Teacher's Working Condition and Hybrid Teaching Environment – A Narrative Case Study

Neha Anand
University of Houston, USA

Abbey Bachmann
Texas A & M University, USA

Abstract

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire system of education around the world is living each day under rapid experimentation to grapple with unforeseen challenges. The event of the COVID-19 pandemic has not only impacted a student's track of learning but also disrupted the everyday functioning of schools. In the case of the United States, since the beginning of March 2020, when schools were pushed into remote learning options, most teachers had minimal training and resources to teach online. Teachers faced technological challenges and suffered a severe lack of pedagogical knowledge to engage students in an online platform. The overnight switch of face-to-face to remote teaching has added to existing teacher workloads, including accommodating student learning and engagement on the virtual platform. The narrative study considers the experiences of Ally, a veteran teacher, who experienced doubts about her sense of confidence as a teacher with the overnight change of instructional formats. Qualitative analysis was conducted from two interviews, 12 written reflections, and observation notes. Following a review of relevant literature, we report the narrative account of this teacher's lived experiences. Next, we present suggestions and implications for research and practice while addressing the following research question: What were the lived experiences of a veteran teacher while pursuing a hybrid teaching instruction format, in both the traditional and online delivery format?

Keywords: pandemic, hybrid teaching, narrative case study, teacher's working conditions

Since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic the entire system of education around the world is living each day under rapid experimentation in order to grapple with unforeseen challenges. The event of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted not only a student's track of learning but also disrupted the everyday functioning of schools (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Solórzano, 2020). In the case of the U.S. since the beginning of March 2020, when schools were pushed to remote learning options, most teachers had minimal training and resources to teach online. Teachers not only faced technological challenges but also suffered a severe lack of pedagogical knowledge to engage students in an online platform. The overnight switch from face-to-face to remote teaching has added to existing teacher workloads, including accommodating student learning and engagement on the virtual platform. Kraft et al. (2020) suggested, "this sudden and total change in how teachers delivered instruction, combined with the health threats and economic consequences of the pandemic, created a uniquely stressful and demanding context for teachers' work "(p.9). With teachers' having to deal with new set of challenges, the rate of teacher attrition continues to soar throughout the nation (Coffin & Meghjani, 2020; Kraft et al., 2020; Kuhfeld et al., 2020).

According to the Economic Policy Institute (2020), more K–12 public education jobs were lost this past April than during the Great Recession (Darling-Hammond & Hyler; 2020, Leachman 2019; Johnson et al., 2020). By the summer of 2020, several states faced massive budget cuts for schools resulting in colossal resignations and retirements adding to plethora of pre-existing challenges of the system itself (Bailey and Schurz 2020; Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Page 2020; Will 2020). The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention has recommended that even now when school buildings reopen, all staff wear masks, and classroom desks be spaced six feet apart, facing in the same direction—a far cry from the collaborative classrooms that are often seen in schools. Hands-on instruction is also discouraged with desks separated at an appropriate distance and all facing in one direction (Taylor, 2021).

In the past, researchers have shed some light on how pandemic has impacted (a) teacher preparation (Choate et al. 2021, Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Slay et al., 2020); (b) academic achievement of students (Kuhfeld et al., 2020); (c) experiences of faculty and administrators (Hamilton et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Kim, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020); (d) teacher well-being (Allen et al. 2020) and last but not least teachers' experiences about remote teaching (Kraft et al. 2020; Marek et al. 2021; Reich et al., 2020). However, for this study, we examine and report the lived experiences of the working conditions of a practicing teacher during Fall 2020 when many schools adopted the hybrid teaching option. Undergoing change has continued to impact teachers' sense of success, student achievement and increased teacher attrition (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). The narrative presented here describes how Ally's (pseudonym) journey of being a veteran, passionate teacher raised doubts on her sense of confidence as a teacher with overnight change of instructional formats. The study enfolds varied challenges that highlight a myriad of issues such as adopting hybrid technology, student engagement and motivation, and self-efficacy. Following a review of relevant literature, we report the narrative account of a teacher's lived experiences. Next, we present suggestions and implications for research and practice, while addressing the following research question: What were the lived experiences of a veteran teacher while pursuing a hybrid teaching instruction format? The data was collected primarily by two one and a half hour semi-structured interviews: one in September when schools were beginning to experiment with hybrid teaching and one before the winter break of the same year. These interviews were mainly to capture Ally's experiences and her narrative of hybrid teaching? The interviews were guided by questions such as:

"What did a hybrid classroom look like?"
"What were your experiences and perceptions about hybrid teaching?"
"How prepared were you to adapt your curriculum for a hybrid platform?"
"What were the perceived struggles and challenges with hybrid teaching?"
"What was the perceived level of student engagement and motivation in a hybrid setting?"
"What was the perceived level of support from school administration?"
"How successful or stressful has your experience been around hybrid teaching?"
"How the prevailing work conditions affect your desire to teach in the future?"

Interviews were conducted utilizing a video conferencing tool and recorded on a local hard drive for further transcription and analysis. The other sources of data used were Ally's weekly written reflections that were used to record Ally's discussions with other teacher colleagues. The third data source was researcher's observation and field notes.

Literature Review

Despite rapidly changing educational policies, teachers in the United States continue to work in a structured and static schooling system. Often introducing a change in traditional classroom setting is a challenging task and calls for crossing numerous hurdles. Such a routine has forced teachers to continue to pursue the monotony of the daily tasks that ultimately focused on high stake testing. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic seeks for upending traditional school approaches, forcing schools to adopt online instructions with minimal time and resources in hand. Schools having to grapple with numerous issues on top of the existing ones clearly showcased how unprepared public-school systems are to face the challenge that comes with the pandemic (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). The upcoming review of literature is tied to relevance of school environment, leadership support, and a teacher's characteristics during the transition of mode of instructions and its impact on teacher's sense of success.

Leadership Support

Leadership roles are the most crucial factor that impact teachers' working conditions daily, especially in urban schools (Hamilton et al., 2020). During the time of crucial changes such as a natural disaster or such, extensive support from schools is seen as a crucial indication of teachers' motivation (Kraft et al. 2020). Bryk et al. (2010) reported that school leadership is critical during transitions to ensure the smooth functioning of the school. Inefficiency in a principal's role and responsibility in providing adequate support to teachers is a prime reason why the teachers opt out of their career (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Ingersoll, 2002). It is evident from the past research, that if a school principal continuously works to provide a healthy work environment, a teacher will stick to a school longer vis-à-vis when there is a lack of support from the top management (Boyd et al., 2011). Teachers expect to get extended support from school leaders and administration, especially during the beginning years of their profession to acclimate to the school environment.

A principal has expertise to offer a variety of solutions that can provide extended support to the teachers who lack the motivation to work in the profession. For instance, offering effective mentoring and induction programs can act as an essential support mechanism for beginning teachers (Darling- Hammond & Hyler, 2020). This strategy can be beneficial to the teachers at an urban school with concerns about working with English language learners (ELLs) and culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. A study conducted by Brown & Wynn

(2009) highlighted that principals should provide support mechanisms to the teachers and encourage teacher participation in the decision-making process on substantive issues to model leadership roles at large (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Similarly, Mizrav & Weber (2020) suggested, teacher's input is relevant for student outcomes, if school leaders are not making use of such collaboration, it can have long term effect on a teacher's practice. In other words, school leaders should provide teachers with an equal opportunity to participate in the decision-making process to voice their concerns and provide valuable feedback and suggestions (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Chetty et al., 2020; Ingersoll, 2002). Recently, Viano et al., (2020) through their study, suggested that consistent administration support acts as a crucial factor in a sustained teacher's career. Besides, from a policy perspective, a principal plays an essential role in reducing the factors that contribute to teacher attrition. Beginning teachers look upon principals as role models to provide direction and valid judgments while making critical classroom decisions. Thus, when teachers feel supported from principals, teachers tend to have greater involvement in everyday activities. Such role models contribute to lower teacher migration and teacher attrition of those schools.

Additionally, during the pandemic, teachers and other school staff have reported about inadequate coping strategies to pursue persistent instruction in a remote setting (Hamilton et al., 2020; Kraft et al., 2020). Under the given circumstances, teachers, both new and existing, count on extensive support from the top management regarding resources being made available for them to offer the best support to their students.

School Environment
A school environment comprises aspects such as working conditions, staff relations, student behaviors, school facilities, job salary, safety issues, and so forth, that can contribute to teachers leaving or continuing to stay in that school. Of these, relations with administrators, students, and other teachers play an essential role in a teacher's everyday work (Ingersoll, 2001; Darling Hammond, 1997). Cordial relations among staff and teachers can contribute to a healthy work environment or lead to teachers leaving their profession. In their study, Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012), analyzed the data from Massachusetts Teaching, Learning, and Leading (MassTeLLs) and concluded that a teacher's satisfaction and academic achievement is related to a school's working environment. Teachers should be prepared for collaborative work not just with their mentors but also with other teachers that help reduce workload stress. Additionally, teachers tend to share and learn from each other massively, helping them draw connections within different content areas (Smethem, 2007; Sass, Seal, and Martin, 2011).

With the pandemic being in effect, the collective school environment across the nation has experienced disconnection and mental stressors. In no time, the school environment transferred into collective chaos with schools looking for solutions to insurmountable problems. Taylor (2021) suggested that the nation's 13,000 districts have largely come up with their own standards without little support from the federal government. At the same time, school authorities are worried about lack of teacher preparedness for the virtual environment and equally for their students' ability to understand and access virtual learning tools. Kraft et al. (2020) reported that essentially a teacher's working conditions impact their sense of success with students.

Teacher Characteristics
Teacher characteristics that relate to sustain to continued service in the profession encompass several components such as teacher efficacy, teacher motivation, and teacher working experience. Ingersoll (2001) argued that teachers of either younger age or older age happen to

leave the profession due to several reasons, for instance, childcare needs, higher stress levels, job dissatisfaction, health concerns, and early retirements resulting in a U-shaped depression of age as a characteristic (Ingersoll, 2001; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Similarly, teacher experience in a classroom speaks about his/her willingness to continue in the profession. The teacher attrition rate is higher during the first five years in the profession. Novice teachers are expected to leave the profession within the first three years due to job dissatisfaction, classroom environment, and student behavior, whereas teachers who stick to the profession for at least five years or more successfully learn to overcome these challenges due to the experience gained over the years (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Smethen, 2007).

On the other hand, teacher efficacy can be understood as a teacher's self-belief and self-awareness to impact student engagement and positively affect students' achievement. Bandura's (1986), self-efficacy construct explains that individuals approach situations where they feel competent to manage the situation successfully while avoiding situations where they lack preparedness. A teacher's self-efficacy can be referred to as an internal construct that affects a teacher's motivation while working as a part of the education community Teacher efficacies are believed to play a vital role in teacher behavior and student outcomes. For instance, teachers with higher self-efficacy will adopt positive behaviors to promote student engagement and a well-planned classroom management technique. Simultaneously teachers having low self-efficacy will lack the motivation to produce positive student outcomes. Additionally, they also tend to have more grievances and greater job dissatisfaction (Ingersoll, 2002; Perrachione et al., 2008; Mertler, 2016). In their review of literature, Tschannen-Moran et al., (1998), reported a strong relation between a teacher's self-efficacy and student achievement, and hence teachers are more resilient when posed with greater challenges.

These unprecedented times have even made experienced teachers question their ability to create a work-life balance. Teachers' ability to motivate and build student confidence has made them worried about their emotional and social well-being (Allen et al. 2020). Regardless of teacher's characteristics and teacher's work experiences, they have pondered questions such as Will we ever get to see the same students in person? How will hybrid learning affect their academic growth? What will the dropout rate look like? What about student engagement? More than anything, teachers have described remote learning as exhausting and mentally stressful for students, parents, guardians, and themselves. Teachers are not only experiences uncertainties in terms of curriculum planning but the economic fallout has result in a wave of layoffs for teachers, staff, teachers' aides, and instructional coaches (Mizrav & Weber, 2020) Similarly, Education Week survey data has shown that teacher morale has continued to decline over the past couple of months (Data: Students Are Getting Less Instruction Time During Coronavirus, 2020).

Teacher's Experiences and "Emergency Remote Teaching"
With widespread of Covid-19 in the U.S., the schools adopted to the mode of remote teaching with no preparation time. Hodges et al. (2020) stated that there was a clear difference between online teaching where courses are prepared well in advance by faculty who have expertise adapting teaching online versus "emergency remote teaching" in the case of many public schools and the pandemic. It called for most teachers to now adapt to a teaching strategy with a lack of curriculum materials and pedagogical training. In their nationwide study, Kraft et al. (2020), reported that work life balance was a concern for 51% of mid-career, while 39% of early-career teachers and 35% late-career teachers reported similar concerns. Veteran teachers reported a severe lack of preparedness to handling technology-based tools. "Teachers struggled to find a balance between their professional and personal responsibilities. They scrambled to

master new technology. And …. remained disengaged in remote learning – due, in part, to their continued lack of access to technology" (Kraft et al., 2020, p.28). Educators for Excellence (2020) reported that only 51% of their students participated on remote instruction impacting their sense of success and motivation. In other words, in their findings they recorded a large drop in teachers' sense of success, and they face enormous challenges during this time (Johnson et.al. 2020; Mareck et al., 2021).

However, with transitioning from "emergency remote teaching" (Hodges et al., 2020) to schools offering hybrid instruction with beginning of Fall 2020, little research is conducted on yet another challenge of teachers having to adapt to a new instructional format. We build on from the existing literature of teacher's working conditions to capture the lived experiences of a practicing teacher under a hybrid instruction format to explore on the effect on teacher's working conditions (Kraft et al., 2020).

Method

Research Design and Data Collection

A narrative inquiry under the umbrella of qualitative research design was used to gather data for this study. Narrative inquiry is a recommended tool that allows researchers to record lived experiences. Connelly & Clandinin (1995) suggested that teacher narratives allow researchers to examine their lived experiences. Utilising this method, synchronous Zoom interviews were recorded with Ally (pseudonym). The first interview focused to understand her everyday teaching experiences in a hybrid format. Ally shared her stories about how her workdays look different from previous years while the second interview was to gain additional data and support inquiry that was developed during data analysis. The second interview also captured her experiences of now being in a hybrid setting over the period of four months. The second source of data was Ally's written reflection about her experiences about her previous week at work. The purpose of this data was capture Ally's experiences in the story format, that could inform her experiences over the coming weeks. Data was also supplemented through field notes, and observation notes. (Crozier et al., 1994; Rushton, 2001).

Participant

Ally is a high school English teacher with ten years of teaching experience within the same district. She is also a full-time doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at a University in Southern Texas. At the time the pandemic occurred, she was in her third year in the PhD program. The interviews took place at the start of her fourth year in the program and eleventh year teaching public school. Ally was selected as a sample for this research study because of her unique position as a full-time teacher and full-time PhD student. The intersectionality of these two identities allowed Ally to provide a unique story to add to the depth of research presented in this study.

For this study, the hybrid teaching approach that Ally references was one where she was asked to teach face-to-face and via Zoom each class period every day. She was teaching from her computer each day to ensure that students online could hear and receive quality instruction as well.

Data Analysis

Data sources were analyzed using a comparative process. Each interview was transcribed and then coded. Patterns were noted, and common themes were identified and highlighted based on frequency and level of importance. Themes from the observation notes served to

substantiate the found themes and coding patterns in the interview transcription analysis. Data sets were reviewed inductively, simultaneously, and repeatedly during the data collection phase to analyze essential connections among factors of influence among the core categories. The prominent themes emerging from the combined data analysis of interviews and observation notes are sectioned into virtual learning, engagement, achievement, and support.

Findings and Discussion

The interviews combined with other data sources reflected that Ally faced a myriad of challenges regularly. Ally experienced additional pressure from both schools and parents, especially when monitoring the growth and learning of individual students in the parallel environment. Her workload has increased manifolds as she must adapt her instruction for a hybrid platform, ensuring that no student falls behind. Additionally, such working conditions had adverse effects on her mental and physical well-being. Regardless of a supportive school environment, Ally stated that there has been no real change to a teacher's work expectations. The data consistently highlighted the challenges faced by the teachers and is categorized into the following themes: virtual learning, engagement, achievement, and empathy and support.

Virtual Learning Environment

Both interviews and observation notes consistently reflected Ally's experience with students in an online platform. Thus, the data was analyzed to underscore her experiences that occurred during the transition from emergency remote instruction to a hybrid teaching format. During her interview Ally mentioned:

> The training and professional development provided for teacher roles were hurried, rushed, and focused exclusively on technical aspects of teaching online. Few resources were shared to help in the classroom and when we were provided with materials, they were often vague and unclear, so we were left with our own interpretation. Most of the time, this meant not implementing t hem in the classroom at all as we had so many other things on our plates. (Interviewee Response, Session 1, September 2020)

Ally discussed the shortcomings of limited teacher and administration training before the beginning of the classes for teachers, especially in the K-12 school setting. In her weekly written reflection, she mentioned, "the teacher training topics included platforms for developing asynchronous lesson plans and what those tools would look like. Increased number of webinars were promptly made available to the teachers on the internet within teacher realms during the semester. However, the implementation of planned resources for teachers was a concern, including delayed availability of tools to develop effective online lesson plans and instructions".

The interview data and reflections made it evident that online learning can be a concern for the teachers and parents while addressing the needs of K-12 students. As a part of the hybrid learning environment, related sub-themes emerged from the data sources categorized as: lack of training and experience, and lack of teacher autonomy. These sub-themes also impact the broader themes of engagement and achievement, which will be discussed in their subsequent sections.

Lack of training and experience regarding an online platform. Teachers in K-12 school systems have had limited exposure to navigating online tools to develop effective lesson plans

and curriculum that scaffolds student learning and success through the online platform (Solórzano, 2020). With the onset of the pandemic, the school systems across the country started intensive planning to maneuver several challenges for the smooth functioning of the school system and how it will look like for the parents, students, teachers, and administration. While no one had the right answer and school leaders were still weighing in on the best options, teacher preparation and development took a sideline (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). During her interview, Ally mentioned:

> As the school year started, we learned that we would have limited or no teacher subs available. This has severely impacted our class planning time. We also could not take any days off because there were no subs available to cover our class. Each day we had more questions than answers, and the tension quickly came to head. Frustration with administration was the first sign, and although my campus has a great administration; their hands were tied by the district. They, too, could only do so much. Many of my colleagues have planned to leave their jobs just because they feel unprepared for the new challenges. I was really shocked to see that my long-time mentor decided to quit her job because she was not able to take any more stress related to the new nature of work. She had planned to retire in the next year or so, but this made her decision easier to retire early. Such a scenario has challenged me to think if I would want to stay in the classroom for a long time: at first, I always thought I'd be okay staying in the classroom after earning my PhD while looking for a full-time job in higher education; however, I'm actively looking for jobs for next school year. I can't do another year of this. (Interviewee Response, Session 2, December 2020)

Several districts offered limited teacher training before the beginning of the school year which left a profound impact on not only their curriculum and instruction planning but switching gears to full-fledged online instruction left several students confused with no motivation to pursue their classes online at a full-time mode. During her encounter with her students during online teaching, one of Ally's students mentioned, "I am not sure how to upload this picture from my computer, can you please help me." Confusing and chaotic situations were now more common to occur while teachers deliver content due to the hybrid class format. Such situations create panic for teachers and students, primarily when they depend on their teachers the most.

Lack of teacher's autonomy. While online learning technology may provide essential resources for teachers to build and execute lesson plans to cover relevant curriculum, they only offer a limited teacher autonomy. For instance, helping students in a real-time scenario can be a concern for teachers to keep students engaged and motivated (Solórzano, 2020). Additionally, other factors such as limited internet services and other forms of technology available to the students are beyond the teacher's control (Kuhfled, 2020). Ally noted that "many teachers are willing to take district scripted lessons this year when they would have never done so before. There's too much on our plates to be creative and engaging with our lessons this year." (Written reflection)

Engagement
Student engagement is another pressing concern that is consistently mentioned throughout Ally's interviews. The curriculum and instruction offered in the public-school system in the United States have constantly pitched hands-on exposure and peer collaboration as a key for student success (Kim 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). However, an online platform limits teacher to engage in more in-depth conversations with their students and offer limited peer

collaboration (Choate et al., 2020). Ally expressed concern for school districts and teacher preparation programs to provide extensive information about addressing student engagement when teaching online. Even though a pandemic situation is known to have a temporary existence, it has caused extensive harm to the students, especially to those who belong to urban school districts. It has raised questions for a more extensive education community to address, such as in what ways can education continue to address societal inequities? Is it ethical and realistic to only hold teachers accountable for student success, especially when everyone is hit equally hard by the pandemic? (Chetty et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond & Hyler,2020; Kraft et al., 2020)

Lack of training and experience. With the beginning of a new normal, teachers were challenged to adapt their courses for online platforms as well as for face-to-face instruction. Nevertheless, teachers were not provided with extensive training and support to address the concern of student engagement. Ally mentioned:

> Our district offered us limited training right before the school year began. These pieces of training were superficial that left teachers to figure out several things for themselves. Also, I had several concerns while preparing our work for online students that no one had answers to. I had no person to look up to for support and guidance because no one had done this before, no one had the answers. This left me struggling each day with students. I pride myself on being a great teacher with effective and engaging lessons; however, I felt like a new teacher all over again. It's hard to feel good about what you do day to day when you know you can't give your best. This also greatly impacted my social-emotional well-being because I love teaching, but now with each day of struggle I know that I can't continue to do this next year. (Interview Response, December 2020).

When asked about the potential effects that this could have on teacher retention, Ally agreed that trying to teach disengaged students is a large source of teacher frustration, potentially leading to teachers choosing to pursue other professional opportunities in the immediate future (Hamilton et al., 2020). Ally's role as PhD student allowed her to empathize with the role of students as well. She knew what it was like to be on the other end of virtual learning as a student. Her observation notes included "It's clear that being successful as an online student isn't for everyone. I know I can do it as a grad student because I'm 33 and self-motivated. I can't expect the same level of effort from 14-year-olds who don't have a say in the matter." (Observation Notes, 10-05-2020)

Lack of teacher's autonomy. A teacher only has limited control over engaging her students in a virtual platform while covering the course content. Online resources can be limited to watching videos, manipulating simulations, interactive read aloud or sharing steps with students to execute some hands-on projects. However, a teacher's contribution to enhancing the degree of student motivation and engagement may not come out as planned.

> It is hard to remind students to keep their camera on while you are trying to teach them. Even after repetitive warning some students do not turn on their cameras: they either blame it on the technology or they probably aren't even at their computers. I can only do so much. I can't reach through the screen and tap on their desk and monitor their level of focus as would when they are sitting in my classroom. It's the most discouraging feeling I've ever experienced as a teacher. (Observation Notes, 11-02-2020).

Achievement

The most significant advantage that Ally shared about virtual and hybrid learning was increasing student achievement when implemented in an organized fashion with students who were engaged regularly. Ally mentioned the ability to differentiate instruction and build in student choice was a key to helping students be successful during this time. "I think this could allow for great differentiation and a way to increase student engagement." The ability to differentiate instruction was something that, when given students who are willing to learn, teachers could use to leverage the higher order thinking skills that they are hoping to implement with their students. Ally indicated:

> Self-motivation is a key for students, especially high school students. Some of my students who are in the online environment and engaged are the ones who keep me going. Students need to be disciplined to pursue their work, and that's a real struggle for 9th graders. My students who are not passing are exclusively online students. I have seen a constant decrease in my student's level of participation just because I am trying to teach students in both environments at the same time, which becomes disengaging for students in either platform. There is also considerable lack of submission of assignments from my students who are attending classes virtually. As a teacher I understand that it is a very different experience for my students and they are still in the learning process, I always keep reminding them that I am here to support them, but honestly, I am concerned about their learning as well as their well-being. (Interviewee Response, December 2020)

In the given situation, student achievement had become a cause of concern primarily because accessing schoolwork through an online platform requires strict discipline from a student's end (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Kuhfeld, 2020).

"Lower-income kids, kids of color, kids with unique needs like those who have a disability or other challenges – the numbers look very, very bad," said Robin Lake, the director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, a research and policy organization based at the University of Washington Bothell (as mentioned in 13,000 school districts, 13,000 Approaches to Teaching During Covid by Taylor, K).

Lack of training and experience. Regardless of their teaching experience, most teachers are finding it challenging to enhance student achievement on an online platform. Taylor (2021) reported that in Houston, 42 percent of students received at least one F in the first grading period in the fall, as compared to that 26 percent in the previous fall. Ally shared, "that limited teacher training on the use of online technology for adapting curriculum for virtual environments had made their work challenging, and ultimately this affected students as well. When there are technical issues, they are much more likely to check out of learning entirely." (Written reflection)

Lack of teachers' autonomy. With limited control to engage and motivate students online, teachers are already experiencing the impact of limitation of virtual environment on student achievement (Kuhfeld, 2020). Ally shared that many of her students who are struggling with getting passing grades are online, and it is not possible to order these students to come back to school even if it's in their best interest. Ally stated:

Often, as teachers, we are not aware what kind of guidance students need while attempting their assignments at their own pace and cannot seek for clarifications simultaneously as they are working at home. This just creates an unwanted gap in their learning and understanding. My online students either end up figuring out the work themselves or with the help of a parent or guardian as I had a sense that they were disengaged while classes were in session. To be honest, most of the time they just didn't do it at all. What can I do about that? (Interview Response, December 2020).

Empathy and Support

Lack of teachers' experiences and autonomy calls for empathy and support by the school leaders. While district superintendents and school principals are making constant efforts to keep a safe and healthy school environment both for teachers and students, they can only support teachers in a limited way when it comes to actual class planning and execution (Kraft et al., 2020). Ally mentioned:

Teachers like me are unable to take off days to cope with the monotony of every documentation and paperwork on top of teaching in a hybrid platform that already requires in-depth planning. I can see that the effect of pandemic is here to stay as I feel a high level of resentment towards my district and those in charge. School leaders should support teachers in improving the quality of the hybrid instructions rather than holding them accountable for increased level of work and catering exclusively to parent demands. (Interview Response, December 2020)

In the given scenario, one of the best strategies is to equip teachers by providing them tools for continued student learning and engagement instead of deviating them with meticulous paperwork and report submissions. In her written reflection Ally wrote, "several students who belong to low-income family groups already lack resources and, in such situations, schools should prioritize the learning gap by making equal efforts to provide learning resources to their students by contacting families to inquire about the support they are seeking at this time." Also, at the same time, teacher education programs should continue to offer extended support to the pre-service and in-service teachers to share online resources that can improve their quality of teaching, keeping in mind that schools need to address varied learning styles (Written Reflection, October 2020). Ally mentioned that she didn't feel like the PhD program was helping her to prepare to return to a world of teaching online. "My classes haven't changed much. Professors have altered their instruction but have made no mention of how I should change what I'm doing in the classroom." (Written reflection)

Discussion

Ally's narrative allows us to understand her lived experience as a practicing teacher who has been in classroom for several years as well as her role and experience as PhD student. She described how her each workday looked under a new setting. Even though she struggled each day, she made it a point to talk to her friends and colleagues. She promised herself to be resilient and be there for her students each day, despite having the thoughts of quitting her work. Her experiences are powerful and did highlight that teaching under sudden change of mode can be extremely challenging especially when we already have existing loads of issues. Based on our current state of education, there is an urgent need for teacher education programs to address the issues that surfaced with sudden hit of pandemic. University faculty, educators, and school personnel should offer coursework or professional development that should provide

technological and pedagogical training for our teacher to operate under an alternative teaching environment such as hybrid or virtual learning. Creating a rigorous and engaging online learning space can be mainly challenging if the teacher preparation programs do not offer relevant and coursework for preparing teachers to engage students in virtual environments that also attends to the different needs of learners.

While teachers are essentially preparing lessons for different platforms, the time allotted during a 45-minute planning period is not enough for the teachers to accomplish the necessary tasks to teach multiple formats successfully. Allowing teachers extra time, either through additional planning time, or designated asynchronous learning days for all the students call allow teachers to feel a small reprieve from the constant pressure of completing two jobs in the time that has been allotted for completing one. Administrators and district support staff should be prepared and trained to handle the specific teacher issues and concerns that have arisen due the nature of teaching during a global pandemic (Will, 2020).

Additionally, ensuring that teacher concerns are taken seriously and addressed is crucial. When tensions and anxiety levels are high for students, parents, and teachers alike, teachers must feel a sense of support from their administration. Allen et al. (2020) reported, "head teachers experienced particularly large increases in anxiety and reported that they were more likely to leave the profession because of the experience. Head teachers showed particularly pronounced increases in anxiety" (p.4). When teachers are forced to reckon with parental concerns or students refusing to follow safety protocols, administrative teams and individuals should be willing and prepared to provide teachers with the support to ensure these protocols are following and that teacher decisions are supported in parent conferences or phone calls. While we all may have varied perspective and approaches to deal with the present situation, it is recommended that teacher education programs, schools, and stakeholders at large should come together to ensure that teachers across the platform are thoroughly trained and educated to maximize student learning and engagement (Solórzano, 2020).

Future research may be carried out to explore the impact of hybrid teaching on a teacher's sense of success and well-being that may incorporates inputs from several teachers. The questions that arise from this study are, "What were student's experiences with hybrid platform especially when we are living in uncertain time?"; "How well prepared are the school districts to offer hybrid learning options to address the health and safety of students and staff?"; "What are parents' perceptions about continuing to hybrid learning options, especially when the health and safety of their children is of paramount importance?". Improving teacher confidence and quality is the key to providing our students with the best education especially in these desperate time (Reich et al., 2020; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Ally's story was just one account that suggests us that even though pandemic has forced us out of our comfort zone, and many have adapted well, the damage it has done will keep surfacing for several years to come.

References

Allen, R., Jerrim, J., & Sims, S. (2020). How did the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic affect teacher wellbeing. *Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities (CEPEO) Working Paper*, (20-15), 20–15.

Bailey, J. P., and J. Schurz. 2020. COVID-19 is creating a school personnel crisis. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute. https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-IsCreating-a-School-Personnel-Crisis.pdf

Bandura, A. (1986). Fearful expectations and avoidant actions as coeffects of perceived self-inefficacy. *American Psychologist*, *41*(12), 1389–1391. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.41.12.1389

Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). The influence of school administrators on teacher retention decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*, *48*(2), 303–333. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831210380788

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago.* University of Chicago Press.

Choate, K., Goldhaber, D., & Theobald, R. (2021). The effects of COVID-19 on teacher preparation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *102*(7), 52–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217211007340

Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., Hendren, N., Stepner, M., & The Opportunity Insights Team. (2020). *How did COVID-19 and stabilization policies affect spending and employment? A new real-time economic tracker based on private sector data* (pp. 1–109). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Coffin, C., and Meghjani, T. (2020). D.C. voices: Teacher retention and recruitment during the pandemic. *D. C. Policy Center.* https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/teacher-retention-recruitment/

Crozier, G., Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Handbook of qualitative research. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *42*(4), 409. https://doi.org/10.2307/3121684

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1995). Narrative and education. *Teachers and Teaching*, *1*(1), 73–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354060950010106

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). School Reform at the Crossroads: Confronting the Central Issues of Teaching. *Educational Policy*, *11*(2), 151–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904897011002002

Darling-Hammond, L., & Hyler, M. E. (2020). Preparing educators for the time of COVID . . . and beyond. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *43*(4), 457–465. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1816961

Delamarter, J., & Ewart, M. (2020). Responding to Student Teachers' Fears: How We're Adjusting during the COVID-19 Shutdowns. *Northwest Journal of Teacher Education*, *15*(1). https://doi.org/10.15760/nwjte.2020.15.1.3

Education Week. 2020. *Data: Students Are Getting Less Instruction Time During Coronavirus*. [online] Available at: https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/data-students-are-getting-less-instruction-time.html

Hamilton, L. S., Kaufman, J. H., & Diliberti, M. (2020). Teaching and Leading through a Pandemic: Key Findings from the American Educator Panels Spring 2020 COVID-19 Surveys. Data Note: Insights from the American Educator Panels. Research Report. RR-A168-2. *RAND Corporation*.

Hodges, C. B., Moore, S., Lockee, B. B., Trust, T., & Bond, M. A. (2020). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, *38*(3), 499–534. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312038003499

Ingersoll, R. M. (2002). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*, *86*(631), 16–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/019263650208663103

Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). Is there really a teacher shortage? *PsycEXTRA Dataset*. https://doi: 10.1037/e382722004-001

Johnson, N., Veletsianos, G., & Seaman, J. (2020). U.S. faculty and administrators' experiences and approaches in the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Online Learning*, *24*(2). https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v24i2.2285

Kim, J. (2020). Learning and teaching online during Covid-19: Experiences of student teachers in an early childhood education practicum. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, *52*(2), 145–158. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-020-00272-6

Kraft, M. A., Simon, N. S., & Lyon, M. A. (2021). Sustaining a sense of success: The protective role of teacher working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 1–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2021.1938314

Kuhfeld, M., Soland, J., Tarasawa, B., Johnson, A., Ruzek, E., & Liu, J. (2020). Projecting the potential impact of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. *Educational Researcher*, *49*(8), 549–565. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x20965918

Marek, M. W., Chew, C. S., & Wu, W. C. V. (2021). Teacher experiences in converting classes to distance learning in the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies*, *19*(1), 89–109. https://doi.org/10.4018/ijdet.20210101.oa3

Page, S. 2020. Coronavirus, schools reopening: 1 in 5 teachers may not return: Poll. USATODAY. https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/05/26/coronavirus-schools-teachers-pollipsos-parents-fall-online/5254729002/

Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2020). Online university teaching during and after the Covid-19 crisis: Refocusing teacher presence and learning activity. *Postdigital Science and Education*, *2*(3), 923–945. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00155-y

Reich, J., Buttimer, C. J., Coleman, D., Colwell, R. D., Faruqi, F., & Larke, L. R. (2020). What's lost, what's left, what's next: Lessons learned from the lived experiences of teachers during the 2020 novel coronavirus pandemic.

Rushton, S. P. (2001). Cultural assimilation: a narrative case study of student-teaching in an inner-city school. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *17*(2), 147–160. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0742-051x(00)00048-2

Sass, D. A., Seal, A. K., & Martin, N. K. (2011). Predicting teacher retention using stress and support variables. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *49*(2), 200–215. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111116734

Slay, L. E., Riley, J., & Miller, K. (2020). Facilitating a path to new teacher certification amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: Unpacking States' "Unchanged-New Flex" Guidelines. *Frontiers in Education*, *5*. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.583896

Smethem, L. (2007). Retention and intention in teaching careers: will the new generation stay? *Teachers and Teaching*, *13*(5), 465–480. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600701561661

Solórzano, D. A. N. (2020). Education before the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems*, *12*(7), 604–610. https://doi.org/10.5373/jardcs/v12i7/20202043

Taylor, K. (2021, January 21). *13,000 School Districts, 13,000 Approaches to Teaching During Covid*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/21/us/schools-coronavirus.html

Tschannen-Moran, M., Hoy, A. W., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research*, *68*(2), 202–248. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543068002202

Viano, S., Pham, L. D., Henry, G. T., Kho, A., & Zimmer, R. (2020). What teachers want: School factors predicting teachers' decisions to work in low-performing schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, *58*(1), 201–233. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831220930199

Will, M. 2020. "Teachers at higher risk of COVID-19 wonder: Should I even go back?" Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/05/07/teachers-at-higher-risk-for-covid-19-worry.html

Corresponding author: Neha Anand
Email: neha.a.ohrie@gmail.com