



LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF IN-PERSON CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic notably affected the educational system of the country through the continuous modifications and shift of instruction to remote learning instruction, and back again to full implementation of face-to-face learning in order to facilitate the continuity of learning. Thus, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of elementary teachers of Quimayong Elementary School during the full implementation of in-person classes, especially considering the shift of instruction from modular learning due to COVID-19 pandemic. Of a qualitative design, descriptive-phenomenological research method was used to discover the lived experiences of the 10 elementary teachers, who have experienced teaching distance teaching modality, specifically, modular instruction, and its transition to face-to-face teaching instruction. Following the thematic analysis, it found out that there were 23 emerging themes from four major questions of the study. Few of these were conducting face-to-face classes more advantageous, making interventions in students' learning levels, difficulty in handling students' attitudes, difference of students' behaviors in modular and face-to-face instruction, and students' difficulty in different learning competencies. From this, the researcher concluded that the challenges encountered by the teachers have affected their approach and techniques toward teaching, and students' attitudes and level of learning due to the gap brought on by the pandemic. Significantly, teachers have accepted the inevitable reality brought by the circumstance and have strengthened their resolve and resiliency as mediums of imparting knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, COVID-19, Full Implementation, Lived Experiences, Modular Instruction

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 crisis had caused significant impacts changing the different aspects of society, notably affecting education systems through the continuous modifications and shift of instruction to remote learning instruction in order to facilitate the continuity of learning. UNESCO Learning Portal (2020) stated that eighty-seven percent (87%) of the world's student population was affected, and at one point fifty-two (1.52) billion learners were out of school. With this, joint effort of the organizations and educators in every country have restructured teaching and learning, and are continuously developing resilient and equitable education systems for the future, ensuring that the quality of education will continue amidst the worldwide outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020; UNESCO, 2022).

In response to COVID-19's occurrence in the Philippines in March 2020, the educational system of the country underwent a number of changes. The Department of Education (DepEd) applied the form of instruction that was being used by the teachers—the use of self-learning modules (modular); use of the Internet (online); TV-based or radio-based instruction; or a combination of the said modalities to provide effective instructions despite the challenges faced. It was also emphasized that the spread of the pandemic compelled schools to embrace modular learning as a substitute to face-to-face instruction, which increased the hardship for both students and teachers.

With DepEd's opening for the full implementation in August 2022, the educational shift towards the deployment of face-to-face classes as the new normal set-up re-emerged. According to Verde and Velero (2021), the repercussions of the pandemic have affected and continued to influence educational strategies and practices on a daily basis. Along with the sudden changes of the curriculum from time to time, it created additional job stressors for the educators. In the locale, the teachers of Quimayong Elementary School, Trento, Agusan del Sur struggled due to the long-term nature of the problem which has led to exhaustion by the given workload, and the difficulties to manage student behavior and supplement student learning.

The study was heavily influenced by the Transformative Learning Theory which focused mainly on adult learning experiences that investigated how adults interpret their life experiences and derive meaning from them, emphasizing that previous experiences were connected to new perspectives and opportunities on acquiring new understanding of things as they change (Western Governors University, 2020). Thus, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of elementary teachers during the full implementation of



in-person classes, especially considering the shift of instruction from modular learning due to COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. What are the experiences of elementary teachers teaching face-to-face classes?
2. What challenges did elementary teachers encounter in handling face-to-face classes?
3. How did elementary teachers cope with the challenges encountered?
4. How did the experiences, challenges and coping mechanisms influence the teaching process in in-person classes?

2. METHODS

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically employing the descriptive-phenomenological research method. A qualitative research is defined as societal research that seeks to interpret the underlying meaning of the gathered data based from the human behavior, opinions, themes, occurrences, and motivations through observations and associated with interviews and discussions that will help in the understanding of a certain phenomenon (Crossman, 2019; Tenny et al., 2022). In line with this, descriptive phenomenological research design, also known as phenomenology, is a method of qualitative research that focuses on the similarity of an experience within a particular group that describes a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

2.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 10 elementary teachers, who have experienced teaching distance teaching modality, specifically, modular instruction, and its transition to face-to-face teaching instruction amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, from Trento Central Elementary School. Of non-probability sampling, a combination of purposive sampling and availability sampling were employed in selecting the participants. Purposive sampling focused on a particular characteristic of a population that is of interest or related to the study which will best enable the researchers to answer the specific research questions (Laerd Dissertation, 2012). On the other hand, availability or convenience sampling is where participants are selected for participation in the sample simply because they are the most accessible to the researcher (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

2.2 Data Collection Tool

A one-on-one in-depth interview was used by the researcher to perform in-depth interviews with a limited number of participants. The questions for the interview were validated by four (4) professional teachers. The entirety of the whole interview was audio recorded, where the participants were asked to discuss their experiences. The participants who were not comfortable with the questions had the privilege of not answering the questions. The findings that were collected were analyzed and transcribed by the researcher. With the help of transcription and thematic analysis, the researchers were able to identify the major themes that were based on the answers of the participants.

2.3 Data Analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for studying qualitative data that involves searching through a data set to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher familiarized the data, established initial codes, searched for themes, analyzed themes, defined and named themes, and produced the report.

2.4 Research Ethics

The researcher followed the necessary rules in conducting research and that no rights of any participants or data collected may have offended somebody, this study has abided with the ethical consideration guideline to guarantee that the conduct of this study is anchored on the right protocol.

3. RESULTS

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for studying qualitative data that involves searching through a data set to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns. Using this, the researchers were able to explore the different themes from the four major questions of the lived experiences of 10 elementary teachers of Quimayong Elementary School during the full implementation of in-person classes, especially considering the shift of instruction from modular learning due to COVID-19 pandemic. The themes were shown in the table below:



Q1. What are the experiences of the participants in teaching face-to-face classes?	
Specific Questions	Themes
1.1 What particular experiences have you had during modular instruction that you still apply now that we're back in face-to-face classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting face-to-face classes more advantageous • Making interventions in students' learning levels • Difficulty in handling students' attitudes
1.2 What particular experience did you encounter from the students that made you adjust to teaching face-to-face classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference of students' behaviors in modular and face-to-face instruction • Students' difficulty in different learning competencies
Q2. What are the challenges the participants had encountered in handling face-to-face classes?	
2.1 What are the challenges that are new to you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decline of students' learning level and skills • Getting students' interest and attention
2.2 What do you think are the causes of these challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of parental intervention • Student's lack of interest • Students' exposure to technology and use of gadgets
2.3 How did you address these challenges you mentioned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience • Identifying students' weaknesses and strengths • Collaborating with parents and school-related personnel
2.4 What did you consider in addressing these challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting to the 21st century learning • Understanding of students' circumstance • Feedbacking
Q3. What are the coping mechanisms the participants employed in teaching face-to-face classes?	
3.1 What are the coping mechanisms you employ in teaching face-to-face classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of teaching techniques • Having more patience • Acceptance
3.2 What kind of experience is your top priority to cope with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student behaviors • Improving the learning competencies of students
Q4. How did the experiences, challenges and coping mechanisms influence their face-to-face classes?	
4.1 How do your strategies in distance learning influence your ways of teaching face-to-face classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Namely longer patience toward students • Development of more efficient teaching strategies

Table 1. Themes of Lived Experiences of 10 Elementary Teachers of Quimayong Elementary School during the Full Implementation of In-Person Classes

4. DISCUSSION

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face learning and all engagements between students and teachers within the school have been suspended. This of which became an avenue for the introduction of Modular Distance Learning (MDL) as an immediate solution to ensure educational continuity. Teaching and imparting knowledge requires more effort as students have experienced major learning loss and change in environment due to the pandemic, thereby, implying that recognizing and acknowledging that such changes have happened is essential for early adjustment. Furthermore, to address the difficulty of students in learning competencies, institutions should priory brief and train educators to prepare themselves; Educators should explore and utilize different teaching styles and activities that would is appropriate to the child's level of learning, provide interaction, as well as, aid in identifying their students' learning strengths and weaknesses in order to supplement on the aspects necessary to assist and support the student in developing and enhancing their competencies.



The participants highlighted making adjustments in their teaching strategies for face-to-face modality due to variations in students' attitudes and behaviors upon transition from modular learning to in-person instruction and given that modular learning is a remote learning modality, students' behavior and attitudes in the new normal perspectives influence their learning processes. Given that the participants focused on the decline of students' learning level and skills and difficulty in getting students' interest and attention in light of the apparent learning loss brought on by the pandemic, educators should address this concern by focusing on providing cognitive support to elementary learners during instruction and adjust themselves to the speed of learning of students.

The COVID-19 epidemic has an impact on many facets of education, including the role of parents as at-home instructors. This highlights the crucial parts played by parents and educators in a child's academic development. Nonetheless, as seen by the participants, there is a lack of responsiveness and little-to-no follow-up from parents regarding their children's progress in relation to increased family pressures and the changes brought about by the pandemic. They should emphasize to the parents or guardians that their participation in the activities would foster their children's development and skills. Constant communication through different mediums such as in-person meetings, sending letters, messaging platforms (eg. Messenger) and other avenues can be implemented in communicating student progress, follow-ups and addressing parent-teacher concern about the student.

The pandemic puts teachers' adaptability and flexibility to the test in times of crisis. As a result, it inspires them to think of new methods to communicate with their students. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, all forms of learning assessment relied heavily on the physical presence of the students, either for administration or for tracking the learners' daily progress (Lieberman et al., 2023). Educators' resilience is emphasized in the findings of the study. Teachers are pushed to change fundamental aspects of education by making policy and implementing necessary changes. In relation, the administration should engage their educators in training and workshops to help them adjust and give better instruction amidst the transition of modalities and the COVID-19 threat.

In order to deal with the difficulties encountered in face-to-face classes, the coping mechanisms of the participants include the acknowledgment and recognition of the situation that they are in. As a result, the educational system also adopted flexible teaching and learning methods, reorganized the curriculum, empowered the faculty, improved the infrastructure, implemented a strategic plan, and evaluated every part of this plan of transition (Dayagbil et al., 2021). Given this, institutions and educators are now given the responsibility of adapting to the present generation where they should engage in teacher development programs to improve their skills and learn new teaching methodologies such as self-exploration and seminars that would help them become better mediums of knowledge.

The effectiveness of the strategies utilized by elementary school teachers in face-to-face instruction is reflected in improved student outcomes and performance. It calls for educators to cultivate an evaluative mindset in order to continuously improve practice. Teaching effectiveness is influenced by growth-focused assessments of teaching practice, indicators of learning and welfare, and is supported by a supportive school culture. This urges educators to be adaptable and flexible in making necessary adjustments towards the circumstance such as employing different teaching techniques to cope with the challenges in supplementing students' competencies. Institutions should prioritize foremost the welfare of their employees in coping with the challenges brought upon by the transition of instruction. Moreover, they should involve activities that promote interaction and enhance student learning skills through methods such as socialization or practical application. In addition, instructors must incorporate the practice of extending their patience in their approach in teaching elementary learners.

The results of the study showed that elementary teachers have encountered challenges pertaining to the changes in instruction that have affected teachers' approach and techniques toward teaching, and students' attitudes and level of learning due to the gap brought on by the pandemic. Through these experiences, however, teachers have accepted the inevitable reality brought by the circumstance and have strengthened their resolve and resiliency as mediums of imparting knowledge. Furthermore, educators must focus on the integral aspects where students have presented deficiencies such as reading and comprehension. In that manner, they should implement effective teaching strategies aligned with the interventions provided by the Department of Education in order to satisfy standards, and meet the educational requirements of pupils.

Based on the findings, teachers must be able to assess themselves in terms of their teaching progress through correlating the effectiveness of their methods of teaching and its influence towards the learning improvement of students. This allows educators to be open to opportunities for improvement through finding ways in creating more efficient teaching strategies such as exploration through research, and involving themselves in workshops in collaboration with the institution. The effectiveness of teaching strategies is correlated to improved student outcomes and performance. Given this, teachers should gauge their students through implementing varied assessments that will assess their students' learning and skills. These strategies may include assessments through the traditional pen and paper tests, integrating learning tools for competencies, recitation and projects. Likewise, as highlighted, educators should be involved with their students through interaction and communication. This emphasizes that strengthening the relationship of teachers with their students encourages their students to be confident and leads them to success in their learning journey.



With exploring the lived experiences of Trento Central Elementary School teacher during the full implementation of in-person classes as the main focus of the study, it has highlighted the challenges, and coping mechanisms, as well as the influence of these aforementioned experiences encountered to the teaching process in relation to the transition of modalities from modular instruction in face-to-face classes.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that elementary teachers have encountered challenges pertaining to the changes in instruction that have affected teachers' approach and techniques toward teaching, and students' attitudes and level of learning due to the gap brought on by the pandemic. Through these experiences, however, teachers have accepted the inevitable reality brought by the circumstance and have strengthened their resolve and resiliency as mediums of imparting knowledge. With that said, it is important for educators to focus on the integral aspects such as implementing effective teaching strategies to address educational deficiencies. Likewise, add to the knowledge and improve existing skills of students. In line with this, the institution at hand should recognize the struggles of their teachers thereby providing them support by means of seminars, training and workshops to improve teaching strategies and assist them in adapting and adjusting to teaching in the new normal setting of in-person instruction. Ultimately, providing these educators an avenue to improve and align themselves to being more effective teachers.

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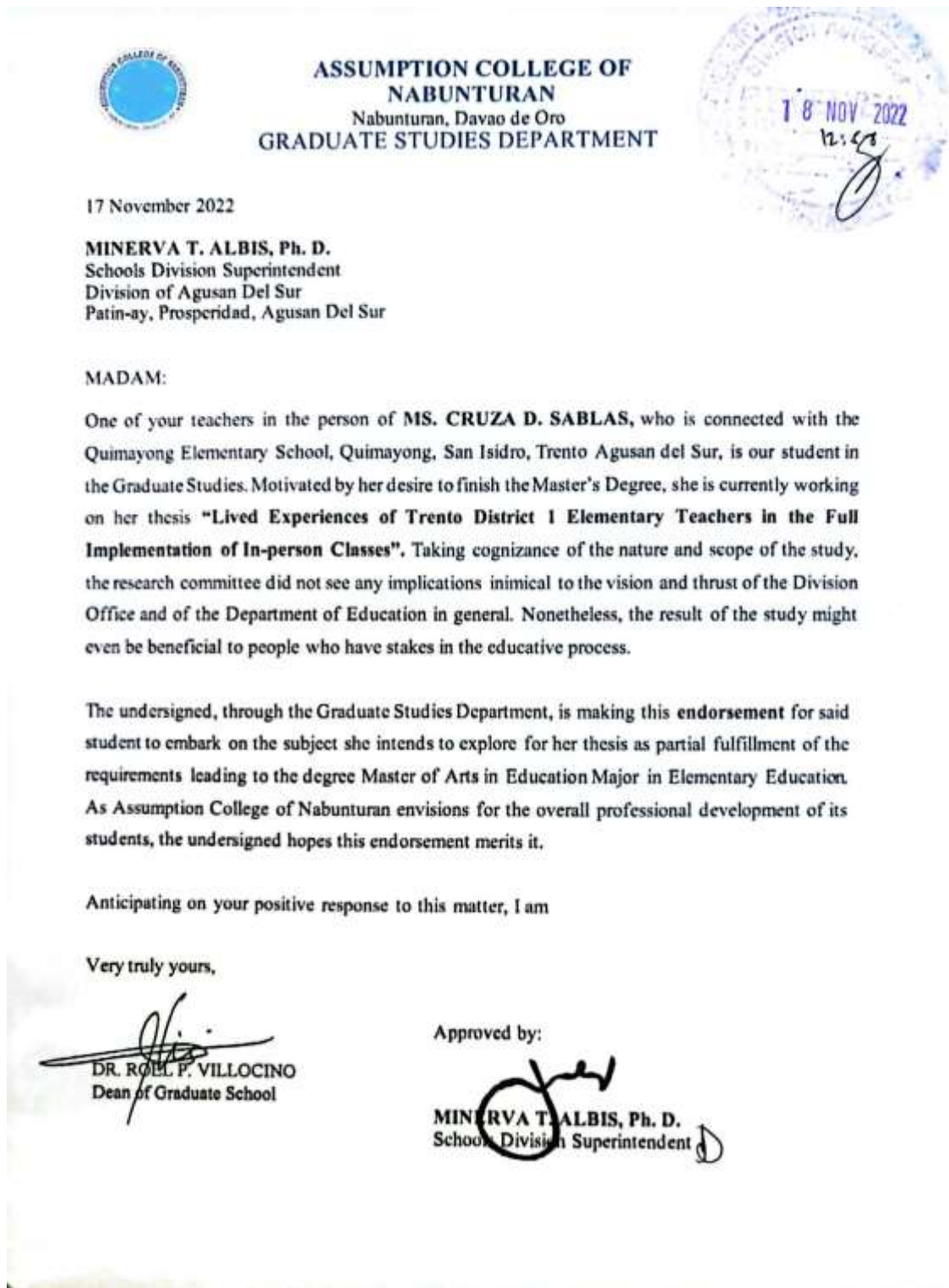


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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Endorsement Letter





Appendix B: Letter to the School Principal



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
CARAGA ADMINISTRATIVE REGION
SCHOOLS DIVISION OF AGUSAN DEL SUR

May 10, 2023

LEMUEL S. DELA VEGA
School Principal

Sir:

Greetings!

I hereby informed your good office that I am enrolled at Assumption College of Nabunturan taking Master of Arts in Education major in Elementary Education. One of my requirements is to conduct a thesis on **"LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TRENTO DISTRICT I ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF IN-PERSON CLASSES"**.

In connection with this, I humbly ask permission from your good office to interview selected teachers from Trento Central Elementary School since they are the research key informants of this study.

Rest assured that any information given to this undertaking is treated with confidentiality and the processes of the system are the only things to be presented during the defense.

I am anticipating your positive approval of this request.

Very respectfully yours,


CRUZA D. SABLAS
Researcher

Approved by:


LEMUEL S. DELA VEGA
School Principal



Title of the Study: **“The Lived Experiences of Trento District I Elementary Teachers in the Full Implementation of in-person Classes”**

Archival Number : _____

Site : _____

Facilitator : _____

Date : _____

Start Time : _____

End Time : _____

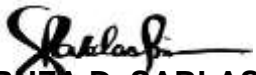
INTERVIEW GUIDE

- 1. What are the experiences of the participants in teaching face-to-face classes?**
 - 1.1 What particular experiences have you had during modular instruction that you still apply now that we're back in face-to-face classes?
 - 1.2 What particular experience did you encounter from the students that made you adjust to teaching face-to-face classes?

- 2. What are the challenges the participants had encountered in handling face-to-face classes?**
 - 2.1 What are the challenges that are new to you?
 - 2.2 What do you think are the causes of these challenges?
 - 2.3 How did you address these challenges you mentioned?
 - 2.4 What did you consider in addressing these challenges?

- 3. What are the coping mechanisms the participants employed in teaching face-to-face classes?**
 - 3.1 What are the coping mechanisms you employed in teaching face-to-face classes?
 - 3.2 What kind of experience is your top priority to cope with?

- 4. How did the experiences, challenges and coping mechanisms influence their face-to-face classes?**
 - 4.1 How do your strategies in distance learning influence your ways of teaching face-to-face classes?
 - 4.2 How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your strategies?
 - 4.3 How do these strategies help you and your pupils?


CRUZA D. SABLAS
Researcher



Appendix E: Summary of Validation Results

Name of Researcher: CRUZA D. SABLAS Degree Enrolled: MAED ED.AD
Title of Research: **The Lived Experience of Trento District I Elementary Teachers in The Full Implementation of In-Person Classes**

Items	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Descriptive Rating
1	4		4	4	Excellent
2	4	4	4	4	Excellent
3	3	1	4	1	Discard
4	3	2	4	4	Good
5	1	2	4	4	Discard
6	4	3	4	4	Excellent
7	4	1	4	4	Good
8	4	3	4	4	Excellent
9	4	3	4	4	Excellent
10	4	3	4	4	Excellent
11	4	3	4	4	Excellent
12		1	4		Discard

Panel of Validators:

Validated by: [Signature] Position of Validator: [Signature]
Signature over Printed Name
Date of Validation: Aug. 13, 2023

Validated by: [Signature] Position of Validator: [Signature]
Signature over Printed Name
Date of Validation: August 13, 2023

Validated by: [Signature] Position of Validator: [Signature]
Signature over Printed Name
Date of Validation: _____

Validated by: [Signature] Position of Validator: [Signature]
Signature over Printed Name
Date of Validation: 08/13/2023



Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I hereby give my consent for my participation in the Researcher's study entitled, **The Lived Experiences of Elementary Teachers in the Full Implementation of in-person Classes**. I know that this endeavor is a study of CRUZA D. SABLAS, a graduating student from Master of Arts in Education major in Education Administration of the Assumption College of Nabunturan, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

The researcher has already explained to me that my participation in this study will be engaged in a face-to-face interview which will require sensitive information regarding personal experiences connected to the study. The information obtained in this study is expected to discover the lived experiences of Trento District I elementary teachers in the full implementation of in-person classes. Furthermore, it was also explained that there will be no risk in my participation.

I know that my participation in this study is voluntary in nature and does not bear negative consequences to me if I choose not to participate. Any information I will provide shall be kept confidential. My name shall never be attached to any information gathered in this study and only Ms. CRUZA D. SABLAS has access to it.

I understand that I may discontinue my personal participation at any time I choose without penalty. Furthermore, we agreed to have a face-to-face interview on May 12, 2023.

Date: _____

Signature of the Participant

Printed Name (Optional)



CURRICULUM VITAE



Name: **Sablas, Cruza D.**
 Address: **Prk. 6, Poblacion, Trento Agusan del Sur**
 Contact Number: **+63948-859-3604**

EDUCATION BACKGROUND

Degree	School	Date Graduated
Masters	Assumption College of Nabunturan Master of Arts in Education Major Education Administration	2023
Bachelor	Bukidnon State University	2018
High School	Prosperidad National High School	2013
Elementary	East Prosperidad Central Elementary School	2007

OCCUPATIONAL/EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND

Position/Ancillary	Inclusive Years	Institution/School
Teacher I Elementary School Teacher	2020 -Present 2018	Quiamyong Elementary School Father Saturnino Urios College of Trento Inc.

ELIGIBILITY AND CERTIFICATIONS

LET Passer September, 2018

I hereby signify to the correctness of the above-cited information.

CRUZA D. SABLAS