EPRA International Journal of Environmental Economics, Commerce and Educational Management
Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra0414 |ISI I.F Value: 0.815|SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.57 ISSN: 2348 – 814X
Volume: 12 | Issue:8 |August 2025

PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES IN TEACHING SOCIAL SCIENCES: BASIS FOR INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES DEVELOPMENT

Francis Michael S. Dilag, Dr. Rowena A. Baloyo

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra23526
DOI No: 10.36713/epra23526

ABSTRACT

This study explored the challenges faced by seven senior high school social science teachers in adapting to the post-pandemic or "now normal" educational setup, emphasizing competency-based learning through the continued use of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). Using a qualitative phenomenological method, interviews revealed key issues such as adapting teaching methods, lack of professional training, mental health struggles, low student engagement, assessment difficulties, and reliance on institutional support. The findings highlight the need for stronger educational support systems, including teacher training, mental health services, and updated policies aligned with current teaching demands.

KEYWORDS: *Post-Pandemic, Now Normal, Teaching Strategies, Social Science Education, Senior High School*

INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic has significantly transformed education systems, prompting educators to redefine their roles within hybrid and digital learning environments. Social science teachers, in particular, have adapted programs to reflect contemporary societal challenges while addressing students' socio-emotional (UNESCO, 2023). Research shows that blended learning models are no longer seen as temporary solutions but as sustainable strategies that enhance engagement and accessibility through virtual simulations, collaborative platforms, and data-driven assessments (Lee & Tran, 2024).

Dhawan (2020) emphasizes the need to improve the education, advocating for instructional strategies that learner-centered approach. Recognizing the diverse learning needs of students, educators adopted differentiated instruction strategies such as tailoring lessons to accommodate varying abilities, learning styles, and interests, thereby promoting inclusivity and personalized learning experiences (Manzano, 2022). Brookings Institution (2022), has 70% of teachers now assign personal devices to students, with different platforms that integral to teaching and communication. Seril (2022) highlighted the importance of SEL or Social-Emotional Learning and mindfulness practices in fostering student engagement and emotional well-being.

Despite concerted efforts to implement flexible learning modalities, various educational strategies, challenges in teaching in a now normal persist. Ondras & Alvero (2023) disclosed that elementary and secondary schools encountered challenges in addressing the learning gaps in a post pandemic. Authors added that those challenges encountered by these teachers can be considered as potential risks to students learning.

Research indicates that teachers who have a strong grasp of both subject content and pedagogical methods, and who are trained to continuously reflect upon and adapt their teaching strategies, demonstrate greater effectiveness in addressing the diverse learning needs of their students (Darling-Hammond, 2020). Teachers have faced significant challenges, one adjustment includes providing students with extended time to complete assignments, acknowledging the diverse learning environments and constraints faced by many learners (Leite et al., 2022).

Conceptual Framework

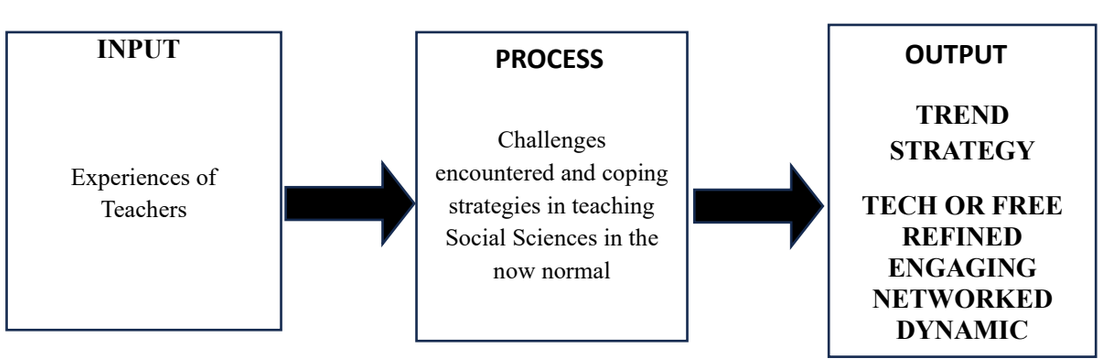


Figure 1 shows the schematic diagram, the schematic flow, and the relationship of the conceptual parts of the study. The input part discussed their experiences during the implementation of the The second column, represents the process of the study. During the procedure, the inputs gathered were processed and analyzed using Thematic Analysis. Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method offers a structured approach for analyzing qualitative data, particularly in educational research, by systematically identifying and interpreting the essence of participants lived experiences. The results was utilized to create strategies which was the output of this study.

General Objective of this study is to know the pedagogical challenges and adaptive strategies of teachers

teaching social sciences in a now normal education, know how they feel and how they cope with these challenges. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following:

1. What are the experiences of senior high school teachers in teaching Social Science?
2. What are the challenges encountered?
3. What are the coping mechanisms?
4. What is the essence of these challenges?
5. What is the proposed intervention program based on the results of the study?

Scope of the Study

The study is mainly focused on determining the challenges and adaptive strategies among Senior High School Teachers in DepEd Butuan City teaching Social Science in the now normal. Furthermore, the study is limited only to DepEd secondary teachers who are teaching Social Sciences subjects assigned in Butuan City division in the six (6) identified Schools offering Humanities and Social Sciences Strand.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES AND STUDIES

Challenges of teachers after pandemic

The findings of Montebon (2024) reveal that, overall, teachers' levels of agreement on the perceptions statements regarding the MELCs released by the Department of Education are at a moderate level.

DEPEd Mandated MELCS Usage

Department of Education Order No. 34, series of 2022 or the Most Essential Leaming Competencies (MELCs)shall continue to apply for SY 2022-2023.

Difficulties in new distance learning

Agayon, Agayon, and Pentang (2022) conducted a qualitative study involving 10 teachers from five secondary schools in the Philippines. The research identified challenges such as learning quality transfer, module distribution, internet connectivity issues, and health risks.

Adaptability and Resiliency

Mamauag's (2022) study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by teachers in the Philippines during the new normal and underscores the importance of adaptability and resilience in teaching

Research Design

This research employed qualitative research design since the purpose of conducting this research is to know the challenges of encountered among senior high school teachers in Butuan City Division. According to Creswell & Poth (2023), a phenomenological study defines the meaning for individuals of their lived experiences. Using phenomenological approach, it is a form of qualitative enquiry that emphasizes experiential, lived aspects of a particular construct, how the phenomenon is experienced at the time that it occurs, rather than what is thought about this experience or the meaning ascribed to it subsequently.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in the Division of Butuan City, which has consistently demonstrated excellence in educational governance and innovation. Notably, Butuan City Division was awarded the National Champion of the SAFE-CI (School Assessment for Effectiveness and Continuous Improvement) Program in 2022. Additionally, the Butuan City Local Government Unit, in partnership with the education sector, was recognized as the National Champion of the National Literacy Awards for the years, 2018, 2022 and 2024, affirming the city's commitment to inclusive and quality literacy programs.

Further underscoring its dedication to human resource development and institutional efficiency, the Butuan City Division was conferred the PRIME-HRM (Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management) Level II Bronze Award by the Civil Service Commission in 2021.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were Seven (7) Senior High School Teachers teaching social sciences from Butuan City. For this analysis, the researcher implemented the purposive sampling. Crossman (2020) states that a purposive sample is *a* non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study.

Research Instruments

The researcher conducted a face-to-face interview and a virtual interview with the use of online platforms, considering the availability of our participants. The researcher used semi structured. Doyle (2020) defined semi structured as a qualitative research method that combines a pre-determined set of open questions with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further. Before the interview proper, researcher presented the prepared questions to the participants and let them read in advance.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher gathered data by conducting interviews and compiling the collected information to address the research questions. This type of study would require not just searching for the definition of specific terms, but the actual reading of primary source material on the study. It was explained to the participants that the collected data would be used exclusively for research purposes, with full credit and acknowledgment given to the teacher participants. Throughout the research process, the researcher maintained an empathetic and nonjudgmental stance to foster trust and uphold a respectful relationship with the participants.

EPRA International Journal of Environmental Economics, Commerce and Educational Management
Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra0414 |ISI I.F Value: 0.815|SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.57 ISSN: 2348 – 814X
Volume: 12 | Issue:8 |August 2025

Data Analysis

Following data collection, the researcher analyzed the responses using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method, a rigorous seven-step process designed to extract the essence of participants lived experiences. The first step involved reading and re-reading all transcribed interviews. This immersion allowed the researcher to become deeply familiar with the data, helping to develop a holistic understanding of each participant's experience in the context of teaching during the now normal.

RESULTS

Each question is categorized with this outline: a) Experiences as a Social Science Teacher teaching in a now normal set up, b) Challenges as a Social Science Teacher teaching in a now normal set up, c) Strategies and Coping mechanisms as a Social Science Teacher teaching in a now normal set up, d) Overall impact and as a Social Science Teacher teaching in a now normal set up.

Experiences of senior high school teachers in teaching Social Science in the now normal

Senior High School teachers have faced significant experiences in adapting to the now normal of education, particularly in teaching Social Science subjects. The abrupt embracing of various distance learning modalities, including online, modular, and hybrid formats, has required teachers to rapidly acquire new skills and strategies.

TABLE . Constructed themes based on their experiences

Codes	Sub Themes	Themes
There were nights I couldn't sleep (KI 1) Mentally exhausting (KI 2) Caused a lot of stress (KI 3) Challenging and emotionally draining. (KI 4) Felt burned out (KI 6) Emotionally taxing (KI 7)	Sleepless nights / Exhausted and Stress / Feeling Overwhelmed	Mental Health Struggles
Assessing students became difficult (KI 1) Technical glitches sometimes affected their completion (KI 2) Change the way we assessed learning (KI 3)	Assessment Adjustment Completing task issues Modifying feedbacks and even grading systems	Assessment and Grading Challenges
Our school tried to help (KI 3) Our principal really helped (KI 5)	Resources availability Technical Supports	Dependence on Institutional Support
had to print modules (KI 2)	Availability of learning materials and devices	Equity in Learning

Challenges encountered by senior high school teachers in teaching Social Science in the now normal

This study enumerated the challenges encountered by the participants in teaching social sciences. A study by Caganan and Buenvinida (2021) highlighted that many teachers struggled with the sudden transition, often lacking the necessary training and resources to effectively deliver lessons. This lack of preparedness led to difficulties in engaging students and assessing their learning outcomes.

TABLE. Constructed themes based on their challenges

Codes	Sub Themes	Themes
Assessing students became difficult (KI 1) Technical glitches sometimes affected their completion (KI 2) Challenging to provide timely feedback (KI 5)	Assessment Adjustment	Assessment and Grading Challenges
Too general and not specific to Social Sciences (KI 1) They didn't always address the specific challenges (KI 2) Not always applicable to our teaching context. (KI 5) We were not trained for this (KI 4) Wish there were more hands-on trainings (KI 7)	Trainings were not suitable for teachers Low Development Lack of Specific and Practical Workshop	Need for Professional Development
We have limited resources (KI 2)	Resources availability	Dependence on Institutional Support
Many of my students don't even have a phone (KI 4) Walking two kilometers to access mobile signal just to submit a quiz (KI 6) I have students who actually stayed with their relatives (KI 7)	Availability of learning materials and devices Internet Access Limited time for School works	Equity in Learning

Coping mechanisms of senior high school teachers in teaching Social Science in the now normal
In response to these challenges, educators have emphasized the importance of collaboration, ongoing professional development, and the provision of adequate resources to enhance the effectiveness of Social Science instruction. By sharing experiences and strategies, teachers aim to create a more supportive and effective learning environment for their students. It underscore the need for continued support and adaptation in the education sector to ensure that teachers are equipped to meet the evolving demands of teaching in the new normal.

TABLE Constructed themes (Coping Strategies)

Codes	Sub Themes	Themes
We were told to be lenient (KI 7)	Modifying feedbacks and even grading systems	Assessment and Grading Challenges
I had to redesign all my lesson plans and find ways (KI 1) I had to modify my teaching strategies (KI 2) Simplify lessons more than usual (KI 4) Had to adapt my lessons (KI 6)	Changing Approaches Streamlining Methods	Need for Professional Development

What is/are the essence of these challenges to senior high school teachers in teaching Social Science in the now normal
Compounding these instructional challenges is the fact that most teachers were not adequately trained for this rapid transition. Many were left to navigate new digital platforms, assessment tools, and online pedagogies with little to no formal preparation (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

TABLE. Constructed themes (Challenges)

Codes	Sub Themes	Themes
Students' future is on the line (KI 3) There's a need for policy reforms (KI 4) Professional development must be prioritized (KI 5)	Need for trainings Policy review	Need for Professional Development

Theme 1: Adjustment to New Teaching Methods
Both contexts required rapid shifts to online/hybrid models, regardless of resource availability.

"At first, it was really overwhelming. I had to redesign all my lesson plans and find ways to use digital tools I wasn't familiar with. I had to watch YouTube tutorials just to learn how to use Google Classroom. I'm still adjusting."- KI 1

"I had to modify my teaching strategies to suit online platforms, which was time-consuming and required a steep learning curve." - KI 2

"I had to simplify lessons more than usual because not all students could attend or keep up. That limited what I could really teach." - KI 4

"I had to adapt my lessons to be more interactive and engaging, using available resources like local materials. - KI 6

These challenges were deepened by limited access to reliable internet and technological resources, which hindered effective teaching and learning. Responses shows that teachers had to quickly familiarize themselves with digital platforms, local materials and tools, often without prior experience or sufficient professional development. Rio et al. (2021) investigated this issue through the lens of Senior High School educators teaching Qualitative Research with limited preparation.

Theme 2: Need for Professional Development
Teachers across regions struggled with new platforms and teaching strategies, often without sufficient guidance.

"I had to attend various online training sessions to adapt to the new teaching methods, but they were often too general and not specific to Social Sciences." - KI 1

"I participated in several workshops, but they didn't always address the specific challenges of teaching Social Sciences." - KI 2

"Honestly, we were not trained for this. The webinars helped, but they were too technical at times. I needed more step-by-step support, especially in using the platforms"– KI 4

"Training sessions were infrequent and not always applicable to our teaching context." - KI 5

"I wish there were more hands-on trainings. Most of what I learned, I figured out by trial and error." - KI 7

Social Science Educators revealed that they encountered significant challenges in this transition, highlighting critical gaps in digital literacy, pedagogical strategies, and assessment methodologies. This reality underscores a need for

sustained and context-sensitive professional development to help educators adapt to the evolving demands of teaching in the "now normal."

Theme 3: Mental Health Struggles
Emotional strain, stress, and burnout were widespread among educators.

"There were nights I couldn't sleep thinking about whether I was doing enough. The pressure to meet deadlines, attend webinars, and also manage my home life but for me it was too much." - KI 1

-

"The constant adaptation to new tools and methods was mentally exhausting."-KI 2

"The uncertainty and constant changes in teaching methods caused a lot of stress." - KI 3

"The isolation and lack of support made teaching more challenging and emotionally draining."- KI 4

"I felt burned out midyear. We were expected to do so much—teaching, checking, attending meetings, even handling students' emotional problems." - KI 5

"The lack of resources and support made teaching more challenging and emotionally taxing." - KI 6

The pressure to quickly adapt to unfamiliar technologies, meet new performance expectations, and support students emotionally, while managing their own well-being has led to widespread stress, anxiety, and burnout of our participants. Butuanon Social science educators have developed an emotional exhaustion and burnout, as to these responses. Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by the dual responsibilities of managing classes and household duties, leading to significant emotional and physical exhaustion. This need to be emphasized since it reflects a broader theme concerning the critical need to address teachers' mental health as a concern in educational recovery and reform.

Theme 4: Engagement and Participation Issues
Teachers in both settings struggled to maintain student interest and interaction.

"Students were disengaged. Some didn't attend online classes, and those who did often had their cameras off, making it hard to gauge their understanding."
- KI 1

"Student participation declined. Many didn't respond to emails or messages, making it hard to maintain communication."- KI 3

"Student engagement was low. Many students had to help their families with farming or household chores, leaving little time for studies." - KI 4

"During online classes, cameras were always off. It felt like I was talking to myself. It was difficult to tell if they were listening or even there." - KI 5

One of the most critical challenges that emerged for Butuanon social science educators during the transition to the "now normal" is sustaining student engagement and participation. As schools shifted in a hybrid modality, many educators found themselves struggling to maintain learners' interest and involvement, particularly in a subject like social science, which thrives on discussion, interaction, and critical thinking. It is a vital aspect of post-pandemic teaching in ensuring meaningful participation in digital and blended learning environments requires more than content delivery but also it demands strategy, creativity, and institutional support.

Theme 5: Assessment and Grading Challenges
Traditional assessment models were insufficient, pushing teachers to develop more flexible and context-sensitive evaluation tools.

"Assessing students became difficult. I had to rely more on performance tasks and projects, but it was hard to ensure academic honesty."- KI 1

"I implemented online quizzes and assignments, but technical glitches sometimes affected their completion."
- KI 2

"We had to change the way we assessed learning. Instead of the usual tests, I gave more performance tasks like essays or short video presentations. But it was hard to gauge honesty and effort." - KI 3

"Assessments were based on written tasks submitted in person, but it was challenging to provide timely feedback." - KI 5

"Grades became more about completion than mastery. We were told to be lenient, but it felt like we were not being fair to students who really tried." - KI 7

Butuanon educators, have faced an array of challenges as they have had to modify traditional assessment methods, such as paper-and-pencil tests and performance tasks, to fit the constraints of remote and hybrid learning environments. These changes are not only about adapting content delivery but also about ensuring that assessments remain fair, reliable, and aligned with learning goals in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

Theme 6: Dependence on Institutional Support
Success largely depended on how well schools, departments and governments supported teachers with tools, training, and encouragement.

"Sometimes we cannot provide the students need ...Even our schools cannot give all the necessities' of our student since we have limited resources to share and to offer" - KI 2

"Our school tried to help by providing internet subsidies and scheduling regular faculty meetings. That really made a difference, even just emotionally" - KI 3

"Thankfully, our principal really helped by allocating a tech support team for teachers." - KI 5

"We were mostly on our own. There was a help from the division office. We shared resources with other teachers, but it wasn't enough." - KI 6

Participants have found themselves increasingly dependent on the resources from professional development to technological infrastructure as the delivery of complex subjects such as history, politics, and sociology demand both innovative strategies and ongoing support.

Theme 7: Equity in Learning

Both urban and rural schools faced issues of inequality whether in access, quality of instruction, or learning outcomes even for different reasons.

"Most of my students had no gadgets, and only a few had stable internet. I had to print modules and sometimes deliver them to remote areas. It was heartbreaking to see how far behind some students were." - KI 2

"Many of my students don't even have a phone. I had to print and distribute modules myself every week." - KI 4

"I remember one student walking two kilometers to access mobile signal just to submit a quiz. It made me rethink how we measure learning." -KI 6

"I have students who actually stayed with their relatives.. working students so they have fewer or limited time for studying." - KI 7

Participants divulged that Urban schools in Butuan City generally had better access to educational resources and infrastructure compared to their rural counterparts. However, even urban schools experienced limitations. A study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) revealed that as of 2020, 1,562 schools nationwide still lacked electricity connections, and 39,335 schools required upgrades to their electrical systems. Additionally, gaps in information and communications technology (ICT) access were noted, with many schools failing to meet delivery targets for computer packages. As social science education increasingly relies on digital tools, the challenge of ensuring equitable access becomes more pronounced, compelling educators to seek solutions that can bridge these divides and support all students.

TABLE. CONSTRUCTED THEMES

Codes	Sub - Themes	Themes (Challenges of Teachers)
I had to redesign all my lesson plans and find ways (KI 1) I had to modify my teaching strategies (KI 2) Simplify lessons more than usual (KI 4) Had to adapt my lessons (KI 6)	• Changing Approaches • Streamlining Methods	Adjustment to New Teaching Methods
Too general and not specific to Social Sciences (KI 1) They didn't always address the specific challenges (KI 2) Not always applicable to our teaching context. (KI 5) We were not trained for this (KI 4) Wish there were more hands-on trainings (KI 7)	• Trainings were not suitable for teachers • Low Development • Lack of Specific and Practical Workshop	Need for Professional Development

There were nights I couldn't sleep (KI 1) Mentally exhausting (KI 2) Caused a lot of stress (KI 3) Challenging and emotionally draining. (KI 4) Felt burned out (KI 5) Emotionally taxing (KI 6)	• Sleepless nights • Exhausted and Stress • Feeling Overwhelmed	Mental Health Struggles
Students were disengaged (KI 1) Participation declined (KI 3) Engagement was low (KI 4) Felt like I was talking to myself (KI 5)	• Unengaging classroom • Low participation	Engagement and Participation Issues
Assessing students became difficult (KI 1) Technical glitches sometimes affected their completion (KI 2) Change the way we assessed learning (KI 3) Challenging to provide timely feedback (KI 5) We were told to be lenient (KI 7)	• Assessment Adjustment • Completing task issues • Modifying feedbacks and even grading systems	Assessment and Grading Challenges
We have limited resources (KI 2) Our school tried to help (KI 3) Our principal really helped (KI 5) We were mostly on our own (KI 6)	Resources availability Technical Supports	Dependence on Institutional Support
I had to print modules (KI 2) Many of my students don't even have a phone (KI 4) Walking two kilometers to access mobile signal just to submit a quiz (KI 6) I have students who actually stayed with their relatives (KI 7)	Avialabilty of learning materials and devices Internet Access Limited time for School works	Equity in Learning

As to Butuanon social science educators, achieving equity in learning, especially in social science education, requires systemic change at both institutional and policy levels. While teachers continue to make efforts to address these disparities within their classrooms, much more needs to be done to ensure that all students regardless of their socio-economic status or geographical location have access to the resources they need to succeed. The studies reviewed here highlight the importance of institutional support in bridging the equity gap, offering a clear call for greater investment in resources, technology, and training to promote equal learning opportunities for all.

Teachers in Butuan City specifically the Social Science teachers have shown remarkable resilience in adapting to the now normal learning methods but despite their dedication, they face significant challenges, including insufficient professional development opportunities, mental health struggles, engagement and participation issues, assessment and grading difficulties, dependence on institutional support, and concerns about equity in learning. These interconnected issues highlight the urgent need for comprehensive support systems to enhance the effectiveness and well-being of educators in the region.

Table. Proposed educational strategy in a now normal education

TREND STRATEGY	
Summary :	The TREND teaching strategy is a contemporary pedagogical approach that emphasizes the integration of Technology or Free, Refined, Engaging, Networked learning, and Dynamic adaptability to enhance student learning experiences.. The framework of the TREND strategy is structured around five key components: Technology integration involves utilizing digital platforms and tools to support learning while mixing with tech-free based learning to accommodate students who don't have access in internet and no gadgets; Refined application focuses on connecting theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios and refined lessons that are essentials to the students; Engagement emphasizes active participation and interest in learning activities; Networked learning encourages collaboration and communication among students and educators; and Dynamic adaptability promotes flexibility in teaching methods to meet diverse learning needs. By implementing the TREND strategy, educators can create a learning environment that is responsive to the needs of students and prepares them for the complexities of the now normal set up.
TREND	**TECH OR FREE** **REFINED** **ENGAGING** **NETWORKED** **DYNAMIC**
	Technology Integration or Free **Select Appropriate Tools**: Choose digital platforms and tools that enhance learning experiences, such as learning management systems, educational apps, and collaborative platforms. **Provide Training**: Offer professional development for educators to effectively utilize these technologies. **TECH free** **KWL Charts**: Utilize KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) charts to assess prior knowledge, set learning objectives, and reflect on what has been learned at the end of the lesson **Mind Dumps**: Allocate time for students to write continuously about a topic without stopping, helping to clear their minds and organize thoughts. **Journaling**: Encourage students to maintain journals where they can reflect on daily lessons, express thoughts, and track their learning progress. **Refined Teaching Methods** **Adopt Evidence-Based Practices**: Implement teaching strategies supported by research, such as differentiated instruction and formative assessments. **Continuous Improvement**: Regularly review and refine teaching methods based on student feedback and learning outcomes. **Engaging Learning Experiences** **Incorporate Active Learning**: Utilize strategies like project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and gamification to increase student engagement. **Connect to Real-World Contexts**: Design learning activities that relate to students' interests and real-life situations. **Networked Learning** **Facilitate Collaboration**: Encourage teamwork and communication among students through group projects and online discussions. **Build Learning Communities**: Create platforms for students and educators to share resources, ideas, and support. **Dynamic Adaptability** **Monitor Progress**: Use data and assessments to track student progress and identify areas for improvement. **Be Flexible**: Adapt teaching strategies and materials to meet the evolving needs of students and the educational environment.

SUMMARY

Teachers faced difficulty adjusting to blended and technology-based teaching strategies. While some embraced online platforms, others struggled due to limited digital literacy or inconsistent internet access. The application of MELCs, while designed to simplify the curriculum, often led to a surface-level approach in Social Science topics that traditionally require in-depth discussions and student interaction.

The transition to a new mode of instruction highlighted the need for sustained and context-specific training. Teachers indicated a lack of workshops or seminars that addressed the integration of MELCs into their subjects or modern strategies suitable for virtual and hybrid classrooms. Many felt underprepared for the demands of the evolving educational landscape.

With increased workloads, technology-related stress, and the pressure to meet MELC-based requirements, teachers reported feeling overwhelmed. The lack of emotional and institutional support led to burnout, especially when personal

and professional boundaries blurred during remote learning periods. Teachers observed a decline in student interest and participation, particularly in critical-thinking subjects like Philosophy and Social Studies. The generalized structure of MELCs made it challenging to sustain deep engagement or foster meaningful classroom discussions, whether in-person or online.

Designing assessments that are both aligned with MELCs and capable of measuring higher-order thinking proved to be difficult. Teachers expressed uncertainty over how to fairly evaluate students' understanding while balancing the condensed scope of the MELCs and the varying learning modalities. Successful delivery of MELC-aligned instruction depended heavily on the presence (or absence) of institutional support. Teachers cited inconsistent administrative communication, lack of access to printed modules, and delays in distributing instructional materials as obstacles that hindered effective teaching.

Successful delivery of MELC-aligned instruction depended heavily on the presence (or absence) of institutional support. Teachers cited inconsistent administrative communication, lack of access to printed modules, and delays in distributing instructional materials as obstacles that hindered effective teaching.

In response to the challenges posed by the new normal, teachers demonstrated resilience by developing innovative teaching strategies. They created engaging and pleasant learning environments through the use of multimedia resources, interactive activities, and collaborative platforms. These adaptive approaches not only facilitated effective learning but also fostered a sense of community among students, despite the physical distance.

Recognizing the pivotal role of parents in the learning process, teachers emphasized the importance of collaboration between educators and families. Effective communication and partnership with parents were deemed essential in supporting students' learning and addressing challenges related to the new normal. Teachers advocated for training programs that empower parents to actively participate in their children's education, thereby strengthening the support system for students.

This study revealed that there were seven (7) generated common themes on the challenges of Senior high school teachers teaching social sciences in the now normal. The seven (7) generated common themes were: (a) Adaptation to New Teaching Methods; (b) Need for Professional Development; (c) Mental Health Struggles; (d) Engagement and Participation Issues; (e) Assessment and Grading Challenges; (f) Dependence on Institutional Support; (g) Equity in Learning.

According to the findings of this study, it is evident that division-wide intervention programs are essential to support social science teachers in Butuan City. These programs should focus on enhancing teachers' professional competencies, addressing resource limitations, and promoting mental well-being. By implementing targeted initiatives, educational institutions can empower teachers to navigate the challenges of the new normal effectively.

Furthermore, addressing mental health concerns is paramount. Teachers have reported experiencing stress, anxiety, and burnout due to increased workloads and the challenges of adapting to new teaching methods. Implementing support systems, such as counseling services and stress management programs, can help mitigate these issues and promote a healthier work environment. Intervention programs are vital for supporting social science teachers in Butuan City. By focusing on professional development, resource allocation, and mental health support, educational institutions can create an environment that fosters teacher growth and enhances the quality of education.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study underscore the multifaceted challenges faced by social science teachers in Butuan City amid the "new normal" educational landscape. The majority of respondents highlighted issues such as the lack of resources, limited Learning Action Cells (LACs), insufficient assistance, and the need for more training opportunities. These challenges have necessitated teachers to develop their own strategies to ensure effective teaching and learning. Despite these obstacles, educators have demonstrated resilience by creating pleasant learning environments and effectively engaging with parents and students.

The shift to MELC-based instruction, though developed in response to the pandemic, brought new challenges in terms of content delivery, depth, and relevance—especially in subjects that require analytical and reflective learning like those in the Social Sciences.

Teachers have had to navigate a difficult balance between institutional expectations, their own capacity, and student needs. Without adequate training and support, their ability to implement MELCs meaningfully has been limited.

Mental health concerns, inequity in learning environments, and persistent engagement issues have compounded the instructional challenges of Senior High School Social Science teachers.

In response to these challenges, teachers have developed their own strategies to ensure effective teaching and learning. They have created pleasant learning environments by incorporating innovative teaching methods and engaging students through various activities. Furthermore, teachers have actively engaged with parents to ensure that students receive the necessary support both at school and at home. These efforts have contributed to maintaining a conducive learning environment despite the prevailing challenges.

Recommendations

The researcher acknowledges the complicated challenges encountered by social science educators in Butuan City, particularly in the context of the "now normal" educational setup. These challenges encompass instructional

difficulties, limited access to resources, and the need for continuous professional development. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure effective teaching and learning in the evolving educational landscape.

These recommendations aim to empower Senior High School Social Science teachers to confidently deliver MELC-based education in the now normal while preserving the richness, criticality, and transformative nature of the social sciences.

Revisit the MELCs for Senior High School Social Science subjects to ensure they retain depth, promote critical thinking, and reflect real-world relevance. Subject-specific enhancements should be developed in collaboration with experienced educators.

Provide continuous training focused on MELC-aligned instruction, blended learning strategies, assessment development, and mental health resilience. These should be tailored to the unique demands of Social Science educators.

Schools should prioritize teacher mental health by institutionalizing wellness programs, providing access to counseling services, and encouraging reasonable workload distribution. Promote interactive and student-centered learning activities such as debates, simulations, and case analyses—that align with MELCs but also revive student participation and interest.

Assist teachers in creating varied and inclusive assessment formats that are MELC-aligned but also account for the diverse learning contexts of students.

Improve communication, logistics, and resource distribution from school heads and education departments. Teachers must be equipped with the tools they need to deliver effective and equitable instruction.

Implement initiatives to support students lacking access to digital tools and stable connectivity. This may include printed modules, learning hubs, or government partnerships aimed at narrowing the digital divide.

These recommendations aim to empower Senior High School Social Science teachers to confidently deliver MELC-based education in the now normal—while preserving the richness, criticality, and transformative nature of the social sciences.

To equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of new teaching methods, it is essential to implement comprehensive professional development programs. These programs should focus on enhancing digital literacy, pedagogical strategies, and assessment techniques. Additionally, incorporating trauma-informed approaches and social-emotional learning frameworks can help teachers address the diverse needs of students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Recognizing the mental health struggles faced by educators, it is crucial to establish support systems that promote their well-being. Schools should integrate mental health programs into their curricula and provide access to counseling services for both teachers and students. Creating a school climate that prioritizes safety, respect, and emotional support can mitigate stress and burnout, leading to improved teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

To address engagement and participation issues, particularly among marginalized students, schools must adopt inclusive teaching strategies. This includes providing necessary learning materials, improving internet connectivity, and implementing policies that promote equitable access to education. Utilizing blended learning models that combine online and face-to-face instruction can cater to diverse learning needs and ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

To overcome assessment and grading challenges, it is essential to develop and implement reliable assessment frameworks that align with new teaching methods. Providing teachers with clear guidelines and training on alternative assessment methods can ensure that evaluations accurately reflect student learning outcomes. Additionally, strengthening institutional support systems by improving infrastructure, access to resources, and administrative assistance can empower teachers to deliver quality education amidst evolving challenges.

By implementing this recommendation, educational institutions can create a more supportive and effective environment for both teachers and students, addressing the multifaceted challenges in the new normal education setup.

REFERENCES

1. *Aquino, J. M., Culajara, C. J., & Culajara, J. P. M. (2021). Factors behind teachers' resistance to participate in professional development in the Philippines: Basis in the enhancement of programs. Thai Journal of East Asian Studies, 10(1), 1-16. https://so02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/easttu/article/view/258340*
2. *Agustin, M. D., & Santos, E. M. (2021). Mental health concerns of Filipino teachers in the COVID-19 pandemic: A preliminary study. Asian Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 10(2), 67–82.*
3. *Agustin, M. D., & Rivera, L. J. (2021). Challenges in assessment and grading: Perspectives from senior high school social science teachers in the Philippines. International Journal of Education and Learning, 8(3), 45-59.*
4. *Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory.*
5. *Bernardo, A. B. I., & Carreon, J. R. (2021). The importance of institutional support for teachers' professional growth in online learning environments. Journal of Philippine Education, 19(1), 45-56.*
6. *Bernardo, A. B. I., & Cruz, D. M. (2021). The role of equitable access in online learning: Challenges in social science education. Journal of Educational Development, 20(3), 95-110.*
7. *Bernardo, A. B. I., & Cruz, E. M. (2022). Online assessment challenges in social science subjects: Teachers' perspectives in a new normal setup. Journal of Educational Assessment and Development, 15(4), 92-104.*

8. *Bernardo, A. B. I., & Reyes, C. M. (2021). Coping with stress: Teachers' strategies in the "new normal" of education. Journal of Education and Development in the Pacific, 9(1), 34-45.*
9. *Bernardo, A. B. I., Wong-Fernandez, B., Macalaguing, M. D. Jr., & Navarro, R. C. (2020). Filipino senior high school teachers' continuing professional development attitudes: Exploring the roles of perceived demand amid a national education reform. Journal of Research, Policy & Practice of Teachers and Teacher Education, 10(2), 1–15. https://ejournal.upsi.edu.my/index.php/JRPPTTE/article/view/4193*
10. *Brookings Institution. (2022). Rewiring the classroom: How the COVID-19*
11. *pandemic transformed K-12 education.*
12. *https://www.brookings.edu/articles/rewiring-the-classroom-how-the-covid-19-pandemic-transformed-k-12-education/*
13. *Cabrera, M. R., & Sanchez, G. T. (2021). Bridging the equity gap: Social science education in the new normal. Journal of Educational Research and Practice, 14(2), 45-59.*
14. *Cabangon, A. J., & Diaz, R. B. (2021). The impact of asynchronous learning on student engagement in senior high school social sciences. Asian Journal of Educational Research, 6(4), 101-113.*
15. *Cabangon, M. A., & Tan, S. A. (2022). Institutional support for online teaching in senior high school social sciences: Challenges and opportunities. Asian Journal of Educational Research, 8(2), 92-106.*
16. *Carreon, P. F., & Velasco, R. L. (2023). Teacher training and professional development needs of social science educators during the pandemic. Journal of Educational Research and Practice, 13(4), 78-92.*
17. *Cauthen, N. (2019). The role of teachers in structured learning environments. Education Insights Publishing.*
18. *Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications*
19. *David, D. C. (2020). Teaching Araling Panlipunan: Challenges of non-social studies major teachers in the Philippines. Asian Education Studies, 9(1), 34-40.*
20. *Dela Cruz, R. T., & De Leon, S. (2021). Institutional guidance and professional development in the new normal: Insights from senior high school social science teachers. Journal of Educational Transformation, 13(4), 58-72.*
21. *De Guzman, S. E., & Pascual, N. T. (2022). Factors affecting student participation in online learning in senior high school social sciences. Journal of Social Science Education, 15(3), 47-59.*
22. *Department of Education. (2015). Policy guidelines on classroom assessment for the K to 12 basic education program (DepEd Order No. 08, s. 2015). https://www.deped.gov.ph*
23. *Department of Education. (2022). School calendar and activities for the school year 2022–2023 (DepEd Order No. 034, s. 2022). https://www.deped.gov.ph*
24. *Department of Education. (2023a). School calendar and activities for the school year 2023–2024 (DepEd Order No. 022, s. 2023). https://www.deped.gov.ph*
25. *Department of Education. (2023b). Clarifications on the use of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) and other issues. https://www.deped.gov.ph*
26. *Dhawan, S. (2020). Online learning: A panacea in the time of COVID-19 crisis. Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 49(1), 5–22.*
27. *Dowling, M. (2007). From Husserl to van Manen: A review of different phenomenological approaches. International Journal of Nursing Studies, 44(1), 131–142.*
28. *Ertmer, P. A., & Newby, T. J. (2013). Behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism: Comparing critical features from an instructional design perspective. Performance Improvement Quarterly, 26(2), 43–71.*
29. *Fabito, B. S., Trillanes, A. O., & Sarmiento, J. R. (2020). Barriers and challenges of computing students in an online learning environment: Insights from one private university in the Philippines.*
30. *Gonzalez, J. F., & Dizon, R. D. (2021). Social science education and equity: Teacher strategies for addressing disparities in learning environments. Journal of Social Science Education, 23(2), 74-88.*
31. *Gonzalez, S. D., & Pineda, R. G. (2022). Dependence on institutional support for online learning: A study on senior high school social science teachers. Journal of Educational Technology and Innovation, 17(1), 124-138.*
32. *Gonzalez, J. F., & Santos, L. T. (2022). Assessment strategies and grading challenges: A study on social science teachers in the Philippines. Educational Review International, 23(1), 34-48.*
33. *Guadalquiver, M. (2020). The new normal in Philippine education: A look at educational privilege. Philippine Journal of Development Studies, 45(3), 210–222.*
34. *Ibarra, N. B., & Garcia, M. R. (2021). Online grading challenges: Perspectives from senior high school social science educators. Philippine Journal of Educational Research, 16(3), 105-118.*
35. *Ibarra, N. B., & Rivera, P. C. (2021). Ensuring equitable opportunities in online learning for social science students. Journal of Teaching and Assessment, 13(2), 56-69.*
36. *Ingle, N. R. (2020). Indigenous people's education during COVID-19: An environmentalist perspective. Ingle Trust Foundation of Davao, Inc.*
37. *Javier and Delgado (2022) further explored how hybrid learning environments complicate the balance between formative and summative assessment*
38. *Leite, C., Fernandes, P., & Cardoso, A. (2022). Teachers' pedagogical strategies in times of crisis: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. Education and Information Technologies, 27(1), 95–111.*
39. *Leite, W. L., Monteiro, J., & Rodriguez, C. (2022). Instructional adaptation during the pandemic: A case study of Filipino teachers. Asia-Pacific Education Review, 23(2), 154–170.*
40. *Llamado, J. C., & Medina, R. P. (2021). Addressing student disengagement in hybrid learning environments: Lessons from social science teachers. Asian Journal of Social Science Education, 19(3), 79-92.*
41. *Llamado, L. E., & Velasco, J. R. (2021). Achieving equity in hybrid learning: The role of social science teachers in senior high schools. International Journal of Education for All, 24(4), 78-90.*
42. *Llego, J. (2023). The Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs): A response to SDG 4 and educational continuity. Department of Education, Philippines.*
43. *Mabborang, F. D. N., et al. (2023). Social science teachers' instructional and assessment challenges in the new normal. Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science, 36(7), 14-40.*
44. *MDPI. (2022). Navigating the new normal: Adapting online and distance learning in the post-pandemic era. https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/14/1/19*
45. *Mendoza, T. V., & Rojas, M. B. (2021). Bridging the digital divide in social science education: The role of institutions in fostering equity. Journal of Educational Leadership, 21(2), 122-135.*
46. *Mendoza, C. T., & Reyes, J. C. (2022). Increasing student engagement in social science online learning: A comparative study of synchronous and asynchronous learning formats. Philippine Journal of Educational Technology, 25(2), 101-113.*

47. *Mendoza, L. G., & Vargas, C. R. (2021). Engagement issues and strategies for senior high school social science teachers in the post-pandemic era. International Journal of Educational Innovations, 16(1), 20-32.*
48. *Montebon, D. R. (2023). Teachers' perceptions of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) in the Philippines. International Journal of Curriculum Studies, 10(1), 45–61.*
49. *Munda, M. A. (2021). Teacher adaptability amidst the pandemic: A study of public-school teachers in Laguna. International Journal of Educational Research, 10(2), 45-56.*
50. *Navasca, M. E. (2022). Factors influencing student participation in online learning in social science classrooms. Educational Science Review, 14(1), 66-80.*
51. *Ocampo, R. F., & Tan, D. R. (2021). Overcoming the challenges of online assessments in the social sciences: A teacher's perspective. Journal of Educational Strategies, 12(3), 72-84.*
52. *Ondras, M., & Alvero, R. (2023). Addressing learning gaps in post-pandemic schools: A Philippine perspective. Educational Research International, 14(2), 97–110.*
53. *Patino, M. D., & Santos, B. L. (2022). Maintaining engagement in hybrid social science classrooms: A case study in the Philippines. Journal of Hybrid Learning, 18(3), 50-63.*
54. *Reddy, B. A., Jose, S., & Vaidehi, R. (2021). Of access and inclusivity: Digital divide in online education.*
55. *Santos, J. G., & Delos Reyes, D. M. (2021). Emotional exhaustion and its impact on teaching effectiveness in the context of online learning. Educational Studies Journal, 20(1), 12-25.*
56. *Seril, M. (2022, October 19). 8 ways COVID has changed some teachers forever. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-8-ways-covid-has-changed-some-teachers-forever/2022/10*
57. *Subramanian, R. (2020). Challenges in engaging students during remote instruction. California Charter School Association.*
58. *Villanueva, R. J., & Balingit, R. C. (2021). Teachers' mental health and job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic: A study on Filipino senior high school teachers. Asia Pacific Journal of Educational Research, 12(1), 55-69.*
59. *Valencia, S. M. (2022). The effects of mental health on teaching performance during remote learning: A case of Filipino educators. Philippine Journal of Educational Psychology, 9(2), 80–93.*
60. *Valencia, M. L., & Ramos, E. M. (2021). Teachers' reliance on institutional support in remote teaching: Social science teachers' experiences. Journal of Educational Policy and Practice, 17(2), 79-91.*
61. *World Health Organization. (2023). Statement on the twelfth meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. https://www.who.int*
62. *Zalco, M. (2023). Impact of utilizing the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) on the academic development of Grade Six students in public schools during pandemic. Philippine Journal of Education Research, 12(1), 34–48*