

Teacher Emotional Agency: Appropriating the Learning Management System amid the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the emotional agency of teachers is achieved in appropriating the Learning Management System (LMS) policy of a non-sectarian private institution in an urban area during the COVID-19 pandemic using digital ethnography. The results reveal that teacher emotional agency involves personal, pedagogical, and technological capacities, emotions, and contextual factors. Specifically, teacher emotional agency is achieved by nurturing “*kaagapay*” relationships with parents, peers, and school, negotiating top-down policies, and recasting teaching and learning in Online Distance Learning. The contextual factors that mediate teacher emotional agency in the appropriation of LMS policy include the following: 1) spatial geographical factors, referring to the shift of the learning environment from the traditional classroom to a virtual learning setting; 2) cultural factors, comprised of learning marketing or entrepreneurship skills, digital competence, and online teaching strategies; 3) material factors, involving using the LMS, meeting applications such as Zoom and Google Meet, the internet, and digital devices for online distance learning; and 4) social factors, referring to greater parental participation and learner agency. The study proposes a conceptual model highlighting the role of teachers’ emotional agency in appropriating the LMS policy amid a crisis.

Keywords: *Teacher Emotional Agency, Appropriation, Learning Management System, Pandemic, Ethnography*

In the wake of the global pandemic, education systems face an unprecedented challenge. This has resulted in the transition of learning from face-to-face to online modalities to contain the spread of COVID-19 (Alam et al., P. 2021; Peters et al., 2020, p.2). Community quarantine protocols compelled educational institutions to introduce policies and practices on distance learning. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued Department Order (DO) 12 s.2020 outlining the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan during the school year 2020-2021 in light of the

COVID-19 public health emergency. The learning continuity plan identified learning delivery modalities that schools can adopt, depending on the COVID-19 restrictions and the particular context of the learners in the school or locality. In response to new regulations, Kanlungang Pamantasan (KP) - a private, non-sectarian school located in an urban area - adopted online distance learning for the first time. This has been made possible through a Learning Management System (LMS), the primary platform for online learning.

LMS, also known as a Virtual Learning Environment or Course Management System (Adzharuddin & Hwei, 2013), employs digital technologies and the Internet to create educational materials, manage programs, and deliver instruction (Fry, 2001). As outlined by Hrastinski (2008), online learning can be classified into synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning involves real-time lectures and timed assessments while asynchronous learning involves delayed activities, such as pre-recorded video lectures and untimed assessments (Oztok et al., 2013).

The market for LMS has grown tremendously due to increased access, reduced costs, and better quality education in high-income and low-income nations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (Bervell & Arkorfol, 2020). During the pandemic, the adoption of LMS sparked passionate debates about why, how, and what to teach (content and pedagogy), including how to ensure equitable access to learning (Burbules, 2020), particularly for disadvantaged students with poor connectivity, limited resources, and low-tech gadgets (Schwartzman, 2020).

From the viewpoint of anthropology of educational policy (Sutton & Levinson, 2001), online courses' policies, pedagogies, and delivery modes are value-laden and ideologically infused (Schwartzman, 2020). Seen this way, the authors deployed the concept of appropriation to understand how online learning modality through the LMS is a negotiated political arena (Levinson et al., 2009; Sutton & Levinson, 2001). Appropriation implies that a policy refers to a complex and ongoing social practice of normative cultural production by different actors (Sutton & Levinson, 2001). Recognizing the role of on-the-ground actors in policy making, policy appropriation is interpreted and understood through teacher emotional agency.

Teacher emotional agency is the confluence of teacher agency and emotion. Teacher agency is the socially mediated capacity of teachers to respond to challenging situations critically (Biesta & Tedder, 2006; Priestley et al., 2015). The conceptualization of teacher agency is extended by mobilizing the post-structuralist perspective on emotion (Benesch, 2018; Benesch, 2020; Zembylas, 2007) to further nuance and elaborate the discussion of teacher agency in the appropriation of LMS policy. The post-structuralist perspective contends that emotions are embodied, constructed, and performed (Zembylas, 2007). Emotions are entangled with structures, policies, and relationships. During the pandemic, teachers mobilize their emotions (emotional capital) as an essential resource mediating their agency, leading to the formulation of teacher emotional agency.

The study's primary objective is to examine how the LMS was appropriated through teacher emotional agency. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers achieve emotional agency in appropriating LMS?
2. What contextual factors mediate the achievement of teacher emotional agency in the appropriation of the LMS?

Online Distance Learning and the Learning Management System

KP implemented Online Distance Learning using the Learning Management System as its primary learning modality during the pandemic. Online Distance Learning involves utilizing technology and the internet to facilitate instruction and enable learners to engage in the learning process actively despite being geographically separated. Additionally, live synchronous instruction allows for real-time interaction, making the learning experience more engaging and interactive. A reliable internet connection is essential for successful participation in online learning (DEPED Order No. 12, 2020).

An LMS, a Virtual Learning Environment or Course Management System, is a platform universities use to develop educational content, manage instructional delivery, and supervise programs using the Internet and digital technologies. KP employed ODL through an LMS, which utilized synchronous and asynchronous learning methods. Synchronous learning occurs in real time and usually requires a scheduled class meeting facilitated by platforms like Zoom and GMeet. On the other hand, asynchronous classes allow students to watch video lessons and access learning activities at their own pace. These classes may include lectures prepared through slide presentations, rubrics, assessment activities, and announcements uploaded to the LMS outside of real-time meetings.

Appropriation as an Approach of Educational Anthropology to Policy Making

Appropriation recognizes the crucial role of authorized policy actors like politicians, board members, administrators, and unauthorized policymakers like teachers in the policymaking process (Sutton & Levinson, 2001, p.3). Policies result from a complex and ongoing social practice involving various actors across different contexts. Therefore, policy appropriation involves actors interpreting, negotiating, and implementing policies (Hamann & Rosen, 2011)). This paper considers teachers, though unauthorized, as policymakers as they deploy their agency in interpreting and appropriating policies.

Teacher agency was conceptualized mainly by examining how educators' reactions are influenced, restricted, or enabled by accountability measures or top-down policies implemented as educational reforms (Priestley et al., 2012, p. 196). Research focusing on the effects of academic policies and reforms on teacher agency highlights how teachers either comply with or resist regulations (Benesch, 2019, p. 2). Moreover, the

discrepancy between aspirations (such as developing competence) and the requirements of policy implementation (such as supporting teacher professional development) has necessitated the use of teacher agency at the local/micro level (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016, p. 31). As a result, teacher agency has been given significant attention in policymaking. At the micro-level, the policy is appropriated through various forms of teacher agency (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016), including hybridizing (Kidd & Murray, 2020; Bonior, 2020), bricolaging (Bonior, 2020), resistance (Benesch, 2019; Foucault, 1982; Reed-Dahanay, 1996; Sannino, 2010; Scott, 1985;), localization, and contextualization (Arzadon, 2021).

Appropriating the LMS through Teacher Emotional Agency

Teacher agency as a means for policy appropriations is usually perceived as practices devoid of emotions. However, this study foregrounds how teacher emotional agency influences the implementation of LMS. Teacher emotional agency acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between emotions and teacher agency (Marshall et al., 2018). This approach recognizes the factors that motivate, guide, and inspire teachers as they incorporate new technology tools, including emotions' vital role in enabling them to act. The following case studies reveal how teachers exercised their emotional agency as they transitioned from face-to-face to online distance learning, reinforcing the importance of care in teaching amid an education crisis.

Kidd and Murray (2020) conducted a study on the impact of COVID-19 on teacher education in England, specifically how teacher educators transitioned to online practicum learning. They noted that working from home blurred the boundaries between work and personal life, leading to a more extended digital presence and negatively affecting work-life balance. This change also required teachers to extend their material and emotional resources for care.

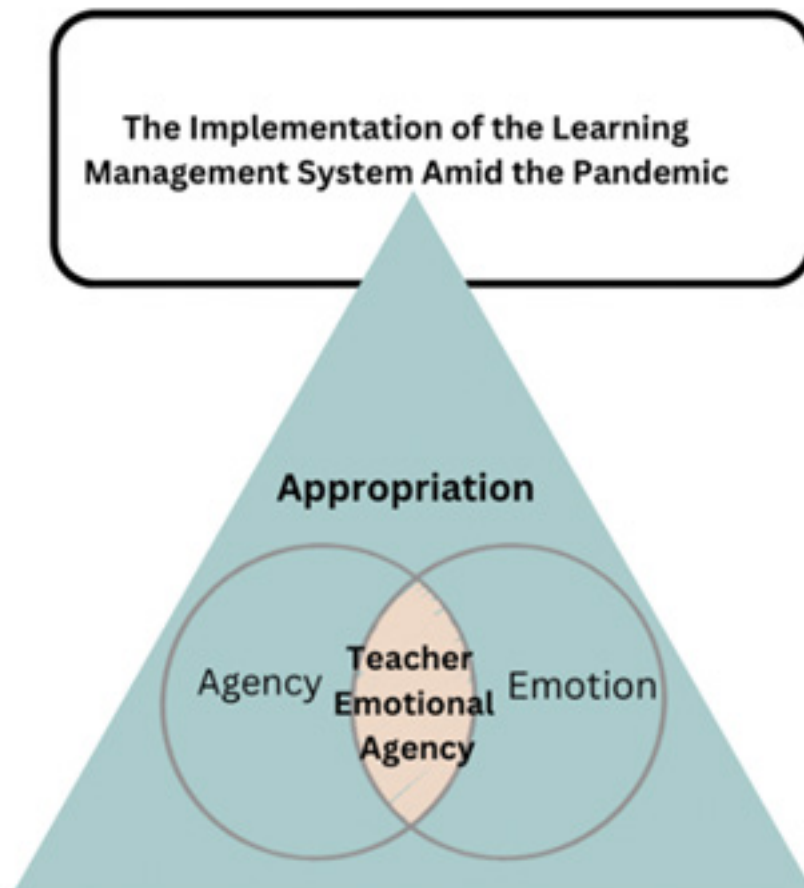
In addition, Schwartzman (2020) established the Facebook group Pandemic Pedagogy to assist educators, students, and other education stakeholders navigate online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The group quickly evolved into an interdisciplinary hub for academic discussions, examining crucial topics such as digital divides, synchronous instruction, and learning migration from school to home environments. Schwartzman noted that the pandemic presented an opportunity to reimagine the nature and purpose of education by promoting communal, care-based, and collaborative resilience. This study demonstrated the power of relational agency, which involves creating a network to provide and receive support (Edwards, 2005, p. 168).

The above empirical evidence highlights that appropriating an educational policy or reform amid a crisis requires agency and care. The following section discusses the conceptualization of teacher emotional agency, shedding light on its theoretical underpinnings.

Conceptualizing Teacher Emotional Agency

Figure 1

The Appropriation of the LMS through the Teacher Emotional Agency



The conceptual framework demonstrates how teachers utilize the LMS by leveraging their emotional agency, which encompasses the intersection of agency and emotions. Meanwhile, the concept of teacher emotional agency builds on the ecological conceptualization of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Priestley et al. (2015). It suggests that teacher agency is not solely a result of personal capability, available resources, and contextual factors but also of emotional capital and labor, demonstrating that emotions play a crucial role in achieving teacher agency.

Methods Shore

Ethnography complements deployment appropriation as a conceptual tool in this research since ethnography reveals extensive power relations and meaning-making (Shore et al., 2011). Specifically, this paper employed school ethnography, where the researcher was immersed in school life to document and describe its culture (Woods,

1986). Digital ethnography was employed due to the community lockdowns and restrictions on physical mobility at the early stages of the pandemic. Digital ethnography is doing ethnographic work in a digital environment. In this study, the internet and digital devices were utilized to observe chat rooms, classes, Facebook pages, and postings to answer research questions. Online ethnography also included participation in group discussions, webinars, and interviews with individuals through Facebook Messenger and other meeting platforms such as Gmeet and Zoom. Soft copies of documents such as video lessons, online announcements, policies, and other learning materials were likewise collected and analyzed. The data generated from the said instruments and tools were analyzed to develop themes that answered the research questions.

Research Setting

The *Kanlungan Paalaran* (KP) is a non-sectarian private educational institution in an urban area. It is a low-cost private school for low-income and middle-income families. For context, the effects of the pandemic have resulted in significant financial losses for schools globally, leading to job losses and salary cuts among teachers (Alam & Tiwari, 2021). At KP, the pandemic caused a decline in enrollment at all levels (preschool, elementary, junior high school, senior high school, and college). The elementary department was the most affected among these levels. The enrollment declined to 60%. This situation required the department to maintain, if not increase, its enrollment quota from SY 2020-2021 to SY 2021-2022. This situation compelled teachers to learn to be marketing strategists, which affected their emotional agency.

Participants

This ethnography involved all teachers in KP's elementary and preschool departments on the main campus (see the table below). This department's unique characteristics suit the study's intended purpose. Firstly, the department has fewer gatekeepers, which is crucial during pandemic times when engaging with a new community can be challenging. Therefore, a familiar community was chosen. Secondly, the participants from this department had diverse teaching experiences, unlike other KP elementary branches, making the group composition mixed in terms of teaching experience. This characteristic allowed a broader examination of different perspectives on policy and teaching, which is essential in understanding agency and emotions (Bonior, 2020).

Table 1*Teacher Profile*

Name of Teacher/ Personnel	Sex	Age	Civil Status	Number of Years in Teaching/ Service	Level/s Handled	Subject/s Taught	Other Position/s handled
Maya	F	49	Married	21			Principal
Joy	F	28	Single	6	Grades 4,5 & 6	Filipino, HELE	LIS Coordinator
Lisa	F	28	Single	7	Kinder	N/A (Thematic Teaching)	None
Jessa	F	51	Married	18 (in AU)	Grades 4,5 & 6 / college	Mostly English subjects	Activity Coordinator /Academic Coordinator
Ira	F	24	Single	2 months	Grades 5 & 6	AP, HELE, Arts	None
Vina	F	33	Married	9	Grades 1,2, & 3	Filipino, MT, P.E, Arts, Health, ESP	Academic Coordinator
Jana	F	28	Single	5	Grades 4,5 & 6	Science, PE	Research Coordinator
Yna	F	26	Single	2 months	Grades 1, 3, 4, 5, & 6	Filipino Health, Music, Arts, Health	None
Lyn	F	30	Married	5	Grades 1,2 & 3	ESP, Math, English, Science, Music, PE, MT	None
Gema	F	28	Single	3	Grades 4-6	Music, Health, ESP	None
Jovi	F	26	Single	2 months	Grades 4 & 6	Math, AP	Activity Coordinator
Shena	F	43	Married	2 months	Pre-Kinder, Grades 1 & 2	English, Math	None
Josielyn	F	44	Married	11	Grade 1,2, & 3	Esp, Math, AP, Health, PE	None
Antonio	M	53	Married	24	Grades 3, 5, & 6	Math, AP, PE	
Esang	F	52	Married	31	Grades 5 & 6	ESP 5, 6	Guidance Counselor/ Telemarketer

Table 1 shows the profile of the participants. Pseudonyms for each teacher were used to protect their anonymity. While these characteristics such as sex, age, civil status, years in service, levels and subjects taught, are personal, in this ethnography, they are inextricably embroiled and implicated by social structures. The table shows that 14 out of 15 participants (including the principal) were females, and 7 out of the 14 female participants were mothers. Thus, the study interrogated how parenting, particularly mothering (Cooley et al., 2003; Nowotny, 1981; Reay, 2004; Zembylas, 2003), caring (Jones & Kesler, 2020; O'Connor, 2008), emotional experiences, and teacher agency were exercised. Four seasoned teachers (teaching for more than ten years) confessed to having limited digital competence. This is important, for teachers who demonstrate technical competence deliver adaptive online teaching during the pandemic (Konig et al., 2020). Hence, technical competence as embodied cultural capital can facilitate or constrain teacher agency and emotional labor.

Ethnography

Ethnography involves collecting and analyzing information about a community's artifacts, beliefs, and values. This process relies on various techniques; thus, it is necessary to use as many different perspectives as possible to confirm things. Good ethnographic research involves triangulating observations, interviews, and archival sources to reinforce conclusions (Angrosino, 2007). These instruments were utilized through online platforms. First, the ethnographer serves as the primary research instrument in ethnography. The "self" is considered a critical tool in the research process (Ortner, 2006; Woods, 1986). As an instrument, the ethnographer is actively engaged in gathering information using all senses. Second, *interview guides* were developed for research participants, focusing on achieving teacher emotional agency and factors facilitating its achievement. Third, *the observation guide* contains critical areas such as teachers' emotions, students' behavior, parents' participation, teaching strategies, and other conditions mediating teacher emotional agency. It helped on reflect on issues arising from observation. These reflections or insights enabled data triangulation and strengthened my analysis. Fourth, *field notes are documents from a researcher's practical experience in a specific setting or environment* (Allen, 2017). Journals or written notes were kept to record the data from classroom observations, faculty meetings, consultative meetings with principals, and webinars. These data, with the information gathered from interviews, focus group discussions, and archival research were combined.

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Data Analysis Procedure

Collected data were analyzed using open and axial coding techniques to identify themes. The themes were then presented through matrices for deeper analysis and pattern generation. The extracted themes were meticulously reviewed.

Ethical Considerations

The school's research director and the Vice President for Academic Affairs gave permission for the study's conduct. The study was designed to fully comply with the university's research ethics guidelines and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (National Privacy Commission, 2024). Before participating in the study, each participant signed a consent letter emphasizing that their involvement was voluntary and uncompensated. They were also informed that they may withdraw from the study without any negative consequences.

The researcher demonstrated a high level of reflexivity in their research in the conduct of this study. Reflexivity involves being aware of one's positionality on the cultural, societal, policy, and educational factors that influence the development of a study and immersion in the field. This also includes recognizing any assumptions or preconceptions that may be brought into the research process, challenging theoretical foundations, and exploring how data can reveal different meanings. Practicing reflexivity requires self-reflection and questioning one's theoretical stance and methodology while conducting ethnography. Ethnographers hold themselves accountable for their research paradigms and have a moral responsibility regarding representation and interpretation (Madison, 2005).

Results

The following section focuses on two primary themes: the achievement of teacher emotional agency in appropriating LMS policy and the contextual factors that influence it (see Tables 1 and 2).

The Achievement of Teacher Emotional Agency (TEA) in the Appropriation of LMS Policy

Table 2

The Achievement of TEA in the Appropriation of LMS Policy

Achieving Teacher Emotional Agency	TEA Manifestations
Nurturing <i>kaagapay</i> relationships with parents, colleagues, and the school	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Earning parents' trust and demonstrating care (<i>malasakit</i>) 2. Demonstrating collaboration, empathy, and <i>malasakit</i> with colleagues 3. Demonstrating competence and caring instruction (<i>malasakit</i>) as a marketing strategy.
Resisting top-down instructional policies	Circumventing a policy and aligning it with the moral or professional dimension of teaching.
Recasting teaching and learning in ODL	Innovating and recontextualizing teaching and learning in ODL

The collected data showed that teachers achieve emotional agency by nurturing *kaagapay* relationships with parents, peers, and school, resisting top-down instructional policies, and recasting teaching and learning. Emotions are crucial in achieving teacher agency and are central to the theoretical discussion.

Nurturing kaagapay relationships with parents: In the new learning landscape, the teacher's initial goal was to earn parents' trust before the teacher could deliver instruction. For example, exploring teachers' emotional agency has led to developing care-based teaching strategies. The emotional connection shared between teachers and parents nurtured empathy, strengthening the concept of "*kaagapay*" - a trusted partner in crisis times. In Tagalog, *kaagapay* refers to being a supportive and helpful ally. Specifically, this study defines *kaagapay* as a partner in crisis, someone with whom you can share your pain and suffering (*sakit*). One teacher explained that she could relate emotionally to her students' parents as both a teacher and parent. This allowed her to better understand the challenges of teaching and working with a child during online classes. During times of crisis, caring (*pagmamalasakit*) is an essential element of teaching, helping, and journeying with a *kaagapay* to overcome challenges and move forward.

For example, Teacher Lisa invested time and effort in earning parents' trust (*namumuhunan*). *Namumuhunan* means being considerate, understanding, demonstrative

of competence, and patient with parents. At the beginning of classes, she received overwhelming inquiries from parents in Dubai (mostly professional workers) about teacher-pupil ratio, medium of instruction, teaching schedule, synchronous and asynchronous class arrangements, navigating the LMS, and submitting their children's outputs. Teacher Lisa felt she was being observed and tested. She found the parents formal (speaking to her in English), cold (just liking her message on the chat group at times), and *mausisa* (scrutinizing her). The parents' suspicious and observant behaviors caused her *kaba* (anxiety). Still, she managed her emotions by empathizing and reflecting that every parent wanted to ensure their child's safety online.

Earning parents' trust is crucial, and part of that involves demonstrating competence as a teacher. During a conversation, a parent inquired about preschool expectations. The response was that the focus was on helping the child rather than imposing expectations. Teacher Lisa emphasized the importance of answering questions with intelligence and politeness. When asked in English, she responded in English, too, always striving to be sincere and respectful in her interactions.

During one instance, Teacher Lisa received a request from parents in Dubai for an entire afternoon schedule for their children. The request was granted with approval from the principal, considering the appeal for a teacher-student ratio of at most 15 students per class. To meet this requirement, Teacher Lisa split her 30 students into two groups - the morning session (8:00 am to 10:00 am) for Philippine-based students and the afternoon session (3:00 pm to 5:00 pm) for Dubai-based students. While the schedule was a success, Teacher Lisa shared that the four-hour time difference between the Philippines and Dubai took a physical toll on her. Despite the exhaustion, she remained dedicated to her passion for teaching and empathized with the parents' situation. For Teacher Lisa, her love for teaching far exceeded any personal interests, a mindset she maintained throughout her many years of experience.

In Dubai, some parents recruited additional students to meet the maximum class size of 15 despite initially requesting a standard class size of 9. Teacher Lisa later received a message from a parent thanking her for her work and asking to accommodate another student. Despite the added challenge, Teacher Lisa accepted the proposal and was proud of the trust she gained from the parents. The principal was also pleased with the outcome. Teacher Lisa described the experience as going from worry to joy, overcoming her anxiety, and establishing her authority in the classroom.

Nurturing kaagapay relationships with peers: Working remotely reinforced collaboration, empathy, and *malasakit* among teachers. Established relationships were relocated from a physical to an online work environment. These relationships were mobilized to generate emotional, social, and technical support for each other. Before the pandemic, seasoned teachers mentored new teachers. During the pandemic, this practice was reinforced and democratized.

The evolution of teaching practices led to a more inclusive and collaborative approach to mentoring, breaking down traditional hierarchical barriers between novice and experienced teachers. This encouraged both groups to acknowledge their vulnerabilities and seek support from each other, fostering deeper discussions about the personal and professional challenges they faced. As a result, a *kaagapay* relationship emerged as a valuable social resource during crisis times.

Kaagapay mentoring is focused on three key areas: managing relationships with parents, teaching principles, and digital literacy. For example, experienced teachers guided classroom management, teaching techniques, and other pedagogical approaches. Meanwhile, less experienced teachers may need help with technical issues and using online teaching tools. Through this process, seasoned teachers came to appreciate the challenges of teaching in an online environment and recognized the value of learning from their younger colleagues.

Nurturing Kaagapay Relationship with the School: Teachers also developed *kaagapay* relationships with the school as marketing strategists. Due to the drastic enrollment decline in SY 2020-2021, austerity measures were implemented to address the pandemic's financial impact on the school. This involved exploring aggressive marketing activities such as making education affordable with freebies, undertaking marketing promotions online and offline, forging partnerships, and implementing modular and online learning modalities through LMS.

As a marketing strategy, teachers capitalized on quality and caring instruction to promote the school's program and increase enrollment. Teachers were mindful that the parents chose the school for their children, so they reinforced teacher-parent relationships through quality instruction by demonstrating teaching competence and building respect for each other through care. Online learning highlighted parent-teacher relationships, so teachers leveraged this opportunity to establish relationships and project a positive image.

Enrolling a child in a program signifies a commitment to quality service and fostering positive parent relationships. Teacher Lisa said, *"I strive to provide excellent education and cultivate strong connections with parents because ultimately, they are the ones deciding on their children's school."*

Instead of directly engaging in marketing efforts, Teacher Lisa relied on her parents to spread the word in Dubai. This allowed them to customize class schedules for students. Her principal was pleased with this strategy and commended Teacher Lisa for her marketing approach centered on cultivating positive relationships with parents. Fostering positive *kaagapay* relationships with parents, peers, and the school community was essential in establishing a nurturing virtual learning environment. A secure and welcoming learning climate made teachers feel valued and heard, particularly in policy-making processes.

Resisting top-down instructional policies

Challenging top-down instructional policies involved navigating around rigid or one-size-fits-all rules, which caused emotional strain for teachers. Teacher Lisa explained, *"We may resist, but we also comply with the policy."* Reactions to policies do not necessarily indicate rebellion or disobedience; instead, teachers interpret the policy based on their ethical principles, considering their emotional well-being and student welfare.

Educational reforms often elicit emotional reactions and micro-political maneuvers from teachers who meet work demands in ODL during the pandemic. For example, due to the rapid shift to online distance learning (ODL), the primary content of learning management systems (LMS) became video lessons. Each campus produced these videos without consultation, resulting in some teachers creating instructional videos outside their expertise. This instructional policy led teachers to engage in various policy appropriations involving on-the-ground negotiations that reflected different ways of exercising agency, including mobilizing their social, material, and cultural resources.

Resistance to policy raises ethical concerns and fosters prospects for change, as illustrated by the following cases.

Jessa, an experienced English teacher, found it difficult to accept the policy as she was tasked with creating video lessons for mathematics. This sudden shift to teaching through ODL proved challenging for someone accustomed to traditional methods of instruction for over two decades. Teacher Jessa had to learn two important things: 1) how to create a video lesson and 2) how to teach mathematics, considering she was an English teacher. To overcome these struggles, Teacher Jessa mobilized her networks. She turned to her sons for help. One, a college student, and the other, a former high school math teacher serving as an SHS principal, assisted her in learning new skills such as creating PowerPoint presentations and recording videos. In acquiring teaching pedagogy and content mastery in Mathematics, she sought the help of her fellow teacher who taught mathematics.

On the other hand, Teacher Jana faced more challenging circumstances. As a science teacher given the task of creating a video lesson on Music VL, she experienced burnout and physical symptoms such as insomnia, persistent sadness, and lutang (disorientation). These difficulties nearly led her to resign from her position. She shared her story:

This situation has been difficult for me. I have been feeling upset for almost a month now. I recently spoke with the principal and told her I would be resigning. I have spent much time revising a video lesson, but I am worried that it will not be easy for my students to understand. I feel sorry for them, and it has been hard to accept this. It has been affecting me so much that I have been crying myself to sleep. Even though I wanted to create a video lesson, my body did not respond to my wishes. I am conflicted between my

mind telling me to work and my heart telling me to rest. One day, I spoke to a colleague, and we both cried because we did not know how to complete the video lessons. It has been a struggle for us to get any sleep lately.

As she pondered her situation, she pushed herself to the limit and relied on her social connections to alleviate her stress and create quality instructional videos for her students. However, she realized that the solution to her problem was beyond her individual capabilities and support system. After completing three music videos, she approached the principal of another branch responsible for science videos and proposed an exchange - she would create their videos in return for the Music VL assigned to her. The principal kindly agreed, and after two challenging months of battling burnout, utilizing her emotional resources to learn from tutorial videos, and struggling with subpar videos from colleagues in her department, she ultimately leveraged a network from another department to achieve her goal.

The example above illustrates that teachers may struggle to meet the demands placed upon them, leading to anxiety, when faced with overwhelming challenges. In such situations, teachers must acknowledge their vulnerabilities, proactively expand their social networks, and assert their right to seek assistance and support.

According to the data, teachers' emotional agency is demonstrated through their resistance to arbitrary instructional policies. This resistance is not provocative but a way to display care and empathy towards students and to teach effectively while asserting their identity. By circumventing policies, teachers combat burnout and develop student trust (Benesch, 2019; Benesch, 2020; Priestley et al., 2013).

Recasting teaching and learning in ODL

In actual teaching, teachers recast teaching and learning by using critical and innovative problem-solving strategies to achieve learning goals. In so doing, teachers reflect on these questions: *“As a parent, how do I teach my child innovatively? How do I make learning easy, engaging, and meaningful?”*

Teachers engage in reflexivity as they empathize, question, and innovate their practice to meet their individual and social aspirations in line with their interests and professional values. Reflexivity means improving a teaching practice while being mindful of the profession's moral, social, and psychological aspects. At the onset of the pandemic, educators encountered formidable obstacles in providing effective instruction due to the unfamiliarity with online teaching and the need for more training for distance learning. Teaching young children, particularly at the early stages, necessitates hands-on interaction and observation to gauge their backgrounds, tailor lessons suitably, and formulate effective learning strategies. The absence of these teaching practices in an online environment raises significant concerns among educators, who aspire to ensure favorable learning outcomes regardless of teaching modality. Teachers had to adapt,

using their observational and relational skills, such as listening, paying attention to pupils' behavior, and understanding their emotions, to create meaningful online learning experiences. Teachers' primary concern in online teaching was determining meaningful and relevant teaching strategies and assessment tools that created positive outcomes, sustained student participation, and encouraged parents' involvement, particularly in the early grades.

The above realization sheds light on the importance of establishing good teacher-pupil relationships as a prerequisite for instruction. Teachers explored different ways to connect with students. Classes began with kumustahan or activities that allowed pupils to express their emotions and others to get to know them, including their families. Teachers usually asked: *How are you today? Pick an emoji that best expresses your feelings.* These practices enabled teachers to know students more deeply so interventions and lesson planning could be undertaken. Because direct or physical observations cannot be done online, teachers had to strengthen their listening skills and sense of sight for online observation. Aside from establishing connections and building trust with pupils, teachers also reflected on the best teaching approaches to facilitate meaningful learning virtually.

Teachers embraced the value of empathy, known as "*malasakit*," to develop practical and creative teaching techniques and learning activities for students. According to Teacher Lisa, navigating the pandemic was a daily struggle, requiring constant innovation in teaching methods and a heightened endurance level due to the increased workload. Each day presented new learning opportunities and required her to demonstrate acquired knowledge and *malasakit* in teaching her pupils and dealing with their parents, reflecting the concept of emotional labor to overcome challenging circumstances.

As teachers navigated their emotions, they posed several important questions: How can I teach in an innovative way? Are students truly engaging with online learning? How can I simplify my lessons while ensuring they remain meaningful? These inquiries focused on the goal of delivering effective instruction online, enabling educators to leverage their cultural, social, material, and emotional resources to overcome challenging circumstances.

Through collaborative meetings and reflective practices, teachers reimagined meaningful performance-based activities and assessments by incorporating elements of arts, music, and games, thereby minimizing the need for lengthy lectures and extended listening periods.

Teacher Lisa reflected, "*Incorporating art-based activities into my classes allows each student to tap into their creativity and imagination. As their teacher, it is my responsibility to help uncover the deeper meanings behind their artwork and encourage them to develop their talents and abilities further. Witnessing my students acquire and apply their skills through firsthand observations brings me great joy.*"

Additionally, parents and guardians were equipped with the necessary skills to teach reading and writing to their children, enabling children to learn more effectively from home. Online instruction achieved great success by fostering strong teacher-parent (*kaagapay*) relationships. *Kaagapay* relationships with parents were a form of social capital, encouraging teachers and parents to mutually involve themselves in children’s learning, particularly during the emergency crisis.

When teachers were asked what drove them to reflect and find solutions to the issues raised, their responses illustrated the enactment of a professional identity as teachers centered on caring and their values. During the pandemic, such a caring identity was extended to the pupils’ families and cultivated through mutual responsibility. Through emotional reflexivity, teachers know the structures and personal resources affecting their teaching, influencing them to commit and care about a particular role or teaching practice (Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016).

Contextual Factors Influencing Teacher Emotional Agency

Table 3

Contextual Factors Influencing Teacher Emotional Agency

Spatial-geographical: The Pandemic and Online Distance Learning	Space-creating collaboration Space blurring of work-life boundaries
Social	Parental Involvement Learner Agency
Cultural	Marketing knowledge and digital Competence
Materia	The Learning Management System Internet Connectivity

Table 3 shows contextual factors influencing teacher emotional agency. Based on the presented data, teachers’ appropriation of LMS policies was influenced by a combination of cultural, social, and material factors (Priestley et al., 2015) or contextualized elements (Arzadon, 2021; Bonior, 2020; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). These factors constrain or facilitate the achievement of teacher emotional agency during the pandemic. These contextualized elements can be divided into four categories:

1. “Spatial-geographical” refers to spaces (online and in-home settings) where teaching and learning took place during the pandemic.
2. “Cultural” involves values, forms of knowledge, and skills related to teaching that were acquired and developed during the pandemic. This includes marketing

strategies, teaching strategies, and digital competence);

3. "Social" pertains to social networks and resources mobilized to achieve teacher emotional agency, such as parental involvement and learner agency); and,
4. "Material" encompasses physical and digital resources, such as the Learning Management System's capabilities and non-human elements like the Internet, digital devices, and teaching materials, such as video lessons and learning plans.

Spatial-geographical: The Pandemic and Online Distance Learning

Space-creating collaboration: Teachers and parents took on new complementary positions and roles in home-based learning. Teachers believe that learning success in ODL depends on a strong teacher-parent partnership and parental involvement. This collaboration is built on mutual trust. Teachers earn parents' trust by demonstrating empathy and competence in teaching, while parents support teachers and school activities.

Teacher Lyn explained how online teaching paved the way for teacher-parent collaboration. She described the contributions of parents and teachers in online learning. She emphasized parents' vital role in creating and managing the learning environment at home and addressing technical challenges. As education partners, providing parents with the necessary training and support was essential. Lyn committed to building trust with her students' parents and equipping them with the skills to assist their children's learning.

Space blurring of work-life boundaries: Teacher Lisa said that teaching had become a personal home routine. She explained that her disposition as a person and teacher was the same. From this perspective, teaching is a space where professional and personal activities intersect. Because good teachers naturally invest part of themselves in their work, their personal and professional identities are interrelated (Jones & Kessler, 2020). She said loving work means loving oneself as one cannot give what he/she does not have.

Teacher Vina, a parent of a two-year-old boy, confirmed that parenting and teaching could present emotional challenges for educators and parents alike. Through mutual experiences, she fostered a more profound empathy for individuals in similar positions. She noted that, as a teacher and parent, she can empathize with the parents of her pupils who also work and teach their children at the same time.

She recognized that separating her personal and professional life in the current work-from-home setting can be challenging, as parenting and teaching co-occur in the same space. However, this situation has taught her the value of embracing a shared identity, enabling her to cultivate patience and empathy for her students and their families.

Social: Parental Involvement and Learner Agency

Parental involvement: Parental involvement means the proactive engagement of parents in their children's educational experiences and development (Ma et al., 2016; Wilder, 2013). Parental involvement mediates teacher emotional agency. In short, parents' resources impact teachers' capacity. Influenced by the pandemic, parental involvement referred to meeting parents' goals in home learning: establishing a partnership with teachers and performing parents' teaching duties at home for children's welfare.

Central to establishing a positive relationship between parents and teachers is mutual trust for each other and the school. The teacher has to earn parents' trust (*makuha ang loob*) and gain their confidence in his/her teaching ability. Trust in the institution and teachers was reflected in the decision of parents to choose KP as the school for their children during the pandemic. Some factors that influenced this decision were the affordability of tuition fees, quality instruction, approachability of teachers, proximity, and family members graduating from the school. The change in the learning modality during the pandemic compelled parents to assume teaching roles at home and to scrutinize teachers' instruction and approachability. *Mapang-usisa* (inquisitive), *nananantsa* (assessing), and *laging nagtatanong* (always asking questions) were words used by teachers to describe parents' skeptical attitude or mistrust of ODL.

Teachers were compelled and pressured to exert extra effort and time to meet parents' expectations and gain their trust. Parents' direct observation and engagement in ODL allowed them to validate whether online learning worked for their children. For example, a parent asked Teacher Lisa to allow her and her husband to observe her classes to determine what was going on in ODL and check if their child was learning. Moreover, parents demanded to learn from parents, too, considering that they were viewed as home teachers.

Teachers guide parents in teaching, assessing, and providing intervention or assistance for their children Teachers knew that the success of ODL was dependent on parental involvement. For Teacher Lisa, building relationships with parents was essential in navigating ODL. This involved being on good terms with the parents. During the pandemic, parental involvement and regular dialogue were strengthened so that teachers could teach more efficiently. Teacher Lisa explained that the partnership should nurtured because teachers and parents can only communicate well if they are on good terms. Regular communication is, in turn, required in the daily online teaching routine.

Learner Agency: Learner agency suggests that students impact a teacher's pedagogical approach. Learners exercise agency through strategic decisions and actions in the classroom, which can influence the implementation of the educational program (Bonior, 2020). ODL presents challenges for teacher-student and peer-to-peer interaction (Online et al.). Linear interactions such as listening and watching can lead to decreased

student engagement. Teachers have also noted that students have short attention spans when learning activities are limited to watching and listening, compared to engaging in activities such as painting, drawing, experimenting, and playing.

These challenges limit pupils' engagement in class and lead pupils to explicitly and implicitly resist online learning, demonstrating uncooperative behaviors or demanding extra time outside class hours to reconnect with classmates. For example, some students do not immediately leave the Zoom meeting because they spend the extra time with their classmates to talk about their friends, toys, families, and other things that interest them.

To address these challenges, Teacher Lisa incorporated games into her reading lessons. One such game was the "reading race," where students read words, phrases, or sentences presented on a slide. Each time a student answered correctly, they advanced to the next level. The teacher guided each student in pronouncing a word; each level represented a corresponding difficulty. Teacher Lisa also gave a group assessment to encourage peer-to-peer interaction. Four students engaged in board activities, games, and "kwentuhan" (story-sharing) sessions. Two siblings talked about their toys in one session, while another boy introduced his baby sister to the teacher and the rest of the class.

Cultural: Marketing Knowledge and Digital Competence

As discussed earlier, teachers developed digital competence and teaching pedagogies that fit ODL, and training was provided to equip teachers with knowledge and skills in navigating the LMS and online teaching strategies. On the other hand, principals and administrators were given training on Social Media Management (SMM) to increase their marketing strategies. SMM focuses on rebranding the school image and promoting it on social media platforms. Social media postings should be relatable and generate audience engagement. Posts could be about activities such as graduation, competitions (beauty contests, online games), concerts, promos, mental health information, and *hugot* lines (relatable online posts). Furthermore, the school's finance team, including the university president, principals, assistant principals, and assistant vice presidents, met every Thursday to discuss enrolment strategies and share best practices to increase the enrollment quota. In these meetings, constraints were tackled and addressed.

The narrative above illustrates how an elementary school principal understands her role. The scope and responsibilities of leadership have expanded significantly. It is crucial to avoid complacency and unproductive practices. Innovation plays a vital role in developing effective marketing strategies. There is always a sense of urgency driven by changes from external forces. Embracing an entrepreneurial mindset is essential for effective leadership. To achieve her enrollment quota, the principal engaged her faculty in marketing activities while also emphasizing quality instruction and building a positive relationship with parents as the primary marketing strategy.

Material: The Learning Management System and Internet Connectivity

The LMS was an outsourced product, but it was customized to the needs of its users. Considering the resources of its stakeholders, KP considered the following criteria: no branding, cost-effectiveness, usability, and data privacy protection. To meet the cost-effectiveness criterion, KP forged a partnership with one of the largest telecommunication companies in the country. The partnership provided each student and faculty with budget internet access at home. It also entitled KP to be on the whitelist of the network company which meant the school could access the LMS with a small amount of bandwidth or data.

Since KP started using the LMS, teachers' ability to navigate the LMS was crucial in delivering instruction. Through the LMS, teachers organized learning materials, shared learning resources, and tracked student records. Students, meanwhile, could monitor their progress and performance. The interface was user-friendly, even for faculty members with limited technological skills. For example, Teacher Jessa was grateful that the LMS simplified the sorting of her students' grades, freeing time for other essential responsibilities. Additionally, the LMS offered an interactive platform where teachers could leave comments, signatures, GIFs, and other icons, which parents appreciated seeing.

The LMS's significance in the online learning modality necessitated that KP continue using it and expand its capacity. From academic years 2020-2021 to 2021-2022), KP increased the capacity of LMS to serve its seven branches better. Each branch now has its own server to prevent technical issues such as overloading. System configuration is set on default, and the LMS automatically updates itself, which can temporarily affect LMS activities. However, technical problems can still arise due to overloading, system configuration, network issues, and inferior internet connectivity. Fortunately, teachers can take control of this last issue by investing in internet packages that can support their classes.

Discussion

“Teacher emotional agency refers to the capacity of teachers to use critical and creative strategies to respond to issues affecting their profession in socially and emotionally mediated ways.” During the pandemic, teacher emotional agency was achieved by nurturing relationships with parents, peers, and the school, resisting top-down instructional policies, and shifting parent-mediated teaching and learning to Online Distance Learning (ODL).

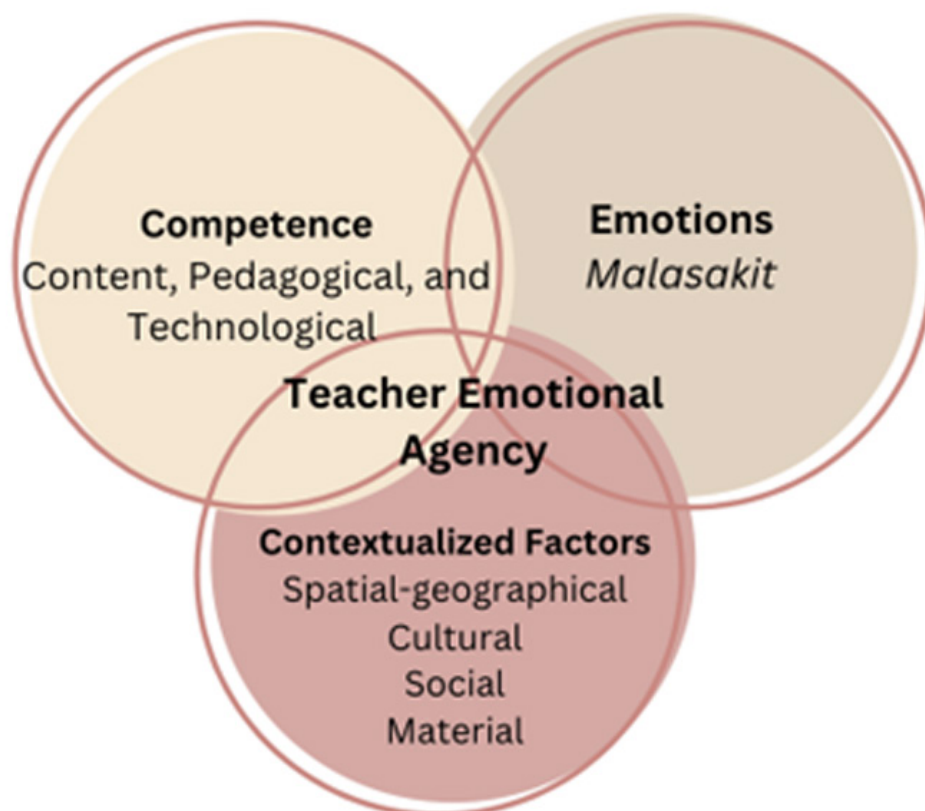
Various contextual factors, such as spatial-geographical, social, cultural, and material factors, influence teacher emotional agency. These contextual factors are interconnected, and their impacts can differ from one setting to another. In this research, the pandemic is crucial in understanding how contextual factors impact teacher emotional agency.

For instance, the ODL has shaped different forms of capital, such as social, cultural, and material capital, which are essential to overcoming the current education crisis.

This paper examines how teachers negotiated ODL through the LMS by mobilizing their agency and emotions or teacher emotional agency. This paper delves into the nuanced and extensive debates surrounding teacher agency and its conceptualization concerning the appropriation of educational policies during emergency crises. Although online teaching presents several challenges for young children, including health, economic, and psychological obstacles, teachers utilize their resources and emotional capital to enhance their effectiveness. This paper contributes by describing the development of a deeper understanding of teacher emotional agency. Thus, this study's theoretical contributions illustrate the appropriation of the LMS through teacher emotional agency.

Figure 2

The Formulated Conceptual Model of the Study



The Achievement of Teacher Emotional Agency

Nurturing Kaagapay Relationships
Resisting Top-down Instructional Policies
Recasting Teaching and Learning

Figure 2 presents the study's conceptual model. In this framework, deploying teacher emotional agency involves 1. competence in content, pedagogy, and digital technology; 2. emotions demonstrating caring or *malasakit*; and 3. contextual factors.

Contextual factors include spatial-geographical, social, cultural, and material conditions that facilitate or constrain the achievement of teacher emotional agency. Spatial geographical factor refers to the shift of the learning environment from the traditional classroom to a virtual learning setting. The cultural factor comprises learning marketing or entrepreneurship skills, digital competence, and online teaching strategies while the social factor includes social networks such as parents, students, colleagues, school officials. The material factor involves using the LMS, meeting applications such as Zoom® and Google® meet, the Internet, and other digital devices for online distance learning while the social factor encourages greater parental participation and learner agency. It is crucial to note that these contextual factors operate within the pandemic.

The interplay of competence in content, pedagogy and digital technology, *malasakit*, and contextual factors enable the achievement of teacher emotional agency, such as 1) nurturing *kaagapay* relationships with parents, peers, and school, 2) resisting top-down instructional policies, and 3) recasting parent-mediated teaching and learning towards ODL. The exercise of teacher emotional agency demonstrates an appropriation of instructional policy, stressing the significance of localized negotiations within a specific context, especially during a crisis. It also underscores the importance of establishing social support and engaging in consultations before formulating and implementing policies to empower teachers as they engage in educational reforms.

Conclusions

Teacher emotional agency is a crucial conceptual tool for the sociocultural approach to policy studies. As a conceptual tool, teacher emotional agency provides a lens on how the impact of power or policy can be examined, interpreted, and negotiated, resulting in strategic actions during the pandemic. As an approach to policy studies, it offers an alternative for policymakers to consider localized negotiations, reflecting creative and morally grounded actions. Emotional agency is an integral part of teacher transformation and professional identity—the exercise of teacher emotional agency enables local actors to engage in critical and care-based activities. Amid a crisis, expressing emotions reinforces agency, shaping teacher emotional agency. Additionally, pedagogical and digital competence, *malasakit*, and other contextual factors facilitate teaching emotional agency within an emergency, such as *kaagapay* relationships with parents, peers, and school; negotiating top-down policies; and recasting teaching and learning in ODL.

Regarding the second research question, teacher agency is influenced by context factors, available resources, and personal capacities. Personal capacities are not limited to cognitive competence and skills. Individual capacities also include emotions.

Emotions are considered personal resources that enable teachers to mobilize other forms of capital (e.g., social, cultural, material, and spiritual).

This study found that the conceptual framework initially introduced in Chapter 3 is adequate for analyzing the findings of this research. However, the sense of the intensity of emotion needed to be added to the initial framework. It was initially perceived as something equal to other capacities (pedagogical and technological). This showed that, amid crises like the pandemic, the emotional dimension of teacher agency is intensified and, therefore, more significant than different capacities.

Following the conclusion that teacher emotional agency is a significant conceptual tool for policy appropriation studies, this research shows the possibility of examining an education issue from a sociocultural approach. This encourages the democratic participation of on-the-ground actors in policymaking. The study also shows it is crucial to investigate how emotional agency (*malasakit*) affects the achievement of teacher agency amid an education crisis. In this sense, the discourse on teacher emotional agency can sharpen our perspective regarding how our emotions (emotional labor and emotional capital) lead to structural change and self-transformation. With teacher emotional agency as a tool for a transformative discourse, teacher emotional agency benefits teachers, learners, parents, policymakers, and administrators. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen caring pedagogy in education; teacher emotional agency and caring pedagogy may be mobilized and integrated into teacher education curriculum, teacher training in private and public schools, research, and policy-making.

As shown by the factors that impact emotional agency, it is crucial to examine and create enabling social conditions that support teachers in exercising their emotional agency. It is essential to consider how teachers integrate their values, knowledge, emotions, and previous and existing relationships in creating these social conditions, particularly in establishing ownership of instructional policies and programs.

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