# Vocational English Teachers' Challenges on Shifting Towards Virtual Classroom Teaching

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## Abstract

The Covid19 pandemic has brought significant influences on every aspect of our lives and society. With the determination to keep learning continued during Covid19, education itself has innovated remarkably to adapt to the lockdown situation in many regions in Asia. Among those, shifting from traditional face-to-face classrooms into online learning has been considered the ultimate solution with tremendous approvals from all stakeholders. However, at some vocational institutions, the shifting to virtual classrooms has plenteous challenges to all involved partners. Since teachers are the keys to effective implementation of this shifting during Covid19, it is crucial to understand their challenges to the shifting towards virtual classroom teaching. This paper aims to investigate the attitudes of the English teachers in some vocational colleges in Vietnam and their challenges for transferring their face-to-face classrooms into online ones. This research collected the data from a questionnaire survey to 45 vocation English teachers at five vocational colleges and in-depth interviews with nine teachers. The findings would be presented to firstly identify the vocational English teachers' attitudes towards shifting to the virtual classroom. This research also revealed some challenges of teaching online classroom from the teachers' voices, such as students' and teachers' technology-competences, students' motivations, students' technical support, teachers' experiences, teachers' willingness, and institutions' purposes and strategies. Some practical suggestions will be presented for teachers on how to face and solve these challenges, specifically during and post Covid19 period.

**Keywords:** challenges, online teaching, virtual classroom, Covid19, teachers' attitudes

## 1. Introduction

The outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic has been causing anxiety, fear, and various concerns for people all over the world. Every aspect of human life has been seriously affected due to the difficulty in controlling the outbreak from its spread throughout the world. The World Health Organization (2019) has enforced some recommendations to implement strict regulations, such as social distancing and physical distancing, working from home, or even lockdown situations for many countries in the world. According to UNO (2020) report, the Covid19 outbreak has suffered the most massive disruption of education systems in history, which has caused influences on appropriately 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Ninety-four percent of the world's students, up to 99 percent in low and lower-middle-income countries in the world, have been greatly affected by the school closure situation.

Vietnam has not been an exception. As the consequence of the Covid19 pandemic lockdown, Vietnamese education witnessed the school closure for nearly three months, from February to May 2020. To cope with the lockdown situation, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) made an agreement of "suspending school,

not stopping learning" during the first period of the epidemic. As a result, more than 100 higher education institutions in Vietnam opted for online teaching and learning, in which private universities account for 70% (MOET, 2020). Changes and determinations in learning systems push schools to shift their traditional teaching mode into basically online education, such as e-learning, correspondence education, flexible learning, and massive open online courses. The adaption of fully online teaching and learning is a new experience as well as a significant challenge to all the education stakeholders at all levels, from administrators to teachers and students. There is no doubt that not all the schools at all levels were well- prepared for this transformation, even private universities. Hence, there are serious concerns about this hasty change in terms of adapting, implementing, and shifting effectively online learning to reduce the impacts of the Covid19 outbreak on education systems. It is legitimate that any education changes before were carefully planned, long-term invested, and evidence-based; this on-the-spot adaptation caused by a health emergency (Hodges et al. 2020) seems to be predominant.

Meanwhile, teachers, as the spearhead of the change from traditional face-to-face classrooms into online teaching and learning, must be able to be immediately prepared for this shift to an online environment with all the practical and technical obstacles this mode of delivery entangles, and often without technical support (Hodges et al. 2020). A teacher has to face and conquer all the challenges present in online teaching and learning responsively to assure continuous learning to achieve the targets set (Aliyyah et al. 2020). Therefore, the question of how teachers perceive and overcome their challenges in online teaching implementation to master the specific situation of the Covid19 outbreak comes to the fore.

Although there has been a rise in research on how the Covid19 pandemic has changed the education systems, there is still a dearth of research exploring teachers' attitudes and challenges toward their immediate transferring into virtual teaching, especially in developing Asian countries like Vietnam. Hence, this study investigates the teachers' attitudes towards their compulsory changes in teaching delivery and the challenges they faced during their shifting to the online environment from traditional ones. This paper reports on a survey of vocational English teachers in five vocational colleges in Vietnam with an attempt to identify the obstacles faced by English teachers during their dramatic shift in the delivery mode of teaching and learning in the unavoidable situation of the Covid19 epidemic.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Online learning and teaching

The term "online learning" has been universally used but not with the same meaning. With this research's aim, online learning was identified as learning that is mediated by the Internet. This identification is considered as much broader than "network meaning"- which focuses on the connections and interactions of teachers and students (Banks et al. 2003; De Laat et al. 2007) – in terms of specificity shortage. Online learning is known to emphasize Internet-based courses provided synchronously or asynchronously with the use of different devices. Students can be offered the possibility of anywhere, anytime learning and interacting with instructors and other students (Singh & Thurman, 2019). While a synchronous learning environment is structured for students and teachers to attend live lectures with real-time social interactions (McBrien et al.,2009) and instant responses (Littlefield, 2018), asynchronous learning is established to learn indirectly with the independent learning approach. As cited in Aliyyah et al. (2020), some subject matter is designed and demonstrated on Learning Management System (LMS) on Moodle, or email systems, blogs, online discussions, videos, and other platforms (Ko & Rossen, 2017; Ogbonna et al., 2019; Papachristos et al., 2010; Sturm & Quaynor, 2020; Tarman, 2020). Students can have access to the teacher synchronously, asynchronously, or both (Hunter & St. Pierre, 2016; Inoue, 2007; Richardson et al., 2020). In this study, online learning is indicated as a teaching and learning environment in which (1) the learner is not

face-to-face with the teacher, (2) the learner uses some technology devices to access the learning resources and materials, (3) the learner interacts with the teacher and other students via some applications, and (4) the learner is certainly supported (Anderson, 2011). Specifically, during the lockdown situation of the Covid19 pandemic, with the implementation of virtual education, such basic online platform needed is described where there would be possible video conference from 30 to 50 attendees, students can discuss with the stable Internet connection, lectures and other soft resources can be accessed with mobile phones, not just laptops, and assignments can be taken (Basilaia et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the school closure confronts all the stakeholders in education systems with an entirely new situation (Huber & Helm, 2020). The continuity of teaching and learning could only be implemented throughout new means of delivery. While for students, online learning could have opted as a piece of cake, for teachers, this transition to online teaching means various requirements for their new adaptation and implementation (Eikelmann & Gerick, 2020). Even though this crisis forced the institutions, which had been early reluctant to change, to accept modern innovation and technology in education, all the institutions would be confused with plenteous online pedagogical approaches and had to select the appropriate one for their own contexts. In the research conducted by Honey et al. (2014), it is claimed that in order to accomplish the positive results in association with teaching technology, the types of interactions among teachers, students, and technologies must be clearly understood. This means that the level and methods of achieving quality results of online teaching are differed and affected by factors related to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competence and practices in education before, during, and after the Covid19 epidemic. Duraku and Hoxha (2020) demonstrated that teachers' perspectives on pedagogy had been confirmed to make an impact on the level of technology integration in the teaching settings. Teachers also hopefully play a remarkable role in the implementation success of online learning. Therefore, teachers are under pressure to prove their teaching methodology and ICT competence amidst the paramount conversion.

## 2.2. ICT transformation in the education system

The 21st century has been testifying the widespread ICT transformation process in all aspects, particularly in the education system (Law, Pelgrum & Plomb, 2008; McFarlane, 2019). ICT has been acknowledged for its benefits in numerous studies (Usun, 2009; Prestridge, 2012; Hasan et al., 2015; Nhu, Keong, & Wah, 2018; Bilyalova, 2017), especially its application is believed to change students' learning style to be more independent and flexible. This would lead to the change of what students need to learn, how students learn, and how teachers teach. ICT is also considered as the crucial factor for quality higher education (Liebenberg, Chetty, & Prinsloo, 2012) because of its ultimate facilitation for teaching, learning, and other research activities. However, the benefits of ICT are not always understandable since its application achievement depends on various factors such as infrastructure, strategies, support, a number of ICT integration activities, and especially teacher's competencies in applying ICT (Raman & Yamat, 2013; Prestridge, 2012; Wei et al., 2016).

The shift of transferring teaching and learning into online teaching obliged by Covid19 Pandemic has become an indispensable part to persist continuous learning for all students at all levels. With the assistance of ICT, teachers would be the main agent to be expected to transit their mode of delivery even they obtain good ICT skills or not. This becomes a compulsory burden on the teachers' shoulders. In the same line with Shulman (1987), teachers must draw on this sphere of professional knowledge and knit it into sufficient cohesion and skills to master the challenges of teaching.

*2.3. Challenges on shifting classrooms into the online learning environment*

Before the Covid19 outbreak, there have been many studies addressing the challenges related to the introduction and application of online learning. Evidence has proved that online learning initiatives have failed because of the unpreparedness and inexperience of institutions and their divisions (Aydın & Tasci, 2005; Borotis & Poulymenakou, 2004). In addition, Watkins et al. (2004) presented the difficulty in transferring online learning due to the people's attachment to the existing pedagogies. Meanwhile, Carr (2000) and Maltby & Whittle (2000) showed students' negative attitudes towards online learning because of their results and motivations. Other research has expressed the challenges at the institutional level about the support, structures, or strategies when applying online learning (Graham, 2012; Hoang, 2015) and the concerns about the technical reliability, workload issues, student outcomes in the new environments (Bacow et al., 2012; Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Betts & Heaston, 2014). Data from several previous studies indicated that teachers had to face various challenges during their online teaching. While Keeton (2004) identified teachers' positive attitudes towards virtual learning, Prestridge (2012) and Wei et al. (2016) raised their concerns about the teachers' lack of technology competence to teach online effectively.

During the Covid19 pandemic with lockdown situation and school closure, it has been clear that the education system is prone to external dangers (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). For Ribeiro (2020), this digital transition of teaching delivery came with certain logistic challenges and attitudinal modifications. Serhan (2020) presented the students' negative attitudes towards Zoom application. Moreover, students' challenge of no Internet access during this pandemic was demonstrated in the research by Fishbane and Tomer (2020), which implied that students at low economic contexts are most exposed to fall behind to interact with others online learning. While Biswas (2020) argued about Skulmowski (2020) in terms of students' obstacles in technical operation, he revealed in his findings that students have challenges in the lack of a good learning attitude, motivation, or good learning environment during this time. Besides, completely online teaching would require critical planning and investments from all stakeholders. Even though many institutions had plans for applying online learning during the pandemic, there has been only applied predominantly on smaller cases than a worldwide crisis as Covid19 pandemic. It raises the question of the purposes and strategies of institutions in the agreement of online teaching transformation.

For teachers, the doer of this shifting, there exist many problematic issues concerning their transforming teaching approaches to the extents of their attitudes, experiences, and competencies. However, it is apparently believed that this must be the teachers' duty and responsibility even the teachers had challenges on their network connections, technology competence, students' performance, and institutions' support (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020; Mishra, 2020; Basilaia et al., 2020; Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Bao, 2020; Akyıldız's, 2020).

Therefore, there has been a shortage of research on teachers' challenges in this urgent transition, which drives this research's significant contribution.

*2.4. Vocational education and training*

Among all types of the education system, vocational education and training (VET) have been an important subset for decades since the need for new skills expanding in the labor market after the industrial revolution could not be satisfied by the traditional education system (Benovat, 1983; Grubb, 1985). VET has been operated besides academic and general education to implement school tracking practices and curriculum differentiation. In recent years, VET has been favored as the sole choice of low-performing students to study at the lower level of educations than universities and academies (Brunello, 2004; Hanushek, Schwerdt, Woessman, & Zhang, 2017; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2006). The fact that students and teachers at the VET system have been considered as much more

difficult to adapt or apply innovations than academic education is based on the school tracking practices of different ages, school preferences, and theoretical programs. VET has turned into a type of education that has been paid less attention and investment than other academic and general education.

During the crisis of the Covid19 pandemic, like all kinds of education types, VET also has to face with challenges of retaining continuous learning, and the shifting into online learning would become the ultimate solution for them at this time. During the transition, the teachers at VET would also encounter challenges for implementing effectively. Therefore, the research would be conducted to explore the teachers' attitudes and their challenges on this transition from traditional face-to-face classrooms to virtual ones.

*2.5. Research Questions*

To fulfill the purpose of the study, two following research questions would be addressed in this paper:

a) What are the vocational English teachers' attitudes towards the shifting to online teaching during the Covid19 pandemic?

b) What are the challenges the vocational English teachers faced during their shifting to online teaching?

**3. Methods**

*3.1 Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

This research subjects were 45 English teachers at five different vocational colleges in the north of Vietnam. Due to the limitation of time, resources, and lockdown situation, our research questionnaire was distributed randomly to English teachers at five colleges based on the respondents' convenience. The participants in our survey consist of 18 English teachers at Hanoi College of Economy and Technology, eight teachers from Vietnam- Hungary Industrial University, six teachers at Sao Do Vocational College, nine teachers at Hanoi College of Commerce, Economy, and Technology, four teachers at Viet Tri-College of Foods and Industry. These vocational colleges were in the same context settings. They are public colleges in and around the capital of Vietnam, providing both technical and economic courses for students after high school graduation. The size of these colleges is between 1000 and 2000 students. All of the colleges have been operated for more than ten years. Before the Covid19 pandemic, these colleges were reported as using traditional face-to-face teaching pedagogy. Hardly did the teachers apply ICTs into their teaching. However, due to the status of school closure for spread restrictions of Coronaviruses, these colleges have been forced to implement the night shift of the teaching delivery mode into completely online teaching, which has surely put their teachers under pressure and challenges.

All of the 45 teachers participating in the survey are full-time English teachers among the ages of 25-50 with at least three years of teaching experience. It was surprising that 19 of them (42,2%) had been applying ICTs in their teaching before the Covid19 pandemic to some extent. Among 45 participants, the number of female teachers is 39, accounting for 86,7%. Only 6 teachers (13,3%) are male, which supports the trend that it is more popular for the female than male to get involved in teacher education course (Ricohermoso, Abequibel, & Alieto, 2019; Alieto, Devanadera, & Buslon, 2020; Torres & Medriano, 2020). Besides, nine of the surveyed teachers engaging in the interviewing part were selected randomly from the survey questionnaire participants.

*3.2 Design of the Study*

This study aims to investigate the vocational English teachers' attitudes and their challenges in teaching through online mode of delivery shifting from traditional face-to-face during the Covid19 pandemic in Vietnam. This study was conducted based on quantitative and qualitative methods. The priority was given to the quantitative method with a statistic survey research design and supported by the qualitative method's interview results.

Data collected from the questionnaire delivery to 45 vocational English teachers were analyzed with SPSS software. There were 23 items in the questionnaire formulated using the 5-point-Likert-scale to express the degree of agreement and disagreement from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The questionnaire comprised 21 multiple choice questions together with two short-answer questions divided into three parts. Part 1 consisted of five questions to find out the respondents' background information. Meanwhile, Part 2 with 15 questions was formed to explore the teachers' attitudes and challenges on shifting to online teaching. Two short-answer questions in Part 3 aimed to figure out the teachers' own experience on online teaching and their willingness to use online teaching after the Covid19 pandemic. The questionnaire was arranged based on the literature relevant to the purpose of the research. The questionnaire was formed on the platform of Google Forms and distributed through its link to participants. In order to obtain more precise results, the questionnaire was written in Vietnamese to make sure of the respondents' clear understanding. A short but concise explanation about the nature of the study was also given at the beginning of the questionnaire. The responses were analyzed quantitatively using percentages of those who responded. Also, to ensure that surveyed respondents provided honest answers, we conducted the survey anonymously and did not seek names and other information that may reveal respondents' identities. The collected responses in Vietnamese were later translated into English by one of our researchers.

Interviews are used to gain more detailed information about personal feelings, attitudes, and opinions of the participants that questionnaires cannot elicit (Opdenakker, 2006). The interviewees in this research were selected randomly. All the questions used in the interviews were to support the information achieved from surveys.

*3.3 Data collection & analysis*

The online survey on Google forms was uploaded and sent on July 31, and the researchers received 45 responses by August 30 when the link was closed. A total of 45 responses were valid.

For interviews, due to the Covid19 pandemic, each interview was carried out via phones or Internet–based applications like Zalo, Facebook messenger, and Zoom separately. Before answering the interview questions, the purpose of the study was carefully explained. These in-deep interviews were conducted in Vietnamese – the interviewees' native language- and recorded. Then, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed thematically with the help of the researchers' colleagues who had great language competence of IELTS 8.0.

Data collected from the online survey were coded and analyzed with SPSS software for descriptive and inferential analysis. Once the questionnaire data were computerized, the findings were tabled as frequencies of responses and percentages. Meanwhile, the interviews were qualitatively analyzed to figure out the teachers' perspectives towards their shifting to online teaching as well as deeply scrutinize their detailed challenges in their transition.

## 4. Results/Findings and discussion

This section presents the results of the analysis data collected from survey questionnaires and interviews concerning the vocational English teachers' attitudes and challenges on their shifting from traditional face-to-face teaching to online teaching due to the Covid19 pandemic, together with the discussion with the view to answer two research questions.

*4.1. Teachers' attitudes towards shifting to online teaching*

The responses from the first five questionnaire items in Part 2 were coded and analyzed from the spreadsheet. Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of the data.

Table 1

Respondents' attitudes towards the shifting to online teaching delivery

|  | Variables | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | I like using online teaching during the Covid19 pandemic. | 0 (0%) | 2 (4,45%) | 2 (4,45%) | 33 (73,3%) | 8 (17,8%) |
| 7 | I generally have positive attitudes towards online teaching. | 0 (0%) | 2 (4,45%) | 2 (4,45%) | 37 (82,2%) | 4 (8,9%) |
| 8 | I think that online teaching is useful for my teaching. | 3 (6,7%) | 2 (4,45%) | 2 (4,45%) | 34 (75,5%) | 4 (8,9%) |
| 9 | I am required to shift to teach online. | 0 (0%) | 3 (6,7%) | 3 (6,7%) | 30 (66,6%) | 9 (20%) |
| 10 | I am willing to use online teaching | 1 (2,2%) | 3 (6,7%) | 1 (2,2%) | 33 (73,3%) | 7 (15,6%) |

As shown in Table 1, 91,1% (accounting for 41 respondents) showed their agreements and strong agreements on their favor of using online teaching during the Covid19 pandemic. The number of teachers confirming their positive attitudes towards teaching online was more than 90 percent. This result showed the same findings as to the results in Keeton (2004) about participants' moderately favorable attitude toward virtual teaching. This result would be implied in Keeton (2004)'s explanation that teachers' positive attitude towards online teaching will support building a positive online classroom and motivate students beneficially in their online learning.

In addition, in terms of the usefulness of online teaching, 38 respondents (84,4%) reported their agreement that online teaching is useful for their teaching. Besides, for their compulsory shifting, 39 respondents (86,6%) expressed that they were required to transfer their mode of delivery into online teaching mode when three of them (6,7%) disagreed that it was compulsory to change their teaching mode. Meanwhile, the number of investigated teachers confirmed their willingness to use online teaching was 40, accounting for 88,9%, and four of them (8,9%) showed disagreement about their willingness to apply online teaching. This finding is consistent with that of Mishra (2020) within the same context during the Covid19 phase, the online teaching mode of education is useful from teachers' perspectives. Therefore, it can be managed as a transition mechanism.

When being interviewed, the interviewees disclosed that they deeply understood the transition to online teaching was somewhat unavoidable and necessary during a hard time of lockdown situation.

> *"I myself believe that online teaching during the school closure time due to lockdown situation was really helpful and necessary. I think this is the only and foremost way to keep students learning and teachers working with the feeling of mentally balanced and safe" (T#4)*

> *"I know that online learning is very useful to students and teachers, but I haven't had a chance to apply it. Now, I have to do it as a requirement, and I am willing to do it." (T#7)*

These positive attitudes towards the online teaching model showed that most of the vocational English teachers were fully aware of the usefulness of online teaching during the lockdown period. Most of them agreed that online teaching would be the ultimate solution for teachers as great support.

*4.2. Teachers' challenges on their implementation of shifting to online teaching*

Even though the investigated teachers showed their positive attitudes towards the transition to online teaching, there have been plenteous challenges that teachers had to face during their shifting to teaching online revealed from the findings of this research. They ranged from teachers' intrinsic challenges to the extrinsic challenges from students and institutions as listed in the issues of teachers' willingness, teachers' technological competence, their experience, the students' technological competence and support, students' motivations, institutional purposes, and strategies in the online learning transition. All of these aspects will be reported and discussed specifically below.

*4.2.1 Teachers' intrinsic challenges*

The challenges arisen from teachers themselves were reported as in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Respondents of teachers' challenges to online teaching transition

|  | Variables | D | N | A | M |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | I can teach online effectively. | 11 | 7 | 27 | 3.4 |
| 12 | I am good at using technology in my teaching. | 26 | 12 | 7 | 2.3 |
| 13 | I have a good Internet connection for my online teaching. | 23 | 5 | 17 | 2.7 |
| 14 | I can manage my virtual classrooms well. | 25 | 7 | 13 | 2.6 |
| 15 | I don't have much workload with online teaching. | 30 | 3 | 12 | 2.4 |

Table 2 provides the results obtained from the survey questionnaire's descriptive analysis from item 11 to item 15. This table is quite revealing in several ways.

Firstly, regarding teachers' self-reports about their confidence in effective online teaching, while 27 (60%) of the respondents indicated their agreement and strong agreement that they could teach online effectively, a minority of the participants (24,4%) showed that they were not confident in their teaching online and 7(15,6%) reported their honest thought to their teaching online effectively or not. This finding was relevant to the interview results when the respondents were asked about how they were confident in their teaching online. Five of them commented that at first, they were not confident at all because they were required to shift to online teaching right after one week, but later, when they engaged in teaching online, they not only became confident in online teaching but also developed their teaching online more effectively.

Secondly, in terms of technology competence, the majority of 26 participants (57,8%) indicated that they did not have good technology competence while only a minority of 7 teachers (15,6%) believed in their good technology competence. The result is significant at the number of teachers uncertain about this issue which accounted for more than one-fourth of investigated teachers. Strong evidence of this finding was found in the interview part when T#2 revealed: "Since we were required to use ICTs, some applications, some tools in our online teaching but actually, we didn't know how to operate them properly and how to match them well in our lesson plan. We know, but it doesn't mean we use it well. Hence, I don't think my technology competence is fairly good". This result revealed

the significant challenge for teachers was the technology competence, which was in a strong relationship with the findings in Prestridge (2012) and Wei et al. (2016).

As mentioned in the literature review part, one of the core challenges was the infrastructure, the physical facilities to implement the transition to online teaching, which could refer to the Internet connection. The finding reported that more than half of respondents (52%) confirmed they did not have a stable Internet connection during their online teaching, while 17 of them (37,7%) showed their safe feelings about this issue. One main reason for unstable network connection was described in the interview: if the online meeting of more than 30 students was synchronous, the teachers had to spend much time handling the in-and-out loggings suddenly of the students and teachers themselves. Besides, they were so annoyed when they couldn't interact with their students due to pausing or flickering, or buzzing problems. Teachers also commented that if they wanted to upload videos or audios for their students to practice, they had to wait for such a long time. And during the lockdown period, it was difficult for them to get out and find somewhere with a more stable Internet connection. This result supports evidence from the findings in Mishra (2020) that unstable network connection was the core challenge to online teaching. In addition, the significant finding also resulted in the finding of virtual classroom management. Only 13 (28,8%) of the teachers found that they could manage their virtual classrooms, while more than a half of them (55,5%) find this management towards disagreement. With the reason of unstable Internet connection and not good at technology competence, teachers found themselves struggling in managing their virtual classrooms.

> *I really find it difficult to read the face and mood of my students through the screen of my laptop. Even I gave the requirement of turning their cameras and voices on during my online classes, many of the students only did it when I reminded them again and in a short time. This really made me annoyed and did not know how to control my students' attendance" (T#8)*

This finding was unexpected and suggests that there would be clear guidance and instructions for teachers in the way they monitor the classroom virtually, and students' conditions would be improved for them to learn online.

Finally, one of the intrinsic challenges noted for teachers was the heavy workload they had to face during online teaching. While one-third of the investigated teachers indicated that they had much work to do with online teaching, only 12 of them (18,8%) thought the online teaching did not concern about their workload much. This finding was specifically explained in the interview when most of the informants claimed they had to do much more work with online teaching than face-to-face teachings, such as redesigning exercises, activities, and assignments to upload them to the virtual classrooms, preparing much more online resources and materials for their students, giving comments on the students' assignments, guiding and supporting students in their doing exercises, online interactions, and even technical support. This result was found to be completely different from the benefits of online teaching in reducing workload for teachers with the support of technology as mentioned in Anderson (2011) and Basilaia et al. (2020).

### 4.2.2. Teachers' challenges from students and institutions

Besides struggling with their own challenges of technology competence, virtual classroom management, more workload, unstable network connection, teachers had to overcome other remarkable challenges risen from students and institutions, as specifically mentioned below as students' attitudes and motivations to learn online, students' technology competence, institutional purposes, and strategies of online teaching. Table 3 showed descriptive data about these aspects.

Table 3

Respondents of teachers' challenges to online teaching transition

| | Variables | D | N | A | M |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | My students are motivated to learn online. | 5 | 4 | 36 | 3.9 |
| 17 | My students like learning online more than face-to-face. | 20 | 3 | 22 | 2.8 |
| 18 | My students are good at technology. | 16 | 5 | 24 | 3.3 |
| 19 | My students get technical support from technicians and teachers. | 25 | 7 | 13 | 2.6 |
| 20 | My institution announces the purposes and strategies of online teaching. | 4 | 1 | 40 | 3.4 |
| 21 | My institution has a clear guideline of shifting to online teaching for teachers. | 20 | 3 | 22 | 3.5 |

Regarding students' online learning, several prior studies noted the importance of their positive attitudes, underlying motivation, technical competencies (Mishra, 2020; Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Bao, 2020; Akyıldız's, 2020). In this study, as can be seen in Table 3, approximately 80% of the investigated teachers confirmed that their students were believed to obtain motivation on their learning online. The interviews also revealed that the students told their teachers that they found learning online more motivated and flexible than face-to-face classes as they could attend their classes anywhere, anytime. It was really a good choice for students to enrich their knowledge and resources to learn online. This finding is contrary to previous studies of Akyıldız's (2020), which claimed isolation, less motivation, and online learning engagement among students. This finding also went beyond stakeholders' expectations of students at the VET education system as VET students were considered less motivated than academic education.

Moreover, the number of respondent teachers who claimed their students' preferring to learn online was slightly more than the number of disagreements on this issue with 48,8% and 40%, respectively. Meanwhile, more than half of surveyed teachers (53,3%) showed their belief in students' good technology competence, while 35.5% of them thought that their students were not good at technology. Besides, the technical support for students was reported as less than 55.5% of the respondents believed that their students did not obtain technology competence.

Much more information was disclosed in the interviewing part. Most of the interviewees (seven out of nine) shared their ideas that their students were a really challenging factor in their online teaching implementation when they had to stop their lectures from dealing with much of the students' interruptions due to their lack of knowledge of technology and skills. Even the teachers had to explain and provided the course code number time by time for students. Additionally, students were reported that they could get only support from their teachers when they had any obstacles with technology. There was hardly any support from a technician or other departments in their colleges. This can be referred that the interaction and communication between teachers and students were ultimate and close.

However, preparation for shifting education outside of traditional face-to-face classrooms in response to the Covid19 outbreak requires thought, coordination, and careful decision making (Simamora, 2020). The two questions of the questionnaire were adopted to figure out the institutional supports for online teaching. In the aspect of a formal announcement, most of the teachers (88,9%) clarified that they were announced about their institution's

purposes and strategies for online teaching transition. Specifically, almost all the teachers interviewed expressed their increasing awareness of purposes and strategies for continuous learning among MOET's institutions. However, to some extent, nearly half of them (49,3%) can get clear guidance about the shifting plan, and 44,4% confirmed there were little guidance and support from the institutional level. When being asked about this challenge, six out of nine informants confessed their expectation that they would be provided more training workshops on how to teach in an online environment effectively, what kinds of ICTs they should use for their teaching, assessing, and even monitoring their virtual classes before transferring to online teaching. They admitted that actually, they had to research the answers to the problems by themselves while they were teaching online. This may explain their not confidence in teaching online effectively. This result further supports the idea of Johnson et al. (2020) in terms of giving the suggestion that should identify a need for assistance related to students' support and guidance for working from home.

Two last questions of the questionnaire were raised to explore the teachers' experience of online teaching and their willingness to use online teaching after the Covid19 pandemic. It was surprising when all the respondents (100%) confirmed that they had never applied online teaching before the lockdown situation due to their facilities and existing traditional pedagogies in their institution. They had no idea of changing their teaching mode from face-to-face teaching to online one. Over half of those surveyed reported that they would consider applying online teaching after this crisis period with some sharing as follows.

> *"Oh, yes. After this school closure time, I will apply online teaching because some of my online activities have been performed better online than face-to-face. So, if I apply it in my classroom later, my students can be more motivated and eager in my lessons." (T#9)*

> *In this time, I learn how to use many ICT applications and tools such as Google Classroom, Quizizz, Kahoot!, Mentimeter,… which I think will surely benefit my teaching later, whether it is online or face-to-face. Besides, I can use these tools again and again for other classes to practice. (T#1)*

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, most of the results of this research were consistent with previous studies in the literature on vocational English teachers' attitudes and challenges they are facing while shifting their teaching mode of delivery into online teaching, including the teachers' technology competence, their virtual classroom management, heavy workload, students' motivations in online learning, students' technology competence and technical support, together with the institution's purposes and strategies of online teaching implementation.

Specifically, there are similarities of positive attitudes towards online teaching between this research and those prior studies of Keeton (2004) and Mishra (2020), even though this research revealed amazingly that teachers were under the compulsory circumstance to shift their teaching delivery to online mode. This result may explain the relatively good awareness and understanding of these investigated teachers during the outbreak of Covid19 and the closures of schools.

Moreover, the internal challenges discovered in this research were in accordance with recent studies indicating that during the online teaching transition, teachers had obstacles to technology competence, virtual classroom management. However, it is surprising that the challenge of heavy workload found out in this research has not been before described as the challenge in online teaching. This inconsistency may be due to the immediate transition requirement, making teachers confused and unprepared for their teaching transfer. This finding has important implications for developing teachers' professional skills, especially in technology competence, so that they can be accustomed to any unexpected situations.

In the meantime, this study supports evidence from previous observations (Mishra, 2020; Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020;) in terms of challenges related to students' technology competence, students' perspective towards online learning, and technical support that students gained during their learning. These findings suggest that to shift to online teaching effectively, the teachers should pay attention to the students' technology competence and encourage and support students with their technical problems in time. In contrast to early findings, however, hardly any challenge of students' motivation for online learning was detected. This result may be explained by the fact that students find themselves flexible and enjoyed their new mode of learning, which permits them to learn anywhere, anytime. This would support the students to get the balance between learning and staying safe during the crisis of Covid19.

On the other hand, the decision-makers are always between supportive and challenging to the doers. It could be an extreme lack if the research did not mention the institutional roles in transferring the delivery mode of teaching and learning. The finding of this research revealed that most institutions issued their announcement about online teaching, their purposes, and strategies to all the teachers but only nearly half of them attached their guidance for this online teaching transition with little support provided for teachers. A possible explanation for these results may be the lack of adequate time and effort in an attempt to calculate and prepare all the issues that arise in the shifting period. It is, therefore, likely that teachers would expect to be provided with more specific guidance and timely support for the effectiveness of their shifting. Organizing training workshops and seminars would be considered reasonable solutions for teachers who are updating new ICT and practicing their technology competence.

On the other hand, several limitations of the present study point to the need for further research on this topic. Firstly, because the study was conducted with a limited number of participants in only VET contexts, the challenges may not be generalizable to various academic or general education system settings. Secondly, the research relied mainly on the participants' self-reported data regarding their attitudes and challenges in shifting to online teaching. Other stakeholders were not examined. Therefore, future research would be implemented to explore the other stakeholders' perspectives and challenges during the shifting period. Further, due to time constraints, the present study only concentrated on determining the challenges that teachers faced during their online teaching transition. Further research should be undertaken to investigate the performances of the teachers during their online teaching implementation.

In conclusion, the present study contributes to our understanding of teachers' attitudes and challenges in transferring to online teaching in the vocational education system in Vietnam during the Covid19 pandemic. Besides, obtaining data on the challenges of online teaching during the sudden Covid19 outbreak would also be valuable for teachers and institutions who are seeking to plan and prepare for future crises.

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