NEW NORMAL TRANSITION: SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCIPIENCE ON ITS WAYS AND CHALLENGES

ROBERTO L. RODRIGUEZ JR.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5667-4309
rodriguez.rl@pnu.edu.ph
FEU Cavite, Silang, Cavite, Philippines
Philippine Normal University, Manila, Philippines

ABSTRACT

The incursion of COVID-19 to various states has set forth the challenge for the educational institutions to transition to the New Normal teaching and learning scheme. In the scarce of the studies driven by the perception of Senior High School (SHS) teachers on its ways and challenges using learning management system (LMS), this qualitative study was conducted. Specifically, the study aimed to explore the strategies and methods of teachers using LMS in (a) facilitating and (b) assessing learning; and (c) to determine the perceived dilemmas of teachers in online learning in the New Normal. Respondents were purposively chosen and underwent semi-structured in-depth interviews by dint of video conferencing. Data were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed. Results revealed three themes on facilitating learning such as maximizing LMS features, employing adaptive tools, and utilizing class structures: and two themes on assessing learning, namely item-based and output-based assessments. Four emerging themes on SHS teachers' perceived challenges were lumped as "EASE": Establishing connection; Access to online learning demands; Stable wellness amidst the pandemic; and Ensuring quality learning experience. Findings revealed that despite this unprecedented transition, the use of LMS does not necessarily equate to an optimum edge in an online teaching and learning environment. Nevertheless, this paper describes how educators embody the commitment to quality education by concretizing adaptive and responsive measures to the demand of the New Normal setup.

Keywords: Canvas, online learning, virtual learning, phenomenological research, online interview

INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning process has been dynamic and adaptive from generation to generation. It has been observed to be responsive to the ever-growing demand of society. However, the education system has been challenged by an unprecedented event that alarms states around the globe. The incursion of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) to various states has triggered the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a global pandemic in 2020 (WHO, 2020). This was followed by the Philippines' declaration of state of calamity per Presidential Proclamation No. 929 s. 2020. Such has set forth the disruption to the education community (Huang et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Last March 2020, the Philippine Government had pronounced the start of the implementation of Enhanced Community Quarantine that prohibits institutions to operate and students to move out of their houses to observe physical distancing due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19. This urged the Department of Education to prepare contingency measures vis-à-vis lesson delivery modalities aligned to the released most essential learning competencies (MELCs) extracted from the department's curriculum guides (Hernando-Malipot, 2020; Mendoza, 2020). Consequently, as a response, academic institutions shifted from a physical setup to what is called now the new normal teaching and learning scheme (Rodriguez, 2020).

During this transition, institutions are compelled to recalibrate pre-pandemic practices in

facilitating and assessing learning (De Villa and Manalo, 2020; Gonzales, 2020; Lansangan, 2020; Lansangan and Gonzales, 2020). This involves exploring flexible modalities, tools, and strategies for the new setup (De Villa and Manalo, 2020; Kim, 2020; Lansangan and Gonzales, 2020; Rodriguez, 2020). Literature showed that in the new normal setup, e-learning is the most suitable approach (DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020, 2020; Mailizar et al., 2020). Specifically, the use of the learning management system (LMS).

Even before the pandemic, LMS has been the basic educational technology support to different institutions at different levels (Fathema and Akanda, 2020). Various LMS are emerging nowadays such are Canvas, Blackboard, Sakai, and Moodle which differ in terms of usability, user satisfaction, and most frequently used features (Bruce-kotey et al., 2018). Various empirical and descriptive studies assert that LMS has been merited for the positive effect on student performance and attitude in their learning process (Goh et al., 2014; Magalong & Palomar, 2019). However, 21st-century teachers manifest a negative outlook on the use of LMS in their classroom activities (Fathema & Akanda, 2020; Goh et al., 2014). Hence, teachers resort to treating LMS as a sole repository (Goh et al., 2014) instead of utilizing its potential for promoting interactive learning in the virtual environment.7
The Philippine educational system, through its institutions, is into the challenge of immersing in the digital realm and getting abreast of the dynamics of the 21st Century teaching and learning process through LMS. This is bolstered by the exigency to translate teaching and learning into a new form. It redefines the interaction between the teachers and learners through a technology-aided learning environment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In all these steps for the paradigm shift, it is worth noting that the academe front liners are greatly affected (De Villa and Manalo, 2020; Lansangan and Gonzales, 2020). However, to date, studies on teachers' percipience in transitioning from traditional classroom setup to the New Normal education using LMS remain scarce, particularly at the Senior High School (SHS) level. Thus, this study attempted to provide the need for one. Generally, it is the goal of the study to investigate the percipience of SHS teachers in transitioning to the New Normal teaching scheme using LMS in a purely online environment. Specifically, the study aimed to explore the strategies and methods of teachers using LMS in (a) facilitating and (b) assessing learning; and (c) to determine the perceived dilemmas of teachers in an online distance learning environment in the New Normal. To attain the aforementioned objectives, the research anchored the investigation to the framework shown in Figure 1. The framework centered on the New Normal percipience of the SHS teachers, influencing their pedagogical approaches using LMS in the New Normal.
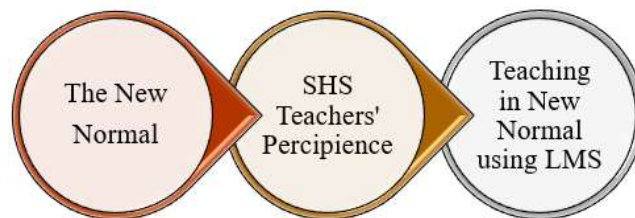

Figure 1. Framework of the study.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive phenomenological research focused on the pre-implementation experiences of SHS teachers in facilitating and assessing learning and the perceived challenges in the New Normal. The research respondents were eight purposively chosen teachers from a private SHS institution in Silang, Cavite, Philippines. Teachers were chosen to represent all strands on the Academic Track in the department. Teachers were identified to have at least a year of teacher training and using Canvas LMS in their class during the pre-pandemic period as they are the key role indicators (Fathema et al., 2015) in its usage in online learning. They were asked to digitally accomplish the informed consent form. Each respondent's percipience was gathered by

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administering a semi-structured recorded interview held in his/her chosen accessible video conferencing platform and his/her most convenient time before the onset of the new academic year. The research instrument was composed of eight questions for the demographic and technological profile of the respondents and three open-ended questions on the percipience on

The bilingual interviews were transcribed, coded, and underwent member checking to ensure proper representation of teachers' percipience (Factor et al., 2017; Pecay, 2017). This provided a venue for clarifications and possible revealing of new data from the respondents (Basatan et al., 2010 as cited in Pecay, 2017) and for concurrence that no data on the file were misconstrued (Simon and Goes 2011 as cited in Pecay, 2017).

the ways and challenges in the New Normal. The respondents were encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts freely on the subject with close consideration to an unstructured interview procedure (Pecay, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Demographic and Technological Profile

Eight respondents, five of whom were female, were interviewed to gain insights into the perceptions of teachers in the transition to the new normal. The informants' ages range from 20-25 years old with 1-3 years of experience in teaching. Literature has revealed that this age range is more inclined to assimilate digital technologies in class (Kalogiannakis, 2010; Purcell et al., 2013) and tends to engage the students to participate and collaborate more in online discussions (Purcell et al., 2013).

Table 1
Generated themes on teachers' percipience on facilitating learning in the New Normal using LMS

Generated Theme	Non-verbatim Response with Frequency	Selected Codes	Themes Description
Maximizing LMS Features	Course materials can be disseminated through the LMS features. (7)	• Publishing references via Module (G1) • Assigning homework and quizzes using Assignment and Quizzes (G6)	Teachers make use of the LMS to store course materials for student access.
	LMS can be a tool for interactive discussion. (3)	• Posting recitation questions via Discussion (G8) • Providing real-time instruction and discussion via Conference (G3)	Teachers treat LMS as the venue to deliver the content.
Employing Adaptive Tools	Students can learn from teacher-created materials. (7)	• Pre-recorded Video (G2) • Learning Module (G4)	Teachers develop contextualized materials to adapt to the New Normal.
	Readily available digital materials can be employed. (6)	• Online games (G5) • Online videos (G7) • Laboratory simulations (G5) • Mobile Applications (G1) • Online Readings (G8)	Teachers collate flexible digital tools for online learning.
Utilizing Class Structures	A combination of synchronous and asynchronous modes can be maximized. (8)	• Processing independently-learned and baffling concepts (G4) • Discussion of quiz items (G1) • Class interaction (G3) • Independent learning (G5)	Teachers underscore blending of real-time and independent learning.

The years of experience of the respondents were within the 0 to 5 years range described as novice teachers who adapted the use of technology in their teaching experience; on the contrary, more experienced teachers adapted technology involuntarily as their response to external forces including policies and mandates of government authorities and expectations of

students and parents (Baek et al., 2008).However, being neophytes to an online teaching setup has teaching (0 – 5 years of experience of teaching online) exhibited the lowest perception of readiness and perceived proficiency to perform pedagogical competencies for online teaching due to a lack of significant experience in online teaching. It was noted that sans high-quality training, novice teachers rely heavily on their experience as previous students and face-to-face instructors (Martin et al., 2019).

In terms of tools, all the respondents planned to maximize their laptops for teaching in the new normal. Other gadgets to supplement this were mobile phones, video cameras, microphones, earphones, and iPad, among other electronic devices. Five out of eight respondents have a Fiber Internet connection while others used mobile data or prepaid Wi-Fi to connect online with internet speeds varying from 5 Mbps to 25 Mbps. This set of teaching equipment qualifies to the technical requirements set by the literature and department orders (Brown, 2017; Canvas Doc Team, 2020c; OUA MEMO 00-0620-0030, 2020). Hence, the respondents' technological profile in terms of devices and internet speed meet the minimum requirements on the use of Canvas as LMS in the New Normal.

2. Facilitating Learning in the New Normal

The distance that separates the learners from the teachers has set forth the demand for changes in their practices of facilitating learning in the teaching and learning process. After a methodical evaluation of the respondents' perceptions of how they plan to facilitate learning by maximizing the use of Canvas LMS, three themes were identified namely *2.1 Maximizing LMS* Features*, 2.2 Employing Adaptive* Tools*, and Utilizing Class Structures* (see These identified themes surrounded the two most common terms that emerged in scholarly discussions when it came to online learning. These common terms were synchronous and asynchronous sessions. In synchronous sessions, teachers and students were required to meet virtually using platforms to simultaneously engage in class while in the asynchronous sessions, learners were at their

been correlated to their years of teaching experience. Teachers who were new to online own pace as it does not require everyone to be online at the same time (Cardamone, 2020; The Best Schools, 2020).

2.1 Maximizing LMS Features

The first theme in facilitating learning was maximizing LMS features. This theme was derived from the teachers making use of the system to store course materials, such as references and activities for students to access. It can be recollected that in a normal setup, teachers can easily hand into learners a copy of the course syllabus before the start of the discussion. In the New Normal using an LMS, the respondents highlighted that the learners should also grasp the overview of the content of the course to inform them of the linear flow of the course content.

> *"In Canvas, it is more on assessment and on what they have to accomplish… I upload readings including instructions." (G6).*

These course contents for the overview can be published through the *Modules* feature of the LMS. This feature lets the instructors organize the content depending on the need of the course (Canvas Doc Team, 2020b). The results confirmed the study of Goh et al. (2014) stating that LMS can be treated as a content repository in online learning to contain references preliminary and supplementary to the course.

The teachers accentuated the need for such a meaningful and interactive manner of facilitating learning, in which these themes likewise emerged. It was a clear manifestation of the next step right after laying down the path of the learners through the course content. Respondents expressed their acuity of conducting real-time recitation sessions through the Canvas Conference for an interactive discussion.

> *"There comes video conferencing in which students and the teacher have the presence and interaction in real-time." (G5)*

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The asynchronous interaction, on the other hand, was identified from the idea of letting the students express their understanding independent of both time and space through the Canvas Discussions. Such a feature allowed teachers and students of the course to interactively communicate individually or as a group, graded or not (Canvas Doc Team, 2020a).

"Sometimes, you can use it [LMS] in posting discussion questions where students can comment on their answers." (G8)

These affirmed the study of Lonn and Teasley (2009) emphasizing teachers and students having a venue in sharing learning materials and online communications in LMS. Additionally, these modes of online interaction confirmed two of the main purposes of using LMS in online teaching according to Bruce-kotey et al. (2018). Hosting real-time discussions and tracking student progress without the dependence on either or both time and space may differ from LMS to another yet a general feature that can be maximized in the instructional process (Bruce-kotey et al., 2018).

2.2 Employing Adaptive Tools

This theme was derived from the instance connected to the previous them where teachers prepare course contents to further populate the teaching materials. Such materials can either created or collated with flexible digital tools for online learning.

Interestingly, all the respondents revealed a willingness to develop their self-made instructional materials for their online classes. These contents varied from the course introduction in the form of files and instructional materials parallel with the prescribed most essential competencies (MELCs) (De Villa & Manalo, 2020).

"I will create compendium through videos, handouts, [and] learning modules aligned with MELCs" (G2)

Subsequently, five of eight respondents signified the utilization of available online resources from the plethora that the online environment can offer. These materials vary from the gathered reference for the discussion proper to online manipulative in the absence of tangible materials for skills demonstration. Respondents even enumerated the contents that can be included in the modules in addition to the preliminary documents for the class. These contents into reference readings and by enumerating some websites such as Netflix, YouTube, and Spotify.

"I'd be able to find other materials from online resources that may be useful or helpful to the students to understand the topics more." (G7)

These insights heightened the need for the teachers to keep abreast by being resourceful to adapt to the current demand of this paradigm shift. These materials can empower online pedagogical approaches (Rodriguez, 2020), especially when designed and curated to contextualize content to fit in the current setup (De Villa and Manalo, 2020)

2.3. Utilizing Class Structures

The teachers perceive the need for such a meaningful and interactive manner of facilitating learning. It was a clear manifestation of the next step right after laying down the path of the learners through the course content. There was a need to supervise the progress of the learning of the students. One of the ways to monitor such learning progress interactively was through the use of a feedback mechanism. This theme surfaced from the awareness of teachers on the possibility of a hybrid of synchronous and asynchronous modes of facilitating learning, which may vary depending on the need of the lesson.

"I will create compendium through videos, handouts, [and] learning modules aligned with MELCs" (G2)

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"I'll start with independent learning and the synchronous follows to clarify unclear concepts to students." (G3)

Such means to navigate online interaction was coined as Bichronous Online Learning which provides propitious impacts in online learning uncovered by Martin et al. (2020). The blending of synchronous and asynchronous modes was an indication of how these modes supplement each other depending on the need of the course (Yamagata-Lynch, 2014). However, when institutionalized, a demerit counts on the scheduling conflict between classes (Martin et al., 2020)

2.4. Assessing Learning in the New Normal

These unprecedented times in the New Normal setup have placed a challenge on teachers in ensuring that learning has been transferred in their respective learning contexts. Such is the main goal of the learning process regardless of the setup upfront.

The responses revealed two themes to ensure that expected learnings were transferred to the learners through the assessments administered namely Item -based Assessment and Output – based Assessment. Table 3 summarizes the generated themes from the responses of the respondents on assessing learning.

Table 2
Generated themes on teachers' percipience of assessing learning in the New Normal using LMS

Generated Theme	Non-verbatim Response with Frequency	Selected Codes	Theme Description
Item-based assessment	Items can be varied in the LMS. (4)	• Multiple-choice items (G1) • Open-ended items (G5)	Online learning can be assessed asynchronously at different levels by utilizing various objective types of items.
	Learning can be monitored throughout the discussion. (4)	Posting questions • right after discussion (G5) • following independent learning through Pages (G3) • during the discussion (G4)	Teachers synchronously and asynchronously monitor the progress of students' learning.
Output-based assessment	Students can exhibit learning through submitted outputs. (3)	• Podcast-link submission (G6) • Written outputs (G6) • Problem sets (G7 and G8)	Teachers point out authentic assessment through product-based and process-based tasks.

2.5. Item-based Assessment

This theme transpired from the incident of ensuring that the learners acquired learning by providing them test items to answer. These items can be dispensed to learners during or after the discussion to monitor that learning happens. Specifically, this theme surfaced from the use of varying objective test items to assess learning and the maximization of items asked synchronously through conferences and asynchronously to monitor students' learning progress.

2.6 Output-based Assessment

Contrary to the perception that item-based assessment can ensure learning comes to the output-based assessment. This theme transpired from the limitations of the objective type of assessment. Hence the need for authentic assessment by letting learners provide pieces of evidence of transfer of learning in the form of performance and/or product to be submitted through the LMS.

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"We cannot assure learning by objective-type assessment, so I focused on authentic and practical assessment." (G6)

"I monitor students' retention so, I'll scan through and I'll browse through the results of their drills, their practices exercises" (G7)

Responses revealed that teachers should explore various modes of assessment in this New Normal setup. This was asserted by Lansangan and Gonzales (2020) and Gonzales (2020) to re-evaluate assessment practices to fit the New Normal. The efforts of the respondents to this transition of assessing student learning highlights the fact that students' understanding should be the core of online learning (Xiong and Suen, 2018).

Lastly, these affirmed the fact that in attaining learning objectives online, there exist various indicators revealed by Kearns (2012).

3. Perceived Challenges in the New Normal

The compulsory paradigm-shifting of institutions to adapt to the demand of the New Normal entails unaccustomed challenges to teachers.

Table 3
Generated themes on teachers' perceived challenges in the New Normal using LMS

Generated Theme	Non-verbatim Response with Frequency	Selected Codes	Theme Description
Establishing connection	A connection needs to be established between teachers and students. (8)	• Teacher to students (G1) • Student to student (G5)	Teachers highlight the difficulty to establish teacher-student and student-student connections and open communications.
Access to online learning demands	Learning can be hampered by connectivity problems and platform adeptness among teachers and learners. (8)	• Internet connectivity issue (G7) • Teaching and Learning tools (G3) • LMS Feature Adeptness (G4)	Teachers view tools, internet connection, and familiarity with the platform used as primary challenges.
Stable wellness amidst the pandemic	Physical and mental wellness should be considered. (3)	• Screen time (G3) • Mental health (G2) • New Normal Anxiety (G1)	The stability of the physical and mental wellness of both teachers and students is at stake in this setup.
Ensuring quality learning experience	The set goals and competencies to be acquired by the students cannot be assured. (4)	• Learner's integrity (G6 and G8) • Learning Assurance (G6)	Teachers are apprehensive of the attainment of the common goal for the learners.

These challenges surround the status of the teachers, students, teacher-student connection, and access. These challenges were lumped as **"EASE":** *3.1. Establishing connection; 3.2. Access to online learning demands; 3.3. Stable wellness* amidst the pandemic*; and 3.4.* *Ensuring quality learning experience*. These generated themes were summarized in Table 3.

3.1. Establishing connection

Respondents showed a manifestation of their awareness of the need to build rapport

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among teachers and students. This theme emerged from the fact that the New Normal hampers teacher-student and student-student connections and open communications.

"Building rapport…it will be difficult to know them more and build trust… They should not be hesitant to reach out." (G1)

"On group works, some may not cooperate and exert much effort even in a small group." (G5)

These identified challenges were similarly reported by De Villa and Manalo (2020) emphasizing that constant communication is a possible challenge between teachers and students. Consequently, Wooten et al. (2020) underscored that students in online learning may feel being isolated from other students.

3.2. Access to online learning demands

The second theme on perceived challenges was the access to the demands of the virtual environment to both teachers and students. This was derived from the teachers' view that internet connection, devices, and familiarity of the platform used as primary challenges.

"Given the internet connection in the country, it could be the barrier for the students to grasp what the teacher is trying to communicate." (G1)

"Not everyone has a reliable internet connection or device necessary in this setup." G3)

"Not all learners are adept with the platform which might interrupt the class." (G6)

These challenges were coined as adeptness and accessibility which were vital elements in online learning as asserted (De Villa and Manalo, 2020; Habibu et al., 2012). These challenges set the starting point of how users achieve the goal of each session in an online class.

3.3. Stable wellness amidst the pandemic

Aside from the criterion-referenced goals for teachers and learners, the respondents signified their concern through their cognizant responses on the stability of physical and mental wellness of both teachers and students being at stake.

"I personally feel anxiety on this situation which can be the same with the students." (G1)

"Screen time of students may affect their health... and quarantine fatigue for teachers and students." (G3)

Results revealed that respondents were acquainted with the possible effects of this setup on both teachers and students. The effects can be on the physical and mental health of screen time and were affirmed and enumerated by Kesuma (2020) such as growth disorders, eye-related health problems, anxiety, depression, and aggression, among others. Meanwhile, on one's mental state, this new normal setup has also brought immense impact underlined by Torales et al. (2020).

3.4. Ensuring quality learning experience

Lastly, under the challenges was the theme labeled as ensuring a quality learning experience which was derived from the teachers' apprehension on the attainment of a common goal for learners. This theme signifies that the educators were still devoted to delivering quality education while assessing the means to attain the main objective of the teaching profession for the learners even in the New Normal.

"The credibility of the answers of students in any assessment is a concern." (G6)

"I don't know if learning is really assessed online." (G5)

Similar results were reported by De Villa and Manalo (2020) and Lansangan and Gonzales (2020) on the questionable integrity of students in

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their submission. This concern was even heightened by the presence of distance between the teacher and learners in which monitoring could have been emphasized. This was furthered by Laghigna (2020) emphasizing the susceptibility of online assessments to academic dishonesty.

CONCLUSIONS

In the scarce of studies understanding the SHS teachers' percipience of the ways and challenges of the transition to the New Normal setup, this study was conducted. Eight respondents were interviewed to gain insights on their percipience in the transition in terms of facilitating learning, assessing learning, and challenges on this New Normal using an LMS. Data were gathered by administering a semi-structured in-depth interview on an online meeting platform due to the mobility limitations of the respondents and the researcher.

The study revealed that the respondents' technological profile in terms of devices and internet speed meet the minimum requirements on the use of LMS in the New Normal. Further, results revealed three themes on facilitating learning, such as maximizing LMS features, employing adaptive tools, and utilizing class structures. These are focused on contextualizing the instruction through available resources with the maximization of features offered by the LMS. Two themes on assessing learning emerged namely item-based and output-based assessments which are focused on exploring various indicators of learning manifestation among students using LMS. Four emerging themes on SHS teachers' perceived challenges were lumped as **"EASE":** **E**stablishing connection; **A**ccess to online learning demands; **S**table wellness amidst pandemic; and **E**nsuring quality learning experience. Findings revealed that despite this unprecedented transition, the utilization of LMS and access to technical requirements do not necessarily equate to having an optimum edge in an online teaching and learning environment. Academic front liners share common challenges yet upholding the commitment to quality education by concretizing adaptive and responsive measures to the demand of the New Normal setup.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As for recommendations, further studies may focus on the (a) comparison of the percipience on the ways and challenges of teachers and learners in this New Normal setup; (b) year-end interviews of the teachers may be focused on how their perspectives have changed and recommendations they can offer; and (c) conduct of subject- and level-specific studies similar to the objectives of the current study.

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AUTHOR' S PROFILE

Mr. Roberto L. Rodriguez Jr. is a full-time Senior High School Physics teacher and STEM Academic Coordinator in FEU Cavite. He graduated Top 8 Magna Cum Laude with the course Bachelor of Science in Physics for Teacher from Philippine Normal University-Manila under DOST-SEI Scholarship. He finished his Master of Science in Physical Science from De La Salle University- Dasmariñas where he graduated with High Distinction and as an Outstanding Research and Virtus et Excelentia awardee. He has published works in various journals focusing on Pure Physics and Education. He has presented his works in various regional, national, and international conferences in which he is a recipient of Best Research Paper, Best Paper Presenter, and Grand Champion in Creative Lesson Planning. At present, he is pursuing the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Science Education at the Philippine Normal University-Manila.

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