role in maintaining the quality of education despite the challenges brought by changes in the learning environment. Their ability to adapt, innovate, and respond to learners' needs contributes to creating a more effective and meaningful teaching and learning experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends strengthening professional development programs through seminars, workshops, training, and collaborative learning opportunities. It also encourages school administrators to provide adequate instructional materials, technological resources, and continuous support to teachers. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, share effective practices, and apply appropriate strategies that address the diverse needs of learners. These recommendations aim to promote teacher growth, improve instructional delivery, and ensure quality education in the post-pandemic setting.

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