

# Challenges and Hopes of SARDOs in Philosophy Subject Amid COVID-19 Pandemic: Gearing Towards Innovative Approaches

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**Abstract:** *This research aimed to understand the challenges and hopes of students-at-risk of dropping out in philosophy subject in Canduman National High School for the School Year 2020-2021 as basis for intervention. It used phenomenology research design in understanding the challenges and hopes of students-at-risk of dropping out. Content data analysis was used to analyze the frequency of occurrence of words and phrases of the responses of participants. It was found out that the challenges fall under the themes are collaboration, reflection, self-regulation, distance learning, and poverty. The themes fall under hopes are intervention and warmth. Based on the findings, the study recommended to design innovative intervention, revisit the most essential learning competencies, lessen the activities in the module and focus more on the content. Provide students with trainings on productivity tools. Ask direct assistance from stakeholders to improve the delivery of instruction. It suggested to design intervention that fits the needs of the students and within the reach of students' capacity. The result of the study was limited to the challenges and hopes of students-at-risk of dropping out in philosophy subject in Canduman National High School and thus recommends for further investigations across curriculum to establish viability of the impact of alternative learning delivery modality in education crisis brought by covid-19 pandemic.*

**Keywords:** students-at-risk of dropping out, difficulty, hopes, intervention, distance learning, covid-19

## 1. Introduction

Covid-19 has brought educational challenges to the education system. The loss of instructional time delivered in conventional classroom settings [1] has steered education policies to alternative learning delivery modalities.

In Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented the alternative learning delivery modalities through distance and online learning, including TV-based and Radio-Based instruction, blended learning, modular printed/digital. While face-to-face instruction are temporarily suspended until the schools are safe for students and school personnel [2]. However, distance learning needs the highest degree of autonomy and thus for the students to finish the program, students need to sustain their motivation while working alone and find effective ways to work individually [3].

Recent studies revealed that distance learning has imposed challenges both in terms of individual and organizational aspects. Based on the large samples of professors and students across universities in Arab world, it was found out that distance learning in time of pandemic imposed some challenges, including self-imposed obstacles, pedagogical, technical, financial, and organizational challenges [4]. Since this alternative learning delivery is, for the first time, widely and commonly used in education system due to pandemic, there is a greater need for educational institutions to investigate and document the impact of pandemic to strengthen the curriculum practices and make it more relevant to the current needs of the students [5].

Currently, there is no plethora of literature that investigates and discusses the impact of the widespread adaptation of alternative learning delivery modalities in basic education

amid covid-19 pandemic in the Philippine settings.

It is for this reason that this research was conducted to gain in depth understanding of the impact of alternative delivery modality to students, especially to students-at-risk of dropping out or commonly known as SARDO. It is hoped that this research adds to the body of literature that deals with the impact of the pandemic to SARDO.

In her analysis of SARDO, Timbal [6] identified four (4) factors that students can be classified as SARDO and these are demographics, performance, self-identified factors, and social contexts. For example, a low-income family, ethnic minority group indicate demographics factor. Poor attendance, lack of attention, and poor grades illustrate poor performance. Self-identified factors include boring class, lack of engagement in school, tests too difficult, poor attendance, adults' poor perception on performance and the lack of parental involvement in school activities. Social contexts involve peer support and teacher support. In this study, the term SARDO takes into account the late and non-submission of outputs, performing low both in terms of written works and performance tasks.

This research aimed to understand the challenges and hopes of SARDO in philosophy subject in Canduman National in order to come up with innovative interventions and save these students from dropping out of school

## 2. Objectives of the Study

This research aimed to understand the challenges and hopes of SARDO in philosophy subjects in Canduman National High School during the first quarter of the school year 2020-2021. Findings of the study served as basis for appropriate intervention.

Volume 9 Issue 12, December 2020

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### 3. Methodology

This research used phenomenology research design. From a research point of view, phenomenology seeks to shed light the intrinsic nature of phenomenon by examining it from the standpoint of those who have experienced it. The meaning of the experience is illustrated both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced [7].

#### 3.1 Research Participants

The participants of the study were grade 11 senior high school students and were perceived as students-at-risk of dropping out during the school year 2020-2021. A total of ten (10) participants participated the study. In phenomenology studies, Creswell [8] suggested only 5-15 participants. The suggestion helps the researchers to estimate the number of participants they will need, but primarily, the required number of participants is dependent on saturation. In this study, such a number was sufficient to arrive at data saturation.

#### 3.2 Data Collection

In the data collection, the teacher-made interview guide is the main data collection instrument. According to Calderon and Gonzalez 1993 as cited by Ebor and Calimutan [9], the interview guide allows the researcher to freely explore significant concepts in depth and allows flexibility in the order, manner, and language of questioning. Following the government health protocol, the interviews were conducted through mobile communication platforms. The researcher individually interviewed the participants and recorded the conversation through a digital voice recorder.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis

This research used quantitative content data analysis analyzing the responses of the participants. Quantitative content analysis is broadly used in an area of communication research and is particularly widespread in media and culture studies [10]. Systematically, it analyzes textual, visual, audio, audio-visual content materials [11]. It examines occurrences of words, phrases, notions, in historical and contemporary texts [12].

In this study, the researcher analyzed the challenges and hopes of the participants in philosophy subject. Significant words and phrases used as unit of analysis which are drawn from the results of the interview. Words were counted as to the frequency of occurrences to produce an array of themes. These themes are clustered according to the agreement of one's perception. With that, the data were analyzed and interpreted.

#### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols were properly observed. Although, the data collection is part of the teacher's duties and responsibilities in monitoring the students' performance, yet still the researcher informed the participants of the goal and end of the research. In phenomenology studies, it is necessary that the participants need to know the goals and end of the

research to warrant respect, privacy, and data confidentiality [13]. Undeniably, Fagundes [14] pointed out that there are teachers or teachers and researchers at the same time seeking to understand the nature of educational phenomena due to learning needs of the students. Similarly, the teacher in this study is at the same time acted as the researcher in order to be responsive to the needs of students amid covid-19 pandemic.

### 4. Results and Discussions

This section presents the findings and discussions with respect to the challenges and hopes of SARDO.

#### 4.1 Challenges of SARDOs in Philosophy subjects

Table 1 shows the challenges of the SARDO such as the lack of collaborative learning opportunities to understand difficult philosophical concepts and processes, avoidance of reflective activities, too many modules to catch up, lack internet connectivity and gadgets proficiency, and working students. These challenges fall under the theme's collaboration, reflection, self-regulation, distance learning, and poverty.

**Table 1: Challenges of SARDO in Philosophy subjects**

Challenges	f	Sub-theme	Theme
lack of collaborative learning opportunities to understand difficult philosophical concepts and processes	10	Collaborative leaning opportunities	Collaboration
Avoidance of reflective activities	10	Reflective Activities	Reflection
Too many modules to catch up	9	Module overloads	Self-Regulation
Lack of internet connectivity and gadgets proficiency	5	Technological limitations	Distance Learning
Working students	4	Financial issues	Poverty

Finding shows the difficulty the students had experienced in terms of understanding philosophical concepts and processes. The subject Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person is one of the core subjects in the Senior High School curriculum. It introduces the students into activity and philosophical processes to obtain a broad perspective of life. Students are taught how to acquire analytical and critical skills, and apply these skills to daily affairs. It is hoped that the students become truthful, service-oriented, environmentally involved, actively participating in the development of a more just and human society, and articulate their own belief systems [15].

Interestingly, this finding indicates that knowledge construction has individual and social dimension [16], but very unfortunate that SARDO can hardly look for peer supports due to stringent physical distancing, and the lack of computer gadgets, and internet access. Laal and Ghodisi [17] believed that learning process is easy and effortless when it occurs in collaborative settings, where students working together to solve problem, complete a task, and create a product. This is something missing in covid-19 pandemic. The finding corroborates to the findings of Adnan and Anwar [18] who concluded that the lack of face-to-face interaction, delayed response time, and absence of conventional classroom interaction caused difficulties for

students to do group work.

The next challenge of SARDO was concerned with the lack of reflective capacity. In this study, students settled for multiple-choice formative assessment activities instead of open-ended, and reflective questions. They believed that multiple-choice questions require less effort because they could just easily find the answers in the discussion section of the modules. It seems possible that this finding is due to the construction of test items which is only meant to assess knowledge of the topics. While essay type questions require them more time to think, analyze, and do few researches to substantiate their opinions on certain issues.

Although the finding is not encouraging, but possible explanation for this is that each self-learning module contains too many written activities. An implication for this is to reduce these activities to give students more room to work on contents, and focus on competencies appropriate to their level of understanding.

This observation is contrary to that of Heiskanen and Lonka [19] who found that students who appreciate reflective activities have higher engagement, and are optimistic, and do not avoid tasks. The finding is crucial because critical and analytical thinking skills are imperative for future employability [20].

Another reported challenge is that late submission of answered sheets during the indicated date of distributions of modules and retrievals of outputs. They were all in agreement that they needed to grapple with ten (10) subjects which correspond to number of modules to work on. And each module contains too many written activities and performance tasks. Besides, they said their parents or guardians were too preoccupied with their work. Such were the reasons why they could not submit on time.

However, another possible explanation for this is that students were not following their weekly home learning plan. This supposed to guide the students what subject need to prioritize, when to contact the teacher or vice-versa. At the same time, this guides the parents in monitoring their children's activities and performance. It is feedback mechanism as to which subject that students might have some difficulties.

An implication of this finding is the possibility that students had problem with self-regulation. Self-regulated learning activities in times of pandemic is crucial because teachers are not physically around to assist the students. According to Farooq [21] self-regulation can only satisfy the needs of the students if parents play a major role in getting their children motivated to perform the require tasks and meeting with teachers' expectations. He found out that parenting aspects form students' attitudes for self-regulated learning activities at home environment by satisfying their psychological needs to make their learning progress more dynamic.

Nevertheless, one cannot overemphasize self-regulatory behavior due to the fact that covid-19 has really inflicted major changes on everyone's daily routines, especially to students with developmental needs [22]. It is safe to assume

that there are students out there who have developmental needs [23] and are greatly affected by this pandemic.

Meanwhile, students who opted for modular digital modality expressed limited technological capability. Most of them did not have personal computers and just simply relied on android phones. For students, android phones can only do as much as downloading content in portable document files (pdf). Reading, encoding, and manipulating materials proved difficult for them. So, they had their answers hand-written in a sheet of paper, had them pictured, and submitted them online in a picture format (jpeg). Unfortunately, some pictures were not in good quality as they appeared on computer/cell phone screen. An implication of this is the possibility that students lack the technological proficiencies and might lead to a make-do attitude.

However, Judd [24] argued that students' technological preferences and proficiencies largely vary, and these preference and proficiencies do not result significant changes the way they learn and should be taught.

Additionally, they complained about intermittent and slow internet connectivity, thus making downloading of self-learning modules and uploading of outputs problematic. Mobile data is too costly for students to make themselves available for online discussion and feedbacking sessions with their teachers. The finding is in accord with the current study [18] that distance learning cannot produce intended results in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan, due to technical and financial concerns.

Working and studying at the same time proved to be counter-intuitive as it affected students' performance. This finding maybe explained by the fact that they were at least 18 years old which is the minimum age for employment [25]. They are taking advantage of the situation in order to help augment family's daily income whose means livelihood largely affected by business closures and stringent lockdowns. Report showed that the impact of covid-19 pandemic had resulted to historic highest employment rate and biggest reduction of Philippine GDP [26].

In summary, these results suggest that SARDO deserves special attention [27], especially amid covid-19 pandemic.

#### 4.2 Hopes of SARDOs in Philosophy subjects

Table 2 shows the hopes of SARDO, that is hoping to be given the chance to pass the subject and the greater consideration in relation to current situation brought by pandemic.

**Table 2:** Hopes of SARDO in Philosophy subjects

Hopes	f	Sub-theme	Theme
Chance to pass the subject	10	Remedial intervention	Intervention
Teacher's consideration	10	Understanding	Warmth

It is not surprising that these SARDO deserves utmost attention. Provisions should be given to them, both in terms of online resources and printed materials. While it is assumed that some of them are mainstreamed students, Battistin et al [22] suggested that these kinds of students

must be given online processes covering audio-video calls, videos, and tailored-made multisensory materials. While Frederick, Raabe, et al [28] recommended to give the students with printed materials with written feedback associated with finished tasks.

Additionally, students can avail the TV-based and Radio-based instruction if internet access is impossible. Teachers just simply provide students of the broadcast schedule.

For those students who are cognitive-challenged, teachers may use Strategic Instructional Materials (SIM). These are meant to demonstrate the concept and skills to assist students master a competency-based skill which they were not ready to develop during the traditional classroom settings [29], much less in this absence of face-to-face classes. In their research in science subject, Suarez and Casinillo [30] found out that SIM is effective in improving students' performance relative to the smallest amount mastered competencies and recommended to apply the SIM across curriculum.

This finding, while preliminary, suggest that there is a need to revisit the Most Essential Learning Competencies or MELC [31] due to the fact the students are very selective on topics or lessons in the module they found easy to accomplish. This may not be the most essential competencies and therefore has implications for crafting educational interventions and designing curriculum which are more responsive to the needs of the students amid the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the findings may help teachers becoming more considerate, knowing that students might not have sufficient time to process all the given materials, seeing too many modules to accomplish. As mentioned above, covid-19 has brought significant changes to students' daily routines, that is something that needs to put in mind by teachers.

Facilitating learning and nurture every student [32] especially in time of crisis is a way of demonstrating truthfulness to the mission of DepEd. This is an important issue which positive discipline goes beyond the bounds of conventional classroom. In this pandemic period, teachers can still provide "Warmth" atmosphere where students feel safe to commit mistakes [33], in the sense they would not submit their outputs for some reasons. However, it has to be noted that teachers can still impose expectations, establish rules and order on students at the comfort of their homes, because positive discipline is not about giving excessive freedom of behavior [33]. Research showed that imposing and modelling positive behavior has significant influence on student engagement [34] especially in this time of pandemic.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The result of the study showed that the challenges of SARDO are: the lack of collaborative learning opportunities for concepts and processes comprehension, avoidance of reflective activities, too many modules to catch up, lack of internet connectivity and gadgets proficiencies, working students. These are challenges that fall under the themes:

collaboration, reflection, self-regulation, distance learning, and poverty.

They found it challenging to comprehend philosophical concepts and processes due to the absence of teacher face-to-face instruction and peer support. Having too many modules to accomplish and the lack of parental involvement were an indicative of students' lack of self-regulating capabilities. Too many activities to accomplish rub students more time to exercise reflective capacity. The lack of digital gadgets proficiency resulted to poor and make-do- attitude. Working and studying at the same time proved to be counter-intuitive.

Since distance learning requires the greatest autonomy, it is suggested that teachers should come up with innovative intervention to sustain students' interest in the subject.

Teacher can focus on providing students with simplified contents rather than giving too much worksheets and activities. There is also a need to conduct trainings on the use of computer productivity tools.

It is further suggested to revisit the MELC and used only few competencies which are more relevant to needs at the time. This can be done through survey using quantitative research design.

On the other hand, students were hopeful that they will be given the greatest consideration by the teachers. In doing so, teachers need to be equipped in terms of giving discipline to students. It is suggested to conduct positive discipline and tailor fit the content in the present crisis.

Teacher should display certain degree of leniency and provide students opportunities to undergo remediation until they will be able to comply the desired requirements. There is abundant room for further progress in determining intervention that are more fitting and within the reach of students' capacity.

The result of the findings of the study is limited to identifying the challenges and hopes of students-at-risk of dropping out in philosophy subjects in Canduman National High School.

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