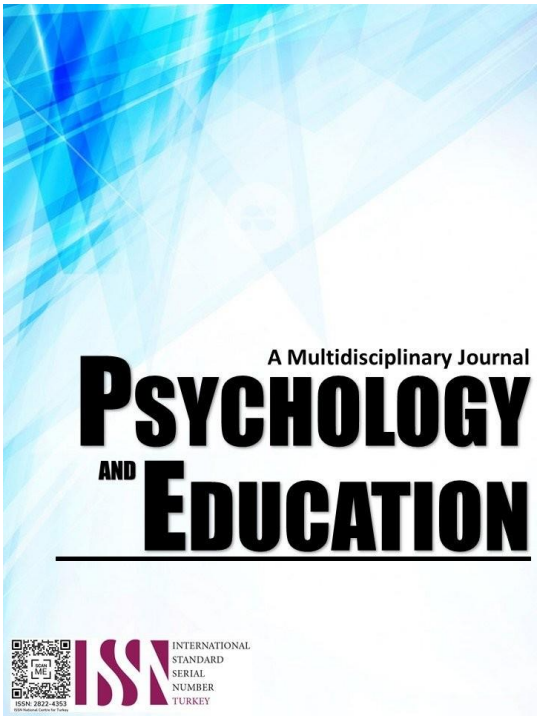
DESTINED FOR AN INNOVATIVE PURPOSE: PERSPECTIVES FROM GURO21 COMPLETERS



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Research Article

Destined for an Innovative Purpose: Perspectives from Guro21 Completers

Jessa Mae L. Argulla, * Jocelyn S. Jimenez
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, insights of GURO21 flexible learning program completers. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews among eight key participants and a focus group discussion among eight participants of GURO21 completers of General Santos City Division, using the qualitative phenomenological method. Key participants were made to sign informed consents with the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. The results of the interview were transcribed, translated to produce themes. Analysis of the transcriptions generated 23 emergent themes and 117 clustered themes. Based on the results of the study, eight emergent themes emerged from the participants' narratives concerning their experiences during the GURO21 flexible learning program. The emergent themes are the Upgrade Essential Teaching Skills, Platform for Personal Transformation and Growth, Navigate Challenges into Opportunities, Avenue to Become Tech-Savvy, Provides a Multi-Modal Learning Experience, Leads Teachers to Do Extra-effort, Fosters Interaction and Knowledge Sharing. In terms of participants coping with the challenges in completing the flexible learning program, five emergent themes emerged: Prioritize what Matters Most, Enhance Time Management, Seek Career Support from Others, Apply Learning into Real-Life Scenario, Employ Optimism. Lastly, in terms of the insights of GURO21 completers seven emergent themes emerged: Practice Being a Lifelong Learner, Unleash Great Potential Within, Joining GURO21 is Beneficial, Learn to Adapt Changes, Introducing New Teaching Strategies is a Must, Professionalism is Develop, Becoming a Tech-Savvy can Be Learned. The results and discussion of this study imply that GURO21 is a transformative journey for its completers, there is a need for continuous professional development and lifelong learning among educators, emphasizing the importance of investing in educators' growth.

Keywords: *educational management, lived experiences, coping mechanism, insights, phenomenology, GURO21*

Introduction

“Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.” - Albert Einstein

The quote encapsulates the essence of the GURO21 flexible learning program. The program goes beyond mere accumulation of knowledge, aiming to cultivate critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities among its completers. This concept aligns with a broader understanding of education as a process aimed at nurturing individuals to think independently and adapt to various challenges in their personal and professional lives. The GURO21 flexible learning program, by DepEd Memorandum No. 80, s.2017, demonstrates a strong partnership between DepEd Region XII and SEAMEO INNOTECH, focusing on enhancing teachers' academic excellence, character, creativity, and leadership skills. However, what happens after GURO21? This question opens a broader reflection on the role of education in society, emphasizing a holistic approach that goes beyond academic success to encompass character-building, leadership, and social responsibility.

Furthermore, several international studies have examined teachers’ experiences with the SEAMEO-INNOTECH Flexible Learning Program. The program faces global challenges due to the digital divide and the misalignment between local and global priorities. While online learning offers flexibility, it may not be practical for students with limited internet access and digital literacy skills. The program’s focus on local development needs may limit its recognition and impact on a global scale. Addressing these challenges requires more inclusive digital learning approaches and strategic partnerships (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Manaligod, 2023; Tarrayo & Anudin, 2023).

Likewise, this trend was also documented in the Philippine educational setting. Teachers who have completed the SEAMEO-INNOTECH Flexible Learning Program in the Philippines encountered numerous challenges, such as limited access to technology and misalignment with national education policies. Consequently, these teacher-completers must strive to achieve their intended life purpose, which may restrict their capacity to make meaningful contributions to society. While the program offers flexible and relevant professional development opportunities, not all teachers have absorbed the 21st-century competencies or the necessary digital literacy skills to make an impact in schools where they are expected to excel. Addressing these challenges requires targeted efforts to improve competencies and support for teachers, as well as closer alignment with national education policies (Baluyos & Clarin, 2021; Bautista Jr et al., 2021; Bernardo et al., 2020).

In the context of public schools, teachers who have completed GURO21 face challenges such as a lack of support from school principals, difficulty in applying new teaching knowledge and skills in classroom teaching, and lack of trust from other teachers or students who do not always agree with their perspectives and teaching methods. Additionally, the program's focus on teachers' local needs can lead to proper implementation issues. Due to these experiences, it becomes challenging for teachers to maintain their sense of purpose, sometimes resulting in doubts about their self-worth and identity. Consequently, support and collaboration are needed to

help the program succeed based on each school's context (Bautista, 2022; Bejec et al., 2020).

To address the challenges faced by GURO21 participants and to support the Philippine Department of Education's K to 12 program, this phenomenological study was proposed to focus on the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of GURO21 completers in public schools. While computer technology has been proven to aid in developing higher skills, it remains a tool, and the program's implementation may face challenges. Thus, this study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of GURO21 completers to fill the research gap. Through the insights and experiences of completers, this study could offer valuable knowledge on the program's implementation and its impact on teaching and learning in public schools, with practical implications.

Although some studies have documented the experiences of teachers who participated in virtual learning, no study has examined the experiences of GURO21 completers in the local setting. While there have been attempts to link a teacher's experiences in public schools, there still needs to be a gap in the current literature on teacher's experiences as completers of the GURO21 flexible learning program. Consequently, this study aimed to bridge the research gap and provide insights into the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of GURO21 completers in public schools, highlighting the urgency and need to understand the program's impact on teaching and learning in the local setting. This experience underscores the importance of the GURO21 program in preparing educators to navigate and thrive in evolving educational contexts (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Bernardo et al., 2020; Sulit, 2020).

Research Questions

This study sought to describe the lived experiences of GURO21 completers in delivering a flexible learning program. The following research questions guided this study: How do participants describe their experiences as GURO21 completers? Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. How do participants describe their experiences completing the flexible learning program?
2. How do the participants cope with the challenges in completing the flexible learning program?
3. What insights can be gained based on the findings?

Literature Review

Limited Teacher's Lived Experiences in Flexible Learning Programs

Filipinos place a high value on education. It is essential in Philippine political, economic, social, and cultural life. It has always been regarded as the framework of national development and the primary means of social and economic mobility. The role of the teacher is critical at every stage of implementation in any school change effort. Teachers' attitudes and actions toward new technologies will encourage and support student achievement as they participate in learning opportunities and explore innovative educational tools (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Manaligod, 2023; Tarrayo & Anudin, 2023).

Moreover, flexible learning programs like GURO21 have recently become popular. These programs allow students to access education regardless of location or time constraints, accommodating various schedules and facilitating learning from almost anywhere. This increase in accessibility not only expands educational opportunities but also promotes a more inclusive approach to learning that can adapt to the diverse needs of participants. Asynchronous learning environments are effective in delivering high-quality education but also pose unique challenges to learners, such as a lack of social interaction and limited opportunities for synchronous communication with instructors and peers (Baluyos & Clarin, 2021; Bautista Jr et al., 2021; Bernardo et al., 2020).

Further, a study exploring teachers who completed the SEAMEO INNOTECH Online Course on Teaching for the 21st century, utilizing a phenomenological framework, found that, despite facing challenges like technological difficulties, time management issues, and heavy workloads, these educators acquired new knowledge and skills. They also reported feeling empowered and motivated to innovate their teaching methods. The findings reveal the necessity of providing sufficient support and training for teachers in using online learning platforms, as well as the importance of flexible and tailored professional development programs that address the distinct challenges educators face in the 21st century (Bautista, 2022; Bejec et al., 2020; Catalan et al., 2021).

Moreover, to grasp the experiences of those who completed the GURO21 program, reviewing recent literature on flexible learning programs and the obstacles that learners encounter is crucial. Current studies have highlighted the significance of learner engagement within flexible learning environments, which correlates positively with outcomes such as academic achievement and overall satisfaction. Learner engagement can be fostered through various means, including gamification, social learning platforms, and peer feedback mechanisms (Bibon, 2022; Graham, 2020; Tingzon & Buyok, 2022).

Other recent studies have also highlighted the importance of learner support in online environments. Learner support can take many forms, including academic, technical, social, and emotional support. Learners who receive adequate support are more likely to persist in their studies and achieve their educational goals (De Leon, 2020; Shaik-Abdullah et al., 2020; Yeo, 2022).

Nonetheless, a new trend of studies reported that participants acquire new competencies and experiences and feel a heightened sense of community and collaboration among colleagues. This suggests that while implementing flexible learning programs may pose particular difficulties for teachers, such programs can also provide professional growth and development opportunities. Moreover,

acquiring new skills and competencies may lead to more effective teaching strategies, ultimately benefiting students and improving the overall quality of education (Aguila, 2021; Akgunduz & Akinoglu, 2019; Talosa et al., 2021).

Likewise, researchers continue to study the purpose of the life of teachers and its relationship to educational outcomes. Recent studies have found that having a sense of purpose in educational pursuits positively influences academic success, career planning, and career satisfaction. A clear sense of purpose helps learners overcome obstacles and persist in their studies. The findings from these studies indicate that despite the challenges faced by participants in flexible learning programs, they acquired new knowledge and skills that enabled them to improve their teaching practices. In addition, the participants reported feeling greater fulfillment and achievement in their profession, contributing to their overall job satisfaction (Huang et al., 2020; Belecina & Ocampo Jr., 2018; Sapungan, 2022).

Further, creating a 21st-century education system requires schools to extensively and intensively use technology and a solid technological infrastructure. By utilizing technology effectively, schools can prepare students to participate in the global economy. These barriers prevent schools from fully harnessing technology as a catalyst for improvement. Despite widespread access to computer technology, there is a significant gap between its presence and use in the classroom (Lagat, 2021; Sabarun et al., 2020; Tupas & Linas-Laguda, 2020).

Moreover, the main concern with developing a data-driven literacy action plan is that it will not guide action. Too often, a strategy is devised only to be abandoned. Most educational strategic planning is ineffective because the documents produced are fragmented, complicated, and convoluted and frequently do not result in improved student outcomes. In other words, the improvement plans are either difficult to implement or rarely used. School improvement plans that focus more than just curriculum implementation and instruction improvement could be more effective in creating a learner-centered environment (Buendia, 2020; Caingcoy, 2021; Tupas & Linas-Laguda, 2020).

In addition, Republic Act 9155 clearly defines the role of the school head as an instructional leader and administrative manager in the Philippines. This means that the school principal must provide constructive support, obtain the resources and materials needed for teachers to succeed in the classroom, and stay updated with current teaching, learning, assessment, motivation, classroom management, and assessment. However, in the past, teachers needed help to keep up with the changing educational landscape because school leaders focused on the second role and delegated instructional leader functions to teachers in the school. As a result, teachers' opportunities for professional development could be improved (De Vera, 2020; Labisig & Baluyos, 2023; Ramirez, 2022).

Similarly, With the institutionalization of School-Based Management (SBM) by the Department of Education (DepEd) and, more recently, the introduction of Instructional and Curricular Excellence for School Leadership in Southeast Asia, various reforms have been implemented (ICeXCELS). ICeXCELS is a two-module flexible learning course on instructional and curricular leadership designed for Southeast Asian school leaders. SEAMEO-INNOTECH Flexible Learning Management System, or iFLEX, manages the online platform (Aguila, 2021; Dupa & Maimad, 2021; Escobin et al., 2022; Fontanos et al., 2020).

Technically, the design of the learning materials focuses on self-instruction, incorporates adult learning principles, and allows learners to study the materials at their own pace, time, and place while on their own. This approach ensures that the learning experience adapts to individual needs and schedules.

Although print-based self-instructional modules serve as the primary source of knowledge, online discussion sessions through chat and discussion boards in a learning management system make the course more interactive and challenging for teachers. SEAMEO-INNOTECH Flexible Learning Management System, or iFLEX, is also used for the modules (Honculada & Naparan, 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Kuo et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, knowledge creation and application are central to the twenty-first century and educational reforms must promote an inquiry culture. As a result, teachers' traditional roles as information transmitters must give way to facilitators and orchestrators of learning. Recently, researchers have asserted the extent to which teaching styles contribute to students' 21st-century learning and innovation skills. The findings revealed a moderately high positive correlation between the extent of implementation of teaching styles and 21st-century learning and innovation skills (Honculada & Naparan, 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Kuo et al., 2019).

Thus, a variety of teaching styles was discovered most of the time. There is also evidence of 21st-century learning and innovation skills. The extent to which teaching styles were implemented and the level of 21st-century learning and innovation skills have a significant relationship. This implies a positive relationship between the extent to which a teaching style is implemented and 21st-century learning and innovation skills.

Teaching styles can help students develop 21st-century learning and innovation skills. This result is supported by several studies that expounded that as subject matter experts, it is incumbent upon 21st-century teachers who are currently in service to seek and discover ways to reinforce existing content and subject curricula (Boholano, 2019; Kozulin, 2023).

Likewise, teachers must be challenging, innovative, and lifelong learners if they are to address society's concerns about improving education quality and nurturing creative, energetic, innovative, and self-directed young people with the mental ability and motivation to continue as lifelong learners (Baring et al., 2020; Kadri et al., 2021).

Coping Strategies in Completing Flexible Learning Programs

The most crucial factor in completing flexible learning programs, including the GURO21 program, is teachers' coping strategies. These strategies help teachers overcome challenges such as time management, technical difficulties, and a need for more social interaction. Engaging in self-care, seeking support from colleagues and mentors, and cultivating a growth mindset can also strengthen teachers' resilience and motivation. By effectively implementing these strategies, teachers can achieve their personal and professional goals while providing quality education to their students amid the pandemic (Sapungan, 2022; Talosa et al., 2021; Turner, 2020).

Further, this section explored the coping mechanisms employed by teachers in completing the GURO21 Flexible Learning program. In response to these challenges, teachers adopted various coping mechanisms to manage the demands of the flexible learning program. Several studies have shown that completing flexible learning programs can be challenging for teachers, and many may experience stress, anxiety, and burnout (Becker & Schad, 2022; Kembubi, 2020; Nkomo et al., 2021; Park & Baumeister, 2017).

Further, researchers identified that teachers implemented various coping strategies to navigate the challenges of flexible learning. These strategies included problem-focused coping, which entails applying practical problem-solving techniques to tackle specific issues related to the flexible learning program. Emotion-focused coping involves strategies to manage emotional responses to challenges, such as relaxation techniques and seeking emotional support from colleagues. Finally, meaning-focused coping involves reframing the challenges of the flexible learning program as an opportunity for personal and professional growth (Honculada & Naparan, 2020; Molano, 2020; Oh et al., 2023)

Similarly, teachers coping with the challenges of flexible learning adopted various approaches, including seeking social support, setting realistic goals, and engaging in self-care activities. Teachers who sought social support tended to contact colleagues for emotional and informational support. In contrast, those who set realistic goals tended to pace themselves and prioritize tasks to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Teachers who engaged in self-care activities, such as exercise, meditation, and hobbies, reported feeling better equipped to manage the demands of the flexible learning program (Roemintoyo & Budiarto, 2021; Supardi et al., 2021; Tarrayo & Anudin, 2023).

Thus, teachers play an essential role in the academic process. Learning can occur at any time and place, and the settings in which it occurs are extremely and progressively diverse as educational environments become more varied and adaptable. Educational systems are undergoing a transformation to address the needs of learners in a rapidly changing world that shifts from technical, demographic, social, and environmental perspectives to facilitating the 21st-century skills necessary for developing creative thinking among learners in inclusive classroom settings (Berlin-Chao & Francisco-Taa, 2018; Cinco et al., 2022; Ostafin & Proulx, 2020).

In recent years, academic systems have evolved to expand their goals of developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for success in the 21st century. Teachers serve as facilitators and collaborators in cultivating a collective vision that prepares individuals, societies, and the world for safety. Likewise, by creating a collective prospect of safety and sustainability, teachers empower their students to become agents of positive change in their communities and beyond, shaping a more just, equitable, and sustainable world for generations to come (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Tyan et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2018).

Moreover, education has proven to be the key mechanism for providing people with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required by today's society. However, academic initiatives often need to catch up to the growing demands. The term "21st-century skills" is understood in various ways, but it generally refers to a combination of essential skills needed in today's society and workforce. Technological advancements, globalization, and demographic changes are transforming society. The skills students needed when they finished school in previous generations, such as the ability to remember evidence, need to be revised for the demands of the workforce and society in the twenty-first century. Employers and teachers recognize critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and social skills as critical 21st-century skills (Olafsson & Kampman, 2022; Tyan et al., 2020).

Furthermore, educational systems recognize the continuously changing goals of education by gradually incorporating a comprehensive set of skills into their strategies and program statements. Teachers, corporate leaders, professors, and administrative agencies have identified 21st-century skills as skills, capabilities, and learning characteristics essential for success in 21st-century society and the workplace. This is a component of a growing global initiative focusing on the skills required for students to master to succeed in a rapidly changing, digital society (Baluyos & Clarin, 2021; Bejec et al., 2020; Burleson, 2018).

Several of these skills are also related to deeper learning, centered on understanding skills such as critical thinking, compound problem-solving, and collaboration. These skills differ from traditional educational skills because they are not mainly contented knowledge-based. Teachers should facilitate students' practice of 21st-century learning skills for the development of creative insights, promoting facts pursuit and handling, problem resolution, automatic learning, and communication that esteems multiplicity and modifications in inclusive classroom settings (Berlin-Chao & Francisco-Taa, 2018; Honculada & Naparan, 2020; Tyan et al., 2020).

Teacher's Insights in Flexible Learning Program

The GURO21 Flexible Learning Program is created to offer teachers professional development opportunities and enhance their skills and knowledge in using technology in education. Therefore, it is essential to understand the perspectives and opinions of teachers who have completed this program. This section will discuss the literature on teachers' insights and perspectives regarding the GURO21

Flexible Learning Program (Lagat, 2021).

Additionally, researchers found that teachers who completed the GURO21 program reported various positive experiences and insights. Teachers indicated that the program was well-structured, provided practical tools and resources, and improved their skills and knowledge in using technology for teaching and learning. Additionally, teachers reported that the program helped them to become more reflective practitioners, increased their confidence in using technology, and improved their communication skills (Abelarde & Cruz, 2021; De Borja et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, it is essential to thoroughly understand the multifaceted factors that influence teachers' motivation to participate in the GURO21 program, such as personal and professional development, the perceived relevance and applicability of the program content, opportunities for networking and collaboration, and extrinsic rewards and incentives. The study found that teachers felt motivated to participate in the program because they believed it would enhance their professional development, improve their teaching skills, and provide opportunities for career advancement. Teachers also reported that the program helped them develop new perspectives on teaching and learning and increased their interest in using technology in the classroom (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Manaligod, 2023; Tarrayo & Anudin, 2023).

Finally, gaining a deep understanding of the diverse factors that influence teachers' satisfaction with the GURO21 program, including the program's pedagogical approach, instructional design, learning materials, communication channels, support services, and overall program effectiveness, provides valuable insights for improving the quality and impact of future teacher training initiatives. The study found that teachers' satisfaction was influenced by several factors, including the quality of the program materials, the relevance of the program to their teaching context, the level of support provided by program facilitators, and the level of interaction and collaboration with other teachers in the program (Baluyos & Clarin, 2021; Bautista Jr et al., 2021; Bernardo et al., 2020).

While "21st-century learning skills" may sound futuristic, some of these abilities are not new but only recently significant. Competencies such as critical thinking and problem-solving have always been essential. However, these competencies have become necessary because of the growing stresses of knowledge-based saving (Bautista, 2022; Bejec et al., 2020; Catalan et al., 2021)

Likewise, teachers frequently discovered the practice of collaboration or communication in real-world problem-solving and knowledge structure in classes that lectured on more than one 21st-century skill. There were some indications that collaboration and communication can help build understanding and solve real problems. A resilient foundation in relaxed knowledge and learning skills, as well as no rational skills, is one method of helping students in undergraduate education. Academic skills, which include learning and problem-solving abilities, enable students to live with comfortable knowledge at innovative levels of reasoning. No rational skills, including learning skills, time management, and self-management, assist learners in improving their ability to increase comfortable understanding and use their educational skills to solve problems (Bibon, 2022; Graham, 2020; Tingzon & Buyok, 2022).

However, learners who recall these skills exhibit excellent educational behaviors, as evidenced by their pursuit of educational goals despite obstacles. These 21st-century learning skills are more critical than ever before for students. They provide a framework for effective learning in the inclusive classroom and ensure learners can thrive in a world where constant change and learning never stops. They are also extremely vital to the well-being of our country (De Leon, 2020; De Vera, 2020; Shaik-Abdullah et al., 2020).

Moreover, creative learning skills imply the ability to use creative practices, such as brainstorming, developing new and valuable ideas, analyzing and evaluating innovative concepts, and working creatively with others. Creativity is traditionally thought to be directly involved with artistic endeavors such as art and music. Although this link is accurate, the false equating of creativity entirely with art has been defined as "art preference recently, creativity has been exposed to be essential in a wide range of skills, including practical thinking" (Escobin et al., 2022; Lagat, 2021; Tupas & Linas-Laguda, 2020).

However, there is no doubt that creativity is the most essential human foundation. Creativity fuels progress and enriches every aspect of human endeavor. Without creativity, there would be no progress, and we would keep repeating the same designs. Teachers frequently oppose creativity because it allows for more change. It is undoubtedly argued that we have been educating people out of their creativity. On the other hand, dazzling in creative acts, being in the "movement" is declared as a resource to encourage self-efficacy: for example, individual creativity has the potential to improve personality (Honculada & Naparan, 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Kuo et al., 2019; Marakovits, 2021).

Moreover, teachers rarely practice the abilities and methods that inspire the advancement of creative thinking, and these teachers classify them as creative. It was also determined that newer teachers are more creative and more at ease teachers use creative thinking methods and practices more frequently in their inclusive classroom settings. Additionally, the findings indicate that teachers who feel a greater sense of ease and comfort in their inclusive classroom settings tend to rely more on creative thinking methods and practices to support the diverse needs of their students (Boholano, 2019; Kozulin, 2023).

Hence, the teacher's role in implementing collaborative learning skills in an inclusive classroom provides a broad overview of these topics. Collaborative learning prioritizes the dual rational hard work of students and teachers. A small group of students may co-create learning outcomes such as reports or demonstrations to demonstrate nurtured understanding (Baring et al., 2020; Kadri et al., 2021).

Similarly, as its emphasis on social and academic dealings holds alterations in understanding, skills, and attitudes among students and

tries such alterations into beneficial means, collaborative learning has been initiated favorable to the outfitting of student diversity. Collaborative learning provides students with the opportunity to improve their communication and cooperation skills as well as logical skills for understanding information. Collaboration occurs when learners take on roles and work together with one another in a team to create a product (Marquez, 2019; Park & Baumeister, 2021)

In addition, collaboration in the teaching and learning process requires individuals to take on leadership roles, make decisions, build trust, communicate, execute tasks, and address conflicts. Collaborative learning skills include the ability to work effectively and respectfully within a group, as well as the willingness to cooperate to achieve a goal and accept shared responsibility. Using a collaborative learning method, for example, could help teachers initiate life skills and critical thinking skills among students in an inclusive classroom setting (Molano, 2020; Oh et al., 2023; Ramirez, 2022).

Likewise, social media is widely used for communication, meeting new people, companionship, and participation. On the other hand, simply using social media skills in learning has grown in popularity. The appearance of social media is one of the hallmarks of the 21st century's rapid technological progress. Meanwhile, because technology has significantly improved the understanding and skills required of students, incorporating social media technology into traditional education has become more common. Another advantage of incorporating social media into classroom instruction is that the technology encourages collaboration, which improves teamwork excellence and social skill advancement (Boholano, 2019; Kozulin, 2023)

Further, the learning system must direct changes in all subsystems of society in its organization as effectively as possible, and as a result, it is fighting to use computer and internet technologies broadly and successfully. Social media is a computer-generated environment in which people share information. Everyone and anyone can share anything, whenever and wherever they want. The 5 Cs can define these characteristics of social media. Furthermore, these technologies may enable an advanced level of student interaction, which will help to build and sustain an academic community. Social media and technology that have turned out to be a central part of life now impact education positively and transport several possibilities in day-to-day learning procedures in an inclusive classroom (Aguila, 2021; Roemintoyo & Budiarto, 2021; Supardi et al., 2021).

However, critical thinking is typically recognized as the same dynamic phase in each learning arena, most notably in previous periods. As a result, it appeals to a broad proposal on critical thinking capability. Higher-order rational skills, including critical thinking, can help people improve their work in various settings. The best teachers believe that it is critical that learners progress such skills while involved in academic learning because they enable learners to engage in determined, self-governing judgment. Critical thinking assists students in estimating the opinions of others and their own, resolving conflicts, and arriving at well-consistent solutions to compound problems (Sapungan, 2022; Talosa et al., 2021; Turner, 2020).

Academic institutions often emphasize "what to think rather than how to think," leading to discussions about the most effective ways to incorporate critical thinking into educational paradigms. While educators widely recognize the importance of such cognitive abilities, they continue to debate the methods for effectively cultivating them.

Critical thinking involves intentional and rigorous engagement in structured argumentation, thorough exploration of alternative perspectives, and applying nuanced value judgments, which are vital in enhancing student learning outcomes. Moreover, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning Skills has formally recognized critical thinking as an indispensable competency for preparing learners within an inclusive and dynamically evolving educational framework (Lagat, 2021).

In summary, recent literature suggests that learner engagement, learner support, and a clear sense of purpose are essential factors for the success of flexible learning programs. By examining the experiences of GURO21 completers, this study aimed to provide further insights into the challenges teachers face in flexible learning environments and the role of purpose in their educational pursuits.

Moreover, the findings revealed educators' various mechanisms to navigate the complexities of completing flexible learning programs such as GURO21. Teachers who employ problem-focused, emotion-focused, and meaning-focused coping strategies—seeking support from others and engaging in self-care—demonstrate heightened resilience and adaptability. These coping strategies facilitate their academic progression and contribute to their overall well-being amid the challenges of such programs.

Furthermore, the related literature is crucial in enriching the study by providing an in-depth analysis of existing research on teachers' experiences in flexible learning environments. This analysis reveals various themes and patterns that emerge from educators' narratives. It helps identify critical knowledge gaps and develop a theoretical framework for exploring participants' experiences. Drawing insights from previous studies, the research positions itself within the broader academic discourse, ensuring rigor and relevance. Engaging with existing literature enables the study to build on previous findings while challenging or affirming them based on new data.

This iterative process enhances the credibility of the research and demonstrates its contribution to the ongoing dialogue regarding flexible learning.

Moreover, situating the study within this academic framework fosters collaboration and exchange among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, ultimately leading to more effective educational strategies. As the field of education continues to evolve, such studies incorporating extensive literature reviews play a vital role in shaping future practices and informing policy decisions.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of participants who completed the GURO21 Flexible Learning Program.

Participants

This study's participants were the GURO21 completers of the South District of General Santos City Division for the School Year 2023-2024. The participants of the study were selected using purposive sampling and inclusion criteria. The study involved sixteen (16) individuals who completed the GURO21 program and were employed as teachers during the 2023-2024 academic year in the General Santos City Division. Eight (8) participants underwent in-depth interviews (IDI), while the other eight (8) participated in focus group discussions (FGD).

Instrument

The researcher used a research-made interview guide questions that have undergone series of validation processes. Three (3) expert validators evaluated the interview guide and their recommendations were incorporated in the paper.

Procedure

First, the data was gathered using the in-depth interview (IDI) method and focus group discussion. Participants for the in-depth interview (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD) must meet specific criteria: They should be permanent teachers in the Department of Education, currently teaching in the South District of General Santos City Division for the 2023-2024 school year. They must have completed the GURO21 program at any school in General Santos City, aged between twenty-five and fifty years, and achieved an A+ in the program's portfolio. They must also be willing to participate in interviews to share their experiences. Exclusion criteria included lack of GURO21 experience, inactive teaching status, and inability or unwillingness to dedicate time to the study. Withdrawal criteria include voluntary participant withdrawal, distress, failure to fulfill commitments, or providing misleading information.

An in-depth interview (IDI) is a data collection technique to gather rich and detailed information from individuals with experience or knowledge about the phenomenon being studied. This approach involves conducting one-on-one interviews with participants, using a semi-structured or unstructured interview guide with open-ended questions to elicit detailed and nuanced responses. The goal of in-depth interviews is to gather in-depth insights into individuals' perspectives, experiences, and behaviors related to the research topic. This approach allowed the researcher to explore complex issues and to gather data that is not easily accessible through other data collection methods (Creswell, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2019).

I was securing permission. To get the information necessary to complete this study, I followed the protocols given by RMMC Graduate School. I asked permission from the Director of the Graduate School of RMMC in General Santos City to conduct the study. Upon approval, permission from the researcher's adviser was similarly requested.

The researcher asked permission and sent a letter to the office of the School's Division Superintendent of General Santos City to conduct the in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Upon approval of the request, she sent a letter to the concerned school principal, who had identified the participants. The researcher also arranged with the school principal regarding the specific schedule and exact time of the in-depth interview administration.

Validate Instruments. Validating an in-depth interview guide for this study typically involved several steps. I requested seven expert validators in qualitative study to review and ensure the questions were appropriate and relevant to the research objectives. Then, the interview guide was pilot-tested on a small sample of participants from other district to identify any issues or challenges with the wording or sequencing of the questions. Based on the suggestions from the pilot test, the interview guide was revised as necessary. Finally, the expert validators reviewed the revised interview guide again to ensure it was ready for use in the study. This process ensured that the interview guide was well-designed and would yield meaningful data that was used to answer the research questions.

Consent. Using a semi-structured interview guide aided in developing a comprehensive knowledge of the informant's lived experiences. I requested consent from my participants to allow me to record the interview or have a video recording for the data analysis to become credible. As for video recording, I respected my participants' decision if they had declined to take videos. Then, these recorded conversations will be manually transcribed using a computer for written documentation. After transcription, my participants were contacted for the second time to confirm the findings and authenticate the data's truthfulness.

Conduct of Interview. Knowing its presence, I used a voice recorder with the interviewee to document the conversation during the interview auditorily. This was done for all eight (8) participants for a more straightforward analysis. Then, these recorded conversations were manually transcribed using a computer for written documentation. After transcription, the respondents confirmed and authenticated the truthfulness of the data gathered. In qualitative case studies, in-depth interviews are often used to collect data from multiple sources, such as critical informants, stakeholders, or individuals directly involved in the studied case.

Transcribing of Recorded Interview. The interviews are typically recorded and transcribed and then analyzed using thematic or other qualitative data analysis methods to identify patterns and themes across the data set. The insights gained from in-depth interviews help to develop a more comprehensive and clear understanding of the research topic.

Finally, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings as soon as possible after the interviews. Member checking was used as a method of validation whereby participants read and affirmed the contents of the interview transcript by affixing their signatures. Such a validation process signaled the trustworthiness of the data.

The interview saturation point is identified when the tenor of the answers has the same flow of thought deriving from the same phenomenon of experiences based on the similarity of experiences revealed during the interview.

Data Analysis

In order to reduce the gap between themselves and the participants in a qualitative study, researchers make every effort to come as near to them as they can. To analyze the data for a research project, a large amount of data must be summarized, and the findings must be presented to highlight the most critical aspects. The data analysis method included data reduction, data presentation, conclusion, drawing, and verification. It was also noted that qualitative content analysis refers to "any qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Hunt et al., 2020).

The following steps represent the Colaizzi process for phenomenological data analysis:

The first step is reading the transcript multiple times to obtain a general sense of the whole content. The second step is extracting significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon under study. These significant statements should be recorded on a separate sheet, noting their pages and line numbers. The third step is formulating the meanings of significant statements. The researcher should "bracket" their presuppositions to stick closely to the phenomenon as experienced. The fourth step is to sort the formulated meanings into categories, clusters of themes, and themes. Bracketing of presuppositions is crucial to avoid any potential influence of existing theory. The fifth step is integrating the study's findings into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study, which will be presented as a narrative account. The researcher incorporated emergent themes and theme clusters and formulated meanings into the description to create the overall structure and ensure that the study contained experience elements. The sixth step is describing the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. To match the researcher's descriptive results with the research participants' experiences, the participants themselves should be asked to validate the findings. The participants will be asked if the findings accurately reflect their experiences. Based on their responses, the researcher may decide to revise earlier stages of the study.

Results and Discussion

Participants

Key Participants. Eight Key informants, made up of two males and six females, responded as participants in this study based on my inclusion criteria, having completed the GURO21 flexible learning program. Their experiences in completing the program were significant in accomplishing this study. Data gathered and analyzed from in-depth interviews reveal the participants' lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights on completing the GURO21 flexible learning program. In accordance with confidentiality guidelines set by the RMMC Graduate School of Studies Ethics Committee, pseudonyms were assigned to protect participants' identities.

Focus Group. One focus group discussion was conducted with eight participants, three males and five females. They were also selected based on being a GURO21 completer in the Division of General Santos City. Data from this focus group discussion provided additional insights and perspectives on teachers' lived experiences in completing the GURO21 flexible learning program. In line with the confidentiality guidelines established by the RMMC Graduate School of Studies Ethics Committee, participants in this group were identified by assigned numbers (Creswell, 2018).

The same set of validated guide questions were administered to all in-depth interviews and focus group discussion participants. These participants, in turn, were selected via the ideal purposive sampling method, as their experiences are related to the phenomenon being studied. It is opportune that all sixteen qualified participants are associated with this researcher since they were also public school teachers in the Division of General Santos City.

As the researcher, I embarked on a journey to explore the lived experiences of educators who had completed the GURO21 Flexible Learning Program. This research endeavor was an intellectual pursuit and a personal commitment to understanding the transformative power of flexible learning in education. Meeting the eight key participants who generously shared their stories was an enlightening experience that illuminated the program's impact. All participants hailed from schools within the General Santos City Division and consisted of two males and six females who conducted in-depth interviews.

The process began with anticipation and curiosity. When I contacted each participant, they welcomed me warmly, eager to recount their unique journeys through GURO21. Their passion for education and belief in the program's potential for growth were palpable. This study allowed them to reflect on their experiences and articulate their transformations.

During the interviews, I observed a shared enthusiasm for GURO21's potential to reshape teaching methods and rekindle a passion for

education. Each participant had a narrative to share—a story of empowerment, adaptability, and the pursuit of excellence in their teaching careers. Their experiences within the program motivated them to complete it. They spoke of small victories and milestones, which fueled their determination to overcome their challenges.

Listening to their stories made it clear that GURO21 was not merely a program but a transformative journey—a gateway to becoming the best version of themselves as educators. The emotional journeys of these participants, marked by challenges and triumphs, highlighted the resilience and adaptability integral to the teaching profession. Their coping strategies ranged from effective time management to breaking tasks into manageable parts, emphasizing the importance of discipline and support networks.

The insights gained by these educators were profound. They grasped the significance of adaptability, lifelong learning, and the transformative power of effective teaching strategies. This deeper understanding allowed them to appreciate how these elements contribute to their personal growth and enhance their teaching practices. As the researcher, I was struck by their collective commitment to sharing their experiences and values with other teachers. They recognized that educational challenges are not roadblocks but growth opportunities—a lesson they were eager to impart to their peers.

At the outset, I asked the participants to read the consent form outlining the terms and conditions of the in-depth interview. I provided my participants with the informed consent form for formal signing. The eight in-depth interviews took place at Lagao Gymnasium during the World Teacher's Day celebration, and I seized the opportunity since all teachers in the Division were present.

As the data collection process unfolded, I found myself amid a community of educators who shared a common belief in the power of flexible learning and the necessity for adaptability in the ever-evolving educational landscape. Their willingness to participate in this study and share their experiences was a testament to the impact of GURO21 and their dedication to the teaching profession.

Analysis of Themes

Themes refer to recurrent patterns observed within data sets, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon and its alignment with specific research queries. In this study, I conducted in-depth interviews with eight individuals and focus group discussions with another eight participants who had completed the GURO21 flexible learning program in the Division of General Santos City.

I meticulously transcribed these interviews to ensure data accuracy. The subsequent data analysis involved categorizing and evaluating each participant's responses to the established research questions. This process required a detailed and systematic approach to ensure accurate interpretation aligned with the study's objectives.

Description of Participants' Lived Experiences in Completing the Flexible Learning Program

The in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were carefully designed to address the primary research problem by elucidating participants' perceptions of GURO21. The inquiry explored participants' evaluative opinions on GURO21, their initial reactions and emotional responses upon receiving the selection notification, and the pivotal experiences that galvanized their commitment to the program.

Participants were also prompted to elaborate on the positive experiences that facilitated their engagement with the GURO21 Flexible Learning Program, assess the program's inherent advantages, and reflect on their daily experiences, emotional trajectories, and personal development throughout their tenure. This comprehensive approach aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the program's impact and effectiveness.

I organized the data in a tabular format, facilitating the categorization and grouping of relevant information necessary for formulating emergent themes to identify patterns and insights for conclusions. This structured approach allowed for systematic analysis, resulting in eight emergent themes derived from the participants' narratives regarding their experiences during the GURO21 flexible learning program.

The emergent themes are Upgrading Essential Teaching Skills, creating a Platform for Personal Transformation and Growth, Navigate Challenges into Opportunities, creating Avenues to Become Tech-Savvy, Providing a Multi-Modal Learning Experience, Encourages Teachers to Make Extra-effort, Fostering interaction, and sharing knowledge.

Table 1. *Participants' Views on their Experiences as Completers of the GURO21 Flexible Learning Program*

Clustered Themes	*Emergent Themes*
My capability as a teacher was enhanced.	Upgrade Essential Teaching Skills
I have gained knowledge and skills through the topics discussed.	
It helps us to develop the skills we need.	
It allows us to become effective.	
Believe in becoming more dynamic.	Platform for Personal Transformation and Growth
I want to grow daily as I continue my online class in Guro21.	
Able to develop myself.	
Able to apply the learnings during the Guro21 journey.	
I managed another session, the next session, and that next one.	Navigate Challenges into Opportunities

These were significant challenges, particularly in applying the strategies I learned from Guro21.	
I decided to continue despite these challenges.	
A new way of equipping oneself is to use technology.	Avenue to Become Tech-Savvy
I was able to explore the use of technology smoothly besides gaining.	
Guro21 is another learning platform that needs to focus on the usual setup of learning.	Provides a Multi-Modal Learning Experience
Guro21 offers an upgraded version of the typical classroom setup.	
I was hesitant to accept the tasks.	Encourages Teachers to Make Extra-effort
Having a new task of joining the Guro21 was quite challenging.	
It was pretty stressful then, but it could not be undone.	
Encouragement from our tutor.	Fosters Interaction and Knowledge Sharing
I am thankful for the colleagues who completed the program.	

Upgrade in Teaching Skills

The participants consistently emphasized the benefits of the GURO21 flexible learning program in empowering their teaching skills. These benefits included professional growth, expanded networks, and a transformative impact on their teaching careers, aligning with the findings of Tarrayo and Anudin (2023). One participant encapsulated this by stating:

Sa akin, siyempre kasi may view about Guro21 as I, as I am going to. Kung mag join ako ng Guro21 as.. ma enhance yung capability ko as teacher. Because, Guro21 I believe is ah addresses teaching and learning requirements of the 21st century learning. Tama ba? (IDI-P1-Line 13-17)

For me, GURO21 addresses the teaching and learning needs of 21st-century education.

Participant 1 specifically noted significant improvement in her technological proficiency. She admitted that she was not initially a technology expert; however, she shared how her participation in the program has enhanced her abilities, especially in managing online classes and engaging in discussions with fellow flexible learners. This sentiment is also reflected in the work of Manaligod (2023). Participant 1 remarked:

Positive experiences. Ah.. One there is my ability to improve, as I have said kanina na I am not so, so expert when it comes to technology. But through this my positive experiences that it improves a little of using technology in answering my online class in chatting. Iam gaining knowledge and skills through the topics discussed with my co-flexible learners. (IDI-P1-Line 38-42)

Positive experiences. Ah, one of them is my ability to improve. As I mentioned earlier, I am not a technology expert. However, my positive experience has improved my ability to use technology, especially in answering questions in my online class and chatting. I am gaining knowledge and skills through the topics discussed with my fellow flexible learners.

Further, Participant 1 expressed how the program aids flexible learners in honing essential skills, not just confined within classroom boundaries but on a global scale. She shared:

Yeah! Ah.. it helps us, us flexible learners to develop the skills we need. Not only within the four corners of the classroom but globally. (the participant coughs, says "sorry" and clears throat) Meaning, ah preparing we teachers flexible learner. Teacher are preparing our learners not only in our places, but globalize or world, world noh, worldwide it allows our pupils to explore beyond what can be seen locally and we can provide. (IDI-P1-Line 50-55)

Yeah, it helps us, flexible learners, to develop the skills we need, you know, we need. Not only within the four corners of the classroom but globally. (the participant coughs, says "sorry" and clears throat) We teachers, flexible learners, are preparing our learners not only in our places but also to globalize or to reach the world, you know, worldwide. It allows our students to explore beyond what can be seen locally, and we can provide an opportunity for them to become internationally competitive classroom learners.

Moreover, participants emphasized that flexible learning platforms like GURO21 play a crucial role in equipping educators, supported by the findings of Baluyos and Clarin (2021), which state that the necessary skills not only within the confines of the classroom but also in a global scale as expressed by the following participants:

Guro21 for me is all about Knowledge, Skills, and Values na dapat matutuhan ng mga Guro para sa hinaharap na 21st Century na pagtuturo ng mga Guro. Yun ang aking view ng Guro21. (IDI-P6-Line 997-999)

For me, GURO21 is about acquiring the knowledge, skills, and values teachers need for 21st-century education.

Additionally, this theme highlights the numerous benefits offered by the program, as expressed by the following participants:

Siguro advantage magkaroon ka lang naman ng dagdag kaalaman noh. Syempre sa time management, sa learning set up sa classroom. Kasi yung kailangan naka focus rin na yung mga strategies mo in teaching. So, yun na. I guess yun yong advantage niya. (IDI-P6-Line 1026-1029)

The advantage is gaining additional knowledge, improving time management skills, and developing effective classroom strategies. It

helps teachers concentrate on their teaching methods.

This theme underscored the limited challenges participants face due to the class schedule. The teacher's approach, which included advanced tasks, facilitated the participants' ability to navigate the assigned activities, as reiterated by another participant:

Flexible learning program noh? Am.. Actually, yung klase namin ma'am noh. Saturday, twice a month. Oo, and sa pagharap naman kay ma'am tutor wala naman siyang gaanong hirap noh. Kasi nagbibigay naman siya ng advance task noh. And then, pagnabasa mo lang yung mga activities na gusto niyang gawin. Wala na masyadong problema doon. (IDI-P6-Line 1033-1037)

The flexible learning program was relatively easy for me. Our classes were on Saturdays, twice a month. The teacher posed minimal challenges because she assigned advanced tasks, and reading the assigned activities made them more manageable.

For me, Guro21 helps us to be more effective teachers, specially this 21st century. And it also upgrade us teachers in our, in the way that we teach our children. (FGD-P4-Line 13-14)

GURO21 helps us become more effective teachers, especially in the 21st century, and upgrades how we teach our children.

Furthermore, focus group discussion (FGD) participants emphasized that GURO21 equips educators with innovative skills, fosters lifelong learning, and prepares them for the dynamic education landscape, as expressed by the participants:

My positive experiences that help me in accomplishing my learning tasks in the Guro21. Ah, iniisip ko din talaga. Sa akin para ano. Mabigyan ako ng ways on how to manage my classroom. And how to handle the children with conflict or I mean yung misbehave. (FGD-P7-Line 116-119)

My positive experiences helped me accomplish my learning tasks in GURO21. It provided me with strategies for managing my classroom and handling conflicts or misbehavior among children.

You gain more experiences on how to deal with your learners in the 21st century learners. (FGD-P1-Line 125-126)

You gain more experience in dealing with 21st-century learners.

Interestingly, FGD participants described GURO21 as a gateway to becoming more adaptable and effective teachers, highlighting the program's advantages, as noted by the following participants:

Those modules that I read before the session. So, I humbly say that I put it into my practice. It improve my teaching strategies as a teacher and to the learners. I know how to approached the diversity of the learners. Yung ang problem ng learners especially yung mga background nila. Kung ano ang kanilang mga talents. So, nalaman ko kung paano mo siya iapproach. On how to become a. how to mold the learners. How to motivate the learners to become, ah, magkaroon ng interest to study the lesson. (FGD-P6-Line 136-142)

I have applied the modules I read before my practice sessions. This has improved my teaching strategies, benefiting both me and my learners. I now understand how to approach my students' diversity, recognizing their challenges, especially considering their backgrounds and talents. I have learned how to engage with them, mold them, and motivate them to develop an interest in studying the lessons.

Platform for Personal Transformation and Growth

The first emergent theme that resonated through the participants' narratives was the idea of transformation and growth. In their words, GURO21 has been a transformative experience that fundamentally reshaped their perspectives on teaching and learning. This theme was also reflected in the study by Bautista Jr. et al. (2021). For instance, eight of the individual in-depth interview (IDI) participants shared similar transformative experiences in the GURO21 flexible learning program, as evident in the following account:

To complete the, the course? Ahhh, what ah lifelong learning would be if I applied this ka during the course ni noh? I would become more dynamic. I believe if I will be joining this course I will become innovative teacher. Ahh, become flexible and a communicator because of the title Flexible Learner (IDI-P1-Line 31-35)

To complete the course? What would lifelong learning be like if I applied it during the course? I would become more dynamic. By joining this course, I will become an innovative teacher—flexible and an effective communicator—because of the title "Flexible Learner."

Likewise, participants described GURO21 as a skills development program fostering teachers' professional growth. This description parallels the findings of Bernardo et al. (2020), which suggest that GURO21 promotes growth for educators. Participants emphasized that the program provided targeted strategies to enhance teachers' professionalism, as stated by the following participants:

Guro21 is a skills development program for ah.. for teachers professional. I, I think it's a more specific on professional growth of teachers especially in the teaching already. (IDI-P2-Line 215-217)

GURO21 is a skills development program designed for teachers' professional growth. It focuses explicitly on enhancing teachers' professionalism, especially in teaching.

Okay, first advantage is that I was able to develop myself in attending classes especially online. Second, the learned am.. strategies on the Guro21 were able to am.. use during the pandemic. I was, I was ah.. lucky that I have entered Guro21. Because all of the strategies in ahm.. being used especially in the pandemic the online classes that we have. (IDI-P2-Line 254-258)

The first advantage is that I was able to develop myself by attending classes, primarily online. Second, I learned strategies through GURO21 that were useful during the pandemic. I feel fortunate to have joined GURO21 because all the strategies I learned were effectively applied, especially during the pandemic and our transition to online classes.

Moreover, Participants highlighted the advantages of the GURO21 program in their teaching experiences. One participant noted,

For me, we could really learn how to maximize your time. Since, you are doing multitasking. You are reading, you are typing, everything. And then, you are trying to remember all your experiences and adding that together. You can make your assumptions and into what kind of teacher are you. And another one, I am also very motivated. Since, I've also seen my co-teachers completed the program. (IDI-P3-Line 424-429)

I have had positive experiences. A key aspect for me is learning how to maximize my time. I multitask—reading, typing, and recalling my experiences to form assumptions about what kind of teacher I am. Another positive aspect is motivation.

Understanding today's generation was deemed beneficial, with another participant stating:

It helps you a lot in terms of understanding the today's generation. Kasi nga mababago lahat. So, you don't have any choice but to adapt to the changes. (IDI-P5-Line 773-775)

Everything is changing, and we must adapt.

This transformative growth was echoed in the participants' initial thoughts about entering the GURO21 program, characterized by anticipation, curiosity, and a desire for professional development. This sentiment aligns with Bautista (2022), who observed that teachers expressed excitement about the program's innovative and forward-thinking nature, viewing it as an opportunity to engage with cutting-edge educational practices. The emphasis on flexibility and adaptability in teaching methodologies resonated with participants as it matched the evolving education landscape. One participant reflected:

It was indeed a mix of excitement and feeling that I am lucky because not all were being chosen. And I was also fueled by curiosity of pushing myself to exploring the possibility that awaits of me. (IDI-P7-Line 1155-1157)

It was a mix of excitement and feeling fortunate to have been chosen. I was also fueled by curiosity, pushing myself to explore the possibilities.

GURO21 was recognized as essential for teachers, enhancing their ability to instruct and guide students and fostering innovative and comprehensive learning. Participants noted the practical applications of what they learned from SEAMEO and GURO21. Additionally, while some participants acknowledged that completing GURO21 might not directly lead to promotions or career recommendations, they considered it a valuable tool. As one participant remarked:

Okay, Ah advantages. Actually, you cannot use the Guro2021 kahit completer ka for the what you mean. For the recommendation para ma ano ka. Para ma promote. But, as a teacher you can use this as your sword. I guess. Para to face the challenges. The challenges as a teacher. To become more effective in front of your students. I guess yan yung sa akin. Be ready for the many battles, waving your swords para maging ready ka anytime. (IDI-P8-Line 1355-1360)

The advantage is that even if you complete GURO21, it may not necessarily lead to a promotion. However, it is like having a sword to face the challenges of teaching. It makes you more effective in front of your students and prepares you to tackle various battles.

This theme reflects the findings of Bejec et al. (2020), which illustrated the transformation teachers experienced and the significant role GURO21 played in redefining their educational approaches. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants characterized GURO21 as a transformative program revolutionizing teaching methods and approaches. They highlighted its potential to empower educators and enhance the educational landscape, underscoring the notion that GURO21 facilitates comprehensive transformation in teaching, as expressed by FGD participants:

For me. Ah. 21st century teachers are the so called experienced. Ah, well experience teachers. But we should be more develop to be more effective teachers. (FGD-P3-Line 10-12)

21st-century teachers are experienced and well-versed, yet we must continue to develop to be more effective.

Participants reflected on GURO21 as an essential educational course addressing the demands of 21st-century teaching and learning. They emphasized educators' need to continuously enhance their knowledge and skills to meet modern educational challenges. One participant recalled:

For me, I remember Guro 21, is a one of the learning course of education. Wherein, addresses the teaching-learning requirements to be a 21st century. Because we are now facing the 21st century. As educator. So, we need to improve of. Dagdagan ang ating

kaalaman bilang isang Guro para maging ready sa 21st century. (FGD-P6-Line 17-20)

I remember GURO21 as one of the educational learning courses that address the requirements of a 21st-century educator. As educators facing the 21st century, we must improve our knowledge to prepare ourselves.

Expressing satisfaction, participants shared their proactive approach in communicating their interest to their principal about participating in GURO21. Receiving notification of their acceptance marked the beginning of a challenging yet inspiring journey, as they welcomed difficulties as opportunities for growth, reflecting a positive mindset toward overcoming challenges and acquiring new knowledge. One participant shared:

Okay. For me, I am very happy because I really give my intention to the principal. So, as I received the notification it was just a signal that the game is on. And the more they tell me its difficult the more I feel inspired. Because it means more challenges, more learnings. (FGD-P2-Line 30-33)

I was thrilled because I expressed my intention to the principal. When I received the notification, it signaled that the game was on. The more they warned me about the difficulties, the more inspired I felt because it meant more challenges and more learning.

When reflecting on the program's benefits, participants emphasized acquiring knowledge that enhanced their effectiveness as teachers and improved their time management skills. One participant stated:

Advantage. One of the advantages that I have learned. It gave me more knowledge on how to be more effective teacher and how to manage my time. (FGD-P3-Line 129-130)

One advantage is that I learned to be a more effective teacher and manage my time better.

They recognized that through daily experiences, they developed the knowledge and skills to become mature and well-rounded educators.

Navigate Challenges into Opportunities

In examining the challenges faced, a noteworthy theme emerged: challenges as learning opportunities. This finding aligns with Catalan et al. (2021), as participants reframed obstacles into opportunities for growth. Their challenges included time management and balancing personal and professional lives, which they transformed into stepping stones for improvement. One participant shared:

Key challenges... Of course, number one there is your time. Time, one of the challenges because there are time that you have an online class and at the same time you have your class. Number 2 challenges their challenge there is yung connection. There are times na nag oonline ka, youre answering with your yung chats ninyo with your co-flexible learners and bigla walang wifi. So that is one of the challenges talaga na naexperience natin. (IDI-P1-Line 73-78)

Key challenges include time—there are instances when I simultaneously have an online class and a regular class. Connection issues also pose challenges. Sometimes, I am online, engaging in chats with my flexible learners, and suddenly lose Wi-Fi. These have been fundamental challenges we have faced.

Initially, Agaton and Cueto (2021) supported feelings of excitement and apprehension as participants expressed concerns about their need for familiarity with technology and gadgets, especially regarding online teaching and learning with GURO21. However, they successfully navigated these challenges with guidance and support from their mentor and fellow GURO21 completers. As one participant recounted,

I was quite excited but, at the same time I'm worried. Because I do not know how to manipulate those ah gadgets and technology especially, in the teaching learning process that we have the online. It was my first time to have the online learning experience with Guro21. That the help of the mentor, my co-Guro21 completers. (IDI-P2-Line 221-225)

I was excited but worried because I did not know how to use those gadgets and technology, particularly for online teaching. It was my first experience with online learning through GURO21, but I managed to navigate it with help from my mentor and fellow completers.

Participants identified two main challenges during GURO21: manipulating technology and effectively translating module learning to their students. Despite these hurdles, they were determined to overcome them and integrate their newfound knowledge into their teaching practices. One participant shared:

The first one is ahh... the manipulation of technology, the gadgets. Because it was my first time in using the technology. To be in the loop for the session. Then the second one is an ah, the challenges in how to translate these learnings with the modules to the learners also. These are big challenges for me. On how to translate those Guro21 strategies the learned. I mean the learned strategies that being ahm, taught by the flexible tutor to us. (IDI-P2-Line 277-282)

The first challenge was manipulating technology, as it was my first time accessing sessions on the online platform. My second challenge was effectively translating the modules' learnings to my students. These were significant challenges, especially in applying the strategies I learned from GURO21, our flexible tutor.

Time management was another significant hurdle participants faced. They described the unique nature of online training, noting:

So, far ah.. When we have the first session of the Guro21. Amm. The training is quite different from the normal, yung ah training. Because it was done in an online platform. Wherein, the participants will only chat or send messages on the chatroom and share their ideas or about the questions raised by the tutor. (IDI-P4-Line 588-592)

Our first GURO21 session differed from regular training because it was conducted online. Participants could only chat or send messages in the chatroom, sharing ideas about the questions raised by the tutor.

Moreover, participants viewed the program as an exciting venture into the digital realm. They recognized it as a challenge to traditional educational norms and an embrace of the flexibility required in today's dynamic world. One participant remarked:

Okay. For me, it's like an adventure on digital realm. Am,, because this program will not only challenge the traditional notions or standard of education. But, also embraces the flexibility needed into this dynamic world. What is trending today in the modern world is the use of computers. It's more likely on like a key to treasure chest of knowledge opening to the portal about digital world. (IDI-P7-Line 1146-1151)

It feels like an adventure in the digital realm because this program challenges traditional education standards while embracing the flexibility needed in this dynamic world. Today, computers serve as keys, unlocking the treasure trove of knowledge in the digital landscape.

Initially hesitant and questioning their selection, participants wondered about their suitability for the program, fearing they might embarrass their school. However, they recognized the opportunity for growth and learning upon receiving the notification. One of the participants stated:

Actually, my initial emotion at first very hesitant. Sabi ko. Why me? Bakit ako? Major in Filipino ako. Why not others. Kasi parang baka mas much better sila. Baka mapahiya ko ang school. But during that time na nareceived ko na yung memo. Well, narealize ko. I need to learn more. Kasi kumbaga, during that time I am 17 years I guess in service. So, need ko talaga siya para ma gear up kumbaga as a teacher. (IDI-P8-Line 1323-1328)

My initial emotion was hesitation. I thought, Why me? Why was I selected? I majored in Filipino; why not others? They might be more qualified. I worried about embarrassing my school. However, when I received the notification, I realized I needed to learn more.

Another participant shared:

My journey are.. First very hard for me to cope. During pandemic kasi ito. All my co-teachers are not reporting. And then, we are just doing the seameo online. And then, I cannot ask them what are those preparation that they did before. The second, those completers cannot let me borrow kasi pinaghirapan nila yon diba. Kahit mafeel mo na gusto nila they will not offer. (IDI-P8-Line 1368-1373)

My journey was initially challenging. This was during the pandemic when my co-teachers were not reporting to school. I attended the SEAMEO program online, and asking them about their preparations was difficult. The most challenging part was that other completers would only lend me their work if they had put much effort into it.

Self-doubt and the struggle to balance work, learning, and personal life were significant challenges as well, evident in one FGD participant's account:

For me. Yes, I was worried at first. Matapos ko ba o hindi. But, it enjoined every bit of it. Eventually, exchanged of ideas was absolutely something worth practicing in our respective classes indeed. Nagkasharing of each. Yung sabi ko mga ideas and experiences. (FGD-P1-Line 26-29)

Yes, I was worried at first. I wondered if I would finish, but it engaged every bit of me. Eventually, exchanging ideas was something worth practicing in our respective classes. We shared ideas and experiences.

Another participant reflected on their initial reluctance to participate in GURO21:

I felt so very sad. Kay sa amoa na time kanang bunot-bunot man gud. Opo, kanang apat mi sa kinder ang gipagpilian. So, bunot-bunot na lang kay wala may mag unsa, na siya magdawat ato nga time. So, ako ang naka bunot. Siyempre, hesitant ka. Kay ana sila Guro21 is lisod daw kayo. Ing-ana sila. Pero, I accepted the challenge because I know GOD has a purpose nganung ako ang nakakuha ato. So, thankful pud ko kay ako ang naka bunot. At least, tapos nako sa Guro21 and thankful ko kay daghan ko ug resources. That's it. (FGD-P3-Line 34-40)

I felt unfortunate. In our time, it was like drawing lots. Four of us were chosen for kindergarten. We drew lots because no one wanted to accept it then. I was the one who drew lots. I hesitated because I heard GURO21 is challenging. However, I accepted the challenge, knowing that God has a purpose for why I got it. I am thankful I drew lots because I have completed GURO21 and gained many resources.

Initially hesitant and fearful of not completing the GURO21 program, participants worried their efforts might be in vain. However,

recognizing the importance of commitment in their profession and their readiness to enhance their professionalism, they embraced the challenge. Participants stated,

At first, I am hesitate (hesitant) I am afraid. Baka hindi ko matapos ang aking Guro21. So, sayang. But as a teacher, we should always be have a committed to our work. We are ready to change our being professionalism. That's why I accept the challenge, and Thanks GOD it succeed. I am, ako ay isang Guro21 na. (FGD-P6-Line 50-53)

At first, I hesitated, afraid I might not finish GURO21, which could mean it was all for nothing. However, as teachers, we should always be committed to our work. We are ready to change our professionalism, so I accepted the challenge. Thank God, it succeeded. I am now a GURO21 completer.

Participants had to overcome hurdles such as time management and adapting to new teaching methods to complete GURO21. One participant reflected:

Ah, every time naa mi'y session. Grabe giyud ang kulba kay siyempre si sir Mario Bermudez. Pero, para sa future go lang ng go, ug para sa bata siyempre. (FGD-P3-Line 160-161)

Every time we had a session, it was nerve-wracking because it was Sir Mario Bermudez. However, it was for the future, so we persevered, especially for the children.

Despite the program's excitement, participants acknowledged the exhaustion from juggling multiple responsibilities. One participant stated,

Mixed emotion. Interesting but exhausting because as we are busy. We have a lot. A lot of ginagawa sa school. But my personal development is of course nag improve ako as a teacher. (FGD-P6-Line 164-166)

Mixed emotions—exciting but exhausting because we are busy. We have many tasks to accomplish at school. However, my personal development has significantly improved as a teacher.

Throughout their experiences, participants faced significant struggles, consistent with Manaligod's (2023) findings, mainly due to their location in areas with limited internet connectivity. One participant shared:

Daily experiences. During that time. Ah, I can say na struggle talaga. Kasi that time naa pa ko sa far flung area. Ang akoang school. And ang internet connection giyud ang akoang problem. Since, I am teaching in far flung area. After my morning class nagababa ako from my school from Daan Banwang to the City. Just to find internet café. (FGD-P8-Line 171-175)

My daily experiences were a struggle because my school was in a far-flung area where internet connection was problematic. After my morning class, I had to travel from my school in Daan Banwang to the city to find an internet café, as we did not have Wi-Fi at home.

When reflecting on the challenges during the GURO21 program, participants expressed difficulties starting assignments and feeling overwhelmed. However, with the help of supportive colleagues who lent their portfolios and provided guidance, they successfully overcame these obstacles. One participant noted:

For me, My key challenges that time. Yes. Somehow same with ma'am Sheng. Nagiging isa rin akong ELLN (Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy) lecturer that time. And at the same time ito naga Guro21 Flexible learning program. Online. (FGD-P1-Line 183-185)

My key challenges were similar to Ma'am Sheng's. I was also an Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN).

Ah, kay challenges. At the end of Guro21, we have lot of assignments and by reading those assignments dili nako kabalo how to start. But thank GOD. GOD will really make a way. I had my references. Thank you, Ma'am Mae, Ma'am Jona, Ma'am Janice, Ma'am Charissa gipahulam nila skoa ang ilang portfolio. And sa reválida, very kulba kayo. But, thank GOD again. I successfully answered all the questions. (FGD-P3-Line 203-208)

For challenges, at the end of GURO21, we had numerous assignments, and when I read through them, I did not know where to start. However, thank God, He provided a way. I had my references, and I am grateful to Ma'am Mae, Ma'am Jona, Ma'am Janice, and Ma'am Charissa for lending me their portfolios. As for the revalida it was extremely nerve-wracking, but again, thank God—I managed to answer all the questions successfully.

Avenue to Become Tech-Savvy

GURO21 effectively transforms participants into tech-savvy educators by equipping them with essential digital skills necessary for adaptability. Through comprehensive modules, handouts, and online interactions, participants engage with diverse digital tools, aligning with Tarrayo and Anudin's (2023) findings that highlight the importance of equipping teachers to navigate the evolving landscape of educational technology. The program emphasizes the practical application of digital skills and fosters a mindset of continuous learning, ensuring participants stay at the forefront of technological advancements. As one participant noted:

The most significant is, I was able to. When I was able to manipulate (gadgets) ah, with my own how to (laptop), to be with the group,

especially in the online instruction. Then, upon looking at the module. Ah, I find it very important and interesting. The module itself sa Guro21. (IDI-P2-Line 228-231)

The most significant thing for me was learning to operate gadgets, especially my laptop, and engaging with the group, particularly in online instruction. Going through the modules was essential and exciting, especially for those in GURO21.

Participants shared similar sentiments, appreciating the flexibility and self-paced nature of the program, which allowed them to develop digital competencies in a way that suited their schedules. Another participant reflected:

One, first is the use of technology. Being technology savvy is indeed one of the skills that makes us or gives us edge from among the others. In which it becomes one of the major problems of the elders. Because they are now deprive of exploring themselves, because of their aged. But, fortunate for the young ones. Maybe I belong to the middle because, I still have, able to update and explore, and use technology in a smooth way. (IDI-P7-Line 1160-1165)

One significant experience was becoming more technology-savvy, which is an advantage in today's professional landscape. This skill is challenging for older generations but essential for the younger generation. Being part of the middle generation, I can keep up with technology seamlessly.

Similarly, another participant highlighted the invaluable advantage of not only gaining knowledge but also becoming adept with technology—a crucial skill in today's professional environment:

It's like having a ticket. A golden ticket. Advantage, is.. Aside from gaining knowledge, were able to adapt technology savviness, and that is invaluable in today's fast phase or everchanging professional landscape. (IDI-P7-Line 1177-1179)

It is like having a golden ticket. Beyond knowledge, becoming tech-savvy is invaluable in today's fast-evolving professional landscape.

The GURO21 program inspires teachers to evolve as 21st-century educators by enhancing their teaching skills, particularly in strategy, application, and innovation. As one participant put it:

Ah.. Seameo21 (Guro21) is more on how to inspired teachers to be a 21st century educators in their teaching skills. Especially on strategies, application and innovation as well. (FGD-P2-Line 7-9)

GURO21 (SEAMEO21) inspires us to be 21st-century educators in teaching skills, especially strategies, application, and innovation.

Provides a Multi-Modal Learning Experience

GURO21 provides a unique, multi-modal learning experience that transcends the traditional classroom setup. This commitment to impactful, versatile learning motivated many participants, as echoed by Baluyos and Clarin (2021). Participants expressed their appreciation for the flexibility and the upgraded learning model offered:

Okay, Guro21 for me is an another platform of learning. Which is not really focusing on the usual set up of learning like classroom discussions, or taking masterals. Like that you are in one room or one class sharing ideas and that. So, Guro21 is an upgraded version of the usual classroom set up. (IDI-P3-Line 390-393)

GURO21 is a learning platform beyond traditional classrooms or even master's degrees. It is an upgraded version of the usual setup, allowing us to share ideas beyond a single room.

The program's flexibility enabled participants to acquire 21st-century skills essential in today's educational landscape, especially effective use of online platforms—a skill that proved invaluable during the pandemic. This adaptability encouraged participants to grow professionally and find their unique teaching style. Participants shared:

The view about Guro21. We have to learn, to be able to teach. So, equipping ourselves with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of the 21st is of necessity to be a good teacher. (FGD-P1-Line 4-6)

Equipping ourselves with 21st-century knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values is essential to being a good teacher.

Being stay motivated, and talagang proper time management. Since, we are teaching. We have assignments. We have activities. So, talagang kailangan yung time management. (FGD-P2-Line 99-101)

Managing time effectively was also crucial since we juggle assignments, teaching, and other responsibilities.

Additionally, focus group discussions highlighted the critical role of time management, particularly for participants balancing roles as mothers, teachers, and wives. As Bautista Jr. et al. (2021) observed, participants emphasized the need for responsibility and overcoming challenges by seeking help when necessary. One participant explained:

Number one is time management is really a big factor. Since, kailangan mong I join lahat-lahat ng forces. Tapusin lahat sa school, sa seameo, sa bahay, as a mother, as a teacher, as a wife. So, time management talaga. Next, be responsible in all take home assignment. Since, sa seameo is nagbibigay ng instruction. The FLT is really counting on the participants kung gaano ka karesponsible sa lahat ng

mga activities na iniiwan. (FGD-P2-Line 192-197)

Time management is critical since juggling tasks at school, home, and with SEAMEO requires serious responsibility. The Flexible Learning Tutor (FLT) relies on us to complete our assignments responsibly.

Encourages Teachers to Make Extra Efforts

Many participants entered the GURO21 program excitedly and eagerly, knowing it would challenge them to put in extra effort. The program encouraged teachers to engage with innovative teaching methods and digital tools, renewing their enthusiasm for teaching. Although challenging, these experiences taught them valuable life skills. One participant shared:

I scheduled my time or how I balance my time. There is a point that it seems like I'm the edge of quitting. Since, I can not really find time for this program. Back in time I, I'm. I was still new in the service. So I'm still adjusting, I have a lot of coordinatorship and I do not know which would be my priority. (IDI-P3-Line 454-458)

Managing time and balancing responsibilities was a challenge. Sometimes, I felt overwhelmed due to the program's demands, but the opportunity was too valuable.

Initially, some participants felt hesitant due to additional tasks on top of their teaching load, yet they accepted the challenge. One participant reflected:

Actually ma'am, I was quite hesitant to accept the tasks. Because during that time I was assigned to be the LAC (Learning Action Cell) coordinator. There will be, there was rather a lot of tasks also to be done as LAC coordinator. But, since, my name was listed among the participants. So, I don't have the choice but accept it. (IDI-P4-Line 600-604)

I was initially reluctant due to my role as the Learning Action Cell (LAC) coordinator, but being listed as a GURO21 participant was a commitment I needed to make.

Time management became essential, particularly amid the heightened responsibilities of pandemic. This aligns with Bibon's (2022) study, which highlighted the determination and resilience of educators to persevere despite various challenges. Another participant shared their resolve:

I guess. I don't need to elaborate more kung ano ang mga key challenges. Kasi nga the, the pandemic itself noh, will explain. Will tell us kung gaano siya ka challenging noh. Gaano siya ka risky in terms, in my personal health, in my personal safety, in my personal space parang, nahassellan ko ato na time. Pero kay dahil ako ang ano, niya (participant). It cannot undone noh. I have to pursue it and finish. (IDI-P5-Line 815-820)

I knew the pandemic made it even more challenging, but I had to finish the program despite the added stress.

Participants also expressed excitement and apprehension about the workload, yet the support within GURO21 motivated them to persist. One participant recalled:

At first, nung nalaman ko na isa ako sa mga participants. Kasi actually, magkasabay kami ni ma"am Jean that time noh. Magkahalong excited atsaka yung meron ding takot kasi sa isip ko. Baka, matapos ko kaya yung Guro21? O, baka, hindi kasi nga, syempre kahit papano my konting view na kasi kami na maraming activities or assignments na dapat gawin. So, baka hindi ko siya magawa. (IDI-P6-Line 1003-1008)

When I learned I was selected, I was excited and scared due to the workload. However, I was committed to completing GURO21, knowing its value for my career.

A participant also described a memorable close call with not passing due to a strict mentor, underscoring the importance of persistence:

Okay. So, dito muntik na akong hindi makapasa. As in, sabi ko nga diba strict ang mentor namin. Although naisubmit ko siya. Nakasubmit naman ako. Pero, parang hindi niya. Hindi siya satisfied sa answer ko. Kaya pinaulit niya ako. Nastress ako kasi maghahanap ka ng printer. Saan ka makakaprint para maisubmit mo skanya. Yun, yung parang ganun ba. And also, nagkataon rin na nacorrupt rin ang aking files gud ma'am. Tapos yun kahit na medyo nahihirapan tuloy parin. (IDI-P6-Line 1040-1051)

Due to a mentor's high standards, I nearly did not pass. I had to redo my submission, and it was a challenge, but it taught me resilience and adaptability.

Through experiences like these, GURO21 continues to foster a culture of dedication and adaptability among educators, empowering them to embrace the changing demands of modern education.

Further, FGD participants supported these findings, as evident in the following account:

Since, this is an online platform learning. I don't have an internet access at home. So, every session I really go to the internet café. Ah, find time to order minimal amount (time spent using the computer). And I do believe that if there's a will, there's a way. So, hanapan talaga ng paraan. Kahit mahirap kailangan maka attend talaga ng session sa seameo21 (Guro21) (FGD-P2-Line 154-159)

I need home internet access since this is an online learning platform. So, for every session, I go to the Internet café and try to minimize my time on the computer. I believe that if there's a will, there is a way, so I found a way to attend the sessions in Seameo21 (Guro21), even though it was difficult.

One of the challenge na akong na experience during that course is noong time na nag final task na sana. During sa akong session is the debate. So, I need to consider the learners capacity. Since, first time din ng mga learners namin sa Daan Banwang. IP school po kasi yung school namin. First time namin doon nag experience na magdebate. Tapos with video pa.. (FGD-P8-Line 244-248)

One of the challenges I encountered during the course was completing the final tasks, particularly the debate. I had to consider the learners' capacity since it was the first time our students from Daan Banwang, an IP school, participated in a debate that was recorded.

Fosters Interaction and Knowledge Sharing

The GURO21 journey instilled interaction and knowledge sharing among participants, a theme reinforced by their stories. This aligns with the findings of Graham (2020), who highlights qualities essential for overcoming obstacles and becoming more effective educators. IDI participants shared:

Significant experiences of the program that motivated me to finish it or to complete it or was, am.. was the motivation given to us by our tutor that as teachers of course whatever tasks, challenges, and things that we should or are expected to do and somehow, we have to complete it. (IDI-P4-Line 609-612)

The significant experience that motivated me to complete the program was the encouragement from our tutor. As teachers, we are expected to fulfill tasks and face challenges, which motivated me to complete any assignment.

Reflecting on their experiences, participants emphasized the positive aspects of the program, particularly the new knowledge they gained. One IDI participant expressed:

Siguro the positive experiences ito yung mga learnings na natutunan ko. Though familiar ako sa mga terms na ginagamit sa mga skill. Though na yung pahapyaw na napagdaanan ko na nung college. Pero yung experience nun is parang kakaiba din. In a sense that yung mga classmates ko from other divisions and yung teacher ko from Manila and Wala siyang kaidi-idea about Gensan. Kasi never been daw siya sa Gensan. So, I was very, very happy for that experience. And I consider it as a positive one. Kasi kahit papano may naidulot siya sa akin as an individual and of course as a teacher. (IDI-P5-Line 763-770)

The positive experiences included the skills I gained, even though I was already familiar with some terms from college. However, this program was unique because my classmates were from different divisions, and my teacher was from Manila, unfamiliar with Gensan. It was a positive experience that contributed to my growth as an individual and a teacher.

IDI participants also shared other positive experiences in the GURO21 program, citing the unique learning environment and interactions with classmates from various backgrounds. Despite initial concerns about terminology and time constraints, adaptability and determination helped them persevere. Co-teacher support was crucial in navigating these challenges, and GURO21's adaptability aligns with Tingzon and Buyok's (2022) findings on tailored learning, peer and mentor support, and stable internet access. One participant noted:

Okay, so sa isip ko kasi andoon na ako. So, why not na tapusin ko nalang siya. Kahit medyo hirap siya sa time noh, to mang. And also, hindi lang naman sa time pati yung internet connectivity, kasi minsan nawawala ang ating internet connection. So, dun kaya sa isip ko na ipagpatuloy nalang kahit nahihirapan. (IDI-P6-Line 1011-1015)

I was already in the program, so I decided to finish it despite time constraints and internet issues, driven by my determination.

The program's adaptability was revolutionary, with tailored learning experiences aligned with participants' teaching styles. Support from mentors and peers provided motivation, while stable internet connectivity enabled program completion. One IDI participant shared feelings of reservation and shyness due to the pandemic and unfamiliar classmates from regions like Marbel and Cotabato, reflecting a theme noted by Agaton and Cueto (2021) on feelings of disconnection in diverse academic groups. The participant stated:

At first, very shy ako. Kasi during pandemic ito eh. I didn't know who are my classmates. From what school, from what region. Kasi may Marbel, may Cotabato. So, from different region. So, parang naging ah, tawag nito. At first, parang ayaw ko siyang. Hindi siya nagsisink in sa akin. Kumbaga very aloof ako. Kasi sila major in English. How about me? Major in Filipino, sila major in Science, major in ano. And then, I realize why not itry ko. (IDI-P8-Line 1331-1336)

At first, I felt reserved because it was during the pandemic. I was curious about my classmates and their backgrounds and regions but felt disconnected because I majored in Filipino, while others specialized in English, Science, and other fields. Eventually, I realized I could learn from them, not just from my teacher.

FGD participants also emphasized the significance of interaction and knowledge sharing, with participants stating:

Okay, significant experiences within the program. Getting acquainted with the co-flexible learners. Knowing some of our interests. Sharing our common and varied interest teaching experiences. And learning about our insights and views on what are or how it takes

to be the 21st century educator. (FGD-P1-Line 58-61)

Significant experiences in the program included getting to know my co-learners, sharing teaching experiences, and learning about what it takes to be a 21st-century educator.

Other FGD participants reflected on the advantage of having co-participants from the same school, sharing:

Ah. For me, significant experiences ah. Big factor talaga if you have your co-participants in the same school. Kasi, ah, sabay kami ni ma'am Marj. So, if I have a question madali lang mag communicate and mamotivate ka to continue. (FGD-P2-Line 62-64)

A significant experience was having co-participants from my school because we faced similar situations and challenges, which motivated me to continue.

FGD participants found their experiences in GURO21 unforgettable and meaningful, particularly during online sessions where they navigated accurate responses. Despite uncertainties, Tarrayo and Anudin (2023) observed that teachers adapted by crafting responses related to their tutor's questions, enhancing their learning. FGD participants shared:

Ahm. For me, the positive experiences help me in accomplishing my tasks. I asked the experts such as my principal, the master teachers, and also those teachers who already attended this kind of program and they finished it. I do research and I do lots of readings. Thank you. (FGD-P5-Line 109-112)

My positive experiences helped me complete my tasks. I sought guidance from experts, such as my principal, master teachers, and those who had completed similar programs. I also conducted research and did extensive reading.

The results of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences in the GURO21 flexible learning program. Participants recognized the theme "Upgrade Essential Teaching Skills" as vital, with the program enhancing competencies—a theme supported by Tarrayo and Anudin (2023). Emphasizing personal transformation, participants acknowledged the program's role in their professional development.

The theme "Navigate Challenges into Opportunities" also highlighted participants' resilience. They viewed challenges as opportunities for growth, showcasing adaptability. The theme "Avenue to Become Tech-Savvy" emphasized the program's impact on equipping teachers with technological proficiency, enabling digital integration in teaching (Tingzon & Buyok, 2022). Other themes, including "Provides a Multi-Modal Learning Experience," "Encourages Extra Effort," and "Fosters Interaction and Knowledge Sharing," underscored the GURO21 program's dynamic nature. These elements facilitated an engaging and versatile learning environment, supporting participants' successful program completion (Manaligod, 2023).

Description of how participants cope with the challenges in completing the flexible learning program.

A series of carefully designed research questions were posed during in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to uncover participants' coping mechanisms in the flexible learning program. These questions explored strategies participants adopted to manage workloads and stay motivated. Specifically, participants were asked how they handled the demands of completing learning tasks, writing essays, and compiling portfolios within a flexible learning environment. The inquiry also aimed to identify the coping strategies that helped them navigate the unique challenges of the GURO21 flexible learning program. Respondents were encouraged to provide detailed insights into their experiences to enhance their understanding of their successful approaches within this context.

This study integrated several vital components: research questions that direct in-depth interviews with primary participants, a thorough outline of the theoretical framework, and an evaluation of the research's significance and intended beneficiaries. Additionally, it included a careful assessment of the study's limitations and delimitations. These elements provided a comprehensive and formal overview of the study's scope, methodological approach, and contextual boundaries.

The insights from participants' experiences in overcoming challenges in the flexible learning program revealed important implications for educators and educational institutions. Emerging themes underscore the need for a holistic, integrated approach to professional development to strengthen instructional skills and foster resilience in response to the demands of flexible learning environments.

This holistic approach equips educators with tools and strategies to support students while maintaining their well-being and professional growth. Such a framework aligns with Bibon's (2022) and Graham's (2020) findings, which emphasize the crucial role of continuous professional development in building resilience among teachers. This resilience allows teachers to adapt and succeed within evolving and often challenging educational landscapes. These findings highlight the importance of integrating resilience-building initiatives within professional development programs to ensure educators' sustained success and well-being in flexible learning contexts.

Five themes emerged from the data gathered on participants coping with the challenges in completing the flexible learning program: Prioritize what Matters Most, Enhance Time Management, Seek Career Support from Others, Apply Learning to Real-Life Scenarios, and Employ Optimism. These emergent themes, elucidated in Table 2, provide valuable insights into the diverse strategies employed by participants. They highlight the complex nature of their coping mechanisms and offer practical guidance for educators navigating similar challenges. Policymakers can better support teachers in overcoming the difficulties associated with flexible learning.

Table 2. *The Coping Mechanisms of Participants with Regards to the Challenges in Completing the Flexible Learning Program*

Clustered Themes	*Emergent Themes*
We determined the priorities first.	Prioritize what matters most.
Itemized work responsibilities.	
Schedule your time and set achievable deadlines.	
Focus on one thing at a time.	
Just do the tasks, and you will see that you have already finished that particular task.	
Kept going and gradually made progress on each task.	
My strategy is to always focus on the goals and ensure they are achieved.	
First, you must manage your time and then motivate yourself.	Enhance Time Management
Time Management is one of the critical strategies.	
I must assign time to make my portfolio, assignments, and other tasks.	
You should have good time management because you teach and have assignments.	
Effective time management is essential.	
Set deadlines for each task and follow the SMART method.	
Ask support from one of my children to type my answers.	Seek Career Support from Others
I messaged my flexible tutor.	
I asked for help from my colleagues who had already completed the program.	
I asked my other companions how to do the tasks.	
Research on the internet to compose my portfolio for accomplishment.	Apply Learning to Real-Life Scenario
Please apply what you learned earlier and enhance it in class.	
Apply what I have learned in the classroom setting.	
Always bear in mind a positive mindset.	Employ Optimism
Keep on thinking positively until you reach the end.	
So, my key strategies were having faith, being persistent, being determined, and having the will to finish it.	
Transform challenges into opportunities.	

In response to the research question "How do participants cope with the challenges in completing the flexible learning program?" and through an in-depth analysis of the interviews conducted with eight key participants, GURO21 completers and eight FGD participants from the Division of General Santos City, several emergent and clustered themes emerged. These themes shed light on the diverse and effective coping strategies employed by the participants, providing valuable insights into how they navigated and triumphed over the challenges presented by the GURO21 flexible learning program.

Prioritize what matters most.

Participants revealed a range of coping strategies that contributed to their success in the GURO21 program. These strategies included effective time management and prioritization, seeking support and inspiration from mentors and peers, and breaking complex tasks into manageable parts is supported by the study of Catalan et al. (2021). IDI participants attested:

Okay. So, as I mention mga challenges noh. So, what I did is I determined my priority firsts, because as I ah I am a teacher. I have my workloads sa classroom siyempre nagcocourse o nagtetake ka ng course na Guro21. (IDI-P1-Line 85-87)

To address the challenges I mentioned earlier, I prioritized my responsibilities, keeping in mind my role as a teacher with classroom duties alongside my coursework in GURO21.

Hmm.. What I did is that I have some planner, that I have to write down all the things that I need to do and give ample time to each of those tasks. (IDI-P3-Line 479-481)

I used a planner to list all my tasks and allocate adequate time for each. This approach helped me organize my schedule, set clear priorities, and manage any conflicts that arose between my teaching duties and the requirements of the GURO21 program.

Further, IDI participants shared the significance of being goal-oriented, prioritizing task completion despite limited resources, and relying on a strategic focus on goals to finish the GURO21 program successfully. This is consistent with the findings of Bejec et al. (2020). As indicated by the following participant's account:

I am a kind of person that when there are challenges given to me or even other ano ma'am mga tasks. I have to see to it na I can complete them regardless of the limited time and the limited resources. So, my strategy is always looking into the goals noh?. Na dapat matapos talaga siya. So, with that I completed the program. (IDI-P4-Line 655-659)

I am the person who ensures that I complete challenges or tasks, even with limited time and resources. My strategy is always to focus on the goals and ensure they are achieved. This approach helped me complete the program.

Number 1, managing. Managing workload and staying motivated was all about finding my time. Setting realistic goals, breaking tasks into smaller chunks, and somehow celebrating small victories, keep me on track. (IDI-P7-Line 1202-1204)

Number 1, managing. Managing my workload and staying motivated was all about time management. Setting realistic goals, breaking educational tasks into smaller chunks, and celebrating small victories helped me stay on track.

Moreover, FGD Participants shared that they employed techniques such as dividing intricate tasks into smaller, manageable steps, seeking guidance and assistance from mentors and peers, and establishing attainable objectives to effectively handle their workload and sustain their motivation during the program.

For me, the strategies is I always see to it that I'm prepared before I am going to attend my class through advance readings, do research, and manage my time. And of course, apply what I have learned to my profession. (FGD-P5-Line 273-275)

My strategy is to prepare in advance by doing readings, researching, and managing my time effectively before attending class. I also make it a priority to apply what I learn to my profession.

Schedule or scheduling. Lahat ng work sa seameo and school. Then, one of the strategy also yung mga module ba tawag nun handouts. Nakaready na talaga sa table. (FGD-P6-Line 276-278)

Regarding scheduling, I ensure that all tasks for SEAMEO and school are organized. The modules and handouts are ready and accessible, which helps streamline the process.

To cope with the challenges, two FGD participants emphasized the importance of always being prepared and tackling tasks individually to avoid feeling overwhelmed. This reflected the findings of Baluyos and Clarin (2021), which highlighted the teacher's strategy of completing assignments ahead of time and printing out handouts, ensuring thorough reading and preparation. FGD participants revealed:

Okay, how do you cope with the challenges? Siyempre always be ready and do your tasks one at a time. Para hindi ka mapressure. Yun lang. (FGD-P7-Line 309-310)

How do I cope with challenges? I stay prepared and complete tasks independently to avoid feeling pressured.

The strategies I utilize is that I do my assignment a head of time of course. And I printed out the handouts. And of course, if I printed it out, I read it a lot. That's all. Thank you. (FGD-P5-Line 328-330)

My approach is to complete assignments ahead of time and print out the handouts. When I print something out, I review it thoroughly. That is all. Thank you.

Enhance Time Management

Time management is one of the most essential coping strategy for participants in completing the GURO21 program, enabling them to manage the workload, set achievable goals, and break tasks into manageable steps. This finding aligns with Bautista Jr. et al. (2021), which notes that effective time management allows participants to stay motivated, celebrate small milestones, and build a supportive network, all contributing significantly to their successful program completion. The following IDI participants shared this:

Okay. First, you have to manage your time of course. First one, manage your time, then you have to motivate yourself also. Then you have to ah, give extra, ahm, attention of what you do and of course you have to love your work. You love, you had to love what you do for you to succeed. (IDI-P2-Line 289-292)

Okay. First, you must manage your time and motivate yourself. You should also pay extra attention to what you do and, of course, love your work. It would help if you had a passion for what you do to succeed.

Moreover, IDI participants emphasized that effective time management was essential, given the demands of teaching alongside program assignments. They highlighted that maintaining good time management practices was critical to meeting the program's requirements. IDI participants noted:

Of course, Time management is one of the key strategies noh. One of the Key strategies in completing the Guro21 program, and with that I really have to assign time for me to make my portfolio, my assignments, my other tasks to be done, and most especially the portfolio. Wherein, your going to put a lot of documents in there so time management. (IDI-P4-Line 668-672)

Time management is indeed an essential strategy for completing the GURO21 program. I needed time to work on my portfolio, assignments, and other tasks. This was particularly important for the portfolio, which involved organizing numerous documents.

Ano parin, dapat magkaroon parin tayo ng time management. Kasi mahirap siya diba dahil nagtuturo ka, may mga assignment ka. So, yun siguro, mas maganda yung time management natin. (IDI-P6-Line 1058-1060)

Balancing teaching responsibilities with assignments requires effective time management, making it an essential skill for success.

Additionally, GURO21 completers consistently highlighted the importance of time management as a coping strategy, demonstrating its effectiveness in managing the program's workload. By strategically organizing their time, completers set and achieved realistic goals, divided tasks into manageable parts, and stayed motivated. This approach allowed them to celebrate small victories and build a

supportive network, which was crucial in completing the program (Tingzon & Buyok, 2022). IDI participants shared:

Ano ma'am. Maliban sa magkaroon ka ng time management. Magkaroon ka ng, yung dedication sa sarili mo. Yun bang tinatawag nating determination mo na tapusin siya. So, yun siguro ang maganda doon ma'am, na dapat yung mga bagay na naumpisahan mo dapat tapusin mo talaga siya. Whatever problems na maencounter, tatapusin mo siya. So, yun siguro ma'am. (IDI-P6-Line 1070-1074)

Along with time management, dedication, and determination are essential. It would help if you were committed to completing your tasks and overcoming challenges. Once you start something, seeing it through despite any obstacles is essential.

From this part our teachers give us the best time. I guess, parang one-month binigay na niya na ahead na ito yung gagawin. And then, by and by napapasa naman naming na on the right time naman. (IDI-P8-Line 1418-1420)

Our teachers supported this by providing ample time—about a month in advance—to understand our tasks, allowing us to manage our work effectively and meet submission deadlines.

Further, FGD participants echoed the IDI statements by sharing their own experiences. As illustrated by one FGD participant:

Same, Time Management and being so innovative to deal with your daily tasks. That's one way you are going to motivate yourself to complete the program. (FGD-P1-Line 260-261)

The same applies to time management and finding innovative ways to handle daily tasks. It is a helpful way to stay motivated and complete the program.

Regarding strategies, another participant stated:

Ah, strategies? Be on time. Be one step ahead. Physically, mentally and always emotionally ready. (FGD-P2-Line 262-263)

Be punctual. Stay one step ahead. Be physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared.

Reflecting on the impact of the pandemic, participants expressed gratitude for the circumstances, as it eased time management demands. With most tasks focused on printing modules, they appreciated the flexibility to read any time without an increased workload. FGD participants noted:

Ah, Management. Thank GOD again anoh. I don't have to manage my time that much. Kay it was pandemic time. So, printing of module lang siya. So, makabasa ka anytime ing-ana siya mao na siya. Mao na nah. Wala kayo workload. (FGD-P3-Line 264-266)

Management. Thank God again. I did not have to manage my time that much because it was during the pandemic. So, it was just about printing modules. You could read them anytime. That was it. There was no workload.

Okay. For me, kay baka maubusan naman. Pero naunahan naman ako. Ano. Time management kasi sa dami ng trabaho natin as teachers diba sa school, mga school works. And then, dumagdag pa itong sa Guro21. (FGD-P4-Line 267-269)

Okay. For me, because I might run out of time, but I was ahead. Time management is essential with the amount of work we have as teachers, right, in school, the school works. And then, Guro21 adds to it.

Seek Career Support from Others

A common thread among participants was their utilization of support systems, including mentors and collaborative peer support. These shared experiences were consistent with Tarrayo and Anudin's study (2023). The GURO21 network and the mentorship provided played a crucial role in guiding participants through the program, as highlighted in participants' responses:

If I have time kasi not only online, online. May mga yung, ano nga tawag gani dun, yung, yung may module ka na. you will be, are given time to mga mga readings tapos another one is yung ipost ng ng tutor mo then you are going to answer. So, if I have time. Accomp after accomplishing I asked support from my children sa mga school works ko, kasi there are times I really can't cope up with, noh. I ask support from one of my child to type my answers. (IDI-P1-Line 97-103)

Suppose I have time because it is not only online. There are, what do you call them, the modules where you have assigned readings, and then there is another part where your tutor posts something, and you have to respond. So, after completing these tasks, I ask for assistance from my children with my schoolwork. Because there are times when I really cannot keep up. I seek help from one of my children to type my answers.

Further, participants noted that they had communicated with their flexible tutor, although this occurred before the official start, as highlighted in participants' responses:

Overcoming… Ah, so, far I have message my flexible tutor consulted us. But by before the start pala. My (participant clears throat) flexible learning tutor, ah consulted each one of us, mga flexible learners. (IDI-P1-Line 106-108)

Overcoming... So far, I have contacted my flexible tutor, but this was before we started. My flexible learning tutor consulted each of us, the flexible learners, to determine a suitable time for our chat sessions that would not interfere with our classes.

Furthermore, the utilization of support systems by GURO21 completers has had profound implications for their personal and professional growth. By actively seeking guidance and mentorship, they have enriched their learning experiences and fostered a sense of camaraderie among their peers (Agaton & Cueto, 2021). This highlights the importance of mentorship and peer collaboration in successfully addressing program challenges, as demonstrated by the following participant statements:

Same with my answer on sa. On the previous question. I actually asked help from my colleagues who already completed the program and with that they give me ideas. They give me suggestions on how to easily complete the tasks. Yun ma'am. (IDI-P4-Line 662-665)

I asked my colleagues who had already completed the program for help, and they gave me ideas and suggestions for completing the tasks more efficiently.

I asked my other companions in how to do this. Accomplished this because I, I, since, at the very beginning I didn't have the idea about the Guro21. Since a lot of my colleagues, ah parang mas marami silang nauna sa akin. So, marami akong napagtanungan kung how to do this. How to kanang accomplish this one. Even the demonstration. (IDI-P5-Line 851-855)

I asked my colleagues for help on how to accomplish the tasks because, at the very beginning, I had no idea about Guro21. Many of my colleagues had more experience with it. So, I asked many people how to do it, even the demonstration.

Further, Bernardo et al. (2020) supported that these support networks have become essential pillars in their journey, ensuring they are well-equipped to excel in the ever-evolving field of education as manifested in the following FGD participant's account:

Sa akin isipin mo lang talaga na makaya mo talaga at siyempre with the support system ng principal, family atsaka coteachers. And then, alam mo din how to manage your time. (FGD-P7-Line 283-285)

Of course, you can do it with the support of the principal, family, and co-teachers. You also know how to manage your time.

Through the help of ano. Of the previous learners also of Guro21. Nakatulong talaga sa akin yung kanilang mga naishare na mga resources. (FGD-P4-Line 297-298)

The previous learners of Guro21 also helped me with their shared resources.

Moreover, participants mentioned that they sought guidance from their co-teachers, mainly regarding situations they had not encountered yet but which their colleagues had. They inquired about how to handle such scenarios and benefited from their colleagues' experiences and materials, which greatly aided them, as manifested in the following FGD participant's account:

Ako, ah. I asked my co-teachers specially may mga questions na I did not experience it. But my co-teachers experience it. So, I asked them how are you going to handle the situations. What are you going to do, mga ganyan. And of course, their materials also. It helps me a lot. Thank you. (FGD-P5-Line 299-302)

I asked my co-teachers questions that I did not experience, but they did. I asked them how they would handle the situation, what they would do, and things like that. And, of course, their materials, too. It helped me a lot. Thank you.

Meanwhile, FGD participants advised seeking assistance from those who have completed the GURO21 program as they possess valuable insights. She emphasized the importance of leveraging advanced reading to acquire learning tasks and recommended relating these tasks to real-life scenarios or situations learners face. By doing so, she suggested, one can effectively write essays based on the modules, with the additional support garnered from co-teachers contributing to the process as evident in the following FGD participant's account:

Mag ask ka ng assistance sa mga natapos ng magkuha ng Guro21. Kasi may, alam nayan nila. So, mag ask ka ng assistance sakanila. And through advance reading so, makakuha ka ng mga learning tasks. Kasi nag advance reading ka. Then, irelate mo sa real scenario o sa real situation ng learners mo. So, on that makagawa ka na ng essay. Kasi module, relating, then asking from assistance from your co-teachers. (FGD-P6-Line 303-308)

Ask for assistance from those who have completed Guro21 because they know. So, ask for assistance from them. Moreover, through advanced reading, you can get learning tasks. Because you did advanced reading, relate it to your learners' real scenario or situation. So, with that, you can now write an essay. Because the module, relating, then asks for assistance from your co-teachers.

Additionally, the participants highlighted the importance of administrative support. They emphasized the strategy of completing tasks one at a time, indicating openness to suggestions from previous participants, as revealed in the following FGD participant's account:

Of course, through the help and guidance of my principal during that time sir Joel Panagunda. Every time na may assignment, may tasks si sir always ano kanang support giyud siya sa akong seameo para mag guide. Since, his also a seameo graduate. (FGD-P8-Line 311-314)

Of course, with the help and guidance of my principal at that time, Sir Joel Panagunda. Whenever there is an assignment or task, Sir always supports my Seameo and guides me since he is also a Seameo graduate.

Am, open for suggestion from the previous participants. Family support is very important. And do the tasks one at a time. (FGD-P2-Line 323-324)

I am open to suggestions from previous participants. Family support is substantial. Moreover, do the tasks one at a time.

Apply Learning to Real-Life Scenario

The participants demonstrated their ability to apply learning to real-life scenarios. They embraced change and saw each challenge as an opportunity for learning and personal growth, as reflected in the work of Catalan et al. (2021). For example, participants shared:

Ah, okay. Before I, I can still remember that before I was able to compose the portfolio, I read the whole module. I think there are four modules. Four sets. I read those and that ah, for each module I think there are 200 pages, more that 200 pages. I studied it. I learn, I read and studied. Then after that I browse. I do research. Self-research. Research in the internet and after that I started to compose my portfolio for accomplishment. (IDI-P2-Line 295-300)

Ah, okay. Before I could compose the portfolio, I remembered that I had read the entire module. There are four modules, each containing more than 200 pages. I read and studied each one. After that, I conducted both self-research and online research. Then, I began to compose my portfolio to complete the task.

Similarly, instead of shying away from difficulties, they wholeheartedly embraced change and viewed each challenge as a unique opportunity for personal and professional growth (Manaligod, 2023). Their collective mindset was an unwavering dedication to self-improvement, profoundly impacting their journey. For instance, participants frequently highlighted:

I have said, I am applying na before what I have learned. And then, enhance na lang sa klase. Kasi during those time parang may part na tinuro sa amin. Yung student need nilang mag learn from their experiences. (IDI-P8-Line 1432-1435)

My strategies involved applying what I had learned earlier and enhancing it in class. During that time, we were taught that students must learn from their experiences.

Meanwhile, the FGD participants shared similar experiences. The participants in the GURO21 program demonstrated remarkable resilience and determination in confronting challenges, as stated by one participant:

For me. Advance reading of modules is big help and siyempre Time management and focus lang. Ana lang giyud sa akong mind focus lang kaya yan. Kayang-kaya biskan nag struggle. Pero gikaya man sad. Thank God. (FGD-P8-Line 286-288)

Advanced reading of modules is a significant help, as is time management and focus. Focus is critical for me, and it is doable. It can be achieved despite struggles, but it can be overcome. Thank God.

Furthermore, FGD participants echoed this sentiment. One participant emphasized the importance of reading modules to gather more ideas and interviewing co-teachers about tasks, which enabled them to manage and complete their portfolios effectively. The FGD participants stated:

Okay. Yes, you must read modules to get some more ideas and to interview some teachers, your co-teachers about the tasks that you are going to do. So, that you can deal with it. And how to accomplish your portfolio. (FGD-P1-Line 291-293)

You must read the modules to gather more ideas and interview co-teachers about the tasks you will undertake to deal with them and complete your portfolio effectively.

Siyempre, naa pirmi sa akoa, akoang mga references. References na portfolio ni ma'am kaganina. And I do the advance reading. That's it and I thank you. (FGD-P3-Line 295-296)

Of course, I always have my references, such as the portfolio from Ma'am earlier, and I do advance reading. That is, it and thank you.

Employ optimism

Participants demonstrated optimism in their learning and a willingness to experiment with new teaching approaches, which aligns with the findings of Bibon (2022). They viewed the GURO21 program as an opportunity to evolve their teaching methods. As stated in the following participant's remarks:

You need to determine, persistent in the program, and always bear in you a positive mind set, that you really can do it. Because of you keep on saying it difficult, another work load, it's it actually take or took a lot of time to you. So, you will never be able to accomplish since you started your mind set with negative thoughts. So, keep on doing. Keep on thinking positive until you reach the end. (IDI-P3-Line 511-516)

It would help if you were determined and persistent in the program and always maintained a positive mindset. The program will consume much of your time if you keep telling yourself that it is difficult or just another workload. In that case, you will not be able to accomplish anything because you started with a negative mindset. So, keep going and think positively until you reach the end.

Furthermore, participants highlighted the importance of faith and persistence in achieving their goals, emphasizing that these qualities are essential for perseverance and task completion. As shared by another participant:

Yung, FAITH, at tsaka yung sense of persistence kasi kung wala ka noon ma'am ba. Yung determination na tapusin mo ang isang bagay, wala ka talaga. (IDI-P5-Line 872-874)

My faith and sense of persistence are crucial because you will not succeed without them, ma'am. The determination to finish something is essential.

Moreover, adapting optimistically to new methods has been a transformative aspect of the GURO21 program for its completers. This adaptability is more than just a skill; it catalyzes growth and innovation in the field of education, as expressed by an IDI participant:

Coping strategies were the lifelines of my learning experience they transform challenges into opportunities. For instance, turning to online forums for help not only solve immediate problems. But, also, open doors to collaborative learning. (IDI-P7-Line 1223-1226)

Coping strategies were the lifelines of my learning experience, transforming challenges into opportunities. For example, online forums helped solve immediate problems and opened doors to collaborative learning.

Meanwhile, the experiences shared by participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) closely aligned with the findings of this study, further supported by the work of Tarrayo and Anudin (2023). This consistency underscores the reliability and validity of the collected data. The following account from one of the FGD participants provides a clear example of this alignment. This participant's narrative corroborated the individual experiences shared in the interviews and enriches our understanding by offering a collective perspective on the phenomena under investigation. The experiences of FGD participants are consistent with the findings, as revealed by the following account:

Okay for me, do not stress yourself give your best and that's it move on. (FGD-P2-Line 294)

Do not stress yourself; give your best, and that is it; move on.

Again, same din advance reading. Then, tawag nito. Ah, think positive na you can. I can do it. And magiging, matatapos ko rin ito. I can be a Guro21 completer. (FGD-P4-Line 326-327)

Again, the same goes for advanced reading. You must think positively and believe that you can. I can do it, and I will finish this. I can be a GURO21 completer.

By embracing new teaching techniques and pedagogical approaches, GURO21 completers have expanded their horizons and enhanced their ability to meet the evolving needs of their students. This positivity has equipped them to navigate the ever-changing landscape of education, where the only constant is change itself, as reflected in the participant's verbatim account:

If others can do, why can't I? So, nagawa nila. Why ako hindi? So, being flexible. And then, pagbinigay sayo ni LORD ang isang tasks. Kaya mo kasi andiyan siya (GOD). (FGD-P6-Line 331-333)

If others can do it, why can't I? They did it, so why not me? Being flexible is critical. You can do it when the LORD gives you a task because He is there (GOD).

Time management posed a significant challenge due to the conflicting demands of teaching responsibilities and participation in the GURO21 program. However, participants adopted a positive mindset, believing they could overcome these challenges through their best efforts, as expressed in the following verbatim account:

During that time conflict talaga yung time kasi nga naga turo kapa and then may mga, may Guro21. So, iniisip ko na lang din talaga na I can do it. And siguro I did my best naman para ma overcome ang mga challenges nay un. Yun po. (FGD-P7-Line 334-336)

My schedule was conflicting during that time because I was still teaching, and then there was GURO21. However, I could do it. I made my best efforts to overcome those challenges. That is it.

Descriptions of the participants and the insights they gained based on the findings.

The following questions were posed during the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to uncover insights that participants could share with others: What do you consider the most important lessons you have learned in coping with the challenges of completing the GURO21 Flexible Learning Program that you would like to share with other teachers to help them succeed in the same program? What insights have you gained from completing the GURO21 Flexible Learning Program? Please elaborate on your answer. How will you encourage others to join the program, considering its benefits for you as a teacher? What significant values would you like to share with other teachers interested in participating in the GURO21 Flexible Learning Program?

As educators navigated this transformative process, the following themes emerged as guiding pillars, imparting valuable lessons and a wealth of experiences extending beyond individual narratives, with implications for educators and the broader educational community. The emergent themes identified in the study's findings include the Practice of Being a Lifelong Learner, Unleashing Great Potential

Within, Joining GURO21 is Beneficial, Learning to Adapt to Changes, Introducing New Teaching Strategies is Essential, Developing Professionalism, and Becoming Tech-Savvy Can Be Learned.

The comprehensive analysis of participant insights from their GURO21 program completion experiences yielded eight major themes, as detailed in Table 3. This analysis examined qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions, revealing critical aspects of the participants' journeys. The insights gathered from these interactions provided a rich and nuanced understanding of their experiences in the program. This analysis method is also supported by the study of Catalan et al. (2021), which underscores the value of qualitative data in capturing the depth and complexity of participant experiences. These findings illuminate individual narratives while contributing to a broader understanding of effective practices and challenges within flexible learning environments. Each theme identified in the analysis reflects critical elements of the participants' experiences.

These themes highlight the challenges faced by participants, such as adapting to new learning environments or overcoming personal obstacles, while shedding light on the strategies they employed to navigate these challenges. For instance, some participants may have developed new study habits, sought peer support, or utilized program resources to enhance their learning. By detailing these themes in Table 3, the analysis provides a structured framework for understanding the participants' lived experiences. This structured approach allows researchers and educators to gain valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of participant experiences, enabling them to support future participants better and improve program effectiveness.

Table 3. *Insights of the Participants in the Completion of GURO21 Flexible Learning Program*

Clustered Themes	*Emergent Themes*
The concept of a lifelong learner and how to apply this principle should be emphasized.	Practice Being a Lifelong Learner
There is a development plan where you want to continue learning, not only from Guro21 but also from other courses.	
In terms of professional growth, you can say that Guro21 is ongoing	
I realized my strengths and how to enhance them before entering this course.	Unleash Great Potential Within
Have to show what you have gained from the Guro21 program	
Tell co-teachers that joining the course is very beneficial, especially for us teachers.	Joining Guro21 is Beneficial
The teaching strategies help us become flexible learners	
Change is the only constant in this world, and survival depends on adapting to change.	Learn to Adapt to Changes
Being adaptive and flexible	
The development of new teaching strategies is significant	Introducing New Teaching Strategies is a Must
The realization in joining is that the strength possess will be enhanced	
Staying open to new teaching methods and approaches is essential for being an effective educator	
Moreover, the learning program of Guro21 helped immensely, especially in boosting my confidence.	Professionalism is Develop
It helps enhance writing and speaking the English language	
Completing the Guro21 program is somehow to becoming technology-savvy	Becoming a Tech-Savvy Can Be Learned
The Guro21 program helped to utilize the technology	

The results shed light on the transformative journey of eight participants from in-depth interviews, supported by another eight participants in focus group discussions who completed the GURO21 flexible learning program. The emergent themes encompass the significant role of practicing lifelong learning, unleashing great teacher's potential, beneficial, learning to adapt to changes, introducing new teaching strategies, professionalism, and becoming tech-savvy can be learned. These insights collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of how educators can thrive and evolve in the dynamic landscape of modern education, offering valuable guidance for those seeking to enhance their teaching practices and professional growth.

Practice Being a Lifelong Learner

Participants recognized the significance of adaptability in the ever-changing field of education. They highlighted the importance of continuous learning, which is crucial for effective teaching. This notion is also supported by the study of Ganal and Geronimo (2022), underscoring that educators must evolve alongside the changing educational landscape. As one participant shared:

Realization in my strength ito? So that I am going to share is that ah, what a lifelong learner should be and apply this principle, yung lifelong learner principle to become more dynamic, to become innovative as I mentioned, to become flexible and to become a communicator. Yun lang siguro ang mashare ko to my co-teachers. (IDI-P1-Line 126-130)

I want to share my realization about my strengths. As I mentioned, I will discuss the concept of lifelong learning and how to apply this principle to become a more dynamic, innovative, flexible, and effective communicator. That is what I can share with my fellow teachers.

Additionally, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants expressed that GURO21 is an ongoing journey, signifying a continuation of their professional development. They likened it to being in the initial phase, where the program's influence has made them better teachers, as De Vera (2020) noted. For them, the program instilled a sense of continuous improvement, where being the best is not the

ultimate goal but rather a benchmark for future growth, as shared by an FGD participant:

Sa professional growth kasi, parang sa akin masasabi mo kasing ang Guro21, ano siya eh. Hindi parin matatapos. May part two kasi ang Guro21. May part one, may part two. Parang doon ka parin sa first phase pa lang. so, yung influence nito parang naging better teacher ako. Para sa akin, parang for me I am the best. Tapos yung best nay un magiging X yun. Hindi siya best maging better ka, after na naging completer ka ng Guro21. (IDI-P8-Line 1535-1540)

In terms of professional growth, GURO21 is ongoing. It has a part two, a continuation. It is like you are still in the first phase. Its influence has made me a better teacher. It is like I was the best, and then that best becomes the benchmark. It is not about being the best but about becoming better after completing GURO21.

Furthermore, FGD participants collectively expressed similar experiences and views about the GURO21 Flexible Learning Program, as shared by one participant:

For me, I will motivate them by saying. Can you handle conflict and chaos? If you can handle conflict and chaos. Then, you can accept it. Because, seameo is really challenging. (FGD-P1-Line 408-410)

I will motivate them by asking, 'Can you handle conflict and chaos?' If you can, then you can embrace SEAMEO because it is challenging.

Unleash Great Potential Within

Participants in GURO21 shared how the program unleashed their potential through practical strategies and reshaped their classrooms. They realized that tapping into their potential can not only engage students but also inspire a love for learning, reflecting the findings of Caingcoy (2021). The participants emphasized the importance of continuous innovation in their teaching practice, as revealed in the following account:

Insights that I have gained. Na realize ko, realization nay an anoh? That my strength that I have already posses before entering into that course. And then how to enhance them. And again, as what I have said what a lifelong learning would be. (IDI-P1-Line 133-136)

I have gained insights. I realized what strengths I already possessed before entering this course and how to enhance them further. Again, as I mentioned earlier, lifelong learning should be emphasized.

Moreover, the participants underscored the significance of self-motivation and showcased the benefits they gained from GURO21. By demonstrating positive outcomes and highlighting the program's best aspects, they can also inspire others to participate. As shared by an IDI participant:

Hmm, How I encourage? Of course, through self-motivation also. Aside, from showing what I have gain. I was have to show what I have gain from the program, by the Guro21 in order for them to ah be with the program also. Meaning, you have to showcase what is best from coming from the program. (IDI-P2-Line 346-349)

How do I encourage? Of course, through self-motivation. I also demonstrate what I have gained and show the benefits I obtained from the GURO21 program to motivate others to join. This means showcasing the best aspects of what you have gained from the program.

The participants reflected on the insights gained from GURO21, noting its impact on enhancing their innovative skills and continuous engagement in child-centered teaching strategies, which are emphasized within the program's framework. They highlighted the program's focus on cultivating teachers with 21st-century skills, as revealed in the following account:

Yes, so insights. Maybe what I can say for Guro21. It helps me improve my innovative skills and being always involve in child centered teaching strategies because that is one of the focus of the program. A teacher with a 21st century skills. (IDI-P3-Line 531-534)

Insights from Guro21 include enhancing my innovative skills and constant involvement in child-centered teaching strategies, as this is a primary focus of the program. Guro21 emphasizes the importance of being a 21st-century skills-oriented teacher.

Further, other IDI participants indicate the significance of talent and the desire to excel in GURO21 to develop their potential as educators. As revealed by the following verbatim account of the participants:

Oo, though iba-iba namang ang every batch ng mga bata. Minsan ang mga batch ngayon is very talented, minsan naman is very ku-an passive, ang iba naman very responsive to the ano, maka frustrate ko ma'am, ana. Ambot I don't know, maybe because kanang parang namulat ako ba na dapat galingan, dapat galingan, dapat galingan in everything you do. (IDI-P5- Line 973-977)

Yes, although each batch of students varies. Sometimes, the current batches are very talented, while other times, they may be more passive, and some are very responsive. It can be frustrating, ma'am. I do not know. Perhaps it is because I believe that you should always strive for excellence in everything you do.

Moreover, this experience is shared by the other IDI participants, who stated that the program sharpened their adaptability and resilience while professionally transforming their approach to teaching. This is parallel with the study of Agaton and Cueto (2021). They noted

that these changes' impact is reflected in their students' increased engagement and their renewed passion for teaching. As shared by the following participant's account:

Personally, it sharpens my adaptability and resilience. And professionally it transformed me how I approached teaching. It's not just by disseminating information. But fostering the environment workers, were it use to describe. The impact. The impact is evident in more engage students and revitalizing love for teaching. (IDI-P7-Line 1290-1294)

It sharpened my adaptability and resilience. Professionally, it transformed how I approach teaching. It is not just about imparting information but about creating an environment that fosters learning. The impact is evident in my students' increased engagement and revitalized passion for teaching.

Actually, for me every teacher. Baguhan man or yung mga season na tinatawag. They need Guro21. I guess pagnandoon ka sa Guro21 masasabi mo. "Ah." Before Ah, for me I am the best on my field. But, during the time na nandoon ka sa Guro21 "No, I am Not." Because I need to learn more. I need to get what they can give to me from my teachers, my classmates, my colleagues. (IDI-P8-Line 1450-1455)

Actually, for me, every teacher, whether new or experienced, needs GURO21. When you are in GURO21, you realize there is more to learn. Before, you might have thought you were the best in your field, but once you are in GURO21, you realize you are not. It would help if you learned more from your teachers, classmates, and colleagues.

On the other hand, the participants expressed that joining GURO21 was their best decision and wanted to encourage other teachers to join. This is also consistent with the study of Tingzon and Buyok (2022), who emphasized that the program helps teachers realize that there is always room for growth and learning. They explained that being a GURO21 completer is not about boasting but about sharing knowledge and experiences with others:

Joining the Guro21 is the best decision I made ma'am. And then, I want to encourage the teachers na join din sila. Parang tataas yung ano (tingin sa sarili) mo. Hindi bababa, yung level mo in a sense na yung level mo maaabot ng mga students mo. Ganun, siya. Hindi siya yung parang "Ah, I am Guro 21 completer. So, try me." No, hindi ganun. I am a Guro21 completer. Come to me. I will share to you what I have learned. (IDI-P8-Line 1486-1501)

Joining GURO21 was my best decision, and I want to encourage other teachers to do the same. It makes you realize that there is so much more you need to learn. When you enter the class, you might feel proud of yourself. There is no right or wrong. It is about the experiences you have gained as a teacher. So, I encourage my colleagues to join, regardless of age or experience. GURO21 gears you up and prepares you for the world of technology you must adapt to.

Meanwhile, FGD participants expressed that the program has shown them that by implementing innovative and practical teaching methods, they can truly inspire their students to embrace education as a lifelong pursuit, thereby setting the stage for a brighter and more empowered future:

Always challenge yourself. It means na if in your present situation. Okay. Walang chaos, it means that you are. There is no learning anymore. Because you are already at is with your present situation. So, engaging in seameo, its very challenging. Maraming insights. And there is really many learnings on that training. (FGD-P2-Line 345-348)

Always challenge yourself. It means that if everything is okay in your present situation, there is no chaos, and there is no learning anymore. Because you are already at ease with your present situation. So, engaging in SEAMEO is very challenging. There are many insights, and there is much learning in that training.

I know there are some teachers na the same with me at first. This is what I want to say. Don't say it is difficult "Oy, I cannot do it." If you didn't try it because in your sacrifices there is a fullfilment. So, try muna before you are going tosay "I cannot do it." Because at the end of the day it is not the school. It is not you will just benefit. What you have started but also the welfare of your students. Thank you. (FGD-P5-Line 366-370)

I know some teachers, like me, at first say, "This is difficult. I cannot do it." If you have not tried it, do not say you cannot do it because, in your sacrifices, there is fulfillment. So, try it first before saying, "I cannot do it." Because at the end of the day, it is not just the school that will benefit. What you have started will also benefit the welfare of your students. Thank you.

Additionally, FGD participants shared insights on overcoming initial doubts and embracing challenges, emphasizing the importance of trying before dismissing new endeavors. They encouraged fellow teachers to approach difficulties with a mindset of potential fulfillment through sacrifice, highlighting the broader benefits for educators and students. FGD participants shared:

Exploration. Explore in a sense of new style in seminar. Since, this is online new way of tasks given by the FLT, new ideas provided by all the participants who joined the seminar. (FGD-P2-Line 386-388)

Exploration. Exploring new styles in seminars, especially in the online setting, with new tasks provided by the FLT and fresh ideas contributed by all the participants who joined the seminar.

Further, participants shared that effective teaching strategies extend beyond engaging students in the classroom. They have witnessed firsthand how these strategies possessed the remarkable power to ignite their students' genuine passion for learning. The following participants narrated:

I see to it that I make myself as a model. Whatever I've learned during our session. I always apply it to my classroom, and I share it to my co-teachers. And I also tell them that this is seameo its not hard because you are going to share your experiences as a 21st century teacher. (FGD-P4-Line 418-421)

I make myself a model by applying what I have learned in our sessions to my classroom. I share my experiences as a 21st-century teacher with my co-teachers and emphasize that SEAMEO is easy because it allows us to share our experiences.

For me ano siya tawag nito. Joining or completing the seameo Guro21 it is important for us. For our professional development. And also, it contributes in our. It helps in renewing our license through the CPD units that you will earn from the Guro21. 15 units. (FGD-P4-Line 506-509)

Yes, definitely. Completing SEAMEO Guro21 is crucial for professional development and contributes to renewing our teaching licenses through earned CPD units.

It helps my, to have a promotion of course. It includes in my promotion. Because this is one of the requirements or unsa bani siya. (pertaining to the course) basta this is one of the requirements that I get the scores which is other did not have. Okay. And then, I feel belong. Kung wala ko nag seameo. I am not here. I feel belong. I thank you. (FGD-P5-Line 512-516)

Difficult, very difficult. The questions are already challenging. Yes. It helped me get promoted, fulfilling one of the course requirements. It also made me feel a sense of belonging, and I am grateful for that.

The participants shared their reflections on their experiences with the programs: The following participants shared:

I gained more learning experiences that apply to our duties and responsibilities as a teacher. As an educator, I am proud to be a Guro21 completer. (FGD-P6-Line 519-520)

One participant reflected on how joining SEAMEO contributed to their self-confidence and realizing their capabilities. They emphasized the importance of continuously enhancing their capacity as educators to better serve their learners and create enriching learning environments. FGD participants said:

Okay. In joining seameo nakadagdag ito sa akin ng tiwala sa sarili na kaya ko pala. And all, I can say by constantly enhancing our capacity as educator. We can better serve our learners and create enriching learning environment for them to tread. And that's would be all. Thank you. (FGD-P7-Line 523-526)

Okay. Joining SEAMEO has added to my self-confidence that I can do it. By constantly enhancing our capacity as educators, we can better serve our learners and create enriching learning environments for them to thrive. That is all I have to say. Thank you.

Another participant mentioned gaining valuable learning experiences from the program that directly apply to their teacher duties and responsibilities. They expressed pride in being a Guro21 completer. FGD participant said:

It helps me to be a little bit. A little bit techno sassy. In terms of ano technology. Kasi there is always a room for improvement "chaar". Dahil din po sa seameo I realize that challenges are not problems. But those are blessings. I am proud. I am proud that my (experiences), are being shared with other seameo participants. As reference as their reference during seameo. Then, feeling nako bright napud kayo ko. Feeling lang. (FGD-P8-Line 529-534)

It helps me become more technologically savvy. Because there is always room for improvement, Thanks to SEAMEO, I realize that challenges are not problems but blessings. I am proud that my experiences are being shared with other SEAMEO participants as a reference during SEAMEO sessions. Then, I feel very bright—just a feeling.

Joining Guro21 is Beneficial

IDI Participants consistently emphasized the substantial benefits of joining GURO21 for educators, citing it as a platform for upgrading essential teaching skills and fostering personal transformation. Their collective insights parallel with the findings of Tarrayo and Anudin (2023), which underscored GURO21's role in providing a multi-modal learning experience, equipping educators with the necessary tools to navigate challenges into opportunities and becoming tech-savvy, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in the 21st-century teaching landscape, as shared by the following narrative:

I am going to tell my co-teachers that's joining the course is very very beneficial specially to us teachers noh. Because the strategies in teaching and really help us to become flexible learner talaga. Flexible learner noh, flexible learner as we go on with our course and become flexible teacher if we are going to apply during our teaching. Teaching in our classroom, in our children, in our learners. (IDI-P1-Line 139-144)

I will tell my co-teachers that joining the course is very beneficial, especially for us teachers. The teaching strategies really help us

become flexible learners. As we go on with our course, we become flexible teachers if we apply them in our classrooms, with our children, and with our learners.

One participant reflected on the impact of GURO21, particularly highlighting the influence of their flexible tutor. She recalled her FLT's soft-spoken demeanor and genuine understanding despite holding a high position in the Department of Education. Her down-to-earth nature left a lasting impression on them. IDI participant said:

I think one of the impact that radiates me from Guro21 is that the flexible tutor is Ma'am Cherry kasi from the start of the session I can still recall that ma'am Cherry was so soft spoken and very understanding, down to earth talaga siya. Ah, even though she is on the top management of the Department of Education. (IDI-P2-Line 368-372)

One of the impacts that has had a lasting effect on me from Guro21 is the flexible tutor, Ma'am Cherry. I can still recall that from the beginning of the session, Ma'am Cherry was soft-spoken, very understanding, and very down-to-earth. She remained humble even though she held a high position in the Department of Education as the Schools Division Superintendent of Region X then.

Another participant suggested encouraging others to join the program by demonstrating its benefits through action. They proposed showcasing what they learned from the program in practice, allowing others to observe and appreciate its effectiveness firsthand. IDI participant stated:

Maybe one thing to encourage them is to show them how good the program is. Like, by practicing how or by practicing my learnings in the program and they will just observe. "Oh, that's good." "That's a very nice", and maybe through actions or and their observations as well. (IDI-P3-Line 543-546)

Demonstrating the program's benefits through your actions and results can encourage others to join. Show them how the program has positively impacted your teaching strategies and your development as a teacher.

My experience in the Guro21 program is, was really different compared to the trainings and seminars that I attended face to face. So, I would say that Guro21 program is really a good avenue to al the teachers that they should also have to experience it because we could really say that learning doesn't only happen inside the classroom or inside the venue. (IDI-P4-Line 719-724)

My experience in the Guro21 program differed from the face-to-face training and seminars I have attended. The Guro21 program is an excellent opportunity for all teachers because it emphasizes that learning does not solely occur within the classroom or a physical venue.

Further, participants highlighted the positive aspects of GURO21, noting its contribution to expanding knowledge and the significance of the certificate for professional development. Additionally, they strongly recommended that new teachers join GURO2021, emphasizing the program's role in gearing up educators, keeping them informed about the latest trends, and fostering a broad perspective beyond traditional teaching.

Maganda ito. Makatulong ito, madadagdagan yung ating kaalaman. And also, siyempre yung importante yung Certificate na magagamit sa professional development. (IDI-P6-Line 1105-1107)

I would tell them it is an excellent program to help them expand their knowledge. Moreover, the certificate they receive can be used for professional development.

If I can speak to the new ones, new teachers, newly hired. I will encourage them to join the Guro2021. Because what I have said they need to be, gear up. They need to know what is latest. They need to be, to learn. (IDI-P8-Line 1472-1474)

If I could speak to new teachers who have just been hired, I would encourage them to join GURO2021. As mentioned, they must gear up and stay updated with the latest knowledge. They need to learn what is new because they have to keep up.

On the other hand, FGD participants shared the same insights about their GURO21 experiences as indicated by the following verbatim account:

I will encourage my co-teachers to join the program. Because it isa big help to us. It aims to guide and to become creative, resourceful and it helps teachers and reflective remote learning educators. (FGD-P6-Line 427-429)

I will encourage my co-teachers to join the program because it is a big help to us. It aims to guide us in becoming creative, resourceful, and reflective remote learning educators.

If they want to join the program of the Guro21. They should persevere. K. They started the program so, they are going to finish it. Because it can help them a lot. It will help them to develop their professional development. It will help them how to handle situations. (FGD-P5-Line 458-461)

If they want to join the Guro21 program, they should persevere. They have started the program, so they should finish it. It can benefit them greatly, aiding their professional development and providing valuable insights on handling various situations.

For me, seameo is worth it. It helps me grow as teacher and help me face changes and learning process. The acceptance in changes and application of learning, learned in seameo in my daily application as a teacher for a better teacher. Kagaya nung sinabi ni ma'am Mylen to be a happy teacher is to learn. To accept changes and apply those learning in your daily tasks as teacher. (FGD-P8-Line 473-477)

A significant value is dedication to our work. Seameo is worth it; it helps me grow as a teacher and face changes in the learning process. Accepting changes and applying what I learned in Seameo in my daily tasks has made me a better teacher. As Ma'am Mylen said, to be a happy teacher is to learn, accept changes, and apply those learnings daily.

Value of Support Networks

GURO21 completers have showcased the importance of mentorship and peer collaboration. They emphasize that a robust support system contributes to their growth as educators (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Manaligod, 2023). This theme reflects their appreciation for the GURO21 community, where they exchange ideas, receive constructive feedback, and draw inspiration from one another, as reflected by the following narrative:

Managing workload and staying motivated was all about finding my time. Setting realistic goals, breaking tasks into smaller chunks, and somehow celebrating small victories, keep me on track. Having a support system like my parents. (IDI-P7-Line 1202-1205)

I was managing my workload and staying motivated involved managing my time, setting realistic goals, and celebrating small victories. I also had support system, including my parents.

During this time kasi ng Guro21 ano to eh, 2021 I guess parang ano. So, pandemic time siya. So, no classes. So, only ano lang modular. So, naka focus ako parang mas naging ano ako, nabigay ko yung time ko. Kasi hindi na kami naga report halos sa school. So, okay to siya sa part ko. (IDI-P8-Line 1411-1415)

GURO21, in 2021, was during the pandemic. So, there were no regular classes, just modular learning. I focused my time on it because we were not reporting to school much, so it worked well for me.

The FGD participants also emphasized the indispensable role of a robust support system in their journeys. They have recognized that the presence of mentors and like-minded peers serves as a cornerstone for their development as educators as they collectively expressed the following narrative:

Flexibility and confidence in seeking help are crucial for achieving a balance between personal and professional life. Support from co-teachers is invaluable in navigating the challenges we face. (FGD-P1-Line 371-373)

Flexibility and confidence in seeking help are crucial for balancing personal and professional life. Support from co-teachers is invaluable in navigating the challenges we face.

Balancing personal and professional life becomes easier with the support of family. It's not about stressing but giving our best, knowing that we have a network cheering us on. (FGD-P2-Line 375-377)

Balancing personal and professional life becomes more accessible with the support of family. It is not about stressing but giving our best, knowing that we have a network cheering us on.

Learn to Adapt to Changes

IDI participants have demonstrated that every challenge they encountered was not an obstacle but an opportunity for personal and professional growth and mirrored the findings of Graham (2020), Tingzon, and Buyok (2022) as shared by the following participant's account:

Being persistent and adaptive. Kasi if you don't want to adapt you are going to be left behind. Oo, kasi the only constant thing in this world is change and paano ka magsurvive is to adapt the changes. So yun ang gusto kung maishare sa ibang teachers na hind pa nakaranas ng Guro21 na ang pinakapoint ng Guro21 is adapting to change. Ang yung demand ng panahon. (IDI-P5-Line 888-892)

Being persistent and adaptive is important because if you do not want to adapt, you will be left behind. The only constant in this world is change, and how you survive is by adapting to the changes. So, that is what I want to share with other teachers who have not experienced Guro21 yet—the main point of Guro21 is adapting to change and meeting the demands of the time.

What insight you have gained? A lot! A lot of insights. So, I cannot enumerate. Napakadami namang makukuha mo dun eh noh, na mga learnings. From the skills, to the strategies, to the stories. Especially yung covid-19. Yung ganun, yung adaptive, being adaptive. (IDI-P5-Line 895-905)

I gained many insights, too many to enumerate. I acquired learnings from skills to strategies to stories, especially related to COVID-19. So, being adaptive and flexible was the central insight I gained from this experience.

Through learning to adapt to changes, they have managed to navigate a rigorous program, balancing their professional responsibilities

with learning tasks. This was reflected in the following participant's narrative:

The significant values is. Number one is to embrace change. It's the only constant. Everything changes, except this change. Guro21 is not just about learning. Its about unlearning and relearning. (IDI-P7-Line 1237-1240)

The most significant lesson is to embrace change because it is the only constant. Everything changes except change itself. GURO21 is not just about learning; it is about unlearning and relearning.

Ang number 1 lang talaga is being flexible and open to changes and be able to adjust your time as well as balance everything. Most especially we are teaching, and already handling our families. Just learn to balance, adapt, and make an organization or manage your time as to what, when, and where to do your tasks. (IDI-P7-Line 1268-1272)

The most important value is being flexible and open to change. You must adjust your time and balance everything, especially when you are already teaching and caring for your family. Learn to balance, adapt, and manage your time to determine what, when, and where you will do your tasks.

Further, the FGD participants also expressed the same sentiment. They highlight that they learned to persevere and adapt to changes in the face of overwhelming challenges in completing the GURO21 flexible learning program:

Be open-minded. Kasi some of. Hindi naman maipagkakaila talaga na other teachers na gina. Inaayawan talaga nila itong Guro21 because of some reasons. But at first ganun din ako. Parang ayaw ko rin kasi nga mahirap. Mahirap ang ano (Guro21) tapos time mo kailangan talaga. So, at first ganun ako. Pero while the session are going on parag natutunan ko ng I love na kung ano yun. Kasi madami akong ideas na nalearn sa aking mga participants. (FGD-P4-Line 354-359)

Be open-minded because some teachers cannot deny that there are teachers who avoid Guro21 for certain reasons. At first, I was like that, too. I did not want to because it is difficult and requires time. However, as the sessions went on, I learned to love it. I gained many ideas from my co-participants during that time.

For me, you should ano ready to face and accept the challenges na binigay sayo kasi nga hindi yan ibinigay sayo, kung hindi mo kaya. At the end of the day isa yan sa malaking accomplishment na nagawa mo. Yun lang. (FGD-P7-Line 374-378)

You should be ready to face and accept the challenges given to you because they would not have given them to you if you could not handle them. It is a significant accomplishment that you have achieved. That is it.

Introducing New Teaching Strategies is a Must

Participants narrated that completing the GURO21 flexible learning program and introducing new teaching strategies is vital when you are a public school teacher. This is aligned with the findings of Agaton and Cueto (2021) and Manaligod (2023), which conclude that GURO21 completers were viewed as an elite unit in the teaching force, and maintaining a positive mindset is highlighted as key to overcoming obstacles. Participants' experiences mirror each other as they shared in the following account:

Development of new teaching strategies. I already have mentioned. Because strategies are being taken up during the course. That are radically different noh. Teachers there we can reflect. We teachers, we flexible learners will become enthusiastic flexible learning ang tawag doon sa naga take ng Guro21 course. (IDI-P1- Line 149-153)

As I have already mentioned, one of them is the development of new teaching strategies. Because the strategies covered during the course are radically different, teachers can reflect on these changes. As teachers and flexible learners, we can become enthusiastic about flexible learning, which is what they call the Guro21 course.

Lessons or insights. Ah, marami yung namentioned ko kanina noh mga insights ko. Dapat sa mga strategies tapos yung teaching strategies ko that I have already yung sa akin lang then I can enhance it. Ah, being flexible kasi flexible learner nga. Magiging flexible ka, magiging good communicator ka,maging innovative ka, oh ano pang mga insights ko. (IDI-P1-Line 185-189)

As I mentioned earlier, there are many lessons or insights. It is about the teaching strategies that I already have and can enhance. Being flexible is important because it makes you a flexible learner, a good communicator, and innovative.

Likewise, new strategies and maintaining a positive outlook when facing challenges were essential themes. This highlights the role of introducing new strategies and a positive attitude in overcoming obstacles. Participants acknowledged their challenges and doubted their capability to progress in the program as the participant shared in the following verbatim account:

Some of the insights are ah, differentiated strategies. I can still remember that active learning strategies very useful. Specially in classroom teaching learning process active learning. Then, I use to have that ah strategies from then upto now that's my ahm.. na hindi ko talaga yun na makalimutan. How that strategies suited to teaching learning process. (IDI-P2-Line 339-343)

Some of the insights include differentiated strategies. I still remember active learning strategies being very beneficial, especially in classroom teaching and learning. I have continued to use those strategies from then until now, and I cannot forget how well they fit into the teaching and learning process.

Significant values as I keep on mentioning. One is time management. Two, is self-discipline. Three is being determined on the things that you are doing and be positive all the time. So, those are the things that I valued during my participation in Guro21. (IDI-P3-Line 555-558)

I have gained significant values through my participation in Guro21, including Time management, Self-discipline, Determination, and Maintaining a positive mindset.

In essence, other participants also highlighted the significance of introducing new teaching strategies and narrated the same experiences:

Okay. Questions that I was not able to answer? Maybe a question that would also look into how the learners improve since, I am one of the Guro21 completers. Is there an improvement on my learners? Something like that? Could be? So, that I could assess my strategies are improving, my teaching abilities is effective or not. That could be one for myself assessment. And yes, there is really a positive impact in my personal at the same time my professional career. Since, it is a way of learning some new ways for your, for the effectiveness of your teaching career. It will not be stagnant. (IDI-P3-Line 571-578)

One of the questions that I was unable to answer might be related to assessing the improvement of my learners as a result of my participation in Guro21. This question could help me evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching strategies and abilities. This program has had a positive impact on both my personal and professional career. Guro21 has provided me with new ways to enhance my teaching effectiveness and has prevented my teaching career from becoming stagnant.

Okay noh, sa Guro21 kasi, isa doon is yung mga time management noh. Yung classroom management noh. Paano mo siya ihandle. Kasi diba iba't iba yung mga learners na naa sa classroom. So, kung papaano mo siya ihandle. Naalala ko pa nga yung nagdraw kami ng setting arrangement sa loob ng classroom. (IDI-P6-Line 1092-1096)

In Guro21, I learned about time management, classroom management, and how to handle different types of learners in the classroom. It is essential to apply the strategies you learn.

Interestingly, FGD participants had a similar experience as they shared their GURO21 journey. This is evident in the following verbatim account of the following FGD participant's account:

In completing Guro21 flexible learning program. I realize how important to us teachers, to be more flexible in this 21st century teaching-learning process to deal with diversity of learners. (FGD-P7-Line 402-404)

Completing the Guro21 flexible learning program made me realize how important it is for teachers to be more flexible in the 21st-century teaching-learning process to address the diversity of learners.

Professionalism is Develop

IDI participants emphasize the need for professionalism and work-life balance in completing the GURO21 flexible learning program (Manaligod, 2023; Tarrayo & Anudin, 2023). These experiences were shared by IDI participants in the following account:

The most important lessons that I have gained in coping with the challenges, ay,,, best – things is completing the Guro21 is that ahm.. I was able to develop my personal and professional aspect. Especially, in, in doing the tasks am beyond,,, beyond your teaching or flexible teaching lesson. Teaching – learning process at ah, inside the classroom beyond. (IDI-P2-Line 321-325)

One of the most important lessons I have gained in coping with the challenges, and one of the best things about completing Guro21, is that I was able to develop both my personal and professional aspects. This was especially evident in my tasks beyond the teaching and flexible learning processes inside the classroom.

Pag, nag-join ka ng Guro21 siyempre, yung tingin nila sayo is medyo taas na ng konti. Kasi diba, nalagpasan mo yung course na yon. Hindi naman lahat nakalampas ma'am. Diba sabi ko nga sayo. Diba may mga kasamahan, may mga kasama kami na hindi nakalampas. (IDI-P6-Line 1127-1130)

When you join Guro21, they see you with a slightly elevated perspective. Because you have passed that course, only some do, ma'am. Like I mentioned to you, right? Some colleagues, some with us, still needed to pass.

Okay. I'll be the programs "unofficial" ambassador indeed. Dili pa ko official nga ku-an. But somehow what I mean is be an advocate. Encouraging others, that involves sharing my open up new avenues of collaboration. (IDI-P7-Line 1257-1260)

I will be an unofficial ambassador for the program. I may not be an official spokesperson, but I will advocate for GURO21. Encouraging others involves sharing the opportunities for collaboration that have opened up for me.

Moreover, participants realized the need to balance personal well-being and professional development. This revealed the significance of professional aspects of life (Managilod, 2023). IDI participants emphasized the importance of developing professionalism as explained by the following account:

My insights. don't stop. Learn more. Okay. And then, you need to focus on what you had learned. Applaying it after learning. Kasi

paghindi mo siya inaapply wala parin. And then, kumbaga as a teacher. Be ready be open minded. (IDI-P8-Line 1463-1466)

My insights are to continue learning and apply what you have learned. If you do not apply it, it is pointless. As a teacher, you need to be open-minded and ready.

Personally, ma'am one of the lessons that I learned is you should always be positive and you should always have the enthusiasm to do the tasks, to do the different assignments and of course in making the portfolio. So, that you have the drive to complete the program. (IDI-P4-Line 682-685)

One of the lessons I learned is that you should always maintain a positive attitude and stay enthusiastic when completing various tasks and assignments, especially when creating your portfolio. This positivity and enthusiasm are essential to driving you to complete the program.

So, for me the values that I really learned from Guro21 that I can share to other teachers is always be positive. You should always have the enthusiasm, the interest in doing the things that are assigned to you. So, that you can complete the program, because if you have that positivity. Somehow, you should always be, you always have the drive to complete, whatever you are doing. (IDI-P4-Line 708-713)

The values I learned from Guro21, which I can share with other teachers, revolve around being positive and maintaining enthusiasm and interest in completing assigned tasks. With a positive attitude, you will find the drive to accomplish whatever you want.

FGD participants further stated this development of professionalism as they shared their experiences on how to develop professionalism in their everyday journey:

My insights I can face all the challenges that arise now. So, parang naging ano pa ko malakas ang loob ko na makaya kong I face ang mga challenges in teaching. Especially in tawag niyan paggamit ng mga technology natin. Yun, talaga anga naka ano sa akin na parang na challenge ako na mag improve in my teaching. (FGD-P3-Line 390-394)

My insights are that I can face all the challenges that arise now. I have gained confidence that I can handle the challenges in teaching, especially when it comes to using technology. This challenge motivated me to improve my teaching.

Okay, insights as a 21st century educator its not an easy task. You need to think of many things especially, in dealings with your learners. Diverse learners. So, you need to consider them if you are planning. You, you need to consider them. Their potentials. What they can do so, that you can have a very good and effective learning in your classroom. (FGD-P4-Line 395-399)

Insights as a 21st-century educator: It is not easy. It would help to think about many things, especially when dealing with diverse learners. Considering their potential is crucial for effective learning in the classroom.

More insights being a professionalism, financial literacy and others. (FGD-P5-Line 400)

More insights include professionalism, financial literacy, and other aspects.

Becoming a Tech-Savvy Can Be Learned

Participants affirmed that becoming tech-savvy is an attainable skill through the GURO21 program, as Caingcoy (2021) supported. They noted that the program offered valuable experiences for navigating and utilizing digital tools and technologies. Participants shared their experiences in becoming tech-savvy:

One of the insights that I gained in completing the Guro21 program is somehow to become technology savvy. Wherein, you should always be a or have the skills and the competence in using the technology specially in education. As learning doesn't only happen in a four walled classroom. But it can also be done using, even using the technology like computers, internets. (IDI-P4-Line 688-692)

Completing the GURO21 program helped me realize the significance of mastering technology in teaching. This involves developing the essential skills and expertise to use technology effectively, especially in the context of education. Learning is no longer limited to conventional classroom environments; it can now be facilitated through digital tools like computers and the Internet.

The participants strongly supported the Guro21 program, highlighting its value in equipping teachers with essential skills in education, teaching-learning, and technology use. They emphasized the program's role in fostering adaptability, effective utilization of digital tools, and collaboration, ultimately promoting innovation and enhancing teaching practices, as reflected in the study of De Vera (2020). The participants expressed:

I would encourage other teachers to join the Guro21 program as that would be an avenue for them to really learn not only about education, the teaching learning, but also the use of technology in delivering the instruction. Just like what happened in pandemic by the use of the online learning. Sino ba ang makapag ano ma'am noh? Makapag. Who can really think of the possibility of having the pandemic. Wherein teaching cannot be done inside the classroom. But instead using the technology to deliver the lesson. Somehow, the experience that I gained in the Guro21 program helped me to utilize the technology for that particular purpose to continue the teaching and learning. (IDI-P4-Line 695-703)

I encourage other teachers to join the Guro21 program because it provides an avenue for them to learn about education, teaching-learning, and the use of technology in delivering instruction. This is especially important given the unexpected circumstances of the pandemic, which forced us to adapt to online learning.

The comprehensive analysis of participant insights within their GURO21 program completion experiences yielded eight major themes, as meticulously detailed in Table 3. This analysis, supported by the research of Catalan et al. (2021), underscores the value of qualitative data in providing a deeper understanding of participant experiences and the factors influencing their professional growth. Participants consistently noted that the GURO21 program was instrumental during the pandemic, equipping them with essential tools, strategies, and knowledge to adapt to the challenges of online learning while upholding the highest standards of educational practice, as emphasized in De Vera (2020). Specifically, participants highlighted the following key aspects:

Insights in Seameo or Guro21Seameo it can promote innovation and technology. (FGD-P6-Line 401)

Conclusions

This study elucidates the pivotal role of 21st-century teaching and learning skills in fostering transformative educational and personal outcomes. The insights derived from the GURO21 program, situated within a flexible learning framework, underscore the profound significance of adaptability, digital literacy, and self-directed learning in contemporary education. Teachers who have undergone professional development in these critical areas demonstrate significantly enhanced proficiency in implementing flexible learning strategies, which directly contributes to their effectiveness in dynamic and ever-evolving classroom environments. Consequently, it is imperative to prioritize sustained investment in comprehensive teacher training programs that seamlessly integrate these competencies. Such investments will not only elevate educators' effectiveness but also catalyze significant improvements in the broader educational landscape, ultimately fostering a more resilient and future-ready workforce of educators.

Moreover, the study revealed the considerable impact of purpose-driven teaching on student engagement, well-being, and academic success. The experiences of educators with a clear sense of purpose illustrate its powerful effect on cultivating a dynamic and supportive learning environment. Purpose-driven teaching not only fosters student achievement but also instills a sense of meaning and motivation in educators, further enhancing the educational experience. The research also highlights the positive influence of instructional strategies, such as blended learning and gamification, on students' self-directed learning capabilities and attitudes. To optimize teaching practices, it is crucial to delve deeper into these aspects and ensure that educational approaches align with students' intrinsic motivations. The study advocates for ongoing research to thoroughly explore these themes, emphasizing the need for a rigorous examination of how flexible learning environments impact educational outcomes. Advancing qualitative research methodologies is pivotal in producing high-caliber, reliable studies, thereby providing more nuanced and actionable insights that can significantly advance the field of education.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Jessa Mae L. Argulla
Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges – Philippines

Jocelyn S. Jimenez, EdD
Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges – Philippines