

# Teachers' Preparedness and Challenges in Handling Distance Learning in the New Normal

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**Abstract:** *The primary goal of this study is to determine teachers' preparedness and challenges in handling distance learning in the new normal. This determined the level of teachers' preparedness in terms of extent of trainings received and challenges encountered in handling distance learning. The study further examined significant relationship between teachers' preparedness and the extent of the trainings received in handling distance learning in the new normal. Descriptive-correlational analysis utilizing survey technique was employed involving 173 participants from the Department of Education, Bayugan City Division, Caraga Region, Philippines who handled distance education of the school year 2020-2022. The findings have shown that teachers are highly trained. There were also several challenges encountered by the school during the implementation of the distance learning modality. However, result have shown that there is no significant relationship between teachers' preparedness and the extent of training received in handling distance learning. These findings stipulate inputs to offer an enhancement program in relation to distance education.*

**Keywords:** *challenges, distance learning, new normal, preparedness,*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The most emerging global emergencies all over the countries' health is the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, now known as SARS-COV-2. Its threats have received massive international attention on fighting and eradicating the continual increase of growing infections (Guo et al., 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19 is already a pandemic. It is continue devastating many countries around the world.

In the Philippines, one of the most affected fields brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic is the education sector. Schools have become the most vulnerable to security and safety. Health concerns of school stakeholders, teaching personnel, parents, and students are at stake; thus, the schools were temporary closed to enforce and reduce the spread and the inspections of the virus (UNESCO, 2020).

The Commission on Higher Education CARAGA, responds to the advisory to prevent the spread of infectious disease as stated by the Department of Health (Philippines News Agency, 2020). It emphasizes the security and health of all students, faculties and staff, school administrators and other stakeholders. It adopts flexible learning modes and strategies in delivering instructions to continue the education process considering the educational landscape until the pandemic ends.

The Department of Education, CARAGA regional office has tapped the DRRM to combat the virus and control the COVID cases in the primary education schools and offices. It is by following the Inter-Agency Task Force that put most of the barangays under Modified General Community Quarantine.

Cancellation of face-to-face classes was made possible thereby schools switched to different learning modalities. The implementation of this executive order was done from the regional down to the cities and municipalities, and then to the barangays where the schools are situated.

To address the problem mentioned above, this study is conducted to provide narrative data on the preparedness on the implementation and the challenges faced by the facilitators of learning in this current educational system.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study in anchored in the theory of Transactional Learning of Moore (2021). According to the theory of Moore (2021) on "Transactional Learning," Distance education is solely focuses on education curriculum, educators' creativity, teaching strategies and diverse process to develop positive outcomes in education. His theory on pedagogy incorporates technologies that contribute to the advancement of delivering learning to be better.

### 2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to determine teachers' preparedness and challenges in handing distance learning in the new normal.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the level of teachers' preparedness in terms of extent of trainings received in handling distance learning in the new normal?

3. What are the challenges encountered by the teachers in handling distance learning?
4. Is there a significant relationship between teachers' preparedness and the extent of trainings received?

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in five selected schools of Department of Education, Bayugan City Division, province of Agusan del Sur, which are in the city proper. The descriptive-correlational analysis utilizing the survey technique was used. The study used proportionate stratified random sampling in selecting participants that involved 173 teachers of the five selected schools of the division who are handling distance classes from the academic year 2020-2022.

A researcher-made instrument was designed to gather the necessary data. It was submitted to the subject specialists for content validation. Upon the approval of the principal per school, it was piloted to 30 teachers at the schools who were excluded as participants of the study. Their responses in the pilot testing were collected and submitted to the statistician. It has a reliability index of .742 which made the research instrument valid and reliable.

During the data gatherings questionnaires were personally distributed to the participants. Then, the data was collected, tabulated, and submitted to the statistician for analysis and interpretation. Weighted Mean was used to determine the effectiveness of teachers' preparedness in handling distance learning. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between teachers' preparedness and the extent of trainings received.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the overall result of the level of participants' responses in terms of extent of trainings received in handling distance learning in the new normal. It can be gleaned in table 1 that the indicators 1, 6 and 9 garnered the highest weighted mean of 4.99, respectively.

**Table 1**

Mean Distribution of the extent of trainings received by the participants in handling distance learning in the new normal

Extent of Trainings Received Based on In-Service Trainings for Teachers (INSET) March 15-19, 2021	Mean	Description
1. "Teach by All Means, Learn by All Means" This training helps me to promote inclusion of all learners as part of my accountability in teaching regardless of gender, ethnicity	4.99	Strongly Agree

and family status considering the present educational challenges.		
2. "Maximizing all Available Platforms and Modalities in learning". This training leads me to apply certain learning modalities as a tool for learning that fits in the environment, according to geographic location of the learner.	4.98	Strongly Agree
3. "Overcoming Challenges in Learning Delivery Modalities" This training strengthens me in creating plans of learners' need through the comprehensive level of readiness.	4.92	Strongly Agree
4. "Overcoming Challenges in Assessment and Grading System" This training guides me in understanding Deped Order no. 31, series of 2020 in assessment and grading system for the new normal.	4.96	Strongly Agree
5. "Effective Utilization of Educational Technologies in Distance Learning" This training helps me to produce infomercial lessons utilizing the aid of different educational technologies.	4.98	Strongly Agree
6. "Interactive Instructional Materials" This training guides me in the utilization of different educational channels like Deped TV, Radio Broadcasting, and others.	4.99	Strongly Agree
7. "Mobile Apps in Education" This training enhance my skills in using various mobile apps that can be used in teaching and learning.	4.95	Strongly Agree
8. "Google Workspace for Education Fundamentals" This training serves as tool for me to gain impactful time, keeping educational data secure using google accounts. It supports the ever-evolving needs both educators and learners.	4.94	Strongly Agree
9. "OER- Readiness Review Criteria" This training helps me in understanding the contribution the DepEd	4.99	Strongly Agree

LRMDS educational soundness in the new normal.			
10. "ETUlay- Breakthrough in Education" This training increase my knowledge on how the online tutorials helps in the current educational status. It helps improve my skill how to conduct educational tutorials.	4.95	Strongly Agree	
<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.97</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree); 3.50 – 4.49 (Agree); 2.50 – 3.49 (Uncertain); 1.50 – 2.49 (Disagree); 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree

The overall weighted mean of 4.97, which is verbally rated as "strongly agree" and interpreted as "very highly trained. "This result implies that the participants have a very high level of utilizing various educational technologies, trainings and workshops that enhanced their knowledge and skills to address the current academic concerns. The finding relates to the study of Bautista, Bleza, Buhain and Balibrea (2021) which reveals that the participants received sufficient assistance within their respective learning institutions when it comes to capacity building, technology integration, comprehensive and systematic information dissemination, and emotional support.

Table 2 shows the overall result of the level of responses of the participants in terms of challenges encountered in handling distance learning in the new normal. It can be gleaned that indicator 13, which is "I encountered challenges on the sudden shift from face to face to online, modular and blended distance learning modalities," has the highest weighted mean of 5.00.

**Table 2**

Mean Distribution of the challenges encountered by the teachers in handling distance learning

Challenges in Handling Distance Learning	Mean	Description
<b>Management of Learning</b>		
1. I encountered challenges with the skills and knowledge in handling distance learning.	4.95	Strongly Agree
2. I encountered challenges on establishing communication with my students especially those without internet/phone signals.	4.93	Strongly Agree
3. I encountered challenges on time management in the conduct of classes, monitoring of responses, availability of	4.93	Strongly Agree

students, and other distance learning issues.			
4. I encountered challenges on beating the deadlines in submitting all online reports and other needed requirements set by the authorities in this pandemic.	4.93	Strongly Agree	
5. I encountered challenges on meeting all the learning needs of my learners due to this pandemic.	4.96	Strongly Agree	
6. I encountered challenges on tracking learners' progress knowing that they can rely their modules/activities responses in so many sources.	4.99	Strongly Agree	

**Engagement of Learning**

7. I encountered challenges on building a positive environment in online/modular/blended distance learning through emotional support among my learners aside from content-based teaching and learning.	4.92	Strongly Agree	
8. I encountered challenges on creating a learning environment that directly guide learners as they undergo the process of achieving meaningful learning since we are distant from each other.	4.92	Strongly Agree	
9. I encountered challenges on establishing a network of communication that provides direct support by allowing learners to work together and interact among themselves, considering that we are in distance education due to this current pandemic that affects teaching and learning process.	4.97	Strongly Agree	
10. I encountered challenges on checking outputs and evaluating learners' progress knowing that sometimes there's a delay of retrieval of Self Learning Modules and Learning Activity Sheets from them.	4.90	Strongly Agree	
11. I encountered challenges on beating the deadlines in submitting all online reports and other needed requirements set by the authorities in this pandemic.	4.93	Strongly Agree	

12. I encountered challenges on guiding and supporting my learners when they need it most and when they misunderstood the concepts since face-to-face classes are prohibited in this new normal. <b>Delivery of Learning</b>	4.96	Strongly Agree
13. I encountered challenges on the sudden shift from face to face to online, modular, and blended distance learning modalities.	5.00	Strongly Agree
14. I encountered challenges on utilizing all learning channels; Facebook, Messenger, Google Meet, Zoom, and others, since not all learners have stable internet connections due to their geographical locations.	4.95	Strongly Agree
15. I encountered challenges on instructional delivery and retrieval of learning resources knowing that not all activities were answered/performed by the learners considering that they some difficulties in learning.	4.96	Strongly Agree
<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.95</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree); 3.50 – 4.49 (Agree); 2.50 – 3.49 (Uncertain); 1.50 – 2.49 (Disagree); 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree

The result indicates that majority of the participants are very highly challenged due to the dynamic and sudden shift from face-to-face classes to distance learning. The weighted mean, which 4.95 with a verbal description is of “strongly agree” and interpreted as “very highly challenged,” emphasizes that the participants, in many cases, their confidence, knowledge and skills in handling distance learning have been incorporated by the attribution of dynamic educational pressure that widens the opportunities for the demand of distance education in this new normal. Opportunities for the demand of distance education in this new normal. The finding has relevance to the study of Ozudogru (2021) in problems faced in distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic, which reveals that the challenges encountered such as insufficient time in learning courses about the implementation of distance learning, the occurrences in the communication between students and instructors, as well as unstable internet connectivity, serve as determining factors towards the movements in seeking solutions of the challenges in teaching and learning environment.

Table 3 shows the significant relationship between teachers’ preparedness and the extent of trainings received.

**Table 3**  
Significant Relationship Between teachers’ preparedness and the extent of trainings received

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Teachers’ Preparedness	0.129	0.075	Not Significant	Fail to Reject H <sub>01</sub>
Extent of Trainings Received				

Level of significance at 0.05

It can be gleaned in table 3 that teachers’ preparedness and the extent of trainings received in handling distance learning in the new normal has a correlation coefficient of 0.129, which is greater than the p-value of 0.075 and which means that they are “significantly correlated”. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant relationship between teachers’ preparedness and the extent of trainings received in handling distance learning..

### 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants in this study provided meaningful opportunities to the learners and demonstrated effective teaching strategies which enhanced creative production of learning in the recent educational paradigm. The challenges they encountered in handling distance learning help them to boost their skills and apply diverse teaching styles and strategies that could help them to discover their unique attributes in relation to their teaching profession. Based on the study’s findings, it is recommended that the Department of Education may continue to implement an enhancement program through various training, to increase fluency on knowledge, skills, and mastery level as they cater distant learners. This is to further support the curriculum and policymakers as well as the school administrators to the continuous implementation and improvement of distance education.

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