Teachers' Narratives: Unveiling the Visceral Accounts of Learning Facilitators in the New Normal

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Abstract

This study analyzed the teachers' Personal Experience Narratives (PEN) as learning facilitators in the new normal. Nine (9) teachers were chosen as participants in the Schools Division Office of Kabankalan City who took part in the spoken interview. The narratives shared in the spoken interview were transcribed and analyzed using the Narrative Analysis: The Personal Experience Narrative Approach. These PEN were discussed using the path diagram showing factors that affect the Personal Experience Narrative. The results revealed that all nine participants considered their experience in the MDL as challenging. In addition, there were three (3) common codes derived from the narratives of the participants – (1) The Painstaking Job of a Learning Facilitator in the New Normal, (2) The Innate Creativity of a Genuine Educator, and (3) The Remarkable Insights Gleaned from the New Experiences. Moreover, it was revealed that the participants considered knowledge of technology, flexibility, positive mindset, commitment, and productivity as vital in the implementation of Modular Distance Learning in the new normal.

Keywords: Personal Experience Narratives, Narrative Analysis, Learning Facilitators, New Normal

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to various sectors, especially in responding to basic rights (DO No. 12, s. 2020). According to UNESCO, prolonged school disruptions are associated with various negative impacts on children since the longer that marginalized children are out of school, the less likely they are to return (DO No. 12, s. 2020). UNESCO also noted the risk of teenage pregnancy and sexual exploitation, and that prolonged closures disrupt essential school-based services such as immunization, school feeding, and mental health and psychosocial support, and can cause stress and anxiety due to the loss of peer interaction and disruptive routines.

This School Year 2020-2021, the Department of Education adopted different Learning Delivery Modalities (LDM) across the country as its mitigating move to continue education amidst the onslaught of COVID-19 Pandemic. To ensure the smooth implementation of the LDM, the Schools Division Office of Kabankalan City crafted its Basic Education – Learning Continuity Plan aimed at providing learners the learning environment under the "new normal" set up. As stipulated in DO No. 12, s. 2020, "The landscape of child protection and child rights will now encompass not only the physical but more extensively, the cyber world and the home as a "school".

The BE-LCP of the division was constantly enhanced as the result of the Monitoring and Evaluation conducted by the Education Program Supervisors and Public Schools District Supervisors in various Schools on the LDM implementation, it was found out that learners have a hard time answering their modules. During the Focus-Group Discussion (FGD) with the school heads and teachers, several factors were identified by the schools to have been the cause of difficulty in answering the Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) such as lack of guidance from working parents, too many activities in the SLMs, learners' lack of focus and concentration, difficult tasks, and complicated concepts in the SLMs among others.

To provide the school administrators and the SDO the image of what was happening in schools during the implementation of Modular Distance Learning and to ensure the full implementation of the articulated Basic Education Curriculum, pre-school, elementary, secondary and Alternative Learning System (ALS) towards the improvement of the quality of learning outcomes, the researchers came up with a research study to unravel the root causes of the identified problems and to find workable solutions to mitigate the problems caused by these problems in the SDO Kabankalan in line with the implementation of the LDM. The data gathered were valuable for the three functional units of the SDO of Kabankalan – Curriculum Implementation Division, School Governance and Operations Division and Office of the

Schools Division Superintendent for the provision of technical assistance to schools.

This research paper aimed at understanding the current situation and context of the teachers during the pandemic being the front-liners in the delivery of basic education during this pandemic. Specifically, this research study sought to answer the question, "What are the teachers' narratives as learning facilitators in the new normal?". The participants of this research study were nine (9) teachers from the six (6) schools in the SDO of Kabankalan City.

Research Questions

This research paper aimed at analyzing the Personal Experience Narratives (PEN) of teachers in the Schools Division Office of Kabankalan City as Learning Facilitators in the New Normal.

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Literature Review

The adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021 in light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency contained in DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020 provides clear policy on the adoption of the BE-LCP, adoption of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), Creation of the Learning Resources and Platforms Committee, No Face-to-Face Until Safe, and Operationalization of All BE-LCP Components. The BE-LCP covers the essential requirements of education in the time of COVID-19 such as most essential learning competencies, multiple learning delivery modalities for teachers, school leaders and learners, required health standards in schools and workplaces, and special activities like Brigada Eskwela, Oplan Balik Eskwela, and partnerships (DO No. 12, s. 2020).

Distance Learning

Saykili (2018) stated that Distance Education has been engineered and re-engineered by the techno-social changes in society. According to Saykili (2018), the practices, philosophies, and cultures of the persons attempting and developing open and distance learning have impacted how it is designed and conducted. Buselic, (2012) underscored that distance learning is a field of education that focused on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching,

often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. Honeyman and Miller (1993, as cited in Buselic, 2012) said that distance learning has been described as "a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and difference or both.

Learning Facilitators

If teachers are to successfully fulfill the role of curriculum leaders, the current models of teacher training must be restructured to provide them the relevant theoretical knowledge currently lacking in the general teaching population (Purnama, 2018). The roles teachers play in the classroom could be various or diverse and would be assumed in different or better ways in order to provide students with a high-quality education (Purnama, 2018). According to Purnama (2018) professional teachers should apply their role as facilitator to facilitate the students in developing their existing skill and to create creative and positive atmosphere in teaching learning process.

The role of professional teacher as facilitator not only to set up opportunities for students but also to help students if they get difficulties to answer the question or get a stumbling block in solving the problems (Purnama, 2018).

New Normal

Pinner and Ambrose (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented disruption to schools and learners in England, since schools were closed from March 2020, with only the children of key workers and those identified as vulnerable being invited to attend. That being said, there was a growing sense of urgency about the need to recover the education system and "lost learning" among students after the pandemic (Pinner & Ambrose, 2020). According to Pacheco (2020), the effects rippling form the COVID-19 emergency include changes in the personal, social, and economic spheres. Texts regarding the pandemic consequences are appearing at an accelerating pace, with constant news outlets, as well as philosophical, historical, and sociological reflections by public intellectual worldwide (Pacecho, 2020). Education both reflects what is now and anticipates what is next, recoding private and public responses to crises (Pacheco, 2020). According to UNESCO (2015, as cited in Pacheco, 2020), an intelligent response to climate change, reactivating the humanistic tradition to education, would reaffirm the

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right to such an education as a global common good. This emphasizes the inclusion of people who are often subject to discrimination – women and girls, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, migrants, elderly and people living in countries affected by conflict (UNESCO 2015, as cited in Pacheco, 2020).

Pacheco (2020) posited that the pandemic ushered in a "new" normal, in which digitization enforces ways of working and learning as it forces education further into technologization, a development already well underway, fueled by commercialism and the reigning market ideology. Daniel (2020, as cited in Pacheco, 2020) noted that many institutions had plans to make greater use of technology in teaching but the outbreak of COVID-19 has meant changes intended to occur over months or years had to be implemented in a few days. Koopman (2019, as cited in Pacheco, 2020) stated that the immediate solution to the closure of schools is distance learning, with platforms proliferating and knowledge demoted to information to be exchanged. According to Pacheco (2020), technologies were the visible face of the immediate changes taking place in commercial society and schools. Furthermore, Pacheco (2020) emphasized that the significant determinants of the commercialization of learning based on performance are digital technologies and economic rationality, which is moving from the real face-to-face presence to virtual contact (synchronous and asynchronous), the learning space becomes disembodied, virtual not actual impacting both student learning and the organization of schools, which are no longer buildings but websites.

Modular Distance Learning

The Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan in the Time of COVID-19 describes Modular Distance Learning as individualized instruction that allows learners to use Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) in print or digital format whichever is applicable in the context of the learner, and other learning resources like learner's materials, textbooks, activity sheets, study guides, and other study materials. In this type of modality, teachers take the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners and that learners may ask assistance from the teacher via email, telephone, text message or instant messaging and where possible, the teachers shall do home visits to learners needing remediation or assistance. Any member of the family or other stakeholders in the community may need to serve as para -teachers.

Methodology

This research study used the Qualitative Research Design using the Narrative Analysis. Narrative analysis is a genre of analytic frames whereby researchers interpret stories that are told within the context of research and/ or shared in everyday life (Allen, 2017). According to Butina (2016) narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research in which the stories themselves become the raw data. This approach has been used in many disciplines to learn more about the culture, historical experiences, identity, and lifestyle of the narrator (Butina, 2016). Allen (2017) stated that scholars who conduct this type of analysis make diverse – yet equally substantial and meaningful – interpretations and conclusions by focusing on the different elements. These elements include, but are not limited to, how the story is structured, what functions the story serves, what is the substance of the story, and how the story is performed (Allen, 2017).

According to Creswell, the general assumption regarding narrative studies was that the researcher studies individual life stories and retells them through the lens of the researcher's own experiences (Nugent, 2007). The researcher conducts in-depth interviews and later recounts the stories, centering the stories around a theme, connecting meanings among interviewees' responses, and linking the stories to a common meaning (Creswell as cited in Nugent, 2007).

In Narrative Analysis Model was adopted from Akinsanya and Bach (2014) has six factors: Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Resolution, Evaluation, and Coda. The Abstract summarizes the whole story. The Orientation gives information about the time, place, characters, and their activity or the situation in what will follow (Akinsanya & Bach, 2914). The Complicating Action are narrative clauses that inform the audience about what happened. The Resolution informs the audience about how the complicating action was resolved. The Evaluation forms the emotional side of the narrative and explains why the story is worth telling. Lastly, the Coda clauses are located at the end of the narratives and indicate that the story is over, bridging the gap between the narrative proper and the present, or sometimes providing a short summary of the narrative.

In this research study, the participants were the teachers involved in the Modular Distance Learning as Learning Facilitators. Through the narrative analysis, the research would be able to evaluate some interesting narratives that could glean out the valuable insights

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and lessons that were being shown and taught by these stories (Akinsanya & Bach, 2014).

The research study used the Individual Interview Form (IIF) to gather the personal information of the participants such as age, subjects taught, and years in service. According to Akinsanya and Bach (2014) the narrative can be written or spoken. In this research, the participants delivered their stories through Face-to-Face interview observing strictly the health and safety protocols of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF). The research instrument contained the question: "What are your experiences as a learning facilitator in the new normal?"

Narrative analysis is a research method that is applied to a narrative by means of breaking the narrative into constituent parts that each have an integral role to play in the narrative (Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). These stories are personal experiences that was experienced first-hand by the narrator. However, according to Akinsanya and Bach (2014), to expand upon the premise of personal experience narratives, the researchers included the second-hand stories – stories of other people's personal experiences in Modular Distance Learning.

Participants

The participants of this study were eight (9) teachers from six (6) schools in the Schools Division Office of Kabankalan City were selected based on the following criteria: (1) Currently teaching in the public school in the DepEd Kabankalan City, (2) has an advisory class, (3) has been teaching for three years and above, (4) willing to be interviewed, and (5) willing to share his/her experiences. Due to COVID 19 restrictions, their personnel narratives were written on the Individual Interview Form.

Instruments of the Study

The research study used the Written Interview Form (WIF). The narrative can be written or spoken (Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). In this research, the participants delivered their stories through written form due to health and safety protocols of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF). The research instrument was divided into four distinct activities in school: (1) Distribution of the Modules, (2) Retrieval of the Modules, (3) Giving of Feedback, and (4) Assessment of Learning.

In qualitative research, data take the form of words or pictures (Snyder, n.d.). This instrument gathered the interesting narratives that sought to glean out the

valuable insights and lessons that were being shown and taught by these stories (Akinsanya & Bach, 2014).

Procedures

The researchers prepared the letter approved by the superintendent through the Planning and Research Unit to conduct the interview with the selected teachers in six (6) schools in the Schools Division Office of Kabankalan City. Upon the approval of the letter, the researchers approached and sought the approval of the school principals to conduct the written interview with the selected teachers through the Public Schools District Supervisors. The teachers were selected based on the following demographic groups: (1) 0 to 10 years in service, (2) 11 to 20 years in service, and (3) 21 years in service and above. They were made to sign the agreement form to be part of the research study.

The data were collected through a simple Individual Interview Form (IIF) with the teachers. The written stories were transcribed based on the Discussion Model of Akinsanya & Bach (2014). The transcriptions were confirmed by the participants to check their validity. These responses were evaluated to glean valuable insights taught and shown in these stories. The figure below shows the data gathering cycle adopted from Snyder (n.d.)

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Goal (Personal Experience Narrative)

A look at the personal experience narrative and elements of the narrative structure and evaluative language used in oral and written narratives. According to Ozyildirim (as cited in Akinsanya & Bach, 2014) narrative analysis in this form is readily explored to view the various parts (i.e factors) merging to gather to form the narrative which, in this case, is of the personal experience form.

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Factor 1 (Abstract)

The abstract summarizes the whole story and consists of one or two clauses at the beginning of the narrative, while not overly necessary, is very instructive in giving the reader or intended audience a fore-glance at what the narrative is all about.

Factor 2 (Orientation)

Orientation gives information about the time, place, characters, and their activity or the situation in what will follow (Ozyildirim, 2006 as cited in Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). The orientation provides the necessary information regarding the time frame, location, and characters involved in the narrative. After all, readers should know the cast of characters performing in a play.

Factor 3 (Complicating Action)

Complicating action clauses are narrative clauses that inform the audience about what happened (Ozyildirim, 2006 as cited in Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). This is the nitty-gritty of the narratives as it goes into detail about the content of the narrative (i.e what actually happened). This forms the body of the narratives.

Factor 4 (Resolution)

Resolution informs the audience about how the complicating action was resolved. This section indicates the termination of a series of events by releasing the tension (Ozyildirim, 2006 as cited in Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). There can bever be a beginning without an end. The resolution ties in the narrative, effectively concluding the story as told.

Factor 5 (Evaluation)

Evaluation forms the emotional side of the narrative and explains why the story is worth telling (Ozyildirim, 2006 as cited in Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). This is where it gets pretty interesting as the narrator uses the evaluation phase to communicate how he/she felt during the time the narrative took place. More light would be shed on the evaluation phase later.

Factor 6 (Coda)

Coda clauses are located at the end of narratives and indicate that the story is over, bridging the gap between the narrative proper and the present, or sometimes providing a short summary of the narrative (Ozyildirim, 2006 as cited in Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). This contains what can be referred to as the "lesson learnt" from the narrative. Every narrative is in the past. This question is "How did it affect your present?".

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted to deduce the teachers narratives as Learning Facilitators in the New Normal as they shared their experiences in the delivery of Modular Distance Learning. These stories have directly impacted our beings due their visceral realism in our lives (Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). According to Creswell (2013), the importance of the benefits of this study is outweighing the risks. Ethical safeguards were employed to ensure that both the anticipated and unanticipated risks would appropriately addressed.

Consent

The research team sought the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS), Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDSs) and School Heads (SHs) to conduct the written interview with the teachers. In addition, the PSDSs and the SHs helped the researchers identify the participants of the study who were informed through Messenger and made to sign the informed consent. If the teachers are willing to participate they can sign the digital or hardcopy of the informed consent. This consideration put into place the unwillingness of teachers to serve as participants of the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

In order to maintain anonymity of the schools and respondents, pseudonyms were used. Potential participants were also be assured of the confidentiality of this research project through the consent forms. There were no distinguishing information that would link the participants to the pseudonym or study.

Data Security

All printed and digital copies of the signed consent, formal responses, interview transcripts, and recordings were stored in a folder and on a password protected computer. Printed copies of the interviews would be shredded while digital files would be destroyed five (5) years after the publication.

Results and Discussion

The narrative inquiry approach revealed the participants' voices which were unveiled through their visceral accounts as learning facilitators in the new normal. Nine (9) teacher narratives offered insight into their experiences as learning facilitators in the Modular Distance Learning under the new normal

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method of lesson delivery.

Abstract

In their detailed narratives, the interviewees revealed their joys and pains of being Learning Facilitators in the new normal generally labeling the experience as challenging. Their stories painted an image of a person who played various roles given the pandemic situation – a learning facilitator, a reproducer of SLMs, distributor of SLMs, a giver and receiver of feedback, assessor of learning, and an encourager of both parents and learners among others, who, despite the seemingly insurmountable odds, served as significant agents in the learning continuity of Basic Education in the Schools Division Office of Kabankalan City.

Orientation

It all started in School Year 2020 – 2021 when the Coronavirus caused a lot of confusion in the world. Like any other organization, the Department of Education was terribly shaken by the pandemic since the lack of preparations and insufficient logistics exposed the department's volatility in continuing the delivery of basic education in the country. In mid-April 2021, nine (9) teachers from six (6) schools in the Schools Division Office of Kabankalan City were invited for a sit-down face-to-face interview of their experiences in the Modular Distance Learning (MDL). The interview was casual, where the interviewer and the interviewee sat opposite to each other. There was a table in between them and the question was, "Tell me your experiences as a Distance Learning Facilitator in the new normal." They sincerely shared their Personal Experiences Narratives (PEN) in the new normal. The interview lasted for about a week with two to three teachers were interviewed in a day. Since the series of events were unprecedented, it was observed that there were a lot of commonalities in their PEN which were analyzed using the dual layer of interpretation in narrative analysis, which according to Butina (2015) as "the process of making sense out of the data."

Complicating Action

Overall, the interviewees considered their experiences in the new normal as challenging. From the reproduction of modules, distribution of modules, provision of learners' support, assessment, and other work-related tasks. For example, Teacher Sapphire said that printing the modules was hard because they only had one printer in their grade level and with eight (8) subjects to print, completing the task was almost impossible. Similarly, Teacher Amethyst and Teacher

Jade had to allot plenty of time to print the modules and that they had to finish before the schedule of distribution. In addition, Teacher Jade revealed that at the onset of the pandemic, the insufficient supply of bond paper affected the reproduction of SLMs. Like Teacher Sapphire, Teacher Jade always finished the reproduction late in the evening because of the volume and thickness of SLMs. That is, since she had 179 pupils, she could only print a maximum of 80 sets for two to three subjects in a day. Like the previous interviewees, Teacher Topaz was stuck in the reproduction of modules because her printer always malfunctioned. The lack of printers was a problem since she had to print for several subjects. Teacher Opal had to print the modules at home. This was inevitable because according to Teacher Topaz, she had 179 students multiplied to 4 subjects.

During the distribution of modules, the interviewees also shared similar PEN. According to Teacher Amber, it was hard for her to distribute the modules because she could not approach the learners. Because of lack of materials, only 50% of the SLMs per learning area were distributed every week and had to be exchanged to another set of learners in the succeeding week. Because not all parents could return the modules, it caused problems in the succeeding week's distribution. For Teacher Sapphire, the bulk of Modules that had to be distributed to the learners piled up and she imagined how overwhelming it was for learners. On the other hand, Teacher Amethyst's school was used as a quarantine facility, so the distribution of modules was a bit challenging. In Teacher Jade's class, there were three of her learners' guardians were still working as helpers. Meanwhile, Teacher Opal admitted that it was hard to achieve 100% distribution since some parents did not come to school to get their children's modules on time. Also, she noticed that modules contained a lot of activities, which were hard for the learners to accomplish in a week. Because of this, the parents complained about the activities since their children were already having tantrums. In addition, Grade I learners still had to be guided because their interest span was very short. Meanwhile, Teacher Turquoise shared a similar experience since she sometimes had two to three sets of unclaimed modules and it was hard for her to reach out for her learners because they did not have cellphones and they live in sparsely populated and far-flung areas. Also, some of her parents were illiterate so they could not easily locate the modules.

During the retrieval of the modules, the interviewees also showed commonalities in their PEN. For instance, Teacher Turquoise said that some parents returned

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unanswered modules because their children said that they were already tired in answering them. In addition, many parents sometimes returned the modules after two (2) weeks. Teacher Amethyst and Teacher Turquoise had to contain the complaints of the parents about the modules having too many activities, being way too hard for their children to answer, and for them to understand as well. Similarly, Teacher Topaz was told by the parents that their children could not easily grasp the gist of the lesson. Also, most of the parents were employed so it was hard for them to tutor their children. Besides, not all parents knew how to teach their children. Like the previous interviewees, Teacher Jasper also had to deal with parents' complaints about MDL. In addition, she also had a problem with the parents' contact numbers since they often changed their phone numbers. She also encountered parents who complained about their having more than one child to take care of and working parents. Like Teacher Amethyst, Teacher Amber, Teacher Sapphire, and Teacher Jasper, also received complaints from parents. This time, it was about their children's lack of internet access especially that their knowledge was quite limited, so they sometimes returned the modules unanswered. Another challenge Teacher Jasper noticed was that parents answered the modules themselves, as shown in their penmanship. Moreover, Teacher Jade also shared a similar experience, according to her some parents could not return them right away. As she evaluated the answered modules, she discovered that some parents were the ones answering the modules. This was supported by the statement of Teacher Amethyst that it was hard to ensure that the learners were the ones doing the activity themselves. According to her, parents also struggled assisting their children since they too had plenty of things to do.

Another challenge the interviewees encountered was on the assessment. According to Teacher Sapphire, during the giving of grades, it was hard to ensure that the learners were the ones doing the performance tasks and not their parents or siblings. In the giving of character traits, it was also hard since you could observe the behavior of the child since it was Modular Distance Learning. This was reinforced by Teacher Jasper saying that it was difficult to ensure that the answers or ideas did come from the learners. Moreover, Teacher Opal said that it was hard for her to track her learners' progress since she could not see and communicate with her learners. In addition, Teacher Turquoise pointed out the difficulty in assessing the learners' performance because parents could not understand the instruction, so it was hard for them to guide their children.

Aside from the above-mentioned routines, providing support to learners had also been a big issue in the new normal. According to Teacher Emerald, it was difficult to communicate with the parents especially in the far-flung areas since they were skeptical about MDL. It was really a challenge to persuade them to adopt the changes in the teaching-learning process. According to Teacher Topaz, it was hard to adjust most of the time since parents sometimes inquired about their children's lessons from 10:30 – 11:00 p.m. Replying to them in the following day would be useless since they would not be able to see them, so she was compelled to reply to the text message right away.

Overlapping tasks that teachers need to accomplish has also been a bottleneck for most of the interviewees. Teacher Sapphire lamented the constant submission of reports. According to her, although it was already in second grading, she was still working on the first grading. She also struggled with other concerns like the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) and Classroom Observation. This was echoed by the statement of Teacher Topaz since she had to deal with a lot of requirements such as the Weekly Home Learning Plan (WHLP), checking of modules, and performance tasks. In addition, Teacher Emerald said that since she was a developer of the materials, too, so it was hard for her to look for resources and to improve her skills and to keep up with the challenges in the modular distance learning. Her time was also divided since the demand of work was high. For her, it was tiring to explore technology in the new normal since she was bombarded with so much work, so she had to work beyond eight (8) hours to reach her targets.

Resolution

Despite the challenges faced by the interviewees, innovativeness, and creativity emerged. For example, in the printing of modules, Teacher Amethyst hired her students to print the modules for her. On the other hand, Teacher Jade printed only 50% of the modules while Teacher Jasper, Teacher Topaz, Teacher Jade used their personal printers at home to reproduce the modules. In addition, Teacher Jade and Teacher Opal asked for help from their colleagues to facilitate the printing of the modules as well as for the maintenance of their printer.

The interviewees also showed creativity in the distribution of modules. For instance, Teacher Turquoise prepared boxes with folders labeled with their learners' names containing the complete set of modules, assisted their illiterate parents to locate their

children's folders. Similarly, Teacher Amethyst assigned specific areas for the distribution of modules so the parents could easily locate them. According to Teacher Jade, the parents were able to fully adjust in the second quarter because they were able to claim their children's modules early this time. For those parents who missed to claim their children's modules on time, Teacher Jade waited for her working parents to claim the modules until 12:00 noon during the scheduled distribution and tried her best to personally distribute them so that she could explain to the parents what to do and how the activities should be done. Meanwhile, Teacher Opal, Teacher Jasper, and Teacher Turquoise contacted parents through call, text, and Messenger and sometimes asked the learners' neighbors to bring the modules for them.

The provision of support to learners was also manifested by the interviewees. For instance, Teacher Amber said that she asked parents' feedback on their children's understanding of the modules and even reminded them of the importance of returning the modules on time because they are important for their children's learning. Teacher Sapphire exercised utmost tact in returning to parents those unanswered modules. On the other hand, Teacher Amethyst inspired the learners through their parents to answer the modules and even distributed textbooks for additional references. Teacher Jade, Teacher Topaz, and Teacher Jasper also created a group chat on Messenger so they could easily contact the parents for updates and inquiries. Teacher Jade and Teacher Jasper also used this platform to advise parents to guide and teach their children in answering the activities and to ensure that the children perform the activities by themselves. Moreover, Teacher Jasper gave more time and attention to her learners while Teacher Topaz constantly messaged her learners and asked how they were and responded to parents' queries even during late evening to help her learners cope with their lessons. Furthermore, Teacher Jasper tried to be more understanding especially with the learners who could not accomplish their modules on time and avoided putting too much pressure on them. Teacher Jasper also prepared simple notes to parents advising them to encourage their children to write the answers on the modules instead of them.

The support system was also evident in the schools where the interviewees were at. For example, Teacher Turquoise revealed that her school had created a group chat for all teachers where materials were shared especially those which could not be found in the Google Drive shared by the division. In addition, Teacher Topaz also shared that all teachers in every

grade level were helping one another by assigning specific tasks in the printing of modules. This was echoed by Teacher Emerald who emphasized the importance of support system from partners, colleagues, and people around them.

This pandemic also taught amazing realizations and reflections among the interviews. Say for example, Teacher Opal said that she learned how to use gadgets such as computers and various applications. She also learned how to do research to gain more knowledge and even enrolled herself in a graduate school program to further her studies. Like Teacher Opal, Teacher Amethyst also learned how to use the computer, the internet, and Messenger. She realized the importance of spiritual growth given the pandemic situation. She also realized the importance of Alternative Work Arrangement in coping with the pandemic. For Teacher Jasper, she learned how to balance her time between her work and family and learned to be positive. Teacher Topaz also learned to provide time for herself and to be flexible, understanding to parents' situation and became good at editing LAS and continued to be positive while Teacher Emerald had more time to explore ways to deliver the lesson beyond the typical classroom setup, became more productive by enhancing her knowledge of technology, being part of the solution and contribute to developing Learning Activity Sheets (LAS), and increased commitment and productivity.

Evaluation

The poignant narratives of these nine (9) teachers as they narrated their Personal Experiences Narratives in the new normal were simply awe-inspiring. Although tired with all the tasks given to them, the passion in their eyes and the conviction felt in their statements showed passion and commitment for their work and love and concern for their learners. Nonetheless, the struggles they encountered seemed endless – form the reproduction of modules, distribution of modules, retrieval of modules, assessment, provision of learners' support, and other work-related tasks.

These challenges encountered by the interviewees could be interpreted simply because of the lack of logistics. For instance, the common issues such as the lack of supplies (e.g. printers and bond papers), and volumes of SLMs to be printed were prevalent in the Modular Distance Learning since the Department of Education had been implementing Face-to-classes before the pandemic. Since, all schools were unprepared for the pandemic, the preparation of materials did start from scratch. In addition, teachers

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who were not so adept with technology were the ones severely affected. That was why two of the interviewees who were in their 60s mentioned about the struggle in printing the modules.

For another, the issue on schools used as quarantine/ healing facility. Because of the upsurge of the COVID-19 cases, the Local Government Unit and the Department of Education entered into a Memorandum of Agreement utilizing some schools located in strategic areas as healing facilities. Although only some classrooms were used for that purpose, some classrooms were still used for the implementation of the MDL which caused less mobility on the part of the teachers. Also, it raised concerns on their and their family's health security as well.

Moreover, the inability of parents to return the modules caused irregularity in the teachers' schedule of distribution of modules. Since most of the schools only printed 50% of the modules, a short delay of the return of these modules could adversely affect the succeeding distribution pattern. This delay in returning of the modules happened because these parents are working parents and since they live far from the school, going to school maybe hard for them. On the other hand, the complaints of some parents and learners about the "too many activities" in the SLMs were rational enough since Self-Learning Modules should be self-paced, and learner centered. Furthermore, the absence of cellphones, working parents and guardians, and parents living in far-flung areas are prevalent in barangays away from the city.

Another issue that was alarming was the unanswered modules being returned by parents. As mentioned above, learners had trouble completing the modules because there were too many activities to answer. This could possibly happen especially if parents are illiterate, or they lack education. Moreover, as mentioned by the interviewees, other parents said that they could not guide or tutor their children because they were working, and sometimes the activities in the modules were just too difficult for them to understand. Unfortunately, teachers could do less about this situation since these parents who could not tutor their children often do not have cell phones, or if they do, the reception was not that good in their area. Interestingly, some parents also changed their phone numbers very often which made the teachers lost contact with them.

During this time of pandemic, the provision of learners' support as well as assessment are vital to ensure the learning outcomes. However, in the context of the MDL, as mentioned by the interviewees, the validity and reliability of the assessments were compromised. As observed, many of the modules were either answered by the guardians or significant adults. It was obvious because of the penmanship. In addition, the "Keys to Corrections" are also found behind every module, so cheating is possible. Moreover, the performance tasks submitted by the students especially the products could not be considered authentic since some of them were just so good to be true. The far distance of school to learners' residence and well as the rising cases of COVID-19 also hampered the teachers' chance of meeting them.

Lastly, the teachers' other work-related tasks such as their Individual Performance Commitment Review (IPCR), Classroom Observation (CO), Weekly Home Learning Plan (WHLP, checking of modules and performance tasks, and other reports made teaching in the new normal extra challenging. Although these were usually tasks, they did during the pre-pandemic time, but these had been additional burdens for them considering the bulk of work that they had to accomplish all throughout the MDL process.

Coda

The Personal Narratives Experiences of the teachers were grouped into three (3) general codes: (1) The Painstaking Job of a Learning Facilitator in the New Normal, (2) The Innate Creativity of a Genuine Educator, and (3) The Remarkable Insights Gleaned from the Personal Experiences. Under the first code, the narratives unveiled the rigorous job of teachers in the new normal that includes printing of modules, distribution of modules, retrieval of modules, providing feedback to learners, and assessment, and other work-related tasks. All these tasks involve challenges, and these have hampered the teachers in performing their work effectively and efficiently. These findings were supported by the study conducted by Pe Dangle and Sumaoang (2020) that the common experiences of teachers in MDL were difficulty in understanding and answering the modules of their children, insufficient time for their kids, modules do not have clear instructions and explanations, the modules have a lot of exercises and the lack of motivation and focus of the learners. The second code talked about the teachers' innovativeness, creativity, and resilience as they relentlessly handled every situation with positive mindset. The last code unfolded the teachers' self-realizations, reflections, and insights gained from their personal experiences.

In the context of MDL, the role of teachers in the

delivery of quality basic education transcends from being a teacher to being the figure that motivates, influences, and empowers learners to think critically, decide judiciously, and pursue relentlessly their dreams and aspirations regardless of the circumstances they are currently in. However, teachers cannot do it alone. As Pe Dangle and Sumaoang (2020) stated that the Philippines is in the process of adapting to the new normal form of education at present, and continuous innovations of educators and active involvement of other stakeholders are the driving force for its success. Needless to say, the strong support coming from all sectors in society will propel the quality of basic education to a higher level. After all, the Department of Education envisions to produce functionally literate Filipinos whose values and competencies enable them to reach their full potential that will contribute meaningfully to building the nation.

Conclusion

Based on the participants' Personal Experiences Narratives, the interpretations, and analyses of the data gathered, the following conclusions/insights were deduced: (1) Ensuring the availability of logistics – people, facilities, and supplies in the preparation of Self-Learning Modules and Learning Activity Sheets and defining the roles of the school heads, teachers, parents/ guardians, learners, and stakeholders are vital in the smooth and successful implementation of the Modular Distance Learning. (2) Adopting innovative strategies in dealing with challenging times has a profound impact on the delivery of quality services in terms of preparation, implementation, and progress monitoring and evaluation of the MDL. (3) Cultivating one's skills through pursuing graduate studies, positive use of technology, attending webinars, and nurturing positive values such as flexibility, positivity, commitment, and productivity among others are essential for one's personal and professional growth.

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