Understanding Teachers' Self Efficacy on Blended Learning Instruction: The Challenges of Elementary Teachers in Focus

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Abstract: This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of elementary school teachers in Kisulad, Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental, during the 2023-2024 school year. Using open-ended interviews and thematic analysis, three main themes were identified from the teachers' narratives: navigating the educational landscape, maintaining a positive attitude, and struggling with the integration of classroom technology. Teachers coped with challenges by being creative, resourceful, patient, and establishing strong professional networks, as well as sharing resources with colleagues. The study also revealed key insights, including the transformative role of technology in teaching, the need for greater flexibility in addressing student needs, and the importance of continuous professional development opportunities for teachers. These findings have significant implications for school administrators, highlighting the need for targeted training, better resource allocation, and fostering collaborative environments. Additionally, the study suggests avenues for future research to examine teaching strategies, the role of stakeholders in education, and the potential impact of socio-economic factors on the teaching-learning process.

I. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic was a global phenomenon that has drastically altered human endeavor and unwittingly accelerated and expanded blended education in elementary, secondary, and even postsecondary institutions. According to Day et al., 2021, the rapid transition from traditional lecture-based classrooms to virtual environments represents the largest unanticipated educational experiment ever. Teachers were required to transition to modular and online instruction with little to no preparation, execute blended instruction under pressure, and tolerate ambiguity regarding the blended modalities' temporary or permanent nature. For some educators, it was a matter of drawing on prior online experiences, but for those with little exposure to blended education, it was an entirely new learning experience in which teachers' efficacy is completely challenged and must be revised.

In terms of risk management, health issues are a "known unknown," or an unanticipated threat for which no preparation was possible. Prior to the introduction of the health pandemic, planning was one of the primary activities that kept a large number of people united, organized, and forward-thinking. Almost everyone is currently adjusting to a new and unexpectedly different way of life. Some individuals refer to our lives during the end of the pandemic as the new normal. Many, particularly teachers and students who rely on strict and regimented daily schedules, find this to be unnatural. Despite the fact that the effects of the pandemic were felt by all professions and communities even now that we are in the post-pandemic era, teachers face unique obstacles that may disrupt their daily routines but provide an opportunity to adapt, surmount obstacles, and prepare for the future. In these difficult times, the perception of teachers' self-efficacy is put to the test.

This study, titled "Understanding Teachers' Self Efficacy On Blended Learning Instruction: The Challenges Of Elementary Teachers In Focus" aimed to explore the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of elementary school teachers in Kisulad, Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental.

In conclusion, this study provided valuable insights into the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and perspectives of elementary school teachers as they navigated the transition to blended learning instruction during the pandemic. The findings highlight the resilience and adaptability of teachers, who were required to quickly adjust to a new and unfamiliar teaching environment with limited

preparation. The study also underscores the importance of teacher self-efficacy in managing and overcoming the challenges of blended learning, while also pointing out the need for ongoing professional development and support.

II. METHOD

The study was conducted using a qualitative-inquiry-based phenomenological research design using open-ended questions. Phenomenological research is a kind of investigation in which the researcher identifies the essence of participants' descriptions of a phenomenon.). Phenomenological approaches are particularly effective at bringing to the fore individual experiences and perceptions from their own points of view, and so challenging structural or normative assumptions. As a result, the research methodology is a good fit for capturing the thoughts and experiences of teachers seeking professional development amidst the Covid-19 outbreak.

Further, this study also employed participants' observations in an In-Depth Interview (IDI). According to Denzel & Lincoln (2000), as cited by Lee (2007) in Pelobello (2015), this method involves the use and collection of variety of interviews, observations, history, interactional and visual texts that describe routines, problems and meaning of individual lives. It is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions that explore a social or human problem. It builds a holistic picture, analyzes words, reports, detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

This study was conducted in DepEd Region XI, specifically in Barangay Kisulad, Sta.Maria, Davao Occidental in Hilario A. Nardo Elementary School and Babak Elementary School. Only ten (10) participants from different elementary schools as the key informants were included and were purposely selected based on the nature of their work as elementary school teachers and who already experienced working in the Department of Education for five (5) years or more. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses.

To gain a variance in perspective from participants, the effort was extended to include both male and female as well as individuals with various levels of educational training, attainment and rank. Specifically, the inclusion criteria include the following: Kinder to Grade six Teachers teaching for three years and above; had experienced challenges and difficulties in his or her working station specifically in implementing blended modality; and a teacher who experienced teaching in the old and new normal.

In conclusion, this study employed a phenomenological approach to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of elementary school teachers in Barangay Kisulad, Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental, as they navigated the challenges of blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. By utilizing open-ended questions and in-depth interviews, the research highlighted the unique insights of teachers who had to adapt to a new mode of instruction, while also facing personal and professional challenges. The purposive sampling technique ensured a diverse range of perspectives, including teachers with varying levels of experience and training, to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first theme presented the challenges faced by elementary school teachers related to their self-efficacy in implementing blended learning in post-pandemic time. When the face to face classes was reimposed after the pandemic, the teachers found out that most of the people involved in the academe had a hard time reconnecting with their used-to-be routine of attending to their classes on a daily basis. Having these reason in mind, the teachers really tried their very best to get back to their daily routines and trying to find out which strategy would best suit to the students as well as the teachers and the rest of the stakeholders. The teachers had to find ways to regain their tracks in their respective classrooms.

The second theme presented elementary school teachers dealing with the self-efficacy challenges they encountered when implementing blended instructions. It can be noticed that most of the learners lost their interest in going back to their classrooms. Teachers and another stakeholder also shared the same feeling of hesitation in going back to the four corners of their classroom. Having all these in mind, the participants of their study had to refocus their attention to their teaching work. Regaining their positive outlook in life made them find their way back into their respective classwork.

The third theme focused on educational management insights drawn from the experiences and challenges of beginning public elementary school teachers. These problems were glaringly noticed during the off-classroom classes years back. The use of classroom technologies gained popularity worldwide. Some of the teachers opted not to adopt the use of such technologies and decided to quit their classroom work, but most of the teachers, they opted to learn the techniques of using gadgets to aid them in their classroom work. Their initial struggles did not remain a problem, but in the long run, these technologies provided them with brighter avenues to improve their teaching skills.

Being creative, resourceful, and patient was one of the coping mechanisms of the teachers during the reopening of face-to-face classes. Having experienced the scarcity of instructional materials at hand, the teachers used their creativity to deliver their lectures and class activities, all these were coupled with their resourcefulness. As the class started, the teachers used their imagination and utilized the materials at hand to present their class activities, all these strategies were notably successful and effective.

It was a great experience for the teachers to use the recent technologies in their classroom activities. Regardless of the family's economic status, most of the learners were gadget-oriented, which means that these learners were capable of navigating their gadgets such as cellular phones, tablets, and other computer materials.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the need for a collaborative effort among principals, teachers, stakeholders, and learners to adapt to the evolving educational landscape. Principals and school heads must remain considerate of teachers' performance in the face-to-face classroom setting and offer opportunities for further training to help teachers relearn vital strategies. Teachers should embrace creativity and resourcefulness, with continued professional development to enhance their teaching effectiveness. Stakeholders must be kept informed about the changing demands of education, such as the integration of online learning and curricular revisions. Learners, on their part, should be encouraged to explore new learning avenues while understanding the responsible use of technology. Finally, future research could expand on this study by exploring other educational settings, factors influencing teaching and learning strategies, and the long-term impact of blended learning on both teachers and students.

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