

Uncovering Reflective Practices of Educators In Teaching and Learning Process: A Phenomenological Study from Elementary School in The Philippines

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Abstract

Recent PISA results consistently show that 15-year-old students in the Philippines are five (5) to six (6) years behind in critical competencies, including mathematics, science, and reading—issues that predate the pandemic. Given teachers' enormous influence on students' academic success, the efficacy of their teaching tactics is becoming increasingly important. The advent of the epidemic and adjusting to a new normal posed significant hurdles to established information transfer techniques. This study investigates the reflective practices of educators at Los Baños Central Elementary School, Philippines, analyzing the evolution of these practices across three key periods: pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and in the post-pandemic "new normal." It further examines the integration of three distinct learning modalities employed during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of ongoing reflection by educators on their instructional methods to more effectively meet the needs of their students. Using a transcendental phenomenological methodology, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with seven (7) educators, resulting in the identification and analysis of major themes in their responses. Through the data collection process, this study revealed that, despite numerous challenges encountered during the pandemic, educators effectively managed the crisis by engaging in reflective practices to enhance their teaching methods. The findings underscore the pivotal role of reflective practices in advancing the teaching-learning process and improving student academic performance.

Keywords *Reflective Practices, Learning Delivery Modalities, Pandemic, New Normal Setting, Teaching-Learning Process*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of Filipino pupils falling behind their worldwide peers is multifaceted, involving educational, economic, and sociological reasons. Recent data from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) highlights a crucial concern: the Philippines drastically underfunds its education system, spending only 3.6% of GDP compared to the regional average of more than 4%. Per-student spending has fallen from PHP 22,979 in 2017 to PHP 19,943 in 2021, placing the country among the world's lowest educational investments (Angelo, 2021). This funding gap causes curricular overload, unnecessary non-teaching responsibilities for instructors, and insufficient instructional time, all of which are adverse to student achievement.

Magsambol (2024) highlights the lack of learning possibilities available to Filipino students, compromising educational access and quality. According to the World Bank (2022), 90% of Filipino children cannot read or comprehend a simple age-appropriate paragraph by age ten. According to Alexander Socalit of the Department of Education, the Philippine education system is five to six years behind other countries, which is supported by poor performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and

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Science Study (TIMSS).

This disturbing trend endangers not only individuals' futures, but also communal well-being and country growth. According to research, low literacy rates are associated with fewer employment prospects and more welfare dependency ([World Literacy Foundation, 2018](#)). The cycle of disadvantage continues, especially among functionally illiterate parents who may emphasize job over education, limiting their children's educational aspirations ([Low & Miranda, 2021](#)).

Despite admitting the significance of education, there is still a significant gap in knowing how reflective teaching approaches might improve learning outcomes in the Philippines, particularly following COVID-19. The epidemic forced a rapid move to online, mixed, and face-to-face learning modes, requiring a critical reevaluation of educational methodologies. While some studies have found that teacher passion improves student engagement, there has been little research into how reflective practices can improve teaching efficacy in changing educational landscapes.

This study will examine how Filipino educators use reflective practices to alter their teaching methods in response to the pandemic's problems. As the educational landscape transforms drastically, teachers must navigate traditional and emerging modalities such as online, hybrid, and face-to-face learning environments. Understanding how educators use reflective practices is critical because they can improve their ability to successfully evaluate and adapt educational tactics. The study's goal is to reveal the perceived consequences of reflective practices on student learning outcomes and determine whether such techniques promote improved academic performance and student engagement in various educational contexts. Furthermore, the study attempts to uncover specific tactics that enhance effective teaching and learning in today's educational scene, thereby giving educators with insights into best practices. By answering these concerns, the project hopes to give significant knowledge that will impact teaching methods and policy, ultimately improving educational quality in the Philippines.

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it intends to fill the gap in the literature on the function of reflective practices in the Philippine educational setting by providing insights into how educators might manage problems and improve their teaching techniques. The findings will provide educators, policymakers, and educational stakeholders with evidence-based solutions for increasing teaching effectiveness and student achievement. By emphasizing the importance of reflective practices, this study aims to encourage continual professional growth among teachers, creating a culture of adaptation and innovation in the Philippine educational system. Finally, it aims to contribute to a deeper knowledge of how reflective practices might assist the delivery of high-quality education in various settings, thereby addressing the country's pressing educational needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Good teachers think about what they do in the classroom, why, and how they do it. As a result of this reflection, great teachers adapt to continually improve their performance. Reflective practice stands as a cornerstone of professional growth and development for public elementary school teachers, offering a transformative pathway to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Through deliberate self-examination and critical analysis of their teaching practices and classroom dynamics, educators gain invaluable insights into their strengths, areas for improvement, and strategies for instructional refinement. As emphasized by the seminal study conducted by [Farrell \(2015\)](#), reflective practices play a pivotal role in elevating teacher performance and fostering student success.

By engaging in reflective practices, teachers cultivate a deeper understanding of

pedagogical principles, refine their instructional approaches, and nurture a culture of continuous improvement within their educational communities. Thus, integrating reflective practices into the professional journey of public elementary school teachers is not merely advantageous; it is imperative for ensuring the delivery of high-quality education that meets the diverse needs of every student.

Reflective practices are guided by various ideas that help frame and understand the processes of reflection and learning. Many significant theories benchmark the research on reflective practices. One of the most well-known was Dewey's Reflective Thinking (Dewey, 1933). John Dewey highlighted the need for reflection in education, claiming that it improves problem-solving and critical thinking. He contrasted habitual behaviour and reflective thought, pushing for a more deliberate approach to learning. His principles are fundamental to education. He pushed for experiential learning and reflective thought, recommending that students participate in inquiry-based learning to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Other theories, such as Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, explain how learning is a process that involves transforming experience into knowledge. His methodology includes four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conception, and active exploration. This cyclical process highlights the role of reflection in good learning. This concept is important in elementary education because it emphasizes experiential learning. It encourages teachers to use hands-on activities and reflection to help students fully engage with the topic and understand their learning processes (Kolb, 1984).

On the other hand, Donald Schön developed the notions of reflection-in-action (reflecting while acting) and reflection-on-action (reflecting after the fact). His work emphasizes the value of reflection for professionals, especially in complicated, unpredictable circumstances (Schön, 1991). Similarly, Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, examines how critical reflection can lead to transformative learning experiences. He claims that thinking on assumptions and ideas can help people make sense of their experiences and promote personal and social change (Mezirow, 1997).

In addition, Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasizes the role of observational learning, imitation, and modelling. Reflective practices can be enhanced by observing others and reflecting on those observations, leading to new insights and behaviours (Bandura, 1977). Likewise, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism emphasized the role of social interaction in learning. Reflective practices can be enhanced through collaborative reflection and dialogue with peers, which promotes deeper understanding (Vygotsky, 1978).

Moreover, Boud, Keogh, and Walker's Model of Reflection consists of three main components: returning to the experience, attending to feelings, and re-evaluating the event. It emphasizes the emotional components of reflection and their impact on learning (Boud et al., 1985). Similarly, Graham Gibbs created a cycle model for reflection that consists of six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and an action plan. This structured approach allows people to reflect on their experiences systematically (Gibbs, 1988). The above concepts collectively shape reflective practices in various disciplines, including education, healthcare, and professional development. They emphasize the value of reflection for personal growth and effective practice.

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study was to investigate educators' reflective practices during the teaching-learning process using three separate learning modalities—face-to-face, online, and blended—across the various phases of the epidemic. A qualitative study method was used to acquire a thorough understanding of educators' experiences and strategies.

In qualitative research, the emphasis changes from numerical data to rich, descriptive data representing the complexities of human experience. This approach involves acquiring non-numerical data using methods such as interviews, focus groups, and open-ended surveys, which allow participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and insights in their own words. By examining this data, researchers can identify underlying themes, patterns, and meanings in educators' reflections on their teaching approaches during these difficult moments.

This strategy not only stresses educators' subjective experiences but also provides a thorough understanding of how they modify their teaching methods in response to different learning modalities. The findings highlight the importance of reflective techniques in improving educational outcomes and promoting professional growth in the face of persistent obstacles. The transcendental phenomenological technique was employed in this study to validate uncertainties, doubts, and ambiguities revealed by sets of questions. A qualitative case study investigates a phenomenon in its real-world environment. Data are gathered for or about a specific person, group, or event. This design emphasizes recognizing the unique and peculiarities (Croker, 2009). This design also allowed the researchers to dive deeper into details, expanding their grasp of the studied topic. Qualitative research typically focuses on observation and inquiry methodologies; it investigates the significance of human experiences and offers the prospect of transformation through increased awareness and deliberate action. It also focuses on life events, with an emphasis on the "why" and "how" rather than the "how many" or "how frequently."

Transcendental phenomenology, founded on Edmund Husserl's work, is ideally suited to discovering introspective practices for various reasons: (1) it focuses on Subjectivity, and Transcendental phenomenology stresses personal sensations and perceptions. This emphasis enables researchers to delve deeper into the subjective character of reflective practices, capturing the intricacies of individual meaning-making. (2) Essence of Experiences: By exploring the essence of experiences, transcendental phenomenology seeks to understand the fundamental structures of consciousness. This approach can reveal how individuals reflect, shedding light on the underlying processes and motivations. (3) Bracketing: The methodology supports "bracketing," which means putting aside preconceived beliefs and biases. This process enables researchers to approach reflective practices without imposing external frameworks, resulting in greater insights based on participants' lived experiences. (4) Rich Descriptive Accounts: The methodology promotes extensive accounts of lived experiences, providing a complete understanding of how reflective practices develop in various contexts. This can highlight differences and commonalities that other approaches may miss. (5) Inter-subjectivity: Transcendental phenomenology considers the inter-subjective aspect of events, recognizing that social interactions and shared meanings frequently impact reflection. This feature allows for a more in-depth investigation of how communal and cultural environments influence reflective behaviours. Lastly, (6) Exploration of Temporal Dimensions: The methodology examines how previous experiences influence current reflections and future ambitions. This temporal component is critical to understanding the continuity and evolution of reflective practices over time (Husserl, n.d.).

Transcendental phenomenology capitalizes on these abilities to give a rich and nuanced framework for examining reflective practices, making it particularly adept at capturing the complexity of human experience. Phenomenology studies have the ability to offer rich data, which is often collected through in-depth interviews with people. This method studies the organization of multiple sorts of experiences ranging from perception, thinking, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to physical awareness, embodied action, and social interaction, including language activity. When describing a phenomenon, phenomenologists highlight all participants' shared experiences (Creswell, 2013). The insights that a phenomenological investigation can offer

put society in a better position to understand one another and make informed decisions. This type of study matches the need of this research to uncover the reflective practices of educators in the teaching and learning process.

According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning theory is the process by which knowledge is generated by changing experience and emerges from the fusion of grasping and transforming experience. Theoretically, teachers must do more than just adjust and adapt during this period of "better normal." They may come into events or circumstances in the classroom that call for them to not only stop and consider their options but also act wisely. Additionally, they have to help pupils "externalize" the process—to translate the idea from inside their minds to the outer world. Furthermore, the learning theory known as transformational learning theory, or transformative learning, looks at how individuals interpret their experiences in life. Constructivism, a theory that holds that every learner creates their own meaning through the combination of new and existing information, is expanded upon by this approach (Mezirow, 1997).

The aforementioned theories lend support to this study, as does Dewey's (1933) definition of reflective thought: "an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it tends." Applying the approaches and theories above to investigate the reflective practices of educators in the teaching and learning process. First, a letter of request to conduct research was given to the District Supervisor and then to the School Heads. When the request letters were approved, respondents were selected. The respondents were chosen based on the research purpose: educators who have taught the three (3) modalities simultaneously and were teaching already before the pandemic, taught during a pandemic and were still teaching in the new normal settings. The seven (7) participants received a letter from the researcher requesting an interview at their convenience.

To understand differ the teachers' reflective practices the research tool used was a set of self-made questionnaires based on the following nine salient points the question must explore their experiences, processes and contexts in consideration with their (1) Experience and Background, participants were ask their years of experience, teaching time, (before, during pandemic and new normal settings) subject taught and grade level, also what motivated them to teach (2) Reflection Processes, participants were ask to describe their typical process of reflecting on their teaching practice, what particular circumstances or experiences motivate them to do reflection, (3) Tools and Strategies, participants were ask of their methods or tools they use for reflection (4) Impact on Practice, participants were ask how has reflecting in their practice influence their teaching methods and student outcomes, also they were ask to share some of their experiences that made a significant change on their practice as a result of their reflection (5) Challenges and Barriers, participants were ask of the challenges they encounter when trying to engage in reflective practices and also how they overcome these challenges (6) Support and Collaboration, participants were ask if they engage in collaboration when they are reflecting in their practice, what role does reflective practices in their professional development, (7) Outcomes and Growth, the respondents were ask on how do they measure the effectiveness of their reflective practice, and how does reflection helped them in their growth as a teacher, finally (8) Personal Philosophy, the participants were ask what is the ultimate purpose of reflective practice in teaching. These questions help uncover the depth and complexity of a teacher's reflective practices and provide insights on their professional development and effectiveness. The researcher carefully and deliberately developed it using the advice of specialists who were Masters Teachers.

Master teachers are instructional leaders; they are instructors who look for ways to aid their colleagues in carrying out their duties and obligations to enable student learning through

functioning lesson plans and relevant, adequate, and up-to-date instructional materials. They actively encourage great teaching practices in order to improve instructional competency inside the institution. They also act as innovators in adversity, spearheading a collaborative initiative for new learning possibilities.

In order to validate the research, the researcher first spoke with each master teacher one-on-one and described the purpose of the study. Next, each master teacher received a copy of the researcher's self-created questionnaires and was asked to respond with their professional advice to each one. Third, the researcher asked for a brief meeting to collaborate with the advice of each master teacher, and each one provided their expert interpretation and viewpoint on each subject. Consequently, feedback and recommendations from the Master Teachers were compared, arranged, and mutually verified. A set of unified guide questions was consequently developed. Each Master Teacher was given a second chance to review the unified guide questions and choose which ones still needed improvement.

The researcher presented each participant with ten (10) questions. In order to convey their thoughts or points of view on important problems to the researcher, participants were asked to pay attention to the full interview. To ensure participant participation, the researcher used open-ended questions. Along with guiding the interview, the master instructor also assisted in understanding and elucidating the challenges faced when responding to the guiding questions. Educators' reflective activities in the teaching-learning process were identified using the collected data.

The interview data was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, a method commonly employed for the examination of qualitative data. This approach is particularly useful for analyzing collections of texts, such as interview transcripts, by identifying recurring topics, ideas, or patterns of meaning. When such patterns emerge, the researcher conducts a thorough examination to uncover common themes (Claufield, 2023). Thematic analysis thus serves as a systematic inquiry into patterns of meaning within the data.

It is highly beneficial when working with enormous volumes of data since it helps the researcher to split and classify vast amounts of data in an easy-to-digest format. It also includes scanning a dataset to detect, assess, and report on repeating trends. Because of this, the phenomenological reduction approach provides a valuable perspective on the value of reflective practices among public elementary school teachers. By utilizing this approach, teachers go beyond their preconceived beliefs and prejudices in order to explore their subjective experiences in the classroom. With the help of this method, educators can go beyond cursory observations to find the deeper insights and meanings hidden in their methods. This phenomenological study was grounded in the theories of experiential learning, transformational learning, social constructivism, and Dimensions of flexibility in education.

In this study, the analysis was conducted through a series of structured steps. The First step is familiarise reading the reflecting data multiple times; this is to familiarize with the data to be immersed in it and understand its context. The second step is the Initial Coding, which creates codes by recognizing significant qualities that signify reflective practice. Highlight any key phrases or concepts that stand attention. Third Step, Theme Development: Organize related codes into larger themes. Look for patterns and connections that highlight important aspects of reflecting activities. Fourth Step, Define Themes: Clearly state what each theme symbolizes. Provide a brief overview of each theme, emphasizing its importance in understanding reflective activities. Finally, the Fifth Step is Communication: Put your results together into a coherent narrative. Use concrete quotes and data examples to demonstrate each theme's relevance to reflective practice. This methodical technique assists the research in uncovering valuable ideas regarding reflective practices in teaching.

To exhibit "truth value," the qualitative researcher must show that their interpretation of "the truth" is credible and adequately communicated. As a result, the internal sincerity of a qualitative researcher determines their credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In order to be credible, one must (1) engage in behaviours that increase the likelihood of producing reliable observations and interpretations (such as consistent observation over time, long-term dedication, and triangulation); (2) conduct ongoing investigations (such as peer debriefing); (3) improve working theories through the process of negative case analysis; (4) make it possible to verify preliminary findings and interpretations against historical "raw data" (referential adequacy); and (5) confirm the findings and interpretations directly with the individuals who created the multiple realities under analysis (member checking). Lincoln and Guba proposed these five strategies for credibility.

This study used the triangulation procedure, which entails cross-checking the data using various techniques, numerous data sources, and various opinions and viewpoints. The four triangulation stages of methodological, data source, investigators, and theoretical triangulation were taken into consideration in order to evaluate the findings' confirmability and believability. A time triangulation research technique examines the same event or research question from several angles. When teachers engage in reflective practices, they can utilize temporal triangulation to assess how well three different modalities—online, modular, and face-to-face—deliver learning outcomes over time (before, during, and following the epidemic). In order to provide theory-driven codes and hypotheses for the study, theoretical triangulation was also accomplished by applying and investigating various theoretical vantage points, such as transformational theory, experiential learning theory, and reflection/reflective teaching theory.

Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling was utilized in this study, specifically case study sampling, which involves choosing a limited number of relevant examples expected to "produce the largest amount of evidence and have a major effect on the formation of learning". Since there are three different types of educators in the school during the 2020–2022 school year—modular teachers, online teachers, and online modular face-to-face—the researcher selected the participants who provided clear and tangible information on using distance learning delivery modalities during the pandemic because they handled the three learning modalities at the same time and by which they experienced teaching before the pandemic.

Demographic information such as years of experience, teaching subject, and grade level are also part of the sampling, which is important since it influences educators' attitudes and approaches to reflective practice. For example, experienced teachers may have developed more sophisticated reflective tactics than novices, and subject-specific problems might influence how reflection is integrated into practice. Furthermore, different grade levels may necessitate distinct teaching techniques, influencing the form and frequency of reflection. Accounting for these characteristics allows researchers to delve further into the contextual influences on reflective behaviours, resulting in a more thorough understanding of how these activities appear across various educational environments.

Usually, only seven (7) participants make up the tiny sample size used in phenomenological investigations. This is so that each participant's encounter can be examined in greater detail, which is possible with a smaller sample size in phenomenology, which aims to delve deeply into people's everyday experiences. By concentrating on a smaller population, researchers can devote more time and energy to comprehending the various viewpoints and interpretations applied to their experiences. This approach yields a deep understanding of the topic by offering a complete and nuanced perspective into the participants' experiences. Additionally, a smaller

sample size allows the researcher to conduct a more thorough and manageable analysis of the collected data, allowing them to fully explore the themes and patterns that surface from the participants' narratives.

Participants

This research had a total of seven individuals. The participants were elementary school teachers from Los Baños Central Elementary School, District of Los Baños, Division of Laguna, who had experienced the same phenomenon of simultaneously teaching online learning delivery modality, modular learning delivery modality, and face-to-face learning delivery modality during the school year 2020-2022, as well as teaching previously and in new normal settings. The Table 1 below is the list of educator participants' pseudonyms and information.

Table 1. Participants Information

Participants Code	Participants Pseudonym	Age	Number Of Years in The Teaching Profession	Number Of Years in Los Baños Central Elementary School	Number of Times Interviewed
Educator 1	Filipino	56	33	30	2
Educator 2	Araling Panlipunan	64	32	30	3
Educator 3	Math	37	16	16	2
Educator 4	EPP	50	10	10	3
Educator 5	Science	62	25	15	3
Educator 6	English	45	20	10	2
Educator 7	MAPEH	53	20	20	3

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants. The pseudonyms assigned to them correspond to the subjects they teach, and they are used to identify each participant, along with their age, years in the teaching profession, and years teaching in Los Baños Central Elementary School, Philippines. Each participant's interview duration varies. The researcher recognizes the significant workload that participants have, so each interview was scheduled at a time that worked for them. At every interview, a snack was provided to the participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to DepEd, the Basic Education - Learning Continuity Plan implemented a variety of learning methodologies and modalities to address the educational challenges provided by the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy was critical to ensuring that learning could continue despite the disruptions produced by lockdowns and health issues. Since the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, schools have implemented several modalities customized to their own local COVID-19 conditions and the availability of learning platforms. In locations with high infection rates, schools have prioritized distant learning options such as Modular distant Learning (MDL) or Online

Distance Learning (ODL) in order to reduce in-person interactions. In contrast, blended learning models were implemented in locations where it was safer to limit face-to-face classes, mixing traditional classroom experiences with remote learning components. These conditions gave rise to the three learning modalities that the new normal settings now know. According to the educator participants' testimonials, pupils in the modular modality class lost their study habits due to the lack of in-person encounters, and educators assessed and assigned too unrealistic grades.

In terms of Online Modality, physical interactions were still limited; pupils and educators could interact in a limited time. Focus was also a challenge, and lastly, online games became a norm in teaching. As to Blended Learning Modality, printed outputs were to stay, and a combination of prints and technology became the new way of teaching. On the other hand, themes that emerged from the notable impact of reflective practices of educators on pupils' performance are (1) Test Scores are higher, they find their (2) Lessons became fun, they also perceived that their (3) Lesson became easier to understand; likewise, their (4) Retention increased, more so, their (5) Comprehension level increased and finally they (6) Engage more to group activities. Self-reflection is an essential component of teaching and learning. It is a metacognitive talent, which implies that it helps teachers evaluate how they teach and decide which strategies to employ and improve. One of the responses of the participants was,

"After employing what I felt is needed, my lesson was considerably easier to understand. Pupils have a higher score in their formative test." – English, Grade 6 Teacher, 20 years in service

The participant implied that after reflecting, he/she realized what needed to be done to improve the performance of his/her pupils. Also, another participant's reflection was,

"In science, there are many debatable topics, and I often do this. I am always surprised by the ideas of the young minds also we are all entertained laughing the whole time; also, we do video critics and laboratory activities, pupils are also very interested in what is behind of something or on the "what if" I do this, or this thing happens, I see its very effective. Everyone engages, and there is no dull moment." – Science, Grade 4 teacher 25 years in service

This respondent implies the significant change when he applies what he observed on her pupils during the teaching and learning process. Six emerged on the observations of educator respondents as to the notable impact or the change the student's exhibit after the educators applied the result of their reflective practices, as presented in the Figure 1.



Figure 1. Themes emerged with the Notable Impact on pupils after employing the result of reflective practices of Teachers/Educators.

First, test scores are higher after every teacher intervention because reflective thinking helps the students comprehend the material better, which improves test scores. Test results are commonly employed as measures of a student's understanding and proficiency of the subject matter being taught, claims quora.com. Students who score highly on exams demonstrate that they comprehend the material well and are able to use it effectively.

The second point was that learning should be enjoyable. According to the educators' responses, while students are having fun with their classes, they also learn subconsciously. A study published in *The Journal of Experimental Education* found that when teachers included humor in their lectures, students did better on their final exams, indicating that they needed to enjoy themselves in school. Students are more likely to participate in class and find the material more memorable when teachers make learning enjoyable.

Third, their topics were easier to understand. The epidemic caused difficulties for pupils and teachers, affecting the teaching-learning process. How teacher presents the subject to their students will determine whether they retain it over time or forget it by the end of the week. Therefore, it is essential to lead them in the right direction.

Learning retention, or the capacity to store new information in long-term memory for easy recall and application later, is another important effect on students. This is the increase in students' retention of the material taught. A brief period will pass in short-term memory before the knowledge is lost if it is not kept. German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus studied the exponentiality of forgetting and is credited with discovering the "Forgetting Curve." Studies indicate that learners who do not try to remember what they have learnt would forget 70% of it in a day and 90% in a week.

Furthermore, their comprehension level also rose. Understanding written words is known as comprehension. Unlike the ability to recognize words, it is not the same. Though able to read the entire chapter, the young person is unable to articulate what they have read. Understanding gives the words we read meaning. Reading comprehension occurs when words on a page convey concepts and ideas rather than just words. With comprehension, reading becomes more interesting, captivating, and educational. Success in school, the workplace, and in one's personal life depends on it.

Additionally, pupils are participating in group activities more frequently. Participating in group activities can help students develop a range of skills that are increasingly important in the job (Caruso & Woolley 2008; Mannix & Neale, 2005). Studies conducted by Astin (1997), Tinto (1998), and National Survey of Student Engagement (2006) have all shown a correlation between positive group experiences and improved student learning, retention, and overall college achievement. Effective group projects can improve skills necessary for individual and group work, such as breaking down difficult tasks into manageable chunks, scheduling and scheduling time, explaining and developing understanding, providing and receiving feedback on productivity, questioning presumptions, and strengthening interpersonal bonds. The themes that emerge from the testimonies of Educator Participants to the challenges they encounter in performing reflective practices are (1) Inadequate skill, (2) No time, (3) No Focus, (4) Motivation, (5) Organization Culture, (6) Environment and (7) Yourself (Please see Figure 2).

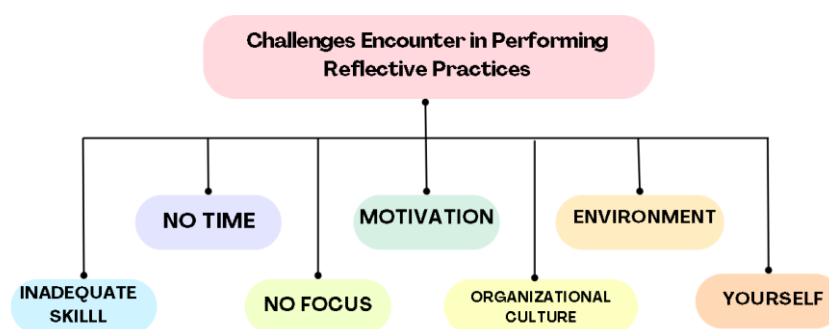


Figure 2. Themes emerged on the challenges encountered by educators in performing reflective practices

In order to meet students' immediate learning requirements, teachers have shown flexibility and resistance to change, going above and beyond when it is both financially and practically possible. One of the participant's responses was,

"During the first year of the pandemic, I was so overwhelmed with the sudden changes of many things. I need to adjust and learn new things drastically and fast. We have to prepare many things. So many things to do. I do not know much about computers, even so with the latest applications needed like Google Classroom." – MAPEH/ESP, Grade 4 teacher, 20 years in service

Also, another participant states that,

"During the first year of the pandemic, I was so confused; everything was new to me; I could not understand many, the tasks were too many, and everything had to be provided personally. All were expensive. Simultaneously, I need to do modular teaching and online teaching, which both are new to me. I do not have my own printer that we all need because we do not have modules for the modular class and also I need to print their activity sheets along with the module, everything should be provided, from bond papers to ink added that my laptop was old and very outdated that it could not be used for online class many applications are not working. Also, I need to subscribe to a monthly wired internet connection to have a strong internet connection to work on my online class. It was so hard that I had to act quickly that I did not have time to reflect much because I am working day and night also I could not just do some of the tasks because I did not know how to do them on my own need to always ask my co-teacher for help added by the so many trainings... but thinking about it right now I am proud that I did survived." – Araling Panlipunan, Grade 4 teacher, 32 years in service

Like, this participant states that,

"At first I felt I am the only who could not understand, I felt stupid old in my profession, I felt isolated especially when there was no internet and I couldn't talk to outside world, I did not have someone to ask or talk to on what I feel, I have time that I wanted to resign from work because everything is new to me, need to learn and relearn many things suddenly and fast

because you need to teach it to pupils. I need to learn all at once but what is frustrating is that I was really having a hard time with the computer applications on our online class I know because I digitally adept because I am old. I told myself that I will just teach in front of the screen thinking that the pupils was in front of me. I thought why do I need to do what my co teachers are doing in teaching online I will just do the traditional way, I will just do not mind if they learn or feel bored on their time in my class, I do not have the heart and even the time to worry or think or even to rest." – Filipino, Grade 5 Teacher, 33 Years in Service

The responses from these three (3) and the other four (4) respondents were similar, confirming that they had shared experiences from which the six (6) theme was derived. The number one reason that hinders teachers from performing reflective practices is Inadequate Skill. It has to do with an educator's ability to do the duties assigned to them, but they also need to retrain themselves due to the rapid changes in society. To stay relevant and connected to the future, educators must not only adjust to changes and transformations but also dissect and repackage knowledge, abilities, pedagogies, and learning objectives. Everything a teacher had been taught in school and received an education in was redefined, along with the rapid shift in curriculum and modalities of learning.

Secondly, one of the themes that also surfaced and prevented educators from engaging in reflective activities is "No Time." The statement pertains to the educator's inability to stop and reflect on any aspect of their work at any time. The abrupt requirement to adapt and perform in accordance with the needs of the learners also contributed to this predicament. Due to the two (2) new learning distance modes that were established, both of which require extensive preparation, instructors are overworked and ultimately exhausted.

No focus is another issue that has surfaced that prevents instructors from using reflective practice. This phrase describes the educator participant's ability to focus on a single activity. Another obstacle preventing the educator participants from participating in reflection is the overwhelming amount of work and worries they must manage simultaneously. Concerns regarding teachers' workloads have grown in recent years since many of them suffer from burnout and excessive stress. Teachers in public schools typically deal with large class sizes, administrative responsibilities, and heightened expectations for meeting performance targets (Kanwal et al., 2023). Another study by Rose and Sika (2019) found that teachers consequently took on too much work, which resulted in high stress levels and exhaustion. Teachers may struggle to remain motivated and focused when stressed and overworked.

Additionally, motivation refers to how the educators feel about their ability to do every work successfully. Everyone is in shock due to the abrupt change, functioning merely to survive. In addition, the burdensome duty must be completed simultaneously and the requirement to create what was required while making adjustments. According to the Education 2030 Agenda, providing a top-notch education for everyone is a top priority. To accomplish this goal, "teachers who are well-trained, motivated, appropriately compensated, and qualified" are needed (UNESCO, 2016, p. 30). However, according to global trends, teacher motivation has been declining recently, which has resulted in a teacher shortage (Crehan, 2016; UNESCO IICBA, 2017).

Additionally, Organizational Culture. This is an additional problem that surfaced from the replies provided by the participants. It alludes to the ideals implied by DepEd, where everything moves quickly. All assignments, reports, and other tasks for which a teacher must provide an answer are due immediately. Every action is carried out quickly. Furthermore, if administrative tasks and bureaucracy are reduced, teachers may be able to devote more of their time to instructing and interacting with students. This entails streamlining registration, assessment, and other

paperwork processes (Kanwal et al., 2023).

The environment presents another difficulty. It speaks about the coming and going from work. The circumstances at work and in their families. The unexpected adjustments and the new paradigm that DepEd was required to impose overwhelmed educators' feelings. Teachers were also forced to perform. There is an urgent need to perform, adapt, and modify. Promoting a collaborative and supportive atmosphere among instructors may reduce personal workloads and improve the standard of instruction. This could include faculty learning communities, peer observation and feedback, and mentoring initiatives (Kanwal et al., 2023).

Lastly, the individual's emotional state, capacity to manage change, and adaptability to new environments are critical considerations. This includes their ability to cope with unforeseen demands in the workplace and to embrace these shifts as part of their evolving lifestyle. Factors that impact an individual include the difficulties caused by the epidemic, health concerns, the ability to pay for the necessary output, and the difficulty of learning new things. Nobody in education desires to be referred to as "obsolete" or "outdated." When teachers become outdated, they lose relevance and connection with their students. Teachers who are too old start to feel uncomfortable and inappropriate in the classroom.

Finally, themes that emerged from the outcome of the educators' reflective practices on teaching-learning process are (1) Improved the quality of care to the pupils, (2) Improve future practice/quality of teaching, (3) Learn to critically think (4) Recognize his own strength / weaknesses, (5) Develop self-directed learning skills (6) Motivated to teach, and (7) Make sense of what you have learn and experience.

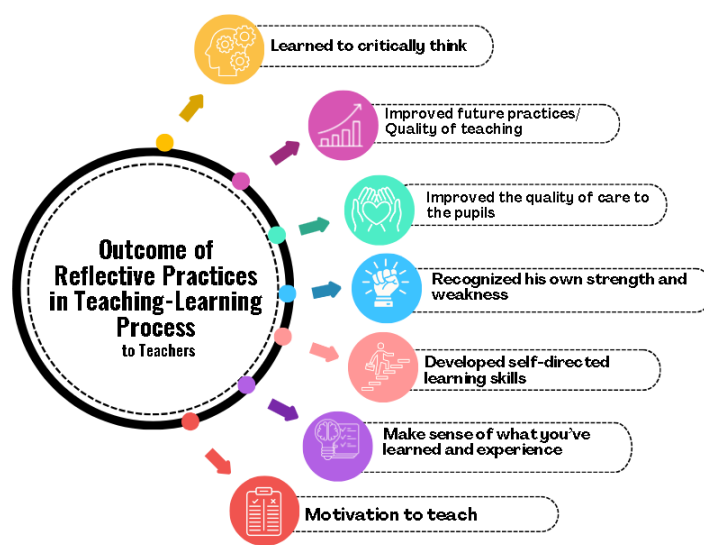


Figure 3. Themes Emerged on the Outcome of Reflective Practices in Teaching – Learning Process to Teachers/Educators

The following are some of the responses from the respondents;

"I am reflecting on the results of the guide test; it is alarming for me if after discussion and administering an initial test that is guided and the scores are very low then I did gamification and reward system. The result was good, and their test results increased." – Mathematics, Grade 4 Teacher, 20 years in Service

Also,

"As I wonder why many are not motivated to participate in my subject or on our activities it is because pupils are now different they do not see the reason of studying they do things for their enjoyment in doing something or take pride and be popular so what I did is to be on that level or feelings of enjoyment and add pride. I see that it is very effective." – EPP, Grade 4 Teacher, 10 years in Service

These responses are some of their personal experiences that the seven (7) themes were drawn. Improved the quality of care to the pupils. Teachers do more than simply watch and listen; they also take action. Teachers may give their students excellent instruction that will undoubtedly meet their needs if they have a deeper awareness of their demands. A pupil is much more likely to respond to a loving teacher, which increases learning and engagement opportunities. Building trust with the students is essential to their learning because it gives them the confidence to participate, ask for assistance when needed, and pay closer attention to guidance and support.

Also, improve future practice or quality of teaching. Teachers are learning how to identify their pupils' difficulties and handle them effectively. Additionally, to improve performance, the students will provide the teacher with practical solutions for any issues that may arise in her future teaching practice. Improving the quality of teachers and instruction is essential for excellent educational institutions. The working conditions of teachers in their schools, classrooms, and educational systems determine the quality of their instruction. According to [Thompson \(2021\)](#) in its article saying, "The quality of an education system cannot be greater than the extent to which it supports, sustains, and invests in the status of its teachers".

Likewise, learn to critically think. Another theme that surfaced regarding the results of the educators' reflective practices is that it aids them in using critical thinking to help their students based on their individual circumstances rather than just identifying issues. The process of analyzing a subject from multiple perspectives in order to be logical and critical is known as critical thinking. It entails posing probing questions to gain essential insight into a given circumstance. Furthermore, critical thinking is one of the most crucial skills for people and communities alike. It might be the most important ability to have as a teacher. Without these skills, succeeding in school, the workplace, and daily living would be difficult. It is comparable to a world without obstacles, which is a world without advancement.

Recognizing his own strengths and flaws was also the fourth theme that surfaced. The teacher progressively discovered its strengths and shortcomings that they could utilize to their advantage as they practised and reflected on their work. A teacher possesses multiple strengths. In order to instruct future generations, teachers need to have a specific set of experiences and personal traits. A teacher's ability to consistently bring out the best in their students is crucial; they bear a great deal of responsibility. Positive learning experiences can only be guaranteed through effective instruction. Nonetheless, some educators are inherently skilled at building strong bonds with their pupils, while others find it difficult.

Additionally, developing self-directed learning skills also emerged from the reflective practice of educators. Teachers, who must always learn new things, also need to have these kinds of abilities. Self-directed learning involves students taking the initiative to learn—in this case, the teacher—assessing their needs, setting goals, locating the necessary materials and human resources, using the best learning strategies, and evaluating their progress—either alone or with help from others. Teachers become both teachers and learners at the same time. All aspects of the education systems were forced to implement some degree of self-directed learning in the early

stages of the pandemic. All students, whether in elementary or grad school, had to do their work independently. Since "self-directed learning" incorporates crucial growth and development analysis within the parameters of lifelong learning, it is a beneficial approach to education (Main, 2023).

Additionally, motivated to teach. An educator who starts and maintains conduct toward a particular aim ought to be in this state. A motivated educator views their job as a mission to cultivate a love of learning in their students, not just a job. They understand that each student's motivation affects not only the dynamics in the classroom but also their future. The capacity of motivation to change education for both teachers and students, as well as useful strategies for making the classroom come to life. In the end, motivation is important for reasons other than personal fulfilment. Being able to learn and adapt is essential in a world that is changing quickly and where new opportunities and difficulties are continuously arising (Impact Teachers, 2024).

Finally, teachers must help students synthesize their learning and experiences. By understanding this process, educators become effective mentors who guide students in making sense of their experiences and applying them to their lives. This, in turn, fosters a positive outlook and cultivates aspirations that contribute to students' future success. Effective teaching practices encourage students to integrate prior knowledge with new content, thereby enhancing their understanding. This structured approach is essential for meaningful learning (Carr, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the experiences of educator responders throughout the pandemic show that reflective skills are critical for overcoming problems in their educational environments. Just as students benefit from time to study and plan, educators require enough time and support to participate in meaningful reflection. This emphasizes the necessity of establishing systems that allow instructors to improve their skills and adjust their practices, thus increasing their efficacy and resilience in the face of adversity.

Additionally, while teachers play an important role in improving students' academic achievement, their welfare is frequently jeopardized. This emphasizes the critical necessity for supportive interventions that promote educator well-being. Furthermore, encouraging reflective practice among teachers is critical since it not only improves their professional development but also positively impacts their students, schools, and the larger community. Investing in teachers' well-being and fostering reflective practices may foster a more successful educational climate that benefits both educators and students.

Moreover, reflective practice is an important skill for educators because it helps them understand the realities of their educational situations. It raises awareness of essential issues and presents concerns, allowing teachers to discover opportunities for change. Educators who engage in reflection receive significant insights into their practices, allowing them to adapt their approaches and incorporate best practices. This continual process not only benefits their professional development, but also leads to more effective teaching and better student outcomes.

Also, the PISA and other assessment results show that Filipino students lag substantially behind in key learning competencies, indicating that these issues predate the epidemic and that earlier efforts to improve academic performance were ineffective. This highlights the need for a more comprehensive strategy that considers various factors influencing student learning, such as teaching practices, curriculum relevance, and support systems. A comprehensive plan is required to address these systemic concerns and enhance academic achievements for Filipino pupils.

Finally, Reflective practice has a significant impact on teacher performance, which in turn improves student results. Educators can improve their teaching methods and address areas for

development by engaging in reflection, resulting in higher academic performance for their students. This interconnectedness stresses the significance of encouraging reflective practices in educational environments in order to improve overall teaching and learning outcomes.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

By addressing the following constraints and implementing these recommendations, future research may contribute more to a better understanding of educators' reflective practices and their importance in the educational landscape.

The current study may have a small sample size and diversity, limiting the generalizability of the results. A greater range of educators from varied situations and experiences is required for a more complete knowledge of reflective practices. Also, the study may not fully account for contextual factors such as the educational atmosphere, resources, and geographical differences, all of which might influence reflective practices. Lastly, relying entirely on interviews may limit the richness of data. Other qualitative methods, such as observations or focus groups, may yield further insights.

As for future research recommendations, conducting longitudinal research could help better understand how reflective practices grow over time and their long-term impact on teaching effectiveness and student performance. More so, future research should include interviews with a larger and more diverse group of educators across different levels (e.g., primary, secondary, and higher education) to capture a wider array of experiences and practices and incorporating quantitative tools alongside qualitative interviews may provide a more comprehensive understanding of reflective practices and their impacts, allowing for more robust data triangulation.

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