MEETING THE CHALLENGES IN THE NEW NORMAL: ASSESSING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE VIRTUAL IN-SERVICE TRAINING

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Meeting the Challenges in the New Normal: Assessing Teachers' Perceptions of the Virtual In-Service Training

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Abstract

This study explores teachers' perceptions of virtual in-service training during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its primary purpose is to assess teachers' in-service training perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, identify the challenges encountered, and examine the necessary solutions to lessen the difficulties during virtual in-service training. The study employs a phenomenological research design within the framework of qualitative research to gather data from 8 participants who attended the previous virtual in-service training conducted by the Philippine Department of Education. An open-ended semi-structured interview was used to gather responses from 6 female and 2 male participants. The result indicated that teachers can increase their knowledge, gain technological/technical skills, and improve teaching and learning through virtual in-service training. The challenges encountered by teachers during virtual in-service training are poor internet connectivity and the lack of technological competence. The necessary solution to lessen the difficulty in providing virtual in-service training is the improvement of internet connectivity which should be done region-based. The study recommends that the government, as well as education administrators, may provide teachers with adequate facilities and technical teaching tools that would enable teachers to participate in any teacher training that would enhance their teaching competence as well as technical capabilities.

Acknowledgment

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.

Zamboanga Peninsula

Introduction

In-service training serves as a bridge in many of the improvements that have occurred in the sphere of teaching and learning. Teachers, as the drivers of the educational system, must stay updated on the new concepts, ideas, and new trends in education, specifically in this time of the pandemic, where all face-to-face learning programs were briefly halted and shifted to different modes or blended learning while the situation remained uncertain.

To provide students with continuous education, traditional face-to-face classroom instruction has been substituted by other modes of learning, which has increased the difficulties and restrictions educators face. The necessity for remote learning during the crisis put teachers' adaptability and readiness to deal with a sudden shift to the test (Gacs, Goertler, and Spasova 2020, 380-392; Hodges et al. 2020).

This change brought about some difficulties, including poor online learning, inexperienced teachers, knowledge gaps, a lack of data and connectivity for all pupils, and a range of home settings (Zhang et al. 2020, 55: Bozkurt and Sharma 2020). Teachers had to change and reevaluate their lessons in response to the pressing need to switch to online instruction (Assunção Flores and Gago 2020, 1-10).

Consequently, to fulfill their duties in the current emergency to an acceptable standard, teachers must be trained and developed. For teachers to be prepared to handle the new difficulties posed by the changes in the educational landscape, in-service training is necessary. Teachers will perform better and gain competency through this in-service training program, which will assist the organization in reaching its objectives even during a pandemic.

Beyond emergency teaching, it is crucial to consider the necessity of appropriate training and planning for developing high-quality remote teaching. To enhance teaching skills and familiarize participants with a variety of interactive teaching tools, software, and methodologies that may be deployed to give high-quality instruction, the Department of Education presented the first virtual in-service training ever. (Hodges et al. 2020; Tupas and Noderama 2020, 4665-4660).

The fundamental objective of the Department of Education's virtual in-service training program is to afford teachers with the knowledge and abilities they need to provide high-quality instruction in a blended learning environment. However, several problems came up throughout the training, including inadequate internet connectivity, trouble signing in, and a lack of technological knowledge. To minimize the difficulty of in-service training in the Philippines, it is necessary to evaluate teachers' perspectives of the situation, their difficulties, and potential solutions since limited research is conducted relative to the current educational context. The findings of this study can be applied to enhance human resource development policies, especially when it comes to the conduct of training programs.

Literature Review

This section provides a thematic presentation of ideas, theories, and results from previous studies relevant to this current one.

Organization Learning Theory. Researchers assert that organizational learning theory is key to improving performance in any dynamic and unpredictable environment, including the classroom. As a place of employment, the school served as a venue for staff

and teacher learning, which is crucial to the success of many schools (Argyris and Schon 1997; Schein 1992).

Individual learning is no longer necessary for organizational performance, as mentioned by Senge (2006). He claimed that organizations that can leverage people's interests and capability for learning at all levels will thrive in the future. According to Schein (1992), who backed this notion, continuous learning will be essential in twenty-first-century schools.

Since learning is a continual process, the social viewpoint of organizational learning emphasizes how effective individuals are in their work environments. However, the social viewpoint of organizational learning is more closely tied to learning as a continuous process and concentrates on how competent people are in their work contexts. This is due to many issues, such as poor internet connectivity, trouble signing in, and a lack of technological competence.

Lipshitz et al. (2007) cited that the process stresses learning and offers a variety of learning tools and theories, such as continuing to invest in training and education, enacting cultural changes, assisting experimentation and information dissemination, along with acknowledging and rewarding attitudes and actions that support generative learning organizational learning is essential to its success.

Senge (2006) also added that it is beneficial to keep in mind the principles of the learning organization, such as individual competence, mental models, a shared objective, collaborative learning, and systems thinking, as a way to help one develop the abilities, perceptions, or instincts required for personal mastery. High degrees of personal mastery leads to a person being more committed to their profession, having better 21st-century skills, and learning more quickly.

Self-Efficacy Theory. Numerous studies have demonstrated how self-efficacy affects performance, even in highly homogeneous groups. However, the context and emotional/physiological components can influence how people perceive their abilities, according to Bandura (2007).

General and individual efficacies contribute to teacher efficacy. Teaching effectiveness is the capacity to impart knowledge with confidence. Professional development also includes acquiring new skills for teachers to become more competent, modify their practices to incorporate new technologies, and improve their teaching tools (Kwakman 1998, 57–73).

For instance, teaching efficacy—the notion that teachers should collaborate with various partners to enhance education despite contextual obstacles—is severely impacted when teachers feel alone and helpless and perceive a lack of support from their colleagues. As a result, the degree of cooperation and support in the learning environment is likely to impact classroom management and the capacity to deal with challenging classroom behaviors (Ashton 1984, 28–32; Bandura 2007).

Given the fact that these educators are also the least likely to take part in professional development activities and interact with other educators, self-efficacy is a factor that is advantageous for them, as cited by Raver et al. (2008).

There are no foolproof methods that can help leaders create learning organizations. Building learning-centered cultures is challenging and requires time. It is an endless route. If a school has the right infrastructure in place, there is a far larger chance that educators will decide to take part in continuous learning.

The Role of In-service Training in Teachers' Professional Development. In-service training is a continuous and efficient practice that helps teachers to increase their professional knowledge and skills. It can be done in several ways to achieve a variety of targets and increase knowledge. The major goal of in-service training programs in schools

nowadays is to assist teachers in advancing their professional and personal skills so they can increase the learning opportunities for pupils.

Examining how in-service training affected Kiambu students' progress in secondary school, it was found to have many advantages. Self-development for teachers includes learning new skills that make their jobs easier and finishing the syllabus on time, which results in improved student and teacher performance. Students are influenced when teachers perform effectively. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that professional development could either improve or have a negative effect on general academic performance (Mshila 2013; Stein et al. 1999, 237-269). It is encouraging to notice that student accomplishment can be increased more effectively by a teaching workforce that is more competent, adaptable in its teaching methods, and informed regarding its subject matter, according to Hargreaves and Fullan (1992).
Considering professional development is linked to advancements in information, abilities, attitudes, and conduct, teachers must increase their expertise and modify their behavior to include new technology and improve their practice (Kwakman 1998, 57–73).

Teachers established a learning community in the classrooms they taught. The conversations advanced their technical knowledge. Additionally, thanks to their newly learned pedagogies, teachers can encourage students to participate in both collaborative and active learning. One may argue that teaching is a profession that requires using new information and trends throughout a person's career, requiring teachers to pursue ongoing professional development actively. Teachers might be able to carry out their professional responsibilities in this way given the current circumstances in which they are working and learning (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon 1996; Ullah 2014; Sandholtz 2002).

Professionalism in Schools. It has been found that when allowed to use their professional skills and knowledge in the classroom and at school, teachers become more competent and can reach their fullest potential. The degree to which school reforms and teacher professionalism are connected determines how flexible the improvement administrators can lead teachers through the phases of including them in the growth process, putting professional development programs into place, transforming schools into collaborative cultures, and creating networks using enlightenment (Rizvi 2003, 5-19).

Government schools have the greatest potential for fostering teacher professionalism because they are motivated by various variables, including the school's environment, background, and political will (Rizvi 2003, 5–19).

Within the established government primary school parameters, teacher professionalism could be raised. It was obvious that all of the teachers had improved due to reform efforts, although they were all at different stages or levels of professionalism. Since the improvements were made, teacher professionalism has increased and is now higher than the previous. As a result, gaining new knowledge and experience enhances teachers' professionalism (Duquette 1993, 419–432).

Additionally, teacher training provided educators with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for their profession. It modifies a teacher's character, habits, and attitudes. Therefore, teacher training encourages diverse practices at all stages of instruction (Rahman et al. 2011).

In addition, teachers become more competent when they are given the chance to apply their professional knowledge and abilities to activities in the classroom and at school to maximize their potential. The effectiveness of these links concerning educational reforms and teacher professionalism determines the adaptability with which organizational leaders guide educators through the stages of involving them in the growth process, implementing professional development programs, fostering a culture of

collaboration in the classroom, and creating networks through the use of enlightenment (Rizvi 2003, 5–19).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the face-to-face in-service training conducted in schools was replaced by virtual instruction provided by the Department of Education on a national level. This training explores new educational advancements, like using digital technologies for teaching and learning. The organization encouraged specialists and practitioners to facilitate bridging the pandemic-related gap in the education curriculum's ongoing crisis (Tupas and Noderama 2020, 4665-4660).

As a result, teacher training provides learners with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for success in the classroom (Rahman et al. 2011). It modifies a teacher's character, practices, and attitudes. As a result, in-service training (INSET) needs to be acknowledged as a source of professional development. However, there must be a need for an evaluation of ongoing INSET training improvements.

Challenges Encountered in the Provision of In-service Training. Since the Philippines has the poorest internet access in Asia, teachers have trouble connecting to the internet (Akamai 2017, 1). The complexity of the home setting (Zhang et al. 2020,1), challenges with teacher capacities to employ digital educational resources added by Huber and Helm (2020), and issues with teacher motivations have also been mentioned (Guskey 2002, 382-391). For online learning to be successful and effective, a "digital learning plan" should be prepared before it is introduced, according to Ferdig et al. (2020).

Researchers discovered that teachers' behaviors, norms, roles, and instructional methodologies have changed due to the abrupt shift to online learning. Additionally, they discussed the difficulties teachers had implementing and adapting to online learning due to the limited skill sets in these programs (Noor, Isa, and Mazhar 2020, 183).

The challenges brought on by inadequate online instruction, outdated infrastructure, inexperienced teachers, knowledge gaps, a lack of data and access for all pupils, and various home settings. Recognizing the contrasts between education during times of normalcy and emergencies (Zhang et al. 2020, 55) is critical.

In addition to growing digital inequality, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a new effect on social support networks, crucial for preserving our interpersonal connections and social constructions, according to (Beaunoyer et al. (2020). Furthermore, having internet access is essential for carrying out the plan. It could improve educational quality in several different ways. It expands learning opportunities inside and outside of the classroom by giving access to a wide range of knowledge, skills, and educational resources. Schools and individuals must have access, and teachers and students should obtain digital literacy and other abilities to utilize it fully. Furthermore, if teachers opt to employ remote learning tools, they will need significantly more planning, resources, and thought than education systems can offer in a few days or weeks (Internet Access and Education: Key Considerations for Policy Makers 2021; Wilichowski and Cobo 2020).

Due to the crisis, INSET was conducted virtually in the current context. As a result, the conventional method of providing in-service training was moved to online using different platforms. As a result, the teacher participants were unable to prepare for the abrupt change in the training. Since online learning is new to the current educational setting and the majority of teachers are still not technologically adept and lack sufficient knowledge of the many digital materials, it is projected that INSET will not be given flawlessly this year.

In a related study investigating teacher in-service education. It was asserted that one of the resources that can improve teaching-learning is professional development, such as the Department of Education's (DepEd) In-Service Training for Teachers (INSET). This qualitative study included automated micro-targeting, interviews, and record

analysis. By defining the themes and including Education 4.0, this study attempts to boost how INSET is conducted in the 2019–2020 academic year. The results showed that INSET focuses on teachers' and students' overall improvement during summer and semester break preparation. Except for doing action research, almost all subjects are content-based (Tupas and Noderama 2020, 4665-4660).

Although INSET has been implemented successfully in Luzon, most people in the Visayas are upset with how the training was carried out. Numerous local and foreign evaluations show that the Philippines' educational system will fail if there are no set standards for INSET. Examining INSET is a method for locating its advantages and disadvantages. To promote interest and involvement among teachers, it is advised to incorporate hands-on activities and current developments into the themes (Tupas and Noderama 2020, 4665-4660).

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore the teachers' perceptions of virtual in-service training during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it sought to answer the following objectives:
1. Assess the teachers' perception of the role of virtual in-service training during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Identify the challenges encountered by the teachers in the provision of virtual in-service training during the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Examine the necessary solutions to lessen the difficulties in the provision of virtual in-service training during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Scope and Limitation

This research is limited to one school due to the COVID-19 crisis. The COVID-19 dilemma and the scope of this study are both restricted to a single institution. It was conducted in the academic year 2020–2021 at Arena Blanco East Elementary School in Zamboanga City, Philippines' Arena Blanco District. Eight teachers currently employed at the selected school made up the target sample.

The chosen participants were reluctant to participate in the interview because they were unsure what to say and avoided close contact with others due to the COVID-19 virus. However, the researcher overcame the issue by outlining the importance of responding to the interview questions and informing them that they may opt not to indicate their names because all of the data was intended for academic research purposes. The researcher also assured them that their responses would not impact their identity and that the COVID-19 health protocol would be followed to ensure their safety and health. Moreover, this study limits generalizability since it is limited to one school.

Method

Research Design

The qualitative research design is the most suitable for this study since it concentrates on comprehending social processes from the viewpoint of human participants in a natural setting. Qualitative research is a type of inquiry that can be utilized to look into and understand a particular occurrence. The researcher may ask the participants in the study broad, general questions before looking for recurring patterns in their responses (Creswell 2002). Moreover, the researcher intends to examine the perceptions and experiences of teachers during the virtual in-service training.

Furthermore, its primary purpose is to assess teachers' perceptions of the role of in-service training during the COVID-19 pandemic. Identify the challenges encountered, and examine the necessary solutions to lessen the difficulties during in-service training.

Research Participants

The total number of participants consisted of 8 teachers currently participating in the virtual in-service training, including 2 male and 6 female teachers. According to Groenewald (2004, 42–55), 2–10 participants were an adequate sample size for qualitative investigations to reach saturation. The criteria used in selecting the participants were (1) currently employed at the chosen school and (2) attended the previous virtual INSET. The study collected interview responses from the eight participants after selecting them using the convenience sampling method of non-probability sampling. Convenience sampling was used as the non-random criterion for selecting participants.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made research instrument was used in this study. It is a semi-structured that is composed of six open-ended interview questions. The research instruments were validated by three (3) validators and experts in the field. This is to ascertain the validity of the content of the research instrument. In addition, this study was reviewed by DepEd Planning and Research to ensure that it complied with the divisions' ethical standards for data collection, data interpretation, and dissemination of results.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher secured permission to conduct and gather the data from the Schools Division Superintendent. After approval, the researcher proceeded with the data gathering through interviews. Informed consent was obtained from the participants following the guidelines developed by DiPietro (2008). The participants voluntarily agreed to participate in an interview. The data was gathered in a single round of open-ended semi-structured interviews. The data was gathered firsthand and recorded using a cellphone audio recording system. The participants were given codenames to keep their identities safe. Moreover, the anonymity of the respondents was maintained in the transcripts using pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

All data collected in this study reflected teachers' perceptions of in-service training during the COVID-19 pandemic. The responses of each respondent were transcribed verbatim before data analysis (Merriam 1998). Thematic analysis was employed in generating emerging themes from teachers' perceptions of the role of in-service training during the COVID-19 pandemic, from which conclusions were drawn.

Results and Discussion

Perception of Teachers on the Role of Virtual In-service Training During the COVID-19 Pandemic. The following themes emerged based on the participants' responses: (1) increase knowledge, (2) technological/technical skills, and (3) improve teaching and learning.

Theme 1: Increase knowledge. Four of the eight participants responded that the virtual in-service training increases their knowledge. The participants noted:

> *"This training, the in-service training that was given to us by the DepEd, parang, it is time wherein, it teaches us or it gives us the knowledge on how are we going or will be able to bring the education to the children ..." (Master Shy).*
> *"In-service training for me is getting more knowledgeable and useful information as far as teaching is concerned..." (Joy Neophyte).*
> *"In-service training ito yong kung saan ang mga teachers ay maggain ng knowledge ..."(Violet Lover).*
> *"...through in-service training teachers gain additional knowledge on new techniques .."(Snappy Thin)*

Though each participant used different explanations in their responses, it is clear that most of the participant's responses concentrated on the concept that in-service training increases their knowledge and progresses from a low to a higher level of competence.

The responses' findings are consistent with those of Rizvi (2003, 5-19), which revealed that the professionalism of teachers rises as they are given both professional knowledge to expand their capacities and the ability to apply that knowledge to instructional activities to utilize their skills fully. Additionally, the majority of the responses to the same question confirm Duquette's (1993, 419–432) conclusions that expanding one's experience and skill set enhances a teacher's professionalism.

Rahman et al. (2011) claim that teacher training provides educators with the knowledge, skills, and abilities essential for their professional development as teachers. It modifies a teacher's character, practices, and attitudes. The outcome of teacher training is more likely to be diverse practice at all levels of education. All teacher training programs are designed to help teachers learn new skills to implement the department's vision while remaining competent in their respective fields. Despite the challenges, teachers can still learn more if they focus on their training.

Training teachers compelled to shift from face-to-face instruction to other methods of educating students is crucial during this pandemic. Teachers might adapt face-to-face teaching strategies and approaches and apply them to a blended learning setting since they are unprepared for this quick transformation, which could have different implications.

Theme 2: Technological/Technical Skills. Two participants frequently stated that the teacher in-service training during the COVID-19 pandemic assists teachers in ways that target their technical skills and help them learn new knowledge to enhance their teaching. They stated:

> *"Yes, nakakahelp siya, kasi yong mga teachers na wala masyadong knowledge sa editing, sa paggamit ng zoom,any applications na magagamit sa online teaching o modular learning so nakakatulong talaga siya" (Joy Neophyte).*
> *"The previous in-service training would be a way to bring quality education to children. It opens the doors for teachers to learn new things, especially about technology and digital application that would help deliver quality education in this time that face-to-face classes are not allowed" (Master Shy).*

Providing children with a high-quality education would be possible thanks to previous in-service training. It allows teachers to learn new things, particularly about technology and digital applications, that provide high-quality instruction when face-to-face instruction is not allowed.

This is consistent with DepEd Order No. 012, s. 2021 goal, which focuses on participants' abilities and knowledge of various digital teaching resources, methods, and approaches that help deliver quality instruction. The fundamental objective of the

Department of Education's virtual in-service training program is to provide educators with the skills they need to offer high-quality instruction in a blended learning environment.

The results also support a study by Kwakman (1998, 57–73), which asserts that if professional growth is related to improvements in knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and behavior, teachers must increase their expertise and adapt their practices to include new technologies and expand their practice. In other words, teachers must be conscious of their students' learning activities in the classroom.

Consequently, it can be claimed that teaching involves utilizing cutting-edge ideas and information throughout one's career, necessitating teachers to pursue continuous professional development. Considering the contemporary circumstances in which they work and study, teachers might be able to complete their professional tasks in this manner (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon 1996; Sandholtz 2002, 815-830).

Additionally, this is consistent with Bandura's (2007) self-efficacy idea, which contends that teachers develop self-efficacy after in-service training that affects sociocultural, psychological, and physiological aspects.

The COVID-19 situation calls for confidence in the effectiveness of online training in addition to knowledge and skills. We focus on teachers' self-efficacy in the affective-motivational domain because it is one of the most important categories in teacher competency.

Teachers' self-efficacy relates to their confidence and capacity to perform in various circumstances. Teachers' views of their efficacy may influence whether or not they act, how hard they work at it, and how long they can persevere amidst difficulties. We consider teachers' self-efficacy a crucial resource for those who must adapt to online learning as a result.

Theme 3: Improve Teaching and Learning. Most participants answered that the virtual in-service training could improve teaching and learning and eventually increase the school's academic performance.

> *"If the teachers will develop their skills and their teaching strategy eventually pupils will learn. They will learn more or they will learn from their teachers. Then that implies that the school will increase their MPS, the performance of the school" (Teki Man)*

This finding is strongly supported by Mshila's (2013) study, which looked at how secondary school success in Kiambu was affected by in-service training and identified many positive results. Teachers benefit from self-development, which includes acquiring new skills that help them do their jobs more efficiently and finishing syllabuses on time, which leads to greater student and teacher performance. When teachers perform well, it affects the students as well. This is also consistent with Stein et al.'s (1999, 237–269) study, which discovered that professional growth can either improve or have an adverse effect on overall academic performance.

Participants also responded that the teachers' virtual in-service training may assist students in learning new information through the teacher, which will improve their academic performance.

The main objective of in-service training programs is to help teachers develop their personal and professional abilities to give all students better learning opportunities. A teaching force that is more qualified, adaptable, and knowledgeable about its subject matter is better able to improve student outcomes, according to Hargreaves and Fullan (1992).

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These findings from the study support an investigation by Stein et al. (1999, 237–269) that revealed professional development, like in-service training, can affect overall academic success. Additionally, they claimed that it might help in the development of methods of learning and the resolution of academic problems. Additionally, they emphasized how it might help students achieve their objectives.

Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Provision of Teachers' Virtual In-service Training During the COVID-19 Pandemic. The following themes emerged based on the participants' responses: (1) poor internet connectivity and (2) lack of technological competence.

Theme 1: Poor internet connectivity. Most participants agreed that internet connectivity was one of the problems they encountered during the virtual in-service training.

> *"Unang-una, poor connectivity, mahina talaga ang ano connection, tapos, mabagal ung internet noh, poor." (Violet Lover)*
> *"This is the sad part of online or virtual training, bien mahina el internet connection and malisud gat man log in na system del DepEd". (Master Shy)*
> *"Poor internet connection that is number one". (Joy Neophyte)*
> *"Yong internet connectivity tapos yon, sobra dahil sa internet connectivity nahirapan ako". (Hapi Custodian)*

The responses from the participants are consistent with the research conducted by Beaunoyer et al. (2020). In their investigation, they discovered that contextual factors, such as inadequate access to technology and the internet, which continue to be a reality and have been made worse by recent lockdowns and the introduction of remote learning, should not be ignored because they have an impact on the quality of the experience. These have impacted not just how teaching and learning activities typically develop but also difficulties with digital disparity brought on by access to technology and gaps in digital literacy anchoring firmly in social, economic, and cultural contexts.

Similarly, challenges are driven by poor learning facilities, inexperienced teachers, knowledge gaps, inadequate data and connectivity for all students, and various home situations. It's critical to recognize the educational variations between normal times and emergencies (Zhang et al. 2020, 55).

Since the Philippines has the poorest internet access, teachers have trouble connecting to the internet (Akamai 2017). The complexity of the home setting (Zhang et al. 2020), challenges with teacher capacities to employ digital educational resources (Huber and Helm 2020), and issues with teacher motivations have also been noted (Guskey 2002, 382-391). For online learning to be successful and effective, a "digital learning plan" should be prepared before it is introduced (Ferdig et al. 2020).

Theme 2: Lack of technological competence. Two of the eight participants are seasoned teachers; despite their willingness to adapt to the new educational landscape, their technological competence still needs to be considered.

> *"Yun nga, medyo may kahirapan sa mga seasoned teachers, mahirap macope up ng mga seasoned teachers. Hindi yan agad-agad, yan ang isa sa akin". (Madam Fil)*
> *"I struggle in utilizing computers and new applications but voluntarily enrolled in computer class just to learn things with regards to computers". (Ma'am Wisdom)*

This is the sad reality that exists in Philippine education. The problem is that many teachers, particularly those referred to as "seasoned teachers," find it difficult to adjust to the changes in the educational system, particularly when it comes to technology. Because unskilled teachers cannot fit in or absorb the quick delivery of the topics during

the training, the technology meant to make teaching and learning easier for children and teachers makes learning more difficult.

Another issue is that some schools have embraced modular distance learning, which depends on the Department of Education's provided modules. Some teachers believed that because these schools serve pupils who cannot afford internet access and technology tools, some teachers believed that the training is insignificant for them because they cannot apply the knowledge they gained in their teaching.

Noor, Isa, and Mazhar (2020,183) recently examined a study conducted in Pakistan and found that the abrupt shift to online teaching impacted teachers' behaviors, norms, roles, and instructional approaches. They also discussed the difficulties teachers had implementing and adapting to online learning because of the limited skill sets in these programs.

In addition to worsening digital inequality, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a new influence on social support networks, which are fundamental for preserving our interpersonal connections and social constructions (Beaunoyer et al. 2020).

The inability of teachers to learn and acquire knowledge might also be hampered by a lack of technical proficiency. It is obvious that some experienced teachers who are still working in the classroom fall behind in terms of technology, but they are nonetheless ready to accept and embrace the changes occurring in the educational environment. Even though they lack technology expertise, they remain upbeat and determined to succeed despite the difficulties because teaching goes on regardless of the problems our educational system faces; learning never stops, and given the COVID-19 crisis, there is still no other way to teach schoolchildren than through blended modular learning.

Therefore, it is important to improve teachers' technological abilities. To evaluate the efficacy of online training, institutions should examine this shift to the new standard, from the confines of the classroom to those of virtual reality. Thus, it can be claimed that teaching involves using new knowledge and trends throughout one's career, necessitating teachers to pursue continuous professional development. Given the changing environments in which they work and learn, teachers may be able to deliver their professional obligations in this way (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon 1996; Sandholtz 2002, 815-830).

This is evidence that the Department of Education should spend more money on teacher preparation programs that emphasize technical expertise. School-level seminars and workshops should be promoted because they benefit teachers and students. Successful training may, therefore, result in effective learning.

The Necessary Solution to Lessen the Difficulties in the Implementation of In-service Training During the COVID-19 Pandemic. For the final objective, two major themes emerged: (1) improvement of internet connectivity and (2) regional-based inset.

Theme 1: Improvement of Internet Connectivity. Almost all of the participants expressed that the major problem they encountered during the virtual in-service training was poor internet connectivity. This major problem may trigger the emergence of a new one, like difficulty in logging in, signal problems, etc.

> *"yong internet connectivity talaga ang uunahin nila kasi kahit ano pa kamotivate ang teacher mag-attend ng inset, ng virtual kung wala mahina ang internet nawawalan ng gana, ako mismo sa sarili ko parang nawawalan ako ng gana."* (Hapi Custodian)

To carry out the plan, an internet connection is necessary. It could improve educational quality in several different ways. It expands learning opportunities inside and

outside of the classroom by giving access to a wide range of knowledge, skills, and educational resources. To make the most of it, teachers and students should develop digital literacy and other skills, and access must be open to both schools and individuals (Internet Access and Education: Key Considerations for Policy Makers, 2021).

Online learning requires a strong internet connection to function properly. Reduced teacher motivation and a variety of problems could occur as a result of poor internet connectivity. Therefore, internet connectivity should be considered first and foremost while planning for virtual training.

Theme 2: Regional-based In-service Training. Most of the participants affirmed that if the Department of Education wanted to make the teachers' in-service training, virtual, the department may do it by region.

> *"For me, maybe, since the system of the DepEd cannot cater to all teachers since we are a large group of employees from the Philippines. Maybe the department of education will separate by region." (Teki Man)*

Since DepEd is hosting the virtual INSET this year and teachers from all across the Philippines are participating for the first time, there are likely to be numerous challenges that will arise from this. The training should be thoroughly planned and designed before it is implemented because the participants are greatly impacted by this. One small problem could lead to many other issues.

When teachers choose to use remote learning tools, they will require significantly more planning, materials, and consideration than academic institutions can offer (Wilichowski and Cobo 2020, 187-205). Given these limitations, it's critical to comprehend how, rather than merely how, to assist teachers in this time of crisis. To utilize and enhance their abilities before they return to their classrooms. As part of this phase, it will be crucial to consider the significance of enhancing technical and interactive pedagogies for a bigger number of teachers. Until these issues are resolved, nations cannot rebuild themselves stronger. Therefore, increased financing for teacher capacity-building and the implementation of daily follow-up plans are required.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explores teachers' perceptions of virtual in-service training during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that In-service training is beneficial not only to teachers' professional growth but also to the academic success of schools and the quality of teaching and learning. Training provided by the Department of Education during the COVID-19 pandemic aided teachers in ways that targeted their technological skills and helped them learn new information. In addition, the most serious concern is poor internet connectivity and lack of technological competence. The following difficulties and issues teachers encountered while implementing virtual in-service training may obstruct teachers' comprehension. Thus, internet connectivity should be enhanced, and regional-based in-service training should be considered to reduce the number of participants and prevent systemic issues.

In light of the crucial role that teacher training plays in advancing teaching competence and technical capabilities, the researcher recommends that Curriculum and Implementation Division Supervisors provide teachers with adequate facilities and technical teaching tools that would enable them to participate in any teacher training that would enhance their teaching competence as well as technical capabilities. Moreover, the Division Training Coordinator may provide appropriate training for teachers' needs.

Through this, teachers would be more engaged, competent, responsive, and effective in delivering quality education and technical knowledge innovatively and competitively as a result of this. Further, a teacher who lacks basic ICT skills should be trained accordingly. Teachers proficient in utilizing digital tools should be given training to enhance and hone their skills to mentor their colleagues at the school level. Likewise, the Division Human Resource Management may identify all teachers who necessitate training at the school level, especially those teachers who are seasoned and lack basic knowledge of the use of computers and technologies. Additionally, the Division ICT Officer may provide hands-on training and seminars for teachers as it is very difficult to learn basic ICT without the guidance of the facilitators. Provide interactive training workshops that would enable teachers to create digital materials and utilize the knowledge they obtained from the training to their field of teaching. Moreover, to successfully integrate technology and digital tools, teachers should have long-term training focusing on technological utilization, creating digital materials, and the like. The School Heads may propose training and seminars focusing on utilizing technology and digital tools. In addition, school heads should identify teachers who are proficient in using technology, digital materials, and digital applications and allow these teachers to coach and mentor those teachers who lack basic ICT competence. Teachers mentored and coached by their colleagues are more likely to learn and comprehend. Lastly, teachers must embrace the new trends in education. They should equip themselves with digital tools and technology knowledge instead of complaining. Attending training and seminars that target technological skills should always be considered as these would enhance the abilities that would help teachers deliver quality education to children amid the pandemic.

Dissemination and Advocacy Plans

It is good to note that the findings of this study can be a basis for improvement in teacher professional development and virtual in-service training, especially when face-to-face interaction is highly discouraged. It could help education leaders make teacher teachers training more meaningful, leading to quality teaching and learning in the new normal education setup.

The researcher would cascade the study's findings into the school's learning action cell (SLAC). Through this, teachers and school administrators would have a clear basis for what training to propose and implement that would help teachers perform better. Targeting teachers' ICT competence would help them improve and be proficient if appropriate training is given.

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Financial Report

The table below shows the cost estimates expended before, during, and after conducting this research.

Items	Quantity	Unit	Estimated cost	Total estimated cost
SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS				
Short Bond paper 80 GSM	3	ream	245	735
T664 printer ink Cyan	1	refill bottle	375	375
T664 printer ink yellow	1	refill bottle	375	375
T664 printer ink magenta	1	refill bottle	375	375
T664 printer ink black	2	refill bottle	375	750
Folder	5		10	50
Binding	2		400	800
Transportation and Snacks (interview)			2000	2000
			SUBTOTAL:	5,460

Zamboanga Peninsula

Appendix A

Research Guide Questions

1. What are the perceptions of primary school teachers on in-service training?
    1.1. What does in-service training mean to you?
    1.2. In what ways does in-service training help teachers, especially in this time of pandemic?
    1.3. In what ways does teachers' in-service training help the school?
    1.4. In what ways does in-service training help the students in this time of pandemic?

2. What are the challenges you encountered in the implementation of virtual in-service training?

3. What do you think are the possible solution to lessen the difficulty in in-service training?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Title of the Study: Meeting the Challenges in the New Normal: Assessing Teachers' Perceptions of Virtual In-Service Training

Dear Participant,

My name is Vanessa P. Mallillin of Arena Blanco East Elementary School, Arena Blanco District. I am conducting a research study entitled "Meeting the Challenges in the New Normal: Assessing of Teachers' Perceptions on Virtual In-Service Training.

The purpose of the research study is to intensely examine teacher's perceptions, and the challenges faced in the provision of in-service training, examine the possible solution to lessen the difficulties in the provision of in-service training, obtain recommendations from teachers, develop a successful in-service teacher-training program amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

Your participation will involve taking part in a semi-structured interview. You will be asked to provide free-response answers to open-ended questions regarding your perceptions on the provision of in-service training that you attended during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please be advised that there is no right or wrong answer. The anticipated amount of time for the completion of questions is approximately 30 minutes.

Your identity will be coded using and only the researcher will have access to this code securing further your identity. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without penalty or loss of benefit to yourself. The results of the research study may be published, but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party.

In this research, there are no foreseeable risks to you.
Although there may be no direct benefit to you, a possible benefit of your participation is providing the organization a better understanding of the perceptions of teachers which could increase the quality of the provision of in-service training.

 If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at 09551940970 or via e-mail at vanessa.samsaraji01@deped.gov.ph
Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

 Participant's Signature   Date

 _____   _____

     VANESSA P. MALLILLIN
Investigator's Name and Signature

Zamboanga Peninsula