

WEARING THE MASK OF THE NEW NORMAL: TEACHERS' CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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II. Abstract

The prevalence of COVID-19 pandemic has caused dramatic changes in the educational landscape affecting teachers. Anchoring on this phenomenon, this gualitative study explored the lived experiences of teachers in the new normal, particularly probing into their struggles, coping mechanisms and successes. The participants were composed of 11 teachers selected via maximum variation sampling. The teachers were either male or female, tenured or young, for SY 2020-2021 from mountainous, coastal and urban schools. A validated semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data, which were thematically analyzed following Colaizzi's. A focus group discussion was also conducted to verify and collect more experiences. As a result, the teacher's new normal experience can be described as transformational, shifting from a bulk of challenges to a circle of successes. The challenges were clustered in three stages: pre-opening, during and towards the end of the semester. The challenges in the first stage included fears, hesitancy, inadequate expertise, and underpreparedness of the work system. The challenges in the second stage were demanding preparations, student unfavorable mindset, unorganized work system, among others. On the other hand, the challenges in the last stage were brought by emergent experiences. Additionally, the teachers were able to survive the challenges by selfdiscipline, improved support system, continuous upskilling, etc. The teachers succeeded in terms of their positivism, acceptance, adjustment and persistence. To address the findings, a validated Teachers' Strategic Support Plan (TSSP) was proposed and disseminated during the Management Committee Meeting.

Keywords: COVID-19, New Normal Education, Struggles, Coping Mechanisms, Success Stories, Teachers' Strategic Support Plan (TSSP)



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IV. Introduction of the Research

Today, the world is besieged with the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic causing threats not just to the world's economic stability, but also to its educational landscape. The global outbreak of this pandemic disease has caused gigantic educational crises affecting most of the countries in the world.

Based on UNESCO's data, 1,379,344,914 or 80% of the world's learners in all educational levels are now out of school by country-wide closures. Another 284 million learners are affected in U.S. states such as California and Virginia (McCarthy, 2020).

Moreover, Thomas (2020) mentioned that based on the United Nations (UN) report, 166 countries closed schools and universities affecting one and a half billion children and young people which is roughly equal to 87 percent of the enrolled population. Sahni (2020) also accentuated that 320 million students in India have been affected by COVID-19 school closures. She added that the government's recommendation to shift to online teaching might not be viable because of India's immense digital divide.

The aforesaid scenarios only show that the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically affected the school systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closures of schools, universities, and colleges.

However, despite the threats posed by this pandemic, the mission of all education sectors remains the same – to overcome the learning crisis and respond to the pandemic. The challenge today is to mitigate, as much as possible, the negative impact this pandemic will create on learning and schooling; and build on this experience to get back on a path of faster improvement in



learning. To address this challenge, many countries have shifted to different modes of teaching and learning such as modular instruction, online learning, blended learning, utilization of radio and television, and other digital learning platforms.

Schools in New York prepared for online learning by ensuring they have access to learning materials. As of early April, they have distributed around 500,000 laptops and tablets to their students, allowing them to participate in online classes (Angdhiri, 2020). Moreover, countries such as Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Bermuda, among others have adopted various teaching – learning modalities which include broadcast media, remote learning programs, online textbooks, and other digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Moodle and Cloud Solutions (The World Bank, 2020).

Nonetheless, the abrupt changes in the educational system have created a huge impact on the lives of teachers, students, parents, and other education stakeholders. Teachers and learners all over the world are the ones mostly affected by this pandemic since they are the main players in the educational setting.

According to Saavedra (2020), the current crisis has immediate impact on children such as losses in learning and increased dropout rates. He added that most countries have unequal education systems, hence the negative impacts are disproportionately felt by poor children. With this, Li and Lalani (2020) emphasized that some students without reliable internet access and/or technology struggle to participate in digital learning creating a gap as seen across countries and between income brackets within countries. They illustrated that while 95% of students in Switzerland, Norway, and Austria have a computer to use for their schoolwork, only 34% in Indonesia do. In the US, there is a significant gap between those from privileged and



disadvantaged backgrounds: while virtually all 15-year-olds from a privileged background said they had a computer to work on, nearly 25% of those from disadvantaged backgrounds did not.

Furthermore, Baht (2020), emphasized that there are many challenges that students are facing when learning online, such as distractions, less personal interactions, low self-motivation, and poor time management skills, to mention a few. Chari (2020) concurs this idea that online learning brings forth significant deficiencies such as lack of human connection, absence of opportunities for collaborative learning, limited teacher supervision and opportunities for hands-on learning in complex subjects. Similarly, Ramamoorthy (2020) stressed that adapting online settings for education poses various problems such as issues of classroom management, appropriateness and effectiveness of online teaching platforms, teachers' competence and skills, and internet connectivity.

In such unprecedented and uncertain times, it is normal for people to experience higher levels of stress and anxiety. Teachers are also severely affected by this pandemic.

In India, online classes are turning out to be a nightmare for teachers. In most schools, teachers are not prepared to handle online teaching, leaving them overworked and vulnerable to abusive behavior from students (Awasthi, 2020). Relative to student misbehavior, UNESCO (2020) emphasized that teachers need socio-emotional support to face the extra pressure being put on them to deliver learning in a time of crisis.

The forenamed scenarios strongly point out that there are challenges that need to be addressed in the adoption and implementation of different teaching modalities.



In the Philippines, the COVID-19 crisis has affected about 27 million learners, one million teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as the families of learners. The disruption caused by Covid-19 has forced schools to adopt online learning (Obana, 2020).

With the current trends in education delivery adopted by different countries, the Philippines has also resorted to using different alternative teaching-learning modalities. To date, the education department has started laying the groundwork for a different kind of learning using technology including radio, television, online classes, and modular learning. The department has been conducting remote enrollment for the first time, drawing a total of 5,086,600 public school learners nationwide in the first enrollment week for School Year 2020-2021 (DepEd, 2020). Accordingly, the alternative learning delivery modalities to be utilized are modular, television and radio-based instruction, online, and blended, which will be offered for various types of learners across the country.

On the other hand, with the request of several local government units and private schools, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte approved the conduct of limited face-to-face classes in low-risk areas, as advised by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) and the Department of Health (DOH) starting next year (DepEd, 2020). Furthermore, Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones noted that this set-up will be allowed in areas under Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) or in the transition phase between GCQ and the New Normal (Hernando-Malipot, 2020). With this mandate, the department has advised schools to decide on the use of learning methods depending on the situation in areas where schools are located.



Despite the initiatives of DepEd to deliver quality education, there are challenges and realities that need to be addressed concerning the utilization of the different alternative learning delivery modalities.

Schools transitioning to digital platforms will have to hurdle challenges on the widening inequality of ICT access, the increasing cases of infrastructural gaps, poor internet connection, and wide-ranging training needs of teachers (Obana, 2020). Supplementarily, Malindug-Uy (2020) enumerated other challenges such as the need of teachers to adjust and be familiar with the dynamics of technology, the acquisition of ICT fluency, the preparation in implementing blended learning programs, and the increasing charges for internet subscriptions.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the education system continues to cope with the crisis with a renewed sense of responsibility and urgency to close the gap in opportunities ensuring that all children have the same chances for quality education.

With the directive of the Department of Education to adopt different alternative teachinglearning modalities for the SY 2020-2021, Candon City Division adopted various teaching-learning modalities, to wit: online teaching, modular instruction, television-based instruction (TVBI), and blended learning. Guided by this, the division has already crafted and disseminated guidelines on the development, quality assurance, and utilization of the different learning modalities. Since this issuance, teachers have been preparing modules, activity sheets and other supplementary instructional materials. Furthermore, teachers have also been conducting continuous simulations on the different teaching modalities among colleagues and learners.

But with the abrupt transition of education setting in the division, teachers are prompted to adapt in the new educational environment. Stability of internet connectivity, insufficiency of



digital devices and equipment, preparation, among others were some of the problems encountered. Moreover, the necessary skills and training needed in the operation of these platforms was also an issue.

Truly, teachers in the new normal assume huge responsibility in the delivery of quality education. Thus, there is a need to explore the lived experiences of teachers during this pandemic to help them thrive in the new education environment.

It is in this light that this study was conceived, whose focal concern is to explore two layers of the lived experiences of the teachers in the division. The first layer includes the challenges of the teachers in preparing for the classes in the new normal. This will look into their experiences before, during and after the opening of classes. The experiences include webinars, preparation for the different learning modalities, simulations, and the like. The second layer digs into the coping mechanisms of the teachers in surpassing the challenges. The overall thematic analysis of the experiences will be used to craft a TSSP.

V. Literature Review

The section presents a review of literature and studies gathered from scholarly articles.

Teachers' challenges

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has brought myriad of challenges in the educational systems across the world. In a moment, teachers and educators were confronted with a multitude of tasks in the delivery of quality education.

According to Fleming (2020), the pandemic has caused various challenges such as the abrupt transitioning of profession online, trading in classroom discussions for the less personal thrum of e-learning, pouring in late nights and long weekends to provide students with some



semblance of normalcy, adapting lesson plans, moving the curriculums online, and implementing creative ways to engage the students, the impossibility to replicate in-person, and provided handson instruction on Zoom or any other e-learning portal. Furthermore, it was also a burden for teachers knowing that many of the students have to face added difficulties with distance learning because of unstable internet or faulty devices or none at all, no quiet place to join class from, or to work.

Moreover, the national survey conducted by Sokal, Babb, and Trudel (2020) in Canada, disclosed that one of the most stressful aspects of teachers' jobs in current conditions is on how they are using daily contact with students to reinforce established relationships and ensure students have adequate food, support and safety.

Similarly, the findings of the survey conducted by Albert Shanker Institute (as interpreted by Kraft and Simon, 2020), revealed substantial challenges to teachers caused by the sudden move to remote teaching as summarized in the following: 1) balancing their work responsibilities with their home lives during the pandemic; 2) being uncomfortable using the technological tools required for teaching at home; 3) engaging students in remote learning on a regular basis; 4) unsupportive working conditions; 4) and student access to technological tools especially among low-poverty schools.

Furthermore, in the study conducted by Mailizar, Maulina and Bruce (2020) in Indonesia on the barriers of E-learning implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic, they found out that on the teacher level barrier, lack of teachers' knowledge was the top barrier with a mean of 3.0 followed by lack of confidence with a mean of 2.9. This was further supported by UNESCO (2020) emphasizing that one of the challenges that teachers are facing in the present situation is



converting teaching materials into digital format especially that only few teachers have strong digital and ICT skills. This only shows that teachers are not fully equipped with the skills and training necessary to implement E-learning.

In addition, Beteille (2020) emphasized that school systems and teachers have to face three serious bottlenecks: 1) stress due to economic uncertainty, concern for the safety of loved ones, and anxiety about the future; 2) the daunting challenge of returning to schools where many students have dropped out or fallen behind and increased pressure on teachers to ensure catchup with little professional development support; and 3) little access to the right technologies or the skills to use them.

Teachers' successes

The challenges brought about by the pandemic have driven teachers, educators, and educational institutions to be more resilient and adaptive to changes. Amidst the pressing situation, teachers continue to encourage, shape, and resourcefully reach their students regardless of the circumstances.

In South Australia particularly in The University of Adelaide, the student support services have successfully adapted to the challenges of remote delivery. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the rapid adaptation to enable remote delivery of the student engagement and success services has been a remarkable achievement. With this, students interacting with the services have risen especially in disciplines that have typically had low engagement. Moreover, the high attendance and participation rates in these services has also been met with positive feedback from students about how they operate remotely (Kemp, 2020).



Moreover, in New Jersey teachers have successfully shifted their teaching from the classroom to the cloud, developed new ways to connect with their students and deliver their curricula, and launched numerous initiatives designed to give back to their communities. These efforts of the teachers made the majority of their students have access to quality instruction, necessary support services, and meals during a time of historical disruption despite students' lack of technology to access remote instruction (Grimaldi, 2020).

Similarly, teachers in the Winnipeg School Division in Canada have been very successful in preparing, collating, and packaging home learning kits for students. Learning packages were dropped off to families where transportation was an issue. Also, industrial arts teachers are using their spare time to make medical mask clasps using 3-D printers and plasma cutters. On one hand, physical education teachers are preparing teaching videos and sharing them online and through social media to motivate students to stay engaged (Manitoba Education, 2020).

Furthermore, staff at St. John School in Canada feel successful utilizing online learning because they have been able to keep students engaged and connected with their class (Shykaruk, 2020).

In addition, during the pandemic the website of Jamie Frost has been very successful in offering several videos, teaching slides, quizzes, and a bank of exam questions for free. His website has seen over half a million hits a day since schools have closed. His success made him shortlisted for the Global Teacher Prize (Education Industry Experts, 2020).

Intervention proposed to help teachers



In times of crises, be it natural calamities like typhoons, or pandemic, teachers, in order to continue their mission, need support systems and programs. Teachers and educators play a central role in the educational system, hence helping them thrive in times of disasters is imperative.

Anent this, the national survey conducted by Sokal, Babb, and Trudel (2020) in Canada found out that teachers who perceived high parental support or high administrator support, and collegial support coped better and are more successful in recovering efficacy and coping.

In this regard, Beteille, Ding, Molina, Pushparatnam, and Wilichowski (2020) as outlined by the new World Bank note emphasized three key principles to strengthen teacher effectiveness during and in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic as embodied by the three core support systems along resilience, instruction, and technology.

True enough, empowering teachers along these dimensions would significantly contribute to teachers' effectiveness in carrying out their duties and responsibilities amidst the crisis.

In the same vein, Teacher Task Force and UNESCO (2020) have identified seven ways to support teachers and education support staff during school reopening namely: 1) ensuring that teachers' voices are heard in policy and planning; 2) assuring that the school environment is safe for the whole school community; 3) recognizing the importance of teachers' and learners' psychological, social and emotional well-being; 4) helping teachers adapt to the new normal as they resume classroom teaching; 5) guaranteeing there are enough teachers, working in the right conditions; 6) maintaining or augmenting financial resources; and 7) monitoring the situation and including teachers in the feedback.



This only shows that giving teachers the best chance of succeeding as they return to school means listening to their needs, protecting their safety and well-being, and helping them adapt their approaches to teaching and learning.

In addition, the study conducted by Hamilton, Kaufman, and Diliberti (2020) across United States, recommended that teachers need professional development to help them address the challenges of distance learning, especially teachers who are working with the most vulnerable students, and resources and strategies to help students stay motivated and engaged while they are learning remotely, as well as guidance to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities (e.g., labs, internships) and to assess and support students' social and emotional learning.

Furthermore, in the study conducted by Mohmmed, Khidhir, Nazeer and Vijayan (2020) in Oman, the Centre of Academic Practice (CAP) established a massive program for the academic staffs about the utilization of the online tools on the instructional delivery after the outbreak of COVID-19 and the suspension of the face-to-face classes. The aim of this program is to support the educators during the transformation process to the emergency remote teaching (ERT) at the college. Some of the conducted workshops and webinars deal with creating great learning experiences, assessing students online, supporting students online on their assessment, utilizing Microsoft Class Notebook for online education, and collaborating in the classroom with MS Teams.

Similarly, in Uganda, the government is relying on the UNESCO-Chinese Funds-in-Trust program which has established a robust teacher training system country-wide. To this effect,



teacher training institutions have been deployed to deliver capacity-building workshops for teachers without ICT skills via one of the program's three ICT hubs (UNESCO, 2020).

In the Philippines, in response to the educational crisis, a series of capacity-building webinars were provided to teachers and administrators sponsored by the Department of Educator-Office of Information Technology, Open Education Resources and other private organizations and book publishing companies. Majority of the topics discussed in the sessions are on the use of multi-modal and flexible learning deliveries using Information and Communication Technology platforms, both online and offline. Likewise, Abram Abanil, DepEd Information & Communication Services, shared the initiative of the department of creating 60 eBooks per week done by their 1700 trained personnel which are all deposited in the DepEd Commons and its websites. The same division also trained 70,000 out of 900,000 teachers in Online training through Webinars (Capulso, 2020).

Meanwhile, in November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines causing a huge impact on the educational systems of the affected area particularly in Visayas. During this time, the Save the Children organization in partnership with Prudence Foundation and through their joint Safe Schools provided direct training to children and teachers on how to better prepare for, manage and quickly recover from the impacts of disasters. Known as Batang (child in Filipino) Empowered and Resilient Team (BERT) facilitators, lead school children are trained to promote disaster preparedness and children's rights among their fellow students. Equally teachers themselves are trained as Advisors to ensure they have the capacity to support and coach BERT children (Save the Children, 2019).



Truly, teachers who are provided with the right assistance and support during uncertainties cope faster with the demands of education. This pandemic has shown the world how important teachers are and how they can succeed, even during a crisis, with the right technology and support system.

VI. Research Questions

This qualitative research explored the challenges and successes of teachers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The key questions of the study revolved on exploring the struggles teachers encounter in the new normal, and the coping mechanisms of the teachers in surpassing the challenges.

VII. Scope and Limitation

The focal concern of this research was on the phenomena of teachers' challenges and successes amidst the pandemic. This basic research covered 11 selected teachers, either proficient or highly proficient teachers, excluding new hires, across all levels in the Schools Division of Candon City for the First Semester of the School Year 2020-2021.

A validated interview guide was used as a data-gathering tool. The interview was conducted using limited face-to-face encounters or online mechanisms, depending on the health situation. For the limited face-to-face, the researchers and the informants subscribed to IATF-DOH health protocols.

The interview was done in several sessions, in the natural settings of the interviewees.

The output of this study was a validated teachers' strategic support plan (TSSP) for the City Division of Candon. The thematic analyses of each layer of experience were the bases in crafting a TSSP.



VIII. Research Methodology

a. Sampling

Maximum variation sampling of qualitative research was used. This type of sampling considered select teachers from elementary, JHS, and SHS. The purpose of the sampling was to explore the voice of teachers from different fields to get a representative picture of the struggles and triumphs of the teachers in the entire division. Specifically, teachers were selected using the following inclusion criteria: (1) elementary or secondary public school teachers for SY 2020-2021, (2) male or female, (3) teachers from urban, coastal or mountainous school, (4) teachers who have given permission to be interviewed as attested by the signed consent.

The details of the informants are indicated in Table 1.

As an exclusion criterion, newly hired teachers for SY 2020-2021 were not included since they did not have yet a share of the phenomenon being explored.

In determining the saturation, the researchers observed that while interviewing the 7th informant, some pieces of information were being repeated and only some bits of new information were shared. The researchers were keen to note that they were about to reach the saturation point. They interviewed more and found no new information. They decided to stop on the 11th interviewee. This is also because after the careful initial data analysis on the transcript of the eleventh interview, there were no new additional concepts or ideas that illuminated. It was

The following table shows a brief description of the participants in the study.

Table 1. Brief description of the informants



Republic of the Philippines

Department of Education

REGION I

SCHOOLS DIVISION OF CANDON CITY

Participant No.	Pseudonym	Sex	Age Range	School Type	School Location
1	Miguel	Male	31 – 40	SHS	Mountainous
2	Edward	Male	31 – 40	SHS	Coastal
3	Isabel	Female	41 – 50	Elementary	Urban
4	Vincent	Male	41 – 50	Elementary	Urban
5	Sophia	Female	31 – 40	SHS	Coastal
6	Ronald	Male	21 – 30	JHS	Urban
7	Jennifer	Female	51 – 60	Elementary	Mountainous
8	Dianne	Female	31 – 40	SHS	Coastal
9	Albert	Male	21 – 30	JHS	Coastal
10	Elaiza	Female	21 – 30	Elementary	Mountainous
11	Pauline	Female	51 – 60	JHS	Urban

at this point where no new information or ideas were surfacing, hence, further coding is no longer feasible. According to Faulkner and Trotter (2017), data saturation refers to the point in the research process when no new information is discovered in data analysis, and this redundancy signals to researchers that data collection may cease. Saturation means that a researcher can be reasonably assured that further data collection would yield similar results and serve to confirm emerging themes and conclusions.



b. Data Collection

The focal concern of the study was to explore three layers of the lived experiences of the teachers in the Division. The first layer encompassed the challenges of the teachers in preparing for the classes in the new normal. This examined their experiences before, during, and after the opening of classes. The second layer dug into the coping mechanisms of the teachers in surpassing the challenges, whereas the third layer probed into the successes of teachers. The overall thematic analysis of the experiences was used to craft a TSSP.

The instrument that was used in data collection was a validated interview guide. The validators were qualitative research experts composed of a dean of a school of teacher-education, a CHED education supervisor of Regional Office I, and a CHED education supervisor of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). All of them possess a terminal degree and have conducted several qualitative studies. The specific comments and suggestions of the validators were incorporated in the final copy of the guide. Further, the calculated validity coefficient was 4.90 described as very highly valid. This signified that the guide is an acceptable instrument.

For dependability purposes of a qualitative instrument, the same tool was subjected to dry run among six teachers: two from each strategic area. The dry run gave the researchers the needed adaptability in asking follow-up, probing, clarificatory, and even alternative questions. This step also armed the researchers in the actual data gathering process.

Relevant to the interview process, this qualitative research was conducted in such a way that the inquiry did not disturb the natural context of the phenomenon being studied. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative investigators should consider the concept of studying things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of the phenomena in terms of the meaning



people bring to them. As applied, the researchers went to the schools of the informants to gather their experiences in the non-controlling context. Thus, teachers in the upland, coastal, and rural areas were interviewed in their respective workstations. Prior to the start of the interview, a rapport building was established. This was done to ensure that the interview process was not tense and that the interviewee would trust the interviewers.

After the validation and dry run of the interview questionnaire, the researchers sought the permission of the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) through the Schools Division Research Committee (SDRC) for review and endorsement. The Office of the SDS gave the permission to the researchers as contained in his letter (see appended letter of approval from SDS). In turn, the researchers coordinated with the school heads of the Division to kick off the data collection process (see appended sample letter).

For triangulation purposes, investigator and data types of triangulation were used. Investigator triangulation uses multiple researchers to study a particular phenomenon (Denzin, 1973). On one hand, data triangulation employs different time, space, and persons (Glen, 2017). In view of this, there were two researchers collaborating on this phenomenological research. The key informants were from different educational levels, school location, and duration of experiencing the phenomenon.

Since this research was conducted amidst the pandemic, observance of the health protocols was strictly adhered to. Also, convergence of the researchers and the respondents with other concerned personnel was conducted to ensure that the objectives of the research are clear among all, which resulted in the full realization of the research. Further, no classes were sacrificed in the implementation of this research and documents, references were properly documented to



promote copyright laws. Anti-plagiarism online platform was also used to ensure this. Moreover, names of the teacher-participants were not revealed in any part of this research. They were not forced to take part in this research but were motivated to participate. A consent letter was facilitated prior to the conduct of interviews.

Also for the validation of the themes, the researchers facilitated an FGD and the results revealed that themes are the actual experiences of the teachers in the pandemic. This method is what we call in phenomenology as validation by the same group, as the terminal part of Colaizi's methodology. This verification by the same group adds to the trustworthiness of the data. Nowell (2017) says that credibility of a study is determined when co-researchers, readers or the informants, themselves, are confronted with the experience, they can recognize it. Credibility addresses the "fit" between respondents' views and the researcher's representation of them (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

IX. Discussion of Results and Recommendations

This section presents the salient findings of the study, thematically analyzed using Collaizi's method. The challenges are clustered into three stages: pre-opening, during, and towards the end of the first semester. Also, the coping mechanisms and successes of teachers were analysed and presented in this section.

CHALLENGES IN THE NEW NORMAL

PRE-OPENING OF CLASSES

In a usual normal opening of classes, there are many struggles for teachers. Such struggles have been magnified during this period of pandemic. The following are the emerged



themes of the challenges experienced by teachers prior to the opening of classes. They have been operationally defined based on the bracketing, clustering, and merging of initial codes.

Fear of Uncertainty. This is an inner challenge of the teachers which gives them worries and troubles on the repercussions of unsure events and circumstances. The repercussions include the extent of underpreparedness for the new normal, probability of losing work and non-remuneration.

Any person feels uneasy towards uncertain events. He will wonder of what tomorrow may bring. Since he does not know what will happen, he often feels unarmed and unready. Dianne shares "We are about to enter a school year where we do not know yet what to do. We have no definite directions (*Pumasok tayo sa lugar na hindi pa natin alam ang direksiyon. Pumasok tayo sa platform na hindi pa natin alam ang gagawin*)." In the same manner, Sophia shares "We do not know what the changes will be. I have a sort of anxiety because I am afraid I might not be able to perform my responsibilities as a teacher in this time of pandemic (*Hindi natin alam ang mga pagbabago. Medyo may konting pangamba kase baka hindi ko magampanan ang mga dapat kong gawin bilang isang guro ngayong pandemya*)." The same sentiment is also felt by Vincent who relates "I am not sure of the things I should do as a teacher in order to teach effectively and efficiently in this time of pandemic (*Hindi ako sigurado kung ano dapat ang mga gagawin ngayon may pandemya bilang isang guro para makapagturo nang mas maayos*)".

Also, Ronald adds "We do not know how and when to start. We do not know what to do. It is our first time (*Hindi namin alam kung paano magsisimula. Hindi namin alam kong anong gagawin*)". Since teachers feel that they have no direction on how to go about their work,



especially adopting unfamiliar distant modalities, they develop this fear that they cannot deliver the educational goods.

As a teacher immersed in the normal set-up, teachers usually prepare the physical aspect of the classroom, chair arrangement, writing lesson plans and the like. But with this pandemic, teachers feel confused on what modality to be adopted, how to go about the modality or if they can effectively deliver in a modality that they are not familiar with. Roald continues "We do not know what modality to apply and if this will be effective (*We are not sure of the effectiveness of the modalities. The preparedness of the modules. Kung ok na ba, kung ito ba ay swak sa mga estudyante*)". The usual practice of preparing for the class has been put aside and replaced by something unfamiliar and uncertain.

The fear of uncertainty also encompasses the formation of "what ifs". Teachers usually ask themselves several what ifs – what if schools close? What if I will not be receiving my salary? These doubts contribute to the uneasiness of the teachers that certainly affect their personal and professional efficiency. MIguel shares "What if I will be removed from my work? What if I will not be effective in this modality (*There are what ifs in our minds. What if there is an academic freeze, mawawalan ba kami ng trabaho? These factors have affected our mental health. Negative ang impact sa amin).*" The same feeling was shared by Jennifer telling "What might happen to us teachers if there are no students who will enrol this school year (*Anong pwedeng mangyari sa aming mga teacher kapag walang mga bata ang nag-enrol ngayon taon*)." These uncertainties negatively impacted teachers.

One aspect included in this anxiety is the confusion developed among teachers on what modality to adopt since there were many options to choose from. Albert describes that there were



many modalities presented, none of which were familiar with him. He shares that since there are many options to be adopted and further adjustments needed, he fears that he may not be effective as compared to the old normal of education. Having varied options sometimes lead to confusion, and confusion may develop into uneasiness.

This fear of uncertainty also emanated from the study of Felicia (2015) explaining that one of the major barriers to e-teaching was the fear felt when one is faced with stepping outside one's comfort levels and the unwillingness to take the risk. It also included the fear of looking foolish, fear of asking for help, fear of not "catching on" quickly enough, and fear of not being able to be effective with the technology in instructional settings.

Moreover, this theme is also synonymous to the ideas presented by Robinson and Smith (2021). Accordingly, uncertainty is everywhere. Whether it concerns the pandemic, work, or economy, much of what lies ahead in life remains uncertain. Yet as a human being, man craves security. Any person wants to feel safe and develop a sense of control over events. With the pandemic, man is challenged by security- work, relationship, personal and professional efficiency, and relations.

Hesitancy. This pertains to the inner challenge of the teacher to accept the changes brought about by the pandemic. This challenge is related to their unwillingness to adapt to the changes since they have been used to the old normal of education.

When one is put in a different situation, or given a challenging task, the first thing he should do is to embrace the situation. Acceptance is the first key in winning a difficult situation. If he does not accept the situation, he fails to triumph. Edward expresses "First, I am hesitant to try new things, especially so that I am used to the usual classroom teaching. Trying new things makes



me really impatient (*Una hesitant na sumabay sa bago. Lalo na't ako may medyo may pagkaano [impatient] sa oras*)."

Pauline also shares "I don't want to try and explore it because I am certain that it is difficult to write modules, record online classes and the like (*Ayaw ko siyang itry kase nararamdaman kong mahirap sa paggawa ng module, recorded, online*)."

Sophia also says "I do not want to adapt to the changes. I have been used to the usual preparations (*Parang ayaw ko muna. Kasi sanay na ako sa usual preparations*)." This was also the sentiment of Dianne saying "I am hesitant to try these things because this is my first time to do such preparations [module-making] (*Ayaw kong i-try kase eto yung una kong pagkakataon na gagawa [modules]*)." Further, Elaiza shares "I am quite hesitant because of the changes that we have to face in this time of pandemic. We do not know how will we go with our teaching this time (*Medyo hesitant sa mga pagbabagong kahaharapin ngayong pandemya. Hindi kase natin alam kung paano ang pagtuturo ngayon*)."

These statements of the key informants dictate their unwillingness to try something new. It further manifests their unwillingness to understand the situation and the demands that come along with them. They do not want to adopt the modalities suited for the new normal. They do not want to learn, unlearn, and re-learn for them to be relevant in the new normal.

This hesitancy of teachers to accept changes is also embedded in the study of Aytac (2021) which brought into view the struggle and inability of teachers to use distance education technologies which encompasses their negative attitudes, lack of experience, and unwillingness to live education.



Nevertheless, this emerging inner challenge among teachers is contradictory to the study of Zalat, Hamed, Bolbol (2021) which brought forward that the e-learning system which is basically the synchronous (live or in real-time) and asynchronous (recorded or self-paced) e-learning strategies implemented through learning management systems (LMS) has a high acceptance level among the staff members.

Inadequate Expertise. This refers to the insufficient technical knowledge and skills of the teachers in the new normal. This also includes the lack of training of teachers in handling different platforms in lesson delivery which made them unprepared or underprepared for the new normal.

No one is born with the facility to skillfully operate on things, especially the new and advanced ones. All people need to learn and earn experience to be able to do something well. In teaching, one needs to be exposed to different platforms and undergo rigorous training to be able to hone the craft of teaching the young. But what happens to a teacher, who has not been exposed to distant learning modalities, needs to teach in a novel manner- via online, digital, and printed forms? Simply, the teacher fails. It is in this view that inadequate experience and expertise in handling distant learning modalities come in.

These are exemplified by the statements of the key informants. According to Miguel "I do not know how to teach in the different modalities (*Hindi pa masyadong gamay ng mga guro ang iba't ibang modalities*)." He also adds "I will have to adjust fully to this kind of teaching (*Nangangapa pa lang talaga ako*)." Sophia also explains "I am new in this field of distant learning. I do not know yet what to do (*Baguhan talaga ako*. *Hindi ko alam gagawin*)." Also, Albert adds "I do not have training in this modality. I do not know what to do. I feel helpless. I am afraid (*Hindi ako na-train on this*. *Wala namang naibigay. Hindi ko naman alam ang gagawin kasi wala naman*



plano. Nkaka-alarma lang)." This is also the same with Vincent "No one gave us a seminar on developing modules. It was so abrupt that I was asked to write SLMs even without training (Walang nagconduct ng seminar sa paggawa ng module. Out of the blue na gagawa ka na lang ng module)."

Further, Ronald also shares "This covid-19 greatly affected our teaching practice. As teachers, we were trained to teach face-to-face. We are not trained to teach virtually." On the other hand, Jennifer also shares "This pandemic has brought us to a new situation in which we do not know anything about it like making modules (*Ngayong pandemic na, parang nagpunta kami sa baguhan gaya ng paggawa ng modules na wala man lang kaming kaalam-alam*)". These statements reflect the limited expertise of teachers in the new normal of education.

Going specifically, TVBI, recorded lessons and online classes are far from the traditional face-to-face classes. In the old normal, the teachers would just face the class, give lectures, facilitate the discussion and assess the outcome. With the modalities, teachers need to become experts in handling technology. Edward explains "I do not know how to set up laptops, modems and other gadgets for the online class (*Hindi ko alam ang pagset-up ng laptop, wifi at mga gadgets*)." The same sentiment is offered by Pauline who exclaims "There are tasks that I am not familiar with. The recorded class makes me feel inexperienced (*Nangangamote ako*)."

Moreover, facing the camera like a TV talent or dramatic actor is something very new for teachers. They need to develop transcripts and act them out in front of the video recorders, green background and studio lights. This is explained by Isabel who shares "It is my first time to be exposed to TVBI production. I really do not know how to go about it (*First time ko ang TVBI. Hindi ko talaga alam*)."



Teachers usually write lesson plans. They are not book or module writers. Since they claim that they have not been trained to write, they feel that they are underprepared for the SLMs modality, whether print or digital. Jennifer explains, "I am not a writer. I do not know how to correctly write modules."

Certainly, new modality requires new grading guidelines and systems. Teachers feel that they do not possess the expertise to grade students using the modality, especially that no guidelines were issued yet by the Department of Assessment. This is likened to the perception of Elaiza narrating, "I do not know how to teach in the modality. I do not know how to grade students."

This struggle on assimilating and developing expertise in the New Normal of Education has been explained by the article of Skills Outside School Foundation (2020) titled "The New Normal: What Skills Does the Year 2020 Teacher Need and Beyond Need?" explains myriad skills that teachers should possess. The skills are digital skills, innovation and adaptability, creativity, and resourcefulness, to name a few. These skills when not learned by the teachers will certainly get frustrated and fail.

Similarly, the findings of the survey conducted by Albert Shanker Institute (as interpreted by Kraft and Simon, 2020), revealed substantial challenges to teachers caused by the sudden which include being uncomfortable using the technological tools required for teaching at home.

In the same manner, the study of Salam, Jianqiu, Hussain Pathan, and Lei (2017) revealed that lack of ICT-based teachers' training is one of the major barriers that obstructs the integration of ICT in public schools. This only shows that the inadequacy of needed training and expertise is an impediment that challenges one to perform his/her duties especially in times of unprecedented events.



Sluggish Adaptability. This refers to the inability of the teachers to swiftly adapt to the changes caused by unprecedented shifts in learning modality. They are willing to adapt, but the process is slow. This includes getting used to the sudden change of work system and routines and dealing with abrupt preparations.

In an evolving workplace, made even more abrupt by the effects of COVID-19, teachers have to be flexible to cope with the teaching demands in the New Normal. Teachers who have limited exposure to digital teaching are forced to do online class, TVBI, printed and digital SLMs. This unprecedented shift in the learning modality, supplemented by limited exposure and old age, for some, made the teachers struggle for the New Normal. Miguel explains "In this Pandemic, it is certainly tougher. First, it is difficult to develop modules, accomplishment reports and other administrative paperwork. In the old normal, we only needed to focus on one aspect, now it has become so multifaceted. We have to accept that fact but I am not fast in doing so. (*Ngayon, mas mahirap. Unang-una sa lahat yung paggawa ng module, accomplishment reports, weekly plan, and other paper works. Noon, iisa lang ang binibigyang-pansin, ngayon napakadami na. Accept lang pero hindi ako ganun kabilis).*"

Isabel also shares "Before, the only focus prior to opening of classes are enrollment and scheduling and sectioning of learners. Now, we also need to focus on the delivery and mastery of the lesson. It is quite difficult to adjust because the changes were so abrupt *(Noon ang focus lang ay enrolment, schedule ng mga bata at sectioning. Ngayon, yung delivery, mastery ng mga bata sa lesson. Kaya medyo mahirap mag-adjust agad agad kase biglaan yung pagbabago).*"

The new normal, from the name itself, enjoined many new things. Learners were not allowed to go out of their homes and physically attend their classes. Absolutely, there were no



students. Schools were very silent, free from the noise of children from all corners of the school. This shift in the scenario of physical to virtual or distant classes was also difficult for teachers. Edward explains, "It is difficult. Students were advised to stay at home. We were given new tasks – developing modules. It is a struggle for me to manage time with my new adjustments at work and family obligations. It is difficult to adjust. (*Ang hirap.Pinagbawal lumabas ang mga mag-aaral. Nabigyan ng bagong gawain gaya ng paggawa ng module. Time management sa paggawa ng modules, kase nga may pamilya din ako. Iba yung adjustment.).*"

The interview was even made deeper when we asked the informants to compare the old and new normal preparations. It is evident in the responses that they struggle more in this pandemic than before. They were used to the old system so they will have to recall what was done. In the new normal, everything else is new. Adjustments are definitely needed to become still relevant. Albert tells, "As compared before, we were only preparing our learning plans/lesson plans and we can do that on weekends at night. Now, there seems to be no rest. In the old normal, we usually prepared our lesson plan then we taught the lesson. Now, we not only prepare our lesson, but we also create modules, we create alternative learning modalities that we can use as supplementary." Edward also shares, "We were given a new set of workload. It is difficult to juggle time because I also have my own family to care for. I really needed time to adjust with the emerging conditions at work (*Nabigyan ng bagong gawain gaya ng paggawa ng module. Time management sa paggawa ng modules, kase nga may pamilya din ako. Iba yung adjustment*)."

This theme is in agreement with the finding of Leech, Gullett, Cummings and Haug (2020) that many teachers are struggling with transitioning their lessons to a remote format, with 54.8% indicating that lessons and activities had not translated well to remote and 53.5% reporting that



they struggled with finding adequate replacements for in-person teaching tools. This shows that teachers were not able to guickly adapt to the abrupt changes in the education system.

Moreover, transitioning from physical classroom teaching to distant education is a challenge even under the best possible circumstances. In education, teachers will take a while to adjust to the "new normal". LexiaLearning (2021) shares that teachers have been out of their usual routines that make them feel uneasy, making it difficult for them to adjust fast. They needed to reimagine things and drop their usual routines and consider learning something new, even if it is little by little.

Also, Lagua (2020) explains that because online learning is now being forced, the tendency is for educators to translate or migrate their face-to-face learning techniques to the online environment. But this new system will require a transformation mindset. What normally works in the classroom would not necessarily be so in distance learning. This presents quite a challenge to the instructor making the first shifts online. Instructors must adapt intelligently with a keen sense of sensitivity to the online format. The challenge is to build rich activities that keep students engaged.

Underpreparedness. This is a problem of insufficient planning in the work system that gives teachers challenges in executing their responsibilities. The teachers experienced challenges because there were no plans to follow as to how to go about the new normal of education. If there were plans, the planning and implementation were so abrupt that understanding of it was vague among teachers.

The school administration and the entire Education system has to be prepared for the demands and changes of the New Normal Education. Plans must be thought of and implemented



smoothly, with contingencies and/or back-up plans to make the transition journey smoother for all teachers, students and stakeholders. As the popular saying goes, "If one fails to plan, then he plans to fail".

The Department of Education has laid its plans for adoption by schools. The interventions, and ideas of the Department are encapsulated in the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BECLP). The Schools Division Office of Candon City adopted this plan through its Division LCP, and the schools through their School LCP. Though there were written plans, the participants still felt the struggle in the implementation of the plans – there were no definite directions, abrupt changes in the implementation, to mention a few. Miguel exclaims "I had three classes so I had to prepare three SLMs per week. There were no plans. Teachers were not collaborating. We did it on our own (*Tatlo ang klase ko, tatlo rin ang gagawing modules, kada week ang submission. Wala pang plano noon. Kanya kanya ang paggawa ng module*)."

Albert also shares the same thought, "We had no good planning. We only relied on the decision of the higher officials. We did not have our own plan (*Dati sa planning kase, wala kaming sariling plano. We only rely on higher-ups. We are waiting from the higher-ups for their instructions.*)," Isabel further explains "The materials needed for teaching are not yet totally prepared because there are no plans yet given by the higher ups (*Hindi masyadong handa ang mga gagamitin sa pagtuturo kase wala pang mga naibibigay na plano mula sa mga higher-ups*)".

The exemplified ideas were not only on the mere presence of the plans that are cascaded to the schools. Teachers want to be involved in the planning and are not simply followers of instructions. They also feel that the plans should be "owned" by them so they can fully implement the plans. Vincent adds "There were no plans. If there were, they were not efficiently



implemented." Jennifer gave specific examples on the preparation of TVBI. He explained that the TVBI is not well prepared since the production system is too lengthy. The number of produced sessions were far lower than the expected for the week.

Part and parcel of the plans is to involve parents, especially so that the students stay at home to learn. Thus, the parents become the teachers at home. When parents are not participative and responsive to this call, the learning at home mechanism certainly fails. To make them responsive, they need to be oriented to their new role. But, what if there was no orientation? How will parents act? Certainly, the parents will not be expected to exercise their new roles as teachers at home. This problem is explained by Isabel, "It is difficult to involve the parents. They need to have a full understanding of the changes in education. It is also difficult to reach them because some have no gadget and internet connection. They cannot be reached (*Paano ipapaunawa sa parents ang sistema. Because parents need to be oriented on the different modalities. Sa online, mahirap iinvolve ang parent kase wala silang knowledge doon at wala silang gadgets at wifi).*" Jennifer also explained this problem "Some parents are working and they do not have time for their children." These issues on the non-involvement of parents make teachers worry. They worry that their students would learn as much when they are in the classroom learning with their teachers.

Forsyth (2020) offered her brilliant ideas on this emerged theme. Poor planning is manifested in the education in the new normal when there were reports that schools have been closed and could not operate due to the pandemic. The schools were not keen at planning for distant learning strategies. Schools, which opted to offer distance learning, but experienced many turbulences, many which are unsolved, are also a manifestation of poor planning. Parents and



other stakeholders who do not know what to do, how to participate and get involved are also products of poor envisioning, planning and strategic thinking.

Varkey Foundation (2019) also emphasized that in the 'new normal', parents play a more significant role in the learning and development of their children than they have done traditionally. Education is now taking place in the home environment instead of the school campus, without the physical presence of teachers. With this scenario, parents must be involved in the planning. They should have an active role in the education of their children.

The emerged themes are supported by studies on New Normal Education. According to Fleming (2020), the pandemic has caused various challenges such as the abrupt transitioning of profession online, trading in classroom discussions for the less personal thrum of e-learning, pouring in late nights and long weekends to provide students with some semblance of normalcy, adapting lesson plans, moving the curriculums online, and implementing creative ways to engage the students, the impossibility to replicate in-person, and provided hands-on instruction on Zoom or any other e-learning portal. Furthermore, it was also a burden for teachers knowing that many of the students have to face added difficulties with distance learning because of unstable internet or faulty devices or none at all, no quiet place to join class from, or to work.

Similarly, Zhong (2020) emphasized that poorly managed and resourced institutions coupled with socially disadvantaged students with limited access to internet and technology have affected how educational institutions adequately respond to learners' needs and inability to engage in an online learning environment.

DURING CLASSES



Problems during the start of the class can have many exits – they can be solved right away, they can continue during the opening, or even get worse as classes go by. The different emerged themes are the struggles of teachers during the opening of classes.

Demanding Preparations. This is a struggle of teachers in accomplishing overlapping tasks. These overlapping tasks affect the family time and social interaction and obligations of the teachers.

In the intricate analysis made across the emerging themes, the interpreters found out that the problems on preparations exist both before and during the opening of classes. The teachers experienced abrupt preparations before the opening of classes (themed as sluggish adaptability) and overlapping preparations during the classes (themed as demanding preparations).

New set of tasks, especially given in a series, makes teachers helpless and restless. They feel that they are given successive tasks they cannot handle. They even narrate that they are given another set of tasks even if they are not yet done accomplishing the first task given to them. These tasks include preparing SLMs, print and digital, recording for online classes, script writing for TVBI, and projecting on screen to produce the learning episodes.

Edward shares "There are many demanding and overlapping tasks given to us and I feel that I cannot handle them." Vincent says "I am a module writer. I do print, sort, staple, distribute and retrieve SLMs. I am part of the TVBI production and even asked to attend seminars. I cannot juggle different things at a time." Ronald also shares his sentiments regarding the many preparations he has to do telling "You do not have social interactions with your loved ones. You do not have time because there are so many things to do like the packing of modules. On Saturdays, you also need to check the modules [output of students] and monitor whether your



learners have received complete modules as well if they are accomplishing them or not *(Wala ka ng social interactions with loved ones. Wala ka ng time. Madaming ipapack na modules. Sa sabado naman,magchecheck pa ng modules. Magmomonitor pa kung kumplete, natanggap nila, o ginagawa nila)".* The same sentiment was shared by Pauline exclaiming "Aside from seminars, I have a lot of work to do - a lot of paperworks. There are a lot of modules to be checked."

Also, Dianne compared her previous and recent preparations to highlight her difficulty. She says, "In the past, I only needed to prepare visual aids. Now, I have to do editing of TVBI materials. I have a hard time creating these materials. I fail in time management due to many preparations (*Noon, we have the visual aids, PPTs, all we have to do is editing. Ngayon, we have to make a new one. Kulang pa ng activities. We are having a hard time creating materials kase kulang ang time and new preparations again).*" She adds "There are more and heavier preparations this time. There are more paper works and other tasks (*Mas mabigat yung preparation ngayon. Mas marami yung paperworks, mas hassle yung mga gawain – andami daming tasks*)".

Jennifer also shares "It is very tiring and challenging. They give us a lot to do. They ask us to attend webinars but still demand us to submit SLMs. They overlap. We feel tired. Our mind and body are both exhausted (*Very tiring and very challenging*. Yung ginagawa kase namin, masyadong maraming binibigay ang department na webinars at nagooverlap na ito sa paggawa ng modules o learning materials. Napapagod ang mga braincells ng teachers. Kung pagod ang utak, pagod din ang buong katawan)."

For recorded lessons, most participants stay up late just to record noise-free lessons. Simple door knocks, rooster sounds and even yells of neighbors are caught during the recording



of online classes. Sophia says "You need to do the recording of the lesson late at night or early in the morning. At this moment, the surrounding is favorable (*Kailangang gabi ka or madaling araw magrecord para malinaw. Kasi pag madaming tao, maingay. Hindi maganda ang marerecord*)."

This emerging theme is in unison with the findings of Castroverde and Acala (2021) regarding the preparations and distribution of modules. Teachers were confronted with a myriad of challenges such as the limited time of developing and preparing modules, lack of printing materials and scarcity of supplies, and the lack of assistance in printing the modules.

In the same manner, the Teach for America (TFA) Editorial Team (2020) has been bold in making a term for the feeling of teachers in this pandemic. They have coined the term "COVID fatigue" or "COVID burnout". The team explained that this type of burnout that teachers are experiencing now is intimately related to how unrelenting the stress is. This makes for a more insidious form of burnout, one that is harder to shake off. This burnout is different because it affects far more teachers, leading to a systemic issue of demoralization.

Student unfavorable mindset and limited skill. This refers to the struggle of the teachers brought about by students' readiness, poor motivation for the lesson and inability to comprehend the lesson well.

After the President's intervention, the Department of Education officially started its classes on October 5, 2020. Prior to the opening, the Department, believing in "Education must continue", developed its Basic Education Continuity Plan to drive all its efforts to make education possible even amidst the pandemic.



Making education possible in this health crisis is measured by providing the quality learning every student deserves. In a nutshell, students' ability to understand the lesson has always been the yardstick of quality education. Having this in mind, teachers feel the struggle about students' readiness to class, particularly in a new education set-up. Usually, students feel excited to attend their physical class, meeting new friends and teachers. They flash their new bags, set of notebooks and writing materials. They wear a new set of uniforms paired with shoes. But this time, students are in a different set-up, which requires a different set of readiness and motivation. This is exemplified in the sharing of Sophia, "Our students do not have the appropriate mindset. They are not excited. Most of them are working (*Yung mga estudyante naming, imbes na excited sila, iba na ang mindset. Mostly ng mga estudyante naming ay nagtatrabaho na*)." With this divided attention or shifted priority among students, it is difficult to tell if students still want to continue their schooling. The same experience is also shared by Albert exclaiming "I think it is harder to motivate the learners to accomplish their tasks this time finishing their modules (*I think it's harder to motivate this time the learners to do their tasks especially finishing their modules*)".

Jennifer also observed this phenomenon among his students. He explains "Many of my students were not able to complete their submission of their SLMs. They have divided attention. Most of them are into computer games – ML [mobile legends] (*Maraming mga estudyante ang hindi na nakakapagpasa ng modules kase divided nila ang attention nila nag-ML sila*)."

Students' unreadiness and misfit mindset is not only the problem experienced by teachers. They are also concerned about the students' ability to comprehend their lessons now that teacherstudent interaction in the class has been drastically reduced. Miguel narrates "I have reduced time to explain the lesson to the students since we mainly adopted the printed modality. Students



cannot understand the lesson." When asked for the proof of the statement, the participants cited the unanswered modules. Sophia, Jennifer, Elaiza, and Pauline also experienced the same situation. They all shared that SLMs were submitted unanswered. Only the preliminary activities were answered while the succeeding were left untouched.

Also, several participants observed that students merely copied the answers from the answer key, even copying the answer "Answers may vary" in open-ended questions.

Isabel also shared that some students texted/chatted with him saying that they cannot understand the instructions or cannot follow what the activity tells them to do. With these, it is really a challenge for the teachers to guarantee whether learning is taking place in this pandemic.

This finding is analogous with the study of Mahyoob (2020) disclosing that the challenges that confront learners are issues on internet speed, online access, material downloading, and accessing conducting online exams. These obstacles significantly contribute to the challenges that teachers encounter.

Further, this theme also agrees with the study of Hayat, Keshavarzi, Zare, Bazrafcan, Rezaee, Faghihi, Amini, and Kojuri (2021) which disclosed that students' unfamiliarity with elearning and their presence in virtual classes caused them to question how they should behave in this environment. Some individuals had experiences with inappropriate and unprofessional behaviors in the e-learning space. Issues with virtual learning etiquette may have been a consequence of students' unfamiliarity with novel e-learning approaches.

Similarly, Leech, Gullett, Cummings, and Haug (2020) posited that some of the challenges that teachers encounter in remote teaching is the unpreparedness of students and their lack of



familiarity with required technologies and applications despite that they belong to a generation of students who are digital natives.

Meanwhile, Martineau, et al (2020), the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, explained that there are several priorities for education in this new normal. One of which is a refocus on curriculum content and authentic learning among students. There is now a challenge to ascertain if self-independent learning is on the work or not.

Compromised Health and safety. This is a struggle of teachers in protecting and promoting their safety and well-being while performing their duties. This struggle also includes the emotional and psychological status of the teachers in coping with work-related stress, health-related factors, and others brought about by the pandemic.

According to WHO (2021), as of May 8, 2021 there have been around 157 million people infected by the COVID Virus across the globe. In the Philippines, more than 1 million have been confirmed COVID positive, inevitably some of which are teachers.

As of August 2020, there were 823 confirmed cases (297 students, 340 teachers and 186 non-teaching personnel) (Rappler, 2020). These numbers rose as months passed by. Several Schools Division offices were temporarily closed due to close contacts and expo. In the SDO, one mortality was recorded among its personnel due to COVID. With this emerging concern on health, it is not a surprise why compromised safety registered as a theme for teachers' struggle.

All the 11 informants observed that during their physical reporting to schools, most parents who come to schools did not observe minimum health standards prescribed by DOH/IATF. They did not wear face masks, face shields and did not follow physical distancing marks and signages. These practices endanger the health of parents, school staff and all people who will be close



contacts of anyone who will be tested positive. These experiences often give stress to teachers, especially so they might transmit these to their children if they are unaware that they are a carrier of the virus. Jennifer says "I am stressed. What if I am a carrier and I transmit this to my family (*Paano pag nakahawa pala ako? Or nahawa ako? Nahawaan ko ang pamilya ko*)?"

Also, Miguel narrates that they personally delivered SLMs to barangays using their motorcycles under the burning sun. They have to deliver so that students in remote areas can still submit the SLMs required for the week. After which, during their schedule, the teachers went again to their assigned routes to retrieve SLMs. Going outside their workplaces increases the risk of contacting the dreaded virus. Pauline also shares "There are school tasks that you cannot do on a work-from-home basis. You really have to go to school. Though it is risky, I have to go to school to accomplish those tasks (*May mga work nga saan a mabalin a wfh. You really have to go. Ako, kahit medyo sakitin at risky, kailangang pumunta para magawa ang mga iyon*)".

But one thing caught the attention of the researchers - the sharing of Edward. He says "We deliver the modules. We feel unsafe because we ride in tractors." The safety here is compromised since the concern is not only contacting the virus but also increasing the probability of vehicular accidents." Teachers have to secure the SLMs loaded in tractors so the SLMs will not fall. Teachers have to sit at the edge, on a small piece of steel." This also made Edward remark "The situation is stressful and depressing (*Nakaka-stress medyo makapa-depress*)."

This fear of teachers about their health and safety was also evident from the study of Carreon, Rotas, Cahapay, Garcia, Amador, and Anoba (2021) which revealed the high level of anxiety and fear of teachers losing their lives because of the coronavirus.



Apart from the obvious risks to physical health, the psychological impact of COVID-19 also carries significant threats and dangers to mental health and well-being as higher levels of anxiety and stress are further exacerbated by the on-going uncertainty of the situation. Moreover, aside from the conceivable stress teachers face regarding the threat of COVID-19 to themselves and their families, they are forced to transition into the new normal in the educational landscape and undertake effective remedial education (Guillasper et al., 2020).

Constrained Teachers' Technical know-how. This is a struggle brought about by the inability of the teachers in facilitating the teaching-learning process in all platforms and modalities.

This phenomenon is conjectured to exist both before and during the opening of classes. Before the opening, teachers feel that they do not possess the expertise to be able to fully transition from face-to-face classes to distant learning. This phenomenon is brought about by limited exposure and training. On the other hand, the phenomenon during the opening classes is the aftereffect of the limited exposure and inadequate expertise.

Arguably, teachers need to have a new set of skills to be able to facilitate various distant learning modalities. If teachers are underexposed to these mechanisms, teachers fail to deliver what is expected of them in this pandemic.

Vincent narrates "I have not been trained for TVBI so I do not know how to write scripts, and edit videos. I do not know the programs that should be used to edit videos. I lack the technical know-how." Because of this, the informant seeks support from teachers who are also untrained in TVBI.



Dianne also shares her story regarding the recorded lesson. She shares "I was asked to do recording of classes without any knowledge. I asked for help and I learned so little. It was difficult for me to open the camera and talk simultaneously. I am not used to it."

On facilitating an online class, Miguel has this to say "I find it difficult to manage online classes, especially if there are glitches and technical difficulties. I do not know how to troubleshoot them. I usually ask my co-teachers for assistance but when I am at home, I am left alone to do it on my own (*Mahirap ang online class lalo na ang mga bata hindi nila alam imute and microphone. Ang hirap imanage. Pag nagkaproblema mangagapa ka kung anong gagawin. I usually asked for help pag nasa school, pero iba pag naka-WFH*)." Pauline also exclaims her frustration regarding the online class saying "In online class, I really do not know much about it (*Sa online, nangangamote ako*)".

These experiences of the informants in various modalities point to their limited technical know-how, especially when it involves digital technologies. The more complicated the technology is, the more that the teachers feel uncomfortable with managing the modality.

In the study conducted by Mailizar, Maulina and Bruce (2020) in Indonesia on the barriers of e-learning implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic, they found out that on the teacher level barrier, lack of teachers' knowledge was the top barrier with a mean of 3.0 followed by lack of confidence with a mean of 2.9.

Moreover, the study of Lapada, Robledo, Miguel, and Alam (2020) disclosed that the problems encountered by teachers in offering distance learning education are the challenges on the knowledge and skills required in delivering distance learning, the use of phones, laptops,



tablets or any devices, including the use of social media, emails and other platforms necessary for distance learning education, and the use of any Learning Management System.

This was further supported by UNESCO (2020) emphasizing that one of the challenges that teachers are facing in the present situation is converting teaching materials into digital format especially that only few teachers have strong digital and ICT skills. This only shows that teachers are not fully equipped with the skills and training necessary to implement E-learning.

Unavailability of gadgets and materials. This is the struggle brought about by insufficient number of gadgets, materials available for both the teachers and the learners used for the delivery of learning.

Teachers struggle in facilitating distant learning when they do not possess the materials to do so. It is hard to imagine an online class without a laptop and internet connection for both teachers and students. It is also difficult to proceed with recorded lessons without updated software and updated storage capacity. It is also impossible to record TVBI lessons without video editing software and large-capacity storage devices. All these difficulties have been experienced by the in their transition to distant modalities.

Sophia says "It is hard for my online class because our school is in a mountainous area. Signaling is difficult here. Online classes are difficult." He also added "*Halos 50% ang mga walang* access sa internet dahil bundok po iyo, mahirap ang signal, at ang estado ng buhay ng mga bata doon ay hindi magaan."

Isabel also shares "Sa internet connections ng mga bata kase remote ang lugar kase coastal. Availability of gadgets. Kailangan makumpleto ang mga estudyante bago umpisahan ang klase." Jennifer also shared her thoughts regarding the online class telling "We do not have online



class because the mobile network signal is weak (*Walang online kase mahina ang signal*)". From here, the gadgets and materials necessary to operate online classes are unavailable. Such unavailability troubles teachers.

Edward offers "TVBI lessons are difficult for me. I have to update my MS PowerPoint to the latest one since the old version does not have the recording feature. I still need to learn how to use this new program." He adds "Signal is difficult in coastal areas for DZTP-TPN to transmit clear TV episodes. Some of my students do not have TV so TVBI is not recommended for them."

For most participants, they forwarded that some of their students have no android or smartphone. This impedes the viewing of recorded lessons, online and broadcast of TVBI lessons broadcast via Facebook. Elaiza says "Some students have no android phone. They are poor so they cannot afford to buy one. This phone is essential in viewing recorded lessons, TVBI episodes and in joining online classes." In alignment with this theme, the recent study of Zala, Hame, Bolbol (2021) brings to light that the barriers of e-learning are insufficient/ unstable internet connectivity, inadequate computer labs, lack of computers/ laptops, and technical problems. These are the challenges imperative to adapting to e-learning.

Further, this emerging theme is analogous with the theme of Hayat, Keshavarzi, Zare, Bazrafcan, Rezaee, Faghihi, Amini, and Kojuri (2021) termed as infrastructural deficits and problems which are considered major challenges to e-learning. These encompass the unpleasant experiences with slow internet speeds, uploading materials and files on e-learning systems, and downloading them.



Similarly, Mayol (2020) explained that the New Normal education is constrained. The problems are brought out by poor internet connection, lack of gadgets, inexperienced teachers and unresponsive government support.

Conversely, Saxena (2020) stresses that since educational institutions were way behind in adopting technology, having focused more on classroom teaching and never having seriously considered online education as a credible model, they were slightly more unprepared than other sectors. These underpreparations gave troubles to teachers.

Learning Resource Issues. This refers to the problem brought about by the inaccuracy of SLMs contents, even unavailability of reference materials. It also includes the long QA process and lengthy format for SLMs.

For the past months, DepED has been placed in boiling waters due to issues in SLMs. Some have content errors, grammatical errors, incorrect information, inconsistencies, misprints, delayed delivery, among others. Due to the delay of centrally produced SLMS, teachers have been asked to develop their division-based SLMs and activity sheets. In writing the localized SLMs, teachers require references for them to write content-based SLMs, aligned to the MELCs. Writing the SLMs does not stop there. The locally developed SLMS still need to undergo quality assurance, which takes some time. These are all the scenarios that add to the struggles of teachers in the New Normal.

Isabel says "The centrally produced SLMs are too long. It has many activities. Students usually have a hard time answering all of them. In most cases, the SLMs are delayed, and we are asked to write our own SLMs". With this statement, the original plan of the Department to distribute



CO SLMs was not carried out as planned. The back-up plan was to let the teachers create their own SLMs which they will distribute to the learners.

Sophia also expressed "The SLMs are the culprit. The students do not understand the activities indicated there. The answer key is a misfit (*Modules na nagbibigay ng sakit ng ulo hindi lang sa mga estudyante kundi pati sa mga teachers. May mga instructions doon na hindi naiintindihan ng mga bata. May mga modules din na sobrang dami ang laman. Yung mga answer key is iba*)." With this scenario, the teachers often answer queries of the learners via text/ chat. They even resort to re-checking the SLMS from the Central Office, an additional task for the teachers.

Isabel says "SLM templates have been changed more than twice." This difficulty is on adjusting and aligning the contents and parts of the SLMs. The informant wanted to have consistency in the format so she can get used to it.

Pauline also commented "SLMs have incorrect answer keys. There are many activities to be answered by the students. There are many errors. It seems that these SLMs have not undergone quality assurance". In terms of quality assurance, issues also arise. The quality assurance takes some time, and this causes delay in the delivery of SLMs. Once there is delay on one part, the entire process is affected. Say for instance, when the checker did not submit the SLMs on time, the reproduction of the SLMs is greatly affected. The teachers have to double time or even extend their time to sort, pack and deliver the SLMs on time. This is attested by Edward "There are many errors in the SLMs. The QA process takes so long. We have to wait for the quality assured SLMs even beyond working hours. Our school head monitors if the SLMs were packed and delivered on time."



Moreover, Vincent also shared his burden regarding the contextualization of CO modules to fit in the needs of his learners saying "We also need to contextualize the modules given by the Central Office (*Nandiyan yung kailangan nating magcontextualize ng mga modules na galing sa CO*)". Likewise, Ronald also narrated his experience regarding the answers from the CO modules "We cannot rely on the answer key of modules. There are some students who just copy answers from others. There are also students who copy answers from the answer key."

These issues in LR have been found akin to the report of Rappler (2020) that there were 27 errors found in reproduced SLMs, 20 are factual and 7 are math-related errors. These errors are only for the first quarter. In the DepEd error watch, Education Undersecretary Diosdado San Antonio (2020) said in a virtual press briefing that they received a total of 56 reports of SLM mishaps.

Restrictions in Lesson Delivery. This is on the difficulty of teachers in explaining the lesson in the distant learning modalities. This also encompasses problems in assessing students' accomplishments.

The shift from face-to-face classes to distant learning modalities, especially the print modality also enveloped a downplay on the interaction of teachers and students. Teachers have no mechanisms to further explain the lesson and in turn, students have no chance to ask clarificatory questions. This difficulty has been expressed in the following statements:

Jennifer says "The most challenging is on delivery (*Delivery ang pinakachallenge*). We cannot explain further the lesson in the module." Vincent also exclaims "The content we are giving to our learners is limited (*Limited lang yung naibibigay nating content sa mga bata*)". These statements reflect the burdens of teachers in providing more lesson content and explaining them



well using the prevailing teaching-learning modality. With this, Dianne underscores the need to use strategies appropriate in the new normal of education "Today, we need to fit in our strategy to our learners in order to deliver well the lesson (*Today, kailangan naming iangkop yung stratehiya na gagamitin sa mga bata para maipaunawa yung lesson*)".

Further, Miguel narrates "The learning process has been affected. We cannot measure the effectiveness of the lesson. We cannot guide our learners in understanding the lesson (*Mas naging mahirap ang process ng education kase hindi na natin namemeasure ang effectiveness ng lesson. Hindi na natin nag-guide yung mga learners natin*)." In the same manner, Edward also relates "Content-wise, it is easier to explain [the lesson]. In recorded lesson or modules, there is no interaction. There is no opportunity to provide immediate follow-ups in case the students do not understand [the lesson] (Sa content-wise, mas madaling ideliver kapag face-to-face. Yung sasabihin mo ng five minutes, kayo mo pang iexplain. Sa recorded lesson or module, walang interaction. Walang chance ifollow-up kapag hindi maintindihan ng bata)".

These statements coming from the participants dictate their problems and at the same time, their concerns on how learning is taking place now that face-to-face classroom interaction is not allowed, and that the main modality adopted is printed modality.

Helpline PH (2020) on their web article titled Disadvantages of Modular Learning, mentioned that there are many disadvantages of modular learning. One of which is the limitation of elucidation, navigation, and clarifications. Students are left to self-understand. They are not fully guided on how to perform things unlike in class interactions. They cannot raise questions that seem to bug them.



This is even mentioned by Pauline "We can impart the lesson in a limited manner. (*Limited lang yung naibibigay nating content sa mga bata*)." Isabel also concurs that in a printed modality, there is limitation in interaction. There is no human touch. "*Parang kulang pa rin. Kapag face-to-face, iba yung interaction, iba yung touch.*"

Human touch is a very crucial component in teaching. One can be called a lecturer who only imparts knowledge. But only a few can touch lives, especially when one teaches the heart, mind and body, all at the same time.

Conaway and Schiefilbein (2008) share the idea that in printed modality, human touch is missing. Often in the minutes before a class starts in a face-to-face class, the instructors and students engage in "small talk" about the weekend or topical events. In some ways, the instructors develop this "more than just the content" part of instruction and recognize that relationships are formed in these situations that do impact student motivation and learning. These cannot be done, or if possible, only to a limited extent, in a printed learning modality.

Jennifer, who happens to be a grade 1 teacher, shares her concern for her students who should be taught how to read and write. With printed modality, the teacher cannot personally teach, guide, and assess her students on the development of the skills. She says "I am a grade 1 teacher. I wonder how my students are being taught how to read and write. Is someone at home really teaching them, the way I teach them when they are in class?"

Another lower-grade level teacher, Elaiza, shared the same experience "How are we going to teach especially for the lower grade levels who cannot learn independently? What if parents are working? Who will be there to teach the children how to read and write? The students will turn to be a non-reader (*Paano na kami magtuturo*. *Comparing sa higher grade levels, parang mas at*



ease na sila kase the children can already learn independently, or minimal na lang tulong ang ipoprovide ng parents nila. Para sa bata na Grade 2, need talaga nil ana tatabihan siya ng parents. Pero what if their parents are working, and here in our setting, most of our parents are farmers, so early in the morning they are already outside their home. Hindi natutulungan yung anak. Matetennga yung bata. Hindi siya marunong magbasa, paano niya masasagutan ang modules)."

Also, assessment is difficult in a printed modality. Teachers are not sure if the students can really understand the lesson. They are worried if the learners are really the ones answering the modules and the exercises. Elaiza shares "The challenge is in the process of learning. I certainly ask, "Can we really see the improvement especially if we cannot be guaranteed that they are the ones answering the SLMs?" (*Yung challenge dun is yung student, process of learning, kase could we really see their improvement lalo kung hindi natin sila nakikita na sumasagot sa mga modules.*)" Since there is no guarantee at all that the students are the ones doing the lesson, it is difficult to ascertain if the alternative modalities adopted in the new normal are taking effect.

Ronald also says "Issue on mastery because the modules have answer keys. We cannot monitor the assessment part. We do not know whether the students are really the ones answering the modules, and whether they really learned something (*On mastery, kase yung modules meron na yung answer key. Hindi namin namomonitor talaga yung assessment part. If the children, sila talaga ang sumasagot or kung may natutunan talaga sila*)."

These challenges are also evident in the study of Castroverde and Acala (2021) which described the difficulty of teachers in assessing, monitoring, and validating students' learning and performance in modular distance learning.



Similarly, this finding runs parallel with the study of Hayat, Keshavarzi, Zare, Bazrafcan, Rezaee, Faghihi, Amini, and Kojuri (2021) in which one of the emerging disadvantages of elearning is the inadequacy of interactions. This constraint adds up to the struggles of teachers in maintaining and creating effective interactions for maximum learning.

Further, this finding also supports the finding of Tria (2020) regarding the challenges brought about by changes on the grading system, assessment and evaluation of student's performance, and laboratory activities in sciences and other subjects that require performance.

Roderio and Nadas (2005), in their published Cambridge Assessment, stated several Effects of Modularisation. Some of these are (1) grades are unhelpful in identifying students' successes and needs, (2) immediate feedback of students' progress is missing (3) difficulty to ascertain learning coming from learners. These enumerated effects find parallelism to the challenges experienced by the teachers.

Reduced Communication with parents and students. This is a problem experienced by the teachers in making and maintaining communications and correspondences between and among students and their parents.

Communication between the school and parents is very crucial. Communication can be done during informal dialogues, thru Parents-Teachers Association conference, School visits by the parents and home visits by the teachers. But these means of communication have been restricted due to mobility restrictions. There are alternative communication platforms available such as phone or online conference, but these are constrained by insufficiency of financial resources and poor internet connectivity.



Edward recalls "It is very difficult to reach parents for follow up. They cannot be reached. The signal is poor." Albert also shares the same experience relating "One problem is the communication with our learners. Though they have social media, still it is difficult to communicate with them because not all of them can log in *('Yung communication with the student. Although adda social media nga usaren, narigrigat tatta kase saan met nga amin ket maka-online)."*

Jennifer also shares "In the past, we can simply call for parents for a conference on some concerns. Now, it is difficult. We cannot contact them, especially if the numbers cannot be reached or if the students do not have social media accounts. Communication is really a problem *(Kung dati, tatawagin lang natin sila and kakausapin sila, makasarita tayo isudan. This time, kung yung student walang social media account, wala ding contact number para makausap siya. So isa yun, yung communication with the student. Kaya ang nangyayari, yung teacher hindi na makausap ang bata at parents)."*

Vincent also says "Not all students have social media accounts or strong internet connection. Not everyone can be reached. It is difficult to update them on school concerns (Another thing is yung communication with the student. Although adda social media nga usaren, narigrigat tatta kase saan met nga amin ket maka-online, saan met nga amin ket updated kuma no ania ti ibagak)." Elaiza also has the same sentiment "In the past, it was easier to connect and communicate with parents and students. Now, you need to have a strong internet connection (Noon, Connections and communications, nalaklaka nga ma-reach out yung tao. Ngayon, masapul naka internet ka)."

With the shift in the landscape of communication between parents and the school, from personal to digital, there are problems that come along the way. The problems posed by limited



communication also create problems in updating parents and their children on school matters. For instance, the delivery of SLMs, feedback on assessments, student progress and the like are some concerns that are difficult to be relayed when parents seem to be out of reach.

In alignment, the study of Leech, Gullett, Cummings, and Haug (2020) brought to light the struggles of teachers with supporting students in engaging in remote learning, with 77.6% of teachers indicating that their students were uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the necessary technologies and 71.4% indicating that students had not been adequately available or responsive.

Correspondingly, Lapada, Robledo, Miguel, and Alam (2020) also revealed in their study that one of the perceived problems encountered by teachers in distance learning is establishing and maintaining communication with students. This barrier makes it more difficult for teachers to communicate and stay connected with their students.

Unorganized Work System. This is a problem encountered by teachers regarding the development, reproduction, packing, delivery, and retrieval of SLMs. This also involves the aftereffect of poor planning as manifested in confusions in work assignment.

To make the workflow organized, enjoyable and meaningful for all concerned, careful planning and well-thought implementation of plans are indeed necessary. But what if these essentials were not fully carried out? Certainly, problems arise and confusions abound. These problems are well expressed in the following statements:

Isabel says "In the printing, packing and delivery of modules, there were no assigned personnel for the different tasks. The system was "do-it-on-your-own". With these, some barangay received incomplete modules while some received surpluses (*In the packing of modules, delivery,*



printing, Wala pang naka-assign. Kanya kanya lang, per adviser ang pagprint, palagay sa box ng barangay. Nagkaroon ng problema dahil may mga barangay na kulang o sobra ang module)."

Same experience is relayed by Vincent "There are modules misplaced and delivered to other barangays." The participant also shared that some parents called them because of missing modules of their children.

These mishaps and confusions in the delivery of SLMs were the effects of poor planning in the schools. Because it is everybody's first time, the planning was not well done which resulted in some errors in the delivery of SLMs. As Jennifer expressed "There was no planning. We worked on our own. We made actions based on what we just know. We were not guided."

The same is forwarded by Pauline "In the beginning, we had no plans. We just relied on the higher-ups. We just waited (*Dati sa planning kase, wala kaming sariling plano. We only rely on higher-ups. We are waiting from the higher-ups for their instructions).*"

The manifestations of no planning were also expressed by other participants. Edward shares "In the development of SLMs, some teachers got confused on what materials to use. Shall we use CO or develop our own (*Sa paggawa ng modules, some teachers are confused kung anong materyal ang gagamitin nila*)?"

Miguel also says "We are confused as to what to do. Shall we wait for CO SLMs which are delayed or shall we make our own. We received different sets of instructions. We simply waited and yet we were overburdened because the decisions were abrupt, and we were under time pressure to make our own SLMs."

This problem on planning was not only felt in the printed modality. It was also experienced in TVBI modality. Elaiza, who happens to be a TVBI talent, shares "The TVBI was not well



planned. We were supposed to air more than 120 episodes, but we failed to do so. Some are not trained and uncommitted (*The TVBI was not well planned. Kase yung number of episodes na iaair for the first quarter, we only have 120 plus, eh dapat nakalimang daan tayo from kinder to shs. Yung process of simulation. Yung teachers, not trained and committed kase may iba pa silang work na gagawin*)."

All the struggles experienced by the teachers were brought about by poor planning in the organization. Roderio and Nadas (2005) also stated that schools, with the abrupt changes brought by the pandemic, failed to think thoroughly of their plans. Their poor planning resulted in some confusions in the delay of SLMs. Some students did not receive their modules on time, worse, they received the incorrect one.

Underinvolvement of Parents. This is a struggle experienced by teachers in the participation and support of parents in the education of their children.

Parents have always been the partners of schools in the education of their children. Their usual crucial tasks involve monitoring a child's progress, coordinating with teachers and parents, attending school meetings and activities, connecting with children after school, and being a role model to their children. These usual tasks have been altered by the pandemic. The parents now become teachers-at-home. They are not asked to attend school fairs and programs but asked to deliver and retrieve SLMs. With this shift in their role, it is expected that some parents cannot easily adjust, thus affecting their participation in the education of their children. These are manifested in the following statements.

Isabel shares "I have encountered problems with parents' involvement. I had difficulty explaining the roles of parents, and the changes in the new system. In the online class, most



parents cannot be involved because they are unfamiliar with the modality and some have no gadgets to do so (*Paano ipapaunawa sa parents ang sistema*. Because parents need to be oriented on the different modalities. Sa online, mahirap iinvolve ang parent kase wala silang knowledge doon at wala silang gadgets at wifi)."

Miguel also shares the same experience "I had problems explaining to the parents their new role in education. What should they do and how to help them do the new role." Ronald further adds "We are not sure if the children are being monitored [by their parents] *(We are not sure kung natututukan talaga ang mga bata]*".

Aside from the difficulty of teachers in explaining to parents their new role. Teachers have also encountered problems with the way parents teach their children at home. Jennifer also relates "Regarding our usual practices before, I do not know if the parents are also doing what we are doing before - that is to sit with their children and let them read." Some teachers are concerned about these practices which boil down to the correct involvement of parents in the new normal.

As teachers-at-home, parents should be as patient as teachers when teaching students. They should let their students answer their tasks and offer guidance when necessary. These expectations are far from reality. Ronald says "The parents cannot convince their children to answer their modules or to finish answering the whole modules. So, the parents are the ones answering the modules." This is indicative that the parents cannot influence their children to prioritize their studies, in turn, they are the ones answering the exercises on behalf of the learners. This practice now anchors on the validity of learning of the students in the new normal.

Some parents also have high expectations. They want their children to learn fast, as a result they pressure or even hurt their children so they can study as fast as possible. Albert says



"Parents have high expectations. As a result, they scold and spank their children (*Mataas ang* expectations ng parents. The parents 'binabaot' nila yung mga anak nila)."

In the research of Varkey Foundation (2019) on the role of parents in the new normal, it underscored that most parents are doing all they can, in enormously difficult circumstances, to minimize and mitigate the significant disruption to learning caused by school closures. Some parents tend to answer the modules of their children just to beat deadlines.

Most of the themes are synonymous to the study of Beteille (2020) which emphasized that school systems and teachers have to face three serious bottlenecks: 1) stress due to economic uncertainty, concern for the safety of loved ones, and anxiety about the future; 2) the daunting challenge of returning to schools where many students have dropped out or fallen behind and increased pressure on teachers to ensure catch-up with little professional development support; and 3) little access to the right technologies or the skills to use them.

Also, all these struggles are similar to the study of Dangle and Sumaoang (2020), titled "The Implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the Philippine Secondary Schools" which divulged the following: (1) Most students cannot study independently. (2) Teachers lack resources for reproduction and delivery of modules; (3) Some learners cannot finish their modules on time (4) Students' answers in their modules have no validity; (5) Parents lack knowledge to assist their child/children; and (7) teachers have a lot of paper works; papers to check and record.

Moreover, this emerging theme runs parallel with the study of Aytac (2021) which presented that family concerns and inadequate parent support at home such as lack of knowledge about distance education, parents' inability to create a home learning environment and to motivate



their children are some of the challenges that teachers have to deal with in the new normal of education.

TOWARDS THE END OF FIRST SEMESTER

Emergent Experiences

This refers to the situation where the old challenges have already been considered by the participants. The challenges that they encounter are the new experiences that they have as they continue their journey in the new normal of education.

The FGD was also able to bring out some challenges encountered by the participants during and towards the end of the semester. All participants were asked the question, "What new challenges were encountered by you now that the semester is about to end?"

Miguel, was the first one to offer a response, saying that "The new challenge was on the compliance of the students with the requirements. Some of our students are not really the ones answering the modules, hence the quality of education is compromised." This challenge was brought out by the participant when he observed that some of his students were having perfect scores in their assessment. He also observed that some students submitted unanswered SLMs.

Ronald offered a different set of challenges, that is on the pile of student works to be checked. He narrated that he was quarantined and because of this, he was not able to retrieve modules to be checked. After a two-week time frame, he had to deal with a mountain of student exercises. This challenge is brought by the experience of being exposed to a COVID patient. Also, he shared that he was also anxious with the new set-up of doing classroom observation. In the old normal, actual students were the one being asked the question.Now, the students are fellow



teachers who are at the same time more tenured in the profession. There is a feeling of awkwardness.

Albert also recalled that his new challenge was to beat the deadline in checking piles of students' written works, summative tests and performance tasks. With students sending back their modules for checking, and concurrently preparing a new set of modules for students to answer, the work of the teachers continues to pile up. Ronald also shared that understanding one classroom indicator (strategies that fit students' cultural, geographical, religious contexts) bothers him. He narrated that this new indicator in the new normal should be explained well to him so he can meet the target.

Koz (2020) explains that it is normal for someone to feel pressure and "trapped" when he tries new things or experiences new situations. The reason for that is because he has to regularly go out of his comfort zone, experiment with new things that bring uncertainty. Further, Koz offers that when someone experiences this, he has to take "small" steps.

COPING MECHANISMS

Teachers have been known to be flexible and resilient (Ainsworth, 2020). They encounter problems but are able to surpass these struggles. It may take some time for some, but certainly they make way to overcome these obstacles. The following are the emerged themes on the coping mechanisms of the teachers in the time of pandemic. There are two main themes: improved work system and expanded self-support system. These two main themes have their own sub themes which are explained in each statement.

Improved Work and Support System. This refers to the assistance afforded by the workplace to the teachers to be able to manage the demands of work.



Providing education especially amidst the pandemic is a collective responsibility among the stakeholders. It is actually a system in which all the concerned personnel have their own tasks to perform. According to (Burke, 2017), a work system is a collective effort and is designed when a particular task or goal is identified as requiring more than one person to accomplish. Work systems incorporate technology, information and other resources to achieve maximum efficiency.

Teachers were able to thrive even amidst the crisis because there has been an improved work and support system in the organization. The support provided by all the education stakeholders has significantly helped teachers perform their duties and responsibilities amidst uncertainties. In this light, Miguel shares his experience regarding the improved system of module distribution telling "There are assigned personnel who will deliver modules in every barangay (*May nakatokang magdedeliver ng modules kada barangay*)." This was further affirmed by Isabel stating "In delivering the modules to the feeder barangay, we are utilizing the "Tulong ni Kap" system in which the barangay officials help us in the distribution of modules (*In the delivery of modules, in the feeder barangay we have the Tulong ni Kap. Barangay officials help us in distributing modules*)."

Similarly, Jennifer also shared "There are no serious problems in the distribution of modules because of the "Tulong ni Kap" (*Walang masyadong problema sa distribution ng module dahil sa Tulong ni Kap*)." Albert also agreed to this exclaiming "The emergence of Tulong ni Kap (TNK) has helped us in the distribution of modules (*With the emergence of TNK, nakatulong iyon sa distribution ng modules*)." This only stresses that a supportive work system greatly helps people carry out their duties and functions.



In the same manner, Pauline shares her relief with the burden of work because of the assistance provided by higher-ups and other administrators. She shares "There has been a lot of help coming from the Division office, from the school heads, and other teachers. These have greatly helped me (*Adu metten ti help from the division office, from the SHs, from other teachers nga makatultulong kaniak*)."

According to Portis (n.d.), research studies have shown that having a strong support system provides higher levels of well-being, better coping skills, and reduces depression and anxiety. Thus, when teachers are given the right support and assistance, they can easily cope with the demands of the work.

Barron, Cobo, Najar & Ciarrusta (2021) explained that some governments recognized that their teacher support systems ended up generating burnout; hence, a call to revisit their guidelines. For example, Peru's Ministry of Education was open to receiving feedback and reacted rapidly by changing the guidelines to reduce teacher's administrative workload. By providing guidelines and tools, some governments have leveraged existing professional development programs that worked before the pandemic, thereby helping teachers and students alike cope with the demands of the new normal.

Sharing of Expertise. This is the collaboration between and among the teachers to make things easier. This also includes benchmarking on practices of a fellow to be able to accomplish a task.

In this time of crisis, the work becomes easier and manageable if there is a collaboration between and among teachers. According to Oxford Learners' Dictionary, collaboration is the act of working with another person or group of people to create or produce something. Thus,



collaboration is a working practice in which individuals work together towards achieving or establishing something.

This new normal has taught people the importance of collaboration in order to make things and work lighter. Pauline shared that he/she was able to manage the work because of the assistance provided by fellow teachers. Moreover, Edward shares, "We conduct informal talks with our fellow teacher about how we develop modules. We share our practices in creating our own learning modules for our students."

Moreover, prior to the opening of classes, teachers have also been conducting dry-runs and mock sessions among themselves on the different modalities. These were the avenues in which teachers share their best practices and teaching strategies. Dianne relays "We conducted a dry-run online class in which fellow teachers were the students (*Nagkaroon ng dry-run sa online class. Ang mga kasamahang titser din ang mga estudyante*)." Sophia further shared "In our SHS department, we helped each other. We share tips (*Sa SHS, nagtutulungan kami. Nagbibigay kami ng tips*)."

This finding runs parallel with the study of Hayat, Keshavarzi, Zare, Bazrafcan, Rezaee, Faghihi, Amini, and Kojuri (2021) in which one of the emerging concepts is the importance of networking and interdisciplinary collaborations in e-learning.

Moreover, the IT Knowledge Bank (2016) asserted that sharing one's knowledge and helping others creates awareness about one's skills and know-how in certain areas and provides opportunities for gaining new skills and experience. This only demonstrates that sharing one's knowledge and technical know-how paves the way to improving one's skills and competencies. It opens the doors for opportunities of learning new skills and abilities.



Refined Work Plans. This is the improved workload and assignments of teachers in the different learning modalities.

Module development has been one of the challenges encountered by teachers in this time of pandemic. However, they were able to weather this because of the improved distribution of work among the concerned people. Dianne affirmed this saying "There is a schedule for module development. There are identified schools who will make the modules for week 1, week 2, and so on (*May scheduling sa paggawa ng modules. May iba't ibang schools na gumagawa ng for week 1, week 2 ganun.*)." Similarly, Elaiza says "In our school, teachers handling the same subjects also have schedules in developing modules." Moreover, Sophia also relayed her relief regarding the development of modules saying "We were already given a format to follow in developing modules. This has made our work run smoothly (*We are actually given a format on modules*. *Yung ginawa naming nagiging smooth*)." These statements are reflective that if there is a division of tasks between and among all the people involved in the system, the work becomes easier and manageable.

Moreover, planning is an essential component of a work plan towards accomplishing a task. Work planning is an innovative approach to realizing the work in an organization. The current health crisis has shown that planning helps a lot. As such, Miguel shared "The administrators noticed that we need alternates in developing modules so they designed a plan [making modules] *(Napansin ng superiors na kailangan ng kahalili sa paggawa ng module kaya nagdisenyo sila ng plano).*" Equally important in planning is scheduling. This mechanism has put everything in proper perspective especially on module-related tasks of teachers. Miguel added "There is already a plan. There are people assigned to do stapling, distribution, and packing of modules *(May plano*)



na. May naka-assign na tao kung sino ang gagawa ng pagstaple, pagdistribute, pagpack ng modules)." This was supported by Dianne stressing "We already have schedules on development, sorting, and packing of modules, as well as doing the quality assurance (May scheduling na kami sa paggawa ng modules, sa paggualtiy assurance, sorting, and packing)." Miguel further said "There is already a specific day in which a particular task should be accomplished. There are already timelines and systems of work submission (May specific day na dapat maaccomplish ng guro ang work. May timelines or sistema ng pagpasa ng work)." This improved work system has helped teachers become more effective and efficient in doing their tasks. They can now accomplish their tasks on the expected time without sacrificing quality of output. Miguel continues "There is already a system designed by the school head. This plan needs to be followed in order to avoid overlapping activities (Magandang sistema na binalangkas ng school head. Mayroon na talagang plano na dapat sundin para wala nang overlapping of activities)." This only signifies that when everything is planned well, it is easier to get things done in less time. This is supported by (Gartenstein, 2017) asserting that a work plan defines the organization's overall purpose and mission and provides perspective for day-to-day tasks, putting them in context relative to the organization's concrete objectives, thus, encouraging collaboration toward common goals.

Improved Monitoring and Mentoring Mechanisms. This is the enhanced coaching and guidance given by school administrators, SDO officials, and colleagues to teachers.

The new normal of education has brought significant changes in the usual routines of teachers. Teachers are confronted with a myriad of challenges that they need to surpass in order to continue providing education. In these times of uncertainties, school administrators, officials, and colleagues have a crucial role in helping teachers survive these changes.



Monitoring and mentoring mechanisms are essential in any work system. According to (Mehta, n.d.) monitoring is a mechanism to identify periodically the bottlenecks in implementing a program and to take remedial measures to improve the effectiveness of the program when the program is still on. Teachers need constant monitoring from the authorized people in order to identify areas of improvement and undertake corrective measures.

The monitoring system that the higher-ups are using has been effective in helping teachers cope with the changes in the education system. Miguel shares "The school heads have monitoring checklists. They are also giving reminders (*Ang mga school heads ay may monitoring checklists. Nagbibigay sila reminders*)." This is tantamount to saying that when teachers are properly monitored, they are able to meet the demands of work because they are redirected on what to do and what to improve.

Moreover, Sophia shared her experience regarding the submission of modules saying "Our head teacher has a checklist of submitted modules. With this, it is easier for us to comply with the submission of modules because our head teacher gives follow-ups (*Our head teacher ay may checklist na sa mga napasang modules. Dito, mas nakakapagcomply agad gad kase may follow-up yung pagpasa ng modules*)."

In addition, teachers were able to cope with the sudden changes in the workplace because of the assistance and support afforded by the different school personnel. The mentoring mechanism provided to the teachers has helped them perform their duties and responsibilities. Ronald shares "The assistance provided by my superiors has helped me do my tasks. I cannot do these tasks without their help (*'Yung tulong ng aking mga superior, ng mga colleagues. Hindi ko magagawa yung mga tasks na yun without them, without their help*)." Further, Vincent relates



"In our school, one of our pre-opening classes activities is the critiquing of developed recorded lessons. Though recorded lessons did not materialize, this helped us in making modules particularly on content."

This emerging theme is similar to the idea of Honigsfeld and Nordmeyer (2020) about the importance of helping and assisting one another. According to them, collaborating with colleagues can offer social-emotional support and lead honest conversations about what works and what doesn't in this new learning environment. The sharing of everything such as teacher-created materials, freely available resources, curated course content can help one survive challenges.

Expanded Self-Support System. This refers to the inner drive of the teachers to overcome the difficulties and challenges.

The outbreak of the coronavirus has impelled teachers to continuously improve themselves in order to cope with the changes in the educational system. In this trying time, selfsupport mechanism is imperative if one wants to survive. As Bhushan Pawar said, " No one can help you better than yourself." In this regard, Jennifer relayed "We have adjusted through learning and our experiences." This manifests that continuously helping oneself in times of difficulty helps one adjust. The initiative to learn new things is an important factor in order to withstand the difficulties of the situation.

Moreover, this new normal of education has motivated teachers to further improve themselves. In this light, Isabel shared "Improve ourselves and let us think of the children's future. We need to do everything to deliver quality education *(Improve ourselves and let us think about the children's future. Kailangan gawin natin lahat to deliver quality education).*" In the same spirit, Sophia shares "We need to continue doing our responsibility as teachers. Thus, we need to help



ourselves." Such affirmations show that supporting and pushing oneself is needed if one wants to remain relevant in delivering education amidst any crises.

Self-Discipline. This pertains to the eagerness of the teacher to manage time and finish tasks as scheduled.

According to Your Dictionary, self-discipline is the ability to control and motivate oneself to stay on track and do what is right. Thus, self-discipline is an attitude that drives people to persevere and do what is expected of them amidst uncertainties.

This theme perfectly portrays the ability of teachers to use their time wisely in accomplishing tasks expected of them. Self-discipline has armored teachers with the needed attitude in order to accomplish their duties and responsibilities.

While the pandemic tenaciously pushes teachers' temperaments in terms of time and tolerance, they were able to surpass this because of self-motivation and discipline. Miguel tells "You need to balance your time and follow the schedule (*Dapat balansehin ang oras. At sundin ang schedule*)." Edward added "Time management is needed. When it is time for work, you need to work. However, you also need time for your family (*Time management, kapag trabaho, trabaho pero dapat may oras pa rin sa pamilya*)." Similarly, Dianne shared the importance of prioritizing. She says "Know your priority. You should know what to accomplish first in order not to be piled up with tasks (*Priority. Dapat alam mo yung mga dapat mong unahin para hindi matambakan ng mga gawain*)."

This theme is congruent with the findings of Castroverde and Acala (2021) which disclosed that time management is one of the steps to ease the tasks that a teacher is handling daily. Through providing a schedule of activities and balancing tasks, teachers are able to manage



tasks effectively. This only shows that everything can be accomplished when one has selfdiscipline and knows how to spend his/her time efficiently.

As Theodore Roosevelt quote, "With self-discipline most anything is possible". Reinforcing this, Sabharwal (2020) further emphasized that one way to respond to the health crisis effectively and to recover from it is through self-discipline.

Continuous Self-Upskilling. This is the ability of the teacher for self-improvement and development.

This time of pandemic has taught teachers the importance of self-improvement and development in order to meet the changing demands of education. The changes that took place in the educational landscape all over the world have demanded teachers to continue upskilling themselves in order to remain relevant.

Destiny's Odyssey, (n.d.) defined that self-development is a process of consciously improving oneself in various aspects of life – a conscious pursuit of personal growth by improving personal skills, competencies, talents, and knowledge. Thus, self-development is a lifelong process which enables one to assess his/her abilities and potential.

This pandemic has driven teachers to become more assertive and aggressive in honing their craft. Continuous self-development has indeed helped teachers withstand the challenges in the educational system. Teachers may have been confronted with a lot of difficulties even before the start of classes, but their drive to learn new things has helped them manage these. In this regard, Albert shares "I will reflect on the things that I need to improve." This reflects the eagerness of teachers to learn new things.



Moreover, Sophia shared "We do research. On Facebook, we joined groups from which we derive new ideas and insights. We also adapt their strategies (*Nagreresearch kami. Sa facebook kase may mga group, eh nagbabasa kami doon. Kumukuha kami ng mga ideas doon. Inaadapt naming yung mga strategies nila*)." This initiative of teachers has contributed much in managing the challenges brought by the pandemic.

Similarly, Edward shares "You need to read and study (Magbasa rin at mag-aral)." Similarly, Pauline communicated "I have to research for other lessons related to the module I am making. I also need to read other reference materials (I have to research for other lessons related to the module I am making. I also have to read from other references)." All these reflect the inner drive of teachers to continuously develop themselves in order to remain functional in the system. Emanating from this, Bosworth (2020) claimed that the "new normal" has forced people to learn new ways of doing things, new technology and skills. Teachers are the living witnesses of this because no pandemic has stopped them from doing their job, instead, it makes them more committed, passionate, and service-oriented. In view of this, Pauline continues "I need to learn new things like that google classroom. Hence, I downloaded samples on how to make and create google classrooms for my classes." (Masapul nga adalek – kasanu ngata dayta google classroom. Isu a agdownload nak iti sample iti kasanu panagaramid ti google classroom, kada mangbuo ti klase.) Such a drive of teachers demonstrates their eagerness to learn new things in order to carry out what is expected of them.

This emerging concept is also present in the study of Castroverde and Acala (2021) which explained the importance of self-upskilling, that is, to equip oneself with the current trends of



teaching tools, strategies, and approaches to be able to adapt with the changes brought by the pandemic.

Adaptability. This is the ability of the teachers to acclimatize to the existing conditions. This also involves some time for the teachers to enjoy and bond with their family and friends.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, adaptability pertains to an ability or willingness to change in order to suit different conditions. In other words, adaptability refers to the ability of a person to change his actions, course or approach to doing things in order to suit a new situation.

This pandemic has demonstrated one core skill of teachers – adaptability. The ability of teachers to effectively adapt to abrupt changes in this time of crisis was manifested in various situations. Teachers have successfully surpassed the unprecedented changes in the educational system because they have been used to it after some time. Their immersion to the different modalities of learning, use of technology and other online and digital platforms made them still functional and relevant. Affirming this, Miguel shared "We are now used to the different learning modalities (*Unti-unting nagagamay ang ibat ibang modalities*)." This only manifests that when one is used to doing something, he/she will eventually master doing it, thus adapting to changes effectively. Edward supported this saying "We are now used to what we have been doing (*Parang nasasanay na kami sa ginagawa namin*)." This is tantamount to saying that if one fails to adapt, he/she will indeed fail in the long run. As Max McKeown put in words, "All failure is failure to adapt, all success is successful adaptation."

Being adaptable in the workplace is an important skill because it helps one adjust quickly and effectively especially during unprecedented times. This is best explained by the words of Charles Darwin which goes this way, "It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive



but those who can best manage change." Truly, those who can adapt to changes are the ones who can thrive in this pandemic.

Similarly, being adaptable at work means one can respond quickly to changing ideas, responsibilities, expectations, trends, strategies and other processes. Being adaptable in the workplace is important when developing strategies and implementing different approaches to doing one's job (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021). Thus, being able to adapt to the changes in the new environment can help one flourish.

Moreover, this emerged theme also encompasses the ability of teachers to enjoy some of their time amidst their hectic schedule. Because teachers have already adapted to the changes in the system, they can already manage their time efficiently. Thus, giving them time to bond with their loved ones. In this regard, Miguel continues "I can already balance my time. There is already time management (*Nababalance na ang time. Mayroon nang time management*)." Time management is an important skill because it enables one to work more efficiently by dividing one's time between specific activities. Good time management enables one to work smarter and accomplish more even when time is tight and pressures are high.

Further, Pauline shared the importance of relaxation and spending quality time with loved ones exclaiming "Sometimes, we need to relax also. When we are relaxed, we can think of ways to reach out with our students (*Kung minsan, magrelax din tayo. Kapag narerelax tayo, mas nakakaisip ng paraan para sa mga bata*)." In this stressful time, relaxation has been found to be an effective way of balancing out the negative mental and physical effects of stress that people experience every day. Emanating from this, Cirino (2019) asserted that relaxation provides one the ability to think more clearly and make better decisions, the power to better resist future



stressors, and a more positive outlook on life and experiences. Thus, a relaxed mind and body contributes much to one's total well-being. Miguel continues "We need to unwind with our friends and family (*Mag-unwind, kasama ang barkada, family*)." Family bonding is a good source of comfort and support. According to Thatcher (2020) spending quality time with loved ones improves mental health, thus reducing the occurrence of depression, anxiety, and other mental illness. Being physically present with loved ones creates a strong emotional support to buoy one's up through life's challenges.

SUCCESSES

Handling problems is always an essential skill. Teachers have to manage problems well, even the ones brought about by the pandemic, to be able to deliver well. Teachers, to be successful, have to generate coping mechanisms and use such to be able to triumph. The following are the themes that represent the success stories of teachers in the new normal.

Acceptance. This is a mental state of teachers in embracing the present conditions. This is the starting point of the journey of personal triumph.

Acceptance, according to Guru (2018), is a willful and courageous action. It is not a fleeting thought but a hard commitment. Guru also continues that to achieve acceptance, one must first acknowledge what exists. This was the phenomenon being described by teachers on how they were able to hurdle the difficult challenges they met before and during the opening of classes. They said that they have to accept the situation and live with the situation to be able to survive. When asked how they survived the education in the new normal, the participants have these to offer:



Albert says "Acceptance. If we stick to the old practice, we will certainly not progress. We have to be proactive. We have to come up with ways to be relevant (*Acceptance. Kung yung mind natin ay naka-set dun sa dating normal na ang trabaho natin ay ganito lang, dapat ganito lang ang gagawin natin, kung ganun yung mind set natin, we will not progress in this pandemic. Hindi tayo magiging proactive kapag ganoon. Kaya una, dapat i-accept yung situation and from there, come up with ways like involving yourself in the different modalities)."*

Isabel says "Accept the situation. Remember that you are a teacher. The department needs us. The children need us." Likewise, Pauline shares "Tiresome but we need to embrace changes – accept changes. Then do something about it so that you will not be left behind. We need to face it. You need to move on." Jennifer further adds "We are already here that is why we need to face it (*Nandito na tayo kaya dapat harapin natin*)".

All these statements are parallel to the ideas of embracing the changes that are brought about by the new normal. If teachers do not embrace what is happening, they will certainly fail and feel overburdened by the situation. Guru captures this very well in his idea that goes "Ultimately, when one truly accepts something, he undergoes a transformation. The structures of his brain literally change. New neurons and networks are formed; he literally physically transforms." Indeed, teachers were able to transform in this situation of pandemic through their acceptance.

Positivism. This is a mental state of teachers to maintain a desirable outlook despite the emerging circumstances.

In this time of difficulty, having a positive outlook in life is imperative. This necessitates people to look on the brighter side of life amidst the difficulties. According to Indeed Editorial Team



(2021) positive thinking is a way of processing information with an optimistic outlook. Great positive thinkers understand that life can be challenging, but they approach challenges with determination rather than defeat. Positive thinkers feel confident that they can conquer whatever obstacles they encounter.

While there are many challenges that teachers have to battle everyday, they were able to hurdle this because of their positive disposition in life. Substantiating this, Isabel asserted "Believe that we can make it." With the same enthusiasm, Edward shared "Every problem has a solution *(Lahat ng problema may solusyon).*" These assertions connote positivity and optimism signifying that every difficulty can be overcome if one believes that he/she can make it. Isabel continued "Be positive!" This further demonstrates that being positive in the midst of difficulties helps one succeed. In the same spirit, Ronald shares "This pandemic will soon end. Believe that every problem has a solution." Moreover, Dianne exclaims "Think positively. This [pandemic] will soon end *(Think positive. Matatapos din)*". Thus, being positive amidst uncertainties helps one in moving forward.

This theme also surfaced from the study of Castroverde and Acala (2021). It emerged from their study that positivity contributes to teachers' favorable outlook in the challenges brought by the changes in the educational landscape, and that the spirit of optimism can help them avoid frustrations, anxiety, stress, and depression.

Similarly, Gordon (2012) claimed that positive people who regularly express positive emotions are more resilient when facing stress, challenges, and adversity. These assertions only prove that being positive lessens one's burdens and helps one focus and deal with things calmly without causing mental stress.

75



Adjustment. This is a physical condition of teachers in being to adapt and keep abreast with the changes.

Adjustment, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, is the ability to become more familiar with a new situation. Adjustment therefore pertains to the ability to change or alter one's actions or perceptions in order to survive the sudden changes in the new environment.

This time of pandemic has demonstrated the ability of teachers to adapt swiftly to the new situation. The ability of teachers to acclimate to the new environment has helped them thrive and surpass the challenges brought by the pandemic. Confirming this, Miguel shared "I have gradually learned and accustomed to doing the different modalities (*Unti-unting nagagamay ang ibat ibang modalities*)." Supporting this statement, Elaiza also shared "I am now more accustomed to developing modules (*Mas nagagamay ko na nang konti kase from module 1 to then now, mas marami sa CNHS ang schedule sa paggawa ng module. Nagagamay ko na*)." These statements depict that when people have been doing something new for a quite long time, they will gradually adjust and eventually will learn how to do it.

However, adjusting to the new environment may be different for many people. Experience and exposure are crucial elements in acclimatizing to the new situation. But teachers have proven that they can surpass the difficulties because of their experiences and learning. In this light, Jennifer relayed "We have already adjusted because we have already learned how to make modules (*Naka-adjust na kami kase we have learned a lot in making modules*)." This statement substantiates the idea that when people have already been exposed to doing something, they will learn it, and gradually, will be able to successfully adjust. Jennifer continued "We [have] adjusted through learning and our experiences." Further, Ronald also relayed "We are getting used to it.



Before, there were stray modules. But now, the distribution of modules is smooth (*We are getting used to it. Noon kase marami pang naliligaw na modules. Ngayon, maayos na lahat sa pagbibigay ng modules*)." These statements further solidify the idea that people can be able to adjust with learning and experience.

Amidst the pressing situation, teachers continue to encourage, shape, and resourcefully reach their students regardless of the circumstances. In South Australia particularly in The University of Adelaide, the student support services have successfully adapted to the challenges of remote delivery. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the rapid adaptation to enable remote delivery of the student engagement and success services has been a remarkable achievement. With this, students interacting with the services have risen especially in disciplines that have typically had low engagement. Moreover, the high attendance and participation rates in these services has also been met with positive feedback from students about how they operate remotely (Kemp, 2020).

Furthermore, staff at St. John School in Canada feel successful utilizing online learning because they have been able to keep students engaged and connected with their class (Shykaruk, 2020).

Survival and Persistence. This is a holistic condition of teachers that manifests their undaunted zeal, passion, and commitment in their chosen vocation. Despite the struggles, they remain steadfast and resilient in the exercise of their responsibilities.

Isabel shares "I have successfully surpassed the challenges. I made it with the help of colleagues and the improved work system."

77



Pauline also agrees when she mentioned that "With the many challenges, we have to innovate and continue going on. We need to move forward and make education accessible to all even if there are quarantine restrictions"

Dianne also shares that "We, teachers, have the persistence to carry on to be able to reach our students. We have to help each other and try new things to solve emerging problems. Because of these, we survived"

Similarly, teachers in the Winnipeg School Division in Canada have been very successful in preparing, collating, and packaging home learning kits for students. Learning packages were dropped off to families where transportation was an issue. Also, industrial arts teachers are using their spare time to make medical mask clasps using 3-D printers and plasma cutters. On one hand, physical education teachers are preparing teaching videos and sharing them online and through social media to motivate students to stay engaged (Manitoba Education, 2020).

Moreover, in New Jersey teachers have successfully shifted their teaching from the classroom to the cloud, developed new ways to connect with their students and deliver their curricula, and launched numerous initiatives designed to give back to their communities. These efforts of the teachers made the majority of their students have access to quality instruction, necessary support services, and meals during a time of historical disruption despite students' lack of technology to access remote instruction (Grimaldi, 2020).

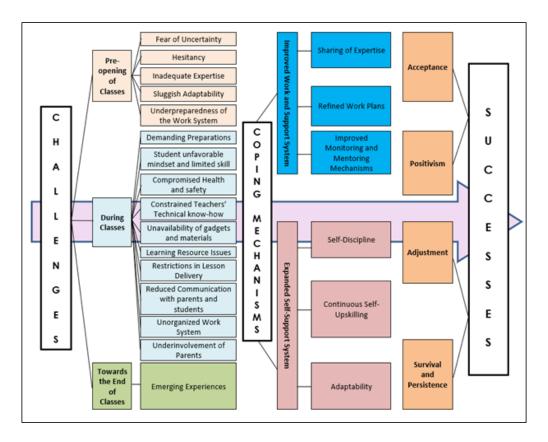
In addition, during the pandemic the website of Jamie Frost has been very successful in offering several videos, teaching slides, quizzes, and a bank of exam questions for free. His website has seen over half a million hits a day since schools have closed. His success made him shortlisted for the Global Teacher Prize (Education Industry Experts, 2020).

78



THEMATIC DIAGRAM OF THE EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS IN THE NEW NORMAL





The diagram depicts the experiences of teachers in the new normal of education. The experiences can be described as transformational, shifting from a bulk of challenges to a circle of successes.

As illustrated in the figure, there are three broad terms that capture the lived experiences of teachers amidst the pandemic. The first layer talks about the three-echelon challenges of teachers that they have encountered before, during and towards the end of the first semester. This encapsulates the struggles, fears, anxiety, and doubts of teachers brought about by the prevailing health crisis. The second layer focuses on the coping mechanisms of teachers that helped them thrive and weather these challenges. These mechanisms are the support systems



that have helped teachers adjust and adapt with the new situations and abrupt changes in the educational system. The last layer centers on the triumphs of teachers during the pandemic. This captures the successes of teachers in accepting the changes, adapting to it, living with it, and finally, surviving it.

Further, the purple-colored background arrow portrays the transition that teachers undergo during the pandemic. It depicts the interrelatedness of success and challenges and what lies between them. This transition reflects the unending zeal, passion, and commitment of teachers in delivering quality education amidst the pressing situation.

To further triangulate the themes depicted in the diagram particularly on the transformational experience, the researchers deemed it necessary to ask how the participants feel towards the end of the first semester. The current state describes a transformed state of having accepted and adjusted with the situation brought by the new normal. The participants mentioned that they now feel better compared to their life during the opening and middle of the semester. All the three participants mentioned that they were unsure, anxious and uncertain of the things they will do in the new normal. But now, they feel better because they have already adjusted with work situations. They are already accustomed to the tasks they need to do such as in preparing the SLMs (developing, quality assuring, sorting, packing, delivering and retrieving). They have already accepted the fact they are in the pandemic and the only thing they need to do is to accept the situation and adjust to it. These are evident in the statements of all the participants. When the participants were asked how they feel now compared to before, the following were their responses.



Ronald said that "I got used to the work. Because the pandemic has been prevailing for quite a long time, I am already getting used to it. I was able to accept it now and have moved forward." This was agreed by Albert who said "I am feeling better now compared to when I was first interviewed. Personally, I am fully adjusted with the situation because we cannot do anything but to accept it."

Also, Miguel has concurred with the two interviewees. He emphasized "I am feeling better now because I have already adjusted with school work. Before, we were groping in the dark, unsure of what we will be doing, but now I have adapted with the situation because we have been doing the same things over and over again. Because of this, I have been used to doing things in the new normal."

Corrano (2018) explains this phenomenon quite simply. She purports that If someone gets used to something, he/she becomes familiar with it, which makes him/her no longer feel that the thing is unusual, fearsome or surprising. She adds that people get so used to specific actions and suddenly they are sure they are the norm. Once in a while, people feel a slight discomfort when something is not exactly what they were expecting, but overtime, they get used to it and start believing the whole world acts like that.



Department of Education

REGION I SCHOOLS DIVISION OF CANDON CITY

TEACHERS' STRATEGIC SUPPORT PLAN

SY 2021-2022

Themes	Details of the themes	Strategies/ Actions/ Plans	Objective/ Purpose of the action	Persons Involved	Time Frame	Measurable Outcomes
I. Challenges before the	e Opening of Classes					
a. Fear of Uncertainty	This is an inner challenge of the teachers which gives them worries and troubles on the repercussions of unsure events and circumstances. The repercussions include the extent of under preparedness for the new normal, probability of losing work and non- remuneration.	Conduct an online Convergence in the New Education among DepEd employees	The convergence shall tackle the following: 1. tenure of teachers 2. remuneration 3. WFH arrangements under different quarantine classifications	SDS ASDS Administrative Services SGOD CID Principals Teachers	October 2021	534 Teachers have attended the online convergence Evaluation results
b. Hesitancy	This pertains to the inner challenge of the teacher to accept the changes brought about by the pandemic. This	Conduct online training and simulation on the use of the following modalities	The training/ simulation shall focus on the following: 1. enhanced delivery and	SDS ASDS Administrative Services SGOD CID	August- October 2021	534 Teachers have simulated the different learning modalities



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c. Inadequate Expertise	 challenge is related to their unwillingness to adapt to the changes since they have been used to the old normal of education. This refers to the insufficient technical knowledge and skills of the teachers in the new normal. This also includes the lack of training of teachers in handling different platforms in lesson delivery which made them unprepared for the new normal. 	1. print 2. digital 3. online	retrieval system using Tulong ni KAP 2. new scheme for sectioning 3. plans/ guidelines in simplifying SLMs including converting to digital copies (pdf version) 4. plans/ guidelines in quality assuring SLMs and other learning resources 5. conducting online classes (suggested time frame for online class across grade	Principals Teachers Trainers	34 approved school plans reflecting the adoption of the modalities
d. Sluggish Adaptability	This refers to the inability of the teachers to swiftly adapt to the changes caused by unprecedented shifts in learning modality. This includes getting used to the sudden		levels)		



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e. Underpreparedness of the Work System	change of work system and routines and dealing with abrupt preparations. This is a problem of insufficient planning in the work system that gives details on how to go about the delivery of educational services in the new normal. This includes the non-orientation of parents, non- engagement of other stakeholders relevant to their new role in education in the new normal.	Conduct School-based stakeholders' convergence	The stakeholders' convergence shall deal with: 1.crtical role of parents in the new normal - delivery and retrieval of SLMS - functions as teachers-at-home 2. enhanced Tulong ni KAP system	SDS ASDS Administrative Services SGOD CID Principals Teachers Parents/ guardians and other stakeholders	August to Septemb er	At least 4000 parents/ Guardians are oriented
II. Challenges During the					· · · · ·	
a. Student	This refers to the	Conduct an	The congress shall	SDS	Through	534 Teachers
unfavorable mindset and limited skill	struggle of the	Online	tackle:	ASDS Administrative	out the Calendar	have attended
anu inniteu Skin	teachers brought about by students'	Congress on Teaching and	1. teaching and learning strategies	Services		the Congress on Teaching
	readiness, poor	Learning in the	in the new normal	SGOD	year	and Learning
	motivation for the	New Normal	education	CID		and Learning
	lesson and inability to		2. Intensifying motivation	Principals Teachers		



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	comprehend the					
	lesson well.					
			Conduct the			
			Project			Project
			"COMPRE". This			"COMPRE" is
			project shall be			fully
			spearheaded by			implemented
			the CID. It intends			
			to provide strategies for			
			teachers to teach			
			comprehension			
			among learners			
			even during the			
			pandemic.			
b. Compromised	This is a struggle of	Intensify the	SHNU shall	SDS	Through	Approved
Health and safety	teachers in protecting	observance of	develop a	ASDS	out the	monitoring
	and promoting their	health	monitoring plan	Administrative	Calendar	plan/tool by the
	safety and well-being	protocols in schools and	and tool to assess	Services SGOD	year	SHNU
	while performing their duties. This struggle	the SDO	the compliance of the SDO and the	CID		534 Teachers
	also includes the	(workplaces)	workplace with the	Principals		are aware and
	emotional and	(womplaces)	minimum health	Teachers		always practice
	psychological status		standards. From	reachere		the minimum
	of the teachers in		the findings, they			health
	coping with work-		shall provide			standards
	related stress, health-		research-based			
	related factors, and		recommendations			



Department of Education

	others brought about		for each of the			
	by the pandemic.		workplace.			
	by the pandemic.	Conduct health				
		and wellness/	The Program shall			534 Teachers
		stress	focus on how to be			have attended
		management	healthy and stress-			the wellness
		managomont	free in this			program.
			pandemic. It will be			program
			a year-round			
			program to support			
			the overall health			
			of all teachers			
c. Constrained	This is a struggle	Online	The Simulation	SDS	Through	534 Teachers
Teachers' Technical	brought about by the	Simulation	Version 2.0 shall	ASDS	out the	implement
know-how	inability of the	version 2.0 on	focus on:	Administrative	Calendar	multimodal
	teachers in facilitating	the learning	1. follow-up	Services	year	strategies in
	the teaching-learning	modalities	training on the	SGOD		their classes
	process in all		learning modalities	CID		
	platforms and		2. simulation on	Principals		
	modalities		the different	Teachers		34/34 schools
			modalities			have shared
			3. simulation best			their best
			practices of			practices in the
			schools in the			implementation
			learning modalities			of the learning
						modalities
			The PLCs shall be			
		Intensify	spearheaded by			
		Professional	coaches/mentors			



Department of Education

		Learning Communities (PLCs) in schools	or even teachers. The PLCs shall be a venue for discussion and sharing on how things are done based on experience.			534 Teachers always participate in PLCs
d. Unavailability of gadgets and materials	This is the struggle brought about by insufficient number of gadgets, materials available for both the teachers and the learners used for the delivery of learning.	Intensify partnerships and linkages	The intensification shall target: 1. increased number of partners for the provision of gadgets and materials in the new normal 2. increased number of teachers investing on personal gadgets The intensification can be done through caravans, solicitations, and other fund-raising activities	SDS ASDS Administrative Services SGOD CID Principals Teachers Parents/ guardians and other stakeholders Donors/partners	Through out the Calendar year	534 Teachers are always inspired and motivated to invest in personal gadgets



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e. Learning Resource	This refers to the	Intensify	The PROJECT	SDS	Through	34/34 schools
Issues	problem brought about by the inaccuracy of SLMs contents, even unavailability of reference materials. It also includes the long QA process and lengthy format for SLMs.	Project ERROR WATCH	shall be cascaded to schools. Reports shall be consolidated monthly. A google sheet shall be made to facilitate the collection of errors.	ASDS Administrative Services SGOD CID Principals Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel Parents/ guardians and other stakeholders Donors/partners	out the Calendar year	have functional Project ERROR WATCH
		Re-training of Teachers in the Development and Quality Assurance of SLMs and learning resources	The re-training shall focus on: 1. Simplified guidelines in creating SLMs 2. Simulation in critiquing SLMs		October- Novemb er	534 Teachers are re-skilled in SLM Development and Quality Assurance
f. Restrictions in	This is on the	Develop a	A standard system	SDS	Through	An approved
Lesson Delivery	difficulty of teachers	System of	shall be developed	ASDS	out the	working System
	in explaining the	Ways forward	in cases of	Administrative	Calendar	on Learning
	lesson in the distant	in different	quarantine	Services	year	Continuity



Department of Education

	learning modalities. This also encompasses problems in assessing students' accomplishments.	cases or quarantine levels	restrictions. For example, if a school is locked down due to quarantine restrictions, the school will just refer to the system and be informed on what to do to make learning continue.	SGOD CID Principals Teaching Personnel Parents/ guardians and other stakeholders Donors/partners		
g. Reduced Communication with parents and students	This is a problem experienced by the teachers in making and maintaining communications and correspondences between and among students and their parents.	Conduct PROJECT PORES (Parents- Teachers Open Response System) Intensify TICTOC for parents	Project PORES will offer available communication platforms for parents depending on capability and availability of materials.	SDS ASDS Administrative Services SGOD CID Principals Teaching Personnel Parents/ guardians and other stakeholders	Through out the Calendar year	At least 4000 parents are contacted throughout the year 534 teachers have active group chats or have intensified TIC-TOC for parents



Department of Education

h. Unorganized Work System	This is a problem encountered by teachers regarding the development, reproduction, packing, delivery, and retrieval of SLMs. This also involves the aftereffect of poor planning as manifested in confusions in work assignment.	Conduct planning conference among schools	The SGOD shall spearhead a planning conference. It shall deal with: 1. the plan of schools on work schedules and arrangements 2. system of SLM delivery and retrieval	SDS ASDS Administrative Services SGOD CID Principals Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel	October- Novemb er	34/34 approved school plans Evaluation results on work system coming from 534 teachers
III. Challenges towards						70 ()
a. New Things Bring New Challenges	This refers to the situation where the old challenges have already been considered by the participants. The challenges that they encounter are the new experiences that they have as they continue their journey in the new normal of education.	Conduct an Online re- skilling program on Coping Strategies and Adaptability	A re-skilling program shall be conducted to bolster: 1. coping strategies of teachers in the new normal 2. gaining and sustaining adaptability and flexibility of teachers in the new normal	SDS ASDS Administrative Services SGOD CID Principals Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel Speaker	Through out the Calendar year	534 teachers are re-skilled on coping strategies and adaptability



Republic of the Philippines Department of Education REGION 1

SCHOOLS DIVISION OF CANDON CITY

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Recommending Approval

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Approved

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Republic of the Philippines **Department of Education** REGION I SCHOOLS DIVISION OF CANDON CITY

Validation of the TSSP

The TSSP was presented to the Schools Division Superintendent, the Asst. Schools Division Superintendent, the Chief Education Supervisor for SGOD, and the Chief Education Supervisor for CID. The validation shows a rating of 4.82, interpreted as Very Highly valid. This means that the TSSP was formulated based on actual research results. The strategies were also developed addressing the key findings of the study.

Indicators		Evaluator		Mean	
	1	2	3	4	
Face Validity 1.The TSSP is complete and comprehensive.	5	5	5	4	4.75
Content Validity	5	5	5	5	5
Functionality 2.The TSSP is based on the findings of the research.	5	5	5	4	4.75
3.The interventions/actions indicated directly address the identified challenges/needs of the study.	5	5	5	4	4.75



Department of Education

REGION I

SCHOOLS DIVISION OF CANDON CITY

4.The interventions are clearly explained. Details are present and can be easily understood.	5	5	5	4	4.75
Timeliness 5.The interventions are planned in accordance with time and relevance.	5	5	5	5	5
Implementation 6.The interventions can be implemented with the indicated resources, both material and human.	5	5	5	4	4.75
7. The indicated measurable outcomes are specific, quantifiable, and congruent to the problems/solutions presented in the action plan	5	5	5	4	4.75
Overall 8.The plan serves its purpose.	5	5	5	4	4.75
Mean	5	5	5	4.25	4.81



X. Dissemination and Advocacy Plans

The following were done to disseminate the results of the study.

- 1. The TSSP was presented to the Schools Division Office and shall serve as the main avenue to disseminate the results and address the issues found.
- 2. Copies of the research were given to the SDO, schools and the library.



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XII. Financial Report



BASIC EDUCATION RESEARCH FUND (BERF) 2020

FINANCIAL REPORT

As of October 22, 2021

Grant Received

Expenses

a) Supplies & Materials 17,000.00 b) Printing/binding cost 12,500.00 c) Communication expenses 15,000.00 d) Transportation Expenses 10,000.00 e) token for validators (interview guide) 10,000.00 f) token for validators of the TSSP 10,000.00 g) dissemination of results 30,000.00 e) Meals & snacks for participants <u>45,500.00</u> 150,000.00

Balance

150,000.00