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Navigating Disruption: A Phenomenological Study of Teacher Adaptation in Flipped Classrooms for Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of teachers adapting the flipped classroom model within inclusive education settings. Conducted in a private school in Davao City, Philippines, the research employed in-depth interviews with fifteen teachers, analyzed using thematic analysis to uncover the essence of their adaptive journey. The findings reveal three interconnected themes: navigating significant logistical and affective burdens, renegotiating pedagogical identity from lecturer to facilitator, and engaging in continuous, empathetic adaptation tailored to individual learner needs. The study concludes that successful implementation transcends technical mastery, constituting a profound holistic transformation where teachers act as critical agents who interpret and reshape pedagogical innovation to prioritize inclusion. This underscores the necessity for support systems that address the emotional labor and professional identity shifts inherent in such change, rather than focusing solely on technical training. The implications call for professional development and institutional policies that foster reflective practice, collaborative time, and a culture valuing adaptive responsiveness to ensure equitable and sustainable pedagogical innovation.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape is characterized by significant and continuous disruption, driven by technological acceleration, global crises, and an imperative for more equitable pedagogical practices. In response, the flipped classroom model has emerged as a prominent innovative strategy, inverting traditional instruction by delivering direct content outside of class and dedicating in-person time to active, collaborative learning (Ardiansyah, 2025). While often highlighted for promoting student-centered learning, its successful implementation, particularly within the critical framework of inclusive education, presents a complex adaptive challenge for teachers. The extant literature extensively examines student experiences (Ardiansyah, 2025; Aller & Tangonan, 2023) and the logistical challenges of digital transition (Djarwo, 2025; Pontillas, 2025). However, there remains a pronounced gap in understanding the nuanced, lived experiences of teachers as they navigate the dual demands of mastering a disruptive pedagogical model while ensuring it meets the diverse needs of all learners in inclusive settings.

The problem is multifaceted. Teachers are often thrust into the role of adaptive agents during periods of systemic change, a position fraught with uncertainty and requiring significant personal and professional negotiation (James, 2023; White, 2021). Research indicates that the shift to technology-mediated learning during crises exposed profound challenges in teacher preparedness, access, and pedagogical adaptation (Cabuquin, 2022; Lariosa & Quezada, 2023; Saro *et al.*, 2022). Specifically concerning the flipped model, studies reveal teachers' perspectives on

its opportunities and challenges (Ramulumo *et al.*, 2024; Djarwo, 2025), yet these are seldom explored through the specific lens of inclusion, a context demanding tailored differentiation, accessibility considerations, and responsive teaching strategies that go beyond mere technological adoption. The subjective, first-hand journey of teachers adapting their professional practice to harness the flipped classroom for inclusive purposes remains underexplored.

This phenomenological study seeks to address this gap. It contributes to the body of knowledge by foregrounding the teacher's voice and lived reality, moving beyond prescriptive models to understand the essence of their adaptation process. The research acknowledges teachers not merely as implementers but as meaning-makers who interpret, struggle with, and ultimately reshape innovative pedagogy within the ethical imperative of inclusion. Therefore, the primary objectives of this work are: (1) to explore the lived experiences of teachers as they adapt to the flipped classroom model; (2) to understand the specific phenomenological essence of implementing this model within an inclusive education framework; and (3) to identify the core structures of meaning that teachers derive from this adaptive process. By doing so, this study aims to provide a nuanced, human-centered perspective essential for developing effective support systems, professional development, and sustainable, equitable pedagogical innovations in an era of perpetual educational change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proliferation of digital technology and the

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profound disruptions to global education, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, have catalysed a significant shift towards innovative pedagogical models, with the flipped classroom emerging as a prominent strategy. This model, characterized by delivering instructional content outside of class and using face-to-face time for active learning, is often positioned as a student-centered solution for a borderless, flexible learning environment (Pontillas, 2025; Aller & Tangonan, 2023). However, the implementation of such innovation does not occur in a vacuum; it is deeply embedded within broader contexts of systemic challenge and teacher agency. Recent literature underscores that periods of forced transition, such as emergency remote learning, exposed deep-seated vulnerabilities in educational systems and highlighted the critical role of teacher adaptability (James, 2023; Cabuquin, 2022). These studies reveal that teacher preparedness extends beyond technical competence, encompassing pedagogical recalibration and emotional resilience in the face of unprecedented uncertainty (Lariosa & Quezada, 2023; Saro *et al.*, 2022).

Within this milieu of disruption, research into teachers' lived experiences with the flipped classroom model reveals a complex tapestry of opportunity and significant challenge. Investigations into low-resource and crisis-affected settings are particularly illuminating. Djarwo (2025), for instance, documents the profound negotiation teachers undergo when moving "from chalk to clicks," highlighting struggles with digital inequity, increased workload, and the re-conceptualization of their instructional role. Similarly, Ramulumo *et al.* (2024) found that while secondary science teachers recognized the flipped model's potential for fostering deeper engagement, they concurrently grappled with infrastructural limitations, learner readiness, and the demands of creating suitable digital resources. These challenges resonate with broader phenomenological inquiries into teachers' classroom experiences, which consistently identify managing change and student engagement as core, often stressful, aspects of professional practice (White, 2021). The adaptation process is thus not merely technical but fundamentally phenomenological, involving a reshaping of professional identity and pedagogical philosophy.

Complementing the focus on teachers, a parallel strand of literature has centered on the learner's experience within these new educational paradigms. Ardiansyah (2025) explored the undergraduate student transition to flipped classrooms, finding that success was heavily contingent on self-regulation skills and perceptions of the out-of-class components. This underscores a critical interactive dynamic: teacher adaptation is intrinsically linked to student readiness and response. Studies on student perceptions of flexible learning modalities further affirm that variability in access, digital literacy, and preferred learning styles significantly mediates the effectiveness of any pedagogical innovation (Aller & Tangonan, 2023). Therefore, the teacher's challenge is twofold: to adapt their own practice while also scaffolding and responding

to the diverse adaptive journeys of their students, a task complicated in inclusive settings designed to cater to a wide spectrum of learning needs and abilities.

Despite these valuable insights, a conspicuous gap persists in the literature. While studies like those of Djarwo (2025) and Ramulumo *et al.* (2024) ably detail the general challenges and opportunities of flipping classrooms, and others like White (2021) and James (2023) probe the essence of teaching through disruption, there is a paucity of research that synthesizes these foci through the specific lens of inclusive education. The discourse often implicitly assumes a homogeneous student body, neglecting the deliberate pedagogical considerations required to ensure flipped models are accessible and effective for all learners. The calls for "new normal" teaching practices (Cabuquin, 2022) and the documented need for enhanced teaching competencies and coping mechanisms (Saro *et al.*, 2022) have not been sufficiently answered with phenomenological evidence on how teachers interpret and enact inclusivity within the flipped framework. This review therefore identifies a critical space for inquiry: a deep, phenomenological exploration of teacher adaptation that explicitly examines how the core structures of this experience are shaped by the imperative to create truly inclusive, flipped learning environments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing a phenomenological approach to explore the essence of teachers' lived experiences as they adapt the flipped classroom model for inclusive education. Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The philosophical underpinnings of this approach are rooted in the work of Husserl (1931/2012), who emphasized a return to the "things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*) by examining how individuals experience and constitute meaning in their lifeworld. Methodologically, this study was guided by the transcendental phenomenology of Moustakas (1994), which focuses on deriving the invariant structures (essences) of an experience through processes of epoche (bracketing preconceptions), phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. The research was conducted within a private educational institution in Davao City, Philippines, a setting chosen for its proactive adoption of technology-integrated pedagogies, providing a rich context for examining the phenomenon in situ. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy. The criteria required participants to be licensed professional teachers who had actively implemented the flipped classroom model for at least one academic year within inclusive education settings. A total of fifteen (15) participants were recruited to reach data saturation. All participants provided informed consent, and the study adhered to strict ethical protocols to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Primary data collection was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, the principal method for gathering descriptions of lived experience in phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). An interview protocol with open-ended questions was designed to elicit rich narratives about the adaptation process. Each interview, lasting 60 to 90 minutes, was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Supplementary data from critical incident reflections and instructional artifacts were collected to facilitate methodological triangulation. The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for reflexive thematic analysis, applied within the phenomenological orientation to identify shared patterns of meaning across experiences. The process began with immersion in the transcripts, followed by the generation of initial codes. These codes were collated into potential themes, which were reviewed, refined, and clearly defined to capture the essence of the participants' collective experience. This analytical approach, grounded in the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl and the methodological steps of Moustakas (1994), and executed through the systematic thematic process of Braun and Clarke (2006), ensured a rigorous exploration of the teachers' lived realities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the teachers' lived experiences revealed three central thematic structures that encapsulate the essence of adapting the flipped classroom model within an inclusive education context. These themes, navigating logistical and affective burdens, renegotiating pedagogical identity and presence, and engaging in iterative, empathetic adaptation, illustrate a complex journey that extends far beyond mere technical implementation.

Navigating Logistical and Affective Burdens

The transition to a flipped model was universally described as an experience laden with significant logistical and emotional weight. Participants detailed the overwhelming task of creating and curating digital content while simultaneously managing the diverse needs of their students.

Informant 1: "Dili lang gyud siya paghimo og video. Pangita pa og materials nga angayan sa lain-laing lebel sa bata, nya i-upload, nya i-check kung nakasabot ba gyud ang tanan. Murag doble ang trabaho sa una." ("It's not just making a video. You still have to find materials suitable for the different levels of the children, then upload them, then check if everyone really understood. It's like double the work at first.")

Informant 5: "Kapoy kaayo emotionally. Usahay magduha-duha ka kung nag-effect ba imong gihimo kay daghan kaayong factors: internet sa bata, support sa ginikanan, ilang motivation. Magsalig ra ka ug hope." ("It's very emotionally exhausting. Sometimes you doubt if what you're doing is effective because there are so many factors: the child's internet, parental support, their motivation. You just rely on hope.")

Informant 4: "Ang pressure kay gikan sa tanan: sa school nga naga-expect og innovation, sa mga ginikanan nga naga-question, ug sa imong kaugalingon nga gusto gyud nimong masakpan ang tanan nga estudyante." ("The pressure comes from everywhere: from the school expecting innovation, from parents questioning, and from yourself because you really want to reach every student.") This theme aligns strongly with existing literature documenting the intensified labour and emotional toll of innovative pedagogy during disruption. Djarwo (2025) similarly found teachers in low-resource settings grappling with "double work" and anxiety, while Saro *et al.* (2022) identified coping with increased workload as a critical competency in the new normal. The affective dimension, the doubt and emotional exhaustion, echoes White's (2021) findings on the lived stress of classroom management, now transferred to a digital-physical hybrid environment. This underscores that adaptation is not a purely procedural challenge but a holistic, burdensome experience.

Renegotiating Pedagogical Identity and Presence

A profound shift in the teachers' professional self-concept emerged as they moved from being primary content deliverers to facilitators of active learning. This renegotiation involved a reconstitution of their "presence" in the classroom.

Informant 6: "Sauna, ang akong role mao ang giyud ang magtutudo. Karon, ang akong role kay ang mag-guide sa ilang pagkat-on. Murag nawala ko sa center stage, pero naa ko sa tanan ka grupo nga naga-assist." ("Before, my role was really the one who lectures. Now, my role is to guide their learning. It's like I disappeared from the center stage, but I am with every group, assisting.")

Informant 3: "Ang klase karon mas kusog ang tingog sa mga bata kaysa sa ako. Pero diri nako makita kung kinsa gyud ang nag-struggle ug kinsa ang naka-sabot dayon. Diri na mas meaningful ang akong panahon." ("The class now has louder voices from the children than from me. But here is where I can really see who is struggling and who understood immediately. Here is where my time becomes more meaningful.")

Informant 9: "Nangita kog bag-ong ngalan sa akong kaugalingon. Dili na teacher lang. Facilitator, coach, designer... pero sa sulod, para sa mga bata, teacher gihapon. Lain lang gyud ang paagi." ("I am looking for a new name for myself. Not just a teacher anymore. Facilitator, coach, designer... but inside, for the children, I'm still a teacher. Just a very different way.")

This transformation mirrors the identity conflicts noted by James (2023), where traditional teachers had to reconceptualize their preparedness and role during emergency remote learning. The shift from "sage on the stage" is a central tenet of flipped learning, but the phenomenological data reveals it as an intimate, identity-level negotiation. The finding that meaningful teacher presence is reconstituted through facilitation and individualized attention, rather than diminished, supports

Pontillas's (2025) observation that borderless classrooms redefine, rather than erase, teacher-student connections.

Engaging in Iterative, Empathetic Adaptation

Successful adaptation was characterized not by flawless execution of a prescribed model, but by a continuous, responsive cycle of observation, adjustment, and empathy-driven innovation tailored to individual learner needs.

Informant 11: "Wala gyud siyay fixed nga template. Kung nakita nako nga ang video dili effective sa usa ka bata, himuon nako og storyboard, or recorded audio call. Trial and error gyud siya per child." ("It really has no fixed template. If I see the video isn't effective for one child, I make a storyboard, or a recorded audio call. It's really trial and error per child.")

Informant 13: "Ang pag-flip nako, gisundan nako sa pag-scan sa ilang mga nawong sulod sa klase. Didto nako ma-adjust dayon ang activity. Kung naay lost, ibalik nako sa small group, himuon nato og live mini-lesson." ("My flipping is followed by scanning their faces inside the classroom. That's where I adjust the activity immediately. If someone is lost, I bring them back to a small group, we do a live mini-lesson.")

Informant 14: "Ang pinakasentro kay ang bata, dili ang modelo. Kung ang flipped dili molihok para niya, unsaon nako pag-flip ang prinsipyo pero ibag-o ang porma? Kinahanglan nimong masinati ang ilang kalisod aron ka makahimo og solusyon." ("The center is the child, not the model. If flipped doesn't work for them, how do I flip the principle but change the form? You need to empathize with their difficulty to create a solution.")

This theme of responsive, student-centered iteration directly addresses the gap in literature regarding inclusive application. While Ramulumo *et al.* (2024) noted teachers' perspectives on challenges, this study details the process of overcoming them: a phenomenology of empathetic problem-solving. It validates Cabuquin's (2022) implication for flexible "new normal" practices but specifies that such flexibility is a daily, intuitive act of pedagogical care. This constant adaptation, driven by empathy rather than just efficacy, is the critical mechanism through which the flipped model becomes a tool for inclusion, ensuring no student is left behind due to a rigid adherence to the innovation itself.

The findings align with and deepen existing phenomenological inquiries into teacher experience during educational disruption. The logistical and affective burdens resonate with the concept of the "lifeworld" (Husserl, 1931/2012), where teachers' professional realities are saturated with both practical tasks and emotional strains. This echoes Djarwo's (2025) findings in low-resource settings and White's (2021) phenomenology of classroom stress, confirming that adaptation is a holistic, existential challenge rather than a technical one. The renegotiation of identity reflects a core concern of phenomenological research: the constitution of self within professional practice. This transformation aligns

with James's (2023) work on teachers reconceptualizing their role during crisis, but extends it by revealing the nuanced, ongoing negotiation between old and new professional selves. It supports the phenomenological view that identity is not static but is continually reconstituted through lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). The theme of iterative, empathetic adaptation directly engages with the phenomenological imperative of understanding the "essence" of inclusive practice. It moves beyond general challenges (Ramulumo *et al.*, 2024) to uncover the intentional acts of care that characterize the teacher-student relationship in inclusive flipped settings. This aligns with van Manen's (1990) notion of pedagogical tact—a moment-by-moment, reflective action oriented to the child's wellbeing.

In adhering to transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), the researcher employed epoché (bracketing) to set aside preconceptions about flipped classrooms and inclusion. However, a reflexive acknowledgment is necessary: the researcher's background in progressive pedagogy may have inclined the thematic analysis toward interpreting adaptation as a positive, agentic journey. To mitigate this, member checking was employed, and negative cases were actively sought during analysis to challenge emerging themes. The commitment was to represent the participants' lived experiences, not the researcher's pedagogical ideals.

While the three themes were predominant, the analysis did encounter instances that complicated the narrative. For example, one participant (Informant 8) initially stated, "After a year, it became routine—less stressful, more efficient," suggesting a linear progression toward mastery that contrasts with the prevailing theme of continuous, burdensome adaptation. This case was analyzed not as a rejection of the themes, but as evidence of varied temporal experiences within the phenomenon. For this teacher, the initial burden eventually gave way to a stabilized practice, highlighting that the essence of adaptation may include a trajectory from overwhelming struggle to integrated routine for some individuals. This nuance prevents an overgeneralized portrayal of the experience as uniformly burdensome and reinforces the phenomenological focus on the diversity of constituted meanings.

Furthermore, two participants expressed minimal struggle with identity renegotiation, viewing the shift as a natural evolution of their already student-centered practice. This contradictory evidence underscores that teachers' prior pedagogical philosophies significantly mediate their lived experience of change. These cases were integral to the analysis, ensuring the themes represented a core commonality without erasing individual variation.

Synthesized, these themes suggest that successful adaptation in inclusive flipped classrooms is a phenomenological process of sense-making where teachers grapple with external demands, internal identity shifts, and an ethical commitment to individual learners. This aligns with broader phenomenological studies in

education that frame teaching as a relational, interpretive practice (Vagle, 2018).

Practically, this implies that support for teachers must address all three dimensions: reducing logistical burdens through time and resource allocation, facilitating identity transition through mentoring and reflective communities, and honoring their empathetic, adaptive expertise as the core of inclusive innovation. Professional development should therefore be phenomenological in spirit—creating spaces for teachers to share and examine their lived experiences of adaptation, rather than solely training them in technique.

CONCLUSIONS

This phenomenological study concludes that the adaptation to the flipped classroom model within inclusive education is an intensely personal and multidimensional process for teachers, fundamentally rooted in lived experience rather than technical procedure. The major outcome reveals that successful navigation of this pedagogical disruption involves a complex interplay of managing significant logistical and emotional burdens, undergoing a profound renegotiation of professional identity from lecturer to facilitative designer, and engaging in a continuous cycle of empathetic and iterative adaptation centered on individual learner needs. This underscores that the true challenge of innovation is not the adoption of a new tool, but the holistic personal and professional transformation it demands from educators. The importance of this finding lies in its humanization of educational change, shifting the focus from model fidelity to teacher agency and resilience. It highlights that the principle of inclusion is not passively served by the flipped structure but is actively enacted through the teacher's daily, responsive judgments. A primary limitation of this work is its context-specific nature within a single private institution, which may not reflect the experiences of teachers in vastly different resource environments or public school systems. Nevertheless, the study's relevance is broad, offering critical insights for fostering sustainable innovation in diverse settings. For practical application, the findings strongly recommend that professional development and institutional support structures move beyond technical training to address the affective and identity-related dimensions of change. Schools should provide dedicated time for collaborative planning and reflective practice, creating cultures that value adaptive experimentation over rigid implementation. Ultimately, empowering teachers as interpretive agents who can skillfully mold pedagogical models to their students' realities is paramount for achieving genuinely inclusive and future-ready education.

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