Entering a new era: The lived experiences of primary school teachers in the post-modular distance learning delivery

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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of primary school teachers in the post-Modular Distance Learning (post-MDL) delivery, utilizing qualitative phenomenological design. In-depth interviews provided firsthand lived experiences of 8 primary school teachers from Peñaplata Central Elementary School SPED Center, Island Garden City of Samal, Davao del Norte, Philippines. Using QDA Miner Lite and inductive content analysis, the positive experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL delivery are consistent assessment and monitoring, social interaction, and macro-skills development and improvement. Parents' factors on learners' learning development, large class size, and pupils' attitudes and behavioral aspects are the themes for the negative experiences. The learning gap, lack of school resources and financial support, implementation of the Covid-19 safety protocols, and overlapping of teachers' workloads are the challenges for the teachers. Differentiated teaching techniques, implementation of classroom management and use of teachers' past experiences, teachers' flexibility, and specialized teacher's training are the themes for the coping mechanisms of teachers. Finally, the insights of teachers are their role and perseverance in the post-MDL, the importance of resources and a positive classroom environment, and preference for new normal face-to-face classes. The results have implications for the teaching and learning process in the post-Modular Distance Learning delivery.

Keywords: post-modular distance learning; phenomenological research; lived experience; primary school teachers; Philippines

Introduction

All educational systems in the world have been affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic, wherein strict restrictions were imposed. In Saudi Arabia, they resorted to exclusively involving digital teaching and learning (Khalil et al., 2020). Likewise, in the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented Modular Distance Learning (MDL) for all public schools in the country (Talimodao & Madrigal, 2021). DepEd Order Number 7 series of 2020 (Republic of the Philippines, 2020a) stated that officials in different places are authorized to decide on the specific Distance Learning Delivery Modality which may demand appropriate in their context (Republic of the Philippines, 2020b).

The implementation of MDL faced challenges such as a lack of school funding for the production of modules, limited school facilities, and lack of parental knowledge in guiding children to answer the modules (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020). Also, it was challenging for teachers to distribute modules on time and to contact both parents and learners (Castroverde & Acala, 2021). The common problem teachers face in monitoring students' performance is the lack of effective communication due to students' lack of gadgets and unstable internet connectivity.

For the school year 2022-2023, DepEd tried to solve the problems by implementing limited face-to-face classes since the country concurred to loosen the restrictions. The Philippines followed the United States in loosening the Covid-19 restrictions but at a slower pace (Mendoza, 2022). Ultimately, DepEd released DepEd ORDER No. 34, s. 2022, stating that starting November 2, 2022, all public and private schools will implement the five days of in-person classes or full face-to-face classes, with amendments that only public schools were required to implement the memorandum (Galvez, 2022; Republic of the Philippines, 2022a, 2022b).

In terms of experience, initially, DepEd implemented limited face-to-face delivery, which teachers needed to adjust. However, the conduct of full face-to-face classes makes it even more challenging and difficult for teachers to adjust further to this modality (Republic of the Philippines, 2022a). They expressed concerns about time constraints to accommodate learners and the limited resources (Hernando-Malipot, 2022). Consequently, this situation caused a lot of students and teachers to feel stressed out and burned out (Schaffhauser, 2020). For these reasons and since no studies were conducted about teachers' lived experiences in the post-Modular Distance Learning delivery in Samal Island, the researchers conducted this study to explore the experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL delivery.

Thus, the researchers sought to explore the lived experiences of primary school teachers in the post-Modular Distance Learning (post-MDL) delivery and specifically aimed to address the following objectives: (1) to investigate the lived experiences of primary school teachers in the post-Modular Distance Learning delivery, (2) to determine the coping mechanisms of primary school teachers in facing the challenges in post-Modular Distance Learning delivery, and (3) to gain insights from the experiences of primary school teachers in teaching in the post-Modular Distance Learning era.

Methods

A research design is a strategy and method that helps answer the questions using empirical data. It also helps ensure that the research aims to match the kind of analysis for the data (McCombes, 2023). This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological study that structures the experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL. That involves the study of phenomena and appearances of things as they appear in our experience or the ways we experience things (Smith, 2018). Similarly, a phenomenological study systematically focused on how groups of people can have different ways of looking at reality (Hancock, Windridge, & Ockleford, 2009). This study examines how teachers perceived their experiences in post-MDL delivery. In connection to their experiences, this would be held as the overall conceptualization of one's experience to understand the current phenomenon fully. Subsequently, this research design was utilized to describe the lived experiences and challenges of primary school teachers.

The involvement of all researchers in the overall conduct of the study was the preparation of interview guide questions for the target participants. After doing the preliminaries of asking permission from the dean of the college and Peñaplata Central Elementary School SPED Center's principal, as well as setting the schedule of conduct of study with primary school teachers of Peñaplata Central Elementary School SPED Center, the researchers conducted an in-depth interview using the interview guide questions prepared. The list of questions was utilized in this study. The researchers also assumed their part as the interpreter and analyst after collecting the data needed.

The target participants of this study were the eight primary school teachers from Peñaplata Central Elementary School SPED Center. It has previously been recommended that qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of at least 8 to reach data saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2016). These eight participants were selected through purposive sampling and criterion sampling design, particularly the selection criteria.

In this phenomenological inquiry, purposive sampling design was utilized as it was considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling to identify the

primary participants based on the judgment of researchers, the purpose of the study and for those who have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched (Kruger, 1988). In addition, the criterion sampling design was also appropriate for this study since it is the selection of a sample that is rooted in pre-defined criteria, which helps the researchers select and identify the participants of the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2017).

Selection criteria refer to a set of predetermined characteristics used to identify subjects that can be participants in a research study (Salkind, 2010). Participants in this study are selected based on the following pre-defined criteria. Firstly, participants should be primary school teachers because the lower the grade level, the higher the effort needed for teachers to conduct a lesson, especially in the post-MDL delivery. They also play a crucial role in child development, particularly in teaching fundamental skills to learners (Keung, Yin, Tam, Chai, & Ng, 2020). Secondly, the participants are currently teaching in a central school because teachers in central schools are more engaged in curriculum planning and structural development, and they are competent in leadership and instructional adaptation to cater to the various needs of the learners (Rahardjo, 2014). Thirdly, participants should have 6-10 years of teaching experience because they have already taught in the old basic education curriculum and the new K-12 Program.

Simply put, they are already experienced in their profession, and they have an idea of the adjustment of the teaching-learning process from different curricula and educational setups, which makes them more flexible and adaptable in the changing learning environment, and they can interact freely with learners when making decisions (Ünal & Ünal, 2012). Fourth, participants must be currently handling 30 pupils and above because this condition makes it more challenging for teachers' responsibility in handling more students than a teacher handles. The more learners that teachers handle in a classroom, the more challenging the teaching-learning process, which affects the quality of teaching and learners' learning outcomes (Chingos, 2013).

In the conduct of the study, the researchers first asked permission from the dean of UM Peñaplata College, and another permission was sought from the principal of Peñaplata Central Elementary School – SPED Center, so that they may interview the primary teachers at the school. Second, the researchers constructed and drafted the interview guide questionnaire to be used as the instrument for the in-depth interview that were the three experts then validated. Third, the researchers identified and chose the participants based on the selection criteria. Then, the researchers approached the chosen participants, gave a copy and explained the Informed Consent indicating the proper ethical consideration of the research and had it signed by the participants. Fourth, after signing of informed consent, the researchers and the participants set the date and time for an interview, considering the participants' time of convenience. That was followed by the conduct of the interviews as scheduled.

In-depth interviews and observation were utilized in the data gathering as they helped the researchers to comprehensively gather the information needed. The advantages of using observation are that the researchers have a firsthand experience with the participants, unusual aspects can be noticed during observation, and it is useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss. These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2011).

After the interview, the researchers collated and transcribed the data. Then, the data was systematically analyzed, classified, extracted, summarized, and interpreted to answer the research questions of the study and to create general themes for discussion. Lastly, the researchers performed a member check where they showed the composite summary to the participants to confirm the themes.

The inductive content analysis was used in analyzing the data. That involved the explication of the data to generate themes. According to Hycner (1985) and Groenewald (2004), solicitation of the data has five steps that the researchers adhered to in this study. The first is bracketing. From the answers of the participants, the researchers grouped and classified their answers. Next, delineating units of meaning, the researchers extracted the data and eliminated the redundant

units, phrases, or words. Then, the researchers clustered the units of meaning from the data to form themes. Afterward, the researchers summarized the interviews and validated their authenticity. Lastly, the researchers generalized the unique themes for all the interviews and created a composite summary based on the data being analyzed. The researchers also utilized the Qualitative Data Analysis Miner Lite software for the coding of data. This software is used to organize data for qualitative research, which helps researchers easily organize the encoded data and come up with codes and categories accordingly (Hilal & Al Abri, 2013). Additionally, this was used to avoid improper subjective judgment and to allow the phenomena to emerge fully and holistically from the interviews and comprehend how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The researchers proved that the ultimate and appropriate observation of the criteria of trustworthiness, such as credibility and confirmability, dependability, and transferability, were observed all the time.

Credibility can be met by elongated engagement with the participants, continuous observation in the field, the use of peer researchers, negative case analysis, researcher reflexivity, participant checks, validation, or co-analysis (Morrow, 2005). With regard to this study was checked by three experts to ensure credibility. Moreover, confirmability refers to the qualitative researcher's emphasis on objectivity (Shenton, 2004). To achieve confirmability, Shenton (2004) noted that the process of conducting the study as well as concluding the findings would always be study based and not just coming from our presumptions. This study utilized inductive content analysis, wherein, according to Frey, Balmer, Boyd, Robinson, and Gott (2019), and Turner (2010), it is proven to be a useful research design in qualitative research.

The assurance of dependability criterion is not easy in qualitative work (Shenton, 2004). When this study is used as a source of information by other researchers in the future, the researchers can then ensure that this study can be dependable. The dependability of this study can be assured, considering that the researchers have given full details regarding the procedure for conducting the study. The detailed description of this study is essential for future researchers' benefit.

Trustworthiness includes the idea of transferability, which refers to the scope to which the findings can be transferable to other settings or groups (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The researchers can give suggestions about transferability, but it is the readers' decision whether they will not use the study in their future research. It is essential to describe the culture and context, selection and characteristics of participants, data collection, and process of analysis clearly and distinctly to facilitate transferability. With regards to the application, the findings of this study may not apply to another study unrelated to post-MDL delivery due to situation differences such as the settings, level of participants, and previous educational background as well as experiences. However, when a similar procedure and a similar participant are used for further research, the researchers can give assurance that the result is within the range of the outcome of this study.

In conducting this study, the researchers adhered to the following ethical conduct and considerations of the study such as voluntary participation, voluntary withdrawal, informed consent, participants' anonymity and confidentiality, risks, and safety of the participants. All participants sincerely and voluntarily participated in the study without being pressured and threatened by the researchers. Regarding this, all participants signed a consent form confirming that they were willing to participate in the interview while maintaining confidentiality and privacy throughout the process. All participants are free and able to withdraw from the study at any point without feeling an obligation to continue. They were also informed that there were no negative consequences or repercussions to their refusal to participate.

In this study, the researchers ensured that the practice of informed consent was abided with. As researchers, they ensured that the participants voluntarily consented to participate in the study without coercion. The researchers also explained to them the benefits, risks, and funding behind the study. In agreement to voluntarily choosing to take part in the study, they affixed their signatures on the informed consent forms.

Researchers respect the identity of each participant, and the autonomy and flexibility of the data were cautiously taken into value and honor. All the participants' names and other personal

information were asked, but their identities were safeguarded to enable them to participate without any fear of revelation or involvement. Any information that was required to be confidential was protected and handled with utmost confidentiality. All data would be stored in a secure and locked area. Also, the data would be held for a period of three years and then destroyed. This research involved high-risk situations that the population may experience in physical, psychological, or socioeconomic concerns. It protected and secured the rights of the individuals in the study. Moreover, the safety of the participants was ensured by using pseudonyms throughout the research to protect their identities. Also, the data gathered from the IDIs were kept confidential and utilized to verify the study's findings. To ensure the health and safety of everyone involved in the study, the researchers used face-to-face interviews to gather data. Hence, in this case, the researchers explicitly declared adherence to the Covid-19 protocol from the IATF and local ordinances.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the researchers addressed the objectives presented in the Introduction, so the presentation proceeds in this sequence: lived experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL, primary school teachers' coping mechanisms, and the insights gleaned from the experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL.

Lived experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL

This section presents the lived experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL. These experiences are categorized into three: (a) positive, (b) negative, and (c) challenges. The themes that emerged were organized according to the number of occurrences in the gathered data.

Positive experiences

In the interpretation of the data, Table 1 presents the three themes that emerged from the positive experiences of primary school teachers in post-MDL delivery, which are (1) learners' assessment and monitoring, (2) teachers' and pupils' social interaction, and (3) macro-skills development and improvement.

Table 1.
Positive experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL

Theme	Core Ideas
Learners' assessment and monitoring	Learning assessment is the major activity done by primary school teachers.
	Teachers can clearly assess learners' learning needs, capabilities, and abilities.
	Monitoring of learners can be done in a hands-on manner.
	Teachers can monitor the learning process and learning progress of each learner.
Teachers' and pupils' social interactions	Pupils' interaction with their peers is natural for young learners.
	Pupils tend to gain friends with their classmates and play together.
	Teachers can interact with their learners and vice versa.
	Teachers can engage their pupils during class discussions.
Macro-skills development and improvement	Learners develop and enhance their macro-skills, particularly in writing, reading, and numeracy.
	Learners are now readers and can already write their names, identify letters, and solve simple mathematical problems.

Learners' assessment and monitoring: In the post-MDL delivery, primary school teachers' assessment is a major activity. They can also clearly assess the learning needs of the learners in a hands-on manner. Finally, teachers can monitor the process and progress of each learner they

teach. Teachers observed the learning development and improvement of each learner, their learning levels, and their respective abilities in real time. That helps them to monitor their academic performance and provide appropriate assessments. The assessment and monitoring of teachers is more evident in the post-MDL setup where Participant 1 stated, "You see the daily improvement of the kids, and their pacing [of learning] is also fast." As Participant 3 further expressed, "It gives [me] more satisfaction since you can see in reality that the students are improving." Another participant, Participant 4, explained, "You can see the pupils who did not understand the lesson and their level of understanding. With this, teachers are able to design appropriate leveled learning activities to meet the needs of each pupil."

Similar findings revealed that in the new normal of full face-to-face classes, teachers developed connection and engagement toward a rich learning environment, which helps teachers consistently monitor and assess the learning progress of the learners inside the classroom (Geverola, Mutya, Siason, & Bonotan, 2022). In the post-MDL, teachers can provide leveled activities appropriate to the learner's cognitive level. Furthermore, assessment strategies such as daily observation and interaction with students can also be used to organize and interpret learners' daily performance and improvement (Cotton, 1988). Tymms (2013) also emphasized the importance of assessment and monitoring in primary schools, revealing that consistent monitoring of learners and appropriate assessment could ensure the attainment of the curriculum in context. Since it could help examine if the content was relevant to the life of learners in the post-MDL.

Teachers' and pupils' social interaction: New normal full face-to-face classes increase the social interaction and engagement among pupils and between teachers and pupils inside the classroom. Participant 8 expressed, "Face-to-face setup is very important because there is an interaction between the teacher and the students." Pupils interact with each other, and teachers can engage with the pupils during classes. These interactions resulted in motivation for learners. Participant 6 also said, "You can see the kids and their eagerness to go to school since there are less instances of being absent."

Pupils' relationships with teachers are key factors to their success in school (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). This relationship was suppressed during the modular setup. In the post-MDL delivery, the strong positive and supportive relationships of teachers positively affect pupils. They also form more gratifying relationships with peers and make a greater academic gain in the post-MDL delivery. To establish this kind of relationship and environment in the classroom, pupils should develop their socialization skills to adjust and associate their social skills and environmental and cultural backgrounds, especially in the post-MDL setup (Maleki, Mardani, Mitra Chehrzad, Dianatinasab, & Vaismoradi, 2019). Similarly, teachers in the post-MDL provide interactive and cooperative learning activities to enable learners to work together and give them the opportunity to express their ideas in class.

Macro-skills development and improvement: One of the positive experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL was the development and improvement of pupils' macro-skills. These macro-skills include reading, writing, and arithmetic or numeracy. Reading, both literacy and ability, were the first macro-skills that were developed and improved in the post-MDL. Participant 6 described, "I let pupils read; there are pupils who reached satisfactory level and there are some who are advanced and when I let some read, they get a score of 100 so I let them practice their reading." Primary school teachers are more focused on teaching reading to their learners. Teachers give learners direct reading instructions and reading materials to develop their reading skills further. Though there are various contributors to successful reading development, such as active and self-regulatory processes, having the knowledge of phoneme awareness and letter sounds remains a significant predictor of reading development (Dessemontet & de Chambrier, 2015; Duke & Cartwright, 2021). That can be achieved in the face-to-face setup of the post-MDL delivery coupled with the active role of parents in the reading skills development of children since they can assist their children at home (Abella, 2022). Writing is the second macro-skill that has been developed. This skill progressively developed in the post-MDL setup. As Participant 3 recounted,

"You can see in the reality that your students are improving. For example, in the beginning of the school year, there were some who cannot write their name and they are already Grade 2. It is so fulfilling in our side as teachers that during the first week, second week, they are struggling in writing their names and then, later on, they can independently write their names without guidance."

This fulfillment is also expressed by Participant 8, when Participant 8 said, "I feel satisfied when my pupils learn from nothing, now they learn how to write." Mastering handwriting skills in the primary grade levels plays an important role in learner's academic performance (Semeraro, Coppola, Cassibba, & Lucangeli, 2019). Due to the post-MDL context, teachers in the primary grades do the same as with Semeraro's, where they can thoroughly explain the letter sounds, their characteristics, and their phonemic composition, constituting the increasing writing skills development and improvement of learners.

Learners' numerical literacy was the third macro-skill that progressively improved as the teachers can directly assess the learners during instruction in the post-MDL. Numerical literacy is defined as the knowledge and ability to analyze, interpret, and use different numbers and symbols to solve problems in everyday life (Van den Heuvel-Panhuizen & Drijvers, 2020). In the context of post-MDL, Participant 8 specifically conveyed, "They already know how to count, they can add and subtract, so for me that is very satisfying that they learn many things; they learn the lesson already." To help learners fully develop this skill, the Project-Based Learning model (PBL) may be effective in improving the numerical literacy skills of pupils (Sinaga et al., 2023). In connection to this study, incorporating PBL into learning activities could be one of the teaching strategies that primary school teachers could use in the post-MDL since they can interact with each other almost immediately in contrast to during modular distance learning.

Negative experiences

The themes that emerged from the teacher's negative experiences of primary school teachers in post-MDL are (1) parent factors on learners' learning development, (2) large class size, and (3) pupils' attitudes and behavioral aspects, which are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
Negative experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL

Theme	Core Ideas
Parent factors on learner's learning development	Parent involvement in a learner's learning development is crucial.
	Most parents do not follow up with their children in school and do not attend homeroom meetings, and parents' attitudes and behavior, either in school or at home, have a big influence on a child's overall learning development.
Large number of class size	A large population of learners inside the classroom is challenging.
	It was difficult for teachers to handle a large number of pupils inside the classroom.
Pupils' attitudes and behavioral aspects	Pupils' attitude is one of the contributing factors to having a positive classroom environment.
	Pupils are undisciplined by their parents, have no manners, and are very hard-headed.
	Pupils' behavior has a big impact on their learning.
	Pupils are war-shocked, unruly, and dependent on their parents, and have very limited attention spans, which affects their learning acquisition.

Parent factors on learners' development: Several factors that come from parents contribute to the negative experience of the teachers. These include parents' attitudes in the light of their children's academic life. Some parents do not cooperate and do not follow up on the learning progress of their pupils. Furthermore, some of them cannot even visit their pupils in the school nor attend homeroom meetings to check on their child's performance. Participant 3 articulated, "We tried our best to give reading exercises here in school, but there is no follow-up at home, so there is no progress, and the child cannot read well." She added, "The parents, though only some of them, when I called for a meeting, they cannot come. We are expecting that they'll try to visit the school so that they will know the performance of their children." That is added by Participant 8 when she revealed, "The parents, they just answer the module themselves and don't teach the children. So, when the children come to school, most of them don't even know how to read and know how to write their names."

Parents indeed play a critical role in shaping their children's academic outcomes. Parental involvement in their child's education was positively related to academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001). This involvement can take different forms, including monitoring homework completion, attending school events, and communicating with teachers about their child's progress. Furthermore, parental involvement not only affects academic achievement but also leads to higher student motivation and better behavior (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). In the post-MDL, parental involvement in a child's education has been shown to be a critical factor in their academic success, motivation, and behavior.

The large number of class sizes: The large class size was the second factor of negative experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL. Participant 2 divulged, "It is challenging if your number of pupils is big because of social distancing and all. So, for me, I replaced some tables to cater more than 40 pupils." She further elaborated, "It is very difficult really and all sense of the word difficult, because as I made mention, 22 boys, 19 girls so hyper so you set the rules first."

Teaching children with large class sizes and a limited time frame can be a challenging task for any teacher. Teachers with larger class sizes experienced higher levels of stress and lower job satisfaction. They were more likely to leave the profession than teachers with smaller class sizes, which was proven in the post-MDL delivery (Flannery, 2023). Additionally, Wang and Calvano (2022) argue that larger class sizes can make it challenging for teachers to build strong relationships with their students, impacting their ability to manage behavior effectively and maintain a positive classroom environment. Similarly, in the post-MDL, a large number of class sizes in a classroom setup resulted in a negative classroom environment.

Pupils' attitudes and behavioral aspects: Pupils' negative attitudes and behavior are a few of the negative experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL delivery, such as being undisciplined, hard-headed, unruly, war-shocked, dependent on their parents, and limited attention span can have significant consequences on their academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being. Participant 5 said, "Children now are more hard-headed and do not listen, do not sit down, do not practice writing. When they roam around the room, it is normal. It is not new in our experience; it is just getting worst." Participant 2 also commented, "Some of the children's attitude seems that they go on tantrums because they are spoiled in their homes." Participant 4 added, "Their behavior is that they cannot focus in the class maybe because of the 2-year span that they did not have face-to-face classes."

All of these pupil factors can result in a negative classroom environment. Students with limited attention spans were more likely to struggle academically and have lower levels of social competence (Raver & Knitzer, 2002). Further, students who exhibited war-shocked behaviors, such as aggression and anxiety, were more likely to have lower academic achievement and poorer social relationships (Li & Lerner, 2011). In the post-MDL setup, pupils' attitudes and behavioral aspects clearly affected teachers' motivation to teach and lowered the academic performance of learners because it was very challenging for them to accommodate students with the said negative behaviors one by one.

Challenges

Aside from the negative experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL, teachers also encountered different challenges in this current learning modality due to different factors, as Table 3 presents. The themes that emerged from the teachers' challenges in the post-MDL delivery are (1) learner's learning gap, (2) lack of school resources and financial support, (3) implementation and adherence to Covid-19 safety protocols, and (4) overlapping teachers' workloads.

Table 3.
Primary school teachers' challenges in the post-MDL

Theme	Core Ideas
Learner's learning gap	Learners have great difficulty in their macro-skills, which creates a big learning gap towards their learning.
	Most of the learners are non-readers, cannot write their names or identify letters, and cannot solve simple mathematical problems.
Lack of school resources and financial support	There are limited school facilities and resources provided by the school.
	Teachers provide their own materials that can be used in their classroom, such as cabinets, extra tables, chairs, curtains, laptops, etc.
	Lack of financial support from the school.
	Teachers use their own personal money to travel when they are having seminars and training, for classroom beautification, and for appropriate learning materials suitable for learners.
Implementation and adherence of Covid-19 safety protocols	Adherence to Covid-19 safety protocols is challenging to implement inside the classroom.
	Most learners play with their classmates closely, do not wear face masks, and share their food with their classmates.
Overlapping teachers' workloads	Teachers suffer from a compiled workload internally.
	They do compile heavy paperwork and make adjustments to the changing curriculum of DepEd.
	Teachers suffer from overlapping external activities of the school.
	Overlapping seminars and training and school activities such as book parades, culmination programs, and others, became a challenge for teachers.

Learner's learning gap: In the two-year implementation of distance learning, a big learning gap among the learners emerged, and the majority of students were non-readers. With this, teachers in the post-MDL also struggled to cope with this problem and to fill the learning gap of the learners in terms of their reading ability. Teachers also faced learners' struggles in writing, as the Grade 1 teachers were struggling with teaching students writing skills because the students did not experience face-to-face teaching of the fundamentals of writing at the kindergarten level. Participant 1 says, "They cannot hold a pencil correctly, they cannot write their names, they do not know how when to begin writing in a sheet of paper where to write, what is the proper placing of the letters." Participant 5 supported this with, "We teachers are the ones who will hold the pencil to guide the pupil's hand. Others still cannot follow the blue -red-blue line."

Another problem that emerged was the student's difficulty in grasping information due to the learning gap from modular distance learning. Participant 2 explained, "The competencies that pupils should have mastered during kinder time, they did not achieve it since no one can guide them." In this post-MDL delivery, the learning gap is the primary problem of the teachers, particularly in handling each student's gap. This gap occurred because, during the Covid-19 restrictions, students who were far below proficiency were not given enough and persistent opportunities to accelerate their learning as a result of inconsistent intervention tactics, while

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students who were just starting to gain proficiency tended to "slide" in and out of competence (Fergus, 2016). Lack of school resources and financial support: In this post-MDL setup, the participants expressed the lack of school resources and financial support. The teachers suffered from the lack of school resources, particularly inside the classroom, and financial support from the school and government. Participant 2 voiced out,

> "No, it is not sufficient. Number one as you can see, the tables I provided it personally, the chairs half of it is personally financed, even inside my classroom the only one that the DepEd own is the teachers table and the teachers chair, the rest are personal."

Participant 2 also added, "When I entered this room, the door jamb is broken I shouldered the repair since there is no budget and was already turned-over to the school." In terms of materials, Participant 1 contributed, "The facilities are provided mostly by the teachers and not the government. For example, these tables are ours. All the things here are mine, from the TV to the chairs."

This problem affects students and teachers, which in turn can affect the parents of the children. The lack of resources in classrooms can cause extreme distress to the students and teachers. Not only are the students and teachers in distress, but they are unable to learn to their fullest potential because they are not being given the proper resources (Duncombe, 2017). That means that the ways schools spend money need to change. Students will have more resources, thus meaning they will learn more, and they will actually want to stay in school. Students will perform better, and they will be able to get into better colleges (Baker, 2018).

Implementation and adherence to Covid-19 safety protocols: Implementing the Covid-19 safety protocols is challenging for teachers. It became challenging for the teachers because learners in the post-MDL do not follow directions. Pupils always share their food, play with their classmates, and teachers cannot control the movements of the kids inside the classroom. Participant 2 shared a situation,

> "There are times that you cannot do anything so you'll just compromise. I really imposed the wearing of masks by the pupils. Yes, they do in the morning but in the afternoon, either they do not wear it or the mask is lost."

In this scenario, it was difficult for the teacher to maintain the social distancing of the learners and the wearing of face masks. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the largest interruption in the education sectors, ranging from lower grades to higher education levels, which heavily impacted learners, teachers, and parents around the world (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Implementation of transmission control measures such as class size reduction, physical distancing, face masks, hand washing, temperature checks, and viral or antibody testing were done (Guthrie et al., 2020). However, its implementation is challenging for teachers in the post-MDL, especially for primary pupils.

Overlapping teachers' workloads: One of the challenges for primary school teachers in the post-MDL is the overlapping workloads. They have to meet certain requirements on time, and the teaching-learning progress of students has been affected. Participant 3 explained, "There is so much work to be done such as reports to be submitted. It also has webinars, so it has really affected our lesson output." Participant 7 supported this by saying, "Sometimes we are very busy and as of this time DepEd instructed us that they should be 'no disruption of classes' but still, they are still posting activities to be done." The amount of time teachers must devote to their official tasks during or after school hours is referred to as their workload (Johari, Yean Tan, & Tjik Zulkarnain, 2018). The workload is negatively associated with teachers' self-ratings of their performance and job satisfaction (Huyghebaert, Gillet, Beltou, Tellier, & Fouquereau, 2018). In turn, this negatively affects their teaching quality. Therefore, it was expected that workload has a

detrimental impact on all outcomes related to teaching quality, particularly now that teachers must devote their full attention to the students in order for them to catch up on lessons from the previous two years.

Coping mechanisms

In response to the different negative experiences and challenges experienced by primary school teachers in the post-MDL, they formulated different coping mechanisms to address these problems. These coping mechanisms, presented in Table 4, are (1) differentiated teaching approaches and techniques, (2) strict classroom management and use of teachers' past experiences, (3) teachers' flexibility, and (4) specialized training and workshops for teachers.

Table 4.
Coping mechanisms of primary school teachers in the post-MDL

Theme	Core Ideas
Differentiated teaching approaches and techniques	Teachers become strategic in utilizing different teaching instructional strategies.
	Teachers used differentiated instruction, provided remedial instruction, energizers, and more focused on macro-skills development.
Strict implementation of classroom management and use of teachers' past experiences	Teachers use their managerial skills in classroom management.
	Implementation of classroom rules and routine activities is important inside the classroom.
	Teachers use their experience in the field to address the problems they encounter.
	Teachers become strategic and consult with their peers who are more experienced than him/her in the field.
Teachers' flexibility	Teachers develop their own adjustments in terms of their teaching styles.
	Teachers adapt teaching strategies and do teaching styles experimentation to meet the learning ability of the learners.
	Teachers become resourceful in providing effective instruction.
	Teachers provide and supplement alternative materials to support learning.
	Teachers manage their time effectively.
Specialized teacher's training and workshops	Schools conduct training and workshops for teachers.
	Teachers attend seminars, training, and workshops to develop their knowledge and skills further.

Differentiated teaching approaches and techniques

The big learning gap among the learners has caused primary school teachers in the post-MDL to provide differentiated teaching approaches and techniques to address this problem. Most teachers in the post-MDL utilize different teaching strategies, techniques, and approaches to teach their learners to match the pupils' learning styles and address their learning needs, particularly in the development of macro-skills. The study of Ismajli and Imami-Morina (2018) ascertained that teachers apply differentiated instruction and interactive strategies based on its key elements to suit the learners' preferences and unique learners' needs. For these underlying reasons, teachers in the post-MDL provide audio-visual presentations, leveled activities, and group presentations to meet the varied multiple intelligences of the learners. Similarly, Taylor (2015) discussed that differentiated instruction was used to cater to and meet the diverse pupils' needs, interests, learning styles, and learning gaps, which was essential in the context of post-MDL, where children are from diverse backgrounds.

During the monitoring of learners' learning gap, teachers in the post-MDL provide interventions, remedial instructions, and leveled additional activities that are appropriate to the level of the pupils. To cater to the slow learners, teachers provide a leveled additional activity that they need to work on to understand the lesson deeply. According to Dai and Huang (2015), remedial

instruction is important as it is specialized instruction that provides extra coaching and additional activities that analyze these activities to facilitate improvement. This instruction was also used to enable assisted teaching and strengthen pupils' learning effectiveness (Lin, Wu, & Hsueh, 2014).

Strict implementation of classroom management and use of teachers' past experiences

To address the problem in parent factors on learner learning development, large class size, pupils' attitudes, and behavioral aspects, and in the adherence to Covid-19 safety protocols in the post-MDL, teachers implement strict classroom management in their respective classrooms and use their past experiences in the profession. They were also firm in the implementation of classroom rules and keeping pupils informed about these rules. Primary school teachers employ various sets of classroom rules to discipline pupils and minimize their negative behaviors and chaotic classroom environments.

As stated by Postholm (2013), classroom management plays a significant role inside the classroom in establishing a disciplined classroom, a quiet and calm environment for the pupils to take part in meaningful learning in a subject. Likewise, the significance of classroom management was proven in the context of post-MDL delivery, wherein learners are unruly, hyper, and undisciplined. That shows that when there are effective classroom rules, learners are more motivated and learn the lesson, which really plays a crucial role in the context of post-MDL delivery.

Other methods used by the teachers in the post-MDL in handling different pupils were using their past experiences in the field. They use their individualized strategies to address the problem in pupils' attitudes and behavior, the number of class sizes, and implementation and adherence to Covid-19 safety protocols. These show that teachers' experiences, both formal and informal experiences, play a vital role in the teachers' professional vulnerability in providing effective instructions, understanding how the teaching-learning process is created, and managing the pupils inside the classroom, which contributes to a meaningful overall teaching-learning process in the post-MDL delivery (Marcelo, 2009).

Teachers' flexibility

Primary school teachers in the post-MDL delivery adjusted their teaching styles and had to adapt. They should be really flexible to meet the competencies and the learning needs of diverse learners. As a result, primary school teachers have become flexible and adaptive in providing instruction. They use their own different teaching strategies and approaches in teaching the lesson.

The study by Lübke, Pinquart, and Schwinger (2021) emphasized the importance of teachers' flexibility in facing different problems in the classroom and in providing inclusive education. Apparently, with the use of adaptability in post-MDL delivery, teachers can respond effectively to the change happening in the teaching-learning process. They also highlight the importance of adaptive teaching practice to meet the needs of students who may have diverse developmental levels, cognitive abilities, and socio-emotional competencies (Collie & Martin, 2016). As teachers in the post-MDL delivery, they innovate their instructional materials to aid the learning gap of the learners and respond to the lack of learning resources in the school at the same time.

Specialized training and workshops for teachers

The challenges faced by the teachers were mitigated by schools conducting training and workshops and teachers attending them. In their seminars and School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions, teachers can raise the concerns and problems they encounter inside the classroom with regard to pupils' behavior, lack of school facilities, and many more.

It has consistently shown that high-quality professional development for teachers can have a significant impact on student outcomes. Studies by Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) and Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman (2002) found that effective professional development programs focusing on subject-specific content and pedagogy can lead to improved student learning outcomes, including higher test scores and better critical thinking skills. Additionally,

Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) found that ongoing support, active learning, and opportunities for collaboration are key components of effective teacher professional development programs. With that, specialized training and workshops in post-MDL delivery are essential for teachers' continuing professional development and the potential impact it can have on student outcomes.

Insights gleaned from the experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL delivery

As resented in Table 5, the themes that emerged from the teacher insights in the post-MDL delivery are (1) the role of teachers and their perseverance in the post-MDL, (2) the importance of teaching and learning resources and a positive classroom, and (3) preference for new normal face-to-face classes.

Table 5.
Insights gleaned from the experiences of primary school teachers in the post-MDL

Theme	Core Ideas
Role of teachers and their perseverance in the post-MDL	Teachers' role inside the classroom is crucial.
	Teachers become the facilitator, channels, and implementers of knowledge and learning activities.
	Teachers adhered to their teaching philosophies in teaching their pupils.
	Teachers use their optimism to become optimistic about striving in their profession.
Importance of teaching and learning resources and positive classroom	Technology was used to improve learning.
	The importance of teaching-learning resources plays a big role in the learning development of learners.
	A positive and conducive classroom environment affects learning.
	Learners respond positively if there are positive and conducive classroom environment.
Preference for new normal face-to-face classes	The effectiveness of the new normal face-to-face classes brought a big impact on students' learning and teachers' effectiveness.
	Teachers can focus on teaching.
	Teachers and pupils appreciate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

Role of teachers and their perseverance in the post-MDL

Teachers play various roles in the learning development of the learners in the post-MDL context. They facilitate the lesson, implement policies, and inculcate values to students. Also, teachers must adhere to their philosophies and optimism so that they persevere in their profession. Teachers who persevere through these challenges are more likely to create engaging and effective learning experiences for their students. In the post-MDL, teachers' perseverance brought a positive impact on the overall learning development of learners and the teaching-learning process inside the classroom. As a result, student academic achievement and curriculum achievement increased.

Moreover, teachers with key philosophies are better equipped to navigate the complexities of post-modular distance learning and ensure the success of their students. Another philosophical factor concerning teachers' philosophies was the curriculum and teaching philosophies. Teachers' philosophical thoughts are important to the curriculum delivery and child development in the classroom.

When teachers adapt to a different learning modality due to the pandemic, the situation provides an opportunity to look at the issues in a different perspective so possible solutions can be proposed (Herawati, Tjahjono, Qamari, & Wahyuningsih, 2022). Herawati et al. (2022) found

that teachers who had a flexible approach to teaching were better able to adapt to the challenges of distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Liu, Zhao, and Su (2022) asserted that teacher resilience was positively related to the teachers' perceived online learning outcomes. Their own teaching competence and their resilience are needed to successfully conduct online teaching. They were also better able to navigate the challenges of online teaching during the pandemic. In the post-MDL, teachers were more likely to play a crucial role in their success in the new normal learning environment. By remaining flexible, optimistic, and reflective, teachers can overcome the challenges of distance learning and ensure the success of their students.

Importance of teaching and learning resources and positive classroom

In the post-MDL, primary school teachers are urged to provide effective teaching and learning resources and correspond with a positive classroom environment. The use of teaching and learning resources, when a teacher is resourceful, can engage students to participate in class.

Tamakloe, Amedahe, and Atta (2005) also defined teaching-learning resources as material that the teacher uses to facilitate the learning, understanding, and acquisition of knowledge, concepts, principles, or skills by the students. The teaching-learning resources in education, especially in the context of post-MDL, include the use of equipment and materials that are relevant to motivate, inform, instruct, and present the subject matter to the learner, as well as making learning easier than it would have been without using it. Without instructional materials, a lesson is just nothing.

The instructional framework by Marzano (2007) revealed that students are engaged and provided pathways for learning and assessment focused on critical thinking, communication, and collaboration to meet their needs, interests, and goals through personalized learning experiences, which was essential in the post-MDL to develop the 21st -century skills of the learners—fostering positive relationships and building a community where all students are included, respected, and valued. When schools use a common instructional framework so that all teachers have a common approach to teaching and learning, students achieve more, and teachers teach more effectively (Robinson, 2011).

With a positive and conducive classroom environment, teachers observed that learners are motivated to learn, and there was a higher academic performance among learners as the classroom environment can affect the learning process of the students. Shirvan and Taherian (2020) found that the necessity of such a positive climate lies in the fact that when language teachers and students interact in a positive atmosphere, they can have better concentration, feel calmer, achieve better educational goals, and work toward their best. A classroom must be considered as a positive environment.

The Positive Learning Framework (PLF) for classroom management states that focusing on a positive and conducive classroom environment helps teachers to re-frame how they see students and to view behavior from a different perspective, as well as to recognize the incredible resilience of students, especially those facing immense challenges in their lives in the context of post-MDL (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Classroom management was often seen as something gained from experience, which greatly contributes to a positive classroom that should be immediately addressed in the post-MDL delivery.

Preference for new normal face-to-face classes

Most of the learners, especially teachers, preferred the new normal face-to-face classes as there was an active learning development in the teaching-learning process. They could also access the students face-to-face, personally see the learning improvement, and they could measure their strengths and weaknesses in terms of learning.

With the new normal face-to-face, there is clear communication between teachers and learners. The teachers can monitor the learning progress of the students, for face-to-face interaction occurs during this post-MDL delivery. According to Freeman et al. (2014), active learning engages students in the process of learning through activities and discussion in class, as opposed to

passively listening to an expert. It emphasizes higher-order thinking and often involves group work in the post-MDL context.

Based on the findings, implications for primary school administrations, teachers, pupils, their parents, and future researchers are revealed. School administration may provide teachers the opportunity to attend seminars, training, and workshops to help them be equipped with knowledge and skills in dealing with challenges that arise. Primary school teachers may be prepared to be strategic and flexible in dealing with any situations that may arise in the educational context. Additionally, they may provide more learner-centered instruction and give learners the opportunity to build a connection with the topic they learn. Parents may build consistent and positive relationships with the school so they can monitor the learning progress of their children. They may actively participate in any school activities and enrichment programs. Primary pupils may do their part by having fun as they learn as much as they can. They may also be encouraged to be more aware of the situation of their teachers so that they can reduce the contributing factors concerning the problem.

Finally, future researchers may be encouraged to investigate a wider scope of participants or other studies related to post-MDL. These may include the experiences of school administrators, parents, and guardians. The post-MDL is an instance of the changing dynamics of the educational system of the country. Researchers may explore other dynamics that may contribute to the teaching-learning policies, including new curriculum implementations, policies from the central office, and possible impacts of social and political activities in the education sector.

Conclusion

In teaching in the post-MDL modality, teachers have positive experiences of the importance of consistently administering the different assessments and conducting direct monitoring of learners' learning progress. They also realized that both they and their pupils developed their socialization skills in the post-MDL compared to Modular Distance Learning. Additionally, most learners improved their reading, writing, and numeracy skills with the help of remedial instruction. Considering these findings, we also realized that this study was critical as it establishes the implications of learning, which helps learners improve their overall learning development and record the effectiveness of new normal face-to-face classes in the post-MDL.

Researchers found that there are negative effects of the post-MDL delivery on teachers' experiences, highlighting the need for research to address the challenges that arise from parent factors on learners' development, large class sizes, and pupils' attitudes and behavioral aspects. With these, we realized the importance of parental involvement in learners' learning, as well as their behavioral aspects towards learning, which influences their child. To mitigate these negative effects, we believe that further research is needed to identify effective strategies that promote positive attitudes and behaviors among students. We also reckon that there is a need for teacher training programs that address the challenges associated with these factors.

Researchers also found that teachers encounter challenges in the post-MDL setup. It is challenging for them when they contend with the learning gap of the learners, lack school resources and school funds, and implement and adhere to Covid-19 safety protocols. Amidst all these things, we realized that their challenges are universal in the context of Philippine education. The grit and resilience of the teachers are the ones that keep them doing their vocation, not just their job.

Even facing challenges in the post-MDL modality, it is wonderful to possess an optimistic perspective that they try to cope with the challenges. They try to use differentiated teaching techniques and approaches to meet the various needs, interests, and learning styles of learners. They also strictly implement classroom rules and use their past experiences to maintain the social order inside the classroom. Also, teachers use their expertise from their prior experiences in dealing with pupils and parents. They become flexible and regularly attend training and seminars to develop their skills further. Considering these findings, researchers realized the importance of

this study as this would relate to the implication of teaching and addressing problems in post-MDL delivery.

Finally, regarding the overall findings, researchers realized the importance of teachers' roles and perseverance in teaching, the significant role of teaching and learning resources and positive classroom environments, and the effectiveness of face-to-face classes in post-MDL delivery. They came to the conclusion that the presence of educational materials and a pleasant learning atmosphere made the session more interesting and dynamic, which improved the teaching-learning process.

In light of this idea, teacher perseverance is a critical factor in promoting student engagement and academic achievement, especially in the post-MDL era. Teachers who persevere in their efforts to engage and motivate students are more likely to see positive outcomes in student learning. Moreover, teacher perseverance promotes student engagement and academic achievement, particularly in the post-MDL era. Teachers who are committed to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment and who persevere in their efforts to engage and motivate students are more likely to see positive outcomes in student learning.

Acknowledgement

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