

Readiness of Elementary Schools in Transitioning to Full Face-To-Face Classes Amidst Pandemic

¹Christine Joy R. Dalagan, ²Alice P. Abalos

Graduate School, Wesleyan University-Philippines, Cabanatuan City
Email: christinejoyritualdalagan@gmail.com

Abstract

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The objective of this study was to evaluate the preparedness of elementary schools in the San Luis District to transition to full face-to-face instruction during the pandemic. The study assessed various aspects, including school operations, facilities, classroom structure, safety and well-being, and coordination between the school and the learners' homes. Eighteen elementary schools in the San Luis District, with a population of 164 teachers, were involved in this study. To collect data on the district's elementary schools' preparation for the return to in-person classes, the study employed a Google interview form. The researcher employed a descriptive correlational method to identify the relationships between various factors that could impact the readiness of schools. By doing so, the study could provide useful information that can be utilized to inform decisions on the best way to implement face-to-face classes in San Luis District. The results of the study were analyzed using statistical software to generate descriptive statistics and inferential.

The study emphasizes the need for elementary schools in the San Luis District to improve their preparedness for the return to full face-to-face classes. The study's findings highlight the importance of prioritizing safety measures before resuming full face-to-face classes. These safety measures include improving ventilation systems, increasing access to hand hygiene facilities, and maintaining social distancing measures where possible. Schools should also prioritize regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, equipment, and learning materials to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The study recommends that schools continue to monitor the situation and collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for all. It is essential to prioritize the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and staff to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission in educational settings.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face instruction, readiness, elementary schools

INTRODUCTION

Long before the COVID-19 outbreak, the globe was experiencing a learning crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic now threatens to exacerbate educational results. The pandemic has already had enormous effects on education, closing schools practically everywhere in the world in the biggest simultaneous shock to all education systems in our history (World Bank, 2020). Most schools have reopened globally following the extraordinary interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but education is still in recovery mode, analyzing the harm done and lessons learned (UNESCO 2021). In today's changing world, the teaching and learning process is undergoing a paradigm shift away from the traditional mode of teaching and learning.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) quickly responded to the crisis by requiring all schools to shift to alternative forms of classes, such as online and modular learning, to ensure the continuity of education.

The Department of Education Memorandum No. 31, Series of 2021, establishes criteria for reintroducing defined face-to-face sessions in locales with a low threat of COVID-19 transmission. The choice to hold face-to-face classes, according to the memorandum, will be dependent on a position's threat inflexibility categorization, as established by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Inter-Agency Task Force for the operation of Arising Infectious conditions (IATF). In response, the DepEd has initiated a pilot implementation of limited face-to-face delivery in low-risk areas of COVID-19 transmission, and the new DepEd Secretary, Sarah Duterte, has suggested full face-to-face classes to address learning loss.

The DepEd has directed all public and private schools to prepare for the implementation of the expanded phase of face-to-face classes, which was scheduled in early 2022 (DM no.085,s.2021). According to the memo, the expanded phase will cover all grade levels from Kinder to Grade 12. DepEd Order No. 34, s. 2022 is widely regarded as one of the most significant changes implemented by the new government administration led by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the Department's new secretary, Vice President Sara Duterte. Recognizing the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the need to resume 5 days of in-person classes.

San Luis District is one of the areas in the country where the DepEd is planning to conduct full face-to-face classes. However, before this can be implemented, it is crucial to assess the readiness of the schools and identify the challenges and necessary improvements required for a safe and effective transition.

As a researcher, it is crucial to highlight the importance of this study in helping address the challenges faced by educational institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the readiness of schools to transition to full face-to-face classes and help ensure the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and staff. By identifying the challenges and necessary improvements required for a successful transition, this research contributed to the continued provision of quality education amidst the ongoing pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research study entitled "Full Face-to-Face Classes amidst Pandemic: Readiness of Elementary Schools in San Luis District" aimed to investigate the readiness of elementary schools within the San Luis District to implement full face-to-face classes amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this goal, the research design utilized was descriptive-correlational as the main method of data collection and analysis to identify the relationships between various factors that could impact the readiness of schools. The descriptive-correlational method is valuable for examining the relationship between variables in a specific context without manipulating them.

Specifically, the study relied on a survey questionnaire distributed to teachers in the San Luis District. The questionnaire consisted of various items that aimed to measure the teachers' preparations for the implementation of full face-to-face classes, taking into consideration the unique challenges posed by the pandemic.

Research Locale and Sampling Procedures

To understand the current situation comprehensively, data were gathered from all the elementary school teachers in San Luis District, which is located in the Division of Aurora. The total population of the study was 164 respondents in 18 Elementary Schools in San Luis District. It is important to note that the selection of all the elementary school teachers in the district as the sample size was deemed necessary to ensure that the data collected is representative of the entire population. The research employed a census method to gather data from all teachers to achieve the highest level of accuracy possible.

Scope and Delimitation

To obtain a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the readiness of the elementary schools in the San Luis District to cater to Full Face-to-Face Classes amidst the pandemic, the research involved all Elementary Teachers from the San Luis District. It is important to note that obtaining 100% participation of the 164 respondents may present a challenge due to various factors such as conflicting schedules, lack of interest, or other reasons that may prevent them from participating in the study.

Research Instrument

In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to obtain the demographic characteristics of the respondents and schools. Followed by the part that was designed to assess the readiness of schools in San Luis District. This section was crucial as it provided information on the five major pillars of the Shared Responsibility Principle: School Operations, School Facilities, Structure of the Classroom, Safety and well-being, and Home-School Coordination. The questionnaire method provides a structured approach to data collection, enabling the researcher to obtain relevant and reliable data.

Data Gathering Procedure

The use of digital technology in research has become a popular method of data collection, especially during the pandemic when physical contact is limited. In this study, the Survey-Questionnaire Checklist was distributed to the San Luis District Elementary Teacher respondents



through Google Forms, a cloud-based survey software that allows for easy data distribution, collection, and analysis.

Data Analysis

This study used several statistical tools to analyze the data collected to achieve the research objectives. The Descriptive Statistics tool, which includes Frequency count, Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation, was utilized. A series of One-way ANOVA was also conducted. This method was used to determine whether there were any significant differences in the data collected from the different groups surveyed. Additionally, Inferential Statistics (Pearson-r Moment Correlation) was used to identify any significant relationships between the different variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results provided an in-depth analysis of the findings from a study conducted among elementary teachers of the San Luis District to assess the readiness of elementary schools in the district for the full implementation of face-to-face classes amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Respondents' School And Personal Profile

PARAMETERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
School Profile (n = 18)		
Category		
Small	14	77.78
Medium	4	22.22
Big	0	0.00
Location		
Coastal	5	27.78
Non-coastal	13	72.22
Teacher Profile (n = 164)		
Age		
24 – 29	30	18.29
30 – 35	54	32.93
36 – 41	39	23.78
42 – 47	26	15.85
48 – 53	15	9.15
Mean = 36.63		
SD = 7.32		
Sex		
Male	14	8.54
Female	150	91.46
Position		
Teacher 1	55	33.54
Teacher 2	47	28.66
Teacher 3	48	29.27
Master Teacher 1	9	5.49
Master Teacher 2	5	3.05

Vaccination Status

None	0	0.00
1 st Dose	2	1.22
2 nd Dose	129	78.66
Booster	33	20.12

According to the data presented in the table, there was a significant proportion of small schools in the District of San Luis. Specifically, the table reveals that most of the Elementary Schools in San Luis District were classified as small schools (14 or 77.28%). The table also indicated that there were 4 medium schools in the district, which comprised the remaining 22.22 percent of the total number of schools. According to Deborah Nusche's research in 2014, the size of a school is a crucial factor that affects students' academic achievement and learning. For many years, education systems have been interested in understanding the impact of school size on efficiency and quality, and this issue has gained even more significance in recent decades as governments aim to find the most effective ways to manage their schools.

The table revealed that the majority of the elementary schools in San Luis District were non-coastal schools (13 or 72.22%), and there were only 5 (27.78%) coastal schools. Trinona et al. (2021) found that non-coastal schools faced challenges such as inadequate resources for implementing health protocols and limited capacity to provide distance learning.

A study by Sibal (2017) found that most of the teachers in the Philippines' basic education system were aged 30 to 50. The research report sheds light on the age distribution of teachers in the San Luis District, as shown in the table.

The result indicated that female teachers outnumbered their male counterparts in nearly all grade levels and subjects. This trend of female domination in the teaching profession was not unique to the Philippines but is a global phenomenon (UNESCO, 2014). Based on the data presented, fifty-five (33.54%) of the teaching workforce were in their entry-level or Teacher 1 position. It is supported by the data collected by the Department of Education (DepEd) as of 2018 that 64.5% of teachers in the Philippines are in the Teacher I position (DepEd, 2018).

The data in the table indicated that most teachers (129 or 78.66%) have received complete doses/ second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, which offers significant protection against the virus. According to the Philippine Department of Health (2023), around 100 million vaccine doses have been administered in the country as of February 2023, equivalent to over 60 percent of the eligible population. This could be attributed to the DepEd's strategy, as outlined in DepEd Memorandum No. 071, s.2021, which urges teachers to get vaccinated before the resumption of face-to-face classes.



Table 2. *Preparations made by respondents for the implementation of Face-to-Face classes.*

PARAMETERS	MEAN	SD	DESCRIPTION
School Operation			
1. School drop-off and pick-up procedures are in place.	3.23	0.42	Agree
2. Signages and printed instructions are visible.	3.02	0.13	Agree
3. Space for parents and guardians is properly marked.	3.03	0.70	Agree
4. There is a display of a school map at the entrance point indicating the location of the classrooms.	3.05	0.42	Agree
5. Schools have entry and exit gates.	2.77	0.43	Agree
Pooled Mean	3.02	0.42	Agree
School Facilities			
1. There is an Isolation Area in the school.	2.67	0.50	Agree
2. There is a designated Waiting Area for the Parents/Guardians of the pupils.	3.15	0.41	Agree
3. There is a clinic.	2.51	0.81	Agree
4. The hand washing facility is accessible with enough water.	3.10	0.30	Agree
5. There is available and safe drinking water in school.	3.12	0.33	Agree
Pooled Mean	2.91	0.47	Agree
Classroom Structure			
1. The classroom is well-lighted and ventilated.	2.87	0.54	Agree
2. Toilets are clean and marked with directional signages and instructions.	2.49	0.57	Disagree
3. Important hotlines are posted in the classroom.	2.46	0.64	Disagree
4. Hand washing area/portable hand washing is present.	2.76	0.48	Agree
5. Availability of Learning Materials (books/SLMs)	2.47	0.54	Disagree
Pooled Mean	2.61	0.55	Agree
Safety and Well-being			
1. Teachers and school personnel are fully vaccinated.	3.20	0.68	Agree
2. Health, hygiene, and safety supplies are available.	2.99	0.41	Agree
3. Temperature, Thermal Scanners, or thermal guns are available.	2.50	0.60	Disagree
4. Health and safety signage and instructions are clear.	3.15	0.37	Agree



5. Disinfection supplies are available and accessible.	3.26	0.44	Agree
Pooled Mean	3.02	0.50	Agree
Home-school Coordination			
1. The school has a communication platform for coordination purposes among the learners, parents/guardians, and teachers.	2.75	0.60	Agree
2. Orientation materials are distributed to the teachers, learners, and parents.	3.09	0.48	Agree
3. The school oriented the parents/guardians on health protocols and safety measures.	3.25	0.43	Agree
4. The school oriented the parents on the implementation of full face-to-face classes.	3.36	0.48	Strongly Agree
5. Teachers orient the parents on their responsibility in the learning process.	3.35	0.48	Agree
Pooled Mean	3.16	0.50	Agree
Over-all Mean	2.95	0.51	Agree

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 Strongly Disagree; 1.76 – 2.50 Disagree; 2.51 – 3.25 Agree; 3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Agree

According to the data in Table 2, the elementary teachers in the San Luis District have shown a notable degree of readiness for the implementation of Full Face-to-Face Classes. This conclusion is drawn from the overall mean score of 2.95 and a standard deviation of 0.51, both of which fall within the "Agree" category. This means that the majority of teachers have made the necessary preparations to facilitate full face-to-face classes.

Home-School Coordination

The Home-School Coordination received the highest weighted mean score of 3.16 and Standard deviation of 0.50 among the areas that needed preparation for the implementation of full face-to-face classes amidst the pandemic in the San Luis District. Factor number 4, "The school oriented the parents on the implementation of full face-to-face classes," received the highest mean among the under Home School Coordination ($\bar{x} = 3.36$, $SD = 0.48$) and was described as "Strongly Agree." This was followed by factor No. 5, Teachers oriented the parents on their responsibility in the learning process ($\bar{x} = 3.35$, $SD = 0.48$), factor no. 3, "The school oriented the parents/guardians on health protocols and safety measures" ($\bar{x} = 3.25$, $SD = 0.48$).and factor no. 2, "Orientation materials are distributed to the teachers, learners and parents" ($\bar{x} = 3.09$, $SD = 0.48$) which was described as "Agree." This indicates that San Luis District Elementary Teachers agreed that they had coordinated effectively with parents/guardians for the implementation of full face-to-face classes during the pandemic. This finding implies that when teachers and parents/guardians work hand-in-hand, sharing information and resources and actively engaging in the educational process, it can lead to enhanced student outcomes, increased parental involvement, and a more comprehensive support system for the student's holistic development. Factor no. 1, "The school has communication platform for coordination purposes among the learners, parents/guardians and teachers," received the lowest mean of 2.75 with a standard deviation of 0.60, which was described as "Agree" This finding implies

that the teacher respondents needs to use other communication platforms to reach the learners, parent/guardians and other stakeholders.

Protection and Well-Being

Table 3 shows that both Protection and Well-Being and School Operation received similar results in their pooled mean ($\bar{x} = 3.02$, $SD = 0.50$) and described as “Agree”. Factor no. 5, “Disinfection supplies are available and accessible,” has the highest mean ($\bar{x} = 3.26$, $SD = 0.50$) with a description of “Agree.” The implication of having accessible disinfection supplies in schools is that it can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases among students, teachers, and staff. Factor No. 3, “Temperature, Thermal Scanners or thermal guns are available.” ($\bar{x} = 3.50$, $SD = 0.60$), received the lowest mean, which was described as “Disagree.” This implies that some of the teachers in San Luis District do not have their thermal scanners or temperature inside their classrooms which are crucial in implementing full face-to-face classes.

School Operation

Regarding School Operation, Factor no. 1, School drop-off and pick-up procedure are in place”, received the highest mean of 3.23 with a standard deviation of 0.42, which was described as “Agree.” Implementing a school drop-off and pick-up procedure can have several implications for ensuring the safety and security of students, parents/guardians, and school staff. The existence of a well-defined and organized procedure can minimize traffic congestion and reduce the likelihood of accidents. It can also help mitigate the risk of safety concerns such as child abduction. Factor no. 5, “Schools have entry and exit gates,” received the lowest score ($\bar{x} = 2.77$, $SD = 0.43$) and was described as “Agree.” This finding implies that without entry and exit gates, the school may be more vulnerable to intruders, unauthorized access, and safety hazards.

School Facilities

The School Facilities received a weighted mean score of 2.91 with a standard deviation of 0.47, indicating that the teachers “Agree” that the necessary facilities are available for the full implementation of face-to-face classes. Factor no. 2 received the highest weighted mean, “There is a designated Waiting Area for the Parents/Guardians of the pupils” ($\bar{x} = 3.15$, $SD = 0.41$). Having a designated waiting area in school implies that students, parents, and guardians can wait in a safe and comfortable space before and after classes, which ensures their supervision and reduces congestion in other areas of the school. “There is a clinic” ($\bar{x} = 3.15$, $SD = 0.41$) received the lowest mean under school facilities. This implies that some of the schools do not have school clinics.

Classroom Structure

Out of all the preparations required for the full implementation of face-to-face classes, the Classroom Structure received the lowest weighted mean score in the results. The teachers responded with a 2.61 pooled mean with a standard deviation of 0.47, which was described as “Agree.” Factor no. 1, “The classroom is well lighted and ventilated” ($\bar{x} = 2.87$, $SD = 0.54$) and was described as “Agree” received the highest mean. This implies that elementary schools in San Luis District were well-lighted and well-ventilated. A well-lighted and well-ventilated classroom is that it can contribute to a conducive learning environment for students. Factor No. 2 received a “Disagree” rating. “Toilets are clean and marked with directional signages and instructions” ($\bar{x} = 2.49$, $SD = 0.57$). This implies



that it is a challenge for elementary teachers to maintain the cleanliness of their toilets. Factor No. 5 also received a “Disagree” rating, “Availability of Learning Materials (books/SLMs)” ($\bar{x} = 2.47$, $SD = 0.54$). This implies that the District needs to provide additional learning materials for the learners. The Department of Education (DepEd) acknowledges the significance of learning materials in elementary education and has initiated several programs and strategies to enhance their quality and accessibility. Factor No. 3 received the lowest mean, “Important hotlines are posted in the classroom.” ($\bar{x} = 2.46$, $SD = 0.64$), which was described as “Disagree.” The result showed that the teachers should focus on this area. The implication of having important hotlines posted in the classroom is that they can provide immediate access to emergency services and support, such as the police, fire department, medical services, and school administration.

Table 3. *Relationship between the profile of the respondents and the preparation for the full face-to-face classes*

TEACHERS' PROFILE	READINESS ON IMPLEMENTATION					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age	-.064	.192*	.102	.127	.193*	.193*
Sex	-.107	-.006	.035	-.011	.042	-.005
Position	.011	.233**	.098	.212**	.210**	.259**
Vaccination Status	.099	-.021	.070	.048	-.016	.069

Legend: * correlation is **significant** at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** correlation is **highly significant** at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

1 – School Operation

2 – School Facilities

3 – Classroom Structure

4 – Safety and Well-being

5 – Home-school Coordination

6 – Readiness

To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the preparation for the full face-to-face classes, a correlation using Pearson r was computed. Results in this study show that both age and position in school have significant relationships to their preparation for full face-to-face classes.

Specifically, Age and School Facilities ($r = .192$, $p < 0.05$) imply that the quality of education received by students can be significantly influenced by the age of their teacher and their preparedness to manage school facilities.

Age and Home School-Coordination ($r = .193$, $p < 0.05$) indicating that experienced and older teachers are better equipped to coordinate with parents who homeschool their children, while younger and inexperienced teachers may face challenges in ensuring quality education.

Age and Overall Readiness ($r = .193$, $p < 0.05$) are indicative of the ability of the teachers to adapt to the challenges of face-to-face classes amidst the pandemic.

Position and School Facilities ($r = .233$, $p < 0.01$) indicate that teachers in leadership positions or higher positions may have a better understanding of the necessary safety protocols and may be better equipped to implement them in their schools.

Position and Protection and Well-being ($r = .212, p < 0.01$) implying that the teachers who are in higher positions, such as master teachers, have a greater responsibility to ensure that their colleagues are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to promote protection and well-being in the school.

Position and Home School-Coordination ($r = .210, p < 0.01$) signifying that the position of teachers, specifically those in leadership roles, may impact their ability to effectively coordinate with parents in face-to-face classes amidst the pandemic. Teachers in leadership positions may have greater authority and resources to establish communication channels with parents and address their concerns related to in-person classes. On the other hand, teachers in lower positions may face challenges in coordinating with parents and effectively communicating safety protocols. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the position and level of authority of teachers when devising strategies for effective coordination with parents in face-to-face classes during the pandemic.

Position and Overall Readiness ($r = .259, p < 0.01$) suggest several implications should be considered. These include the importance of providing equal access to resources and support to all schools to ensure that the quality of instruction and student outcomes are not negatively impacted by disparities in preparedness. Additionally, effective leadership and communication structures within schools should be established to ensure that all teachers receive adequate preparation and training to implement full face-to-face classes successfully. On the contrary, sex and vaccination status are not significantly related.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. San Luis District primarily consists of small elementary schools located in non-coastal areas, indicating the general size and geographical distribution of schools in the district.
2. The teachers generally agreed on their level of preparedness for full face-to-face classes, but specific areas were identified that require improvement, suggesting the need for targeted efforts to address these areas.
3. The areas requiring improvement include the posting of important hotlines in classrooms, availability of learning materials, clean toilets with clear instructions, and the presence of thermal scanners or temperature checks in schools, emphasizing the specific aspects that need attention and improvement for successful face-to-face classes.
4. Teachers in higher positions demonstrated greater readiness for full face-to-face classes, implying that their experience and responsibilities contribute to their preparedness.
5. Non-coastal schools were found to be more prepared for face-to-face classes compared to their coastal counterparts in the San Luis District, highlighting a significant difference in readiness based on the location of the schools.
6. The position of the teacher significantly influences their level of preparedness in areas such as school facilities, protection and well-being, and home-school coordination, emphasizing the correlation between the teacher's position and their readiness in these aspects.

7. Experienced teachers displayed higher levels of preparedness and familiarity with school facilities compared to younger teachers, indicating the advantage of experience in creating an optimal learning environment.
8. Experienced teachers were also more equipped to coordinate with parents compared to those who were new to the profession, underscoring their ability to effectively collaborate and communicate with parents for successful home-school coordination.
9. The results indicate that the majority of elementary schools in the San Luis District are prepared to implement full face-to-face classes, as evident from the level of preparedness observed in the district.

Conflict of Interest

I, Christine Joy R. Dalagan, understand that conflict of interest refers to situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise my judgment in evaluating, conducting, or reporting research.

I hereby declare that I do not have any personal conflict of interest that may arise from the application and submission of my research proposal.

I understand that I may be held accountable by the Wesleyan University – Philippines, Graduate School for any conflict of interest that I have intentionally concealed.

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