

Uncovering teacher's situation amidst the pandemic: Teacher's coping mechanisms, initiatives, constraints, and challenges encountered

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Research Article</p> <p>Received: 14 April 2022 Revised: 19 July 2022 Accepted: 22 July 2022</p> <p>Keywords: Distance learning, Covid-19, Coping mechanisms, Initiatives, Constraints and challenges</p>	<p><i>This paper aimed to discover the coping, initiatives, constraints, and challenges public secondary school teachers encounter in the new normal education. The central question of this paper lies in "What are the adapting and coping mechanisms of teachers and students in the distance learning modality amidst the pandemic?". This paper used the qualitative research design and employed a phenomenological approach to investigate secondary public-school teachers' coping mechanisms and initiatives in the new normal education. This paper focused on twelve public secondary school teachers in Cagayan, Philippines. The research's findings are: (1) Most teachers encountered substantial challenges due to a lack of resources, student supervision, and duties. (2) Most teachers were constrained by the advent of the digital era. (3) Public-school teachers cope with their students' needs by employing effective initiatives and teaching strategies. (4) Despite their weariness and stress, teachers report positive outcomes such as tremendous enthusiasm and building connections with the school community. Meanwhile, the schools' adaptation to distant learning should be guided and encouraged by the following policies and concepts: (1) Access to technology for students. (2) Regular monitoring and feedback (3) Providing curriculum and instruction of the highest quality. Through this paper, teachers may benefit from adopting various coping techniques and activities for the new normal education.</i></p>

1. Introduction

The global coronavirus illness of 2019 (COVID-19) is wreaking havoc on educational systems worldwide, including in the Philippines. Consequently, instructors' responsibilities are critical to ensuring their students achieve academic achievement. COVID-19 posed a challenge to schools, faculty, students, parents, and other stakeholders. For this reason, several school districts have moved activities to the internet to keep instruction going even while classrooms are closed (Caratiquit & Pablo, 2021; Nenakhova, 2021).

Aside from online learning, several public schools, particularly in rural regions, employed modular instruction, consisting of printed self-learning modules that supplemented classroom instruction. Furthermore, many students and parents favored the modular distance learning option (Manlangit et al., 2021). As a result, teachers' ability to deliver high-quality instruction and preparation to students has significantly decreased. Due to the pandemic, teachers have been compelled to play an essential role in assisting and monitoring students' growth in the face of barriers and changes to the educational platform, which now includes home-based learning. Exceptional learning experiences are not limited to the four walls of the classroom; they can take place at any time and from any location as long as they are of high quality. (Mishra et al., 2020).

Teachers encounter a variety of constraints and challenges because of the new educational system's significant changes. Several challenges arose when modular training was used in traditional learning continuity. On the other hand, teachers are accountable for the development and progress of their students. When possible, the instructor

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should make house calls to students who require remediation or further support (Butron, 2021). Regularly adopting the recognized remote learning strategy has proven to be complicated. According to Dangle and Sumaoang (2020), a lack of school finance was one of the most significant problems found during the preparation and execution of courses. Also, Cardullo et al. (2021) and Iglesias-Pradas et al. (2021) reported that teachers were surprised when forced to give emergency remote instruction due to a lack of distant education competency and computer literacy.

Undoubtedly, the outbreak puts instructors' ability to adapt and be flexible in times of crisis. As a result, they are motivated to devise new and unique initiatives for connecting with their students and colleagues. Additionally, instructors received specific training to provide adequate education in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers, on the other hand, cannot simply disregard uncontrollable situations. Regardless of how difficult it is, teachers continue to make learning possible while aiding themselves and students in adjusting to the new normal (Agayon et al., 2022).

One of the instructors' strengths is their capacity to adapt when faced with hardship. Numerous roadblocks arise during this trying period, and educators are still adjusting to their new normal. As a result, instructors adopt a variety of coping strategies and innovations to overcome daily problems (Robosa et al., 2021). These coping strategies and improvements assist teachers in overcoming barriers and significantly enhance the classroom atmosphere. Based on the previous evidence and observations, this paper identified the constraints public secondary school teachers encountered when implementing a distance learning modality. Additionally, this paper defined their coping capabilities and initiatives, which will aid in addressing any issues and difficulties that arise throughout the shift to the new normal alternate learning approach. Finally, it proposes a plan of action or policy for preventing these difficulties depending on the individual's coping technique.

2. Literature

2.1. *Philippine education system in the face of an outbreak*

Teachers face hurdles in the new normal because of the COVID-19 pandemic involving children's parents (Castroverde & Acala, 2021). Even though other countries have been declared virus-free, the Philippines remains one of the worst affected. The disease has had a tremendous effect on education, with considerable changes occurring in academic institutions and schools because of the outbreak. Due to the outbreak, face-to-face instruction was challenging to offer (Abbas, 2021). The education sector must ensure that each school achieves its mission and goal of offering quality education to every Filipino student to ensure the continuation of successful education (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020). Following these developments, the country's Department of Education (DepEd) issued an order establishing new instructional techniques and delivery modalities at all levels, as expressed in the Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) for the school year 2020-2021 to the present (Guiamalon, 2021). In either digital or paper version, the document addresses a variety of learning modalities, including distant online education, blended learning, homeschooling, and modular distance learning. The most common distribution method used by public schools is printed self-learning modules, which are available in various formats. This is because only a minority of learners, particularly those living in remote regions, have access to the internet. Students own a small number of gadgets, and internet access is limited (Castroverde & Acala, 2021; Alomyan, 2021).

2.2. *Constraints and challenges of teachers in the new normal*

Teachers ensure students get the most out of the lessons during the outbreak. Nevertheless, educators have faced a lot of constraints and challenges because of the COVID-19 outbreak, but they have continued to serve by producing modules that serve as learning aids for students in the classroom (Alea et al., 2020). Although Malipot (2020) highlighted that some teachers are concerned about modular distance learning, he also noted that other teachers are worried about the high cost of reproduction and must stay at school until evening to complete the printing on time. According to Macaraeg et al. (2021), the modular distance learning model has resulted in more work, increased health hazards, and increased expenses, prompting teachers to request contributions of bond paper and ink to print on to keep up with demand. These only underscore the fact that there are concerns with printed self-learning modules that must be addressed. Teachers must learn to deal with the new normal and carry out their responsibilities in the face of impediments that may develop in their work (De Villa & Manalo, 2020).

2.3. *Coping mechanisms and initiatives of teachers amidst the pandemic*

The rapid changes and advancements of today's world present new challenges and raise the bar for our educational system. The instructor, who viewed himself as a second parent to his students, was having difficulty adjusting to the new program. In the same way, the lack of equipment and material aid raises whether the country is

ready to start this new phase of education. As a result of teachers' efforts to deliver quality education, many academics, particularly instructors, feel stress and burnout (Ansley et al., 2021).

Even though the current school year ended without incident, teachers, school officials, parents, students, and other stakeholders continue to confront barriers to incorporating remote learning modes (Barcenas & Bobin, 2021). Due to the constant evolution of the curriculum, every teacher must devise innovative and imaginative approaches to facilitate learning for children who learn at home. Parents and other family members gained excellent skills as learning facilitators in their own homes. The teacher is responsible for monitoring their students' development. One can communicate with the teacher by e-mail, phone, text message/instant messaging, or other means. When feasible, the teacher makes home visits to students who need immediate attention, remediation, or help. (Agaton & Cueto, 2021).

Teachers occasionally need assistance from Barangay Local Government Units with module distribution and retrieval, whereas students receive printed modules and other educational materials from their parents or guardians. Since education is no longer contained within the school walls, parents have joined educators as academic partners. Parents are critical components of their children's education as home facilitators, guidance counselors, modulators, and facilitators, among other functions equivalent to classroom instructors. In modular or blended learning, their primary job is to develop a rapport with the students and guide them through the activities in the learning materials (Everaert & Safari, 2021). This paper was conducted to support the findings and perceptions by presenting arguments and developments about public secondary school teachers' challenges and coping techniques.

2.4. Research questions

This paper aimed to explore the coping, initiatives, constraints, and challenges public secondary school teachers encounter in the new normal education. The central question of this paper lies in "What are the adapting and coping mechanisms of teachers and students in the distance learning modality amidst the pandemic?"

This paper sought to answer the following queries:

- 1) How are teachers and students adapting to and coping with remote education during COVID 19 lockdowns?
- 2) What are teachers' and students' initiatives to adapt and cope with the distance learning modality?
- 3) What constraints and challenges do teachers encounter in delivering instruction in the distance learning modality?

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This paper employed a qualitative research design. It employed a phenomenological approach to explore secondary public-school teachers' coping techniques, initiatives, constraints, and challenges in the new normal education. Phenomenology was preferred because it focuses on secondary public-school teachers' lived experiences adjusting to distance learning.

Table 1. Teacher's demographic profile

<i>Sex</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Female	6	50.0	Junior High School	8	66.7
Male	6	50.0	Senior High School	4	33.3
<i>Grade Level</i>			<i>Specialization</i>		
Grade 10	2	16.7	English	5	41.7
Grade 11	1	8.3	Filipino	1	8.3
Grade 12	1	8.3	MAPEH	1	8.3
Grade 8	4	33.3	Mathematics	2	16.7
Grade 9	4	33.3	Science	1	8.3
			Social Science	2	16.7
<i>Position</i>					
Master Teacher II	3	25.0			
Teacher I	2	16.7			
Teacher II	1	8.3			
Teacher III	6	50.0			

3.2. Participants of the study

This paper gathered data from two public secondary schools in Cagayan, Philippines, under the Division of Cagayan. These public secondary schools provide Junior and Senior High programs along with the general education curriculum. Meanwhile, purposive sampling was applied in selecting the 12 participants with the following demographic characteristics. Table 1 illustrates the profile of the teachers. The results revealed that 50 percent of the teachers are female, whereas 50 percent are male. The results showed that 66.7 percent of the teachers are in Junior High School, whereas 33.3 percent are in Senior High School. The results indicated that 33.3 percent of the teachers belong to Grade 8. The same is true with Grade 9. Regarding specialization and position, most teachers teach English subjects (41.7 percent), and most are Teacher III (50 percent).

3.4. Instrumentation

In a formal letter submitted to the heads of the schools, permission to conduct the research was requested. When communication was authorized, the researchers used the channel to collect data from both participating schools' junior and senior high school coordinators. The interview procedures were self-administered to fully consented participants from the two schools through Google Meet with the assistance of the researchers. All teachers' responses from the two secondary schools were automatically entered into a database, which was then examined to ensure that no missing or erroneous information was included. Because the researchers used Google Meet to gather data for the study, they had to recode with the participants' permission to guarantee that the necessary data was correctly classified. Apart from acknowledging them for their cooperation, the study's findings were communicated to all participants in general terms. It was stated that general recommendations were made, and those specific directions were followed. An interview protocol divided into two sections was used to collect data in this study: (1) the Participants' Profile and (2) the Guide Questions, which included information on the coping mechanisms, initiatives, constraints, and challenges encountered during COVID 19 lockdowns.

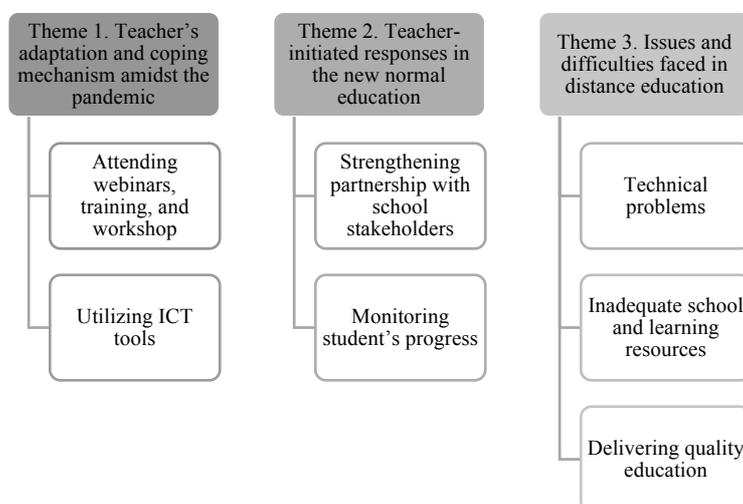
3.5. Analysis of data

The qualitative data collected was evaluated utilizing a thematic and content analysis. Qualitative content and thematic analysis are included in the qualitative descriptive design technique. These collections gather textual analysis approaches and themes for explaining textual data. The methodical process of coding, meaning inquiry, and presenting a description of social reality via theme creation that they undertake to differentiate themselves from other methods is their distinctive trait (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The researchers used this data analysis to gather evidence that a specific story aspect was repeated throughout their responses.

4. Results and discussion

Three significant themes emerged from the data following a qualitative review of the responses from the 12 participants. Each topic is subdivided into connected sub-themes based on the results of the subsequent thematic analysis.

Figure 1. Themes and sub-themes



Theme 1. Teacher's adaptation and coping mechanism amidst the pandemic

Two sub-themes were identified from the responses of the participants. The teacher's adaptation and coping mechanism amidst the pandemic was categorized into (1) Attending Webinars, Training, and Workshop and (2) Utilizing ICT Tools.

Attending webinars, training, and workshop

Participants 3, 5, 7, 8, and 11 mentioned, "For me to cope in the new normal education, I attended seminars and training on the new modes of learning delivery like the training conducted by DepEd EdTech Unit. I busied myself on the different webinars to update myself on the construction of quizzes, exams, and answer sheets to ease my learners academically." They also added, "I indulge myself in learning new normal educational platforms, especially in joining webinars to cater to the needs of learners, and devoted my time to printed modules. Attendance in webinars in alternative distance learnings and advancement in ICT occupied our time as our means of adjusting to cater to our learners' needs." Also, Participant 6 mentioned, "I joined different virtual seminars about teaching our learners through various learning modalities. Finding pathways to engage students in group discussions to build collaboration and communication skills is critical this upcoming school year."

This suggests that teachers participated in various training programs, seminars, and workshops to better cope with and adapt to the new educational system structure and policies. This means that webinars provide several topics and opportunities for the professional growth of teachers. Teachers may share best practices, ideas, and resources with their peers in a safe and open environment during this time of new normal education. These strategies empower all teachers in their classes to handle and adapt to the new system by increasing their empowerment, creativity, and imagination. The results are consistent with prior studies.

According to De Villa and Manalo (2020) and Hazaymeh (2021), distance learning relies on technology. Teachers are constantly gaining exposure to a variety of online learning venues. They participate in webinar sessions, study video courses, and receive peer coaching to prepare for the new normal. This enables teachers to expand their knowledge base and build crucial skills while developing instructional strategies. Moreover, continuous learning enables teachers' professional growth and development by preparing them to adapt to changes in the educational landscape as they occur. Given teachers' vital role in raising the overall quality of education, developing their ability must be a primary objective (Aslam, 2014).

Utilizing ICT tools

Participants 8, 9, and 10 stated, "It became quite challenging for us educators as learning started to serve in the plates of our learners with much difficulty. So as an educator, I also pushed out ways to meet the needs of my learners. I created group chats to have a place of conversations with my learners to address some questions and clarifications in our lessons. I did my best to learn more on ICT." Participant 11 also reported, "I changed and adapted quickly to ensure my students' safety to slow the spread of COVID-19. I have moved classes online, created virtual classrooms, and developed innovative activities to provide physical distancing. For me, these changes have required us to adopt new technologies and teaching methods to fit these unique circumstances."

Participant 12 also mentioned, "Since there was no F2F learning, I needed to teach my learners online using Google meet, eduThinker, Messenger or even video call or text. All these platforms are used to ensure that teaching and learning go on. From delivery of instruction to retrieval of learning outputs and monitoring, these are the same ways I used." Participant 5 also added, "Used different platforms for distance learning like Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom, Facebook chat, and others. Whatever our current situation is, I always remind myself that I must ensure that my students learn something from me."

This indicates that teachers used ICT tools to cope and facilitate the delivery of classes and themes in remote education using computer- or internet-based technology. The use of ICT applications helps teachers and students communicate and collaborate more effectively. Among other things, smartphones, SMS, online forums, chat, blogs, social media platforms, and e-mail enable learners to connect and collaborate in order to create a meaningful learning experience. This also implies that the school can now make knowledge more accessible to everyone by utilizing information and communication technology. ICT tools can be used to teach a wide range of classes on a wide range of subjects and lessons. All of these can be accessed at any time and from any location to meet the needs and convenience of students. The findings are congruent with previous literature.

According to Jamon et al. (2021), teachers in the twenty-first century are encouraged to utilize technology. They must be digitally savvy in order to succeed in today's educational environment. In today's educational climate, students who do not understand how to use technology will struggle to succeed. Additionally, according to

Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2006), technology training through refresher course seminars improves teachers' technical literacy. Meanwhile, they argued that incorporating technology into education and introducing educational technology during instruction would better prepare students for the future of teaching and learning.

Theme 2: Teacher-initiated responses in the new normal education

The researchers selected two sub-themes based on the opinions of the participants. The teacher-initiated responses in the new normal education were divided into two categories: (1) Strengthening Partnership with School Stakeholders and (2) Monitoring Students' Progress.

Strengthening partnership with school stakeholders

According to Participant 2, "The school empowered school stakeholders who can provide technical assistance, such as the parents, siblings, LGU, Barangay officials, and volunteers. They are agents in delivering instructions by making a memorandum of agreement to share responsibility with the school to foster quality education in the community. Strengthening the strong partnership between the school and stakeholders would be a shared responsibility in delivering quality education to our learners." Furthermore, Participant 8 also asserted the importance of school stakeholders, "Even during the pre-pandemic period, the school could not stand without the support of our stakeholders. Much more than we needed them during the critical pandemic as it was a must to have command centers or catchment areas of modules and retrieved answer sheets in every barangay. Therefore, we coordinated with the barangay officials and other stakeholders for smooth learning delivery."

As a result, strong connections between instructors and other external stakeholders are crucial. This will allow the whole school community to work together in the best interests of students, particularly in the new normal education. This signifies that the school's curriculum relies on instructors and critical stakeholders from beyond the academic community. The new educational system emphasizes student and family interaction throughout the system. This also means that instructors enlisted the assistance of school stakeholders, such as parents or guardians, who served as classroom para-teachers. The findings coincide with prior research.

Teachers must be given direction and interventions to help them reach out to students and other teachers, with the help of school administrators and politicians. Furthermore, teachers must work in collaboration with parents, communities, and other stakeholders to reach students consistently (Fontanos et al., 2020). According to a previous study, working collaboratively is one of the essential skills in the twenty-first century. As a consequence of technology improvements, it has also become easier to work with other teachers, stakeholders, students, and school officials, among other benefits (Morel, 2014).

Monitoring student's progress

Participants 3 and 4 answered, "I made sure that I was available online or through my contact details to call or message me if they had problems or difficulties with their self-learning modules. I applied personal one-on-one feedback given to my students for their performance tasks. This strengthens the connection with students so they will not feel burdened with the shift in learning delivery." Participant 11 also added, "I find time to monitor and follow up always my students or visit them at home though it is hazardous. Because I think that one of the most effective initiatives that helped me cope with the new normal education is to embrace the changes in our educational setup." Participant 12 mentioned, "With students that seem problematic and show negligence in their learning, I usually text or call them. If I fail to receive a response, I do home visitation, so I can also talk with the parents to ask for their guidance for their children. Despite the many platforms, I have always believed that coping with the new normal is easy. Yes, I can teach, but the end question is, did they learn? Thus, it is a must for me not to rely on the outputs of the learners. Mainly I usually monitor how they are going with their activities. I always remind them that they can always ask for clarification if there is any part of the lesson they did not understand. That is when I do one-on-one chatting or talking with the learner and re-discuss or clarify part of the lesson that is vague to them."

This indicates that teachers strictly monitor and record student performance data and use it to make necessary instructional improvements in this new normal. Teachers constantly monitor students to ensure they grasp the learning material and progress. This also implies that teachers may be able to enhance student achievement, increase parent participation, address discipline concerns, and raise generally favorable opinions regarding school by conducting home visits. A home visit program, when properly implemented, may foster opportunities for connection, communication, and cooperation among teachers, parents, and children. The most significant advantage of home visits was a greater awareness of the student's environment and how that environment may affect his learning in distance learning. The results agree with other studies.

Monitoring the learner's improvement is the most effective method of determining if students continue to study by collecting their work, evaluating, and grading their assignments (Gross & Opalka, 2020). Furthermore, Blankstein et al. (2020) claimed that instructors must keep constant touch with their students despite the technological divide. Teachers should meet parents' requirements continuously, ensuring open communication between parents and their children's teachers. As previously stated, children who are not monitored and provided with assistance in the new normal are more likely to drop out. If they do not receive the appropriate care, they may lose hope of returning to school (Fontanos et al., 2020).

Theme 3: Issues and difficulties faced in distance education

Teachers' responses to issues and difficulties faced in distance education were divided into three categories: (1) Technical Problems, (2) Inadequate School and Learning Resources, and (3) Delivering Quality Education.

Technical problems

Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8 stated, "Weak internet connection disables many processes we do since we are heavily reliant on technology. Not all students can attend online classes due to slow internet connection and other problems like the laptop hanging in the middle of the discussion. Internet connection became another challenge when we sorted to e-module in place of print.

Participant 10 indicated, "Unstable internet connectivity. One of the most recurring difficulties experienced by students in remote learning is unstable internet connectivity. Most of the time, this problem is caused by geographic location. Furthermore, remote learning requires internet expenses needed for the online class. Even if they choose to take a job to support their studies, they cannot do it because of the current situation." Participant 11 also confirmed, "The biggest challenge I encountered was technical difficulties, reliability of internet connection, and being passive of students." This indicates that teachers and students experienced difficulties accessing the internet during their online sessions, one of the various learning modes available through distant learning. Some students and teachers do not have access to a computer at home, do not use it frequently, and do not have enough data or internet connection. In students from indigenous, lower socioeconomic, or rural origins, a digital divide in computer literacy must be bridged. The results are apparent in other studies.

Despite the country's constant development in internet connectivity over the last ten years, the internet connection speed is the biggest obstacle to using an online virtual platform. Salac and Kim (2020) recognized that the internet infrastructures of emerging Asian countries are pretty slow. Furthermore, not every student has access to the internet or other technological resources. Because the type of training necessitates the usage of an internet connection, a hybrid approach combining asynchronous and synchronous learning is required. According to the study, interruptions and internet issues have a detrimental effect on students' performance, perhaps resulting in more failures in this new normal. Both teachers and students may be dissatisfied with the consequences (Amiti, 2020)

Inadequate school and learning resources

Participant 8 stated, "In this time of the pandemic, it is necessary to become resourceful, upgraded, and updated with the trends in teaching so that learners can cope with this challenging situation they are experiencing. At first, adjusting was quite difficult because this was not what I was used to, but the passion empowers teachers to teach and instill learning in students. I had to get adjusted no matter what. However, our resources such as bond papers, printer inks, and printers are slowly running out, and even our printers in our respective faculty rooms backed down, so personal printers came to the rescue." Participants 10 and 12 mentioned, "Another difficulty that repetitively appears in the students' responses is the inadequacy of learning resources. Most students use only their phones and need other resources. One student said he needed a laptop and printer to study and accomplish my requirements well. Others have a challenge also regarding the storage capacity of their available gadgets which most of the applications used nowadays have a high device specification requirement."

This implies that teachers also have several problems, including enough access to technical help, school resources, instructional equipment, and time allotted to adopt new technology. It is possible that when students are obliged to bring their device to school, there will be significant variances in device capabilities, such as the difference between what a cheap android phone can accomplish and what an iPad can do. Students may find it challenging to write on tiny gadgets for extended periods. Teachers may be required to provide several instructions for various devices in the classroom. Meanwhile, it has been indicated that they also construct modules for students who do not have access to computers or the internet. They have expressed concern about the school's lack of resources, which has alarmed several teachers.

According to Onyema et al. (2020), inadequate facilities appeared to be the most significant hindrance to online education throughout the pandemic. It was also reported that most teachers felt that poor facilities, such as a lack of a computer, learning tools, and access to the internet, were the most significant obstacles limiting their participation in online education. Meanwhile, in accordance with the findings of Tria (2020), insufficient physical facilities, a shortage of instructors, and a scarcity of learning materials are some of the difficulties that schools are dealing with in the new normal. This is also in line with the statement of Tuga et al. (2021) that the following issues that may arise during professors' and students' flexible learning experiences: insufficient access to a steady internet connection; a lack of a suitable gadget or device; an inadequate learning management system or platform; and a lack of flexible learning rules and processes, particularly in the online mode.

Delivering quality education

Participants 1, 2,3, and 4 reported, "Maintaining a high-quality education requires more than just good hardware like technical infrastructure and connection, good software applications and content to be successful. Due to this pandemic, there is a lack of emotional bonds between learners and teachers. Since everyone faces virtual media, face-to-face interaction hinders the bond between our learners and us." Participant 4 also noted, "I am missing and working students. I had to adjust modes to accommodate them. I cannot discriminate since it is their chance to finish their secondary education. But the level of learning is sacrificed in this new normal." Participants 7 and 10 said, "Not being able to provide the utmost quality education we can give because of the many limitations this pandemic has imposed. The biggest challenge for me is delivering quality education, and there should be quality learning among all my students despite the pandemic."

This implies that teachers encountered issues and difficulties in delivering quality education in distance learning. One of the difficulties is the absence of physical, social interaction in a regular classroom setting. On the other hand, students may interact and express their opinions only through virtual means, such as chatrooms or social media, and cannot communicate physically. It is not suitable for all types of students. This also implies that teachers are not always available to assist students in the same way they are in a traditional classroom, leading to poor quality instruction and academic performance. In addition, not all instructors and students are computer proficient, which is another problem. Regarding distance learning, teachers and students are expected to have a working experience in various chat rooms, online examinations, and interaction opportunities. Nevertheless, many teachers and students are uncomfortable studying without physical means.

The findings are in line with the argument of Tuma et al. (2021). Students often considered that online education was inferior to face-to-face instruction. Most teachers expressed an interest in maintaining the current online strategy if necessary due to the outbreak. On the other hand, most students reported feeling overwhelmed and abandoning virtual learning altogether. This is a critical element to consider if one continues his education online. Meanwhile, educators must address students' concerns and create an environment favorable to learning. Additionally, Vilchez et al. (2021) revealed that teachers attempted to offer high-quality education lessons online when given the required resources. Teachers discussed the difficulties associated with redesigning lesson plans, acquiring new technology, sustaining student interest, and ensuring that all students have equitable access to quality education. While participants discussed practical approaches for developing an online learning environment, they also recognized additional areas for improvement.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

The researchers noted various difficulties when modular learning was used in a classroom environment. While teaching can be difficult at times but more so during these challenging times. As the teachers demonstrated, everything is possible with an optimistic approach to difficulties. Teachers addressed these challenges by developing their coping mechanisms. Despite their hardships, the good news is that they persisted in seeking potential initiatives to address the problems they experienced as teachers.

The school should devise solutions to the classroom's instructional material shortage problem. Teachers should deliver differentiated instruction based on the capacities of their learners. The school's internet connection should also be consistent and stable. Schools and teachers should communicate regularly with students and parents and provide feedback on their development. Teachers should conduct regular assessments of their students' development. Finally, teachers must be prepared for every eventuality. This situation is unlikely to change very soon, so teachers must adjust to and embrace the new normal education. At the same time, schools must develop internal regulations that serve as a road map for day-to-day activities.

For the proposed school policy development, the schools' adaptation to distant learning will be guided and

encouraged by the following concepts:

- 1) Access to technology for students. For students to fully participate in the distance learning program, the school must lend DepEd Computerization Program Tablet PCs to students who do not have distance learning devices. If internet connectivity is disrupted, the school must provide students with alternative teaching tools, such as paper-based materials.
- 2) Regular monitoring and giving feedback. Teachers must connect with students daily, provide weekly feedback, grade, and track student progress at regular intervals for each course in which a student is enrolled, and meet with parents at least once a quarter to discuss student achievement and expectations for family involvement in student learning.
- 3) Providing curriculum and instruction of the highest quality. To support and encourage the internal development of the remote learning program, promote and provide standards for training, including the inclusion of distant learning classes in instructors' responsibilities and technical help.

5.1. Limitation of the study

The study's limited sample size of only 12 individuals was viewed as a drawback. In order to corroborate the findings, the researchers recommend that future studies increase the sample size and geographic scope of the inquiry. The researchers strongly suggest that future researchers use triangulation, a qualitative research approach for determining validity that depends on the convergence of data from several sources.

Author contribution statements

The authors contributed all to the research's design and implementation, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.

Kevin D. Caratiquit: Conceptualization, methodology, software, data curation, writing- original draft preparation, writing- reviewing and editing.

Lovely Jean Caratiquit: visualization, investigation, supervision, software, validation.

Disclosure statement

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

Ethics committee approval

All responsibility belongs to the researchers. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

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