

Teaching in the “New Normal”: Thoughts and Experiences of Teachers on the Shape of the Academe

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Abstract: At the start of the year, the world was thrown into disarray by a pandemic. The first months of 2020 the Covid-19 or Corona Virus, which originally appeared in China last December 2019, quickly traveled to the Philippines. Locally it had its first case on March 7, 2020. While learning must continue throughout the epidemic, a mindset shift is required for an effective distant learning experience. Lecturers are gradually adapting to remote instruction, some aspects of teaching and learning cannot be recreated at home. This qualitative-descriptive research focused on thoughts and experiences of 16 teachers as they try to reorder and reorganize themselves in the academe. Constrained by the pandemic, responses were collected using the Google form and themed accordingly. It used the Thematic Analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006) as a method in analyzing the data. The teachers revealed empowerment, trustworthiness of officials, negation, readiness, hopefulness, time management, elusiveness, flexibility, and security shaped them in several aspects amidst this pandemic while realizing the importance of serving students with quality. Administrators, government officials, and others must evaluate how schools might recover faster, with a transformed sense of duty, a deeper knowledge and firmness of the need to bridge the gap in opportunities and ensuring that all kids have equal possibilities for a quality education. The call to exceptional service is a lifetime

goal for them, and as academic front liners with the ability to respond to pandemic issues, they must also ensure optimum safety.

Keywords: Covid-19; New Normal; Experiences of Teachers; Shape of the Academe

1. Introduction

Quarantine time does not have to be wasteful, especially if one is blessed with a consistent internet connection. Many individuals have moved on to investigate the plethora of online courses, webinars, and zoom classes available for continuing education. In a traditional classroom, students must sit through the lecture until the bell sounds. Nobody is permitted to leave until they are threatened, whether outside by an earthquake or inside by a full bladder or an anxiety attack. However, you can't sit through long stretches of Zoom without being distracted by the household surroundings, a phone, a pet, a busy background, or even a head of two-month-growing hair. It is preferable to break a speech into four pieces rather than speaking for an hour straight. In a live lecture, one can make errors or even perform asides, but online preparation and practice using either a script or an outline is essential. Then there's the need for accurate post-production editing to ensure that there are no gaps or "ahs" that fill dead air. As a teacher, the researcher's problem, along with millions of other instructors', increases to unprecedented levels of dread, worry, and hope. As a result, this study focuses on other instructors' experiences, opinions, and ideas, as well as how they reorder and reorganize themselves in academia.

2. Methods

This study employs the qualitative approach to describe the responses gathered from the respondents. Their experiences and thoughts on the current pandemic and how these experiences reorder and reorganize their role in the school. Their narrated responses were then themed accordingly. The researcher chose her Facebook friends and sent the 10-semi structured interview to them. There were 10 researcher-made guide questions that were utilized to produce responses from 16 teachers of the institution. The responses were gathered and themed using the thematic analysis method of Clarke and Braun (2006). This comprised the following steps: familiarization, coding, generating themes,

reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing/ reporting. Phones and social media were utilized for the interview.

3. Results and Discussions

The responses from the 16 teachers of the institution were collected through google forms and were themed accordingly, as follows:

a. Empowerment

Digital learning necessitates a variety of tactics, skills, and incentives accelerate student learning processes. The function of teachers during this epidemic is so critical that their empowerment throughout this crisis is critical. According to Saavedra (2020), some countries will be able to improve teachers' digital skills. Radio and television stations will recognize their critical role in advancing national education goals – and, ideally, improve the quality of their programming as they recognize their enormous social responsibility. Parents will be more involved in their children's education, and education ministries will have a much clearer understanding of the gaps and challenges that exist in effectively using technology (in connectivity, hardware, integration of digital tools in the curriculum, teacher readiness), and will act on that understanding.

A few respondents had this solely to say:

I will be able to handle

Depends on how much support and information the school can provide me regarding these.

I'll try my best to manage these modalities in teaching to acquire new challenging experience in times of pandemic provided that the school provides me with strategies, as well.

b. Trustworthiness to Officials

The pandemic requires maximum support from the higher ups that teachers, parents, and students rely for their decisions. In this pandemic, teachers become more affected as the key players in the academe. Being the implementers, they need all-out backing that involves provisions of technology, well-adept and thought-of plans for delivery of services to students, program orientation for parents, and many other concerns. Arvisais, Olivier (2020) claimed that according to studies in the subject of education in emergencies, practically all students, and especially

vulnerable pupils, experience a reduction in school performance or a delay in learning when they are absent for extended periods of time. To sustain proper learning, teachers must follow up pupils and identify the special requirements. Because students may suffer from a lack of social connection at school, it is preferable to create possibilities for them to engage with their colleagues and teachers through the formation of virtual discussion groups or the provision of interactive learning platforms. For many young people, school is also a vital source of protection. Many students rely on free or low-cost school lunches to provide enough or healthy nourishment. School cancellations can thus have a direct influence on pupils' food security. This can be reduced if school administrators give their full support.

The comments of the instructors below demonstrate their faith in their officials on the following provisions:

Yes, the school can provide us enough and sufficient precautionary measures once we are in the school

I believe that the school is in touch with the local government.

Yes. Before classes, the school is ensuring precautionary measures for everybody's safety. It is the school mandate in fact.

Yes, the school does and provides everything at its best to protect me in this time of pandemic.

c. Negation

This crisis has brought negative comments and feelings among them that they become now the academic front liners amidst the opening of classes. With the lack of health support in the school, scarcity of directions and webinars on online schooling and learning, dissemination of quality services beyond reach and far-flung areas, different modalities of conducting classes.

These were the negative responses of the teachers as to how they see themselves in the school amidst this pandemic:

Not exactly. It requires a lot of things to consider. A 100 % virus-free, and complete protection for the school personnel are some of the things that the school should provide. Though precautionary measures are provided, still it is not enough for the enemy is unseen.

There are a lot of things to innovate, and my school didn't give us yet the opportunity to adapt with this crucial mode of teaching and learning.

Honestly, I did not have enough time making and polishing my modules which I have not yet accomplished just two weeks before the first day of classes. I can say I am not also prepared psychologically, emotionally, and socially.

I'm sure that a bulky activity in school will degrade family bonding.

No, there are a lot of things to be prepared and considered, and I am still adjusting to this kind of situation.

I can focus, if the pandemic is over. I can sense that the "normal" isn't coming back yet, and if the school continues face to face classes, I can say I will not be able to focus on the activities in the school.

Not at all because we are afraid to expose ourselves to all.

Not all students can learn alone. Though parents or any member of the family is there, the presence of the teacher is still the best. For instance, a student cannot understand a certain topic, parents cannot give fully the explanation they need maybe because they are busy with their works or with their means of life. This may lead them to cheat. They might go and see their classmates' house and ask for the answer of their activity in the module.

Some students live in upland, modules will be the key for them to keep on learning.

Weak signal and considering the life of my students, no available gadgets, no internet connections and even if computer shops are available in their community, but it's not advisable for them to spend more money from their pockets. Mobile data is not enough to cater online classes.

No. Many of them have no access to internet due to unstable signal. However, most of them have no gadgets to use for online learning.

Sadly, being in the profession at a public school, I can say that my learners cannot make themselves available for the online classes. Most of them have no access to internet as well as gadgets to be used for the online classes. That is why; our department is doing its best to cater the needs of the new normal.

d. Degree of readiness

Amidst this pandemic, readiness to do the academic related activities is important. The degree of readiness among teachers is what matters this time as they need to abreast themselves with massive skills. Marshall (2020) Online teaching and learning will become increasingly prevalent. Teachers and students in general must be prepared to teach online. Online schooling is not a novel idea. What is new is that schools are embracing it as vital to the education of the next generation of kids. In a world where calamities and disruptions are becoming the norm, schools and colleges must train teachers on how to teach online and encourage them to spend time teaching online as a drill mechanism to prepare for unanticipated occurrences. It is not just about the epidemic that we are now witnessing. Other natural calamities, such as earthquakes and floods, will require teachers and students to stay at home and teach or study online. More classes are being conducted online.

These were their responses:

It is my job.

Yes. It is my sworn job so I can.

The change is radical but I am coping. Prepared? Somehow because this has been going on for months now. So, I better be ready or I will be lost with the madness of this devastating pandemic

Yes. Since the start of the pandemic, I have already programmed myself to be always ready to what could happen, especially to the way of teaching

e. Hopefulness

Small gestures in times of this COVID19 pandemic means a lot to teachers. Little prayer amidst this crisis, together with actions can work. Dalai Lama (2020) stated that when friends ask him to help them with an issue in the world, he always tells them that the Dalai Lama has no magical abilities. He wouldn't have leg discomfort or a sore throat if he did. He claimed to be the same as humans, and he, too, has anxieties, hopes, and concerns. According to Buddhism, every sentient being is familiar with suffering and the realities of disease, old age, and death. People, however, have the ability to utilize their thoughts to overcome wrath, terror, and greed. In recent years, he has emphasized "emotional disarmament": trying to perceive things rationally and objectively. The hopeful instructors expect to succeed in addressing this. Pandemic through the most stringent health procedures at school, completion of modules despite their home activities, and a sense of security in the middle of this crisis.

Their replies to their optimism were as follows:

I believe our school administrators know the do's and don'ts of the current pandemic.

As long as it is safe to stay in the school, I will be concentrated to teach.

*I will make my modules interesting so that my students will still learn.
The school should be because it mandates us to report in required days instead of working from home mode.*

*I doubt it! Considering that our enemy is unseen. The school must provide protection and must be fully responsible for all the School Personnel.
I hope so. Since I will be risking my life to serve the school and the students, I hope the school will not only be responsible but also accountable for whatever might happen to me.*

If the school will let us get into work amidst the pandemic, yes. A good employer must always think of the welfare of employees.

f. Time Management

Managing time at this moment is a very imperative skill among teachers. With all the vital responsibilities at hand like: enrollment, preparation of modules, revision of work plans, constructing school-related activities, dissemination of materials, orientation of parents, and many others. This pandemic has taken lives and trauma beset teachers and students.

These were the responses of teachers:

I will be able to handle.

It will be hard, very hard because of the double and triple demands of blended teaching, plus having to teach my own children during the new normal.

Yes. It is just a matter of time management. If we focus on doing something then we could finish it on time.

According to Marshall (2020), being an educator often comes with its own set of tensions and worries. However, in the middle of the COVID-19 epidemic, kids and instructors may face unpleasant conditions.

One instructor stated:

We can't deny that even if we're not in school, there's still a lot going on during the summer. One upside is that the epidemic has filled in the voids of decreasing family quality time.

g. Elusiveness

The pandemic has brought them unprecedented notches of elusiveness and negativity for themselves and to their students, as well. Zacarian and Silverstone (2020) claimed when it became evident that the country's school buildings would be closed for the foreseeable future due to a global epidemic, and that remote learning would be the only option to continue education, student and teacher roles were reversed overnight. In the midst of these major changes, face-to-face social relationships (which for many are the most important component of schooling and the glue that ties us all

together) have been digitized. However, attitudes and behaviors that allow students to succeed as learners have shown to be easier to nurture, particularly when the option of empowerment is incorporated. While videoconferencing with students from home historically had emotional ups and downs in the classroom, students appear to be happier, more productive, less distracted, and more at ease without distractions from peer conflicts or anxieties about what others think of them. Most students appear to be coping well with the changes in their educational life. They appear relieved to be focused on assigned tasks and spending more of their time doing activities they enjoy, such as painting, lengthy bike rides, or walks with family or alone. Other teachers have voiced concern about their kids' overall well-being, particularly those who have faced struggle.

Maybe. It is my first time and our first time on this kind of modality.

Depends on how much support and information the school can provide me regarding these.

I am still playing it by ear. Depending on the availability of medical remedies, then and only I am prepared for the new normal. Yes, I am apprehensive of the school's capacity, knowledge and ability to give precautionary measures.

I am aware that the school administrators are carefully planning for a list of necessary precautionary measures.

I am not sure of it since my students have different learning styles and preferences.

However, I am half-hearted regarding its implementation and proper observance.

I don't think so. Modules alone without teachers' supervision are difficult.

h. Security and Safety

For many individuals, especially children, education is a crucial source of security. With the arrival of this pandemic everyone needs the complete protection and safety. Every school must have sufficient health practices in place.

With the current situation, my focus will be more on my family considering that I have a little one. I worry that going to school and dealing with different people everyday will make me susceptible to the virus and be a threat to the family.

My family is my sanity. My loved ones are the ones keeping afloat amid the craziness of work.

Gibbs (2020) went on to add in his article that technology and technology businesses may play an important role in eliminating COVID 19. The responsibility of governments and public-health groups in responding to this problem is evident.

i. Flexibility

According to Arvisais (2020), teaching contributes to vital learning. The school closures deprived the youth of possibilities for development and advancement. The consequences of this decision are likely to be significant, particularly for vulnerable pupils, notably underprivileged students, who have fewer educational alternatives outside of the school setting. When there is a protracted stop in school, students with learning disabilities may be disproportionately affected. For some, the strain of making up after a period of prolonged inactivity may lead to dropping out of school. Online education can use alternative strategies based on the perspective of cognitivist to enable learners to process learning and information efficiently. The instruction materials develop the information in small meaningful bits of pieces. He further suggested numerous strategies to deliver this online education like highlighting information at the middle of the screen to draw attention and motivation of learners. The presentation of information should not create an overload of sensation for the online learner.

Despite all the negation, predicaments, and elusiveness amidst this pandemic, the teachers learn to be flexible and embrace the new normal, hence responded accordingly:

I am a teacher, and I am flexible. It is not going to be easy, but I will be able to adjust.

I'll try my best to manage these modalities in teaching to acquire new challenging experience in times of pandemic.

Yes. As a teacher, it is expected of me to adapt changes for the sake of my learners. That's why teachers nowadays are required to attend webinar just to be equipped with knowledge and skills in preparation for new modalities in education.

I am willing to do necessary adjustments in using the modules which we were required to prepare to be used this coming academic year. With limited experience in making and using such, I am somehow worried about how I could successfully use it with my students.

Honestly, I need to adapt to the changes, to this new normal way of teaching.

According to Saavedra (2020), remote learning is more than simply online learning; it is also about mixed media learning, with the objective of reaching as many students as is now possible. It is critical to maintain children's engagement, particularly among early secondary school students. Dropout rates remain high in many countries, and a protracted period of disengagement may result in an increase. School is about more than simply math and science; it is also about building social bonds and interacting with peers. It all comes down to being a good citizen and developing social skills.

That is why it is vital to keep in touch with the school necessarily. This is also an opportunity for all students to strengthen their socio-emotional skills and learn more about how to contribute to society. The

role of parents and families, which has always been important, is especially important in this attempt. As a result, much of the help supplied by education ministries through the media should go to parents as well. Radio, television, and SMS messages may all be used to provide them with advice and information on how to better aid their children.

Another educator, Gibbs (2020), stated that instructors are able to work from home effectively because they have done it in the past and have established a foundation. They require that foundation on an ongoing basis, which is human nature. They have greater flexibility and certainty.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Any undertaking of all education systems is inculcated in their VMGO, which is to overcome any challenges that beset and respond to the pandemic, Covid19. The trial today which teachers face to eradicate as much as possible the negative effect that pandemic brings to the stakeholders and help build and rebuild to get back on its normal trail for improved learning. With their responses of empowerment, trustworthiness of officials, negation, readiness, hopefulness, time management, elusiveness, flexibility, and security and safety shaped them in several aspects amidst this pandemic while realizing the importance of serving students with quality.

As schools, administrations, and the government cope with the pandemic, officials and others must also consider how the school might recover more quickly, with a changed sense of duty, a deeper knowledge, and a strong feeling of the need to reduce the opportunity gap and ensure that all children have equal access to a superb education. Furthermore, academics who act as academic front liners for these consumers and who, in the face of the crisis, enable all conceivable efforts to ameliorate the situation must be provided the highest level of protection.

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