



LOOKING INTO THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF MASTER TEACHERS DURING THE IN-PERSON CLASSES: A PHENOMENOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore and understand the views and perceptions of Master Teachers as educational leaders during in-person classes in the elementary and secondary schools of the Division of Davao de Oro. The study was gleaned from the Contingency Theory and Path-Goal Theory. The research design employed in this study is a qualitative phenomenological design. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants, who are Master teachers in the elementary and secondary schools of Davao De Oro. There were fourteen (14) Master teachers, seven (7) for in-depth interview and seven (7) for focus group discussion. Results of the participants' experiences mainly include managing curriculum implementation, facilitating pedagogical development, encountering difficulties as master teacher, and engaging support for professional growth. Participants also shared that they handled the situation by carrying out effective instructional leadership, being provided with support, and implementing strategies in new setup. Apart from other findings, possessing skills as instructional leader is one of the solutions to continue one's educational leader role during in-person classes. It is also recommended to research further about the experiences of teachers as school-in-charge as another angle to be seen along with how they coped with the struggles in handling both instruction and administration tasks during in-person classes.

KEYWORDS: In-person classes, educational leader, Master teachers, qualitative phenomenological inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as a complex crisis that necessitates great leadership. Due to the disruption caused by this pandemic to the world's educational system, leadership in schools under normal conditions is different from that in times of emergency. Due to this, the implementation of in-person sessions after more than two years of blended learning presents significant problems for the instructional leadership of Master Teachers. They act as a role model for the rest of the teaching team as a result, which directly affects how well each student learns. However, when Master Teachers' instructional leadership will not be effective, teachers and students are having a hard time adjusting to the return of face-to-face instruction since these they form a great part in implementing the curricular landscape of the school.

In Malaysia, schools are scrambling to stay up with the global learning recovery as a result of the increased in-person instruction since it was found in a study that Master Teachers were only completing their leadership duties at a leadership function below 90% (Rumeli et al., 2022). In a similar vein, it was discovered that most local schools in Thailand lacked suitable methods for instructional leadership (Luo, 2022). As evidenced by the gaps between goals and actual implementation, there have been incidents of inadequate instructional leadership reported in Indonesia (Rahayu & Usman, 2022). The results of studies conducted in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia suggest that there are significant challenges in providing effective instructional leadership in

schools, with Master Teachers in Malaysia not fully meeting their leadership duties and a lack of suitable methods for instructional leadership in Thailand.

In the Philippines, Laude, et al. (2019) revealed that based on the consolidated National Competency Based Teaching Standard (NCBTS) –Teachers Strength Needs Assessment (TSNA) results for three consecutive years starting SY 2014-2016, in the Department of Education-Division of Biliran, there is a need for the secondary Master Teachers to acquire relevant skills pertaining to ICT instruction, pedagogy, and making a training design to further enhance their instructional leadership capacity as Master Teachers who have been assigned with various curriculum tasks. Similarly, Mendoza and Bautista (2022) supported the notion that Master Teachers will be more competent in terms of their instructional competence skills if they performed their instructional leadership practices well. On the other hand, Ojale (2019) stressed that even though they are allocated with funds for training and seminars, due to their heavy teaching loads, lack of preparation, and the challenges associated with using instructional technologies, master teachers are also unable to provide instructional supervision.

Based on my firsthand observation in one of the schools in Davao de Oro, Master Teachers face challenges, and they are still struggling in adapting to the resumption of in-person classes after more than two years of having blended learning. As instructional leaders, they are tasked to provide mentorship to teachers who are stunned with the return of face-to-face



classes. When teachers are not well supervised, effectiveness in instruction will be adversely affected and the instructional purposes may not be well realized. Thus, this only means that Master Teachers' instructional leadership must be properly employed to address the current situation. With this, I would like to understand the viewpoints of the Master Teachers in carrying out their task as curriculum and instruction experts, and the challenges they encountered to carry out a proposal for a development plan on the areas master teachers need coaching and mentoring as a response to the changes and challenges of the modern world.

In the numerous research articles, instructional leaders support teachers in their practice by coordinating professional development opportunities and offering coaching and mentoring to guarantee that best practices are applied in their schools. In order to give students, the greatest instruction possible, teachers should have access to everything they need (Brolund, 2016 as cited in Amakyi, (2021). Additionally, school leaders' instructional leadership approaches influence their level of leadership self-efficacy. The effectiveness of school leaders' responsibilities, choices, and actions will increase as they work on tasks that have an impact on school improvement (McBrayer et al., 2020). The effectiveness of providing high-quality education will be increased as a direct result of the master teachers' instructional leadership; they serve as the compass in this process. To overcome the learning gap that the pandemic has caused in the students, the master teachers must carry out their duties.

This study needs to be carried out as soon as possible because full implementation of in-person classes happens this year and master teachers had significant difficulties when the Philippine schools were reopened after more than two years of blended learning. The master teachers' experiences, coping skills, and insights will be a tremendous aid for the smooth adjustment in the reopening of the schools and it could help to improve the school's situation. Additionally, there is a paucity of literature and study about master teachers' leadership in the classroom, and some of the studies are so old that they cannot be utilized as a guide for contemporary academics.

The results of this study also aimed to offer a fresh perspective on how education would proceed following the pandemic and perhaps help all master teachers who were having trouble managing their workloads and other responsibilities at the time of in-person classes. Additionally, it will highlight the master instructors' function and how it affects both teachers' and students' performance. The findings of this study will be shared with the academic community and other interested parties by publishing the research in a reputable journal. This will allow the results to be accessible to a wide audience, including educators, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the field of education.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and understand the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights met by Master Teachers in their instructional leadership during in-person sessions. The Master Teachers are from different

schools in the Division of Davao de Oro as they gained experience after the comeback of in-person classes.

At this point in the research, the Master Teachers' instructional leadership was broadly defined as their concerns about how they adjusted their leadership and adapted the implementation of in-person classes after more than two years of using blended learning due to the pandemic. Upon delving into the experiences of these Master Teachers, it will help them to adjust their work routine in the new normal education.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Master Teachers as instructional leaders during the in-person classes?
2. How do Master Teachers cope with the challenges encountered as instructional leaders during in-person classes?
3. What insights can they share with other Master Teachers as instructional leaders?

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing phenomenological approach. The purpose of qualitative research, according to Fossey, E. et al. (2002), is to provide answers to queries concerning how to understand the significance and experiential elements of people's lives and social surroundings more fully. A qualitative research strategy also provides a thorough understanding of a particular issue, challenge, or meaning based on first-hand experience (Maxwell, 2012).

This study primarily used a phenomenological technique to investigate the Master Teachers' experiences during the in-person classes. The phenomenological approach was used to investigate human lived experiences or an investigation of lived experiences. This method's main objective was to describe the nature of the specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

A thorough interview was conducted as part of this study's phenomenological approach because it allowed the researcher to delve into the perspectives, understandings, and emotions of those who were actually experiencing the phenomenon—in this case, the master teacher's instructional leadership during the in-person classes. The researcher was able to completely comprehend and analyze the participant's experiences because of this.

The use of a qualitative-phenomenological methodology in this study allowed for the identification, exploration, and understanding of participant statements and descriptions regarding their experiences and insights. The fact that this research design recounts the information acquired from the interviews makes it the most suitable for this investigation.

In this study, fourteen (14) participants took part in this study: seven (7) participants for the focus group discussion (FGD), and seven (7) participants for the in-depth interview (IDI). These 14 participants were master teachers from public elementary and secondary schools in the Schools Division of Davao de Oro- Laak North District. According to Creswell



(2013), there should be three (3) or no more than fifteen (15) participants in a phenomenological study conducted with a heterogeneous group.

It used the purposive sampling method since it only includes master teachers from various elementary and secondary public schools in the Laak North District, Division of Davao de Oro. For the collection of data that is rich in detail and of premium, purposeful sampling is a common and well-liked method in qualitative analysis. According to Patton (2015), purposeful sampling involves choosing examples that have a lot of information so that the limited sources are used as efficiently as possible.

I identified and selected the participants using the following selection criteria: a.) must have a permanent item as a master teacher of either elementary or secondary public school in Laak North District, Division of Davao de Oro, b.) have at least three years of experience of teaching face-to-face classes, and c) must be assigned in the school under Laak North District, Division of Davao de Oro.

On the other hand, these are the exclusion criteria of my study: a.) the principal or the school heads of the school, b.) the Teacher I to Teacher III and c.) non-teaching staff like Administrative Assistant II and Administrative Assistant III.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Duties and Responsibilities of Master Teachers

The Department of Education (DepEd) emphasizes a merit-based approach in the selection and advancement of employees, as outlined in DepEd Order No. 29, s. 2002, focusing on qualities and competence. This commitment to merit, competence, fitness, and equality is fundamental to DepEd's policies. Additionally, DECS Order No. 70, s. 1998, governs the allocation of Master Teacher (MT) positions, linking them to the number of teachers in a district, with one MT post designated for 5-7 instructors at the secondary level. Master Teachers, as detailed in DO no. 42, s. 2017, play a pivotal role in providing technical support across various educational domains, including subject matter, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and professional growth, ensuring a comprehensive approach to instructional leadership within the education system

The monitoring of modular distance learning (MDL) instructors' lived experiences was uncovered through an interview and a focus group discussion as part of the research into these lived experiences. Master Teachers have accomplished educators who are passionate about expanding their influence as teachers to raise the standard of instruction in their schools (Arce, 2019). Additionally, Master Teachers are highly skilled at planning projects for the entire school and supporting colleagues' professional development. Master Teachers work together with school and/or district administration to plan professional development programs, oversee teacher teams, and facilitate coaching sessions to help their peers develop (Danahy & Tsai, 2021).

Moreover, with the "New Normal" teaching trend, it is their responsibility as master teachers to monitor how the pupils and

teachers are faring. Some participants noted that face-to-face training is very different from seeing modular distance learning instructors teach and going through the learning experience. In the school year 2020–2021, it is predicted that education would start under the New Normal. Parents, students, and the Department of Education were all put at risk by the abrupt shift from in-person instruction to online instruction since the latter sought to preserve educational quality despite changes in how instruction was given (Ancheta & Ancheta, 2020).

Thus, the Department of Education is tackling the difficulties in basic education through its Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), in accordance with Department of Education Order No. 012, s. 2020. This strategy seeks to find a way to continue instruction despite these difficulties while also ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of students, instructors, and staff throughout the COVID-19 epidemic. The BE-LCP was specifically developed with a legal framework that responds to the "new normal," keeping in mind the constitutional duty to continuously protect every citizen's access to a high standard of education (Creus, 2019).

The school principal, head teachers, and master teachers must oversee and watch learning delivery to verify that it truly takes place and that the necessary feedback and technical assistance will be provided (Wong, 2019). This is necessary to ensure learning continuity. A study found that the MTs performed exceptionally well in terms of their instructional competence and that they were highly skilled in terms of educational leadership, notably in the areas of planning, assessing, reporting, and professional growth and development. Due to their competence in education, they are qualified to advise and mentor other teachers with these (Donato, 2021).

In addition, Abasolo et al. (2021) in their study reiterated that master teachers are very good in terms of modeling exemplary practice in the application of content knowledge and pedagogy showing its integration within and across learning areas. This means that teachers look up to them on how teaching instruction must be carried out, and this would serve as a guide to them to do the same. On the contrary, even though a secondary master teacher entails a subject he specializes in he must relate his area of expertise to other disciplines which some teachers find hard. Therefore, master teachers are expected to demonstrate such concern.

Resiliency of Master Teachers on New Curricular Routines

In 2020, distance learning via online learning gained popularity because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kim, 2020). By the end of October 2020, around 25 countries in the East Asia and Pacific region that had been entirely shuttered during COVID-19 have either started or restarted lessons (UNICEF, 2020). Only "green districts," or those with less COVID-19 danger, have seen school reopening in Indonesia since July 2020. During COVID-19, internet learning was employed in several Indonesian schools. With this, master teachers should cooperate fully with the teachers below them and offer technical support. The goal is to minimize academic losses through efficient event, emotion, and consequence management (Hanafi et al., 2021).



Although face-to-face classes go back to normal, there are still emergency situations like calamities where distance learning is implemented for the safety of students. Nicholls (2020, as cited in Abasolo et al., 2021) stated that having distance learning could mean more work on the part of teachers who print learning materials and create essential content that students can cope with despite the circumstances. So, it is a challenge for the Master Teachers to supervise them effectively in adjusting to such setup. So, they must be aware of their capabilities and responsibilities in the context of New Normal K12 Education.

Furthermore, changes should be implemented based on the lessons learned to maintain the safest environment possible for children, staff, and larger communities. Difficulties in implementing the distance learning plan developed on a regular basis. Due to a dearth of distance education competence as well as computer literacy, teachers were caught off guard for emergency remote instruction. Indeed, the pandemic puts teachers' adaptability and flexibility to the test (Cardullo et al., 2021). As a result of the present constraints, MTs must modify their practices when watching classes. Mentoring and coaching are more important than ever in assisting instructors with instructional implementation (Caratiquit & Pablo, 2021).

Teachers are driven to come up with novel ways to communicate with their students with the help of MTs (Lagua, 2020). Furthermore, technical assistance to instructors should be provided on a consistent basis. The situation has necessitated greater dedication to the task at hand, empathy for others, and extra measures to ensure that training continues in the event of a pandemic. As a result of these issues, the master teachers were forced to take on new responsibilities (Caraan et al., 2022).

Adapting in the face of hardship is one of the master teachers' strengths. Various problems exist, particularly during this trying time, and teachers are still adjusting to the new normal (Tosun et al., 2021). To effectively offer their teachings, they must use available and suitable pedagogy (Lapada et al., 2020). Because MTs are more familiar with, conversant with, and educated about educational philosophies, one of their duties is to impart their instructional competence to Teachers I-III (Teruel et al., 2022).

Finally, to ensure quality education, the MTs oversee the implementation of in-person classes to Teachers I-III through classroom observation (CO). COs are completed using pre-determined metrics and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers-Results-Based Performance Management System (PPST-RPMS). During the pre-observation process, the MT and the instructor must discuss and agree. These indications must be monitored throughout the delivery of actual instruction, and a post-observation conference must take place (Patadilla-Naquines & Salazar, 2022).

Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders

Continuous, collaborative, and professional efforts to improve teaching effectiveness constitute instructional leadership. It may be important to give management, support, impart ideas, aid, or creativity to improve a teacher's capacity for managing varied learning contexts (Donato, 2021). A well-rounded master teacher who is second only to the principal will have a broad leadership style that integrates several different

leadership models. The goal of classroom instruction is to follow the practice of instructional leadership. It could be determined by how successfully its administrators and members work together. These leaders must have a thorough understanding of and familiarity with the educational environment. They must encourage collaboration to strengthen the school and its professional learning community (Hanafi et al., 2021).

Additionally, instructional leadership is a strategy for formulating and disseminating a distinct vision and goals for students as well as for assisting instructors through coaching, mentoring, and professional development (Rahayu & Usman, 2022). As a result, instructional leaders are held accountable to the community, parents, teachers, and students on a wide range of levels. Teachers require a knowledgeable, energizing, and supportive leader in the classroom (Potane et al., 2021).

People have long been curious about the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness, which is often gauged by student academic accomplishment. According to prior studies, instructional leadership has the most empirical impact on the results of student learning of any kind of leadership (Qian et al. 2017). In support of this, a meta-analysis showed that instructional leadership typically had a three to four times better influence on student learning outcomes than transformational leadership. The size of the effects of instructional leadership may also vary depending on cultural background (Zhao, 2018).

Additionally, the decisions and actions of instructional leaders play a crucial role in building and sustaining trust in a school. A leader sets the atmosphere for their organizations. Their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs have a significant impact on how trustworthy the workplace is (Ma & Marion, 2021).

Positive instructional leadership characteristics have been shown to significantly predict teachers' trust in the literature. Determining a vision, managing through norms and procedures, coaching instructional programs, and modeling professional actions are important leadership techniques that promote trust. The data point to a positive association between instructional leadership and faculty trust in the instructional leaders (Atik & Celik, 2020).

It was found in a study of master teachers in Cavite, Philippines, that master teachers needed to oversee and evaluate learning delivery to make sure that it truly happened and that the necessary feedback and technical support were provided (Espineli, 2021). The master instructors are further qualified to advise and coach other educators due to their depth of knowledge in teaching. By providing teachers with the chance to learn effective methods that could improve schools' ability for critical thinking and education, instructional supervision can help re-professionalize teachers' work (Mendoza & Bautista, 2022).

An investigation carried out in Tanzania by Manaseh (2016) found that the hard workload, lack of financial support, inadequate training, and carelessness of instructors all have an impact on the instructional leadership of heads of schools. The report suggests that heads of schools schedule frequent in-



service training sessions and that more research be done to determine the extent to which heads of schools use instructional leadership approaches.

Another study conducted in Malaysia found that instructors need significant support from their principals in order to strengthen their influence over classroom management, subject matter material, different aspects of their pedagogy, and student assessments. This study also shows that, in contrast to conventional methods of formal teacher training, a school leader can take on the role of an instructional leader when he or she actively engages in coaching, mentoring, and assisting their subordinates to enhance their teaching and learning methods (Abdullah et al. 2020). Additionally, research in the State of Kedah has demonstrated how instructional leadership's involvement in the current flow of educational, teaching, and learning processes has increased teachers' functional competency. Sustainable leaders should inspire teachers to collaboratively increase school quality in order to tackle the challenges of the 21st century in education (Ismail et al., 2020).

On the other hand, a study from Quisquino (2022) revealed that master teachers' high competence in terms of mentoring, observation, instruction, and supervision significantly related to the professional growth of the teachers under his supervision. If Master Teachers demonstrate all the time their responsibility in giving technical assistance to teachers, then it could improve the supervisory practice and performance of teachers. This implies further that the more effective a master teacher is, the more efficient a teacher becomes under his care.

Additionally, one of the responsibilities of instructional leaders is to provide a resource for teachers who desire to advance their pedagogical practices. Master teachers admitted that they find it difficult to become good instructional leaders because they lack the time and expertise or because it makes them uncomfortable to criticize the teaching methods of other teachers. Principals and master teachers can employ these ideas to improve teaching and learning in the classroom (Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019).

An instructional leader's other major responsibility is to develop and articulate a clear vision for the future of the school. To increase student achievement, principals must develop a vision, which they hope teachers will adopt and implement in their classrooms on a continuous basis. By establishing goals and creating a vision, the school can work toward improved student performance (Alsaleh, 2019). Teachers will work together toward a shared objective when principals set goals for the school and communicate these goals to the workforce. While in high-performing institutions, leaders regard themselves as visionaries and act accordingly, school leaders in Greece, for example, rarely discuss the institution's goals and objectives with their staff members (Qadach et al., 2020).

Master Teachers are competent leaders who have mastered management skills in making students independent learners who have developed critical thinking skills to grow and thrive. It is also reiterated that Master Teachers visit classrooms and coach teachers to improve instruction. They also ensure that

curriculum development happens as well as support such as meeting the teachers for the planning of professional development training. This is in the form of Learning Action Cells (LAC) sessions implemented by the Department of Education in all schools. It provides opportunities for teachers to discuss the learning gaps, new strategies in teaching, and interventions to be made among students who performed lower than expected from them. All these endeavors are properly administered by a Master Teacher as the most competent in terms of delivering high-quality instruction (Jentsch & Konig, 2022).

It is believed that master instructors, who are supposed to have more expertise in curriculum development, professional development, and mentorship than typical teachers, are the ones who attain the highest standard in teaching. Their teaching strategies will be different from those of regular, non-master teachers because they are the "creme de la creme" of educators (Basilio & Bueno, 2019). Therefore, effective MTs possess exemplary pre-teaching skills, outstanding teaching strategies, motivational and communication abilities, a thorough knowledge of the subject, interpersonal abilities, and classroom management competence. Additionally, MTs are seen as excellent sources of curricular leadership, qualified instructors, staff development, and stimulus (Chew & Cerbin, 2021).

Master Teachers is a model of teacher learning that incorporates three elements that have been recommended as helpful for teacher development programs. Priority one for programs should be their scope and sustainability. The average length of MTs is greater than three years. Second, a program needs to be especially made for teachers' needs and habits (Mayo, K.E., 2002). According to Pambudi and Gunawan (2019), an MT is an experienced educator who puts operational issues with classroom education first.

The MTS has a high level of professional autonomy because the MT establishes the goals, rules, materials, and schedule. Teachers in a learning environment pick up knowledge from their peers and subject-matter specialists. An MTS, as opposed to a one-time training, gives participants the chance to develop long-lasting relationships with the MT and other teachers from different schools (Zhang & Wong, 2018).

In summary, these pieces of literature highlight the important roles of Master Teachers in providing instructional support not only to teachers but the school as a whole. The resumption of in-person classes signifies that certain curricular adjustments must be done such as carefully planning the teaching loads of teachers in congruence to the number of students, establishing appropriate teaching strategies to scaffold some "learning loss" of students due to the pandemic, and providing adequate mentorship to teachers in performing their duties and responsibilities in making the teaching-learning process effective. According to the mentioned authors, Master Teachers as instructional leaders of a learning institution, play a critical role in shaping the core of the curriculum. The literature discussed in this chapter is structured to have a thorough understanding of the study. Evidence shows that there is a need to conduct further study in this field.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1

Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Managing Curriculum Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborating with school personnel for curriculum implementation • providing curriculum direction and guidance • assessing and giving feedback and points for improvement to develop higher order thinking skills of students • monitoring appropriate use of teaching strategies and pedagogies • monitoring teaching strategies and mentoring colleagues • facilitating professional development in the delivery of quality education • making education process more effective • being responsible to find strategies to create a program to fill-in the learning gaps of the students • giving the 100% service to students needing attention • providing support to students needing assistance
Facilitating Pedagogical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring a positive and conducive classroom environment • giving varied instructional strategies to improve thinking skills • facilitating different kinds of strategies in teaching • giving attention to students needing knowledge and skills • employing techniques and strategies in Science and Technology subjects • engaging the students with different fun activities • assessing the progress of learners • conducting remedial classes • ensuring congruency of teaching strategies into learning preference
Encountering Difficulties as a Master Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having difficulty managing time • encountering limited time for instruction • engaging so much with paper works • doing overloaded tasks • having students with learning gaps brought on by the pandemic • having adjustment to the work environment • adjusting to the role of instructional leader
Engaging Support for Professional Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing Teacher Induction Program (TIP) • conducting Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions • providing technical assistance to beginning teachers • coaching and mentoring the proficient teachers • providing pre-conference and post-conference in the teaching learning process • giving positive feedback after the observation • observing classes to ensure effective teaching practices • discussing with teachers on how to improve their teaching skills and appreciating their efforts.

Managing Curriculum Implementation

“My role during the implementation of in-person classes is to collaborate with the principal and fellow teachers in providing curriculum direction and guidance for the successful implementation of the curriculum.” FGD-06

“As a master teacher, there are many roles in the implementation of in-person classes. The roles I play are about the teaching-learning process, monitoring teaching strategies and pedagogies, and mentoring colleagues. I feel contented and satisfied complying with that role.” IDI-02

“These are the roles that I play as a master teacher: serve as a mentor to facilitate professional development and deliver important information to my co-teachers.” FGD-04

Traditionally, teachers have focused on delivering curriculum within the classroom, but nowadays master teachers become curriculum managers. These experienced teachers are stepping into leadership roles to leverage their understanding of the pedagogy and the needs of the students in shaping the curriculum they deliver.

Moore (2015) highlighted that master teachers play a crucial role in education, not only as instructional leaders but also as curriculum managers. They are independent learners dedicated to enhancing their own learning to effectively impart knowledge to their peers. Master teachers are distinct from traditional teachers, focusing on providing high-quality professional development to their colleagues and analyzing



student data to create academic achievement plans for their schools. Their responsibilities include conducting observations, scoring assessments, and researching effective teaching strategies to support their peers in improving their instructional practices.

Facilitating Pedagogical Development

“We have to ensure a positive classroom environment and facilitate varied instructional methods because we are not sure if students answer their modules or not when they are at home.” IDI-01

“I facilitate them through the use of different kinds of activities so that they would also be motivated to learn in the classroom. It is effective because they have high scores in assessment.” IDI-06

“As a master teacher, I employ strategies and techniques where they can learn and interact more. I also give attention to those students who need special attention.” FGD-04

The role of teachers has evolved beyond simply imparting knowledge. It has been found in this study that master teachers play a key role in facilitating pedagogical development. Furthermore, the participants expressed that they have to play various roles as master teacher which include not only facilitating the learners but also act as mentors for new teachers, guiding them in effective lesson delivery. Their leadership roles ensure best practices, and are passed on, and benefits the students as well as the educators.

In connection to the above ideas, master teachers facilitating students’ learning are supported by Cheng (2020) who emphasized that the instructional coaching and collaborative lesson planning of master teachers can significantly improve the quality of classroom instruction leading to a better student achievement. This collaborative approach not only benefit the students but also shows the educational leadership of master teachers in shaping dynamic and successful learning environment for all students.

Encountering Difficulties as Master Teacher”

“In the implementation of in-person classes, master teachers faced various struggles one of which is time management. There was so much paperwork that some of my classes were affected.” IDI-07

“There are role-overloaded works I do. I become the OIC, checking the cleanliness of the environment, becoming a teacher, a master teacher, and then coaching others.” IDI-01

“The struggles I experienced in the implementation of in-person classes are the learning gaps of the students. They are not ready to have face-to-face learning since there are adjustments in their behavior and understanding the lessons “ FGD-01

Master teachers, having honed their skills over years of experience and dedication, are frequently regarded as paragons of educational excellence. Upon delving into the experiences of the master teachers, it can be inferred that their journey is not without difficulties. The study shows the unforeseen difficulties they encounter in their pursuit of fostering effective student learning. Having to teach their own students at the same time mentoring co-teachers challenge their time management skills.

The study of Abasolo et al. (2021) reveals that work overload and stress were some of the most viewed difficulties of master teachers in implementing instruction. Master teachers mentioned that they become stressed whenever there was unannounced submission of reports that needed to be passed on the day or tomorrow. These gave master teachers stress as they have work overloads and their time with teaching the students will be compromised. Thus, work overloads leading to stress among master teachers have been one of the known challenges.

Engaging Support for Professional Growth

“In assisting our proficient and beginning teachers, I split the newly hired teachers into two to have a Teacher Induction program.” IDI-01

“I assisted the beginning teachers in the implementation of their instruction by providing technical assistance in their respective subjects.” FGD-03

“I assisted the proficient and beginning teachers through class observation, I saw to it that they achieved the indicators in the observation tool.” IDI-05

Master teachers plays an important role in establishing mentorship relationships with other teachers, fostering professional growth and development within educational settings. These mentorship programs are designed to enhance teaching practices, improve classroom management, and support the overall well-being of educators.

According to Smith and Johnson (2018), mentorship by master teachers can lead to increased job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and higher retention rates among novice teachers. Additionally, research by Brown et al. (2020) highlights how mentorship from master teachers positively impacts student outcomes by improving instructional quality and teacher effectiveness.

Table 2

Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanisms of Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders during In-person Classes

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Carrying Out Effective Instructional Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having the right attitude in managing and leading the school • understanding and patience for the students • having good planning in managing and leading the instructional aspect of the school • leading the teachers properly so that plans and objectives will be achieved to improve quality education • having proper and clear communication with fellow teachers • creating a well-balanced time performing one’s duties and responsibilities well



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhancing one’s skills as master teacher by providing appropriate instructions to students finding ways to help the students and their families in promoting social and emotional learning
Being Provided with Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> having support system by getting technical assistance for the improvement of school program having emotional, moral, spiritual and monetary support from family and friends getting constructive criticism and sharing of thoughts from the school principal and colleagues having a school head to monitor implementation of activities overcoming challenges easily through moral and technical support having supportive school principal and co-teachers in helping implement activities and programs well continuing professional development to stay competitive and reliable to one’s job
Implementing Strategies in the New Set-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishing think-pair-and-share activity with the students foster collaborative environment where students and teachers can work together to address challenges soliciting ideas from colleagues on effective ways that would make learning effective in the classroom seeking support form co-teachers, administrators and stakeholders employing peer teaching strategy to learn from each other

Carrying Out Effective Instructional Leadership

“In leading and managing the school, it is important to have the right attitude to be a mentor to teachers. You should be professional and committed to your duties and responsibilities” IDI-01

“Managing and leading the instructional aspect of a school during the come back of face to face classes requires good planning, execution and time management. Through this the objectives of the school will be achieved.” IDI-06

“As an instructional leader, I just create a well-balanced time in facilitating colleagues and learners in delivering quality education.” FGD-06

Carrying out one’s role as master teachers as a coping mechanism in facing challenges is a crucial aspect of the teaching profession. Though challenges are inevitable in teaching, some teachers find focusing on their roles as master teachers help them cope up with these difficulties. Master teachers immerse themselves in honing their crafts, developing interactive lessons, and ensuring student growth instead of being stressed out of the various challenges hindering their tasks.

Lacy & Guirguis (2017), states that master teachers cope with challenges in their role through various strategies and mechanisms. Their research indicates that experienced educators often rely on their expertise, resilience, and mentorship skills to navigate difficulties effectively. They exhibit adaptability and use their knowledge to guide others through tough times, providing stability and support within educational settings. They also engage in emotional labor, managing their emotions, and maintaining professionalism as coping mechanisms when facing adversities in the classroom.

Being Provided with Support

“My colleagues supported me by giving constructive criticisms and sharing thoughts on how the learners have been improved especially in reading. And for my administrator, the school principal, he helps me a lot since he has these words of wisdom

to share, especially in achieving the best classroom interaction.” IDI-05

“Our principal is very supportive. My co-teachers help a lot to implement the school activities as we address the transition to in-person classes the implementation of the activities.” IDI-01

“The support that I have is the moral support, most especially to my family and my friends. And the spiritual support by prayers and the technical support or technical assistance by my colleagues most especially in my professional growth.” FGD-04

Having a strong support system can significantly motivate teachers in performing their jobs effectively. When teachers feel valued, acknowledged, and supported by their colleagues, leaders, and students, it creates a positive work environment that boosts motivation. This recognition can take various forms, such as expressing gratitude, celebrating achievements, and acknowledging strengths through thank-you note, shout-outs, incentives, and encouraging peer recognition.

According to Grossman (2022) creating a culture of recognition in schools where gratitude is expressed, achievements are celebrated, and strengths are acknowledged can foster a sense of value and support among teachers. Encouraging peer recognition and feedback can further enhance the feeling of being trusted and supported by colleagues among teachers. Thus, being provided with support is one of coping mechanism among teachers when facing difficulties in their role as master teachers.

Implementing Strategies in the New Set-up

“My strategy is to share my thoughts with my colleagues because it is them who know the problems of the learners. Just like having a think-pair-share activity. Whatever challenges we observe, we think and share to solve the problem.” IDI-02

“Peer teaching is a strategy we do so that they can share during SLAC sessions and we are learning from each other. For the



next year, we exchange topics so there will be new points of view. "IDI-01

"As to the strategies that I employed in facing those challenges that I encountered, one strategy is by sharing it to my colleagues. Another strategy is by accepting the reality that as time goes by, learning environment change." FGD-02

Master teachers play a crucial role in the education system, often facing various challenges that require effective coping mechanisms. As the educational landscape shifted, master teachers are increasingly adapting to innovative techniques and strategies in this changing educational environment.

Implementing strategies in a new setup is a key approach for master teachers to navigate these challenges successfully.

For instance, research by Smith (2018) highlighted the significance of proactive strategies in adapting to new environments. He emphasized the importance of master teachers being flexible and open to change when implementing strategies in unfamiliar settings. This adaptability allows them to address challenges more effectively and enhance their teaching practices. These strategies include integrating technologies inside the classroom and maintaining open communication to students, colleagues, and parents.

Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders during In-person classes

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Possession of Required Skills and Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be wise and prepared all the time to implement successful and relevant output • give one's best and be responsible to all the tasks to become productive citizen • always be prepared to handle tasks • ensure learner's needs will not be short change • use differentiated instruction to meet the learning needs of the students • monitor the progress of the students • encourage teachers to have diagnostic assessment to identify the level and learning needs of the students • monitor classes to assess the problems of the teachers
Possessing Skills as an Instructional Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve instructional leadership skills become more effective • make oneself responsive and confident in learning new knowledge • experience is the best teacher • develop strategic plans to help the students and teachers for the good of the school • be an efficient teacher with an open heart • share one's knowledge and expertise • learn to be open-minded and listen to others • helpful experiences to improve one's skills as instructional leader • share thoughts and practices in the classroom • set clear direction to achieve goals
Imposing an Engaging and Supportive Teaching-Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement varied strategies in the classroom to enhance student learning • implement strategies that learners learn while having fun in the classroom • good learning environment for students • necessity in having quality teachers and physical facilities • give importance to teaching and learning process • implement more time on reading for non-readers • set standards to encourage students to improve academic performance
Having Positive Attitude Despite Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do what is right for the benefit of the learners and love one's work • give the best for the learners • work happily, be open-minded and positive at all times • look into the brighter side and focus on solutions not problems • take a break if feeling tired

Possession of Required Skills and Competencies

"First, use differentiated instruction, recognize their unique ability, and then adapt your teaching strategies.IDI-03
 We master teachers must use differentiated activities to monitor the progress of students." IDI-06

"To ensure that learners' needs will not be short-changed during in-person classes, I recommend to the master teachers that they should properly and wisely be prepared on the activities they implemented to have a successful and relevant output." FGD-01



Master teachers' preparedness on their tasks is of great importance for ensuring effective teaching practices and positive student outcomes. As a seasoned educator, the level of readiness and competence of master teachers bring to the classroom directly influences the quality of education students receive. A well-prepared master teacher is important in shaping students' academic growth and overall development.

In fact, Baeher (2012) emphasizes that the quality of teacher preparation programs directly impacts the effectiveness of teachers in enhancing student learning outcomes. Being adequately prepared as a master teacher involves a combination of formal training, ongoing professional development, and practical experience to excel in the dynamic educational landscape. Teachers' feelings of preparedness play a significant role in their ability to navigate various classroom requirements, such as maintaining order and discipline, addressing student needs, and engaging in professional development activities.

Possessing Skills as an Instructional Leader

"The experiences I acquired made me open-minded in developing strategies in planning what suits best to the needs of teachers, students, and school. IDI-01

It gives me new knowledge to make my instructional leadership effective." IDI-06

"Be open to change and accept the reality that we make mistakes anytime. Be open to share what you know to your colleagues." FGD-04

Master teachers play a crucial role as instructional leaders within educational settings. Instructional leadership is not solely the responsibility of principals but should also be integrated into the expertise of master teachers. These educators are known for their ability to deliver high-quality professional development to both students and fellow teachers, focusing on improving instructional practices and student achievement.

Moreover, Wien and Beck (2022) underscore that master teachers possess various skills such as managing classrooms effectively, accelerating student learning, and fostering critical thinking skills among learners. Furthermore, they are described as exceptional communicators who tailor their teaching to meet the diverse needs of their students, emphasizing the importance of creating independent learners capable of thriving academically.

Imposing an Engaging and Supportive Teaching-Learning Environment

"I will implement varied activities inside my classroom which it can catch students' attention". IDI-03

"I hope to implement a good learning environment for my students." IDI-07

"We need to set standards for our students to help them improve their academic performance." FGD-05

Master teachers play a crucial role in instructional leadership, focusing on professional development, supporting classroom teachers, and enhancing teaching effectiveness. They engage in various activities such as providing demonstration lessons, coaching, team-teaching, and conducting walk-throughs to ensure the effective implementation of strategies and best practices.

In line with this, according to Gouedard et al. (2020) the effectiveness of master teachers in driving curricular improvements lies in their pedagogical expertise and ability to embed authentic application of skills through research-based professional development. They are described as change agents who conduct extensive behind-the-scenes work to guide teachers in improving their effectiveness and student achievement. Master teachers are independent learners dedicated to enhancing their own learning to deliver high-quality professional development to their peers.

Having a Positive Attitude Despite Challenges

"Just do what benefits best for the learners. You also have to love your work." IDI-03

"We should work happily because we are lucky to have this job. Just be yourself, and be open-minded we should think positively at all times." IDI-05

"The advice that I can give to other master teachers is just to do what is best for the improvement of instruction to learners." FGD-01

Master Teachers are recognized for their profound impact on students and the classroom environment. They possess a unique set of behaviors, attributes, and techniques that set them apart, contributing significantly to student learning and development. The role of master teachers is not only to impart knowledge but also to inspire creativity, share innovative teaching techniques, and continuously strive for excellence in education.

In connection to the above idea, Letzel et al. (2022) highlighted that teachers, especially master teachers, are faced with various challenges but are adept at instilling a positive attitude despite difficulties. These resilience and positive outlook are crucial in maintaining motivation, engagement and fostering a conducive learning environment for students. Master teachers navigate challenges effectively while they remain focused on the ultimate goal of providing quality education.

IMPLICATION FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

The implications of this study to the teaching practice are profound. First, the study emphasizes the importance of master teachers as instructional leaders in creating a conducive learning environment. Educators may develop their instructional leadership skills by analyzing and leveraging their experiences, which will result in better student outcomes and engagement.

Second, the findings of the study highlight the value of mentorship and professional development programs for teachers. Master teachers can be valuable mentors, sharing their knowledge and insights with colleagues to foster a culture of continuous learning and growth. Implementing structured mentorship programs based on the experiences of these instructional leaders can have a major impact on teachers' professional development and contribute to a more collaborative learning community.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of reflective practice in teaching. Master teachers frequently use reflective practices to examine their instructional strategies, assess student learning outcomes, and adjust their approaches accordingly. Encouraging all educators to include reflective methods into their teaching can result in more effective



instruction, higher student engagement, and better understanding of the teaching-learning process.

Lastly, the study implies that educational institutions should recognize and encourage master teachers as instructional leaders. Providing opportunities for these experienced teachers to share their knowledge, lead professional development activities, and contribute to curriculum development can improve teaching practice within the school and raise the overall quality of education delivered to students. By recognizing and rewarding master teachers, educational institutions may foster a more dynamic and effective learning environment for both educators and students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study on the lived experiences of master teachers as instructional leaders during in-person classes in the Division of Davao de Oro has provided valuable insights into the dynamic role these educators play in shaping the educational landscape. Through an exploration of their instructional leadership practices, mentorship approaches, and classroom management techniques, this research has highlighted the significant impact master teachers have on student achievement and overall school improvement initiatives. By delving into the professional development needs of master teachers, the study has underscored the importance of tailored training programs and support systems to enhance their instructional leadership skills and effectiveness.

Furthermore, the assessment of the role of master teachers in school improvement has emphasized the collaborative nature of their work, their contributions to curriculum development, and their role in fostering professional growth among educators. Understanding the challenges faced by master teachers in fulfilling their instructional leadership roles has shed light on critical issues such as time constraints, resource limitations, and the need for additional support. Addressing these challenges is essential to empower master teachers to lead instructional initiatives effectively and promote continuous improvement in teaching and learning practices.

Moving forward, future research endeavors could focus on exploring the impact of instructional leadership on student achievement in greater depth, examining the specific strategies and practices that yield the most significant outcomes. Additionally, investigating the broader implications of master teachers' roles in school improvement initiatives and identifying innovative solutions to overcome the challenges they face will be crucial for advancing educational practices in the Division of Davao de Oro. By building on the findings of this study and continuing to explore the lived experiences of master teachers, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can work collaboratively to enhance instructional leadership practices and ultimately improve the quality of education for all students in the region, nurturing learning environments. The coping mechanisms employed by the students can serve as valuable lessons for concerned entities in fostering resilience and perseverance in their educational journey. Moving forward, it is crucial for all stakeholders in the education sector to collaborate and implement measures that address the challenges highlighted in this study, ensuring a more inclusive, adaptable, and supportive educational landscape for all students.

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