

Embracing the New Normal Set Up from Modular to Face-to-Face Learning: Experiences and Insights of Teachers

Estella Marie P. Alicante-Marte^a, Ron Ford Van B. Estilo^b,
Glendel M. Lapid^c, Mary Joy A. May^d

^aestella.alicante@umindanao.edu.ph; ^br.estilo.126856.tc@umindanao.edu.ph; ^cg.lapid.127834.tc@umindanao.edu.ph;

^dm.may.128873.tc@umindanao.edu.ph

^aFaculty-Teacher Education, University of Mindanao Tagum College, Mabini St. Tagum City, Davao del Norte, Philippines

^{bcd}Student, University of Mindanao Tagum College, Mabini St. Tagum City, Davao del Norte, Philippines

Abstract

This phenomenological research conducted in Davao del Norte delved into the experiences and insights of elementary teachers navigating the transition from modular to face-to-face learning in the New Normal educational landscape. This study highlighted significant challenges faced by teachers, such as the need for students to exhibit proper manners and attitudes, a lack of interest among students, and the importance of maintaining engagement during lessons. Coping strategies identified in the study included the implementation of diverse instructional strategies and the integration of technology in classroom instruction. Insights from teachers emphasized the need for flexibility, the importance of patience, and the value of respecting students. In general, this research shed light on the detailed experiences of teachers in the New Normal setup and provided valuable insights for further exploration and development in the field of education.

Keywords: teaching in new normal; elementary teachers; phenomenology; Philippines

1. Introduction

The reopening of educational institutions, coupled with stringent measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, introduces a sense of unpredictability for both schools and students. With this, the government of Indonesia implemented a series of regulations for the gradual reopening of schools. Aligning the reopening of schools with fluctuations in Covid-19 cases is expected to result in continued interruptions, and the manner in which schools and students will navigate these challenges remains uncertain (Sparrow et al., 2020). In addition, teachers expected that students would face challenges adjusting to school in the aftermath of the pandemic, and they believed that any shortcomings resulting from the pandemic could be remedied through additional make-up lessons (Serpil, 2022).

In Turkey, teachers transitioning to the New Normal faced student-related challenges with face-to-face instruction. While some recognized its benefits, many encountered difficulties. This mirrors experiences of educators worldwide, grappling with various issues in adapting to the New Normal (Inan, 2021). In the Philippines, after several years of implementing distance learning due to the pandemic, schools were preparing to transition back to face-to-face classes. Teachers encountered numerous challenges, particularly regarding students' difficulties stemming from parents overly assisting them with their tasks during modular distance learning (Magsambol, 2022). In addition, teachers encountered numerous challenges amidst the

abrupt changes in the new educational system, including the necessity to monitor students' growth and development closely. Teachers also had to provide support or remediation to students in need (Llego, 2020). Moreover, teachers also face significant challenges related to the transfer of learning quality and students' struggles in following instructions (Agayon et al., 2022).

The Education Transition Theory of Secuya and Abadiano (2022) posits that teachers' adaptability hinges on their appreciation, accommodation, and resilience as instructional specialists amid educational shifts. To foster learning continuity amidst ongoing challenges and pandemic adversities, teachers must recognize and embrace their roles, accommodate specific initiatives, and demonstrate resilience in trying circumstances. Furthermore, David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory provided a fundamentally different understanding of the learning process than behavior theories based on empirical epistemology or the mode implicit theories of learning that support traditional educational methods based on a rational idealist epistemology. This new viewpoint led to different recommendations about how education should be managed, how activities should be balanced with learning, and how knowledge should be produced (Kolb, 1984).

Despite the widespread declaration of a "return to normal" in many schools, the transition is proving to be more complex than initially expected. Politicians and school administrators are vocal about schools being open again and are eager to welcome teachers and students back to in-person classes. However, there is hesitancy among some teachers and students. Certain educators are reluctant to abandon the digital technologies they have embraced, as they have found them to be effective tools for adapting their instructional goals (Kerres & Buchner, 2022). Furthermore, teachers encountered significant hurdles in capturing students' interest and maintaining their attention during lectures during face-to-face classes in the new normal. They also found themselves grappling with the demands of today's competitive society, where patience levels are low and attention spans are short. Additionally, they struggled to effectively instill principles and morality in their students' education (Praveena, 2022). Despite the obstacles in the new normal, teachers remained committed to preserving the quality of students' learning and sought ways to seamlessly continue the learning process as students transitioned from Modular Distance Learning to face-to-face instruction (Magsambol, 2022).

1.1. Research Objectives

This study focused on understanding the experiences and insights of elementary teachers in the new normal. The researchers were interested in contributing to the body of knowledge, especially by expanding the literature in this area. Broadly, this phenomenological study aimed to identify how elementary teachers coped with the transition in the educational landscape from modular to face-to-face learning. Specifically, the study was directed towards answering the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the teachers in the new normal setup from modular to face-to-face learning?
2. What are the coping strategies of teachers in the new normal set up from modular to face-to-face learning?
3. What are the insights of teachers in new Normal setup from modular to face-to-face learning?

2. Method

This study employed qualitative phenomenological research approached to comprehend and investigate the experiences and insights of elementary teachers in the new normal. Specifically, participants of the study were the public elementary teachers in Davao del Norte. A phenomenological study was implemented in this study as it promotes a more in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon being experienced (Creswell, 2014).

Similarly, phenomenology research investigates actual events to learn more about how people interpret them (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022). In addition, credibility and trustworthiness within the study were increased through multiple data collection sources to described the phenomenon of interest, such as formal responses, observations, individual interviews, and focus group discussions (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the questions asked to participants in this study, there are many ideas to discuss further. These discussions aim to fully understand the experiences and viewpoints of teachers in the new normal.

3.1 Proper Manners and Attitude were not Observed

Students needed to exhibit proper manners and attitudes upon returning to face-to-face classes. Educators are observing a substantial increase in incidents of student misconduct, which includes a rise in disruptions within classrooms, unauthorized usage of electronic devices, and displays of disrespect towards teachers and staff members (Hane, 2022). Furthermore, following the pandemic, students are exhibiting behaviors such as introversion, distraction, or heightened socialization, necessitating a period of adjustment to the learning process (Serpil, et al., 2022).

3.2 Lack of Interest and Participation

The foremost challenge confronting teachers worldwide today is fostering interest and active student engagement in the classroom. This issue arises from various factors, including diminishing attention spans, declining patience levels, monotonous teaching methods, and the widespread availability of electronic content. In the current educational landscape, which increasingly prioritizes student-centered learning, educators must embrace innovative teaching approaches to enhance student responsiveness, cultivate critical thinking skills, and promote greater mental engagement in the classroom (Dhamija & Dhamija, 2020). Similarly, teachers come across difficulties including poor interaction, students' lack of participation and interest, also limited socialization. To comprehend classroom instruction and the development of critical thinking abilities, participation, and interest is seen as a crucial element (Hebebe et al., 2020).

3.3 Creating Different Strategies

Almost all participants from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion conducted by the researchers shared that they created different strategies for the students to understand the lesson during the New Normal setup. Education is a learning process that may include improvement by utilizing various techniques and methods for creating exciting lessons. It represents the teachers' highest ideal and way of life. The various learning areas that impact pupils in various educational activities, particularly in the new regular classes, can also address academic advancement. When learning is complete, it analyzes activity and knowledge engagement. It aids educators in providing content that satisfies students' academic demands. The numerous learning domains should how academically successful youngsters were in their activities, attitudes, and learning practices (Saro et al., 2022). A number of different teaching practices such as expansion of teaching hours and tailoring of teaching to specific learning needs are being implemented in Indonesia as a means to recovery from the pandemic (Beatty et al., 2020).

3.4 Using Technology Inside the Classroom

Teachers exhibit a proficient level of technology integration while conducting classes. This competency underscores the confidence that teachers possess in their ability to effectively utilize technology (Elçiçek, 2021). In the digital age, the use of technology for innovative learning continues, with blended

learning maintaining its relevance. This approach prioritizes the human aspect by incorporating face-to-face interactions alongside digital methods, leveraging the unique advantages of direct engagement in the learning process (Thahir, 2023).

3.5 Be Flexible and Increase Patience in Teaching Students

Teachers can give their students the most excellent education possible by being flexible in response to various circumstances and their needs. It was more crucial than ever for instructors to be adaptable to meet the requirements of their students, given the constantly evolving educational landscape. Teachers show compassion and flexibility by adjusting the curriculum and assessment and effectively communicating with students (Gelles et al., 2020). Teachers are also being flexible in a way of combining digital and non-digital technologies aim provide flexible learning, the continuation of comprehensive and accessible education through online, traditional, or hybrid delivery methods procedures for teaching and learning (Santiago et al., 2021). On the other hand, a teacher who embodies religious values such as gratitude, patience, perseverance, trust, and humility is considered exemplary, as these qualities serve as intrinsic components crucial for success in the teaching profession (Ulfah, 2021).

3.6 Treat Students with Respect

Respecting students were essential for boosting teacher effectiveness. Creating a welcoming and inclusive classroom involves placing emphasis on student experiences, identities, and concerns, being a reflective and adaptable instructor, and nurturing strong interpersonal relationships between the instructor and students. All educators should always show their students respect, including in moments of conflict. Respect should always be the cornerstone of relationships educators work hard to establish with their students. When a teacher can get the respect of their students, their effectiveness soars (Cook-Sather, 2022). Also, teachers should create a supportive atmosphere marked by respect, active engagement, facilitation of learning, and deepening students' understanding of the subject matter, all while promoting proactive and student-centered learning approaches (Sharoff, 2019).

4. Recommendations and Conclusions

In the wake of the pandemic, the return to face-to-face classes presents a myriad of new challenges for teachers. Among these challenges, managing student behavior and adapting to in-person instruction stand out as significant hurdles. While students are still in the process of readjusting, teachers find themselves grappling with the intricacies of this transition. To navigate these complexities, teachers have turned to a combination of flexibility, innovative teaching strategies, and the integration of technology into their classrooms. These approaches serve as indispensable tools in addressing the unique needs and demands of the post-pandemic educational landscape. Despite the obstacles, a prevailing theme emerges from the insights shared by educators: an unwavering commitment to maintaining positivity and embracing adaptability. This resilience underscores the realities of operating within an environment characterized by uncertainty and change, where teachers are called upon to continually evolve and innovate in response to evolving circumstances. Based on this study conducted, the researchers would like to list the following recommendations which could be a room for further advancement of this study.

1. Teachers should employ diverse instructional strategies to engage students and maintain their focus during lessons.
2. Teachers must incorporate technology into classroom instruction to enhance learning

experiences and foster digital literacy skills among students.

3. Teachers need to demonstrate flexibility in their teaching methods and act as facilitators of learning, adapting to the diverse needs and learning styles of their students.
4. Teachers are encouraged to cultivate a positive mindset, exhibit respect towards students, and exercise patience when addressing their needs and challenges in the classroom.
5. Schools should prioritize providing comprehensive professional development programs, trainings, and workshops for teachers to equip them with the latest approaches and strategies in teaching within the New Normal educational landscape.
6. Further exploration is necessary to delve deeper into the experiences and perspectives of teachers within the New Normal educational environment, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities they encounter.

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