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Teaching in a Pandemic: A Phenomenological Study of Higher Education Professional Communication Academics' Lifeworlds in Response to Pandemic Measures

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ABSTRACT

This insider research study examines how higher education academics responded to and enacted on pandemic measures, using phenomenology as a concept and research design. Seven academics who teach professional communication skills to computing undergraduates participated in semi-structured interviews in this study. Consistent with phenomenological studies, and to deepen depth in understanding the phenomenon, 'existentials' of lifeworlds, namely lived space, lived time, lived body and lived human relations were used to highlight salient features of the opportunities these academics utilised, and challenges they experienced in response to pandemic measures. Findings revealed mixed responses to the measures and the ways in which they enacted on them. This study raises our awareness of professional communication academics' lifeworlds in a pandemic, invokes academic consciousness and thoughtfulness in the reader, and invites contemplation on being at the receiving end of pandemic measures.

Keywords: Phenomenology, higher education, academics, communication, pandemic, lifeworlds

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 left an indelible mark on the way higher education (HE) institutions operate, academics teach, and learners learn. As countries sanction measures to curb the spread of the pandemic, bourgeoning studies have emerged on their impact on HE. Some of these include but are not limited to learner perspectives (Gustavo et al., 2020), mental health, (Zimmermann et al., 2020), living in uncertain times (Jung et al., 2021), digital disruption (Watermeyer et al., 2020), hopes and fears (Eringfeld, 2021), distance learning (Rizun & Strzelecki, 2020), academics' behavioural intentions in the adoption of e-learning (Jere, 2020), developing competencies for student support systems (Lloyd-Jones, 2021), e-learning (Pham & Ho, 2020), challenges and opportunities of distance learning (Najeb & Om, 2020), managing and responding to the pandemic (Izumi et al., 2020), assessing the impact of HE (Agasisti & Soncin, 2021), global faculty's self-perceptions of virtual education (Sasere & Makhasane 2020), faculties' experiences in specific universities, (Chiparra et al, 2020), whether online education is a threat or opportunity (Vlachopoulos, 2020), impact on academic mothers (Minello & Lidia, 2020) and the effect of HE measures on specific disciplines (Steele et al., 2020). While these studies offer variegated pandemic-related experiences that raise our awareness of HE education, measures and their impact, an area that is under-researched, yet crucial, is an examination and understanding of the lifeworlds of academics who teach professional communication skills to computing undergraduates.

Lebenswelt, or lifeworlds, is a phenomenological construct and is defined as "what we know best, what is always taken for granted in all human life" (Husserl, 1970, p. 123). It explicates the "wholeness, with examining entities from many sides, angles, and perspectives until a unified vision of the essence of a phenomenon or experience is achieved" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). Hereof, communication academics' lifeworlds, should be examined for two main reasons. Firstly, teaching and learning professional communication has traditionally relied on inclusive human connections through face-to-face (f2f) interaction, engagement, relations with one another, and conducted synchronously within institutional concrete environments, furnished space, and where access to necessary equipment, tools and materials are provided to teach and learn. Here, the setting, bodily dispositions of academics and learners, and the discipline not only conjure a unique type of feeling, but also mutually define and affect learning and teaching. These classrooms were utilised, experienced, and perceived in different ways. In these contexts, communication academics facilitated lessons through interactions with learners who interpreted them within these contexts, creating a mutual interplay of experiences. In short, these academics and their learners inhabited this space in pre-pandemic times and were engaged in a teaching and learning relationship. The pandemic and its unprecedented pivot to online/hybrid teaching disrupted these ways of teaching and learning communication skills, which hitherto were taken for granted. Secondly, communication academics are assumed to manage crisis and disruptions better, due to the type of content that they are conversant in and teach (Ashby-King, 2021; Schwartzman, 2020). A fundamental tenet that is taught and learnt in communication is that communication is process-oriented or that it is not linear. To illustrate and experience this, wicked problems (Rittel & Webber,1973) are commonly used in communication classes to create the need to collaboratively make sense of issues, adopt a resilient mindset, challenge resolutions, and search for alternative ways to solve issues (Schwartzman, 2020). This resilient mindset is intrinsically related to the back-and-forth (non-linear) communicative processes between students and learners, wherein the "construction of particular narratives, identities, and emotions that allow for growth after change" (Brandhorst, 2018, p. 89). It becomes interesting then to examine the extent to which these academics, who espoused these values, were able to manage the wicked pandemic phenomenon, maintained the richness of their pedagogical content and experiences in its midst, whether they struggled with pandemic-related policies or/and if they were able to transit and adapt seamlessly with a resilient mindset.

Therefore, the purpose of this insider research is to examine the effects of pandemic-related measures on professional communication academics' teaching experiences using phenomenology as a construct and research design. This paper will be divided into four parts: an exposition of phenomenology and its relevance in this study, how it was used as a research method, and how lifeworlds, a phenomenological construct, was used to understand the data followed by a discussion section.

PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenological studies afford a deeper understanding, appreciation, a form of empathy and inform the phenomena being discussed (Tight, 2015). There are several types and approaches to phenomenology, with each assuming its own way of viewing the world. Among these, the focus in this study is Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) hermeneutic phenomenological tradition. However, to appreciate this, his predecessor Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) transcendental/descriptive tradition must be understood first.

Husserl emphasised knowledge or an epistemological focus, while Heidegger focused on the ontological aspect—on being and temporality (Neubauer et al., 2019). Husserl stressed on the descriptive clarification of the phenomenon and on uncovering what is peculiar to a phenomenon than describe every aspect of it. To Husserl, reflective character makes phenomenology distinctive, as it questions rooted philosophical theories about "mind" and "world" and the demands that we attend to. Hence, a Husserlian phenomenology is "grounded in the conscious reflection of the participants" (Walsh, 2012, p. 7). Methodologically, Husserl believed in understanding experiences and the need to adopt a "phenomenological attitude" which is to bracket beliefs and assumptions, to be consciously aware and to exclusively focus on the observation (Smith et al., 2009, p.12).

However, the probability of this mental state has been refuted (Ashworth 1996; Finlay, 2008) as it is an arduous task to expect this of participants unless they have been trained in mastering their thoughts and mind. His finest student, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), transformed this phenomenological tradition by rejecting Husserl's emphasis on consciousness and core aspects of Husserl's phenomenological methods. Unlike Husserl's descriptive style, Heidegger believed in a hermeneutic or interpretive approach to understanding others' experiences. He popularised the idea of "Dasein", or the idea of "being there" or being present, and he theorised that humans reflect on both themselves and their relationship with others (Smith et al., 2009, p. 33). So, unlike Husserl's focus on humans as 'knowers of phenomenon', Heidegger focused on the relationship between an individual and his/her lifeworld and how lifeworlds are deeply influenced by the world that individuals live in, regardless of whether they are conscious of it (Lopez, 2004). While Husserl focused on conscious reflection, Heidegger advocated an interpretative role of the participants.

In this study, this interpretative role of "being there" is also assumed by its "insider-ness", as the respondents were asked to reflect upon themselves and their relationship with their professional communication discipline as well as their learners as they discussed and interpreted their teaching experiences during the pandemic. This "insider-ness" is also relevant because unlike Husserl's bracketing, Heidegger emphasised acknowledging and being open about "research bias" (Walsh, 2012, p. 2). Gadamer (1975) refers to this nexus as the 'fusion of horizons' where experiences of the researcher who shares similar experiences, characteristics and structural positions with the participants is able to understand and make meaning of the phenomenon (Hultgren, 1990, Shah, 2004). Entwistle (1997) takes this one step further and argues that in HE research, this type of nexus is not about testing the validity of phenomenology; rather, its value is in producing useful insights into teaching and learning.

Bynum and Varpio (2018) outline some iterative and interpretive steps for hermeneutic phenomenology in research studies which this study is attuned to. These begin with:

1. identifying a phenomenon that interests the researcher,
2. examining it as it is lived than conceptualised,
3. considering possible themes,
4. reflecting on own and participants' narratives,
5. practising iterative cycles by being 'there' and to not be distracted,
6. arriving at the 'hermeneutic circle', which "emphasises the practice of deliberately considering how the data (the parts) contribute to the evolving understanding of the phenomena (Laverty, 2003).

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Pandemic phenomena and change policy

This study is situated in an English language communication (ELC) centre in a cosmopolitan university offering a range of written and spoken communication courses to undergraduate and graduate learners. It has strictly adhered to national and institutional pandemic-related measures to curb the pandemic's spread. In the last three weeks of the second semester in April 2020, the country was in lockdown and macro-level institutional regulations were swiftly and systematically communicated to all stakeholders. One such regulation was the massive pivot to a fully remote e-learning education platform.

Online and remote education in the university

Online education, both in synchronous and asynchronous forms, are not new in the university. However, what was unprecedented was the suddenness, scale, and disruption caused by the pandemic, which necessitated the HE community having to pivot instantaneously from "traditional four-walled settings" to a "remote approach" (Bonk, 2020, p. 589), and with little time to convert planned f2f lessons (Liguori & Winkler, 2020).

New measures in-lieu of fewer pandemic-infected cases

When the infected community case figures declined from July 2020, the university reviewed its policies and announced new measures in the next academic semester (August 2020). Selected communication courses, with 50 or fewer students within the same zones in the university, could resume pre-lockdown f2f lessons, but this was subject to the availability of large classrooms, approval from meso-level managers, and adherence to strict safety measures. Students who could not attend f2f lessons could choose hybrid lessons where they could synchronously participate in lessons virtually using video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. In these lessons, academics teach f2f for learners who were physically present and remotely at the same time.

Although the academic community was well-supported technologically, emotionally, and mentally by the university, the mandate to implement remote and hybrid learning was especially problematic for professional communication academics whose lessons were traditionally grounded in f2f interactions and activities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is situated from the end of Semester 2 in April 2020 to the end of the new semester in November 2020. The research question is:

- How did professional communication academics respond to and enact on pandemic measures especially with regards to the pivot to synchronous remote and hybrid education?

Hermeneutic phenomenology is used both as a method and theoretical framework to discuss the lifeworlds of these communication academics.

Sample

Consistent with phenomenological studies, to facilitate depth and understanding of the lived experiences of the phenomenon, a small sample choice was used (Armour et al., 2009). The author's insider role as a professional communication academic influenced the choice of seven part-time and full-time academics (PTAs and FTAs respectively) who were purposefully sampled to ensure maximum variation in terms of teaching roles, power dynamics, ethnic backgrounds, and teaching experience in three types of professional communication courses to computing undergraduates (Table 1). Three of the FTAs also assumed the role of Course Coordinators (CC).

Table 1
Participant demographics

Pseudonym	HE teaching experience in communication (estimated in years)	Ethnicity	Roles[1]	Name of the professional communication courses participants designed and/or taught
Anna	10	Chinese	FTA & CC	Effective Communication for Computing Professionals
Joan	10	Vietnamese	FTA	Communication in the Information Age
Kelly	15	Chinese	FTA & CC	
Lyn	10	Malay	PTA	
Sharon	10	Indian	PTA	Business and Technical Communication
Sue	15	Chinese	FTA & CC	
Tina	5	American	PTA	

1. CCs design, teach and oversee administrative matters in the course.
   FTAs teach and handle administrative matters in the course. They can assist in designing some materials.

Data collection

Interviews are used typically in phenomenology studies, to gather data. (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). In this study, where working from home was the modus operandi, participants took part in one-on-one, semi-structured, online recorded approximately one-hour interviews on Zoom. They were posed "meaning questions," with the intent of seeking "meaning and significance" (van Manen, 1990, p. 18) by reflecting upon the phenomenon, as per the hermeneutic strand of phenomenology (Gibbs et al., 1982; Kei & Harland, 2017).

Data preparation

Verbatim transcripts auto-generated by Zoom were first checked for accuracy and were read several times to understand the participants' lifeworlds. These were then analysed using four fundamental, co-constituted phenomenological lifeworld themes known as 'existentials' (Gadamer, 1975), which comprise: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality), which together with their interconnectedness to one another, ground the way human beings experience different modalities in life (van Manen, 1990). That is, these explain the co-connectedness of how the lived body is positioned in lived time and lived space, and how these impact lived human relations. As posited by Alerby et al. (2014), in education,

> "it is it is through our bodies that we experience the world. This in turn is prerequisite for learning, and it is through the body that we are in a living relation to things, such as a school building or a classroom" (p. 114).

Ethics

This study received the university's ethic committee approval and ethical considerations were observed throughout the study.

FINDINGS

The findings revealed mixed responses to the pivot to synchronous remote and hybrid education. Four out of seven respondents, comprising three FTAs and one PTA who considered themselves to be technologically savvy, expressed positively to the pivot. The remaining three however were apprehensive and anxious about their ability to adapt swiftly. Regardless of the extent of their adeptness, all of them expressed that the pandemic made them think of ways to make professional communication more meaningful and relevant to their learners. Sue for instance, commented that the pandemic created first-hand experience of the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world, a context which she used to underpin class activities in her "Business and Technical Communication" course. She also saw new meaning in her beliefs about equipping her learners with relevant communication, critical thinking skills, and the ability to be adaptable and cope in the ambiguous pandemic stricken VUCA world. Kelly and Joan added that their "Communicating in the Information Age" course took on new meaning in the pandemic with the pivot to online education, with their learners seeing the need to be more informed about the types of information they were accessing and utilising.

LIVED SPACE (SPATIALITY)

Aside from these initial reactions to the pivot, to understand the nuances of the academics' lifeworlds, it is important to unravel the lived spaces/landscapes that these academics functioned from. Humans access the world through their bodies and knowledge which is developed through that is embodied (Alerby et al., 2014). At any point of time, humans, are situated in a particular time and space which exudes an atmosphere, influences the body (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), invokes feelings and emotions (Miles et al, 2015) which influence practice (Van Schalkwyk et al, 2015) and a sense of power (Alerby et al., 2014). In pre-pandemic times, both the academics and their learners inhabited the same space (the classroom) to teach and learn, and both relied on physical cues generated from each other's physical presence in a physical place (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Pandemic measures and the pivot to synchronous online education required these communication academics to operate from their homes, a new space which was not equipped like their f2f classrooms. Homes which have "something to do with a sense of being" and often referred to as "that secure inner sanctity where

we can feel protected and by ourselves" (Heidegger, 1971) was the same place where they had to work from, share their workplaces and conduct their lessons. Predictably, this caused tension, bordered on their sense of power and played on their feelings and emotions not just for themselves but for their learners as well. Sharon for instance, shared how the home working space caused anxiety and affected her learners' attention span, while Tina had concerns that working from home would mean that she had to manage her fears about technical issues by herself. Kelly was careful not to share too much of her personal space and she added that her computer screen size, background noise, and irregular bandwidth connectivity were challenges she had to grapple with while she taught. Joan concurred on the aspect of bandwidth connectivity and felt anxious as she taught. Kelly acknowledged that although technical support was provided at macro- and micro-centre levels, anxiety loomed when she realised that "all the prep was done in the office and now had to work from home." Lyn had different experiences from her peers. She modified her didactic techniques and made full use of her home-work space. She taught herself to "interact with the camera," and she purchased gadgets to enhance her visual appearance during lessons. It must be noted that she experimented with these equipment when the pivot to online education had just been instituted, and these strategies were not too popular then. Instead of using virtual backgrounds like Kelly who did not feel comfortable sharing her lived space with her learners, Lyn endeavoured to design and create real backgrounds with buntings. She even brought her learners on "house tours." She believed that these efforts engaged her learners and made them look forward to something different, which she felt was especially essential for teaching her professional communication course during the pandemic. She also saw the need to undertake these extra methods so that she could create a safe and warm environment for her learners to participate, which she added she would have ordinarily created without much effort in her f2f lessons.

When the spread of the pandemic began to wane, macro-level measures were eased. A major change was the option for tutors to conduct hybrid lessons. Sue was the only CC who chose this hybrid option. Tina and Sharon, who were in her team, supported the idea and all three were keen to engage their learners f2f. However, these sentiments towards f2f education were not shared by their learners, who seemed to have become either accustomed with the lived space that online education had created in their lives or who had to alter their lifestyles. One student for instance remarked that f2f lessons were upsetting his "sleeping cycle." When Sue switched to f2f teaching, she also realised the extent to which she had taken her pre-pandemic lived classroom space for granted and "how much instruction rests upon presumptions of privilege" (Schwartzman, 2020, p 508). As a CC, she had to ensure that her classroom was conducive and suitable, with strict adherence to safety measures instituted by the university and appropriate for the hybrid mode as well. She reflected that additional safety measures such as requirements to take photographs of learners' seating arrangements during lessons, which had to uploaded onto the central attendance system site, the need to wear masks and to ensure that everyone adhered to safe distancing measures were necessary, but that they stacked onto her challenges to conduct her lessons and manage administrative matters at the same time.

Lived body (corporeality)

Lived body, closely linked to spatiality, refers to how we are part of the world physically (embody) and how we choose to reveal or conceal aspects of our physical body or presence to others (Heidegger, 1962). In teaching, this is often termed as social and cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2000). Traditionally, professional communication academics emphasise key human elements of engagement of 'being present' while communicating. Non-verbal elements such as gestures, posture, eye contact, and how our body transmits hidden messages about our intent and presentation presence are important components of professional communication, and academics encourage lived body movements (by way of using the space) to augment meaning-making. With the type of lived space the academics and learners were operating from, almost all the academics shared their concerns about lack of engagement as well as interaction, and realised that this presence was not automatic and had to be "intentionally created" (Lehman & Conceição, 2010, p. 11). Kelly tried to enhance her engagement efforts by using three monitors instead of one and she tried to focus on the camera while she taught. However, she realised that these efforts did not reap the same results as her f2f lessons where

she could engage easily. She also noticed that learners who had more than one monitor found it challenging to establish eye contact and she also found that her assessed online presentations made it easier for her presenters to read from the screen, which hindered engagement with the rest of her learners. Lyn who taught on her course had the same concerns regarding lack of eye contact among her learners. In terms of assessment expectations, Tina preferred her learners to stand while they delivered their final online oral presentations, as she strongly felt that this is how people speak on online platforms. However, she realised that her colleagues preferred their learners to sit and present, which meant that she and her team had to negotiate expectations. Sharon and Kelly added that while they were pleased to see all their learners on their screens, which made it easier for them to remember their names, they and their learners agreed that the online platform of teaching and learning communication will not replace the 'humanness' of f2f communication.

Lived time (temporality)

Lived time, or temporality, is subjective time as opposed to clock time or objective time (van Man, 1990). It refers to how the pace of time appears to quicken or lag depending on the type of activity one is engaged in. With the challenges of teaching synchronously online, Sue, Anna, and Tina observed that their lessons took longer to complete than planned. Sue for instance, compared her pre-pandemic f2f lessons as being multidimensional, where she could multi-task easily and include more content and activities. Her online lessons, however, were "one-dimensional", where she could only handle one task at a time, making it difficult to complete her content. She resorted to creating more pre- and post-class homework, but she soon learnt that this was counter-productive and was not favoured by her learners. Tina, like Sue, noticed that she took longer to complete her lessons, which made her exhausted after each lesson. She added that unlike f2f lessons which energised her, online lessons consumed more energy.

Lived human relation (relationality or communality)

Corporeality and spatiality are prerequisites to experience the world, and to be involved in relationships with one another and with contexts and situations. (Alerby et al., 2014). This relationality refers to inter-relatability when people meet, where emotions, energy, and interpersonal communication are shared, impressions are created or confirmed, which are core elements in professional communication courses. Although all the academics were relieved that some form of inter-relatability could be established with the online pivot, they agreed that it was not ideal as they felt mostly disengaged by the lack of in-person interpersonal communication, and difficulty in interpreting learners' emotions and feelings as the lived space was not the same as pre-pandemic times. In Joan's case, her learners expressed concerns that online communication and the lack of f2f inter-relatability impacted their wellbeing and mental health. Lyn, who shared the same sentiments, created WhatsApp groups for her learners so that they had a medium to reach out to her, and she commented that several of her learners were grateful that this platform allowed them to relate their uncertainties and anxieties with her.

As for impressions which stem from preconceived ideas that we have of others in communication settings, Lyn observed tacit assumptions that academics make, especially about computing learners being digital natives, and that they should be able to transit seamlessly into online interpersonal communication,

> "…. students who did not know how to effectively put themselves as learners in an online platform. This is something we overlook a lot. We just think that this[sic] people...part of the Internet age born into this system…everything online, but a lot of them don't know how to interact on online platform…."

She had to remind her students not to multi-task and to be "fully present mentally, physically and emotionally" so that interpersonal communication was not compromised. In this new lived space, it was not easy for the

academics and learners to manage 'presence' of 'being there'. Tina resonated with this point about "being there" and that learners did not know how to contribute ideas readily. To alleviate this, she "had to try extra hard to be enthusiastic, excited", so that her learners will "mirror" her energy, but it made the experience "more draining" for her. In online breakout rooms, she also observed that her learners were more reticent, and took longer to communicate with one another in a lived space, which was very different from the lived space within physical classrooms. Anna added that the breakout rooms made it challenging for her to monitor how her learners were relating to tasks and with one another, since at any one time, she could only enter one room and for a limited time, in contrast to f2f lessons where she could "sense" how her learners were relating to one another just by looking around.

Despite their concerns about relationality, all seven academics commented on their learners' encouraging responses in their lessons and performance in formative and summative assignments.

DISCUSSION

Synoptically, this study examined professional communication academics' lived experiences in response to pandemic-related measures using four inter-related phenomenological lifeworld themes or modalities in life (van Manen, 1990), which contribute to the evolving understanding of the phenomenon (Laverty, 2003). They offer not only glimpses on what it is like to be at the receiving end of measures, through the lens of an under-researched group of academics but also how lived body, lived time and lived space, lived human relations are closely dependent upon one another, have taken new forms in pandemic higher education settings and which have not been previously studied. Underlying these lifeworlds, a type of 'social practice' (Schatzki, 2002) can be seen in how the academics had to adapt swiftly to uncertain times and how in their own ways and despite the challenges, they seized opportunities to change their practices with the online arrangements, and how they were exemplars and agents of change as they promoted small-scale changes to enrich student learning in their professional communication courses. In lived space, these academics showed how they adapted and created 'new' spaces to teach and in Sue's case, the same space she had used in pre-pandemic times was somewhat 'different' when she switched to hybrid education. Despite the challenges faced in adhering to safety measures, these academics did not give up and persevered to continue with f2f teaching in the belief that this will foster pre-pandemic engagement. This point on engagement and its relevance in professional communication was further illuminated in lived body, when these academics shared their experiences on insufficient non-verbal cues which impacted communication. In these instances, these academics, tried to embody their existence and presence in several ways and in varying degrees in the online platform, and had varying expectations of what this entailed among their learners. This is closely related to lived human relations, when they noticed how their interpersonal communication with their learners were affected and how the learners expressed concerns about its link to mental health issues, which has been gaining more attention in higher education. Finally, lived time illuminated how the academics took longer to accomplish tasks than what they would have in f2f classes, which impacted their energy. This 'presence', or embodiment that the academics tried to project intentionally and which they expected of their learners, highlighted that managing this skill requires additional cognitive, emotional and ICT[1]-related pedagogical preparation.

Arguably, this study is a snapshot of their full experiences and hence cannot be interpreted as the "the final word" (Walsh, 2012, p. 7), since the academics' lifeworlds were their constructions of reality and cannot be misunderstood as reality in itself. Additionally, its insider-ness and its associated interpretativeness can be a limitation in understanding the phenomenon, and might affect the study's rigour as to whether it yielded 'thicker description or greater verisimilitude" (Mercer, 2000, p. 6). However, it is debatable if an outsider with "an imposed incapacity to comprehend," could have been able to appreciate, let alone interpret or even be interested in the nuances of the phenomenon (Merton, 1972, p. 15). Its insider-ness engendered a sense of familiarity to the phenomenon, its participants and social setting, and these afforded stronger credibility, trust

and rapport which generated narratives about how the academics lived and enacted on pandemic measures. However, examining this phenomenon should not be compared to allowing oneself to experience the "emotional valence" (Walsh, 2012, p. 5) of the phenomenon. Rather, it is to "witness the worlds of others" (Churchill, 2012, p. 6), in this case an overlooked group of academics and how they enacted on pandemic measures, using the lens of lifeworlds. Heidegger refers to this awareness as a form of thoughtfulness, "a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 12), or the ability to "cultivate a sense of empathy in accessing others' experiences" (Churchill, 2012, p. 3). This empathy is not limited to only those who belong to the communication discipline. Instead, it strives to humanise perspectives, create a type of practice sensibility (Trowler, 2020) and to invite discussion as to what it is like to be on the 'other side', or even the 'same side' of enacting on pandemic measures.

Future research could further examine this phenomenon by using other theories or frameworks to conceptualise the research, analyse the data and discuss the outcomes as no single approach can adequately, let alone fully, reflect the complexities of teaching in a pandemic. Saunder's (2006) implementation staircase for instance, could be used to show how policies are interpreted and experienced from macro-meso-micro levels in higher education, or frameworks such as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) could offer another lens to understand the phenomenon. A mixed method and a wider group of participants will also yield more diverse and discursive data which will enable a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and communication academics. Lastly, while this study built on the theory of phenomenology, future research could perhaps interrogate this theory and perhaps allow the evolving of new concepts of understanding how higher education measures are received and enacted upon in a pandemic.

ENDNOTE

1. ICT stands for "information and communication technology".

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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