

Reconceptualising Faculty Teaching Competence: The Role of Agency during the Pandemic

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Abstract : The Covid-19 pandemic transformed teaching contexts at an unprecedented level. Although studies have focused mainly on its impact on students, little is known about how emergency online teaching affects faculty members in higher education. Given that the pandemic has robbed teachers of opportunities for adequate preparation, it is vital to understand how teaching competencies were perceived in the crisis-response transition to online teaching and learning (OTL). Therefore, the study explores how academics perceive their readiness for OTL and what competencies were perceived to be central. Therefore, through a mixed-methods design, the study first explores through a survey how academics perceive their readiness for OTL and what competencies were perceived to be central. Emerging trends from the quantitative data of 330 academics (three public and three private Higher learning institutions) led to the formulation of interview guides for the subsequent qualitative phase. The authors use critical sensemaking (CSM) to analyse interviews with twenty-two teachers (n = 22) (three public; three private HEs) toward understanding the interconnected layers of influences they draw from as they make sense of their teaching competence. The sensemaking process reframed competence and readiness in that agentic competency emerged as crucial in shaping resilience and adaptability during the transition to OTL. The findings also highlight professional learning critical to teacher competence: course design, communication, time management, technological competence, and identity (re)construction. The findings highlight opportunities for strategic orientation to change during crisis. Implications for pedagogy and policy are discussed.

Keywords : online teaching, pedagogical competence, agentic competence, agency, technological competence

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