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TEACHER PERCEPTION OF ONLINE TEACHING APPROACHES DURING THE PANDEMIC COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the instructional methods utilised by English Language teachers in Malaysia during the Covid-19 outbreak. During the pandemic in 2020/2021, the participants had to learn, explore, and decide which digital tools to use remotely for teaching and learning. In May 2021, twenty English Language Teachers from various secondary schools in Malaysia participated in this study. The Movement Control Order (MCO) period was in effect when the study project began, so Google survey forms were chosen as the research tool. The Google forms were sent out via Telegram and WhatsApp, two popular online teacher support groups. Schools were forced to close in March 2020, and the time of Home-Based Teaching and Learning (PdPR) began with teachers conducting online classes from their homes. This study looks at the online technologies that the participants utilised and the obstacles they faced when teaching online. The study establishes a link between the various types of digital tools and the benefits of using these teaching and learning tools for both teachers and students; it also showed how the digital tool selection was influenced by either the teacher or the student or both. The study's findings revealed that most of the participants used comparable tactics and strategies in their online teaching, such as allowing students time and space to reply to lessons utilising the asynchronous method. According to the findings, participants faced problems such as a lack of internet access, failure of electronic and digital technologies, poor self-efficacy, and lack of support during their HBT&L period. The findings further showed that 80% of the participants used mobile applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram to connect, communicate and teach, as these tools were available to their students. The study's acknowledgement of the fundamental premise of Malaysia's status as a developing nation, with its lack of digital infrastructure, poor economic realities of its citizen and the unaffordability of data makes the selection of tools relevant in this 21st century. The study also provides a promising start for utilising these different online teaching tools using flipped, hybrid, asynchronous, or synchronous forms, which have many elements of progressivism and constructivism type teaching styles. When combined with in-person education, the findings could have considerable benefits for the learner and support heutagogy (learning self-management) when combined with in-person teaching.

Keyword: online teaching, Home-Based Teaching and Learning, Teacher Perception

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic exposed the precarious position of the Malaysian education ecosystem when traditional in-person teaching was stopped, and remote teaching and learning were put in place. Since March 2020, teachers, students, and parents have had to adapt and adopt a new mindset and teaching pedagogy for the continuation of education. This mini-action research looks at the experiences of 20 English Language teachers and their Home-Based Teaching/Learning (HBL) environment, how they reached out to their students with their online teaching approaches, and the difficulties they faced when transitioning online. The participants come from various states in Malaysia, including Selangor, Johor, Sabah, and Sarawak. The research objectives are to discover the digital tools selected for ease of teaching, the influence of digital tool selection and the problems participants might have faced or are continuing to face when teaching remotely.

The study focused on English Language Teachers in Secondary Schools as they are usually more experienced and hopefully would be given better access to data, tools, and technology. Secondary school teachers are responsible for preparing their students for two very important exams, namely the PT3 in form three, where class streaming is decided, and SPM, where students then pursue their diploma or college certificate. Since May 2020, teachers have had to adapt and adopt new teaching methods and assess student learning. The need to explore the situation is relevant as prior to the pandemic in 2020 -2021, many primary and secondary schools were using the traditional in-person teaching method. Malaysian school teachers, not unlike those in other developing countries around the world, 'did not have the training to deliver distance and online education effectively during this time of educational disruption' (UNESCO,2020). The research also looks at challenges these teachers face when trying to enable teaching and learning with their students. The teaching of secondary school English syllabus is not a compulsory pass to receive SPM certification at the end of form 5. This makes it difficult for English language teachers to maintain student numbers during online classes. The survey results will show that the participants in this survey faced many challenges when teaching online, including difficulty with digital tools, work stress and expectation, and mental and physical fatigue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Malaysia, online teaching in government primary and secondary schools were rarely seen. Although the Education Ministry had established an online digital portal for the registration of all students in Malaysia, this portal was rarely used as a learning management platform. Implementation of Google Classroom was hampered by poor digital infrastructure, teachers facing time constraints, lack of internet data and insufficient digital tools to access the site. No attempts were made prior to 2020 for the public education system to occasionally move online to check for feasibility, viability, and accessibility among the stakeholders, especially the teachers and the students and their parents. This lack of preparedness is found in Malaysia and almost every developing and third world nation.

When the pandemic started and schools were told to move online, most Malaysian school teachers were not prepared, not trained, and did not have the know-how, the tools, or the internet access to make it possible(Lukas & Yunus, 2021). Not immediately anyway, but eventually, these teachers found their footing and continued with teaching and learning, reaching out to their students as best they could. When we look at curriculum approaches in language teaching, we can understand the difficult position teachers are placed in, especially when trying to fulfil syllabus

planning and traditional teaching methodology, which does not apply with online teaching (Richards, 2013). Of the three curriculum approaches, the central design will need to blend with the backward design to accommodate feedback and learning outcomes from the students as the online teaching evolves (Anderson, 2008). Educators today are constantly learning how they can be most effective in engaging their students in the learning process, online learning requires constant formative assessment activities, and measurable activities have had to be implemented to show engagement. Different remote learning approaches have been adopted to ensure the continuity of the teaching and learning process. Pre-recorded asynchronous lessons are becoming a must, especially for students who do not have the digital tools nor the data to access online synchronous classes(Țurcanu et al., 2020).

Having ministries and administrators aware and involved in the transition from physical to online teaching can ease the stress and helplessness that many teachers face daily. The sometimes-hostile attitude towards anything digital and online has exposed the lack of initiative and foresight by many public and private education bodies in Malaysia. The failures of teachers who have never been trained to create a virtual classroom, use an education platform, record a video or audio, digitalise their syllabus, create quizzes and polls to evaluate learning, and many other characteristics of online teaching and learning fell squarely with the Ministries involved and the top-down draconian and authoritarian school system in Malaysia(Catalano et al., 2021).

'Distance learning is challenging in developing countries because many parents are poor and digitally illiterate with lower educational levels, and this leaves the children with poor learning motivations who will suffer and thus increase the depth and widen the gap in inequality(Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). Besides the deficit in digital infrastructure and electronic tools, many educators around the world, including in Malaysia, had no idea how to teach remotely, had no training and were fearful of venturing into the digital sphere. Since the early first quarter of 2020, many Malaysian teachers have had to do their best within a very short time span and learned how to accomplish some type of communication with their students to continue teaching and learning. There are many reports of 'lost learning' for these children, but many educators have tried to step up to the task and have navigated the vast new frontiers of the online digital world, not unlike pioneers in discovering their new frontier(Dinleyici et al., 2016).

The global pandemic and closure of physical classes everywhere have exposed the deep difference between the have and have nots, lack of internet coverage in rural areas of Malaysia, inability to own or have access to digital devices that can enable online learning is a serious deficit and affects anyone living below the poverty level in both urban and rural setting. The pandemic has created a bigger lower-income population in Malaysia, ranging from 40% to higher. Only 20% of Malaysians earn 10,000 and above in monthly income, and the measure of this too will change with the lockdowns resulting in many businesses being forced to shut down (UNESCO, 2020). Workload stress, be it emotional and mental, due to the fears teachers have in their teaching quality, the number of hours in a day used for teaching and marking, the crossover of personal space into the workspace with no obvious guidelines or borders for is having a huge impact on everyone. Many teachers worry about their students' mental, emotional and physical situations, which perpetuates further stress.

Since the devastating impact of the Covid-19 virus on the world's population, many elements of life and living were curbed to accommodate safety measures that governments worldwide took to prevent the spread of the deadly disease. The education sector suffered a massive blow in the closing of schools and the cessation of traditional in-person schooling. Many developing and third world nations around the world had not invested in the necessary digital infrastructure in education nor adequately trained their teachers to support digital teaching and learning when it became necessary to move online and be conducted remotely(Winthrop, 2020).

When the pandemic was in full force in March 2020, Malaysia, not unlike other countries around the world, made the decision to close schools to prevent infection and the loss of lives and move to remote teaching and learning. Considering the unpreparedness of educators and parents, and other stakeholders in this decision, it is not surprising to find that after more than a year since the imposition of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns instituted by governments, the problems of transitioning to remote teaching has not improved much(Rajaendram, 2021). Complains range from lack of data to access to the internet, insufficient digital tools, and uninspiring online lessons. Prior to 2020, it is unclear if most Malaysian teachers and their teaching environment had adopted or accommodated the use of 21st-century tools or teaching methods. There is evidence showing the contrary. Some of the reasoning for this can be the lack of investment in digital infrastructure, failure to fit schools with basic 21st-century tools and not empowering, training, and allowing teachers to practise 21st-century pedagogy in their classrooms.

Reports on the pandemic and its effect on economies and industries rarely focus on the education sector and the loss of learning by students. Since 2020 teachers have gained more experience in teaching online. Many teachers who were unfamiliar with online teaching solved these quickly by having a healthy attitude towards seeking support and their willingness to experiment and adjust, leading them to find new ways to teach. (Todd, 2020). Government support and new guidelines that considered the sometimes nonexistence of internet connection in some remote areas of Sabah, Sarawak and rural Peninsular Malaysia. New models of assessment and grading were designed to accommodate the new remote teaching and learning. Formative assessments were encouraged whenever synchronous learning occurred, and teachers were encouraged to employ asynchronous learning targets for students with easy access to all educational resources.

When we look at the shift from traditional to online/remote teaching and the available data on Malaysian teachers and their perception of using 21st-century tools, there is a clear dislike and disdain and the opinion that using digital tools to teach is an affront to traditional teaching. A 2015 study in a local university on the expected shift from the use of teacher-centred pedagogy (content-based learning) to learner-centred pedagogy (inquiry and project-based learning) found that the approach to teaching and learning had not changed as desired by the National Education Blueprint for students to be independent thinkers and teachers to practice a more constructivist form of pedagogy(Selvaratnam, 2018). While the students were digital natives, their tendency to respect teachers had led to their passive acceptance of the limited amount of technology used by their teachers in their English classes. The limited use of technology by teachers did not reflect the needs of the students. Furthermore, the findings indicated a necessity for the students to move away from this teacher-dependent attitude toward greater independence and the collaborative and constructivist style of teaching and learning, which will benefit the students, especially now with remote/online learning being the norm. (Thang et al., 2014).

The findings suggest that challenges associated with integrating ICT and the 21st-century approach in the classroom resulted in pedagogical practices that were archaic and teacher-centred. The teachers encouraged the culture of being teacher dependent, and the students saw it as a sign of respect, appreciation, and value for the teacher's worth. The paper made two suggestions, the first was the building of basic ICT infrastructure and facilities, and the second was to get teachers to use the facilities in teaching and learning using the 21st-century teaching, and learning approaches in their classroom practises. (Garba et al., 2015). A study in 2016 on ICT skills and integration in the classroom found at that time, insufficient technical support discouraged teachers from using ITC in teaching (Mirzajani et al., 2016).

Another study in 2018 on 140 teachers from 24 secondary schools in Malaysia had similar results, reporting the failure of educators to emphasise and promote independent student thinking and intellectual engagement. The study measured the teachers' teaching based on Constructivist

teaching styles and student lead learning in the classroom. There was overwhelming evidence that almost 80% of the teachers 'show an overreliance on teaching directly from the textbook'. (Yew Tee et al., 2018), and there was little evidence of efforts made to inculcate an independent value mindset towards learning. Arming children with the tools for self-efficacy can play a role in how they feel about themselves and achieving life goals. One of the factors of successful online or remote learning is the need for the learner to have discipline, accountability and independent/collaborative learning strengths, which teachers should have developed following the National Educational BluePrint. This concept is central to Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, emphasising observational learning and social experience. Children with these skills, especially during the Covid-19 lockdown, will be able to transition better, recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments and view challenging problems positively. (Cherry, 2020)

The transition from in-person to online/remote learning might still be possible for our students if we followed the intended critical / higher-order thinking skills element emphasised in the MOE's Education Blueprint, and students then naturally moved towards a more inquiry-based/ collaborative learning environment with the teacher as the facilitator or guide. The same needs to be said about the role of our teachers, where administrators and education officials apply trust and disperse centralised decision making lower down the ranks.

Recent research has shown that the smartphone has become a popular tool for teaching and learning in certain developing and third world countries.

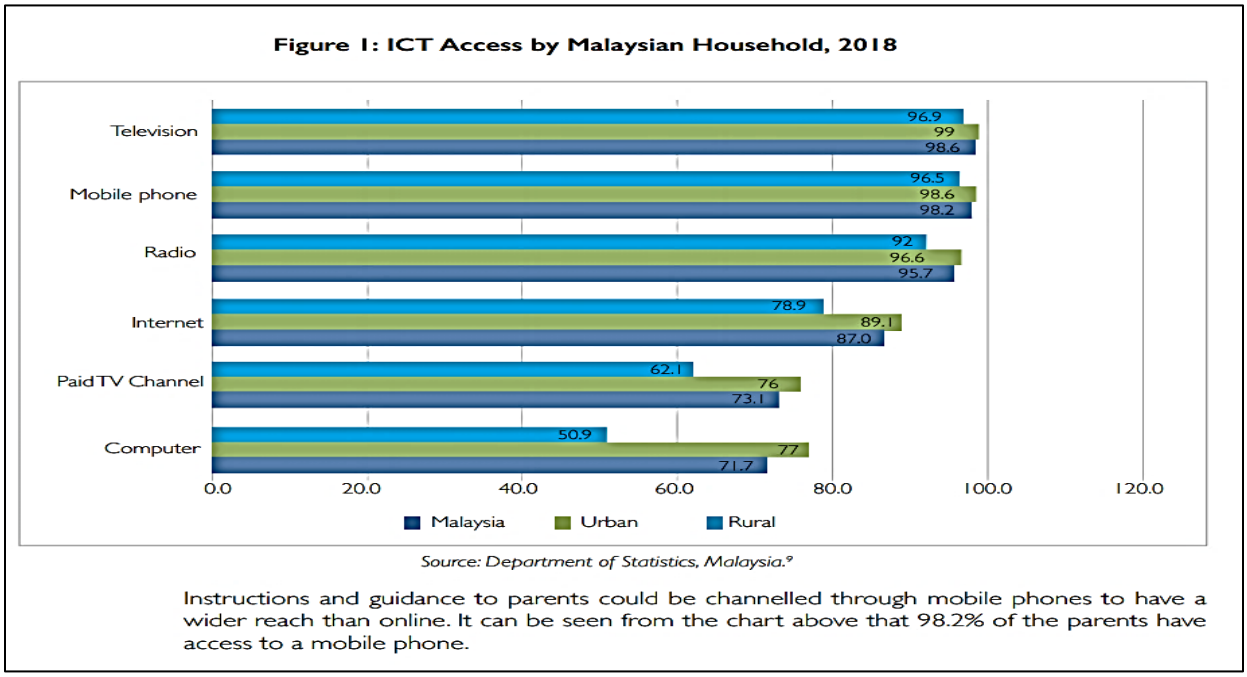

Figure 1: ICT Access 2018 Dept of Stats, MY (Wan,2020a)

This study by Wan helps to clarify why WhatsApp has become an effective teaching and learning tool for many Malaysian teachers and students. In single-parent, low-income households with one mobile device, children studied in the evenings when their parents returned home from work. Teaching instructions and guidance on the subject can be channelled through to parents as they too are involved and concerned about their children's interrupted learning. Another effort by the

Malaysian government is the increased investment in Educational TV (TV Pendidikan). This is because the coverage of students via television is wider than on online platforms. (Wan, 2020).

The mobile application of WhatsApp is a popular teaching tool in many countries where access to internet data is limited, or laptops and computers are just too expensive for lower-income or poorer households. Smartphones running on Android Operating System (OS) can install and run the WhatsApp application where a minimum of 740kb is required, where voice and video calls are free to use if data is available. All users must have a mobile number to exist on WhatsApp. Teachers can organise WhatsApp groups according to classes and broadcast (send) homework in the form of pdf files easily to each group. Another positive aspect of this application is the availability of the teacher to his student, especially during these trying times when all the physical benefits of school are not available, and some children are unhappy being cooped up at home. Teachers who have access to computers can use the WhatsApp desktop application to deliver lessons, share voice messages, and upload videos and images for teaching purposes. A study done in Indonesia found that an increase in the use of WhatsApp helped motivate students learning, and there was a significant increase in student learning outcomes through blended learning with the use of WhatsApp. The study also found that online learning using WhatsApp Group is effective before and after the Covid-19 pandemic.(Susilawati & Supriyatno, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative mini action research was carried out on English Teachers from various secondary schools throughout Malaysia, including the states of Johor, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, and Pinang. A total of 20 teachers from public and private (government syllabus) secondary schools in Malaysia participated in the research. Secondary school teachers were chosen with the view of the heavier expectation by stakeholders when switching to online teaching. The parental and administrative expectation for secondary school teachers who are generally very experienced and better trained It was also the hope that their students would be more likely to be given priority access to remote learning in their own homes. All the participants worked from home, and schools were not open to visitors. The pandemic and lockdowns made it impossible to meet and interview teachers in their schools physically. Going online and interviewing participants was the second-best option; the Telegram and WhatsApp groups that I belonged to grouped secondary school English language teachers regardless of state. The only qualifying factor for the participants was their employment as secondary school English Language teachers.

The use of English Language teachers as a collective group is purposeful in that the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) syllabus currently being used in national schools are relatively similar in parts with oral, listening, grammar, reading, writing and comprehension skills with the international school's IGCSE text and are all gradable according to the CEFR assessment framework. The survey was conducted using a Google form, where multiple questions were asked in relation to the tools the participant used during the HBT&L period. The sections where participants were required to type out opinions and share experiences manually.

A Google form with seven questions was created to learn about English language teachers' best online teaching methods. The question outlines and selection of possible answers for Questions 1, 2 and 3 were prepared after interviewing English teachers and understanding the issues and concerns involved in recognising the problems and concerns in online teaching in Malaysia. The forms were divided into 5 parts; questions one and two were prepared with multiple secondary-level selection boxes and two best teaching approaches. The second section 1.2 had space for the participants to type out their explanations. Section 1.3 asked the participants to describe how their approach worked, including examples. Section 2 discusses the reasoning and link between

tool selection and what influenced this. The third section asks the participants to select two challenges they faced. Section 4 gives the participants space to write out challenges that were not included in the multiple-choice section of question 3.

The data were collated and charted in graphs to show frequency for choice questions and answers in relation to teaching level, types of approaches used to access and teach students, parties favoured for the teaching approach, and challenges faced when using these approaches.

FINDINGS

This research is to study the teaching approaches used by English teachers in secondary schools in Malaysia during remote/online teaching periods. The concept was to uncover the two best online teaching approaches these teachers discovered, how they monitored their reception and to whose benefit was its use, besides the challenges they faced when teaching online. The survey began with secondary levels, and participants were able to select up to five secondary class levels.

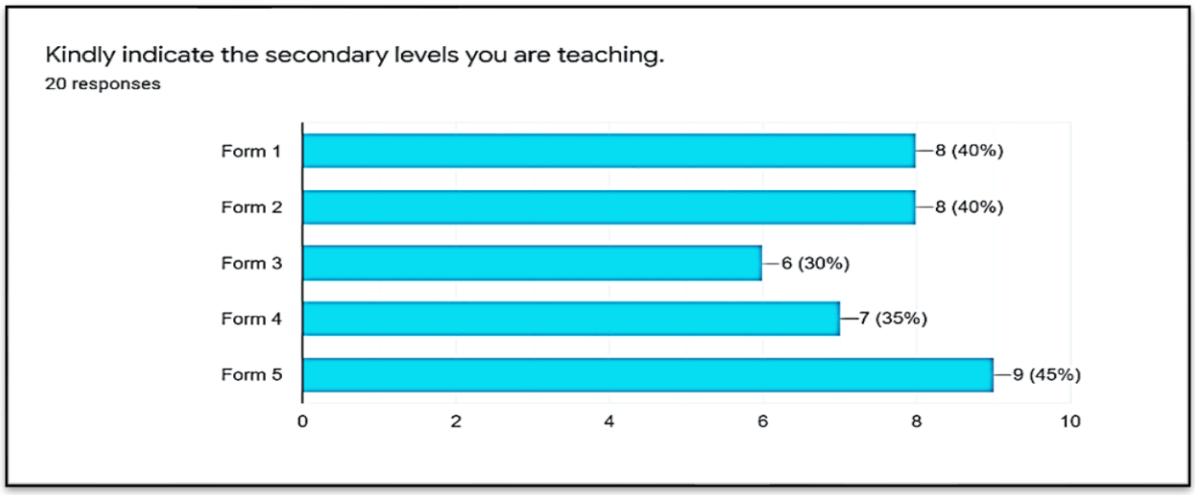

Figure 2: Google survey result on secondary levels participants were teaching

Participant	**Kindly indicate the secondary levels you are teaching.**
P1	Form 1, Form 2, Form 3
P2	Form 3, Form 5
P3	Form 3
P4	Form 1, Form 2, Form 5
P5	Form 3, Form 5
P6	Form 1, Form 2, Form 4
P7	Form 1, Form 4, Form 5

P8	Form 4, Form 5
P9	Form 1, Form 2, Form 4
P10	Form 2
P11	Form 4, Form 5
P12	Form 4, Form 5
P13	Form 1
P14	Form 5
P15	Form 1, Form 2
P16	Form 1, Form 2
P17	Form 3
P18	Form 3
P19	Form 2
P20	Form 4, Form 5

Five of the participants were teaching three different levels, eight were teaching two different levels, and the other seven participants had one level each. Exam levels like form 3 for PT3 and form 5 for SPM were taught by thirteen of the participants. The maximum number of form levels the participants taught were three. The survey did not show how many classes each level had in total. PT3 exams are held in form three and represent the lower form it is carried out by the school based on guidelines from the Ministry of Education. The PT3 examinations were not implemented in 2020 and 2021 because of the pandemic and school closures. Teachers, heads of department and the school board were then responsible for students streaming into form four science and art classes. Teacher and school assessments were used to justify the students' placement for the following year. Form five students had to sit for the 2020 SPMexaminations in 2021, and with this change, the 2020 school year ended in March 20th 2021.

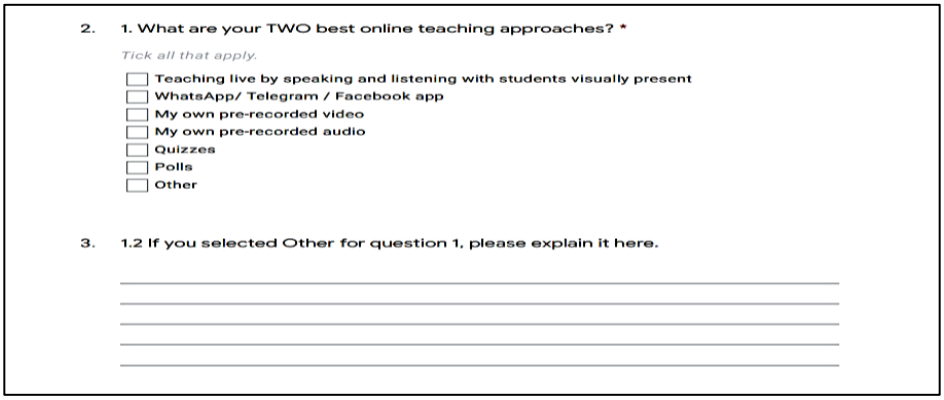

Figure 3: Survey question 1 on best teaching approaches.

To question 1 on the best teaching approach, only one participant, P11, elaborated with 'other' and indicated 'Interactive Website' as the additional teaching approach used besides

WhatsApp/telegram/FBApplication.

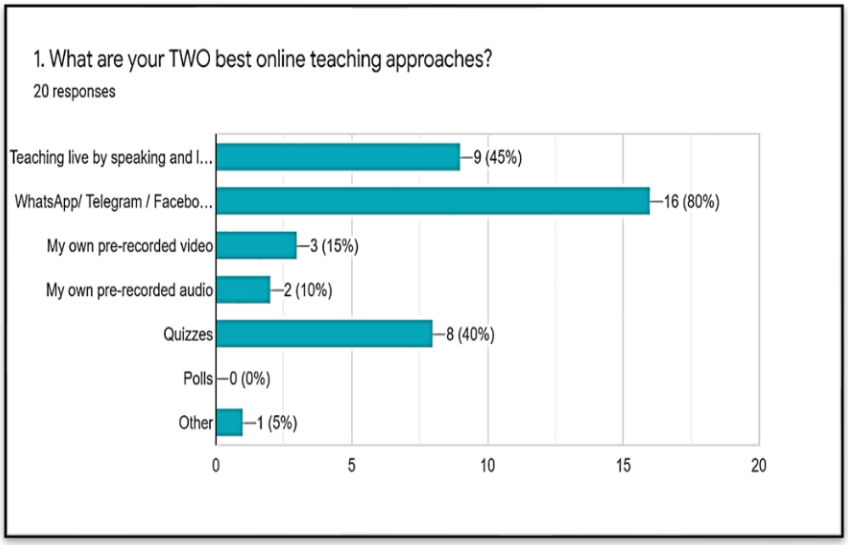

Figure 4: Survey question 1 on preferred teaching approaches

The above chart shows that 16 of the participants, or 80% of the selected mobile massaging applications like WhatsApp/Telegram/Facebook to help them teach, and they supplemented this with one of the other choices. Eight of the participants have a teaching platform for their classrooms, and six of the same supplemented this with WhatsApp/Telegram/Facebook. Only one participant, P19, selected WhatsApp/ Telegram/ Facebook as the sole teaching approach, and this choice was further explained as being accessible to his/her students. P19 further elaborated that insufficient internet data and the sharing of digital devices among family members as core challenges for the students. None of the participants selected polling as a teaching approach they used.

P1	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present,			My own pre-recorded video	
P2	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present,		Quizzes		
P3	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present,		Quizzes		
P4		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,	Quizzes		
P5	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present,	WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app			
P6	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present,	WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app			
P7		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,	Quizzes		
P8	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present,	WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,	Quizzes		

P9	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present,	WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app			
P10		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,			My own pre-recorded audio
P11	Other	WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,			
P12		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,			My own pre-recorded audio
P13		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,		My own pre-recorded video	
P14		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,	Quizzes		
P15		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,		My own pre-recorded video	
P16		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,	Quizzes		
P17	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present				
P18		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app,	Quizzes		
P19		WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app			
P20	Teaching live by speaking and listening with students visually present,	WhatsApp/ Telegram / Facebook app			

P 11 selected using WhatsApp to communicate with his students, and his other tool is an Interactive website. P19 only uses mobile applications like WhatsApp / Telegram or Messenger. P17 had only one selection where synchronous teaching takes place. The maximum number of tools participants used were three, and the minimum was just the one like P17 and P19.

For section 1.3, the participants had to write out their answers when asked, "*How can you tell that these TWO approaches work?*" The following are the written responses from the participants.

No.	Written Responses	Teaching and Learning aspects
P1	Live class Students are engaged in the lesson, and you can obtain immediate responses and feedback. Pre-recorded video for students who missed out on the lesson	Synchronous learning Asynchronous learning
P2	Students enjoy it, and they want to do more.	Active Interest and engagement
P3	Students ask for more quizzes.	Gamification
P4	Response and submission of work	Active learning
P5	Students are actively involved.	Active learning
P6	Students are able to communicate with me and ask questions when they have difficulty answering questions.	Questioning towards active learning
P7	The students responded (not all of them), they asked how to do it.	Engaged in the process
P8	Students hand in their work	Lesson objective achieved
P9	2-way communication	Active learning
P10	Students write their attendance and send their work.	Lesson objective achieved
P11	Majority like it if teachers do not nag them to do tasks and would prefer to do the tasks on their own time because some work part-time, some Balik kampung, some wake up late etc. It is not a question of whether they like it or not; they do it according to their own pace.	Asynchronous
P12	Attendance was high compared to the other methods. Students were quite active; at least they typed questions.	*Engaged in the process*
P13	Students are able to follow the instructions	*Involved in the process*
P14	More participation	*Interest in the process*
P15	students would not be present at the exact time, so teaching live would not work for me. They would have more time to finish the task based on the instructions I have given.	*Asynchronous*
P16	From the attendance and work submission	*Lesson objective achieved*
P17	Face to face is the best where you can carry out many activities such as games for speaking and listening. You can see their faces and their reactions/responses.	Synchronous
P18	Students give feedback, and they do ask questions when they do not understand the task, etc.	Active learning
P19	Accessible by students	Reachable
P20	Students understand the given tasks better. When explained	Engaged in the process

Teachers who use only WhatsApp or other mobile applications had adjusted their expectations to suit the teaching and learning environment. P4, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P18 and P19 all use mobile apps to teach, and P15 and P19 indicated that their choices were made because they worked for their students' Home-Based Teaching and Learning situation.

"P15	students would not be present at the exact time, so teaching live would not work for me. they would have more time to finish the task based on the instructions I have given." And

"P19	accessible by students."

In question 2, which asked about what shaped their teaching approach, the selection was limited to three choices. This reasoning was that most teachers, as they worked from home, would try and find a good balance where possible to accommodate everyone.

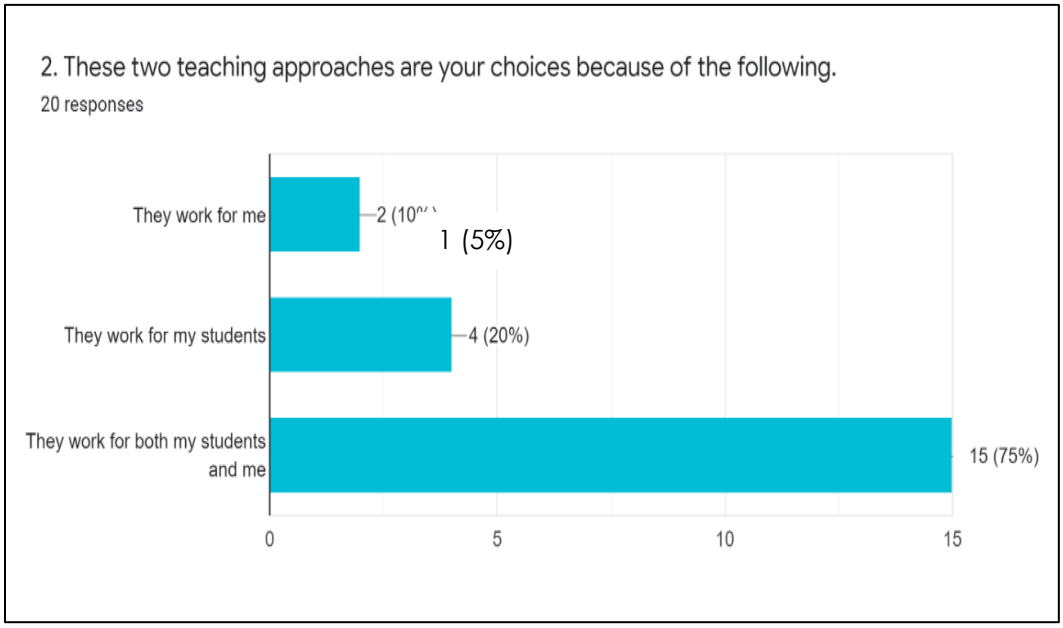

Figure *5*: Survey question 2 on what shaped the participants' choice of teaching

Only one participant, P10, selected '*they work for me'* and gave the reason as '*my students do not listen to me and I am demotivated, and I have difficulty working from home.*' Participant 10's situation is sad to note, but here is where we see a need to give teachers like P10 the administrative, emotional and economic support they require to cope with their situation and continue teaching.

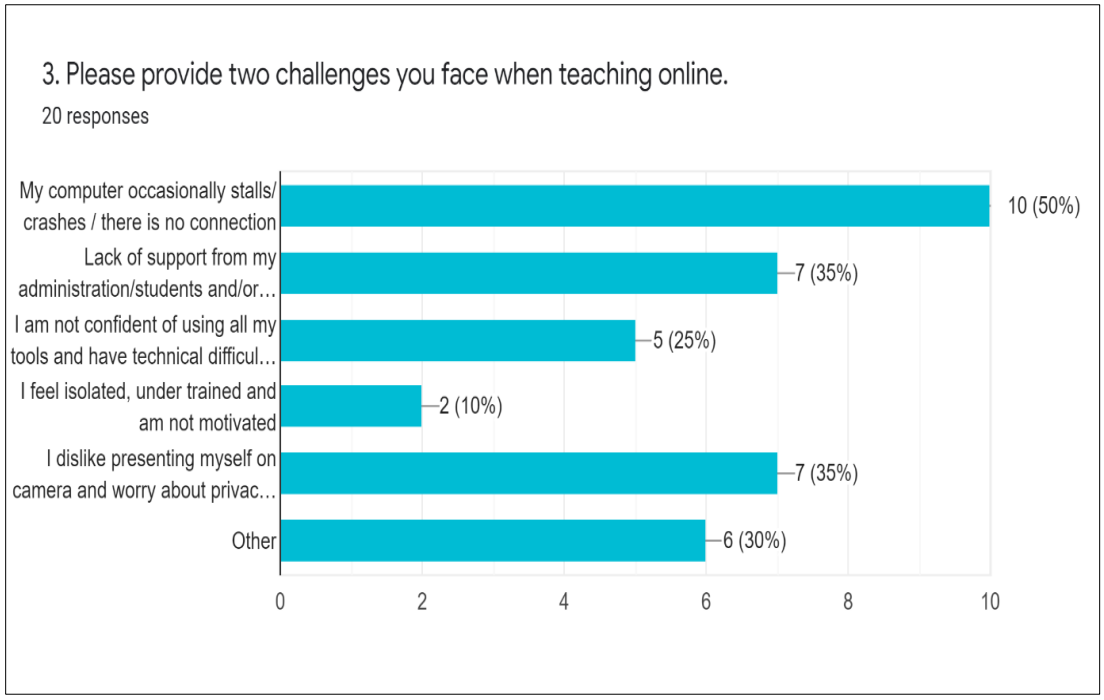

Figure 6: Challenges faced when teaching online.

In challenges question 3, participants were asked about the challenges they faced when teaching online. Half of the participants selected digital, mechanical and data issues as major challenges. One of the two other challenges that had an equal number of picks were to do with the lack of support from administrators. In a study done in 2018 on school leadership. The study explored how the hierarchical setup of the school focuses largely on the principal and does not follow the Ministry of Education's exhortation for schools to move towards instructional, distributed and transformational approaches whereby the well-being of the teachers and the students are improved to promote school improvements. (Bush et al., 2018).

Some participants found the idea of presenting online challenging as they lacked the confidence needed to conduct an online class. Some candidates had privacy issues which can only be overcome with professional development, ICT training and security assurance from the school authorities or the education ministry. These challenges cannot be solved overnight but should be attended to as soon as physical classes commence, and schools reopen.

Below are the responses of the six participants who were selected to write out their challenges.

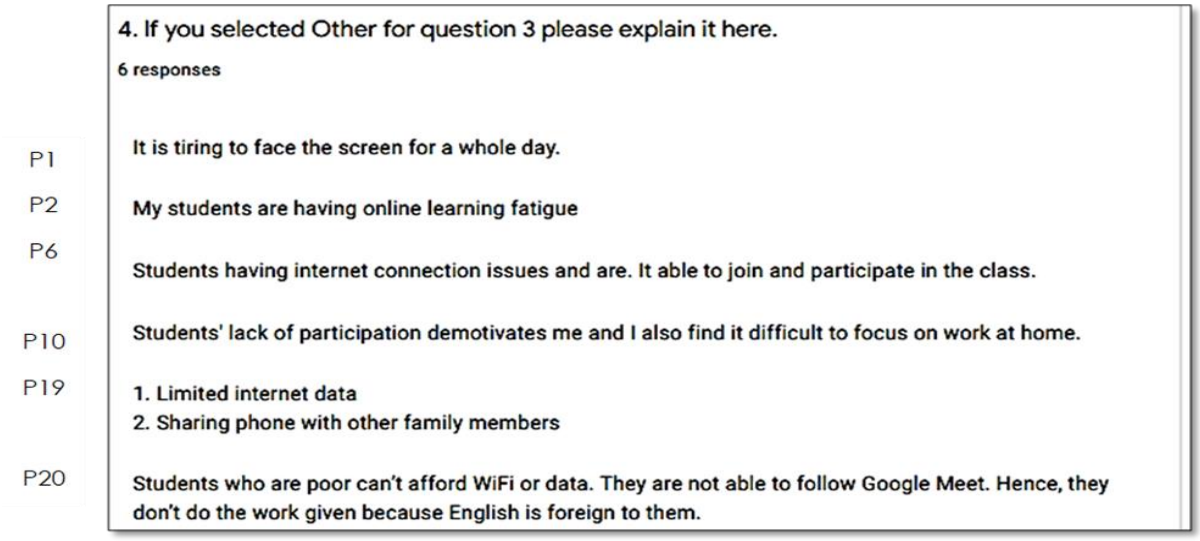

Figure 7: Other Challenges the participants faced when teaching online

The further challenges posed by participants cover both the teacher's side of affairs and the students' HBL situation. Both teachers and students are tired and fatigued with online/remote teaching and learning in this group.

LIMITATIONS

There is a lot of data recovered from this study, but there are also limitations. There is no information on the type of schools the participants are working in and the number of classes each participant has at the time of the survey. The gender and age of the participants were not collected and could prove valuable compared with the challenges the participant have when teaching online. A matching survey with the students of these teachers could have introduced valuable information on whether the strategies and methods used to teach them worked for them or was all an assumption. While this study does not have the students' point of view on whether the teaching methods used by the teacher is working for them, some of the assumptions can be verified by using recent secondary school student surveys like the ones done by Student Survey Project ID (Tan, 2021). Over 700 secondary school students were surveyed in May 2020, and again in May 2021, they presented the following chart. 'WhatsApp' came in the first place as a preferred online learning platform. Preferred could be due to digital tools and online data limitations, thus restricting students to the mobile application as a learning platform.

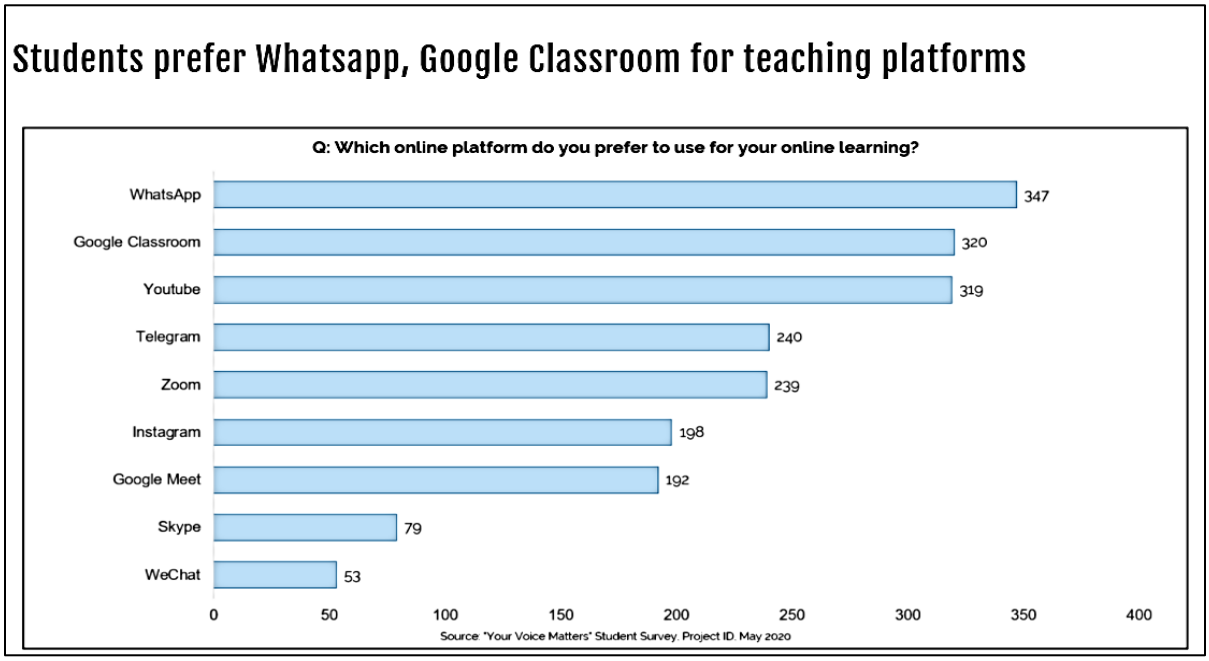

Figure 8: SVM 2020

If we use this piece of research to compare some of the elements of the survey, the results co-relate and match with the ecosystem of the current Covid-19 pandemic period. When it came to the challenges students faced learning online, poor internet connection came in third, with self-motivation and unclear learning structure running first and second. These findings are very similar to the surveys' results on challenges faced by the teachers.

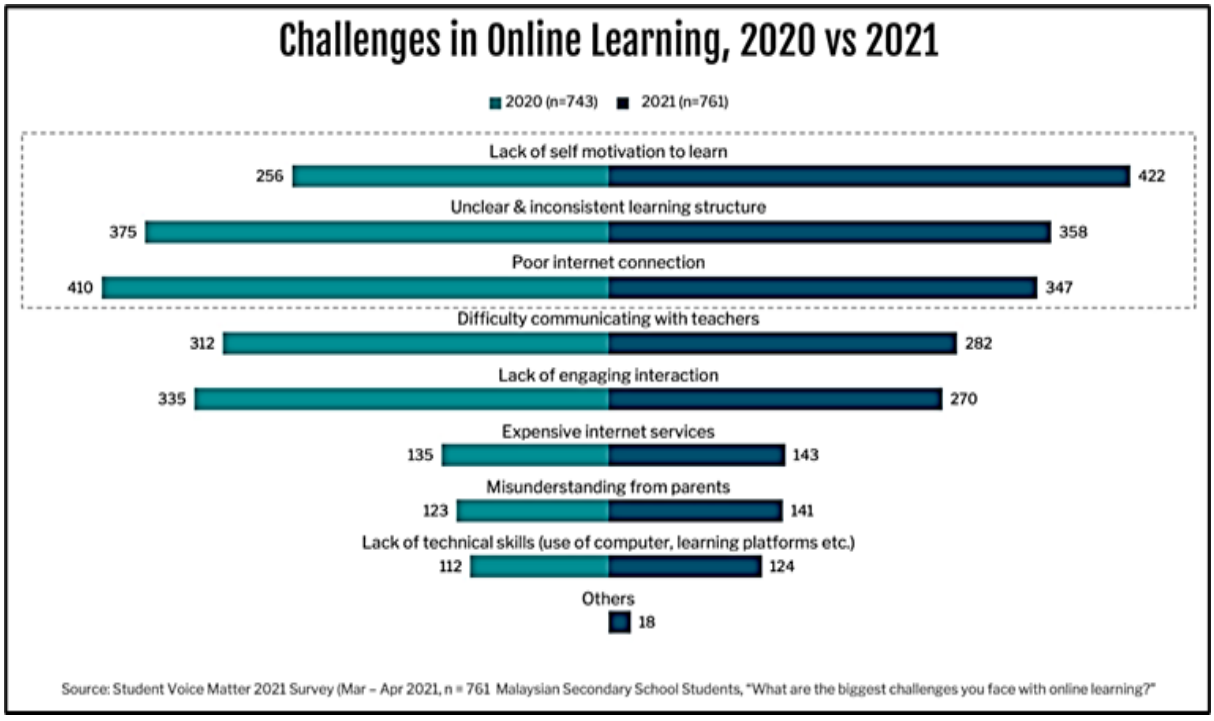

Figure 9: SVM 2020 vs 2021 challenges

The survey shows that 92% of respondents were either satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the support they received from their teachers and schools. However, when it came to how students felt, some of the findings in the survey showed similar results.

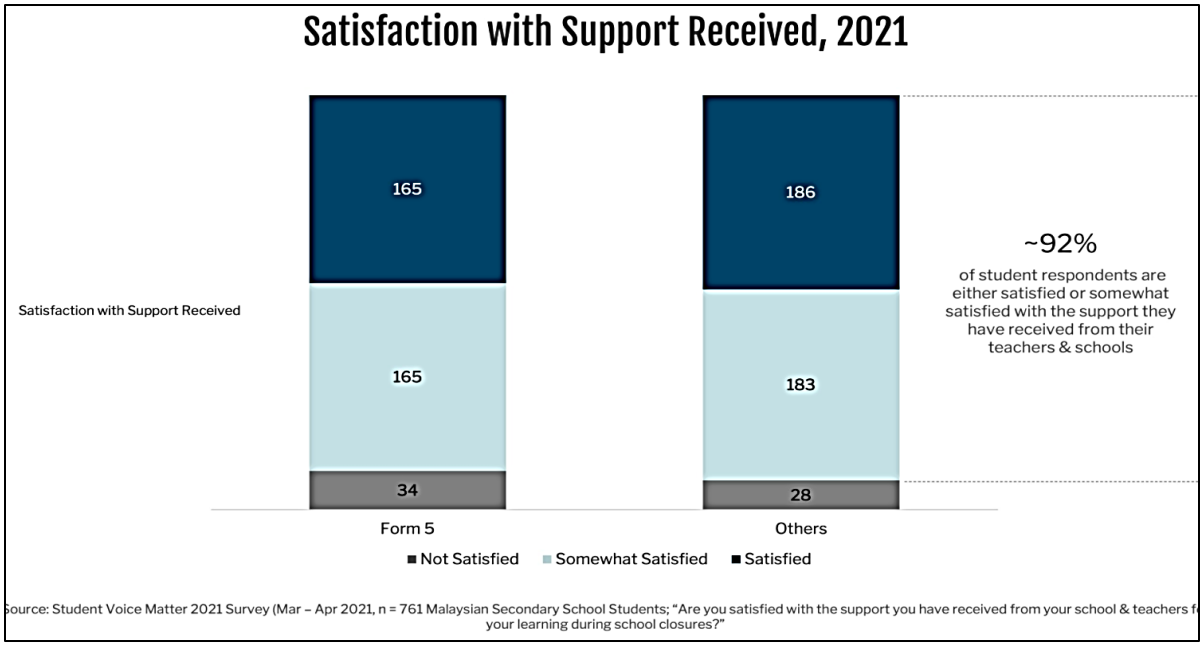

Figure 20: Teacher support SVM

Recommendations and Conclusion

The findings from this mini qualitative research show that the mobile messaging application WhatsApp is a choice for most of the participants. The second choice is Learning Management Systems, which can provide synchronous and asynchronous learning; the third choice is quizzes. Quiz is a popular choice, with eight out of twenty using it when teaching. Gamification in education is becoming a popular teaching tool as it increases learners' motivation and engagement. This survey should be expanded and conducted on a larger group of participants to understand teachers' current methods of conducting remote lessons. It would be recommended to split the findings into two or more groups. Groupings of those using an educational platform to teach and those using a mobile application like WhatsApp to teach.

Research needs to be done on how differentiated teaching is done online, how the teacher decides on online textbook transformation, and the types of formative and summative evaluation techniques formulated by these teachers from 2020 until today. Research should be carried out to discover the extent and use of LMS by all stakeholders, especially the teachers, students and parents. It would be interesting to know if the teachers using LMS have special challenges and those challenges need to be recognised and documented, especially in matters like online professional conduct, what to teach and what not to teach online; not everything from the physical classroom can transition to online teaching and learning. Discovery can be done to see if these educators need training on self-efficacy, self-confidence and cyber security in order to optimise their teaching methods.

Unless digital infrastructure is currently commencing to build these satellite towers and efforts are being made to provide every child with a digital device and the required data to access the internet, the WhatsApp teaching situation will persist into 2022 or later as the pandemic is not going away any time soon.

The teachers in this research who did not use a learning platform and relied on mobile devices and their applications require different types of support. Many of these teachers worry about their student's inability to attend or access lessons due to poverty. Teachers using mobile devices and applications should have access to good practices for grading and types of syllabi and the amount of learning acceptable for the new normal. Support groups need to be formed for both teachers and students to help them identify their problems and find solutions.

Information about the number of classes each teacher was teaching can be added to the survey to get an idea of the workload the teachers were carrying. Other questions could be on the number of hours spent preparing, conducting lessons and marking students' work and where they find their resources and if there exists a database for teachers to access and easy access.

It will be interesting to know if they would reshape the syllabus and, if so, how the elements were removed and what were retained to reach new levels of acceptance. Discovery of the evaluation process and which were the easiest element to teach and evaluate online on a scale for each of the different language skills such as grammar, reading comprehension, literature, writing, reading (oral), and speaking (oral). This knowledge will be useful should the need to move to remote home-based teaching and learning) occurs again.

It would be good to know if teachers are interested in improving their video or audio presence and if they want more training and coaching for their online teaching styles. Another aspect that needs exploring is the trust and mobility issues teachers have always had with the administrators of the schools; it would be interesting to discover if the teachers are being given more autonomy and authority when conducting and performing their duties online. Moreover finally, it would be good to know if teachers are leaving or thinking of leaving their profession, as a recent survey from RAND Corp. in the USA estimates that one out of six American teachers were likely to leave the teaching profession due to challenges online teaching.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest regarding this manuscript.

CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHOR

All authors are participants in the data collection and analysis and writing and revising the manuscript.

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