

“A WHOLE NEW WORLD” TEACHERS IN THE NEW NORMAL: A CASE STUDY



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ABSTRACT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational leaders including teachers experienced diverse problems that challenges their efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of quality education. Problems ranging from the change of learning modality, upscaling of teachers' capability in dealing with non-traditional mode of teaching, workloads, and ancillary tasks, learning materials to be used and many others, further challenges teachers to perform their function efficiently and effectively.

The study utilized Qualitative Case Study Research Design employing “Thematic Analysis” method through manual transcription approach. The study generated a full narrative and detailed analysis of the teacher's workload, current situations, challenges as well as their coping mechanisms as they face the new normal in education. Furthermore, it developed a clear lens on the cases of teachers as they go along the “new normal in education”.

Findings revealed that despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, teachers became more passionate in their craft and was able to devise contemporary strategies to solve every problem they face along the way. Being a public servant requires a strong and firm sense of positivity and resilience. strong partnership with the stakeholders and establishing an open communication with them will make our work a lot easier. Moreover, being adept to available resources and technology could be an asset to meet the demands of 21st-century distance education.

Keywords: *Teacher's Workload, New Normal Education Teachers, 21st Century Education in the New Normal, Teaching Strategies in the New Normal*

INTRODUCTION

A major transformation in the economic, political, and educational landscape was experienced by the Philippines since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic in the country last January 22, 2020 (Edrada, Lopez & Villaram, 2020). For almost six pandemic months, most countries around the globe have decided to temporarily shut down and restrict their operations. The battle against COVID-19 pandemic endured profound impacts to different sectors. It imposed a widespread disruption on travel restrictions (Chinazzi et. al., 2020), limitations on school operations (Viner et. al., 2020), recession and economic issues (Fernandez, 2020), political issues and disputes (Barrios & Hochberg, 2020), diverse misinformation and controversies and many others.

This elicited varied response including community lockdowns and quarantines. Specifically, educational institutions were forced to temporarily close and impede their operations. This has affected more than 1.2 billion learners worldwide, with more than 28 million learners in the Philippines (UNESCO, 2020). This steered students and teachers to study and work from home which led to the shift to online-distance mode of learning.

In the Philippines, there are 304,000 cases as of September 28, 2020, and still increasing (DOH, 2020) with more than 33 million cases worldwide (WHO, September 28, 2020).

Relative to DepEd Order No. 12 s. 2020, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented the Basic Education - Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) as a major response to this challenging time. This will be the new normal in education which will strengthen educational planning. This is to provide quality, inclusive, and accessible education for every student.

This is anchored with the reform initiatives in the department on the improvement of teachers' quality. It is

indisputable that teachers play a crucial role in improving the quality of teaching and learning process. Proficient teachers are vital to raising students' achievement. Hence, enhancing teacher quality, ranks foremost in the many educational reform efforts towards quality education. The Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary, Maria Leonor Briones signed a reform initiative on teacher quality, known as the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which was developed and nationally validated through DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017.

The PPST is a public statement of professional accountability for teachers, to ensure that they are properly equipped to effectively implement the K to 12 program. It articulates what constitutes teacher quality through well-defined domains, strands, and indicators that provides measures for professional learning, competent practice as well as effective engagement (RPMS Manual, 2017).

To be able to produce globally competitive 21st century learners, it requires hands-on and minds-on learning experiences that develop students' motivation and interests towards learning. Furthermore, it is identified that teachers have got to become equipped with modern models of instructions and pedagogies to uphold the department's target of quality education. All of these were challenged in this time of pandemic. The country's current situation renders added obstacle to all education leaders. It is true that COVID-19 pandemic is still existent today and we need to live in the "new normal". Since the education sector is one of the most affected by COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to respond to this trying time and develop the "new normal education policy" (Tria, 2020).

Hence, this study was conceptualized and explored the recent contexts of teachers as they face the new status of education in the country. Furthermore, the study developed a clear lens on the ethnographies of teachers as they go along the "new normal in education".

The study generated a full narrative and detailed analysis of the teacher's workload, current situations as well as their coping mechanisms as they face the new normal in education.

Results of the study provided substantial data that may help educational leaders to conceptualize relevant and meaningful educational programs which upholds the attainment of quality education. Furthermore, results of the study provided meaningful and contemporary inputs that may serve as basis in developing educational plans and policies.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized Qualitative Case Study Research Design. A Background Information Checklist utilized to provide the personal details and demographic profile of the respondents. An interview guide was utilized during the data gathering procedure. This was composed of four (4) essential questions anchored on the objectives of the study and several probe questions that investigated the in-depth perspectives and notions of the respondents/ participants. The researcher employed "Thematic Analysis" method. Transcriptions, coding, categorizing, forming of themes, generating theories and creation of domains through manual transcription approach.

The procedure for data collection were summarized below:

Phase I. Preparation Stage. Preparation and consultative meetings of the research team on the agenda as well as objectives of the study. Crafting of all different tools and instruments to be utilized in the study. Checking and validation of the instruments.

Phase II. Data Gathering Stage. Identification of probable respondents of the study. Assignment of field researchers was assigned to gather data from the identified respondents. The researchers used the validated instruments for the data

gathering procedure which included but not limited to semi-structured interview, FGD, documentary analysis, portfolio analysis as well as triangulation procedure.

Phase III. Data Analysis Stage. Retrieval of all gathered data from the respondents. The researcher performed initial reading and familiarization of the transcript of responses. Categorizing all similar codes from the responses and form themes.

Phase IV. Summary and Interpretation Stage. Crafting of research summary through major domains of the study.

Phase V. Reporting. Crafting the final paper including the results and recommendations of the study. Present the result of the study.

RESULTS

The study explored the teacher's workload, current situation, and challenges as they face the new normal in education. Furthermore, the study investigated the recent underlying principles, concepts, and contexts of respondents.

Question 1. What is the nature and context of your workload in the new normal?

- Consistent delivery of basic education in accordance with the BE-LCP.
- Establishing an open, wider and clearer communication is vital in times of pandemic.
- Proper planning of activities is key to attainment of educational goals.
- Provision of support mechanism and guidance to teachers to be more effective in their functions.

Question 2. What are the different challenges you are facing towards the new normal in education?

- The new mode of delivery of education has required teachers,

learners, parents, and the community to take extra steps to learn and apply current trends and changes in the new normal.

- Monitoring and tracking students' performance became more difficult most specially for the non-readers and non-enumerates.
- Communication to parents, students and co-teachers became a problem, especially if there are uncooperative student, parent, or co-teacher.
- Inability of parents to understand the modules and assist their children.
- Overlapping and designated special tasks makes it even more difficult to manage time.

Question 3. What are your specific contemporary strategies in managing work-related challenges?

- Improving oneself professionally by engaging to different educational activities such as focus group discussions, LAC sessions, attending online trainings and webinars.
- Open and constant communication with parents, students, colleagues, and stakeholders.
- Establish wider and strong partnership with parents and other stakeholders
- Being resourceful and be able to maximize the available technology and resources to deliver quality education the best way we can.

Question 4. What are your specific coping mechanisms and modalities in facing the challenges of the new normal?

- Strong partnership and communication with different stakeholders.
- Maintain positive attitude and emotional composure. Being able to realize that these challenges may be an opportunity as well.
- Teachers are public servant. We need to sort out things to be able to serve. As public servants we need to embrace the changes and

adjustments and always ready to cope with the challenges.

- Being adept to different available resources and technology to meet the demands of 21st-century distance education.

DISCUSSION

Appropriate plans, communication and support mechanisms are vital in the attainment of educational goals and delivery of basic education in accordance to BE-LCP.

The new trend in education brought a huge transition and changes in the system. Ranging from the new mode of delivery, monitoring students' performance, parents, and community support, up to the additional workloads and special assignments given to teachers. Nevertheless, teachers were able to adapt and learn to accept the challenges of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, teachers became more passionate in their craft and was able to devise contemporary strategies to solve every problem they face along the way. They believe that this is the right time to improve oneself professionally and establish an open and constant communication to all stakeholders that could be their partner in the delivery of education. Moreover, being resourceful and be able to maximize the available resources and technology is a vital strategy to address problems and deliver quality education the best way we can.

Being a public servant requires a strong and firm sense of positivity and resilience. To be able to face the challenges of the new normal, we should be equipped with the right attitude and emotional composure, so that we may be able to realize that these challenges may be a great opportunity as well. Furthermore, strong partnership with the stakeholders and establishing an open communication with them will make our

work a lot easier. Moreover, being adept to available resources and technology could be an asset to meet the demands of 21st-century distance education.

It is evident that teachers are always ready to accept change. They tried their best to adapt to changes brought about by the pandemic. They showed high level of resiliency and optimism that in spite the threat of Covid-19 they continue to uphold to serve and protect the welfare of every learner by delivering the highest level of service the best way they can.

We need to accept the fact that we must adapt to the new trends in education in times of pandemic. Challenges and problems are inevitable, so we have to device plans on how to face and overcome these.

This is the right time that we must be more adept to our craft as educators. We need to be transformative in a sense that we face the changes and bring these changes as an opportunity to every learner.

Acknowledge our significant role in the community to ignite hope and progress in spite the pandemic. Willingness to adopt new ways of teaching and being adept to available resources and technology could be an asset to meet the demands of 21st-century distance education.

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