

## Online Remote Teaching Challenges of Mexican English Teachers during the Covid-19 Pandemic

*Desafíos de la Enseñanza Remota en Línea de los Profesores Mexicanos de Inglés durante la Pandemia COVID-19*

**ABSTRACT:** The sudden remote teaching emergency as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic created a disruption to education forcing English Language teachers to immediately teach remotely from home. Therefore, the following mixed method research was performed through an online survey with the aim of knowing how the participants of different language levels confronted the situation. This study was conducted through an online questionnaire that had opened and closed ended questions that were applied to 34 English language teachers from the cities of Guadalajara, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí in México. The data collection consisted of ten responses of the above-mentioned teachers with a total of 340 answers in data collection. Thus, the purpose of this article is primarily to provide insight and information on how the English teachers faced the challenges and coped with the situation of the pandemic. More in particular, this research informs how the 34 English language teachers felt, and demonstrates that despite of the numerous challenges, uncertainty, trauma, anxiety and stress that surrounded them, the majority of teachers were perseverant on teaching, and learning during the health contingency.

**KEYWORDS:** Pandemic, resilience, online teaching, professional development, burn out.

**RESUMEN:** La repentina emergencia de la enseñanza remota como consecuencia de pandemia COVID-19 creó una interrupción en la educación la cual obligó a los profesores de inglés a adaptar sus métodos de enseñanza en educación virtual. Por ello se realizó la siguiente investigación a distancia, a través de un cuestionario, usando métodos mixtos. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo dar a conocer cómo los participantes de diferentes niveles lingüísticos afrontaron la situación. El presente estudio se llevó a cabo a través de un cuestionario que se aplicó a 34 profesores de idiomas de las ciudades de Guadalajara, Guanajuato y San Luis Potosí en México. La recolección de datos estuvo compuesta por diez respuestas de los docentes antes mencionados dando como resultado un total de 340 respuestas al realizar el conteo durante esa etapa. Por ello, el objetivo principal de este artículo

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es brindar conocimientos e información acerca de cómo los docentes enfrentaron los desafíos durante la pandemia. En particular esta investigación informa cómo se sintieron los 34 docentes y demuestra que, a pesar de la incertidumbre, constantes retos, el trauma, la ansiedad y el estrés que los rodeaba, la mayoría de los docentes fueron perseverantes en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de sus alumnos durante la pandemia de COVID-19.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Pandemia del COVID-19, resiliencia, enseñanza en línea, desarrollo profesional, agotamiento.

## Introduction

The outbreak of the Coronavirus disease arrived to Mexico on February 27, 2020, having an enormous impact on English teachers, and the educational community. Emerging in Wuhan, China in the early days of December 2019, Cucinotta & Vanelli (2020) informed that the World Health Organization (WHO) declared on March 11, 2020 a global pandemic due to the existence of a new coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2. Because there were no vaccines or drugs to treat the Coronavirus disease, world leaders imposed a global emergency human lockdown. The virus caused the death of 14.9 million people between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2021, according to the World Health Organization (2022).

When the Coronavirus pandemic started, the only option for schools and universities was to temporarily lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus. Thus, the institutions were forced to close classrooms, but continue with a totally online educational system that implied implementing new methods and modalities such as broadcasting and online teaching. It also involved the need to adapt the educational infrastructure to the new online modality using pedagogy that adjusted to new teaching and learning demands. In addition, some of the challenges imposed by remote teaching were that the teachers had

to cope with low student engagement and motivation. In the same way, the educators had a difficult time to teach grammar implicitly, evaluate student comprehension and knowledge of the learners. Likewise, student productive skills and student interaction were difficult to monitor since internet meeting rooms were the only options. All this limited the supervision of student performance and cooperative learning as informed by Babic (2021).

Although online education was not a new approach in some developed and developing countries at that time, the impact of the swift from face-to-face to online classes was particularly momentous and challenging in developing countries. Mostly because of the challenge posed to teachers, learners, and society in general, since the government and educational institutions did not count with strong financial and educational resources, skills, Information Communication Technology network and Internet access (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

The distress of the pandemic brought uncertainty and anguish among the general population and not to mention among teachers who experimented a mixture of feelings and emotions in their personal and professional lives. Because they were also worried of their students' learning and well-being. Likewise, the decision of the educational authorities to adopt a system

that would allow the continuity of the educational program through remote teaching, also put teachers in an unease and extremely demanding situation, so that, in the blink of an eye, many teachers faced a series of challenges due to the rigorous change in the teaching environment.

Consequently, teachers were required to learn to use technology, digital platforms and resources. As well as to be attentive at all times without taking a break from their screens, trying to engage their students, and helping them to continue to learn. Everything had to be submitted and assessed online. For example, there were some courses that resulted difficult or even impossible to teach such as music, physical education, laboratories, and art subjects. Moreover, there were many problems with the quality of the internet in Mexico as stated by Garcia, *et al.* (2022) that caused more stress and frustration to teachers, and students whose classes were continuously interrupted or could not be delivered. Thus, feelings of confusion, anxiety and exhaustion seemed to emerge among educators since all these contrasted with the classroom-based model of education which was imparted in a physical place and members bonded with one another. Because, in face-to-face classrooms, teachers used traditional materials such as textbooks, lecture notes and rapport. In contrast, in online education, teachers had to give extra feedback, perform continuous evaluations, attend parent or student online meetings, check homework, etc. Also, health concerns imposed an extra burden on teachers' comfort, which can be sustained in a study conducted by Mavridi (2022, p. 36)

that demonstrated that the wellbeing of some of the participants may have been negatively affected as a result to the shift to online teaching. In addition, the researcher also informed that this could have been a consequence of the absence of adequate preparation, training and support. Taken together, her results implied that perhaps the pandemic by its own nature caused both uncertainty and stress.

### Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to discover how teachers' well-being was affected and the impact that the emotional state had on their teaching performance. Through interviews with English teachers, the following investigation intends to obtain valid information that will allow to portray the didactic panorama, and institutional demands that English language teachers from public and private institutions faced in distance teaching.

For the previous reasons, the research questions are:

1. How did the experience of remote teaching during COVID-19 pandemic affect the teachers' emotional well-being?
2. What were the challenges that educators had to overcome in order to be able to adapt to the new online educational teaching?

### Rationale

This investigation was performed from May 2022 to April 2023. The data was collected two years after the pandemic, when teachers had recently returned to face-to-

face classroom teaching. This led to the opportunity to explore the challenges, and feelings that teachers had encountered after having to teach from home. As stated by Powder (2022) “in 2022, the virus was less severe and less deadly compared to 2020 and 2021”.

Therefore, the following application of this investigation during this time period may lead to important data, because the teachers were not experiencing the same levels of adrenaline, trauma or stress that emerged during the outbreak of the pandemic.

For these reasons, the purpose of this study was to discover the experiences of English teachers during the online teaching COVID-19 pandemic which can be used as an indicator to measure the pain and gain experience. Conveniently, both the challenges and positive aspects of virtual teaching during COVID-19 have been highlighted to invite to a subjective criticism from the reader.

Finally, the results of this study can shed some new light to the teaching community, educational stakeholders, or policy makers to help make informed decisions in the use of different virtual instruction in remote teaching. It may provide recommendations to faculties on the importance of continuous teacher development, support and well-being. As well as the creation of pedagogical training opportunities that should be provided by institutions to the educational staff.

## Literature Review

To obtain a better understanding of the themes that gain importance in the data

collected we read similar investigations about this phenomenon. Moreover, definitions of the key words; *stress, anxiety, burnout, resilience, professional development, pedagogical knowledge* were provided to guide the reader to a better comprehension.

Juarez & Perales (2021) in the journal of *Language Teachers' Emergency Remote Teaching Experiences during the COVID-19 Confinement* described the experiences and emotions of 26 faculty members and 32 students. The gathering of the data was obtained through an open-ended online questionnaire. As claimed by the authors most of the teachers and students expressed negative feelings towards the form that they were taught and the poor access to internet. The educators that already had on line teaching knowledge seemed to be more successful than those who did not have any training.

Mendiola et al. (2020) in *Educational Challenges during The COVID-19 Pandemic: A Teacher's Survey*, shared the results of a qualitative and quantitative online survey that was administered to 788 teachers of the National Autonomous University of Mexico at the beginning of the COVID-19 online teaching eventuality. The authors' research findings showed that the initial problems that teachers confronted were related to logistics (43.3%), technological (39.7%), pedagogical (35.2%) and socio-emotional (14.9%) factors. The educators reported that different technological apps, and platforms to teach were used. Finally, the teachers mentioned the importance of receiving teacher training and pedagogical knowledge by academic institutions and authorities.

In the research of University language instructors' preparedness for Technology Mediated instruction and burnout during the COVID-19 Pandemic of the Juarez Autonomous University of Tabasco, Mexico. Izquierdo *et al.* (2021) applied a quantitative study to 104 University language teachers through Google Forms which is a free online tool that allows researchers to design forms, surveys, and quizzes as well as editing and sharing information with other people. In their study, they used a burnout questionnaire to examine the three dimensions of teacher burnout which were exhaustion, depersonalization, and accomplishment. The findings revealed that the teachers were tired of teaching during long hours, and some felt that they required technological assisted language training. Therefore, many participants experienced teacher burn out, as a result of the long teaching hours, insufficient curricular support, problems with technological connectivity and logistics.

Richards (2017) declared pedagogical knowledge as an essential skill for teaching, and he acknowledged it as all the methodologies and activities supported by theories, beliefs and principles that are used while teaching a second language (p.1).

Selye (1936, as cited in the American Institute of Stress, 2017) defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change, causing kidney disease, heart attacks, pathologic changes, stomach ulcerations, anxiety, substance abuse and other illnesses". For these reasons, stress may be good, however in large quantities it could be responsible for poor health or illnesses.

MacIntyre *et al.* (2020) informed that "anxiety is a fear-related, full body reaction to an amorphous threat that includes physiological effects" (p.4). This emotion may have been a result of the uncertainty and devastating effects of the pandemic on their students and surroundings.

Also, MacIntyre, *et al.* (2022) described the burnout syndrome as "chronification of work-related stress, manifesting as a long-lasting response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors at work" (p.2). In other words, emotional and physical tiredness could be acknowledged as a consequence of the non-stopping stimuli or demands that were occurring.

Diener, Oishi, and Lucas' work (as cited in Mercer 2020) describe subjective wellbeing "as the presence of positive emotions, a lack of negative emotions, and a sense of overall life satisfaction".

The American Psychological Association (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023) defines resilience as "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands". All in all, it is being able to recover after the exposure to continuous life stressful events or traumatic stimuli. This concept has been broadly used by the Military, Medical, Psychological and Natural Disaster fields.

Buendia & Macias (2019) state that professional development is "a life-long process of growth which involves collaborative and/or autonomous learning where teachers are engaged in the progress, and they actively reflect on their practices"

(p.1). There are other authors like Murray (2010) that explain that professional development makes the teachers feel more secure, positive, and enhances a better teaching performance that will positively impact their students (p.3).

### Type of Study and Instruments for Data Collection

A mixed research design was the methodology selected for this study. Creswell (2012) explains that it is a reliable tool to discover the “numbers” and the “information” pertaining to a specific matter (p.558). Therefore, both the quantitative and qualitative approach were used with the aim of being able to provide an adequate answer to the research questions. According to Muijs (2010) “quantitative research is based on numerical data analyzed statistically.” In agreement with this approach, the numerical data collected in this study were analyzed and processed to account for a particular phenomenon by establishing a generalization among a group of individuals. This approach was used in sampling, data collection, counting, tabulation, data processing, presentation of percentages, and design of statistical graphs.

Similarly, Creswell (2012) claims that the most relevant aspects of the qualitative approach are the application of open-ended general and unbiased questions that give the participants the opportunity to express themselves without any restriction (p. 212). This approach was therefore used to understand the reasons behind the teachers’ responses on the anchor scale, and it provided the tool for the scrutiny and interpretation of the follow-up questions.

Hence, questions two, four, six, eight and ten of the questionnaire were first classified, and then interpreted and generalized according to the quantitative trait given by the percentage obtained in each of the responses of the anchor scale. The quantitative and qualitative approaches allowed a better understanding of the variety of feelings experienced by educators during the pandemic confinement and offered the path to a meaningful interpretation.

There were two types of questionnaires used as the principal instrument for data collection. A closed ended questionnaire that had five questions, and an open ended questionnaire that had other five questions that offered the explanation to the anchor scale responses. In total it had ten questions as to seek the teachers’ opinions and emotions during online teaching.

The survey was delivered through a link of Survey Monkey. The advantages of this type of questionnaire are that “they can gather extensive data quickly, employ tested forms and sample questions rather than having to design them” (ibid., p.385). For these reasons, the survey application does not require a specific date or time. The respondents may answer the questionnaire face-to face or online through any electronic device whenever it is convenient for them.

Survey Monkey is a testing instrument that is practical and accurate to gather facts. This tool for assessment was also chosen since the data is presented through graphs. Its analysis and interpretation are set according to the gathered results.

Next, the compilation of the data of the study is described. The investigation

involved thirty-four English teachers of different ages and genders. Initially, to be able to gather the data from the teachers, ten questions were developed. Then, the links were shared with colleagues in English Teacher Facebook and WhatsApp groups that taught in the states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and San Luis Potosi.

At the beginning of this research a survey with twenty closed and open-ended questions was elaborated in Spanish for its application in July 2022. Afterwards, a second survey in English with the same questions was performed to fourteen teachers to complete 34 samples. Cresswell reports that this type of procedure for quantitative and qualitative research provides useful information (p.220).

The questionnaire had a total of ten questions. First, the closed questions were numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9. Each one was presented to the respondents through a Likert scale. As explained in Survey Monkey “the Likert scales are one of the most reliable ways to measure opinions, perceptions, and behaviors”.

The rest of the data was collected by open questions, which were numbers 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. The teachers had to explain their answers to the previous questions. Kumar (2011) informs that the responses are not given to the respondent in this type of questionnaires. The objective is that the person who answers expresses his/her opinion is not being manipulated. It is not threatening, and the participant can give his/her own response (Cresswell, 2012, p. 211). Finally, this type of method to collect data is that the information can be immediately collected.

### Procedure of Analysis

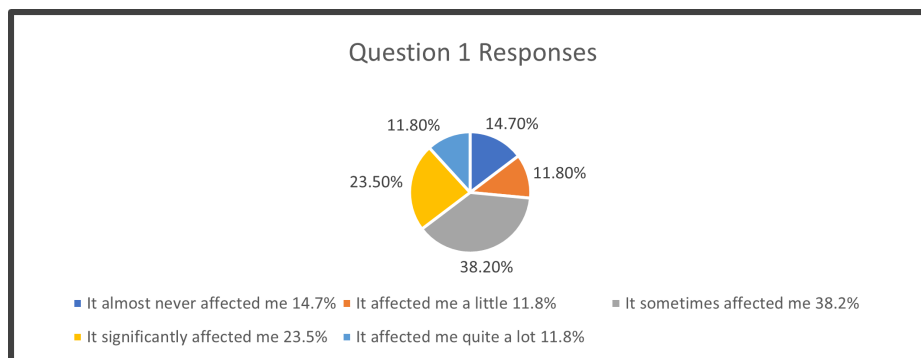
The answers of the participants were downloaded from the survey monkey Likert Scale to an excel document (see Appendix A). The first twenty questions were translated to English and the other fourteen were added to one document. A cross tabulation was performed for this study because it helps to obtain a better comprehension of the collected information (see Appendix B). The data that is related to each other were analyzed in the following order, questions 1, 2-3,4-5,6-7,8 and 9,10.

### Results

After interviewing the English teachers of several contexts, the interpretation of data allowed us to gain awareness of the online teaching experiences described by teachers during the pandemic. First, the questions of the surveys in the order that they were applied will be presented. Second, the close ended questions correspond to odd numbers (1,3,5,7,9). In contrast, the open questions relate to the even numbers (2,4,6,8,10). It is essential to emphasize that initially there were two surveys administered. Then, the first questionnaire of 20 questions was answered in Spanish. Next, the second survey with 14 questions was sent in English. Finally, both quantitative and qualitative data will be presented.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Figure 1. Relative frequency that shows the extent to which participants' emotional well-being was affected in times of distance teaching during the pandemic



*Note.* Values shown in percentages. Source: own elaboration.

### Interpretation of Questions 1 & 2

The first question of the interview was intended at finding out if the impact of distance teaching in times of the pandemic had affected the emotional well-being of the interviewees. Regarding this matter, it was observed that **38.2%** of the EFL teachers mentioned that it had affected them at some point, more specifically those who considered the frequency range that is commonly associated of the idea of “sometimes”. The biggest reasons why participants felt their emotional well-being had been affected in this way were that they were shocked by an unexpected and unknown phenomenon. Many of them also mentioned that the confinement had made them feel isolated and it had prevented them from socializing. In contrast, some teachers mentioned that they tried to enjoy the process and not let the fear and

anxiety of the situation defeat them. The other **23.5%** of the teachers mentioned the situation had significantly affected them. The major reasons the participants gave were the following: the overload of online work along with the sudden need to use difficult and unknown platforms coupled with emotional problems such as fear, uncertainty, and feelings of isolation. In the same way, distance education represented a new challenge for some teachers regarding classroom management and other affective aspects such as the proper management of interaction and the link between students through digital platforms such as Google Meet, WebEx meetings, etc.

Another **14.7%** of the interviewees mentioned they had almost not been affected by the situation since they saw this contingency as an opportunity to learn

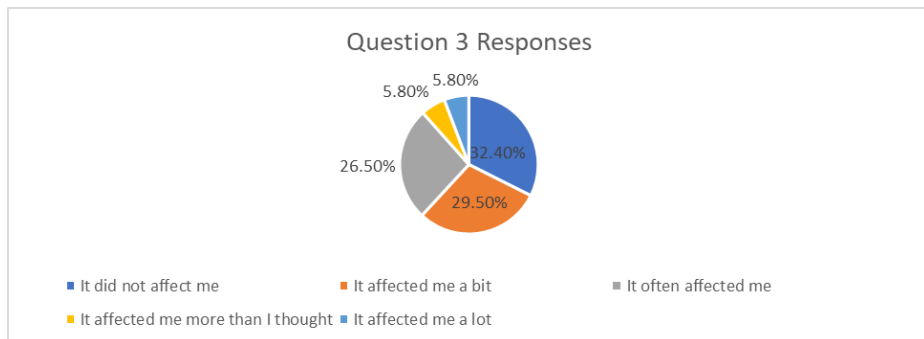


new things and grow. Finally, two divisions of the Likert scale that appeared in the following order in the survey 1) “it affected me a little” and 2) “it affected me a lot” competed with **11.8%** respectively. Among the reason the former group mentioned were that the work felt less heavy and many of them reported having the necessary tools and knowledge about the use of digital platforms. Most of them also stated they had felt better teaching from home. Regarding the latter group, the reasons given by the teachers were the

high responsibility placed on them as well as the difficulty to cope with feelings of depression and anxiety.

It is perceived that the particular way in which each teacher approached the situation would also generate reactions of different types. As shown in the figures **73%** of the teachers were emotionally affected by the uncertainty of an unknown phenomenon, while others reaching a total of **26%** saw the challenge as an opportunity to process the change and not be overwhelmed by adversity.

Figure 2. Percentage that shows how much the teachers’ emotional well-being affected their performance during the pandemic



*Note.* Values shown in percentages. Source: own elaboration.

#### Interpretation of Questions 3 & 4

The aspect of the impact of the teachers’ emotional well-being over performance during the pandemic will be analyzed in the following section. Reporting the different positive and negative emotions that teachers experienced as a result of online teaching.

Firstly, the obtained data showed a correlation between the educators’ well being

and teaching performance. A **32.4%** of the population felt that they had not been totally affected by the lockdown because technology became a helpful tool that helped and motivated them to address the challenges that were emerging.

Secondly, another **29.5%** expressed that the lockdown had affected them only

a bit. A better adaptation to the challenging surrounding circumstances resulted in student motivation during the initial face of online teaching. However, there were also teachers that considered that sitting in front of the computer for more than 13 hours had made them feel extremely tired and what is more, the students' stress had also affected them.

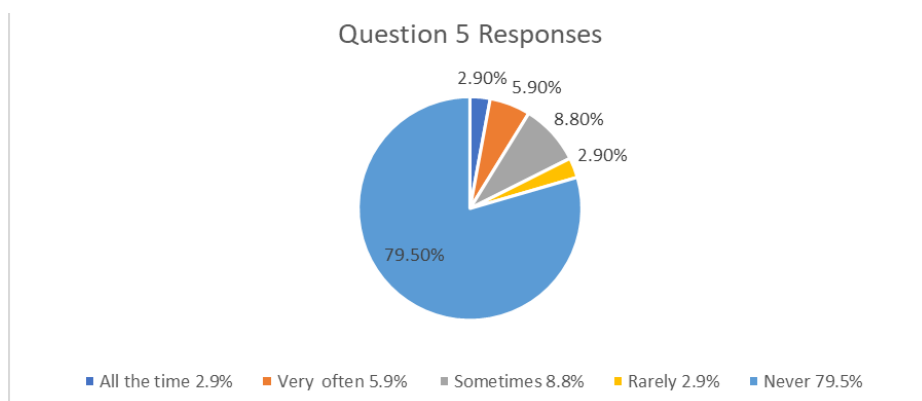
Then, **26.5%** of the interviewees felt affected by the pandemic, since it was difficult to reach out to students effectively. The contestants also reported that traditional material had to be replaced by digital material which was not always available or did not always fit the students' needs. In addition, these segments of the interviewees also experimented a feeling of frustration towards the low learning commitment of students because teachers felt that they did not seem to be taking studying seriously.

Next, the following two categorical data fell in the same size with a **5.8 %** each. First, there were those participants who thought

that their emotional well-being had affected their performance more than they thought. These respondents felt that feelings of depression and loneliness along with students' unwillingness to participate had contributed to low teaching performance.

Finally, in the set of data we have those interviewed that considered that teaching remotely had significantly affected their performance. These teachers regarded that the situation had led them to feel dismay at the heavy burden and the assignment of responsibilities that not even corresponded to them, all this resulting in a change of attitude towards the students. These data shed some insights about how nearly a third of the population corresponding to **32%** was able to manage their feelings in a smart and efficient way, so that the whole situation did not seriously affect their performance. In contrast, the other two thirds of the population, totaling **68%** expressed that their emotional well-being had indeed affected their performance to a greater or lesser degree.

Figure 3. Relative frequency of teachers' beliefs about leaving the profession at a certain point during the pandemic



Note. Values shown in percentages. Source: own elaboration.

### Interpretation of Questions 5 & 6

The objective of the fifth question was to discover if at any time of online teaching during the pandemic, teachers considered leaving the profession. The figures show that only **2.9%** of the participants said they had thought all the time about leaving their career. The apparent reason for such a feeling was the fact that the participants wanted to be in a workplace and environment where things were more peaceful.

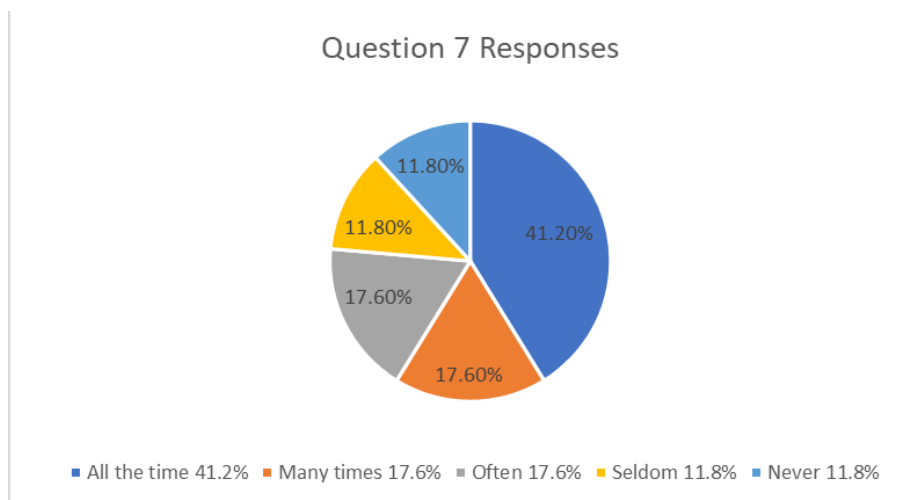
In contrast, another **5.9%** often thought about the possibility of resigning because teachers expressed feeling useless and unable to make their students pay attention and care about the class. Moreover, **8.8%** of the sample mentioned having thought about resigning on certain occasions during the pandemic lockdown. In their opinion dealing with the students' attitudes like not willing to answer or turning on their cameras was exhausting. Some also thought that this situation made them feel dissatisfied.

In addition, continuing with the categorical data, **2.9%** of the interviewees said they had rarely felt like quitting their careers. This was in part because they were reaching the retirement age and they thought it would be a good time to quit. Notably, the segment of the sample that thought they had never considered leaving

their jobs was a big **79.5%** and consensus about the reasons could be observed, for instance, the majority of the participants believed that they saw the new situation as a new and exciting experience that pushed them to learn and keep themselves busy. All of them said they had felt motivated to discover new ways of teaching and they also felt they were able to connect with their students in a completely different level, which in turn gave them the opportunity to listen to the academic and personal needs of the learners. Many teachers said that they were aware that it would be a transitory stage and soon things would go back to normal. From the information provided, we can infer that many of the teachers saw their true vocation in teaching and they did their best to adapt to the new challenge.

Thus, the data obtained shed some light on the emotions that teachers had towards quitting their jobs. It can be seen from the figures that more than three quarters of the population or **80%** showed a high level of resilience and determination and the idea of leaving the profession never crossed their minds. In opposition only a small fraction or **20 %** of those interviewed acknowledged having thought all the time or at certain times about leaving their career as teachers.

Figure 4. Relative frequency that shows teachers' perception about the amount of institutional support during pandemic work



Note. Values shown in percentages. Source: own elaboration.

#### Interpretation of Questions 7 & 8

The next question was aimed at knowing if the interviewees received any kind of support from the institution for which they were working. The scale distribution of anchors was as follows, **41.2%** of the respondents said they had received continuous help, more specifically, the type of help received was through videos and ideas to work online. Also, through face-to-face and virtual meetings, brainstorming, mindfulness seminars or teacher training. There were also course observations and teacher development courses to develop certain digital skills. Some of the participants also mentioned that the institution provided the necessary computers, cameras, laptops, USB, earphones, and internet access to work online at school. Public and private

universities provided them with psychological support and didactic strategies. A small portion of the informants also sensed that the fact of having a job, when many other professions did not, was enough support.

The next proportion of the sample corresponds to the next two items that compete in terms of size with **17.6%** respectively. The first item conforms to the percentage of instructors who definitely believed that the institutions supported them on many occasions. This in light of the fact that the teachers felt they received help not only from the institution, but also from colleagues and other people. The help received consisted of constant training and good work organization; in the same way, some teachers commented that they had been provided with the tools to

complete the tasks. Some of them also felt that whenever they had a family situation, they had received strong emotional support and permission to be absent from work.

The next item with **17.6%** is correlated with the perception that teachers had about the support provided by the institutions, which in their opinion was frequently granted. The reasons they gave for feeling supported were that they received training on the use of new digital platforms. However, interestingly, this segment of the respondent population seemed to justify rather than complain about insufficient support from institutions, as they felt that the institutions were also learning to improve. As a result, many of these teachers felt they received practical but no emotional support, some others thought that the support from institutions was not necessary.

The last two anchor points on the Likert scale also equaled in size with **11.8%** each, being the first item in descending order the one that was related to the response “seldom”. On this occasion the respondents said they had been poorly supported by the institutions since there was no initiative or creativity on the part of universities and schools and they were only helped when requested.

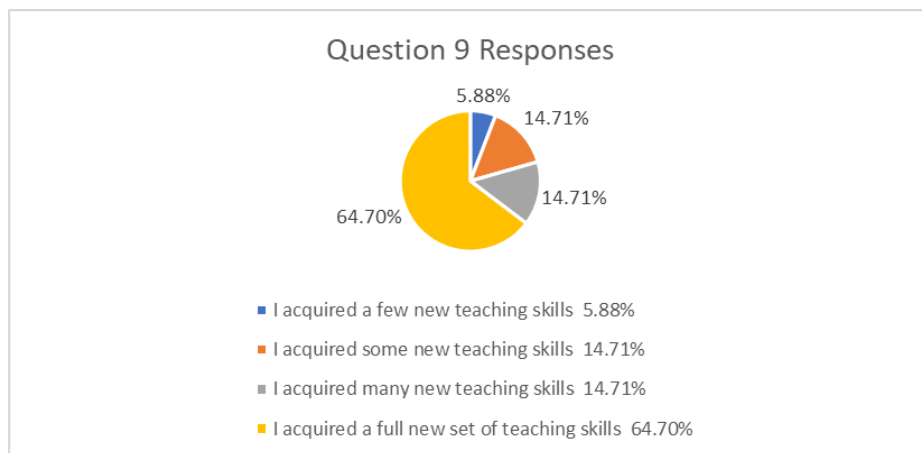
Several of them also thought that the institution, far from being supportive, became demanding to the point that some

of them had to work even when they were sick, and they were even assigned tasks outside of the employment contract.

The last item on the scale addressed the answer “never” and the participants revealed that they were never supported with any type of material or incentive such as an extra bonus or additional payment for online work. Some also felt the institution never cared enough about how the teachers were doing and one of them said he had even been fired due to his psychological instability.

Some inference can be drawn from these data, first of all, the bulk of the population of respondents, more specifically **42%** seemed to be satisfied with the type of support received by the institution, while another **35%** were not precisely expecting to receive support from the institution. This in part, because as they mentioned, everything that happened was new for everyone, including the institutions, and no one knew what the future might hold. Finally, yet importantly we have a fraction corresponding to **22%** at the end of the spectrum which felt that without sufficient training on tech tools and online teaching skills had been left adrift. An important point to remark here is that it is evident that the institutions tried to help and actually did, but many times such support was incomplete or deficient.

Figure 5. Relative frequency that shows to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic helped teachers acquire new teaching skills



*Note.* Values shown in percentages. Source: own elaboration.

#### Interpretation of Questions 9 & 10

Finally, we will center our attention on the last question of the survey whose objective was to know to what extent the change to teaching mode during the COVID-19 pandemic helped English language teachers to acquire new teaching skills. The points to highlight will be made according to the order in which the response anchors appear on the Likert scale. The first item being the one that inquired whether the teachers had not acquired any new teaching competence.

In this regard, the figures show that no response was obtained on this issue, thus representing **0%**. Continuing in descendent order we have the following item which tried to find out if teachers had acquired at least a few new teaching skills, and the proportion obtained in this regard was **5.8%**. The participants who consid-

ered it justified their answers by saying that they were in constant training for which they had no problems working with information and communication technologies, even when they occasionally came across a new platform. In addition, some of them mentioned that they had not had difficulties managing online groups.

The next two items reached a total of **14.71%** each, remaining in balance. In accordance with the following order of the interview, it can be verified that the segment of respondents who thought that they had acquired some new teaching skills considered it that way because in their perception planning a class in a different way is part of the good teaching practices and the educator's vocation demands to be in constant development.

This group of participants also considered that at that moment many apps to

present classes emerged and others were simplified thus facilitating teachers' adoption of new technological tools. They also felt that the need to use these platforms had encouraged them to enter the digital world. As mentioned before, the segment of interviewees that considered they had acquired many new teaching skills reached the same size as the one previously described. According to the general opinion it seemed that the respondents saw the confinement during the pandemic as an opportunity to learn to use more technologies such as video conferencing, Google Classroom, and other useful apps to carry out their work and be able to teach classes remotely.

Moreover, **64.60%** of those who participated in the survey mentioned having acquired a whole new set of teaching skills. The opinion of those who supported this idea was diverse, for instance, some thought that before the confinement working from home was unimaginable, others also considered that the experience gave them the opportunity to learn countless things such as how to handle distance teaching and teach in a different modality. Some also thought they had learned new teaching strategies and acquired new techniques while others said they learned to use their creativity to design online material and solve problems and learned how to use technology to obtain maximum results. Overall, this group of participants thought that the experience had changed their lives in all aspects.

Finally, from the data obtained, it can be inferred that while a minimum percentage relative to **.058 %** felt they had not learned anything new, another **14%** felt

they had learned some new things. However, and as expected, the highest value obtained in the scale reached **79%** and corresponds to those informants who believed the pandemic had a significant impact on them and the challenge led them to a positive transformation, since it pushed them to suddenly navigate the digital world in order to find solutions to distance education.

### Discussion and Conclusions

As discussed at the beginning of this article when COVID-19 appeared it challenged all human beings to their limit. English language teachers were abruptly forced to shift to online teaching with their cellphones, computers, and other teaching resources.

Moreover, unfamiliarity with the use of technology also became a challenge for many teachers, because some had never taught classes through distance teaching. Although the majority of the teachers acknowledged that they had received some kind of institutional support, some others felt they had not received enough technological training and pedagogy. This takes us back to recall Murray (2010) who explained that teachers should be enrolled in constant professional development, because technology is constantly changing.

The pandemic high demands imposed on educators and school logistics ended in fatigue and stress. Health concerns about the safety of their families, friends and students created difficult working environments and as teachers know trying to help others can be very stressful, since many emotions and effort are put into the task of educating, motivating and helping students. Teaching is characterized

by a rollercoaster of emotions, where the teachers' main concern is the students' learning, and engagement on learning a foreign language. As Glickman & Burns (2021) claimed "teaching has always been a stressful profession, but the additions of high-stakes accountability coupled with a global pandemic have increased stress to unprecedented levels."

A great number of educators mentioned that they had an increased workload and they expressed that besides the sudden change to online teaching they were also required to attend to mandatory training courses during mornings, afternoons or weekends. All these demands and pressure resulted in work related stress, and burn out.

It can be inferred that other factors such as the age and lack of professional development might have affected the self-efficacy of some teachers during the pandemic. This could have been due to the technological generational gap or lack of training opportunities.

The limitations of the study were that the age, gender, and years of teaching experience were not taken into consideration in the survey. These variables could have provided valuable data about the background of the participants, and their familiarity with technology. In addition, the grade or level of students to whom the teachers taught was also unknown. It would have been insightful to know the percentage of teachers that came from public or private institutions. Similarly, this study was carried out several months after the pandemic had emerged.

Also, despite the adversity, uncertainty, and stress **79%** of the participants of this

study informed that they never thought about resigning their jobs because their main concern was their students, even if some of them presented a lack of motivation to learn. It was observed that teachers demonstrated vocation, and endurance to the exposure of long periods of stress, and working hours. Therefore, it can be implied that educators showed profound resilience, and commitment. It can also be assumed that undoubtedly the pandemic impacted on the teachers' well-being, teaching, attitudes, and concerns.

From the findings this paper can also inform that some teachers had a mixture of positive and negative emotions during synchronous teaching in the lockdown, due to the unavailability of technological equipment or internet connection problems in their environment. This can be corroborated with figures presented by The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (2020) which informed that there were **84.1%** million users of internet in Mexico. According to the institute, about **78.3%** of people living in cities were internet users, while in rural areas there were **50.4%**. In addition, it also estimated that there were **44.4 %** million of computer and **88.2 %** million of cell-phone users.

The results may help to accentuate the need for constant professional development to help teachers and administrators to be prepared for unexpected occurrences like the COVID-19 pandemic. It is fundamental that institutions train their staff and create professional development opportunities, because it makes teaching easier and helps educators acquire good teaching



skills. Moreover, it also lowers the teaching stress levels, since it supplies pedagogical knowledge, tools, creative ideas and methodologies to educators. Murray (2010) asserts in her work that professional development empowers teachers, helping them to improve their teaching and develop leadership skills (p.3).

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Appendix A. Survey Monkey Open-Ended Questions tabulations  
and tables with the answers of the Participants

**Question 2**

**2) Explain your response (use less than 10 words)**

1) *It almost never affected me.* Interviewees: 10, 13, 14, 22, 25

Reasons:

10-Just the first few days while I was adapting to the new way.

13-I enjoyed both the challenge and change.

14-I was affected by not knowing how to use the technology and methodology.

22-I worked with the hybrid program and it was difficult at first.

25-It did not stop me from doing what I like to do.

2) *It affected me a little.* Interviewees: 7, 18, 27, 34

Reasons:

7-I am not a person who likes to be away from home.

18-The work was very light compared to face-to-face work.

27-I had the resources to get the job done.

34-Because I prefer to work from home than presential.

3) *It sometimes affected me.* Interviewees: 2, 6, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33

Reasons:

2-I was shocked since it was unexpected and unknown.

6-I tried to enjoy the process and not let it affect me so much.

11-It affected me not being able to socialize as it was done before.

12-At times it was frustrating, I felt isolated.

15-Yes, it affected me in my personal life; therefore, it also affected my performance at work.

17-Parents and young children were not familiar with the platforms and ways to access activities. The work time was longer.

20-It is more difficult to have the motivation to work from home.

21-I had to deal with stress, misinformation, and academic demands.

26-I am an active person who likes to go out and travel a lot.

28-I tried to be calm but there were difficult times.

29-I was not ready to teach online and it was really stressful.

31-I felt restricted and uncomfortable.

33-Socializing with peers and students changed completely.

4) *It significantly affected me.* Interviewees: 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 19, 23, 24

Reasons:

- 1-The online workload was brutal.
- 4-It was hard to handle new and unknown platforms.
- 5-I was afraid to leave the house.
- 8-It was hard to get the students to interact and connect.
- 9-Work hours increased, and new problems arose with students.
- 19-My insomnia got worse, and I am under medical treatment.
- 23-I don't like being at home.
- 24-Confinement and a little coexistence.

5) *It affected me quite a lot.* Interviewees: 3, 16, 30, 32

Reasons:

- 3-I believe there was a lot of pressure in terms of work responsibilities, since being an experienced teacher I was assigned responsibilities that were not mine.
- 16-I suffered from depression and anxiety.
- 30-It still has. Sort of minor depression.
- 32-I suffered from depression and anxiety.

#### **Question 4**

#### **4) Explain your response (use less than 10 words)**

1) *It did not affect me.* Interviewees: 2 5 10 13 17 22 24 25 27 31 33

Reasons:

- 2-I accepted and adapted to what had to be done.
- 5-We continued to work remotely thanks to technology.
- 10-The change from face-to-face to virtual classes affected, but not my emotional state.
- 13-Personally, I saw it as something positive.
- 17-Problems were solved as they came up.
- 22-For me, it was like a normal workday.
- 24-I came back to traditional teaching feeling more motivated due to everything I missed.
- 25-On the contrary, it gave me the opportunity to learn.
- 27-Yes, I was worried, but, as usual, you do not take your worries to work.
- 31-I gave the best of myself and learnt and used all what was learnt to my students benefit.
- 33- Quite the opposite, I became more active and creative.

2) *It affected me a bit.* Interviewees: 7 11 12 14 16 18 21 26 30 34

Reasons:

- 7-I adapted to online classes well.
- 11-Only the time the situation was very difficult.
- 12-During the beginning of the pandemic, it was difficult for me to motivate my students.

- 14-By learning how to do it, it became easier for me.  
16-The stress of the students during the pandemic affected me.  
18-I was able to relax working from home.  
21-At the beginning we were sitting very tired in front of the screen for 13 hours  
26-I felt impatient when students did not respond.  
30-Sometimes I didn't realize it.

3) *It often affected me.* Interviewees: 1 4 6 8 9 20 23 28 29

Reasons:

- 1-When there was no response from the students.  
4-Stressful when the internet connection was lost.  
6-It was difficult for me to suddenly reach out to students effectively.  
8-I felt powerless not having the means to motivate my students more.  
9-There were situations that did not motivate me.  
20-It was difficult to establish a bond with my students.  
23-I didn't have the same connection with my students.  
28- I really felt frustrated about some students' attitude, since they did not take studying seriously.  
29-I felt demotivated because my students do not turn on their video cameras during online classes.

4) *It affected me more than I thought.* Interviewees: 15 19

Reasons:

- 15- Depression and loneliness.  
19-It exasperated me that students did not participate.

5) *It affected me a lot.* Interviewees: 3 32

Reasons:

- 3-Since I was assigned responsibilities that did not correspond to me.  
32-My behavior towards students changed.

## **Question 6**

### **6) Explain your response (use less than 10 words)**

1) *All the time* Interviewees: 3

Reasons:

- 3-I wanted to be in a peaceful place.

2) *Very often* Interviewees: 30 32

Reasons:

30-It felt useless at times. Students not paying attention or caring.  
32-I thought about working at a call center for a while.

3) *Sometimes* Interviewees: 9 24 31

Reasons:

9-It was very exhausting dealing with students and some situations.

24-It was not satisfactory for me.

31-Students did not open the cameras or did not respond. Not always but when they did so, I was so disappointed.

4) *Rarely* Interviewees: 27

Reasons:

27-I am already reaching retirement age. So, I thought that it was a good time to quit.

5) *Never* Interviewees: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20  
21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 33, 34

Reasons:

1- (No response given)

2-I love my job and my thoughts were only about adapting.

4-No, because I was learning.

5-I continued to work as normal.

6-I just tried to adapt to the situation.

7-Well, not really.

8-It was a challenge, and I took it.

10-I continued to enjoy teaching, although not as much as in face-to-face classes.

11-It was what kept me busy.

12-I never considered it, I adapted well.

13-I discovered new ways to teach and that motivated me.

14-No, I am motivated by learning, teaching, and success.

15-Not at all.

16-I had a fast adjustment.

17- I applied previously acquired knowledge, and also the new knowledge acquired during the pandemic.

18-I like my job.

19-I lie teaching. Therefore, I tried to do more activities to engage students.

20-I knew that at some point we were going to return to school.

21-I was worried about my students and their learning.

22-I never considered it. (It never crossed my mind).

23-It was not an option for me.

25-Teaching online was a new and exciting experience.

- 26-One has to adapt to the circumstances and continue with the vocation.  
 28-I really love teaching. It was a new challenge, but overall, it was a good experience.  
 29-I really like my job and I trained myself to adapt to the new situation.  
 33-I was comfortable listening to my students' academic and personal needs when they opened up.  
 34-I enjoy my profession.

### **Question 8**

#### **8) Explain your response (use less than 10 words)**

1) *All the time* Interviewees: 2 5 6 9 10 12 14 15 17 21 26 27 28 30

Reasons:

- 2-My colleagues were who helped me the most, not the institution.  
 5-We had a mindfulness seminar.  
 6-The institution sent us videos and ideas to work online.  
 9-I was supported when there were problems and had training.  
 10-The fact of continuing to work or have a job, when many did not, was enough support.  
 12-The institution helped me a lot to learn many new things.  
 14-We were always given options and recommendations.  
 15-There were classes.  
 17-It is the priority of the school to satisfy the client. Therefore, to provide the necessary teaching equipment was important.  
 21-Microsoft Office Workshops, Psychological support and teaching strategies to help students, were provided to the teaching staff.  
 26-Because the results depended on the support.  
 27-There were face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings and brainstorming.  
 28-There were course observations, teacher development courses to develop certain digital skills.  
 30-They kept sending us emails to offer help.

2) *Many times.* Interviewees: 4 7 13 18 25 33

Reasons:

- 4-Constant training.  
 7-They trained us, helped us with doubts, etc.  
 13-I received help from many people.  
 18-There was good work organization.  
 25-They tried to provide the tools to have the best performance.  
 33-Whenever there was a family situation, they were very supportive.

3) *Often.* Interviewees: 8 11 20 22 23 29

Reasons:

- 8-The institution was also learning how to improve.

11-Everything that happened was something new for all of us, and nobody knew the future or where we would go from then on.

20-We did get practical support, but no emotional support at all.

22-It really was not necessary.

23-Training and the use of new digital platforms.

29-We had teacher training courses.

4)*Seldom.* Interviewees: 3 16 24 31

Reasons:

3-I was seen as an “experienced teacher” that could handle whatever was assigned to her.

16-Even if you were still sick, you had to work on the online classes. I had to give the face-to-face sessions outside contracted working hours.

24-Only when I requested it.

31-The educational institution did not really support us, but they demanded the best results.

5)*Never.* Interviewees: 1, 19, 32, 34

Reasons:

1-They never called me to see how I was doing.

19-We were not provided with any material or online payment.

32-I was even fired due to my psychological instability.

34-Not sure what you refer to by “support”. What kind of support do you mean?

### **Question 10**

Explain your response (use less than 10 words)

1)*I did not acquire any new teaching skills* no responses given

2)*I acquired a few new teaching skills* Interviewees: 21 28

Reasons:

21-I am always in constant training. However, there were new platforms that I did not know.

28-I have never had any problems working with ICTs and in terms of managing online groups, nothing was difficult for me in general.

3)*I acquired some new teaching skills* Interviewees: 10 15 17 27 33

Reasons:

10-You teach and plan the class in a different way and . . .

15-You always learn something.

17-The apps to present classes increased, some of them were simplified, others were improved and new ones emerged.

27-I learned how to use Zoom and breakout rooms.



33-I started using different tools and platforms than otherwise, I might not have needed to learn that fast.

34)I acquired many new teaching skills

Interviewees:1 5 6 23 34

Reasons:

1-To use more technology.

5-I learned to use more technology (video conferencing) to teach distant classes

6-Several useful apps to carry out my work and Google classroom usage.

23-I used more technology in my classes.

24-(No response given)

5)I acquired a full new set of teaching skills

Interviewees:2 3 4 7 8 9 11 12 13 14 16

18 19 20 22 24 25 26 29 30 31 32

Reasons:

2-It changed my life in all aspects.

3-I learned to know how to decide what was best for me.

4-I definitely integrated the new teaching strategies I learned.

7-I had never imagined that I could work from home.

8-Yes, I discovered things that I could even use in face-to-face classes.

9-In general, I learned about technology but also about teaching in another modality.

11-We learned to teach remotely although it was difficult and it was also a challenge.

12-I learned to manage a distance learning class, use online materials, and solve problems from a distance.

13-I had to search for technological knowledge and also acquire new techniques.

14-I learned a lot. I like challenges.

16-I learned countless things to teach.

18-I found new strategies.

19-Yes, now I am in a Master's degree in virtual environments.

20-I used lots of new platforms and tools.

22-Especially with the use of technology.

24-(No response given)

25-I learned how to use technology to become a better teacher.

26-I reinvented myself in the field of education with technology.

29- I learned a lot about online classes and activities.

30-It helped me master my organization of teaching online.

31-I learned how to use several platforms and obtain maximum results by using online resources.

32-Now I teach using an entirely new system and I love it.

Appendix B. Survey Monkey Close-Ended Questions tabulations  
and tables with the answers of the Participants

**Question 1 -Tabulation**

**1)Do you consider that your emotional well-being was affected in times of distance teaching during the pandemic?**

It almost never affected me	10, 13, 14, 22, 25.
It affected me a little	7, 18, 27, 34.
It sometimes affected me	2, 6, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33
It significantly affected me	1, 4, 5, 8 ,9 ,19, 23, 24.
It affected me quite a lot	3, 16, 30, 32.

**Table 1. Teacher Responses**

<b>Total Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Relative Frequency</b>
It almost never affected me	5 (participants)	14.7%
It affected me a little	4 (participants)	11.8%
It sometimes affected me	13 (participants)	38.2%
It significantly affected me	8 (participants)	23.5%
It affected me quite a lot	4 (participants)	11.8%
Total	34 (participants)	100 %

**Question 3 - Tabulation**

**3) Do you consider that your emotional well-being affected your performance as a teacher during the pandemic?**

It did not affect me.	2, 5, 10, 13, 17, 22, 24, 25, 27, 31, 33
It affected me a bit.	7, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21, 26, 30, 34
It often affected me.	1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 20, 23, 28, 29
It affected me more than I thought.	15, 19
It affected me a lot.	3, 32

**Table 2. Teacher responses**

<b>Total Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Relative frequency</b>
It did not affect me	11 (participants)	32.4%
It affected me a bit	10 (participants)	29.5%
It often affected me	9 (participants)	26.5%
It affected me more than I thought	2 (participants)	5.8%
It affected me a lot	2 (participants)	5.8%
Total	34 (participants)	100%

### Question 5 - Tabulation

5)At some point during online working in times of the pandemic; did you think of leaving the profession?

All the time	3
Very often	30, 32
Sometimes	9, 24, 31
I gave it some thought	27
Never	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 33 34

**Table. 3 Teacher Responses**

Total Answers	Frequency	Relative frequency
All the time	1 (participant)	2.9%
Very often	2 (participants)	5.9%
Sometimes	3 (participants)	8.8%
I gave it some thought	1 (participant)	2.9%
Never	27 (participants)	79.5%
Total	34 (participants)	100 %

### Question 7 – Tabulation

7)Did you receive support from your educational institution during the pandemic work?

All the time	2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 21, 26, 27, 28, 30
Many times	4, 7, 13, 18, 25, 33
Often	8, 11, 20, 22, 23, 29
Seldom	3, 16, 24, 31
Never	1, 19, 32, 34

**Table 4. Teacher Responses**

Total Answers	Frequency	Relative frequency
All the time	14 (participants)	41.2%
Many times	6 (participants)	17.6%
Often	6 (participants)	17.6%
Seldom	4 (participants)	11.8%
Never	4 (participants)	11.8%
Total	34 (participants)	100 %

### Question 9 - Tabulation

#### 9) To what extent did the Covid-19 Pandemic help you acquire new teaching skills?

I did not acquire any new teaching skills.

I acquired a few new teaching skills. 21, 28

I acquired some new teaching skills. 10, 15, 17, 27, 33

I acquired many new teaching skills. 1, 5, 6, 23, 34

I acquired a full new set of teaching skills. 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32.

**Table 5. Teacher Responses**

<b>Total Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Relative Frequency</b>
I did not acquire any new teaching skills	0 (participants)	
I acquired a few new teaching skills	2 (participants)	5.88%
I acquired some new teaching skills.	5 (participants)	14.71%
I acquired many new teaching skills	5 (participants)	14.71%
I acquired a full new set of teaching skills	22 (participants)	64.70%
Total	34 (participants)	100%