

## Teachers' Learning Experiences: Transforming Their Professional Activity During COVID-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought teachers professional and personal challenges, creating particularly stressful crisis-like conditions for their learning and development. The aim of this qualitative study is to conceptualise teachers' learning experiences that have accompanied the transformations of their professional activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Narrative interviews of teachers were conducted in Latvia in the spring/summer of 2022. They were coded and analysed according to thematic analysis method. This article entails the results of the first stage of the study.

The study found that teachers' learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic are characterised by the paradigm of transformative learning as overcoming. Thematic structure of the learning experiences was developed and comprises 4 themes (dealing with limitations, seeking support from community, learning on the go, drawing conclusions) as well as 13 subthemes, which describe teachers' experiences in rich detail, revealing their complexity and variability.

The article offers conclusions on the conceptualisations of teachers' experiences, discusses support and conditions needed to benefit from the experience and points to the significant role of context, relationships, and dedication for teachers to have beneficial learning experiences accompanying the transformations of their professional activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Keywords:* COVID-19 pandemic, learning experiences, teachers' professional activity, thematic analysis, transformative learning

## Introduction

Teacher professionalism has been positioned as one of the key factors for quality education (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021), recognising the need for collaborative and systematic opportunities for long-term professional learning and development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought an unprecedented disruption to education worldwide affecting more than 1.6 billion learners and their teachers. Teachers needed to adapt their work to new realities of remote learning, dealing with large and unequitable learning losses of their students and changing realities of the epidemic situation (The World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, 2021). Teachers' learning and professional development was affected as well.

In Latvia COVID-19 started to affect schools after the World Health Organisation declared global pandemic in March 2020, as due to the declaration of an emergency situation schools moved to working entirely remotely until the end of the school year in June (Cabinet Order No. 103, 2020; Cabinet Order No. 655, 2020). One week of school holidays was the time allocated for preparation. The next school year was shaped by various infection control measures, such as student flow control, the longest period of remote learning lasting roughly half a year – depending on student age group and municipality (Cabinet Order No. 662, 2021). The third school year affected by the pandemic involved prioritizing face-to-face learning while striving for epidemiologically safe environment via routine COVID-19 testing at school, isolating, masking, vaccinated personnel, and hybrid models of learning face-to-face and remotely (Cabinet Order No. 720, 2021; *Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection*, 2020). The unpredictability of the modality of learning due to quarantine was accompanied by resistance to compulsory vaccination by some teachers and further complicated by the full swing of curriculum reform “Skola2030” (Skola2030, 2019), reportedly lagging behind with the provision of textbooks and learning materials. As 2022 draws to a close, although COVID-19 realities influence us less, the pandemic is not yet over.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought teachers professional and personal challenges, creating particularly stressful crisis-like conditions for their learning and professional development. This crisis is characterised by a rupture in the existing working practices, laying the groundwork for restructuring of the teachers' work. This study aims at conceptualising teachers' learning experiences that have accompanied the transformations of their professional activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theoretical basis of the study has been elaborated in detail in previous publications (Goba-Medne, 2019; Goba, 2019), viewing learning experience from a phenomenological and subject-centred perspective and exploring it as

a conceptualization of past occurrences that form an individual's subjective perspective in the context of one's lifeworld and guides their future actions. Transformations of teachers' professional activity were examined applying the activity system's model developed by Yrjö Engeström (Engeström & Sannino, 2010), viewing teachers' professional activity as a dynamic cultural system occurring in its particular context (primarily practice based) rather than focusing on competence models as idealised sets of required competencies. Learning experiences were studied through the theoretical lens of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2009), which investigates impactful learning that has the capacity of altering a person's frame of reference or "(...) processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualises and interacts with the world" (Hoggan, 2016, p. 71). Four paradigms or ways of understanding transformative learning experiences have been defined in a philosophical investigation by Douglas W. Yacek – initiation, overcoming, discovery and conversion (Yacek, 2017), providing insights into their educational meaning and fostering conditions as well as problematic facets. For the sake of this study, these paradigms or archetypes serve as a lens to apprehend the nature of the learning experiences teachers have gone through due to crisis evoked by a global pandemic.

## Methodology

This qualitative study attempts to answer the research questions: How can teachers' learning experiences of transforming their professional activity during COVID-19 pandemic be described? What experiences do teachers describe as conducive (or detrimental) to their learning during COVID-19 pandemic? Narrative interviews (Nohl, 2010) were conducted with schoolteachers in Latvia utilizing maximal variety sampling along with theoretical saturation principle (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). A flexible interview guide included open ended questions that generate rich narratives on teachers' experiences during COVID-19 pandemic (from when they felt COVID-19 started to influence their work up until the time interviews took place). Interview participants include schoolteachers of general education schools of different size, ownership (state, municipality, private), type (elementary school, secondary school, gymnasium) in various locations across the country (urban, rural), comprising teachers of different age groups (30 to 70 years), gender, respective teaching experience (3 to 29 years), teaching in various subject areas (STEM, arts, languages, sports, social sciences, technologies) in various levels of education (elementary, primary, secondary). Participants were recruited via purposeful invitations, referral sampling (or the snowball method) as well as voluntary application and they provided an informed consent approved by the respective Ethical board of University of Latvia.

As a result, 9 interviews (lasting 26min to 1h 6min) were collected in person and via ZOOM video conferencing platform (May to June 2022) and verbatim interview transcription was performed. To grant anonymity participant names were substituted with a pseudonym (such as Sk1) and other private details were removed. The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in a reflexive and recursive process (Braun et al., 2019) starting with familiarisation with the data, moving towards generating codes to text segments of shared meaning for the entire data array, grouping codes in candidate themes, revising and mapping themes, defining themes and finally producing the report. Themes and subthemes were developed inductively, searching for patterns through the codes and across the dataset, attempting to incorporate both the complexity and richness of the experiential space it covers.

### Results

Analysis provided thematic structure of teachers' narratives on their learning experiences of transforming their professional activity during COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the thematic structure comprises 4 themes and 13 subthemes, depicting the complexity and variability of the teachers' experiences of transforming their professional activity in Latvia during COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 1).

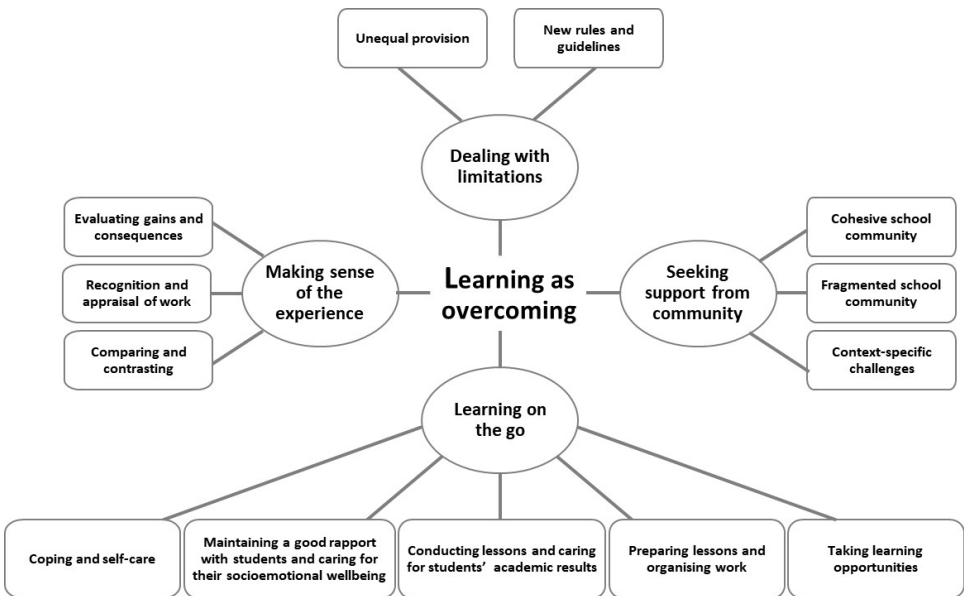


Figure 1. Thematic structure of teachers' learning experiences of transforming their professional activity in Latvia during COVID-19 pandemic

As a whole, teachers' experiences tell the story of overcoming various challenges in order to perform their professional activity in an uncertain and unstable situation.

Therefore, learning associated with this experience rather takes the shape of work-based problem solving and reflection than exploring new opportunities within formal or non-formal education (such as teacher professional development courses). Participant's Sk3 words illustrate this:

*And then something doesn't work there, one has no sound, other has no camera, then the teacher has some other problems. So constantly, absolutely every day, you are going through constant changes all the time and you are in constant communication. All the time.<sup>1</sup>*

Here Yacek's four transformative learning paradigms (Yacek, 2017) come in handy, as it becomes apparent that the overcoming paradigm is dominating and thus becomes the overarching theme of the thematic structure of this study. Transformative learning as overcoming is revealed in 4 main themes: dealing with limitations, seeking support from community, learning on the go, and making sense of the experience.

### Dealing with limitations

The notion of limitations was apparent in all interviews, as teachers were adapting to the new realities of crisis-induced remote and hybrid learning. Two subthemes were distinguished.

*Unequal provision for both students and teachers* affected the initial transitioning to remote and online teaching and learning – it limited the opportunities for teachers to provide interactive online lessons as well as students possibilities to participate in such lessons. Unequal provision was associated with limited capabilities of the available devices, insufficient availability and quality of an internet connection as well as limited access to certain software and website subscription services that not all schools or municipalities had purchased. Teacher Sk11 illustrated it:

*Well, very, very many socially sensitive issues appeared there, reality – we say, “children have phones”. And?! It's possible that one can't do anything with that phone! (...) But the platform he must work on requires a higher quality device for him to be able to engage.”*

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<sup>1</sup> This excerpt of an interview as well as all the following excerpts are translations from Latvian.

*Sk2 told about the circumstances in a rural area: “There was no way, the primary school didn’t have such a view at all that there should be online lessons – absolutely and definitely not because of resources, moreover because we have those who live in such a dense forest, there is nothing (no internet) there at all!*

Teachers organised their work with the limited resources at their (and school’s) disposal, furthermore, they ascertained the provision of their students and sought to improve it. Technical support was often sought from family members that were more technically savvy. Teachers also discussed issues connected to their working premises and conditions while working from home, such as the need to share space and devices among family members, taking care of their own kids studying from home. Teachers were distressed by the limited availability of teaching/learning aids and resources – not only ones suitable for online teaching, but learning materials were lagging for the implementation of the aforementioned curriculum reform Skola2030. In addition, teachers encountered the lack of other study resources, such as supply for arts or STEM experiments for students learning from home.

*New rules and guidelines* were established frequently during the period studied and therefore discussed in several respects. Along with the need to comply to the general schooling principles, the rules and guidelines for remote and online teaching were discussed, criticised as well as anticipated. COVID-19 inflicted safety measures and the associated unpredictability was discussed, especially the unpredictability associated with quarantining and the abrupt transition from face-to-face to remote learning as COVID-19 cases were detected. Teachers also expressed their views on the new rules and guidelines of Skola2030 curriculum reform, recurrently criticising the decision of the authorities to continue implementing the reform in a crisis, Sk5 described her perceptions:

*The feeling is that you are not just thrown into the water, but just as you reach the edge of the pool, you get pushed back into it! (...) So, you had a stomach operation? – not a big deal, we are supposed to eat porridge today! You’re just getting it.*

Some benefits of Skola2030 were highlighted as well, for instance Sk4 said:

*I have to say that Skola2030 with its curriculum pretty much forces me to wade into fields that I have not wandered into before, really. (...) Well, since I like (doing) it, I don’t mind, I also read, search, analyse, collect (information), and so on.*

Several participants admitted they had been bending the rules to achieve what they felt was for the benefit of students, considering that the state of emergency initially allowed for relaxing the learning outcome requirements, Sk4 elaborated:

*(...) I was definitely looking for what works for me and what doesn't work for me! And what suits a particular class, what works for a particular child and what doesn't, and then I think about how to bypass the system! But to be honest, I said that for myself, but to be frank, I also have colleagues who did similarly. They were looking for ways to bypass the system as well! This consumes a huge amount of energy! Because of the awareness of the mission to educate the child.*

Local and school-level rules and demands were depicted in opposing views, demonstrating how differently schools tackled the crisis.

### Seeking support from community

The role of community was initially not apparent as a central theme in teachers' narratives, however, as participants depicted the availability of support and the perceived appreciation of their work, it became evident that there were distinct characteristics of a cohesive school community as opposed to a fragmented school community and that it influenced their job satisfaction. It is important to mention that the aspects of school culture are aggregated here for the purpose of typification and were not necessarily simultaneously present in all cases. The third subtopic comprises context specific challenges.

*Cohesive school community* was manifested through a perception of the school leadership as supportive and dedicated, colleagues as an encouraging and supportive team that engage in mutual learning, exchanging ideas and conveying emotional support. Sense of appreciation and job satisfaction was more probable to be expressed in such a community as well as the sense of long-term planning and preparedness to the remote teaching challenges ahead. Representatives of such communities frequently viewed their colleagues as reliable and doing their best in regard to professionalism and concern for students. Utterances of Sk13 depicted such a community:

*But the rest of us sat here at school, rehearsed, connected, simulated that lesson – as if I was a student and he was a teacher and vice versa, whether he heard me, or saw what I wanted to show, and so on. We supported each other. Well, yes, it is like that, quite a large part of the collective felt safer at school than at home. Because there were people ready to help at any moment.*

*Fragmented school community* was apparent through a perception of the school leadership as controlling or uncaring to teachers, teachers' perceived isolation and solitude, short-term orientation and survival with respect to the remote teaching challenges ahead, along with negativity among teachers mainly in the shape of venting negative emotions and shared pessimism. Sk6 depicted such a situation:

*You stay alone, and you get along somehow, you talk to your colleagues, everything is negative and depressing for them too. There was no support to turn to, to talk to.*

Perceived futility or fruitlessness of cooperation at their respective school was a characteristic as well, Sk11 accounted:

*It was not important for me to collaborate with someone, because it was rather a waste of time. Because when, for example, there is a meeting about problems and how to solve them, then after 10 minutes all the meetings go “how bad everything is, and we don’t have computers, and they don’t learn at all, and they don’t connect, and they turn off the cameras, and the parents are irresponsible and the parents don’t care and it’s the parents’ responsibility, it’s the social service’s responsibility” and so on. Everyone is tossing around responsibilities. But there is no constructiveness.*

Sense of underratedness and being neglected was often paired with doubts about other teachers' performance and devotion that were based on personal observations.

*Context-specific challenges* include shortages of teachers and support staff along with the socioeconomic situation of the local community, schools and classes in threat of closure in contrast to challenges of large class and school sizes and limitations of devoting time to all learners, a statement from Sk4 illustrates this:

*It was completely clear to me that in [city] I cannot give such assignments, as I said, the children in large classes are not, they are not ready. They haven’t managed to learn a lot of things, well at least practically, I think that there are no problems with mathematics, no problems with languages, but design, technologies – where you need to work practically, which, by the way, is the focus now (Skola2030), it is not possible with 30 children in class. Well, a teacher can’t provide guidance for 30 children (at once) to learn to crochet properly!*

School type, size, and location (urban, rural) affected the availability of resources and possible solutions. Sk1 depicted a small urban school:

*Then overall, I’d say we survived that digital experience relatively well as a school, because, what worked well was the fact that we are small and flexible.*

Compulsory vaccination of teachers had a negative impact on some school communities, given that colleagues resigning felt deserted, and if they returned relationships were not what they used to be. Substitution of colleagues was problematic for various reasons. While working from home, one’s own family situation affected teachers’ work. Teachers recounted how global events, such as the war in Ukraine, affected them as well.



## Learning on the go

Most of the teachers' accounts of learning experiences were about their development through adjusting to the dynamic changes in their work and learning to provide online learning experiences. Five subthemes were generated through analysis: taking learning opportunities; preparing lessons and organizing work; conducting lessons and caring for students' academic results; maintaining a good rapport with students and caring for their socioemotional wellbeing; coping and self-care.

Teachers were *taking learning opportunities* in various ways, predominantly relying on self-directed learning and self-study resources that allowed to direct their professional development according to their needs, capacities, and pace, according to Sk4:

*There have been courses and, of course, there was mutual exchange of thoughts and ideas among colleagues, but above all I investigate by myself. I search, I read, as I said, the same Skola2030 with the new topics that need to be learned, what courses should I expect there? When I need something, I read, I search, I find and I put it together.*

Several teachers were particularly appreciative of experience sharing workshops and supervision sessions. Participating in professional development courses was generally perceived as having some or limited added value, though teachers were appreciative of the broadened choice of courses due to being conducted online and thus their increased accessibility. Participants reported collecting ideas and materials from social media and their social circle as well as learning from their students and encouraging them to take initiative in lessons. University studies and other studies were mentioned as well.

*Preparing lessons and organizing work* was taking up much more time than before and involved considerable amount of learning by doing and relentless problem-solving, Sk12 depicted it:

*Well, the preparation of it too, a lot more searching for material that can be used like digitally. Making all kinds of Kahoot! quizzes about sports and adding something like that, because with that number of hours honestly – you have to be very athletic to physically, let's say, exercise all that. At first, I also tried to exercise along myself, then I realized that I can't do it. Then I just demonstrated, which is also more correct from a pedagogical point of view, that I watch them make mistakes, instead of me exercising a lot and no one else actually doing it.*

Online lesson preparation and planning was described as time consuming and complex, it involved preparing learning materials from scratch fitting to the new teaching modality as well as according to the curriculum reform Skola2030,

preparing engaging, tailored and personalized online lessons and self-study tasks. Various methodological solutions and timetable variants were developed and tested, including outdoor learning. Teachers reported increased class-teacher duties and extra-curricular work connected both to student attendance and learning results tracking, collaboration with parents, socioemotional problem solving, work connected to COVID-19 testing and tracking as well as keeping track of students learning face-to-face versus remotely during hybrid learning periods.

*Conducting lessons and caring for students' academic results* involved the challenge of maintaining students' learning discipline remotely, evaluating results, dealing with student cheating and sometimes frivolous attitude towards remote learning, excessive or insufficient parental involvement sometimes resulting as a disservice of doing homework instead of students. There was an apparent consensus on the crucial issue of giving and receiving feedback from students online and remotely. Sk13 depicted the challenge:

*Well, how to conduct this lesson effectively, so that the students actually work, instead of sitting with their screens off, without a camera.*

Teachers typically maintained multiple communication channels and closely communicated with other teachers as well.

*Maintaining a good rapport with students and caring for their socioemotional well-being* appeared to be important for academic performance. Teachers generally kept close track of student attendance and lesson engagement, strived to maintain a good rapport with students remotely, attended to students' socioemotional well-being both individually and on a school level. Sk5 depicted students' challenges:

*Well, then you understand that some of those children really had extreme conditions for learning. And then the child is saddened that the result is not so good, and then I must reassure them that the circumstances are completely different, they're no longer at school.*

Participants devoted time to students individually and collaborated with parents to help struggling students. Teachers' efforts were sometimes met with incomprehension, negativity, and criticism. They observed deteriorated student social skills after the prolonged remote learning period.

*Coping and self-care* was crucial for maintaining teachers' working capacity. Teachers reported various effects of remote teaching and the overall tension on their health and emotional wellbeing. They were struggling with time management and with retaining of work-life balance. Several teachers recollected becoming aware of their limits, overcoming perfectionism, and learning self-preservation, for instance Sk5:

*Well, I've always tried to be a very, very nice person, and this remote work showed me, in general, this whole emergency situation, working, let's say it, under triple workload conditions – you have to do it face-to-face, bearing in mind (you may have to switch to) remote learning and then also Skola2030 – I must note, that I'd said this so many, so many times: you know, I feel sorry for myself too! When I had never said that in my life before.*

Others were appreciative of their previous experiences and personality traits that helped cope. Respondents reported regenerating through family time, recreation in nature and enjoyable activities. Sense of responsibility towards students, steady pay and acceptance of the situation were aspects sustaining teachers' in their efforts.

### **Making sense of the experience**

Learning and sense-making is what brings an experience its educative meaning. Three subthemes were determined for making sense of the experience: comparing and contrasting; recognition and appraisal of work; evaluating gains and consequences.

Teachers were commonly *comparing and contrasting* as a means to comprehend and navigate the changes. They observed the working conditions of teachers in other schools and countries as well as the dedication and working methods of colleagues and were critical of the quality of some. Sk5 shared her observations:

*And then it turns out that you – a couple of teachers – are the kind of bogeys who force the poor child to do something (to study hard remotely) and then there are other teachers who are easy going about it.*

There were statements of state officials not matching local realities that were perceived as infuriating and troublesome, Sk11 portrayed it:

*Parents were troubled too because they were living in the pandemic as well, not just the education sphere, but they may have lost their jobs and so on. And they say: "But on the TV, it was told you have everything!" And then they (on the TV) say: "The school should give you a computer!" And then those kids go to school and the school responds: "We don't have that computer! There just is none." But the TV told there is! Well, that's it."*

Teachers shared their observations about the mental state of their colleagues, Sk12 described:

*So many of those colleagues also, I think, became very stressed during Covid (...) I think that many were on the edge, not that they were, they remain there.*

*They are on the edge of it now. In my opinion. And is it just Covid, well, now the war comes as a bonus.*

Another aspect of this subtopic was validating one's experience through recognizing the similarities in other teachers' experiences.

*Recognition and appraisal of work* appears to be closely tied to teachers' job satisfaction and overall wellbeing throughout the interviews. Student success and learning motivation was mentioned as one of the key aspects that brought sense of meaningfulness to work along with appreciation and positive emotions from parents and students. It was common to experience negativity from both parents and students as having the opposite effect, Sk6 characterised it:

*Everyone is stressed and they just don't see you, they don't notice you.*

Another crucial aspect was recognition of work by school leadership and other parties ranging from encouraging words to financial bonuses for achievements at school. Lack of performance-based pay on the school-level along with the perceived overall distrust of teachers' professionalism from authorities and policy makers was perceived as disheartening, Sk4 stated:

*But I can't work, I don't trust myself, after all these reforms, I can't trust myself anymore, maybe I really don't know how to work?! (...) And a teacher, a subject teacher, a specialist in his field, he can't choose. For him, as I have already said, we do not trust ourselves anymore, we clearly see that these children need something different, but we cannot do it, because we are put in this sort of track, in a frame.*

*Evaluating gains and consequences* serves as a final step towards making the meaning of the experience. It was commonly agreed that developed digital literacy and learning materials were a great asset along with increased methodological flexibility and adaptability. Some of the teachers discussed what appeared a sense of empowerment and agency, for instance Sk5 told:

*In a way, those remote studies provided more freedom, because if you feel, if I feel, that more ZOOMs are needed, then I schedule another ZOOM (...). I loved the freedom of being my own boss, now I'm actually still trying to maintain it.*

A common thread was the perception of a stabilised system during remote teaching that immensely eased the job and provided a sense of "the new normal". Some participants acknowledged that they had restructured their professional activity beyond adjustment to remote teaching mode, for instance an experienced teacher Sk4 explained:

*It was this huge benefit that art could be taught in a completely, completely, completely, different way. I had not had such an experience for years, and then I was tormented by the question that I still sometimes ask myself: Which art classes are better?*

Teachers admitted the experience had led them to a more student-centred process and taught them to make clearer task descriptions. Overall participants portrayed increased self-awareness along with learning to spare oneself and set boundaries. Increased compassion and tolerance towards students and other teachers was depicted in some cases in contrast to attained irritability and disappointment in others. Sk11 portrayed how he has changed through the years of teaching:

*If initially I could be a very drastic teacher and say that if it is not handed in 8:00, then 'cmon, the train has left (...). But now at this moment I say it is possible for all of us to learn – sooner or later – that it is possible for all of us to learn and get something done. It is a calmer perception of it all.*

Negative consequences entailed burnout, retreating to self-preservation, considered or performed resigning along with decreased requirements from students.

## Discussion and conclusions

This study aimed at conceptualising teachers' learning experiences that have accompanied the transformations of their professional activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The time frame covered was March 2020 to June 2022 and included periods of remote and online learning, face-to-face and hybrid learning modalities. The 4 themes and 13 subthemes laid out in results section describe teachers' experiences in rich detail, revealing their complexity and variability.

Theme *dealing with limitations* revealed how teachers situate their professional activity and learning in regard to provision and rules, the former challenged by inequality among schools and families, the scale of which was not necessarily discerned by the interviewees themselves. Likewise, the rules applied in particular schools appeared to be moulded by the interpretation of school leadership and of local communities, which not necessarily was reflected in the judgements of interviewees. *Seeking support from community* was a theme that was revealed in the background of the depicted ongoings of teachers, however, it revealed the salient role of context as well. Namely, despite the unpredictability and pressures of pandemic realities, what can be called a cohesive school community could offer considerable strengthening and supportive features. Through the destabilisation and crisis community support can help reorientating

and finding one's footing. *Learning on the go* is a theme that depicts how teachers' learning resembled constant adaptation and work-based problem-solving, prioritising learning opportunities that offered skills and solutions directly applicable to their professional activity in the school. That shows that in a pandemic crisis and alike problem-oriented work-based professional development that provides an opportunity to practice and analyse working practices along with adaptable, targeted support should be delivered. It was also apparent how maintaining a good mutual rapport, bonding, and maintaining warm relationships online was crucial to students' success as well as teachers' wellbeing and job satisfaction.

Finally, the theme *making sense of the experience* outlined the sense-making journey of interviewees, which involved analysing their observations, receiving feedback and appraisal of their actions as well as drawing conclusions. Most teachers recognised they had not only learned new skills, but they had changed their professional activity and changed themselves in various ways during the timeframe studied. Clearly it takes time to reflect and make meaning of such a complex and lengthy experience, however this process needs dedication and space as well.

The discussed four themes unified by the overarching theme of learning through overcoming challenges depict the journey of getting through an uncertain situation to which the previous experience doesn't offer an immediate solution nor explanation. However, to move figuratively from enduring and overcoming through to growth and empowerment, an intermediate stage is required. Teachers need not only reflect on their experiences, but to recover and regain their integrity, to make closer scrutiny of experience possible. What makes some teachers go through this crisis and experience growth, while others remain in bewilderment and state of survival? What role does the school culture play? Are there personality traits that bolster teacher resilience? How to maintain the quality of life while going through hardships, recover when the hardships are over and experience growth? What support is effective? On the one hand, evidently targeted support is needed to give space for a deep, improvement-oriented reflection with a clear target in order to benefit from the experience, on the other hand, the notion of teacher professional competence embodies the obligation to become aware of the need oneself.

This study doesn't allow for generalisations due to the limited sample, though it points to the significant role of context, relationships, and dedication for teachers to have beneficial learning experiences accompanying the transformations of their professional activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collected in this study may be used to develop a typology of teacher learning experiences to further this line of research. It is suggested to collect a larger sample in future lines of investigation and to analyse the factors that have influenced teachers' professional learning and opportunities for reflection. Themes

that were developed in this study may help to build context-specific and situational learning and support systems for teachers and guide future research.

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