

Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Elementary Teachers in Blended Learning in Bulan II District

Mary Ann Peñaflor Aguirre

Sorsogon State University, Philippines

Abstract— This study aimed to determine the challenges and coping mechanisms of elementary teachers in Blended Learning in Bulan II during the SY 2021-2022. The study employed the descriptive method of research. The respondents of the study were the teachers in Bulan II district. The main instrument that was used in the study is a survey questionnaire which includes the determination of the challenges and coping mechanism of the teachers. The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted by the use of appropriate statistical measures and tools. Based from the data gathered the findings were: This study aimed to determine the challenges and coping mechanisms of elementary teachers in Blended Learning in Bulan II District Division of Sorsogon Province for SY 2021-2022.

Keywords— coping mechanism, elementary, teacher, learning, bulan district.

INTRODUCTION

Blended learning is still considered new for teachers. However, this growing demand for blended learning possesses problems and challenges that are noteworthy to investigate, specifically for basic education teachers, which hinder effective and efficient delivery of teaching and learning. Blended learning, also known as hybrid learning, is an approach to education that combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. Common challenges posed with the use blended learning modality when unidentified and unacted can cause difficulty in learning or even failure in delivery of lessons.

According to UNESCO (2019), after the historic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, most schools are back open worldwide but education is still in recovery assessing the damage done and lessons learned. The pandemic affected more than 1.5 billion students and youth with the most vulnerable learners were hit hardest. Some gains already made towards the goals of the 2030 Education Agenda were lost.

From the outset UNESCO's Education Sector worked with ministries of education, public and private partners and civil society to ensure continued learning for all children and youth. The Sector's work is now focused on prioritizing education as a public good for everyone in order to avoid a generational catastrophe and drive sustainable recovery.

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought a lot of changes in many aspects of the people's lives and the community as a whole. Education, medicine, and

trade, are just among the few fields severely affected by the said pandemic. And its unprecedented occurrence challenged the readiness and initiative of the government's system. For the field of education, a continuity plan for learning has been laid, and actions were taken to ensure that the learners still acquire access to education despite the present situation.

The latest study of Huckins (2020, in McNiff 2020) revealed that Coronavirus pandemic had an immediate impact on the mental health of teachers. The study recorded spikes in depression and anxiety at the beginning of the pandemic in early March of the year 2020, just as the school pushed pupils to leave campus and begin remote learning. The researcher attributed it to the decrease in activity among these pupils related to lockdown orders implemented at the time.

Saavedra (2020) commented that because of the pandemic the whole world is experiencing right now is potentially one of the greatest threats in global education, a gigantic educational crisis. He supported his claim saying that as of March 28, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing more than 1.6 children and youth to be out of school in 161 countries. This number is close to 80% of the world's enrolled pupils.

Teachers and pupils at all levels of education are transitioning from classroom to computer as the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases continues to rise. Not every subject lends itself to a smooth transition to distance learning, as teachers and pupils have discovered. Distance learning has presented challenges to teachers trying to adapt to lecturing online (Macalisan and Calo, 2021). Coping strategy or coping mechanism

refers to ways to handle stressful and troublesome circumstances. Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman scientifically defined coping as the sum of cognitive and behavioral effort, which are constantly changing, that aim to handle particular demands, whether internal or external, that are viewed as demanding (Guevarra & Cimanés, 2017).

The same had happened in the Philippines. The pandemic required a lot of adjustments and transitions as pupils are continuing education not inside the classrooms, but at their own homes. Various challenges also confronted the teachers in the implementation of this shift from face-to-face learning to distance learning. In fact, the opening of classes had been delayed twice to give schools ample time to prepare for this shift. Despite the delays, many teachers and pupils still struggled to keep up with the preparations needed for the distance learning. Furthermore, since the opening of classes, different suicide cases presumably related to stress in the new normal set-up of education has been recorded. Based on the reports about the suicide cases in Bicol, online learning-related difficulties such as phone signal challenges, internet connection problems, and cost of buying load for data were the most feasible reasons behind the suicide (Recaña, 2020).

The study of Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) disclosed that students used multiple strategies, mainly praying/meditating, self-distracting activities such as watching TV and listening to music to cope with stress. Other important stress coping strategies were emotional and instrumental support from family, friends and lecturers. Learning readiness refers to how well equipped a pupil is to learn, including circumstantial and environmental factors. A student with a low readiness to learn may be encumbered by difficult personal circumstances in his or her life, or a lower emotional or physical maturity.

Paragraph 2 of DepEd Order No. 032 s. 2020, states that, in accordance with DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020, "Adoption of of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) for S.Y. 2020-2021 with the light of the Covid 19 Public Health Emergency," DepEd shall employ multiple learning modalities (LDMs) to its learners. To ensure the continued provision of learning opportunities to its learners while protecting the health and safety of both its personnel and learners. This can be done through blended learning, distance learning and homeschooling. The paradigm shift of the learning

process adheres to heighten the awareness, preparation and readiness of the school teachers especially in the primary and intermediate levels. All stakeholders of the schools confronted several challenges along livelihood, education, income and other aspects of life.

As observed by the researcher, as an elementary teacher some teachers in the Bulan Districts find it difficult to cope with some issues, concerns and challenges brought about by the pandemic. Some of which are the fear of shortage of basic necessities especially the food, COVID-19 illness, and other medical emergency conditions and uncertainties. Another is the lack of contact with peers, in a wider scope is the global mental health crisis. Further, the coronavirus outbreak generated and increased depression, stress, anxiety, fear, and anger all over the place. The economic, social, and psychological problems that the teachers are currently facing are the consequences of novel challenges that have been posed by the pandemic. The emergence of the pandemic which turned the learning modalities into modular form and later to blended learning also gave problems to the teachers to have adjustments to the transition. In this, teachers may have really encountered challenges on blended learning in the new normal relative to delivery of instruction, learning resources, monitoring, learning assessment and instructional support.

Thus, with the above premises, the researcher decided to conduct the study to be able to determine the challenges and address these challenges with the coping mechanism of the teachers.

Moreover, from the results of this study, the researcher hoped to design an action plan that can alleviate the teachers' coping mechanism to cope with the challenges on blended learning. Hence, this present study will give a response to these effect.

Specifically, it seeks the answer to the following questions:

1. What are the challenges encountered by the teachers on Blended Learning in terms of:
 - a. delivery of instruction
 - b. learning resources
 - c. monitoring
 - d. learning assessment
 - e. instructional support

2. What are the coping mechanisms by the teachers to overcome the challenges along the identified variables?
3. What can be proposed based from the results of the study.

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to determine the challenges and coping mechanisms of elementary teachers in Blended Learning in Bulan II District Division of Sorsogon Province for SY 2021-2022. The study employed the descriptive method of research. It is descriptive in the sense that it described the challenges and coping mechanism of the teachers.

The respondents of the study were the 85 elementary teachers in Bulan II District. The main instrument that was used in the study is a survey questionnaire which includes the determination of the challenges and coping mechanism of the teachers. The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted by the use of appropriate statistical measures and tools such as frequency count, percentage and weighted mean.

The Sample

The respondents were the 85 elementary teachers who from elementary schools in Bulan II District. Stratified random sampling was used in choosing the respondents in which all schools in Bulan II District were represented. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage of the respondents.

Table 1: The Respondents

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Primary | 41 | 48% |
| Intermediate | 44 | 52% |
| Total | 85 | 100% |

The Instrument

The primary research instrument that was used in gathering the data needed to answer the specific questions is a researcher-made questionnaire. The questionnaire is composed of 2 parts namely: Part I is all about the challenges encountered by the teachers and the second part is all about the coping mechanism of the teachers in facing the challenges on blended learning.

The questionnaire was first shown to the researcher's adviser for some corrections and suggestions. After which, the researcher incorporated the comments and suggestions of her adviser. The corrected questionnaire was then submitted to the panel members for critiquing

before the finalization. The comments and suggestions of the panel members were considered by the researcher and included them in the instrument. The questionnaire was subjected to a dry-run to validate its content and make revisions for some ambiguous questions. The dry-run was conducted on November 14, 2022 with the help of some teachers in the schools of Bulan I District. The questionnaire was then finalized and readied for administration.

Data Collection Procedures

After the finalization of the questionnaire, the researcher secured the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd and public elementary school principals in Bulan II District Division of Sorsogon Province to conduct the actual survey to the respondents of this study. Upon approval, the researcher administered the questionnaire herself to the respondents considering the health and safety protocols.

The administration of the questionnaire was conducted on December 12-16, 2022 in which the teachers are not anymore confronted with heavy workloads. The researcher herself administered the questionnaires with the help of her friends in the respondent schools. There were a 100% retrieval of the answered questionnaires. After the retrieval, the results were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted with the use of appropriate statistical measures and tools.

Data Analysis Procedures

The responses were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted with the use of appropriate statistical measures. In determining the challenges encountered by the teachers in blended learning, the weighted mean was used with the following scales.

| SCALE | Adjectival Description |
|-----------|------------------------|
| 1.00-1.49 | Never |
| 1.50-2.49 | Seldom |
| 2.50-3.49 | Sometimes |
| 3.50-4.49 | Often |
| 4.50-5.00 | Always |

Frequency count and percentage were used in describing the coping mechanism of the teachers under palliative and direct actions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based from analysis of the gathered data, the following findings were revealed: The most encountered

challenges met by the teachers along delivery of instruction were continuity of education in remote setups through online/offline platforms, embracing the shift of delivery of lesson to online platforms and the flexibility as needs or schedule changes arise on blended learning with the computed weighted means of 4.43, 4.41 and 4.49 respectively.

The teachers regularly met the challenges along learning resources with regards to the utilization of online learning modalities to mitigate the risk of face-to-face interaction, the use of technology with a possible impact on education and the utilization of updated learning tools. The computed weighted means for each of the indicators are 4.36, 4.35 and 4.28 respectively with an adjectival description of often.

The challenges along monitoring with respect to monitoring the mobilization of resources, and expertise to address the impact of pandemic on education, proper monitoring in all emergency responses during the conduct of classes on blended learning and proper monitoring and observations in helping students to maintain better achievement and develop new skills for both on line and off line platforms are met oftentimes by the teachers with the computed weighted means of 4.47, 4.39 and 4.33 respectively.

Oftentimes the teachers met the challenges along learning assessment in terms of assessment of pupils' progress and improve pupils learning, presence of sufficient technology to support online assessment and provision of TOS for the content to be measured with the computed weighted means of 4.47, 4.42 and 4.35 respectively.

The teachers also oftentimes met the challenges along identification of pupils' needs in terms of academic, emotional and/or behavioral support, determination of pupils at risk of failure through a variety of screening methods, introducing and explaining new concepts to the learners clearly and verbalization to practical aspect of teaching and learning with the computed weighted means of 4.42, 4.35, 4.35, and 4.35 accordingly. The overall computed mean on the challenges encountered by the teachers on blended learning in terms of delivery of instruction, learning resources, monitoring, learning assessment and instructional support were 4.30, 4.30, 4.34, 4.34, and 4.34 respectively. The number of teachers who take direct actions in coping with the challenges met along blended learning are greater than

those teachers who chose palliative actions. An action plan was proposed to address the challenges met by the teachers in blended learning.

Based from the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: The teachers oftentimes met challenges on blended learning in terms of delivery of instruction, learning resources, monitoring, learning assessment and instructional support. Most of the teachers preferred to make direct actions rather than palliative to cope with the challenges met regarding blended learning along delivery of instruction, learning resources, monitoring, learning assessment and instructional support. The action plan for project COPE was proposed geared toward developing resiliency in blended learning.

Based from the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are given: The school heads may provide psychosocial support to the teachers in coping with the challenges consider providing orientations and seminars regarding coping mechanisms of the teachers that delved on coping with difficulties and challenges in teaching relative to the challenges on blended learning. The school may seek assistance from other agencies which give psychosocial support for teachers to be able to adopt effective coping mechanism. The proposed action plan may be adapted and implemented upon review and approval by concerned authorities. Further research may be conducted considering other variables relative to Blended Learning.

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