

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Carrying Out Full Face-To-Face Classes in Primary Grades: Threading the Preparations, Challenges, and Best Practices of Schools Through the Lens of Elementary Teachers

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Abstract

When COVID-19 continued to spread in 2020, many institutions were impacted and began adapting to the new environment, which most people call the new normal. Schools were among the most impacted institutions, with pupils at all grade levels, from primary to higher education, forced to stay home and choose between modular and online learning modes. Hence, this study aimed to explore the experiences of elementary school teachers' preparations, challenges, and best practices in carrying out full face-to-face classes to design proactive measures to prevent further harm in the entire basic education system. The study used a qualitative descriptive research design approach, with in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. Findings revealed that primary teachers extensively prepared for face-to-face classes by ensuring facilities were fixed, maintaining transparent communication with parents, rigorously implementing COVID-19 protocols, employ-

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ing structured teaching methods, and focusing on personal development. These encompass ensuring safe school environments, personal financial sacrifices due to inadequate government support, addressing poor academic skills of pupils, navigating insufficient parental support, and tackling learning gaps among pupils. The findings revealed that the elementary teachers propose several best practices for preparing face-to-face classes. These suggestions encompass motivating oneself to overcome challenges, maintaining an optimistic outlook, ensuring proper communication with parents/guardians, responsibly facing challenges, and fostering cooperation among school personnel.

Introduction

When COVID-19 continued to spread in 2020, many institutions were impacted and began adapting to the new environment, which most people call the new normal. Schools were among the most impacted institutions, with pupils at all grade levels, from primary to higher education, forced to stay home and choose between modular and online learning modes. Many pupils, as well as their parents and guardians, have encountered numerous difficulties in learning and guiding, particularly elementary pupils who are still learning basic and fundamental subjects (Andarwulan et al., 2021).

The challenges primary school teachers face in adapting to various modes of learning, as highlighted by Rasmitadila et al. (2020), underscore the need for comprehensive studies addressing the unique strategies and difficulties elementary teachers encounter in this specific context. Scholars, such as Widodo et al. (2020) and Rahmawati (2022), have identified the initial impacts of reopening schools at the elementary level, emphasizing the daunting task of managing diverse learning needs and adapting teaching methods to individual student requirements. However, a gap in the literature is noted, pointing to a lack of comprehensive studies addressing elementary teachers' specific challenges and strategies during transitions to full face-to-face classes.

Though several studies have been published investigating the problems that elementary school teachers are experiencing in different school settings, research exploring the preparations, challenges, and best practices of elementary teachers on the full implementation of full face-to-face classes is barely sufficient. Hence, this study will

be conducted to bridge this gap by investigating the difficulties that elementary teachers face as they prepare for the full adoption of face-to-face classes.

This study was very significant to the elementary school teachers who served as research participants, as a venue to express themselves and to generate authentic responses from the grassroots. These significant concerns from the teachers were essential information for educational leaders to design proactive measures to prevent further damage in the entire basic education system. This study was also significant as a contribution to the body of knowledge as a future reference for scholars who wish to pursue relevant topics.

Methodology

Research Design

This investigation used a qualitative method approach, particularly Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology (TPh) approach. The researcher will use Transcendental Phenomenology to obtain a neutral description of the raw facts. With this, the researcher eliminates any personal bias. This comprehensive design aims to identify primary teachers' preparations through diverse individuals' lived experiences, providing insight into the core structures and meanings inherent in adaptability in the post-pandemic.

Research Participants and Materials

The study's research participants were seven primary school teachers in Libas Elementary School in South Cotabato who had been selected using a purposive technique. These elementary teachers took part in an open-ended interview. A list of guide questions was used as the study's materials. All record-keeping activities were documented in audio and video recorders.

Data Collection

The researcher will start all the undertakings by sending a letter to the Principal of Libas Elementary School of South Cotabato to conduct this study. After obtaining the permission, the researcher will secure informed consent from the research participants to serve as proof that all involved in the study consented and were granted permission. Informed consent emphasizes that participants are

Table 1*Readiness Activities for In-Person Elementary Classes*

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Maintenance of School Equipment and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers address and fix damages. • Primary teachers get themselves and the school ready for potential impacts of the pandemic. • Primary teachers arrange and set up the physical layout of the classroom.
Ongoing Communication with Parents and Guardians of Young Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers reach out to parents to provide updates. • Primary teachers communicate important information to parents. • Primary teachers organize meetings with parents when necessary.
Modern Teaching Approaches for Young Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers deliver fundamental lessons to their pupils. • Primary teachers cover core subjects necessary for student learning. • Primary teachers provide instruction on key academic concepts.
Cultivate Individual Competence in Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers build their own teaching readiness. • Primary teachers develop independent teaching skills. • Primary teachers enhance their self-preparedness for instruction.

entirely aware of and informed about the study’s undertakings. A preliminary visit and interview with participants will be conducted; therefore, the researcher is authorized to collect extra data to make the study more authentic and believable. The researcher will conduct in-depth interviews (IDI) with the participants to obtain more accurate data and assess their honesty and impartiality.

To validate the research findings, the researcher will use a validation and triangulation approach that gathers and compares data from several people. Finally, the researcher will be through three processes in the thematization process: data reduction, which involved shifting the data from the participants and translating it into figures, tables, and discussion, data display, which involves showing the organized data; and conclusion, drawing, and verification, which involves summarizing the primary inputs and, in contrast, assessing the given data to enhance the conclusion.

Data Analysis

The data from the qualitative research was analyzed using thematic analysis. This analysis aimed to comprehend the experiences, ideas, or behaviors reflected in the data, identify patterns of themes, and assess the research instrument's relevance, applicability, and adaptability for exploratory purposes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). After addressing all the research questions, conclusions were drawn, and the key inputs of the study were validated. The foundation of the conclusion underwent verification through repeated review of all the data until the desired result was obtained.

To attest to the objectivity and creativity of this qualitative investigation, a changeover concept based on empirical theory, as put forward by Piantanida and Garman (2009), was employed. Following an in-depth exploration of the research participants' experiences, an engaged interpretation rooted in their statements was provided. The discussion was constrained in its incorporation of theories, research, and personal biases, strictly aimed at supporting data interpretation and preserving the genuineness of the participants' perspectives and emotions.

Results

Readiness Activities for In-Person Elementary Classes

Maintenance of School Equipment and Facilities

This theme investigates the research participants' physical preparation in school equipment and facilities, so pupils will be comfortable in their environment while learning. It revealed a broader perspective that fixing school equipment and facilities is linked to a holistic education enhancement. By addressing these issues, schools could improve the quality of education, enhance teacher-student interactions, and better prepare pupils for future challenges. This idea is expressed by research participants 1 and 6:

“...what I did was repair the pupils's tables if they were broken, and I also fixed the designs inside and outside our room, including the flowerpots and other items that required design.” –RQ1P1

Table 2*Difficulties Experienced by Primary Teachers in Readying for Full In-Person Classes*

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Ensuring Positive and Safe Learning Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers face difficulties in preparing the learning environment for students. • Primary teachers take on the responsibility of preparing both the classroom and themselves.
Out-of-Pocket Expenses Due to Inadequate Government Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers use their own funds to support students' needs. • Primary teachers do not depend on external donations. • Primary teachers face higher personal expenses.
Underdeveloped academic abilities in children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers noticed the underdeveloped academic skills of students. • Primary teachers identified weaknesses in students' academic abilities. • Primary teachers observed struggles in students' academic performance.
Lack of Adequate Parental Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers get minimal assistance from parents. • Primary teachers receive limited support from parents. • Primary teachers benefit from only a small amount of help from parents.
Filling Educational Gaps in Young Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers identified learning gaps in students. • Primary teachers noticed educational gaps among students. • Primary teachers recognized discrepancies in students' learning.

“...we need to start by cleaning the things inside and repairing any broken equipment in the classroom. This way, when the pupils return, everything will be in order. Then, I arranged my room, making sure to space the chairs apart to allow social distancing among the pupils.” –RQ1P6

This theme implies the importance of preparation in terms of the physical aspects of the learning environment to be substantially appealing to learners despite the ongoing pandemic. Berris & Miller (2013) emphasize that a learning environment should be inviting to pupils, fostering a sense of safety while promoting an atmosphere conducive to learning. The process of resuming limited in-person classes amidst the pandemic has seen certain schools taking proactive steps to initiate a gradual transition.

Table 3*Difficulties Experienced by Primary Teachers in Readying for Full In-Person Classes*

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Encourage personal determination to overcome challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers inspire themselves. • Primary teachers encounter challenges despite the difficulties they face.
Fostering a positive outlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers cultivate a positive attitude. • Primary teachers foster an optimistic mindset. • Primary teachers build a constructive outlook.
Establishing proper channels of communication with parents/guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers engage in clear communication with parents. • Primary teachers maintain effective communication with parents. • Primary teachers ensure proper communication with parents.
Addressing challenges with conscientiousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers embrace accountability for their profession. • Primary teachers own their professional duties. • Primary teachers assume responsibility for their work.
Joint cooperation among educational staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary teachers collaborate with school staff members. • Primary teachers team up with other school personnel. • Primary teachers cooperate with the school workforce.

Estrellado (2022) highlights this priming as a pivotal move in preparing for the return to physical classrooms. However, despite these initial efforts, the implications of readapting educational landscapes post-pandemic still present a notable and evolving challenge. The complexities involved in this transition go beyond mere logistics and encompass multifaceted considerations, including safety protocols, pedagogical adjustments, pupils' emotional well-being, and equity in access to education. Navigating these implications effectively demands comprehensive planning, ongoing assessment, and adaptable strategies to ensure a smooth and sustainable transition back to in-person learning.

Ongoing Communication with Parents and Guardians of Young Learners

This theme expressed the effective communication with parents and guardians of elementary pupils. Respondents consistently em-

phasized the need for clear, timely, and comprehensive communication to address concerns, disseminate vital information, and reassure parents about the safety and logistics of the full implementation of face-to-face classes in primary school. As stated by participants 1 and 5:

“...prepare pupils by providing updates and information through contacting their parents.” –RQ1P1

“...before the classes started, I called a meeting for the parents and informed them to teach their pupils writing at home.” –RQ1P5

This theme underscores the significance of effective communication when discussing important matters and issues with parents or guardians. According to Ozmen et al. (2016), parent-teacher communication offers diverse advantages to teachers, the school, and parents alike. Fostering collaboration between schools and families is a focal point in educational discourse among scholars. Establishing a partnership with parents is deemed essential for enhancing the quality of education as families significantly influence pupils' learning process and development (Buza & Hysa, 2020).

Modern Teaching Approaches for Young Learners

It emphasizes the need for a well-structured curriculum, thoughtful lesson planning, differentiation, assessment, classroom management, technology integration, and strong collaboration with parents. These elements collectively contribute to a holistic and systematic approach to primary education that benefits educators and pupils. As highlighted by participant 2:

“...we provided them with only basic instruction. It wasn't as intensive as usual due to the pupils being impacted by two years of the pandemic.” –RQ1P2

The theme entails how primary teachers manage the level of difficulty of their topics in the return to face-to-face classes. Primary school teachers shared valuable perspectives on educators' readiness levels and suggested ways to enhance preparation for teaching pupils after the pandemic (Akçay et al., 2023). The study conducted

by Lawal (2021) delves into the strategies pertinent to the effective implementation of blended teaching and learning within teacher preparation institutions during the “new normal.” It illuminates the importance of diverse stakeholders’ engagement in this endeavor.

The strategies outlined likely encompass a range of approaches such as technological integration, pedagogical innovation, and collaborative planning among educators, administrators, and support staff. This study underscores the necessity for a concerted effort among these stakeholders to navigate the challenges of the evolving educational landscape and capitalize on the opportunities afforded by blended learning methodologies.

Cultivate Individual Competence in Teaching

It underscores the need for teachers to be lifelong learners, continuously evolving and honing their skills. It emphasizes professional development, pedagogical techniques, classroom management, educational technology, curriculum design, reflective teaching, emotional intelligence, and parental collaboration. These elements collectively contribute to the development of self-equipped teachers who are better prepared to meet the evolving needs of their pupils and the educational landscape. Participant 5 stated:

“...then, for me, we really need to be equipped. You should be ready so that when the pupils return and you face them, you are full of energy.” –RQ1P5

This theme suggests that ensuring personal well-being is crucial for being adequately equipped and energetic while teaching pupils. According to Elas et al. (2019), possessing knowledge and skills related to technology leads to more effective teaching, enabling educators to be better equipped in their approach. Even amid the pandemic, primary teachers make a concerted effort to exude energy in front of their pupils, aiming to uplift the mood and alleviate any apprehension about returning to school.

Baser et al. (2016) emphasize that teachers undergo self-transformation by cultivating positive perspectives, attitudes, and dedicated efforts to acquire knowledge, ultimately enhancing their teaching methods significantly. This internal evolution toward positivity and continuous learning contributes to their ability to deliver more impactful and impressive teaching experiences for their pupils.

Difficulties Experienced by Primary Teachers in Readying for Full In-Person Classes

Ensuring Positive and Safe Learning Environments

Educators, administrators, and parents gather to prioritize maintaining safe and thriving school environments post-COVID-19. It revolves around adapting health protocols, fostering mental well-being, implementing flexible learning models, and creating a collaborative approach involving stakeholders. Insights focus on the need for adaptable strategies to balance safety measures and maintain a conducive learning environment. As stated by P1 and P4:

“...what I mean is to determine if the school is ready for face-to-face interactions, as this poses the most significant challenge. Being adequately prepared for face-to-face learning is crucial for enabling pupils to learn easily.” –RQ2P1

“...the preparation of the internal and external learning materials within the classroom needs to be clean and in good condition for the pupils, as that’s the main problem we encounter.” –RQ2P4

This theme implies the challenges in adapting health protocols for the safety of learners. In response to the extensive trauma induced by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, it is increasingly imperative for educational institutions to actively seek methods to cultivate secure, trauma-sensitive, and rehabilitative learning environments (Brown, 2021). Findings underscored the apparent readiness of public schools at the beginning of the academic year, evident in their preparedness and organization before class commencement. The study highlighted that these institutions adhered to safety protocols aligned with the Department of Health’s mandates, demonstrating compliance among public schools. Consequently, the study concluded that public schools effectively executed and implemented school improvement and safety plans, tailored explicitly for limited face-to-face classes, as evidenced by the observed protocols and strategies (Gildo et al., 2023).

Out-of-Pocket Expenses Due to Inadequate Government Support

Participants share personal experiences, highlighting financial challenges and sacrifices made due to the lack of adequate governmental aid. The conversation delves into the emotional and practical implications of navigating financial uncertainties independently. Insightful narratives shed light on strategies employed, community support networks, and the resilience demonstrated amid these challenges. The aim is to understand the human perspective behind these sacrifices and advocate for improved support systems. As stated by participants 5 and 6:

“...The government budget falls short as it struggles to cover and sustain all the pupils’ needs. As a teacher, it’s disheartening when you can’t supplement these limitations for the pupils’ and classroom’s improvement.” –RQ2P5

“...Before the class starts, my intention is to complete the classroom setup for the pupils. Additionally, I’ve taken the initiative to construct a personal comfort room for the pupils, leveraging donations from others while also contributing as a teacher.” –RQ2P6

This theme implies that due to insufficient government funding for school repairs, primary teachers often use their finances to cover these expenses. The return to face-to-face classes post-pandemic for teachers unveiled a complex web of challenges. Primary teachers face ongoing financial difficulties, striving to meet their financial obligations. To address this, Fernando and Arrieta (2023) suggest that school leaders should examine these financial challenges and consider incorporating a financial literacy initiative into the in-service training teachers provide. This would assist in enhancing their financial management skills.

The emotional toll of personal losses experienced during the pandemic is exacerbated by financial instability. Teachers adapted to new teaching norms, balancing work-life demands while navigating reduced resources and increased pressures. Understanding these themes is crucial, revealing the importance of support networks, professional development, and strategies to foster resilience amidst profound personal and professional upheavals (Singh et al., 2021).

Underdeveloped Academic Abilities in Children

This aims to understand how the pandemic has affected pupils' academic abilities and explores the various factors contributing to this decline, such as disruptions in schooling, remote learning challenges, social isolation, and mental health impacts. Participants exchange ideas on potential solutions, supportive strategies, and the importance of adapting teaching methods to mitigate the impact on pupils' education. Participant 2 stated:

“...The struggles pupils face are largely due to the pandemic's impact. They've had difficulty learning fundamental skills like reading, writing, and numeracy. With the return to face-to-face classes, it's evident that their academic skills have significantly deteriorated.” –RQ2P2

This theme implies the challenges of primary teachers in teaching some pupils with poor academic skills due to remote learning. The reopening of schools in the Philippines after the pandemic has seen concerning academic performance among pupils. The learning outcomes have shown poor results despite returning to face-to-face classes. This poses a significant challenge for the education system, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and support to enhance student learning in the post-pandemic scenario (Amora et al., 2023). Aguaded et al. (2023) stated that while learning loss occurred during phases of physical separation between teachers and pupils, the pandemic brought about an unforeseen shift where the gap between them became primarily digital.

Lack of Adequate Parental Support

There is inadequate parental involvement in supporting teachers with restoring and cleaning school facilities during the return to face-to-face classes. The conversation delves into the difficulties of insufficient parental support, including the strain on school resources, compromised hygiene standards, and limited maintenance efforts. Participants discuss the importance of parental engagement in ensuring a safe and clean learning environment, emphasizing shared responsibility and the role of community collaboration. As P3 stated:

“...I really took it as a challenge because only few helped me”
–RQ2P3

This implies that primary teachers encountered difficulties in effectively contacting parents to request assistance with school-related issues. The reopening of classes for the 2020-2021 school year, amidst health risks and stringent protocols from concerned agencies, has emphasized the critical role of parental involvement in ensuring a safe and effective return to face-to-face learning. Samoy Jr. et al. (2021) highlight the necessity for parents to actively engage with schools to navigate the challenges posed by health measures, underscoring the collaborative effort required between families and educational institutions during this post-pandemic transition.

Dotterer and Wehrspann (2015) found that social and economic factors limit parental involvement in schooling. The study revealed that schools are often difficult for parents to reach. While there is consensus on the benefits of parental engagement, differing views exist on its purpose. Importantly, involvement in school activities serves social functions, but engaging parents in facilitating learning at home significantly impacts learning outcomes.

Filling Educational Gaps in Young Learners

This discussion aims to explore the specific learning gaps noticed in pupils following the pandemic. This focuses on identifying specific areas where pupils exhibit gaps in learning, whether in core subjects, social skills, or emotional development. Participants discuss potential reasons for these observed gaps, such as disrupted learning environments, varying access to resources, or emotional stressors. P7 specified:

“...So, in other words, learning gaps are the cause, and until now, they continue to be the pupils’ problem.” –RQ2P7

This theme implies the challenges primary teachers face in pupils’ learning gaps after lockdown. Creating a love for reading and fostering a strong literacy culture among pupils’ post-pandemic is the primary aim for schools. However, cultivating this culture among young learners poses challenges. Tabroni et al. (2022) emphasize the crucial role of parental involvement in building a child’s literacy culture, highlighting the collaborative effort needed between

schools and parents to achieve this goal in the face of post-pandemic educational shifts.

Moreover, Alejo et al. (2023) outlined that addressing the disruptions caused by COVID-19 requires implementing five crucial rapid measures: Ensuring access to education for all pupils and maintaining their attendance; Regularly evaluating learning levels; Focusing on teaching fundamental skills; Enhancing the effectiveness of instruction; and cultivating psychosocial health and well-being.

Effective Strategies for Elementary Teachers in Preparing for In-Person Classes

Encourage Personal Determination to Overcome Challenges

Teachers can find motivation by focusing on their purpose: their impact on pupils' lives. Emphasizing small victories, like pupils' progress, can boost morale. Encouraging a growth mindset and viewing challenges as growth opportunities helps sustain motivation. Support networks and sharing success stories among colleagues can foster a sense of community, enhance motivation and ongoing professional development, and stay updated with innovative teaching methods, which can invigorate educators, offering fresh perspectives and renewed enthusiasm in navigating post-pandemic teaching challenges. As stated by participants 1 and 3:

“...Motivation and going with the flow are crucial because, ultimately, I'm the one who must help myself. If I don't confront my problems, they won't resolve themselves. Self-motivation is key, and it's something I consistently rely on.”
–RQ3P1

“...I faced all the tasks, despite the struggles and exhaustion, because there was no other option but to complete the work. Eventually, I managed to overcome those challenges. –RQ3P1

This theme implies the need to motivate oneself to overcome the challenges of primary teachers. Baiza (2022) highlights the importance of self-motivation to extend beyond personal needs and prioritize the well-being of pupils. This call to action underscores the crucial role of educators in not only meeting academic needs

but also fostering a supportive and caring environment for pupils. Emphasizing empathy, dedication, and a commitment to the overall welfare of pupils becomes essential as teachers navigate the challenges of the post-pandemic educational landscape. Amid the public health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting from face-to-face to online modes of learning and teaching is deemed essential. It has been recognized that employing strategies to enhance motivation can assist in overcoming the associated challenges (Thu & Nguyen, 2021).

Fostering a Positive Outlook

This theme captures teachers' resilience, adaptability, and innovative strategies to navigate unprecedented circumstances and continue providing quality education to pupils amid the pandemic. It highlights the importance of their role in shaping not just academic growth but also pupils' emotional and psychological well-being during these trying times. Participant 2 stated:

“...Simply be an optimistic, passionate, and consistently enthusiastic individual.” –RQ3P2

This theme entails that maintaining a positive outlook could help overcome challenges. Amidst the challenges of the pandemic and the return to face-to-face teaching, teachers exhibited remarkable resilience, hope, and optimism. Their unwavering determination to navigate uncertainties, adapt swiftly to new teaching methods, and support pupils in tumultuous times reflects their resilience. Despite the adversities, their hopeful and optimistic outlook has been a guiding light, inspiring colleagues and pupils alike as they continue to navigate the complexities of the post-pandemic educational landscape (Josefsson, 2022). As per Finnegan (2022), the teaching practices most strongly linked to pupils' reported sense of hope were 1) acknowledging and accepting negative emotions and 2) sustaining a positive perspective.

Establishing Proper Channels of Communication With Parent/Guardians

In this theme, communicating effectively with parents or guardians during the post-pandemic educational phase is critical for ensuring a smooth transition and addressing any concerns or un-

certainties. By keeping communication channels open, providing necessary information, and promptly addressing concerns, schools can foster a supportive partnership with parents to benefit the pupils' education and well-being. Participant 4 stated:

“...Engage in a polite and respectful conversation with parents regarding cleaning the internal and external areas of the classroom for the pupils.”–RQ3P4

This theme implies the significance of proper communication with pupils' parents/guardians. El Cid (2018) conducted a study aiming to comprehend the potential of teacher-initiated communication to foster student learning and improve connections between home and school. The study delves into the effects of this communication on the relationships between school and home, student academic achievement, and motivation.

A study discovered that both teachers and parents play crucial roles as the foremost educators. Parents, in particular, are responsible for guiding and cultivating their pupils' behavioral, mental, and emotional development, shaping them into well-rounded individuals. Their role involves motivating pupils to harness their abilities, fostering discipline, and nurturing confidence (Asmarani, 2022). Hence, the necessity for developing effective communication channels with parents becomes evident.

Addressing Challenges with Conscientiousness

Facing challenges responsibly involves overcoming obstacles and embracing opportunities for growth, innovation, and resilience. It is about ensuring the well-being of both educators and pupils while maintaining educational quality and support in a rapidly changing educational landscape. Participant 5 stated:

“...Stay consistently responsible and don't dwell on problems or challenges, as they can be overcome. Embrace your profession with love and always strive to maintain happiness.”
–RQ3P5

This theme entails the continuity of education while facing challenges responsibly. The authors aim to shed light on responsible problem-solving. Sá & Serpa (2020) focus on providing insights into

the challenges and opportunities posed by COVID-19 for higher education. They advocate for rediscovering teaching approaches, leadership strategies, and communication channels within the digital landscape. This digital transformation is considered integral to advancing sustainable educational development, emphasizing the importance of adapting teaching practices to meet evolving needs and embracing innovation to drive positive change.

During crises, the dynamics of teaching and learning go through notable shifts. Whether it is natural disasters or human-made incidents, schools and colleges need resilience, adapting through innovative means to sustain teaching and learning activities. Consequently, ensuring the continuity of education stands as a significant challenge for educators (Chang-Richards et al., 2013).

Joint Cooperation Among Educational Staff

In this theme, the success of returning to face-to-face education hinges on the cooperation, collaboration, and support among all school personnel. It is about fostering a unified approach to create a safe, supportive, and enriching learning environment for pupils while ensuring the well-being of everyone involved in the educational process. Participant 6 stated:

“...help each other; if there’s no assistance from the president or Ma’am (the school head), my expenses might increase.”
–RQ3P6

This theme emphasizes the importance of collaboration among school personnel in addressing matters within the educational setting. The current landscape presents unprecedented challenges for school administrators in the Philippines and globally. A recent study investigates explicitly the correlation between school principals’ leadership and management styles and the readiness of public schools for the academic year. Focusing on five schools in Laguna City, the research contributes to developing governance operations and contingency plans tailored to these schools. This study’s findings aim to inform and guide these administrators in enhancing their leadership approaches and operational strategies, intending to bolster the preparedness of schools in navigating the complex challenges they currently face (Villar et al., 2021). Additionally, collaborative efforts between parents, teachers, and school personnel are essential in edu-

cational settings, particularly in the pandemic where online learning or schooling is prevalent (Elka Anakotta, 2022).

Conclusion

Based on the findings, this study concludes that elementary teachers' preparatory measures significantly impact the creation of effective learning environments for face-to-face classes. Actions such as fixing school equipment, transparent communication with parents, implementing COVID protocols, employing systematic teaching approaches, and focusing on self-equipped teaching development collectively contribute to fostering conducive learning settings. These measures are pivotal in establishing safe, organized, and engaging classrooms, emphasizing the importance of meticulous preparation and structured teaching methods for a successful transition to face-to-face classes.

Furthermore, the study highlights the crucial role of proactive measures in benefiting pupils' learning experiences. It emphasizes the need for continued emphasis on these preparatory measures to ensure a smooth and productive shift toward face-to-face instruction, highlighting their significance in enhancing the educational journey for both teachers and pupils.

Moreover, this study concludes that the challenges faced by primary teachers in the preparation of face-to-face classes include ensuring safe school environments, enduring personal financial sacrifices due to inadequate government support, addressing pupils' academic shortcomings, managing insufficient parental involvement, and bridging learning gaps among pupils. These challenges highlight the need for addressing these multifaceted challenges, which necessitate proactive safety measures, adequate resources, ongoing professional development, and prioritizing teachers' well-being to ensure conducive learning environments.

Therefore, this study affirms that the suggestions put forth by primary teachers present valuable perspectives for enhancing conducive learning environments in primary grades amid significant adjustments. These recommendations involve motivating oneself to confront challenges, upholding a positive perspective, establishing effective communication with parents/guardians, responsibly addressing obstacles, and promoting collaboration among school staff.

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