

## **Experiences of Secondary School Administrators in the Implementation of Distance Learning Delivery Modality in the New Normal**

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### **Abstract**

The coronavirus outbreak had provided varied challenges to the school administrators in managing the schools. This qualitative study determined the experiences of 20 secondary school heads of the Ozamiz City Division. Through a phenomenological approach, this research endeavor comprised a series of interviews and focus group discussions in gathering the data, which were categorized into themes using Van Manen's thematic analysis. The five central themes are (1) Preparing Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) for Distance Learning, (2) Attending virtual meetings and webinars, (3) performance monitoring and evaluation, (4) conducting assessment activities, and (5) managing administrative tasks. The school heads had different experiences as they performed the function of administrative support in preparation for the school's readiness for the implementation of distance learning. The researchers concluded that although some school heads find the implementation challenging due to varied preparations that need to be done, they still persevere in implementing the program. The optimism of the school heads in implementing distance learning was very strong. The study recommends that school administrators be trained on time management and stress management so they can cope smoothly with the challenges brought about by education during the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Administrative tasks, Learning Continuity Plan, monitoring and evaluation, virtual meetings, assessment activities

### **Introduction**

Effective school heads are profoundly concerned about student performance and know that test scores are not the primary indicator of a great education in this health crisis. School heads monitor everyday activities and develop concerns about students' remote learning by immersing themselves in all elements of the school system. Because of the varying obligations of the work, no day is ever the same. Nevertheless, they may have what it takes to confidently serve as a school principal of the new normal education as a visionary leader with great communication skills and a passion for giving diverse children a special education (Priyadarshini & Bhaumik, 2020). One of the school heads' responsibilities is to give implementing direction to the school system. They are responsible for all aspects of making the school suitable for learning. They also guide teachers to adopt changes in the curriculum, setting rules and regulations, making parents closely engaged in the study of their children, following up learning progress of students, evaluating the performance of the school personnel, budget management, and even looking after the school facilities. Other critical accountabilities include designing safety measures and crisis response methods, which remain unchanged despite the health issue (Cahapay & Anoba, 2020).

The school heads' responsibilities are broad because the school operations rely on their hands. They do the a) structuring of the school; (b) the formulation of the program; (c) the assignment of tasks to and supervision of all personnel in school; and (d) the overall running of the school building (Mahmut, 2020; Alsaleh, 2020; Hopper et al., 2021). During the pandemic, school principals' duties and responsibilities change. A quick and broad change in schools in the shape of significantly digital transformation' impacted overseeing the radical shift from on-site teaching to online teaching and learning (Iivari et al., 2020; Krishnamurthy, 2020).

School leaders must be more adaptive in managing resources during this crisis to keep up with constantly changing situations. As a result, they make more difficult decisions that were previously unnecessary. For example, in Chile, school principals are responsible for different plans for school reopening, which necessitates tighter coordination with several stakeholders (Bol, 2020, Hilburg et al., 2020, Singh & Haynes, 2020).

School heads were challenged in response to the call for change during the pandemic. As a result, they need effort and time to carry out their tasks as school heads. Although education portals were implemented due to this health disaster, there are issues such as technical problems in live broadcasts, low hours of lessons in weekly schedules, teacher reluctance for distance education, and teacher inefficiency in monitoring students and providing feedback (Aytac, 2020). In addition, they have a variety of obstacles in ensuring that education continues to exist during the epidemic (Berwick, 2020).

School principals are tasked with leading this transition from regular face-to-face classes to a distance learning modality. They have to mentally shift to this educational adjustment fast or be left behind by the demands of the various sectors of society. As a result, they experienced stress and pressure in coping with the demands for quality learning despite the pandemic. In this context, school heads must adapt to the development of a new era in education wherein distance learning is the norm (Harris & Jones, 2020). Moreover, they faced enormous logistical challenges in assuring technology availability and creating clear communication channels in the school (Netolicky, 2020).

Another challenge faced by the school heads was related to their teachers. Teachers, the most knowledgeable teaching resources, are confronted with diverse problems like finances and physical and psychological contemplation due to pandemics. (Vu et al., 2020). Thus, school heads are entrusted with the enormous accountability of promoting new instructional methods in ways that enable students to learn while ensuring their safety during the pandemic period (UNESCO, 2020).

School heads need to engage with faculty members before introducing distance learning. This will address the requirements and train teachers to effectively deliver excellent education (De Villa & Manalo, 2020). However, school heads experienced challenges like inadequate teacher preparation, lack of preparation time for modules, tests, and other associated instruction preparation. In addition, students have trouble understanding some exercises due to the professors' lack of physical contact (Caca. yan, Baua & Alvarado, 2020).

The challenges and experiences of school heads explored in other studies during the pandemic motivate the researchers to describe the experiences of the secondary school heads in DepEd, Ozamiz City, and how these school heads cope with the different challenges of this generation.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study explored the experiences of secondary school administrators in the implementation of distance learning modality in the new normal.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Research Design***

This study used Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological design. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that enables researchers to investigate how life's everyday behaviors are shaped by experiences, customs, and culture. Participants' experiences are retrieved using this method as a source of understanding (Oerther, 2020).

### ***Research Setting***

This study was conducted in public secondary schools of the ten districts of Ozamiz City Division. Each district is supervised by a public schools district supervisor, who monitors the curriculum implementation of instruction in schools both elementary and high schools belonging to the district. Secondary schools in each district offer junior and senior high school except for Gala National High School, which only offers junior high school due to its total population, which is less than 100 learners from Grade 7 to Grade 10. Other schools in each district are integrated schools that offer both elementary and junior high schools. Marcelino C. Regis Integrated School of Kinuman Norte, Ozamiz City, is the only integrated school in the division that offers elementary, junior and senior high school. Schools in the division are managed by the principal, while others are managed by head teachers appointed by the Schools Division Superintendent.

### ***Participants of the Study***

The study participants were the 20 secondary school principals, assistant principals in the senior high school, and head teachers of the Ozamiz City Division. They were chosen through purposive random sampling. The participants' criteria included the full-time secondary school principals, assistant principals in the senior high school, and department heads who gave full consent to participate in the study. School principals are school personnel in-charge in the school operation. The assistant principals assisted the school principal in supervising the senior high school program. At the same time, the head teachers were assigned to assist the school principals in supervising the different departments in junior high schools like the Academic Department and Makabayan Department. In big schools like Ozamiz City National High School and Ozamiz City School of Arts and Trades, head teachers are assigned to each subject department like the English department, Science Department, etc. The school's division superintendent designated some head teachers to manage schools in the division due to the scarcity of Principal's Test passers. These schools are Pulot NHS, Labinay NHS and San Antonio NHS.

### ***Research Instrument***

The interview guide was utilized by the researchers to extract data from the participants. During the interview, open-ended questions increased and enhanced the elaboration of the participants' responses with follow-up questioning. The opening question, core questions, and exit question were included in the interview guide and were approved by the dissertation committee during the proposal hearing.

### ***Data Collection***

The researchers initially sought permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Misamis University to conduct the study. After obtaining approval to conduct the study, the researchers requested permission from Ozamiz City's Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the research among the selected participants. After obtaining the permission, the researchers received the participants' agreement by a letter outlining the study's goal and obtaining their consent. Then, individual interviews were performed face-to-face, carefully adhering to interview and health procedures. Fi-

nally, the researchers videotaped the whole interview to preserve the participants' replies in their original form and the subtleties in responding to the interview questions.

To build trust, the researchers maintained close contact with the participants and employed strategies such as taking notes during and after the interviews and thoroughly monitoring the respondents' behavior and nonverbal cues to understand the significance of their experiences better. Furthermore, at a meeting, the researchers presented the first thematic statements and subthemes, as well as the actual text of the interviews, to the selected participants to confirm their replies and perspectives. Finally, the researchers presented the findings to the study team throughout the analysis phase.

She transcribed the interview transcripts once she had interviewed all of the participants. The replies were then coded, classified, and translated into themes using Nvivo software and the six Van Manen data analysis processes. The results were then studied and interpreted. The researchers employed documentation throughout the investigation to ensure the reliability and conformability of the replies.

#### ***Ethical Consideration***

The researchers employed the Helsinki Declaration (2001) rules to conform to ethical norms. The researchers explained the study's aims and importance to all participants. Participants consented to have their remarks recorded during the interviews and were granted informed consent to participate in the study. She followed the secrecy concept, and the teacher participants were promised their identities would not be disclosed throughout the study. There was no mention of the factors that led to interviewee identification. All papers relevant to the participants were preserved in a separate folder in a protected file. Participants might resign at any moment. She moved the interview to the next round when a responder felt fatigued or refused to continue. They were always handled respectfully. They were also told that their remarks would not affect their condition and would be kept secret.

#### ***Data Analysis***

Vivo, a statistical software application developed to detect and code replies and enable data analysis, was employed by the researchers. First, she used a horizontal approach to organize enormous volumes of material into meaningful statements and meanings for each participant. The codes were then organized to generate the meaning as initial subthemes, themes, and primary themes from all participants (Alexander & Spencer).

The researchers applied Van Manen's six phases to data analysis (2016). (1) focusing on the nature of lived experiences or identifying the phenomenon of interest; (2) investigating experience as participants live it or investigating the lived experiences of teachers in conducting distance learning; (3) gathering salient data by reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon or the development of central themes from early and sub-themes; and (4) defining the phenomena of writing and rewriting arts— changing the written output to represent the instructors' experiences teaching online programs. (5) Maintaining a strong and directed link to the phenomena or combining earlier observations and ideas; and (6) Balancing the study context by identifying the parts and the total, comprehending the phenomenon from individual and holistic viewpoints.

These six phases served as the foundation for the overall study methodology. The underlying aim of the qualitative phenomenological design was to gain and explore an in-depth understanding of school administrators' experiences in distance learning implementation. In addition, methods for separating the data's major themes are also discussed. Finally, in terms of application within the fol-

lowing study, the application of these six processes and the isolation of theme statements in this research were addressed further:

### ***Van Manen's Six Components of Phenomenological Research***

The first step is to consider the nature of lived experience. This process entailed developing research questions. Before developing the questions, I evaluated the study's goal. In this paper, I investigated administrators' lived experiences with the learning mode during its deployment. The research questions have three parts: opening, core, and exit questions.

The second step is investigating the experience as the participants live it. It concerns the methods employed to investigate the lived experience in question, such as in-depth interviews for data collection. I started the interview in the study with a general conversation about their perceptions/views on implementing the learning modality in the new normal, 1. What is it like to be an administrator in the new normal education? 2. As an administrator, what are your preparations for implementing the learning modality in the new normal? Then, core questions will be asked related to the implementation of distance learning in the school they are handling. 3. What are the positive and negative experiences you have encountered following as you implement the new normal education using the distance learning modality? Planning of the learning modality, orientations of teachers, parents, and students in the new normal, training of teachers, development, production, distribution, and submission of learning modules, teachers' monitoring of performances, doing administrative tasks, fulfilling personal and family tasks, managing time. 4. How did you respond to the negative experiences or challenges? 5. As an administrator, what is your fulfillment in life?" I then followed it with the exit questions, 6. What are the best strategies you can employ as a school head or administrator to strengthen the implementation of New Normal Education? 7. How do you view yourself as an administrator in the future?

Considering the major themes that characterize the phenomena, this stage focuses on the analysis process, which includes reflecting on the themes found in the interviews and aiming to capture the core meaning or substance of the lived experience under review. In this study, I employed a holistic and line-by-line method to uncover theme assertions expressed in interviews.

In the writing and rewriting arts, the phenomena are being defined. It is an essential component of the research process, particularly during the analytic phase. The writing process aims to make the participants' feelings, thoughts, and attitudes evident. After reading each answer and proceeding with its complete transcription, the researchers put down her broad interpretation of the interviews in a few lines. Then I read the interview transcript, extracting the words and sentences related to the experiences and changing them into the initial theme statements.

Maintaining intimate and concentrated ties with the phenomena. During this stage, the researchers must focus on the study subject at hand. I utilized the prior observations and ideas to develop a strong attachment to a certain subject, phenomenon, or thought. As the study continued, the first common themes eventually emerged, and the focus of all following interviews was comparing and merging comparable ones. I alternated between the overall perspective and the first topic remarks throughout the interviews.

Balancing the study context by taking into account the parts and the total. Throughout this stage, I assessed the overall design of the research/text against the value of the portions in the overall textual structure of the study. Throughout the interviewing process, the researchers participated in hermeneutic or interpretative meditation on the issue. After I investigated each one that appeared and identified the key ones using free variation in imagination, the themes were compared to other

phenomenological writings. Finally, the researchers provided instances of useful participant remarks based on notes obtained throughout the analysis stage and following the interviews.

### **Results and Discussion**

The study involved twenty (20) school heads conducting administrative supervision in the Division of Ozamiz City, Philippines. They are in the age range from 35 to 55 years old. Six (6) participants had been school heads for more than fifteen years, while eight (8) were less than fifteen years. The researchers utilized Van Manen's data analysis to identify commonalities. The researchers assigned the participants letters of the alphabet and numbers to protect their identities.

The interviews held with the participants produced the five central themes. These central themes emerged in this study about the experiences of school administrators in the implementation of distance learning as reinforced by some learners, namely: (1) preparing a Learning Continuity Plan for distance learning, (2) attending virtual meetings and webinars, (3) performance monitoring and evaluation, (4) conducting assessment Activities, and (5) managing of administrative tasks.

#### ***Preparing Learning Continuity Plan for Distance Learning***

The necessity to continue learning in constraints brought on by COVID 19 in the Philippines, BE-LCP was created cooperatively by the Department of Education (2020). In addition to the most basic prerequisites for education, the essential academic skills, and prescribed procedures in schools, the plan was critically designed, taking into account different modes of teaching (Cahapay, 2021).

One of the experiences of school administrators for the distance learning modality is the varied preparations required. First, the school administrators had to plan the learning modality to be used, which involved crafting the Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) for the school and putting this into action. It also involves tapping stakeholders' help and orienting parents and teachers on adopting the learning modality. Looking for adequate resources was also a challenge. Therefore, the study's main theme on Preparing Learning Continuity Plan for Distance Learning was grouped into four subthemes: Planning and Preparation of LCP, Stakeholders' Cooperation and Collaboration, Orientation/Training of Teachers and Parents, and Resource Management.

**Planning and Preparation of LCP.** School administrators need adequate planning and preparation for distance learning. They had to ensure that the Learning Continuity Plan of the school was crafted and approved by stakeholders and see to its correct implementation. The LCP of the school provided a detailed plan on the type of modality to be applied for teaching and learning, the schedule of classes, and safety measures on the parts of teachers and learners. These were revealed in the answers of the school administrator participants.

*"I crafted the LCP properly, including the budget plan and attend webinars to be more informed"* (P5).

*"Changed pro-active BE-LCP and follow health protocols"* (P14).

While the school administrators, particularly the school principals, are at the forefront in implementing the BE-LCP, the head teachers or department heads support this program initiative of DepEd, as expressed in the following statement.

*"I supported the school head's learning continuity plan and implement what is in the plan"* (P6).

The Learning Continuity Plan was developed with a legislative structure that responds to the recent pandemic crisis while considering the constitutional obligation to vindicate every citizen's

right to a high standard of education at all times. As a result, the school's performance was impacted by adopting LCP variables individually or collectively (Abril & Callo, 2021).

Guided by the BE-LCP, schools in the Ozamiz City Division smoothly implemented the distance learning modality. The content guidelines embodied in the learning plan enabled the division curriculum planner and the school head to adjust the implementation of the learning modality. The BE-LCP also guided the school administration in monitoring the implementation of the Distance Learning Program.

**Stakeholders' Cooperation and Collaboration.** To implement the distance learning modality, school administrators needed the assistance of people inside and outside the school. The support of stakeholders was needed to provide both human and material resources needed by the school in its transition to distance education. The stakeholders served as strong pillars that support the school administration, teachers, learners, and parents in the period of adjustment in the implementation of distance learning. The participants in the interview presented it:

*“Collaboration with the external and internal stakeholder and strategic planning on expenditures using school resources” (P7).*

*“Inform the parents and stakeholders on the correct things to do when learners, Have a proper schedule for the daily routine/activities in school” (P10).*

*“Cooperation of the stakeholder strengthened the planning of learning modality” (P8).*

Stakeholder involvement is an ongoing dedication to students' self-learning, particularly during challenging circumstances. As a result, they are regarded as collaborators who are concerned about the well-being of students and educational outcomes both inside and outside of school (De Torres, 2021). Therefore, it makes sense to deliberately fill in inadequacies with knowledge and opinions from as many stakeholders as possible when schools begin any planning process to accomplish a specific task, solve problems, or create competence for learners (Pile and Gilchrist, 2020).

Educating the children involves people in the community as the school is not the only entity that can do it. Therefore, a collaboration of the stakeholders in the planning of the learning modality to be adopted by the school is strong support that strengthens the operational mechanism of the school.

**Orientation/Training of Teachers and Parents.** Teachers and parents were oriented to the new modality and its implementation process in preparation for distance learning. In addition, teachers and parents were oriented that education must continue despite the pandemic. As such, a new way of learning was crafted to ensure that learning will continue even in the learners' homes through modules and online learning. Some of the participants in the interview said:

*“There was a consultative meeting with the parents, stakeholders, teachers conducted before its implementation” (P12).*

*“Conducted virtual orientation for teachers and students and in-person orientation for parents during “Paaralan sa Tahanan” (P2, P3, P4, P7, P8).*

Teachers were specifically trained to handle education in the distance landscape. Virtual training was given to teachers by the national, regional, and division offices of the Department of Education to prepare them for the use of technology in teaching, to provide them with knowledge on other resources that they can use for distance learning, and to equip them with strategies better to handle learners who were learning at home. The school heads said:

*“In school, we did virtual meetings to let teachers be informed on the technological capacity of the learners and present to their options as to the kind of distance learning the school can provide” (P6).*

*“Teachers were given chances to attend webinars for the positive side. Teachers used their personal data load/internet connection when attending webinars during Work from Home (WFH)” (P1).*

*“Teachers attended webinars and another online mode of conferences” (P2, P3).*

*“Teachers were exposed to various online apps, making them capacitated on its operations & use. Moreover, they were directed to attend virtual training to gain further exposure in the blended modality, how to keep oneself fit & fight mental stress & anxiety brought by pandemic” (R4,5,6,7 and 8).*

*“EdTech provided training for teachers to adopt the new way of teaching. New approaches were introduced during webinars and other online training” (R 9 to 20).*

Agaton and Cueto (2021) cited that parents faced several challenges regarding their children engaging in the new normal mode of learning delivery, virtual setting, and even learning style adopted by the school. UNICEF (2020) stressed the importance of the continuity of learning through distance learning modality. Furthermore, all its details must be communicated to the parents or guardians to make them aware of the education programs being rolled out by the government with their accessibility.

The conduct of training/orientation is essential for the advocacy of information, new policies, and guidelines adopted in distance learning. Misinformation of important points in the implementation of distance learning leads to problems that might disrupt the school system. All individuals involved in implementing new policies should be properly informed to make them aware of their role.

**Resource Management.** Education continued despite the pandemic. The greatest challenge posed was that not all learners were equipped with resources for online learning, so the Division of Ozamiz City schools resorted to modules. However, the modules must be crafted and prepared before the learners can use them. The development and production of the modules started with the combined effort of educators from the upper to the lower rank with the assistance of stakeholders. Then the distribution and retrieval of modules by the parents following schedules set to observe health and safety as well as proper social distancing. School heads better expressed these in the following statements:

*“Division Learning Management Development system of the Division provided the soft copies for the modules to be produced. School MOOE was used in the production of these modules” (P1).*

*“Management of resources is challenging, and schools were confronted with limited resources such as ink, printer, and laptop” (P2).*

*“The school developed, produced, distributed learning modules to the learners. Lack of supply due to limited resources is sometimes a problem” (P8).*

*“The teachers did “production and distribution of modules” (P9).*

Each school has a unique mix of issues, from school leaders to instructors and teachers to student participation and even interaction with other stakeholders, and continues to provide education in the new normal. Providing the finest administrative support to schools during the epidemic is a challenge for school administrators. Principals developed their reactions to the epidemic in terms of a hierarchy of needs, understanding that their pupils and staff needed to feel physically and mentally safe, thus effective in the classroom. Even when these fundamental demands were met, principals faced enormous logistical challenges in assuring technology access and creating clear communication channels (Asio & Bayucca, 2021).



As the start of distance learning was approach, school heads, with the support of teachers and community leaders, continued to prepare for a reimagined learning far away from school rigorously. School principals tasked with leading this transition had to mentally shift to this educational adjustment fast or be left behind by the demands of the various sectors of society. School heads experienced stress and pressure in coping with the demands for quality learning despite the pandemic. School administrators had to prepare themselves psychologically, emotionally, and physically to adapt to the changes brought about by COVID 19 in the educational sector (Palaoag et al., 2020; Caratiquit & Pablo, 2021).

Planning the preliminary preparation for the launch of distance learning education was not easy, but school administrators must face all this with calmness and psychological readiness. The school principal oversees operations to create a secure and productive learning environment in the new normal. During this crisis, school administrators were required to be more prepared and adaptable in managing school resources to keep up with rapidly changing standards and situations (Buheji & Buheji, 2020).

Along with the shifting of the educational landscape brought about by the pandemic is reallocation/realignment of the school budgets to cater to the emerging financial needs in executing this new education modality. Proper reallocation/realignment of the school MOOE supplements the school's financial needs like an internet connection for online classes and communication, resources for printing modules, purchasing supplementary materials to enrich distance learning, etc. In addition, proper management of resources available in the school contributes to winning the trust of the school partners/stakeholders to share their resources to support school programs.

#### ***Attending Virtual Meetings and Webinars***

Being well equipped to handle technological advancement in learning during the new normal is a plus factor in overcoming problems met in education.

In the implementation of distance learning, the availability of gadgets for teachers and learners was necessary. Another challenge confronting school administrators was the poor internet connectivity. Meetings were done online, which resulted in poor attendance in meetings by parents due to a weak internet connection. Attendance to online training for teachers and administrators was limited due to poor internet connectivity. The lack of gadgets for online classes for teachers and learners was also a problem. This theme comprises three subthemes: (1) Poor Internet Connectivity and (2) Lack of Needed Online Gadgets.

**Poor Internet Connectivity.** The poor internet connectivity was a challenge faced by school administrators in implementing distance learning. Orientation and training for school administrators, teachers, and stakeholders were done virtually, which required a strong internet connection. Even downloading soft copies of the modules still needed strong internet connectivity to succeed. Some classes were done online, which needed a strong connection to the internet. The responses of the participant administrators supported this:

*“Teachers attended webinars and virtual training, but unstable internet signal and lack of load were the obstacles met during these training” (P17).*

*“Unstable internet connection in school and cost of data load were the bottlenecks encountered along the way in the implementation of distance learning” (P18).*

*“Most of the time, teachers do WFH during virtual training as the school has limited internet signal affordable to cater all teachers within the school” (P20).*

*“Downloading materials is a problem because of poor connection” (P15).*

*“Some classes were done online, and poor internet is a hindrance” (P16).*

During a pandemic or even before a pandemic, the internet is the means of connecting people around the world through social media and other online platforms. However, poor internet connectivity hinders one from getting connected with others. In school, it is necessary as it is the only means for the school principal to contact teachers during work from home and attend webinars. This burdens school personnel utilizing their internet connection and purchasing their load data to attend virtual orientation, meetings, conferences, and webinars.

Unstable internet connection in school creates anxiety and communication barriers among school heads, teachers, and learners as social distancing are implemented. At the same time, the country is not yet free from the pandemic crisis.

**Lack of Needed Online Gadgets.** Computers, laptops, tablets, and cellphones were just a few online gadgets needed to implement distance learning. The teachers needed these gadgets during synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning episodes which needed the online presence of learners. However, these gadgets were lacking at the initial implementation of the new normal modality. Some administrators said:

*“The school has a limited facility in terms of gadgets to support virtual training” (P5).*

*“The limited computers in the schools made it difficult for some teachers to handle online learning” (P7).*

*“The attitude of teachers towards the training like webinars and online training was positive, but lack of gadgets has held a challenge in their part” (P10).*

Technological gadgets promote independent learning. The internet application for education facilitates the sharing of information and communication. It gives teachers and students internet access to training and lectures, as well as references to important study material in various multimedia formats assisting instructors in employing various tools in their curriculum. Teachers can also acquire assistance from the internet. In addition, they can conduct their research on the internet. Online learning allows for greater flexibility and gives pupils more influence over their education, emphasizing the need for internet access (Ancheta & Ancheta, 2020; Buheji & Buheji, 2020).

Though DepEd-Ozamiz City is implementing modular distance learning, teachers made follow-ups of learners through social media and online platforms the students can afford. No problem on the part of the teachers since all of them had their cell phones. However, on the part of the learners in the public schools, not all of them can afford to have such gadgets. Moreover, teachers do in-person home visitation to communicate school matters to the learners and parents. This is a burden in both parts that somehow discourage learners from continuing their schooling in remote learning conditions.

#### ***Performance, Monitoring, and Evaluation***

A comprehensive, equitable, research-based, well-implemented teacher rating system can empower teachers and improve learning processes. However, it was difficult to monitor teachers' performance during the pandemic without the learners. Moreover, one-on-one conferencing was also limited due to COVID 19. Performance monitoring and evaluation has to be modified to suit online teaching. The participants' responses yielded two sub-themes which are (1) Online Monitoring of Teachers' Performance and (2) Monitoring Tool for Teachers' Performance.

**Online Monitoring of Teachers' Performance.** The school administrators resorted to online monitoring in observance of the safety protocol set by the Department of Education and IATF protocols. Monitoring of teachers' performance online was resorted to by school administrators. Online meetings and minimal in-person contact were the usual way of monitoring teachers' perfor-

mance. Gradual adjustments to online meetings and monitoring by the school administrators to teachers occurred. During the interview, these school administrators said:

*“Monitoring of teachers’ performance was done thru online meetings, conferences & group chat & texts & calls” (P4).*

*“New skills are acquired in monitoring performance. Difficulty in conducting supervision was encountered due to limited means of communication” (P5).*

*“Online meetings and minimal in-person contact were the usual way of monitoring teachers’ performance” (P9).*

*“Performance can be tracked through text, FB messenger, and minimal in-person contact with the teachers” (P15).*

To follow proper health protocol, performance monitoring is done online as everybody observes social distancing. However, this kind of monitoring is not as effective as in-person monitoring. Performance cannot be gauged by just mere calling or sending messages. It should be validated in the real working environment of teachers. This implies that the performance monitoring of teachers during distance learning is a little bit questionable and unreliable.

**Monitoring Tool for Teachers’ Performance.** The teacher monitoring tool's main purpose is to extract information that will instruct and promote improvements in instructional practices. Since COVID 19, the monitoring tool for teachers’ performance was adjusted to suit the new normal landscape. Accordingly, the school administrators opened that:

*“I need to adjust the observation tool I am using to adapt to online teaching and learning” (P6).*

*“I crafted my monitoring tool in supervising teachers’ performance during the pandemic” (P12).*

*“I had to adjust the monitoring tools that I used to adapt to the new education landscape.” (P15).*

The primary goal of the monitoring activity is to collect data that will inform and enable the development of classroom practice. The information must be documented in an agreed-upon, consistent manner that allows the outcomes of various experiences to be intelligently combined (Alipio, 2020).

A teacher, performance monitoring tool offers information on the quality of education offered by schools. Performance evaluation focuses on assessing pupils’ academic achievement through testing. This gives information on the outcomes of educational investments (Asio & Bayucca, 2021).

Class observation during distance learning is done through video teaching demonstrations of teachers. School heads observed it and rated the teacher using the monitoring tool. However, data collected through the monitoring tool is still unreliable since the teacher doing the demo can edit or enhance the video to make it more realistic. Again, teachers’ teaching competence can hardly be evaluated since teaching is not in his actual working environment while doing the video.

#### ***Conducting Assessment Activities***

Assessment is essential to the school curriculum as it evaluates the learner’s learning performance and progress. The teachers can use the information gathered through assessment to make adjustments and customize their teaching plans to enrich learners’ learning experiences (Lynch, 2016). Assessment is an important part of education as it assesses whether educational goals have been achieved. This influences the grading system, instruction types, and the school's finances. Assessment existed in the new normal education, although difficult to implement. Learners studied

their lessons at home, so it was difficult to assess their learning. They were, however, given written and performance tasks as a form of summative assessments. In addition, other means of assessing learning were applied. This fourth theme is subdivided into three themes, namely: (1) Learners' Performance Monitoring; (2) Assessment Modality in the New Normal; and (3) Validation of Learning.

**Learners' Performance Monitoring.** Monitoring learners' progress can give information that helps learners learn more and faster, teach teachers more effectively, and make better decisions about the type of education that is best for them. However, performance monitoring of learners proved very difficult for teachers and administrators when face-to-face instruction was not allowed during COVID 19. School heads said:

*"We provided modules to learners, but we cannot be sure of the reliability of their answers since they are working at home" (P19).*

*"Monitoring of learners' performance online was difficult due to poor internet connection and lack of internet in learners' homes" (P11).*

*"Reliability of the results of assessments was difficult to measure outside the school" (P20).*

According to Vilanova et al. , (2019), monitoring student performance is a strategy that helps teachers assess the effectiveness of their instruction to make them more informed of the adjustment they have to make to benefit the student.

Tracking learning outcomes allows teachers to assess the quality of their instruction, whether for a single student or the entire class. During the recent pandemic crisis, teachers find it hard to assess students' progress as they only rely on the written outputs submitted by the learners through the modules. Other components of monitoring learning progress like competence in practical skills, which need to be done and evaluated by the teachers, were not realized.

**Monitoring and Assessment of Learning Modality in the New Normal.** The regular monitoring of student development through assessment enables the instructor to know a student's current proficiency with a particular ability. As a result, teachers may aid pupils in reaching their specific academic goals. The distribution of unified written works to students and teacher-created performance assignments provided a bird's eye view of learners' performance. These assessment modalities were provided with the learning modules distributed and retrieved from the parents every Monday. The school administrators declare:

*"In the distance learning landscape, both written and performance activities were distributed to parents for the learners at home" (R17).*

*"The learners answered the assessments at home and returned by the parents to teacher advisers during the retrieval of learning modules" (R9).*

*"We are not sure if the results of the assessments are authentic and reliable" (R12).*

New standards for distance learning and other forms of distance learning are necessary. Teachers' teaching styles, including daily tasks and accountability, must be altered as it is necessary to develop new options to track the learner's learning progress (UNICEF, 2020).

The only means for teachers to monitor the learning condition of the learners during distance learning is through the parents who get and return the learning modules to school. Some of them are not aware of the learning condition of their children as they are not considered full substitutes for a teacher in school. This makes it difficult for teachers to monitor and thoroughly assess the learning outcome of the learner. Sometimes, teachers made limited home visitations to the learners who needed follow-up. However, these strategies are not enough to augment the learning condition of the learners. Nothing can substitute the substantial inputs the learners can get in school.

**Validation of Learning.** Despite the difficulty in assessing learners' performance at home, school administrators and teachers used other means to validate learning. Some teachers went for a limited home visitation in the residences of the learners with the cooperation of the Local Government Unit (LGU). Others avail of chat in the messenger application while others monitor learners' performance through call and text. It is mentioned by participants P1 and P2 that: *"Most teachers undergo home visitation to monitor learners' progress."*

P4 and P8 added, *"Messenger chat, call, and text are effective means of validating learners' progress at home."*

Assessment helps students learn. Students can determine if they understand the course materials by observing what they are doing in class. Students can also be motivated by evaluation. Assessment is an important part of education as it indicates whether educational goals have been achieved. It helps learners identify their goals and understand what they need to do to reach those goals (Aytac, 2020).

The assessment and validation of learners' output is a crucial issue in distance learning as it is hard to validate if the learners were doing their learning tasks through the modules. Therefore, learners' output does not fully guarantee the quality of learning. In some cases, the learner's tasks of accomplishing the learning activities in the self-learning module were done by their parents or other people due to reluctance and boredom. This instance posed a challenge for the teachers in ensuring quality instruction to learners doing independent learning at home.

#### ***Managing Administrative Tasks***

School administrators have various administrative tasks, including human resources, financial resources, educational activities of students and teachers, external relations, the well-being of students and teachers, and teaching students. As administrators, the Bids and Awards Committee is part of the responsibility of being a school head. In addition, routine tasks like answering calls and messages, attending meetings and conferences, maintaining health protocol, and constant updating of DepEd issuances and at the same time sustain one's family life. These varied tasks produced stressful experiences, but school heads managed to overcome these. Management of Administrative Task is divided into sub-themes: (1) Performing administrative tasks and (2) Time management.

**Performing Administrative Tasks.** As school leaders, school administrators had to perform varied administrative functions. One of these is maintaining the check and balance of the Bids and Awards Committee, wherein the school head is the head of the Procuring Entity. In addition, the school administrator had to do routine tasks like attending virtual meetings and conferences, reading issuances concerning the school, organizing LAC sessions for teachers, and conducting monitoring of teachers and learners. The health and safety of teachers, learners, parents, and stakeholders were considered. School administrators had to plan the work-from-home schedules of teachers and staff so that the guidelines for safety and wellness could be observed properly. School heads supervised instructional supervision and monitored the logistics of printing, distribution, and retrieval modules. Although the tasks were exhausting and stressful, the school administrators managed to take things lightly and positively. Most of the administrators said that:

*"Administrative tasks done being a school head can be various ranging from storing and finding information, buying equipment and supplies (this is under the Bids and Awards Committee, the purchasing team) answering phones/cell phones as necessary, greeting visitors with the observance of health protocol, create and manage written or digital/virtual communications for meeting preparations" (P16).*

*“Most of the time, virtual management through GC to follow up teachers’ tasks in school is done to observe social distancing” (P3).*

*“Administrative tasks are done most of the time virtually to ensure social distancing.” (P7).*

*“It is exhausting, but I have to multi-tasked to manage my work” (P6).*

*“Administrative tasks are so varied that these led to stress, yet, I had to manage my stress since these tasks are my responsibilities” (P8).*

School administrators are accountable for providing proper training and education assistance in learning institutions. Their leadership is essential in sustaining distance learning during an academic crisis. But even though school administrators managed to carry out broad academic tasks within the context of social exclusion guidelines, they did various tasks to sustain the distance education system effectively. (Zincirli, 2021).

Although performing administrative tasks is exhausting, draining, and challenging in various forms, most school heads find satisfaction in accomplishing them. It is implied in this scenario that school administrators are not only working to earn a living but more so dedicated and committed to doing their tasks.

**Time Management.** Effective time management allows school administrators to complete more in less time because their attention is focused, and they’re not wasting time on distractions. Since distance learning was new to the school administrators, many adjustments were made. Many preparations must be done to get ready for the new modality. It is an exhausting experience, but school heads must learn to manage their time properly. In the busy schedules of school heads in the performance of varied administrative tasks, a balance between work and family must be maintained. Working time properly can help school administrators spend quality time with family. School administrators must budget time wisely for both work and family. It will be difficult to perform these tasks without effective time management. Thus, the school heads expressed:

*“Work of a school administrator is exhausting, but I have to manage my time correctly” (P2).*

*“Manage time depending on the task. I also have to stay beyond office hours to set the deadlines of reports to be submitted” (P3).*

*“I can manage well the time as multi-tasking is easier than before” (P5).*

*“Time can be managed well by giving time to the priority tasks in school and at home” (P7).*

*“Strengthen the family ties, discover oneself, and spend more time with them when we work from home” (P18).*

School heads oversee administrative tasks in schools, colleges, or other educational institutions. They guarantee that the organization runs smoothly and take care of the finances and resource management of the school. It is a demanding activity requiring efficient time and stress management (Vu et al., 2020). Therefore, school administrator must manage their time effectively. Time management entails completing more vital tasks in a single day. Managing time effectively is more essential than efficient time management. The most successful time managers are also the most efficient. Effective time management boosts your attention and productivity. Greater focus enables you to seize larger possibilities. It also allows you to devote more time to the initiatives, ambitions, and people that are important to you. Therefore, time management is essential for improving concentration and priority (Putra et al., 2020).

People have various perspectives on the consequences of distance learning. However, remote learning is the only way to continue schooling during the epidemic. Learning away from home is a

method of educating pupils outside of a traditional classroom environment. The internet is used to provide lectures and learning resources. Learning is done at home rather than in a classroom. There are several advantages to remote learning, but there are also drawbacks. The primary purpose of distance learning is to transcend geographical, temporal, and pandemic constraints. Due to COVID 19, learners may live in distance, rural places without access to education (Mahmut, 2020).

School administrators have been confronted with multi-tasks in school daily operations. Thus, management of time is a necessity, prioritizing goal-oriented tasks. This implies a sense of responsibility and dedication of school administrators in the Ozamiz City Division.

The participants' statements reflected the school heads' experiences in managing schools. The varied preparations to achieve readiness and the administrative support helped them realize the value of collaboration and a positive mindset. The following poem entitled "Standing Proud and Strong" gave an overall view of school heads' involvement in the distance learning mode.

### **Standing Proud and Strong**

When Covid 19 hits the nation,  
Everything in education was in commotion,  
Learners, parents, teachers and school administration,  
Everybody is left in disgust and confusion.

A lot of questions were unanswered,  
Everyone seems bewildered,  
What to do with the school operation,  
Instruction, assessment, monitoring, and evaluation.

Preparing the Learning Continuity Plan for distance education,  
Poses a challenge to the school administration,  
Also, teachers' trainings, parents' attendance to orientation,  
Resource management, and stakeholders' cooperation and collaboration.

Participation in webinars and virtual meetings,  
Are all part of the teachers' new normal settings,  
But poor Internet connection and lack of gadgets,  
Hinder the teachers' professional development targets.

Teachers' performance monitoring and evaluation,  
Is a must in this present situation,  
This is required for the delivery of instruction,  
And for the attainment of quality education.

The use of appropriate assessment activities,  
Are at the top of teachers' priorities,  
These are essential for the learners' academics,  
And to ensure learning amidst this pandemic.

Managing the human and financial resources,  
 Developing the well-being of students and teachers,  
 Establishing connections with the community and other stakeholders,  
 Are the tasks required of school administrator.

Truly, school administrators are faced with various responsibilities,  
 The COVID-19 crisis has added to these,  
 Ensuring everyone's health and safety is included in its list,  
 And continuity of education is at the top of these.

With hard work, optimism, and endurance,  
 School administrators have proudly managed,  
 And ensure that schools are ready as DepEd has set,  
 Glory to God in the highest!

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The school heads have different experiences as they perform the function of administrative support in preparation for the school's readiness to distance learning. They exposed themselves to varying conditions in implementing education in the new normal landscape. School heads investigated the school's readiness and provided appropriate administrative support to all needs of the school during the pandemic. The experiences of school administrators in the implementation of distance learning were clustered into themes, namely: (1) preparing a learning continuity plan, (2) attending virtual meetings and webinars, (3) performance monitoring and evaluation, (4) conducting assessment activities, and (5) managing of administrative tasks.

The researchers concluded that although some school heads find the implementation challenging due to the varied preparations that need to be done, some found it exhausting due to the time, effort and resources needed. Furthermore, the optimism of the school heads in distance learning participation was very strong, and their commitment and resilience, although tested to the utmost, remained steadfast throughout the pandemic. It is further concluded that each school head applied various means like training teachers and orienting the parents, tapping the help of stakeholders, equipping themselves and teachers with technological competencies, and looking for ways to procure the pre-requisite. In addition, making the school ready for education in the new normal provided the school heads with the fulfillment that they had performed their duty to the utmost for the sake of the learners.

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the researchers recommends that school administrators be reoriented in preparing the Learning Continuity Plan to incorporate recent issues in the learning modality used that need to be addressed by the school. Local government units must find means to boost the internet connection of the schools and the entire community to reach out to those learners in the rural areas. It is recommended that each learner, through the local school board fund, will be given online gadgets like tablets to avail the conduct of online classes by the school. Boosting internet connection enable parents, teachers, and even school administrators to attend online orientation, meeting, and webinars and even perform online monitoring & evaluation. Curriculum planners should design reliable assessment tools to validate the learners' performance during distance learning. Furthermore, School administrators must be given time management and stress management training to cope smoothly with the challenges brought about by education during the



pandemic. Moreover, educators can do an in-depth investigation of the positive and negative experiences of public secondary school teachers in the implementation of a distance learning modality.

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## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (Instrument)

Before the interview begins, the participants were informed that:

- The interview was digitally recorded.
- Their identity would remain confidential during the whole course of the study and in the written report of the study.
- They can discontinue their participation any time.

### A. Opening Questions

1. What is it like to be an administrator in the new normal education?
2. As an administrator, what are your preparations in the implementation of the learning modality in the new normal?

### B. Core Questions

3. What are the positive and negative experiences you have encountered for the following as you implement the new normal education using the distance learning modality?
  - planning of the learning modality
  - orientations of teachers, parents and students in the new normal
  - training of teachers
  - development, production, distribution and submission of learning modules
  - teachers' monitoring of performances
  - doing administrative tasks
  - fulfilling personal and family tasks
  - managing time
4. How did you respond to the negative experiences or challenges that you encountered?

### C. Exit Questions

6. What do you think are the best strategies that you can employ as a school head or administrator to strengthen the implementation of New Normal Education?
7. As an administrator, what are your fulfillment in life?
8. How do you view yourself as an administrator in the future?