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Words from the Editor

We are delighted to share the first volume of the Journal of School Research (JoSR) with you. This volume has been the product of our labor amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We could have stopped and just waited for the situation to go back to "normal" and used the pandemic as an excuse not to publish. But we held on to our vision and kept the faith because we believe that research is vital, and its value is amplified during these trying times.

The Lord has been gracious in providing the resources (wisdom, strength, agility, and people) to turn our vision into reality. To Him, we are ever grateful. We are equally thankful to (1) the administration and St. Scholastica's College community led by our School President, Sr. Christine Pinto, OSB, for the support and encouragement not only for this publication but for our future endeavors; (2) the contributors for lending us their trust and participation in the entire publication process; and (3) the reviewers for their expertise in evaluating the manuscripts and making sure that we publish quality research.

Published by the Center for Research and Evaluation (CRE) Office, JoSR serves as a venue for sharing discussions and reflections on policy, practices, trends, and issues concerning education. JoSR welcomes internal (within St. Scho community) and external (outside St. Scho community) research on various aspects of education (but not limited to): learning and teaching, teacher training, community engagement, curriculum, library, administration, policymaking, and supervision.

The first volume includes a wide array of topics such as retrospective analysis of research risks, analysis of outputs on reading, teacher education, inclusive education, stories of survival of kindergarten schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, and evaluation of performance tasks in Chemistry classes. As we read and discuss these researches, may we become more curious, reflective, and responsible educators and scholars. May we continue to ask relevant questions, seek and try out solutions, and collaborate with our peers. Because when we remain open and humble in season and out of season, we will learn and grow. We will outgrow our old selves and our past successes. Indeed, research changes us. We improve our situation and community after doing research ourselves. Through research and collaboration, let us reinvent ourselves and continue positively impacting our communities and societies.

Elen Joy A. Bruza
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of School Research (JoSR)

A Retrospective Analysis of the Proportion of Research Risks of Studies with Human Participants

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Abstract

This study aims to provide evidence of research risks in research with human engagement. Research done within a period of three school years before the implementation of an ethics policy in a particular academic institution was retrospectively assessed for research risks. Four hundred ninety-three research that is non-medical in nature were reviewed to determine the proportion that involved human participants. Findings show that slightly more than half of the percentage of papers included human participants. Further review was conducted to determine the proportion of research with protocols that are beyond minimal risk. This was done by assessing the magnitude and probability of harm categorized as psychological, physical, social, and economic harm using a rubric that was developed for this purpose. Results show a small proportion of research that were assessed with risks for psychological harm. The risk for social and economic harm was also seen in diminutive proportions. Recommendations are made on the need to institutionalize ethics policies for disciplines such as social sciences without having to compromise the basic ethical principles that are articulated in the medical field and health sciences.

Keywords: research risk, research ethics, ethics review, psychological harm

Introduction

The establishment of the Nuremberg Code (University of Nevada, 2019) is the springboard for raising awareness and concerns about safeguarding participants' welfare in the course of a research study. Despite these guidelines and regulations, maltreatment of human participants continued in biomedical research. These are accounted for in the infamous Tuskegee study which involved patients who were left untreated for syphilis as part of the study's protocol and in another study that required injecting live cancer cells to patients without the patients' knowledge (Katz, 1972 cited in Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

In the field of behavioral science, Stanley Milgram conducted a psychological experiment in 1963 that tested people's obedience to authority. The study is known to have evoked feelings of shame and embarrassment among research participants (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). The procedures of the experiment have affected some participants in the long run that scientists labelled such experimental procedures as unethical (Hobday, 2012). The experiment was simulated in the context of a memory and learning activity that required participants to administer fake electric shocks to another person for every incorrect answer made during the activity upon the instruction of a university professor who symbolized the authority figure in the said experiment (Gryzb & Dolinski, 2017). During the course of the experiment, participants were not told that the electric shocks they were asked to administer were not real. The accounts on the Tuskegee Study and Milgram's Study are examples of research protocols that inflict physical and psychological harm to the participants.

As a response to criticisms of Milgram's study, the American Psychological Association (APA) formulated its ethical guidelines for the use and treatment of human participants in research in 1973. At present, the APA Ethical Guidelines Concerning Human Participants in Research is observed in the field of Behavioral Sciences. At present, the most significant points highlighted in the APA guidelines include the following: protection of participants from physical or psychological harm, informed consent, debriefing, and confidentiality (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). More recently, the APA ethical guidelines underscored beneficence, fidelity, integrity, justice, and respect for rights and dignity (APA, 2017). The formulation of the ethical guidelines in research with human participants in the medical, biomedical, and social science are necessary as according to the Institutional Review Board of the University of Virginia (2019), for as long as studies involve human participation, human participants are at the least, but at minimal risk ranging from physical, psychological, social to economic harm.

Research Risks

Risks refer to those conditions that make a situation dangerous (University of Nevada, Reno, 2019). In the context of research ethics review, research risk can be described as the probability of harm or injury resulting from a person's participation in a research study (University of California, Irvine Office of Research [UCI-OR], 2019). A research risk is considered minimal when the probability or likelihood and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ones would encounter in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests (Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board University of Chicago, 2019; UCI-OR, 2019). Thus, when the harm or discomfort are beyond what one would typically encounter in their daily life, the research can be considered to entail risks that are above minimal or beyond minimal level.

The identification and evaluation of these research risks are necessary. To the highest possible extent, researchers take the responsibility of ensuring that the physical, psychological, and social well-being of their research participants would not be detrimentally affected by the research (Cardiff School of Art and Design, 2014). Wassie, Gebre-Mariam, Tarekegne, and Rennie (2019) revealed that privacy and confidentiality were a concern in social science studies and this is due to the methodological approaches used in the discipline. Their study's discussants reported that privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality may not be completely assured in such studies. Wassie and colleagues also found that in some instances, psychological, social, or emotional distresses were also traumatic and stigmatizing for research participants. For instance, this happens when participants relive their experiences necessitating counseling or rehabilitation services afterward.

In Felzmann's (2009) report, she presented that school-based research is not usually at risk for significant physical harm. However, even survey research may be a bit taxing if it is lengthy and repetitive. Felzmann highlighted that psychological and social risks are more typical in school settings. Some of these potential psychological risks include emotional upset or even emotional fatigue in certain cases. As for the risks of social harm, this may occur as a result of being singled out, experiencing embarrassment, or loss of status within peers to name a few. Hence, to safeguard the participants' welfare, Research Ethics Committees (REC) take responsibility for evaluating research protocols for ethical acceptability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2009). RECs, which are also known as Institutional Review Boards (IRB), have the mandate to specifically

evaluate research protocols in terms of their potential risks to participants as well as the magnitude of harm that could happen thereafter (UCI-OR, 2019). Research risks can be better assessed by looking at them in terms of their typology. The World Health Organization (2011) emphasized, too, that the nature of these risks depends on the type of research being conducted and that members of IRBs or RECs must be aware that research risks may occur in different ways or dimensions presented thru a typology that covers physical, social, financial, or psychological harm.

Typology of Research Risk

In the purview of ethics review, research risks can be analyzed and gauged more precisely when presented according to different types of harm. These types of harm customarily include physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic (WHO, 2009; 2011). A research risk typology is often used by IRBs or RECs (UCI-OR, 2019; University of Nevada Reno, 2019; University of Oregon, n.d.; University of Virginia, 2020; Rochester Institute of Technology, n.d.) as a frame of reference in reviewing and evaluating protocols for research risks. Some of the risk categories commonly included in such typologies which are relevant to the current study are briefly described subsequently.

Physical Harm

This type of harm results from possible injury as a result of one's participation in research. This includes physical discomfort, pain, injury, or illness caused by the procedures of research. This can be brought about by procedures that involve physical stimuli such as noise, electric shock, heat, cold, etc. However, physical harm can also ensue when participants engage in a social situation that involves violence leading to a physical risk (University of Oregon, n.d.). Physical harm may also happen when participants are asked to exert beyond their resting state, possibly causing an injury. Care and treatment for such risks must be provided and this must be communicated in the consent forms (University of Virginia, 2020).

Psychological Harm

This occurs due to the arousal of anxiety, stress, fear, confusion, embarrassment, depression, guilt, and shock as a consequence of participating in be-

havioral experiments or research. Psychological risks may happen, too, when the procedures of the study lead to loss of self-esteem, or altered behavior (University of Chicago, 2019). Such procedures include interviews, answering questionnaires, or manipulating the participant's environment to observe how people respond to it (University of California Irvine, 2019). Psychological harm may result from exposure to emotionally evocative material, age-inappropriate material, topics related to personal difficulties or difficult life experiences, or from conditions that trigger traumatic memories (Felzmann, 2009).

Social Harm

This type of harm can be triggered by procedures that lead to being labeled or stigmatized (University of California Irvine, 2019). It involves loss of respect (University of Chicago, 2019) due to invasion of privacy and breaches of confidentiality causing embarrassment within one's social group (Rochester Institute of Technology, n.d). Social harm can also affect social relationships with others to the disadvantage of the participant (University of Oregon, n.d.).

Economic Harm

Participation in research may result in additional actual costs to individuals which consequently results in economic harm (University of California Irvine, 2019). Economic harm is about financial loss resulting from participation in a research project. This can be in the form of consequential economic losses resulting from lost income (Munshi & Tatthe, 2013).

This typology is used as a frame of reference in assessing risks in research protocols and is the basis for determining if proposed research can potentially put a participant at minimal risk or beyond minimal risk. Institutional Review Boards or Research Ethics Committees assess these research risks in terms of the probability and magnitude of harm that may be inflicted to research participants in biomedical, health science as well as social science research. By measuring the magnitude of the harm, the extent of the probable harm that could occur to research participants is assessed, and by examining the probability of harm, the likelihood that the harm may occur is also assessed. These are important indicators of research risks because even when the magnitude of harm is considered to be of minimal extent, the protocol can still be judged as risky if there is the certainty that the harm will ensue.

Issues on Research Ethics Review

Primarily, IRBs are mandated to protect human subjects from physical harm in biomedical research. However, IRB's concern is no longer limited to assessing the risks for physical harm, and no longer restricted to the biomedical field. One of the criticisms against IRBs is that it is perceived as a body that tends to imagine minor or unlikely harms due to their aversion to risk. As a consequence of this, researchers are said to resort to avoiding formulating research topics that an IRB might find questionable. Instead, researchers resort to developing research that will abate IRB scrutiny. Consequently, this limits academic freedom and effective research (White, 2007, cited in Sontag, 2012).

Within the purview of social science research, the concern for research ethics and data protection is viewed as imperative as nearly all research data in social sciences is collected from human participants. Because it involves human participation, the principles of research ethics and privacy apply to them (German Data Forum, 2010). While the need for an ethics review is justified, one of the issues raised in relation to this is on the appropriateness of research ethics framework for the social sciences as these frameworks are presumably modeled after the natural sciences. Thus, IRBs might be implementing requirements and standards that are more apt for the natural sciences than the social sciences. Such discussion is presented in the context of the research ethics infrastructure in Germany where ethical requirements for research vary across research fields with the field of biomedical research being more rigorous than in the social sciences (Oellers & Wegner, 2010).

Research Ethics Review in the Philippine Context

Health and social science research involve human subjects. The ethical conduct of research is required for health research in the Philippines (Philippine Health Research Ethics Board, 2017; 2019). The Philippine National Health Research System Act of 2013 (RA 10532) mandates the *Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) to* ensure adherence to the universal principles for the protection of human participants and promote the creation of functional and effective ethics review committees. Thus, policies on health research ethics are governed and implemented by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB). PHREB (2017; 2019) emphasizes that research involving the participation of humans should conform with the standards set for the ethical conduct of research. PHREB states that the creation of an Institutional Ethics Review Com-

mittee (IERC) is necessary for Philippine institutions that engage in biomedical and *behavioral research.* IERCs must be created in order to independently and competently review the ethical acceptability of proposed research studies.

In the Philippines, there are 97 RECs in the Philippines that are accredited by PHREB. Forty-six have a level 3 accreditation while 30 are accredited with level 2 status. Lastly, there are 21 RECs with a level one accreditation nationwide. In the national capital region area or the greater Manila area, there are 8 RECs from universities or schools/ hospitals with a level 2 accreditation and 1 university with a level 1 accreditation. It should be noted here that RECs with level 3 accreditation are either hospitals or schools offering medical or allied medical programs (PHREB, 2019). Thus, the number of RECs accredited with levels 1 or 2 suggests that there are a handful of colleges and universities that have applied and have been duly recognized by PHREB.

From the said figures, it can be surmised that a number of higher educational institutions in the Philippines have yet to form their RECs and implement policies and guidelines for research ethics review. When RECs are not institutionalized in an educational environment that requires faculty and students to engage in research and thesis writing respectively, the assessment of the research project or thesis proposal's potential risk for harm is met with limitations. Researches done by faculty could only be presumed to be evaluated by a technical review board or its equivalent while the students' thesis would be evaluated by a thesis committee or panel. This suggests that research/ thesis proposals are mostly reviewed and evaluated for their relevance and scientific merit or value but not specifically for the research protocol's potential physical, psychological, social, and economic harm to the participants. In a research ethics review, the research protocol is particularly evaluated according to the type of harm and the degree of risk which human participants may experience once they participate in the study.

Objectives of the Study

Given this backdrop, it can be inferred that the formal establishment, institutionalization, and accreditation of ethics boards or committees are met in a number of tertiary academic institutions especially those that offer medical, allied medical courses, and science programs. However, it also seems that in some academic institutions, the need to institutionalize an ethics policy has yet to be met. Thus, by conducting a retrospective examination of past research in

an academic setting that has not yet established an ethics board, the current researchers intend to show that there is a proportion of research that involves human participants and that a fraction of these papers may post moderate or even high risk for harm (e.g. psychological, physical, social, and economic) on the participants.

Specifically, the current study aims to provide descriptive data on the following: the proportion of researches of faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students that involved human engagement, and the proportion of research that is assessed as moderate and high risk for psychological, physical, social, and economic harm. The researchers also aim to present data showing the mean scores from the risk assessment according to the different types of harm. Furthermore, the qualitative descriptions and frequency distribution of the potential harm of the research works rated as moderate and high risk are also presented in this paper. These data are deemed valuable as they would provide details about the risk involved in each type of harm in the papers reviewed. These data can be used as a frame of reference in the teaching of research ethics guidelines in all research methods courses, in the creation and full implementation of institutional research ethics policies and review processes, and in strengthening mechanisms to address research risks with consideration of the different types of risks or harm.

Method

Research Design

This is a descriptive retrospective study of past research conducted in a higher education institution within a period of 3 academic years before the implementation of the institution's ethics policy. The current study presents a description of the proportion of studies that involved human participants in their research protocol and the proportion of researches with human participants that are rated as minimal, moderate, and high risk based on a rubric that was developed for this research. Furthermore, the current study also presents a qualitative description of the probable specific research risks of the papers that were rated as moderate to high-risk research.

Research Site

The study site is a higher educational institution offering graduate and undergraduate programs in the field of arts and sciences, business, accountancy,

hospitality management, and music. The research site has not yet established its working research committee at the time the study was conducted.

Data Sample

The data utilized in this study was originally a part of a research project of a particular consortium of universities and colleges in the Philippines. The data in the current study was utilized with the permission of the consortium and the institution where the data came from. A total of 493 completed pieces of research were evaluated in this study and included undergraduate and graduate school research works (theses), and faculty research works from three school years. Four hundred sixty-three (n= 463) of these researches were undergraduate thesis and nine (n=9) of them were graduate school thesis. The remaining twenty-two (n=22) were research works of faculty members. The field of discipline in which the research works were written for included psychology, mass communication, education, political science, nutrition, economics, business management, accountancy, information technology, fine arts and interior design, and hospitality management.

Data Availability Statement

The data samples in this study are not publicly available to uphold the privacy of the research/ thesis authors whose works were assessed in the study. However, these data are available upon request from the corresponding author [EEL].

Instrument

The SMEC (South Manila Educational Consortium) Human Engagement in Research Inventory (HER-I) was utilized in order to assess human engagement in research and determine the level or degree of harm in the research procedures of the papers evaluated in this study. The SMEC HER-I is an instrument developed by the South Manila Educational Consortium Research Committee for their purposes. The instrument identifies research works that involve human participation and assesses the degree of risk in research protocols. This instrument consisted of two parts. The first part asked for information that was useful in identifying research procedures that involved human participation while the second part consisted of a rubric which was utilized in evaluating whether the degree of risk in the protocol of the research works and theses were a mini-

mal risk, beyond minimal risk and high risk. The description of the SMEC HER-I including its dimensions and criteria of the rubric is described further in the succeeding sections.

Description of SMEC HER-I

The HER-I consists of three parts. The first part included items that identified research with human engagement versus those without human participants. A checklist was also used to determine the research design/ method of studies that required human engagement. The second part contained a rubric with the leftmost vertical column indicating the nature of harm (e.g. psychological, physical, social, and economic harm) and the top horizontal row showing the criteria for assessing the degree of harm in terms of magnitude or extent of harm. The degree of harm is determined by evaluating the magnitude and probability of each type of harm in the research protocol. Specifically, the magnitude of harm is a measure of the extent of harm with scores ranging from 3 (great extent), 2 (moderate extent), and 1 (minimal extent). Moreover, each nature of the harm is evaluated in terms of probability which is assessed based on the likelihood of the occurrence of harm and scored from 3 (High Probability), 2 (Medium or Moderate Probability), and 1 (Low Probability). The magnitude and probability of harm are indicated in a separate answer sheet which also asks for a brief description of the nature of harm from the evaluator.

In this study, the nature of harm includes Psychological, Physical, Social, and Economic. These constructs are operationally defined as follows: Psychological harm refers to the risk of experiencing depression, anxiety, altered self-concept, etc. as a result of participating in the study; Physical harm refers to pain, injury, illness, or impairment which participants may suffer from as a result of the study; Social harm centers on social stigma, and damage in reputation; and Economic harm mainly focuses on the loss of employment opportunity, and the incurred cost of participating in the research by the participant.

Scoring

The rating for Magnitude and Probability are multiplied in order to determine the risk assessment per nature of the harm. For instance, if the rating for the magnitude of Psychological Harm is 1 and the rating for probability is 2, the risk assessment for Psychological Harm is 2 (1x2). Thus, the highest possible score for each nature of the harm is 9 with a magnitude score of 3 and probabil-

ity score of 3 while the lowest possible score is 1. In this study, the harm is considered a minimal risk when the rating for magnitude and probability of harm is equivalent to 1. This suggests that the extent of harm is minimal with a low likelihood that it will happen. When the rating for the magnitude and probability of harm is between 2 (moderate extent for magnitude and moderate in terms of probability) to 3 (great extent for magnitude and high in terms of probability) in any of the nature of harm, the level of harm is considered beyond minimal risk because the extent of harm is moderate and with a probability that it will happen. The thesis protocol is considered high risk when the rating for magnitude or probability in any of the nature of the harm is equivalent to 3 as this means that the harm is perceived to be of great extent and is very likely to happen. Therefore, it should be noted that, in this study, the research is considered a minimal risk when the risk assessment is equivalent to 1. The risk assessment is considered moderate when the rating is at 2 and high risk when the assessment is equivalent to 3 and above in any type of harm. Those considered moderate to high risk mean that the participants would likely encounter the following: risks that are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests, severe emotional or cognitive disturbance, mild pain, or mild illness leading to injury or impairment, creation of social stigma/ damage in reputation, and significant economic losses.

Research Procedures

This section presents details on the training of the research assistants who evaluated the research protocols of the research reviewed in this study, and the procedures undertaken during the data gathering and data analysis phase of the study. Before this study commenced, an Ethics Clearance was sought for this research. The ethics clearance was granted by the University of the Philippines Manila Research Ethics Board.

The theses of the undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty research from a particular school were evaluated using the SMEC Human Engagement in Research Inventory. The theses and research works sampled in the current study covered three school years, which was a period when the school had yet to establish its REC. The authors and the research assistants of the current study were required to attend a 2-day Good Research Practice (GRP) Training conducted by the PHREB. This training was necessary to ensure that the researcher and the research assistants have a clear understanding of

ethical research practices and risk evaluation. After the completion of the GRP Training, the research assistants also attended a 2-hour training that explained the standard procedures on how the research protocols are to be evaluated. This session was necessary in order to establish a common ground among the research assistants who evaluated the research protocols. During the said training workshop, the descriptions of the conditions for each type of harm were verbally explained to the research assistants. The breadth and depth of psychological and social harm were explained to the research assistants. Likewise, physical harm was also discussed with emphasis on discrete situations in which participants may be at risk for physical harm. Lastly, economic harm was also discussed both in terms of expenses incurred from participating in the research as well as the possible loss of income/employment or opportunity to earn as a result of participating in the research.

In the process of evaluation, a code was assigned for each document so that the anonymity of the authors of the paper is ensured. With permission from the school administration, the data were sourced and evaluated in a working area that is conducive and within the premises of the college library and the research office. The proportion of research that involved human participants and those that were evaluated as beyond minimal risk are presented in terms of frequencies and percentages. The proportion (percentage and frequency) of research with human engagement were presented with consideration of the type of researcher (faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students). The risk assessment was done across course programs. However, in the final analysis, these were treated as aggregate data. The findings for risk assessment were analyzed per nature of harm using descriptive statistics presented as percentages and frequency counts. Lastly, the research works that were evaluated as moderate to high-risk research were further described qualitatively by inferring the specific potential harm which its research protocol/ procedure could have caused the participant.

Results

The number of researches that involved human participants and researches that are evaluated as beyond minimal risk is shown in the succeeding tables. Table 1 shows the frequencies and proportions of research works that have human engagement.

Table 1.

Frequencies and Proportions of Research with Human Participants

Total number of Research	Frequency and Proportion (%) of Research with Human Participants by Faculty	Frequency and Proportion (%) of Research with Human Participants by Graduate Students	Frequency and Proportion (%) of Research with Human Participants by Undergraduate Students	Frequency and Proportion (%) of Research with Human Participants
493	18/22(82%)	9/9(100%)	243/ 462(52%)	270/493(55%)

Slightly more than half (55%) of the sample of researches included human participants. Data reveals, too, that faculty and graduate school research protocols involved procedures that required the participation of human respondents. In the case of the undergraduate students, the percentage of students who worked on papers that required human participation is more than half (52%) of the research sample assessed in the current study. This suggests that in the undergraduate level, there is a considerable number of students who worked on papers that required human engagement or gathering data from participants. A description of the proportion of research that is rated as moderate and high risk for psychological, physical, social, and economic harm is presented in the next table.

Table 2.

Frequencies and Proportions of Moderate and High-Risk Research with Human Participants by Faculty, Graduate and Undergraduate Students

Researcher	N Research with Human Participants	Frequency and Proportion (%) of Research that is Moderate Risk				Frequency and Proportion (%) of Research that is High Risk			
		Nature of Harm				Nature of Harm			
		Psycho-logical	Physical	Social	Econo-mic	Psycho-Logical	Physi-cal	Social	Econo-mic
Faculty	18	2 (11%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Graduate Students	9	3 (33%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Under-graduate Students	243	20 (8%)	0	7 (2.8%)	5 (2%)	2 (.82%)	0	3 (1.2%)	0
All Re-searchers	270	25 (9%)	0	(2.5%)	5(1.8%)	2(.74%)	0	3 (1.1%)	0

The proportion of moderate and high-risk research in terms of psychological harm was observed across researches with percentages ranging from .82% to 33%. Thus, the sample of the research works reviewed yielded proportions that were at risk for psychological harm (e.g. depression, anxiety, altered self-concept, etc.) to the participants. However, for undergraduate (2.8%) research, the results showed a low percentage of the risk for moderate social and economic (2%) harm, and a high risk for social harm (1.2%). Though the percentages are minimal, the findings still mean that there are a small number of participants who may have experienced social stigma and may have incurred some cost or economic losses as a consequence of the time spent in participating in the study. It is noteworthy, too, that physical harm was not observed in all the papers assessed in this study. In the succeeding table, data showing the risk assessment mean scores are presented according to the different types of harm and researcher.

Table 3.

Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Research Risk Assessment of Researches with Human Participants by Faculty, Graduate and Undergraduate Students

Researcher	N Research with Human Participants	Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Research Risk According to the Nature of Harm			
		Psychological	Physical	Social	Economic
Faculty	18	1.11	1	1	1
Graduate Students	9	1.33	1	1	1
Undergraduate Students	243	1.12	1	1.06	1.02
All Research Works	270	1.13 *SD = 40**	1 SD = 0*	1.05 SD = .29*	1.02 SD = .13

*Standard Deviation

These data generally show minimal risk for psychological, physical, social, and economic harm. This implies that the magnitude and probability of harm in the works evaluated were generally minimal. Also, the probable risks seen in most of the research samples were not greater than what one may encounter on a day-to-day basis. By and large, it can be said that the research protocols reviewed in this study were not physically harmful or risky. With the exception of a very few papers that were rated as somehow "beyond minimal risk" for

psychological, social, and economic harm (see Table 2), it can be inferred that generally, the protocols formulated in the studies reviewed can be considered safe and ethically acceptable.

Table 4.

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Descriptions of the Nature of Harm in the Moderate – High-Risk Research Protocol

Description of Risk	Type of Risk	f (frequency)	Percentage (%)
Unpleasant Feelings	Psychological	19	22
Frustration	Psychological	10	11
Depression	Psychological	9	10
Shame/ Embarrassment	Social	7	8
Decreased Confidence	Psychological	7	8
Anxiety	Psychological	7	8
Boredom	Psychological	5	6
Altered Self-Concept	Psychological	5	6
Guilt	Psychological	3	4
Social Stigma	Social	3	4
Loss of Break Time Hours	Economic	3	4
Damage in Reputation	Social	3	4
Fear	Psychological	2	2
Loss of Work Hours	Economic	2	2
Anger	Psychological	1	1

Total number of descriptions= 86

The qualitative descriptions of the nature of harm of the moderate and high-risk researches are presented in Table 4. It can be inferred from the data that the risk of experiencing unpleasant feelings was observed (22%) among the protocols reviewed. Likewise, the research works assessed to be moderate to high risk may also possibly evoke feelings of frustration (22%), depression (10%), and shame and anxiety (8%). The rest of the proportions observed in the study ranged from 6% to 1% which included altered self-concept, social stigma, and anger to name a few. From this set of data, one could deduce that most of the harm observed in the studies that were deemed to be moderate to high-risk research were psychological in nature while social and economic harm make up minimal proportions. Physical harm was not observed in the protocols evaluated.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine the proportion of past research that involved human participation, and the percentage of papers that were moderate and high risk for psychological, physical, social, and economic harm prior to the full implementation of research ethics policies in the institution where this study was conducted. Another objective of the current study was to look at the level of risk of the studies reviewed according to the nature of harm and to provide brief descriptions of the risks that were observed by the evaluators in the papers that were rated as moderate and high-risk research.

Findings of this study show that prior to the establishment of a REC, the overall proportion of researches that involved human participants in the current study's research site is of a considerable proportion. It comprised more than half of the researches sampled in the study which suggests that there are a lot of researches that required the participation of individuals either as survey, interview, or experimental research participants mostly in the field of social sciences and business. In these studies, researchers including students have sought permission from respective institutions, and have addressed letters to individuals inviting them as research participants. In most cases, consent was obtained through an informed consent form prior to data collection. Although seeking permission and obtaining informed consent were means to ensure ethical research practice, these steps are not enough to safeguard research respondents from potential harm or risks in the process of research. While permission and consent were sought, research participants may not have been sufficiently informed about the study's protocol and the probable risks that go with it. In the current study, some consent forms provided details about the study's background and the tasks that participants are expected to perform in the study such as answering paper and pencil tests, answering interview questions, etc. Moreover, it was observed that the risks of harm that one may experience from participating in the research are not explicitly stated and described well in most of the informed consent forms. With this limited information, the participants who were invited to be respondents may not have fully comprehended the probable harm or risk that may ensue from their participation. Thus, based on these grounds, the notion that scientific investigations need social control (Hossne, Vieira & De Freitas, 2008) such as in the form of a research ethics review is even further validated.

The presence of psychological harm was observed in more or less 10% of the papers done by undergraduate students and faculty while one-third (33%)

of the graduate students' researches were perceived to have the potential to bring about psychological harm. Another type of harm that emerged in a small proportion of undergraduate research is social harm, which is closely related to psychological harm. Consistent with the somewhat small proportions of moderate and high-risk research, findings in terms of the mean scores show that generally, the risk for psychological, physical, social, and economic harm is minimal and thus, not alarming. But then putting into consideration the findings indicating a fraction of the papers that showed potential for psychological, social, and economic harm, the importance of having an ethics board should be upheld institutionally. These types of harm surfaced in the data because the nature of the disciplines which the student papers were written for was psychology, education, mass communication, business, and hospitality management with methods varying from experimental and non-experimental quantitative to qualitative designs. The papers in these disciplines mostly involved variables that are organismic which can only be measured by utilizing tests or conducting individual and group interviews and observed through an intervention or performance evaluation. When it comes to faculty research, the research showed potential for psychological harm and these works were actually a program review study and an evaluation study of a particular classroom instructional approach. Part of these studies' data included vignettes from focus group discussions, individual and aggregate grades and test scores resulting from quasi-experimental intervention, individual and aggregate scores in standardized tests, and teaching performance evaluation ratings. The utilization of these kinds of data may be the reason these were deemed a bit risky. This could have evoked anxiety, worry, and unpleasant feelings on the part of the participants. Due to this, the protocol was perceived to be "beyond minimal risk research" which meant that although the magnitude or extent of harm is moderate, it is somewhat likely to occur or happen in the course of the study. Looking at the overall proportion of psychological, social, and economic harm, the amount of paper assessed to be moderate and highly risky appears to be a fraction of the sample reviewed in this study. However, what one should be concerned about is not the size of the proportion but the presence of the probability of occurrence of harm regardless of whether it is low or high in proportion.

Based on this evidence, the establishment and implementation of an institutional ethics review board are warranted even for academic institutions that do not offer allied medical courses and health science programs. As seen in the current study's findings, some of the research protocols of the studies in the field of psychology, education, communication, business, and hospitality

were believed to be of moderate risk and high risk for certain types of harm. By having an institutional ethics review board composed of members who are duly trained to conduct research ethics review, the research risks could be minimized and researchers will provide more specific and responsive mitigating measures in the research process.

In the Philippines, the ethical conduct of research is required for health research which encompasses the social sciences and any research activity that involves humans as participants (Philippine Health Research Ethics Board [PHREB] 2017; 2019). PHREB (2017) reiterates that Philippine institutions that engage in behavioral research must establish an institutional REC, which shall provide an independent, competent, and timely ethical review of proposed studies in the interest of the potential research participant's dignity, rights, safety, and well-being. RECs should consider both the scientific and ethical aspects of the proposed research (PHREB, 2017). Furthermore, the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC) also advocates ethics review in social science with the expectation that social science researchers "will respect the individuals, groups and communities whose behaviors they seek to understand, and will value their rights and identities at all times" (Philippine Social Science Council, n.d., par. 2), and consider the long and short-term effects of research projects not only on individuals but also on the natural and social environments. PSSC's code of ethics underscores integrity, confidentiality, informed consent, beneficence, social justice, cultural and gender sensitivity, and protection of vulnerable and at-risk individuals and groups.

Similar ethical principles also apply to business research. The probable transgressions that can happen in the process of conducting research include the risk of harm to participants, invasion of privacy, lack of informed consent, deception, legal matters, data management, and conflicts of interest (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The Academy of Management (2005 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011) even states in their code of ethics that researchers are expected to be responsible for assessing the possibility of harm to research participants, and determine what can be done to minimize the risk of harm. Researchers must ensure that respondents will not be harmed or adversely affected as a result of their participation in a marketing research project (Market Research Society, 2019). The occurrence of physical or emotional harm may take place when researchers engage in fieldwork or field research.

Furthermore, an ethics review is not only deemed necessary in health, social, and business. The necessity of an ethics review is also recognized in the

field of humanities, arts, and design. In De Montfort University (2019), faculty, staff, and students of the Faculty of Arts, Design, and Humanities are required to undergo an ethics review to determine if the research risk is minimal or beyond the minimal level. In Cardiff Metropolitan University (2014), they acknowledge that the specific domains and research practices established in the arts may challenge traditional ways of responding to ethical issues in other disciplines. They consider ethics review to be relevant as fine art research most frequently involves audience participation, participatory research projects, and projects involving photography making ethics review of papers necessary. In the current study, the research setting where the data was sampled also offers programs in visual arts and interior design. As far as these data are concerned, none of the students' research/ thesis in fine arts and interior design methodologically involved humans as participants. However, by having an institutional ethics review committee or board, there would be an independent body to review the research protocol. The ethics review board would be in a position to determine whether there is human engagement in the research procedures or not. Some possible forms of human engagement in this type of research could be client interviews, audience surveys or interviews, and other similar undertakings, which may be understated in the research method and protocol.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the light of the current findings, it is posited that policies on ethics review would be beneficial for disciplines beyond medicine, and health science as it should not be presumed that the research methods in the social sciences, business, humanities, and arts are risk-free. The nature of the papers reviewed in the present study are not in the area of pure science, medicine, and health science, and yet, small portions with a risk for psychological, social, and economic harm were exhibited in the findings. The functions and responsibilities of an ethics committee are to ensure that the protocol of any research undertaking takes into consideration the welfare and safety of its potential participants. By institutionalizing research ethics committees, the accountability on the part of the researcher will be underscored and thus, their proposed mitigating measures will be more carefully planned and articulated in their proposals. Moreover, its institutionalization will pave the way for ethics committee members to undergo ethics training (e.g. Good Research Practice Training, Clinical Research Practice Training, etc.) as this is ideally a requirement for ethics committee members. With proper training, they will be able to examine, envision, approxi-

mate potential harm in a given research protocol which technical review boards or thesis panel committees may not be able to infer.

In the current study's context, the nature of the research that requires an ethics review is in the social sciences, education, business, accountancy, hospitality, and arts and design. Thus, with clear ethics policies and guidelines, and upon completion of an ethics training program, an objective, accurate and unbiased evaluation may be conducted with consideration of the philosophy, standards, and perspectives of the above-mentioned disciplines. This is possible as there is a framework (Economic and Social Research Council, 2006 cited in Oellers & Wegner, 2010) that includes rules that are relevant to the social sciences with consideration of the challenges in social science research such as globalization, technological advancement, and interdisciplinary research. Briefly, these rules reiterate ensuring integrity and quality, the need to inform participants about the purpose, methods, utility of the research, and its potential risk. The framework underscores confidentiality of information and anonymity of respondents, voluntary participation, harm avoidance, and statements on conflict of interest or partiality. This framework responds to the requirements of research ethics boards while valuing the methodological nuances of the social sciences. Hence, using this as a frame of reference, it is possible to institutionalize ethics policies for such disciplines without having to compromise the basic ethical principles that are articulated in the medical field and health sciences.

In the light of these findings, the researchers recommend the establishment of an institutional ethics review board and ethics polices in academic institutions that do not offer allied medical courses and health science programs. In establishing the ethics board and policies, the researchers also emphasize the importance of undergoing ethics training and the conduct of an objective, accurate and unbiased evaluation with consideration of the philosophy, standards, and perspectives of the social sciences, education, business, accountancy, hospitality, and arts and design disciplines.

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Reading at the Crossroads: Examining a School Division's Research Output on Reading

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Abstract

The quest in finding solutions to reading problems has tightened the eagerness of educators to do research. Examining what has been done in the track of research endeavors on reading provides a lens on what works, what else should be done next, and what educators, parents, school administrators, and other stakeholders can do together to help every learner to read for life. Using content analysis, this study synthesized purposively selected 15 action research studies in a Division in Region 4 from school year 2014 – 2020. Results reveal the following findings: most action research were undertaken in elementary and junior high school levels; focused on instructional materials; reliability measures; had students as main participants of the study, and conducted interviews. In addition, most of the action research claim that the innovation, strategy, or intervention introduced in each study is effective based on their findings. Only 5 action researches present an action plan while most recommendations are addressed to teachers.This study recommends that researchers consider checking the developmental nature of reading, discussing methodologies used thoroughly, and ensuring the utilization of research outputs into practice; and curriculum planners, teachers, and the division personnel consider this mapping for program and project planning. The findings may pose a significance among educators on using research-based reading strategies to remedy reading problems especially in the New Normal and open opportunities for dialogue on how action research results are utilized for future practice and studies.

Keywords: reading, reading program, reading intervention, innovations, research

Introduction

If students in this generation do not learn to read, they cannot succeed in life. If they are unable to read, their chances to be successful in the academe and in their profession in the future will be limited. It is common knowledge that reading empowers individuals to myriad opportunities because through reading, they are also able to learn as much as they can as they progress in the academic ladder.

As much as reading affects students' intellectual development, there are pressing problems that teachers, parents, and students face in the 21st century. According to the report of the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) administered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Philippines ranked last in reading among 79 countries and economies. The report implies that 15-year-old Filipino students who took the 2018 PISA had an average score of 340 on the reading portion of the test wherein the score was below the OECD average of 487 points, and even more worrying, less than one-fifth of Filipino students achieved a Level 2 score, which was the minimum proficiency level (Jaucian, 2020).

The report on PISA garnered national attention and resulted in some government measures. One of these is the DepEd's B3s (Bawat Bata Bumabasa), which urged all offices at the Central, Regional and Schools Division Offices as well as in school levels to respond to the 3Bs initiatives to intensify their advocacy for reading, pledge their commitment to make every learner a reader at his or her grade level, and align their priorities towards the promotion of a culture of reading as a key step in closing achievement gaps (DepEd Memorandum No. 173 s. of 2019).

Meanwhile, reading programs have already existed even before the 2018 PISA Report. In particular, the Department of Education initiated the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP). This is a national program that supports the thrust of DepEd to make every child a reader and writer at his grade level. It supports the attainment of the Education for All (EFA) target of universal school participation and elimination of dropouts and repetition in the first three grades. ECARP funds are allocated to the regions to support the acquisition of children's storybooks, training of implementers, setting up a school reading center, and other advocacies (DepEd Order 50, S. 2012). Hence, projects and programs on reading were anchored in this DepEd Order.

To address the problems in reading, various action researches have been conceived to determine immediate solutions. Chapter 1, Section 7 (5) of the

Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (RA 9155) expresses that DepEd urges all levels to conduct educational research and studies that will serve as one of the bases for necessary reforms and policy development. In particular, action research refers to the "process of systematic, reflective inquiry to improve educational practices or resolve problems in any operating unit" (DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017). Thus, schools and divisions have conducted action research to expand educational practices.

For the past six years, action research in reading in the City Schools Division Office of Antipolo has been widespread to address the problems in reading in basic education. The problems and challenges in reading have inspired many educators to dig for solutions. Solving reading problems is necessary to remedy related concerns. Students' difficulty in comprehension may also affect students' performance in other subjects since students need to comprehend learners' materials provided by the Department of Education (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2012).

Despite the efforts to make every child a reader, the reading programs still do not cater all students. Problems continue to exist. Based on the Philippine Individual Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), there is still a myriad of frustration among readers in both elementary and high school. Still, some readers fall behind as far as comprehension is concerned. In addition, some students do not display interest in reading.

Jennings, Caldwell, and Lerner (2010) stressed that reading problems "*can be devastating for students and their families. In school, these children are forced to face their inadequacies day after day. As failing students, they are often rejected by teachers and peers. In their academic classes, students with reading problems are assigned textbooks that they cannot read, and they are given homework they cannot do. A common consequence is that failing students turn to misbehavior, or they may simply give up, displaying a trait called learned helplessness*" (pp. 2-3). Allington (2001) expressed, "*our schools create more students who can read than students who do read. Too many students and adults read-only when they are required to*" (p.8).

Although much has been done in the research work, the direction of the research endeavor of educators in the Division of Antipolo remains to be an area for discussion. There are three possibilities. If many studies already addressed a particular portion of the dilemmas in reading, is it about time to refocus on other areas? If problems persist, is it appropriate to continue and find solutions to existing problems? It is also possible to ask whether the previous

actions were effective or not, and is there a way to change the track and picture a new direction for research?

Action research has been an effective avenue to address the common problems that occur in the educational system especially those that happen in the classroom. The Division Research Festival, which started in 2014, inspired a lot of educators to propose and implement more action research. The role of the teachers is crucial since they are the ones who work closest to the students. The concern now focuses on whether the previous research works addressed the problems by asking the right questions. The present research, however, does not intend to point fingers or grill the previous endeavors to solve reading problems; but it initiates an avenue to rethink what has been done and what needs to be done to produce more productive and constructive research.

Synthesizing previous works may provide a lens on the common practices in Antipolo, and it may reflect what works and what needs to be done. Since most projects, programs, and policies should be research-based to ensure their success and effectiveness, looking at research practices poses relevance among educators, school administrators, supervisors, and parents.

Objectives of the Study

This researcher aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the profiles of the action research in reading?
2. What are the most common research topics in reading?
3. What methodologies of research on reading were used in terms of:
   a. research design,
   b. sample size and sampling technique,
   c. instruments, and
   d. validity and reliability measures?
4. What are the common findings of research on reading?
5. What are the common recommendations of research on reading?

This action research poses significance among teachers, school administrators, and future researchers. Teachers may benefit from this study by getting informed with the synthesized findings of previous studies. School administrators may plan professional development programs that will enhance the teaching of reading. Future researchers may conduct action research on areas that are not explored by previous researchers.

Reading

The purpose of this review is to identify the direction of research in teaching reading. The article of Fox and Alexander (2011) *Handbook of research on learning and instruction* explored the current trends and issues in particular areas of teaching and learning. Fox and Alexander (2011) argue that reading is "*the complex communicative behavior of deriving meaning from presented text*." This definition provides an understanding to educators of what reading is in general.

In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) of the United States stressed the importance of scientific, evidence-based research on the best way to teach reading. In addition, NRP asserted that learning to read well is "a long-term developmental process." In other words, reading skills and demands on readers evolve from different stages of human development (Fox & Alexander, 2011).

Hassett as cited in Fox and Alexander (2011) probed that elementary education and reading instruction face a challenge whether the ones learned in the classroom are parallel to the reading experience that awaits a child in the adult world. Specifically, questions on how the child will apply the reading abilities that he developed in school in the different activities outside the academe.

Gray as cited in Fox and Alexander (2011) emphasized that reading should include much more than word recognition and oral fluency. Thus, it should include reflection, critical evaluation, identification of patterns and relations, accommodation of new ideas, and application.

Clark as cited in Fox and Alexander (2011) found that students of different reading abilities did not differ in patterns of strategy use in reading, but the quality of strategy varied.

Various studies also highlighted factors on growth in reading comprehension. Verhoeven and van Leeuwe as cited in Fox and Alexander (2011) stated that children's initial scores for listening comprehension and vocabulary strongly predicted their later development in reading comprehension. Bray, Pascarella, and Pierson as cited in Fox and Alexander (2011) found that students' initial levels of reading comprehension and reading attitude were the strongest predictors of later reading comprehension and reading attitude.

According to Gray as cited in Fox and Alexander (2011), reading materials and instruction should be aligned with students' interests, and it should foster a reading habit all throughout human development. Gray added that acknowl-

edgment and accommodation of learners' individual differences in capabilities, interests, and needs should be at the heart of any program to improve reading in schools.

Meanwhile, females are found to be more likely to enjoy reading and reading for pleasure (Hughes-Hassell and Rodge as cited in Fox & Alexander, 2011). Activities and purposes in the reading of students also differ in school and out of school (Ivey & Broaddus as cited in Fox & Alexander, 2011).

Senior (2005) described reluctant readers as "readers who come in a number of guises: they include the intelligent reader who is interested in reading but who don't read well; those who seem to have little or no interest and who, because they read so rarely, are in danger of falling behind their peers; and those children who have specific problems that make reading difficult. The most frustrating one is the reader who reads well but chooses not to."

Reading Programs in the Philippines

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) was utilized in many studies. It is "used as a classroom-based assessment tool that aims to measure and describe the learners' reading performance in both English and Filipino languages in oral reading, silent reading, and listening comprehension. These three types of assessments aim to determine the learner's independent, instructional and frustration levels" (DepEd Order 14, s. 2018).

Indeed, there is a need to organize the system of reading programs in the country. According to Ocampo (2016), "*When the national level is disorganized, so is the rest of the system. Even the classroom level is affected. They want to decentralize and look at it at the division level but they don't know what to do. Nobody seems to know what to do*" (p. 230).

It is important to address problems in reading because reading has influences on other learning outcomes of students particularly on their attainment of dreams. Patterson (2014) claimed, "*It's a simple fact. If kids don't read, they're going to have a hard time getting through high school. Kids who don't read a lot are falling behind in school, which means they are likely to fall behind in life. I believe if you can turn a kid on to reading, you're saving a life*."

Woolfolk (2005) emphasized the importance of reinforcement. She stressed, "*The best reinforcers are intrinsic ones, such as the pleasure one gets from reading, the pride one feels after accomplishing a challenging task, or the*

internal satisfaction one feels in helping others. Students will willingly engage in activities that are enjoyable or that satisfy their curiosity" (p. 319).

Hence, it poses a challenge to teachers to create good impressions on students as far as reading is concerned. For instance, when they are provided a new reading strategy or material, they may ask questions such as "Is it interesting?" "Do I need or want to know this?" "Can I become successful in using this strategy?" (McGregor, 2007).

Another area of concern that probably research on reading fails to address despite the proposed activities and strategies: What if students still can't read the text? Lent (2012) argues that teachers can help students comprehend by empowering them to become aware when they are not understanding the text and providing them strategies to check their comprehension and perform something to address the problems.

Action Research on Reading

Mostly, problems with reading in the classroom are examined through action research. Action research is defined by Leedy and Omrod (2010) as "*a type of applied research that focuses on finding a solution to a local problem in reading in a local setting*" (p.108). Researchers who go in this direction may explore a certain phenomenon in the classroom and school setting and address problems using the scientific method.

Frankel et al. (2012) defined action research as a type of research "conducted by one or more individuals or groups for the purpose of solving a problem or obtaining information in order to inform local practice" (p.589). Omrod (2008) pointed out that action research may come in a variety of forms – "assessing the effectiveness of a new teaching technique, gathering information about students' opinions on a school-wide issue, or conducting an in-depth case study of a particular student" (p.15).

Since research plays an important role in classroom decision-making, teachers should be cautious in jumping to conclusions. Teachers and researchers need to be reminded that theories are rarely "set in stone." They are continuously expanded and modified as new information is added to the body of knowledge (Omrod, 2008). Thus, the research contributes to the expansion of that process.

Teachers and other education practitioners may assist in giving some answers to problems and questions in the field. However, these studies are very limited in generalizability, but if they were taken into comparison with other schools and districts, they may shed light on important problems that may influence policy-making and practice (Frankel et al., 2012).

Method

Research Design

This research used the qualitative design, which is a type of research that investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Frankel et al., 2012). The researcher gathered qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of research endeavors in the area of reading in the Division of Antipolo City.

The particular qualitative research methodology that was used in this study is content analysis. Frankel et al. (2012) define content analysis as "*a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through analysis of their communications."* In addition, Leedy and Omrod (2010) describe content analysis as "*a detailed and systematic explanation of contents of a particular material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases*." Both descriptions of content analysis highlight that this procedure is indeed systematic.

Research Sample

Using purposive sampling, the participants of this study consisted of 15 completed action research with a total of 29 researchers from 9 schools where the previous studies have been taken and implemented. The participants were purposively selected because they were expected to potentially provide the data needed for the research (Frankel et al., 2012).

The researcher made a list of action research in the Division of Antipolo based on division memoranda from school year 2017 to 2019. The participants that have been selected were the ones whose copy of the full paper of action research is available. Thirteen out of fifteen full action research papers were obtained from the Division Office while the other 2 were taken directly from the authors via email. Meanwhile, some studies on the request remained as proposals only. The education program specialist on research provided additional research that was conducted from the school year 2019 – 2020.

Instrumentation

To gather qualitative data, the researcher used a checklist. The Categories Used to Evaluate Social Studies Research as presented in Frankel et al. (2012) and as used in a content analysis of all the research studies published in Theory of Research in Social Education was adapted in this study. The checklist consists of questions that seek grade level, topic, type of research, sample size, sample type, respondents, instrument, reliability and validity measures, use of Phil-IRI, effectiveness, and action plan. It also has a space for findings and recommendations. At the bottom part, a space for notes is likewise provided in case there is remarkable information in a particular action research.

The different copies of action research were reviewed by the researcher-proponent. No attempt has been made to have reliability measures since the procedures required manual tabulation only and the source where it was adopted was an international journal that was already reviewed before it was published. However, it considered validity measures. The instrument used underwent content and face validation by another teacher who has a master's degree and a reading specialist to ensure that the categories in the checklist will get the data it intends to obtain. The validator checked the terms used and made sure that the options generated in the checklist are appropriate for the research.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher followed the methods specified by Leedy and Omrod (2010). The researcher identified the specific body of material to be studied. Since the body is relatively small, the researcher intended to study its entirety, particularly action research on reading in the Division of Antipolo City that was completed.

The researcher defined the characteristics or qualities to be examined as mentioned in the instrument in precise, concrete terms. The items were broken down into small, manageable segments and were analyzed separately.

Although predetermined categories were prepared early on, the researcher allowed the categories to emerge as the analyses continued. The researcher communicated to the education program specialist in research in the Division of Antipolo City to obtain copies of completed action research. The researcher also consulted the Chief of Curriculum and Instruction Division, who is also the education program supervisor in English, of the division regarding the

current research.

After obtaining the copies, the researcher scanned all the action researches at once to gain a full understanding of the studies. During the second reading, the researcher used the checklist to identify the characteristics of each research.

Data Analysis

Following the procedure from Leedy and Omrod (2010), the researcher tabulated the frequency of each character found in the material being studied. The researcher used such tabulations and statistical analyses to interpret the data as reflected on the problem under investigation. Meanwhile, the researcher synthesized the results and recommendations of previous studies and looked for similar themes.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section will identify the profiles of the action research in reading in the Division; the most common research topics in reading; methodologies of research on reading that was used, common findings of research on reading, and common recommendations of research in reading in the Division of Antipolo City.

Profiles of Action Research in Reading in the Division of Antipolo City

Figure 1

Grade Levels of Respondents

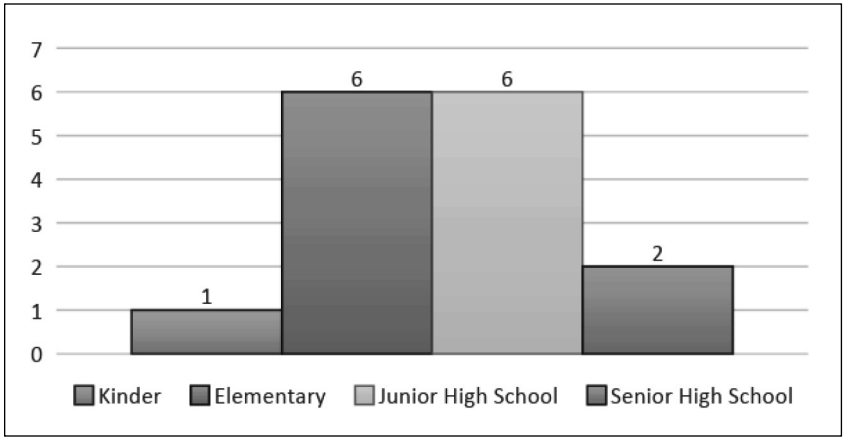
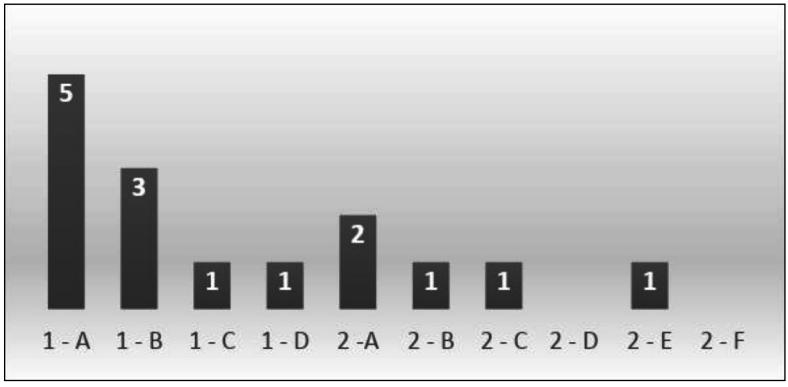


Figure 2

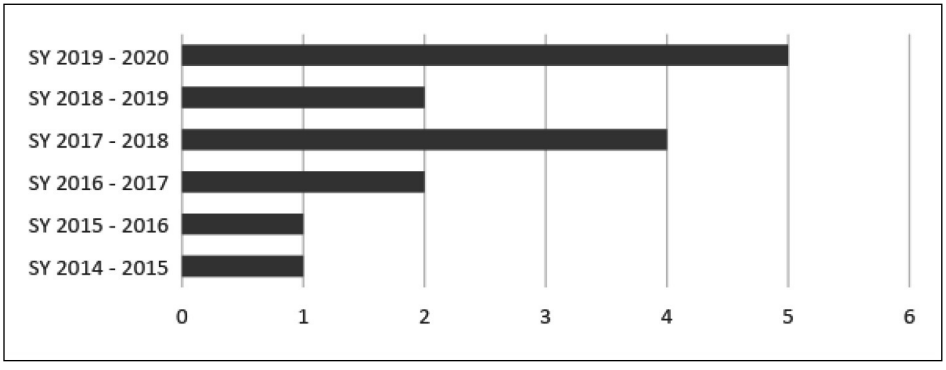
Action Research Per District



Most action research were undertaken in elementary and junior high school levels as shown in Figure 1. Meanwhile, District 1-A is the most active in producing action research in reading as shown in Figure 2. No full action research paper was obtained from District 2-D and 2-F. There were researchers with multiple studies: One researcher completed three studies while there were two researchers who each completed two studies. One particular high school undertook 5 action research while two elementary schools were able to produce two action research.

Figure 3

Research Per School Year

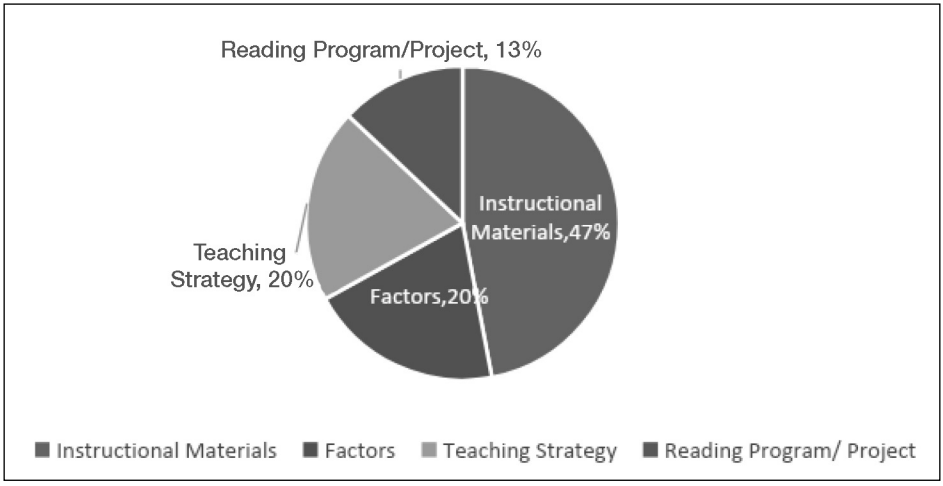


The most number of action research was produced in the school year 2019-2020. Only one action research was retrieved in SY 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The productivity of having much action research in the school year 2019-2020 may be attributed to the response of schools with regard to the PISA report.

Common Research Topics in the School Division

Figure 4

Common Research Topics



The most common research topic in reading in the Division of Antipolo focused on instructional materials (47%). Factors and teaching strategy both placed second (20%) while reading program/project ranked third (13%). The results suggest that researchers are more interested in determining what instructional materials work to improve the reading skills of the students. Most of these instructional materials are a selection of appropriate reading materials for students.

Research Methodologies

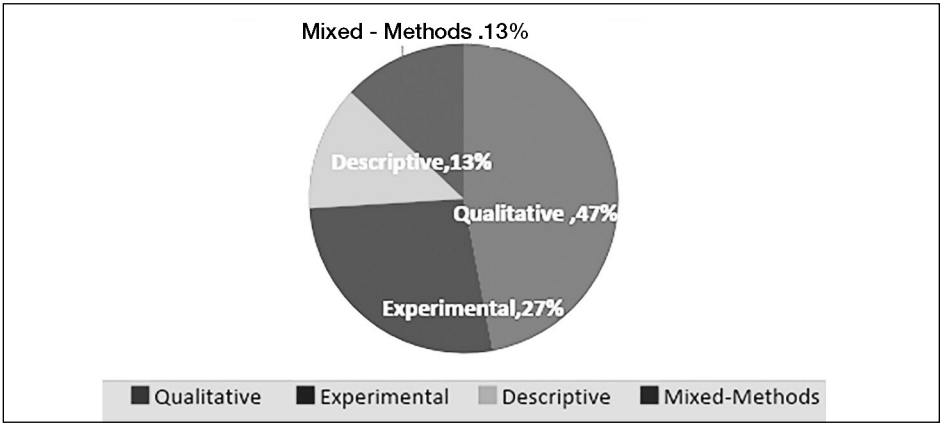
The research methodologies used in the studies sampled were also described in terms of their research design, sample size and sample technique, instruments, and validity and reliability measures.

Research Design

As shown in Figure 5 below, most action research utilized qualitative design (47%). Other researchers used experimental (27%), descriptive (13%), and mixed methods (13%). The results imply that most researchers prefer qualitative design because it is the most feasible and easiest methodology of research that can provide teachers a better understanding of teaching and learning phenomena.

Figure 5

Research Designs



Sample Technique and Sample Size

As shown in Table 1 on the next page, the sampling technique in most action research was not identified. Thus, it is difficult to determine the quality of the sample in each research. In this regard, the extent of generalizability of results may also be hard to establish. It is important to highlight that researchers who used non-random sampling utilized a purposive type of sampling.

Table 1.

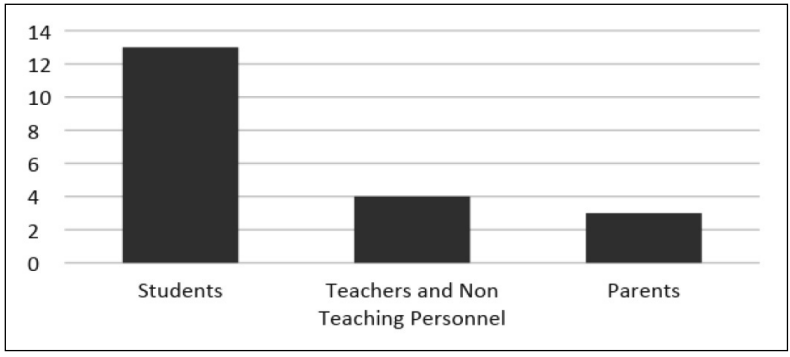
Sampling Technique Used in Research

Random	2
Non – Random (Purposive)	4
Total Population	1
Not Specified	8
	***n* = 15**

Findings reveal that most studies have students as the main participants of the study. Meanwhile, some studies also sought information from parents, teachers, and non-teaching personnel as shown in figure 6 below.

Figure 6

Respondents in Research



Results show that most studies also did not specify the sample size as presented in Table 2 below. As mentioned earlier, this may increase the difficulty to determine the quality of the sample in each research and the extent of generalizability of results.

Table 2.

Sample Size

30 and below	5
31 to 50	2
50 and above	2
Not specified	6

Instruments

Since most action research used qualitative methodology, the most common instrument used was the interview. It is followed by a survey and questionnaire, test, and other types of instruments (collective discussion, students' outputs, and students' reflection). These data are shown in table 3 below. Out of the 15 studies examined, 7 action research utilized Phil-IRI data.

Table 3.

Instruments Used

Interview	8
Survey / Questionnaire	7
Test	6
Observation	3
FGD	2
Documents	2
Others	6

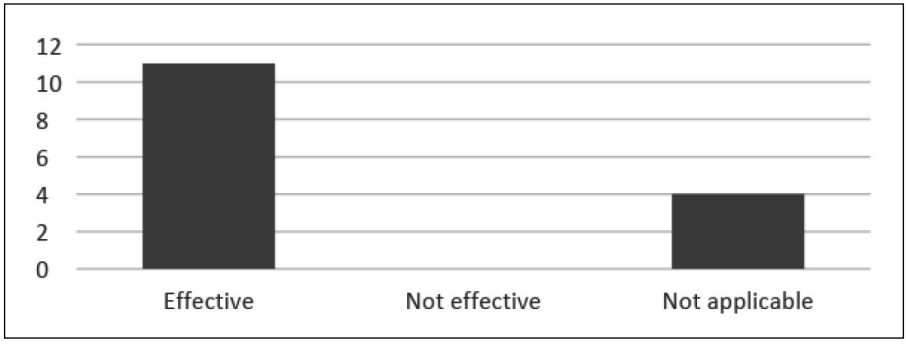
Validity and Reliability Measures

No action research presented reliability measures used in the study. Meanwhile, only 1 out of 15 studies have presented validity measures. This study mentioned that it conducted content validation. However, it lacked a description of how it underwent the procedure.

Common Findings of Research on Reading

Figure 7

Common Findings on Effectiveness



Results show that most action research are reported to be effective as shown in Figure 7. To specify the findings of each research according to the type of topics presented earlier, Table 4 summarizes the findings in action research in reading:

Table 4.

Findings in Action Research in Reading

Findings	Narratives
Factors	*"Mother's educational attainment affect reading comprehension."* *"Teachers' competency in teaching reading is also a contributing factor."* *"The reading habit of the Grade One pupils improved."* *"The pupils' love for reading developed."* *"Voice of the customer showed positive response to the color-coded reading material."* *"More than 10 % per grade level becomes a reader."* *"The common problems of teachers are absenteeism, class participation, and parents' involvement."* *"The common factors that maintain struggling readers are absenteeism, pupils' health status, family situation, and pupils' attitude."*
Instructional Materials	*"Confidence, fidelity, and love are appropriate themes based on conflicts faced by groups."* *"One way to address the concern of making the students read is to provide children with reading materials that are appropriate, and they are interested in."* *"The level of reading comprehension skills of the pupils on the posttest marked an improvement after exposure to the supplementary reading materials."* *"The reasons why students struggle in reading include lack of interest, lack of reading materials, reading materials are not congruent to students' reading interest, and poor reading foundation."* *"Integrative Skill-Based Instructional Materials (ISBIM) in English and Filipino significantly enabled the participants towards word recognition, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension."* *"The least mastered skills of Kindergarten from the seven domains are self-help, receptive language, expressive language, and cognitive domains."* *"Children learn best when they are actively involved in their environment and build knowledge based on their experiences rather than through passively receiving information."*

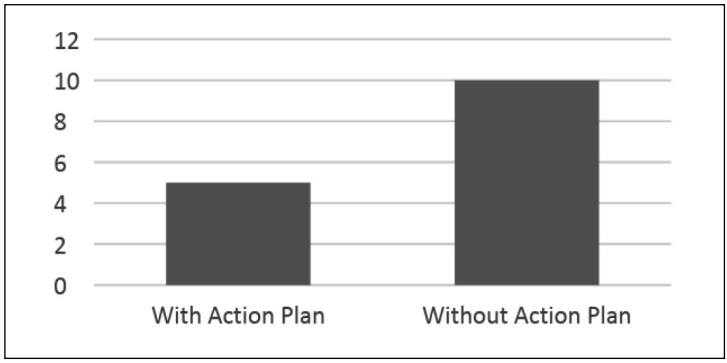
	"Developmentally appropriate materials show the transformation of development of learners." *"Reading teachers described the Marungko Approach in teaching Decoding as 'Very Much Effective.'"* *"There are reading texts that are misclassified from Grades 7 to 10."* *"145 out of 183 reading texts or about 79% of the selections being used in the administration of Phil-IRI in the secondary schools are not age and grade level appropriate."*
Teaching Strategy	*"Literacy strategies help the students increase performance, retention, and mastery level in Science."* *"The developmental reading activities are effective in developing the reading literacy skills of the selected participants of the study."* *"The reading performance in the two sections without using the Herringbone technique still needed improvement."* *"There is an increase of MPS after the utilization of Herringbone as a reading technique."*
Reading Program/ Project	*"(1) The impact of promoting reading interest among students includes evaluation of materials, wow factor, book awareness, and drive for reading while (2) encouragement to readers lead to a culture of reading, reading habits, reading buddies, and emphasis on prior knowledge."* *"The 21st Century Skills that were developed in reading books for pleasure are creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, decision making, collaboration, and utilizing technology."* *"The rooms for improvement for existing reading programs are reading materials; facilities; training; community libraries; commitment, cooperation, and support; and need for a licensed librarian."* *"Most of the parents are working parents."* *"Most of the parents answered that they rarely spend time to help their children in doing school works."* *"There are only 3 out of 20 or 15% parents answered that they help their child in school work."*

Table 4 shows the narratives which emphasize the importance of innovation in improving reading skills among students in schools. It also shows that the efforts of teachers to promote reading lead to fruition at different levels.

Common Recommendations of Research on Reading

Figure 8

Action Plans in Recommendations



Results show that only 5 out of 15 action research provided action plans as shown in Figure 8. Although the action plan is not a guarantee whether recommendations in action research were undertaken, it serves as a guide in how the findings of the research may be applied in other contexts. Table 5 summarizes the recommendations from action research in reading:

Table 5.

Recommendations from Action Research in Reading

Teachers	*"Teachers should help parents understand their role in the success of their child and their capability to support the school academic undertakings."* *"Teachers should motivate students to use English language."* *"The identified themes and topics may help teachers for the selection of appropriate narratives."* *"Teachers may use the study to evaluate appropriate materials."* *"Teachers may "utilize the different Literacy Strategies to facilitate teaching–learning process."* *"Pupils should be exposed to different supplementary materials in order to improve their level of comprehension skills."* *"Teachers who are teaching these struggling readers, should consider the following:1) the content load of the reading material; 2) the level of vocabulary used; 3) sentence complexity; and 4) themes of reading materials."* *"Knowing each factor which may become the main contributor of the low performance of a child will really affect its academics."*

	Teachers may develop "sets of Integrative Skill-Based Instructional Materials (ISBIM) in English and Filipino designed for struggling readers in each grade level." *"Continuous development of reading literacy of the frustration readers should be intensified."* *Teachers need to "listen to 'the pupil voice.'"* *Teachers need to "encourage literacy at home."* *Teachers need to promote "fit bodies and minds."* *Teachers need to "provide reading materials to Grades 1 to 3."* *Teachers may "disseminate results of the study through parents' conference."* *"The teachers should (1) continue developing supplementary materials especially in the event that reading instructional materials is lacking and (2) hold workshops."* *"Teachers may continue to (1) evaluate reading materials that fit students' abilities and interest and (2) work hand in hand to promote a school-wide reading culture."* *"Teachers should help parents understand their role in the success of their child and their capability to support the school academic undertakings."* *"Teachers may find ways to create a culture of reading."* *"Teachers and students may be encouraged to share more interesting and age-appropriate books."* *"Teachers may process student reflections on what they read or organize a focus group for thought sharing."* *"In order to achieve the full benefits of Herringbone technique and other varied strategies of reading comprehension, there has to be an incorporation of the aforementioned techniques in the lessons especially during literature classes."*
Parents	*"School and home should assume mutual tasks."* *"Let parents participate more often on school activities."* *"Parents should spend time to show care, concern and support to their children."*
Curriculum Writer	*"Curriculum writers may use the study to evaluate appropriate materials."* *"All reading materials should be reclassified."*
School Administrators	*"Professional advancements among teachers in reading and skills development should be emphasized."* *"The school administrators may (1) encourage and (2) intensify the reading teachers to develop and use Marungko and Marungko with combination of other approaches especially in early reading."* *"School administrators, together with community partners, may consider to continuously upgrade facilities."* *"School administrators may find ways to create a culture of reading."* *"School administrators may train teachers on how to improve 21st century skills in reading."*

Researchers	*"Future researchers may "conduct similar study."* *"Future researchers may conduct same study using other approaches."* *"Future research may explore other types of reading centers or may use different research methodologies."* *"Competence of teachers in conducting Phil-IRI and parents' support should also be investigated."*

The findings on Table 5 reveal that most recommendations are addressed to teachers. Thus, it positions their critical role in reading development among students.

Conclusion

Research being focused on elementary and junior high school students may be attributed to the availability of formal policies and curricula on reading at these levels. Furthermore, research on instructional materials is prevalent because there is a need to contextualize existing materials. Completed action research used qualitative design while most research did not discuss sampling technique, sample size, reliability, and validity measures. Innovations are good sources of the initiative to improve the reading skills of students. Teachers play a crucial role in improving the reading skills of students.

Recommendations

It is recommended that researchers in reading consider doing a study that focuses on the developmental nature of reading. Education program supervisors and specialists may utilize this research report in coming up with future programs and policies. Curriculum planners and teachers may also consider incorporating innovations in their existing curriculum. Teachers may likewise continue to follow this path in determining the effectiveness of their innovation in the classroom through action research. However, aside from teachers, other school stakeholders need to play a role in improving reading skills among students. Lastly, researchers working on studies in reading may allow readers to benefit more from their work by discussing their methodologies more thoroughly to provide readers a clearer understanding of the context of the results.

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Situation Analysis of General Teacher Education Curriculum and Inclusive Education

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Abstract

The study is based on Print's Situation Analysis model to identify the problems and factors affecting General Teacher Education Curriculum and Inclusive Education in the Philippines. Interview, survey, and observation were used to gather data from 55 participants. The participants are from public and private inclusive schools in Mandaluyong and Quezon City, and a public school from Benito Soliven, Isabela. Data were analyzed using concepts, constructs, and theme analysis (CCT), factor analysis, principal component analysis, and Pearson correlation. Guidelines for creating interview questions and observation checklists, and criteria for selection of instruments were created. Instruments were made and appropriate survey questionnaires were chosen to gather data for each element in Print's model. Problems with the general education teacher curriculum and inclusive education were identified.

Keywords: situation analysis, inclusive education, general teacher education curriculum

Introduction

Situational analysis is the starting point of the curriculum development process prior to the selection of objectives (Almario, 2017; Nicholls and Nicholls, 1978). It plays a key role in designing a relevant and up-to-date curriculum. Appropriate goals are identified, and effective activities are designed when the situational analysis is conducted (Nicholls & Nicholls, 1978; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004; Prideaux, 2003; Print, 1993). It is also a continuous process that has to be done whenever there are changes that have to be made in the curricu-

lum. In conducting situation analysis, curriculum developers are able to focus clearly on issues surrounding the curriculum as well as learning objectives that they seek to address. However, conducting a situation analysis is often overlooked because curriculum developers have a tendency to rely on their intuition and knowledge about the context (Bago, 2001; Palma, 2007; Print, 1993). Bago (2001) observed that changes in the Philippine curriculum are often based on gut feel, hunches, conventional wisdom, and common sense. Problems and confusion arise despite the resources poured into nationwide reforms when stakeholders' needs were not carefully examined prior to implementing educational reforms (Lee-Chua, 2011). Almario (2017) observed that when people involved in curriculum development do not gather information about the context where the curriculum is to be placed, educational reforms fail to achieve the curricular goals. It is important to understand the local context in order to develop a relevant and effective curriculum that will address the learners' needs, meet the expectations of society, and change the nature of the subject matter (Print, 1993; Tyler, 1949). Societal changes and expectations, educational system requirements, teacher support system, changing nature of contents, resources, teachers, pupils, material resources, school ethos, perceived problems, leadership, and adoption factors are identified by Skillbeck (1976) and Richards (2001).

Changes in Philippine education are often patterned or derived from international models, especially from the United States where our current educational system is based without carefully examining the local context (Bago, 2001). Educational policies are made to meet international standards without establishing procedures and guidelines on how they should be implemented in the country (Catalan & Durban, 2012). Due to a lack of framework, many of these reforms fail to achieve the intended goals. According to Guerrero (1989), problems in Philippine education are due to inadequate planning. Pre-planning is needed in order to gather baseline data that will help curriculum developers propose curricular changes that will respond to the needs and concerns of stakeholders. Almario (2017) stated that when education reforms are being done, it is important that curriculum developers know the context where the new curricula will be placed and follow a system of aligning all members of the curriculum development team. Through the process of situation analysis, curriculum development in the Philippines will no longer be a piecemeal process but participants will have a clear understanding of curricular goals, following the same process and in agreement as they develop the curricula together.

The Special Education Act (Senate Bill No. 3002) is now underway to make education accessible to all Filipino children regardless of social, economic, physical, mental, and emotional conditions. General education teachers are given the task of addressing learners' diverse needs by applying an inclusive approach to instruction and curriculum design. However, Tsang (2004) and Muega (2014) found that teachers and administrators believe that they are not well-equipped to handle learners with special educational needs (LSEN). Filipino teachers' lack of knowledge and involvement with LSENs are among the barriers to inclusive education (IE) in the Philippines (Muega, 2014). Teachers have to be prepared for inclusive education as early as the pre-service teacher education program. Ahsan, Deppeler and Sharma (2011) stated the need to align the curriculum with changes in educational policies. Educational policies brought about by the law have to be reflected in the general teacher education curriculum to be relevant and effective. Conducting situation analysis will provide valuable baseline information on how to effectively plan the implementation of this nationwide educational reform.

Print's Situational Analysis Framework

This study used Print's situation analysis framework. Print (1993) presented a model for conducting a situation analysis. The process starts with identifying the problems in the curriculum, followed by selecting the appropriate factors. After the factors are selected, data gathering is conducted to collect necessary information about the appropriate factors identified in the earlier stage. These data about the factors that shape the curriculum will be analyzed. Recommendations about the curriculum are made based on the results of the data analysis.

The problems experienced by stakeholders that bring about analysis of the situation are either specific, general, or fundamental. Problems are usually obvious and their consequences are felt and expressed by the school. These are the conditions that will have a drastic effect on the school system if ignored.

After identifying the problems, curriculum developers must look at the different factors suggested by Skilbeck (1976) which Print cited in his book. Factors were categorized into external and internal factors. Carefully studying the factors related to the problem that will help the curriculum will shed light on the nature of the problems being experienced. Select which among these fac-

tors are relevant to the problem that needs to be addressed based on the data. Situation analysis is an analysis of factors. External factors are those beyond the control of the school such as cultural and social changes and expectations, educational system requirements, changing nature of content, teacher support system, and resources. Internal factors are those pertaining to the stakeholders and the resources available within the educational institution such as pupils, teachers, school ethos, material resources, and perceived problems. Assessing the impact of factors and their influence will help developers to have a deeper understanding of the context that leads to planning a relevant curriculum.

Print suggested some techniques in gathering data about the factors and what kind of data can be obtained from them. Data collected will be gathered will be analyzed by finding patterns and trends to determine the significant factors and their impact.

Table 1.

Data Collection Techniques

Factors	Techniques	Data Collected
Pupils	Interviews School records Systematic Observations Questionnaires External exam Psychosocial environment Self-reporting scales	Student information and attitudes Background and achievement data Student behavior patterns Students attitudes (large scale) Comparative student performance Student perceptions of room climate Student attitudes
Teachers	Anecdotal records Staff profiles Questionnaires	Teacher behavior and attitudes Records of staff skills and abilities Teacher attitudes
School Ethos	Systematic observations Psychosocial environment Interviews	Impression of school climate Aggregated school climate Student/Parent/Teacher attitudes
Resources	Inventory Checklist Systematic observations	Listing of school resources Impressions of school resources

(Source: Print, 1993, p. 118)

The final step of the situation analysis is making recommendations based on the result of the data analysis. Recommendations are stated in the form of actions that are based on the goals. These plans of action to be undertaken will guide curriculum developers as they formulate goals, objectives, content, learning activities, and evaluation.

While Print proposed a framework for conducting situation analysis, he did not develop instruments on how to operationalize the framework. He provided some guidelines for gathering data about appropriate factors but the specific tools are up to those conducting situation analysis.

Existing instruments on IE were developed over the years. The instrument used in this study was chosen using criteria for the selection of instruments developed by the researcher. The criteria for selection of survey questionnaires are: (a) relevance of items/questions to research questions, (b) applicable to the local context, supported by local literature, (c) reliability and validity of the instrument, (d) culturally relevant (participants across countries, especially Asia), (e) tested and validated in several countries, (f) cited in published articles worldwide in several countries, (g) used and administered in research worldwide, and (h) positive feedback from researchers who used the instrument.

Statement of the Problem

The study aims to identify problems and factors affecting General Teacher Education Curriculum and Inclusive Education. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What problems are being experienced and perceived by general education teachers in inclusive education?
2. What are the factors that shape the general education teacher curriculum and inclusive education?
3. How do these factors affect inclusive education and general education teachers' curriculum?

Method

Research Design

This study utilized mixed methods using concurrent triangulation. Qualitative and quantitative data are gathered to identify problems and select appropriate factors and, at the same time, to validate the findings. This study is

based on Print's framework. Interviews were conducted, and survey questionnaires were administered to participants. To further validate the results of the interview and survey, classroom observations were conducted in the three participating schools. The participants of the survey questionnaires are general education teachers from inclusive and non-inclusive elementary schools. Interviewees are general education teachers, school administrators, and special education teachers. The researcher used purposive sampling. Teachers in inclusive schools who are handling three or more LSENs in their class were interviewed. Teachers in public and private schools with LSENs answered the questionnaires.

Sampling and Respondents

The participants are from public and private inclusive schools in Mandaluyong and Quezon City, and a public school from Benito Soliven, Isabela. There were 46 participants for the survey and 16 participants for the interview. The participants for the survey are composed of 27 general education teachers from inclusive schools, and 19 from non-inclusive schools. The participants for the interview are 7 general education teachers, 4 special education teachers, and 5 school administrators. Twelve (12) are graduate students (earned academic units) or graduate degree holders and four (4) of the participants have bachelor degrees.

Table 2.

Demographics of Participants of the Interview

Gender	n	%
Female Male	14 2	87.5 12.5
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree	4 12	25 75
No. Years Teaching and/or School Administrator		
0-5 years 6-15 years 16-25 years 26-45 years	3 2 5 6	18.75% 12.5% 31.25% 37.5%

Instruments

The interview questions are based on the four steps in Print's situation analysis model incorporating the factors identified by Skillbeck (1976) and Richards (2001). The survey questionnaires used was the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale-Revised (SACIE – R), which was developed by Forlin, Earle, Loreman, and Sharma (2011. SACIE-R has an overall reliability of r = 0.74. The observation checklist is based on the Index for Inclusion by Booth and Ainscow (2002). Purposive sampling was used for the interview. Teachers in inclusive schools handling 3 or more LSENs and teachers in non-inclusive schools who have experienced handling at least one LSEN were requested to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews and observation were analyzed using concepts, constructs, and themes (CCT) analysis. Patterns or themes across data that have been gathered were identified. Concepts from significant utterances that are relevant to the research questions were determined.

The steps in analyzing quantitative data are encoding, reverse coding for negatively worded statements, Barlett's battery test, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy, Factor Analysis, and Principal Component Analysis. To identify factors based on the responses per question for SAICE-R multivariate analyses are performed. It is a method that analyzes a relatively high number of variables, and in this case, there are 33 questions that are to be analyzed, and simplifies the information to a much lower number. This technique is called dimension reduction. Factor analysis is one of the dimensions of the reduction method. This analysis has an assumption that our set of variables has an underlying concept or factor which explains these existing variables. These factors make up all the 33 questions, each with varying degrees of effect. Bartlett's test for sphericity is a test that determines whether there is enough relationship among the variables which is an important assumption of factor analysis. We identified the relationships among the variables since this will allow us to group them together or to show evidence that these variables have an underlying factor. The p-value of the test, where a value of less than the assumed significance value (usually at 0.05), indicates that there are relationships between variables. PCA aims to reduce the number of variables given an original set of variables while retaining the maximum amount of information.

Results and Discussion

Problems in Inclusive Education

The most common problem is a lack of knowledge, skill, and experience about special education and inclusion. Teachers from public and private schools lament over the lack of subjects and training on special education and inclusion during their pre-service program. Communication with deaf and visually impaired students is a basic problem since they do not know basic sign language or Braille. Teachers tried strategies on how to teach LSENs and handle behavioral issues based on their limited knowledge. These often lead to disruptive behaviors and low performance among LSENs. Behavior and classroom management problems are major sources of stress among teachers. Disruptive behaviors, hitting, and violence also happen that can have a drastic effect on the quality of learning that takes place in class.

It is challenging for the teachers to provide the needed academic support of LSENs in class. They lack the knowledge and skill to differentiate lessons. They are aware that there is a need to customize learning plans and delivery for LSENs but they need more support in the form of training and mentoring to do this. In one class, there are students with visually impaired, global developmental delay, and possible causes of ADHD. The teacher explained she does not have enough knowledge and skill to modify instruction for each of their conditions. As a result, she is unable to respond effectively to the needs of LSENs in their classes. Filipino teachers have negative perceptions about inclusion due to a lack of knowledge and skills (Tsang, 2004). They are willing to embrace IE and have LSENs in their class but they do not feel that they are equipped to teach LSEN because they lack involvement and interaction with LSENs (Muega, 2014). Baker and Zigmond (1990) have similar findings - teachers seldom apply differentiated instruction or made adaptations based on students' needs. In Palestine, teachers do not use the appropriate methods to handle LSENs (Abu-heran, Abukhayran, Domingo & Perez-Garcia, 2014).

Heavy workload is a common complaint among teachers. Teachers resist inclusion because of the additional work it will entail. Teachers need to submit a budget of work, anecdotal records, incidents reports, organize school events, and extracurricular activities. They also have regular parent-teacher conferences to give feedback and report the progress of LSENs. The myriad demands and challenges in inclusion cause high levels of pressure, stress, frustration, and

complaints among teachers, resulting in a negative attitude towards inclusion. Negative attitudes, inadequate training, and lack of resources are major barriers in creating effective and developmentally appropriate inclusion practices (Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2011).

Lack of support from stakeholders is one of the biggest challenges in inclusion. Teachers need support from their students, parents, and the government. Regular students have difficulty accepting LSENs because they exhibit disruptive behaviors. They respond by rejection, social exclusion, discrimination, or bullying. Rejection of LSENs can result in low self-esteem, which, in turn results in absenteeism. There are parents of LSENs who do not comply with school requirements and do not reinforce interventions at home. Parents of regular students also express complaints about the presence of LSENs due to disruptive and violent behavior in class. Parents and professionals have different expectations of special education programs, which serve as barriers in tapping parents' assistance (Sarillo, 1993; Singayan, 1987). Teachers also express dismay over the lack of support from the government. There are no textbooks for students and very few teaching materials, manipulatives, facilities, and infrastructure for LSENs**.**

The researcher employed quantitative measures to find out the sentiments of teachers and concerns based on the problems they experienced as well as their attitudes toward inclusion and LSENs. The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale - Revised or SACIE – R (Forlin, Earle, Loreman, & Sharma, 2011) was used to validate the findings from the interviews and observations. Identifying the sentiments of teachers towards LSENs is important because it influences the way they view and treat these children in the class (Forlin et al., 2001). Studies showed that teachers with a positive attitude towards inclusion are more likely to succeed in their practices than those who harbor negative attitudes (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Muega (2014) and Tsang (2004) found that Filipino teachers do not feel that they are well prepared for inclusion because of a lack of knowledge and experience about inclusion and special education. SACIE-R may provide information that can assist in identifying and preparing necessary training courses that will address the needs and beliefs of teachers (Forlin et al., 2011). It is composed of 15 items, with an overall reliability of 0.74. Factor analysis and Principal Components Analysis (PCA) were used to find the number of significant factors that can be generated. PCA aims to reduce the number of variables given an original set of variables. The

table of the result of total variance shows that after 5 factors, the variability that can be explained by an additional factor for the whole set of data is already lower than what is recommended by the eigenvalues which are at 1.0. The most preferred number of factors that should be generated from the 15 items is only five (5).

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Table 3.

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis (N=46)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.164	27.757	27.757	4.164	27.757	27.757
2	2.459	16.396	44.153	2.459	16.396	44.153
3	1.808	12.056	56.209	1.808	12.056	56.209
4	1.370	9.133	65.342	1.370	9.133	65.342
5	1.084	7.226	72.568	1.084	7.226	72.568
6	.891	5.943	78.510			
7	.661	4.408	82.918			
8	.528	3.517	86.435			
9	.504	3.362	89.797			
10	.445	2.968	92.765			
11	.359	2.394	95.159			
12	.252	1.678	96.838			
13	.207	1.380	98.218			
14	.160	1.068	99.286			
15	.107	.714	100.000			

Table 4 below shows which among the original 15 variables do the generated five factors from Table 3 tend to be close or to load towards. These are variables having absolute value of their loading that is greater than 0.3.

Table 4.

Component Matrix

Items	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Students who have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally should be in regular classes.	-.778	.232	.264	.133	.104
Students who are inattentive should be in regular classes.	-.710	.349	.382		-.202
I am concerned that students with disabilities will not be accepted by the rest of the class.	.652	.133	-.372	.164	
I dread the thought that I could eventually end up with a disability.	.620	.402	-.294		
Students who frequently fail exams should be in regular classes.	-.614	.424			-.406
I find it difficult to overcome my initial shock when meeting people with severe physical disabilities.	.609	.242	.155	.398	-.318
Students who need an individualized academic program should be in regular classes.	-.592	.126	.162	.530	.411
I tend to make contacts with people with disabilities brief and I finish them as quickly as possible.	.477		.369	.449	
I am concerned that it will be difficult to give appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive classroom.	-.104	.772	-.262	-.185	
I am concerned that my workload will increase if I have students with disabilities in my class.	-.186	.692		-.380	
I am concerned that I do not have the knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities.	.505	.583	-.124		.327
I am concerned that I will be more stressed if I have students with disabilities in my class.	.435	.255	.721	-.107	.222
I would feel terrible if I had a disability.	.466	.123	.616	-.286	.279
Students who require communicative technologies (e.g. Braille/sign language) should be in regular classes.	-.168	.473	-.332	.579	.217
I am afraid to look directly at a person with a disability.	.429	.350	.294	.229	-.547

Table 4 showed the following results about the sentiments, attitudes, and concerns of Filipino teachers about inclusion: (1) teachers believe that students who are having difficulties should learn together in the regular classroom with their peers; (2) teachers are able to have contact with a person with disability positively without fear and anxiety; (3) teachers of LSEN see the need to have a customized method of learning, such as separating students who need communicative technologies or those who need individualized academic program; (4) the teachers have insufficient knowledge or skills in handling inclusive classes, experience difficulty in terms of providing attention and managing workload, and (5) teachers are bothered with the presence of students with disabilities in their class.

These results support the findings from the interview and observation that teachers lack knowledge and skills in handling classes – delivering instruction using appropriate means by implementing customized methods, addressing the emotional needs of LSENs through allowing them to participate and be accepted as part of the school community, and by giving them the needed attention and a supportive learning environment. While they understand that there is a need to customize methods of delivering instruction based on the needs of the students and utilize technology, the means and resources are often lacking. The result of SACIE-R also reflected the difficulty experienced by teachers in managing the workload as discussed by teachers during the interview. Factors 1, 2, and 5 pertain to the sentiments and attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education and LSENs. The impact of these factors will be discussed in the succeeding section.

Factors and their impact on general education teacher curriculum and inclusive education

Teachers' knowledge and skills about inclusion and LSENs greatly affect how they implement inclusive practices in their classes. Teachers who are knowledgeable in applying IE practices have a more dynamic, lively, and conducive learning environment where LSENs participate in activities and interact with their peers. Effective facilitation of pair work and group class activities provides the opportunity for LSENs to learn concepts, interact, and develop friendships with their peers. This study found that effective classroom management and behavior management skills enable teachers to maintain a conducive learning environment. Classroom management skills identified by teachers are (a)

setting classroom rules that are simple, clear, easy to understand, and execute, (b) establishing age-appropriate routines, (c) designating areas or stations for certain tasks and/or activities that children can do, and (d) seating arrangement that keeps students from unnecessary chatter. Behavior management involves (a) minimizing triggers to misbehaviors, (b) creating clear protocols that the LSEN and peers can follow whenever they have emotional outbursts, and (c) communicating the consequences that behaviors entail. Similarly, Vaugn, Bos, and Schunn (2003) identified implementing routines, adapting effective classroom management strategies, and adjusting physical arrangement. Sakarneh (2009) stated that applying appropriate management and organization skills is needed in an inclusive classroom setting.

The opportunity to observe how LSENs behave in class, how experienced teachers deliver instruction to LSENs and regular students, and how teacher address the needs of LSENs while attending to the questions and inquiries of regular students in actual classroom settings is a rich and effective learning experience for teachers. Respondents explained that witnessing how theories are applied in real-life classroom settings is a more effective means of transferring knowledge and skills compared to lectures and discussions. Those who were given the opportunity to observe inclusive classroom settings and those who had their practicum in inclusive classrooms are more comfortable in dealing with LSENs. They explained that spending time with LSEN in their practicum enabled them to understand the needs and behavior better and resulted in greater empathy and patience towards LSENs' behavior and performance. Teachers who did not have the opportunity to interact with LSENs and see how experienced inclusive classroom teachers are handling them expressed their apprehension towards inclusion. The delivery of their instruction is disrupted and, at times, chaotic due to behavioral problems. This results in a negative attitude towards inclusion. Researchers found similar findings, stating that teachers' knowledge about inclusion and LSENs influence their feelings and behavior towards LSENs (Ryan, 2009). Pre-service teachers who took courses in special education had more significant positive attitudes (Fayez, Dababneh & Jumiaan, 2011). Gao and Mager (2011) found that teachers' belief is developed during their pre-service teacher education program. Practicum is an important component in developing teaching skills and a positive attitude even though it is often lacking in teacher education programs. Teachers had a more positive view of the benefits of inclusion at the end of their practicum (Haq & Mundia, 2012).

School ethos, a supportive and inclusive culture ingrained in the institution on, being surrounded by teachers, staff , and peers who accept and consistently provide help increase LSENs' confidence and self-esteem. These contribute greatly to success according to the respondents while the absence of inclusive culture leads to a myriad of problems that keeps them from achieving their goals. Social inclusion was observed during TLE class where the teacher and peers of LSENs helped and encouraged them. Close friendship among deaf LSEN and their peers results in a positive learning environment for all. Students are seen laughing and playing together, even during their break. Acceptance and belongingness matter (Ahsan, Sharma, Deppeler, 2012) because the positive attitude toward LSEN creates a healthy learning environment where there is respect and love for others. The support of the entire school community helps create an inclusive culture. When school leaders support their teachers and staff, they, in turn, are able to support one another and their students.

Good collaboration among teachers, parents, and other professionals enables the student's support team to develop effective solutions and interventions for the student. Participants from public inclusive schools emphasized the need for collaboration between the Department of Education (DepEd), school administrators, and teachers. They believe that close collaboration and open communication with DepEd will help address problems, find solutions, and improve the implementation of inclusion. The home-school partnership ensures that the program for the child is properly implemented at all times. Effective interventions being done at home can be reinforced in school. Providing resources, supporting the services, and timely feedback to the teachers will help the school in giving relevant and quality programs and interventions for LSENs.

Students' ability, age, and readiness for inclusion affect the quality of instruction. Students in early grades have a short attention span. Having three or more LSENs at the primary level is exhausting for teachers due to classroom and behavior management issues among young children. Regular students tend to stay away from LSENs. Rejection and discrimination happen in class. These are attributed to the lack of knowledge of regular students about the behavior and condition of LSENs. Orientation about LSENs helped regular students to understand LSENs better. This led to better treatment and acceptance of their classmates. As a result, LSENs are actively joining classroom activities, games and discussions. The inclusive learning environment helped students to cultivate friendships. Cooperative learning activities became easier to facilitate and more effective as students interact and journey together in their learning.

Public schools need proper funding from the government for facilities, materials resources, hiring qualified personnel, giving incentives or salary increases, and in-service training. Additional salary or compensation for general education teachers will encourage and motivate them to take in additional work that IE entails. Clear policies, guidelines, and procedures for implementing inclusion, specifically in accepting and placement of students are crucial factors in implementation. The presence or absence of material resources determines how well teachers can implement inclusion in their classes. There are needed materials for certain: Braille for the blind, manipulatives for Math concepts and Science, and highly visual books for the deaf.

Conclusion

The implementation of inclusion in the country is besieged with many challenges and problems. Situation analysis is a crucial step to understanding the local context that requires a thorough process that requires time and resources. Changes that come with inclusive education require a paradigm shift, resources, and reform that will challenge stakeholders to create new policies, provide resources, and redefine culture. Research-based findings will enable decision-makers to make relevant changes based on accurate data. To ensure that essential information is collected, the instruments must be researched-based, relevant, and developed specifically for the study. Findings and recommendations from previous studies done in the Philippines (Muega, 2014; Tasang 2004) are the basis in creating interview questions. When results from these data are analyzed, they paint a clear picture of the local context. The consistency of results gathered from different instruments substantiates the findings.

The need to evaluate and revise the pre-service teacher curriculum has been proposed by many literatures, including Kozleski, Pugach, and Yinger (2002), Muega (2014), and Malak (2013). The study showed that these are the content areas that have to be incorporated pre-service and in-service programs based on their experience in teaching LSENs in inclusive classes: (1) introduction to inclusion, (2) characteristics of LSENs, (3) dealing with disruptive behaviors, (4) differentiation strategies, (5) specialized skills such basic sign language and Braille, and (6) developing and strengthening collaboration skills. We need to understand the unique needs of Filipino teachers to help them to transition from traditional education to provide a more responsive, inclusive education that improves and uplifts the quality of education in our country. Creating a

supportive learning environment that acknowledges the value of every child regardless of the academic, mental, or emotional condition of learners is the primary responsibility of teachers. The general education teacher curriculum must be transformative, cultivating the knowledge, skills, and positive attitude of teachers for them to embrace all kinds of learners and provide a safe and healthy learning environment for everyone.

Recommendations

1. There is a need to increase the number of courses in both special and inclusive education in TEIs. The quality of instruction will be affected if we fail to prepare teachers for inclusion (Malak, 2013).

2. For professional teachers who are already practicing their profession in schools, in-service training should be given to them.

3. Kozleski, Pugach, and Yinger (2002) also offered similar recommendations: (a) renew the teacher education curriculum that supports the collaboration of general and special education teachers; (b) establish collaborative clinical experiences for general and special educators and (c) ensure the competence of new teachers to work effectively with students with disabilities.

4. Practicum in an inclusive school is proposed by participants to give the opportunity for pre-service teachers to interact with LSENs. Observing how senior teachers address problematic issues in actual classroom settings, how they handle behavior and the best course of action to take in a given situation will make learning more meaningful for pre-service teachers.

5. If practicum is not possible, teachers should be given the opportunity to observe in inclusive schools as part of the pre-service teacher preparation program.

6. Teacher education programs must emphasize teaching practices that have been proven to be effective in inclusive education contexts (Carroll, Forlin, & Jobling, 2003; Moeller & Ishii-Jordan, 1996) for teachers to feel more confident and positive about teaching children with diverse needs in their classrooms.

7. There has to be a quality of hands-on, field-based experience given to pre-service teachers to practice their craft, learn by facing the realities of

life inside the class, and receive feedback valuable from mentors who supervise them. These will help them become effective teachers when they practice their profession (Dray & Thomas, 2010).

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Empowering Local Kindergarten Schools in the Philippines: A Story of Survival from Education System's Requirements of Selected Private Kindergarten Schools During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic brought several challenges to the total educational system in the whole world. In the Philippines, basic education schools are required to shift to remote learning mode and are expected to meet several requirements and standards from the Department of Education. As a consequence, local kindergarten schools are among the most affected and some were prompted to close. This paper presents stories on how several local kindergarten schools survived and continued their mission of providing quality education despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: kindergarten schools, indigenous people, remote learning, pandemic

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought devastating effects to the lives of millions of people around the world. It has caused the death of numerous individuals, loss of jobs, economic turmoil, political uncertainties, and emotion-

al stresses among people and countries. On March 15, 2020, the President of the Republic of the Philippines declared the entire island of Luzon to undergo *enhanced community quarantine* (ECQ). This was later extended to the whole archipelago to control the spread of the virus. Schools, companies, business establishments, mass transportation, and all public institutions were closed. The education system is among the most affected in the whole country. Teachers lost their jobs as many small private schools are closing because students either stopped from their studies or transferred to public schools. Nearly all educational institutions and teachers experienced unprecedented stresses facing various issues and challenges as they prepare for what is called the new normal.

This study aims to describe the situation of local kindergarten schools as they struggle to sustain their operation due to the restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Churches and private individuals established these schools primarily for the purpose of serving the educational needs of young children in various local communities. Most of them are considered non-profit and mission schools. Unlike government schools where the fund continues even without students, these local kindergarten schools rely on the collected tuition fees from students and donations to sustain their operation. Some of these local kindergarten schools are located in indigenous communities. They are instrumental in making education more relevant and accessible to young children especially to those who live in difficult contexts.

These local kindergarten schools are also struggling to comply with all the education requirements and standards set by the Department of Education (DepEd). The government, through DepEd, set standards and guidelines to be followed before schools are allowed to resume their classes for the school year 2020-2021. This served as an additional challenge to local kindergarten schools. Thus, this study aims to share the survival stories of selected local kindergarten schools in the Philippines as they face numerous challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and in complying with government standards and requirements.

Objectives of the Study

This descriptive exploratory study investigates the stories of how several local kindergarten schools survived and continued their mission of providing quality education despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the educational requirements for kindergarten schools to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the issues and challenges experienced by the local kindergarten schools in relation to the government restrictions?
3. What are the strategies done by local kindergarten schools to sustain their operation?

Purposes of Kindergarten Education in the Philippines

Republic Act 10157, or "The Kindergarten Education Act" states that the purpose of Kindergarten Education in the Philippines is to effectively promote the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development, including values formation of young children so they will be ready for school.

The Department of Education (DepEd) stipulates that Kindergarten is the transition period from informal to formal literacy (Grades 1–12). As researchers have shown, Kindergarten year is the period of greatest growth and development, during which the brain continuously develops most rapidly and the young children's mind's absorptive capacity for learning is at its sharpest. It is also the stage when self-esteem, the vision of the world, and moral foundations are established.

Thus, the kindergarten curriculum aims to make education responsive to the needs, circumstances, and diversity of learners, schools, and communities using developmentally appropriate and culturally-sensitive practices. It is anchored on the principles of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) which immerses the learners in meaningful experiences through engaging play-based, and child-centered activities. The Mother Tongue of the learner shall be the primary medium of teaching and learning.

The Kindergarten curriculum is built around developmental domains which refers to specific aspects of growth and changes in children. The contents of each developmental domain are defined by learning expectations, as follows:

- Socio-Emotional Development
- Values Development
- Aesthetic/Creative Development
- Mathematics
- Physical Health & Motor Development

- Understanding of the Physical and Natural Environment
- Language, Literacy, and Communication

Common Challenges Experienced by Kindergarten Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Public and private kindergarten schools were profoundly affected by the pandemic. One of the most obvious effects of the pandemic is the plummeting of enrolment. The drastic drop in enrollment resulted in the closure of a number of schools and the retrenchment of employees. Due to this, schools implemented limited to no face-to-face instruction. It was also noted that a great number of students transferred from private to public school due to financial constraints.

Drop in Enrollment

Data from the Department of Education (DepEd) showed that around seven million students did not sign up during the 45-day enrollment period that ended on July 15. As of July 17, DepEd data showed that there were already 21,344,915 enrollees in basic education for the combined public and private schools for School Year 2020-2021 at the end of the enrollment period. This represents 76% of last year's enrollment. For the public schools, the enrollment is 20,147,020, representing 88% of SY 2019-2020 enrollment. The institution is optimistic that it could meet the adjusted target of 80% of last year's enrollment (27.7M) submitted to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

School Closures

The Department of Education confirmed that around 400,000 schools have already notified them of their plan to shut down due to the low number of enrollees as well as the safety and security concerns of the parents amid the pandemic. They discussed the concerns of private schools and local government units in areas without internet connectivity. DepEd has yet to release the data on the number of private schools that have notified them of plans to stop operations. Last week, Cavite Gov. Jonvic Remulla said around 100 private schools in the province would not reopen next school year.

Retrenchment of Employees and Massive Layoffs

The Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations Director Joseph Noel Estrada (cited in Magsambol, 2020) reported that a total of 409,757 teachers, faculty, and school personnel in private educational institutions nationwide were affected by the enhanced community quarantine. "The revenue loss for the private education sector if school opening is pushed to August is already estimated at P55.2 billion. Imagine if we don't allow schools to open by then, many teachers will lose their jobs," Estrada explained. President Rodrigo Duterte approved the recommendation of the government task force on coronavirus to move the class opening for the school year 2020-2021 to October 5.

Limited Face to Face Instruction

The President ordered a "no vaccine, no classes" policy but his spokesperson and officials asserted that learning could still continue through various means such as distant modular instruction, television instruction, online instruction, and blended learning approach. From the previous pronouncement of August 25, the opening of classes in public basic education was moved to October 5, 2020, pursuant to Republic Act No· 11480 (Mateo, 2020).

Students Migration from Private to Public School

Data showed that 328,862 students so far have transferred to public schools. Of this number, 202,345 are in elementary; 82,230 in Junior High School (JHS) and 32, 455 in Senior High School (SHS) along with 6,494 non-graded learners with disabilities. This is due to the fact that parents have concerns regarding the safety of students during the pandemic, apparently due to confusion on whether or not face-to-face classes would be conducted. The migration of students from private to public schools can also be attributed to the economic impact of COVID-19 among families. Since the private education sector charges tuition and other fees, many parents — who might have lost their jobs or who are struggling to make both ends meet — have decided to delay the registration of their children to private schools or transfer them to public schools where education is free.

The Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA) also projected that the enrollment rate for private schools will drop by 50 percent amid the health crisis – wherein around two million learners are

expected to leave private schools. COCOPEA said that private institutions comprised 16% of the country's total school enrollment rate in SY 2019-2021. Of the 27 million learners last SY, four million students enrolled in private schools.

Challenges to the Implementation of Online Learning

In the first few weeks of the implementation of online learning and distant modular instruction, students, teachers, and parents have expressed sentiments and concerns on the difficulty of implementing online instruction. In fact, they are pushing for an academic freeze or the suspension of online and offline classes for the entire school year. Concerns mainly revolve around the lack of skills and preparation of stakeholders for online instruction. The skills and strategies of the teachers in conducting virtual classes while sustaining students' interests are lacking. The parents need skills in encouraging and guiding their children in virtual learning at home. Learners also need to understand their role in online learning.

Method

The qualitative method of research was used in this study to provide a clear description of the stories of selected local kindergarten schools as they struggled to continue their operation during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. It makes use of narratives and qualitative data from written reports of the schools, interviews with teachers and administrators, and analysis of secondary data from the Department of Education.

Data Gathering Procedure

There were two data gathering procedures utilized in the study: documents analysis and interview. Analysis was done using reports and public statements from local kindergarten schools. These reports are available online for the public. Most of these reports are part of their submission to the DepEd. Online interviews were also conducted among teachers, principals, and other school administrators to elicit their opinion, ideas, and stories about their struggles as they transition to the new normal. Interviews with local teachers were conducted to determine their experiences on how they prepare for teaching in the new normal and how they comply with the DepEd requirements.

Interview questions revolved around the following: (1) educational requirements for kindergarten schools to operate during the period of COVID-19 pandemic, (2) notable experiences and stories in relation to complying with DepEd requirements, (3) issues and challenges experienced by the local kindergarten schools in relation to the government policies and requirements and delivery of instruction, (4) strategies done by local kindergarten schools to sustain their operation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, (5) lessons and insights they gained from the experiences and, (6) how they wish to be supported or assisted by the stakeholders.

Data Analysis

The reports and public papers from local kindergarten schools were analyzed carefully to extract information and secondary data needed for the study. Thematic analysis was also done to analyze the result of the interview transcripts. Thematic analysis was employed to come up with a cluster of categories related to the objectives of the study. The use of thematic analysis enabled the researchers to see patterns and understand the experiences of teachers and school administrators as they faced the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and as they comply with educational requirements and standards set by the DepEd. After reading and rereading the initial transcripts, initial codes were identified. The quotes from which the codes were derived were also noted.

From the analysis of the interview responses and DepEd documents, the following themes were generated: (1) educational requirements for kindergarten schools to operate during the period of COVID-19 pandemic, (2) issues and challenges experienced by the local kindergarten schools in relation to the government policies and requirements and delivery of instruction, and (3) strategies done by local kindergarten schools to sustain their operation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion of Results

Of the 10 schools, seven are private kindergarten schools, two are public schools and one church-based mission school. Of the 10 respondents, nine are teachers and one is a principal.

Educational requirements for kindergarten schools to operate during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Department of Education developed the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) which covers the essential requirements of education in the time of COVID-19 (D.O. 12, 2020). The key elements of the learning strategies include the streamlining of the K to 12 Curriculum into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), allowing multiple learning delivery modalities such as distance learning and blended learning, either on top or in place of face-to-face learning, and use of Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) in print and offline/online digital formats. DepEd also tapped the materials developed by various partners and entities such as Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Center for Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO-INNOTECH), BASA Pilipinas, Knowledge Channel, Frontlearners Inc., and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), among many others.

The MELCs are defined as the competencies that a learner needs in order to continue to subsequent grades, and ultimately to have a successful life. The MELCs are aligned with national standards or frameworks, connected to the content of higher concepts across content areas, applicable to real-life situations, important for students to acquire, even if a student drops out from school, and cannot be expected to be ordinarily learned by students if not taught in school. Field implementers are encouraged to contextualize the MELCs in order to accommodate the varying contexts of learners, teachers, learning environment, and support structures considering both the content and performance standards. With these, Filipino learners are guaranteed relevant and quality basic education amidst COVID-19.

The BE-LCP stipulates some of the factors that need to be assessed in order to determine the learning delivery options:

Risk Severity Grading/IATF (Interagency Task Force) Policy - whether teachers and learners are allowed to be in school, physical distancing

School Context - the health status of teachers; readiness of principals and supervisors to lead and manage multiple learning delivery modalities; availability of learning resources/materials; teachers' readiness and capacity to facilitate multiple learning delivery modalities

Learners' Context - capacity to complete self-directed learning resources; access to learning resources and technology; parental, home, and community support; and capacity to guide learners in understanding lessons

Learning delivery options include face-to-face instruction, distance learning, blended learning, and homeschooling.

Face-to-face instruction refers to a learning delivery modality where the students and the teacher are both physically present in the classroom, and there are opportunities for active engagement, immediate feedback, and socio-emotional development of learners. Face-to-face option may also be feasible in very low-risk areas such as the geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA) with no history of infection and with easily monitored external contacts, but with teachers and learners living in the vicinity of the school.

Distance learning refers to a learning delivery modality where learning takes place between the teacher and the learners who are geographically remote from each other during instruction. This modality has three types: Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and television (TV)/Radio-Based Instruction.

Modular Distance Learning involves individualized instruction that allows learners to use SLMs in print or digital format, whichever is applicable in the context of the learner, and other learning resources like learner's materials, textbooks, activity sheets, study guides, and other study materials. Learners access electronic copies of learning materials on a personal computer (PC), tablet PC, or smartphone. CDs, DVDs, USB storage, and computer-based applications can all be used to deliver e-learning materials, including offline e-books.

Online Distance Learning features the teacher as facilitator, engaging learners' active participation through the use of various technologies accessed through the internet. Online learning allows live synchronous instruction. The DepEd Commons and DepEd Learning Resource (LR) Portal fall in this category.

TV/Radio-Based Instruction utilizes SLMs converted to video lessons for Television-Based Instruction and SLMs converted to radio scripts for Radio-Based Instruction. Distance learning modality is most viable for independent learners, and learners supported by periodic supervision of parents or guardians. Recently, DepEd tapped popular TV anchors and journalists to serve as content creators and lecturers.

Blended Learning refers to a learning delivery that combines face-to-face with any or a mix of online distance learning, modular distance learning, and TV/Radio-based Instruction. *Homeschooling* aims to provide learners with quality basic education that is facilitated by qualified parents, guardians, or tutors who have undergone relevant training in a home-based environment. It allows families to educate according to their personal faith, philosophy, and values, and to adjust learning schedules around family schedules and circumstances.

In addition to textbooks distributed to the schools, SLMs are made available in print and digital format (PDF Flat and Interactive) for use this incoming school year. SLMs are converted to videotaped lessons and radio scripts for radio-based instructions. Self-learning modules for Alternative Delivery Mode were crafted by all regions from Kindergarten to Grade 12 core subjects plus applied subjects covering all essential learning competencies For K to 3. ADM learning modules for K (Kindergarten Learning Experiences –KCEP Module) to Grade 3 include modules in digital format, video lessons, modules in audio format (interactive), interactive songs, poems, rhymes in different languages, manipulative materials on literacy and numeracy content like puzzles, forming words, lacing, and tracing. There are also Primer lessons in 19 languages.

Since early grade learners need adult guidance, a combination of face-to-face learning delivery with the teacher and modular learning at home may be employed. For modular learning at home, the guidance of trained para-teachers is required. They must be trained on the content and delivery of instruction before implementation to properly and appropriately deliver the instruction. A Facilitator's Guide shall be made available to para-teachers.

The learning outcomes in the form of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values will be assessed through a portfolio/e-portfolio to include written works and performances (and products), whether hardcopy, softcopy, or a combination of these, and through summative tests, as conditions allow. In terms of assessment, DepEd said last September 21 that schools will not be holding periodical examinations for this school year to prevent "distance cheating." Summative performance tasks will replace objective tests since the former are "more inclusive and authentic in gauging the learning progress of students," DepEd Undersecretary Diosdado San Antonio reiterated (Magsambol, 2020).

Required health standards

In accordance with the DOH Guidelines on the Risk-Based Public Health Standards for COVID-19 Mitigation (DOH AO No. 2020-0015), DepEd will issue guidelines on its Required Health Standards for the adoption and guidance of all public and private schools and DepEd offices. This will cover the four COVID-19 mitigation objectives identified by the DOH, namely: 1) increase physical and mental resilience, 2) reduce transmission, 3) reduce contact, and 4) reduce the duration of infection.

In addition to the current programs in place, the following measures shall also be implemented:

1. There shall be designated isolation areas, aligned with the standards set by DOH, for school and offices.
2. All students, teachers, and personnel who will be entering the school/ office premises shall use cloth masks.
3. Regular disinfection of schools and offices shall be conducted.
4. Teachers shall regularly and closely monitor the health of their students.
5. Students, teachers, and personnel who will be detected as having respiratory symptoms shall not be allowed in schools/offices.
6. There shall be restrictions on mass gatherings that would require close contact.
7. All activities involving a large congregation of learners are canceled in the coming school year.

These health and safety standards shall not only be observed in schools and offices but during travel and in their private activities as well to reduce the risk of exposure and transmission. Upon recommendation by the Schools Division Office, after consultation with the schools under their respective jurisdictions, the RDs shall decide on the learning delivery modalities deemed appropriate in the context of the local conditions and consistent with the COVID- 19 guidelines and regulations.

To prepare teachers and school leaders for multiple learning delivery modalities, they were introduced to learning delivery modalities that they can readily utilize depending on community context and provided with tools and mechanisms to inform their decision-making and instructional planning. Capacity building was implemented beginning in June until July 2020. A repository of online resources was also established. Adjustments were also applied to the

Alternative Learning System (ALS). Required health standards were enforced to reduce vulnerability, transmission, contact, and duration of the infection.

Issues and Challenges experienced by the local kindergarten schools in relation to the government policies and requirements

The interview participants correctly identified the following DepEd requirements for the new normal in schools as stipulated in the order: Implementation of Health and Safety protocols, no face-to-face instruction, use of distant modular instruction, and the same number of subjects and hours per day contact time.

All participants said that they comply with the requirements. There were challenges though in the preparation and delivery of instruction. Challenges were categorized into six namely (1) internet connectivity, (2) lack of instructional materials (modules, laptops), (3) health-related illness due to long exposure on screen, tiredness, adjusting with the use of mask, (4) behavioral concerns like lack of interest from students, uncooperative students and parents, (5) overwhelming DepEd requirements/checklist, and (6) insufficient time to prepare.

The intermittent and unstable internet connection affects teachers' confidence and competence in delivering instruction. Half of the participants admitted that they struggled and had difficulty delivering instruction due to internet failures and gadget problems. Below are some of their responses indicating a feeling of helplessness and despair when they were asked to identify challenges to online instruction:

> *"Struggling in internet connection while, teaching online also having these difficulties when you teach and your laptop is not working."*

> *"The challenges I faced was about the low internet connection not only on my side but also on my students' side."*

> *"Yes!!!! When the internet is slow and some technical difficulties with the devices I am using."*

> *"Yes. The challenges came out when the classes started and some of them are the internet connection of both students and teachers…"*

"This whole online learning stuff affects the students in various ways such as low network bandwidth"

Aside from the unstable internet connection, teachers also articulated difficulty in delivering instruction in the first two weeks of implementation caused by a lack of quality instructional materials online. One participant narrated, *"This whole online learning stuff affects the students in various ways such as low network bandwidth and lack of modules."* Teachers were required to design online modules which are usually uploaded in the school's Learning Management System (LMS) and downloaded by the parents and students.

Teachers also noted health-related consequences of excessive screen time such as eye irritation and fatigue for both teachers and students. Some schools have significantly reduced screen time by minimizing synchronous classes.

Since teachers are distant from the learners and their learning context, the learning behavior of students is difficult to control. This is also one of the areas the teachers struggle with. They also need to establish harmonious relationships with parents as partners in the child's learning. Teachers are also aware that they are being seen and probably monitored by parents online. The awareness of the parents' presence and importance of understanding, patience, and partnership are evidenced by the responses below:

"The challenges came out when the classes started… students' behavior in class, and partnership with the parents or guardians."

"Some parents and kids couldn't catch up because of low network bandwidth."

"We learned to adapt to changes, we learned to use the technology, we learned to have more patience not only to student but also to their parents because, now in online they are monitoring and observing our teaching method and our style."

In terms of the DepEd checklist of requirements and compliance to health protocols, teachers admitted that they were overwhelmed with the abrupt date of submission, scoring, interpretation, and confusion as to who will certify the schools. These concerns are manifested by their responses on the next page:

"The requirements they asked us are reasonable. It allows the school to comply with certain standards. It would make sure also the quality of education that each school will provide as they conduct distance learning modality. However, we just had concern before on the date of submission since they released the memo a bit late."

"They have ***many requirements*** *to comply with."*

"Sort of. I need to prepare my *powerpoint presentation for the kids and I need* to comply with those requirements at the same time. It is ***really challenging***

But, what can we do? We do it for the next generation."

"It›s just the ***confusion*** *on who shall certify the requirements."*

"*Madami. As in napakadami (There are* ***too many*** *[requirements])"*

"Had trouble with the checklist itself, the ***scoring*** *and* ***interpretation****."*

"Scoring *ECCD checklists"*

It is noteworthy that one of the teachers has a sense of purpose for compliance and performance of duties and that is "do it for the next generation." This sense of service to the generation of young students keeps the respondent going. Apparently, at this trying time, individuals may rely on a cause higher than oneself in combating uncontrollable problems and situations.

Strategies done by local kindergarten schools to sustain their operation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

How do teachers respond to the untimely pandemic? Interestingly, the participants rely on their inner strength and character at this time of pandemic when everything crashes outside. They rely on what they can control - their attitude, thinking skills, and faith in God. Themes of *compliance*, *determination* (patience, consideration for others, desire), *thinking skills* (creativity, resourcefulness, analysis, flexibility,) and *faith in God* emerged in the analysis of their responses as to how they cope with the challenges brought by the pandemic to education.

"*Im struggling but,* ***pursuing to finish or do my best*** *to* ***at least meet the*** requirements *of DepEd"*

"I am having a ***hard time*** *adjusting yet* ***I see to it that I am doing and*** submitting the requirements*"*

"By ***strictly following and implementing*** *those health and safety protocol"*

"I learned that even us teachers***, this pandemic will not let us stop learning*** not only in lessons that we teachers must master it but we learned about how to be ***productive*** *and sufficient in terms of teaching even through online. We* learned to ***adapt to changes****, we learned to use the technology, we learned* to ***have more patience*** *not only to student but also to their parents because,* now in online they are monitoring and observing our teaching method and our style."

*"****Always be prepared*** *when you're on screen and* ***looooooooong patience*** for the students and parents as well who›re just getting used to the routine. "

"Analyze *everything.* ***Think*** *outside the box"*

"Learn ***to adjust****, be* ***resourceful****, and* ***creative****. Have* ***faith in God****. I may say that teaching in a face-to-face setting is much easier. But what happened right now proves that* ***nothing beats the desire of the schools and teachers in educating the children****"*

"Be more ***flexible****"*

"Be ***patient*** *and* ***considerate****."*

Although teachers are distant from the physical school setting, from the learners, and other stakeholders, they do not need to feel alone in this battle. They should be supported and equipped with the necessary gears. In the interview, they were asked how they wish to be assisted by the school administrators and stakeholders. The following were the responses.

"I wish to all the parents and the church to ***support us*** *in our teaching."*

*"I wish, I think they should provide a proper **internet connection** and **laptop or PC*** that we can to teach online properly also about the ***finances** like electric bills even* if it's a small amount it's a big help for us teachers.»

*"**Patterned, detailed** and **well-guided**, as they're doing to us."*

*"**Budget** for Internet Connection"*

*"I hope that the University can provide all the **materials, equipment and facilities** needed for this set-up."*

*"Through **seminars**"*

"***Better understanding** about the new school year"*

"*Sobrang willing po ko magpaassist especially **financially** para makaprovide samin ng resources n maggaamit ng bata (I am [more than] willing to be supported especially financially to provide resources to be used by students)"*

*"Ask a DepEd personnel to conduct a **demo"***

Conclusion

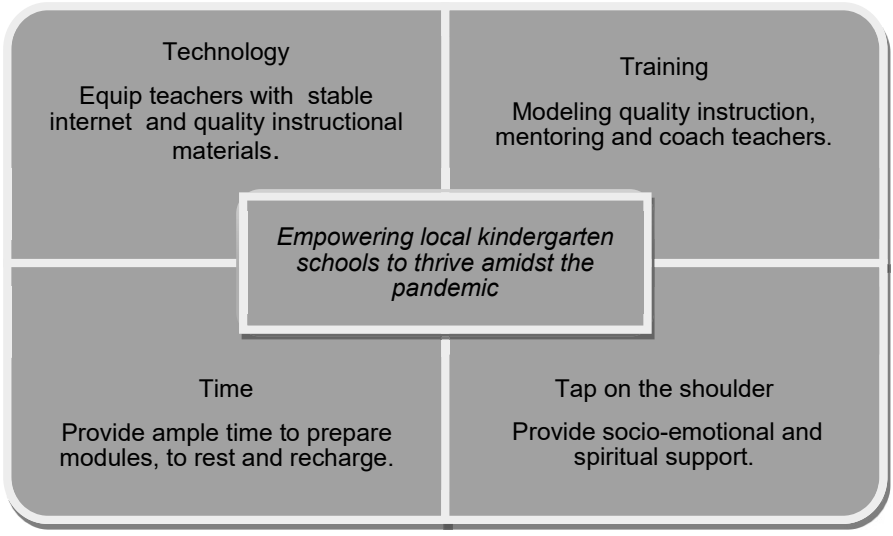
Apparently, teachers wish to be supported not only materially or financially, but spiritually and emotionally as well. As the *frontliners* in the education system, they must be constantly supported and encouraged. Their wishes can be categorized into four: technology, training, time, and tap on the shoulder. Technology refers to the ICT tools, internet, and infrastructure. Training in designing modules and implementing them must be provided as well. They also request online teaching demonstrations from experts and peers. Ample time is also a crucial element in the preparation and implementation of instruction. Lastly, they must also be provided with emotional, social, and spiritual support. They should feel valued and appreciated for their efforts.

Based on the articulated concerns and needs of teachers and administrators in relation to the delivery of instruction and school operations in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, a schematic diagram was developed to capture support systems that stakeholders can establish in order to empower local kin-

dergarten schools to thrive amidst these trying times. Support systems revolve around but are not limited to the following four key areas: Technology, Training, Time, and Tap on the shoulder. A brief description is provided for each key area in the figure below.

Figure 1.

Empowering local kindergarten schools to thrive amidst the pandemic



Recommendations

1. Teachers need to be properly assisted and supported especially at this time of transition so they would not feel helpless and alone in the battle.
2. Support systems revolve around but are not limited to the following four key areas: Technology, Training, Time, and Tap on the shoulder.
3. To foster successful implementation, teachers should be better equipped and have more resources. Empowered and supported teachers design inclusive learning environments and produce successful students.

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Students' Perceptions, Teachers' Implementation and Evaluation of Science Performance Tasks in the Chemistry Classrooms: A Case Study

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Abstract

The case study was conducted to determine students' perception of performance tasks. It aimed to: (1) assess teacher-designed performance tasks in chemistry through self and peer assessments of chemistry teachers; (2) identify indicators of a good performance task; (3) determine the challenges that teachers face in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the performance tasks; and (4) establish the systems of support that the school can provide to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of the performance tasks. Using the Student Perceptions Assessment Questionnaire, the majority of the students "agree" that the teacher-designed performance tasks in chemistry were in accordance with the following components: *Congruence with Planned Learning, Authenticity, Student Consultation, Transparency, and Diversity*. *Congruence with Planned Learning* was given a rating of "Highly Evident" and all the remaining criteria were given a rating of "Evident." Based on the evaluation of the teachers, the majority felt that all the performance tasks addressed standards alignment and student learning. It is recommended that teachers be trained in the design, implementation, and evaluation of performance tasks to maximize assessment.

Keywords: Science performance tasks, Chemistry performance tasks, performance task evaluation

Introduction

Classroom assessment is an integral part of curriculum implementation. Dylan (2013) believed that assessment is the bridge between teaching and learning. Muskin (2017) stated that continuous assessment affects factors beyond the educational system, influencing the quality and equity of learning.

Performance-based testing is an alternative assessment that better represents student progress including the effectiveness of teacher lesson plans, worksheets, and study skills by gathering the scope of knowledge a student has on a subject instead of simply testing the recall of information ("Performance Based Assessment," n.d.).

Lund and Kirk (2010) enumerated several benefits of performance-based assessments: First, they allow teachers to assess learning areas not considered by traditional assessments. Second, they are more engaging and challenging for students because they involve real-world tasks. Third, performance-based assessments empower students by giving them the freedom to make choices in the direction of their learning within boundaries. Fourth, they prompt students to use higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, stimulating the affective, social, and metacognitive aspects of learning. Lastly, they provide an opportunity for teachers to collaborate.

The Philippine K to 12 curriculum, which was implemented in 2012, aims for holistic development and acquisition of 21st century skills. It embraced an assessment model based on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, which guarantees students' success to move from guided to an independent display of knowledge and enables learners to transfer knowledge, understanding, and skills successfully in future situations. This view of assessment allowed the utilization of two types of classroom assessments, namely formative and summative assessments.

There are three components of summative assessment by which students are graded in the K-12 classroom: written works, quarterly tests, and performance tasks. Written assignments included quizzes and long test/unit tests, which develop and enhance students' pen-paper test-taking skills. Performance tasks include skills demonstration, oral or multimedia presentation, and research or portfolio projects that allow students to showcase their knowledge and skills in various ways. Quarterly tests measure student learning each quarter. Depending on the subject, it may be in the form of objective tests, performance-based tests, or both.

Hilliard (2015) indicates that ideal performance tasks are complex, authentic, process/product-oriented, open-ended and time-bound. To craft a performance-based assessment, teachers should 1) identify the goals, 2) select appropriate course standards, 3) review assessment and identify learning gaps, 4) design the scenario (setting, role, audience, time frame, product), 5) gather or create materials (optional) and 6) develop a learning plan.

According to Mussawy (2009), there is little evidence to support that students should participate in evaluating assessment tasks, but the earlier studies of Fisher, Waldrip, Bruce, Fisher, and Dorman (2005) encourage research on student involvement in classroom assessment. Mussawy (2009) adds that investigating students' and teachers' perceptions about the role of assessment in the classroom and students' approach to learning is beneficial because these perceptions of assessment will affect their learning approach, which, in turn, also affect the success of students inside the classroom.

In the Philippine context, the performance task is relatively new. There are no studies conducted yet on the quality, validity, applicability, and usefulness of performance tasks in the basic education classroom, especially in chemistry classes. Perceptions of students and teachers are not yet sought either. A case study design was adopted to ensure an in-depth examination of the performance tasks implemented in the chemistry classes, with an end goal of informing educational practitioners of the effectiveness of the assessments being brought in the classrooms.

Waldrip et al. (2005) developed and validated a helpful instrument to assess middle school students' perceptions of assessment. They recognized the vital role of students in planning instruction and assessment. Waldrip and colleagues identified the following dimensions as important to assessment: *Congruence with Planned Learning, Diverse Methods, Authenticity, Student Consultation, Transparency,* and *Accommodation of Student Diversity.* The perceptions of teachers and students on the quality and usefulness of performance tasks implemented in the classroom are vital in the revision.

Assessment

Assessments, according to Gibbs (2003), have six main functions which include (1) capturing student time and attention, (2) generating appropriate student learning activity, (3) providing timely feedback which students pay attention to, (4) helping students to internalize the discipline's standards and

notions of equality, (5) generating marks or grades which distinguish between students or enable pass/fail decisions to be made, and (6) providing evidence for other outside the course to enable them to judge the appropriateness of standards on the course.

According to Arhin (2015), performance assessment is a clear departure from traditional tests because, in performance tasks, students need to perform tasks that provide them the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to demonstrate that they attained a learning target and provided a solution to a problem. It provides better evidence of good instructional activities, is more engaging to students, and is a better reflection of the criterion performances even outside the classroom. With traditional tests, students select an answer from a ready-made list. In scoring, the teacher determines whether a student selected the correct answer (product) but not the strategies used to arrive at the answer (process).

Various authors have supported the notion of involving students in assessment. Falchikov (2003) advocated students' inclusion in assessment so that teachers can maximize the purpose of evaluation. Similarly, Stiggins, Chappuis, and Chappuis (2004) stated, "Student involved assessment means that students learn to use assessment information to manage their own learning" (p. 41). In addition, Black and Wiliam (1998) saw that including students in the process of assessment not only decreases the weight of work for the teacher but also guarantees that they are seen as in charge of their own progress. Mussawy (2009) cited that student involvement in the process of assessment has been discussed as an influential tool in augmenting student learning. Involving students in the teaching – testing – grading cycle can improve the validity of the assessment process and invalid assessment instruments can be avoided (Steinberg, 2000).

The perception and participation of stakeholders (teachers and students) are vital in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the types of assessments done in class. Performance tasks as a major assessment form in the K-12 classroom should therefore be evaluated in light of the perceptions of the designers and implementers. Careful analysis and examination of the implementation of performance tasks in the classroom would disclose significant insights on important aspects such as (1) the applicability of the assessment form to the learning context, (2) the appropriateness of the content and tasks to the students' experiential and developmental background, (3) and the capacity of the teachers to implement the assessment activity.

Incorporating teachers' perceptions "will build a foundation and rationale for the assessment practice they use in their classrooms, through which one can learn to what extent and in what ways students' perceptions of classroom assessment impacts their learning."

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to determine students' and teachers' perceptions of performance tasks. It aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do students perceive their performance tasks in terms of:
    a. congruence with planned learning
    b. authenticity
    c. student consultation
    d. transparency
    e. diversity
2. What are the indicators of a quality performance task?
3. What challenges do teachers face in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the performance tasks?
4. What systems of support can the school provide to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of the performance tasks?

Method

Research Design

Given that the present investigation dealt with a novel task of appraising the performance tasks implemented in the Chemistry classroom, an in-depth examination of the performance task using the exploratory case study design was necessary. defined the case study as "… an intensive study of a single case… with an aim to generalize across a larger set of cases of the same general type…" (p. 65). The exploratory case study design allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the particularity and complexity of the performance tasks under study. The evaluation of the performance tasks provided a holistic view of the said assessment since the evaluation came from both students and teachers – the individuals who are directly responsible for the design and use of the performance tasks.

Research Site

In choosing the research site, the following selection criteria were used: (1) the school adopts the K to 12 curriculum and the K to 12 assessment guidelines provided by the Department of Education; (2) it must have incorporated Performance Tasks as one of its major components in its grading system, (3) it must have used Performance Tasks in the Chemistry classes for at least a year; and (4) the school must be willing to participate in the study. The chosen site has met all the selection criteria stated above. Its High School Unit adopted the performance task as part of its assessments in SY 2017 – 2018, alongside its major changes in the grading system.

Participants

The teacher - participants were Junior High School Science teachers. Half of the participants (3 out of 6) were probationary teachers. Only three out of the six participants were permanent teachers who have taught in the institution for more than three years. Two teachers are specializing in Physics, the other two are specializing in Biology and the last two are specializing in Chemistry. None of the teachers underwent formal training on the design and implementation of Performance Tasks in their classes. Their extant knowledge on the design and implementation of the Performance Tasks was based on their area sharings/ discussions on how this can be implemented in their respective classes.

The student-participants were composed of Grades 7 -10 students. The number of sections in each grade level varies from 5 to 7 sections, with an average population of 38 students per class. Out of the 876 target population, 690 students (or 78% of the target population) served as the participants of the present study. These were the students who willingly completed the survey questionnaire disseminated to the entire student population.

Instruments

To determine the students' perceptions towards the performance tasks, the "Student Perception on Assessments Questionnaire" SPAQ, an instrument developed by Waldrip, Fisher, and Dorman (2008), was used. For a more focused response of the students, the tool was modified in a way that all occurrences of the terms "assessment" and "tests'' were deliberately changed to "Chemistry performance task". The SPAQ consists of thirty (30) statements that carry the

different possible perceptions of students towards Chemistry performance tasks. These statements were categorized into five (5) scales.

Table 1.

Five Scales of SPAQ and Example Statements from the Questionnaire

Scale	Item Numbers	Sample Statement
Congruence with Planned Learning	1 – 6	*"My Chemistry performance tasks examine what I do in class."*
Authenticity	7 -12	*"I am asked to apply my learning to real life situations."*
Student Consultation	13 – 18	*"I am aware of how my assessment will be marked."*
Transparency	19 – 24	*"I know a particular Chemistry performance task will be marked."*
Diversity	25 – 30	*"I am given performance tasks that suit my ability."*

In answering the questionnaire, the participants were asked to rate each item using the 5-point Likert Scale (5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree). For each item, the mean score was computed and the overall mean for each scale of the SPAQ was also computed. In addition, the percentage of students for each subscale of the Likert was also calculated (e.g. percent of students who agreed or disagreed with a particular statement). Furthermore, the table shown below was developed and used to verbally interpret the overall mean score of each scale in the SPAQ. For example, if the overall mean score of the scale "Congruence with the Planned Activity" is 4.06, it meant that the student-participants perceive their Chemistry performance tasks to highly manifest congruence or alignment of the instruction and the performance task.

Table 2.

Mean Score Interpretation for each SPAQ Scale

Range	Verbal Interpretation
4.01 – 5.00	Highly Evident
3.01 – 4.00	Evident
2.01 – 3.00	Slightly Evident
1.00 – 2.00	Not Evident at All

Teachers' self and peer evaluation of the performance tasks was completed with the use of a "Performance Task Assessment Tool" that was developed by the researcher. The assessment tool was primarily based on McTighe's (2015) 10-item "Performance Task Review Criteria." In this tool, the teachers are asked to rate the quality and relevance of teacher-developed performance tasks with the use of evaluative statements like "*the task is set in an "authentic" context – involving a genuine challenge, a target audience, and realistic constraints.*" McTighe's (2017) tool was modified to meet the specific requirements of the present study. It was broadened in a way that the statements sought to determine (1) the alignment of the performance task to the set performance standards and (2) how the performance task addressed student learning. For each item, the teachers were asked to rate the statement using the 5-point Likert Scale (5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree). The questionnaire underwent face validation from an expert and from the teacher-participants to ensure that the questionnaire items are appropriate to the assessment objective.

After the implementation of the Performance Tasks, the Science teachers were also interviewed either by pair or individually depending on their availability. The questions asked sought to determine (1) their views of assessment and performance task, (2) how they designed their performance task including the rubric, (3) the challenges they encountered in implementing the performance task, and (4) the perceived support systems necessary for the successful implementation of the performance task (Appendix 4). Each interview lasted for thirty minutes to one hour. All interviews were completed after a week.

Data Analysis

To answer problem statement 1, the investigator utilized the result of the Student Perceptions of Assessments Questionnaire. The percentage of each scale was computed using the formula shown below.

$$P = F/N \times 100$$

where

P = Percentage (%)

F = Frequency

N = Total Number of Population

The percentage of the Performance Task Assessment Tool was also computed. In addition, the average percentage of each scale of the 5-scale questionnaire was computed. The average percentages were presented in table and graph forms.

$$AP = P/n \times 100$$

where

AP = Average Percentage ($\%_{ave}$)

P = Percentage (%)

n = Total Number of Question per Scale

The average percentage of each category of the Performance Task Assessment Tool was also computed. The average percentage is also presented in table and graph forms.

For both questionnaires, the mean scores of each scale were computed and were interpreted using the Mean Score Interpretation for each SPAQ Scale shown in Table 2.

On the other hand, the interview data were analyzed by coding and classifying them according to themes. The themes used in the present study were based on the different scales that appeared in both the questionnaires given to the students and the teachers. Hence, teachers' responses were coded and classified according to the following: congruence to the planned activity, authenticity, student consultation, transparency, diversity, standards alignment, and student learning. Additional codes like "extended thinking" were included if such occurrence was evident in the data.

Discussion of Results

Students' Perceptions on their Performance Tasks in Terms of Congruence with Planned Learning, Authenticity, Student Consultation, Transparency, and Diversity

Most of the students agree that the Performance Tasks were *Congruent with Planned Learning, Authentic, Consulted Students, Transparent,* and *Diverse* (see Table 3 below). Similarly, in terms of mean interpretation, all criteria were interpreted as Highly Evident or Evident.

Table 3.

Students Perceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ) Survey Results

	Responses						
Criteria	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)	Overall Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Congruence with Planned Learning	1%	1%	17%	54%	27%	4.06	Highly Evident
Authenticity	1%	3%	24%	48%	24%	3.92	Evident
Student Consultation	1%	2%	23%	48%	25%	3.94	Evident
Transparency	1%	1%	22%	50%	26%	3.99	Evident
Diversity	1%	2%	22%	49%	25%	3.95	Evident

Congruence with Planned Learning

This criterion asked students to assess whether the performance task in chemistry was aligned with the goals, objectives, and activities of the K-12 Science program. *Congruence with Planned Learning* has the highest percentage in the "strongly agree" and "agree" scales. In other words, students perceived that the Chemistry performance tasks they worked on were aligned with the lessons discussed in class. This finding is supported by Biggs' Constructive Alignment. The alignment aspect refers to the appropriate teaching activities which are arranged to fit the desired learning outcomes and assessing students' learning outcomes to see how well they match what was intended (Biggs, 2011).

Transparency

Questions here asked students regarding the extent to which the purposes and forms of assessment tasks were well-defined and clear to them. Half of the respondents agreed that the performance tasks in Chemistry were transparent. *Transparency* was the second-highest percentage in the "strongly agree" scale. Such finding suggests that the respondents believed that expectations and grading criteria were set at the beginning of the task.

Student Consultation

This criterion asks students to assess the extent to which they are consulted and informed about the forms of assessment tasks employed. Almost half of the respondents (49%) agreed that students were consulted and informed. This was the third-highest in the "strongly agree" scale alongside *Diversity*. In this study, both Student Consultation and Diversity got a percentage rating of 25%. The respondents believed that they had a say on the performance task given to them in Chemistry. Similarly, 25% of the respondents thought that the performance task catered to the range of capabilities of students.

Diversity

The last six items of the questionnaire tackled the diversity of the assessment. In *Diversity*, students assessed the extent to which they had an equal chance at completing assessment tasks. The performance task survey result shows that 22% of the student-respondents "strongly agree" that the Chemistry performance tasks were diverse while 49% of the respondents "agree" to such (see Table 3 on p. 93). This was the third-highest in the "strongly agree" scale alongside *Student Consultation*.

Authenticity

This criterion asks students to assess whether the performance tasks in chemistry featured real-life situations relevant to the learner (Waldrip, Fisher, & Dorman, 2008). Overall, 48% of the respondents agreed that the performance tasks in Chemistry were authentic (see Table 3). *Authenticity* is the fourth-highest in the "strongly agree" scale as shown by 24% of the respondents.

All criteria resulted in an overall mean average between 3.94 – 4.05 (see Table 4 below). *Congruence for Planned Learning* has an overall mean of 4.06, which ranked as the highest among the five criteria. This result shows that the students perceived that the alignment of the Chemistry Performance Task with the lessons discussed and the subject's goals is "highly evident." The students perceived that the Transparency or clarity of the objectives and requirements of the Chemistry Performance Task is "evident." The overall mean of *Transparency* is 3.99, which is the second-highest among the five criteria. Students perceived *Diversity, Student Consultation,* and *Authenticity* as "evident" in the Chemistry Performance Tasks.

Table 4.

Summary of Overall Mean Score Interpretation and Ranking

Criteria	Overall Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Congruence with Planned Learning	4.06	Highly Evident	1st
Authenticity	3.92	Evident	5th
Student Consultation	3.94	Evident	4th
Transparency	3.99	Evident	2nd
Diversity	3.95	Evident	3rd

Indicators of a Quality Performance Task

From the teachers' perspective, a good performance task should have the following: 1) transparency, 2) authenticity, 3) congruence with planned learning.

Transparency

This was emphasized as the teachers clearly articulated their expectations to the students in completing their Performance Tasks. Some teachers emphasized: *"It should have "wow" factor… can see the principle of Science that you want to get,"* and "*They should be able to meet the criteria that we set in our rubric."*

Authenticity

The teachers also highlighted *Authenticity* as one important consideration in designing performance tasks: A teacher mentioned that performance tasks *"should help the students realize the importance of the lesson or its practical applications";* help students *"zero in" on the practical applications of the lessons;* and should be authentic because "*The more authentic the performance task is, the more engaged the students are*."

Congruence with Planned Learning

Teacher-respondents were unanimous in stating that alignment of the assessment with lesson objectives is a crucial requirement in designing a good performance task. Several of them stated: *"First, a good performance task must be coherent with the objectives… the learning competencies;"* "*It must also show the interrelatedness of all topics;"* and "*They should be able to apply their knowledge on mixture and percent composition through making the drinks."*

Other Considerations

When teachers were asked if they consult students on the kind of Performance Task, they answered that they do not consult the students, but they find out what the students need to deliver their output best. They believed that students are more likely to consider a Performance Task as good if: (1) they can learn on their own when doing the performance task, and (2) they are comfortable in doing the Performance Task because their multiple intelligences were considered. One teacher said that learning is more meaningful when students do performance tasks because they are encouraged to learn independently. Another teacher also mentioned that students are more comfortable doing performance tasks than pen-and-paper assessments because it accommodates their other intelligences.

Challenges Teachers Face in the Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of the Performance Tasks

The interview and observation notes showed some of the challenges they faced when the teachers designed, implemented, and evaluated the performance task. The said challenges fall into the following categories: 1) integration with other subjects, 2) logistics (time and resources), 3) mastery of the subject matter, and 4) motivation.

Integration with Other Subjects

On the Performance Task design, according to the Grade 8 teacher, the lack of integration with the Art class posed a challenge because of the nature of the task. Here, integration as a theme was emphasized as evidenced in the

interview statement: *"I cannot solely grade them on their artistic capability because that is not my learning expertise, so I still made the rubric center more around their knowledge of the element."*

Logistics

According to the Grade 10 teachers, the challenges they met in designing their Performance Task were scrapping the original Performance Task due to time constraints and creating a new one. With the new Performance Task, they had to include the artistic component of a storybook in the rubric and discuss with the students how to make a storybook. These were shown in the interview statements: *"I think it would be a challenge in checking the artistic component of the storybook. We still need to discuss with students how to make a storybook."* The researcher observed that the requirements of a storybook and a 60-minute video (ChemisTREE) are time-consuming. Both tasks required additional work and training on storybook making and video making and editing, which consumed extra time from their Science classes. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2015), the most effective teaching is planned "backward." This statement means that all classroom activities--from teaching to learning to practice--are organized to prepare learners for the desired performance (McTighe, 2015). The Grade 9 teachers also said there was a need to rush with the discussion of the lesson due to several class interruptions. Also, students cram with their work and submit their work late. They said: "*Students cram. There is a need to fast track the discussion*" and "*Some students submitted their projects two days after."* The teachers had problems with the execution of the lesson that led to the late implementation of the performance task because of time constraints. In this part, the teachers highlighted the importance of time in preparing the students for the different kinds of Performance Tasks and in creating a good rubric.

Mastery of Subject Matter

Based on the interview of the teachers, all grade levels experienced implementation challenges due to a lack of mastery in certain concepts. According to a Grade 7 teacher, some students have not mastered identifying the solute and solvent in a solution and the computation of percent solution: "*They thought that the major fruit ingredient is the only solute they have. Should be*

given more examples in computation in percent composition." The researcher likewise had observed that Performance Tasks should have been more successful if mastery of the subject matter has been established first. If students have a good comprehension of the lesson, this will lead to a better implementation of the performance task. In addition, if mini-tasks were provided, this would save time and better the monitoring process of the assessment. These mini-tasks may have been incorporated early on in the lessons.

Motivation

According to the Grade 8 teacher, some students did not put a lot of effort into their execution of the Elemental Hero: "*There were still some hiccups or some speed bumps along the way with some students putting less effort on their costume*."

Suggested Systems of Support for the Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Performance Tasks

Based on the interview data and the self and peer evaluation results, the teachers articulated the need for training on designing, implementing, and evaluating performance tasks, and provision of enough resources for the planning and execution of the Performance Tasks.

Training on Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating Performance Tasks

The teacher-respondents stated the following: *"Training on how to make creative engagements (or performance tasks) effectively without eluding the learning goals; fun, interactive and novel ideas without becoming too gimmicky," "Training in creating a genuinely authentic assessment that would cater to all types of learners and will measure their understanding of the topic," "Seminar-workshop on how to properly design a performance task that will link all the topics discussed during the quarter. Also, training on how to "design scaffolds" to prepare students for performance tasks," "Training on how to create a more authentic performance task which includes all the topics covered in the quarter. Something more practical and relatable to students' experience"* and *"Training on how to design authentic performance tasks, to update resources and to evaluate all performance tasks on execution and grading."*

Provision of Enough Resources for the Planning and Execution of Performance Tasks

One teacher-respondent asserted: *"Enough resources to execute the task without asking the students to bring these materials from home."*

Among the suggestions, the most recurring is the need to provide teacher-trainings on the design of the Performance Tasks to ensure authentic, engaging, creative, and developmental assessment. In addition, there is a need for the Subject Area Coordinator (SAC), as the academic leader of the area, to be on top of all the assessments provided to the students. The SAC should discuss with the different grade levels their performance standards vis-à-vis their performance tasks to ensure standards alignment and student learning. Also, the SAC should make sure that the essentials of a Performance Task are considered when designing said tasks. Finally, teachers should realize that an actual Performance Task is not just fun, interesting, and engaging, but it should be, first and foremost, a meaningful activity that allows students to apply what they have learned in class in a real-life setting.

Conclusion

The majority of the students agreed that the Performance Tasks were in accordance with the following components: *Congruence with Planned Learning, Authenticity, Student Consultation, Transparency,* and *Diversity*. *Congruence with Planned Learning* was given a rating of "Highly Evident," and all the remaining criteria were given a rating of "Evident." From the teachers' perspective, the indicators of a good performance task are *Transparency, Authenticity,* and *Congruence with Planned Learning*. The majority of the teacher-respondents also felt that all the Performance Tasks addressed standards alignment and student learning. Regarding the challenges that they face in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the performance tasks, integration with other subjects, logistics (time and resources), mastery of the subject matter, and motivation were mentioned. Finally, the teachers articulated the need for training on Performance Task design, implementation, and evaluation, and provision of enough resources for the planning and execution of the Performance Tasks.

Recommendations

1. The Science teachers should be given more training or benchmarking on how to design, implement and evaluate a performance task and on how to design a rubric.

2. There should be close collaboration between the SAC and the subject teachers. All assessments, including Performance Tasks, should be discussed and studied to ensure their quality.

3. Teachers should be provided with more training on the design of outcomes-based assessments.

4. There is also a need for an area-wide review of performance tasks through focus group discussion to assist one another in designing performance tasks and rubrics.

5. Teachers also need to strengthen their preparation, monitoring, and follow-up of the activities.

6. Teachers should be able to prepare the students for the task by giving mini-tasks. With the mini-tasks, teachers can provide feedback to better the students› output. Post-activity discussion should be part of the entire process.

7. Further studies should be made focusing on the correlation between the SPAQ results and students' performance. It is also recommended to initiate the use of the revised Performance Task.

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A Classroom-Based Research on Students' Outreach Activity Participation

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Abstract

Outreach programs and activities are a vital part of the holistic formation of high school students at St. Scholastica's College Manila (SSC). This classroom-based research aims to present qualitative descriptions of students' experiences and insights, and the values they learned from their participation in outreach activities. The study is qualitative in nature and used open-ended questions to generate data that respond to the study's aims. Data samples from 3 students were purposively selected. The results showed that students associated their experiences with specific outreach sites. Their insights underscore contentment, gratitude, and listening, while the values learned centered on responsibility, commitment, and respect. Hence, the outreach may be considered a form of transformative education that may have led the respondents to view their lives with gratefulness and realize their desire to help and serve less fortunate individuals. The study discusses outreach activities as a vital component in academic institutions.

Keywords: high school students, outreach involvement, social awareness, community engagement, outreach experiences

Introduction

According to Boyd and Myers (1998), "Education in an open society has the charge of promoting personal transformation as one of its major aims." This personal transformation helps the individual acknowledge and understand the relationship between her inner self and the world, that a person is not a

separate entity from the bigger society. In addition, Boyd and Myers uphold that "the curriculum of transformative education must be integrative, comprehensive, and holistic in the true sense of the word." Moreover, the curriculum which contains the general strategy for transformative education becomes the heart of transformative education. Its objective goes beyond offering the learners the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values/beliefs. An important aspect of the transformative education curriculum is that it gives the students an opportunity for critical thinking and social awareness, developing their love and commitment into becoming empowered citizens for social transformation. Transformative education must be a tool to analyze what is truly happening in society. Moreover, it provides the learners' avenues for critical judgments on the things and events occurring around them and helps urgently address present concerns.

This is very much needed in the Philippine society at present, when learners witness various events in the society that can, in one way or another, affect the lives of the learners. We can feel the effects of consumerism, broken families, poverty, gender discrimination, drugs, and other family and societal issues in general. These are a great challenge for the institution's curriculum to respond to the needs of society. Segovia (2004, as cited in Tamban et al., 2020) agrees with what Paulo Freire said that a transformative education should have a "method which pulls down the need for the four walls we associate with the traditional classrooms, which are only about six hundred years from us today" (p. 25). Moreover, Tujan (2004, cited in Tamban et al., 2020) said that the learners must experience learning more than the traditional approaches provided by the teacher in the classroom setting. This method would help the learners experience the contingencies of life, which will help them examine the condition of the society and contribute to its transformation. These life-realities in the bigger society will provide the learners with an awareness of various social issues.

One of the ways to respond to the "signs of the times" in the local and global communities is to do outreach activities or get involved with the various actions done by many groups and institutions to respond to the most urgent concerns faced by humanity at present. Thus, Moga (1995, p.121) mentioned that "an involved way of living is a social or communal way of existing," which is always for the common good and not solely for personal benefits.

This study aims to lead the readers to examine the significance of outreach activities or community involvements as a part of transformative pedago-

gies inside and outside the walls of the classrooms. The main objective of this research is to examine the students' "learning interaction" through community engagement pedagogies that often combine learning goals and community service. As a result, this method enhances the learner's growth for the common good.

Education for Justice and Social Transformation through Outreach Activities

The institution's transformative education is concretized based on its school thrust: "Education for Justice and Social Transformation" (St. Scholastica's College, Manila – Faculty Manual, 2007) which was recently rephrased as "Creating Leaders for Social Transformation," signifying the bold intention of the institution to mold future leaders. As part of the institution's curriculum, the "Religion Extension Program (REP)," which is transformative, provides the learners the venue to experience learning outside the classroom. Through outreach initiatives, a medium to attain its vision, mission, and goals (VMG). This flowed from the previous program called the "Religion Extension Class (REC)", offered only to some selected students in Years 3 and 4 who would pass the interview and other requirements such as no grades below 80, recommended by the CLE teacher, and others. However, due to PAASCU's recommendation, the REP is the new program offered to all Scholasticans in all grade levels to strengthen and concretize the school's goals for transformative education through exposure trips (social awareness) and outreach involvement (realization of classroom lessons) of all learners. With the REP program, the institution can initiate various outreach activities through its curriculum for the learners. As Tujan (2004) mentioned, there are multiple ways to concretize outreach activities like having one through the school's outreach program initiative, a subject area or a teacher, of the parents' association, of the alumni association, or the students' organization. The content of the syllabus must be concretized in solidarity with the marginalized in society through outreach activities.

These outreach activities relate the context to the classroom learning environment by showing applications in practice, and such activities typically have several characteristics (Vennix et al., 2017). When comparing outreach activities as a form of transformative education, Vanderbilt University's Janet S. Eyler (winner of the 2003 Thomas Ehrlich Faculty Award for Service Learning) and Dwight E. Giles, Jr., said that it is:

"a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students. . . seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves. In the process, students link personal and social development with academic and cognitive development. . . experience enhances understanding; understanding leads to more effective action."

Transformative Education Outside the Four Walls of the Classroom

In St. Scholastica's College-Manila, outreach activities are a mandatory part of the curriculum. A Religion Extension Program (REP) outreach activity could be a major integration of all subjects at a year level. Through the REP program, the curriculum is enriched with value-laden advocacies across grade levels 7 to 12. When critically reflecting on these advocacies, a person would understand that these advocacies mirror the realities and the needed solutions in the local and global communities. Thus, a learner would know that no matter how petty the issue is, as long as it exists in the local community, it would affect the global standards.

These grade-level advocacies inspire the learners to immerse themselves in the different outreach activities with the following partner communities:

1) Outreach Site A- The Grade 7 students interact with orphans in this outreach venue. These are children who lost their parents or were abandoned at an early age. The students often speak, play, and eat with these kids.

2) Outreach Site B- When the learners reach Grade 8, they interact with grandmothers in the place. Abandoned and rejected by their families, these old women find solace in this institution that aims to provide care and comfort. The learners listen to their life stories and share food while interacting with them. The grandmothers would often entertain the students with songs.

3) Outreach Site C- Grade 9 students interact with the low- income families in a municipality. They are given this activity to share with them simple blessings like food or anything that would let the families feel that there are people who still care for them. During the activity, the students would often learn from the joys and struggles in the lives of the families in the area. This experience would make the students think critically about the inequity and injustices in society, especially the disparity between the rich and the poor.

4) Outreach Site D – In Grade 10, the learners interact with those who have cerebral palsy and autism. Seeing the patients' situation in the institution would make a person grateful for her normal physical condition. The learners would take care of them by cooking their food and interacting with them. Moreover, the learners would donate simple tokens for the patients in the institution.

Outside the campus, the above outreach activities would provide holistic formation for the learners. Conscious of the societal realities, the learners can start contributing critical solutions towards a better society. However, Segovia (2004) said that some people in education deny historical facts that significant learning occurs outside the classroom. But we expect the learners to be immersed with the realities of life - this is what we want them to learn and experience so that they can become genuine agents for social transformation. In this research, the 39 Grade 12 students who had their junior high school in SSC, Manila, were asked to choose outstanding outreach or community involvement experiences from Grade 7 to 10.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions based on the respondents' experiences:

1) What are the respondents' experiences from their outreach activities?
2) What insights did the respondents learn from the outreach activities?
3) What values did the respondents report to have learned from the outreach activities?

This research revisits the school's transformative education program through outreach activities as a major part of the curriculum being implemented to attain its VMG. The VMG of the High School Unit (SSC, High School Planner, 2019) clearly states that SSC as a Catholic institution aims to provide transformative education. In order to have a deeper and critical analysis, discussion, and evaluation, various scientific, literary sources are used to strengthen the school's program on transformative education.

Tujan (2004) mentioned that the partner communities become the real-world laboratories for the school to conduct their outreach activities. As the bigger and broader community becomes the real-life laboratory for the learners, they are encouraged to have a variety of critical learning reflections based

on their experiences. These vital reflections provide the students with various perspectives that will make them critically think of creative ideas to contribute to the transformation of society. Exon (2017) said that outreach activities remain important in their school's mission. Moreover, Grabill (2010) stated, "Outreach service is the way to understand service to the broader community." This makes every educational institution a transformative unit for the learners' high-impact experiences upon involving themselves in outreach activities. Thus, the previous research stated that the learners' participation in community involvement reinforces positive social values or sets an example (Youniss & Yates, 1997). This must be true to any educational institution if the aim is to bring transformative education to the society, outreach program or community involvement must be a part of the school's curriculum. However, this must flow from the institution's vision-mission-&-goals. Outreach activities will not be implemented without the clear statements flowing from the institution's V-M-&-G. Bateman (1991) stated that "social and health programs that are meant to benefit the poor must have outreach capacities to reach their prospective clients." One's community involvement then becomes a personal contribution to helping the marginalized in society. The poor people in the society must benefit from whatever community involvement program the institution has mapped out within the school year. The more outreach activities, the more people will find meaning in life because humans seek meaning in every "situation" they get involved in (Moga, 1995).

The High School Unit's VMG mirrors a transformed society. One of the institution's goals is "to have a high sense of social awareness and commitment to social change" (SSC, High School Planner, 2019). Paulo Freire (2013) clearly stated that learners do not need "Banking Education" to transform society. They need no deposits of information. Moreover, Freire said that to transform the world, we need to have "dialogue, critical questioning, love for humanity, and praxis, the synthesis of critical reflection and action." It aims to mold the ideal graduates of the institution to become critically active agents of change in society. Thus, transformative education critically reflects on the social realities that affect people's lives in society.

Method

This section presents the description of the research design, a description of the respondents, setting, and instruments. The procedures in gathering and treatment of the data for analysis and interpretation will also be discussed.

Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative method. An open-ended questionnaire was used to determine the respondents' most memorable outreach experiences and values learned during community involvement.

Research Setting

This study was conducted in the high school unit of St. Scholastica's College Manila. The research site is a Catholic institution whose Vision-Mission-Goals include providing a transformative Benedictine holistic education that is anchored on academic excellence and social responsibility. SSC aims to form every Scholastican into a Christian Filipino woman who is an agent for social transformation. It implements the Religion Extension Program (REP) curriculum as a form of holistic Transformative Education, which includes outreach activities.

Participants and Data Sample

The data analyzed in this study were from a 12th grade class of 39 female students. The works of 3 students were purposively selected in the final analysis. They were selected on the basis of their reflective and critical responses on how the outreach activities helped them improve their relationship with others. The 12th-grade students whose works were included in the current study have been with SSC in their junior high school years and experienced joining at least one of the junior high school outreach activities in the past. The respondents' age ranged from 16-18 years old. All participants agreed to voluntarily participate and allow their responses in the survey to be utilized in the current study.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made instrument was used to gather the necessary data. This instrument is composed of three open-ended questions which determine the students' critical outreach insights and learning. These include the students' (1) most memorable outreach activity in high school, (2) benefits they earned when immersed in outreach activity, and (3) values they learned from the outreach activity.

A pilot test of the open-ended questionnaire was conducted on 15 Grade 12 students who met the criteria. The open-ended questionnaire was revised for better implementation with the actual respondents. Two Theology/Christian Living Education teachers and one licensed psychometrician were asked to review the research instrument.

Data Analysis

The students' responses to the open-ended questions were tabulated and analyzed according to the frequency of mention. A limitation of the study is that there was no external validation to the data analysis conducted.

Ethical Considerations

Permission from the high school principal was sought before implementing this research. All participants voluntarily consented to this study. Parental permission was also required by sending letters with reply slips. All information from the participants is used for the study alone. The participants were fully informed of the research's purpose, method, and intention that would help the school intensify its Benedictine transformative education.

The researcher remained independent and objective throughout the procedure to avoid conflict of interest in the research process. All students included in the study have agreed to participate. Likewise, parents' gave their permission or consent for their children to participate in this research.

Results and Discussion

The findings are presented based on the respondents' descriptions of their most memorable outreach involvements, the impact of the outreach activity for them, and the values they developed before, during, and after participating in a particular outreach endeavor. Likewise, direct quotations, labeled according to the students' grade levels when they participated in certain outreach activities, are presented.

The respondents shared that they were inspired by the realities of the lives of people living in various outreach venues. They can now relate better with the situations of the lives of the people living in those places like the chil-

dren and elders who suffer from cerebral palsy, the ones with special needs, and those who were in prison. The respondents were able to form camaraderie with people they interacted with by playing games and telling stories with them. Moreover, they were surprised at how they display happiness despite unlikely conditions. Seeing the people in those places made them realize the abundance of God's blessings in their lives. They realized that authentic joy is not found solely in material things, but in how people look at the brighter side of life. Through the respondents' interaction with these people, they participated in the bigger societal family through solidarity. As Tamban et al (2020) stated, "(Their) humanity is shared, and (their) reality as persons immediately and irrevocably links (them) to the rest of the human community."

Furthermore, the respondents showed the communitarian spirit in the first outreach site when they immersed and interacted with people during outreach activities. Listening to the stories of these people nourished the respondents' faith in God, that there is beauty in life according to God's plan and the mantra is "never give up." Thus, the outreach activities commonly opened the minds and hearts of the respondents, likewise fulfilling the vision-mission-goals of the institution in terms of "social awareness" as agents for social transformation.

In common, the respondents learned to value their blessings in life. The simple things they enjoy in life like food, house, gadgets, and especially having their own families would be what many people in outreach venues lack. Moreover, they realized that they/one should not leave people in their worst conditions but they/one must lend a helping hand to share one's blessings. Furthermore, what is unique in their experience is the ability to listen. Nowadays, we rarely observe young people listening to others. Through their stories, like the women in Correctional Institute for Women (CIW), the participants gained firsthand knowledge on how the inmates face an uncomfortable life inside the jail. However, hope is what they keep on holding on to, especially those who claim to be innocent or not guilty of any crime. Lastly, these realizations made a significant impact in the lives of the respondents that until now, they would always cherish those incredible moments while doing the outreach activities.

Table 1

Sample Responses and Frequency of Mention

Outreach Sites	Sample Responses and Frequency of Mention
A	Home for children who were forsaken by their parents or relatives (4) Huge impact in my life (3) Lucky and blessed as a person Lively ambiance of the place Smiles painted on the faces of the children (4) Welcoming embrace and their longing hugs just before we left
B	Disheartened me after realizing that they were left by their families temporarily or permanently Reminded me of the love that my grandparents made me feel (2) Love within a family will never end Spoke in their dialect Tiring yet very meaningful experience (2) Brought happiness to everyone
C	Experienced their daily lives Luxury would mean having a place to sleep
D	Get to help and interact with almost all of them (11) Fortunate enough to live the life I am currently living It made me very happy (2) Memorable (2) Provide care and comfort to the abandoned children with disabilities (6) Heartwarming experience (2) Let them feel the love and care they deserve (3) Elderly people who were left by their families (2) Suffering from a disability that can never be reversed (3) Kindhearted and joyful through the little things they have (8) They are equal to any one of us (3) Bond really well with the kids, elderly, & even my classmates (4)

All of these inspired the respondents to do better in school. Thus, according to Indiana University Bloomington, the learners who spend time in community engagements or outreach activities ironically spend more time in their academic studies with more time spent communicating with faculty and staff (Tamban et al., 2020). It turned into a meaningful journey when the respondents, through solidarity and empathy, entered other peoples' humanity. The respondents learned various aspects of others' humanity, a closer look at the internal beauty rather than the external appearance of people. To consider

them as blessings while reflecting on their own life's blessings is another key to solidarity with the least, the last, and the lost in the society, as Jesus said: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

The study results prove that outreach activities as a form of community engagement brought transformation in the lives of the respondents. This is in congruence with what Boyd and Myers (1998) stated, "Education in an open society has the charge of promoting personal transformation as one of its major aims." Moreover, Tujan (2004, cited in Tamban et al., 2020) mentioned that the partner communities become the real-world laboratories for the school to conduct its outreach activities. Furthermore, based on the policy brief from the National Education Association (NEA), "when schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher-level programs". The higher nature and goal of transformative education are found in the respondents' awareness of the various social issues. This awareness brings deeper meaning to the respondents' relationship with others, a concretization of authentic charity – a love that is put into action more than any material donations. Thus, as Tujan (2004, cited in Tamban et al., 2020) stated, outreach should not just be mere dole-outs. Tujan further adds that St. Scholastica's College Manila made it a point to provide their facilities for urban low-income families victims of Metro Manila's numerous fires. He explains that instead of the typical relief work, the students can interact with the urban poor for a certain period.

Conclusion

The respondents' high regard for their most memorable outreach activities or community involvement is noticeable in their reflective responses. The respondents described every outreach experience in meaningful sentences on how a particular outreach activity became a worth remembering experience. The *bayanihan* or "community spirit" as part of the Filipino culture is truly alive in the modern forms of outreach activities. The respondents shared their own time and effort to reach out to others, more than any material donations is the ability to take time to listen to their stories. Transformative education is not only limited within the walls of the classroom but was meaningfully achieved collaboratively with the outside communities as "real-world laboratories."

Moreover, the outreach activities made the respondents critically reflect on their most important insights and learning which started with their commitment to join the outreach activities. The respondents made mention of their realizations on their blessings in life that must be shared with others. The help they gave paved the way to love their own families. In addition, the learners discovered that they need to be sensitive to the needs of others due to the different burdens and stories that they found behind every smile on the face of the people they encountered. The new learnings the respondents got from the outreach activities were the realizations and manifestations of the lessons inside the walls of the classroom. Moreover, their insights and learnings mirrored the effectiveness of St. Scholastica's College Manila's vision-mission-goals. Based on the respondents' critical and reflective answers to the survey questionnaire, a genuine transformation took place in their hearts and minds.

Finally, the respondents recognized relevant values imbibed from their outreach experiences. There is a discovery of values related to the respondents' goals as they immersed themselves in every outreach endeavor. These values will lead the researcher, readers, and participants to strengthen the idea that outreach activities, as a form of community involvement, are a significant element of the curriculum of any institution.

Recommendations

1. The school should create sustainable means of learning and growth for all adopted communities. In this way, the learners will not be the only ones to benefit from the adopted communities by making them their "*real-world laboratories*."

2. The faculty should conduct research-based studies to strengthen further and evaluate the effectiveness of outreach activities flowing from the school's vision-mission-&-goals.

3. The school should conduct virtual exposure trips or outreach initiatives to fill the gap of face-to-face (*real-world laboratories*) community involvement.

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