A Phenomenological Study of Teachers' Perception of Implementing remedial Instruction in an Online Distance Learning

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Abstract

The study explored the lived experiences and perceptions of the teachers at the university in implementing remedial instruction in online distance learning. The study participants are elementary, senior high school, and junior high school teachers who have been part of the new normal, online distance learning. The researchers used purposive sampling to recruit 10 participants. Strategies used to address study credibility include verbatim transcription and saturation of data. Then it was coded and analyzed for patterns and themes to identify the essence of participants' perceptions. The study revealed that implementing remedial instruction in online distance learning had brought challenges and obstacles to both teachers and students adapting to the new setup. The study recommends that the school administration must establish a strong remedial instruction enabler such as additional compensation, mental health, and spiritual support to the teachers and, at the same time, must provide a standardized remedial plan for the students. Doing so will lessen the extra loads of the teachers. It will help the struggling learners improve their academic performance, and most importantly, bringing this will help the gap between the students, teachers, and administration.

Keywords: Remedial Instruction, Online Distance Learning, Phenomenology, Pandemic

Introduction

The global outbreak of coronavirus infection (COVID-19) has a significant impact on a number of factors, causing authorities to take emergency measures. This health problem has forced us to pay more attention to people's safety, and nothing could be more apparent in meeting this pressure than in education. Philippine officials have ordered the temporary closure of educational institutions to prevent the disease from spreading further. Nonetheless, Secretary of Education Leonor Briones stated that education could not wait, prompting the creation of multiple Learning Continuity Plans (LCP). As a result, the educational system devised a number of methods for students to achieve their academic commitments, one of which is online distance learning. ODL is a learning delivery method in which a teacher employs internet-connected technologies to support learning and engage learners' active participation while they are geographically separated. The internet facilitates learner-teacher, learner-content, and peer-to-peer engagement. As a result, ODL applies to schools where teachers and students have access to computers with online resources and internet connectivity.

However, research into ODL-related difficulties during a pandemic is becoming more common. The academic performance of the students is one of these challenges. The learners' internet connectivity and learning interests were examined by Dublas et al. 2021. Findings showed that a strong internet connection is vital to students' learning interests. Salac and Kim conducted a study on internet connectivity in the Philippines, which confirmed the country's poor internet connectivity. Numerous studies have been undertaken in response to these difficulties, with the conclusion that a slow internet connection at home can lead to pupils' failing grades or poor academic performance.
A study of learners was also conducted to determine their online distance learning experience. The result revealed that students had been affected by a lack of access to quiet space to study, lack of access to appropriate online course materials, and slow or unreliable internet connection had hampered their learning. (Mckie 2020)

Teachers employ remediation exercises to respond to educational issues, particularly student performance. According to Jackson (2016), Instructors who provided remediation employed teaching strategies that matched effective practices. Teachers are choosing to provide remediation until students are back on track. According to Capuyan et al. (2019), there is a favorable association between the grades of learners taking remediation sessions at prior and current grade levels. Tseng et al. (2016) also stated that remedial interventions by teaching advisers had a significant impact on students' progress.

With the difficulties teachers face regarding the academic performance of their students and the efficacy of remedial instruction, there is a need to research educators' lived experiences in an online setting. Even though researchers and remedial instruction have identified factors affecting academic performance that has received considerable attention, conducting remediation in an online setup is still to be explored. As a result, this study investigates teachers' perceptions of remedial instruction and their personal experiences to address students' learning gaps or deficits.

Methods and Materials

The researchers used a phenomenological approach to investigate teachers' perceptions and lived experiences of implementing remedial instruction in an online distance learning environment. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and lived experiences of Basic Education teachers at the University of San Jose-Recoletos by analyzing themes and patterns derived from the data to understand better the barriers and enablers associated with implementing standardized remedial instruction. The study took a phenomenological approach, more precisely a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. In this phenomenological study, the researcher served as a tool, collecting data during the interview process.

Moreover, the study's research questions were designed to elicit information about teachers' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of remedial instruction in online distance learning. The interview and recording of each informant were conducted via the zoom platform. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the INVIVO software, coded specific themes. The data collection technique used was semi-structured interviews with ten teachers who were chosen using a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria. These criteria included the following: participants must be teachers who manage classes in a virtual environment and must be willing to participate. The researchers analyzed the data using Colaizzi's Phenomenological Analysis, a seven-step process for analyzing and interpreting data. It describes the phenomenon under investigation validated by the individuals who created it.

Ethical Consideration

The main ethical principles that will be considered in conducting this research are confidentiality, respect for the person, and individual differences, found in the Belmont Report of 1974. Only the researchers have access to all the participants' specific responses to maintain confidentiality. All participants are treated with respect and are not compelled to participate. Additionally, they provided informed consent before participating in the research.

Results

This section summarizes the data collected during the interviews. After the data saturation point was reached, theme analysis was employed to analyze the coded data.
Theme 1. Teachers Experience in an Online Distance Learning

Sub-theme 1.1 Teachers Beliefs and Values

The first sub-theme, teacher beliefs and values, was created to understand better teachers' attitudes and perspectives in their chosen profession. The majority of respondents felt that being a teacher focused on values formation.

"My belief I instill and practice in teaching is to help and guide students in becoming good and better people on this earth. Being morally and ethically good individuals comes first above everything else. A successful career and academic achievements will follow when a student works hard and practice good ethics in all aspects of life. With that, as their teacher, I should do my best to provide and set good examples to them, for example, as social media user." (Participant 1)

"Being a CLF teacher (I'm speaking as a CLF teacher right now), I am actually more of value formation because I always believe that the lessons from the books or from the different sources that we have, the students would usually forget them. Also, apart from aiming at teaching the minds of the students, I also see to it that I am touching their hearts as well. Kay para na kong mao man na ang long lasting gud. So, values for me are creating long-lasting impacts among students. If you've taught them values, you've taught them life lessons." (Participant 2)

Another participant stated that being a teacher should focus on the students' capabilities.

"For me I think, I am more of dealing students capabilities in a way that I know that they were able to really come out from their shells and extracting their potentials. I believe that students are capable of what they learn, and I guess there is no prejudice on my end whenever students encounter failures and even struggles in their class. In a way, that are my beliefs as a teacher. When it comes to values, well, since I am teaching Literature for the past three years, I believe it is more rooted in how life shows us some of the morals being placed on literary texts and situations they've encountered in their lives. I make sure that these are processed well by the students. I think it is more than having to learn inside the classroom but putting yourself in perspective. And I am that kind of teacher based on how I have been handling the subjects and my experience as a teacher for the past three years." (Participant 5)

"I have always believed that teaching is a two-way process. Teachers learn from students, and students learn from teachers, and from time to time, I always open my doors to learning new things from them. They know something that we don't know since they are capable of great things, and I always remind them that at the end of the day, whatever it is that they want to do, always choose the right thing." (Participant 6)

Sub-theme 1.2 Challenges in the Online Setup

The second sub-theme captures teachers' experiences, particularly their struggles in the virtual environment. One significant challenge for teachers in an online setting is the virtual setup. It is difficult to evaluate whether students are learning because teachers cannot see the students physically.

"Kuan, this is one difficulty na akong na-encounter since virtual setup. Sa klase, we really cannot determine if the student is really struggling with us, with the topic, with the discussion or wala lang jud siyay gana sa pag-eskwela. So, mao na iyang performance is really not that good. We can't totally assess
the student virtually para nako kay dili nimo makita, compare sa katong face-to-face pa na makita jud nimo siya na galisod kay makita man nimo siya physically during the class.” (Participant 3)

Another participant remarked it is challenging to check the authenticity of students' responses, especially during an oral recitation, since some students may say their microphone is defective and prefer to type their comments in, giving them time to Google their answers.

"The next option is to use the chatbox if guba ang microphone but if we talk about the authenticity and kana gani how the students are more natural and impromptu sila makatubag, mas impromptu man tong maka-tubag ka orally than you put it in the chatbox. Ang authenticity sa ilang answer, maybe you are not that sure kay pwede nila ma copy-paste, especially kung ang question kay dali rah ma-search sa google.” (Participant 1)

“Since I am handling TLE, I am not sure anymore if they are really the one doing their outputs. They just simply present the finished product, and that is it. Hard to assess.” (Participant 7)

Additionally, another participant claimed that the limited activities associated with online distance learning and the heavy reliance on technology are significant impediments to online distance learning success.

"So, personally, lang kanang for me. Kana bitaw grabe ang kana bitaw dependent not sa technology and grabe kaayu ang dependent nato sa internet. Walay internet kung wala sab power source for example. So, usahay diri kung mag-power interruption nya kanang walay notice ba. If mag-game ka kay ma-limit man sab ang imoan game to Kahoot or other things na mag-use jud og laptop, so para nako kay ma-limit ang akong creativity bah kai kinahanglan nako ibalhin tanan gamit ang technology. So, kana!” (Participant 4)

**Theme 2. Teachers Perception of Struggling Learners**

**Sub-theme 2.1 Factors Causing Students to Fail**

The rationale of the first sub-theme was to discover teachers' perceptions on why students fail in their respective academic subjects, particularly in online distance learning. The majority of participants indicated it is more about the student factor, which comprises: (a) a lack of effort, (b) a lack of submission, (c) a lack of attention span, (d) a lack of gadgets availability, and (e) an inability to respond.

"The reason for failing is the lack of effort on what is asked from them. The activity, you know? And most especially if they fail to comply, the performance task, that's a very big factor for them to fail.” (Participant 5)

“Ang problema na akong nakita based sa akong assessment og sa akong nakita sab, ang attention span in this kind of teaching-learning mode kay lahi rajud. Though miskag katong sa face-to-face pa kay short raman jud ilang attention span or dili maminaw sa whole duration sa class, how much more na sa online? Mapalaw jud ka og manawag ka kay walay motubag. It could be nangatulog pa na sila and igo ra na nila gi-log in ang ilang accounts og mobile devices.” (Participant 4)
“Ang rason jud kay unresponsive. Even the parents or guardians kay unresponsive. So, I don’t have other options left but to fail the students. How can I give the students a chance if wala jud reply, even the parents dili makontak? That’s the worst case.” (Participant 2)

“It has been a challenge to let the students get out from their shells, and most of them, shall I say, are nonchalant in the classroom. They just sit in the classroom and wait for the quiz to happen and not participate.” (Participant 6)

“Mo submit lang for the sake of compliance. No effort at all.” (Participant 7)

“I find it funny because there are times when you call them, mo left sa meeting.” (Participant 8)

Sub-theme 2.2 Attitude Towards Struggling Learner

The rationale of the second sub-theme was to identify the teachers' ways of helping struggling learners in online distance learning. The participants emphasized the importance of teachers providing one-on-one assistance to struggling learners.

“Extra time na imong exert along with the students na medyo hinay. Mag one on one with him/her as long as si student is willing to learn and get higher grade. And then, mao na siya! Until such time na si student maka-sabay nah.” (Participant 1)

Another participant stated that the teacher should compile their outputs and identify students who have missing outputs in order to follow up on their submissions, as this is the primary reason students fail the class.

“Yeah. Well in every week, at the end of the week, I actually collate all the learners' output based on our learning management system, that is Quipper, and then I call out students with the use of Quipper message to check if they can still able to comply it before the end of the week, or I need to consider if the students can respond or not. I give them enough time to respond. What I do is call out these learners who have lacking requirements that I believe are the reason they may fail in my subject and then come up with alternatives. I can understand the students if they have valid reasons or excuses. What I do afterward is I give another time span for them to comply, and that is the ultimatum wherein I can say if I will fail or pass the student, that is being carried by the students whom I called out?” (Participant 5)

Additionally, one participant suggested that teachers encourage students to send a private message, as most students dislike asking questions in a virtual class.

“Siguro to help the students na ga-struggle is to always... during classes or even in our communication setup, naa man mi messenger, is to always ask for clarifications from the students if they truly understood the topic and then once I find out that the students really don’t get um...the expected outcome or that the expected scores, I personally messaged the student and then ask kung asa siya dapita galisod. But sometimes, like even if we do it na inana... naa sad jud students na dili mo-respond. Probably mawaw sab sila or something.” (Participant 2)
“If the students fail in a certain assessment, our department is already programmed to include them in our remedial session. Flexibility is the key.” (Participant 7)

“They can always send me a private message since others are already hesitant to ask questions in our meeting.” (Participant 8)

Theme 3. Teachers Understanding of Remedial Instruction

Sub-theme 3.1 Teacher’s Definition

The purpose of the first sub-theme was to observe how well participants understood the remedial instruction. The participants reported a common definition of remedial instruction to help struggling learners enhance their knowledge by giving activities, assessments, and doing special classes.

“So, I think remedial instructions are given to students who are struggling or to students who didn't get the concept pag first palang nimo pag-tudlo. It could be that you need to use a simpler method to go through for them. Dili siguro same method na imong gigamit when you were teaching the entire class but a little more like need nimo e-simplify ang concept and lesson for them. Murag ana, ikaw mag-adjust bah!” (Participant 4)

“Well! Based on my understanding of what remedial instruction is, it is more or less giving a remedy to the student's lack of capacity when it comes to dealing with learning. So, in such a way remediate the student, we provide alternate solutions to activities that the student is unable to come up with.” (Participant 5)

“If I'm not mistaken, remedial instruction diba is kana man na siyang what you do for students who find it difficult to catch up with the discussion. So, bali galisod siya og catch-up, you have to do... you have to give him more time or you have to kanang... imong siya tabangan or imong siya tudloan og balik aron maka-catch up siya or makasabet siya. If I am not mistaken, mao na ang remedial instruction sa akong pagsabot.” (Participant 2)

“This is a useful program to help those struggling students improve.” (Participant 8)

Sub-theme 3.2 Perceived Benefits

The purpose of the second sub-theme was to learn to what extent participants perceived remedial instruction as a positive approach beneficial to students. Participants discussed one benefit of implementing, which is to help the students learn and, in that way, pass the subject.

“I find it effective because it becomes more personal and ahm... effective to the students to even... kana gani to try harder as much as they can if nag lisod jud sila og kat-on sa lesson.” (Participant 1)

“Benefits would be siguro... well, sa students’ part... I mean sa teacher na part, mas nahatah niya sa students ang dapat jud niya makuh sa subject. So, less na ang mga ka-hassle sa kanang mga students na maglisod gani of catch-up kay mag-lisod sab sila og kuha sa mga expected out outcomes. Ma-lessen sab siguro ang pag-worry ni teacher na kung naunsa na kaha to si students. Ma-assured si teacher na nakakat-on najud toh siya because of the remedial instruction.” (Participant 2)
“Very effective program kay makita jud na mo ang grades na at least makapasar. Commitment lang from the students ang needed.” (Participant 9)

Sub-theme 3.3 Feasibility of Conducting Remedial Instruction

The function of the third sub-theme was to learn to what degree participants believe standardized remedial instruction may be implemented practically in their respective departments. Participants judge that it is feasible to conduct standardized remedial instruction but point out challenges on the implementation, such as the time constraints and students' responsiveness and willingness to learn.

“I think it's possible. It is possible, but with the limits of our time, most especially that our school year has been, you know, it's much speedier than what the usual calendar of the school year has been before, quite different to the pacing becomes more of a challenge as well.” (Participant 5)

“I think it's possible pero lisod siya noh? Kay maybe unlike during face-to-face class, we really get the hold of the student. Karon na online setup, we can't really be sure if mag create ta og remedial instruction na session, na the students are also willing to participate. Kay what if naa natay gibuhat na kuan, naa nata gibuhat na schedule. Nag set nata og inani pero the students are also not willing, and we really can't determine it, so I think lisod siya, but it is possible. Dili siya ingon na dili siya doable.” (Participant 2)

“Based on my experience, challenging siya gamay kay we cannot force students to attend unlike the face-to-face class na you can just let them stay after class, but now it's different. They have the control just to leave the meeting when they feel like it. Pero possible ra.” (Participant 7)

Theme 4. Obstacles Affecting Remedial Instruction Implementation

Sub-theme 4.1 Students’ Commitment

The objective of the first sub-theme was to discover what factors students pose to teachers that cause challenges in conducting remedial instruction. Participants noted that obtaining students' commitment to attend the remedial class and actively participate would be difficult due to the students' unresponsiveness.

“I think for me challenges include communication, preparations needed for both the teacher and the student and the active participation of the student as well. We will try to check if there is really the interest of the student to really be in the program.” (Participant 5)

Sub-theme 4.2 Administrative Obstacles

The second sub-theme aimed to determine what impediments administration imposes on teachers necessary to implement standardized remedial instruction. Participants noted various impediments to implementation, including the following: (a) limitation of time, (b) teachers' autonomy in deciding whether to implement (c) administrative priorities, and a lack of attention. The participant said that the department allows instructors to apply remedial instruction freely, thereby holding teachers accountable for their student's performance without requiring remedial instruction to be standardized and serve as a tangible model.

“Hmm... Siguro ang akong makita na reason is I think the department is giving the teachers freedom to implement on his or her own sa kanang inana na butang. I think kana lang ang akong ma-think na reason.” (Participant 2)
Another participant remarked that the administration's priorities impede standardizing remedial instruction. The administration placed other priorities ahead of remedial instruction, leaving teachers with no choice but to pass or fail struggling learners.

“Cguro una kay busy sila. Ikaduha kay slow sila! Cguro kuan, walaay ga-pay attention. They know the importance but wala ay ni pay attention... Medyo lack of attention... Murag siya og overload... Ang nagakahitabo man gud sa department kay mapugos og pasar sa student kay late nah na address bah. Management sa teacher and sa admin and problema.” (Participant 1)

Additionally, the participant said that the virtual setup is a significant factor in not implementing standardized remedial instruction because of the pacing and learning scheme.

“So, I think being in a virtual setup is one particular reason that it becomes more challenging. If I were to add more, maybe everything goes on how quick it is. What else? Communicating, I think it’s part of online. Communication is somewhat a very challenging role. So, I think these are just what I can enumerate.” (Participant 5)

“Though we have a schedule for remediation pero because of the virtual setup, it’s difficult. Students have their concerns all the time. Irason ang no internet or naay issue.” (Participant 7)

**Theme 5. Remedial Instructions Enabler**

**Sub-theme 5.1 Administrative Advocacy**

The first sub-theme examined the role of administrative leaders in ensuring the effectiveness of standardized remedial instruction implementation. Participants answered that administration enables implementation of standardized remedial instruction through (a) additional compensation, (b) mental health and spiritual support, (c) tangible model for implementing the remedial instruction, and (e) regular monitoring. One participant answered that it would be reasonable for the administrator to pay additional compensation because this will add to the teachers' burden.

“Kung naa jud remedial program in the future, I think, it would be justifiable since dugang man siya na trabaho... kanang naay gamay na pahalipay or add-on sa teacher kay mahulog man gud siya na murag tutorial sa teacher. So, I am into adding the compensation of the teacher though it is part of the work of the teacher but our setup is across and not for individual student. The admin should also be hands-on on the teachers... support like emotionally and spiritually kay since madugangan man ang work ni teacher, ma-GGB na si teacher.” (Participant 2)

Another participant said that administrators should give mental and spiritual support to the teachers. One way of giving support is to be considerate of the teachers, especially on giving deadlines on submitting their deliverables.

“It's mental health support. Unsa pa man? Support sab sa time kay usahay biya dali ra kaayu ang atong deadline so mao sab ang magpaka-stress sa ato ba.” (Participant 2)

**Discussion**

The themes and patterns emerged from the interview transcripts about teachers' lived experiences and perceptions in implementing standardized remedial instruction. The organization of themes continued and comprised...
The sudden pandemic surge in the Philippines affected all aspects of education. The problem caused a change in the country's educational approach, thus affecting the schools, teachers, and students. As shown in the findings of this study, teachers' experience in online distance learning is being highlighted and divided into two sub-categories. Teachers' beliefs and values show how they can help guide students in becoming good and better people on this earth. This can also lead to students' successful careers, strong value formation, and honing their capabilities. (Tseng et al. 2017) also stated that remedial interventions by teaching advisers had a huge impact on how they understood the program and perceived its benefits. Teachers find it useful for those struggling students, which can be the main avenue to simplify their method --- a personalized approach. A remedial class is always impressive to help struggling learners (Asio, Jimenez 2020). This can also be a remedy to students who lack the capacity and help them catch up. A program that seeks to avoid failures and dropouts as an alternative to individual coaching (Yolak, Kiziltepe, Seggie, 2019). (Tseng et al. 2017) also stated that remedial interventions by teaching advisers had a significant influence on students’ improvement. The feasibility of conducting remedial instruction has also been considered, and teachers mentioned that implementation is possible. However, limited time and the assurance of students to attend are the possible concerns experienced.

On the other hand, the study revealed the different obstacles affecting remedial instruction implementation in this setup. Teachers mentioned the tedious role of students and teachers since they need to double their preparations and how their commitment affects it. (Riley, 2009) stated that if students' and teachers' beliefs match each other, learning will increase. However, it is undeniable that different issues could arise in this setup. This can be an issue of internet connection, device, electricity, or even personal, leading to not attending the remediation session.

Online distance learning is a rapidly expanding environment that allows users the flexibility of operating outside of the constraints of time and place (Chaney, 2010). In addition, administrative obstacles were also mentioned, and the lack of support has been noticed. This has been a less priority of the administration, leaving teachers with no choice to decide on their own if they will implement it or not. However, as mandated, a learner who receives a grade lower than 75 in any subject must be given an intervention through remediation and pass the said remedial sessions for promotion to the next grade level (DepEd, 2021). Based on the mandate, the setup mentioned is quite different and needs intensive administration support.
Also, this study revealed the different remedial instructions for online distance learning enablers. There are several ways mentioned, but it should all start from the administrative advocacy. Additional compensation has been highlighted for this job requires double preparations and efforts. Money is the ultimate motivator (Taylor, 1911). Research has shown that motivation is an essential tool that managers use to attain higher performance and a form of inspiration to retain high performers to achieve greater productivity (Bessel et, 2002). Mental health and spiritual support for teachers could be a good help. Teachers' stress and anxiety have soared, and their morale has plummeted during the pandemic, an explosive combination that could burn them out and lead them to leave their jobs. Making mental health and spiritual support visible is the key to helping them (Gruttadano, 2021). Having a tangible model and regular monitoring from the administration could help reinforce the implementation of the remediation program. Role clarity is the degree to which employees perceive that required information is provided about how the employee is expected to perform his or her job (Malhotra, 2017).

Conclusion

Our educational system was drastically altered as a result of the pandemic. We switched to online distance learning, which significantly affected both teachers and students. The abrupt change affected the delivery of remedial instruction to students. The gaps mentioned should be seized and taken seriously. The difficulty mentioned above should be addressed quickly, with administration and teachers working together to assist struggling students. According to the study, school administrators should create a strong remedial instruction enabler, such as enhanced remuneration, mental health, and spiritual support for teachers, while also ensuring that students receive a structured remedial plan. This would relieve teachers of excessive workloads while also assisting struggling students in improving their academic performance. Most importantly, it will bridge the gap between students, teachers, and administration.

Reference


