



Teachers as Victors: Navigating Shifts in Teaching and Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

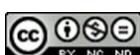
This article explores how teachers managed shifts in the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic and offers insights for designing an intervention program. Conducted as a narrative inquiry, the study involved eleven participants across three secondary and three primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. Adopting a qualitative, interpretivist approach, data were collected through collages, reflective journals, and interviews. Multiple methods of generating data were selected: collages, reflective journals, and structured interviews. Kurt Lewin's theory of change was used as a theoretical framework to offer lenses in exploring and understanding how teachers navigate these changes, and it provided a framework for overcoming the challenges in education during crises. During data interpretation and analysis, findings were organized around key themes and sub-themes. The research findings indicate that teachers adapted to the changes brought about by COVID-19 through a range of trial-and-error strategies. The study resulted in the creation of a model and guide for developing context-specific intervention programs. Furthermore, from this study, the researcher developed a theory called 'Navigating Change Theory.'



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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted education systems worldwide, forcing schools to rapidly adopt alternative modes of teaching and learning (Nakar, 2024 & Huang et al., 2020). In South Africa, educators faced the dual challenge of sustaining the teaching and learning process while complying with evolving health and safety protocols. The abrupt shift to remote and rotational learning intensified long-standing inequalities, particularly in under-resourced communities, and required teachers to adjust curricula, adopt unfamiliar pedagogical strategies, and sustain learner engagement during crisis conditions, a pattern also identified by Jiang (2024) and Dempsey and Mestry (2023).

Although international research has documented many of the broad challenges of emergency remote teaching, there remains limited context-specific evidence capturing the lived experiences of South African teachers. As Dempsey and Mestry (2023) note, much of the research continues to overlook provincial and local contexts such as KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, Nakar (2024) observes that existing studies often prioritize systemic constraints while paying less attention to teachers' day-to-day decision-making and pedagogical adaptation during the pandemic. Comparative work across differently resourced school environments is similarly underdeveloped, despite widespread evidence that the pandemic deepened pre-existing inequalities, as demonstrated by Jiang (2024). These gaps reduce the sector's capacity to develop practical, context-responsive interventions to support teachers during future crises.



In response to these gaps, this study explores the lived experiences of primary and secondary school teachers in KwaZulu-Natal and the strategies they employed while navigating shifting educational demands during the pandemic. A qualitative, interpretivist narrative inquiry design was used, drawing on collages, reflective journals, and structured interviews with eleven participants. The study is guided by Lewin's theory of change, which continues to provide a useful framework for understanding educational transitions, as evidenced in recent applications by Dempsey and Mestry (2023) and Nakar (2024). This research aims to generate insights that may inform policy and practice within South African education and comparable international contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

Interpretivist Paradigm

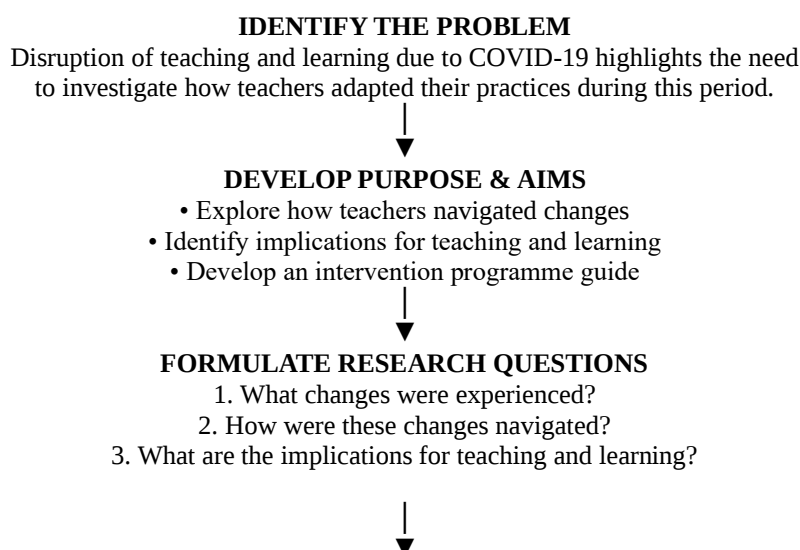
The study adopted an interpretivist paradigm to explore how teachers navigated changes in the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interpretivism facilitates an understanding of lived experiences, beliefs, and behaviors within specific contexts (Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Ataro, 2020). It values multiple interpretations of reality and prioritizes methods such as participant observation and interviews over statistical analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). Through naturalistic inquiry, the researcher engaged with teachers' subjective realities in their school settings (Bergold, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2015), generating rich, theory-informed insights into their socially constructed meanings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers navigated pandemic-driven changes in teaching and learning. Qualitative methods enable the exploration of human experiences and social phenomena (Jackson et al., 2007; Creswell, 2008), with an emphasis on interpreting meaning within specific contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Lopes, 2008). Data were collected through reflective journals and collages, which captured nuanced and contextually grounded accounts of teachers' lived experiences.

Research Design

A case study design was adopted to investigate how teachers in public schools adapted their practices during the pandemic. Case studies allow for detailed, context-specific investigations of complex phenomena (Neuman, 2006; Cohen et al., 2011) and are particularly suited to answering 'how' and 'why' questions within a defined setting (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As Simons (2009) notes, case studies examine the uniqueness and complexity of real-life situations from multiple perspectives, enriching our understanding of teachers' experiences during COVID-19.



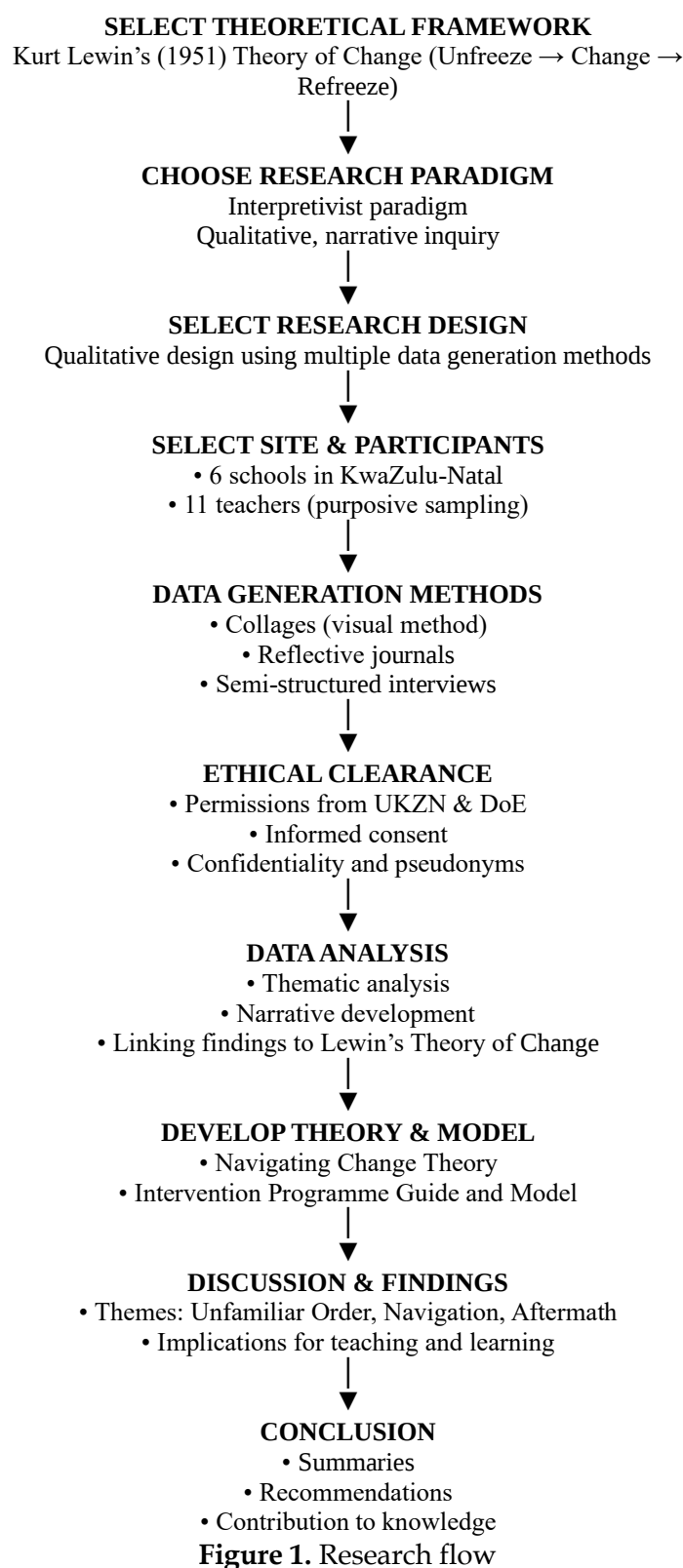


Figure 1. Research flow

Research Location

The study was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal across six public schools, three primary and three secondary, serving multiracial learner and teacher populations. Four schools were located in Phoenix, one in Tongaat, and one in Newlands West. The sample included schools from different quintiles, reflecting South Africa's Department of Education policy to promote "redress, equity, and quality" through its quintile funding system (DoE, 2006). This system

ranks schools from Quintile 1 (least resourced) to Quintile 5 (most resourced), with higher funding allocated to poorer schools (Van Dyk & White, 2019).

Sampling and Participants

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select eleven teachers. Unlike probability sampling, which randomly selects participants to ensure generalisability (Cohen et al., 2011), purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of individuals with relevant experience and knowledge (Cohen et al., 2007). Participants were chosen based on their return to in-person teaching during the pandemic, prior interactions with the researcher, and their capacity to provide rich, in-depth insights. The final sample size was shaped by participant availability and resource constraints (Cohen et al., 2007). Table 1 presents participant profiles (as of June/July 2021), and Table 2 outlines functional changes in their schools due to COVID-19. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Table 1. Participant profiles during the study

Participant	Pseudonym	School (Pseudonym)	Qualification	Years of teaching experience
1	Sonu	Evergreen Heights	B.Ed	6
2	Mandisa	Crestview Primary	B.Ed	15
3	Danny	Riverdale Secondary	B.Ed, B.Ed Hons	5
4	Hazel	Winterville Secondary	B.Ed, B.Ed Hons	6
5	Songezile	Lakewood Primary	B.Ed	2
6	Kate	Lakewood Primary	B.Ed	10
7	Duduzane	Evergreen Heights	B.Ed, B.Ed Hons	5
8	Shaun	Lakewood Primary	B.Ed	18
9	Sipho	Valleyview Primary	B.Ed	23
10	Natasha	Lakewood Primary	B.Ed	25
11	Praise	Evergreen Heights	B.Ed	6

Table 2. The functional changes experienced in their respective schools due to COVID-19

School name: (pseudonym)	Number of participants	Quintile	Learner attendance and functionality during Covid-19
1.Lakewood Primary	4	4	Lakewood Primary School implemented a 10-day rotational attendance cycle, dividing learners into two main groups (Class A and Class B), with each group attending school on alternate days. To further comply with social distancing requirements, each class was subdivided into two smaller groups (A1 and A2, B1 and B2).
2.Crestview Primary	1	5	Crestview Primary School adopted a colour-coded attendance model, dividing learners into two groups: the Yellow Code and the Green Code. Each learner was issued a colour tag to ensure attendance on the designated days.
3.Valleyview Primary	1	5	Valleyview Primary School implemented a model in which learners from each class were divided into two groups. Group One attends school on one day, while Group Two attends on the alternate day, following a rotational schedule.
4.Winterville Secondary	1	5	Winterville Secondary School manages attendance according to grade levels. All Grade 12 learners attend school daily, while Grades 10 and 11 attend on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Grades 8 and 9 attend on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
5.Evergreen Heights	3	4	Evergreen Heights School implemented a two-week rotational attendance model. In the first week, Grades 8, 11, and 12 attend school, while in the second week, Grades 9,

School name: (pseudonym)	Number of participants	Quintile	Learner attendance and functionality during Covid-19
6.Riverdale Secondary	1	4	10, and 12 attend. Riverdale Secondary School adopted an alternate-day attendance model. Grade 12 learners attend school daily, while Grades 8 and 10 attend on one day, and Grades 9 and 11 attend on the alternate day.

Data Generation Methods

Data were generated using collages, reflective journals, and structured interviews, with each method aligned to specific research questions and objectives. The collage method addressed the first research question and objective, reflective journals focused on the second, and structured interviews targeted the third. The use of these diverse methods allowed for an in-depth understanding of how teachers navigated shifts in the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Qualitative Data Interpretation and Thematic Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis involves a systematic process of interpreting information to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This study employed a structured approach to segment and reorganize data into a coherent framework addressing the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis process included generating, reviewing, selecting, and interpreting data to identify themes and draw meaningful conclusions (Patton, 2015).

Thematic analysis followed a seven-phase approach adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006), comprising data preparation and organization, transcription, familiarization, coding, category and theme development, and ensuring transparency throughout the process. Three overarching themes emerged from the analysis:

1. The Unfamiliar Order
2. Teachers' Functioning Within the Unfamiliar Order
3. The Aftermath of the Unfamiliar Order

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this research have been tabulated (Table 3).

Table 3. Research findings

Teachers as Victors: Navigating Shifts in Teaching and Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic	
Listed in this column are the changes in teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic	Discussed in this column are how teachers navigate shifts in the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic.
COVID-19 health protocols: ▪ Wearing of masks. ▪ Social distancing at a 1.5-meter distance. ▪ Frequent sanitizing and washing of hands. ▪ Screening.	The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2020) implemented strict COVID-19 safety guidelines for schools, including maintaining 1.5 meters of social distancing, limiting attendance to 50% capacity, mandatory mask-wearing, and regular handwashing and sanitizing protocols. To adhere to these measures, teachers reinforced health guidelines through posters, role-plays, charts, and games, integrating them into daily lessons. They also raised verbal awareness about the virus's severity and modelled safe practices. Schools implemented alternate-day attendance models to reduce class sizes and ensure compliance with distancing requirements. Teachers assumed additional responsibilities, including screening learners, conducting temperature checks, and sanitizing classrooms. Movement within schools was restricted to prevent cross-contamination, while classrooms were regularly ventilated and

cleaned. Group work was minimized in favour of whole-class or individual discussions, with staggered breaks and ground markings to maintain distancing. Support staff, such as education assistants and general assistants, played a key role in enforcing protocols and maintaining hygiene. Collectively, these measures contributed to a safer learning environment during the pandemic (Zimu et al., 2020; Gustafsson, 2020).

Mental health issues faced by teachers and learners - anxiety, fear, stress, depression, and tension.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with increased stress, anxiety, and depression, largely due to fear and uncertainty surrounding the virus (WHO; Asmundson & Taylor, 2020; Bao et al., 2020). Studies indicate a rise in mental health issues during lockdown periods (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Rey et al., 2020). Teachers coped by sharing experiences, seeking guidance, and encouraging learners to remain calm while adhering to health protocols. They created safe and supportive spaces where learners could express their concerns and access mental health resources. Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education appointed educational assistants to serve as counsellors, providing additional support for learners' psychological well-being during the pandemic.

Frequent closures and irregular reopening of schools.

A study by Hoadley (2020) provides critical data on the number of school days lost due to COVID-19, which prompted the education system to shift toward online and remote learning platforms. During the lockdown period, some participants conducted lessons virtually while learners remained at home, primarily communicating via WhatsApp. Teachers shared instructional materials, voice notes, and activity guidelines through this platform. Upon the reopening of schools during periods of high infection rates, participants prepared work booklets and resource packs to ensure learners remained actively engaged at home, as many parents were hesitant to send their children to school. Additionally, participants provided structured daily work plans to guide learners' home-based learning.

Loss of teaching and learning time.

Participants adapted to teaching challenges during COVID-19 by following the trimmed curriculum outlined in the Annual Teaching Recovery Plan (2021–2023), which reorganized and reduced content and assessments. This adjustment allowed for the integration of Term Two topics into other terms to accommodate alternate-day school attendance. With restrictions on sharing textbooks, teachers developed instructional packages, including worksheets and remedial activities, to support learning. Some schools implemented learning recovery programs to address missed content. Teachers provided timely feedback by correcting tasks immediately and experimented with new teaching methods to identify the most effective strategies under these conditions. Frequent school closures necessitated progressive assessments conducted after completing each section rather than at term-end. To support struggling learners, participants paired them with peers while observing COVID-19 safety protocols. Difficult topics were broken down into smaller segments, reinforced through homework, and learners were encouraged to independently utilize online resources, such as Google, for additional support and understanding.

Online and remote learning.

Participants were required to rapidly transition to online teaching platforms, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, and Google Classroom, during the pandemic. Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021)

describe this shift as essential despite the challenges faced by both educators and learners, who had to quickly adapt to unfamiliar methods of teaching and learning. WhatsApp proved particularly valuable due to its accessibility, enabling teachers to create chat groups for sharing learning materials, resource packs, worksheets, and guidance electronically. However, unequal access to digital resources presented a significant challenge for some learners.

This emergency adoption of online education, referred to as “Education in Emergency” by Subedi et al. (2020), required teachers to implement systems for which they were often unprepared. Despite these difficulties, the shift provided unprecedented opportunities for collaboration, creativity, and professional learning from peers (Doucet et al., 2020). Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) further argue that these digital tools have the potential to complement and enrich traditional face-to-face teaching even after schools fully reopen.

New attendance model with reduced class sizes.

This change facilitated adherence to COVID-19 health protocols, as reduced class sizes allowed for social distancing of at least 1.5 meters. Participants managed this adjustment by encouraging learners to attend school according to their assigned groups and ensuring that all learners received the same instructional materials. To support learning on non-attendance days, teachers provided additional work for learners to complete at home. Some participants viewed this change positively, noting that smaller groups enabled more individual attention for learners. Furthermore, alternate-day attendance prompted teachers to ensure that assessments were completed during class time.

Halt in collaborative teaching and learning practice.

Participants initially found this change in teaching and learning challenging, as the methodology disrupted established classroom practices. They had to ensure that tasks and activities did not require group work, instead promoting whole-class discussions. With reduced class sizes, these discussions proved effective, and learners were actively encouraged to participate orally. Additional learning materials were provided to extend and deepen understanding of specific concepts. Participants reported that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, their teaching largely reverted to a direct or teacher-centred approach, with learners completing tasks individually. Physical contact between learners and teachers was strictly avoided. The chalkboard became a central instructional tool, as key ideas were written down and visualized for learners to support understanding.

Decreased learner performance and huge learning gaps.

The pandemic caused a significant decline in learner performance, highlighting the need for remediation. Participants found the trimmed curriculum beneficial, as it reduced workload and allowed the implementation of catch-up plans focused on literacy and mathematics, particularly for learners with special educational needs and those struggling academically. Additional teaching was provided outside regular hours, including after-school and weekend sessions. Teachers adapted their methods by encouraging discussions, simplifying concepts, and adjusting assessment standards to meet learners’ needs. The buddy system paired weaker students with stronger peers, contributing to improved performance. Parents were also actively engaged to support learning during school closures, enhancing collaboration between home and school.

Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education introduced “reading champions” to strengthen learners’ reading skills (Sintema, 2020b).

Discipline.

Participants noted that adherence to COVID-19 health protocols contributed to improved discipline. Learners were required to stand on marked spots, maintaining distance from others, which reduced the occurrence of fights and scuffles.

Halt in sporting activities.

Physical activity, traditionally promoted through physical education (PE), was significantly disrupted by COVID-19. As Shepherds et al. (2020, p.25) note, “There is little doubt that PE teachers love sports and sports practice, not least for athletes, but they have had to change, pause or even cease their activities as a result of the pandemic.” Participants reported that this disruption led to some demotivation among learners, as PE had previously been used to encourage engagement in learning. To adapt, teachers incorporated non-contact activities such as aerobics, yoga, stretching, and breathing exercises into lessons, which were feasible within socially distanced classrooms. Additionally, teachers encouraged learners to engage in safe physical activity at home to maintain fitness while observing COVID-19 precautions.

New classroom requirements.

Participants managed this situation by ensuring strict adherence to COVID-19 health protocols. They safeguarded both themselves and learners by minimizing movement within classrooms. The consistent reiteration of rules helped maintain an environment where teaching and learning could occur with reduced fear, anxiety, and stress. Additionally, participants closely observed learners’ body language and facial expressions to interpret their responses effectively.

Discussion

Teachers experienced deep and multilayered disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their reflections in this study align with findings reported internationally and in SiLeT scholarship. According to Fauzi and Khusuma (2021), many teachers across basic education environments were not adequately prepared for technology-supported instruction, which mirrors the difficulties described by participants who felt thrust into online learning without the training needed to navigate digital platforms. Inequalities were intensified as learners from disadvantaged communities struggled with limited connectivity and inadequate devices. This widening divide echoes observations made by Munir and Hartati (2022), who noted that rural and low-income learners faced severe barriers that undermined participation and academic progress.

Teachers in this study also reported significantly increased workloads and emotional strain. Similar concerns were raised by Arifin, Supriyadi, and Wahyudi (2020), who identified rising stress levels among teachers who were required to redesign lessons while also managing the social and emotional needs of learners. Daily routines were reshaped by distancing, constant sanitising, and stringent screening measures. These realities parallel findings by Dempsey and Mestry (2023), who described how health protocols disrupted classroom flow and placed additional management responsibilities on teachers.

Learner isolation and demotivation emerged as recurrent challenges. Teachers in this study observed substantial learning losses, especially in mathematics and literacy. This concern is supported by Spaul and Van der Berg (2020), who reported major declines in learner performance due to reduced contact time and inconsistent attendance. Evidence from Huang, Liu, Tlili, Yang, and Wang (2020) also highlights that remote learning, although necessary, deepened disparities because not all learners could access digital materials reliably. The

reflections of teachers in this study echo these findings, particularly regarding weak engagement and the limited ability to monitor learner understanding.

Participants highlighted that rotational attendance offered smaller class sizes and occasional benefits, yet increased workloads since lessons needed to be repeated. Jiang (2024) similarly argued that rotational systems created uneven learning opportunities and placed considerable pressure on teachers, particularly in resource-constrained environments. Teachers in this study also described decreased collaboration opportunities, cancelled sporting activities, and the emotional weight of supporting learners who were grappling with anxiety and isolation.

Across reflective journals, teachers expressed that they received minimal guidance for implementing a reduced curriculum in shorter time frames. Rahmawati and Abdullah (2021) emphasized that teachers often lacked structured professional support during emergency transitions, a theme that resonates strongly with the experiences documented here. Teachers also had to cope with staff shortages as colleagues became ill, and they carried the emotional burden of watching learners struggle socially and academically. At the same time, several participants described acquiring new digital skills, a process also documented by Nakar (2024), who found that teachers gradually developed technological confidence despite initial uncertainty.

The interviews in this study revealed a strong current of resilience. Teachers persisted despite exhaustion and mounting challenges, a pattern also observed by Dempsey and Mestry (2023), who highlighted perseverance as a key factor in maintaining continuity during crises. This study captures that resilience in the narrative titled *Hard Pressed but Not Crushed: The Victors of Unprecedented Times*, illustrating how teachers placed the well-being of learners at the center of their decisions even when feeling overwhelmed.

A notable contribution of this study is the Navigating Change Theory, which extends the ideas first proposed by Lewin (1951) by applying them to rapid educational transitions during crises. The framework illustrates the movement from pre-pandemic routines to adaptive strategies forged in response to unprecedented disruption. International research has highlighted the need for deeper theoretical engagement with teacher adaptation, yet few studies have connected lived experiences so directly with change theory. This study, therefore, offers an original theoretical lens grounded in narrative accounts.

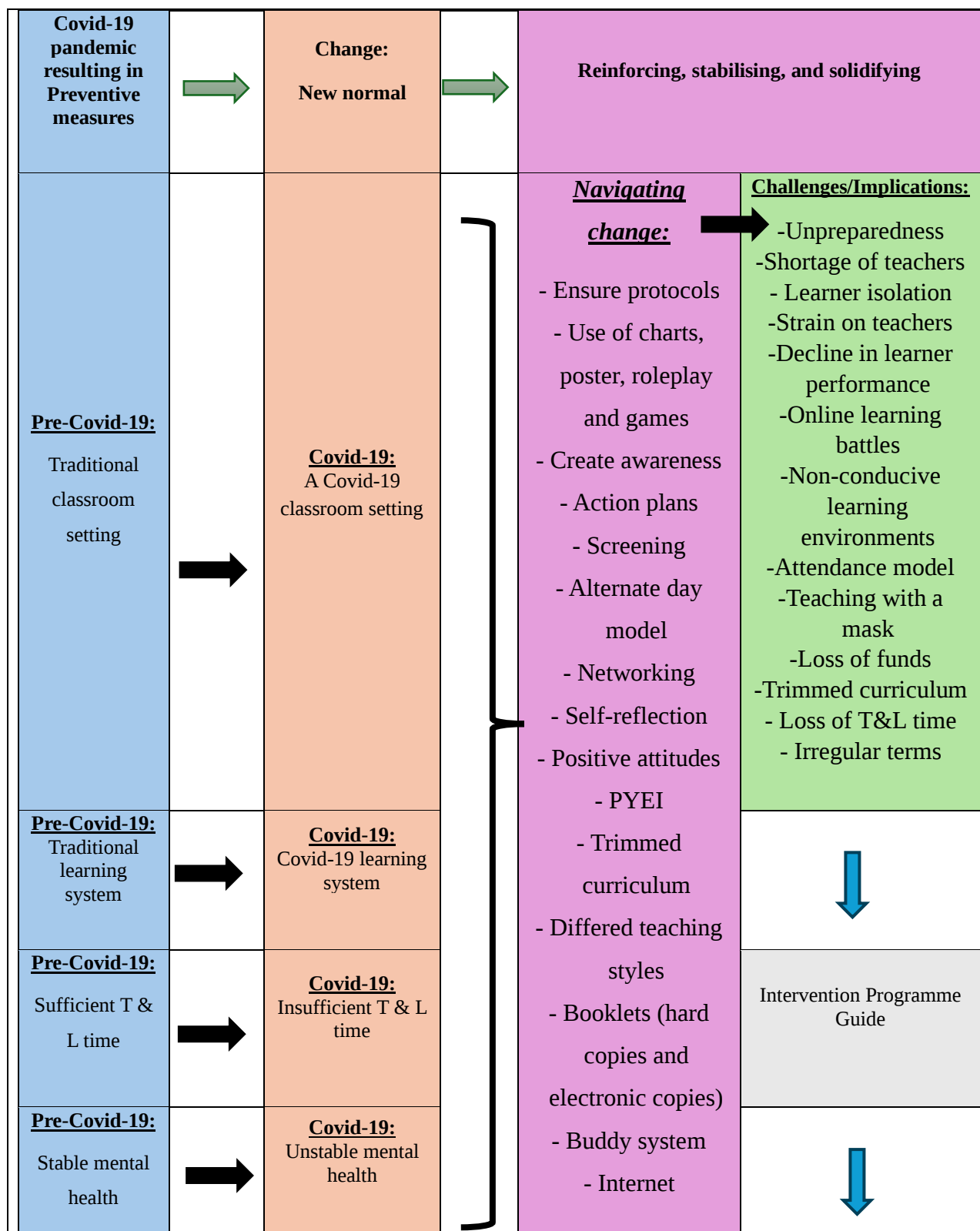
Finally, the intervention program developed from this research provides a practical guide for supporting teachers, learners, and schools during future disruptions. This type of targeted support responds to concerns raised by studies such as those of Munir and Hartati (2022) and Rahmawati and Abdullah (2021), who called for clearer guidance and equitable allocation of resources.

Participants in this study emphasized the significance of governmental assistance, improved parent-teacher communication, realistic curriculum expectations, and psychosocial support. They stressed that the education system must be better prepared for future crises, noting that strengthened structures, clear communication, and adequate resources would allow schools to sustain learning with less disruption.

Navigating Change Model

Theorizing involves generating compelling inferences and explanations grounded in data, representing a process of abstraction by the researcher that enables understanding and interpretation for others (Cornelissen & Durand, 2014; Welch et al., 2011). In this study, theory development resulted in an intervention model designed to support the educational sector during the COVID-19 pandemic and in future crises. The pandemic posed immense challenges to teaching and learning, yet teachers adapted and persevered, developing new skills and strategies to meet evolving demands globally.

From this context, the *Navigating Change Theory* emerged from the study “Victors or Victims?” *An Exploration of How Teachers Navigate Changes in Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic.* The theory illustrates the transition from pre-COVID to pandemic-era teaching environments and highlights how educators overcame disruptions. Grounded in Lewin’s (1951) Theory of Change, it supports a school-based intervention model and emphasizes the importance of flexible, responsive educational systems that can ensure timely action and sustained improvement in times of sudden change.



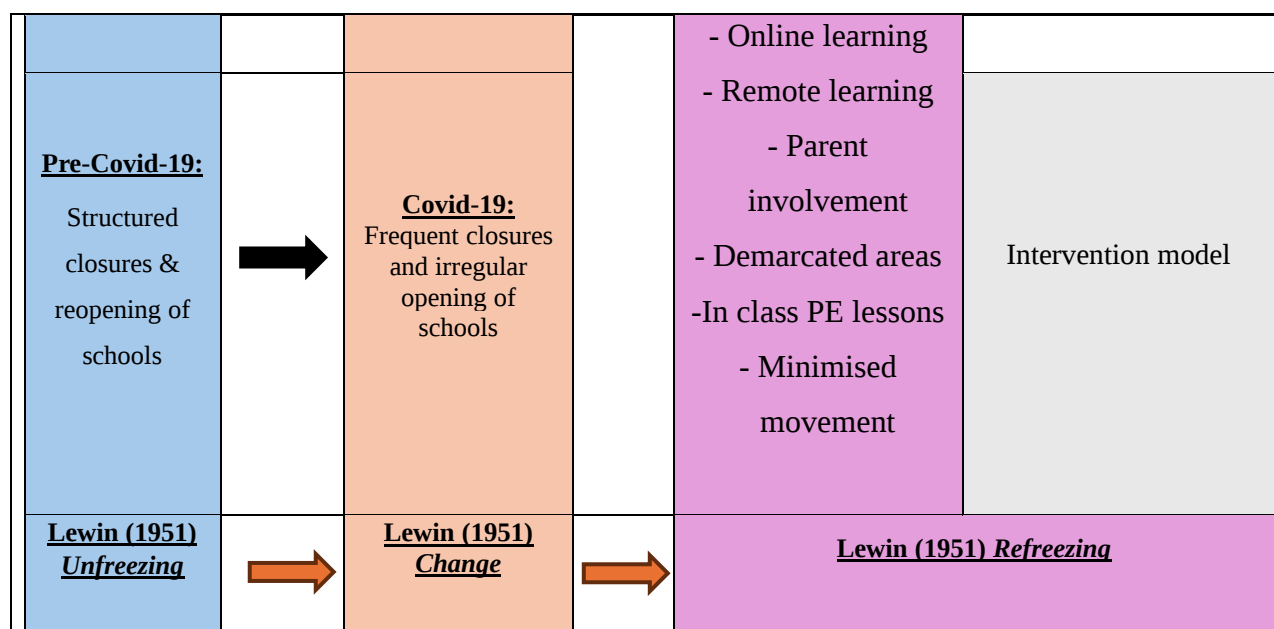


Figure 2. Navigating Change Theory

An emergent intervention program and model

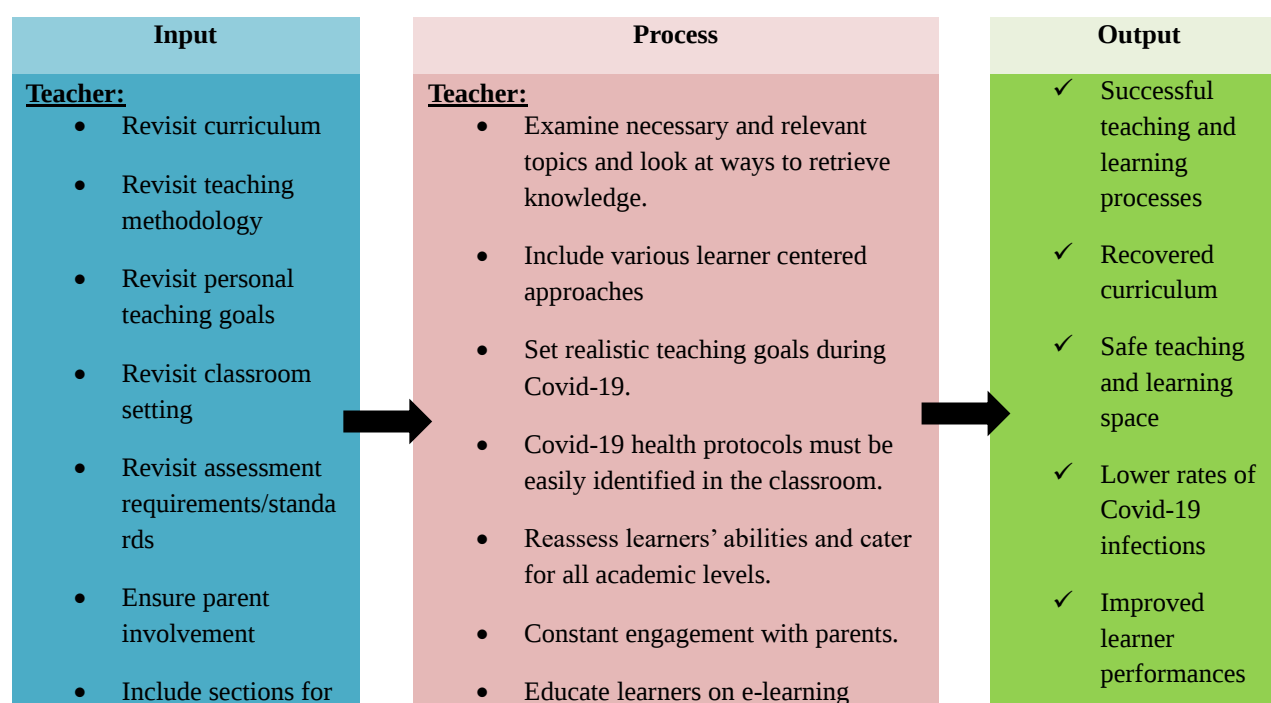
Effective teaching and learning require skilled educators, adequate resources, and strong leadership (Bush & Glover, 2009; Spillane, 2004; Taylor, 2007), with learners also playing a crucial role in the educational process. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers demonstrated adaptability in responding to rapidly changing conditions. An intervention model provides practical strategies to support teachers, learners, and schools in navigating similar challenges, ensuring continuity and quality of education during periods of disruption.

Table 5. Intervention programme

Challenge	Goal & Intervention	Responsible Stakeholders	Beneficiaries
- Teachers and learners unprepared - Online learning challenges - Remote learning	Short-term: SMTs and the Department of Education to rapidly share resources, guidance, and support with teachers and learners during crises; involve teacher unions in decision-making. Medium-term: Provide Covid-19 risk awareness, prevention strategies, and professional development on ICT, remote teaching, and education in emergencies. Long-term: Expand nationwide internet access, provide devices (through partnerships or libraries), and train teachers/learners on platforms (WhatsApp, then Zoom, Google Classroom).	- Department of Education - Schools, SMTs, Teachers	Teachers and learners
- Psychosocial issues - Teacher mental health	Short-term: Provide socio-emotional support for teachers via helplines or counselling services. Medium-Long-term: Regular professional development on social-emotional competence as ongoing support.	- Department of Education - Schools, SMTs	Teachers
- Teacher shortages - Strain on existing	Short-term: SGBs to appeal to retired teachers for temporary teaching support	- SGBs - Department	- Schools - Learners



Challenge	Goal & Intervention	Responsible Stakeholders	Beneficiaries
staff	and conduct Covid-safe fundraising to employ SGB teachers. Medium-Long-term: Principals to request Department of Education funding for teacher employment.	of Education • Principals	
• Decline in learner performance	Short-term: Use learner-friendly strategies (e.g., whole-class discussions, buddy systems) within Covid-19 safety protocols; enhance professional development in diverse teaching methods; encourage teachers to be innovators. Medium-Long-term: Promote stakeholder collaboration (learners, parents, teachers, researchers, unions, education departments) on future teaching methods and e-strategies.	Teachers	Learners
• Trimmed curriculum • Loss of teaching time • Learner isolation	Short-term: Reassess curriculum to address pandemic-related learning gaps; conduct regular assessments to identify at-risk learners; strengthen foundational literacy in early grades; provide remedial programmes (after school, weekends); aim for 400+ hours of quality instruction to achieve reading proficiency by Grade 3. Medium-Long-term: Update curriculum to include relevant subjects (e.g., robotics, coding) and remove outdated content.	• Department of Education • Schools, Teachers	Learners



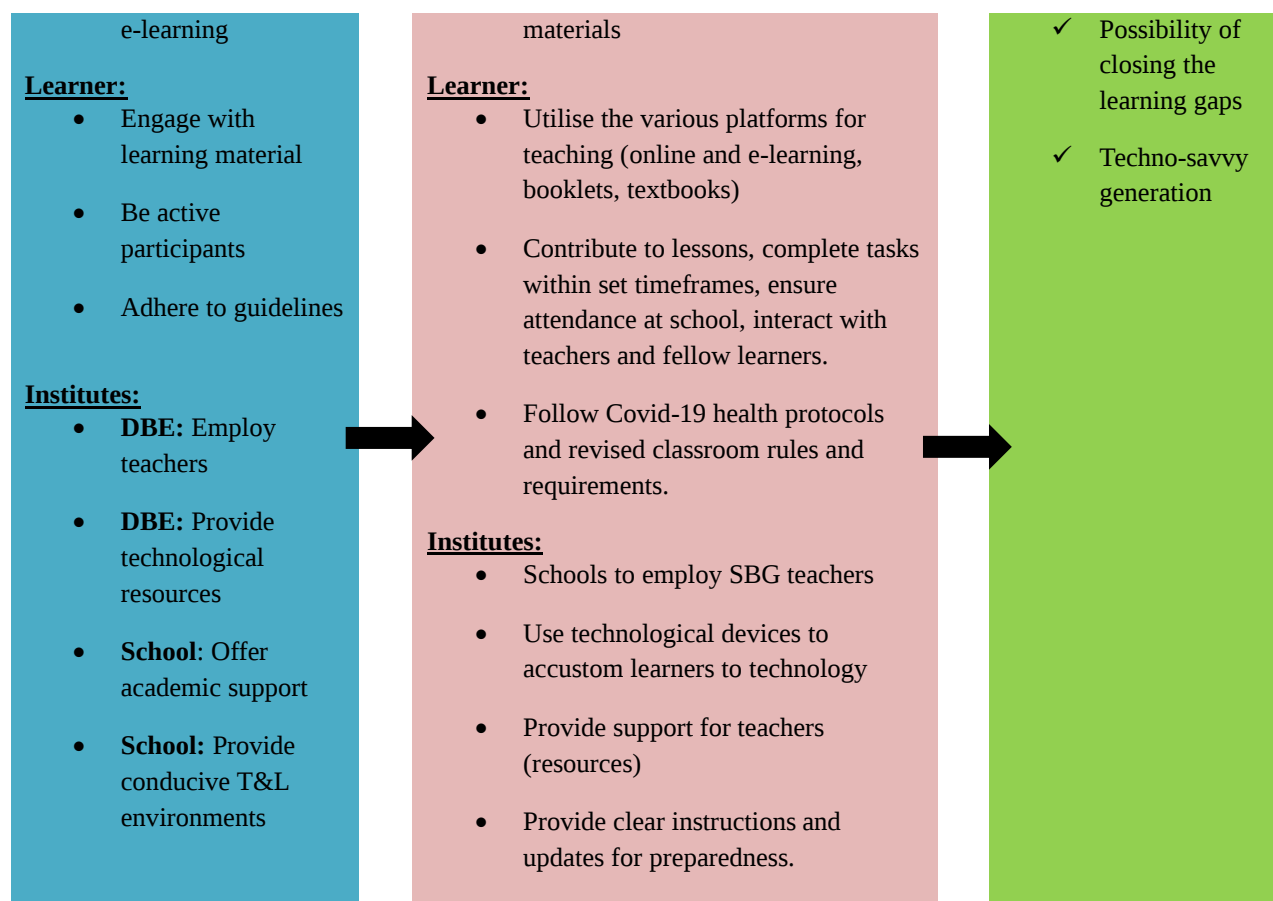


Figure 3. Intervention Model

CONCLUSION

This research article offers a detailed account of how teachers navigated the shifting landscape of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 period and provides a strong foundation for the development of a school-based intervention program. Through qualitative evidence drawn from collages, reflective journals, and structured interviews with teachers from both primary and secondary schools, the study uncovers the depth of professional adaptability, resilience, and agency demonstrated throughout the disruption. The analytical lens of change theory illuminates how teachers assumed the role of active change agents who reshaped their practice to preserve learning amid extraordinary pressure.

The investigation shows that teachers managed a wide array of operational and pedagogical demands. They balanced strict health protocols, irregular attendance patterns, remote learning systems, and condensed curriculum requirements while still attending to the psychosocial and academic needs of their learners. Participants made thoughtful use of digital platforms, low-tech resources, and differentiated methods to sustain engagement, reduce learning losses, and maintain continuity. Their efforts extended beyond instruction, as many created supportive environments that prioritized learner wellbeing, encouraged participation, and upheld consistent behavioral expectations despite ongoing uncertainty.

Insights from the study directly inform the design of a practical intervention model aimed at strengthening the capacity of educators, learners, and schools to respond effectively to future disruptions. The model highlights the central role of well-prepared teachers, sufficient resources, decisive leadership, and flexible structures that can adjust swiftly to changing conditions. By foregrounding teachers' lived experiences and showcasing the strategies they used to cope with shifting demands, the study deepens understanding of how education systems can cultivate resilience during periods of instability. The findings point to the continuing need for meaningful professional development, collaborative networks, and strong

institutional backing to empower teachers as catalysts of sustainable change and to ensure that learning remains stable and of high quality during any future crisis.

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