Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning

Carla Jobelle Culajara[1], Olivia Portos[2], Juan Paolo Martin Culajara[3] , Mark Kim Villapando[4]

[1,2,3,4] Department of Education, Sta. Catalina National High School, Philippines

Abstract

This study assesses the factors affecting students' learning experiences in one of the secondary public schools in the Philippines implementing different learning modalities in distance learning. As a learner-public institution, the school has broadened its implementation of learning by providing wide perspectives to students through online distance learning. The study utilized quantitative and qualitative research designs. Purposive sampling was used in the study consisting of 250 students and 18 students who participated in FGD, where data were collected and obtained through a survey questionnaire and focus group discussions. Distance learning encourages students to learn on their own and explore without the assistance of teachers, enhancing their ability to research topics related to the courses they should learn. With the results of the study, two themes emerged: *ICT integration and innovational instruction.* Mostly, it aided in the development of independence. Students usually lose concentration in their learning tasks as a result of physical distractions and due to slow internet connection. Regardless of their difficulties, students continue their studies because they have learned that the more difficult the road, the sweeter the result. This study will provide baseline information for the development of the school's strategy on how to strengthen and consolidate distance education.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak has wrought harm on a wide range of industries, including education (O'Brien et al., 2020); thus, the new normal must need to reassess education in light of new opportunities and challenges (Cahapay, 2020). As the Department of Education makes its way to continuing education, distance learning has become the mainstream of all institutions in delivering instruction. Because of distance learning, education has not stopped, and it continues to reach every student, but there are still some challenges that each one faces despite offering different learning modalities, and through this study, it will make a bridge and fill the gaps in the different aspects that affect the learning of each student and can better evaluate the effective delivery of instruction for "No child must be left behind". Consequently, (Dayagbil et al., 2021) reiterate that academic institutions should migrate to dynamic teaching and learning modalities, adjust the program, capacitate teachers, rebuild services, execute a comprehensive strategy, and analyze all aspects of the plan. This is proof that everyone needs to be involved in change and can keep up with the program and school plans that were published for the continuity of education. Whereas if challenges encountered during the pandemic are investigated properly and converted into opportunities, distance learning will become more viable, while instructional activities will become more blended (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

Corresponding author
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Carlajobelle.culajara@deped.gov.ph

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

This study was employed to understand and acquire in-depth learning experiences of the students in distance learning and recognize the factors affecting learning experiences 9in terms of mental, physical, and technological aspects; this study will shed light on why some students are unable to keep up with the rapidly changing educational environment using technology and develop enhancement programs on how to meet each of these challenges and to be able to transform the ever-changing educational landscape to develop skilled and globally-competitive students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Significant advancements in information and communication technology in the digital age have led to major shifts in the method of distance education (Arinto, 2016). The time we face opens our minds and prepares our bodies that we need to be aware and responsive to every challenge of our lives, particularly in adapting to the changes in the delivery of instruction in our school. The study by (Sacramento et al., 2021) stated that students who used active learning strategies indicated that they took a great deal of time to examine its importance. Along with the change and adoption of teachers in different ICT integration and literacy and content, each student will also simultaneously cope with those differentiated activities in the use of technology. The use of technology alleviates every student's fear that they will not understand their lesson and are hesitant to do the learning tasks because they do not immediately understand what is in the modules. But, despite the challenges they face, one of the coping strategies of every student is their dedication and commitment to reaching their dream of finishing school despite the pandemic faced. It was very evident that today's technology during the pandemic has greatly helped in delivering learning to every student. This is a way to make every student aware that in addition to the modular distance approach, the school has thought of other learning modalities that can offer and cater to the needs of students and parents. Whereas if challenges encountered during the pandemic are investigated properly and converted into opportunities, distance learning will become more viable, while instructional activities will become more blended (Lucenario et al., 2016).

According to (Jeong & So, 2020), changes in strategic instructional strategies are required to understand the characteristic educational features and thereby effectively communicate the benefits in efforts to answer the labeled problem and improve the effective service of online classes. Through this study, the School Heads will be able to understand and enlighten each teacher to come up with a more complex and dynamic continuity plan in adapting to changes using technology. Online learning is used by the school for synchronous and asynchronous sessions, and each student attends online classes using Google meet. This allows each student to enter the virtual world so that even if they are not able to do traditional classroom routines, they can continue in the virtual environment. Moreover, (Tupas & Linas-Laguda, 2020) emphasize that throughout the world, teachers are working to safeguard students from COVID-19, and different institutions have embraced the responsibility of transforming from conventional to innovative educational methods in the new normal.

As this online distance learning approach gives leeway on technologies, pedagogies, and even work tasks are all terms that have been used in their entirety. As (Licayan et al., 2021) assert that schools keep educating and developing despite the Covid-19 pandemic, a dynamic learning paradigm promotes a multinational approach to education. As a guide and foundry for responsible citizens, the school becomes innovative and collaborates to provide quality education to students. With the different learning modalities in distance education, students also experience challenges in answering the modules, accomplishing the learning tasks, and doing the performance tasks. Moreover, (Ancho, 2021)there is a continuous task to thrive in proactive and adaptive practices in a way to sustain communication where

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

conversations are unusual and done virtually to continue the dialogue and discussion process. This is strengthened by (Culajara, 2022a), teachers are required to employ real-world approaches in teaching and address student diversity to fulfill their needs and provide a variety of instructions, but through different modalities, students are given the right to choose an adequate and appropriate modality for their learning process. Along with the continuity of the learning plan, teachers need to increase their level of competence, especially their digital capability. In lieu of (Singh et al., 2021), it is essential to emphasize all these approaches so they may be advantageous where students and teachers during the outbreak and as we strive to recover from this incredibly stressful environment. As we move along the fast pace of the innovative world, teachers serve as a light that serves as a guide, and a light to everyone in attaining the objectives and addressing goals in our curriculum.

In delivering effective and efficient instruction to every student, the incorporation of technology is key for teachers to fulfill their task of reaching every student in any mode of teaching and learning process. Feelings are prevalent and perform a significant role in doing their practical activities throughout regular times as established elsewhere (Villalba et al., 2017). When distance learning is done well, all of these factors can be considered completely significant, and it will take some time and practice to understand the proper degree of pacing, commitment, and online instruction. It is best to think big yet take small steps when designing and implementing instructional methods. Collaborative learning has become an element of the learning environment in education; it was also for lessons developed for distance learners and learning communities (Stacey & Gerbic, 2009). In distance learning, teachers must be familiar with the technology and the notion of minimization. Teachers should be capable of converting their unique teaching style to a distant learning platform, as well as grasp how to use technology to interact with their students in the teaching-learning process. As (Ancho, 2020) reiterates that internal and external stakeholders must show some real engagement and involvement in future policy endeavors of the school. Thus, (Tria, 2020) notions that working together is the most essential in these challenging circumstances. Everybody ought to participate in creating learning amidst COVID-19 in moving toward the new standard. Utilizing the efforts of various stakeholders would emerge in a more planned and controlled policy. Moreover, The new normal necessitates formulating emergency response plans and interventions in the Philippines' basic education (Caňo et al., 2021). Continuing education, despite the challenge of the pandemic, is a shared responsibility of the students, teachers, and stakeholders. Thus, it is necessary to have a policy for it to be sufficiently delivered to each student and have concrete plans that are more to utilize for students in future references.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers used mixed methods, specifically quantitative and qualitative. As reiterated by (Bryman, 2017), quantitative research is specifically efficient at eliciting structural areas of social life, whereas qualitative research methods are typically superior in terms of procedural aspects. The descriptive-survey research approach with a quantitative methodology was used to investigate the factors that influenced students' academic achievement in distance learning. The appropriateness of this approach was evidently supported by the study (Watson, 2015), which defined quantitative research as a variety of approaches for conducting comprehensive studies of social phenomena employing statistical or numerical data.

To obtain the necessary data, a set of self-made questionnaires was developed and validated by a head teacher, a research coordinator, and a master teacher. A rating scale of 4- Strongly Agree, 3- Agree, 2- Disagree, and 1- Strongly Disagree guided the respondents in answering the questionnaire. Qualified

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

participants are students from grade seven to grade ten who are in modular modality using a digital platform. Slovin's formula was used to determine the number of required participants out of seven hundred ten (710) qualified students allowing a marginal error of 5%. The calculations resulted in 250 participants. After the school principal's approval, the survey questionnaire was distributed to all (710) qualified students with the help of their class advisers. Attached to the questionnaire is a consent letter for parents. A total of four hundred sixty-seven (467) responded, but only the first 250 feasible responses were selected for the study.

While in the qualitative design, researchers conducted focus group discussions, where students were asked to answer the given questions via Google meet consisting of 18 participants; where the data was recorded and transcribed using coding and themes with the permission of the participants record interview. The participants in FGD were Grade 10 students under the digital learning modality. Qualitative research is intended to work within this paradigm as a complement to quantitative research methodologies (Taylor, 2014). To choose the participants in the focus group discussion, purposive sampling was used (Campbell et al., 2020) assert that purposive sampling is a non-probability sample in which the items selected for the questionnaire are specified at the researchers' choice. The study's objective wants to have in-depth knowledge of the learning experience of students in distance learning, particularly in students who are in the digital learning modality as to recognize the instructional gaps.

The researchers used focus group discussions (FGD) and an interview guide. Thematic analysis was performed to assess the qualitative data and acquire an in-depth understanding of students' learning experiences; thus, it is used for the analysis of classification and the representation of themes that are meaningful to the data (Ibrahim, 2012). Expert validation was carried out to verify that the questionnaire's content addressed and fulfilled the study's objectives. Through the ideas and words, it will formulate themes needed in the study to come up with a program that will enhance the implementation of online distance learning. The researchers went through the validation process where each piece of data available was a great help to know the result of the study through the guidance of the inter-rater and coder. The participants in the FGD were asked two questions: (1) What are the students' learning experiences in distance learning? and (2) What do you think needs to be improved in the implementation of distance learning?

This study gives a leeway to assess the school's needs to improve its distance learning implementation through an interview; the researchers can grasp more ideas that can lead to formulating themes. Following the FGD, the data was examined, gathered, and recorded with meticulous word and idea tracking to develop themes. All information obtained in the audio recording will remain confidential and secretly kept for the protection of each participant of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
4.1 Survey Questionnaire Result

This section discusses, assesses, and summarizes data collected on the factors affecting the student's learning performance in distance learning, specifically in mental, physical, and technological factors.

Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

Table 1. Physical factors that affect students learning performance in distance learning

Statements	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. Since I am at home, it is unavoidable to do homework and complete learning tasks and understand the module.	2.94	Agree
2. When I do schoolwork at home, I become preoccupied.	3.30	Strongly Agree
3. At home, I struggled to finish the tasks due to a lack of resources.	2.95	Agree
4. I find it difficult to accomplish performance due to a lack of space	3.14	Agree
5. Due to an inconsistent internet connection, I have limited flexibility in completing the task.	3.24	Agree
6. I am not capable of handling other chores at home while doing the task.	3.20	Agree
7. Due to physical conditions at home, I have struggled to focus.	3.32	Strongly Agree
8. Because my room is poorly lit, I am unable to read and comprehend the lesson because of the not ventilated and well-lighted area.	2.84	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.12**	

Table 1 shows the physical factors that affect the student's learning performance in distance learning. It showed that most of the respondents have struggled to focus on their school tasks, with a 3.32 weighted mean with the verbal interpretation of Strongly Agree. Similarly, students become preoccupied while doing schoolwork at home with a weighted mean of 3.30 – Strongly Agree. Due to an inconsistent internet connection, I have limited flexibility in completing the task with a weighted mean of 3.24 – Strongly Agree.

Distance learning is a unique learning environment; these modalities could lead and serve as supplementary and complementary tools in students learning performance. As (Meydanlioglu & Arikan, 2014), learning takes place in a unique environment, and the focus of useful collaborative learning study should be on the links between diverse learning styles and the structure of their connectedness. With (Casillano, 2019) notions on the integration of the e-learning platform into the traditional classroom and making it accessible to students as an opportunity to learn, Students will have more autonomy concerning connectivity since they will not be forced to buy expensive internet-enabled devices or also have their internet access. Furthermore, with the change and adoption of teachers in different ICT integration and literacy and content, each student will also simultaneously cope with those differentiated activities in the use of technology in partnership with the community to ensure efficient instruction delivery in this time of crisis pandemic.

Table 2. Mental factors that affect students learning performance in distance learning

Statements	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. I usually have trouble staying motivated to study at home because of distractions on my mind (like using social media, looking at messages, watching Tiktok)	3.20	Agree
2. With every activity I went through, I was doubtful if I did it right because I wasn't sure if I followed the instructions posted on the online platform.	3.44	Strongly Agree
3. With so much to think about, I'm too uncertain about completing my tasks because I'm not touching myself.	3.02	Agree

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

Statements	WM	Verbal Interpretation
4. Distance learning is one way to prevent the spread of Covid-19.	3.51	Strongly Agree
5. I think that online learning is different from modular learning because I get more inputs than modular learning.	3.50	Strongly Agree
6. With every distraction I experience in learning, I am not able to comply with the learning tasks due to excessive thinking.	3.22	Agree
7. I don't end up doing learning tasks when it's simultaneously given.	3.07	Agree
8. I am very affected and overwhelmed by the grades that I will get every time I submit my learning tasks.	3.28	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.28**	

Table 2 shows that the mental factors were evident in the student's learning performance. Based on the result, respondents viewed distance learning as one way to prevent the spread of Covid-19 with a weighted mean of 3.51 – Strongly Agree, which implicitly shows that this is a way to prevent disease and the spread of viruses that we do not see. Moreover, respondents viewed that online learning is different from modular learning because it can get more inputs than modular learning, with a weighted mean of 3.50 – Strongly Agree where there is real-time interactive and class engagement. Also, students were very affected and overwhelmed by the grades that they got every time they submitted learning tasks, with a weighted mean of 3.28 – Strongly Agree. Some students are more motivated when their efforts are recognized and they are given feedback on each learning task they perform.

As the COVID-19 outbreak was linked with moderate stress in our cohort, even though the outbreak still seems to be continuing (Zhang Y & Ma Z, 2020), (Qiu et al., 2020) empathize that COVID-19 has a tremendous effect on individuals' performance which also sparked a wide range of emotions, particularly on mental concerns. Through such alternative ways of delivering instruction, they can focus more on their health and ability to study independently. As (Toquero, 2020) noted on that, there would be no technological barriers or disparities, and there will be comprehensive and inclusive education for all students who possess particular educational abilities, which may be addressed through virtual learning platforms. Likewise, (Rapanta et al., 2020) point to the need to modify assessments to constant learning requirements and the combination of multiple forms of involvement and the creation of educational activities with particular features. With the study, by modifying the learning activities, there is great relief in the emotions and thoughts of each student. Every student's anxiety that they won't comprehend their lesson and are reluctant to complete the learning assignments because they do not immediately understand what is in the modules is reduced using technology. One of every student's coping mechanisms, however, is their devotion and desire to achieve their dream of graduating from school despite the challenges experienced. It was abundantly clear that modern technology has tremendously aided in delivering education to every kid during the pandemic.

Consequently, (Remedios et al., 2000) reiterate that the student's goals, or the grades they aspire to obtain, seem to be the driving force and most profoundly impact their emotional responses. With these, teachers should provide constructive criticism or comments on students' output so that they are guided in every activity they have. But (Abante et al., n.d.) assert that public school teachers face challenges from pupils' limited resources and uncooperative parents. Some students cannot participate in online and digital modalities due to a lack of learning devices and weak connectivity; that's why remaining in modular

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

learning is their choice which does not excite their capabilities to perform learning tasks such as in a classroom setting.

Table 3. Technological factors that affect students learning performance in distance learning

Statements	WM	Verbal Interpretation
1. I have difficulty doing Google classroom tasks.	2.85	Agree
2. I can keep up with the discussions in an online class.	3.08	Agree
3. I have an available device to access the learning tasks in Google classroom and online platforms.	3.08	Agree
4. I am capable of creating and using various Microsoft programs or any online platforms.	3.14	Agree
5. I have the knowledge and ability to use different digital platforms because it is new to me.	2.84	Agree
6. I am having a hard time connecting to the discussion because the reception I was receiving was not clear due to weak connectivity.	3.06	Agree
7. I have difficulty adapting to change in my learning because I don't have enough knowledge in using technology.	2.93	Agree
8. But overall, I am learning to use different digital platforms for my future preference that will be used in my studies.	3.72	Strongly Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.09**	

Table 3 shows that students employing digital access in their learning could be of help in their future preferences that will be used in my studies, with a weighted mean of 3.72. While their technological aspects were enhanced, students became capable of creating and using various Microsoft programs or any online platforms with a weighted mean of 3.14. Students can keep up with the virtual discussion and have an accessible device to do their learning tasks with a weighted mean of 3.08. As gleaned from Table 3, the respondents got an overall weighted mean of 3.09, which indicates that distance learning was not new in their paces of life; it was the new normal of their living. Consequently, based on the result, students have difficulties in coping with the lesson due to "old" devices and a weak internet connection, with a weighted mean of 3.08.

With the study (Tayebinik & Puteh, 2013), hybrid learning is an effective method of distance learning. Teaching and learning are anticipated to be the dominant education paradigm in the future when it comes to students' learning experiences, student engagement, and a student-centered approach. In the study, In the implementation of the different learning modalities also gave way for the students to further expand their technological aspects. As we enter the 21st century, we need to adopt ICT literacy content as well as integration so that they can have a better understanding of the lesson. As (Béres et al., 2012) noted, individual learning styles, which come into consideration where the digital instructional environment, plays a significant role. The study (Salac & Kim, 2016) states that in the Philippines, the internet infrastructure falls further behind modern countries, and filling the gap across Asian nations and boosting Internet access in the Philippines could resolve those challenges. It is quite evident that the reception is weak for the connectivity of each student. Even with this modality, whether they use online learning or digital modality, they still have difficulty based on their place and picking up the signal in their position.

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

4.2 Interview Result

As we transit to the paradigm shift of delivering instructions, implementing different learning modalities will be of great help to students and teachers. In the line of the study, the interview focused on the student's experiences in the implementation of online distance learning and what are the needed improvements of the school to further develop the implementation of distance learning.

1. The impact of distance learning on the ICT integration

It is critical to normalize in the new normal, and the use of technology has been an important factor in response operations through development, exploration, and digitization. Considering the ability of each student, the school has opened different learning modalities for the survival of each teacher and parent and reduced paper production in the use of modules and the same time, kept pace with the widespread coverage of technology in educational setup. Distance learning is a unique learning environment; these modalities could lead and serve as supplementary and complementary tools in students learning performance. As (Meydanlioglu & Arikan, 2014), learning takes place in a totally unique environment, and the focus of useful collaborative learning study should be on the links between diverse learning styles and the structure of their connectedness. Moreover, (Tupas & Linas-Laguda, 2020) emphasize that throughout the world, the teacher is working to safeguard students from COVID-19, and different institution have embraced the responsibility of transforming from conventional to innovative educational methods in the new normal. As this online distance learning approach gives leeway on technologies, pedagogies, and even work tasks are all terms that have been used in their entirety.

Participant 6 from FGD shared that:

> *"Distance learning has aided my learning because I have a better understanding of the lessons and topics taught to us, as opposed to modular learning, where I didn't understand the lessons well because the other explanations in the module were lacking, but now with the online distance learning my study has gone well because each lesson is well explained to us."*

Participant 8 from FGD added:

> *" It helped me nurture my independency, which before, when there were still face-to-face classes seemed impossible."*

Participant 10 from FGD added:

> *"I was able to catch up on my studies after two years of distance learning. Despite being in a pandemic, I am still able to study and learn. I am grateful that none of my time was wasted over those two years, and I am now going up."*

Participant 11 from FGD shared that:

> *"I must say that I have made significant progress in the last several years, not only academically but also in terms of my personal development. It drove me to be more perseverant and diligent in managing my papers and any other tasks I had to meet."*

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

Distance learning benefits include convenience and flexibility for the student, enhancement of student interaction, improved adjustability to a learner's requirement, more variety in the learner experience with using multimedia, and the display of teaching material in a non-verbal manner (Al-Arimi, 2014). Most of the participants illustrate their learning experience as a fun, challenging, and flexible task for themselves - as a student because they see progress in their skills, specifically in technological capabilities, and they are more engaged in the modalities offered by the school. In lieu of the study (Paramita & Indarwati, 2015), the capacity of students to participate in regular physical, mental, and other forms of activity that are connected to the learning process referred to as their "engagement of students ' learning" and education and the development of teaching strategies should be handled with caution and consistency (Abdullah M. & Yang, 2018). As the COVID-19 outbreak showed linked to moderate stress in our cohort, although the outbreak still seems to be continuing (Zhang Y & Ma Z, 2020), teachers (Hew et al., 2020) should emphasize what approaches will best encourage the students to do the pre-classwork. With the learning experiences of the students (Nguyen et al., 2021) emphasis of the improvements is on enhancing students' engagement, involvement, and connection where active-learning techniques, which have been shown to boost productivity, participation, and performance in traditional classrooms, also have a favorable effect in the context of remote learning. Learning independently has a reasonably significant effect (Mwebu et al., 2020). Students' learning experiences are impacted by distance learning because it helps students understand how to use technology, develop their time management skills, and increase their sense of autonomy in learning by allowing them to become independent learners.

Participant 13 from FGD added that:

"During the previous two years of distance learning, my path has been a rollercoaster. It was both challenging and rather easy at certain points. As a shy teen and student, distance learning lets me avoid in-person social situations while simultaneously lowering my anxiety. There were times when distance learning was sad because, by nature, we miss the relationships between the people around us. However, distance learning benefited me and made it relatively good in terms of being out of the crowd because I was studying at home, which made it easier for me to concentrate.

Participant 12 from FGD added that:

"I grew more responsible and autonomous in my studies as a result of distance learning because I was able to focus and learn on my own phase and method. But despite this experience, I can say that the weakness of distance learning is the poor internet connection because, not every day, the signal of every student is strong."

Participant 17 added that:

"Distance learning helped me because it gave me the motivation to study again with the guidance of my teachers, and it was relatively easy for me to learn the lessons."

With teachers' primary concerns, becoming innovative and creative in providing efficient teaching-learning experiences (Culajara, 2022b) will make an endeavor to analyze and identify its

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

advantages, flaws, and usefulness (Lorenzo, 2016). It shows proof that each student has his or her level of acceptance and adjustment to the learning modality they face due to their differences. One of the factors they look at is being grade-conscious and overwhelmed by the different learning tasks they do in their home, which serves as their classroom for three years dealing with the pandemic. Thus, (Vollbrecht et al., 2020) emphasize that schools should provide technical and organizational support, especially to teachers and students who are working and learning remotely. To avoid factors that are difficulties or lack of factors that affect their learning, technical assistance should be provided, continuous improvement on the learning continuity plan, and teachers upskilling and retooling specifically on technological aspects. With these (Moralista & Oducado, 2020), teachers and students must adjust to the new normal by responding effectively, coaching, and improving with possibilities to thoroughly grasp and deepen the potential that internet education provides, and it should be embraced for the common good of the learning-teaching process.

2. Expand the innovational instruction in the distance learning

To address the identified issue and enhance the efficacy of remote learning, strategic instructional improvements are needed to comprehend the characteristics of online education and effectively express its benefits (Jeong & So, 2020). Participant 1 from FGD shared that:

> *"The school still needs the proper implementation of distance learning is the uploading of recorded lessons for those who are unable to attend the online class due to technical problems because I occasionally encounter such problems, and it affects my learning. I just think the recorded lessons will be more helpful because you can monitor the lessons discussed in case there are technical problems with gadgets and the internet, and you may be able to monitor the lessons discussed."*

Similarly, Participant 2 from FGD added that:

> *"They need to simplify the students' tasks and devote more time to teaching students because, in my experience, I'm having difficulty learning due to a lack of class time. I believe that if each class had three to four hours per day (two hours per subject, one in the morning and one in the afternoon), the teachers would have more time to explain things to us."*

Participant 3 from FGD shared that:

> *"Give students more resources so they can learn on their own, such as a YouTube channel they believe will be useful or a reliable Google website we can visit if we have any additional questions. Even if they are not teaching us, I think that instructors can still motivate us in this way.*

Today, one of the top objectives of the government's ideology is to digitalize education, which is really a significant facet of life in today's society (Poddubnaya et al., 2021). As (Casillano, 2019) notions on the integration of the e-learning platform into the traditional classroom and making it accessible to students as an opportunity to learn, students will have more autonomy concerning connectivity since they will not be forced to buy expensive internet-enabled devices or also have their own internet access. Thus, advancement in the educational process improves teachers' technical competence, and its impact on youth active learning is then demonstrated (Et al., 2021).

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

It is essential to formulate the appropriate environment and alternatives for obtaining the essential technology capabilities and investigating the digital technology culture in classrooms and other learning spaces to succeed in successfully incorporating digital innovation into the field of learning (Kalimullina et al., 2021). One of the creative thinking suggestions of each respondent is to have asynchronous video lessons or recorded sessions so that they can access them anytime and anywhere the lesson and they can repeat them when they want to better understand the lesson. Students and teachers must embrace new concepts and adjust to changes in their surroundings if we are to go forward with normalizing the new normal since, as each circumstance changes, so do our abilities and knowledge. Participant 4 from FGD shared that:

> *" It enabled me to become more self-sufficient than ever before. Because I am most productive at night, it is a huge benefit to me that the lists of things we must complete are already posted with their respective long due dates, allowing us to respond to them at any time of day."*

Participant 5 from FGD added:

> *"I think the school needs more programs that will make the teachers and students interact with each other virtually. I also think that the school needs to teach students and teachers properly how to use the virtual apps and any apps needed in distance learning to flow steadily."*

In relation to the study, by modifying the learning activities, there is great relief in the emotions and thoughts of each student. Similarly, Participant 14 added that:

> *" I hope the school can create a program that will help strengthen the internet connection and gadgets for the students."*

Collaborative learning has become an element of the learning environment in education; it was also for lessons developed for distance learners and learning communities (Stacey & Gerbic, 2009). As (Salac & Kim, 2016) reiterates that a lack of competition in the Internet access industry is at the foundation of the problem of a slow and expensive connection to the internet. It was still the problem of every student, the fast and accessible signal for connectivity. Despite continuing education in their home, they still have connectivity issues, especially when it rains or the internet suddenly crashes due to a weak signal. Another of their dilemmas is that there are no proper and useful devices that they can use in distance learning for communication and making learning tasks using online applications.

CONCLUSION

This study is significant to have a widespread acceptance of distance learning. In this study, it was shown that there are factors that serve as hindrances to students learning experience in distance learning. For the physical factor, they lose focus on their learning tasks because of distractions due to physical conditions such as noise and not being well-lighted or ventilated, which comes to the point that they are unable to perform the tasks in their learning. Another factor is the slow internet connection. On the mental factor, students tend to overthink their grades. After all, they are not that confident in the output they have completed based on their knowledge and abilities because some are not guided by their parents while studying. Lastly, in their technological aspect, it was very evident that children can quickly cope with the

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

modern challenge of learning using technology. Despite the factors that affect the learning of each student, each one still aims to continue knowledge and expand their ability and take a step toward success.

According to the findings in FGD, implementing online distance learning in schools is a crucial component of student success through numerous learning methods, providing each student with the to choose their preferred and most appropriate style of learning. The strength of online distance learning is that it helps to reduce COVID-19 cases in our country, which has significantly reduced the concern and allowed individuals to live their lives in the new normal. It also allows students to learn autonomously and explore without the assistance of teachers through ICT integration. The best words to describe the students' learning experiences were versatile. It was revealed in this study that several issues impede students' online learning experiences. Thus, this study will lead to a clear appreciation and expansion of ICT integration in the delivery of instruction and having a policy on innovation and pedagogical skills to have good outcomes on student learning. By knowing the instructional gaps, there will be a way to open the heart and mind of every teacher so that no matter what challenges or barriers, individuals are ready to fight for education for the bright future of generations. With this, the study will provide assistance and clarity to each institution in filling gaps in instruction and being creative and innovative in meeting individual demands and enhancing students' competencies, which will aid in their success and efficiency.

SUGGESTIONS

Today's educational systems must prepare students for a reality in which learning has been widened, and accessibility is becoming more diverse by the accepted situation as an opportunity. It was clear that students could swiftly adapt to the current challenge of technology-assisted learning. They can learn to adapt to and maintain up with various online programs that will improve the integration and adoption of their learning. Everyone at the school, whether online or offline, is focused on individual advancement, self-growth, and attending to students' problems. Teachers must consciously encourage themselves to use student-centered and effective strategies. Nonetheless, while learning is a multifaceted process that cannot be rushed, enhancing students' ability to use techniques in the expansion of creativity and innovation, and competencies provides the potential for schools and instructors to explore online education. The following suggestions were drawn from the conclusions:

(1) Immediately adapt and keep up with different online applications that will help their learning with integration and adoption. Everyone at the school is focused on individual progress, self-growth, and attending to students' concerns, regardless of online or offline.

(2) Teachers must consciously urge themselves to use approaches that are student-centered and effective. Nevertheless, even though learning is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be hustled, improving the ability to utilize techniques in the expansion of creative thinking and competencies in students further offers new areas for students and teachers to start exploring in distance education.

(3) To obtain and accomplish the curriculum's addressed goals, teachers and students must be committed and dedicated to adapting to the changes by creating a suitable learning environment, accessible and available learning materials in their locality, mobility, and inclusivity for all students; one should extend in whatever manner we can because education must proceed no matter what.

(4) Furthermore, the effective conduct of distance education was the reflection of the school. Regardless of the various factors that the students face, they are continuing their studies since they have learned that the more difficult the journey, the sweeter the accomplishment.

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167
Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study will be significant to future researchers that every action and implementation of programs in education has an associated impact and effect on learning experiences. In order to reach and complete the curriculum's stated objectives, teachers and students must be motivated to respond to the changes by establishing a proper educational experience, having access to learning materials in their locality, and providing accessibility and inclusivity for all students. This study will focus on the expansion of the learning modality approach in preparation for hybrid learning in the upcoming school year. Schools now must prepare students for a world where access is becoming more diverse, and learning has expanded due to the acceptance of circumstance as an opportunity. Additionally, the institution was well-represented by its efficient online instructional management.

REFERENCES

Abante, A. S., Cruz, R. P., Guevarra, D. F., Isabel Lanada, M. B., Julius Macale, M. S., Willie III Roque, M. B., Salonga, F. R., Santos, L. C., & Cabrera, W. C. (n.d.). *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS A Comparative Analysis on the Challenges of Online Learning Modality and Modular Learning Modality: A Basis for Training Program*. https://doi.org/10.47191/ijmra/v4-i4-17

Abdullah M., A. A., & Yang, C. (2018). Impact of Active Learning on Mathematical Achievement: an Empirical Study in Saudi Arabia Primary Schools. *Journal of International Business Research and Marketing*, *4*(2), 57–78. https://doi.org/10.18775/IJIED.1849-7551-7020.2015.42.2005

Adedoyin, O. B., & Soykan, E. (2020). Covid-19 pandemic and online learning: the challenges and opportunities. *Interactive Learning Environments*, *0*(0), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1813180

Al-Arimi, A. M. A.-K. (2014). Distance Learning. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *152*, 82–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SBSPRO.2014.09.159

Ancho, I. (2020). Graduate Education during COVID-19 Pandemic: Inputs to Policy Formulation in the New Normal. *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, *8*(2), 87–105. https://doi.org/10.32871/rmrj2008.02.07

Ancho, I. (2021). Education policies and COVID-19 in the Philippines: observations and inputs. *Interdisciplinary Research Review*, *16*(4), 1–8.

Arinto, P. (2016). Issues and challenges in open and distance e-learning: Perspectives from the Philippines. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, *17*(2), 162–180. https://doi.org/10.19173/IRRODL.V17I2.1913

Béres, I., Magyar, T., & Turcsányi-Szabó, M. (2012). Towards a personalised, learning style based collaborative blended learning model with individual assessment. *Informatics in Education*, *11*(1), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.15388/infedu.2012.01

Bryman, A. (2017). Quantitative and qualitative research: further reflections on their integration. *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*, 57–78. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315248813-3

Cahapay, M. B. (2020). *Pr ep r int t p ee r r Pr ep r no t p r r ed*. *4*(2), 1–5.

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing: JRN*, *25*(8), 652. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206

Caňo, M. C., Consorcia S. Tan, E., Marcial M. Bandoy, E., Albert D. Yazon, E., & Lerma P. Buenvinida, E. (2021). An Input for Stakeholders' Management and Engagement Primer (SMEP) of Basic Education in the New Normal in Laguna Cluster, Philippines Insight. *International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education*, *3*(2), 76–90. https://doi.org/10.31098/IJTAESE.V3I2.662

Casillano, N. F. B. (2019). Challenges of Implementing an E-Learning Platform in an Internet Struggling Province in the Philippines. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, *12*(10), 1–4.

Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

https://doi.org/10.17485/ijst/2019/v12i10/137594

Culajara, C. J. (2022a). *Edu Sportivo*. 11–24.

Culajara, C. J. (2022b). *Maximizing the Use of Google Sites in Delivering Instruction in Physical Education Classes*. *1*(2), 79–90. https://doi.org/10.56003/pessr.v1i2.115

Dayagbil, F. T., Palompon, D. R., Garcia, L. L., & Olvido, M. M. J. (2021). Teaching and Learning Continuity Amid and Beyond the Pandemic. *Frontiers in Education*, *6*(July), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.678692

Et al., D. A. S. (2021). "Methodology of Using Innovative Technologies in Technical Institutions." *Psychology and Education Journal*, *58*(1), 5351–5362. https://doi.org/10.17762/pae.v58i1.2136

Hew, K. F., Jia, C., Gonda, D. E., & Bai, S. (2020). Transitioning to the "new normal" of learning in unpredictable times: pedagogical practices and learning performance in fully online flipped classrooms. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, *17*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1186/S41239-020-00234-X/FIGURES/9

Ibrahim, M. (2012). THEMATIC ANALYSIS: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ITS PROCESS AND EVALUATION. *West East Journal of Social Sciences-December*, *1*(1).

Jeong, H. C., & So, W. Y. (2020). Difficulties of online physical education classes in middle and high school and an efficient operation plan to address them. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(19), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17197279

Kalimullina, O., Tarman, B., & Stepanova, I. (2021). Education in the context of digitalization and culture: Evolution of the teacher's role, pre-pandemic overview. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, *8*(1), 226–238. https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/629

Licayan, R. J., Angelli B, H., Michelle S, B., & Rocris Glenn R, I. (2021). Readiness of Students in Flexible Learning Modality. *International Journal of Asian Education*, *2*(4), 514–530. https://doi.org/10.46966/ijae.v2i4.118

Lorenzo, A. R. (2016). Effectiveness of the computer and internet literacy project in public high schools of Tarlac Province, Philippines. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, *15*(2), 38–46.

Lucenario, J. L. S., Yangco, R. T., Punzalan, A. E., & Espinosa, A. A. (2016). Pedagogical Content Knowledge-Guided Lesson Study: Effects on Teacher Competence and Students' Achievement in Chemistry. *Education Research International*, *2016*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/6068930

Meydanlioglu, A., & Arikan, F. (2014). Effect of Hybrid Learning in Higher Education. *International Journal of Information and Communication Engineering*, *8*(5), 1292–1295. https://elearn.mohawkcollege.ca/shared/Documents/InfoSheets/

Moralista, R. B., & Oducado, R. M. F. (2020). Faculty perception toward online education in a state college in the Philippines during the coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *8*(10), 4736–4742. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.081044

Mwebu, G., Sakalama, G., & Kwangda, K. (2020). The Influence of Family Socio-Economic, Learning Motivation and Learning Independency on Student Learning Outcomes. *Journal Educational Verkenning*, *1*(2), 26–30. https://doi.org/10.48173/JEV.V1I2.56

Nguyen, T., Netto, C. L. M., Wilkins, J. F., Bröker, P., Vargas, E. E., Sealfon, C. D., Puthipiroj, P., Li, K. S., Bowler, J. E., Hinson, H. R., Pujar, M., & Stein, G. M. (2021). Insights Into Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Remote Learning Methods: From the COVID-19 Pandemic to Best Practice for the Future. *Frontiers in Education*, *6*, 91. https://doi.org/10.3389/FEDUC.2021.647986/BIBTEX

O'Brien, W., Adamakis, M., O' Brien, N., Onofre, M., Martins, J., Dania, A., Makopoulou, K., Herold, F., Ng, K., & Costa, J. (2020). Implications for European Physical Education Teacher Education during the COVID-19 pandemic: a cross-institutional SWOT analysis. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *43*(4), 503–522. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1823963

International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE), Vol. 4 (2), 152-167

Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

Paramita, S., & Indarwati, T. A. (2015). Improving Interest, Activeness, and Student Learning Outcome Using Problem Based Learning Model. *Trending Issues of School Education in Advanced Countries and Indonesia*, *March 2018*, 328–359. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323546565

Poddubnaya, T. N., Zadneprovskaya, E. L., Voevodina, S. S., Ilyinova, N. A., Khatit, F. R., & Panina, E. A. (2021). Distance Learning Experience in the Context of Globalization of Education. *Propósitos y Representaciones*, *9*(SPE2). https://doi.org/10.20511/pyr2021.v9nspe2.985

Qiu, J., Shen, B., Zhao, M., Wang, Z., Xie, B., & Xu, Y. (2020). A nationwide survey of psychological distress among Chinese people in the COVID-19 epidemic: Implications and policy recommendations. *General Psychiatry*, *33*(2), 19–21. https://doi.org/10.1136/gpsych-2020-100213

Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2020). Online University Teaching During and After the Covid-19 Crisis: Refocusing Teacher Presence and Learning Activity. *Postdigital Science and Education*, *2*(3), 923–945. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00155-y

Remedios, R., Lieberman, D. A., & Benton, T. G. (2000). The effects of grades on course enjoyment: Did you get the grade you wanted? *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *70*(3), 353–368. https://doi.org/10.1348/000709900158173

Sacramento, M., Ibanezr, G., & MAGAYON, M. V. C. (2021). Technology adaptation of teachers and students under the learning continuity plan: A case of one school in the Philippines. *International Journal of Learning and Teaching*, *13*(4), 204–223. https://doi.org/10.18844/ijlt.v13i4.5594

Salac, R. A., & Kim, Y. S. (2016). A Study on The Internet Connectivity in The Philippines. *Asia Pacific Journal of Business Review*, *1*(1), 67–88. https://doi.org/10.20522/apjbr.2016.1.1.67

Singh, J., Steele, K., & Singh, L. (2021). Combining the Best of Online and Face-to-Face Learning: Hybrid and Blended Learning Approach for COVID-19, Post Vaccine, & Post-Pandemic World. In *Journal of Educational Technology Systems* (Vol. 50, Issue 2). https://doi.org/10.1177/00472395211047865

Stacey, E., & Gerbic, P. (2009). Introduction to blended learning practices. *Effective Blended Learning Practices: Evidence-Based Perspectives in ICT-Facilitated Education*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60566-296-1.ch001

Tayebinik, M., & Puteh, M. (2013). *Blended Learning or E-learning? 2008*. http://arxiv.org/abs/1306.4085

Taylor, P. C. (2014). Contemporary qualitative research: Toward an integral research perspective. *Handbook of Research on Science Education, Volume II*, 38–54. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203097267-10/CONTEMPORARY-QUALITATIVE-RESEARCH-TOWARD-INTEGRAL-RESEARCH-PERSPECTIVE-PETER-CHARLES-TAYLOR

Toquero, C. M. (2020). Challenges and Opportunities for Higher Education amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Philippine Context. *Pedagogical Research*, *5*(4), em0063. https://doi.org/10.29333/PR/7947

Tria, J. Z. (2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic through the Lens of Education in the Philippines: The New Normal. *International Journal of Pedagogical Development and Lifelong Learning*, *1*(1), ep2001. https://doi.org/10.30935/ijpdll/8311

Tupas, F. P., & Linas-Laguda, M. (2020). Blended learning - An approach in philippine basic education curriculum in new normal: A review of current literature. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *8*(11), 5505–5512. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.081154

Villalba, A., González-Rivera, M. D., & Díaz-Pulido, B. (2017). Obstacles perceived by physical education teachers to integrating ICT. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, *16*(1), 83–92.

Vollbrecht, P. J., Porter-Stransky, K. A., & Lackey-Cornelison, W. L. (2020). Lessons learned while creating an effective emergency remote learning environment for students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Advances in Physiology Education*, *44*(4), 722–725.

Bridging Instructional Gaps through Recognizing the Factors and Students' Experiences in Distance Learning
Carla Jobelle Culajara, Olivia Portos, Juan Paolo Martin Culajara , Mark Kim Villapando

https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00140.2020

Watson, R. (2015). Quantitative research. *Nursing Standard (Royal College of Nursing (Great Britain) : 1987)*, *29*(31), 44–48. https://doi.org/10.7748/NS.29.31.44.E8681

Zhang Y, & Ma Z. (2020). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and quality of life among local residents in Liaoning Province, China: A cross-sectional study. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health [revista en Internet] 2020 [acceso 8 de octu. *Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health and Quality of Life among Local Residents in Liaoning Province, China: A Cross-Sectional Study.*, *17*(march), 2381. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32233719/