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Teachers' Perspective on Distance Learning for Students with Visual Impairment

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Abstract: Learners with special needs have come a long way in their education. It can be in the style of a strategy from special education (SPED) to curriculum implementation, or it can be in the form of a transition from integrated education to inclusive classrooms. The transition from traditional learning to a new mode of learning happened due to the rise of the Covid pandemic in 2019 until the present. Students were forced not to enter school to avoid the spread of the virus. With that as an alternative solution for learning, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented distance learning and modular learning for all the students all over the Philippines including the learners with disabilities. The current research study aimed to identify the extent of distance learning for children with a visual impairment from their teacher's point of view. The researchers used a qualitative case study method and distributed questionnaires to the three chosen respondents. A purposive sampling method was adopted to select the respondents. The researchers selected the Special educators who have experience in handling students with visual impairment during distance learning. Each of the teachers underwent formal interviews through Google Meet and some were written answers which were later transcribed and analyzed by the researchers. After conducting the data analysis, it became evident that many of the teachers have their own unique perspectives when it comes to their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies for distance learning for their students. Recommendations are made to provide solutions aimed at reducing conflict in implementing distance learning among students with visual impairment.

Keywords: Distance Learning, Visual Impairment, Teachers' Perspectives, Coping Strategies, Challenges, Experiences, Children, Effectiveness, Learners, SPED Teachers

Introduction

Due to a global pandemic, face-to-face classes are not permitted. As a result, distance learning is the Department of Education's solution for continuing education. As cited by Sherry in 1995, according to Charp and Godfrey (1994) students need assistance to enable them to shift from the traditional classrooms to self-directed learning environments.

However, students with disabilities may be affected inadvertently by online courses. For persons with physical disabilities, intricate scrolling on Internet sites might be challenging to traverse. It is unsurprising given that the people with impairments were among the least considered in the educational context of online learning (Kinash, Crichton, & Kim-Rupnow, 2004). Distance learning is a method of instruction in which students learn without being physically present in the classroom. It could come in the form of students receiving modules, video lessons, or online classes. A number of factors influence the effectiveness of distance education systems, including their success or failure.

The impact of distance learning theory on instructional design and delivery, as well as the role of partners in distance education teams, are some of these topics (Sherry & Morse, 1994) as cited

by Sherry in 1995. Distance learning is a method that is excellent for persons with disabilities, particularly those who have a visual impairment, as it can help them integrate more easily into the social and educational environment. The principle that underpins distance learning is the development and distribution of appropriate learning possibilities for all, as well as full access to these opportunities for all, in order to realize the ideal of open education (Lionarakis & Likourgioti, 1998, p.30). Students with visual impairments (i.e., blindness or low vision) encounter unique social and structural challenges in higher education (Hutchinson et al., 1998). With that, a vast number of plans were made for them during the new set-up of classes. Moreover, the researchers expect to learn more about the teachers' perspectives on distance learning for students with visual impairment during the global pandemic.

Despite all of the citations, it is critical to understand the teacher's perspectives on distance learning in dealing with children with disabilities, especially those students who are visually impaired. As a result, this research discusses the issues of students with visual impairments in knowing their lived experiences and the challenges of distance learning to them through their own perspectives.

Review of Related Literature

Distance Learning

As cited by Ibrohim1 et al 2021; As the Covid19 pandemic has affected the education system of the world; we cannot deny that online learning is needed to be done to ensure the safety of students. The closure of schools makes distance learning the only alternative so that students can continue to learn and continue their studies. The sudden shift of delivery of learning from face-to-face classes to an online or digital mode of learning is not new, and it is being utilized in some parts of the world and has been used for several years. It should be highlighted that universities' infrastructure and technical knowledge are vastly different.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, online learning is the best option for fulfilling students' rights. The adoption of online learning in schools, on the other hand, is not always seamless and effective. Schools with little or no experience with online learning will undoubtedly have challenges, particularly when trying to learn something new. Teachers don't know how to use the necessary technology (Zaharah et al., 2020). Furthermore, teachers must be prepared to comprehend how to learn to monitor student performance and development. What students require to effectively teach is cited by Ibrohim1 et al., 2021.

Teacher's Perspective on Distance Learning

In a study conducted by Jaffee, 1998; Teachers play a vital role in ensuring the success in conducting distance learning. But to do this people manning the academe should be and can be trained to be good moderators in doing remote learning and will allow them to have a wider reach in their audience with such educational efforts. This meant to supplement to Sherry et al 1994 training requirements assessment, along with other supplemental material for all the other information technology and online educational programs.

In a study conducted by Solcova et al, 2016; tells us that students can enjoy while learning additional knowledge with the use of immersive audio books. In a study of Simonson et al, 1999; tells us that conducting distance learning can greatly improve the collaborative learning with the use of innovative technologies. But to teachers' perceptions of distance learning, students may not have the appropriate technical skills to pursue an online course, or worse students may lack the resource to even own a home computer, stable internet to support their schooling.

Gordy, X. Z et al (2021) stated that the Covid-19 pandemic had affected almost all aspects of life on the planet. One of the most affected sector is the education system of the world. With the threat of the virus on the well-being of students, teachers, and school staff alike, many institutions in the world opted to have a sudden shift of teaching which is to teach in a typical

classroom to a more modern attack in education is to have it online. Though it is not new but we can agree that this type of setting had institutions caught off-guard by the sudden shift.

In the perspective of education, this transition happened so quick, catching many teaching institutions off-guard. The process has been and can be considered as been hurried and so chaotic, plus highlighting the lack of technology availability and internet connection in some area. According to some experienced online teachers, online teaching can have numerous benefits due to planning and experience, but to many, it has become a method of “emergency remote teaching” rather than a planned experience. Plus this has been a challenge because almost all teachers were forced to go online rather choosing not to, plus putting a great strain on teachers on stretching an already stretched resources they have.

With the right amount of training and enough planning, online teaching can also be and as effective like a traditional face-to-face class. The COVID-19 Pandemic has everyone left most educational institution with little or less time to do planning and to prepare for the shift of students in a new set-up. To make matters worse, most teachers in our country with less successful transition successful.

According to Hodges et al (2020), the conduct of online learning can create and provide many opportunities for students, but it needs and requires a thorough evaluation to determine its impact on students learning experiences, provide various needed data on how different online practices of teachers, students, and even school staff can be improved, and to be able to provide enough evidence that can used to improve future conducts of online classes.

Students with Visual Impairment

As cited by Logan E. Gin, Frank A. Guerrero, Katelyn M. Cooper, Sara E. Brownell, and Cynthia Brame, the social model of disability, that is popularized during the 1970s and 1980s: Disability Rights Movement; tells us that disability is a social construct; an individual may have a functional limitation or physical, mental, or even a sensory impairment. But what makes an individual disabled is the opportunities are taken away from them due to societal attitudes and structures (Oliver 1996, 2013). For example, if a city doesn't have a ramp in their pavements citizen who have physical disability might have a difficulty in crossing.

As cited by Maria Liakou in the research of Lionarakis et al 1998; tells us that distance learning is a method that is appropriate for people with disabilities, especially those who have visual impairment, because it can help them integrate more easily into society. This will push to have a alternative educational opportunities, and might as well open access to have a chance for everyone to the goal of inclusive education.

Sindile A. Ngubane-Mokiwa et al. 2021; as a result, the Community of Inquiry is regarded as an appropriate model for promoting an inclusive eLearning environment that facilitates educational experiences for students with visual impairments. As a result, this paper looks at how Community of Inquiry can be used to help designers create a holistic e-learning educational experience for students with visual impairments. The study focuses on all aspects of effective interaction for effective teaching and learning, as well as student support, in which the student is drawn in by the content (whether it is people, text, images, or something else), and the technology fades away.

The educational experience is at the heart of teaching and learning activities, and this paper focuses on students with visual impairments. The educational experience is significant in that it does not negate or minimize the relevance of the elements or their intersections in any manner. Rather, such teaching emphasizes the importance of providing the student with a comprehensive experience. The teaching experience, for example, is about the teacher's location, the environment, and content selection in a vacuum. All of these elements, on the other hand, work together to create a complete educational experience.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study is to discuss the perspective of teachers regarding distance learning for students with visual impairment. In this regard, the researchers established a focus area, as well as specific questions, to be gathered during data collection. The following are the focus and the presentation of the problem:

1. What are your experiences with distance learning for students with visual impairment?
2. What are the challenges for teachers in teaching distance learning to students with visual impairment?
3. What are the coping strategies of teachers in facilitating distance learning for students with visual impairment?

Methodology

The methods that were utilized to acquire the data needed for the study are discussed in this chapter. It includes the research design, sampling design, research instrument, and data gathering procedures. This chapter also covers the locale of the study and its respondents.

Research Design

The researchers made use of a qualitative type of research in conducting this non- experimental study, which was adopted to effectively determine the teachers' perspective on distance learning for students with visual impairment. It aimed to gather information through open-ended questions and conversational communication. The case study method was utilized in the research for its relevance to the study since it would allow the researchers to have an in-depth analysis of the specific context.

Research Locale

The study took place in Zamboanga City, Philippines. The City of Zamboanga is known as "Asia's Latin City." The city was chosen as the locale for the study since it offers a variety of educational opportunities, including programs for children with visual impairments.

Research Respondents

The three (3) special educators for students with visual impairments were the sample for the present study. The study's respondents were special education teachers for students with visual impairments in Zamboanga City during the distance learning since the study focused on teachers' perspectives on distance learning for students with visual impairments.

Sampling Design

The researchers adopted purposive sampling, a non-probability method in selecting the respondents for the study. It is also known as selective or subjective sampling. In utilizing this sampling design, researchers rely on their own judgment when it comes to selecting the people to participate in the study. The researchers selected special education teachers who have experience in handling students with visual impairments during distance learning.

Research Instrument

A research-made questionnaire was adopted for this study. The questionnaires focused on the teachers' perspective on distance learning for students with visual impairments. The researchers composed a 15-item survey questionnaire which consists of open-ended questions.

Research Data Gathering Procedures

The researchers obtained first permission from their research adviser to start, before conducting the study. Then the 15 – item questionnaire composed by the researchers was sent to the validators. After the pilot testing of the questionnaire, the researchers sought the collaboration

and permission of the respondents to participate in the study, and informed consent was sent to them. The researchers assured the respondents that their identities would be kept anonymous and pledged to keep the data collected confidential. When the respondents agreed to participate in the study, the researchers set a date and time to conduct the data gathering. For the first respondents, they agreed to have a virtual interview where data gathering would take place. While for the second and third respondents, data gathering was done by sending them the questionnaire then they sent back their responses through a picture of their answers on a sheet of paper, and a file where they encoded their answers. The researchers made sure that they strictly followed the research ethics while conducting the data gathering.

Results and Discussion

This section provides the presentation of data relative to the statement of the problem. The corresponding explanation of the researchers and themes are incorporated in this portion of the study. This research study aimed to determine the perspectives of the teachers regarding their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in facilitating distance learning for students with visual impairment. This study gives the researchers a variety of ideas on how teachers handle their students despite the new mode of learning with the help of research questions. There are three respondents for this study, the researchers selected the Special educators who have the experience in handling students with visual impairment during the distance learning as the study focused on the perspectives of teachers on distance learning for students with visual impairment.

Table 1. Research Question 1: What are your experiences with distance learning for students with visual impairment?

Themes	Excerpt
Challenges	<p>May challenge dun, kase, yun nga hindi guaranteed na ang mga students ang sumasagot sa modules. And then, minsan hind rin consistent ang parents sa pag-retrieved at pagsurrender, pagre-return ng modules ng mga studyante. (R1) <i>(The challenge there, is that it is not guaranteed that the students are the ones answering the module. And sometimes parents aren't consistent in retrieving and surrendering, and returning the modules of the students)</i></p> <p>It is not easy because I and the student are not used to it. (R2)</p> <p>It was tough and challenging. It made me work out as a SPED Teacher and do my very best. (R3)</p>
Readiness	<p>Yung readiness ko in terms of distance learning if I will rate it from 1-10, siguro nasa mga 8 or 9. (R1) <i>(My readiness in terms of distance learning if I will rate it from 1-10, I'm on 8 or 9.)</i></p> <p>I can say that I am not yet ready in conducting distance learning because I am not trained in delivering lessons online. (R2)</p> <p>I was shook at the new normal but since I am dealing with my special students I had to be ready anytime anywhere. (R3)</p>
	<p>Yung techniques kasi na iaano namin, techniques na ginagamit namin usually chinachannel namin through theirparents. (R1) <i>(The technique that we usually use is, that we channel it through their parents.)</i></p>

3. Techniques	<p>I'll be the one who will review the lessons, afterward, give him the instructions in the activities, then read to him the questions. I'll wait for his response, then I'll be the one who will type his answers. (R2)</p> <p>I had to teach my visually impaired student one-on-one (R3)</p>
4. Responses	<p>Actually, hindi ko masabi yung response. Kasi, hindi ko masisiguro ang response nila kasi nga wala ako doon sa setting. (R1)</p> <p><i>(Actually, in terms of their response, I cannot really make sure about their response because I'm not in the setting.)</i></p> <p>He responds well every time we answer his activities together. (R2)</p> <p>Her response was fine. (R3)</p>
5. Preparations	<p>Yung pinaka-preparation namin is yung pagprepare ng modules nila. (R1)</p> <p><i>(The main preparation of us is to prepare their modules.)</i></p> <p>What I do sometimes is I use their power point for review, use YouTube videos, and other online materials that can be used for clearer understanding. (R2)</p> <p>My preparations were abrupt and fast. (R3)</p>

Table 2: Research Question 2: What are the challenges of teachers in teaching distance learning for students with visual impairment?

Themes	Excerpt
1. Challenges	<p>Challenge siguro is yun nga yung mismong inadapt na mode of distance learning is medyo hindi siya ganon ka appropriate for students with visual impairment and kahit sa mga learners with disabilities in general (R1)</p> <p><i>(Challenge is probably the adapted mode of distance learning. It is not quite appropriate for students with visual impairment and even for learners with disabilities in general.)</i></p> <p>My challenges are an Internet connection and environmental factors. (R2)</p> <p>A common challenge is the Internet connection and power interruption. (R3)</p>
2. Effects of the Challenge	<p>Yes it affects my teaching, it also affects yung pagkatututo ng bata, kasi wala talaga di guarantee na may 100% learning sa ganitong klase ng modality. (R2)</p> <p><i>(Yes, it affects my teaching. It also affects the learning of the child. Because there is no 100% guarantee that learning would happen in this kind of modality.)</i></p>

	<p>These challenges affect the learning of my student as well as our learning process. (R2)</p> <p>It delays our tasks. We will run out of time, and there's the possibility that we will not submit the activities on time. (R3)</p>
3. Challenges in Utilizing Gadgets	<p>Yung pinaka problem nila doon aside nga dun sa minsan walang time, yung problem na may kinalaman sa gadget, uhm okay naman kasi marunong naman yung mga parents mag manipulate yung pinaka problem doon yung connection although strong per hindi kasi siya stable. (R1)</p> <p><i>(The major problem they have aside from that sometimes there is no time, the problem related to the gadget, uhm okay since the parents know how to manipulate but the major problem there is the connection although strong but it's not stable.)</i></p> <p>Of course, manipulation of gadgets, adjustment, and connectivity. (R2)</p> <p>He is not that good at using a laptop, he lacks training in using a laptop, but he is good at using his cell phone. (R3)</p>
4. Challenges in Student's Behavior	<p>Okay lang naman yung sa mga students ko na ano walang manifestations ng autism, wala namang problems sa behaviors kasi on point naman yung mga answers nila kapag kausap ko sila sa call (R1)</p> <p><i>(There are no problems with students who have no manifestations of autism since their answers are on point when I talk to them during a phone call)</i></p> <p>For behavioral problems, I just managed it properly the student was behaved and good. (R2)</p> <p>Every time I give him a task to do on his own and if you will not keep on reminding him, he will not comply with it. (R3)</p>
5. Challenges in Terms of Internet Connection	<p>Sa part ko walang problem sa Internet connection, pero yung nga yung problem is with students kasi yung Internet nila hindi siya stable although strong siya, puwedeng magvideo call pero consumable data. (R1)</p> <p><i>(For my part, there is no problem with the Internet connection. The problem is with the students because their Internet is not stable although it is strong, and they can make video calls but it is consumable data.)</i></p> <p>The problem with Internet connectivity is when there's an authentication problem and if there's bad weather and it affects the Internet connectivity. (R2)</p> <p>The only problem with the WIFI is if it is slow or there's a power interruption. So, if that happens, he cannot be able to attend online classes. (R3)</p>

Table 3. Research Question 3: What are the coping strategies of teachers in facilitating distance learning for students with visual impairment?

Themes	Excerpt
1. Effective Coping Strategy	<p>Strategy is I always talk to the parent and ask them if they could set up a place at home na free from distraction and walang maingay tapos makakapagfocus yung bata at saka sila. (R1) <i>(The strategy I use is I always talk to the parent and ask them if they could set up a place at home that is free from distraction and without noise to the point that the child can focus and also them.)</i></p> <p>The most effective coping strategy I use... ample time in finishing the task given and assessing her work, doing one- on-one teaching and remedial instructions. (R2)</p> <p>I just make my instructions clear for him to understand well, and I give some time for breaks (R3)</p>
2. Least Effective Coping Strategy	<p>Yung least siguro ano yung mismong module kasi prescribed siya, binigay siya ng central office from region down to region down to division ibig sabihin iba yung gumawa and usually kasi kapag may prescribe na module is hindi siya sensitive doon sa need ng isang estudyante. (R1)</p> <p><i>(The least effective maybe is the module itself because it is prescribed. The central office gave it from region down to division, which means the author is different. And usually, when there is a prescribed module, it is not sensitive to the needs of the student.)</i></p> <p>But in my case, it depends on the situation. (R2)</p> <p>I want to teach him in answering his activities on his own so he to be independent, but he cannot do it successfully. (R3)</p>
3. Challenges Experience using Strategies	<p>Yung challenge nga yung sa pag-aano sa first na shinare ko na kinakausap ko ng parents na mag-allocate ng space pero usually hindi nasusunod. (R1)</p> <p><i>(The challenge according to my first sharing that I talk to the parents to allocate space is usually not followed.)</i></p> <p>My challenges using these strategies were the time being, and the availability of the student if the student with visually impaired has a time for the remedial or one-on-one teaching. (R2)</p> <p>Sometimes, I can feel already that he is bored, and the strategies are not effective anymore because of the repeated strategies (R3)</p>
4. Respond to the Strategy	<p>Pagrerespond nila is very obedient naman sila kapag yun nga kinokontrol sila ng parents nila tapos hindi ko talaga masabi yung mismong response sa pag-aano pag answer nila ng module dahil wala naman ako doon. (R1)</p> <p><i>(When they respond, they are very obedient when their parents control them, then I can't really say the exact responses when they answer the module because I'm not there.)</i></p>

	<p>I observed that the student was seemingly doing good, and she can do things simultaneously. (R2)</p> <p>There's no problem with the student's response, as long as he understood the lesson, he answers immediately especially when he has an idea. (R3)</p>
5. Behaviors Shown	<p>Again, nagrerely lang ako sa feedback ng parents kung ano yung ano nila. (R1) <i>(Again, I just relied on the parents' feedback on what they have said.)</i></p> <p>Regarding her behavior, there are no changes or manifesting or occurring of new behavior. (R2)</p> <p>He is just silent, he listens well, and then if I will ask him, he can answer correctly. (R3)</p>

Conclusion

The findings of the study emphasize the experiences of the respondents in teaching distance learning for students with visual impairment. They all have varied experience in conducting distance learning, varied preparations, and varied techniques implemented to ensure that they will deliver a good education to their learners. According to the three respondents, their experiences include getting off-guard by the sudden change of the education medium, which agrees with the study of Gordy, X. Z et al in 2021 that this setting had institutions caught off-guard in the sudden shift. Also, they had to adjust quickly to adapt to that change. This experience also brought them great collaborative efforts from their colleagues and the parents of the students as stated in the study of Simonson et al in 1999 "Distance learning can improve collaborative learning through the use of innovative technologies."

According to the data gathered, the respondents stipulated that they have encountered various challenges in teaching distance learning for students with visual impairment. It was in terms of their facilitation, utilization of gadgets, the behavior of their students, and the Internet connection during the distance learning. According to the three respondents, the challenges that they encountered during distance learning affect the way they facilitate distance learning. This result agrees with what Gordy, X. Z et al. when they stated in 2021 that the majority of the teachers had to immediately adjust with the implementation of distance learning, with less emphasis on making it effective. The respondents stated that the challenges affect their tasks as well as the learning of their students. In 1999, Simonson et al. stated that the students may lack technical skills as per teachers' perspective on distance learning. This was supported by the responses of the participants of the study. They stipulated that their students lack knowledge on how to manipulate their gadgets for distance learning.

In addition, among the three respondents, their coping strategies in facilitating distance learning were teaching and guiding students with visual impairment little by little so they could easily adapt and learn from them. Their main focus is to give them the best strategy for them to learn conveniently and at their own best. However, the teacher may use some innovative strategies for their students to learn additional knowledge and to have enjoyment while doing so by using immersive audio books (Solcova et al 2016).

Concluding Statement

This case study is carried out to discuss and examine the perspectives of Special Education teachers on distance learning for students with visual impairment. The transition to distance learning from the traditional face-to-face classes was done quickly due to the global pandemic.

With that, the Special Education teachers encountered challenges in distance learning for students with visual impairment, and accordingly, it affects their facilitation of learning as well as their students' learning. However, varied preparations and techniques are implemented to ensure that students will receive a quality education.

Furthermore, the findings of the study show that the Special Education teachers have various perspectives in terms of their experience, challenges, and coping strategies for facilitating distance learning for students with visual impairment.

In light of the findings of the research, this study recommends that more meaningful and effective integration of learning should be made compulsory for all teachers and parents for the students with visual impairment to learn efficiently. In line with this recommendation, teachers must find ways to make learning fun and creative and parents must create a way for their children to learn at their best. We recommend that future researchers determine the opinions of the SPED teachers about distance learning for learners with visual impairment and their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies that they undergo during their teaching. Furthermore, the study also recommends that more profound research should be carried out on teachers' perspectives on students with visual impairment. Thus, the need to rethink how best to support and give the learners with visual impairment in acquiring knowledge is critical on their own.

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