
Challenges Encountered by Secondary Teachers in Teaching Students at Tiong Hen So Memorial High School Amidst the Pandemic

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Abstract — “Education in the New Normal” started from the school year 2020-2021. Face to face learning engagement of students and teachers within school classrooms is not yet allowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic brought momentous challenges to students, parents and most especially to teachers. The key purpose of this research is to find out the challenges encountered by secondary teachers and how they overcome them. Purposive sampling was used in selecting 8 secondary teachers that participated in the study. The researcher used FGD (Focal Group Discussion) and semi-structured interview to seek the in-depth information that that revealed the current situation on how the informants responded to it. Phenomenological data analysis was utilized to analyze and interpret the results of this study. The main challenges that emerged were poor parental support, child labor, lack of interest/priorities, teenage pregnancy, availability of materials, unfinished modules/LAS and poor time management. Tiong Hen So Memorial High School may utilize the results in designing Professional Developmental trainings/programs to capacitate the teacher’s capability in the new normal of education. This can also serve as springboard data in conducting related study in Elementary level.

Keywords –*Secondary Teachers, Challenges, New Normal*

I. INTRODUCTION

A sudden shift from face-to-face learning engagement into distance learning or the so called “Education in the New Normal” this school year 2020-2021 due to Covid-19 Pandemic brought challenges to teachers, students, and parents. Such shift may be considered a threat. The Department of Education has addressed the challenges in the basic education through its Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) under the Department of Education Order No. 012, s. 2020, which aims to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of the learners, teachers, and personnel in the time of COVID-19, while finding ways for education to continue amidst the crisis.

Concerned with the students’ continuous learning, the Department of Education provided learning modalities suited for the learners’ accessibility. Face-to-face engagement of students and teachers within the school has been suspended by the Government, so the other options are modular distance learning, online learning or the so called blended learning. For the continuity of the education and for every school to still attain its mission and vision which is to provide quality education to every learner, the DepEd implemented the Modular Distance Learning. To clearly define it, Distance Learning refers to a learning delivery modality, where learning takes place between the teacher and the learners who are geographically remote from each other during instruction. This modality has three types: Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and TV/Radio-Based Instruction. (Philippine News Headline, 2020).

Tiong Hen So Memorial High School as an institution aims to deliver quality education for its learners by offering Modular Distance Learning (MDL) and Online Distance Learning (ODL). Teachers prepare Self-Learning Modules to be used by the learners. According to the DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones, “The Self Learning Modules and other

alternative learning delivery modalities are in place to address the needs, situations, and resources of each and every learner and covers all the bases in ensuring that basic education are accessible amid the present crisis posed by COVID-19.” The use of modules encourages independent study. One of the benefits of using modules for instruction is the acquisition of better self-study or learning skills among students (Dangle and Sumaoang, 2020). In addition, from the study of Malik (2012), it was found that the performance of learners with the modular approach in teaching is better than those learners who were taught by the traditional approach. As cited by Espineli (2021), the same findings proved that modular instruction is more effective in teaching learning method compared to usual teaching approaches because in this modular approach the students learn at their own stride.

Due to the ever-changing and conditions of the pandemic, teachers and schools are continuously bound to adapt in order to safely educate students. (Altemose and Lampron, 2021). From the study of Ancheta and Ancheta, (2020), they claimed that the role of the teacher in the new normal plays a big part on the teaching and learning process using the chosen modality. The role is expanded as compared to the normal classroom setup. In the new normal, the teachers must be available at all times even they are working at home. In line with this, teachers continue to provide a system of education to their students. However, there have been different challenges encountered by teachers in the new normal education. This is congruent to the statement that COVID-19 has therefore significantly added to the workload of teachers who, at the best of times, face a number of challenges. (UNESCO, 2020). Lack of instructional materials, problems in the use of self-learning modules, the issues/concerns in distance learning, inability of parents to teach their students, among others, serve as hindrances in making education accessible for all in these difficult times. Thus, this research specifically aims to discuss the challenges encountered by secondary teachers teaching students amidst pandemic and how they to resolve such challenges.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to examine the challenges encountered by secondary teachers in teaching students of Tiong Hen So Memorial High School amidst pandemic, for the School Year 2020-2021.

Specifically, it will seek answers to the following:

1. Determine the demographic profile of the secondary teachers along:
 - a. Subject taught
 - b. Age
 - c. Sex
 - d. Length of Service
2. Describe the strategies employed by the secondary teachers on:
 - a. Printing of LAS/SLMs
 - b. Delivery of LAS/SLMs
 - c. Retrieval of LAS/SLMs
 - d. Checking of LAS/SLMs
3. Identify the challenges encountered by the secondary teachers and how they overcome them.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Respondents

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by frequency and percentage.

Respondents	f	(%)
Secondary Teachers	8	100
Total	8	100

As reflected in Table 1, the participants needed in the study were selected according to the needs of the study: there were eight secondary teachers that teach different subjects. All participants are Teacher 1. Among the eight participants, three of them have served for more than five years while others are newly hired and have been teaching for less than three years. The participants are three males and five females. They are all teaching at Tiong Hen So Memorial High School. The study was conducted on July, 2021, ending of fourth quarter, School Year 2020-2021. They were selected through purposive sampling. The sampling technique is non-probability sampling. They are the most appropriate sample of this undertaking since they are teachers handling students at school who commonly experienced problems in the new normal.

After seeking help from the experts for the validation of the guide questions used in the conduct of the study, the researcher sought permission from the Tiong Hen So Memorial High School's school head to conduct the study at the same school. Upon approval, the purpose of the study was explained to the selected participants. Then the time and date for the face-to-face interview and analysis of the document were set as agreed by the researcher and the participants. After the participants shared their experiences and challenges encountered, the data were interpreted and analyzed.

B. Data Gathering Methods

The researcher utilized interview guide/questionnaires in the Focal Group Discussion and semi-structured interview to seek in-depth information. This is to determine the current situation on how the participants responded to the new normal.

The researcher set a schedule based on the availability of the participants to share their opinions with one another. With this method, researcher compared their reactions and ideas substantial to the information needed by the researcher. It was recorded to assure the accuracy of data and to effectively understand and extract exact responses from the discussion that will be undertaken. The discussion emphasized teachers' perceptions in terms of the problems and concerns or problems they experienced in teaching students during this time.

Another research method that was used in this study was Observation. This process was helpful in understanding the attitudes, behaviors, feelings and other forms of non-verbal language that would give researcher opportunity to deeply understand the participant's idea and reactions relative experiences of participants in teaching students in new normal education. Profound knowledge and more accurate information was gathered particularly on teachers' responses about the questions, utterances, gestures, body movements and facial expressions during interviews and focus group discussion.

After data collection procedure using the said research methods appropriate to the study, gathering, findings, conclusions, and recommendations were made. Appropriate interpretation and tabulation were carefully done to accurately discuss and present the study.

C. Data analysis

In order to analyze the study, a phenomenological analysis was employed. According to Koppa (n.d), it is based on discussions and reflections of direct sense of perception and experiences of the research phenomenon. Phenomenological research is understood as the study of experiences or consciousness. It is about studying a “*phenomena*”, appearance of things as they appear on people’s experience, or the ways we experience things. It was cited by Espineli (2021) that the phenomenological research culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomena.

This is the most accurate to be utilized because it delves on the experiences of teachers in teaching students. Participants’ shared problems along teaching was analyzed and examined using this method of research.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following discussions were on the demographic profile of the secondary teachers in terms of sex, lengths in service, designation and subjects handled/taught. Frequency count and percentages were used to analyze the data as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

Demographic	f	%
1. Sex		
Male	3	37.5%
Female	5	62.5%
Total	8	100%
2. Lengths in Service		
5 and below	7	87.5%
6-10	1	12.5%
Total	8	100%
3. Designation		
Teacher 1	8	100%
Total	8	100%
4. Subjects Taught/Handled		
Science	1	
Mathematics	1	12.5%
English	1	12.5%
Filipino	1	12.5%
Araling Panlipunan	1	12.5%
MAPEH	1	12.5%
TLE	1	12.5%
ESP	1	12.5%
Total	8	100%

Table 1 showed that 37.5% were male and 62.5% were female. On lengths of service, 87.5% of them had served for five years and below, 12.5% served for 6 to 10 years. With regards to designation, they are 100% Teacher 1. It also showed that the respondents have one particular subject handled/taught.

2. Strategies Employed by the Secondary Teachers in terms:

As teachers, it is their responsibility to facilitate the teaching and learning process and monitor how the students performing in the new normal. Some participants employed different strategies to maximize the time allotment.

The following are the strategies employed by secondary teachers in teaching their students. The tables also provide teachers' feedback and observations.

Table 2a. Printing of SLMs/LAS

Teacher-Participant	Strategy
Teacher B	<i>Scheduling/having a line up for the materials that are needed to be printed</i>
Teacher C	<i>Weekly printing of SLMs/LAS.</i>
Teacher D	<i>If necessary those broad topics must be shortened, selective in terms of activities. And prepared all the possible materials needed in printing. Example: Availability of printers, ink, etc</i>
Teacher F	<i>Reduce the consumables/pages that are not necessary for printing.</i>

As seen in Table 2a, teachers resort to reducing resources to address the issue on learning materials. Since every teacher has at least 50 students per section, the teacher will have to print more modules, thus consuming more paper and ink. To address this, the teachers make concise and realistic modules that can be accomplished by the learners.

Table 2b. Delivery of SLMs/LAS

Teacher-Participant	Strategy
Teacher B	<i>Having a checklist for what subject delivered to the learners and putting their signature on it.</i>
Teacher C	<i>Online and house to house delivery</i>
Teacher F	<i>Followed weekly schedule of Delivery of SLMs/LAS which is every Tuesday of the week. Monitoring tools are also used</i>
Teacher G	<i>Make use of checklist in house distribution for modular and send through chat/email for online students providing clear instructions</i>
Teacher H	<i>Sorting of modules by subject is done a day before distribution so it will be easy for the adviser to just give the envelope with modules to students and just have the checklist to identify those student who receive modules.</i>

Table 2b presents how the teachers organize and maximize delivery of learning materials. They have to have a checklist for materials and plan ahead since the houses of the learners are located in at least two barangays. The house-to-house distribution of modules in barangays consumes more time and resources. Thus, to at least minimize waste of

time and resources, planning and management are important. This is also important in making sure that every learner gets to receive his or her modules. In addition, despite limited Internet connection, teachers also utilize such technology to send materials to students who can afford to have Internet access. Those who live near the school can likewise have easy access to modules. These circumstances show that both teachers and students work hand in hand in order to cope with the current educational needs and difficulties.

Table 2c. Retrieval of SLMs/LAS

Teacher-Participant	Strategy
Teacher B	<i>Checklist, as well as making sure that they have answered their modules</i>
Teacher F	<i>Every Tuesday of the week is delivery and retrieval of SLMs to maximize the time allotment</i>
Teacher G	<i>Retrieve modules by group leader (per barangay) or in-house retrieval for who did not return accomplished SLMs and make use of checklist</i>
Teacher H	<i>Same as distribution of modules</i>

Teachers plan ahead and organize the retrieval of the modules since the same scenarios exist. Some live far from the school, so the collection of the modules is the same as the distribution.

Table 2d. Checking of SLMs/LAS

Teacher-Participant	Strategy
Teacher A	<i>Check after retrieval</i>
Teacher B	<i>Providing an answer key for easy checking and giving feedback for what have they done</i>
Teacher D	<i>Checking must be always on time after retrieval of modules. It should be graded/rated and should have feedback</i>
Teacher E	<i>Provide feedback that encourage learners to study hard</i>
Teacher H	<i>Checking of modules is done right after retrieving it. Teacher will just prepare the key to correction so that it will be easy to check.</i>

The teaching and learning process must always be maintained. Thus, teachers check and rate students' modules to determine their learning status. It is as if the performance of the students is conducted in the classroom. However, some modules may not be submitted on time or some may be incomplete, so the teachers are compelled to make follow ups and teach the learners in their respective houses. The teachers' dedication during this time can hardly be questioned because they need to adapt to the changes and to every learner's needs and concerns.

3. Challenges Encountered While Teaching Students amidst Pandemic

From the point of view of the secondary teachers, the following are the challenges encountered by the teacher teaching students amidst pandemic.

Teacher A mentioned "*child labor, teenage pregnancy and parents support to students*"

According to Teacher B, *“the student having a hard time studying and understand the topic/lesson due to so many factors, example is the chores and they cannot easily ask for clarification to their teachers.”*

Teacher D shared *“adjusting time and availability of materials”*

As Teacher E stated *“unfinished modules/LAS, child labor/distractions/lack of focus, and lack of interest in answering SLMs/LAS”*

Teacher G further stated *“unavailability of students due to child labor, lack of interest, no focus towards his/her studies and no guidance from parent/other members of the family.”*

Teacher F claimed *“availability of internet access, poor affectivity of teaching and learning process and lack of resources, time consuming”*

Teacher H shared *“some students have poor time management and lack of priority in answering modules”*

Based on the shared experiences of Secondary Teachers the challenges that get the attention and need to give immediate solution are the following: 1) Poor parental support. 2) Child labor. 3) Lack of interest/priorities. 4) Teenage pregnancy. 5) Availability of Materials. 6) Unfinished modules/LAS. 7) Poor Time Management.

4. Coping Strategies in the New Normal

From the interview, secondary teachers also pointed out their coping techniques in the New Normal Education.

According to Teacher B *“since it was mandated by the government that “Education must continue” even there is pandemic I as a teacher have no reason to not to do so. I find time to adjust myself so that I can manage to cope up the flow of the new normal in the field of teaching.”*

As Teacher C said, *“by attending trainings/seminars/workshops etc. And by being updated to the innovations done by DepEd.”*

Teacher D shared *“first I need to accept the situation that this is a new normal education that I need to cope up and teach myself to learn something new especially in terms of digital aspects”*

Teacher E mentioned *“continuous monitoring even through online and partnership with the parents and encouraged the learners to finish the subject assigned every week. (time management and peer learning)”*

Teacher F stated *“by applying the social media platforms significantly to remote areas, radio-based instruction and online form and discussion”*

Teacher G added *“be available and flexible, need to adapt new practices on how to transfer learning to students and teacher who is emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically strong.”*

Lastly, Teacher H further added *“just follow the guidelines and protocols. It will be tough sometimes but when you do it wholeheartedly, it will be easy and of course through the cooperation of everyone.”*

From the shared insights of the participants, it can be ascertained that secondary teachers are adapting to change with difficulty, since they the new normal is an extraordinary circumstance calling for extraordinary solutions.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Secondary teachers employ various strategies in terms of printing, delivery, retrieval and checking of SLMs/LAS. Mostly, they make use of scheduling and checklist to be at ease.
2. The challenges encountered by the secondary teachers that should be prioritized and need to be given immediate action include:
 - a. Poor parental support
 - b. Child labor
 - c. Lack of interest/priorities
 - d. Teenage pregnancy
 - e. Availability of Materials
 - f. Unfinished modules/LAS
 - g. Poor Time Management
3. Secondary teachers are adapting to change with difficulty. They may have developed ways to survive and deal with learning difficulties and logistics. However, these have made them consume more time and resources than usual.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations should be considered.

1. Teachers should maximize the time allotment for the preparation, distribution and checking of SLMs/LAS.
2. Teachers should open what they are facing in an INSET/LAC to address the issues and concerns.
3. Administrative support to teachers should exist in order to deliver quality education to learners.
4. Teachers, especially at the remote areas, must be given more administrative and educational support since they face more challenges in reaching out to every student and teaching all of them despite the dangers caused by the virus.

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