Research Article

Webinars for Teachers: A Lived Experience for Developing Capability in These Challenging Times

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ABSTRACT

The sudden force shut down of all educational institutes across the country due to COVID19 pandemic is truly a great challenge on how to continue resiliency in education. As response, educational institutions conducted webinars to enhance the faculty capabilities in these challenging times. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explore the lived experiences of teachers who attended webinars during the pandemic. An interview was conducted to ten participants from Aroroy National High School. Purposive sampling technique was employed. Researchers used self-made questionnaire with open ended questions and thematic analysis is applied in analyzing the data. Five major themes where identified: (1) Developed Capabilities; (2) Significance of webinars in current situation; (3) Best Practices; (4) Suggestions for Smooth Running; and (5) Plan for utilization and enhancement of learnt knowledge and skills. These themes shows that webinars positively affects the teachers during pandemic. Teachers developed their teaching skills, technical and managerial skills and emotional quotient through webinars. It was also concluded that educators experience the enormous impact of webinars in their lives when they effectively utilized and shared their learnt knowledge and skills in the webinars. However, it should be considered that in conducting an effective and smooth webinars there must be guidelines to follow. Challenging times will not be as challenging as they are when the goal of webinars to develop faculty capability is successfully planned and achieved.

Keywords: *Challenging times, Teachers' capability, Webinars*

Introduction

Despite the call for academic freeze due to COVID-19 pandemic, the DepEd still believes that education should not be compromised. Educators cannot stop learning and sharing knowledge. Webinars is an example of E-Learning that refers to online seminars and includes audience interacting in virtual environment. E-learning refers to the usage of technology and network communication in teaching and learning process. It can also be defined to a technology enabled transmission of skills and knowledge to many recipients in different places. This is now the widely used and fastest growing trend in the area of educational technology (Means, 2013 as cited in Lieser et al., 2018).

Moreover, the abrupt increase of the COVID-19 cases across the globe has also added to the importance of E-Learning classes. The education system needs to adapt to the current requirement and necessity to use ICT (Information Communication Technology) to encourage pedagogical innovation in teaching and learning. From the knowledge and skills learned in webinars, teachers will become fully equip and capable in the demands brought by change. Ultimately, teachers need to be open minded and accept the shift of educational transfer modality to be able to reap the benefits of online learning or seminars.

In response to this current situation, the present study explored how webinars affected the lived experiences of those who attended. Specifically, it tried to analyze the effectiveness of webinars on faculty's capability during the COVID-19 pandemic with these guide questions: (1) What are the important skills learned or developed from the webinars attended? (2) What are the best practices in the webinars? (3) What are the faculty's future plans related to utilization of knowledge and skills? (4) What are the suggestions for the smooth procedures or even enhance the conduct of webinars?

Methods
Research Design

This qualitative research employed the phenomenological approach because it focused on the study of phenomena or the ways actors experience things. Phenomenology, which has its roots in philosophy, offers a special possibility for recording the lived experience of people since it allows for the discovery of phenomena from the standpoint of how individuals interpret and give meaning to their existence (Frechette, et.al., 2020). This design suits studies that focuses on examining the experiences of the respondents.

The Respondents

The study investigated the teachers from Aroroy National High School composed of ten (10) respondents using the purposive sampling technique to draw the sample. The limited respondents of this research are those teachers of Aroroy National High School who experienced attending webinars.

Instrument

This study used interview as a method to gather learning outcomes/feedback and reflection on the webinars attended. Researchers have used self-made questionnaire with open ended questions. Before the conduct of the interview, the researcher sent a letter of consent to the principals and teachers to ask permission to gain information from the respondents. The responses and data obtained were treated with utmost confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The study analyzed through thematic analysis techniques for identifying some common themes. The process undergone transcription of responses that require coding stages. The researchers used the Qda miner app in transcription and coding process. In initial stage, the authors read and re-read the transcripts in order to identify the potential themes. Reviewing to the first and last authors' initial codes is the second stage process. It is important to give consideration on how to retain the diversity of these initial codes, in which higher level sub-themes is given emphasis. The target research question, the effectiveness of webinars on faculty's capability in these challenging times, informed this process. As to third level of analysis, it was conducted by the first and last authors' identified quotes that were consistent with the overarching themes. These themes were completely reviewed prior to defining

and naming them. Finally, the presentation of the report began once themes were finalized.

Result and Discussion

In these challenging times brought by the new normal context, teachers are forced to learn and somehow deliver learning through online mode, this might be difficult, however if they had already mastered online teaching, situation would be different. Trainings and seminars cannot be conducted in a physical location during pandemic. Thus, using an online webinar trainings have been regarded as a useful technique for keeping higher education instructors current (Rao, 2019 as cited in Abel et.al., 2021).

Recent study of Bhaumik and Priyadarshini (2020) clearly stated that techno pedagogical as well as digital skills of both teachers and learners need to be taken care of. So regular workshops, webinars, conferences are very important for the academicians, research scholars, students and stakeholders so that they can develop professionally, share their own knowledge and experiences and become techno savvy. It was therefore vital to analyze how webinars affected the lived experiences of teachers as to its effectiveness on their capability. The result of this study shows within cohort coded samples, that the effect to teachers was overwhelmingly positive.

Q.1. What are the important skills that you have learned or developed from webinars attended?

Most of the participants in this study reported that they have developed their competence in teaching.
"I have learned the various strategies which can be used in teaching during this time of pandemic."

Others said that their technical and managerial skills in these challenging times were enhanced. One of the participants reported, it helped increased their emotional quotient as a good listener.
"I was able to develop my skills in terms of being flexible and adaptable which may be helpful for my career development."

This agrees in the study of Tanucan & Uytico (2021), webinars serves as a crucial forum for official professional discussions. In the same regard, Abel et.al., (2021) found that webinars provides a way to ensure lifelong learning.for professional educators and assists them in adapting to the new educational standard.

Q.2. What is the significance of webinars to your current work as an educator?

Regarding the significance of the webinar, one of the participants said *"It is essential for my career and professional development that enables me to look for a wide perspective for growth,"* Others spoke that, *"I continuously gain relevant information and skills that I can apply to my practices as a teacher."*

Two (2) of the respondents said that webinars they attended helped them in their professional growth. Five (5) respondents said that webinars gave them relevant and innovative ideas that are applicable and useful in their teaching career. Thus, consistent with Rao (2020), webinars provide more detailed knowledge about the subject that is presented though they only last for a short period of time. Thus, getting valuable information about latest teaching strategies, methods and approaches are properly catered to the participants. In addition, Rao P.S. (2019) stated that teachers have to attend webinars to refresh their teaching skills and strategies in order to make classroom lively and interactive.

Q.3. What are the best practices of webinars that you can share?

When a new project emerges because of changes in certain situation, expect the existence of different reactions and feedback. Participants reflected on the third theme the best practices they have experienced in the webinars. A participant expressed that, *"preparedness of the speakers and the training staff; good technical management, communication of training or webinar program and schedule."* One of the best practices lies in the hand of the trainers with regards to their preparedness and technical management.

Another best practice in webinars depends on the active participation and following rules

by the trainees. One respondent expressed that the best practice in a webinar is, *"Follow the proper rules or practices right attitude in joining the webinars".*

Flexibility of the delivery of the webinars or accessibility of the webinars is also a best practice cited by two respondents. One of them said that webinars can be recorded so that it can be reviewed by the participants.

Rathod, V. et. al (2021) supported that one of the webinars' benefits as revealed in their findings that they can be recorded and stored which can be made available for further learning sessions. Similarly, online learning provides flexible opportunities for different forms of study and facilitates continuous learning (Oosi, et. al., 2019), such as webinars have technical elements like voice feeds, chats two-way videos, polls, breakout groups, shared screens, shared whiteboards, documents, changes of administrator, and recordings (Khechine & Lakhal, 2018; Snow, et.al, 2018; Timonen, 2018). It seems likely that the effectiveness of webinar-based learning relies on the preparation, duration and frequency.

However, there are studies argued that webinars could be more effective based on the application of approaches or instruction in the delivery and consideration on stable internet accessibility. This fits well in the article of Vangie Beal, "Webinar- Web-based seminar," that the lack of proper communication, technical problems, and poor understanding of instructional goals are the barriers for online learning. In addition, Ramos, L. & Soliven, P. (2022) stated in the results of their study that the negative side of online learning is the unstable internet connection which hinders the learnings. The right online instructions enable students to provide feedback, ask questions, and further explore topics connected to the course material.

Q.4. What are your suggestions for smooth running of webinars?

Majority of the participants clearly reported that there is a disruption in the online program due to poor internet connectivity and even technological disruption from the organizers side as stated in their own words,

"enhance the internet connection in the provinces and electricity supply."

For smooth running of the webinars the most important suggestion is to secure good internet connection. (Nagar, 2020) reported the major factors of effectiveness of online programs are availability of digital device, internet connectivity, infrastructural facilities and supporting online mode of learning.

Another suggestion for the smooth running of webinars is it must be interactive. A respondent said, *"Hopefully, the routine of doing most of the talking can be avoided and strategize to insert some slides one from time to time to continuously hook the interest of the viewers."* Webinars must be engaging as well as informative. One participant also suggested that handouts must be provided to the trainees that they can use for review.

Q.5. What are your future plans related to utilization of knowledge and skills learned?

Finally, participants described that the impact of webinars in their lives is effectively utilized when it is applied and shared to others or workplace. A participant spoke, "to have the things I've learned be executed especially in the teaching of English." Gegenfurtner, et. al (2018) expressed that it is thoughtful to use what have learnt in webinars to apply the techniques in teaching since webinars are frequently integrated into curricula of distance education and blended learning programs, some examples for overcoming transactional distance learning.

Attending more educational endeavors and be equipped with the necessary skills are responses of three out of ten participants in their webinars' learning application. This pandemic made us bound to go for situation planning for academic institutions Rieley (2020). Teachers should attend webinars available on the internet where they get up-to-date information that take place in their field to enhance their teaching and learning skills enormously and to update necessary skills (Rao, P.S, 2019).

These themes emerge to link with the concept in exploring how webinars affected the lived experiences of teachers and its effectiveness on their capability in these challenging times. In the present study, it is indicated that

many educators have sound content knowledge, but they do not have updated technological knowledge and strategies that create problems in the online program. Similar findings have found from the study by Bhaumik & Priyadarshin (2020) and Muthuprasad et.al (2020) that teachers and students who both are unfamiliar towards online program are the great obstacles for online mode of learning. A very positive side of the present study is respondents have accepted that online program helps them to enhance their depth of knowledge and they are ready to utilize their learnt knowledge in their professional field. In the current climate, where provision of handouts is scarce, interactive strategies and poor internet accessibility during webinar session, must and should be addressed. Thus, the result of the current study clearly suggests that effective guidelines for webinars offers benefits as a tool for the enhancement flow of webinars at the level of developing faculty capability.

Conclusion

The sudden shift of the conventional face-to-face classes to alternative learning delivery mode, whichever is applicable in certain context, brought a huge impact of change due to demand of using technology. In response, different educational institutes are organizing workshops and webinars the country since the month of March 2020 for learning purposes. The present study revealed that the effect of webinars in faculty capability is overwhelmingly positive. The study reported that teachers developed their teaching skills, technical and managerial skills and emotional quotient through webinars. It is also concluded that as they effectively utilized and shared their learnt knowledge in the workplace, they have experienced the enormous impact of webinars in their lives.

However, in attending webinars, it is important to consider the technical issues that may occur in running session. Thus, it is recommended that there must be uninterrupted and low-cost internet facilities for the smooth conduct of the program. It should not be only for urban population but also for rural people. Other things like providing of handouts to the participants, taking the feedback from the participants and work on it, providing timely topics are some of the elements that organizers must keep in mind for a more interactive and purposive sessions. One of the best practices lies in the hand of the trainers with regards to their preparedness and technical management and the other one depends on trainers' active participation and following of rules. Flexibility of the deliver of webinars or accessibility of the webinars is also a best practice. One way of doing this is through recording the webinars so that it can be reviewed by the participants.

In general, proper planning should consider that webinars make more inclusive through providing guidelines that slowly gives understanding on how to effectively conduct webinars in this new learning situation. So, these challenging times demand solution through competent educators. Attending more educational endeavors and be equipped with the necessary skills are important for educators even in pandemic. These can be achieved through attending webinars. Challenging times will not be as challenging as they are when the goal of webinars to develop faculty capability is successfully planned and achieved.

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