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Exploring the Experiences of Filipino Parents on Distance Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to explore the challenges faced by parents in teaching-learning situations with their children during this COVID-19 pandemic year. It employed a qualitative method through virtual focus group discussion/interview via Google Meet with 11 parent-respondents whose children were enrolled under the blended online modality from across all grade levels in a public elementary school in Quezon City, Philippines to constructively assess and improve the strategies used by both teachers and parents to teacher the students during the health crisis. The findings suggested that parents described their experience regarding distance and blended learning as difficult and tiring because of the following reasons: time management, child discipline and supervision, knowledge on lessons, students' distraction from mobile games and YouTube videos available online and others (internet connection/gadget sharing). The parent-participants stated that the school and teachers were very responsive and supportive of their needs and queries and that they constantly communicate through a group chat messaging function in Facebook messenger. The parents observed there was an increased level of independence among their children but lower levels of their socialization skills. The researcher recommends the conduct of virtual or live (in person) parenting and values formation seminars and parent-help-parent program (PHPP) to enhance parental involvement and sharing of best practices among them to help other parents which may be done with the help of the Teachers' Club (TC), General Parent Teacher Association (GPTA), Homeroom Parent Teachers Association (HRPTA) and the local community council. The research suggested further studies on teachers and students' experiences to improve the school's planning, strategies and streamlining of policies for the implementation of learning modality during this time of pandemic and in the coming years.

Introduction

This time of COVID-19 pandemic has not only put the world on hold but with great chaos and uncertainty.

The situation challenged the strength and resilience of the world to respond to the uncertainties of the unprecedented and disruptive times of COVID-19 that

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shook economies, politics and the educational systems. And since we are still aiming for herd immunity, we still must keep striving to find ways to get back to normal or easily migrate to the new normal.

Due to COVID-19, the education scheme shifts into the new normal. Locally, this is in accordance with the D.O. No. 12, s. 2020 or the Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year (BE-LCP) 2020-2021 in the Light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency stating that learning must be sustained; especially, during this time of pandemic where accurate information dissemination and practical skills development are necessities to every individual learner. In line with this, the Department of Education has also come up with the identification of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) to lighten up the curriculum. Hence, school leaders and teachers are posed to a very crucial part in facing the challenges of education as this pandemic has forced our educators to come up with solutions for the learning continuity of the learners through different learning modalities.

Based on the United Nations statement in their policy brief in August 2020, COVID-19 stimulated innovative actions within the education sector. These innovative approaches were launched in different modalities; namely, online and blended (synchronous, asynchronous), television and radio and self-learning module kits. With this initiative, parents and guardians play very important parts as teachers' partners in educating their children. To further support them, the sector is still finding ways to help them teach their children at home as we continue to suppress the spread of the virus while staying at home.

However, since no one expected this to happen, a lot of adjustments had to be made- from the curriculum down to the execution of learning. Hence, the Department of Education (DepEd) selected the most essential learning competencies for students to learn during the pandemic, teachers were obliged to do technological upskilling and upgrading of devices to be able to cater to the needs of learners in their virtual learning. Teachers must go through varied upskilling and capacitating trainings and seminars on synchronous and asynchronous learning. Trainings on varied educational technology to better help them face the challenges of the new normal of education (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015; Al-Zarahni, 2015). Moreover, knowing what challenges parents encounter during the pandemic will greatly help the school in crafting programs and activities to better support

the parents as teachers' partners in teaching the students.

Since the opening of classes in October, parents have complained about different issues namely, the burden of teaching their children at home, lack of devices to use for online classes and internet connectivity. While teachers need training to capacitate themselves, the learners also must be prepared to participate in online distance learning modality. The shift from teaching to learning entails financial imperatives towards the uptake of technology supported learning modalities (Benson & Kolsaker, 2015). Also, some parents complained about having to juggle working and teaching their children while others complained about having to teach their children from different grade levels. To support the education sector, the Quezon City Local Government Unit lent out 176,000 tablets for its high school and some elementary school students to assist them with their virtual classes (BMPlus, 2020). There were many challenges to deal with as unemployment also looms (Lopez, 2020) making it more difficult for parents to provide their children the means and the ways to participate in their virtual classes. On the other hand, many families cannot provide both the gadgets and the needed data or internet connection, so they had to fully teach their children at home with the use of modules. Parents' knowledge on the topics or educational background is an essential factor in teaching students at their home. Not all parents have attained bachelors' degrees while others did not even finish their elementary education hence, teaching could really be a great challenge for them.

Since these are some of the most common challenges that parents face in elementary schools, it would be good to further explore their lived experiences as they have become partners who are more involved in their children's education in this pandemic time. The results of this study may be utilized for further research on distance/remote learning, better policies and strategies which schools can use for the new normal or until we have all transitioned to a better normal. If it is known how distance learning occurs at students' homes, education supervisors and school heads can better plan initiatives for their schools, teachers can also better identify ways on how to become better partners with parents and how to better reach and teach their students and for parents to be able to build stronger relationships with teachers in order to make plans and strategies on teaching their children at their homes. In addition, Alias, Mohd, Saedah, & Ibrahim (2013) stated that

homeschooling in Malaysia is a quality alternative form of education grounded on moral values and beliefs for the fortifying of family bonds, hence, it should be fully supported by the government through the efforts of schools and according to Moskal, Dziuban, & Hartman (2013), blended learning necessitates great infrastructure support and faculty development and consistent student support mechanism to make it really work, emphasizing more on learning rather than teaching (Norberg, 2011).

In pre-pandemic time, homeschooling was a personal choice of parents because of the freedom it gave them in both teaching and learning processes and it was mostly chosen by families who travel a lot and those who wish to personally instill their values to their children (De Laat, Dadić, & Kardum, 2020). However, this time everyone is forced to homeschool their children for health and safety purposes.

The results of this research will be used for identifying better actions to give training and seminars for parents on how to manage and homeschool their children. Also, this study aims to contribute to the knowledge of policy makers in the Department of Education to better address the challenges of the pandemic as we live in the new normal. This way, we can make necessary adjustments in the education system to better serve the needs of the Filipino learners.

Objectives

This study aimed to

1. Describe experiences regarding distance learning.
2. Name the challenges faced by parents and how are these addressed.
3. Identify ways on how the school assisted parents in teaching their children.
4. Propose a strategic program based on the findings of the study.

Literature review

United Nations (2020) recommended that the learning crisis should be prevented to become a generational catastrophe with great urgency. Its recommendations were as follows; protect education financing and coordinate for impact, build resilient education systems for equitable and sustainable development, reimagine education and accelerate change in teaching and learning. In the UN Policy Brief (United Nations, 2020), it was expected that the disruption of classes and school closures during the COVID-19

pandemic will have longer effects on the provision of essential services to children and communities; not only does it affect parents' ability to work, as most parents fully rely on schools for their children's education. Their time will be divided into working and teaching their children as schools continue to implement distance learning.

Department of Education (2020a) issued DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020 which is the Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021 in the Light of the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency on June 19, 2020 to provide a clear guidance to the stakeholders of community learning centers of interventions to respond to the challenges of this pandemic. This order states that K-12 materials will be adjusted, teaching and learning will be delivered in multiple modalities with provisions for training of teachers and orientation of parents or guardians of learners. Distance and blended learning were introduced by education experts long before COVID-19 nudged the world in 2020 but was not given much time, attention and budget by the government as well as school heads and teachers. The unprecedented event of COVID-19 forced all sectors to painfully shift to using different strategies of distance learning.

Department of Education (2020b) issued an Official Statement on May 6, 2020, stating that despite the threat of the deadly virus, education can and must continue, plans were devised for multiple modalities so that online learning is not the only option. They launched DepEdTV which airs lessons from Kindergarten to grade 12 and modulars. Teachers were tasked to do surveys of parents for proper profiling with regards to their readiness for distance learning. According to the Learner Enrollment and Survey Forms (LESF), the majority of the respondents preferred modular learning modality (8.8 M) followed by blended learning (3.9 M), online learning (3.8 M) and educational TV and radio programs (1.4 M).

Known to many, fast-growing technology plays a great role in many Filipinos' lives but because of economic reasons, many families cannot afford to provide gadgets and internet connection in Quezon City. On the other hand, other parents sacrificed and put a great effort on acquiring new devices so that their children could participate in online classes. As mentioned in the study by Benson, & Kolsaker, (2015), schools should embrace the strategic necessity of online and blended distance learning within the educational system and that

technology should be exploited to strengthen pedagogical results and it should not be inclined to full automation but with transformation which means improving how learners learn. In addition, he mentioned that a productive espousal of a delivery modality must reflect the needs of all stakeholders- particularly teachers, parents and the learners. As per Broadbent (2017) stated in her study, that if blended learning is done well, it will allow students to customize their learnings, while teachers can still play important roles in giving form, organization, scaffolding and time allocation of learning although self-management approach and these may vary.

In the study by De Laat, Dadić, & Kardum (2020), one of the most important challenges in homeschooling children is motivation, especially because they must follow a certain program rather than their interest. This is because students have to pass the year-end exams. Also, they stated that the required learning materials is seen as boring to the students and that coordinating all of the obligations is quite challenging. The result of this study mentioned that parents find the time frame to be so limited. It was just an alternative before because of certain challenges that go with it which include the following: condemnation and criticisms from family, friends and experts, lack of curriculum and educational guidelines and parents are afraid to expose themselves as homeschooling supporters and to communicate with other parents about it in that context. In short, most countries do not consider this an essential provision of education (De Beer, Vos, & Myburgh, 2020).

There are challenges but according to Hirsh (2019), homeschool families can curate and blend varied education and social learning opportunities that have interesting significances to make education more agile and custom-made for students' and families' needs. It was also stated that there is a need to promote a "co-learning" space, where everyone can access a vast repository of online and homeschool resources are provided for students' good learning experiences, better learning outcomes and academic achievement (Poon, 2013) hence, identifying the students' learning styles should be done to better motivate them (Yusoff, Yusoff, & Md Noh, 2017). As Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki (2013), blended learning involves more learning time and instructional resources that can motivate and encourage learner interactions if done well, hence, parents' participation and cooperation is highly needed.

This pandemic has forced families to homeschool their children as the Department of Education had rolled

out DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020 which stated that learning modality would include online and modular learning with support on DepEdTV accessible on some local TV channels. Cui & Hanson, (2019) mentioned in their study that parents were asked what best describes the teaching style they used to homeschool their children in the US whether they strictly follow a formal curriculum or use informal learning.

During this health crisis, parental involvement will play a vital role in children's education. Bartolome, Mamat, & Masnan (2020) stated that family engagement shows positive effects in school but unfortunately most are not considered in the improvement in the education system. Hence, it is about time that parents' experiences during COVID-19 be considered to create policies specifically intended for parental involvement and support be made in the country. This will not only help parents help their children but also help our teachers make better strategies in managing their remote classes and relationships with the parents.

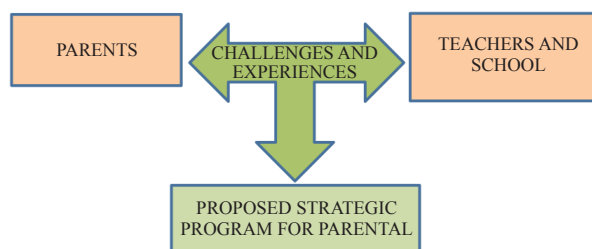


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Research methodology

1. Population and samples

This study employed a qualitative method through virtual focus group interviews/discussions and/or face-to-face or phone interviews with parent respondents, depending on their time, technology and mode of communication available for them. The responses were collated and analyzed according to themes. According to Creswell (2013), the qualitative approach for inquiring and understanding individuals' or groups' meaning ascribed to a social or human problem especially during this difficult time of a health crisis wherein internet connectivity and smart equipment are dwindling and are a concern by many families not only in the Philippines but even in other parts of the world (UNICEF, 2021). It also involved emerging queries and processes that were gathered from the participants. Data analysis

was inductively constructed from specifics to general themes.

The researcher employed purposive sampling—there were a total of 11 parents of students from all grade levels under online blended learning modality in a school in Quezon City, Philippines.

Table 1 Distribution of participants per grade level

Level	Number of participants	Gender
1	2	Female
2	2	Female
3	1	Female
4	2	Female
5	2	Female
6	2	Female
Total	11	

Table 2 Participants' profile

Parent participant	Age	Number of school children	Children's grade level	Employment	Husband/other family members assist in teaching
1	33	1	1	Yes Self-employed	No
2	39	2	1, 2	No	Yes
3	36	2	5, 6	No	Yes
4	38	2	4, 6	No	Yes
5	41	2	SPED, 3	No	Sometimes
6	40	4	5, JHS, SHS, College	No	Yes
7	38	3	4, 6, 9	Yes	Yes
8	35	4	K, 3, 4	No	No
9	38	3	5, 7, 8	No	Yes
10	41	1	2	Yes Self-employed	No
11	30	1	2	No	Sometimes

2. Collection of data

The researcher conducted a focus group interview/discussion with the parents of blended learners and face to face with some phone interviews (for additional queries) with parents of learners under blended (online and modular) modalities, via Google Meet on March 10th, 2021. The questions used were validated by five education experts.

3. Data analysis

Data collected was arranged according to the themes that emerged from the respondents' responses. The results and themes were drawn from the interviews and discussions with respondents. The redundant responses as well as the unique ones were carefully analyzed and summarized. Using the qualitative method can better help researchers to identify where the respondents have a problem and to make better inferences on certain issues on distance/remote learning.

Also, qualitative approach offers richer responses from the participants (Fuchs, 2017).

The researcher ensured proper ethical considerations in terms of informed consent, proper protocol, confidentiality of information and the mechanism of sharing the results of the research was addressed properly by the researcher.

The participants were informed about the study to assure them of the purpose of the study and the benefits it can offer educators and parents. Moreover, an informed consent form was given to inform them of the nature and objectives of the study and to assure that their responses will be dealt with utmost care and confidentiality. Moreover, they were assured that the results will help to establish baseline data for the input in schools' plans to deal with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Any information obtained from the respondents will remain confidential and will only be disclosed upon their permission.

Moreover, the researcher ensured that conflict of interest is avoided and objectivity and independence of the research was given the highest priority. There were no financial or non-financial benefits to any respondent, relative or friend alike.

Results

The discussion shows the parent participants' experiences on distance learning / blended learning modality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Problem 1: How do parents describe their experiences regarding distance learning?

During the discussion, all parent participants articulated that distance learning is generally difficult and tiring. As this is a new experience for them, they are still trying their best to cope with the current situation of blended distance online learning.

Most of the parent-participants talked about the following concepts as their challenges: time management, child discipline and supervision, knowledge on lessons, household chores and gadget sharing as their greatest challenges. Their usual pre-pandemic routines had drastically changed as their roles as parents and teachers merge and interconnect with each other. A parent respondent stated that her business gets in the way of teaching her daughter during daytime. She finishes work late and when she is ready to teach, her child is already tired and sleepy. On the other hand, a parent stated that she can supervise her children during synchronous and asynchronous classes, but she has divided attention as

they all take their online and offline lessons at the same time and there is no one to help her teach and assist her children's task which, according to her is very physically tiring. "It is hard especially with discipline. I endure because theirs is no one to rely on", a parent quoted.

Moreover, some parent respondents who have children in the intermediate grade levels said that they do not stress themselves too much on teaching their children because they somehow are more independent than those in the primary levels however, they further stated that they just don't know how much they learned on their own and that the face-to-face learning modality would still be much better to ensure their children's extent of learning. In addition, they mentioned that having older children is a great help in guiding and teaching.

With these, it can be noted that parents with younger children have more challenges to go through than those with older children, much harder when only a few of them receive help from their husbands/partners and other family members. According to them, older children could do their school tasks and lessons independently and even help teaching their younger siblings.

2. Problem 2: What are the challenges faced by parents and how are these addressed?

Parents described blended and distance learning as tiring and challenging and these changes continue to overwhelm them. Their usual tasks had been greatly interrupted as the pandemic lingered for more than a year now.

The parent-participants complained in unison the following concepts as challenges.

Table 3 Challenges of parent participants in distance learning

Concepts of parents' challenges
Time management
Child discipline and supervision
Knowledge on lessons
Distractions from mobile games and YouTube videos
Others (Internet connection/gadget sharing)

2.1 Time Management

During the interviews, the parent-participants complained about time management as the most challenging aspect on distance learning because of the following reasons: employment, business, taking care of

other children and household chores. Many of them mentioned that their jobs/businesses are compromised because of distance learning setup.

As quoted by a parent, "*napabayaan iyong business, hindi ko natututukan.*" (.my business was neglected. I was not able to focus on it.)

Some parents also mentioned that however busy their days went, they make it a point to check on their children's notes and activities before going to bed. They juggle their roles as parents, workers and teachers so that they could supervise their children's lessons.

Parent-participants acknowledged the fact that they must manage their time well as they have to do house chores, businesses and jobs before they could teach their children. What makes it even more challenging is that when they have time, their children are not in the mood anymore. One parent also said that she has to go to work at night and check her children's schoolwork before she goes to sleep, while the others said that they lose much time and attention for their small businesses. Moreover, the other parents said that they have to finish all house chores before they can really sit and teach their children or check what their children learned during the day.

With the coalescence of different roles of parents nowadays at home had greatly affected their mental health. They all complained about how disrupted their daily situation are this school year. Pressures from fulfilling their household chores, business and employment and a full-time teacher to their children usually leave them with emotional distress and anxiety.

2.2 Child discipline and supervision

During the discussion, most of them spoke about child discipline as a challenge for them during this time of distance learning. They all said that this adds more than other challenges they have gone through. They have confessed that teachers hold a certain authority over their children that they can make their children do their school tasks more easily than when they tell them.

They stated that their children do not listen and take their words seriously and seem to listen more to their teachers, while others said that they prefer their children to go to school because they do not obey them well. In unison, they confessed that child discipline is their most challenging task as parent-teacher this school year. No one had it easy when it comes to managing their children to do their school tasks and study times. In fact, one of them complained that it takes her a day to scold and nag her son before he can finish his task. She also

said that he does not easily cooperate with her.

All parent-participants agreed that it is a challenge to make their children obey and listen to them when they teach. However, it is very notable that parents with both female and male children said that the females are easier to handle and are more manageable as compared to their male counterparts. Another parent quipped that aside from the fact that their children listen more to their teachers, they also enjoyed being with their classmates. They all agreed that what lacks the most in their children's life during this pandemic time was socialization; which they can amply get with their classmates at school.

On the other hand, Parent 2 does not find it to be challenging at all and confidently said that she can manage her child's synchronous and asynchronous tasks. However, she did not elaborate on her strategies on how she handles her child's studies. In relation to discipline, maintaining their children's focus was also raised. Managing their time is already a major challenge but when they do find time, encouraging and maintaining their children's focus is not easy. She said, "my children are into watching videos on Youtube and some games and very much distracted with these."

In reference to keeping their children's focus, some parents stated that their children are too distracted with smart phone games. They said that their children spend so much time playing certain games and this gives them a headache. Hence, it is advised that teachers and schools should proactively communicate with parents to provide guidance and support using DepEd Learning Resources on varied platforms and other education applications and programs available online along with structured routines to help them aid their children to learn during asynchronous classes (UNICEF, 2020) as they, too, learn how to integrate available learning resources into their children's learning routines.

2.3 Knowledge on lessons

Some parents with older children stated that teaching is not as hard as those with only younger children. They were relieved that their older children who can study on their own with very minimal supervision and are very helpful in terms of teaching their younger siblings.

A parent with three older children had repeatedly stated her relief that she gets help from them. She said that at first, she was excited to teach her child because she thought that they would have more time to

bond together like when s/he was a child, but as time went on, she realized that it wasn't as easy as she thought it would be.

With regards to the parents' knowledge of the lessons, a parent said that she also must study her children's lessons so that she can teach them better. She spends a lot of time watching videos and notes on how to teach her child's lessons. She said that video lessons available on the internet were very helpful for her as she taught her children. She mentioned that she does not hover on her older children as they are more independent, though she said she still supervises them.

2.4 Distractions from mobile games and video sharing-Apps (Youtube)

During the discussion, parents also talked about how hard it is for them to keep their children's focus on the lessons and they mentioned that mobile games are children's top distraction. Some of them complained that their children are distracted with smart phone games and YouTube videos even during online classes. They also mentioned that there was not enough pressure to force their children to fully focus on their studies. They all agreed that learning and teaching is more effective at school.

2.5 Others: Internet connection, gadget sharing

Aside from those challenges, parents also complained about not having enough gadgets for their children to use and the wobbly and unstable internet connection of both the students and the teachers affect the teaching-learning situation.

Though most of them have enough gadgets for all their children to use, a parent said that her other children are enrolled under pure modular modality to accommodate the other siblings to take longer classes online. On the other hand, they mentioned that bad internet connection gets in the way of having a substantial class. This issue is not just for the students but also with the teachers. They agreed that their network is unstable at times.

Despite that, they mentioned that the teachers are very prepared with the lessons but because of bad internet connectivity, the class time is (sometimes) wasted.

3. Problem 3: How does the school assist parents in teaching their children?

Schools are expected to provide the needed support that parents need to help them with their instruction at home. In general, the parent-participants

did not complain about the teachers and said that teachers are supportive and responsive to all queries they have. Parents stated that whenever they have questions, the teachers usually respond as early as 30 minutes to even a few hours. They agreed that teachers never failed to respond on anything they asked them.

Also, they all said that teachers give all necessary instructions and announcement through their messenger group chat (GCs) so it is all up to the parents to check regularly. Generally, they are grateful that teachers accommodate their queries, but some feel bad that other parents do not even have time to check these messages. “I only get to check my messages after my work which ends at 11:00 in the morning, because I work on a night shift.” Moreover, they also feel that despite the teachers’ efforts in maintaining an open line of communication, connection and bond between parents and teachers is still better and much stronger when done personally, so they appreciate that they still can speak to their teachers during distribution and retrieval of modules and worksheets.

However, they suggested that elementary schools should have longer online classes so that their children can learn more from the teachers. However, the Department of Education Undersecretary for Curriculum and Instruction, Diosdado M San Antonio, had issued Memorandum DM-CI-2020-00162 on July 21, 2020, stating that the following are the recommended number of hours for online classes. They are as follows: 1 hour for kindergarten, 1.5 hours for grades 1-5, 2 hours for grades 6-8 and 4 hours for grades 9-12. And these are strictly followed by the public schools as duly recommended by experts- the American Academy Pediatrics (AAP) and World Health Organization (WHO).

Moreover, public schools in the Philippines recognize families’ differences and struggles so, they do not oblige them. Hence, parental involvement programs should be further developed to help the parents become better partners of teachers and schools in order to better achieve academic progress for students. In so far as the pandemic protocols and regulations are concerned, schools have limited physical assistance with their learners and the community. However, parents all agreed that their children’s teachers are very assistive, responsive to queries and diligent in doing their tasks. Despite the physical limitations, schools, as prescribed in the abovementioned memorandum, continuously provide their learners, self-learning modules and worksheets

along with the weekly home learning plans (WHL) to better guide the students and parents with the lessons and limit screen time.

In addition to that, the department along with the teacher-writers/contributors, continuously develops the DepEd Commons and the Learning Resources (LR) Portal to better provide parents and students the materials they need in teaching their children at home. In turn, teachers are tasked to give performance task-based activities and video lessons for students who missed to join their online classes and for students under the pure modular modality. However, as per the parents’, request of having longer online classes, schools are not allowed to exceed the prescribed numbers of synchronous online classes.

4. Problem 4: What school strategic program may be proposed based on the findings of the study?

Generally, parent-participants experience various challenges during this pandemic school year. These challenges include time management, child discipline and supervision, knowledge on lessons, distractions from mobile/smart phone games and others (internet connection, gadget sharing among siblings). Despite the teachers and school’s efforts and roles in providing and assisting them with their children’s studies, these parents who can be considered matured in child-rearing, still struggle with time management and child discipline and supervision. Hence, the school should consider conducting parenting seminars to help parents with time management and child discipline concerns (Simbre & Ancho, 2019) to help them with managing their time and dealing with discipline issues. Devaney, Begeney, Haskett, & Ginns (2018) suggested that parents could give suggestions to other parents which can be used to address specific parenting challenges such as knowledge on lessons, distractions from smart phone games and others.

Another program that the school can use to address parents’ concerns is the Parent Helping Parents Program (PHPP) wherein parents help other parents in terms of sharing teaching and discipline strategies, best practices and experiences in child-rearing. This is like the Responsive Parenting program designed by Hess (2016) to use parents to help other parents in terms of managing the behavior of their children through training and retraining of parents. This program may be done in partnership with the school’s Teachers’ Club (TC), General Parent-Teacher Association (GPTA), Homeroom Parent-Teacher Association (HRPTA) and the local

community council. These sharing and trainings will be in the form of webinars and/or live in-person seminars. Lachman et al. (2016) proposed that this should be integrated within a local and culturally relevant context to fit their needs.

Moreover, the school may also strengthen their information dissemination strategies to better reach all parents whose children use pure modular learning modality. With the help of the TC and the GPTA and HRPTA, all advisories will be posted in the school's website and social media page.

COVID-19 has forced the Department of Education to come up with different modalities to ensure learning continuity which led to the adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year (BE-LCP) that streamlines the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) implemented all over the country under different modalities. This is the contingent plan but as the results of this study suggest, the teaching and learning process was not easy for both learners and parents. Although distance and blended learning had long been introduced, it was not implemented fully until the COVID-19 pandemic and was never conceived to be fully implemented in public elementary schools.

This study found that parents had challenging experiences during this pandemic. As teacher-partners did a great part in their children's learning this year, they described their experiences as tiring and difficult. Time management, child discipline and supervision, knowledge on their children's lessons, children's distractions from mobile games and connectivity and lack of devices were mentioned as their main challenges. Generally, the selected participants are very active parents who did their parts well in the learning process (Koneru, 2017).

Discussion

Parent-participants revealed that, in general, their experience on distance learning during the COVID-19 was difficult. They talked about the concepts of time management, child discipline, knowledge on lessons, distractions from mobile games and Youtube videos and insufficient gadgets and poor internet connectivity to use for their children's online classes. It can be inferred from their responses that they were very attentive to their children's school activities and tasks and are more than willing to cooperate with their teachers. However, this pandemic situation necessitates parents and schools to

invest on technology (internet and devices), learning resources not only for students but also for parents who are tasked to teach their children at home (Almarashdeh & Alsmadi, 2016). Unfortunately, not all families can avail of these. However, parents, teachers, school leaders and the government should acknowledge that this is the prime support these families need to bridge the learning loss brought about by the pandemic. We must begin to transform the ways we live, think and work (Prinsloo et al., 2015) as we continue to learn to live with COVID-19.

Moreover, parents also showed willingness to learn more ways to better handle their children's school tasks at home while the pandemic continues to disrupt regular face-to-face classes. Teachers and schools are expected to be more proactive in strengthening their partnerships with their students' parents by providing better parent support.

Suggestion

To address the challenges experienced in distance and blended learning, schools are encouraged to consider conducting programs for parents to help them become better teacher and homeschool partners. Parenting and values formation seminars could help them better deal with the challenges they faced this pandemic year especially with time management, child discipline, lessons knowledge and others. Another program to consider is having a values formation among parents and learners so that parents can be more aware of their roles in the system delegation of authority and labor-sharing (Frydkova, 2013). Families and school should have complimentary functions so that the goals for the students can be better achieved. Also, Parent Helping Parent program can also be introduced where parents can share their best practices in terms of teaching, discipline and rearing with their fellow parents. Schools are suggested to partner with their PTA officers and members and their barangay council to implement so that a better plan for inclusive re-opening will be made by understanding and knowing how these parents' experiences have affected their children's learning and socio-emotional skills (United Nations, 2020).

On the bright side, parents have mentioned their children's improved independence and better computer skills. However, they noticed the decline of their children's social skills and enthusiasm in doing their school tasks. Since they mentioned about these, it is recommended that further studies on these issues be conducted in other schools within the city and more so

in other areas so that interventions can be organized. The researcher suggests conducting further studies on other aspects and perspectives such as teachers' and students' experiences to better improve the school's planning of programs, implementation, strategies and hopefully better policies for the implementation of distance and blended learning modality. After all, designing distance and blended learning calls for systematic approach, design decisions and implementations and principles to help the teachers develop appropriate learning (Simarmata et al., 2018).

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