

Understanding the Teachers' Lived Experience in Teaching Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) Using Modular Distance Learning in Now Normal



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ABSTRACT: This qualitative study examined the lived experiences of teachers of teaching Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) using modular distance learning in now normal utilizing daily. A review of literature was completed concerning the areas of teachers and the history of modular distance learning. The research question for the study was, what are the participants' lived experience in teaching and assessing students in modular distance learning class of TLE in the now normal? And how do they cope up with the challenges of teaching and assessing students in modular distance learning class of TLE in the now normal? The research design for the study was Phenomenological qualitative research in interpretive design. Interviews were completed. The data were disaggregated according to themes and patterns. The participants of the study consisted of eight (8) participants' experiences of TLE teachers on modular distance learning in the Department of Education in the Division of the City of Biñan. After data collection, the researcher found seven (6) common themes. Each of these themes was discussed in terms of supporting or not supporting the review of literature. The majority of the findings of the study supported by participants served as authentic guidelines of the study. A major contradiction in the findings was the fact that none of the teachers in the study felt a need for more professional development and community involvement.

KEYWORDS: Teachers, Modular Distance Learning, Technology and Livelihood Education, and Lived experiences

INTRODUCTION

Education is a continuous process where an individual acquires and imparts knowledge and skills to another. The former is a process basically undergone by students while the latter is played by teachers. In this process individuals acquire knowledge to discern what is right from wrong, learns social norms, and acquire sound judgment and reasoning, as foundations to develop skills essential to daily living. The ultimate goal of education then could be inferred as to help individuals navigate life and contribute to society. In developing, low-income countries, there is a projected 10 percent increase in a person's future income for every additional year of education (World Vision, 2021). Education helps eradicate and break the cycle of poverty and hunger, giving people the chance at better lives. Typically, traditional formal education dictates the way success of a country is measured. Individuals who attended school and attained a higher level of education are considered more employable and most likely to earn more. This is one big reason why parents make their children attend school as long as possible.

The Republic Act No.10533 known as "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013" The K to 12 Program is an act enhancing the Philippines Basic Education System by strengthening its curriculum and increasing the number of years for basic education. The K to 12 Basic Education Program is designed to reform the system of education in the Philippines. It aims to empower every individual to improve his quality of life, to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts, develop life-long learners, prepares graduates for tertiary education, mid-level skills development, employers and entrepreneurship and to avoid child exploitation and other related problems. The enhanced curriculum allows students to gain work experience while studying. Every graduate will be equipped with information, media and technology skills, learning and innovation skills, effective communication skills and life and career skills. Technology and Livelihood Education subject plays a vital role in attaining the goals and objectives of the new enhanced curriculum (Alsong, 2019). It is composed of four (4) major livelihood component areas, namely Home Economics (HE), Agriculture and Fishery Arts (AFA), Industrial Arts (IA) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Entrepreneurship is integrated in all areas in TLE and its components. CP-TLE is focused on either HE, AFA, IA or ICT from Year I to Year IV and students choose the path they want to follow. Moreover, CP-TLE builds the capacity of the high school students

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for self-employment and provides pathways for further education and training in a chosen career. The practical and relevant course offerings are responsive to individual and community needs and will provide students with opportunities to become economically productive even if they decide to leave the formal school system at any given time (Valencia, 2015).

The Covid 19 pandemic practically changed both the local and global arena of educational systems. Countries continuously looking for and developing different strategies on how to deliver quality education. Lockdowns and staying home became main strategies to flatten the curve and control the transmission of the disease (Sintema, 2020). Reviews of existing Department of Education (DepEd) policies has led the researcher to believe that the CoVid-19 health crisis has exacerbated the delivery of education to learners in terms of quality educational access. This health issue has profoundly affected every identifiable sector – education, health, public service, industry, among others. The impact is felt more acutely in education particularly as children and adolescents (WHO, 2020) have fewer resources for well-being, mental health, and coping strategies than adults.

The current COVID-19 crisis has obliged most education systems to adopt alternatives to face-to-face teaching and learning. Many education systems moved activities online, to allow instruction to continue despite school closures (OECD, 2020). The shift of the teaching learning delivery in schools to modular distance learning made more challenging, on the part of the school personnel, the delivery of basic quality education. That is why DepEd leaders are always finding avenues to solve the problems and capacitating its teachers and school heads to become more effective in the field of modular distance learning (Bagood, 2020).

The Philippines' Department of Education (DepEd) in order to pursue its mandate of delivering quality education while coping up with the demands of health protocols implemented by the Inter-Agency Task Force on emerging disease (IATF) adopted the Modular Distance Learning (MDL) approach across all programs. This MDL approach puts the programs of vocational education especially on teaching Technology Livelihood Education (TLE) as provided for on Republic Act 10647 at a disadvantage. TLE contributes meaningfully to the solutions of the problems of the society such as unemployment, poverty, malnutrition (Doucet et al., 2020). The TLE learning process whose terminal objective is to instill skills among learners requires a traditional teaching or the face-to-face method. The MDL approach created two main problems among TLE teachers, primarily on how to teach skills among learners through Modular Distance Learning and secondly, how to evaluate objectively the growth and performance of learners. Malipot (2020) stressed that teachers also air their problems on modular distance learning. The issues in teaching TLE specialization courses through Modular Distance Learning has been huge and debilitating. Distance learning poses a challenge for accessing teaching-learning resources that usually found in a classroom setting (Pedragoza, 2021).

Modular Distance Learning poses challenges for TLE teachers and learners in teaching and in the conduct of assessment, including limitations on giving immediate feedback, and the need to account for different contexts in designing, implementing and grading assessment tasks. The grading system, which is divided into two, written work is thirty percent (30%) and the performance task is seventy percent (70%) (DepEd, 2021). It is used to keep track of the progress of the students in achieving the learning standards and in the development of 21st century skills, to promote self-reflection and personal accountability among students, and provide basis for the profiling of student performance.

In this study therefore, where in-depth experiences of TLE teachers were qualitatively gathered and interpreted, the researcher hopes that this research would shed empirical light on the current Modular Distance Learning (MDL) of the Department of Education (DepEd) specifically in teaching TLE and its assessment and grading policies. The researcher further hopes that through the lived experiences that were shared by seasoned TLE teachers, new teaching strategies and evaluation methods will emerge particularly in the DepEd division in the City of Binan, province of Laguna.

METHODS

Research Design

This paper drew inspirations from a qualitative inquiry that was conducted during the implementation of modular distance learning by DepEd. This study used a Psychological Phenomenology approach in Interpretive Qualitative analysis. Interpretivism seeks to build knowledge from understanding individuals' unique viewpoints and the meaning attached to those viewpoints (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The interest of the research are the phenomenon on modular distance learning and the lived-experiences of TLE teachers on this phenomenon. There were 8 teachers from the secondary schools in the Division of Binan Laguna that participated in the study and shared their experiences in modular distance learning during now normal.

This veered into their experiences through the lens of examining human lived-experiences as source of critical knowledge and understanding.

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Participants of the Study

This study was situated within the indigenous context of the 8 participants' experiences of TLE teachers on modular distance learning in the Department of Education in the Division of the City of Biñan. Targeted 8 teacher-informants were from Jacobo Z. Gonzales Memorial National High School, Biñan Integrated National High School, Dela Paz National High School, St. Francis Integrated National High School, Biñan City Science and Technology National High School, Biñan Secondary School of Applied Academics, Southville 5A Integrated National High School, and Mamplasan National High School are targeted participants in this study.

The inclusion criteria in choosing the participants include (1) experience in teaching TLE in modular distance learning class; (2) More than 5 years in teaching TLE; (3) openness in sharing experiences towards teaching modular distance Learning in TLE ; and 4) voluntarily signs the waiver of participation.

Data Analysis

The gathered qualitative and empirical data conducted through from the TLE teachers of the eight (8) identified school were analyzed using interpretivist lens guided by constructivist philosophy. Using thematic analysis the researcher strived to identify patterns of themes in the interview data following the framework of Moustakas as cited in Creswell (2017). It is generally considered to be an effective data analysis tool as a systematic approach to organizing interview data. This lessens the possibility for personal biases clouding the interpretation of data. It also makes it easier to explain and convincingly assure the reliability of findings and conclusions from the study.

Since the nature of the data are highly qualitative, the researcher considered a data analysis strategy that can appropriately effect in the forwarding some knowledge claims as building blocks for policy crafting. These knowledge emanating from the participants served as guides for educational policy-makers for the new or next 'now normal'. These textual analysis were gathered information about how TLE education teachers make sense of the phenomenon on TLE modular distance learning. By means of representation of TLE teachers' narratives of lived-experiences through which the meanings of the conversation can be deduced by the researcher to understand the challenges they faced and understand the challenges for just and accurate evaluative assessments of the work-skills acquired by the students. The researcher chose the three representation theory by Hall (as cited in Leve, 2012) in analyzing the gathered qualitative data: (a) reflective, in which language reflects an already existing meaning in the world; (b) intentional, in which language expresses the producer's intended meaning; and (c) constructionist, in which meaning is constructed in and through language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This qualitative-phenomenological study looked into the lived experience of TLE teachers in (1) teaching and assessing and (2) challenges of teaching and assessing students in modular distance learning class of TLE in the now normal

1. What are the participants' lived experiences in teaching and assessing students in modular distance learning class of TLE in the now normal?

Theme 1: Teaching and learning as key concept. Based on this theme, the participants mentioned about utilizing modular distance learning approach to teaching technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) increased learner's motivation and interest in teaching and learning as key concept, students are provided with huge opportunities through modular instruction that make TLE lessons more interactive, educational, and fun as an instrument of learning. The teachers also shared that through this approach, they are able to emphasize inquiry-based learning where students investigate, explore, and find through traditional and modern learning platforms. This in turn develops the higher order thinking skills especially for TLE where students need to very curious, inquisitive, and investigative. As the teachers recalled:

Participant #2 Modular Distance Learning modality is a way of learning with this new normal to cater the education in this time of pandemic wherein school provide the self-learning modules for learners to study at home and continue the education. It can be modular print or digital print; it depends upon the available resources of the school as well as the learners.

Participant #4 Modular distance learning is an alternative mode of learning delivery designed for the teaching and learning continuity during the pandemic. The students are learning on their own pace remotely. They are answering their learning tasks at the comfort of their homes without the physical presence of their fellow students and their subject teachers. They are free to ask assistance from their guardian and parents or surf the web for other learning resources but with certain limitations. They can also ask the help of their teachers via messenger, texts, and other platforms.

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Modular distance learning advocates argue further those additional reasons for embracing this medium of instruction include current technology's support of a degree of interactivity, social networking, collaboration, and reflection that can enhance learning relative to normal classroom conditions (Doucet et al., (2020) and (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

Modular distance learning also enables the students to become more motivated and more involved in the learning process as key concept, thereby enhancing their commitment and perseverance, Sumitra Pokhrel, and Roshan Chhetri (2021). Students have both reported that the online components of modular distance learning encourage the development of critical thinking skills. Student satisfaction has also been reported to be higher in blended learning courses compared with purely face-to-face courses, (Adedoyin and Soykan, 2020 ; Ali, 2020; Bao, 2020).

Theme 2: Learning during Pandemic. In this theme the students nowadays who are declared as advance knowledge in terms of technology are constantly exposed to various learning platforms, many of which exist in the Internet, the participating Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) teachers shared that through modular distance learning style, it becomes more of a facilitator of learning because modular instruction becomes more dynamic, participative and active since students maximize learning platforms in using the internet which results in the ease of their understanding. This allows teachers to think more in terms of better lesson: *Participant #7 This is the learning modality that enables to continue the education as mandated by DepEd Secretary, Leonor Magtulis Briones to continue the education amidst pandemic eras. In this modality, the learners will be given activities for which their parents will pick it and deliver to the school.*

Participant #8 Modular Distance Learning is a type of learning modality in which learning happens without physical interaction between teachers and students. In this form of learning modality, the students can learn at home using printed modules and other learning resources. They are provided with the learning materials like worksheets/activity sheets and Learning Packet (Leap) containing different activities based from the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). They are also given with printed weekly home learning plan as their guide in answering the learning tasks given in the module and worksheets. To facilitate the learning process, the students are allowed to ask assistance from their parent/guardian and/or from the teacher via phone call, text message, private message, etc. during his/her office hours. The teacher takes responsibility of monitoring the progress of the students by checking the output submitted every end of the week.

Modular distance learning benefits students and institutions. It facilitates improved learning outcomes, access flexibility, a sense of community, the effective use of resources, and student satisfaction. Several research studies have demonstrated that courses as a delivery method contribute to improved learning outcomes for students (Oselumese, et al., (2016).

Nessipbayeva, (2018) reports on an evaluation of the use of modular distance learning identifies positive aspects of virtual learning environments and critical issues for those considering the use of those environments as part of a lecturing module. It is the positive aspects of TLE that includes and enhances participation, increased enjoyment of learning, ability to facilitate group work in an efficient manner, and the provision of a standardized, user-friendly interface across courses

Theme 3: Teachers' clash of emotion. This theme refers to the participants' experience when it comes to teaching Technology and Livelihood Education leading to their clash of emotions. For some, their second and random thoughts made them question their ability whether they could perform the job because of emotion. For others, what they felt in emotionally was being challenged but somehow disappointed because this is not what they prepared for when they were studying. For the rest, although nervous, they felt a sense of happiness because at least they could make a difference in the students' lives by teaching and inspiring them. As can be considerably noted, the emotion of the participants did not matter much because what truly counted is their ability to accomplish things which are expected of them by the school administration, much more by their students This theme stresses that by means of modular distance learning approach to teaching TLE, the teachers emotionally observed better learning engagement among their students. This is because of modular instruction and interfaces results in a developed focus on deeper learning. Additionally, this approach paved the way for the avenue of modular distance learning space where students can enjoy interactive contents like codified texts, videos, relevant articles, archival documents, news, pictures, as well as documentaries that make their students more inquisitive and practical to learning since accessibility to these materials can be made available at their fingertips. The participants noted that:

Participant #4 Honestly, at first it didn't bother me and thought it's the best for everyone. It's a relief at first knowing that I'll be safe from Covid, and I will not face the everyday face to face setting/scenario. But along the way I realized that it's much harder to everyone especially in terms of assessing the students learning/skills emotionally. Weeks before the school opening, I got anxious, scared of the sudden changes, imagining the possible worst-case scenarios during modular classes. Thinking how I can reach out my students and provide learning materials that cater their different needs.

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Participant #5 When the DepEd decided to use MDL in the classroom to teach TLE, I had some concerns. For example, how will I teach the lesson effectively if the students will use the self-learning modules? How will I assist students emotionally who are academically challenged that need someone to explain the lesson clearly in order for them to learn? How will I monitor students learning, check and evaluate their outputs, and provide feedback on my student's performance?

Research has also shown that modular distance learning can foster a decrease in student attrition and facilitate an increase in the passing rate for student examinations emotionally, Dangle and Sumaoang (2020). However, other studies point to the need for a more nuanced understanding of how modular distance learning delivery affects student learning. Elcano, Day et al., (2021) explored the relationships between students' perceptions of the e-learning environment, their approaches to study, and their academic performance. They found that students differed widely in their perceptions, resulting in variations in study approaches and grades students with positive perceptions of the e-learning environment tended to obtain better grades, and vice versa.

2. As to how do they cope up with the challenges of teaching and assessing students in modular distance learning class of TLE in the now normal?

Theme 4: The perks of collaboration. Surfacing in this theme is the participants' receiving administration support in order for them to improve their working knowledge of what they teach. Although not all participants have sought and received school management support, they see to it that they had consultation with seasoned teachers in the field like TLE teaching Modular Distance Learning as well as those who are experts in teaching methodologies by asking for their best practices to maximize student learning that emphasizes learner centered approaches. In so doing, they were able to compensate for their knowledge and practice gap by embracing the pieces of advice shared with them by the experienced in-field educators. Continuously coping with the challenges of modular distance learning in terms of technology integration, the participating teachers always strive for meaningful, and competency based TLE classroom where standards and performance-based considerations are constantly applied to make sure that combination of face-to-face classroom instruction and modular distance learning is successfully carried out to meet desired learning outcomes. One participant disclosed:

Participant #5 By means of collaboration and constant communication with the school head, co-workers, parents and to our students are the factors needed in facing the new normal set up in TLE. The school head will always give us the information of the DepEd policies as to what to do in implementing it. The co-workers will work as a team for the students' progress in this new normal. The role of the parent is to guide them at home during study hours, a difficult task for the parent to act as a teacher in this new set up in education. Moreover, adapting to new teaching strategies fitting for the new normal, learning new applications and skills by attending various seminars and trainings

Participant #6 In the traditional teaching TLE, there is a direct interaction of collaboration with the teacher and students. The learners are able to understand the lesson by doing tasks guided by the teacher (through demos, etc.). In the "now normal" setting, students rely mostly on the LMs so most of the time, they cannot comprehend the lessons as effectively as those on the traditional setting.

Participant #7 In the now normal, still there is possibility of collaboration of learning though they are not physically together. It can be self-paced depending on their capabilities. There are different apps to use to reinforce learning. The teachers were able to produce 21st century learners as they themselves are making changes in the education process.

Teacher collaboration, when practiced with a focus on instructional strategies, curriculum, and assessment particularly, has benefits for both teachers and students. Results are even more promising when the collaboration is extensive and perceived by teachers as helpful. Collaboration among teachers even influences the results of teachers who do not experience directly the same high-quality collaboration, Pedragoza, (2021).

Theme 5: Students' evaluation. As teachers it is a must to have an evaluation in order to come up with the best result when it comes to finalization of the final result of the grades. This evaluation further pushes teachers to always determine whether what they do in education system the cognitive, affective and psychomotor as part of the evaluation process This is so because some learners may easily absorb what they teach using modular distance learning but there are also those who are also challenged in terms of technology use, added to the availability and accessibility of online materials and other digital contents that are supposed to maximize their learning encounters in TLE. Some participants mentioned that:

Participant #4 The evaluation of students' performance in the now normal is very challenging and controversial along with the issue of academic integrity of the students. I am not confident enough to say that I am effectively evaluating my students' performance during these times, because we all know that there are possibility that it is not them who answered all the

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learning tasks especially in MDL. It somehow lacks in authenticity. We are not also able to give them skill test or actual practical tasks and immediate feedbacks.

Participant #5 The evaluation is done through watching and grading the return demonstration videos submitted by the students. The students were also given quizzes and summative test for the written works.

Participant #6 The use of the bricks as a way of evaluating students' performance likable and then "now normal" setting the only challenge is something to do with whether the student with the activities by himself or herself or someone did it for them (guardian, friend, etc.).

Darsih, (2018) proposes a framework using a modular distance learning approach for higher education institutions faced with challenges of developing and deploying continuing professional development in the construction industry. The framework can be used by continuing education providers to determine the most suitable combination of media for a modular distance learning intervention, taking into consideration learner and instructor characteristics, the desired instructional goals and strategies, the nature of the learning environment, and the availability of resources. Research has also been published, Tumbali, Aaron Jed (2021) in which the key factors for successful implementation of modular distance learning are discussed. Among these key factors are the availability of financial resources, support from senior management, and access to personnel with the requisite technological capabilities and skills.

Theme 6: Resiliency, flexibility make things possible. The last theme speaks of resiliency and flexibility that make things possible. Enclosing the reality that once a teacher, forever a student, the participants clearly communicated their resiliency and flexibility to teaching TLE using modular distance learning by going an extra mile in what they do in order to make certain that their teaching competence translates to quality learning. This said, they have a strong conviction that even though they have a productive experience that tells and can be beneficial if handles correctly provided that the starting point of resiliency and flexibility turns to positive influence on the students' learning. As being testified by some participants that

Participant #8 We came up with Project TOOLS (Technical Online Orientation and Learning System) as our resiliency and flexibility to help and assist our students on their modular distance learning journey. We are conducting FGD to discuss issues and concerns with our subject area and to address the needs/problems during MDL and appropriate interventions for non and low performing students. We have our online class once a week to discuss the lessons and at the same time assist them in answering the activities in the module. We are giving our students a feedback form for their submitted output. We have practiced the reward system to encourage them to perform the tasks given weekly. We usually give the rewards to those students who did an excellent performance on the task.

Participant #4 As a teacher we are expected to be flexible, resilient, and agile. Though I am not fully successful in coping up with challenges and issues in the evaluation of performance of my students, I acknowledge the fact that those webinars and trainings are helpful. Also the comfort that I'm getting from my colleagues knowing that I am not alone in facing difficulties help me a lot in enduring, bearing and accepting these challenges. Checking of the output is also one of the issues that we're getting in these kind of setting, to protect my credibility I am checking all those outputs and keep all the records that I have, just like what we're doing during pre-pandemic. I think creating harmonious relationship and open communication with everyone including the parents and students is also one of the factors that can help us cope with the challenges.

Participant #5 Because of the pandemic, I always demonstrate my flexibility, open-mindedness and reliance when evaluating my students. I did this because my daughter experiences anxiety or depression when answering the learning tasks that have been assigned to her. This experience in my family has given me a better understanding of the situation of students. Furthermore, by being more adaptable, students can be exposed to new methods of assessing their performance.

Teachers' resiliency and flexibility shows their students interest especially in Modular Distance learning. It is a pedagogical approach that denotes the effectiveness of the e-classroom with the technological enhancements Ajzen (2019). Contained within is a paradigm change in which the emphasis shifts from teaching to learning, Elcano, Day et al. (2021). A modular distance learning course should also increase the interaction between the instructor and students. It should furthermore enhance the mechanism for integrating formative and summative feedback in order to boost students' learning experiences (Pedragoza, 2021). Therefore, modular distance learning is a fundamental redesign using their resiliency and flexibility where students become active and interactive learners.

Essence. The reality of teachers teaching TLE using modular distance learning in the Philippines as shared by the collective accounts of the selected participants in the public high schools Laguna, is an affirmation of a committed and devoted community of teachers who can confidently confront and embrace a fact which they successfully dealt with through experience in welcoming various reactions, setting their mind right and coming face to face with the students. Although struggling in the early stages of the phenomenon, the participating teachers were resolute and ready to stand their ground by clinging to the power of

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composure and conviction, perks of active collaboration, students' evaluation and resiliency and flexibility to make things possible. Irrefutably, teachers which seem to be a disadvantage at one glance, can turn into a solution to a considerable extent since in the country, lack of qualified and competent teachers teaching TLE using modular distance learning is still a rampant issue in the educational system, provided that teachers who have the guidepost of right attitude, display willingness to learn, relearn, and unlearn and to expand their knowledge horizons in order not to compromise the successful learning process of today's highly diverse learners' strata.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The lived experience of the participants when it comes to teachers teaching TLE using the modular distance learning approach, included confronting the reality of others teachers in different subjects should be given an attention and enthusiasm to teach even with an emotion and setting the mind right, and coming face to face with challenging learners or students. As regards with the coping mechanisms of the participants that dealt with the challenges and demands of teachers with their students' evaluation, perk of collaboration and their flexibility and resiliency are the composure and conviction, active collaboration with the school principals' which make things possible.

RECOMMENDATION

As hiring of qualified TLE teachers in modular distance learning is still a problem, DepEd should strictly implement the policy and guidelines in hiring teachers such as: review the applicant's credential thoroughly, assigning teaching assignment based on their field of specialization. School administrators or principals should assign teachers especially for TLE subjects who are qualified or specialized in that area whether in modular distance learning or face to face mode to ensure quality education. The administrators or principals should encourage teachers to attend seminars. The school may conduct in-service seminar to further enhance teachers' capabilities, skills and for professional growth on areas like: pedagogical skills, communication skills, instructional competencies and the like. Senior teachers should lend hands to new teachers in facilitating the teaching of TLE subjects especially when there is no available qualified teacher. Teachers teaching TLE using the modular distance learning should extend their hands in guiding their students. This can be achieved by conducting team teaching, peer critiquing, and pair organizing of classroom tasks where they actively collaborate by sharing best practices that will help teachers understand the varying complexity of the subject/s they handle through firsthand guide. Future qualitative researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in different locale and with higher number of participants for better generalizability. On the other hand, future quantitative researchers are advised to conduct similar inquiry on the phenomenon utilizing a much higher number of participants from various education institutions.

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