

Challenges of Physical Education Teachers in Distance Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Physical Education (PE) teachers in public schools might have encountered significant issues in distance education with special emphasis on performance-based activities applicable to their subject. This qualitative research looked into the challenges encountered by PE teachers in the implementation of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at a public high school in Victorias City, Negros Occidental during the School Year 2020–2021. The study applied the qualitative research design with the phenomenological method involving eight PE teachers, of whom four were males and four were females, to gain further insight into their experiences in online teaching in public schools. It was found by the study that while distance learning modalities, such as online, modular, and blended learning, sustained education, they also brought with them varied challenges. Teachers encountered problems such as insufficient equipment or materials for module reproduction, challenge in reaching out to students due to connectivity issues, working on students, or insufficient ideas of parents in the modality. Despite all these setbacks, PE teachers remained resilient by adapting their techniques and refocused themselves on student learning. Study findings call for the immediate improvement of infrastructure and technological support in public schools, specifically in guaranteeing the provision of stable internet connections, adequate digital devices, and appropriate learning materials. Also evident is the need for professional and emotional support geared toward teachers; this would include training and workshops on distance-learning tools, stress management programs, and strong administrative support as a coping mechanism with the demands of remote teaching to offset teachers' burnout.

Keywords: Distance learning, Physical Education Teachers, COVID-19 pandemic, teaching challenges, online, modular, and blended modalities

INTRODUCTION:

Background of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected education systems across the world including Nigeria consequently necessitating a sudden, unplanned and unparalleled switch from regular classroom bases to some form of distance learning. Schools shut down in over 190 countries or territories, disrupting education for almost 1.6 billion learners around the globe (UNESCO, 2020). This global emergency tested access to learning and teaching, and the engagement and the well-being of students and teachers. Majority of the nations resorted to online-based, printed modules-based, or hybrid methods of teaching and learning, and something that became a new normal that was new and often not in existence for both teachers and learners (Bozkurt et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, full government response is the DepEd Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) that adopted several learning delivery modalities such as modular, online, radio-based, and blended learning (Department of Education, 2020). No doubt these strategies helped to maintain that learning continuum, but they also created significant obstacles – particularly for public school teachers who were dealing with restricted resources, connectivity issues and a much higher workload. PE teachers were among the hardest hit b/c how do you get the physical part virtually." Movement teaching, movement skills assessment and engagement in PE were not easily transferred to screens and to printed modules (Varea & González-Calvo, 2021).

A number of studies have emphasized the unique challenges faced by PE teachers amid the pandemic. Indeed, PE teachers in Spain reported losing their pedagogical identity and experiencing challenges with remote physical activity implementation in Varea and González-Calvo (2021). Valenzuela and Caluza (2021) also found that PE teachers in the Philippines struggled to assess their students' motor performance and modify learning activities when no proper equipment or space was available at home. In a wider Asian context, Loh (2022) also highlighted that PE teachers in Malaysia have had to dramatically restructure their lessons to maintain students' physical activity levels, as well as tending to their own welfare and workload.

These national and international issues are felt and manifested in public schools in Victorias City, Negros Occidental. Similarly, PE teachers in high schools in the city were able to transition to this distance learning through the use of available resources, often without much training, the tools, or having a digital infrastructure. Their challenges included struggles to perform physical tasks in practice, to contact students in remote regions,

and to combat their learners' lack of motivation and parental support. These restrictions also resulted in teacher fatigue, stress and burnout--themes that were also observed in international research on pandemic education (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2020; Joubert, 2022). Despite these challenges, PE teachers showed the progress as they adapted their teaching approach by connecting with the community and focusing on student learning. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate and comprehend the various dimensions related to the challenges that PE teachers confronted while they were implementing distance learning patterned during the pandemic time so as to better plan educational systems, including teacher support systems at the time of future crises.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Educational reforms could leave teachers little time to adapt to them, specially for sudden and abrupt changes. A prime example is the sudden shift to online instruction resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented educators of all specialties with novel obstacles. For a more in-depth understanding of these changes and the ways in which teachers respond to them, a theoretical model, which accounts for all these different levels (i.e. experiences, perception and responses), is necessary. Hall and Hord's (1987) Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) offers a useful conceptual framework for understanding how teachers respond to and enact educational innovation in different settings.

The CBAM framework is based on the premise that the success of an educational innovation is highly dependent on how individuals have experienced the process of change. Stages of Concern (SoC) reflect the feelings and worries that teachers possess about the innovation personally; Levels of Use (LoU) describe how the teacher actually uses or applies the innovation in practice; and finally Innovation Configurations (IC) are descriptive of variations in implementation of the innovation. These dimensions recognize the fact that change is not a one-time event but rather a developmental journey in which individuals move from initial unawareness and resistance to increased confidence and adoption. CBAM has established that everything-from understanding teachers' concerns and usage levels to knowing the true extent of the adoption of an idea-will critically inform what is the most appropriate support or development for teachers in transition.

This study is grounded with CBAM to investigate and describe the challenges faced by the physical education teachers of a high school in Victorias City, Negros Occidental when they implemented distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The model itself seems to be a filter for representing teachers' personal, professional, and instructional struggles, especially in a content area such as Physical Education where the knowledge is typically transmitted through physical interactions with one another. The research, utilizing the CBAM protocol, sought to determine the challenges in effective implementation that informed practice, the degree to which teachers could accommodate their practice and the kinds of support that would effectively facilitate their transition. Through which, the research attempts to bring some systematic approach of interpretation to lived experience of teachers who confront with swift transformation of education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research Design

The study utilized the qualitative research design using phenomenological approach which aimed at investigating and understanding the lived experiences of individuals who experience a certain phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2018) included that: phenomenology focuses on the description of what all examples of a phenomenon have in common as individuals experience the events of the world; it is carried out through interviews, observations, or narratives. The researchers used both structures and spontaneous interviews, using audio-recordings, handwritten notes, and observations of non-verbal cues to ensure the authenticity and depth of informants' responses.

Informants and Inclusion Criteria

Eight public secondary school teachers (four males and four females) who are currently handling PE classes in a public high school in Victorias City, Negros Occidental, were considered participants in this study. The participants served as major informants as the focus of the study was on their experiences and challenges in distance learning enforcements during the COVID-19 pandemic. The inclusion criteria were set to ensure the relevance and richness of data; that is, (1) they should be presently assigned to teach PE in the identified public school; and (2) they should have a minimum of five years of continuous teaching experience. Such requirements proved that the participants were adequately loaded with professional expertise, instructional exposure, and a first-hand account of the pedagogical transition and obstacles in remote instruction.

Instruments

We collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews guided by a protocol developed to be semi-structured, and therefore allowed for moderated structure and freedom. Open-ended questions were used in order to delve deeper into the informants experiences. Both types of interview were both structured and unstructured- structured interviews were conducted within a formal frame with a guide, while unstructured ones

were putative to trigger natural meaning interactions. In order to provide an accurate record of responses, all non-verbal cues including changes in tones of voice, facial expressions and body posture were recorded with an audio recorder and in writing, consequently augmenting the richness of context in the data.

Following transcription and thematic analysis were carried out, member-checking involved the participant who would be contacted by the researchers and asked about the accuracy of the findings. This ensured that the themes were true to life, i.e. that it drew from their real experiences. Every interview was successively debriefed to give an area to reflect afterwards and to include clarifying statements or admission of further insights and thereby also enhance trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

Data Collection

The interviews were semi-structured and took the form of both formal and conversational interviews, dependent upon the preferences and availability of the participant, and were conducted face-to-face and virtually. At the start of the interview, the respondents were informed about the aim and confidentiality of the study, and their voluntary participation in the interview and its estimated length. Informed consent was given after participants were allowed to ask questions and agreed to participate.

For the sake of comfort, privacy, and openness, interviews were conducted in private, with responses recorded using audio recording equipment and notes. Participants were urged to use their language to be able to express themselves well. Exploratory questions were asked for response generating and explaining. The interviews concluded with a review of the purposes of the study, description of the member-checking process, and gratitude for their time and participation.

Data Analysis

Data were thematically analyzed using recursive data analysis, that is, coding, categorizing and conceptualizing (the 3 C's) the data to enhance Physical Education teachers' detailed experiences (Lichtman, 2012).

Coding. The collected data were red into an office tool (MS Word) after each participant interview. Meaningfully relevant participant quotes about their experiences were emphasized. In this phase, all participants' responses were deeply read.

Categorizing. In that step, all major statements that appeared during the coding process were categorized. The categories were constructed from the manifest content of the statements. Similar meaning texts were then aggregated and colour coded.

Conceptualizing. The last level of data analysis was the abstraction of related categories into higher order concepts. Similar categories were integrated and labeled with one concept. These ideas that emerged were then further sorted into themes and sub-themes.

Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data

For rigor and quality of the results, the four criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied to this study: confirmability, transferability, dependability, and credibility.

Confirmability. To increase the likelihood that findings were a true representation of the participants' experiences, and not the researchers' bias, investigator triangulation was employed with an audit trail of the data. This consisted of compiled spreadsheets of raw data, field notes and interview transcripts, which were checked and verified by an external qualitative analysis expert. This reviewer paid particular attention to the development of themes and sub-themes, making sure that these were all rooted in the actual responses of participants and were sustained by appropriate documentation (e.g., audit trail confirmation).

Transferability. To enhance the findings' generalizability elsewhere, the research employed thick description, a detailed and comprehensive narration of the participants' context learning backgrounds, exposure to learning, and the participants' lived experiences in distance education. This technique enables the readers to decide how far the findings are transferable or applicable in other settings with similar contexts.

Dependability. To ensure rigour and openness during the research process, purposive sampling was employed and participants were chosen according to explicit inclusion criteria (e.g., PE teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience). Individual interviews were conducted and on audio, and notes were taken. All data collection and analysis steps were followed and recorded to facilitate replication and to strengthen the dependability of the work.

Credibility. In order to confirm the accuracy and representativeness of the ALT data, the present study employed member checking. Participants had the chance to engage with transcribed interviews and validate the member-generated interpretations to ensure that the interpretations captured participants' experiences. This contributed to increasing the internal validity of the conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

The informants were well informed on the aim of the study, the procedures of the study and on the role of their own, as well as on their rights as participants, in accordance with the ethical guidelines in qualitative research. They were required to write a sign informed consent in which they agreed to take part in the study. Only eligible participants were part of the study. Participants were told that if they agreed to take part in the study they would be asked to discuss their own personal experiences and will dedicate some time to interviews, and we will safeguard their effective anonymity through the use of coded identifiers. Only demographic information (e.g., name, contact number, school affiliation) was recorded for research purposes and strictly kept confidential in line with data protection requirements. They were also informed that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time, without justification. The researchers adhered to Tracy's (2010) concept of trustworthiness indicating adherence to ethical principles of qualitative research such as transparency, participant autonomy and respect. Participants were given the researcher's address for follow-up questions or needs. All information was kept secure both in digital and paper form and was deleted following data analysis. The rest of the data was stored on a password protected portable device maintained by the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

This section presents the lived experiences of PE teachers in distance learning, highlighting their challenges, adaptations, and reflections. The thematic presentation follows the sequence outlined in the study's statement of the problem to ensure coherence and alignment with the research objectives.

1. Voices from the Virtual Classroom: Teachers' Insights on Distance Education

1.1 Dimensions of Distance Education: Online, Modular, and Blended Modalities

It was culled out from the participants that distance learning is a delivery instruction with the absence of the traditional face-to-face classes. This is an alternative approach to make sure learning continues amidst the pandemic. One of the examples of distance learning is online learning which uses internet connection to conduct classes in various platforms. Additionally, Modular learning is a self-paced learning through modules or learning activity sheets wherein students learn on their own and with the supervision of teacher or parent. And, Blended learning is a learning delivery which utilizes both online and modular learning modality. The participants stated this way:

"Distance learning is an alternative way to continue education without regular face-to-face with teachers and other students in classroom." (Participant 1 Line 2-4)

"The distance learning modalities has applied to ensure learning continuity, the students can continue their education through different set ups like online classes and printed modules." (Participant 2 Line 5-6)

"Online learning- is a distance learning that is internet-based, using different types of platforms. With students having diverse backgrounds and perspectives." (Participant 4 Line 18-19)

1.2 Unfolding the Educational Worth of Online, Blended, and Modular Modalities

The participants emphasized that due to the pandemic, learning instruction delivery has been limited. And DepEd has allowed online learning to be one of the modalities to use just to let education continue. Furthermore, Effective participation of teachers and students in the blended learning has a positive impact since it is vital in every learning endeavor and for learning to be significant. Also, Modules are considered as the most preferred alternative approach to cope the absence of face to face classes because it's cheap, it gives students the opportunity to learn at their own pace, and allow parents or guardians to keep track of their children's performance. The participant declared this:

"Online learning indeed is urgent way to deliver education as of this time of pandemic since it's the most accessible way to students and teachers to still continue the learning with intervention nearly to the face-to-face classes, which involves the teacher-students exchange of ideas and interactions." (Participant 7 Line 43-46)

"In online class, I do not have problem with the attendance of the students during meetings, I have 35 students and all of them are participative in discussions." (Participant 1 Line 54-55)

"The blended learning is quite prolific to the part of individual learner because it has to solicit active participation both teacher and students." (Participant 6 Line 41-42)

"Yes, because I used to teach and deliver my lesson facing and connecting with my students but now we are using modules in delivering the lesson." (Participant 3 Line 65-66)

Discussion on the Voices from the Virtual Classroom

The result of the study coincides to the idea that online, blended, and modular learning are considered as the different modalities used in distance learning. Virtual education highlights flexibility for both traditional and non-traditional students and increase access and equitable education for many (Deming et al., 2015). Online learning is defined as an instruction done through a technology that is intended to aid learning. Furthermore, several positive implications of online learning have been emphasized: studying from any location at any time; saving money, no commute on congested transportation; freedom to choose, and saving time. Likewise, it has become more essential for education during the pandemic, giving chances to remain in touch, even being apart from classmates and teachers and to follow lessons. Through this, the implementation of online learning in a state of emergency signifies a need, however it has also encouraged experts, policymakers, citizens, teachers, and learners to look for new solutions (Esteron, 2021).

Blended learning is a combination of both online and modular learning delivery. Hence, blended approach is a learning modality in which students learn through online and face to face instruction and where students learn at their own pace by using specific platforms that give them time to work (Lawless, 2019). Additionally, blended learning utilizes two different platforms such as Asynchronous and Synchronous. Asynchronous Learning is a self-paced learning where instructions take place in a different time and space (Finol 2020), while synchronous learning is a type of learning where instruction and learning occur in real time (Simonson, et al., 2012). Moreover, asynchronous learning is constructivist in nature where students can actively construct their own knowledge from their own experiences (Elliott, 2000, cited by Ancheta 2020), at the same time, synchronous allows face to face classes in a virtual room which enables online interaction opportunities (Simonson, et al., 2012), outright question and answer sessions ((Hrastinski, 2008), and creates personalized opportunities to learn (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005).

Modular learning is a learning delivery mode which is done through modules or learning activity sheets where students learn on their own and with the guidance of a parent or a teacher. Modules are self-contained, self-instructional packages, with each learner pacing his or her own learning according to his or her own needs and abilities. A module is a distinct unit of topic or skill that covers a single element of subject matter content or a group of content elements. A module's objectives are comprehensible and behavioral (Daries, 1981 as cited by Sadiq and Zamir 2014). Operationalizing modular method helped students become more motivated and that they benefited more from it. Overall, it shows that the modular learning group performs much better than the standard teaching group (Barnes et al., 2000).

2. Unseen Burdens: The Hidden Trials of Teaching PE from a Distance

2.1 Mosaic of struggles unique to online, modular, and blended learning

The participants have encountered various challenges in the distance learning instruction since not all learning materials are provided to the students and not all students have the access in other learning resources. Lacking of needed gadgets was also a problem because it was difficult to reach out to students. Other challenges of distance learning is the unavailability of internet connection, parents' lack of support, students' tardiness in the submission of learning outputs. Furthermore, teaching online class has been a great challenge in this time of pandemic. Some of the reasons are poor internet connectivity and power interruption, in connection with this, teachers and students were unable to communicate properly, thus students were not able to submit their outputs promptly.

Additionally, other students don't have gadgets to use during online class since they cannot afford to buy it. Also, lessons in online class needs ample time to prepare. Another disadvantages of online learning modality is that it is hard to catch students' attention and interest, and it is also hard to tell whether students had significant learning because some of their outputs were answered by their parents. Consequently, the participants have experienced different struggles in the implementation of modular learning. There was a scarcity of modules to be distributed due to time constraint, some content of the self-learning modules do not align with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) and the reproduction of learning materials are done by them as well. Another problem encountered by the teachers was parents' lack of guidance when it comes to their children's school related works. The participants shared the following:

"My only problem with their class is their attitude in submitting their outputs on time. They have quality outputs but some of them are not deadline-conscious." (Participant 1 Line 55-57)

"Not all my students afford to buy a cell phone where conversation is not consistent." (Participant 3 Line 67-68)

"On the online class I might say that there are those students deprived of their longing due to the fact that the availability of gadgets does favour in their side." (Participant 6 Line 93-94)

"It is difficult to establish good communication to the students because of the unstable internet connection, also it is a challenge to me to prepare the lesson/content since it requires more time." (Participant 4 Line 70-72)

"Yes, I did experience challenges in delivering online classes esp. when the students have a slow/poor connection and as well as I am, not only that but also when there is a power interruption." (Participant 7 Line 95-96)

"The unstable internet connection this could be a problem for the students as well as the teachers handling online classes." (Participant 2 Line 7-9)

"Yes, I have different experienced problems, struggles and challenges in the implementation of distance teaching/learning. There are some students who are not conscious about the deadline and schedule of submission of outputs and papers." (Participant 8 Line 99-101)

2.2 Scenes from the Screen: Navigating Virtual Classrooms and Digital Resources

The lack of gadget or technology was the main problem in online class, since not all students can afford to have those things. It is one of the reasons why teachers find it hard to communicate or reach out to their students. In addition, teachers also have challenge in motivating students during online class because they get distracted. The participants stated these:

"I always struggle on how to motivate the interest of the learners since it requires more self-attention unlike with the traditional classroom setting." (Participant 4 Line 72-73)

"Connecting with my students through facebook messenger is okay, Not all my students afford to buy a cell phone where conversation is not consistent." (Participant 3 Line 66-68)

"On the online class I might say that there are those students deprived of their longing due to the fact that the availability of gadgets does favour in their side." (Participants 6 Line 93-94)

Discussion on the Unseen Burdens

Distance learning has been implemented in the educational system long before the Covid-19 pandemic. It was even more emphasized now since it is by far the most suitable and convenient learning delivery mode. However, there are still issues encountered in the implementation of this program. Some problems that were raised were students' lack of gadgets, weak internet connection, lacking of support from parents or guardians, and late submission of learning outputs. Researchers discovered that public and private school teachers had identified issues such as poor internet connection for both teachers and students, parents' financial situation, unresponsive students and parents, students' coping mechanisms in terms of modular modalities, a lack of students' resources, specifically gadgets that can be used for online learning, technical challenges in using online applications that can be utilized in online teaching and learning, as well as a lack of students' reserves (Abante et al., 2021). Additionally, budgetary constraints make it difficult to prepare for online distance learning courses. Mobile phones, laptops, desktop computers, and other electronic devices must meet particular criteria. As a result, the improvement will need financial resources. There is no provision for extra funding, which means teachers do not have the most up to date gadgets for conducting online distance learning programs. Financial issues are at the foundation of the instruction-related challenge in online distance learning programs (Manalo, 2020).

With these issues in mind, the following tentative solutions have been proposed: If distance learning institutions are serious about providing equal educational opportunities for all, the special needs of distance educators need to be carefully considered. Appropriate planning and collaboration for everyone involved with remote learners. If the student is taking a distance learning course that requires computer skills, the student must at least be taught the basics of operating the system selected in the distance learning platform. From time to time, distance learners should be given feedback from relevant distance teachers and authorities regarding admissions, assignments, exams, and projects. Especially with the rapid expansion of technology, it is important to understand and mitigate technology problems. Further research on course development techniques will help learning institutions understand which methods are most effective in distance learning (Attri, 2012). In addition to, Thomas and Rogers (2020), recommended that policymakers reward and motivate companies to create engaging and effective educational games and learning environments to make sure education will inspire children's involvement and interest.

Amid the challenges faced by the educators in the distance learning in this time of pandemic, they still remained resilient and embraced changes and been flexible. They kept themselves motivated amidst the struggles in distance education especially in the use of the recent technology in the education system. According to Schifter 2000, the need to utilize technology and chance for innovation were found to be the greatest motivators of the faculty in distance teaching and technology. McKenzie (2000) agreed with these motives and emphasized the need to include learners with technology and the opportunity to address the necessities of the learners at a distance (Crumpacker, 2003). In addition to, (Rockwell et al., 1999, cited by Howell et al., 2004) conducted a

survey of faculty motivation and stated that most motivations to participate in distance education seemed to be intrinsic, while inhibitory factors are mainly time related.

3. Threads of Resilience: How Teachers Navigated and Survived Their Struggles

3.1 Cracks in the Digital Classroom Were Mended with Persistence and Practice

The stakeholders play a vital role in the implementation of distance learning. It needs collaboration from them in order for the clientele to have significant learning. Despite all the problems faced by the participants, they found better ways to address the issues. To attend to these issues, the participants made their own "To Do List" for them to manage their time wisely, they also did home visitation, and encourage learners to do well and be diligent in their studies amidst the present pandemic. They have been flexible and patient amidst the challenges in the distance learning modality in this time of pandemic. The participants shared these:

"The manner of distribution and retrieval of modules to each barangay it took careful preparation. We need to have memorandum of understanding between the school and the barangay which quite sometimes difficult because of unexpected raised of covid-19 cases in particular barangays which eventually hinder our way for distribution and retrieval and resulted to rescheduling."(Participant 6 Line 89-93)

"I do have "TO DO LIST" in order to manage my time well because in distance teaching, you will be bounded with lots of things to do in preparing of modules and delivering lessons online."(Participant 1 Line 106-108)

"By giving clear and exact instructions to the students, and by conducting home visitation with the coordination of the brgy officials so that we can reach our students in the remote areas."(Participant 2 Line 109-110)

"By encouraging them to continue their studies during difficult times cause by the pandemic."(Participant 2 Line 110-111)

"We create group chats to follow up questions of the students and by consulting their subject teachers about their activities getting their contact number also helps to communicate them easily."(Participant 2 Line 111-113)

"First I accept the fact that distance teaching/learning is the mode of delivering education to learners. Second research how to manipulate applications online. Apply those research and note what are the do's and don'ts. After that everything will follow."(Participant 3 Line 114-116)

3.2 With a heart full of purpose, face every storm with grace, and let resilience and well-being be your armor

The participants have reminded themselves and their other colleagues to keep motivated in spite all the challenges, challenges, and struggles encountered. Also, they believed that they have to embrace changes and be flexible, and they should be holistically healthy in order to provide meaningful learning to the students with the help and provision of the Department of Education. The participant declared the following:

"You may struggle a lot some make criticize you without knowing the things you do at school and at some point you question your work as a teacher. Do not ever doubt yourself YOU ARE ESSENTIAL."(Participant 1 Line 215-217)

"I know you are doing a great job. Just continue inspiring students, this is the profession we choose and we love this profession, whatever challenges and struggles we are facing right now is not hinder for us to continue to inspire learners. God bless us."(Participant 2 Line 218-220)

"Take it one step at a time. I did it and you can too."(Participant 3 Line 221)

"Always work with a joyful heart."(Participant 4 Line 222-223)

"Be of good cheer, put your shoulder to the wheel. Accept the challenge and adopt the change. If we are not mindful the we find ourselves weary in doing things. Think that there are many ways to kill a lion."(Participant 6 Line 226-228)

"Everything has a purpose in this world, especially as teachers that we are the ones who moulds the future leaders and next generations. We should keep ourselves emotionally, mentally, and spiritually stable and balanced."(Participant 7 Line 229-231)

3.3 Guiding Pillars of Practice in Pandemic-Era Distance Learning

Covid-19 has made schools to close, but the Department of Education designed a continuity plan not to impede education or learning of the students through distance learning. Some changes and adjustments were made and the welfare of the teachers and the students was the utmost priority. And to ensure the safety of all the stakeholders in the new educational set up, proper safety measures were implemented and observed. The participants said these:

"It is the most important set up the DepEd implemented during pandemic time." (Participant 2 Line 6-7)

"Distance learning has its place with or without covid-19, because some schools are already using different kinds of platform in delivering their lesson." (Participant 3 Line 12-13)

"Then pandemic came where face-to-face classes are not allowed to be conducted." (Participant 3 Line 13-14)

"Other schools change their mode of delivering lesson some choose to stick on online, some in modular and blended." (Participant 3 Line 14-15)

"Adjustments are made through using available resources provided by the school." (Participant 4 Line 117)

"As we all know, we are facing an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus (COVID-19). And because of this, we are affected of this killer virus. Until to this very moment, we are now facing the new normal education along with the different modalities faced different disapprovals at first because of the risk but with the effort of education sectors in the Philippines it is done systematically for the goal of continuing education despite the pandemic. The IATF implemented its different safety measures in order to prevent and mitigate the spread of covid-19 while the teaching learning and learning process continues in the country to protect the teachers, parents and students' health and welfare." (Participant 5 Line 22-29)

"Some of the safety protocols includes: proper sanitation of the schools where modular learning is implemented by providing alcohol stands in every classroom for the parents' use, sanitizing footbath mats in every rooms doorsteps, wearing facemask and face shield is a must for the teachers and parents and social distancing is strictly executed." (Participant 5 Line 29-32)

"While on the other hand, for the online learning and other modalities where parents and their children stay at home as well as the teachers, they are prescribed to do proper hand washing and regular sanitizing of their homes." (Participant 5 Line 32-35)

"As the pandemic entered here in our country, we faced different kinds of problems. Each family suffered from poverty, our economy and also the education. There are lots of adjustments to be made most especially to the distance teaching/learning." (Participant 5 Line 120-122)

"The adjustment to distance teaching/learning is dependent to the diversity of learners and the preparation of schools to make learning happens despite of the challenges." (Participant 6 Line 126-127)

"This time of pandemic, all of us are surprised with the sudden change of everything." (Participant 7 Line 133)

"Since everything relies on computer and internet, we don't have a choice but to embrace them." (Participant 7 Line 134-135)

"We need to adjust, lessen embrace and cope with the present situation." (Participant 7 Line 135-136)

3.4 In the face of instructional strain, solutions emerged to ease the weight of content development and uphold learner performance

The participants have gone an extra mile to address the problems they faced in the preparation of the learning resources and the submission of students' outputs. They dedicated more time than necessary in the reproduction of modules and preparation of lesson in their online classes. Also, they do home visitation if deemed necessary. The participants mentioned the following:

"Providing flash drives with learning and instructional materials to both online and modular class."(Participant 1 Line 167)

"There should be ready made instructional materials for the students so that teachers will focus in the implementation of distance learning, DepEd should hire staff to do the printing, sorting and packing the learning materials."(Participant 2 Line 168-170)

"Yes, in delivering the different modes of learning it will be efficient if there are enough supply of SLMs/LAS w/c are readily available, and it will be effective if the students will be given ample time to answer it with the help of the teacher and the parents."(Participant 4 Line 173-175)

"I would suggest that as a teacher, we should keep doing what we are doing and we should lift it all to God and by bringing all the glory, honor, and praises to him everyday. We should put God first and he will be doing our tasks efficiently and effectively."(Participant 5 Line 176-178)

"My mere suggestions.. is the thorough collaboration of the higher office down to the very low office in the instructional instructions. An open communications, identify priorities, preparations of important materials, and manpower."(Participant 6 Line 179-181)

"Yes, online classes, I suggest that if the student chose these mode they should have a good connection for sometimes that it can affect the spontaneous discussion and also their eagerness to learn. In modular, I suggest that LAS/modular content should be simple and activities should be more accessible."(Participant 7 Line 182-185)

"My suggestion to deliver the different modes of learning efficiently and effectively are having colored ready-made modules or books and attach activities/summative test that students can answer it directly. Free internet access for teachers and students so that any queries can accommodate anytime, and also study habit will improve."(Participant 8 Line 186-189)

"To cut the tardiness of the students, I communicated with the parents/guardians of the students to report their behaviour towards passing their outputs."(Participant 1 Line 191-192)

"I always remind my students about the schedule of retrieval and distribution so that they will be aware the time to finish their activity. Those who cannot pass their outputs personally, I let them take a picture of their outputs and send to their subject teachers. Those students who don't have cell phone I conduct a home visit and give modules to answer for the whole set so that he/she will no longer go to school or to the distribution area many times."(Participant 2 Line 193-197)

"Analyze the problems think of the practical solutions to the current problems. Always abide to the valid protocols be proactive in all actions. And evolve in many things."(Participant 6 Line 207-208)

"To overcome some problems: 1. Call the attention of parents or guardian about the schedule of submission."(Participant 8 Line 211-212)

3.5 The partnership with stakeholders proved to be a valuable pillar in sustaining the distance learning journey

It takes a village to teach a child, therefore stakeholders should work together hand in hand for a successful learning to happen. The collaborative effort of those people who are involved in the teaching-learning process plays a vital role in providing quality education among the learners. The participants shared the following:

"The parents of my students, my co-workers, and barangay officials play the biggest part in giving us support."(Participant 1 Line 143-144)

"Co-teachers and friends, DepEd family and other stakeholders plays a big role in this time of pandemic in the implementation of distance learning. With the help of our heads and co-teachers, we can ask them also what are the best thing to do in order to solve the problems and challenges I encounter."(Participant 2 Line 145-148)

"My co-workers who motivate me to do my best, as well as my students who makes an effort to study despite of pandemic."(Participant 3 Line 149-150)

"School heads- for the needed supply for teaching. Colleagues- to finish the work earlier. Department head- for guidance. Family and Friends- for moral support."(Participant 4 Line 151-152)

"As to the delivery of modules to each barangay. The local government units. The stakeholder the PTA.. the churches.. Parents in the community. Fellow teachers, the principal, the office personnel."(Participant 6 Line 161-162)

"Support system is very important nowadays, it's the one high factor to cope with the present situation. My family, friends and especially my mentors and colleagues."(Participant 7 Line 163-164)

"Parents and Guardians. Stakeholders. Teachers."(Participant 8 Line 165)

Discussion on Threads of Resilience

Different learning modalities and methodologies were implemented for education to continue despite the health crisis the world is facing at the present. Also, different precautionary measures were strictly practiced in the community and in schools to mitigate the spread of the disease. Educators worked to guarantee that their students could continue studying at home, using a variety of methods, including delivering printed materials, offering access to educational applications and websites, and implementing new learning management systems or renewing older ones (Bozkurt et al., 2020). The true value of digital revolution and distance learning was highlighted during the Covid-19 emergency: it is during such times that distance learning, which was previously viewed as a simple response by academic institutions to the recent rise of online higher education institutions, has become the only way of providing education and work paths for all levels and types of institutions while also ensuring health protection (Appoloni et., 2021).

In the higher education sector, the Commission on Higher Education determined that HEIs should exercise academic freedom and make remote learning, e-learning, and other different modes of delivery accessible to students (CHED, 2020). Additionally, using face masks or even personal protective equipment (PPE) as a public health intervention would very certainly break the transmission chain and prevent risk of disease transmission (Huang, 2020). Thus, learners, instructors, and non-teaching personnel should be obliged to wear face masks and ensure physical separation while entering schools. Additionally, workers will be obliged to adhere to stringent hygiene procedures, health standards, and other preventative measures, including contact tracking, foot baths, disinfection, and regular washing hands (Tria 2020).

Several schools have built their own programs to assist teachers and offer learners with resources to concepts taught. Additionally, several instructors employed tools provided by online learning internet services or other parties, such as Youtube, Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom, among others. Distance learning facilities often begin the course creation process by designing the student evaluations that will be included. This is a method of outlining learning goals and material that instructors transitioning abruptly to remote operation should consider using. It will assist them in determining the components of the regular curriculum on which they will concentrate their efforts, as well as their objectives for incorporating additional subjects. As a result, schools in industrialized nations have shifted to online learning, including the use of social networking platforms, to avoid depriving learners and pupils of the chance to acquire information. According to some scholars, social networks are the most effective method for distantly arranging classroom instruction during a pandemic (Danchikov et al., 2021).

Teachers and stakeholders play a fundamental role in the teaching-learning process. Teachers are the vessel of knowledge, and because of the pandemic, teachers' presence in the learning process has been limited, thus students struggle in some learning areas. In today's new normal education, parents has somehow took over the role of the teachers as facilitator in the education process. Support network from factors such as parents, teachers, close friends, and peers has an effect on online learning (Saefudin et al., 2021). Another influential factor is social interaction, which will appropriately encourage students' performance throughout online learning modes (Tus, 2021). For instance, most of the family assistance provides students with instrumental help in the form of technology, the internet, and other favorable conditions. Additionally, peer support from close fellow classmates is critical since social concerns are a hindrance to online learning programs, particularly when it comes to overcoming separation and physical distance challenges (Lemay et al., 2021).

Social support has a vital role in reducing scholastic adjustment problems. Likewise, it has evolved into a method for resolving some of the most complicated academic procrastination, plagiarism, and school-skipping situations (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). With exception of conventional forms of pedagogy, m-learning is a composite socio-technical artifact that requires the collaboration and coordinated efforts of several stakeholders to succeed (Okai-Ugbaje et al., 2020).

Furthermore, diverse stakeholders took a variety of actions to influence change to fulfil their own demands and interests. It is critical to offer knowledge regarding this unexpected scenario caused by the epidemic, preferably from the views of several individuals. As such, administrators' measures should support educators mentally and

financially. School districts and nations, with their own histories of change and good or bad encounters, may either promote or obstruct the process. School boards and communities should collaborate actively and foster strong parent-school partnerships in order to effect change. Authorities should not be focused with policies and programs but instead be cognizant of the issues and the process by which professionals effect change (Luik & Lepp 2021).

Implications:

The implications of this study are profoundly relevant to educational planning, teacher growth, and policy making, particularly in remote learning scenarios. In the first place, the varied forms through which instruction are delivered — online, modulated, and blended — must be carefully incorporated in curriculum planning in order to avoid leaving any category of learners behind. Consequently, teacher education and in-service training programs should integrate significant components focused on preparing teachers for these diverse content delivery mechanisms, with teachers being well trained in both the ways with which to use them effectively, as well as the skills and strategies of engaging these methods effectively in non-traditional environments.

This study also exposes the hidden challenges borne by the Physical Education teachers as a consequence of the pandemic, such as excessive workload, inadequate resources, and suffered from poor connectivity. These stressors require a responsive system that empowers teachers with not just modules and gadgets, but with manageable load and time demands that are proportionate to the expectations set upon them. Upgrades in digital infrastructure, module production and logistics—particularly in marginalized communities—are needed to prevent the education deficit from even further expanding in times of crisis.

Lastly, the resilience among teachers highlights the importance for schools and education systems to develop psycho-social support initiatives in order to maintain teachers' well-being and professional morale. Similarly crucial is the increase of stakeholder collaboration, with parents, school colleagues, local politicians, and even teachers as partners. These partnerships need to become institutionalized in education continuity plans, as the research reveals that collaborative support is crucial in enabling teachers to negotiate crisis and maintain education quality in adversity.

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