

Hurdling with the “New Normal”: Thoughts and Experiences of Parents on the Shape of their Children in the Academe

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Abstract: This study is focused on the Thoughts and Experiences of Parents on the Shape of their Children in the Academe as they hurdle in the new normal. Specifically, it sought to analyze their thoughts on the ten questions posited on them that varied from safety of their children in school, module purchase and subsidy, optimum learning despite on the adopted learning system by the school, time to submit finished tasks of their children, academic freeze, and thoughts in case their children get sick. Findings included the following: Parents were doubtful as to safety of their children in the school yet, hopeful that through the skills, knowledge, and dedication of their reaches, optimum quality education could still be achieved regardless of the learning modality which the school implements, subsidy of modules was strongly begged for since an allocation from materials production is a priority of the school amidst this pandemic, academic freeze was not an option to a majority, humane considerations from the teachers was a loud remark from parents. This allows their children to analyze, edit, and review materials and assignments. In conclusion, parents' priority is education of their children that they need to purchase modules at all cost, hopeful that optimum learning and quality education could be achieved through the dedication and commitment of skilled and knowledgeable teachers. It is then recommended that the administration may want to consider conducting an orientation seminar to

parents as to the new procedures, policies, modality for learning for their children, Parents are also recommended to monitor and guide their children especially on the submission of finished tasks and other assignments.

Keywords: Thoughts and Experiences; Children; Academe

1. Introduction

The world was entwined and interlaced with a pandemic at the onset of the first month of 2020. COVID-19 or the coronavirus disease is transferrable and began in Wuhan, Hubei Province in China sometime on December 2019. The virus spread in the Philippines that it had its first case on January 2020 with a female Chinese, 38 years of age. Locally, it had its first case on March 7, 2020. (<https://www.who.int/philippines/emergencies/covid-19-in-the-philippines>).

Learning must go on during the pandemic and a paradigm shift is vital to have a meaningful remote learning experience for our students. While lecturers are slowly adjusting to remote instruction, there are some teachings and learning elements that cannot be replicated at home. Philippines alone had adjusted to different modes of learning. With all the protocols at hand, to note the heart-breaking lockdowns and quarantines that kept people isolated from others. The school, community, and the home prepared to outwit the effects of this pandemic. All units, agencies, and most especially the school were directly hit by it. The schools needed to uphold the necessities of the learning processes and had to look into the easiest way to reach the students and pupils, remote or not. Adoptions to the learning modalities for the school year were the priority, considering the safety of the students and the teachers. Schools looked into their budgetary requirements and align for the priorities.

The continuing health threat of the pandemic pushed the schools to have a manageable Learning Continuity Plan to ensure the learning of the students continues considering the health, safety and wellbeing of all learners, teachers, and employees, as well. The Abra State Institute of Sciences adopted its Flexible Learning System to guarantee that education must continue for its clients. It is paramount that the institution, being the sole State College in the province and with unprecedented enrollees each year, it assures the parents that despite of the hurdles of this pandemic, the education of their children is set as a priority. The FLS adapted the synchronous and the asynchronous learning, wherein the former allows students for online classes based on scheduled meetings while the latter

allows students to have access on the materials prepared by the teachers, online or printed, and do activities based from their own and most opportune time at home.

It is in this point that the researchers conceptualized this study and wanted to know the thoughts and experiences of parents based from the semi-structured interview prepared for them.

COVID 19 has made a very tremendous effect on the lives of people and worst is the closure of schools, lockdowns left and right in the communities. The pandemic has made the offering of distance learning inevitable, not only in urban areas but also in rural areas, even to the most remote areas in the province of Abra and all parts of the Philippines, and throughout the world.

Schools had adopted different modes of learning modalities to deliver learning to all students. Distance learning has three types of delivery modalities: Modular Distance Learning, Online Distance Learning, and Blended Distance Learning (Quinones, 2020). Dangle & Sumaoang (2020) showed that the main challenges that emerged were lack of school funding in the production and delivery of modules, students struggle with self-studying, and parents' lack of knowledge to academically guide their child/children. Hence, it is evident that there are struggles associated with the use of modular distance learning.

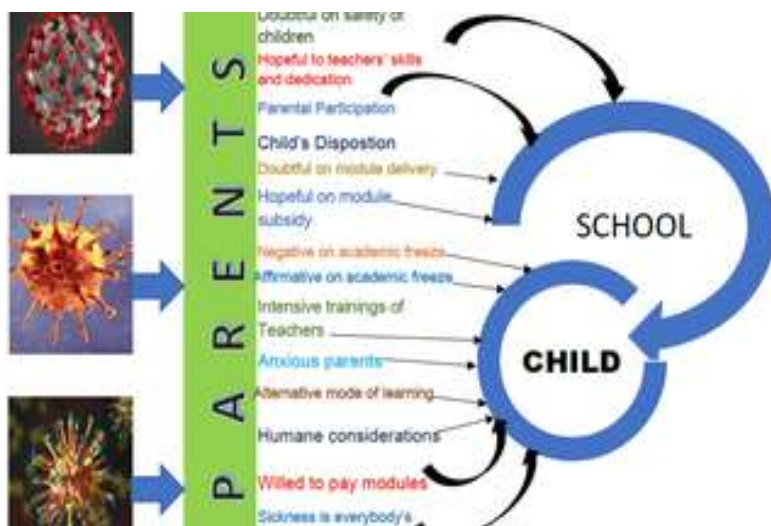
Parents suffer the most due to this pandemic. It is inevitable that these sufferings are also caused by the modes of learning which schools adopt. Connectivity of internet, money to purchase for the modules, lockdowns, unemployment of some members of the family, inadequate fund form the government, sickness, and a lot more also cause depression , fear, and anxiety in the family.

As noted by Ross and Madsen (2020), for most parents the COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful. Reason of financial instabilities, loss of child care and health concerns is remarkably stimulating for families especially for parents. Due to this, mental problems are probable to increase. The potential long-term consequences on children from increased parental stress, anxiety and depression are only beginning to be understood. Yet, children who are exposed to problems like these are more likely to experience mental health problems themselves, in addition to developing an increased risk of learning and behavior problems and reduced economic mobility throughout their lives. They further added that schools need to develop an approach that helps parents protect their children's futures. Findings of their study included that pregnant mothers and those with young children are experiencing three- to five-fold increases in self-reported anxiety and

depression symptoms. A history of mental illness, current domestic conflict and financial stress were associated with worse mental health across multiple child age groups. These figures are especially concerning because young children are highly vulnerable to maternal mental illness due to their near total reliance on caregivers to meet basic health and safety needs. In addition, high rates of parental mental illness combined with children spending more time at home due to COVID-19 present multiple risks, including alterations in children’s stress-system function, higher rates of physical health problems and cognitive impairments. Parenting stress associated with mental illness can lead to negative interactions, including harsh discipline and being less responsive to children’s needs. For parents, depression contributes to health problems and low quality of life.

Experiences showed that mental Healy problems had really been one of the problems now. The worst would be, children commit suicide due to uncontrolled problems at home and from the activities set by teachers. The demands from these situations cause students to commit suicide since this is a leading cause of death for the young. Should there be more unaddressed mental problems, this is expected to rise intensely in the future.

Concept Map



This illustrates how COVID 19 affects the disposition of parents and their thoughts on the shape of their children in the academe. The thoughts of parents include doubt on the safety of their children but hopeful that despite of the mode of learning which the school adapts quality education and optimum learning will be gained by their children through the expertise, skills, and knowledge of their teachers. Parental participation on the child's learning seems to be imperative as his/ her disposition to study and focus is needed. Subsidy on module purchase is another parental concern, though a few are willed to pay at all cost. Parents are anxious amidst this pandemic but rely on the school and community for support

To describe the experiences and thoughts of parents towards the pandemic and how they perceive the shape of their children in the school. The thoughts and experiences of the parents revolved on the following questions:

- a. Will my child be safe in the school?
- b. Will my child earn the optimum learning he/ she deserves while doing his/ her online classes?
- c. Will the modules be available to my child?
- d. Will academic freeze be an option for us?
- e. Is quality education rendered with the new modalities of the teachers?
- f. If connectivity shall hinder my child to do her online classes, how can she cope?
- g. Will teachers allow my child enough time to do her assignments?
- h. How much shall I pay for the modules of my child?
- i. Will the school subsidize the costs of modules?
- j. If my child gets sick during the course of the face to face with his/ her teachers, who shall shoulder the expenses?

2. Methods

This study employed the qualitative- phenomenological approach to describe the experiences and thoughts of the parents on the current pandemic and how these experiences reorder and reorganize their role in the school. Their responses were narrated and themed accordingly. The researchers chose 15 Facebook friends and sent the semi structured interview to them. The 10 guide questions utilized to elicit responses were taken from these responses were themed accordingly. Ethical considerations in conducting this research ensured all respondents that their identities would be kept, and responses are solely for the conduct of this study.

3. Results And Discussion

Consequently, the following are the results of the study after a systematic analysis of the parents' responses. They were coded, thermalized, and presented as follows:

- a. On the thoughts of parents whether their children will be safe in school, the sole theme, *doubtful* was derived. All 15 parents responded doubtfully on the safety of their children due to the following reasons: "the increasing number of positive cases in the province", "health protocols of the school", "limited facilities and sanitation of the school", "uncontrolled socialization of children when in school", "the persons whom the children may come in contact with would be carriers of the virus", "COVID virus is unseen that is why it is better to be at home", and "the unavailability of vaccines". These reasons signify that the safety of their children is the most important thing for them.
- b. On the thoughts of parents whether their child earns the optimum learning he/ she deserves while doing his/ her online classes. The themes derived from the responses were: *parental participation, child's disposition, and face-to-face learning*. Parental participation is a must especially when children are constrained at home. Optimum learning is limited though but with the guidance of parents, elders, guardians, and teachers, learning takes place even during the pandemic. Maximum parental care needs to be abreast and allow children to adjust in the new normal. A parent responded "*to help her child adjust because in this new normal, schools introduce blended learning which children are not exposed of. Children need to adjust to this situation and not all are capable of having gadgets or internet connection and some parents are busy working that is why they lack time to teach.*" For parents and guardians who engaged into their jobs to augment family income, children are solely left at home to study. "*It is up to the child whether he/she wants to focus*", one parent responded.
- c. On the thoughts of parents as to the availability of modules to be delivered to their children, there were two themes derived namely: *hopeful and doubtful on the delivery of modules*. In this question, the parents responded so bluntly that modules would not be delivered since preparation takes time and its budgetary requirement needs to be considered. While this observation of parents is evident, module preparation needs sufficient time

and administrative support for the monetary allocations. One parent responded, “*Module making is very difficult to develop plus the budget. I think modules will not be available to all learners*”. On the contrary, parents were hopeful that the modules for their children would be available. “*Teachers knew of the New Normal, hence they are prepared for this battle*”, replied by one parent. Obviously, this practice and assurance was integrated in the Flexible Learning System (FLS) of the institution. It guarantees that teachers would be into series of trainings on module preparation and that the prepared materials go through the proper procedure from submission, editing, re-submission, and finally for production and circulation.

- d. On their thoughts as to whether academic freeze would be an option, responses derived were thermalized into two: *affirmative and negative*. For parents who favored academic freeze, they noted on being indispensable during the pandemic. The risk that one takes amidst the COVID 19 is not all safe for everyone; hence academic freeze is an option. On the other hand, some parents believe that despite this pandemic there are still other alternative learning modalities which the school can engage. As one parent replied, “*We can have new form of teaching-learning experience. We just help one another to cope up this situation*”, and another responded, “*Education should not stop. There are other alternative delivery modes to be used for our children*”.
- e. On their thoughts regarding quality education rendered with the new modalities of the teachers, there were three themes that were derived: *child’s disposition, intensive trainings and competencies of teachers*. With whatever learning modality which the institution may engage, quality education can be achieved. As responded by parents, “*Provided that the teachers shall be well equipped of the skills and knowledge that the new normal shall give to them, only then that my child shall get the quality education he deserves*”. This statement proves that parents believe in the skills of the teachers employed in the school. Their competencies, knowledge, and skills incumbent of their dedication and commitment, quality education is ensured. Intensive trainings conducted on the new normal may also help to deliver quality education to students. One parent replied hopefully, “*I hope so but since they are well trained for this for sure they can.*” On child’s disposition, one parent commented, “*Yes and it*

will always depend on the child". Quality education is a part of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development which ensures each child for lifelong learning. Goal 4 does not only focus on numeracy and literacy but also noting into consideration that it is a system designed to help all children reach their full potential and enter society as full and productive citizens (Slade, 2020).

- f. On parents' thoughts on the hindrance of their connectivity to do child's online classes and how can he/she cope up, replies were coded and thermalized. There were two themes that were derived and these were: *Alternative Modes of Learning and Anxiety*. Parents are so anxious with the situations of their child when classes start. The closure of the schools, lockdowns, and increase of positive cases are just few of the sources of anxiety of parents. The new modality surely braces them with strong connectivity for online classes and activities of their children. As on responded, "*As expected that connectivity shall be a problem, surely teachers must pave the way to help our children*".
- g. Parents' thoughts on whether teachers allow their children enough time to do assignment, replies resulted to two themes namely: *humane considerations and setting of deadlines*. Parents are hopeful that their children would be given considerations to finish their tasks. They replied, "Provisions of enough and humane consideration is much expected from the teachers for children to do tasks. With the bulk of assignments and other learning tasks which my child shall delve in surely, this consideration is expected for transfer of knowledge and skills." *They had assumed that teachers would be considerate in helping children with the loaded assignments and related activities which the students would have.* This would also avoid cramming and students could concentrate well in their tasks as one parent commented, "*So that our children will not be cramming and they will concentrate on doing their assignments and tasks*". Connectivity would also be one foreseen problem hence, parents were hopeful on the considerations which teachers can offer. One parent responded, "*Yes, because not all are privileged. We differ from how fast the signal received in a certain area/barrio*". *Setting deadlines* is also one theme that was derived from the responses of parents. Deadlines gave the students the preparations and time management hat they need to finish their tasks. In so doing they could review and edit their tasks prior

submission. This allows also the students to develop prioritization of tasks and leisure. Parents remarked, “Because *the teacher will set a deadline on retrieving the module or worksheets*”, “*to give students chance to analyze and give correct /concrete answers to assignments*”.

- h. On the thoughts of parents as to how much shall they pay for the modules of their child, the researchers were able to derive two themes namely: *willed to pay and subsidy*. Parents prioritize the education of their children and paying materials for their learning bears no issue at all. It is imperative for these modules to be purchased at all cost. Their awareness on the production cost of developing modules is one parent remarked, “*If the cost is worth it and if it’s for studying then I will buy for my child*”. As to the *subsidy*, parents wished that the modules be taken care of by the school. Since it is a public institution, the modules are for free to students, with its MOOE the budget can be utilize for the materials production, as commented by one parent.
- i. On the thoughts regarding the subsidy of modules, the researchers were able to derive an *affirmative* theme. All parents stated that the school shall subsidized payments of the modules since money is hard for the household. Loss of jobs by almost all of them hinders them to spend on the payments of modules. Their claim that the Institution is a Government-run one, they are hopeful that the subsidy is allocated well for the production of materials. Relies from parents included the following, “*Yes, not all parents can afford providing learning materials for their children*”, “*It should. Because we all know that we are all affected by the pandemic. How much more of the parents who lost their jobs*”.
- j. Parents’ thoughts on the instance that their child gets sick during the course of the face with his / her teachers, who shall shoulder the expenses, got the theme: *Everybody’s concern*. Parents remarked that this is everybody’s concern since nobody wants this pandemic amidst all of us. It’s not only the sole responsibility of parents but also the community and the school. As they remarked, “*Both. Kasi wala namang may gusto if ever na magkasakit ang ating mga anak. Gaya ng sabi ko, tulong tulong na lang po tayo*” (*No one wishes that our children get sick. Let’s help one another*), “*The school and the government. At first they are just the people who ordered to have this face-to-face class. We are just following them because we want our child not to be left behind for a year in learning*”.

4. Conclusions

From the findings, the researchers concluded that: Parents are doubtful on the safety of their children once the school conducts face-to-face classes, yet they are hopeful that as the school adopts alternative learning modes to deliver learning to their children, they still earn optimum learning from teachers. With the skills, knowledge, expertise, and competencies of the teachers, the children gain the sufficient skills and knowledge as in the normal classroom delivery. Modules are important to their children and regardless of their cost, parents are willed to purchase but other hope for a subsidy from the school. Considerations from teachers as to submission of assignments, tasks, and other related activities are highly begged for from parents. Setting of reasonable deadlines may also be pondered by teachers to give time for their children to analyze, edit, and review their submitted tasks.

In the light of the conclusions, the researchers humbly recommend the following: The administration may want to consider conducting an orientation for the parents especially on the new normal situations of the school: The Flexible Learning System of the school, calendar of activities for the whole school year, new policies and guidelines formulated amidst the pandemic, procedures to consider especially on the course of this pandemic like enrollment procedures, grading system, and many others. Parents may want to monitor their children on the submission of activities and requirements for guidance and mentoring. Research studies may also be further conducted on the post pandemic thoughts of parents is highly recommended.

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