



TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYING VARIOUS TEACHING MODALITIES

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Abstract: This qualitative research established the reality behind the present situation of Balogo Elementary School in terms of learning delivery by looking into the experiences of teachers who are implementers of the learning recovery plan (LRP) at the classroom level. The researcher interpreted the experiences of the participants to establish the realities behind the implementation of the plan and proposed an intervention to further enhance the school's effort in addressing the learning gaps among pupils particularly in reading and numeracy. This research adopted the phenomenological approach which focuses on understanding the meanings of human experience as it is lived. It conducted interviews with 20 teacher participants to assess their perceptions and experiences in the implementation of the learning recovery plan of DepEd. The findings showed that the modular approach as an alternative learning delivery modality was not effective in developing target competencies among learners and that the crafting of the materials was rushed without proper quality assurance. Modules must be effectively crafted to contain high-quality information presented in a way that is understandable to learners and activities that are engaging enough to sustain interest. The modular approach was ineffective in facilitating learning during the pandemic, as the learners did not master the target competencies and the learning materials were inappropriate for the level of the learners. Teachers need assistance in terms of effective supervision to guide them in carrying out lessons and assessment strategies. The pandemic has caused stagnation if not regression among learners' learning skills, particularly in the earliest grades, with a gap of 30% in reading fluency and oral reading fluency stopping in the first to the second quarter of 2020. Teachers are concerned that learners have not mastered basic numeracy skills and have not been able to effectively learn from modular instructions.

KEYWORDS: *Learning gaps, Learning recovery*

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the education sector of the Philippines, with 56, 448 students and 4, 258

teachers affected. Public schools have implemented alternative delivery modalities, such as online learning and distance modular approaches, allowing for flexibility of time, place, and audience.

The Department of Education (DepEd) reported that 22.2 million learners had enrolled in public and private schools nationwide for the school year 2020-2021. Due to the rapid spread of Covid 19, the government imposed a total lockdown in March 2020, known as Enhanced Community Quarantine. Secretary Briones convinced President Duterte to allow the Department to continue with education delivery via 'blended learning', which prohibits face-to-face schooling and puts emphasis on e-learning. The ODL applies to schools where both teachers and learners have connectivity and access to online resources. However, making education accessible to learners during the pandemic proved to be an overwhelming challenge.

Observed that there is a growing interest in studying how these contingency efforts to ensure that education delivery is uninterrupted has affected the students, - added to the impact of the pandemic on the overall well-being of both teachers and students.

This scenario was faced by the education system of the Philippines, where online learning was imposed together with a distance modular approach for learners without access to the internet. As a result, flexible learning was imposed by higher education, allowing for flexibility of time, place, and audience, including but not limited to the use of technology. The education sector of the Philippines has suffered due to the pandemic more than the neighboring Asian countries according to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

The Department of Education developed appropriate learning delivery modalities for basic education learners to continue

education while containing the spread of Covid-19.

However, making education accessible to learners during the time of the pandemic proved to be an overwhelming challenge.

Key Concepts

With the easing up of restrictions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, DepEd has carried on with its implementation of the limited face-to-face classes, and soon the Department will expand it to full implementation. The two years of distance learning have caused learning gaps across grade levels. To address this issue, DepEd Region V has crafted a learning recovery plan (LRP) dubbed RAISE or Recovering for Academic Achievement by Improving instruction through Sustainable Evidence-Based Learning Programs, primarily designed to address the learning gaps in the primary grade levels as foundational years and is focused on key learning areas such as literacy and numeracy (PIA). However, learning difficulties in reading and numeracy remain despite this effort of the Department.

The researcher deemed it necessary to conduct this phenomenological study to assess the implementation of the learning recovery plan by exploring the experiences of teachers who have observed the learning gaps firsthand. The teacher participants, 20 in all, narrated their experiences along the delivery of learning instructions, particularly along the performance of the learners. Among the gaps were reading, writing, and numeracy. The research was partnered with a master teacher and designed an intervention project in support of the learning recovery plan of DepEd.

Research Questions

This phenomenological study established the reality behind the present situation of the school in terms of learning delivery by looking into the experiences of teachers of Balogo Elementary School who are implementers of the learning recovery plan (LRP) at the classroom level. Specifically, this answered the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly on learners' performance?
2. What are the learning gaps and issues observed by teachers?
3. How do teachers cope with their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly on learners' performance?
4. What innovative teaching activities could be designed to address the identified learning gaps?

Research Process

This research adopted the phenomenological approach focusing on understanding the meanings of human experience as it is lived.

The researcher conducted interviews with 20 teacher participants to solicit their perceptions and experiences in the implementation of the learning recovery plan of DepEd. The participant narrated their experiences and in doing so, identified the challenges in learning delivery, the learning gaps among the learners, and the strategies they employ to address the issues as learning facilitators.

Findings

Through the interviews conducted, the researcher was able to establish the following findings in response to the posted specific research questions:

Experiences of Teachers during Pandemic relevant to Learners' Performance

The modular approach was not effective in developing target competencies among learners due to rushed crafting and poor-quality assurance. Teacher 2 commented that the pupils did not understand the lessons from the modules and learning activity sheets or LAS. Teacher 12 said that the crafting of the materials seems to have been rushed without proper quality assurance which is why the activities are not appropriate for the learners' capacity.

Should DepEd continue to implement modular instructions, there is a need to operationalize a system for the quality assurance of the instructional materials. These materials should be effectively crafted targeting competencies through activities that are appropriate to the level of the learners.

Teacher 12 said that they tend to cut the lessons since the learners generally cannot cope with the difficulty of the tasks given the allotted time. Teachers 9 and 17 observed that many activities were not answered. And in cases when the submitted modules and LAS were answered, teacher 15 worries that the activities were accomplished by the parents and guardians instead of the learners themselves. Teacher 3 argues that it is difficult to assess the actual performance of the learners given that they were not in school during the implementation of the modular approach.

Teachers need assistance in terms of effective supervision to guide them in carrying out the lessons and assessment strategies. The role of school heads as instructional supervisors is critical in addressing the challenges encountered by teachers.

Generally, the teacher participants considered the modular approach ineffective in facilitating learning during the pandemic. Based on the information shared by the teachers, the pupils did not master the target competencies. The learners found the modules and learning activity sheets very difficult to accomplish. The teachers considered the learning materials inappropriate for the level of the learners. The assessment of learning was also difficult given that they could not personally monitor the learners as they accomplish the tasks. Many of the teachers commented that some of the outputs were made by the parents instead of the learners.

Learning Gaps and Issues Observed by the Teachers

Teacher 7 is worried that they failed to develop the skills the learners need because learners generally find the modules and learning materials too difficult. She said that there is no improvement in the performance of the learners. Teacher 11 even said that her pupils have not even mastered cursive writing. Teachers 8, 10, and 15, as well as most others, reported having learners who are frustration-level readers. They also underscored that many learners failed to master basic numeracy skills. The pandemic has undeniably caused stagnation if not regression among learners' learning skills. They have failed to develop the necessary competencies to effectively learn from modular instructions. Concerning this, a

study conducted by researchers at Stanford affirmed the negative impact of the pandemic on learning particularly among learners in the earliest grades. The findings showed a gap of about 30% in the reading fluency of second and third-graders in the United States. Furthermore, the development of oral reading fluency, or the ability to read text aloud quickly and accurately, largely stopped among learners among first to fourth graders sometime in the first to the second quarter of 2020.

There is a crucial need for the school to devise and implement an intervention to support learning recovery. Such intervention must particularly focus on the younger learners, and address concerns along with reading and numeracy. It is on this need that the researcher, in partnership with a master teacher, designed an intervention called EOSY Literacy and Numeracy Catch-Up Enhancement Program. It is particularly designed for learners in Kinder to Grade 4 who have demonstrated critical reading and numeracy gaps. Some activities also target cursive writing skills as among the identified areas of improvement for learners.

Teachers 4, 6, and 7 on the other hand are troubled about the values formation of the pupils. Many of the learners demonstrated a lack of interest in the learning activities. When DepEd finally proceeds with the full implementation of face-to-face classes, the teachers have the crucial task of developing study habits among the learners.

To sum it up, the teacher participants identified four learning gaps: the learners have unsatisfactory reading skills, numeracy skills, cursive writing skills, and values formation or development was also needed. Remedial instructions are necessary to

reinforce learning instructions targeting the identified learning gaps. Teachers need to be creative in devising innovative teaching activities that would facilitate productive learning among pupils.

How Teachers Cope with their Experiences brought about by Covid-19 Pandemic

Teacher 1 commented that there is a need to encourage the learners to take remedial lessons which is what teacher 5 did in hopes of alleviating the issue with the learning gaps among learners, particularly in reading and numeracy. Teacher 18 said that since the learners had very little to zero progress at all in the distance modality, they have to start from the basics.

The distance and blended modalities have been difficult for teachers who have had no sufficient preparation in terms of training and practice. Teachers are generally accustomed to traditional classroom teaching. Teachers are having difficulty in implementing blended learning because there are no institutional policies, they are not trained for the modality, and the equipment and facilities do not exactly support distance learning.

Conclusions

Based on the findings presented, the researcher formulated the following conclusions:

1. DepEd Sorsogon City needs to institutionalize and operationalize a system for crafting, evaluating, and utilizing instructional materials to ensure that they are appropriate to the level of the learners.

2. The modular approach is ineffective in developing the target competencies, particularly in reading and numeracy due to the lack of preparedness of teachers and learners for distance learning.

3. Teachers revert to teaching basic prerequisite skills before targeting the grade-level competencies.

4. Teachers need to implement innovative teaching activities to address learning gaps.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions formulated, the research gives the following recommendations:

1. A system for the quality assurance of learning materials be put in place to improve the implementation of various teaching modalities.

2. Learning instructions for reading and numeracy by enhancing to ensure mastery of prerequisite and grade level skills.

3. Learning interventions be developed along basic reading and numeracy skills to provide the learners with the prerequisite competencies they need to progress to higher grade levels.

4. Onboarding and debriefing of teachers along different teaching modalities be designed for teachers to enable the DepEd to implement innovative teaching activities.

Suggestions for Future Research

With the information and knowledge established through this phenomenological study, the researcher encourages future researchers to conduct studies relevant to learning recovery. The researcher makes the

following suggestions as the focus of the investigation:

- Teachers' Lived Experiences with Digitized Learning Activities for Specific Learning Areas.
- Development of Innovative Teaching Strategies for Distance Support Instructions
- Comparative Study on the Impact of the Pandemic Across Education Programs
- Wellness of Teachers amidst Education Crisis

