
**Development of An Assessment Tool for Master Teachers
Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to Schools**

Mary Elizabeth C. Galang

Holy Angel University, Philippines

maryelizabethgalang@gmail.com

Abstract - This sequential exploratory study developed an assessment tool from the experiences and practices of elementary public school master teachers from the four school divisions in Pampanga. 12 master teachers were interviewed and a total of 155 pilot test responses were analyzed. From the interviews, seven themes about the facilitating experiences of master teachers emerged. Specifically, these themes were (1) learning environment preparation, (2) instructional preparation, (3) experienced changes, (4) encountered challenges, (5) classroom management, (6) teaching and learning, and (7) mentoring practices. These themes were analyzed using the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), Transformative Learning Theory, and the Connectivism Theory. From these themes, an assessment tool for master teachers was developed. The points in the qualitative portion informed the development of the tool items. Five factors were extracted in the quantitative data analysis: (1) classroom management, (2) mentoring with health protocols, (3) mentoring through good communication skills, (4) teaching practices, and (5) remediation and innovation. With a reliability coefficient of 0.9276, it was concluded that the tool was valid and reliable to measure master teachers' practices relevant to facilitating the safe return of learners to school. Still, the tool was refined based on the specific factors identified in the quantitative analysis. Specifically, the teaching practices section of the improved assessment tool was divided into (1) classroom management, (2) teaching practices, and (3) remediation and innovation. Also, the mentoring practices section was divided into (1) mentoring with health protocols, and (2) mentoring through good communication skills. Lastly, it was determined that there was a need to enhance the tool to address the emergent crises that may hinder the teaching and learning process in the future.

Keywords - master teachers, assessment tool, teaching and learning, mentoring practices, safe return to schools

Introduction

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021) explained that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the matchless value of the teaching profession. Teachers had to adapt quickly to distance learning and utilized new digital gears. Now, they must cope with health and safety challenges in the classroom. Still, educators are at the core of the teaching and learning process whether students are having in-person or distance learning.

According to Basilio & Bueno (2019), teachers should be up to speed with the continuous changes in educational research and policy to remain effective. There are constant changes in economic realities, curriculum, and modalities of assessment that affect the environment of teaching. In addition, teachers must keep pace with new advances and trends or put their learners at a disadvantage.

Also, an important credential of a modern educator is Information Communication Technology (ICT) competence. A modern educator must be aware of the educational opportunities offered by the primary forms of telecommunication. Likewise, a modern educator must be knowledgeable about various kinds of information and communication technologies and be able to utilize them. It should be noted that ICTs allow the advancement of the pedagogical progression of learning (Yuldasheva, 2021).

Educators need to have the expertise and abilities necessary to deliver technology-based instruction in the age of ICT in education. Due to this, there is a need to continuously educate and prepare instructors with the knowledge and skills necessary to optimize the use of ICT in their instructional methods (Hero, et al., 2021).

Focusing on elementary master teachers is crucial in the context of facilitating the safe return of learners to school. Primarily, they are expected to possess the necessary professional skills to provide quality education. They are

expected to constantly improve their teaching practices through professional growth, which aligns with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers.

Accordingly, master teachers make every effort to advance their learning to provide quality education to learners and colleagues. Professional growth is expected of a master teacher. They provide high-quality instructional competence to the learners while promoting professional development to fellow teachers (Laudea et al., 2018).

Moreover, in accordance with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, master teachers are expected to possess the expertise and motivation to elevate teaching standards within their respective institutions by exerting their influence as educators. They also have rich experience in facilitating professional education and spearheading school-wide initiatives. As master teachers, they have the obligation to monitor the performance of their learners and fellow educators in the latest trend of providing instruction as part of the new normal (Espineli, 2021).

The researcher, being an elementary Teacher III in the Division of Mabalacat City, has observed that the return to face-to-face classes affected master teachers. Specifically, there was an adjustment in delivering educational instruction to pupils and mentoring sessions to colleagues. With this in mind, the researcher saw the changes brought about by the pandemic to master teachers.

Moreover, Joseph (2023) explained that the burden of teaching lessons and moral principles fell heavily on teachers before the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational systems across the world consistently satisfied specific requirements for dispensing and conducting educational standards. Thus, the educational system imposed a routine on students.

According to Barruga's (2021) explanation, master teachers should prioritize time management, patience, enthusiasm, and passion for teaching amidst the pandemic. Due to the age range of 45 to 60 among some schoolteachers, it can be challenging for them to stay updated with the latest technological advancements that play a critical role in education. In this regard, master teachers can assist and enlighten them about the benefits of ICT, which provides supplementary learning materials necessary for modular distance learning.

Simbre & Ancho's (2023) study revealed that technological proficiency, professional growth and development, and maintaining a positive outlook were among the post-pandemic aspirations of Filipino elementary school teachers. Also, it was revealed that effective usage of educational technology could assist teachers in adjusting to the numerous changes that are expected in the future. It was noted that instructors aim to improve their teaching practice by attending in-service courses offered by their department and connections as part of their professional growth and development. Furthermore, it was highlighted that teachers must remain committed and sincere to teaching and speak to students' interests to retain a positive approach.

Hence, the researcher was motivated to conduct the study to better learn from the best practices and experiences of master teachers towards facilitating the safe return of learners to schools amidst a health crisis.

In conjunction with the account revealed by the researcher, Donato (2021) mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic made a general modification in the education area. Also, the learners are the ones who are highly impacted by this health crisis. The so-called "new normal" in education requires adaptation. The evolving changes in the method of delivering quality instruction are a significant difficulty encountered by educators.

Given this dearth of knowledge, the undertaken study aimed to develop an assessment tool from the experiences and practices of master teachers towards facilitating the learners' safe return to face-to-face classes amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Significance of the Study

The research was noteworthy for it aimed to develop a facilitating skills assessment tool from the experiences and practices of elementary public school master teachers. The significance of the study may specifically be viewed from the following perspectives:

For the school administration, this study is of great aid in having a deeper understanding of the support needs of teachers who experience transition challenges toward facilitating in-person education amidst a pandemic. Also, for teachers facilitating the safe return of learners to school, the findings of the study may serve as a guide in managing

the changes in face-to-face instruction brought about by the pandemic. In addition, for future researchers who intend to conduct related studies, the research findings are may of great help in developing their conceptual framework.

Moreover, the significance of the study may be viewed from the following education stakeholders' points of view:

For the pupils and their parents/guardians, the paper may provide confidence regarding the safety of school interactions (i.e., making friends, interacting with teachers, etc.). Also, For the school community members, the records may become an avenue in bridging cooperation with the teachers' goals regarding the health safety, and welfare of the learners. Furthermore, for educational policymakers, the results may contribute to policymaking regarding school health safety practices.

Review of Related Literature

This review was methodically divided into five (5) portions: (1) an outline regarding the roles of Master Teachers, (2) a summary of the effects of COVID-19 on the educational sector, (3) a review of the preparation for the safe return of learners to schools, (4) an overview of experiences and practices towards the reopening of schools in different settings, and (5) a summary of Transformative Learning Theory and Connectivism Learning Theory.

Roles of Master Teachers

As attached in DepEd Order no. 42, s. 2017, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which are based on National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS), is a complement to reform efforts on teacher quality from pre-service education to in-service training. Through clearly defined domains, strands, and indicators that offer measurements of professional development, competent practice, and successful engagement, it clarifies what exactly qualifies as a good teacher in the K–12 Reform. To attain competency, improved student learning outcomes, and ultimately high-quality instruction, this set of criteria makes clear what instructors should understand, be able to accomplish, and value.

In addition, the PPST specified the depth of 7 domains needed for teachers in the Philippines to be effective in the 21st century. The following qualities are necessary for effective teachers in the Philippines: (1) recognize the necessity of mastering content knowledge and its connections within and beyond curricular areas, as well as the application of solid and critical ideas and approaches to teaching and learning (2) offer environments where learning may take place in a fair, safe and secure setting, (3) offer learning environments that take into account student diversity, (4) engage with the needs of the local and national curriculum, (5) use a range of assessment methods and tools to keep track of, assess, record, and report on the needs, development, and accomplishments of students, (6) establish relationships between the community and the school to improve both the learning environment and community involvement in the educational process, and (7) prioritize professional and personal development.

According to the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) Updated Manual of the Philippines, Master Teachers I-IV are expected to be at the Highly Proficient career stage. This denotes that they constantly exemplify a high level of performance in their teaching practice.

Furthermore, Master Teachers I-IV (Highly Proficient Teachers) are expected to; (1) show a thorough understanding of the teaching and learning process, (2) solve problems more skillfully and optimize prospects acquired from experience, (3) provide support and collaborate to improve the practice of their colleagues, and (4) pursue to advance their professional knowledge and practice by contemplating own needs and those of their colleagues.

Laudea et al. (2018) mentioned that master teachers have a way to accelerate education for all their learners. They are excellent communicators who have a great link with their learners. Master teachers adapt the curriculum to the needs of their learners. It was also highlighted that the main role of a master teacher is to coach fellow teachers to advance educational instruction.

Pressley et al. (2020) examined the differences between new teachers, proficient teachers, and highly effective teachers. It was found that the classroom environment varies on the teacher's experience, development, and effectiveness in general. In the study, the highly effective teachers defined intrinsically handled classrooms through developing relations. This yielded environments that stimulated learners to self-regulate learning. Hence, it was

mentioned that the attributes of highly effective teachers remain steady even with the constantly changing educational world.

Furthermore, the tasks and obligations of master teachers are specified by the Department of Education and the Civil Service Commission. Some of these tasks are mentoring co-teachers in content and skills challenges; guiding colleagues in the performance of responsibilities; providing technical assistance to teachers to advance their skills; leading co-teachers in the preparation of instructional materials to check, improve, and prepare sample lesson plans for the assigned grade/subject. As instructional leaders, master teachers explore methods to support and help their fellow teachers in delivering their mandate of facilitating the learning of their pupils through the planning of activities as well as suitable and up-to-date instructional resources (Sangalang, 2018).

Likewise, master teachers are responsible for guiding co-teachers who are having difficulty learning subjects and skills. They help school heads with classroom and instructional monitoring, curriculum creation and enrichment, and professional ideas, difficulties, issues, and concerns. To mention a few of the majority of their tasks, master teachers develop projects and programs that strengthen the curriculum and make required instructional resources accessible to teachers and students. Master teachers must, however, master their tasks and responsibilities to be equipped with the skills required to give technical support following their profession (Arnejo et. al, 2021).

In Tetuan District, Zamboanga City Division, Tinaytina (2022) determined the level of master teachers' competency and link to the performance of the teachers and the achievement of the learners. It was highlighted that master teachers should continue to match their capacity for mentoring with teachers' achievement in various ranges. Also, the learners' need for better academic achievement must be in line with the master teachers' competency level.

It should be noted that in the context of teacher education, mentoring is usually thought to be advantageous to both mentors and mentees. However, several barriers limit the usefulness of mentoring as a method for enhancing professional expertise (Aderibigbe, et al., 2022).

Effects of COVID-19 on the Educational Sector

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has greatly affected the educational sector of the world. The virus that first appeared in December 2019 became a pandemic that led to the closing of institutions. The conventional delivery of education has changed and there was a migration to remote learning (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020).

In Turkey, Karakaya et al. (2021) revealed that there were poor interaction and a lack of teacher competencies related to distance education during the COVID-19 health crisis. It was explained that teachers should have strong pedagogical competencies and attitudes toward the integration of technology into education. It was recommended that for teachers who consider themselves inadequate in terms of technological knowledge and equipment in distance education, support by experts should be given.

In the Philippines, the educational landscape has suddenly changed amidst the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Without thorough preparations, the standard shift from face-to-face classes to online learning stances disappointments (Ochavillo, 2020). Educators cannot remain to teach similar content in similar ways, from year to year, in each class. The context of education keeps on evolving. Hence, educators must be up to speed with subject knowledge, communication, and pedagogical skills (Basilio & Bueno, 2019).

Moreover, COVID-19 shifted the methods and techniques used to offer education. It has exposed flaws while also revealing great human resourcefulness and potential. Despite the economic hardships and health crises plaguing communities, the Department of Education has explored options to guarantee that lessons continue. Education will continue to be unwavering in its commitment to ensuring that no kid is left behind (Barrera et al., 2022).

DepEd Order No. 012, s. 2020 specified that distance learning is a delivery modality where instruction ensues between the teacher and the learners who are distant from each other. There are three kinds of distance learning: Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and Television (TV)/Radio-Based Instruction.

However, the lack of in-person interaction has a great bearing on the learners' emotional and cognitive development. The missed chances for instantaneous teacher-learner interactions suspend competency development and have a grave

effect on quality learning. Also, the longer learners are out of educational institutions, the less likely they are to come back (UNICEF, 2021).

In addition, the disadvantages related to the prolonged closure of institutions are well-classified. Specifically, the effects include (1) a decrease in physical activity, (2) an array of impacts on mental health due to social separation, (3) a decrease in social support, (4) exposure to home violence, and (5) exclusion of children from school-delivered public health interventions (Viner et al., 2020).

Preparation for the Safe Return of the Learners to Schools

In-person learning (face-to-face instruction) has been publicized to generate more learner-to-learner contact, which could encourage better engagement. As clarified through the Social Learning Theory, new patterns of behavior emerge from straight contact with peers. New behaviors could also emerge by observing peers. Nevertheless, due to the pandemic, formal and informal face-to-face prospects have stopped (Kumar et al., 2021).

To regain a feeling of normalcy during the pandemic, the gradual reopening of face-to-face classes becomes necessary (Gopez, 2021). There should be thorough planning to guarantee the safety of the learners and teachers in the reopening of schools for face-to-face classes. During a pandemic, the preparation and implementation of school health protocols should be braced with straightforward data. Also, school health protocols must be meticulously planned following national and international procedures (Sarmiento et al., 2021).

Since a continued closure is not practicable in low- and middle-income nations, it is easy to understand that there are no simple responses to resolve when to reopen institutions. Learning from the lessons and changing primacies of other countries will help nations to manage the pandemic. Each nation must deliberate approaches for the safe reopening of institutions (Fernandez-Guzman et al., 2021).

Bonell et al. (2020) explained that support, leadership, adequate time, and resources to strategize and implement changes are required to reopen institutions. Educational institutions should reduce COVID-19 spread by increasing the frequency of cleaning practices. Also, schools should encourage the observance of social distancing and hand sanitation by integrating these into policies. School staff, learners, and parents should be taught how to lessen COVID-19 transmission.

In the Philippines, according to DepEd Memorandum No. 071, s. 2021, all public schools shall conduct an assessment using the School Safety Assessment Tool (SSAT). This is in preparation for the safe reopening of face-to-face classes. For an institution to be eligible for the implementation, all indicators in the SSAT should be met.

According to an official statement of the Department of Education on February 2, 2022, with the approval of the President, Education Secretary Leonor Briones has authorized all regional directors to start with the expansion of face-to-face classes for both public and private institutions. The core protocols in the DepEd-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular No. 001, s. 2021 shall continue as fitting.

It should be noted that the Department of Education echoes the policy of the government about requiring the workforce who work on-site to be vaccinated. This includes teachers and the non-teaching staff involved in face-to-face classes. Also, this is to avoid the spread of COVID-19 in institutions and DepEd offices. This policy does not and is not intended to show prejudice to employees who choose not to receive the vaccine. Unvaccinated employees are treated justly (DepEd, 2022).

As stated in DepEd Region III Memorandum No. 131, s. 2022, the conduct of limited face-to-face was divided into three strategic stages. These phases are (1) pilot implementation, (2) progressive expansion, and (3) mass implementation.

Magsambol (2022) reported that the first phase or the pilot run of face-to-face classes was partaken by 287 public and private schools. The first phase persisted for a month from November to December 2021. For the first phase, select grade levels were only permitted. The expansion phase is the second stage of the Philippines' plan to reopen schools for in-person education. Under the second phase, institutions may take in other grade levels based on their capacity.

Moreover, DepEd Region III Memorandum No. 180, s. 2022 states the guidelines on concerns regarding classroom structuring and management, class schedule, teacher load, learning gaps, learning assessment, and other related issues. This is to conduct the teaching and learning component effectively and efficiently in limited in-person education.

As specified in the regional memorandum, the instructional time during the in-person classes shall be dedicated by the teachers to (1) explicitly explain the content and performance requirements that are the least learned/mastered, (2) conduct genuine classroom assessments of learning, (3) revisit prior lessons, and (4) give remediation or intervention. Also, teachers must make the most of the time given for the teaching-learning process during the limited in-person classes to bridge the gaps in distance learning, particularly the learning gaps in reading and numeracy at all key levels. Teachers should profile students to determine who needs to get essential interventions or remediations as a result of the determined learning gaps.

Reopening of Schools: An Overview

To further articulate the rationale and enhance the framework, the following related kinds of literature were also properly reviewed. These are arranged from global to local themes. These related kinds of literature further explain the different experiences of teachers in reopening schools amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is distinctive for it is only directed to the experiences of elementary public school master teachers facilitating the safe return of learners to school amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first section comprises the following pieces of literature that were taken from the global setting that discusses experiences in reopening schools amidst the pandemic:

In June 2020, England lay the groundwork to reopen institutions to certain year sets. In a study regarding the narratives during the partial school reopening, Kim et al. (2021) were able to identify six themes that echoed the experiences of the interviewed teachers. It was explained that comprehending educators' lived experiences during a time of educational interruption is essential. The first identified theme was uncertainty. Educators testified that they felt uncertain of what would be anticipated of them when looking toward the reopening of institutions. The second theme was about practical concerns. The interview participants communicated their worries about how the teaching instructions need to adjust to the new normal. Some teachers were worried about how they would cope with the distancing requirements. The other themes were worry for pupils, the benefits of relationships, the identity of a teacher, and reflections.

In Indiana, institutions started reopening for in-person instruction in August 2020. The study by España et al. (2021) highlighted the necessity of reducing the operating capacity of institutions to obstruct virus transmission. It was mentioned that as institutions struggle to move forward due to the pandemic, the results express an essential source for encouraging the sustainment of limited school operating capacity and obedience to face-mask requirements.

Tran et al. (2021) mentioned letting the community of the University of New Haven in Connecticut safely return was challenging work. To produce learning environments that followed the continuously changing procedures, their group at the School of Health Sciences was required to develop and utilize innovative approaches. Classrooms were fashioned from non-traditional spaces in the institution (e.g., athletic studios) to let socially distanced face-to-face classes.

Furthermore, Tran et al. (2021) revealed that the progress of the pandemic has stunned teachers and obliged them to re-evaluate best practices. In their study, a common theme for the faculty teaching face-to-face courses identified exhaustion (emotional, mental, and physical). It was mentioned that the teachers often felt separated from colleagues. They also felt unease and the expectations to meet new instruction standards for face-to-face, hybrid, and online learning modalities.

On one hand, schools in Ireland reopened in September 2020. Schools had a four-month closure. Chadwick & McLoughlin (2021) mentioned that primary teachers were directed to highlight literacy and numeracy in their instruction. In their study, educators branded the procedures in their science classes that obstruct the transmission of the virus. It was revealed that these procedures had an adverse impact on teaching and assessment. In the study, 78% of the respondents revealed the adverse effect on their capacity to support the learning of the students in general.

In Spain, Ozamiz-Etxebarria (2021) explored the difficulties of returning to face-to-face instruction. Most schools reopened in September 2020. Consequently, the educators felt excessive uncertainty due to the unique situation. It was mentioned that educators have accrued psychological symptoms since the start of COVID-19. By understanding how educators cope with the return to school amidst the pandemic, appropriate support structures could be better placed.

Similarly, Wakui et al. (2021) evaluated the aspects that contribute to educational anxiety among educators implementing face-to-face classes in Japan. It was revealed that in-person education during the pandemic has triggered anxiety among educators. To safeguard learners' right to education, it is important to comprehend the reason why educators feel uneasy and to identify suitable steps to decrease anxiety.

Tran et al. (2021) asserted that planning approaches to keep and improve teachers' mental, emotional, and physical health should not be overlooked. To prevent physical and mental exhaustion, virtual services (e.g., medical counseling, mental health counseling, exercise classes for physical health) could be beneficial. Also, training teachers and staff to determine signs of anxiety could help in identifying the needs of learners. Likewise, creating positive thinking on work-related strains may help teachers manage exhaustion caused by an augmented workload.

In Thailand, learners returned to the physical classroom in July 2020. In a school situated on the Thailand-Myanmar border, the learners need to register with their teachers. Some teachers have hand-held thermometers to check the learners' temperatures. Also, the learners are required to have their hands sanitized at the institution's screening area. Then, the children receive a pass stamp on their wrists. There are COVID-19-related posters everywhere. According to UNICEF (2020), even if going to school comprises adapting to numerous preventive actions, all the learners expressed that they are joyful to be back.

In Indonesia, teachers and learners need support to catch up on missed learning (UNICEF, 2021). The schools in Indonesia were closed for nearly 18 months to control the spread of the pandemic. UNICEF identified three main priorities for recovery in opening schools for face-to-face instruction. First, aim programs to safely return learners to institutions. Second, there should be remedial learning plans to assist learners with missed learning. Third, there should be support for educators to target learning loss.

In view of this, the second section comprises the following related literature that discusses the local scenario:

Since the World Health Organization declared the pandemic in March 2020, the Philippines was the last nation to reopen institutions for face-to-face instruction (Magsambol, 2022). In November 2021, the return to limited face-to-face classes started nationwide in the Philippines. Learners in low-risk areas returned to school after 20 months of having blended learning. It is an academic year unlike any other. Consequently, the Department of Education along with other agencies and stakeholders made steps in reintroducing face-to-face classes amidst the difficulties brought about by the pandemic (Montemayor, 2021).

Hernando-Malipot (2022) reported that DepEd Planning Service Director Roger Masapol presented a poll performed by the agency following the five-week pilot study on limited in-person education in a virtual news briefing. In general, the student participants were satisfied with their overall experience during the pilot phase of the limited in-person education sessions. The poll focused on health and safety measures, as well as the teaching and learning process, in addition to their overall experience. When it came to health and safety, nearly all Kinder to Grade 3 pupil-respondents felt comfortable while participating in the pilot implementation. This indicates that the learners felt secure interacting with their teachers and classmates and going around the school premises. Masapol also indicated that overall, this is a good sign that the students' perspectives altered as they moved from learning at home to school.

On the other hand, Hernando-Malipot (2022) also reported that teachers and learners experienced different trials during the pilot face-to-face instruction. After finishing the five-week research on limited in-person classes in select institutions in December 2021, the Department cited the different challenges encountered. In January 2022, DepEd Assistant Secretary Garma mentioned these reported challenges.

Specifically, the encountered challenges by the learners were: (1) there were barely enough opportunities to ask for clarifications due to limited time allotment, (2) cannot visibly see what is written on the board due to distancing, (3) cannot hear clearly what the teacher is discussing due to barriers and face masks, (4) learning materials were not

enough, (5) not yet prepared for face-to-face classes and (6) struggle in basic literacy. Also, there is an inclination to remove face masks during lessons, especially among Kinder and Grade 1 pupils (Hernando-Malipot, 2022).

Furthermore, the experienced challenges of educators were: (1) concern about the limited time allotment to accommodate concerns of students, (2) the teaching and learning resources are limited, (3) difficulty hearing the students due to face masks, (4) there were determined reading and writing learning gaps, (5) there is separation anxiety among Kindergarten to Grade 1 pupils, and (6) there were observed behavioral issues (Hernando-Malipot, 2022).

Similarly, Ramos (2021) reported the challenges encountered during the first weeks of the limited in-person education in the Philippines. As stated in the report, an official of the Department of Education voiced out to a senate panel that there are audibility issues owing to the use of face masks.

Moreover, Ramos (2021) also reported that Garma explained that the audibility of the teachers' instruction was impeded because of the muffled effect of face masks. Likewise, the unreadiness of some learners was mentioned. Garma also clarified that the noted behavioral issues were not adverse behavior. This behavior is caused by the excitement of the children. Accordingly, it was mentioned that this is one of the things that test educators. This is because aside from focusing on delivering instruction, part of the job of teachers now includes the continuous reminder about the observance of physical distancing.

On the one hand, Gopez (2021) explained that collaboration with local government bodies is required for Higher Education Institutions, as well as a backup plan for the return of restricted physical classes. Provided that a gap of 1.5 meters is maintained between each student, the maximum number of learners should be permitted. To avoid mass gatherings, extracurricular activities are prohibited. Furthermore, institutions must redesign their facility layouts to maintain social distancing. At the school's entry point, health declaration forms and body temperatures must still be obtained. Another duty of school administrators is to maintain a clear barrier between the professors and the students when classes are in session. School libraries are also accessible for a short amount of time to encourage students to make use of online library services.

Gopez (2021) also mentioned that face masks, face shields, and other personal hygiene kits (e.g., ethyl alcohol, hand sanitizer, cleansing wipes, and hand soap) are required for learners and staff. To evade physical contact during break periods, they are discouraged from purchasing food off campus. Since students will be removing their face masks and face shields while eating, they must eat in their allotted seats within classrooms with transparent partitions. When students have symptoms, they are to stay at home.

Learning Theories

To further explain the context of the study, two learning theories were presented.

Acheson & Dirx (2021) explained that Jack Mezirow presented the concept of transformative learning (TL) to the adult education community over four decades ago. Since then, transformative learning has grown to represent a variety of theoretical perspectives and its framework is still being expanded and refined. As TL theory grows into new settings and fields, the phrase transformative learning is frequently used without reference to the theoretical framework in which it was first rooted. Although learners and educators regularly characterize learning experiences as transforming, there is little agreement on what constitutes transformative learning. If the field is to continue to advance philosophically, these claims of change could not be recognized at face value. The phenomena must be quantified in some way.

Searle et. al (2021) asserted that TL is a theory of learning that define the course of change in how an individual sees the world grounded on prior experiences. In their study on illuminating transformative learning, three salient components resonated: (1) the value of disorienting dilemma, (2) the potential of self-reflection, and (3) liberatory activities.

As illustrated in the study of Kabakci and Izmirli (2015), Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning has 10 phases. Specifically, these phases are (1) disorienting dilemma, (2) self-examination, (3) critical assessment, (4) recognition, (5) exploration, (6) planning a course of action, (7) acquisition of knowledge, (8) provisional tying of roles, (9) building of competence self-confidence, and (10) reintegration.

According to an article from Western Governors University issued in 2020, a disorienting dilemma is a key to igniting a fire of transformative learning, even if it may be uncomfortable or difficult for the learners. Next, self-examination of knowledge and prior experiences and how it relates to the disorienting dilemma can produce a perspective transformation. Subsequently, Critical evaluation of assumptions changes people's perspectives since it enables them to see their past with more objectivity. Strategies for acquiring new knowledge and developing fresh perspectives will be made possible by planning a course of action. The following phase is the acquisition of knowledge or skills to carry out a new plan. To maximize their learning throughout this stage, the students might need to study new information and take into account other viewpoints.

In addition, the Western Governors University article described how exploring and trying out various roles are essential for success in transformational learning. It involves more than just knowing about something; it also includes making an effort to comprehend and engage with novel ideas. The following stage is developing self-efficacy in new responsibilities and connections. Following the transformative learning phases, it is crucial to continue to practice the transformative cycle and gain confidence in our ideas and knowledge while moving forwards.

Furthermore, according to the Western Governors University article, Mezirow's theory is described as a viewpoint that holds that learners' understanding and reinterpretation of their sense experience is essential for making meaning and, therefore, learning. Through self-reflection, learners can comprehend the meaning structure of what they mean. Also, transformational learning theory relies on awareness of previous ideas and the capacity to consider new structures and viewpoints.

Moreover, Hart (2020) explained Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory in an article regarding competency-based education amidst COVID-19. Hart (2020) suggested embracing the challenges brought about by the pandemic. Specifically, the application of journaling, visioning, and other self-care methods to change attention to the lesson that COVID-19 presents. By changing, one may feel more in control and perhaps less traumatized and grieving. This was suggested because education as a transformative occurrence will direct to a new world for teachers and learners.

Transformative learning relates to the experiences of master teachers in facilitating the safe return of learners to school amidst COVID-19 by emphasizing the 10 phases of the theory. First, the disorienting dilemma in this context can be the sudden closure of schools due to the pandemic, which disrupted the routine of both teachers and learners. Second, self-examination involves the master teachers' reflecting on the situation, and how it affects their teaching and relationships with students. Third, critical assessment means evaluating the available information about COVID-19 and its impact on the school setting and applying one's professional judgment to make informed decisions. Fourth, recognition involves acknowledging the concerns of learners and their families and understanding their perspectives. Fifth, exploration involves researching and exploring different ways of teaching and learning that are safe amidst the pandemic. Sixth, planning a course of action involves developing a plan that addresses the health and safety of learners. Seventh, acquisition of knowledge involves keeping abreast of the latest developments concerning COVID-19 and applying this knowledge to adapt teaching strategies and practices. Eighth, provisional tying of roles means being flexible and adaptable in one's role as a master teacher and being willing to take on new responsibilities as needed. Ninth, building competence and self-confidence involves continually developing one's skills and knowledge to be an effective facilitator of learning amidst the pandemic. Tenth, reintegration involves transitioning learners back to the traditional school setting, ensuring their emotional well-being and continued academic progress.

On the one hand, the learning model proposed by Connectivism Theory takes into account the social changes that have occurred recently and shows that learning is no longer only an individual's internal endeavor. Its main thesis is that learning the skills needed in the future is more significant than what we now know. Therefore, the capacity to tap into sources to satisfy the criteria becomes a crucial talent when knowledge is required but not known. Connecting specialized information sets is the main goal of learning, and connections that allow us to expand our knowledge are more significant than our present level of understanding (Voskoglou, 2022).

In Connectivism Theory, learning is the expansion, improvement, adjustment, or reinforcement of the links between the entities that make up knowledge, so that a change in one entity may result in a change in the other entity (Downes, 2022). Furthermore, the key tenet of Connectivism is that students should engage in a learning group and gain knowledge from that community. This group regularly communicates and studies alongside one another due to their shared interests. Networks that are distinct but related support the independent development of a broad range of

knowledge. It is important to continually assess the authenticity and dependability of this new information (Boyras & Ocak, 2021).

George Siemens (2017) explained the idea behind Connectivism is that choices are made on dynamically shifting grounds. There is a constant gathering of new data. It is crucial to be able to distinguish between significant and irrelevant information and to understand when judgments taken yesterday change the situation due to new facts.

Furthermore, an article from Western Governors University issued in 2021 explained that Connectivism Theory encourages group participation and conversation, allowing for many points of view when it comes to making decisions, solving problems, and understanding information. Connectivism encourages learning that takes place in environments other than a person, such as social media, online communities, blogs, or knowledge.

Also, Connectivism Theory emphasizes the use of technology to facilitate learning, and in the context of the pandemic and post-pandemic education, technology has been key in enabling remote learning and facilitating the safe return of learners to school. As highlighted by Pappas (2023), education has increasingly emphasized collaborative learning, particularly due to isolation and loss of physical contact with peers resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Connectivism advocates for students to gather ideas, theories, and broad knowledge from multiple outlets while integrating them in a meaningful way, acknowledging the role technology has played in the delivery and dissemination of information. Collaborative strategies and pertinent materials can be put to good use in designing online courses that reflect this perspective.

All the cited and analyzed scholarship gave details about the necessary concepts. The related literature provided the researcher with a wide-range understanding of the areas concerning the experiences of reopening schools amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper is distinctive from the cited studies because it focuses on the practices and experiences of elementary master teachers toward facilitating the safe return of their learners to public schools.

Emerging health threats and future global health crises are inevitable (Tran et al., 2021). Hence, the researcher intends to learn from the practices and recommendations of master teachers facilitating the safe return of the pupils to face-to-face instruction amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to develop an assessment tool from the experiences and practices of elementary public school master teachers who facilitate the return of learners to schools. The purpose of the tool is to identify the facilitating skills employed by elementary master teachers. Also, the tool is designed to determine the respondents' skills and practices in ensuring the safe return of learners to school. Moreover, the assessment tool is intended to promote practices that may help master teachers ensure learners' safe return to in-person education.

To achieve the aim of the study, the sequential exploratory mixed method was utilized. According to Dawadi et al. Al (2021), in this approach, qualitative data is first gathered and examined, then quantitative data is gathered and tested. Moreover, the instrument or intervention is designed with the use of qualitative data from the first stage and is then tested in the second phase (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

The qualitative research phase aimed to describe the practices of the master teachers towards facilitating the safe return of learners to schools amidst the pandemic. The themes to be generated in this phase are intended to be the bases of the assessment tool to be developed in the quantitative phase.

Accordingly, the qualitative part aimed to answer:

1. What are the emergent themes that describe the experiences and practices of the master teachers?

In addition, the quantitative part of this study aimed to use factor analysis as a form of data triangulation for the generated themes in the qualitative phase. Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

2. What are the latent factors underlying the experiences and practices of elementary public school master teachers that facilitate the return of learners to schools?

3. What tool in the facilitating skills of master teachers may be suggested based on the qualitative and quantitative analyses?

Based on the foregoing questions, it was assumed that the master teachers utilize facilitating skills for the safe return of the learners to schools amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conceptual Framework

As shown in Figure 1, the divergent framework was anchored to two theoretical foundations. The figure further shows interconnected components that show different emerging situations concerning facilitating in-person education amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. As pointed out in the foregoing discussions, the transformative learning theory relates to the experiences of master teachers in facilitating the safe return of learners to school amidst COVID-19 mainly in terms of the need for transformation of views.

On the one hand, the last-mentioned component - the technological factor, aside from being theoretically anchored on the transformative learning theory is also based on the Connectivism Learning Theory. In this theory, a network is a collection of circuits joined together by relationships. Therefore, the networks are made up of circuits that are linked in one or more ways (Boyras & Ocak, 2021).

In addition, the other components were anchored on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. Specifically, the mentoring factor is under the personal growth and professional development domain of PPST. The teaching and learning factors are under the curriculum and planning domain. On the one hand, the learner factor is associated with the diversity of learners' domains. In addition, the socio-political factor is related to the community linkages and professional engagement domain. Finally, the technological factor covered the positive use of the ICT strand of the content and knowledge and pedagogy domain.

The target output of the study was drawn from these interconnected components. Particularly, the experiences and practices anchored on the aforementioned components which were based on this study's theoretical underpinnings were explored in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of the master teachers. Subsequently, from the themes that emerged from the said experiences and practices relative to the interconnected components, a tool for assessing the facilitation of the safe return of learners to school was developed.

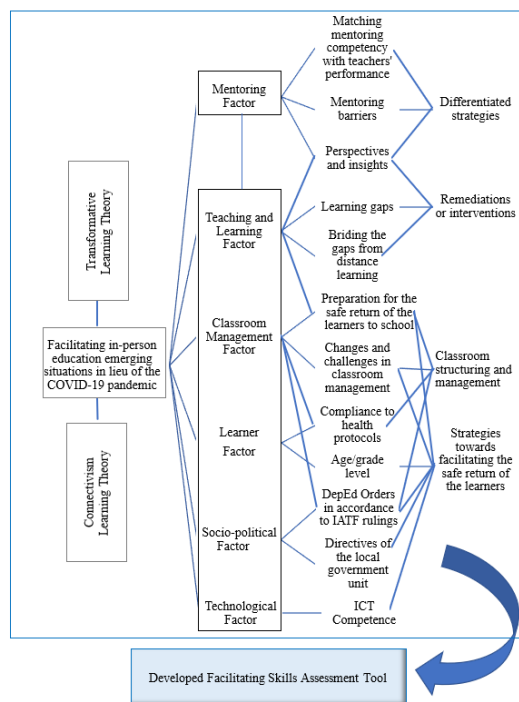


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

Materials and Methods

Research Design

Mixed methods were utilized in this study. Mixed methods research incorporates components of qualitative and quantitative research procedures (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative views, data gathering, analysis, and inference techniques) with the general aims of depth of understanding and corroboration (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

Specifically, this paper utilized the sequential exploratory mixed method. As mentioned by Dawadi et. al (2021), in this design, qualitative data is collected and analyzed first, followed by quantitative data collection and testing. In a practical guideline, qualitative research often involves data in the form of words rather than statistics. However, it excludes range, frequency, and place in an objectively defined chain of cause and effect (Busetto et. al, 2020). Hence, the qualitative method was utilized in the first phase to describe the practices and experiences of the participants in facilitating the safe return of the learners to school. Then, the themes that were gathered were utilized in the following phase in generating a quantitative tool.

Furthermore, the exploratory-sequential approach is utilized when a researcher is interested in following up qualitative findings with quantitative analysis. The qualitative (exploratory) findings from the first step are used to assist the design of the instrument or intervention, which is subsequently tested in the second phase (quantitative). This approach is suitable to determine the significant variables for later quantitative analysis when variables are unknown (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

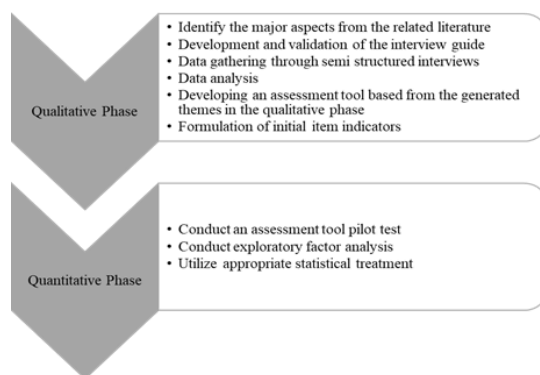


Figure 2. Assessment Tool Development Process

Participants and Setting

The elementary public school master teachers from the divisions in the province of Pampanga were the participants in this study. Specifically, the elementary master teachers from the Schools Division of Pampanga, the Schools Division of the City of San Fernando, the Schools Division of Angeles City, and the Schools Division of Mabalacat City were chosen purposively.

The participants of this study were master teachers because they have the main responsibility of providing high-quality instructional aptitude to their learners as well as professional development to their colleagues (Laude, et al., 2018). Furthermore, the study was conducted in the four specified divisions because as reported by SunStar Pampanga, DepEd Central Luzon ramped up its preparations for the gradual expansion of in-person education.

It should be noted that one of the advantages of purposive sampling is that it acquires vital data to generate a conclusion (Thomas, 2022). The participants were chosen using the purposive sampling technique based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) the teacher must be willing to participate and has disposable time to join which is not detrimental to his/her work, (2) the teacher must have at least 1-year experience as an elementary master teacher before the implementation of the Philippine COVID-19 restrictions (March 2020), (3) the master teacher must have at least 3 months of exposure to the return of in-person education, and (4) for participants who would choose to answer via an

online platform, decent access to the internet is needed. Ergo, upon the conduct of interviews, the participant must have at least a 3-year experience as an elementary master teacher.

Moreover, this paper intended to describe the experiences and practices of seasoned and recently minted (1 year before the pandemic) master teachers. This is to have a rich description of the different experiences during the return to in-person education. Also, this paper took into consideration the differences in in-person class reopening dates due to IATF guidelines on the reported active cases per barangay.

Excluded in this study were the Junior High School and Senior High School master teachers also facilitating face-to-face instruction amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The reason for this exclusion is that in facilitating the safe return of the learners to school, there may be a difference in strategies and approaches among the levels of education—elementary, junior high school, and senior high school. Furthermore, these inclusion and exclusion criteria guided the homogenous sample of the study. As explained by Fraenkel & Wallen (2010), all the participants in a homogenous sample have a certain characteristic. This sample is also a type of purposive sampling.

Also, the researcher aimed to interview at least 12 elementary master teachers from the four divisions in Pampanga (three from each division) or until data saturation is reached for the qualitative phase. This is to ensure that each division was equally represented.

For the quantitative phase, the sample size depended on the extracted statements from the qualitative themes. Specifically, the developed tool contained 25 Likert Scale items. As discussed by Kyriazos (2018), a ratio of 5 to 10 respondents per item was proposed by Tinsley and Tinsley. Hence, the researcher targeted at least 125 respondents for the pilot testing.

Significantly, the researcher received a total of 184 responses via Google Forms. However, 29 respondents did not meet the inclusion criteria. As a result, only 155 pilot test responses were analyzed in total.

Furthermore, the table shows the distribution of elementary public school master teachers in the province of Pampanga. As of May 2022, there were 660 (63.58%) master teachers in the Schools Division of Pampanga, while there were 200 (19.27%) in the Schools Division of the City of San Fernando. In addition, there were 107 (10.31) in the Schools Division of Angeles City and 71 (6.84%) in the Schools Division of Mabalacat City.

Table 1
Distribution of master teachers in the province of Pampanga (As of May 2022)

	Master Teacher I	Master Teacher II	Total	Percentage
SDO Pampanga	434	226	660	63.58%
SDO City of San Fernando	123	77	200	19.27%
SDO Angeles City	84	23	107	10.31%
SDO Mabalacat City	47	24	71	6.84%
	688	350	1038	100%

Philosophical Assumptions

For the qualitative phase of this study, the following phenomenological assumptions were utilized: As cited by Singh (2019), ontological assumptions are concerned with both the form and the nature of things, of reality and existence, and what may be learned about those realities. With this, the researcher asked the participants about their (1) perspectives and insights, (2) concerns and challenges experienced, (3) changes in teaching and mentoring practices, and (4) strategies towards facilitating the safe return of the pupils. In addition, the researcher included all vital accounts of the elementary master teachers to provide equal importance to each.

Also, through epistemological assumption, the researcher interacted with the master teachers with good communication to gather vital information. As cited by Singh (2019), epistemological assumptions are concerned with

the creation, acquisition, and transmission of knowledge. It is in charge of knowledge collection and new knowledge development in the form of new models or theories.

Instruments

For the interview guide, the researcher aimed to answer the grand tour question. The proposed grand tour question: "What are your experiences and practices towards facilitating the safe return of your pupils amidst the COVID-19 pandemic?" To further enrich the description of the experiences and practices of the master teachers, the grand tour question was segmented into three.

Specifically, the interview guide consisted of three parts: (1) the introduction and purpose of the study, (2) the ten interview questions with prompts and follow-up questions, and (3) the closing statement of the researcher. In addition, the researcher asked follow-up questions to gather more details about the experiences and practices of the participants in facilitating the return of their learners to face-to-face classes amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The questions were open-ended so that they may reach data saturation.

To guarantee that all the required data could be gathered, the interview guide was submitted to experts for validation. The researcher sought the suggestions of experts in the field of educational management. Specifically, the face validity of the interview guide was validated by a Senior High School Master Teacher. Moreover, a Senior Education Program Specialist, an elementary public-school Principal, and a School of Arts and Sciences faculty from Holy Angel University validated the content of the interview guide. These experts who confirmed the face and content validity of the interview guide were not directly connected to the researcher to achieve maximum objectivity.

For the developed assessment tool, the extracted statements from the qualitative themes were tested for generalizability through a Likert Scale. To specifically identify the purpose and intended user of the developed instrument, the researcher named it - Assessment Tool for Elementary Master Teachers in the Time of Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to School. The item statements were brief and simple to comprehend to encourage the respondents to participate in answering the questionnaire. For ease of identification of their practices and facilitating skills, the items were written in the first person. The developed tool was submitted to a Senior Education Program Specialist for face validity before pilot testing.

In addition, the developed tool contains four parts. The first part is about the demographic profile of the respondents. The second part contains a checklist of the preparations conducted for the learners' safe return to school. The third portion contains teaching practices while the fourth part covers the mentoring practices of master teachers. These last two parts of the tool were designed using a four-point Likert Scale with the following interpretations:

Score	Interpretation
4	Always
3	Often
2	Rarely
1	Never

Furthermore, the tool's instructions prompted the respondents to mark the circle corresponding to their actual practices as master teachers: where a score of 4 meant they consistently display the given indicator at all times or on any occasion; a score of 3 meant they do so frequently in many situations; a score of 2 means they do not frequently or rarely display the indicator; and a score of 1 meant they never do so at all.

Data Gathering

For the data collection phase, the researcher wrote a letter addressed to the office of the division superintendent from each of the divisions in Pampanga, respectfully asking permission to research the experiences and practices of elementary master teachers in facilitating in-person education amidst the pandemic. Upon securing approval, the researcher utilized purposive sampling for the qualitative phase.

Before the interview, the researcher ensured ethical considerations. Informed consent was given and explained. Also, the pros and cons of this study were explained thoroughly. Due to the pandemic restrictions, the researcher prioritized the health and safety of the participants. Hence, the researcher let the participants decide their preferred mode of

interview (virtual or face-to-face). The informed consent was sent to the participants through their respective school heads. To confirm the receipt of the informed consent, the researcher corresponded with the participants using their social media (Facebook Messenger) accounts.

Before the start of the face-to-face interview, the signed consent was explained and retrieved from the participants. Also, the researcher asked for the permission of the participants for the interview to be audio recorded. During the interview, the researcher had prompt to direct the conversation on communicating important information. Also, there was a provision of signals to acknowledge that the points were heard and understood. The interview took approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Specifically, the questions were about the participants' experiences and practices in facilitating the in-person education of their pupils amidst the pandemic. Moreover, the researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews immediately. Then, the recordings and transcriptions were re-checked to guarantee the accuracy of the transcription.

For the participants who choose to have an online discussion, verbal consent was recorded before the start of the interview. The researcher ensured that the participant has read and understood the form and is willingly consenting to the online interview. Also, the Google Meet platform link was provided a day before the interview. The online interview participants were reminded that the use of the camera is voluntary. In addition, the researcher asked the participant for the online interview to be recorded. Then, the researcher guaranteed that the online interview is a safe space for genuine questioning and relevant information seeking. For unclear answers, the researcher provided relevant reasoning to facilitate a clear and concise discussion. To further confirm the statements and themes, the researcher corresponded with the participants through their social media accounts after the interview. Also, some participants had their members checking via phone call (unrecorded).

For the quantitative phase, the researcher floated the developed tool via Google Forms to prioritize health safety. The first page of the form was about the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and the informed consent. Moreover, the purpose of the study was thoroughly explained in the first part. For the questions of the respondents, the researcher's contact information was also posted on every page of the Google Form. The survey took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to answer completely. Specifically, the tool was about the respondents' experiences and practices in facilitating the in-person education of their pupils amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the regular checking of the assessment tool in the Google Form, the researcher was able to determine the responses that did not meet the eligibility criteria. Consequently, the researcher was able to gather 184 responses wherein 29 responses were excluded. The excluded responses were from master teachers who did not meet the inclusion criteria regarding the length of service (i.e., number of years as a master teacher and number of months facilitating in-person education amidst the pandemic). Therefore, this study has only 155 eligible responses for factor analysis.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized Colaizzi's methods in descriptive phenomenology for the analysis. As cited by Gumarang Jr. et al. (2021), the analysis consists of the following steps: (1) all transcribed data should be read and re-read to achieve an overall sense of the entire content, (2) for each transcript, significant statements that refer to the phenomenon must be extracted and must be noted on a separate paper, (3) meanings should be articulated from these noteworthy statements, (4) these meanings should be arranged into categories, clusters of themes, and themes, (5) the findings of the paper should be integrated into a comprehensive description of the phenomenon, (6) the essential structure of the phenomenon should be defined, and lastly (7), the validation of the findings should be pursued from the participants to compare the researchers' descriptive results with their experiences.

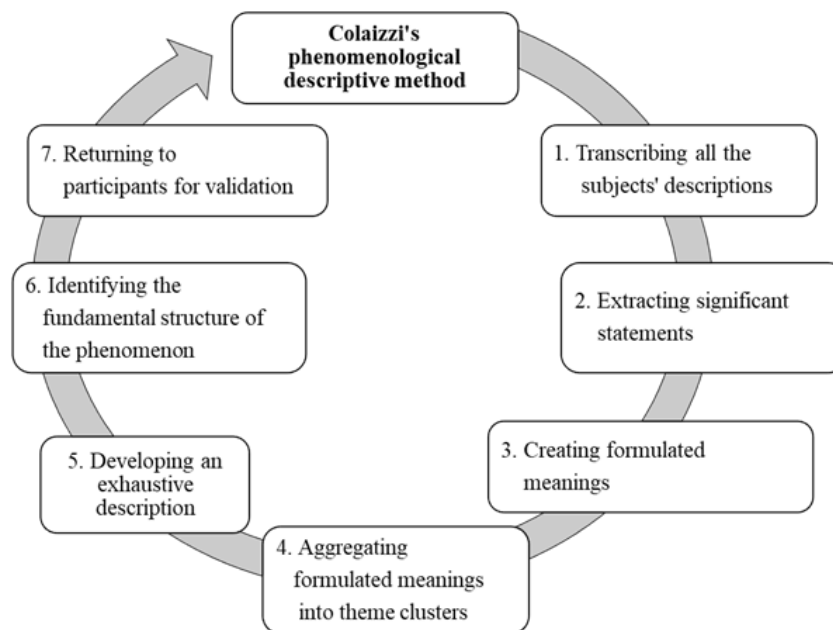


Figure 3. A summary of Colaizzi's methods for phenomenological data analysis taken from the study of Salman Alzarani (2015) as cited by Gumarang Jr. et al., (2021)

Moreover, the researcher also utilized the NVivo software program in the qualitative data analysis to objectively generate novel codes.

For the proper interpretation and analysis of the quantitative data, the following statistical tests were utilized:

1. Frequency and Percentage. These were utilized to describe the demographic profile of the respondents.
2. Exploratory Factor Analysis. This was tested to identify the underlying structure of a relatively large set of variables.
3. Principal Axis Factoring. This was used to properly extract factors.\

Establishing Trustworthiness

For validity and reliability, Guba and Lincoln's criteria were used in the undertaken research. Jesmi et al. (2021) stated that Guba and Lincoln's criteria comprised credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability.

Accordingly, the researcher addressed the credibility criterion by seeking validation from the participants by conducting member checking. This procedure is used to assess the veracity of the qualitative findings by returning the final report or particular descriptions or themes to the participants and asking them whether they believe they are correct (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

For dependability, the researcher recorded the interviews that allowed the examination of the analysis of findings. To gather a rich data set for confirmability, elementary master teachers with significant experiences in facilitating the safe return of their pupils to schools were interviewed. Also, the researcher described all details of the research. For the transferability of this study, the researcher provided an accurate description of the participants' accounts of the findings.

In general, the researcher determined the trustworthiness of the data by conducting: (1) data triangulation – the interviews, transcriptions, and notes were reviewed thoroughly, (2) member checking – the participants' comments on the accuracy of the gathered themes were taken into account, and (3) thick description – the researcher presented clear descriptions of the collected data for replication studies in the future.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations have a specific quality in research due to the thorough nature of the process (Mohd Arifin, 2018). In accordance with research ethics, the proposed research sought the approval of the Institutional Ethics Review Board of Holy Angel University. From the ideation stage until the completion and preservation of data, this study aimed to make sure that the well-being of all participants is a major focus.

Moreover, to guarantee ethical consideration, participation in the interview was conducted voluntarily. Informed consent was given and explained before the interview process. The researcher thoroughly explained the pros and cons of the paper. The participants were reminded that they have the right to withdraw or refuse to join entirely, should they have wished to do so. The researcher guaranteed anonymity and utmost confidentiality to the participants for their responses. A minimal perceived risk which may not be directly attributed to the participation in the study was indicated in the consent. Also, it was explained that there is no direct benefit or monetary compensation to the participants in the study. Moreover, this study was independent of any conflict of interest or sponsorship of any kind.

The treatment of the gathered data was in accordance with Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. It was noted in the consent that except in situations when the researcher is required by law to report particular instances, all material submitted remained anonymous and was only presented as group data without any identifying information. All information was stored on a personal laptop using a password-protected drive connection. The data will be stored for about three years, or until the study has been published. The data was only utilized for the study's purposes. Furthermore, it was explained that the participants had the right to object to the future storage of their disclosed data if it will be used for future purposes.

The researcher informed the participants that the study may be presented in a research forum and/or may be published in a journal. The participants were given the option to receive the results before the study was made widely available to the public.

Results and Discussions

This portion identified the results of the paper. For the qualitative phase, the findings based on the participants' actual responses were presented. Then, the results from the statistical treatments tested were presented in the quantitative phase.

Phase 1: Qualitative

This section presented the information acquired from interviews that were guided by the grand tour question. The researcher was able to identify seven themes based on the statements from the interviews. Specifically, these themes were (1) learning environment preparation, (2) instructional preparation, (3) experienced changes, (4) encountered challenges, (5) classroom management, (6) teaching and learning, and (7) mentoring practices. Moreover, Transformative Learning Theory and Connectivism Theory both informed the formulation of the seven themes.

For the learning environment preparation, transformative learning theory emphasizes the importance of creating a safe and welcoming learning environment that encourages dialogue, critical reflection, and collaboration. Connectivism Theory highlights the need for a flexible and adaptive learning environment that leverages technology and supports social networks.

Next, in instructional preparation, Transformative Learning Theory highlights the need for teachers to design instruction that is relevant, meaningful, and engaging to learners, motivating them to challenge their assumptions and explore new perspectives. Connectivism Theory points to the importance of teachers as facilitators of learning and making connections between different sources of knowledge.

For the experienced change's theme, transformative learning theory stresses the potential for learning to lead to personal and social transformation. On the one hand, Connectivism Theory highlights the role of learning in facilitating connections that lead to the emergence of new and innovative ideas. In this theme, the changes experienced by teachers and learners as a result of returning to face-to-face classes, and the strategies used to support these changes were given focus.

For the encountered challenge's theme, Transformative Learning Theory points out the potential for learning to be challenging and uncomfortable. Connectivism Theory underscores the need for teachers to develop effective strategies to manage the amount of information available.

Subsequently, Transformative Learning Theory underlines the importance of creating a supportive and respectful learning environment. Also, Connectivism Theory highlights the need for learners to develop digital literacy skills. In this theme, the practices of master teachers to manage the physical environment and promote positive behavior were focused.

Teaching and learning: Transformative Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of learner-centered instruction that promotes active engagement, critical reflection, and collaborative learning. Connectivism Theory highlights the potential for networked learning to leverage diverse sources of information and knowledge to support personalized and self-directed learning. The themes in this category, therefore, focused on the strategies used by master teachers to promote learner-centered instruction and scaffold networked learning.

Next, Transformative Learning Theory points to the importance of mentoring in supporting personal and professional growth and development. Also, Connectivism Theory highlights the potential for networked learning to support access to expertise-rich networks of peers and mentors.

Learning Environment Preparation

Based on the findings of the interviews, the first theme that emerged was the learning environment preparation made by the master teachers for the safe return of their learners to school (See Appendix K.). As shown in Figure 4, the transcripts were categorized into two to support the first theme. The categories for the first theme were: (1) prepared classroom in accordance with the health and safety protocols, and (2) communicating with the stakeholders.

The first category identified was prepared classrooms following health and safety protocols. Participant No. 1 declared that the first thing in terms of preparation is that the classroom must be safe by sharing that “una syempre, see to it na yung classroom ay safe”. In the same way, participant no. 5 shared that “even though it is very tiring, I clean and prepare my classroom so that it will be pleasing and safe to the learners”.

Also, as mentioned by participant no. 2, “nagdisinfect, so, humingi ako ng tulong sa mga parents. At the same time, pinrovide ko ang mga kakailanganin – for example: the alcohol, the face mask, yung mga temperature scanner natin – mga lahat ng gamit”. (I have conducted disinfection. I asked for the assistance of the parents. At the same time, I provided the essentials such as alcohol, face mask, and thermal scanners). Similarly, participant no. 4 expressed that they ensured that all classrooms were cleaned even the comfort rooms by mentioning “we make sure na lahat malinis even yung sa comfort room nila”. Also, as explained by participant no. 7 “The setting of the classroom is different, or they should observe the physical distancing one - to at least one to two meters”. (The classroom is different. They should observe at least one to two meters of physical distancing). Similarly, participant no. 8 directly stated that “we make sure that our classroom is that the learners are having a social distancing, physical distancing with each other. And we have, I prepared mask, alcohol, all the necessary things that we use to sanitize are all available inside the classroom.” Moreover, as mentioned by participant no. 11 “naglagay lang po kami ng maraming mga paalala sa mga walls naming”. (We have posted a lot of signages.)

As shown in Figure 4, communicating with the stakeholders was the second category for the first theme. As mentioned by participant no. 5, “I reminded the parents and pupils in the GC and in person to follow the IATF safety protocols to avoid the spread of COVID-19 whenever they go to school or outside the school premises”. Also, participant No. 6 expressed the importance of conducting orientations by directly stating, “virtual orientation and we believe - I personally - I personally help a lot because once you orient the parents as to what they would expect when they come back to school, they would also be orienting their children”. Similarly, participant no. 10 shared an actual account of their experience in coordinating with their stakeholders by directly mentioning, “we were able to prepare by conducting a visit first in the barangay – in our barangay, and we had a conference with them and asked their assistance for the opening of classes”.

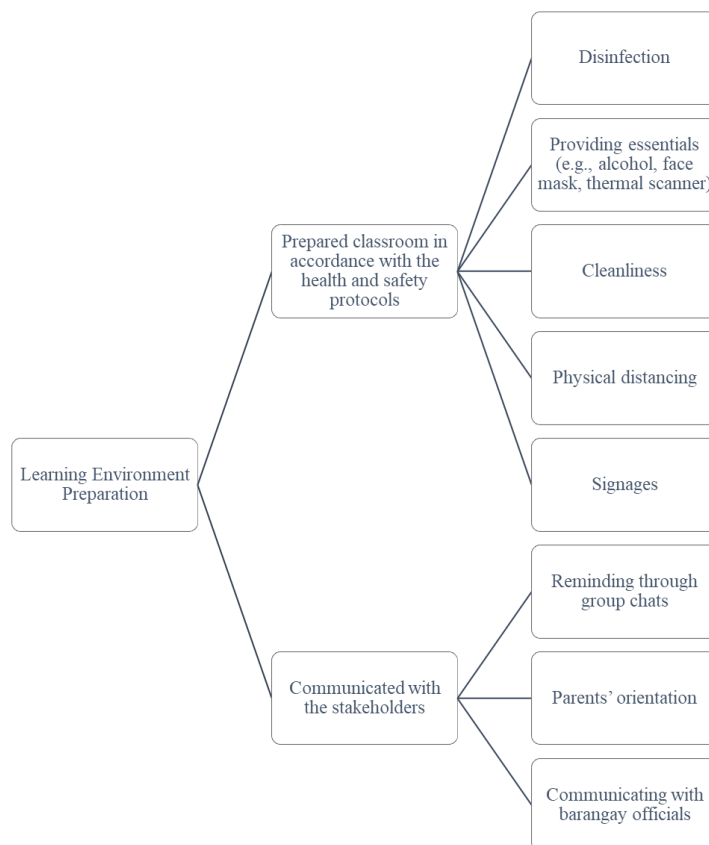


Figure 4. Learning Environment Preparation

Instructional Preparation

The second theme that emerged was the instructional preparation made by the master teachers. As shown in Figure 5, the transcripts were categorized into three to support the second theme. Specifically, the categories for the second theme were: (1) participated in training, (2) researched, and (3) prepared lessons.

As revealed in Figure 5, the first category identified was participating in training. As explained by Participant 5, “I attended some seminars and training to update myself to different technologies and psychosocial training that made a great help to my learners and co-teachers to adapt the new normal setup of education”. Correspondingly, participant no. 9 shared a quarterly training being conducted in their division by stating “nag-attend kami ng mga trainings ng mga ITQM. Yung pong ITQM yung po yung parang quarterly – quarterly mentoring namin na ginagawa ng division namin per subject”.

Meanwhile, the second category identified was researched. Participant No. 12 explained that she kept on researching by stating, “because I do not have any idea what should I do, even I, so, I kept on researching on how will I conduct it”. Also, participant No. 12 noted that “I thought of reading journal articles on how will I teach again - because like I said, I have no idea what are the learners - the nature of my learners”.

Lastly, the fifth category was prepared lessons. As noted by participant no. 3, “the first thing that I prepared really are the lessons that I have to give them”. Similarly, as mentioned by participant no. 9, “pina-plan namin ang mga lesson plan. Though, meron nga kaming tinatawag na model DLP sabi ko nga kanina. So, gumagawa nga ngayon - kami ng daily lesson log. Naglo-log na lang kami sa mga lessons pero hindi naman namin totally kinukuha yung mga activities na nasa lesson plan na iyon. Mino-modify pa rin namin sa level at needs nung mga bata.” (We plan the lesson plans. Although, we do have a model called DLP. So, we are making a daily lesson log. We just log the lessons but we don't

totally take the activities that are in that lesson plan. We are still modifying it according to the level and needs of the children.)



Figure 5: Instructional Preparation

This particular theme revealed that certain preparation practices conducted during the pre-pandemic period were still conducted for the return of learners to school. Nevertheless, it was noted that there is an emphasis on modifying class activities to cater to the learning difficulties identified in the other theme. Furthermore, this theme underscores the significance of staying up to date with the latest developments in teaching and learning by reading journal articles. Additionally, the research revealed that elementary master teachers sought professional development opportunities during the pandemic for their instructional preparation techniques.

Experienced Changes

Based on the interviews, the third theme that emerged was the experienced changes in instruction. As presented in Figure 6, the transcripts were categorized into five. The categories for the third theme were: (1) observed learning difficulties, (2) limited class activities, (3) use of technology, (4) observance of health and safety protocols, and (5) communication.

For the master teachers who experienced changes, observed learning difficulties were the first category. As articulated by participant no. 1, “marami pong pagbabago dahil siyempre yung mga bata nga, kagaya ng nasabi natin – yung mga bata hindi sila prepared dun sa lesson natin.” (There are many changes because of course the children, as we said - the children are not prepared for our lessons.) Participant 7 also stated that “There is a very big change, ma’am, because considering the two-year pandemic, really, really put our learners where you they really need our help noh, our, our, we really need to extend our help regarding their reading abilities, literacy, and numeracy of pupils.” (There is a very big change considering the two-year pandemic. We really need to extend our help to the pupils regarding their reading abilities, literacy, and numeracy.)

Moreover, participant 9 mentioned that “and then yung activities dun, rine-recalibrate pa namin or mino-modify pa namin. Kasi minsan, kahit na alam natin na napakasimple lang ng activity pero dahil nga yung mga bata wala sila ng 2 years sa school. (For the activities, we are still recalibrating or modifying. Because sometimes, even though we know that the activity is very simple, but because the children haven’t been in school for 2 years.) Similarly, participant 9 expressed that “ngayon, di na, diretcho na talaga sa lesson. Tapos, binababa ko pa yung competency para makahabol sila.” (Now, I go directly to the lesson. Then, I lower the competency so that they could catch up.)

The second category was about having limited class activities. As expressed by participant no. 2, “Yes, dati – sabi ko nga, yung technique ko kasi dahil grade 5 na ako no – more on group works na talaga kami lalo na sa Science palaging ganyan. May ginagawa sila palagi. Ngayon, medyo nalilimitahan na ako sa mga group works kasi nga bawal.” (Yes, before – I said, my technique is because I am in grade 5, no – we are really more on group works, especially in Science, it is always like that. They are always doing something. Now, I am a bit limited in group works because it is not allowed.) Likewise, participant 4 mentioned that “Oo, kagaya po ng nabanggit ko kanina less group activities. May group activities pero hindi siya masyadong ganoon ka – nagdidikit-dikit sila.” (Yes, it is like I mentioned earlier, less group activities. There are group activities but the children do not stay close together.)

The use of technology was the third category in the experienced changes of the interviewed master teachers. As explained by participant no. 5, “Yes, I needed to learn new things to adapt to the changes brought about by the pandemic, like making video lessons, virtual games, virtual puzzles, electronic modules, and a lot more.”

For the observance of health and safety protocols category, participant no. 10 mentioned that “Yes, there was a change because now, during instruction, we still need to remind pupils every now and then to wear their face masks, wash their hands, don't forget to use alcohol or sanitizer. Unlike before, we're just focused on teaching them even activities like that.”

As illustrated in Figure 6, the fifth category was about the change in the manner of communication. As articulated by participant no. 12, “I became more gentle towards communicating with others also when address - addressing issues and it follows during when I teach during our face-to-face. Since, I have developed that - that behavior it follows during my teaching I am more gentle, I am more accepting towards the answers of my students.”

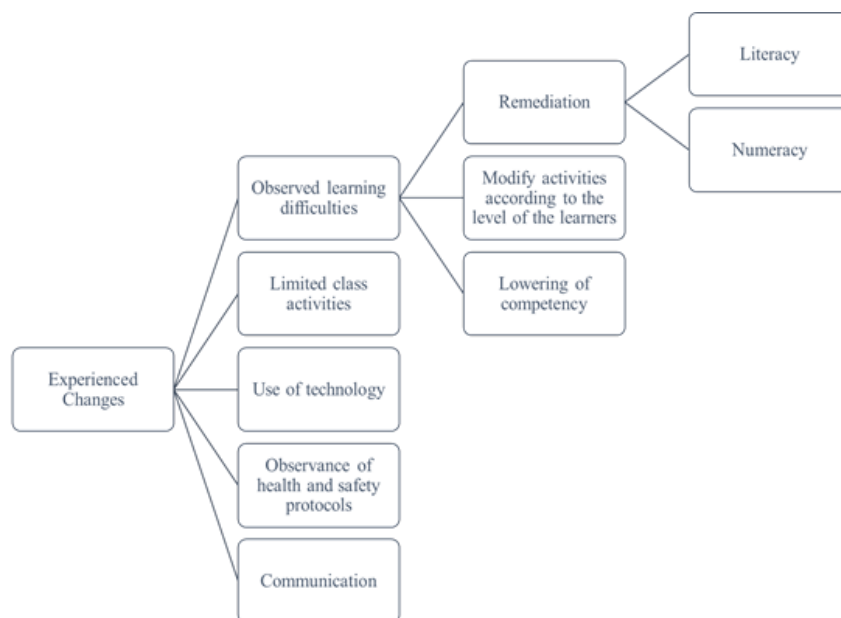


Figure 6: Experienced Changes

Encountered Challenges

The experienced changes theme refers to the adjustments that the master teachers have implemented in response to the limitation brought by the pandemic, such as having limited class activities, using technology, and observing health and safety protocols. On the other hand, the encountered challenges theme refers to the difficulties or obstacles that master teachers have faced in facilitating the safe return of learners to school.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, the fourth theme that emerged was the encountered challenges of the master teachers. As shown in Figure 7, the transcripts were categorized into five. The categories for the fourth theme were: (1) provide learners with ways how to overcome the challenges brought by the pandemic, (2) limitations due to the wearing of face masks, (3) physically tiring, (4) observed learning difficulties, and (5) learners' discipline.

For the master teachers encountered challenges, the first category was about providing learners with ways how to overcome challenges brought by the pandemic. As articulated by participant no. 1, “so, isang challenge po iyon kung paano natin sila i-overcome natin po yung ano nila – yung fear din nila. So, para ma-manage natin po yung mga challenges na ito, siyempre yung mga bata bibigyan natin sila – yung bang tamang paraan kung paano sila – paano rin nila ma-overcome yung tungkol sa pandemic.” (So, one challenge is how we can help overcome their fear. So, in order for us to manage these challenges, of course we will give the children right ways how they can overcome pandemic related challenges.)

On the one hand, the second encountered challenge was about the limitations due to the wearing of face masks. As articulated by participant no. 2, “Una, dahil naka-face mask yung mga bata, medyo mahina ang mga boses ng mga iyan kapag nagre-recite sila or nagbabasa sila. Minsan ginaganun ko na yung tenga ko – wala pa rin.” (First, because the children are wearing face masks, their voices are inaudible when they recite or read. Sometimes, I move my ears closer to the child - still nothing.)

The third challenge was about physical tiredness. As explained by participant no. 3, “Of course, the challenge is it is physically it’s more tiring now because time to time you have to walk from one room to another – check on children from one place to another.”

Moreover, the fourth challenge was about the observed learning difficulties. As mentioned by Participant No. 6, “There were challenges on the part of the learners and the teachers as well. You know, it’s a very long day.” Similarly, participant no. 4 stated that “ma’am, sobra. Nawala yung momentum nila most especially sa reading, sa numeracy, sa math. Actually, sa pagpasok nila ang tawag namin doon – mayroon silang learning shock.” (They lost their momentum, especially in reading, numeracy, and math. Actually, when they came in, we call it – they have a learning shock.) Also, participant no. 8 mentioned that “They are not that prepared. They are not that - what they say, is that they really find difficulty, especially following instruction, everything, that is why it is a big challenge.” (The learners are not that prepared. They find it difficult especially in following instructions. It is a big challenge.)

Correspondingly, participant no. 10 articulated that “So, I think the challenge first is helping the pupils get ready and get back on track in studying during face-to-face instruction. Second challenge, I think is how to help the pupils be focused on giving their best kasi parang - right now they just want to socialize.” (I think the first challenge is helping the pupils get ready and get back on track in studying face-to-face instruction. The second challenge is how to help the pupils focus on giving their best because it seems that they just want to socialize.) Also, as mentioned by Participant 11 “of course po, meron pa rin challenges. Yun nga po, yung mga bata, yung kanilang reading ability, medyo hindi akma dun sa kanilang grade level, so, yung kanilang reading comprehension, kahit Tagalog minsan di nila naiintindihan.” (Of course, there are still challenges. The learners’ reading ability does not fit their grade level, so, their reading comprehension, even Tagalog sometimes they do not understand.)

Lastly, the fifth category for the encountered challenges was about learners’ discipline. As directly stated by participant no. 7, “yes po, ma’am, nahirapan po. So, our learners had the two years modular and online modality, right, ma’am? And then we really had difficulty in during this face-to-face classes, we really had this difficult time in disciplining our - our learners.” (It was difficult. So, our learners had two years of modular and online modalities. We really had difficulty during these face-to-face classes, we had this difficult time disciplining our learners.)

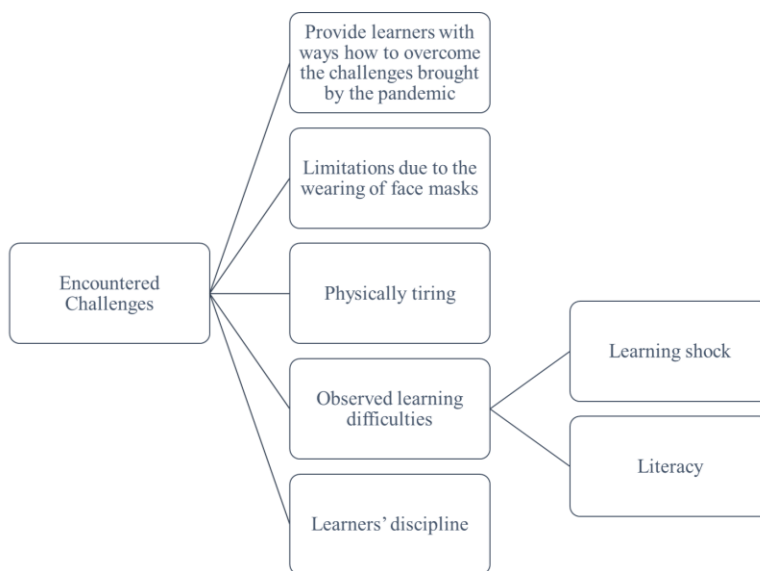


Figure 7. Encountered Challenges

Classroom Management

The fifth theme is about elementary master teachers' classroom management. This particular theme differs from the other themes because it underscored the teacher's role in managing learners' behavior in the classroom. In this theme, the emphasis is on the teacher's ability to model appropriate health protocols and manage student conduct regarding adherence to these protocols. Also, the theme emphasizes the teacher's ability to maximize the use of technology to support learning.

This specific theme refers to the strategies used by master teachers to create a safe learning environment. This theme also emphasized maximizing the use of technology in class. This finding is in line with the concepts of Connectivism Theory, which underlines the role technology has played in the delivery of information. Moreover, this theme underscored following health protocols and managing learners' behaviors. These categories are associated with transformative learning theory, which underscores critical reflection. Master teachers may use this aspect in helping learners understand the importance of following protocols and to encourage reflection on their behavior.

Specifically, the following records were categorized into three significant statements to support the fifth theme. The categories for the fifth theme were: (1) following health protocols, (2) managing learners' behaviors, and (3) maximizing the use of technology. As revealed in Figure 8, the first determined category was following health protocols. Specifically, this category was segmented into two: (1) monitoring the learners, and (2) reminding the learners.

For the monitoring of the health protocols, as explained by participant no. 2, "yung mga mata laging nandiyan sa kanila specially in monitoring their – if they are following the health and safety protocol". (I always monitor if the learners are following the health and safety protocols). Similarly, as expressed by participant no. 7 "all the safety and health protocols we have to provide all those things and observe all the health and safety protocols in our school". Also, as supported by participant no. 8, "we strictly follow the safety health protocols".

For the reminding of the learners, participant no. 10 shared actual accounts about her instruction relative to following health protocols, "during instruction, we still need to remind pupils every now and then to wear their face masks, wash their hands, don't forget to use alcohol or sanitizer". In the same way, participant no. 3 mentioned that "I often checked them with their face masks". Additionally, participant no. 4 shared their practice of scanning the learners' temperatures by directly stating, "we check their temperature and then pag-uwi nila chine-check pa rin namin yung mga temperature nila".

The second identified category was managing learners' behavior. As shown in figure 8, this category was also segmented into two: (1) establishing of routines and rules, and (2) conducts psychosocial activities.

For the establishment of routines and rules, as explained by participant no. 6, "we need to prepare the children themselves - that once they are inside the classroom, we have to prepare them with the routine and the classroom rules". Participant no. 6 further stated, "establish a routine. You have to always keep in mind that routines are very important. And finally, set classroom rules there should be boundaries so that you know there will still be respect - mutual respect for each other and positive discipline will happen."

For the psychosocial activities, as noted by participant no. 5 that "their psychosocial behavior should be monitored and improved and make the teaching and learnings much enjoyable for them so that they will be excited to go to school every day". Additionally, participant no. 4 mentioned the importance of psychosocial activities by stating, "yung mga psychosocial activities po nila, ma'am, para ma-establish muna yung rapport sa teacher. Yung titignan muna namin kung okay ba sila – masaya ba sila na nakapasok na sila." (Their psychosocial activities are about establishing first the rapport with the teacher. The first thing we will see is if they are okay - are they happy that they have come to school.)

The last category for the second theme was identified as maximizing the use of technology. As supported by participant no. 2, "I maximize the use of technology. So, kasi yung bata, hindi na 'yan magle-learn kapag bored na 'yan. Pag nabo-bored na sila. So, I make it sure na yung interest nila nandiyan palagi – nandiyan palagi". (I maximize the use of technology because the children will not learn if they are bored. I make sure that their interest is always there.) Similarly, participant no. 4 mentioned that "dahil yung mga bata nasanay sa pagga-gadget, medyo ina-adopt muna

namin yung ugali nila na mas mahilig silang manood ng video lesson kaysa sa black board lang at chalk lang yung gamit namin”. (Because the children got used to playing with gadgets, we have accepted that trait. They like watching video lessons instead of listening to the traditional board and chalk discussion.)

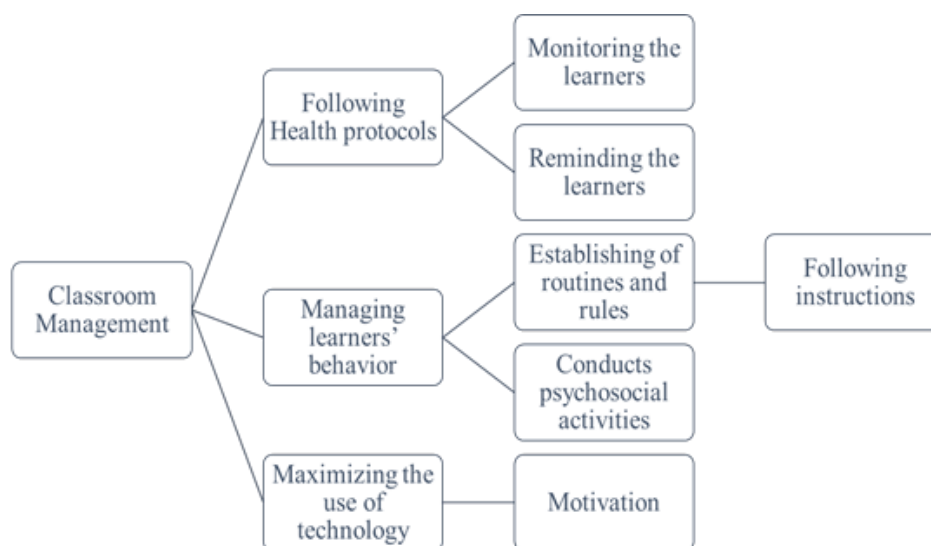


Figure 8. Classroom Management

Teaching and Learning

Based on the interviews, teaching and learning were the sixth generated theme. In the context of the pandemic, transformative learning theory calls for teachers to foster teaching and learning that accommodates the unique learning needs of learners amid the limitations. On the other hand, the Connectivism Theory posits that learning is socially constructed and continuously evolving, and it is facilitated by technology. The Connectivism Theory has great relevance during the pandemic since it calls for teachers to use digital platforms.

Moreover, this particular theme affirmed the research paradigm specifically the teaching and learning factor. To support this theme, the transcripts listed below were divided into six major statements. Specifically, the categories were: (1) learners' current competency, (2) teaching practices, (3) maximizing the use of technology, (4) remediation, (5) innovations, and (6) involving stakeholders.

As presented in Figure 9, the first highlighted category was the learners' current competency. As expounded by participant no. 1, “hanapin mo kung saan yung- ano yung bata – kung saan yung learning na alam niya or kung saan yung nahihirapan sila. Doon po kami magii-start. Doon ko ii-start yung lesson ko”. (You have to identify what the learners know. You have to know where they are having difficulties. That is where I will start. I will start my lesson there.) In the same way, participant no. 8 mentioned that “we started from their needs, we assess them on what level are they now and we want to do is that we group them”.

The second category for this theme was teaching practices. Specifically, participant no. 9 explained that “yung activities dun, rine-recalibrate pa namin or mino-modify pa namin”. (We recalibrate or modify the activities.) Correspondingly, participant no. 9 mentioned that “binababa ko pa yung competency para makahabol sila”. (I am lowering the competency so that the learners could follow.)

Moreover, maximizing the use of technology was determined as the third category for the teaching and learning theme. Specifically, participant no. 6 stated that “we have to plan for activities to make sure that the lessons are more appealing. So, we use ICT in teaching”. Likewise, participant no. 7 expounded that “since, we are now in the world of computer, we're in we have to embrace the computer technology that we have right now, since - it is - since it is also - it plays a big part noh, ma'am, in imparting knowledge to our pupils”.

Notably, the fourth determined category was remediation. As supported by participant no. 4, “focus kami sa remedial isasabay dun sa lesson”. (We focus on the remedial that will go along with the lesson.) Likewise, as shared by participant no. 8, “we set different interventions to meet the learning needs of these pupils”. Similarly, participant no. 10 pointed out that “to have a tutorial or one on one remedial classes, we still need to make sure that we are following the basic protocols”. Furthermore, participant no. 11 confided that “marami talaga -yung ano- mga naiwan. So, ang ginagawa ko niyan is pag meron akong extra time, talagang kahit hindi ako reading teacher, inuupuan ko yung bata”. (There are a lot of pupils who fall behind. Hence, whenever I have extra time, I sit with the child even if I am not a reading teacher.) Participant no. 7 also mentioned that “we really need to extend our help regarding their reading abilities, literacy, and numeracy of pupils”.

Subsequently, the fifth identified category was about innovations. As stated by participant no. 4 “we conduct research and design some innovation for the school - for our learners”. Likewise, participant no. 7 shared that “I had made my innovation regarding the reading, reading abilities of my learners.”

As revealed in Figure 9, the sixth category for this theme was about involving stakeholders. As narrated by participant 8 “we really involved the stakeholders and the parents in the teaching and learning process. We do not do it alone by ourselves, it is much better to involve the parents also”. In the same way, participant 10 mentioned that “being given enough information not just to the pupils or learners but also to parents and stakeholders because teachers cannot do it alone. So, we need partners like the stakeholders”.

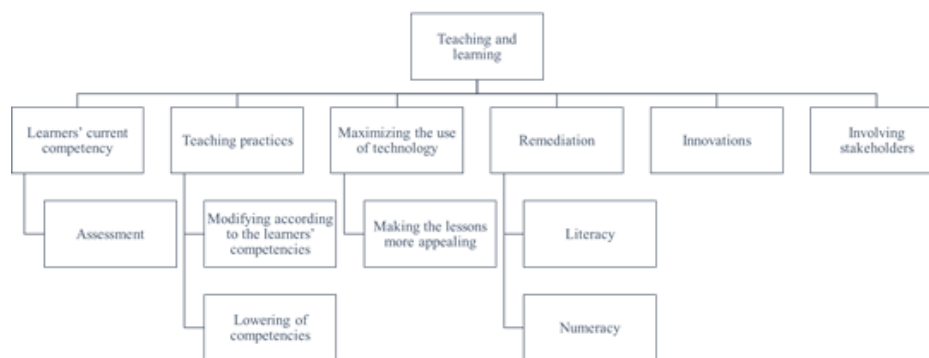


Figure 9. Teaching and Learning

Mentoring Practices

Finally, the seventh theme was about the mentoring practices being conducted by the teacher-participants. The emergence of mentoring co-teachers as a theme in developing an assessment tool for master teachers can be traced to the theoretical underpinnings of Transformative Learning Theory and Connectivism Theory.

As explained in an article by Western Governors University, transformative learning theory points to the importance of self-reflection in helping individuals ability to look at new structures and perspectives. In the pandemic context, master teachers need to reflect on their previous teaching practices to identify areas that need improvement or modification to ensure the safe return of learners. On the other hand, the application of technology in mentoring is significant in Connectivism Theory. In the context of mentoring, technology has a significant part in enabling communication and interaction between mentors and mentees while following the health protocols. The use of technology tools such as video conferencing facilitated mentoring activities.

The participants' responses were categorized into four significant statements to support the theme. The mentoring practices categories were: (1) technical assistance, (2) maximizing the use of technology, (3) education with health protocols, and (4) communication.

The first category for mentoring practices was technical assistance. As presented in Figure 10, this category was segmented into three: (1) checking of objectives alignment, (2) assisting with new strategies, and (3) Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions.

For the checking of objectives alignment, Participant No. 1 shared her practice by directly mentioning, “I see to it na yung tinuturo ng teacher is aligned to their objectives”. (I see to it that what is being taught by the teacher is aligned with their objectives). For assisting with new strategies, participant no. 8 narrated her technical assistance practice by directly stating, “I always - assisted regarding the strategies, the new strategies, the different things that they should do to help them”. For the LAC sessions, participant no. 10 mentioned her aim for her colleagues by declaring, “I want my co-teachers or my mentees to be also immersed in trainings or LAC sessions where they could learn new strategies involved in technology”.

As can be gleaned in Figure 10, the second category for mentoring practices was maximizing the use of technology. As narrated by Participant 2, “Nagvi-video call kami, naka-open din yung cellphone nila(colleagues)”. (We have video calls; their cell phones were also on.) Congruently, as mentioned by participant no. 10 “giving them other strategies that are more inclined in technology”.

On the one hand, the third category for mentoring practices was determined as education with health protocols. Specifically, this category was segmented into three: (1) checking of rooms, (2) reminding of the protocols and conducting focus group discussions.

For the checking of rooms, as shared by participant no. 4, “I was tasked to check all the rooms kung ano na sila – tinignan namin kung nag-follow sila sa safety protocols”. (I was tasked to check all the rooms. I have checked if they had followed the safety protocols.) For the reminding of protocols, as mentioned by participant no. 10 “so, physical activities are allowed. But I want them to be mindful also to the activities that the give or implement in their classroom”. Moreover, as shared by participant no. 9, “nagkakaroon kami ng Focal Group Discussion, discussing then yung mga safety protocols.” (We have a Focus Group Discussion, discussing then the safety protocols.)

As drawn in Figure 10, the fourth mentoring category was communication. The figure further showed two segments for this category: (1) conducts focus group discussion, and (2) feedback mechanism.

For the focus group discussion, as mentioned by participant no. 2 “kung ano yung personal kong ginagawa sa mga estudyante ko – yun nga – yung ginagawa ko shine-share ko sa kanila.” (I share my personal classroom practices to them.) Similarly, as pointed out by participant no. 4 “we do have different interventions - best practices that we give and we share to our teachers”. For the feedback mechanism, as explained by participant no. 1 “pwede rin kasi natin alamin yung mga feedback – pwedeng gawin para maging mai-akma ang pagtuturo natin sa mga bata na dumanas ng pandemic”. (We could also identify the feedback. We could do that to tailor fit our teaching practices according to the learners who experienced the pandemic.)

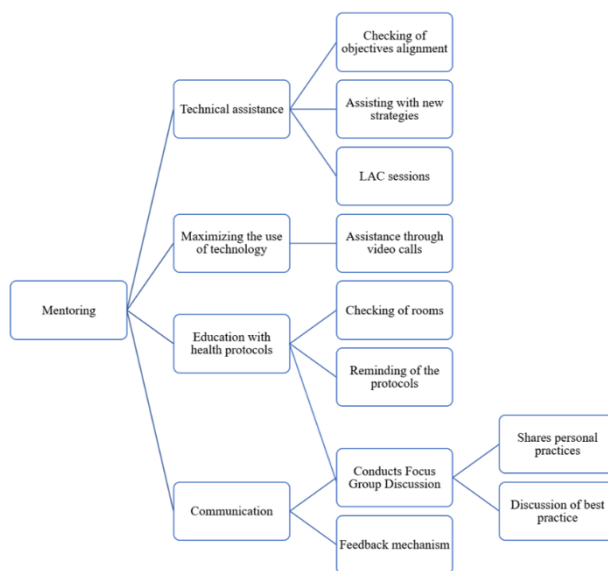


Figure 10. Mentoring Practices

Phase 2: Quantitative

From the analysis of the qualitative themes, an assessment tool for elementary master teachers in the time of facilitating the safe return of learners to school was developed (See Appendix O). The first part of the tool was items about the demographic profile of the respondents. The second part contains a checklist regarding the preparation for the safe return of learners to school. Specifically, the items found in the second portion do not apply to a Likert Scale test.

The data obtained from the responses to the assessment tool was presented in this section. Specifically, there were 184 responses received via Google Forms. However, 29 respondents did not meet the eligibility criteria. Hence, a total of 155 responses were analyzed. To determine the reliability and validity of the assessment tool, the following results were analyzed.

Pett et al. (2003) explained that when determining if partial correlations between variables are modest, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is used. Table 2 revealed that the KMO test resulted in a value of 0.8808. It should be noted that KMO values between 0.8 and 1 specify that the sampling is adequate. Therefore, a data reduction technique like factor analysis is appropriate to utilize in the investigation of the data set.

Table 2
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Results

Variable	KMO
Overall	0.8808

Table 3 presented the principal component analysis results of the data. The principal component analysis is an extraction technique that may be used to reduce data using factors. As can be gleaned from the following results, five (5) factors were extracted which had an Eigenvalue of higher than 1. Specifically, the first factor has a cumulative value of 0.3887 while the second has 0.4747. Moreover, the third factor has a 0.5396 cumulative value while the fourth has 0.5990. Lastly, the fifth factor has a 0.6486 cumulative value.

Table 3
Principal Component Analysis Results

Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	9.71856	7.56843	0.3887	0.3887
Factor2	2.15013	0.52798	0.0860	0.4747
Factor3	1.62215	0.13911	0.0649	0.5396
Factor4	1.48304	0.24266	0.0593	0.5990
Factor5	1.24038	0.28113	0.0496	0.6486
Factor6	0.95925	0.14236	0.0384	0.6869
Factor7	0.81689	0.13212	0.0327	0.7196
Factor8	0.68477	0.02115	0.0274	0.7470
Factor9	0.66362	0.03072	0.0265	0.7736
Factor10	0.63290	0.04248	0.0253	0.7989
Factor11	0.59042	0.02903	0.0236	0.8225
Factor12	0.56139	0.08754	0.0225	0.8449
Factor13	0.47385	0.03123	0.0190	0.8639
Factor14	0.44262	0.01065	0.0177	0.8816
Factor15	0.43197	0.04285	0.0173	0.8989
Factor16	0.38912	0.01872	0.0156	0.9144
Factor17	0.37040	0.05024	0.0148	0.9293
Factor18	0.32016	0.02375	0.0128	0.9421
Factor19	0.29641	0.03097	0.0119	0.9539
Factor20	0.26545	0.01189	0.0106	0.9645
Factor21	0.25355	0.05299	0.0101	0.9747
Factor22	0.20056	0.02993	0.0080	0.9827
Factor23	0.17063	0.03493	0.0068	0.9895
Factor24	0.13570	0.00959	0.0054	0.9950
Factor25	0.12610	.	0.0050	1.0000

Using the principal component analysis, the pilot test results revealed that there were five (5) factors extracted from the developed tool. Specifically, the first five (5) factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1 were: factor 1 with 9.71856; factor 2 at 2.15013; factor 3 at 1.62215; factor 4 with 1.48304; and factor 5 at 1.24038. The results revealed that all items could be located in factor 1 and other scattered values were dispersed throughout the four (4) factors. This indicated that the five (5) underlying factors were measured by the developed tool.

As presented in Table 4, the factor loadings demonstrated the relationship between the items and the extracted factors. The connection revealed that every item in the developed tool examined the first element which supported the theme of classroom management.

Specifically, the five (5) factors were associated with the following: factor 1 – classroom management; factor 2 – mentoring with health protocols, factor 3 – mentoring through good communication skills; factor 4 – teaching practices; and factor 5 – remediation and innovation. Moreover, these factors narrowed the broad description of the qualitative themes.

Table 4
Factor Loadings (Pattern Matrix)

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5	Uniqueness
a1	0.5234	0.4277	-0.2538	-0.0013	-0.0117	0.4786
a2	0.6639	0.5267	-0.2315	-0.0742	0.0128	0.2225
a3	0.6374	0.4789	-0.2778	0.0172	0.1347	0.2688
a4	0.4736	0.1709	-0.2665	0.6046	-0.1310	0.2927
a5	0.6581	0.0885	0.0816	0.3538	0.2200	0.3789
a6	0.6254	0.3069	-0.1477	0.0604	0.1808	0.4565
a7	0.4780	0.1561	0.4430	0.0652	-0.0458	0.5446
b1	0.5537	0.1452	0.2372	-0.3032	-0.2370	0.4679
b2	0.5795	0.1345	0.4423	-0.3353	-0.3483	0.2167
b3	0.7414	0.2996	0.0279	-0.1889	-0.2223	0.2746
b4	0.7477	0.2635	0.0242	-0.2190	-0.2249	0.2723
b5	0.5796	0.0846	-0.1379	0.5222	-0.2471	0.3041
b6	0.5413	-0.0010	0.4839	0.2036	0.2298	0.3786
b7	0.5211	-0.0336	0.3426	0.0618	0.4211	0.4288
b8	0.5560	-0.0105	0.4872	0.2577	0.2640	0.3172
c1	0.6953	-0.1655	-0.1292	-0.1751	0.1488	0.4197
c2	0.6148	-0.2615	-0.1780	-0.2288	0.3701	0.3326
c3	0.5144	-0.3550	-0.3934	-0.0393	0.1981	0.4138
c4	0.7354	-0.2664	-0.1675	-0.3301	0.1734	0.2211
c5	0.7442	-0.0935	-0.1179	-0.2416	0.1062	0.3539
c6	0.6523	-0.3569	0.1243	0.0998	-0.0357	0.4205
c7	0.5368	-0.5431	-0.0672	0.1125	-0.2152	0.3535
c8	0.5095	-0.4669	-0.0559	0.1751	-0.3682	0.3531
c9	0.7706	-0.1701	-0.0240	0.0329	-0.2131	0.3302
c10	0.7564	-0.3569	-0.0351	-0.0085	-0.1222	0.2842

Table 5 presents the rotated factor loadings. Each factor's squared loadings are rotated by a maximum variance orthogonal rotation known as a "varimax". As a result, only a few variables have notable loadings on each factor. Varimax immediately simplifies the loading matrix's columns, greatly enhancing the factors' ability to be understood.

As displayed in the table, it was revealed that 14 out of 25 items had cross-loadings. This indicated that 14 items measure more than one of the factors. The table further revealed the latent variable per factor.

For factor 1 – classroom management, the variable with the highest value was a3. Specifically, the 0.784 value of item a3 revealed that the statement “I remind my pupils about the observance of the health and safety protocols.” was a latent practice of the respondents. Subsequently, the variable with the greatest value for factor 2 – mentoring with

health protocols was c4. The 0.785 value of item c4 specified that the statement “I advise my co-teachers to be mindful of their class activities to lessen the risk of COVID-19 transmission.” was a latent mentoring practice of the respondents. Also, the variable with the highest value for factor 3 – mentoring through good communication skills was item c8. The 0.742 value of item c8 showed that the statement “I help check the alignment of the objectives.” was a latent mentoring practice of the respondents.

For factor 4 – teaching practices, item b2 was revealed to have the highest value. Specifically, the 0.832 value of item b2 exposed that the statement “I identify the starting point of my lesson (where my learners are having difficulties.” was a latent teaching practice of the respondents. Moreover, the variable with the greatest value for factor 5 – remediation and innovation was b8. The 0.779 value of item b8 indicated that the statement “I involve the stakeholders in the teaching and learning process.” was a latent practice of the respondents.

Table 5
Rotated Factor Loadings

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5	Uniqueness
a1	0.6709					0.4786
a2	0.7820			0.3291		0.2225
a3	0.7844					0.2688
a4	0.6143		0.5195			0.2927
a5	0.4417				0.5572	0.3789
a6	0.6109					0.4565
a7				0.4084	0.4996	0.5446
b1				0.6601		0.4679
b2				0.8320		0.2167
b3	0.5039			0.6100		0.2746
b4	0.4760			0.6217		0.2723
b5	0.5217		0.6125			0.3041
b6					0.7346	0.3786
b7		0.3204			0.6681	0.4288
b8					0.7792	0.3172
c1		0.6229				0.4197
c2		0.7653				0.3326
c3		0.6677	0.3073			0.4138
c4		0.7852				0.2211
c5		0.6232		0.3227		0.3539
c6		0.3904	0.5018		0.3617	0.4205
c7		0.3973	0.6772			0.3535
c8			0.7423			0.3531
c9		0.3702	0.5365	0.3654		0.3302
c10		0.5111	0.5555			0.2842

Table 6 identified the items following their specific factor loadings. The 14 items that measure more than one factor were placed under the factor with a higher value. Moreover, the matrix presents a clearer figure of the relevance of each item in the factor.

As presented in Table 6, the first factor is related to the classroom management theme. The classroom management factor contains five specific items generated from the fifth qualitative theme.

The factor regarding mentoring with health protocols is associated with mentoring practices theme. Similarly, the factor regarding mentoring through good communication skills is also associated with the seventh theme. Moreover, the second and third factors contain items generated from the mentoring practices theme.

The fourth factor presents items regarding the teaching practices of master teachers. Specifically, the items found in the teaching practices factor were generated from the statements in the sixth theme. Correspondingly, the remediation and innovation factors were attributed to the teaching and learning theme. The five items found in the fifth factor were generated from the sixth qualitative theme.

Table 6
Items Under New Factors

Factor 1 Classroom management	Factor 2 Mentoring with health protocols	Factor 3 Mentoring through good communication skills	Factor 4 Teaching practices	Factor 5 Remediation and innovation
A1 I emphasize class routines and rules to manage the learners' behavior.	C1 I conduct Focal Group Discussions regarding safety protocols.	C6 I conduct a group discussion about our best practices.	B1 I assess the learners' current competency.	A5 I introduce new classroom activities to address the limitations brought about by the health protocols.
A2 I make sure that my classroom follows the health and safety protocols.	C2 I check the classrooms of my co-teachers to ensure that the health and safety protocols are being followed.	C7 I share personal practices with my co-teachers.	B2 I identify the starting point of my lesson (where my learners are having difficulties).	A7 I repeat the class instruction several times to ensure that the learners comply.
A3 I remind my pupils about the observance of the health and safety protocols.	C3 I provide technical assistance via in-person and/or video calls to ensure health safety.	C8 I help check the alignment of the objectives.	B3 I provide recall activities and drills to help the learners better understand the next lesson.	B6 I conduct remediation after class hours to help the learners cope with the observed learning difficulties.
A4 I maximize the use of technology in order to motivate my learners.	C4 I advise my co-teachers to be mindful of their class activities to lessen the risk of COVID-19 transmission.	C9 I assist co-teachers regarding new strategies.	B4 I modify my teaching practices in accordance with the competency of the learners.	B7 I develop innovations/projects to address learning difficulties/losses/gaps.
A6 I conduct psychosocial activities in class.	C5 I advise my co-teachers to motivate their learners to participate.	C10 I utilize feedback mechanisms to help tailor fit my co-teachers teaching practices.	B5 I maximize the use of technology to catch the learners' interest.	B8 I involve the stakeholders in the teaching and learning process.

Moreover, the assessment tool's reliability coefficient was examined using Cronbach's Alpha. According to the calculated alpha value of $\alpha = 0.9276$, the developed assessment tool has a good range of internal consistency for the particular sample. It should be noted that $\alpha \geq 0.9$ indicates that the internal consistency is excellent.

It should be noted that Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, or how closely connected a group of things are to one another. It is used as a scale dependability indicator. However, even if the alpha has a high value, the

measure may not be one-dimensional. Further analyses can be carried out to present that the scale in question is unidimensional in addition to testing internal consistency. One technique for determining dimensionality is exploratory factor analysis.

Table 7
Pilot Test Results of Reliability Statistics

Average interitem covariance	.0768461
Number of items in the scale	25
Scale reliability coefficient	0.9276

DISCUSSION

This section provided a brief yet methodical assessment of the results' implications, conclusions, and recommendations.

Phase 1

Demographic Profile of the Participants

Table 8.1 reflected the distribution of the participants per division. Three master teachers per division participated in the study. Hence, a total of 12 interviews were conducted. As can be gleaned from the table, the majority of the participants were Master Teacher I. Specifically, 10 participants (83.33%) were identified as Master Teacher I. On the other hand, only 2 participants (16.67%) were identified as master teacher II.

Table 8.1
Distribution of participants per division

	Master Teacher I	Percentage	Master Teacher II	Percentage
SDO Pampanga	3	25%	0	0
SDO City of San Fernando	2	16.67%	1	8.33%
SDO Angeles City	3	25%	0	0
SDO Mabalacat City	2	16.67%	1	8.33%
	10	83.33%	2	16.67%

Distribution of Participants per Length of Service as a Master Teacher

Table 8.2 described the distribution of the participants per length of service as a master teacher (as of September 2022). As presented in the table, 7 (58.33%) participants have been serving as master teachers for 3-6 years, while 4 (33.34%) participants have 7-10 years of service. Notably, 1 participant has been serving as a master teacher for 11-14 years.

Table 8.2
Distribution of participants per length of service as a master teacher

	3-6 years	Percentage	7-10 years	Percentage	11-14 years	Percentage
SDO Pampanga	2	16.67%	0	0	1	8.33%
SDO City of San Fernando	3	25%	0	0	0	0
SDO Angeles City	1	8.33%	2	16.67%	0	0
SDO Mabalacat City	1	8.33%	2	16.67%	0	0
	7	58.33%	4	33.34%	1	8.33%

Distribution of Participants per Number of Months Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to School

Table 8.3 described the distribution of the participants per number of months facilitating the safe return of learners to school (as of September 2022). As can be seen in the table, 6 (50%) of the participants have been facilitating face-to-face classes for three months. Meanwhile, the other 6 (50%) participants have been facilitating for four months.

Table 8.3
Distribution of Participants per Number of Months Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners

	3 months	Percentage	4 months	Percentage
SDO Pampanga	2	16.67%	1	8.33%
SDO City of San Fernando	1	8.33%	2	16.67%
SDO Angeles City	1	8.33%	2	16.67%
SDO Mabalacat City	2	16.67%	1	8.33%
	6	50%	6	50%

Description of the Participants' Practices and Experiences towards Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to School

Based on the findings from the interview, seven themes with regard to the participants' practices and experiences towards facilitating the safe return of learners to school were identified. Significantly, these themes extracted from the practices of master teachers during the safe return of learners to school revolved around the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. Master teachers adapted to the challenges posed by the pandemic and implemented strategies that ensured that all learners could continue to learn and thrive in a safe learning environment.

Alignment of the Learning Environment Preparation Theme to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

The theme for the learning environment preparation conducted by the master teachers has two major categories. First, the category about the preparation of classrooms in accordance with the health and safety protocols is under the learner safety and security strand of Domain 2 of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (Learning Environment). It should be noted that the learning environment domain in the PPST emphasizes the need for teachers to provide welcoming, supportive, and safe learning environments. Also, highly proficient teachers utilize productive learning environment tactics to improve learning. Moreover, this supported Pressley et al. (2020) statement that master teachers' practices produce learning environments that encourage students to self-regulate their learning.

Second, the category of communicating with stakeholders is under Domain 6 (Community Linkages and Professional Engagement). This particular PPST domain recognizes the function of educators in forging school-community alliances designed to improve the learning environment. In addition, highly proficient teachers mentor their peers to improve their connections with parents and guardians. This is to increase the stakeholders' participation in the learning process. This specific category corroborated Montemayor's (2021) report that, despite COVID-19's challenges, the Department of Education, together with other agencies and stakeholders, took measures to reintroduce face-to-face instruction.

In general, the learning environment theme greatly affirmed the explanation of Tran et al. (2021). It was revealed that it was difficult to work to allow the community of the University of New Haven in Connecticut to return safely. Their team at the School of Health Sciences had to design and use cutting-edge techniques to create learning environments that adhered to the constantly changing procedures.

Alignment of the Instructional Preparation Theme to The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

The instructional preparation theme has three categories. First, the category of participation in training is under Domain 7 in the PPST (Personal Growth and Professional Development). This particular area is concerned with preserving the traits that protect the honor of teaching. It also gives high importance to learning to advance one's practices. As highlighted in the PPST, highly proficient teachers engage in professional networks. This is done to exchange knowledge and improve practice. This supported the assertion of Laudea et al. (2018) that master teachers

are expected to continue their professional development. The need for master teachers to advance their learning was also emphasized to provide students and colleagues with high-quality instruction.

Second, the category of research is directly related to researched-based knowledge and principles of teaching and learning of Domain 1 (Content Knowledge and Pedagogy). As noted in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, highly proficient teachers are at the stage where they work with peers to undertake and apply research to advance their understanding of both pedagogy and material. Significantly, this category supported the statement of Basilio & Bueno (2019) that educators need to stay updated with the policies and advancements in education research to maintain their effectiveness.

Third, the category for lesson preparations is linked with Domain 4 (Curriculum and Planning) of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. As specified in the PPST, highly proficient teachers are at the point where they use effective techniques in the planning and administration of developmentally sequenced teaching and learning processes. This is to satisfy curricular requirements and different teaching settings. This substantiated Sangalang's (2018) explanation that master teachers look for ways to assist other teachers in carrying out their responsibility to facilitate learning through the preparation of activities and the use of appropriate and current teaching materials.

Master Teachers' Experienced Changes Theme in Relation to The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

The third theme was about the experienced changes of master teachers upon their return to face-to-face instruction. This theme was categorized into (1) observed learning difficulties, (2) limited class activities, (3) use of technology, (4) observance of health and safety protocols, and (5) communication.

First, the category of observed learning difficulties is related to Domain 1 of the PPST (Content Knowledge and Pedagogy). This specific domain is related because it highlights the critical understanding of the application of principles of teaching and learning to address the observed learning difficulties of the learners. Similarly, the categories regarding the use of technology and communication are also related to Domain 1. Specifically, highly proficient teachers are expected to encourage effective strategies in the positive use of ICT as stipulated in the PPST. Likewise, highly proficient teachers are expected to demonstrate a wide range of classroom communication strategies to support learner understanding.

Next, the categories regarding the limited class activities and observance of health and safety protocols are associated with Domain 2 of the PPST (Learning Environment). As expounded in the PPST, Domain 2 underscores the role of educators to give learning environments that are safe and secure. Specifically, the limited class activities category is associated with this because of the management of classroom activities strand of this domain. As noted in the strand, highly proficient teachers are expected to share effective practices in the management of classroom structure to engage learners.

Similarly, the observance of the health and safety protocols category is associated with the second domain of the PPST because of the learner safety and security strand. As highlighted in this specific strand, highly proficient teachers are expected to demonstrate efficient methods for ensuring secure learning environments to improve learning through the regular application of rules, regulations, and procedures.

Master Teachers' Encountered Challenges Theme in Relation to The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

The fourth theme was about the encountered challenges by the master teachers upon the return of the learners to school. This specific theme was clustered into (1) provide learners with ways how to overcome the challenges brought by the pandemic, (2) limitations due to the wearing of face masks, (3) physically tiring, (4) observed learning difficulties, (5) and learners' discipline.

The learning environment domain of the PPST is related to the categories of providing learners with ways to overcome the challenges brought by the pandemic and limitations due to the wearing of face masks. These are related to the second domain of the PPST because of the learner safety and security strand. The emphasis on the safety of the learners regarding virus transmission is related to the learner safety and security strand of Domain 2. As noted in this strand,

highly proficient teachers are expected to demonstrate efficient methods for ensuring secure learning environments to improve academic performance by employing regulations, standards, and procedures.

Next, the category of observed learning difficulties is connected to the Content Knowledge and Pedagogy Domain of the PPST. This particular domain is associated because it emphasizes the need of using teaching and learning concepts to solve learners' apparent learning challenges.

In addition, the category of learners' discipline is associated with Domain 2 of the PPST (Learning Environment). This category is linked with the learning environment because of the management of the learner behavior strand of this domain. As mentioned in this specific strand, a highly proficient teacher is expected to display efficiency and constructive conduct management abilities by using constructive and non-violent discipline to create settings that are learning-focused.

Overall, this particular theme affirmed the report of Hernando-Malipot (2022). In the report, it was revealed that teachers and learners encountered different challenges during the pilot phase of in-person instruction in the Philippines. It should be highlighted that there is a direct similarity between the report of Hernando-Malipot (2022) and the finding regarding the limitations due to the wearing of face masks. Specifically, it was reported by Hernando-Malipot (2022) that the learners cannot hear clearly what the teacher is discussing due to the face masks. Correspondingly, Ramos (2021) reported that the audibility of the teachers' instruction was obstructed due to face masks. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that the observed learning difficulties category greatly relates to the determined reading and writing learning gaps report of Hernando-Malipot (2022).

Alignment of the Classroom Management Theme to The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

The classroom management theme has three significant statements. The fifth theme was grouped into (1) following health protocols, (2) managing learners' behaviors, and (3) maximizing the use of technology. The category for following health protocols is associated with the strand about learner safety and security under Domain 2 of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (Learning Environment). According to the PPST, highly proficient teachers are at the point where they demonstrate efficient methods for ensuring secure learning environments. This is to foster learning via the consistent application of rules, regulations, and procedures. Moreover, this verified the report of Ramos (2021) that in addition to providing instruction, teachers' duties also include advising students to observe physical distance.

Meanwhile, the category for managing learners' behaviors is directly under the management of learner behavior strand of Domain 2. In this particular strand, it was stipulated in the PPST that highly proficient teachers are at the stage where they demonstrate effective and constructive behavior management abilities. This is by enforcing positive and non-violent punishment to promote learning-focused settings. Specifically, this specific category greatly substantiated the explanation of Laudea et al. (2018) that master teachers have a strong connection with their learners and are effective communicators.

The category about maximizing the use of technology is associated with the strand about the positive use of ICT under Domain 1 (Content Knowledge and Pedagogy). In this specific PPST strand, it was highlighted how successful teaching methods in the constructive use of information communication technology to support the teaching and learning process are promoted by highly proficient teachers. This category is in agreement with the key point of Hero et al. (2021) that in the era of ICT in education, teachers should possess the knowledge and skills required to offer technology-based instruction.

Notably, the classroom management theme supported the explanation of Laudea et al. (2018) that master teachers possess a technique to accelerate the education of their students. Also, it was noted that master teachers are exceptional communicators who connect well with their students. On the one hand, the category regarding maximizing the use of technology greatly affirmed the key points of Yuldasheva (2021) that a modern educator must be familiar with numerous information and communication technologies and be proficient in using them. ICTs provide for the advancement of the educational progression of learning.

These findings are pointedly coherent with the explanation of Downes (2022) regarding Connectivism Theory. It was noted that expanding, enhancing, adjusting, or reinforcing the connections between the components of knowledge so that a change in one component may cause a change in another is what is meant by learning.

Alignment of the Teaching and Learning Theme to The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

For the teaching and learning theme, the major statements were categorized into six. First, the category of learners' current competency is linked with Domain 3 of the PPST (Diversity of Learners). The PPST states that the domain pertaining to the diversity of learners emphasizes the significance of teachers' knowledge and comprehension of the various traits and experiences of students as inputs to the preparation and design of learning opportunities.

Second, the teaching practices category is under Domain 4 (Curriculum and Planning). As stipulated in Domain 4 of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, highly proficient teachers collaborate with peers to organize, support, and improve teaching practice by reviewing teacher and learner feedback. Moreover, this category supported the explanation of Espineli (2021) that master teachers have the desire to increase the caliber of teaching in their schools by expanding their influence.

Meanwhile, the category about maximizing the use of technology is associated with the teaching and learning resources including the ICT strand of Domain 4 of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. As stipulated in this particular strand, highly proficient teachers offer guidance to peers on the selection, arrangement, creation, and use of relevant teaching and learning materials, including ICT, to meet particular learning objectives. In addition, this category greatly confirmed the statement of Yuldasheva (2021) that knowledge of numerous information and communication technologies is required of modern teachers. Also, teachers need to be able to use ICT.

Significantly, the remediation and innovations categories are associated with the relevance and responsiveness of the learning programs strand of domain 4 (Curriculum and Planning) of the PPST. As noted in this specific strand, highly proficient teachers collaborate with colleagues to review the creation of learning programs that enhance the learners' knowledge and skills at various ability levels. Specifically, these categories corroborated with the points of Arnejo et. al (2021) that master teachers make projects and initiatives that enrich the curriculum and provide their fellow educators and learners with access to the necessary instructional tools.

Furthermore, the category of stakeholders' involvement is greatly anchored to Domain 6 (Community Linkages and Professional Engagement) of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. As stated in this particular domain, highly proficient teachers mentor colleagues to improve ties with parents/guardians and the larger school community to optimize their engagement in educational progression. Correspondingly, this category affirmed the report of Montemayor (2021) that the Department of Education, organizations, and stakeholders took initiatives to reintroduce in-person learning in November 2021.

The sixth theme greatly affirmed the three major points identified by UNICEF (2021) for recovery in opening schools for face-to-face classes. These points were: (1) prioritize initiatives that safely return students to institutions, (2) remedial learning programs should also be available to help students with missed learning, and (3) there should be assistance for teachers who want to focus on learning loss. These findings were greatly consistent with the points of Boyraz & Ocak (2021) regarding connectivism theory. In particular, it affirmed the core principle of Connectivism that students should participate in a learning community and learn from it. Networks that are different but connected encourage the autonomous accumulation of a wide variety of knowledge.

Alignment of the Mentoring Practices Theme to The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

Finally, the theme regarding the mentoring practices of the master teachers was categorized into four significant statements. The categories for the seventh theme were: (1) technical assistance, (2) maximizing the use of technology, (3) education with health protocols, and (4) communication. Significantly, these categories are profoundly rooted in the 7th Domain (Personal Growth and Professional Development) of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers.

Furthermore, it is explicitly stipulated in the 7th domain of the PPST that highly proficient teachers actively participate in professional networks both inside and across schools to advance practice and knowledge. In addition, they encourage learning opportunities with colleagues and start professional reflections to enhance practice.

Basically, the seventh theme is consistent with the expectations stipulated in the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) Updated Manual. Specifically, master teachers are expected to pursue the advancement of their professional knowledge and practice by taking into account both their personal needs and those of their colleagues. It was stipulated that master teachers do this by offering support and working together to better the practice

of their colleagues. Also, the category regarding technical assistance supported the explanation of Laudea et al. (2018) that the key role of a master teacher is to coach fellow educators to enhance educational instruction.

Furthermore, these findings regarding mentoring practices notably affirmed the account of Sangalang (2018) that master teachers look for ways to assist other educators in carrying out their duty of aiding students' learning through the preparation of activities and the use of appropriate and current educational materials.

Master Teachers' Practices and Experiences Towards Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to School in the Context of Connectivism Theory

The themes generated from the practices and experiences of elementary master teachers towards facilitating the safe return of learners to school align with the principles of connectivism theory.

Firstly, learning environment preparation is crucial in creating a conducive learning environment. Master teachers recognize the importance of establishing a safe environment in the classroom that promotes collaboration among learners. This aligns with the principles of the Connectivism Theory. According to a Western Governors University essay published in 2021, Connectivism promotes group engagement and dialogue, allowing for a variety of points of view when it comes to making decisions, solving problems, and comprehending information.

Secondly, instructional preparation involves planning and designing learning activities that are relevant to learners. Master teachers recognize the importance of incorporating technology into their instructional design. This is consistent with Connectivism Theory's tenets. Connectivism, which recognizes the role technology has played in the delivery and dissemination of information, encourages students to absorb ideas, theories, and broad knowledge from a variety of sources and integrate them in meaningful ways, as explained by Pappas (2023).

The specific themes regarding preparations are coherent with the Connectivism Theory. It was explained by Siemens (2017) that connectivism holds that decisions are made based on factors that are always changing. Moreover, these findings affirmed the reports of Sarmiento et al. (2021). In their study, it was explained that there should be careful planning to ensure the safety of the learners and teachers in the reopening of schools for face-to-face instruction. In addition, it was specified that the planning and execution of school health policies during a pandemic should be supported by clear evidence. Also, school health practices must be carefully developed in accordance with national and international regulations.

The experienced changes theme refers to the adjustments that master teachers have had to make in response to the pandemic such as having limited class activities, using technology, and observing health and safety protocols. On the one hand, encountered challenges theme refers to the obstacles and difficulties faced by master teachers in facilitating the safe return of learners to school. These themes are in tune with the principles of connectivism theory. The core tenet of connectivism, according to George Siemens (2017), is that decisions are made based on variables that are always changing. New data is constantly being gathered. It's also essential to be able to recognize when decisions made yesterday modify the situation because of new information.

Next, the classroom management theme refers to the strategies used by master teachers to create a safe learning environment. This theme also highlighted maximizing the use of technology in class. Similarly, the teaching and learning theme underscored the maximization of master teachers' use of technology in class. These themes align with the principles of Connectivism Theory, which emphasizes the role technology has played in the delivery of information.

Finally, mentoring practices refer to the strategies and techniques used by master teachers to support the professional growth and development of their colleagues. This conforms with the ideas of the Connectivism Theory. Specifically, an article from Western Governors University issued in 2021 outlined how Connectivism Theory promotes group interaction and discussion, allowing for a variety of viewpoints when it comes to making decisions, resolving issues, and comprehending information.

Master Teachers' Practices and Experiences Towards Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to School in the Context of Transformative Learning Theory

Jack Mezirow's Ten Phases of Transformative Learning Theory highlights the role of master teachers in facilitating the safe return of learners to school. This context's disorienting dilemma is the sudden closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the routine of both teachers and learners. Master teachers engaged in self-examination about how the situation impacts their teaching and student relationships. In addition, the master teachers assessed available information on COVID-19's impact on schools and use their professional judgment to make informed decisions.

Moreover, master teachers recognized learners' and families' concerns and understand their viewpoints. They explored safe ways of teaching and learning while planning a course of action that prioritized learner health and safety. Also, master teachers acquired knowledge to adapt their teaching strategies and practices to the latest COVID-19 developments. They took on new responsibilities as the situation demands while building competence. Finally, master teachers reintegrated learners back into the traditional school setting, ensuring their emotional well-being and academic progress.

Furthermore, the extracted themes from the experiences and practices of master teachers facilitating the safe return of learners to school are in line with the principles of transformative learning theory. For the first theme - learning environment preparation, transformative learning theory highlights the significance of creating a safe learning environment that encourages collaboration. Next, the instructional preparation theme, the theory stresses the need for teachers to design instruction that is relevant, meaningful, and engaging to learners. For the experienced changes theme, transformative learning theory underlines the potential for learning to lead to personal and social transformation. In this theme, the changes experienced by teachers and learners because of returning to face-to-face classes, and the strategies used to support these changes were given focus.

In the encountered challenges theory, theory points out the potential for learning to be challenging and uncomfortable. Subsequently, transformative learning theory underlines the importance of creating a supportive and respectful learning environment. In the Teaching and Learning theme, the theory points out active engagement, critical reflection, and collaborative learning. Finally, transformative learning theory points to the importance of mentoring in supporting personal and professional growth and development.

Phase 2: Quantitative

Distribution of Respondents per Schools Division

Table 9.1 showed the distribution of the respondents per division. As presented in the table, more than half of the respondents were under the Schools Division of Pampanga with 83 responses, followed by the respondents under the Schools Division of the City of San Fernando with 30 responses. Noticeably, the least number of respondents were under the Schools Division of Mabalacat City with 18 responses.

The table further revealed that the majority of the respondents (71.61%) were identified as Master Teacher I. On the other hand, only 28.39% (44) of the respondents were identified as Master Teacher II.

Table 9.1
Distribution of respondents per division

	Master Teacher I	Percentage	Master Teacher II	Percentage	Total	Percentage
SDO Pampanga	58	37.42%	25	16.13%	83	53.55%
SDO City of San Fernando	22	14.19%	8	5.16%	30	19.35%
SDO Angeles City	20	12.90%	4	2.58%	24	15.48%
SDO Mabalacat City	11	7.10%	7	4.52%	18	11.61%
	111	71.61%	44	28.39%	155	100%

Distribution of Respondents per Length of Service as a Master Teacher

Table 9.2 described the distribution of the respondents per length of service as a master teacher (as of October 2022). As presented in the table, 57 (36.77%) respondents have been serving as master teachers for 3-6 years, while 40 (25.81%) respondents have 7-10 years of service. Moreover, there were 19 (12.26%) respondents who have been serving as master teachers for 11-14 years. Notably, a total of 39 (25.17%) respondents have been serving for over 14 years.

Table 9.2
Distribution of respondents per length of service as a master teacher

	3-6 years	Percentage	7-10 years	Percentage	11-14 years	Percentage	Over 14 years	Percentage	Total	
SDO Pampanga	27	32.53%	22	26.51%	12	14.46%	22	26.51%	83	100%
SDO City of San Fernando	17	56.67%	4	13.33%	3	10%	6	20%	30	100%
SDO Angeles City	9	37.5%	8	33.33%	1	4.17%	6	25%	24	100%
SDO Mabalacat City	4	22.22%	6	33.33%	3	16.67%	5	27.78%	18	100%
	57	36.77%	40	25.81%	19	12.26%	39	25.17%	155	100%

Distribution of Respondents per Number of Months Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to School

Table 9.3 described the distribution of the respondents per number of months facilitating the safe return of learners to school (as of October 2022). As can be seen in the table, 64 (41.29%) respondents have been facilitating face-to-face classes for 3-6 months, while 67 (43.23%) respondents have been for 7-10 months. Meanwhile, 7 (4.52%) respondents have been facilitating in-person education for 11-14 months. Notably, a total of 17 (10.97%) respondents have been facilitating the safe return of learners for over 14 months.

Table 9.3
Distribution of Participants per Number of Months Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners

	3-6 months	Percentage	7-10 months	Percentage	11-14 months	Percentage	Over 14 months	Percentage	Total	
SDO Pampanga	30	36.15%	35	42.17%	6	7.23%	12	14.46%	83	100%
SDO City of San Fernando	15	50%	14	46.67%	0	-	1	3.33%	30	100%
SDO Angeles City	15	62.5%	7	29.17%	1	4.17%	1	4.17%	24	100%
SDO Mabalacat City	4	22.22%	11	61.11%	0	-	3	16.67%	18	100%
	64	41.29%	67	43.23%	7	4.52%	17	10.97%	155	100%

Validity and Reliability of the Developed Assessment Tool

For the second phase, the validity and reliability of the developed tool were examined. The Assessment Tool for Elementary Master Teachers in the Time of Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to School was pilot tested to the four divisions in the province of Pampanga. Specifically, the developed tool was able to gather 184 responses via Google Forms. However, 29 respondents did not meet the eligibility criteria. Hence, a total of 155 responses were analyzed.

Moreover, the developed tool was comprised of four (4) parts. For the first part of the tool, the demographic profile of the respondents was covered. For the second part, a five-item checklist regarding the preparation for the safe return of learners to school was included. The second portion was developed from the first theme and second theme that emerged in the qualitative findings. Also, it should be noted that a Likert Scale test cannot be used with the items.

Even if the items in the second portion could not be tested using the Likert Scale, it was still deemed vital to include in the tool following the explanation of Sarmiento et al. (2021) that there should be thorough preparation to ensure the safety of the pupils and teachers in the reopening of in-person classes. Also, it was mentioned that school health protocols must be carefully considered following national and international practices. Moreover, the second portion followed the explanation of Fernandez-Guzman et al. (2021) that it is the responsibility of every nation to examine approaches for the safe reopening of schools.

Next, the third part of the tool was comprised of actual facilitating practices and skills being utilized by elementary masters during the return of the learners to school amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the third part was subdivided into segments: (1) classroom management with 7 items, and (2) teaching and learning with 8 items. These 15 items were tested using a four-point Likert Scale. Moreover, these items were developed from the fifth theme and sixth themes that emerged in the qualitative part of this study.

For the fourth part of the developed tool, statements regarding actual mentoring practices of elementary master teachers during the return of the learners to schools amidst the pandemic were covered. Specifically, the third part contained 10 statements that were tested using a four-point Likert Scale. These statements were developed from the last theme in the qualitative findings.

The computed value from the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy showed that the sampling was sufficient. Moreover, the results revealed that data reduction techniques such as factor analysis are suitable to be used in analyzing the responses of the master teachers to the developed assessment tool.

After the pilot test, the results of the Likert Scale items were analyzed to determine the reliability and validity of the assessment tool. First, 5 factors were extracted which had an Eigenvalue of higher than 1 in the principal component analysis. Specifically, the factors were associated with the following: factor 1 – classroom management; factor 2 – mentoring with health protocols, factor 3 – mentoring through good communication skills; factor 4 – teaching practices; and factor 5 – remediation and innovation.

Consistently, these factors were already identified in the qualitative findings under different extracted themes. In particular, the classroom management factor is greatly associated with the fifth theme. Also, the factor regarding mentoring with health protocols was included in the seventh theme. Similarly, the third factor (i.e., mentoring through good communication skills) was also featured in the seventh extracted theme. On the one hand, the fourth factor (i.e., teaching practices) was under the sixth theme. Likewise, the fifth factor (i.e., remediation and innovation) is also covered in the sixth theme. These factors refined the substantial points of the qualitative themes.

Moreover, the result revealed the latent variable per factor of the developed assessment tool. It was revealed that item a3 (I remind my pupils about the observance of the health and safety protocols.) was a latent variable for factor 1. Notably, this result affirmed the report of Ramos (2021) that teachers now have to constantly urge students to maintain physical distance as part of their work.

Also, it was indicated that item c4 (I advise my co-teachers to be mindful of their class activities to lessen the risk of COVID-19 transmission.) was a latent mentoring practice under factor 2. This specific result revealed an agreement

with the explanation by Espineli (2021) that master teachers are motivated to use their influence to improve the instruction of their school.

For factor 3, it was revealed that item c8 (I help check the alignment of the objectives.) was a latent mentoring practice of the respondents. Also, it was indicated that item b2 (I identify the starting point of my lesson - where my learners are having difficulties.) was a latent teaching practice under factor 4. These results exposed greatly affirmed the account of Espineli (2021) that master teachers have the responsibility to keep an eye on their students' progress and that of their fellow teachers in the most recent trend of giving education as part of the new normal.

Subsequently, item b8 (I involve the stakeholders in the teaching and learning process.) was revealed to be a latent practice under factor 5 – remediation and innovation. This result greatly confirmed the third theme of the qualitative findings. Specifically, the teaching and learning theme indicated that involving the stakeholders is one of the major statements in the qualitative findings.

Furthermore, the pilot test results revealed a total of 14 out of the 25 Likert Scale items had cross-loading after testing the rotated factor loadings. These items were included under the factor with the highest value since they measure more than one factor. As a result, the following significant rearrangement of items was conducted:

1. The statements under the teaching practices portion of the improved assessment tool were subdivided into 3 factors. It should be noted that it was only subdivided into 2 sections in the original tool. Specifically, the third part of the improved tool for master teachers particularized: (1) classroom management, (2) teaching practices, and (3) remediation and innovation. This enhancement significantly followed the explanation of Basilio & Bueno (2019) that teachers must stay up to date with subject knowledge, communication, and pedagogical skills because the context of education is constantly evolving. Moreover, the report of Hernando-Malipot (2022) that there were identified reading and writing learning gaps during the pilot in-person education in the Philippines strongly affirmed the need to highlight the remediation and innovation factor.

The improved assessment tool's statements under the section on mentoring practices were divided into 2 specific factors. It should be mentioned that the original tool only had 1 section for mentoring practices. Consequently, the fourth part of the improved tool specified: (1) mentoring with health protocols, and (2) mentoring through good communication skills. This improvement made in the tool notably followed the exposition of Sangalang (2018) regarding the tasks of a master teacher. It was stated that master teachers look for ways to assist other educators in carrying out their duty of facilitating students' learning through the preparation of activities and the use of appropriate and current educational materials.

To further assess the validity and reliability of the tool, the researcher also used Cronbach's Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Significantly, the scale reliability coefficient of 0.9276 indicated excellence of internal coherence. Due to the consistency of the statements, the developed tool was regarded as reliable to measure master teachers' practices relevant to facilitating the safe return of learners to school, according to the researcher's analysis of the pilot test result. Based on the results of the pilot test, the tool is valid since it examines the data it is meant to.

Moreover, the results displayed that the tool designed for master teachers is appropriate based on the statistical measurement and analysis of the data. However, the developed tool was improved by rearranging the statements in line with the specific factors that were identified.

In the study of master teachers facilitating the safe return of learners amidst a health crisis, the qualitative findings were coherent with the phases of Transformative Learning Theory explained in the article of Western Governors University (2020). For the first phase, the master teachers experienced changes and encountered challenges as enumerated in the third theme and fourth theme respectively account for the contributory factors for the disorienting dilemma. These changes and challenges were used for the self-examination of the participants about their facilitating practices.

Following the Transformative Learning Theory, the master teachers' learning environment preparation and instructional preparation as explained in the first theme and second theme respectively records the planning phase. With the testimonies of the master teachers, it was revealed that creating a learning environment that is conducive and safe to the return of the learners to school was a top priority. Also, the limitations or challenges in class activities encountered by the master teachers were addressed with proper instructional preparation.

Next, the practices under the master teachers' classroom management, teaching, and learning and mentoring record the participants' provisional tying of roles. It should be noted that these recorded practices were coherent with the building of competence and self-confidence phase of transformative learning.

According to Searle et. al (202), the theory of learning (TL) describes the process through which a person's perspective on the world changes based on earlier experiences. Three key elements resonated in their study on transformative learning: (1) the value of disorienting dilemma, (2) the potential of self-reflection, and (3) liberatory activities. In the context of elementary master teachers facilitating the safe return of learners to school, transformative learning theory suggests that teachers may use the pandemic experience as an opportunity for personal and professional growth. Transformative learning theory may help elementary master teachers to facilitate the safe return of learners to school by enabling them to critically reflect on their experiences, gain new insights, and challenge their existing assumptions and beliefs. Through this process, master teachers may transform their beliefs and practices.

On the one hand, Connectivism Theory emphasizes the role of technology and the networked environment in facilitating learning and knowledge acquisition. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, master teachers are faced with challenges. This requires them to adopt new strategies for teaching and learning. Connectivism theory suggests that these new strategies can be effective in facilitating learning if they are designed to take advantage of the use of technology.

The assessment tool was developed using the significant statements that were gathered during the qualitative phase. The narratives were summarized into concise and comprehensible items. To make it simple to recognize the practices and facilitating practices of elementary master teachers, the item statements were also written in the first person. In general, the tool is valid since it examines the data it is meant to. Also, the tool has excellent internal consistency according to the results of Cronbach's Alpha.

The validity and reliability of the developed tool were examined in the quantitative phase of this study. The KMO test revealed that sampling was adequate for factor analysis. Five factors were extracted from the analysis: (1) classroom management, (2) mentoring with health protocols, (3) mentoring through good communication skills, (4) teaching practices, and (5) remediation and innovation. Ergo, the seven themes from the qualitative phase were classified into five factors.

Moreover, the latent variable per factor was revealed. Specifically, the latent factors were: (1) I remind my pupils about the observance of the health and safety protocols, (2) I advise my co-teachers to be mindful of their class activities to lessen the risk of COVID-19 transmission, (3) I help check the alignment of the objectives, (4) I identify the starting point of my lesson – where my learners are having difficulties, and (5) I involve the stakeholders in the teaching and learning process.

In the setting of a health crisis, the connectivism theory was revealed to have a close relationship with how master teachers facilitate the safe return of learners to school. According to an article from Western Governors University, connectivism theory promotes group participation and conversation. The practices of elementary master teachers that were not directly observable highlighted these key points of the theory. In the context of the latent factors mentioned, connectivism theory provides information on how master teachers can facilitate effective teaching and learning while prioritizing health and safety protocols amidst a health crisis.

For the first latent factor, master teachers facilitate communication and collaboration among their learners while reminding them about the observance of health and safety protocols. Next, master teachers advising their co-teachers to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission is also a collaboration point found in connectivism theory. With connectivism theory, master teachers may involve the parents, guardians, and other community members in the learning process by utilizing online platforms.

In general, master teachers may follow the Connectivism Theory in designing strategies to mitigate the changes and challenges encountered during the return of learners to in-person education. Furthermore, Connectivism Theory highlights the importance of ongoing learning and adaptation in response to changing circumstances. In the context of the health crisis, this can include staying informed about emerging developments and adapting teaching strategies accordingly.

Overall, the emergent themes that addressed the first problem statement were used to develop an assessment tool from the experiences and practices of elementary public school master teachers who facilitate the return of learners to schools. As a form of data triangulation for the emergent themes, factor analysis was conducted in the quantitative part. The latent factors that answered the second problem statement revealed the practices of elementary master teachers that were not directly observable.

From the analyses of emergent themes and latent factors pertaining to the practices of elementary master teachers on the safe return of learners to school, it was concluded that the development of the assessment tool is necessary. Furthermore, the qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that the tool could be improved in accordance with emerging crises that may hinder the teaching and learning process. The significance of ongoing learning and adaptation in response to developing crises is also emphasized by connectivism theory. As a result, it is also consistent with connectivism's tenets to urge that the assessment tool be modified to better reflect emerging crises.

Future Direction

From the findings of this study, future researchers may opt to conduct similar research in different contexts. Specifically, this study was limited by the master teachers' insights regarding the safe return of learners to school during a health crisis context. Future researchers may explore emerging crises (e.g., calamity, disaster, war) that may hinder the teaching and learning process. In addition, to adapt to the shifting needs of the educational sector, the items in the improved assessment tool may be modified.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, the following conclusions were drawn:

The demographic profile of the participants revealed that the majority were Master Teacher I. As of September 2022, more than half of the participants have been serving as master teachers for 3-6 years. Moreover, it was revealed that half of the participants have been facilitating face-to-face classes for three months amidst the pandemic while the other half have been facilitating for four months.

As of October 2022, the demographic profile of the respondents indicated that 71.61% of the respondents were Master Teacher I. It was discovered that 36.77% of the respondents have been serving as master teachers for 3-6 years, 25.81% of the respondents had 7-10 years of experience, and 25.17% of the respondents have more than 14 years. Also, 12.26% of the respondents have 11-14 years of experience. Furthermore, the result revealed that 43.23% of the respondents have been facilitating face-to-face classes amidst the pandemic for 7-10 months, 41.29% of the respondents have been for 3-6 months, and 10.97% have been for over 14 months. Lastly, it was revealed that 4.52% have been facilitating in-person education for 11-14 months.

From the qualitative data analysis, there were seven themes emerged in relation to master teachers' experiences and practices toward facilitating the safe return of learners to schools amidst a pandemic. Specifically, these themes were (1) learning environment preparation, (2) instructional preparation, (3) experienced changes, (4) encountered challenges, (5) classroom management, (6) teaching and learning, and (7) mentoring practices. Subsequently, these themes were coherent with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Also, the qualitative findings were coherent with Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory and the Connectivism Theory. With this, it could be concluded that sound statements could be generated to develop an assessment tool for master teachers.

Consequently, the Assessment Tool for Elementary Master Teachers in the Time of Facilitating the Safe Return of Learners to School was developed. The quantitative part of the study examined the validity and reliability of the assessment tool. Based on the quantitative data analysis, the following factors were extracted with principal component analysis: factor 1 – classroom management; factor 2 – mentoring with health protocols, factor 3 – mentoring through good communication skills; factor 4 – teaching practices; and factor 5 – remediation and innovation. It was noted that these factors were already identified in the qualitative findings under different extracted themes. With this, it could be concluded that the developed tool was valid and reliable to measure master teachers' practices relevant to facilitating the safe return of learners to school.

Based on the analysis of the rotated factor loadings results, the following statements were concluded to be the latent factors underlying the experiences and practices of elementary public school master teachers that facilitate the return of learners to schools: (1) a3 - I remind my pupils about the observance of the health and safety protocols., (2) c4 - I advise my co-teachers to be mindful of their class activities to lessen the risk of COVID-19 transmission., (3) c8 - I help check the alignment of the objectives., (4) b2 - I identify the starting point of my lesson (where my learners are having difficulties., and (5) b8 - I involve the stakeholders in the teaching and learning process.

The statistical measurement provided an impression that the developed tool for master teachers is suitable as suggested by the results. However, the developed tool was improved by utilizing rearranging in accordance with the specific factors that were identified (See Appendix S.). Lastly, premised on these results, it was concluded that there was a need to enhance the developed tool to address the emerging crises that may hinder the teaching and learning process in the future.

Recommendations

Premised on the discussion and conclusion derived from the study, the following recommendations were hereby presented:

- 1.1. The division leaders in collaboration with the school heads could conduct a study that may lead to the formulation of a training module that may support the master teachers' preparations, classroom management, teaching and learning, and mentoring practices. In addition, the training module may guide teachers who are facilitating face-to-face classes during a health crisis.
- 1.2. The master teachers in collaboration with the school heads may cascade the emergent themes to the stakeholders through an educational forum. This is to formulate arbitrary safety procedures that highlight the teaching and learning process amidst a health crisis. Also, parents and guardians could be involved in the forum to ensure their commitment to following the safety procedures.
- 2.1. The school heads may design and implement School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions that specifically address the latent facilitating practices of elementary master teachers: (1) health and safety precautions, (2) appropriate class activities in the time of COVID-19, (3) alignment of objectives review, (4) diagnostic assessment, and (5) stakeholders' involvement. These sessions would be advantageous for the safe return of learners to schools for they would update teachers with the latest trends.
- 2.2. The school head may regularly monitor the application of the key points from the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions designed to address the latent facilitating practices of elementary master teachers. This activity could ensure the execution of the facilitating practices of master teachers.
- 3.1. Future researchers may replicate and develop this study in accordance with the emerging crises being faced by the educational sector. The statements in the improved assessment tool may be modified to meet the changing needs of the educational sector.
- 3.2. The Department of Education policymakers could enhance the developed tool of this study to address the inevitable crises that may hinder the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the assessment tool may be integrated into the teacher performance review. This may ensure that the identified facilitating practices are being applied by the teachers.

Acknowledgement

This educational endeavor was achieved with the help of supportive individuals. Hence, the researcher would like to convey her sincere appreciation for the following; To her family, Allen L. Galang, Alda C. Galang, Ayn Bernadette C. Galang, Joan Mari Ishmael C. Galang, and Jasmin M. Galang, for always supporting the researcher in all her goals; To her alma mater, Holy Angel University, and her professors, for equipping the researcher with the necessary skills to complete this paper; To her dissertation adviser, Dr. Imelda P. Macaspac, for her meticulous guidance and words of encouragement; To the School of Education Program Coordinator, Dr. Cecilia H. Teodoro, for inculcating to the researcher, since her baccalaureate and graduate school years, the values of a true professional educator; To her former cooperating teacher, Mrs. Lyn P. Kuizon, for showing the researcher the pride, joy, and beauty of teaching young minds; To her oral examiners, Dr. Al D. Biag, Dr. Levi E. Elipane, Dr. Jean R. Canlas, Dr. Joselito C. Gutierrez, and Dr. Freddie A. Quinito, for their key points in refining the paper; To Dr. Divina Gracia D. Dizon, Dr. Vilma L. Tacbad, Dr. Jennifer Bungque-Ilagan, Dr. Elvira C. David, and Mr. Lyndon D. Morales, for their generous technical support; To her colleagues and friends within the Department of Education, especially Ms. Bernadette G. Lising, Ms. Karla Y.

De Leon, and Ms. Roselle Andrea S. Macabanti, for the fun that they have induced during the challenging times; and Above all, to the Almighty Father, whose blessings made the researcher who she is as an educator and as a person today. Thank you. Laus Deo semper!

References

Aderibigbe, S., Holland, E., Marusic, I. & Shanks, R. (2022). A comparative study of barriers to mentoring student and new teachers. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*. Volume 30. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13611267.2022.2070995>

Acheson, K., & Dirx, J. M. (2021). Editors' Introduction to the Special Issue of the Journal of Transformative Education on Assessing Transformative Learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 19(4), 295–305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15413446211045158>

Arnejo, J., Potane, J. & Alforte, N. (2021). Phases of collaboration in exploring master teachers' competence. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)*, 60(5), 173-188

Basilio, M. & Bueno, D. (2019). Research skills and attitudes of master teachers in a Division towards capability training. *Philippine Int'l Conference on Economics, Education, Humanities & Social Sciences*. Retrieved from: <http://erpub.org/siteadmin/upload/9008UH0119421.pdf>

Barrera, L., Gomez, A., Padernos, J., Villanueva, P., & Espinosa, M. (2022). The Experiences of selected teachers in Dasmariñas City during the initial implementation of Online Distance Learning (ODL) in the Philippines. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. Vol. 3, 381-392. Retrieved from: <https://www.ejournals.ph/article.php?id=17076>

Barruga, J. (2021). The role of master teachers this pandemic. Department of Education. Region V. Schools Division of Masbate City. Retrieved from: <https://www.depdmabatecity.com/the-role-of-master-teachers-this-pandemic/>

Bonell, C., Melendez-Torres, G., Viner, R., Rogers, M., Whitworth, M., Rutter, H., Rubin, J., & Patton, G. (2020). An evidence-based theory of change for reducing SARS-CoV-2 transmission in reopened schools. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353829220308807>

Boyraz, S. & Ocak, G. (2021). Connectivism: a literature review for the new pathway of pandemic driven education. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*. Volume 6. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Serkan-Boyraz/publication/350966425_Connectivism_A_Literature_Review_for_the_New_Pathway_of_Pandemic_Driven_Education/links/607d4d272fb9097c0cf3e8f1/Connectivism-A-Literature-Review-for-the-New-Pathway-of-Pandemic-Driven-Education.pdf

Busetto, L., Wick, W. & Gumbinger, C. How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurol. Res. Pract.* 2, 14 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>

Chadwick, R., & McLoughlin, E. (2021). Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on learning, teaching and facilitation of practical activities in science upon reopening of Irish schools. *Irish Educational Studies*. Vol. 40. Issue 2. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2021.1915838>

Creswell, W., & Creswell, D. J (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. (5th ed.). Sage publications. Retrieved from: <https://www.docdroid.net/XAQ0Ixz/creswell-research-design-qualitative-quantitative-and-mixed-methods-approaches-2018-5th-ed-pdf#page=262>

David, E. (2014). *Towards a model counselor – principal relationship*. Holy Angel University. Angeles City.

Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-Methods Research: A Discussion on its Types, Challenges, and Criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2), 25-36. <https://doi.org/10.46809/jpse.v2i2.20>

Department of Education. (2022). On the expansion phase of limited face-to-face classes. Retrieved from <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2022/02/02/on-the-expansion-phase-of-limited-face-to-face-classes/>

Department of Education. (2022). On requiring vaccination for teachers handling face-to-face classes. Retrieved from: <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2022/01/20/on-requiring-vaccination-for-teachers-handling-face-to-face-classes/>

DepEd Memorandum No. 071, s. 2021. Preparations for the Pilot Face-to-Face, Expansion and Transitioning to New Normal. Retrieved from: https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/DM_s2021_071.pdf

DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017. National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. Retrieved from: https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/DO_s2017_042-1.pdf

DepEd Order No. 012, s. 2020. Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021 in Light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Retrieved from: https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DO_s2020_012-1.pdf

Donato, N. (2021). The Relationship of the Strategies and Practices of the School Heads and Master Teachers and Teachers' Competencies and Skills in the New Normal.

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education. ISSN 2684-7167 (online) Volume 3 Number 2

Downes, S. (2022). Connectivism. *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, 17 (1). Retrieved from: <http://www.asianjde.com/ojs/index.php/AsianJDE/article/view/623>

Edmonds, W. & Kennedy, T. (2017). Exploratory-sequential approach. In *An applied guide to research designs* (pp. 201-207). SAGE Publications, Inc, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781071802779>

España, G., Cavany, S., Oidtman, R., Barbera, C., Costello, A., Lerch, A., Poterek, M., Tran, Q., Wieler, A., Moore, S., & Perkins, T. (2021). Impacts of K-12 school reopening on the COVID-19 epidemic in Indiana, USA, *Epidemics*, Vol. 37, 100487, ISSN 1755-4365, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.epidem.2021.100487>.

Espineli, N. (2021). Lived experiences of master teachers in monitoring modular distance learning (MDL) teachers at TMCNHS. *Ioer International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*. Vol. 3, No. 1. Retrieved from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3811648

Fernandez-Guzman, D., Sangster-Carrasco, L., & Pinedo-Soria, A. (2021). COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean: what is known about the status of school reopening?. *Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 43, Issues 2, Pages e262-e264. Retrieved from: <https://academic.oup.com/jpubhealth/article/43/2/e262/6015903>

Fraeknel, J., & Wallen, N. (2010). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*. 7th Edition. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Gopez, J. (2021). Cautious and gradual reopening of limited face-to-face classes in Philippine tertiary schools, *Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 43, Issue 2, June 2021, Pages e356–e357, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab060>

Gumarang Jr., B., Mallannao, R., & Gumarang, B. (2021). Colaizzi's methods in descriptive phenomenology: basis of a Filipino novice researcher. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. Vol. 2, No. 10, 928-933. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.02.10.10>

Hart, C. (2020). Educators are learners, too. Retrieved from: <https://www.ednc.org/perspective-educators-are-learners-too/>

Hernando-Malipot, M. (2022). DepEd: majority of students 'satisfied' with pilot face-to-face classes. *Manila Bulletin*. Retrieved from: <https://mb.com.ph/2022/01/05/deped-majority-of-students-satisfied-with-pilot-face-to-face-classes/>

Hernando-Malipot, M. (2022). Students, teachers encounter various challenges during pilot face-to-face classes. *Manila Bulletin*. Retrieved from: <https://mb.com.ph/2022/01/05/students-teachers-encounter-various-challenges-during-pilot-face-to-face-classes/>

Hero, J. L., Zulueta, M. C. E., Gloria D. S., Tongol, J. C. L., Cruz, A. C. D., Sagun, S. A. T., Cajurao, F. G. V., & Cabrera, W. C. (2021). Mastering Innovations in the Lens of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Competence and Practices of 21st Century Filipino Teachers: A Comparison among Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research* 2(4): 285–295. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.02.04.02

Jesmi, A. A., Yazdi, K., Sabzi, Z., Chenari, H. A., & Hasani, A. (2021). Factors Affecting Professional Integrity in Nurses: A Qualitative Content Analysis. *Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology*, 15(4), 633–641. <https://doi.org/10.37506/ijfmt.v15i4.16776>

Joseph, R. (2023). Education before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved from: <https://www.skylineuniversity.ac.ae/knowledge-update/lifestyle-and-trends/education-before-during-and-after-the-covid-19-pandemic>

Karakaya, F., Adigüzel, M., Üçüncü, G., Çimen, O., & Yilmaz, M. (2021). Teachers' Views towards the Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic in the Education Process in Turkey. *Participatory Educational Research*, 8(2), 17–30. Retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1283619>

Kabakci, I., & Izmirlı, Ö. (2015). Investigation of Prospective Teachers' Information and Communication Technology Integration Practices in Terms of Transformative Learning Theory. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281612022_Investigation_of_Prospective_Teachers'_Information_and_Communication_Technology_Integration_Practices_in_Terms_of_Transformative_Learning_Theory

Kim, L., Leary, R., & Asbury, K. (2021). Teachers' narratives during COVID-19 partial school reopenings: an exploratory study. *Educational Research Col.* 63, No. 2, 244-260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2021.1918014>

Kumar, A., Sarkar, M., Davis., Morphet, J., Maloney, S., Ilic, D., & Palermo, C. (2021). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning in health professional education: a mixed methods study protocol. *BMC Med Educ* 21, 439 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-021-02871-w>

Kyriazos, T. (2018). Applied Psychometrics: Sample Size and Sample Power Considerations in Factor Analysis (EFA, CFA) and SEM in General. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327180990_Applied_Psychometrics_Sample_Size_and_Sample_Power_Considerations_in_Factor_Analysis_EFA_CFA_and_SEM_in_General

Laude, T., Ralar, T., & Arcenal, J. (2018). Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders: An exploration of school leadership capacity in the Division of Biliran. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)* (2018) Vol. 40, No 1, pp 50-74. Retrieved from: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/249336371.pdf>

Magsambol, B. (2022). DepEd Allows More Schools to Hold Face-to-Face Classes. Retrieved from: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/depd-allows-more-schools-hold-face-to-face-classes-february-2022/>

Mohd Arifin, S. R. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*. 1(2), 30–33. <https://doi.org/10.31436/ijcs.v1i2.82>

Montemayor, M. T. (2021, December 31). School year unlike any other: A return to F2F classes. *Philippine News Agency*. Retrieved from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1164154>

Ochavillo, G. S. (2020). A paradigm shift of learning in maritime education amidst COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(6), 164–177. Retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1277930>

Ozamiz-Etxebarria, N., Santxo, N., Mondragon, N., & Santamaria, M. (2021). The psychological state of teachers during the COVID-19 crisis: the challenge of returning to face-to-face teaching. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.620718>

Pappas, C. (2023). Everything you need to know about the Connectivism Learning Theory. *eLearning Industry*. Retrieved from: <https://elearningindustry.com/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-connectivism-learning-theory>

Pett, M., Lackey, N., & Sullivan, J. (2003). *Making Sense of Factor Analysis. The Use of Factor Analysis for Instrument Development in Health Care Research*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Pressley, T., Croyle, H., & Edgar, M. (2020). Different approaches to classroom environments based on teacher experience and effectiveness. *Psychology in the Schools*, 57(4), 606–626. Retrieved from: <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=25&sid=bc548de4-fee0-4a91-aa84-fd6218ee9e0b%40sessionmgr4008>

Ramos, C. (2021). In-person classes challenges: ‘Unreadiness’ of students, face masks. *Inquirer.net*. Retrieved from: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1528813/in-person-classes-challenges-unreadiness-of-students-face-masks>

Regional Memorandum No. 131, s. 2022. Opening of all schools for progressive expansion of limited face-to-face classes. Retrieved from: <https://region3.deped.gov.ph/rm-no-131-s-2022-opening-of-all-schools-for-progressive-expansion-of-limited-f2f-classes/>

Regional Memorandum No. 180, s. 2022. Implementation guidelines on the teaching and learning component of the limited face-to-face classes. Retrieved from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yCAthojltjdQostP4U5Wv8ZMtiibeTb/view>

Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) Updated Manual for Teachers and School Heads.

Rotas, E., & Cahapay, M. (2020). Difficulties in remote learning: voices of Philippine University students in the wake of COVID-19 crisis. *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, 15(2), 147–158. Retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1285295>

Sangalang, L. (2018). Mentoring skills and technical assistance of Master Teachers in Pangasinan. *Multidisciplinary Research Journal*. Vol. 1. Issue 1. Retrieved from: <https://psurj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/6.-Mentoring-Skills-and-Technical-Assistance.pdf>

Sarmiento, P., Sarmiento, C., & Tolentino, R. (2021). Face-to-face classes during COVID-19: a call for deliberate and well-planned school health protocols in the Philippine context. *Journal of public health (Oxford, England)*, 43(2), e305–e306. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab006>

Schoonenboom, J., & Johnson, R. B. (2017). How to Construct a Mixed Methods Research Design. *Kolner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 69(Suppl 2), 107–131. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11577-017-0454-1>

Searle, M., Ahn, C., Fels, L., & Carbone, K. (2021). Illuminating transformative learning/assessment: infusing creativity, reciprocity, and care into Higher Education. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 19 (4), 339-365. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/15413446211045160>

Siemens, G. (2017). *Foundations of Learning and Instructional Design Technology*. Chapter 19. Connectivism. Pressbooks. Retrieved from: <https://lidtfoundations.pressbooks.com/chapter/connectivism-a-learning-theory-for-the-digital-age/>

Simbre, A. & Ancho, I. (2023). Post-pandemic aspirations of Filipino elementary School teachers. *Interdisciplinary Research Review*. Vol. 18 No. 2. Retrieved from: <https://ph02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jtir/article/view/247054>

Singh, D., SBPPSE, A., & Gate, K. (2019). Understanding philosophical underpinnings of research with respect to various paradigms: Perspective of a research scholar. *Institute of Management, NIRMA University*. Retrieved from: <https://rb.gy/vvci10>

Sunstar Pampanga. (2022). DepEd gears up for face-to-face classes in Central Luzon. Retrieved from: <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1924768/pampanga/local-news/dep-ed-gears-up-for-face-to-face-classes-in-central-luzon>

Thomas, F. (2022). The role of purposive sampling technique as a tool for informal choices in a Social Sciences in Research Methods. *Just Agriculture Multidisciplinary e-Newsletter*. Vol. 2 Issue-5. Retrieved from: <https://rb.gy/b838v6>

Tran, A., Kerkstra, R., Gardocki, S., & Papuga, S. (2021). Lessons learned: teaching in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.690646>

Tinaytina, J. (2022). Relationship of master teachers' mentoring competency, teachers' performance and students' academic achievement. *International Journal of Research Publications*. Retrieved from: https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&as_ylo=2022&q=master+teacher+mentoring&btnG=

UNICEF (2021). Indonesia: After 18 months of school closures, children must safely resume face-to-face learning as soon as possible – UNICEF/WHO. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/ndonesia-after-18-months-school-closures-children-must-safely-resume-face-face>

UNICEF (2021). Reopening schools safely in the Philippines. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/reopening-schools-safely>

UNICEF (2021). Teachers at the heart of education recovery. Joint Message from UNSECO, UNICEF, and Education International. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/teachers-heart-education-recovery>

UNICEF (2020). School reopening: How teachers and students are adjusting to the new normal in Thailand. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/ndonesi/stories/school-reopening-how-teachers-and-students-are-adjusting-new-normal-thailand>

Vaillancourt, T., Brittain, H., Krygman, A., Farrell, A. H., Pepler, D., Landon, S., Saint-Georges, Z., & Vitoroulis, I. (2022). In-person versus online learning in relation to students' perceptions of mattering during COVID-19: a brief report. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 40(1), 159–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07342829211053668>

Viner, R., Bonell, C., Drake, L., Jourdan, D., Davies, N., Baltag, V., Jerrim, Primos., & Darzi, A. (2020). Reopening schools during the COVID-19 pandemic: governments must balance the uncertainty and risks of reopening schools against the clear harms associated with prolonged closure. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. Retrieved from: <https://adc.bmj.com/content/106/2/111.citation-tools>

Voskoglou, M. (2022). Connectivism vs traditional theories of learning. *American Journal of Educational Research*. Vol. 10. No. 4. Retrieved from: <http://article.scieducationalresearch.com/pdf/EDUCATION-10-4-15.pdf>

Wakui, N., Abe, S., Shirozu, S., Yamamoto, Y., Yamamura, M., Abe, Y., Murata, S., Ozawa, M., Igarashi, T., Yanagiya, T., Machida, Y., & Kikuchi, M. (2021). Causes of anxiety among teachers giving face-to-face lessons after the reopening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11130-y>

Western Governors University. (2021). Connectivism Learning Theory. Retrieved from: <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/connectivism-learning-theory2105.html>

Western Governors University. (2020). What is the transformative learning theory? Retrieved from: <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/what-transformative-learning-theory2007.html>

Yuldasheva, L. (2021). ICT-Competence as a professional characteristic of a modern teacher. *International Journal of World Languages*. Vol. 1 No. 2. Retrieved from: <https://ejournals.id/index.php/IJWL/article/view/202>