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Back To the Classroom: Teachers' Views on Learners' Behavior In Post-Pandemic

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Abstract — The purpose of this study was to reveal the effects of the disruption to face-to-face education during the pandemic on the classroom environment upon return to the classroom. The participants of this case study were 15 junior and senior high school teachers working in Lumiad National High School in the Paquibato District of Davao City. This study aimed to examine teacher perceptions of the changes the COVID-19 pandemic caused on learners' behaviors and how teachers addressed those changes and to understand the next steps that could address student learning disparities going forward. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and their contents were analyzed. The study revealed that there were cognitive changes, motivation and concentration problems, social changes, discipline problems, and psychomotor changes observed in students' behaviors after the transition to face-to-face education. The sources of the behavioral changes were the family, the Department of Education, being away from school, and use of technology. The strategies used by the teachers in terms of classroom management while managing the process after the transition to face-to-face education were management of teaching, behavior management, management of relationships, and management of the physical environment, engagement of communities in school reopening, targeting resources for optimal use, getting children back to school, making school environments safe, and recovering learning loss.

Keywords — Post-Covid 19, Classroom Management, Classroom Management Strategies, Student Behaviors, Behavioral Changes

I. Introduction

A great impact of the pandemic on education is its potential disruption of all the components in the learning process. It would affect students' readiness and involvement, support of teachers, classroom equipment, safety and inclusiveness of schools, and system management (World Bank, 2020). This pandemic has created serious challenges for teachers all around the world. Teachers, all of a sudden, have found themselves needing to adapt quickly to an online teaching and learning environment.

Accordingly, it has become important to arrange various educational contents in order to present all the subjects comprehensibly in the new learning environment. Classroom management is undoubtedly an issue that requires special attention in these chaotic times (Manea & Gări-Neguț, 2021). The reason for this is that the classroom environment allows not only learning and cognitive

development, but also the social, emotional, and psychomotor development of students. There are also studies indicating that socio-affective factors play an important role in the development of teacher–student relationships (Ansari, 2020; Hughes, 2019; Jones, et al, 2019; Poulou, 2019).

With the transition to face-to-face education, the effects of the process in which schools were closed constitute the starting point of our research. After schools have closed for almost two years as mandated by the government due to the pandemic, and all educational levels have initiated changes in instruction primarily applying blended learning, the education arm of the government decided to open schools again. The face-to-face interactions were initiated first, to a limited scale, and then later a full-blown endeavor was applied. What were the preparations done for the re-opening of school? What were the reactions of teachers to the face-to-face interactions? Were there changes in the learners' behavior? What were the sources of these changes?

These questions prompted the researcher to conduct this study. The focus of the study are the teachers of Lumiad National High School in the Paquibato District of Davao City.

Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What kind of changes were observed in students' behaviors during the transition to face-to-face education after the pandemic?
2. What might be the sources of this changes in student behavior according to teachers?
3. What kind of strategies did the teachers use in terms of classroom instruction for the re-opening of classes?

Changes in Students' Behavior

Distanced from their students, faculty members also found it difficult to verify their students' performances. Given the lack of supervision, there were numerous cheating incidents in the university where students were found to be sharing course materials in exchange for solutions to their course requirements. At some point, some problem sets and exams, and their answer keys were even uploaded online.

Ensuring the academic integrity of their exams, dealing with low class participation, and guaranteeing that their students get the education they need require the faculty to think outside the box on how to conduct their classes. But coming up with new ways of teaching and learning proved to be challenging. This is especially true for STEM courses which have the most difficult skills to translate when it comes to remote learning since their traditional set-up relied on hands-on practical exercises, according to a study in the Journal of Baltic Science Education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly prompted the reevaluation of education and its delivery. Indeed, while the system of remote learning has its own set of problems, it also opened

opportunities—that perhaps we can learn beyond the confines of the traditional four corners of the room. But whether the vision UP has translated into actual practice is another story.

As the schools moves forward, calls on the administration to examine and propose policies that enable effective pandemic adaptations—in terms of health, transportation, and other facilities—that instigate the conduciveness of hybrid and onsite education. This would include hastening the development of UP's retrofitted facilities, the accessibility of COVID-related health services, and the resumed operation of Jeepney and UP vendors within the campus.

COVID-19 pandemic-induced prolonged closure of schools threw the educational system of our country into a turmoil. Since, apart from academics, schools serve as centers for providing well-round development, nutritious food, as well as taking care of the physical fitness and psychosocial wellbeing of children, closure of schools have caused multidimensional effects. Dropouts, no new admissions, and learning gaps, are some additional critical effects of school closures.

Keeping in mind vast and diverse educational scenario, a lot of preparation and strategies are required for reopening and conducting school activities. Challenges like lack of space, limited resources, inequality in accessing technological tools, are some of the major hindrances in the implementation of uniform policies while reopening schools. Introduction of new methods in the form of hybrid and online learning, along with other strategies aimed at taking care of the physical, psychosocial, and nutritional needs of the students is heralding a new era in the Indian educational system.

Sources of Changes in Students' Behavior

Teachers perceived negative behaviors as the most negative impact affecting student learning. Teacher perceptions revealed that negative student behaviors were taking up instructional time and causing disruption to other students and impeded the teachers' abilities to fully address learning gaps in the classroom. Teachers perceived that the lack of being in the physical classroom, a decrease in student interactions, and learning "alone" during virtual learning created a situation where students did not understand acceptable behaviors for their age, their family, and the use of technology. The lack of social-emotional learning led to less mature behaviors in every grade level. Teacher perceptions of the learning gaps in academic and social-emotional skills negatively affected student learning.

Teachers forged ahead with their content regardless of student proficiency, per administrative mandates. The learning gaps present before the pandemic exacerbated the gap for economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and ESL learners due to their lack of exposure to the English language while not in school. Intensive early literacy and math support is essential and critical for economically disadvantaged students and students of color who were at risk before the pandemic. Students are behind in their social-emotional learning, which is causing some behavioral issues. Compared to the pre-pandemic classroom, teachers perceived students'

social-emotional learning to be behind. Teachers stated that students were needier, needed more structure, were more socially awkward, and were less mature.

Although the perception of technology integration was positive, another negative component affecting student learning was student dependency on technology, especially at the secondary level. Appropriate technology usage for educational purposes, not student entertainment, had to be monitored in the classroom. Teachers had to implement specific rules and policies to regulate non-educational-based technology usage, such as cell phones, within their classes. Students also lacked time management and discourse skills with their peers. Student mental health is also a factor that has negatively affected student learning.

Strategies Used by Teachers in the Re-opening of Classes

Detailed studies have given recommendations and prescriptions for various stakeholders involved in school reopening. A study by the Center for Global Development, listed five dimensions of school reopening and recovery after the pandemic. These dimensions are important for policy-makers but can be used by school administrators as well. The five dimensions are:

1*) Engagement of communities in school reopening:* To design and apply reopening plans, communities have to be productively engaged and trust has to be built as a first step. This helps in responding to government policies quickly, and anticipating potential risks better. Close engagement also enables clear and consistent communication to reach all affected groups.

2) *Targeting resources for optimal use***:** Policymakers have to coordinate actions and resources to manage priorities across different groups involved in reopening. Administrative and survey data has to be used for supporting reopening activities and community inclusion.

3) *Getting children back to school:* This is a very important activity for ensuring re-enrolment of all students, and requires a combination of community participation and direct communication campaigns to encourage back-to-school efforts. Children with highest-risk of dropping out have to be identified, and then given additional attendance options to make it easier for them to return. Families may also have to be provided financial or in-kind support (e.g. school meal) to overcome hurdles of re-enrolment.

4) *Making school environments safe:* Safe school environments have to be provided after the pandemic, and policymakers have to focus on (1) hygiene promotion within the school; (2) screening for possible health issues for risk containment; (3) training of teachers and staff to be able to offer counselling support to returning students.

5) *Recovering learning loss:* This would require three types of engagements – (1) engage students in accelerated learning to reverse the past loss, and to strengthen future preparations; (2) engage teachers in training and coaching to help students catch up and to keep school environments

safe and protected; (3) engage parents to smoothly convert remote learning efforts of students to offline classes.

This study has propositional underpinnings of teachers and instructional environment in the class. Effective classroom instruction should not only be used to refer to controlling behavior but also to create supportive learning environments that can respond to changing and complex needs (Brophy, 2000; Evertson & Harris, 1998). Good classroom instruction should embody discipline, routines for instructional and non-instructional tasks, flow of instruction in transition between subjects, classroom climate and environment, and arrangements for learning (Covino & Ivanicki, 2019). Moreover, classroom instruction requires establishing and maintaining a positive classroom climate based on respect, openness, fairness, and trust. A productive and positive classroom environment is the result of the teacher's consideration of students' academic as well as social and individual needs (Stronge, 2019; Tschannen-Moran, 2021).

II. Methodology

The study was designed as a phenomenological study. The fact that the research questions include 'why' and 'how' questions and that in the study the focus was on a contemporary phenomenon, namely post-Covid 19 classroom instruction led to the adoption of this design (Yin, 2018). Hays (2021) draws attention to the importance of detailed description in case studies and focuses on understanding events, facts, institutions, or people and explaining their effects (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2019).

The current research was carried out with research questions aiming to find out what kind of change occurred in learner' behavior after the Covid-19 pandemic, why this change occurred, and how teachers acted during this process. The first and most important condition to identify the research method is to classify the type of research question asked, and some perception-based studies are also based on qualitative evidence (Yin, 2018).

The study group consisted of 15 teachers working in high school in the 2022-2023 academic year and who voluntarily participated in the research. The participants were informed about the study. Seven (7) of the participating teachers work in the Junior High School level, and eight (8) in the Senior High School level.

The data of the study were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. While preparing the research questions, the dimensions of classroom management were taken into account. The interview questions were prepared by reviewing the literature and previous studies. The questions were peer-reviewed before use.

The data recorded in the interviews were transcribed manually word by word in Microsoft Word and a dataset of a total of 52 pages of consisting of 13234 words was obtained. The consistency of the video recordings with the written data was checked by the researchers and

spelling mistakes were corrected. The data were prepared for coding. The data of the study were analyzed by content analysis. In content analysis, content is coded as data in a form that can be used to address research questions and any material collected in the study, which can be referred to as the records of the study, is transformed into data through coding (Lune & Berg, 2019).

III. Results and Discussion

The study revealed the following results:

Changes observed in students' behaviors during the transition to face-to-face education after the pandemic

Changes observed in students' behaviors after the transition to face-to-face education were discussed under the themes of *cognitive changes, motivation and concentration problems, social changes, discipline problems, and psychomotor changes.*

Sources of the changes in student behavior according to teachers

According to the teachers, the perceived sources of the causes of the changes observed in students' behaviors after face-to-face education are collected under the following four themes: *family, the Department of Education (DepEd), being away from school, and use of technology.*

Strategies used by Teachers in classroom instruction for the re-opening of classes

Many strategies are used by teachers in the classroom for the re-opening of classes. In the narratives of teachers interviewed, the strategies they frequently used are *management of teaching, behavior management, management of relationships, management of the physical environment, engagement of communities in school reopening, targeting resources for optimal use, getting children back to school, making school environments safe, and recovering learning loss.*

Analysis

In the present study, the findings indicated that there have been perceived social changes in students' behaviors. It has been understood with the Covid-19 crisis that school not only fulfils its educational mission within the framework of conveying knowledge, but also meets the socialization needs of individuals (Colao, 2020; OECD, 2020; The World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, 2021; Wang, 2020). Moreover, during this process, children had to be away from the areas where they would possibly socialize with each other (Colao, 2020). Therefore, it has been noted that the school environment serves as a social learning area and an area for children to acquire social skills (Stamatis, 2021). It was observed that the individuality of students increased and they had problems in socialization since they were away from school. According to other studies, students are expected to experience difficulties in terms of social interaction in face-to-

face education after the pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). To overcome these challenges, schools can offer strong support for the development of social relationships. Most importantly, schools also host social relations. In fact, teaching and learning are related to human interactions, mutual communication, and change.

Moreover, out-of-class activities rather than in-class teaching practices are becoming more important (OECD, 2021). It was also found in the present study that there were some differences in students' behaviors in terms of psychomotor skills. Students' inability to stay still during the lesson and their constant movement were among these behaviors. During the pandemic, children thought that they needed to move around inside the house and sought reasons to get out of their chairs (Stamatis, 2021). It is evident that children need movement, play, and active learning (OECD, 2020). The fact that children had to spend a long time at home, that they had the freedom to move around at home as they wished, and that they did not feel any obligation to sit down even during the lessons was shown by increased mobility in the classroom environment. In addition, there was a weakening or even regression in students' psychomotor development and movements. Korkmaz (2020) stated that 65% of secondary school students had reduced physical activity levels during the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequent inactiveness that started in this period and continued in the normalization period was observable

Motivation and concentration related problems in students became more evident. During distance education, students found it considerably difficult to focus on the computer screen and stay silent for a long time. Therefore, they were able to find many reasons to distract themselves (Stamatis, 2021). Accordingly, during the process of adaptation to school after the pandemic, a decrease was expected to occur in the attention span and motivation levels of the students.

It was regarded as necessary to enhance the adaptation of students and strengthen their motivation upon returning to school (Emin & Altunel, 2021), since the emotional states and motivation levels of everyone, including teachers, students, and parents, were influenced negatively during the pandemic. Together with the transition to face-to-face education, disciplinary problems also emerged.

IV. Conclusion

Some implications have been developed within the scope of the research results. It has been observed that there have been significant changes in student behavior in recent years. These changes are reflected in the school environment, classroom environment, family environment, and social environment.

Therefore, it is thought that there is a need for studies focusing on this subject. Similar research can be considered in detail in different types of schools. In addition, studies involving students, parents, and school administrators can provide different perspectives. Considering the

cognitive experiences of students, additional support should be offered within the scope of schools to eliminate learning losses. It may be necessary to review lesson plans to reduce problems with motivation and concentration. Game-based and technology-supported activities can be prepared that can be applied during the introduction to the course and during the period.

One of the most important issues during the period of being away from school has been socialization. Projects in which students can work and collaborate can be developed. Social and sportive activities, club activities, and competitions can be organized and socialization of students can be emphasized. In this way, students' psychomotor skills can also be supported. Informative training can be given to students and families regarding the correct use of technology. Rules for the management of behavior should be clearly defined and reinforced. It is thought that a communicationoriented approach to students will provide mutual benefits

Teachers think that the sources of behavioral change in students are the family, practices, staying away from school, and using technology. One of these reasons is seen as the management of the process by the top management. There were some problems faced in ensuring coordination in the decision-making processes regarding the opening and closing of schools. Further, the declarations of the DepEd included inconsistent and contradictory decisions, which resulted in last-minute changes. The uncertainty caused by constantly changing information from the DepEd and educational institutions as well as insufficient communication raises anxiety in individuals (Bozkurt, 2020).

On the other hand, building a stronger education system that is well prepared for future risks is possible with a long-term improvement plan that takes advantage of innovations in education and focuses on equal opportunities (The World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, 2021). During the period when the students were away from school, the role of families gained a little more importance. One of the sources of changes in students' behaviors is parents' assuming the role of a teacher. Families played a critical role in shaping what, when, and how children learn, and the importance of family involvement in the process was emphasized (Bozkurt, 2020; ÖRAV, 2020; Quilter-Pinner & Ambrose, 2020; Stamatis, 2021). It is of great importance for parents to continue to be interested in their children, who returned to face-to-face education after the pandemic (Kocabaş, 2021).

On the other hand, students who did not receive parental support at home also had difficulties in accessing digital learning resources (Colao et al., 2020). The increase in the use of technology was one of the sources that caused changes in students' behaviors. Especially with the Covid-19 pandemic, a significant increase was observed in digital activities and screen time (Saxena, 2021). In addition, students spent more time in digital environments with less supervision and control (OECD, 2020). According to the findings of research on children's use of technology, the rate of internet use by children was 82.7% in 2021. In addition, 35.9% of children in the 6-15 age group reported that they read fewer books as they spent more time in front of the screen.

As for the strategies applied by the teachers regarding classroom management after face-to-face education, the first one is related to the management of teaching. During this process, the teachers mentioned that they revised previous lessons due to the learning deficiencies and losses in order to close the gaps. Indeed, according to a recent analysis of the approaches to address learning losses, it is seen that the focus is on “the removal of the gaps” or “re-establishment of learning” (Reimers, 2021). Cullinane and Montacute (2020) stated that when schools return to the normal process, make-up or support lessons should be provided for children with learning deficits in addition to normal lessons or during the summer months. The underlying reason is that the disadvantaged students were likely to fall behind their advantaged friends during school closures. The teachers emphasized that they benefited from different methods, techniques, and materials during this process.

Learning losses during the pandemic required schools and teachers to re-evaluate students' knowledge and skills when they returned to school. This obliges educators to devise curriculums adjusted according to students’ levels and to develop appropriate individualized methods to support students (Reimers, 2021). The teachers also stated that they attempted to attend to students actively in the lessons. One of the five scientifically proven classroom management practices put forward by Simonsen, et al (2019) is to ensure active participation of students in the lesson. They have indicated that teachers can increase active participation by increasing students' opportunities to respond, using direct instruction techniques, applying peer instruction, using computer-based instruction, and providing guided notes. Active participation in lessons creates opportunities for students to learn and apply new knowledge and strategies, to explain their reasoning, to examine their thinking processes, and to recognize the need to review thinking. It also provides teachers with a window into students' thinking processes and learning, allows them to diagnose learning problems or assess student progress, and offers teachers the opportunity to build a structure for students' understanding or provide cognitive and affective support (Turner & Patrick, 2019).

As the schools reopen, and hybrid modes of education appear, the role of parents and caregivers becomes all the more important. During the lockdown periods, parents and caregivers have had to spend a lot of time with children, along with a unique chance to closely influence behavior of children. Besides fulfilling this responsibility with maturity and wisdom, they have to also update themselves on the latest facts and updates about COVID, and ensure avoiding fake and negative news. Parents and caregivers also have to be able to understand and communicate severity of any health issue without panic, so as to take effective decisions about when to send children to school. Also, whenever required, parents have to be supportive about facilitating online classes, and to take effective support from outside resources for helping with distance learning. This includes maintaining a child-friendly and peaceful atmosphere at home, and taking all possible steps to avoid situations of extreme discipline or domestic violence.

With the effects of pandemic, the future of education is changing significantly. The importance of life skills like resilience, adaptability, empathy, communication, and emotional

intelligence are becoming highlighted like never before. Changing over from theoretical to experiential learning, and using technology more efficiently are some other key factors, and schools have to keep these in mind while designing curriculums and using various pedagogical approaches. Syllabus content and delivery systems, both are changing, and require ever-growing use of technology. Governments and Education departments and Boards, have been announcing and implementing various initiatives for new systems of learning.

The next logical initiative is to ensure such e-learning initiatives reach the last strata of society, and some recent examples have shown this to be feasible. While it's ludicrous to suggest that the medical field has it "right," there is still much that education can learn from the sector about how to deliberately deploy different kinds of professional talent. The goal ought not to be for education to import medicine's particular hierarchies or work routines (or its paper-chasing pathologies), but to ask how education might similarly order responsibilities and leverage talent, experience, and training.

First, it's essential for us to better understand what teachers actually do. Teachers perform many tasks throughout the course of a day: They lecture, facilitate discussions, grade quizzes, fill out forms, counsel distraught students, monitor the cafeteria, and struggle with balky technology. Even in the classroom, a stream of housekeeping chores, disruptions, and distractions means that the typical teacher spends less than two-thirds of the total class time on academic instruction — a massive opportunity cost.

No one believes all teacher activities are equally valuable. The problem is that supervisors and principals rarely devote much energy to examining how educators are spending their days, making it tough to know whether time is being used effectively. These leaders would do well to unpack what teachers do and prioritize the activities that matter most.

Second, schools should be organized so that individual educators can spend more time doing what they do well. Having a superbly skilled early literacy instructor teach addition or watch students eat lunch simply because he's a second-grade teacher is a bizarre way to leverage talent. The challenge is to more deliberately tap teacher skills and explore how technology or support staff can help off-load rote tasks. The pandemic experience is instructive: School leaders have observed that while some of their stronger teachers stumbled during remote learning, others were surprisingly effective, frequently due to changes in classroom management or presentation style. School districts should develop mechanisms for matching teachers with the environments that best suit their strengths, then provide them with the appropriate training and support.

Third, teachers need more opportunity to grow. Nearly every school district uses some version of the step-and-lane pay scale in which teachers, regardless of background or skill, enter the profession at roughly the same salary and with a similar job description. Things don't look much different in most charter or private schools, which do little to leverage the skills of accomplished, highly trained educators or help them grow within their roles.

Professions from architecture to accounting offer more promising approaches, in which staff are utilized with an eye to skill set, experience, function, and cost. The Opportunity Culture model, currently employed to varying degrees in about three dozen school systems, illustrates a nascent attempt to import one such approach to schools. The model permits an experienced teacher to mentor a team of novice teachers without having to leave the classroom to become an administrator or instructional coach. Lead teachers are responsible for the whole team's students, are paid commensurately, and enjoy new professional opportunities. In addition to offering a more sensible use of teaching talent, such options give exceptional teachers the recognition they deserve and may help prevent them from departing for new opportunities.

Fourth, there's a crying need to expand the pool of potential teachers. Exclusively recruiting new college graduates for teaching positions made sense half a century ago, when the average bachelor's degree recipient held just five jobs throughout an entire career. Today, new graduates may well have held that many jobs by the age of 30. Early career transience, routine mid-career transitions, and delayed retirements make it increasingly bizarre for education systems to focus on training and recruiting 22-year-olds in the expectation that they'll continue teaching into the 2050s.

Today, the changing nature of work means there's an excellent chance that a mid-career entrant may wind up teaching for two decades — a tenure likely longer than that of a traditional hire. And yet balky licensure systems, seniority-based pay, and factory-style pensions create major practical burdens and financial penalties for career changers, making the teaching profession onerous and unattractive for this promising source of new hires.

When one considers the skills, knowledge, and life experience that a 40-year-old engineer, journalist, or computer programmer might bring to the classroom, the value of such hires becomes even clearer. Accordingly, states should end bureaucratic teacher licensure and adopt more precisely targeted safeguards, such as ensuring that prospective teachers have relevant experience in or mastery of the subject they wish to teach. School leaders would then be free to hire as they see appropriate, adopt more customized training, place new teachers in apprenticeship roles, and use skilled veterans to provide rigorous, applied mentorship to new hires. Relieving the certification bottleneck would also equip schools to better meet the novel demands of innovative models like hybrid home schooling, learning pods, and distance learning.

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