



Teaching under Lockdown

A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM
TEACHERS IN MINDANAO



Introduction

When COVID-19 struck, governments scrambled to put their countries under quarantine and care for their residents as best as they could. The mysterious invisible threat was dealt a swift blow by halting travel, trade, work, and school around the world. Social distancing, wearing masks, and handwashing quickly became the new normal.

In the Philippines, people were given a week's notice before the quarantine was implemented leaving many stranded and unable to return home. Daily wage earners who relied on physical contact and face-to-face transactions were the first to lose the opportunity to work. Flight crew, hotel staff, travel agents, real estate brokers, events organizers, lawyers, musicians, entertainers, and other professions have been immobilized by the quarantine, too. Overnight, the formerly-employed-suddenly-unemployed have had to live frugally on their savings and rely on dole-outs from government, friends, and strangers. The uncertainty of living on "pause" not knowing when it is safe to press "play" again has caused fear, panic, and anxiety. Those with pre-existing illnesses are worried about contracting COVID-19 while the poor and unemployed are worried about dying from hunger first. Others have to contend with domestic violence and drug addiction as well. Needless to say, mental health problems have soared during the pandemic.

Amidst these circumstances, the Davao Project Team has managed to continue working together albeit remotely from their respective homes in the Philippines and in Germany. Like everyone else in the country and the world, the first weeks of the quarantine were not easy both personally and professionally for each member of the team. But the more they understood COVID-19, the less anxious they became. One of the first things they did was to check on partners in education and find out how they have been coping with COVID-19 grounding to a halt almost all aspects of society.

From April to May 2020, the Davao Project Team held conversations with partner teachers whom forumZFD has been working with to integrate peace and conflict topics in the teaching of Political Science and of Conflict Sensitive Journalism (CSJ). Twenty-four of them responded positively to an invitation to have a chat over Facebook, Skype, or phone. The concerns, needs, and interests that they shared have been captured in **Teaching Under Lockdown**. It is a compilation of stories that gives a glimpse into how the teachers have been living under lockdown. What are their struggles, fears, hopes, and experiences? What is their home situation? What is their work situation? Are they able and willing to collaborate online during the quarantine?

It should be noted that whenever teachers shared information off the record they did so because they did not like to put their schools in a bad light. These information have therefore been omitted from Teaching Under Lockdown.

As the education sector is entering unprecedented times, the question on many people's minds is how will the academe respond to the challenges? With social learning becoming more and more difficult to facilitate, how can quality education be reimagined? It is hoped that through these stories, the academe, and those around them, will find inspiration in re-defining the new normal for education and learning.

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Chapter One

Online Teaching Experiences and Innovations

Ahead of His Time

Derf Hanzel Maiz, Holy Cross of Davao College, Davao City



Derf Hanzel Maiz, 37, has been teaching Bachelor of Arts in Communication for eight (8) years now at the Holy Cross of Davao College. Days before the COVID-19 lockdown, Derf had the foresight to bring home all his pertinent school documents and printer. And buy two sacks of rice, just in case. Derf admits the first days were the most difficult because the news about COVID-19 was alarming. "The first thing I checked was my family's finances," Derf recalls. "I asked myself, 'Can we survive these next months?' I went over our savings and investments and was reassured. Only then could I roll up my sleeves and go back to work."

To help his four young sons understand why they have to stay home and cannot go outside anymore, Derf showed them some creative COVID-19 animations on YouTube. To remedy the children's restlessness, Derf and his wife schedule activities for them to do every day - art, math, science, language, etc. "We find activities for them to do online which we print and, after the children finish, they fill the backs of the papers with drawings and paintings."

Derf's wife is in charge of homeschooling their three older sons and Derf's in charge of homeschooling their youngest son. Having things to do at certain hours of the day provides the family with a steady comforting grounding rhythm. And gives Derf the space he needs to focus on his own work. "The best thing about this crisis is that I don't have to commute two (2) hours to get to school anymore," Derf muses. "I don't have to wake up at 4 am anymore. I don't have to shower for work anymore. I don't have to dress up anymore!"

As the Director of Social Communications, Promotions, and Media Center of Holy Cross of Davao College, Derf has been preoccupied with training teachers and student assistants to use online platforms to prepare for online summer classes this April. The most accessible and most efficient online platform, according to Derf, is the Google Suite for Education platform which is a cloud-based suite of tools designed for educators and students for teaching and learning. Derf then uses Workplace by Facebook as his team's online coordination center. The application by Facebook is a working space for organizations to connect. It works like Facebook but you can only see the feed of and connect with co-workers using the organization's email.

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How was Derf able to help shift Holy Cross to going online so efficiently in such a short time? Derf explains that back in 2014 he had developed a contingency plan for online enrollment. Derf's proposal was to pilot test online teaching with one class and then offer online classes to working students. At the time, the plan was not deemed a priority and was shelved. With the COVID-19 crisis leaving Holy Cross no choice but find creative ways for the school community to reconnect virtually, Derf simply exhumed his 2014 contingency plan and implemented it.

For some reason, however, students hesitated to enroll for summer classes this April to May. That was worrying because the school relies on students' fees in order to pay its teachers. Especially during summer when not all teachers are teaching but still receive their salaries. To get to the bottom of this set back, an online survey was conducted. It revealed that students simply had a hard time paying and had unstable internet access.

Derf proposed for Holy Cross to reassess its school fees and cut all unnecessary fees - like laboratory fees of all laboratory subjects, clinic fee, and internet lab fee. In the process, over a thousand pesos has been deducted from school fees and students are allowed to pay half of the fees now and the other half at the end of summer classes through online payment schemes like Gcash.

That is not all. Derf was also able to mobilize his friends from a mobile network to give Holy Cross students access to online platforms at a very affordable cost. This has made it possible for students to subscribe to a special load package not available commercially. By subscribing to this particular data package, students can access the learning platform.

"We need a news consumers group that will say, 'This is fake news!'"

As a former news anchor of primetime local news, Derf has kept in touch with his peers in the media industry. He accepted being promoted in Holy Cross to a Directorship only on the condition that he still be allowed to collaborate on media projects with the local government and other private individuals and groups. These connections have given Derf an insider's knowledge of the plans and actions of all sectors - government, business, and civil society.



It is therefore alarming for Derf to see circulating on social media so much fake news about COVID-19 that undermine the three sectors' well-intentioned efforts. He's encouraged his friends in the Davao media to come up with a statement to counter fake news. Derf says, "It's complicated though because media themselves are victims and perpetrators of fake news. We need a news consumers group that will say, 'This is fake news!' A MEM that is united, coordinated, and is clear about its policies and goals would be perfect for this role!"

Even though Derf has his hands full overseeing online summer classes and his other projects, he's okay to collaborate online with MEM and with forumZFD.

Just a Different Kind of Busy

Dinah Hernandez, University of Mindanao Main Campus, Davao City



Dinah Hernandez, 41, teaches Mass Communications and General Education courses under the Languages Discipline at the University of Mindanao Main Campus, Davao City. She's been a teacher for 12 years now.

On a regular day before the Community Quarantine, Dinah would be juggling teaching and coordinating the teachers in the Mass Communications program. It was tough having three (3) classes on top of writing reports as the school's Internal Quality Auditor and Program Coordinator in preparation for ISO visits. After one group of accreditors left, Dinah would barely have time to catch her breath before another group of ISO inspectors arrived. Dinah was always in the middle of something and had a hard time committing to other personal and professional engagements. School always, always took precedence. Needless to say, a typical day in Dinah's life ended very late sometimes after everybody else had left the campus.

During the COVID-19 quarantine, the difficulties are not less, just different. Working from home has given Dinah more time than ever before to be with her husband and three children. It's strange but wonderful to be stuck with them every day instead of seeing them only in the morning. When Dinah's youngest daughter keeps on wanting her attention, Dinah acquiesces and plays with her. Then Dinah goes back to work at her computer.

She's in the process of revising the syllabus and the laboratory manual for the Mass Communications Program. Aside from that, Dinah's been contacting companies to match them with student interns. It is not uncommon for companies to have halted or paused operations and put in charge a skeletal staff that is working from home. The internship partnership with the school is hard to push on companies dealing with the quarantine's economic repercussions. So, Dinah decided to put it on hold until it is safe to go back to school. Dinah hopes classes will resume in campus in May, God willing.

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"How she wishes to slow down and just reflect on what COVID-19 means."

The shift from face-to-face teaching to online teaching has been very stressful. Dinah explains how her school has been using CHED's sophisticated online Learning Management System (LMS) that captures the date and time when a teacher or a student goes online to submit a document, view a document, and join online classes. Teachers collate these crucial information and report them to Program Heads who give them to the Deans who give them to the Academic Vice President who gives them to the school's Quality Monitoring Office. Meticulous checking is done at each stage. When the information from the reports is found to not match the online record, everything has to be redone.

The role of Program Heads like Dinah is, from the get-go, to ensure that teachers and students go online and use the LMS. Because, when they don't, Dinah has to find out why and record their reasons. Unstable internet connection is the usual reason cited for being unable to use the LMS. That's because teachers and students often find themselves with poor internet connection or without a load.

What worries Dinah most these days are the teachers pursuing master's degree whose status are part time with full load whose salaries depend on the number of units they teach each semester. For the part time teachers, it's a matter of "no work, no pay." Some part time teachers have called Dinah to ask when classes will resume. But Dinah's guess is as good as theirs. Although the admin regularly updates the school's middle managers, the school can't say for sure when exactly classes will start again. Dinah has resorted to encouraging part time teachers to finish their deliverables for the University and consider sideline jobs while waiting for classes to resume in campus.

Dinah muses that there are very few days she is not doing anything. She's been super busy since the quarantine. She still finds time to cook for her kids, though. How she wishes to slow down and just reflect on what COVID-19 means. For now, Dinah prefers to collaborate online with MEM and with forumZFD after the quarantine is over.



Teaching Like Nothing's Changed

Lorenzo I. Balili, Jr. Cor Jesu College, Digos City



Lorenzo Balili, Jr., 57, teaches Assessment, Technology for Teaching and Learning, Art Appreciation, 21st Century Literature in the Philippines and the World at Cor Jesu College. He has been a teacher for 32 years now - in Cor Jesu College in Digos City, then at Davao Central College in Toril, Davao City, and is now back in Cor Jesu College.

Despite the COVID-19 quarantine, Lorenzo has found a way to continue teaching like nothing's changed. Yet everything's changed. Lorenzo lives with his sister's children and their children. He has become their de facto father and grandfather in the absence of his sister who is working and living abroad. Every day, Lorenzo cooks and takes breakfast with the family and then leaves them at home to walk two blocks to another relative's house where the internet connection is much better. That's extremely important these days because otherwise Lorenzo wouldn't be able to do his work.

He sits at his usual spot along the dining table, opens his laptop, and begins working. From morning 'til afternoon, pausing only for lunch and dinner, Lorenzo is glued to his laptop and his phone. He is developing lesson modules, sending them to students, answering their questions, and checking and grading their answers. Working like this takes a lot of time. Lorenzo says he prefers face to face teaching where the teachers and students can interact and respond to each other directly. The closest to this is holding "live" online classes on Zoom or Skype but this is easier said than done since not everyone has access to the appropriate technology and software. So, while the teachers are still figuring out and preparing to conduct "live" online classes, Lorenzo has put all his effort into developing lesson modules.

This includes thinking of good examples to give. "The simpler the examples, the better," says Lorenzo. "So, students won't need to call me or email me or send me a Facebook pm with their questions. I'm like a virtual assistant. My work involves a lot of uploading and downloading and arranging in online folders my lesson modules and my students' outputs."

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That's because 25% of Lorenzo's students have no internet access and therefore cannot access the online folders. So, Lorenzo puts extra effort into making sure "no one is left behind." He texts the day's assignment to each student with no internet access. These students either text him back their answers or they write their answers on a piece of paper, take a picture of it, and send it to Lorenzo through Facebook Messenger. Lorenzo's even developed standardized multiple-choice exams which his students take in turns. To minimize cheating, Lorenzo reshuffles the multiple choices.



"Everyone is committed and working hard to make the transition to online teaching a smooth one."

Lorenzo reflects, "The advantage of this kind of online teaching is that teachers just need to open their laptops and can check their emails immediately to see students' assignments and tests. Students, too, can right away see their scores and don't have to wait for days." Still, Lorenzo feels nothing beats physically being in the same room with students because the rapport is natural and instant.

Compared to other schools in Mindanao, Cor Jesu College has had to deal with more blows, one after another. From October to December 2019, consecutive earthquakes in Mindanao damaged many of Cor Jesu College's school buildings. Classes were temporarily suspended and all offices were transferred to the President's veranda, the school's gymnasium, and the school's canteen while construction workers fast tracked new building and lighter modular classrooms on the school's open field.

The superhuman effort enabled Cor Jesu College to resume classes in January 2020. But in March 2020 COVID-19 struck and the school has had to close down. Again.

These setbacks, however, have failed to dampen the spirits of teachers like Lorenzo. He admits he has his moments of stress. But they are few and far in between because he is bent on keeping his sanity intact. With a one-pointedness in aim and effort, Lorenzo keeps on teaching. His colleagues, too, Lorenzo confides.

He says, "Everyone is committed and working hard to make the transition to online teaching a smooth one. Even if the school administration cannot regularly monitor and check our progress, we do what we need to do and work from 8 am to 5 pm, just like we did before COVID-19 struck. We work by the principle of trust. Our administrators have trusted us much and in return we have to do what we need to for it is the right thing to do. Life during quarantine is as busy as before, if not busier!"

Despite having his hands full with online teaching, Lorenzo wants to collaborate online with MEM and forumZFD during this quarantine as long as the parameters and measures are clear.

This Too Shall Pass

Joy R. Risonar, University of Southeastern Philippines, Davao City



For almost 16 years now, Joy R. Risonar, 37, has been teaching Literature, English and Communications subjects in 3 different schools. Since 2010, she's been teaching Language and Literature at the University of Southeastern Philippines, Davao City (USEP).

Joy lives with her young son and real estate broker husband. Since 2016 she has been on leave to focus on finishing her Doctorate in English and Literature Teaching at the Ateneo de Manila University. Joy was about to resume teaching in USEP this year but had to stay home due to a miscarriage. While she recuperated, a substitute teacher handled all her classes. After two months, Joy took over from the substitute teacher but after only a week, she had to stop and stay home indefinitely again due to the Community Quarantine.

Weeks before USEP closed its gates, Joy had been forewarned about the Community Quarantine by her son's soccer coach. He opined that the summer tournaments would most likely be postponed because of COVID-19. So, Joy wasted no time to start bringing all her paperwork back home and so by the time the Community Quarantine was in effect, Joy was ready to resume online classes at home.

The shift from face-to-face teaching to online teaching was easy for Joy because she had systems set up in advance. In the only one week that Joy was together with her students, she had them fill in information sheets with all their pertinent background details - including their cellphone numbers and who to contact from their families, just in case of emergencies. This proved to be useful because by the time of the Community Quarantine many students had gone back to their villages where there was no internet access. They could only be reached through their cellphones. Or they could be reached through their relatives' cellphones.

Joy did not mind going the extra length to make phone calls to her students to check up on them. She realized that it wasn't enough to have students replace their fuzzy/funny/weird Facebook profile pictures with clear ones. It wasn't enough to just make Facebook group chats with each class and establish firm rules such as posting only school related stuff. Facebook was no use when students had no access to the internet or did not own smart phones and laptops.

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“But I won’t allow myself to panic. I will just do what I can, and accomplish what I can. I cannot afford to be paralyzed.”

But it’s already May and there is still no definite end to the quarantine in sight. Despite the uncertainty though, Joy remains pragmatic. “I’ll just do my job and continue asking how students are and giving them reading materials.” By now she’s almost finished giving lessons for her four class preparations. One more major requirement remains for students to complete so Joy can start computing their final grades. In consideration for those with no internet, Joy has set no deadline and has told them, “If you can comply, please do. If you can’t comply, then do it when you return to school when it reopens.”

How is Joy’s family coping with COVID-19? The first thing they did was to rearrange the whole house so everyone, not just Joy, has a comfortable working space. “We began with a general cleaning and then agreed on a daily schedule to follow,” Joy says. This daily schedule includes vegetable gardening and writing her dissertation and sitting with her son three hours a day to go through his academic work after he practices soccer drills in the garden with his father and Taekwondo drills with his teacher online.

Joy, on the other hand, is enjoying watching all sorts of “hacks” on YouTube, testing them out, documenting the process, and posting them on social media to share with friends. She’s learned from YouTube what should and shouldn’t be refrigerated, how to store produce, and how to freeze vegetables. “It’s reassuring to be able to buy a lot of food and be able to store them well so I don’t have to go out every other week to buy food and risk being exposed to COVID-19,” Joy explains.

Being practical and positive are, in Joy’s opinion, the most important attitudes to have right now. She says, “This (pandemic) will pass. When? We do not know. But I won’t allow myself to panic. I will just do what I can, and accomplish what I can. I cannot afford to be paralyzed. I’ve been through worse.” Joy says that she is willing and able to collaborate online with MEM and with forumZFD during this quarantine.

It was during a routine call to students when Joy found out about one student in dire straits. This student had decided not to go home during the Community Quarantine but instead continue working in a restaurant never thinking she would be laid off because the business couldn’t adjust to the Community Quarantine. The student was stuck in her boarding house and couldn’t return home to her family because public transportation had been halted. Soon her money was spent and she didn’t have food anymore, either. Joy informed USEP about the student that needed rescuing and immediately food was sent to the student and a vehicle picked her up to bring her to her home to her family.

With all of her students back with their families, Joy continues with online classes. Even if not everyone has internet access. Joy deposits reading materials in the FB group chats for those who have internet access to read them. She doesn’t force those with no internet access to read and just tells them to catch up with reading when school reopens. This was Joy’s thinking because she assumed that by April school would reopen.



The Joy in Online Teaching

Julius Cesar Deloy, Holy Cross of Davao College, Davao City



“It's a unique way of working and learning...one can be flexible with the time and method.”

Julius Cesar Deloy, 29, has been teaching political science and general education subjects at the Holy Cross of Davao College (HCDC) for 5 years now. He has been enjoying the school's virtual summer classes, which will go on until May despite the many challenges. He mentions three in particular: students do not all have access to reliable internet, quizzes are difficult to assess, and it's difficult to ensure students do not cheat. Although Julius and his co-teachers were able to attend an orientation on online classroom teaching before the quarantine began, Julius thinks teaching-learning remotely can be an engaging experience or not depending on the teachers.

In HCDC, two online platforms are being used in specific ways. The Facebook Workplace is used to communicate among teachers, administrators, and staff while Google Classroom is used for online learning. It's a unique way of working and learning and Julius is very grateful for that. The best thing about this online set up, he says, is that one can be flexible with the time and method. When he is not preparing for his class or answering questions from his students in Facebook Messenger, Julius spends most of his time eating and sleeping. He is currently living with five members of his family, so there hasn't been a time where he felt bored.

Julius hopes that as the quarantine continues, there will be opportunities to collaborate with forumZFD in other virtual activities. He also thinks that it would be good to pick up where the group left off with the teaching guide for political science. He is quite interested in it. In fact, before the lockdown, Julius submitted his part to the working group for review.

Embracing the Movement Online

Neil Ryan Pancho, Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City



Neil Ryan Pancho, 44, has been teaching Peace Studies, Philippine Public Administration, Theories in International Relations, Political Philosophy, and Philippine History at the Ateneo de Davao University for almost twenty years.

If there are those doubting the shift towards online learning in the academe, Neil has somehow found a way to embrace it. He says, "Online learning is here to stay, so what we must do now is prepare ourselves while there is still time."

Neil shares that using online learning spaces is not new to him as he has integrated this in his classes for the past three years. However, he admits that this time will be different as the integration will be more intentional and extensive.

For the last couple of weeks in quarantine, Neil has been re-designing his syllabus to incorporate the new blended platform for instruction that ADDU wishes to roll out by June. This means classes will be conducted virtually as much as possible, and face-to-face, only if needed and possible, once the quarantine is lifted. Aside from familiarizing himself with the different online instruction platforms, he is also making the necessary technical improvements to boost his internet connectivity to hold his online classes well. He discloses that he even spent personal money to purchase an online software that he wanted to use to administer his final exam. Setting goals like these has helped Neil cope with the limitations of life in quarantine as a teacher.

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“Online learning is here to stay, so what we must do now is prepare ourselves while there is still time.”

Neil has also been preoccupied with picking up old hobbies that he could not do pre-quarantine. He is happy that he can now do some gardening, watch videos, and finally read books that have been gathering dust in his bookshelf. Most importantly, he is grateful that he can spend this time with his wife and kids.

One thing that Neil wishes he could do is continue with his research work in the field. If the pandemic hadn't happened, he would have been somewhere in the island provinces of Mindanao right now, interviewing respondents for a research on women and violent extremism. "I love being at home, but I also long to be out in the field,"



He says, "Doing research is my outlet." To channel some of his energy, he is into learning more about quantum geographic information system (QGIS) mapping, which he hopes he can use in his future research work.

In this period of imposed isolation, Neil is looking forward to working with forumZFD, particularly in organizing virtual discussions. He even volunteers to facilitate one session where he will share his knowledge on online teaching platforms that other partner teachers may also find practical to use in their contexts.

Chapter Two

Resilience in the Face of the Pandemic

It's Been Crazy Weird

Samsel Rhys Pampilon, Davao del Norte State College, Panabo City



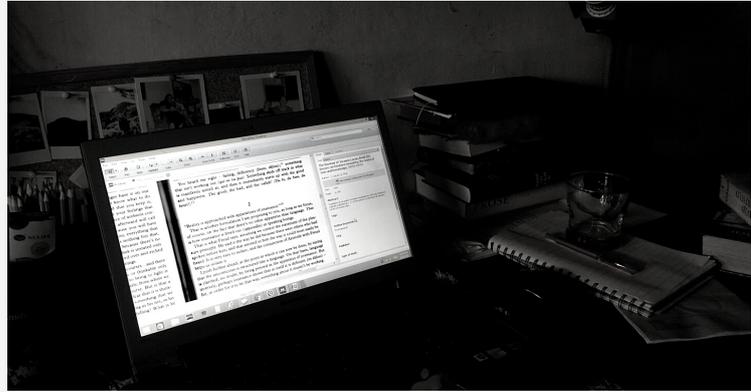
Samsel Rhys Pampilon, 31, has been a teacher for almost 10 years and is currently teaching Literature and Language subjects at Davao Del Norte State College. She's living with her brother and sister in Tagum City. Their parents were in Davao de Oro when the borders closed because of COVID-19, making it impossible for them to travel to Tagum and reunite with their children. So, the family's living this COVID-19 crisis apart.

For Sam it's been crazy weird. "My days are sleeping, waking up, cooking, household chores, and movies on repeat. Gone is the travelling back and forth to school and teaching every day. Gone, too, is waking up early to jog three times a week. Every time I venture outside the house, I have to wear a mask - even when jogging! So never mind, thank you." Resourceful Sam has adapted nicely by reacquainting herself with yoga. She rolls out her yoga mat every day in her bedroom, switches her laptop on, and follows the yoga teacher on the computer screen.

The one and only time Sam decided to go out to buy food in the mall was such a harrowing experience that she refuses to do it again. "Because there were no more pedicabs and jeepneys around, I had to walk three kilometers to the mall. There I had to wait outside in a long line for one hour before I could enter the mall." It was a nightmare Sam doesn't want to repeat. She is sticking to buying food at the wet market nearer to her house. She and her siblings always stock up on enough food that lasts them a week. They were happily surprised to be given food by the local government - 5 kilos of rice and sardines. "We were promised another round of dole outs but these still haven't arrived."

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“My days are sleeping, waking up, cooking, household chores, and movies on repeat.”



When DNSC closed due to the quarantine, some important paperwork was unfortunately left behind. Before the Enhanced Community Quarantine was implemented, there was still some freedom to travel back and forth between cities and municipalities in Davao del Norte. During that time, when Sam and a few colleagues were called back to DNSC, they were able to finish some of the paperwork. Now that the ECQ is in place but nearly complete, Sam looks forward to getting back to the tasks temporarily interrupted.

There's a lot of uncertainty these days in school because of COVID-19. Online classes have been cancelled because not all students have internet access. Students rely on their cellphone internet data but it is not enough to view pictures and videos. Besides, many students have gone back home to their provinces where there is no cellphone signal. Teachers have been advised to continue giving students assignments to do in their own time and submit them online, if possible. If this is not possible, then students can submit their assignments once classes resume. Nobody has an idea when classes will resume though. Everybody is just waiting.

Sam worries about getting COVID-19. Other than that, Sam feels fine. Money is not a problem because she still gets her salary. Food is not a problem either. Sam feels positive, too, about the local government and how it's taking good care of citizens. Because Sam has nothing much to do these days, she's open to collaborating online with MEM and with forumZFD during the quarantine.

The Pangs of Isolation

Marco D. Aguja, Holy Trinity College of General Santos, General Santos City



Marco D. Aguja, 25, teaches Peace, Community Development, Sociology, Science and Technology and Society, and History at Holy Trinity College in General Santos City. He has been a teacher there for 3 years now.

When COVID-19 struck and Holy Trinity College -Gen. San. closed, students were just one week away from taking their exams. A mad dash began to adapt to the crisis. Students took their exams online but it was still difficult for teachers to calculate students' final grades with other papers still being under lock and key inside the College. No one was allowed to enter anymore except the guards.

Things have settled down a bit now with teachers applying different strategies in their virtual classrooms to keep students interested and engaged. The Edmodo online platform is being used to send assignments which students then return to teachers for checking. Holding online lectures is impossible though because most students do not have internet, smart phones, or laptops. This is fine, says the College's management. What's more important is that teachers finish the lessons they need to teach and that students get a grade. When the College will reopen is anybody's guess though. Marco remains stoic when sharing this piece of information. The only FB group chat Marco checks every now and then is the one with the school's deans that he was invited to join because they needed his expertise as a researcher. He appreciates the deans' plan that when school will reopen, time will be spent on reorienting teachers "to get used again to how to do things."

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“I have lost my confidence! I have forgotten how to socialize!”

The COVID-19 crisis has been harrowing for Marco. “It’s very, very, very, very, very hard for me. There’s nobody around. Nobody has visited me, not even my parents or my girlfriend.” That’s because one week before the quarantine, Marco had to hide away at home because he was exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms like fever, tiredness, dry cough, and sore throat. Yet even if Marco doesn’t feel sick anymore, he still doesn’t see his family or girlfriend because of news that people who’ve survived COVID-19 might catch it again. Yet Marco never got tested for COVID-19 and never was admitted to the hospital. So, he’s not 100% sure that he had the virus and has been cured. Still, the people he loves seem to think it’s better he continues living alone. For now, Marco has acquiesced even though living alone is driving him crazy.

“I wake up in the morning and have my first and only meal for the day at 5 pm then I go back to sleep at 8 pm. I’ve read all the books in the house. When the President said to walk around the house, I did. I’ve become so familiar with the house that I know where the rats poop and I know how the dust settles in each part of the house!” How does he keep in touch with the world? “Through the internet, thank God!” Marco says. “But I haven’t spoken to anyone for a month - except my parents. I don’t want to even look at social media anymore - because it’s full of negativity and fake news. I get my news through GMA’s website.”

When the ECQ was rolled out, some of Marco’s colleagues were unable to return home. This whole time they, too, have been stuck in their small one-room apartments with no gardens and just their mobile phone’s internet data as their connection to the world. They keep in touch with each other through their FB messenger chat group. At the moment though, Marco has disengaged in order not to fuel the blaming and self-pitying, frustration and loneliness.

It’s only very recently that Marco ventured outside for the first time in more than a month to buy food in the neighborhood’s grocery store. He was alarmed that he couldn’t look people in the eye anymore and had difficulty talking to people. “I have lost my confidence! I have forgotten how to socialize!” Marco says.

The COVID-19 crisis has made him appreciate things that irritated him immensely before. Such as the noisy crowds in a mall. If only Marco could turn back time, he would have put time and effort into growing food in his backyard. This is one of the things that he beats himself up over. “I never made time! I should have made time! Now I rely 100% on grocery stores for all of my food needs!”

Needless to say, right now, Marco isn’t feeling well enough to do any collaboration online with MEM or with forumZFD.

From a Merchant of Ideas to a Merchant of Vegetables

James Louis Moreno, University of Mindanao Digos College, Digos City



For 7 years now, James Louis Moreno, 35, has been teaching Political Science subjects such as Philippine Public Administration, Introduction to Law, International Relations, Constitutional Law, and Political Economy and Theories at the University of Mindanao – Digos College.

Cooped up in his home in Davao del Sur, James has been spending much of his time growing vegetables such as eggplant, okra and ginger in the plot of land nearby. He proudly grows them and shares them with his relatives and friends in the area who are fed up with the usual canned goods and noodles that are part of the weekly food ration they receive from the local government.

Taking care of his 7-year old son and his 60-year old mother is a top priority now for James. He always makes sure they are meticulous about two things: wear masks when ever they go out and that they use disinfectants to protect themselves. James' mother is adapting well to the situation because she is used to the quiet life in the farm. James, on the other hand, misses being able to go out and experience life in the city.

He shares that work at the University has been suspended since the start of the quarantine. It was quite abrupt. Classes were still in the midst of the second semester when COVID-19 struck. Since then, the University's management has asked all teachers to submit their students' final grades as soon as possible so they can graduate in the first week of June. According to James, this is a problem for the students majoring in political science who are supposed to have their OJT and final thesis defense this summer. Without these, the students will not be able to join the graduation. Fortunately, these concerns were discussed in a recent meeting between the University's management and political science teachers and new guidelines were set-up.

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With no work, James hasn't been getting any pay from the University for more than a month now. The only financial assistance he has received is a portion of his thirteenth month pay. Because of this, he tries to augment his income by selling the vegetables he grows in nearby towns. But it is hard because he needs to first get a pass to transport his goods to Digos City where the market is bigger. With no pass, he can't go out and has to rely on the buyers living nearby. They aren't that many so James always has surplus vegetables that turn bad. This forces James to have to sell them at a much cheaper price or give them away.



"The lack of food, especially among the vulnerable sectors of society, can cause so much frustration it may even result to unrest!"

His experiences so far have made James realize the importance of saving and investing wisely. "I realize that in times of crisis, it is always good to have a safety net that I can depend on," He shares. "Food security is a major issue these days. The lack of food, especially among the vulnerable sectors of society, can cause so much frustration it may even result to unrest!"

While there are many worries, James still feels that his time in the farm and with his family is like a long vacation. Life in the *bukid* (mountain) is so much more peaceful and simple that it almost feels like the virus is distant. James quips that because he doesn't have a strong internet connection, he is not as bothered by additional work or social media.

James is excited to collaborate with forumZFD and reconnect with the members of the core group of political science teachers. He thinks this is the perfect time to work on writing the teaching guide because people are at home and can be engaged. He also hopes that he and colleagues, Alger and Bon, from the UM Main Campus, will resume writing the textbook for the subject, Contemporary World, under the general education curriculum. He believes that maximizing this time in quarantine to do productive pursuits like writing, will help with the mental state of the teachers.

I am Alone, but not Lonely

Estrella Cantallopez, Davao Central College, Davao City



Estrella Cantallopez or “Boots”, as people fondly call her, has been in the academe for 40 years. She has taught Sociology, Literature, Linguistics, Political Science, History, and even Peace and Development subjects. Presently, she has been teaching for 3 years at the Davao Central College (DCC) in Davao City, and heads the College’s Peace Center and Research Office. At one point, before joining DCC, she was also the head of the Peace Program of the Notre Dame University (NDU) in Cotabato City. She retired from NDU in 2013.

“I am alone, but I am not lonely,” Boots shares. Since the beginning of the quarantine, she has been living on her own in a rented apartment in the south of Davao City. Her family in Iligan City was anticipating her return but, unfortunately, because of the lockdown, she could not go out and travel. She is among those identified as vulnerable to the virus because of her age and health. It was a wise decision, she said, because she did not feel she was left out. Her neighbors and colleagues were there for her. If there is one good thing out of this pandemic, it would be the relationships she has built among those in her village.

Several times in a week, there will be somebody who bring her cooked food, vegetables, meat and fish. Even those not near her also reached out to her by giving her fresh produce. One colleague has been regularly visiting her to bring her groceries and do errands for her. Boots shares that, just recently, even a friend from Cotabato City sent her a box full of food and medicines. She cannot help but think how fortunate she is that despite the circumstances, there are still people holding out their hand to help. Boots pays forward the kindness she has received by also giving away fruits and ornamental plants to her neighbors.

TEACHING UNDER LOCKDOWN

"If there is one good thing out of this pandemic, it would be the relationships she has built among those in her village."



Her source of joy, in these trying times, is her mini-garden filled with vegetables and flowers. Every morning she would get up to meet the rising sun and greet her flowers. Each time she sees her patch of earth, she is filled with an overwhelming sense of peace. As she paces herself during the day tending to these earthly creatures, she also keeps her mind occupied by working on some materials and editing her students' theses. She has also been advocating for online trainings that will help the teachers cope with the current changes in the academe.

As to collaborating with forumZFD and the rest of the political science teachers from other schools, she sees no problem other than her internet connection. She can only access Facebook and Messenger, most of the time.

Surviving this Pandemic

Melchizedek John Bañas, University of Mindanao Digos College, Digos City



"This time in lockdown has impacted people like MJ who are middle-wage earners more than they could ever imagine."

Melchizedek John "MJ" Bañas has been teaching at the University of Mindanao Digos College for over 5 years now. Aside from teaching, he also heads the sports department of UM Digos.

From the beginning of the lockdown, MJ has been staying home with his wife, daughter, and father-in-law. MJ admits that because he hasn't been receiving any salary since the University ceased operations, life has been more challenging than before. They have been living off their savings and he is worried that by the end of the quarantine period, nothing will be left of it. His wife, Mechelle, is working online but only part-time. He appreciates that he has time with his family these days, but he is concerned that if classes will not resume soon, they will have a difficult time surviving this pandemic.

This time in lockdown has impacted people like MJ who are middle-wage earners more than they could ever imagine. MJ is painfully aware that the University's policy is to only continue paying salaries to regular employees in times when the school is not operating. He is aware that professionals like himself who have been working with the school yet are not regular employees are therefore not covered by this policy. The struggle is hard. Yet MJ is quick to say that he is not blaming their institution for this. He understands that the University is also being thrown into the deep end as it grapples with the shift to online classes and the decrease in student enrollment this summer and the next school year. He just hopes that, somehow, there will be some form of mutual agreement that addresses both the school's concerns and the concerns of teachers like him who are not regular employees. Just recently, the University has been able to give him and his struggling colleagues some financial support which MJ is very grateful for.

Right now, MJ is preparing himself to teach his subjects online. UM Digos College has been using Schoology as its official online platform to set-up exams and activities for students. He is interested in sharing some of his knowledge in this regard to other teachers. As such, MJ is happy to work with forumZFD in conducting learning exchanges like the one he mentioned.

Chapter Three

Connecting with the Self and Others

Going Back to Basics

Christine Faith Avila, Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City



For almost 9 years now, Christine "Tinay" Faith Avila, 36, has been teaching Communication Theory, Advertising, Integrated Marketing Communication, Internship, Conflict Sensitive Journalism, and Development Communication at the Ateneo de Davao University.

She lives with her real estate broker husband and two young daughters. Because of the COVID-19 quarantine, the family stays indoors 24/7. But working from home is not the same for Tinay and for her husband.

With people's priorities shifting from buying properties to saving during this Corona crisis, Tinay's husband is practically out of a job as he and his team primarily earn from sales commissions. While profits from past sales are still coming in, no new sales have been made. This has prompted Tinay's husband to reinvent himself as the family's backyard vegetable gardener. So far, the seeds of kalabasa, talong, sitaw, okra, lettuce, kangkong, avocado, and atis that he's planted are growing well. "We're going back to basics," Tinay explains. They even have a compost pit now and save the seeds from the fruits they eat. Tinay and her husband eventually started growing succulents and indoor plants, too. When their friends got wind of it on social media and liked what they saw, the gardening hobby evolved into a thriving business with deliveries now being made twice a week instead of once a week.

In the midst of this gardening shift at home, Tinay says it's still business as usual in school. She is Ateneo's Communications Program Head and in charge of the summer internship program. The biggest setback is that because of the quarantine, Tinay has been having a hard time finding organizations and companies that are still open to letting students be their interns. After considering the implications of postponing summer internship, Tinay has decided to push through with it. "Who knows when the quarantine will end and when it's safe to go back to school? The uncertainty of the times has pushed me to find creative ways for students to still get the internship experience they need." That is why Tinay has turned to asking her friends and contacts to help connect her with potential organizations and companies who may be open to having interns work from them virtually - editing videos, writing, and researching.

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"She and her husband have realized that it's more important than ever to not overspend, eat simply, and recycle whatever can be recycled into pots for vegetables."



During the pre COVID-19 era, Tinay would always feel guilty about going to work and then arriving home too tired to play with her children. While at work, Tinay would often miss her children and call them. She doesn't need to do that anymore because of the quarantine. For her, it's a blessing in disguise to be working from home. She doesn't mind the mess and getting disturbed every now and then by her children while she's working. She cherishes being able to cook for them, watch movies with them, and play with them. Tinay's glad that during the quarantine she's finally been able to arrange the things she has always been planning to arrange around the house but never had time for.

Because it has not been easy having to take care of her family and focusing on her work as a teacher and focusing on her work as Program Head, Tinay has started journaling. Her entries lately have been about the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the world's economy. This includes her own family's finances. As the only one earning a steady income, the responsibility for paying for her family's investments lies on Tinay's shoulders now. She and her husband have realized that it's more important than ever to not overspend, eat simply, and recycle whatever can be recycled into pots for vegetables.

Tinay shares that Ateneo has been preparing its teachers to shift from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. Despite some student protests to halt summer classes, the President of the University has decided online classes should continue. Those students who can't join because they don't have internet access will not be forced to join, Tinay says. They can take the same classes when school reopens.

Having a doctor for a sister has helped Tinay get an insider's perspective of the COVID-19 pandemic in Davao City and makes her doubly motivated to make sure her family follows the rules of social distancing and handwashing. Tinay has extended her concern to the community, too. As a part time life coach, she takes care of 15 women friends' mental and spiritual wellbeing and they in turn take care of their own circle of women friends. "This is how we are helping ease each other's panic and anxiety," Tinay shares.

She says that despite having her hands full with taking care of her family, her friends, her school work, and her thriving indoor plant business, she is willing and able to collaborate online with MEM and forumZFD during the quarantine.

Keeping Active while Staying Put

Earl Jones Muico, University of Mindanao Tagum Campus, Tagum City



For 6 years now, Earl Jones Muico, 30, has been teaching major subjects and general education subjects at the University of Mindanao Tagum Campus.

He lives with his parents, brother, and two helpers. As a marathon runner, it's normal for Earl to wake up at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning to jog. But since the COVID-19 quarantine, he's stuck at home which he finds very annoying. He's adapted by starting high intensity workouts. "I do compound exercises on different muscles," Earl explains. The push-ups, crunches, lifts, planks, squats, jumps, etc. last for an hour and help Earl clear his mind and relax. He doesn't mind household chores like washing clothes and sweeping the floor either because they keep him active.

Earl is hopeful the Corona virus will be contained now that testing is easier with 15 testing centers instead of just 1. He is closely monitoring the unified region-wide effort against COVID-19. The Davao Region COVID-19 Task Force, chaired by Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte, is composed of local government leaders from the provinces of Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, Davao del Norte, Davao de Oro and Davao Oriental, and Davao City. Earl is hopeful that with the Task Force's firm leadership, the quarantine will end soon because the number of people infected by the Corona virus has gone down. Then again, Earl acknowledges, "It's hard to presume it's safe to interact with others because we don't know if we're carriers."

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This is why everyone in Earl's household is especially careful about hygiene because of his elderly parents. Every time someone returns home from buying groceries or medicines or going to the bank, they leave their shoes outside, take a shower, and wash their hands several times a day with soap and alcohol.

How else have things changed for Earl and his family? During the pre COVID-19 era, Earl would wake up, leave the house, stay in school the whole day, return home, sleep - and repeat. He was always in a rush to go somewhere or do something, especially when he became the school's Program Head of AB English. It's ironic, therefore, Earl shares, that when he was still busy being busy, "I would often complain that I wanted time with my family. But now that I have time with my family, I want to go back to work!"

Covid-19 shut down UM Tagum Campus just five (5) days before the end of the semester. It forced all teachers, including Earl, to stay home and stay glued to his computer. "I'm still getting used to working from home and not nodding off to sleep," Earl chuckles. He has been following the school management's directive to hold online classes no matter what. This means that when about 20 out of 50 students in every class cannot join online classes because they do not have access to the internet, Earl tells them it's okay. He reassures them that they don't need to go out of their way to find an internet connection. They can just make up for whatever they missed when classes resume. Earl is simply following CHED's directive to schools to not be too strict with students who do not have access to the internet.

Earl says he is willing and able to collaborate online with MEM and forumZFD during the quarantine.

"I would often complain that I wanted time with my family. But now that I have time with my family, I want to go back to work!"



Being Present at Home

Rechelle Ann Barraquias, Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro City



Rechelle Ann Barraquias, 34, has been teaching Communication Theories at Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro City for 10 years now.

She lives together with her husband and two young children an hour's drive from Xavier University. That's why Rechelle says she learned to "work smart." Like clockwork, she wakes up early to be in school by 8 am and return home by 5 pm. Every day for years this has been her routine. She says she rushes through cooking, household chores, and gardening, always prioritizing her school work over her family.

Then COVID-19 struck.

Rechelle remembers it was just one week before the end of classes when it happened. Xavier University closed down and told its teachers and students to stay home. Luckily, Rechelle belongs to the administrators and is required to report to the office every summer. Some tasks, however can be easily carried out in a work-at-home set-up that's why when Covid-19 struck, she didn't have to undergo a major adjustment.

Other colleagues, on the other hand, are now supposed to be teaching summer classes and decided to resume teaching in June instead. Everyone is just waiting for the school management to announce this postponement any time now. This is because although some parts of summer classes can be taught online through the e-learning online platform, the laboratory component has to be done face-to-face.

Thanks to the internet at home, Rechelle can continue working on things she would be working on anyway if there were no COVID-19. It's also a relief that Xavier University has reassured that teachers' salaries will continue to be paid during the quarantine. Moreover, shops are still open, drug stores are still open, and banks are still open. "I'm very glad that my family can still decide what to eat and what to buy," Rechelle says. She says she'll panic only when there's a total lockdown and nobody can leave their houses anymore and all businesses are closed. Right now, however, Rechelle worries over minor things like her family's grocery bill being twice as much as usual and their gargantuan use of air conditioning.

TEACHING UNDER LOCKDOWN

It's been almost two months of living in quarantine. The beginning was the most difficult and frustrating for Rechelle because news about the virus was shocking and troubling. When COVID-19 reached her city and town, Rechelle turned pragmatic. "It's already here, there's no point in crying over spilled milk." Instead of panicking, she and her husband focused on preparing their children. "The children's biggest adjustment was not visiting with their grandparents anymore. Thankfully we were able to pull through because my family's mindset is to stay at home."

"The COVID-19 crisis won't last forever. It's temporary and an opportunity to focus on being a mother and wife for a change."



Not everyone shares this mindset Rechelle laments because, she observes, many still go out unprotected and unmindful of the risks. Maybe it's because attitudes towards social distancing are different from place to place as evident in the unequal enforcement of the quarantine, Rechelle thinks. In her town, for instance, every time Rechelle and her husband take turns to go out for errands and buy food, they have to pass by three checkpoints and have to have their temperatures checked, show their food and medicine passes, and step through an antiseptic foot bath. Within Cagayan de Oro City, however, there are no checkpoints.

Rechelle cannot control others, only herself and her family. So, she's pouring all her focus into her children and husband. "I'm glad I'm stuck with them at home and not stuck in the office with my colleagues!" And though she's never been much of a homemaker before when she was busy with school, Rechelle now treasures staying at home. "It's such a luxury to wear my duster the whole day and just be cooking, cleaning, and gardening. I'm going to come out of this quarantine as a chef!" This is Rechelle's new normal. Her family has graduated from planting just spices to planting fruit trees and vegetables with the seeds and seedlings from the Department of Agriculture. Rechelle says, "The COVID-19 crisis won't last forever. It's just a pause from my usual busy schedule. It's temporary and an opportunity to focus on being a mother and wife for a change."

Although Rechelle's family is her priority right now, she is open to collaborating online with forumZFD and MEM during the quarantine.

It Feels Surreal

Ramir Villaro Sonsona, University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, Cagayan de Oro City



For almost 14 years now, Ramir Villaro Sonsona, 39, has been teaching English and Humanities courses at the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines (USTP).

Ramir lives with his wife and mother and is the only one who can leave the house to buy food and medicines during this quarantine. It has not been easy living together. He worries a lot about his elderly mother who suffers from a heart condition. She cannot hear well anymore and does not understand the importance of the sick and elderly staying at home because they are the most prone to Covid-19. She has been relentlessly complaining that she wants to go out and see her doctor for her regular checkups and doesn't quite understand why she cannot do that anymore.

His restless ailing mother and Cagayan de Oro City's lax implementation of Community Quarantine are what's causing Ramir's greatest anxiety. He shares that in Cagayan de Oro, people can go in and out of checkpoints without being checked. People are roaming around the wet market and not following social distancing. "People are not cooperative at all!" Ramir exclaims. He is also aghast that the city has bought two super expensive thermal scanners and doesn't see how politicians' daily press conferences are helpful. "I just wish our government were stricter," he says. "Other cities imposed a lockdown immediately but not Cagayan de Oro despite reports of Covid-19 cases."

Because he cannot control others, Ramir is striving to manage himself and his family well instead. It has been a struggle. "We talk a lot now more than before but end up arguing over what is the best thing to do," Ramir says. "We spend more on food than before because we're always eating. And always arguing over what to cook," Ramir shares sheepishly.

TEACHING UNDER LOCKDOWN

Other changes in the family's rhythm are watching Netflix daily instead of once a week, and sleeping at 1 am instead of at 11 pm. Ramir points out one irony of his situation: "Before the quarantine, I was complaining about being busy and wanting to go on vacation. But now that I'm home, I want to go out!" To counter boredom, Ramir has been busy searching on the internet for possible academic journals to publish his past research work in. This is what preoccupies him now. Aside from continuing teaching online.

Ramir remembers that when the Community Quarantine was announced, it was a Friday. All teachers were called together and given a two-hour demonstration on how to continue teaching classes online. The University's platform for online teaching is Facebook pages for each class. That is where Ramir uploads his reading materials for students to download. That's also where students send in their assignments for Ramir to comment on. But it is easier said than done. After just one week, the University decided to halt online classes because many students had no internet access and no access to smartphones and laptops.

It is fortunate that the midterm exams finished just before the Community Quarantine happened. Ramir was able to compute the midterm grades of 5 of his classes. The remaining 2 classes, however, were not able to take midterm exams. To resolve this, the University's management is thinking over whether or not to allow teachers like Ramir to give students one major task to accomplish as a last requirement.

If Ramir could choose, he'd rather teach face-to-face than teach online any day. Ramir explains, "In my online classes, I ask students to read the materials that I send to them. I have to trust them to understand and analyze the information on their own. But to be sure, I'd rather be in the same classroom with them so we can discuss face-to-face."

Ramir's very candid about his feelings and shares that once when he was watching priests singing after a mass on television, he was so moved that he cried. The lyrics captured his sentiments well: "God where are you now?" The pandemic feels so surreal that Ramir often wonders whether it's caused by human negligence. This is also why Ramir is willing and able to collaborate online with MEM and with forumZFD during the quarantine.



**"'God where are you now?'
The pandemic feels so surreal that Ramir often wonders whether it's caused by human negligence."**

Together but not Quite

Bon Hamilton Rabaca, University of Mindanao Main Campus, Davao City



For a decade now, Bon Hamilton Rabaca has been a professor of Political Analysis, Comparative Politics, and Political Thought at the University of Mindanao Main Campus. He started teaching when he was only 22.

Since the start of the lockdown, Bon has been spending his time between his work as a teacher, his dissertation, and tending to things at home. While work is not regular right now, his supervisor keeps him busy with writing modules and preparing for online classes in order for him to still be able to receive his teacher's salary. His disciplined work routine before COVID-19 struck is what keeps him focused. He identifies his tasks for the week and spreads them out on different days so he knows what to do when. Because of this, he often finishes his work early and spends the rest of the day focusing on his dissertation for his Doctorate in Public Administration.

Bon feels productive most of the time, but there are moments when he feels boredom and a general sense of weariness creeping in. To divert himself, he tends to his garden and his dogs. And leaves the house every now and then to run errands for the household as he is the one designated to buy food and medicines. The food rations that barangay officials give whenever they go house-to-house, are a welcome bonus for Bon's family. They appreciate how their barangay officials keep them informed of new guidelines under the Enhanced Community Quarantine.

TEACHING UNDER LOCKDOWN

"His disciplined work routine before COVID-19 struck is what keeps him focused.



Bon's wife, Maria Lourdes, is an online English instructor, and is equally busy. Bon laments that although they are in the same house, some days they are not able to talk much because of her work schedule which usually begins in the evening and end the next day at the break of dawn.

What Bon finds most challenging is missing his son who is in Tagum City with his grandparents. They were not able to reunite in time before the lockdown was imposed. Bon finds it hard to be so far from his son and consoles himself with the thought that his son is much safer in Tagum City than in Davao City.

Bon considers engaging with forumZFD, even in quarantine, as a good opportunity to continue what was started before with the group of political science teachers integrating peace and conflict topics into their subjects. In particular, he sees this time as a good space to revisit the idea of developing a teaching guide for political science teachers.

Another Time

Stella Mariz Roilo, Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City



"This is a time for reflection and a time to think about our priorities."

For almost 3 years now, Stella Mariz Roilo, 25, has been teaching Philippine Constitution, and Philippine Politics and Government at the Ateneo de Davao University.

In Bukidnon, where Stella and her family are residing, life has been filled with happy and peaceful moments. Finally, she has found the opportunity to press pause and take a rest from the hectic life she was living before the pandemic. She welcomes life in quarantine with a smile and a grateful heart. Stella shares, "This is a time for reflection and a time to think about our priorities."

Before the lockdown was announced, Stella had already planned to take a summer leave. She had finished all her work and packed her things, and went home to Bukidnon. She had planned this time away from work only because she was preparing for something big - her own wedding!

Days before the quarantine, everything was already set: the date, the caterer, the venue, and the guests. But, because of the restrictions and the threat of the virus, she and her husband-to-be had to postpone their wedding. Fortunately the owners of the venue and other caterers didn't mind the change, and were open to either just postpone their services or offer a refund. Despite this, Stella and her fiancé are still looking forward to tying the knot later this year. Stella takes everything in stride as she tries to see things more positively in this time of COVID-19.

While waiting for things to settle, Stella also feels positive about engaging with forumZFD. She thinks there are a lot of possibilities to hold virtual discussions with other teachers. She is quite interested in spaces where people can exchange ideas and learn from each other. The only thing she mentions as a challenge would be to find a strategic time for holding these discussions. Some teachers, just like her, might not have a stable internet connection. She proposes that watching a pre-recorded webinar in their own time, and then having the exchange at a separate session would be a better option.

Helping is Most Natural

Janice Mama, Davao Central College, Davao City



Janice Mama had only been teaching Professional Education at the Davao Central College for a year when the COVID-19 crisis broke out. She lives in the outskirts of Davao City, together with her parents and other relatives.

Janice shares that because they live far from the center, one of her difficulties during this time of the pandemic is traveling down to the city and back to her home in time before the curfew. Due to this, she has to schedule all her errands, like groceries and banking, wisely. This, however, does not stop her from also visiting some of her colleagues to deliver fresh produce from their small farm. She shares, "It is different when you are able to do good for somebody. The feeling is priceless."

Since the lockdown started, Janice has been helping her parents with their small businesses more than ever before. Her family's rubber farm suffered greatly from the lockdown measures because they could not transport their produce to their regular client, who is based four hours away from the city. Sadly, their search for another buyer within the city has not yielded any result. She also laments that even their coconut business is also affected, as prices for the crop has gone so low that they only get breakeven for their labor.

TEACHING UNDER LOCKDOWN

"Janice feels that the most important thing right now is building and strengthening good relationships with others."

Nevertheless, Janice still feels fortunate that she is able to enjoy the simple luxuries of living in a farm where fruits, vegetables, and even native chicken are just a stone's throw away. This is why she feels compelled to also share what they have to those she knows are in a difficult situation. She says that helping others is intrinsic to her.

Janice is glad that her family's enterprising nature has rubbed off on her and has influenced her to start diversifying her investments and saving up for emergencies. This crisis made her realize even more the value of having a diverse income stream and knowledge on financial management.



More than the money, however, Janice feels that the most important thing right now is building and strengthening good relationships with others. She fears that this time of isolation has only fuelled the tensions already existing among different groups, and created new lines of division. She tries to not let these worries overwhelm her and make her anxious.

In her opinion, there is a need to have discussions on what peace looks like at this time of the pandemic. That is why, she is looking forward to working with forumZFD in creating spaces where people can exchange ideas online. She also sees that these exchanges are not only for teachers, but also for students.

Chapter Four

Sparking Change in Communities

Self, Family, and Community

Mark Binocal, Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology, Mati City



Mark Binocal, 31, teaches Development Communications at Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology (DOS CST) in Mati City, Davao Oriental for 6 years now.

He lives together with his two young children and wife in a neighborhood where the houses are right next to each other so it's easy to get from door to door in just a few steps. The families in the neighborhood were caught off guard by the COVID-19 crisis - including Mark's family. Mark shares, "The first two weeks were the most difficult because I'm used to going to school every day, I had a hard time adjusting to suddenly having to stay at home with two restless young children."

Mark admits, "I would sometimes raise my voice in irritation at my wife and children. But I eventually got a grip on myself. I couldn't isolate myself from my family. I had to connect with them. So *sinasabayan ko sila*. (I go along with them.) I also started meditating. My children sometimes catch me in the bedroom meditating and ask what I'm doing. I'm not sure whether I'm doing it right though and would like to learn how to meditate properly for my mental health. Then, for two hours after dinner, I practice playing the guitar and watch YouTube to learn pentatonic scaling and arpeggios because doing this helps me manage my anxiety during the pandemic."

Online news, Mark observed, is filled with accounts of how the sick and elderly are the most vulnerable to COVID-19. This worries Mark greatly because he is asthmatic and therefore most susceptible to COVID-19. He feels pressured to protect himself for his family. A recent trip to the doctor confirmed that Mark also has gastroenteritis or inflammation of the lining of the intestines. That is why Mark has stopped drinking coffee and has stopped eating sweet and salty food. He has also stopped drinking cold water and has stopped lying down immediately after eating. Mark hopes that quitting these habits will prevent acid from forming in his stomach.

TEACHING UNDER LOCKDOWN

"The committee have been tasked with replacing fear mongering, gossip and hearsay with verified facts from official government sources."



But no matter how much he takes care of himself, sometimes other people are the problem. One day, a neighbor suffered a stroke and was rushed to a hospital located out of town. The neighbor recovered and returned but had to self-quarantine himself for 14 days as is the standard practice in the Philippines every time someone leaves his/her place of residence to travel out of town. The problem was that the neighbor did not follow this SOP and would every now and then leave his house to mingle with the neighbors. This is the reason why Mark now forbids his children to leave the house.

It's his job security that Mark is most worried about. Although Mark is glad DOSCST advanced his April salary already in March, he is one of the more than 300 employees at DOSCST whose contracts are renewed every semester. With school closed because of COVID-19 and no certainty yet when it will be safe to resume classes, Mark worries that his contract may not be renewed in May. He shares that DOSCST had just finished its prelim period and was about to enter its midterm period when COVID-19 struck and everybody was told to stay home. DOSCST tried to adapt and shift to online classes but less than a week into the attempt, the school president changed his mind. He cancelled online classes and informed the school community to focus on protecting themselves from COVID-19. Only a skeletal force of school employees remained in school day in and day out to take care of the paperwork. However, when news broke that 2 residents of Mati had contracted COVID-19, even the skeletal work force stopped coming to school and started working from home.

DOSCST is still weighing what to do, according to Mark. He presumes that after the ECQ ends on April 19, there will be news about whether or not DOSCST will pursue online classes. Meanwhile, Mark is being kept busy as part of DOSCST's 4-person communications committee that helps the Provincial Government of Davao Oriental with developing communication materials for its constituents. The communications committee was formed to address Mati residents' inaccurate social media posts about COVID-19. The committee have been tasked with replacing fear mongering, gossip and hearsay with verified facts from official government sources. How? By translating the Provincial Government's memos into a simplified and easy to understand form. The committee hopes this will help people overcome their fears and make good decisions. After Holy Week, Mark will resume travelling every day to the home of one of DOSCST's school heads and stay in the garden with the rest of his colleagues to develop communication materials. This is his priority right now. Any collaboration with MEM and forumZFD he will park until after May.

Trust is the Cure

Daniel Fritz Silvallana, Davao del Norte State College, Panabo City



Daniel Fritz Silvallana is 27 and has been teaching for 6 years in two schools. At the moment he is teaching Risk, Disaster and Humanitarian Communication and Communications Theory at the Davao Del Norte State College (DNSC).

COVID-19 struck, however, and DNSC closed by mid-March. All teachers began working from home, except a skeletal workforce. This included Fritz, because aside from being a teacher, he is also the executive assistant to the President.

Since the suspension of work and classes, Fritz had been traveling to DNSC and arriving at an empty College. There was no time to lose. Fritz had reports to prepare for CHED monitoring on the efforts done by DNSC such as the school's online psychological support for faculty, staff and students, and the DNSC's relief support to frontliners. With its own money, DNSC bought materials which were made into personal protective equipment (PPEs) by its students and faculty. The DNSC also extended planting materials to its barangay beneficiary. It was only when traveling to school became impossible due to the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) that Fritz- stopped coming to school and stayed home.

Fritz lives with his parents, brothers, sisters, and brother-in-law. Everyone stays indoors because of the quarantine, except Fritz's brother-in-law who has to work in a bank. The COVID-19 hiatus has been a blessing for Fritz because it has given him, finally, time to reflect on his life. "The promotions I received in the academe made me always give my time to the schools I worked for, never mind if I didn't give myself time. I became so busy that I didn't stop to consider my options and think about whether immediately being given a high position was the best thing for me." That's why Fritz is enjoying this downtime to focus on himself. "Finally, I have time to write my Master's thesis, enjoy sound tripping, read books I've always wanted to read, and write in my journal!"

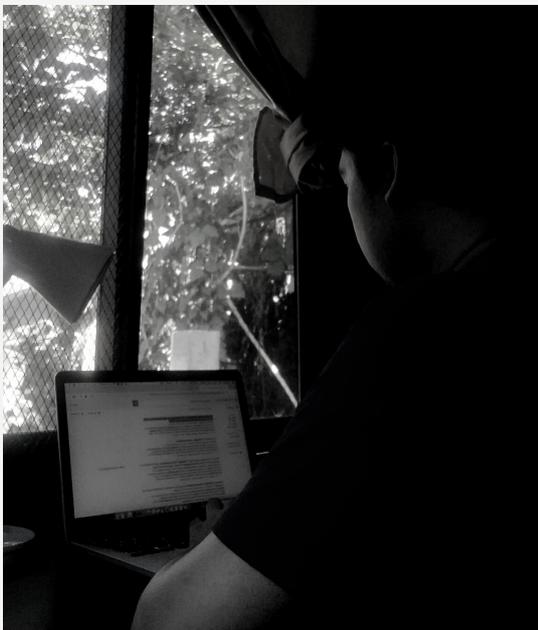
TEACHING UNDER LOCKDOWN

DNSC, Fritz shares, is still waiting for the next guidelines by the national and local authorities on what to do next during this COVID-19 quarantine. Fritz explains, "Online classes have been canceled because the school is not yet prepared. Moreover, many students have gone home to their villages where there is limited internet access. They are not prepared to join online classes either." Needless to say, the school community is grappling with having to adapt to the shift. Before they can use technology to learn with, they need to learn to use the technology.

The news about COVID-19 is troubling, Fritz finds. "It's hard to discern the information overload. But what's clear is that humanity is struggling to survive in a destructive environment of its own making. The challenge is how to contain and mitigate the virus. So, I'm thinking, what can I do at my own level?"

"The challenge is how to contain and mitigate the virus. So, I'm thinking, what can I do at my own level?"

In Fritz's opinion, local government units need to properly strategize communication in times of crisis. He says, "I can see there's a tendency to default with a top-down approach and order people around. Governments say, 'Stay home and don't go out.' But has the government done enough to find out how people feel about this? What are they afraid of? I'm seeing there's not enough being done to respond to people's concerns." This is why Fritz is wanting to conduct a research and share his findings to local government units so that they may be able to develop better COVID-19 messaging and people stop spreading unnecessary information.



Fritz explains, "I'm interested in how LGUs are utilizing social media to be really interactive and engaging in order to create trust and satisfaction as well as loyalty and positive word of mouth." He has started writing the Review of Related Literature already and crafted several research questions: (1) How are LGUs attempting to meet different emotional needs via social media responses? (2) How are LGUs using framing via social media responses to the Covid-19 pandemic? (3) How do government organizations use different frames in their response to the Covid-19 pandemic? His unit of analysis are the Facebook pages of LGUs in the Davao Region, particularly in Davao City, Panabo City, Tagum City, Digos City, Mati City and Island Garden City of Samal.

Although Fritz is busy with this personal research initiative and with finishing his Master's thesis, he is able and willing to collaborate online with MEM and forumZFD during the quarantine.

Change in the Virtual World

John David O. Moncada, University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, Cagayan de Oro City



For almost 14 years now, John, 34, has been teaching communications subjects in three different schools. This school year, John is teaching Theories In Communications and Online Content Writing to Technology Communication Management Majors at the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines (USTP) in Cagayan de Oro City.

When the Community Quarantine was announced, John was 2 hours away from home working as the multimedia documentor of his university's research team. They were in Bukidnon researching how the Talaandig in Talakag utilizes plants. On the last day of field work, the research team hurried home after learning of a possible lockdown in Cagayan de Oro City because of COVID-19.

John and his colleagues were able to reenter Cagayan de Oro City just in time and, without ever returning back to school again, John settled into a life of online teaching. To communicate with his students, he continued to use the Facebook Page that he had set up at the beginning of the school year. It is where he sends students materials to read and receives their assignments. Simple and easy. But not really. Because many students cannot access the internet from where they are and have no smartphones and laptops.

This is the reason why after only 1 week of online teaching, USTP decided to put it on hold indefinitely. The University's game plan is to wait for the Community Quarantine to be lifted so students can be more mobile and online classes can be resumed. John is eager for this to happen. He has been instructed by the school to give only one more major task that will cover his students' midterm and final grade. Once students accomplish this task, John can finally compute his students' final grade. It's up to John and his co-teachers to develop a task that's challenging enough.

John's other preoccupation these days is volunteering for his barangay. He first thought of volunteering because he wanted to help the barangay disseminate information better. He witnessed how his neighbors didn't mince words complaining about their barangay officials' handling of the COVID-19 crisis. The conflict unfolded on Facebook and on the radio when a group of people accused the barangay captain for taking back his consent that they volunteer to disinfect people going in and out of the barangay's checkpoints. The group contacted a local radio station to complain about the barangay captain not being true to his word. The radio station anchor called the barangay captain to explain himself. The barangay captain took a defensive stance and somewhat accused the radio station for being biased. This irked the radio anchor who flared up and berated the barangay captain on air. John cringed listening to the exchange of profanities and wondered, "How can I help?"

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"So, John sat down with the barangay administrator and the barangay captain to explain to them how a communications strategy is key in good governance..."



After giving it some thought, John decided to visit the barangay. He found out the barangay had no official strategy to disseminate information to its constituents. No wonder barangay residents were confused and angry at not knowing where to get what kind of help during the quarantine. So, John sat down with the barangay administrator and the barangay captain to explain to them how a communications strategy is key in good governance and offered to teach the barangay's information officer the ropes.

Long story short, John ended up volunteering for the barangay. Every week, since the start of the Community Quarantine, the barangay informs John how many persons under monitoring (PUMs) and persons under investigation (PUIs) there are in the barangay. John's task is to rewrite and repackage the information in social media templates with the barangay's official Facebook page always mentioned at the bottom of each frame. John gives the final output to the barangay's information officer who posts them on the barangay's official Facebook page. The strategy has increased the number of followers on the barangay's official Facebook page from around 400 two years ago to around 5,000 now. John believes that there are less disgruntled residents now that the information being disseminated is clear.

John was concerned that *Cagayanons* (residents of Cagayan de Oro), particularly his neighbors in Bugo, were not taking the quarantine seriously. So, John pushed his volunteerism further by applying what he learned from his recent trip to The Netherlands about "Media Campaigns for Development and Social Change." John initiated a media campaign involving retired teachers of his community's public high school. He asked the teachers to share about their unforgettable memories at home. John's goal: to motivate *Bugohanons* (residents of Bugo) to stay home during the quarantine.

First, one teacher, and then five teachers, agreed to be featured in one-minute videos. John had his work cut out and wasted no time to film them in their homes. The resulting "Stay at Home and Make Memories" media campaign was a success with many likes and shares and comments on Facebook. Did it achieve its aim to motivate people to stay at home during quarantine? Yes, it did, John thinks, because people respected the teachers and listened to them.

Full of the success from this first media campaign, John is wanting to conduct more researches about communication for social change. He does not have a clear statement of his research problem yet but is interested in these kinds of topics: (1) Can sowing fear be a good media campaign strategy? (2) Does Facebook escalate or deescalate conflict? (3) What is an ingenious way to design a message and change behaviors?

While musing over which research to delve into and how given the constraints, John continues to accomplish his requirements for his masters and to finish the script for the video documentary of the university's research project. He is looking forward that the Community Quarantine will be lifted. He has learned to enjoy the downtime and be present with his mother - cooking, talking, and worshipping God. John realizes he has only one life to live that's why he wants to live it with purpose despite the uncertainty. John is willing and able to collaborate online with MEM and forumZFD.

Closer to Work

Alger Dura, University of Mindanao Main Campus, Davao City



Alger Dura, 44, is currently the head of the Political Science Program of the University of Mindanao Main Campus in Davao City. He has only been teaching Public Administration, Local Government, and Foreign Relations for 2 years now.

Since the beginning of the quarantine in Davao City, Alger, who is also a host of Aksyon Radyo Davao, an AM radio program, has been living in the radio station together with the station's skeletal team. They eat, sleep, work, and cook in the confines of the station. While many of us are struggling with the challenge of working in our homes, Alger and his team are making a home out of their workplace.

Alger runs Aksyon Radyo Davao daily from 5 to 7 in the morning. Sundays are his only time-off. Despite the limitations caused by the lockdown, Alger says his job in the radio station hasn't been that difficult as he initially thought it would be. How he gathers news now is what has changed the most. That is, he does it remotely. But his routine has been more or less the same. During the day, after his program, he scours for relevant updates on the pandemic. So he can prepare to answer his listeners' multitude of queries on the government's various emergency response programs. Many of his listeners are government employees, retired professionals, and military personnel situated in the rural areas who are most interested in the social amelioration program currently being rolled-out by the government. Information is often not accessible to them, so it is Alger they rely on to share as much as he can so they can better understand what is happening during this pandemic and explain it more clearly to other members of their communities as well.

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"Information is often not accessible to them, so it is Alger they rely on to share as much as he can so they can better understand what is happening during this pandemic..."



As a teacher and administrator, Alger also continues to do work for UM. A priority right now is encouraging students, both at the college and graduate levels, to enrol in online summer classes. He says that it has been challenging to convince them because not all are prepared to go online. Yet Alger persist in encouraging them to enrol online so they can continue learning and so they can help sustain the operations of UM. "Taking online classes is going to be a big adjustment, but necessary," Alger says.

Even though Alger is very focused on his work in the academe and media these days, he does not spend a day without catching up with his wife and kids who are in Bislig, Surigao del Sur. Alger is used to being away from his family for months even before the quarantine began. They keep in touch by talking every morning and evening to catch up and check up on one another. Alger says that in this time of COVID-19, it is important his family trusts and respects each other and keeps positive and not give in to fear and panic.

Despite having his hands full at the radio station and at school, Alger is interested in supporting and participating in future activities with forumZFD, but not take on major tasks. He is particularly interested in joining virtual discussions that are related to his work. Several times Alger has offered to give forumZFD space in his radio program or his newspaper column, should this be needed in the future.

The Broader Picture of Peace

Robert Miclat, Former teacher at the Rizal Memorial Colleges, Davao City



Before deciding to go through an early retirement and enter graduate school to obtain his PhD in Educational Administration and Supervision, Robert "Bob" Miclat taught Social Science subjects at the Rizal Memorial Colleges for over two decades. He became even more a key figure in the school as the one in charge of Student Affairs and the Community Extension Program. However, as societal unrest and uncertainty have increased during this pandemic, Bob is regretting leaving the academe. He fears that because he no longer has a job, he will lose all his retirement savings. He also fears that it will now be very hard to go back to graduate school and finish his doctorate degree.

It hasn't been financially easy for Bob and his wife, Bevz, but they get by with the small business they started. Through a training conducted by the local government prior to the lockdown, they learned how to make dishwashing liquid, soap, and fabric conditioner. They make a few of these household items and sell them to those living within their village. Sometimes, they also give these away to relatives and friends. It isn't much but they are happy sharing what they have.

Bob and Bevz are both passionate about community service. Bevz works with the barangay and is one of those in the frontlines conducting surveys and giving out aid. Bob, however, often fears for Bevs' safety, and often argues with her to remain at home. These days, however, instead of arguing with Bevz, Bob accompanies her wherever she goes and helps with repacking and distributing relief goods in their barangay.

It is ironic that as a barangay official, Bevs' can help others but not help herself and her husband. The couple often do not receive food packs because barangay officials are not allowed to receive government aid, including cash subsidies. "But what about me, an optional retiree at 56 who still is not eligible to receive a pension?" Bob asks. He cannot get any financial assistance under the government's social amelioration program because not having regular work is just one of the many criteria. Bob doesn't fit the other most important criteria - his age. At 56 he is not yet a senior citizen and is expected to still work. "But I don't have a regular job!" Bob exclaims.

"Bob feels strongly that "peace" has become distorted because of conflicts within the community and outside the community."



One thing that Bob regrets even more in these trying times is that he cannot anymore help those who are in need. He regrets not being able to send aid to his brother in Kidapawan and his other relatives who have reached out to them. Bob feels chained and limited by his own difficult situation.

Bob observes that now more than ever we need to be kind and compassionate towards each other and relate to each other well. It alarms Bob that many relationships between individuals and groups have become strained because of the social, economic and cultural impact of the pandemic. He shares, "People are discriminating each other because of race, profession, and social and economic standing, it's terrible."

Yet Bob is also quick to point out to not put all our attention on the corona virus when there are plenty of other potentially dangerous concerns that need our attention and action as well. He says that while the pandemic is happening and we're all busy coping with it, China is advancing in the West Philippine Sea, and building more structures in the islets in the area. For Bob, it's important to work on managing the pandemic but never lose sight of regional issues and how the interest of other states are being advanced at our expense.

Bob feels strongly that "peace" has become distorted because of conflicts within the community and outside the community.

Case in point, Bob says, is the conflict over food security during the pandemic. Flattening the curve is important, he says, but so is ensuring that groups and individuals who are suddenly out of work will receive the appropriate relief and benefits. Bob predicts a collective and individual trauma if the government is unable to manage all aspects of society affected by the quarantine and social distancing. People who have not contracted Covid-19 like Bob and Bevs are already suffering because they have nowhere to turn to for aid. Drawing from their own experience, Bob wishes to collaborate with forumZFD to conduct such a response among the academe. For, he says, peace is not only the absence of war, but also a matter of human survival.

As a political scientist, Bob considers the relevance of looking into the readiness of state agencies to intervene and appropriately address the pandemic. He has personally witnessed how the mere lack of a clear database of the residents within their village has handicapped government efforts to decide who to prioritize when distributing aid. This is basic information that should be in place even without the presence of a calamity. Another issue that has caught his eye is the rampant spread of fake news in social media.

As Bob reflects on these important topics, he sighs that he could only do so much as an individual. That is why, he clearly sees the added value of working with others and forging partnerships in this difficult time.

Out of a Loss Comes a Crusade

Jill Palarca, Ateneo de Davao University Senior High School Department , Davao City



Jill Palarca, 41, has been a pioneering teacher of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) to Senior High School students at the Ateneo de Davao University for 4 years now. When Covid-19 struck and the school closed, Jill had been on maternity leave for 7 months to take care of her baby, Lyanna, who was born with several birth defects: a cleft palate, a ventricular septal defect (VSD) or a hole in the heart, and a congenital diaphragmatic hernia (CDH) which is when the diaphragm fails to close and the stomach, spleen, part of the intestines, and liver move to the chest area, impacting the lungs' development. Needless to say, Lyanna was only given 40% chance of survival. She underwent surgery at two days old in the hopes of extending her life, but as expected, she had to live with pulmonary hypertension and bronchopulmonary dysplasia, the common long-term effects of CDH. Lyanna would have to be oxygen-dependent for a very long time. Because of her condition, Lyanna was legally registered as PWD (person with disability).

After staying almost 4 months in the NICU and intubated almost the entire time, Lyanna finally came home on December 2019. The prolonged intubation caused her to lose her ability to swallow naturally thus she had to be fed via an Oro-Gastric Tube (OGT). Because of Lyanna's heart defect and the perils of having an OGT, a fit of crying and coughing could easily cause a fatal bout of aspiration pneumonia. She, in fact, survived two bouts – one while in NICU and one while at home.

Lyanna's condition was so delicate that Jill had to give up teaching to become a full-time parent. She and her husband somehow were able to raise millions to support Lyanna's medical needs at home and while she was in the NICU. They launched fundraisers on social media and were flooded with a massive outpouring of support from all over the world. The couple were prepared to do anything for their baby. This is because they had already lost a baby in utero in 2015 and waited for 11 years for their dream to have a little family come true.

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Transferring Lyanna from the hospital to the home greatly improved her well being. When COVID-19 struck, however, all her routine check-ups, vaccinations, and the planned peg surgery kept on being postponed. By the time the quarantine had been rolled out everywhere, Jill and her family had been holed up at home for months already. Jill and her husband only went out for food and medicines, did not receive any visitors, and practiced strict hygiene and disinfection protocols. Because doctors were unavailable for home visits, however, Jill and her husband had to figure out how to ease Lyanna's discomfort.

Persistent pulmonary hypertensive attacks kept Lyanna up. Jill and her husband's pleas for help, however, did not melt doctors' hearts. The couple were literally left on their own. They learned that medical personnel dismissed them because they were too inquisitive, too involved, too emotional, and too toxic so other doctors were told to avoid them, too. At this, Jill turns defensive and asks pointedly, "*Siyempre wala naman sigurong magulang na relaxed kung since day 1 agaw buhay anak niya?*" (Tell me, what kind of parent can afford to relax when her child has been fighting to live since day 1?)

When Lyanna's coughing and crying did not abate, Jill and her husband, already at their wits end, decided to risk bringing Lyanna to the hospital for a check-up despite other people's warnings about COVID-19 medical protocols. The tests showed Lyanna's pneumonia had gotten worse because no doctor had seen her for a long time. Lyanna was so weak that she had to be intubated just like before the COVID-19 outbreak. But this time, the hospital immediately tagged Lyanna COVID-19 suspect and refused to give her any kind of further medical intervention insisting on following the City's protocol that all COVID-19 related cases should be handled by another hospital.

"... Lyanna was a COVID-19 suspect so the hospital was going to treat her like any other COVID-19 suspect. It didn't matter that Lyanna was a baby and had a disability"

Despite Jill's protests, Lyanna was sent to that hospital for mandatory quarantine. The team of pediatricians, cardiologists, and other medical personnel who knew Lyanna's history had not helped Jill explain that Lyanna had CDH making it totally "normal" for Lyanna to have pneumonia. Although these medical professionals were the ones who first explained to Jill that Lyanna was prone to respiratory issues, they did not speak up in Lyanna's defense now but instead advised Jill to follow protocols and let Lyanna be transferred to the designated COVID-19 hospital.

When Lyanna was moved to the other hospital's intensive care unit along with other COVID-19 patients, Jill was horrified that she was not allowed to join her daughter because the hospital insisted, 'protocol is protocol'. Jill resisted this new set-up because prior to Lyanna's transfer, Jill presumed that the new hospital had been informed of Lyanna's specific needs and requirements given her critical condition.

"The new hospital did not know Lyanna's pre-existing condition," Jill realized to her shock. "All they knew was that Lyanna was a COVID-19 suspect so the hospital was going to treat her like any other COVID-19 suspect. It didn't matter that Lyanna was a baby and had a disability," Jill shares.

So Jill cited other examples happening in other cities wherein the parent of the child and the husband of a woman were allowed to join their loved ones as long they wore PPEs and signed a waiver. Jill begged and offered all possible options for a little leeway. "After all, protocols are JUST protocols," Jill said. "By principle, authorities can override rules depending on context." But Jill was rebuffed repeatedly with, "We can't break protocols."

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It did not matter that as a baby, Lyanna was still inextricably connected to her mother and could therefore be calmed down by the mere presence of her mother. The hospital remained firm about its adult protocols having to apply to baby Lyanna, too.

It was a heartbreaking situation because Jill knew her daughter would cry uncontrollably and hold her breath when stressed. This was indeed what happened. Jill is sure that Lyanna became so distraught from being separated from her parents that she couldn't stop crying, suffered a cardiac arrest, comatosed, and died. When the COVID-19 test came out negative as Jill predicted, it was too late.

Jill and her husband are still reeling from the loss of Lyanna and do not think they will ever be completely healed. They haven't dared go home yet and face the empty baby room. Thankfully, OMF Ministry (Overseas Missionary Fellowship) welcomed the couple and offered them a room to stay in their guest house while undergoing grief counseling. But Jill says it's been extremely hard to get their bearings back and "return to the same society that has abandoned my family in our greatest need."

The experience of giving birth to Lyanna and of taking care of her amidst great obstacles, has given Jill an insider's perspective into the medical field. Jill is scathing in her observation: "Medical front liners are very scared. They're paralyzed with fear of contracting COVID. You have that and worse are doctors who treat the medical field as a business. Why would doctors turn away the sick and only accept those who are not yet sick? Why do doctors have an aversion to HMO insurance? Because doctors complain that they won't be paid immediately! Why are doctors allergic to parents like me who ask a lot of questions? Patients' rights should come first!"



This was also the case of some parents of special needs children who experienced the same fate as Lyanna. The parents reached out to Jill when they learned about Lyanna's story on social media. They narrated similar nightmares with hospital protocols that did not consider their special needs/PWD children who had autism, down syndrome, and congenital heart defects, but just tagged them as COVID suspects.

The irony is that the rules that are supposed to protect the children, traumatized them instead. As COVID suspects, the children were either refused care for their pre-existing conditions or were traumatized by the separation from their parents, and died.

Their parents are sure their children's deaths could have been avoided if only the private hospitals' emergency care had rapid tests to immediately screen the children. Then the children would have received the proper medical care for their actual illnesses. Jill shares, "It's excruciating that all of the children tested negative but the results only came out after their deaths!"

"How come government officials themselves are breaking quarantine rules while ordinary people have to suffer separation, anxiety, and worse penalties?" Jill wonders. She understands many parents do not want to contest the authorities and keep quiet because they are afraid of being trolled and bullied for questioning government protocols. Many parents have turned to Jill for advice about what to do and who to ask for help. Jill says, "These parents often do not know what their rights are. I assist them gladly because what happened to our children is a crisis that can happen to anyone. I challenge everyone to think and assess what you can do as entrepreneur, parent, medical professional, management of a hospital - everyone has a role to play! We need to discuss it and face it and come up with solutions!"

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Jill thinks Lyanna's case is a reflection of bigger social issues which is why she is putting all her energy into making people see this connection. She says, "This is a crisis in child's rights, PWD rights, and government's lack of integrity! Lyanna's case was not an isolated case!" Jill is doing everything she can to get the word out and hopes to do this with the help of her extensive media network from Metro Manila where she worked for a long time as a writer/producer for MTV Asia, TV5, GMA7 and as a copy writer for marketing and advertising agencies.

I understand how to sell 'evil products' and make them enticing," Jill says. "I know the psychology behind it. It got to a point when I faced a moral crisis and started questioning, 'Why am I selling cigarettes?'"

Jill also remembers that TV ratings always took precedence when airing a show. She recounts, "If the show's audience dwindled or the show was perceived not to have an audience to begin with, the show was shelved. This profit motive at the core of the television industry made it very hard for independent producers to pitch educational shows." Jill is now finding herself in the same boat as she struggles to influence media to highlight a problem that does not affect and concern everyone.

With grit and determination, however, Jill has succeeded in pushing Lyanna's story from obscurity into the national limelight. Jill says, "It was hard in the beginning because Lyanna's case was not deemed national news since we are from Davao and not Metro Manila. I had to think of an angle to tell Lyanna's story so it's seen as relevant and news worthy for a national audience. In the end, Lyanna's story was picked up because we had connection with the news desks of these national broadcasters, and I was persistent. I found a way to make it compelling. If I didn't have that kind of power, Lyanna's story wouldn't have been told. I hope more people will help share her story in order for the government to change its medical protocols and deaths like Lyanna's can be prevented."

Summary and Analysis

The Aim

The 24 stories show similarities and differences of the teachers' experiences as they each cope with the pandemic. The goal is to identify key issues being faced by the teachers, both at the personal level and professional level, and draw out creative responses to the challenges of adapting to online learning, the rapidly decreasing student enrollment, the stability of their work as faculty and administrator in their institutions, and the mental and emotional distress caused by the crisis.

The Respondents

The twenty four teachers are partners of forumZFD from the different peace education projects it has initiated with various academic institutions in Mindanao since 2011. The teachers teach a range of subjects from the humanities, social sciences, and communication programs. Some of them also handle general education and professional education subjects. There are those who have taught for almost 40 years and have become part of the administrative body of their institution. Others have just begun teaching and are still learning the ropes in the academe.

Half of the teachers are based in Davao City, while the other half are spread out across Mindanao - Tagum, Panabo, Digos, Cagayan de Oro, Mati, General Santos, and Malaybalay. Many of them have been living with their families since the beginning of the quarantine, but there are also some who are in less than ideal circumstances - living alone in a one-bedroom apartment or living in the office.

Despite the diversity of the group, when asked about their experiences during the pandemic, three common themes emerged from their stories: **personal well-being, teaching profession, engagement and collaboration.**

PERSONAL WELL-BEING

As can be expected, many of the teachers stressed the difficulty that comes with "not knowing" when and how (and if) the crisis will end. Majority have accepted that the pandemic will not end anytime soon. The uncertainty has led to anxiety, fear and even a questioning of the "self", especially during the start of the quarantine. But now that the teachers know more about COVID-19 and how to avoid it, their anxiety has lessened. They are all religiously practicing physical distancing, wearing masks, and disinfecting with soap and alcohol several times a day.

Many of them are able to cope with the negativity through social interactions and regular self-care such as gardening, journaling, meditation, and exercise. These "pauses" are not only ways of coping, but are also spaces where the teachers are able to deeply reflect upon the realities they are now facing amidst the pandemic. They also appreciate finally having time to write their thesis and dissertation, playing the guitar, listening to music, and reading books.

Being cooped up in the same space for a long time has led several teachers to find new ways to live. Two teachers shared they now do online yoga and compound exercises instead of going running outside with masks on. Three teachers shared they have started growing vegetables for their own consumption. COVID-19 made one teacher realize how dependent he is on others for food when he could have started growing vegetables in his garden years ago. Another teacher learned YouTube home hacks - kuje freezing vegetables.

Prior to the quarantine, teachers shared that these moments of caring for the self and family were often put on the side as teaching always took precedence. The teachers often rushed through their day beating deadlines and travelling back and forth to school. During the quarantine, however, teachers got immense fulfillment from being able to work from home and being with their families. Having deep conversations, cooking meals together, and tutoring the children were simple joys that many teachers appreciated. Nonetheless, balancing keeping up with the demands of work while tending to things at home is still a struggle.

There are teachers who said working from home has not been as easy as they thought it would be. For these teachers, home is not the ideal working place because it is too hot, too noisy, and there are too many distractions – the comfy bed, the couch, and Netflix - for instance.

There are teachers who said that online teaching has been more difficult because it takes a lot of time and energy to prepare modules. These teachers have been much busier during the quarantine than before the quarantine. They have been working from morning to afternoon albeit virtually, like COVID-19 never happened. Most of their time has been spent on making modules, uploading them for students to read, reviewing students' answers, and leaving comments.

There are also teachers who live far from their schools and relish not anymore having to wake up early to travel to school. They like that they do not anymore have to take a shower and wear a uniform. But many teachers admit that being together with students in the same room is still better than communicating with them remotely. Face-to-face interaction is direct and spontaneous and teachers can better gauge students' progress and make necessary adjustments.

Establishing a healthy routine has given a lot of teachers a good head space while in quarantine. This includes pacing one's focus and energy throughout the day and the week. This also means not feeling pressured to be productive all the time and allowing oneself to take breaks when needed. For a time, a feeling of weariness does emerge because of doing the same thing every day or not doing anything at all. This is why some teachers challenge themselves by setting goals every now and then to keep their motivations high.

What do teachers cherish most in these trying times? They share it is the social support from families, friends, colleagues, and even neighbors. Those who have maintained and strengthened connections with others through sharing food and conversation, albeit the difficulty of doing so, reported better well-being.

Also very helpful, teachers shared, is taking time to introspect and reflect about the meaning of the pandemic. Going inward seems to somehow have soothed feelings of isolation which is taking a toll on teachers' mental health, and has affected some more than others. Teachers who have been physically cut-off from their families and teachers who have been inconvenienced by COVID-19 protocols feel the separation much more.

Because the quarantine announcement came on short notice, many teachers were unable travel back to their hometowns. One teacher has been quarantined in the radio station where he works and regularly calls with his family. An elderly teacher was not able to return to her hometown before quarantine rolled out but kind neighbors and colleagues visit her often and bring her food.

Three teachers have particularly difficult experiences they are dealing with. The first teacher fell sick with COVID-like symptoms and has been cooped up in his apartment a week before the quarantine was rolled out in his City and forced everyone else to stay home, too. He candidly admits that he has been trying out different things to stop from being consumed by loneliness and anxiety during the pandemic.

The second teacher has taught for a while before becoming an administrator in the same school. He laments that he stopped teaching to pursue a Doctorate degree when the quarantine was imposed and the school closed. He does not have a source of income yet he is not qualified to receive any government COVID-19 subsidy.

The third teacher is going through depression and grief over the loss of her baby with special needs. It is a death which she is sure could have been prevented were it not for the Davao City-wide medical COVID-19 protocols that hospitals insist on following despite her child's special needs. The teacher is deeply hurt that her pleas for support were addressed more by kindly strangers than her own friends and doctors.

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TEACHING PROFESSION

How have teachers dealt with the shift to online education? Some are optimistic while others are doubtful that schools can successfully shift to not anymore relying on personal contact with groups of students and colleagues.

There are teachers who strongly feel it is not possible to substitute face-to-face teaching with online teaching. These teachers are ambivalent about how much can be transferred to a virtual education set-up given that much of the social support and guidance may be lacking in the virtual world.

On the other hand, there are also teachers who think that while online teaching is not a complete substitute for face-to-face teaching, they should come to accept it. These teachers say online teaching is a way to sustain learning among the students, their work as teachers, and more practically, the operations of their educational institutions.

In order to somehow strike a balance, there are schools moving more towards blended or flexible learning, which is a combination of online and offline learning activities. To some teachers, this means delivering classes online for now while the quarantine is in place but not giving up hope that it will be possible again to be physically together in the same classroom. When and how is not that clear for the teachers yet.

All of them expressed the need to prepare well first in order to be able to successfully shift to remote learning. The teachers were concerned about four things in particular: (1) They need to be adequately trained in using online learning platforms given that not all of them are technologically savvy. (2) They need to have the necessary equipment and internet connection to hold online classes. (3) They need enough time to review their old syllabi and adapt them to the new blended mode of learning. (4) Their students also need to have their own laptops or a working smart phone, steady internet connection, and know how to use online platforms. Often, remote learning has been difficult to do when one of these four concerns come in the way.

The teachers have been waiting for their schools' management to make a decision about whether to wait it out until the quarantine is lifted and everyone can return to school or to continue online classes albeit without the students who cannot make it. Some have opted not to pursue online education at all until the proper systems are in place. These schools are looking to resume regular face-to-face classes by August or September.

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There are three online education platforms most commonly used by the teachers: Google Suite for Education, Schoology, and Edmodo. In order to communicate among themselves and their school heads, teachers often use Facebook Workplace. One of the teachers shared that he prepares for his own online classes and trains his colleagues to use online education platforms. His school is one among several schools that have been conducting in-house training on the different online platforms so teachers will be prepared to resume the school year albeit online this June and August.

An example of a creative shift to online teaching happened when a teacher asked help for her student interns to be matched with companies that could give them workplace experience albeit while working from home. The forumZFD Davao Project Team pitched in to connect the teacher with friends from non-government organizations and corporations. Five student interns were then also assigned to the Davao Project Team to develop two informative videos on schools shifting to online teaching and how the media has been covering the pandemic.

A number of teachers have taken a heavy financial hit because of the quarantine. When the pandemic struck and schools closed down, not all of the teachers were able to retain their jobs. A number of them, mainly from private institutions, experienced their work put on hold and their salaries, too. The decline in student enrollment, both in the undergraduate and graduate levels, greatly affected private schools that depend on students' tuition fees to sustain teachers' salaries.

This is why schools have lowered their fees and removed all unnecessary expenses like laboratory fees. The hope is that by making online classes more affordable, there will not be a decline in the number of enrollees for summer classes this April-July 2020 and for the regular semester this August 2020. Teachers fear that if enrollment decreases retrenchments will be inevitable.

At least 6 among the 24 teachers are currently in a "no work, no pay" situation. While they receive weekly food packs from the government and some financial support from their institutions, there is uncertainty whether these would sustain them throughout the lockdown. Teachers are careful not to show their anger and disappointment openly because they understand that their schools are unprepared for the pandemic. When schools attempt to make amends by giving their faculty one-month salary in advance and/or a portion of their 13th month pay, teachers appreciate the gesture. Especially those who have lost their main source of income from teaching. The money is stretched and when it is gone, these teachers continue to live off their savings (if any) and apply to be included in the government's social amelioration program. Regularized teachers who still receive salaries during the pandemic are the lucky ones. They do not have to worry about not being able to buy food and medicines.

As a way to mitigate loss of income, several teachers have engaged in micro-enterprises. Three teachers who have no teaching load and therefore receiving no more salary, are determined to take matters into their own hands and find new ways to earn. They have been growing and selling vegetables, and making and selling laundry products. It is a good start. Once the quarantine eases and travelling is easier, the teachers will hopefully be able to expand their customer base and sell enough products to completely cover their living expenses.

It is becoming clearer that even middle-wage earners like teachers who have no work at this time are also vulnerable to the economic effects of the pandemic. The teachers fear that if nothing will be done to address this situation, a new kind of "poor" may emerge out of the pandemic and it will include them.

ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

As the crisis continues to unfold, it is all too easy to lose track of underlying and complex societal issues that also drive conflict. Now more than ever is it timely for organizations and individuals working in peacebuilding to work together with the academe. The challenge is how to do this despite the limitations of the quarantine. What creative initiatives can peacebuilders like forumZFD and the academe collaborate on? forumZFD's Davao Project Team looked for ideas and inspiration from the teachers themselves.

"For one, teachers are using their own agency to contribute to positive change by extending help to others."

For one, teachers are using their own agency to contribute to positive change by extending help to others. It started when media educators noticed that during these uncertain times, social media platforms are flooded with information. They observed that for individuals who do not have the habit to verify the accuracy of their news sources, this information overload can be very confusing, overwhelming, and even paralyzing. Needless to say, media educators felt that communicating factual and meaningful information in a timely manner during a crisis is as important as boosting a person's immunity from the virus, and from widespread fear, panic, and anxiety. Media educators strongly felt that governments and the public should invest in good crisis communication and not overlook it or gloss it over. Those who experienced first-hand the adverse effects of this lack of good crisis communication felt compelled to intervene and volunteer in their local governments' official media teams that disseminate COVID-19 updates. The teachers used their knowledge of the topics and their knowledge of conflict-sensitive journalism to help streamline information sharing in their communities.

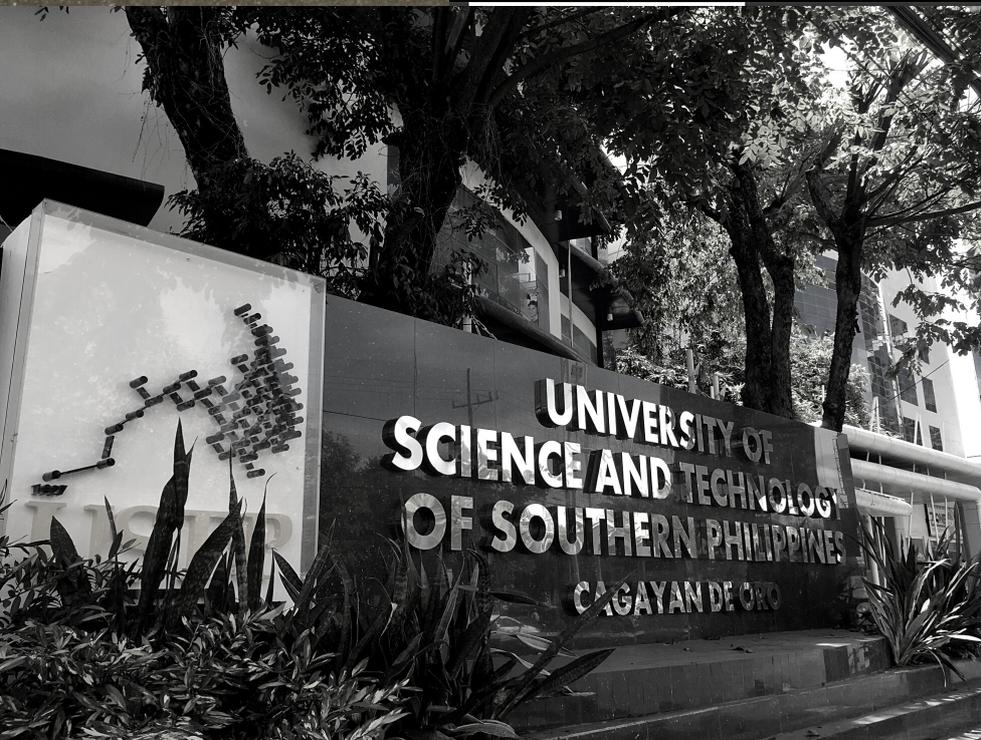
Another example are the teacher-researchers who have found motivation to study different aspects of the pandemic. At least two of them are interested to look into the use of communication (online and face-to-face) for social change. The first teacher is specifically interested in finding out how government actors are using social media to bridge the gap between the citizens and the State. He wants to know how social media builds trust and confidence in this time of uncertainty and fear. The second teacher, on the other hand, wants to look into aspects beyond the immediate effects of the pandemic. He is interested to see how COVID-19 is not just impacting people's health but also changing the way goods and services are exchanged, how people participate and adhere to local governance, and how people create and resolve conflicts. Both teachers are aware that as social scientists and communicators, they have an important role to play in building and sharing knowledge, and initiating exchanges among experts, government agencies, students, and the general public.

Teachers have observed that because of the pandemic, Philippine society is finding out many cracks in its systems and structures that would otherwise have remained unnoticed. The teachers point out that the pandemic has thrust the government under a microscope revealing how unprepared it really is in handling the pandemic at many levels, particularly in ensuring that everyone gets access to appropriate care, and an opportunity to live a balanced and healthy life.

While the government may be doing many things right, teachers understand the importance of stepping back and checking how government policies are traumatizing some sectors through unfair and unhealthy policies often implemented without much compassion. One teacher in particular observed how the government's responses to food scarcity, job security, and even health practices are based on fear and not careful study of what is the healthiest response to these societal concerns. This is the reason why some teachers do not just wait to be told what to do but step out to become real partners of government even if this means being critical of the government's actions.

Do the teachers want to continue collaborating with organizations like forumZFD and the Media Educators of Mindanao? The answer of the majority is a resounding, "Yes!" The way forward for them is to connect with each other and find new ways to work together. Some have already suggested holding virtual discussions on topics such as the rampant spread of misinformation or fake news and sharing of resources and experiences on the use of online learning applications. Others also mentioned revisiting and reactivating parked plans and activities that can be done remotely such as developing a teaching guide on peace and conflict topics for Political Science teachers.

A handful of teachers, on the other hand, expressed that they cannot commit to any collaboration during the quarantine because they want to prioritize taking care of themselves, their families, and focus on their work. There were also those who said that they are willing to collaborate, but are unable to commit to taking on major tasks.



Epilogue

forumZFD Davao has been working with teachers to integrate peace and conflict topics into several curricula since 2011. Part of its approach as a conflict transformation organization focusing on educating for peace has been to continually learn from the changing landscape of education and be responsive to teachers' needs, especially in designing peace education activities. It was no wonder that when the pandemic started, and the academe began to enter unprecedented times, forumZFD sought the experiences of the teachers and document them. From April to May 2020, forumZFD's Davao project team talked to teachers to find out how they were holding up working from home. "It's very hard," everyone answered. In July 2020, their moving stories of grit, resilience and transformation were put together into Teaching Under Lockdown Stories (TULS). A Facebook page was then created for the teachers to read and react to each other's stories. "I'm not alone," was the common sentiment.

Later that month, the teachers from Digos City, Cagayan de Oro City, Davao City, Panabo City, Tagum City, Mati City, and General Santos City met online for the first time and saw the faces behind each story. They agreed that "the pandemic did not change us; it revealed us!" The pandemic drew out what teachers had built up inside. Irritation and anger or patience and acceptance? Anxiety or pragmatism? Powerlessness or steadfastness?

The teachers candidly admitted that their equanimity, creativity, and resourcefulness continue to be tested as they struggle to keep level headed and not panic. They are consciously avoiding the knee-jerk reaction to blame and complain. They understand that these are crazy unpredictable times for everyone, no one is exempted. So they air their disappointments and frustrations matter of factly instead of with resentment and anger.

They are, however, careful not to express strong negative emotions in print. In finalizing TULS, for example, parts had to be rewritten several times not because the information was inaccurate, but because teachers felt they couldn't appear too critical of their schools and their administrators. Sometimes, revisions were scrapped entirely for the same reason.

How then does one solve the dilemma of capturing the true experiences and sentiments of teachers in a public document? Especially when true accounts are not flattering but embarrassing? Such as when one teacher described his teaching during lockdown situation as comparable to being in the Hunger Games!

Behind the personal stories that the teachers shared, they also dealt with situations in their work contexts that show various forms of structural violence, inequality, injustices which were consolidated in this epilogue as a collective experience. These are the following:

- In the early days of the community quarantine, teachers had to give students evaluative grades based on very little or no information about the students' progress. It didn't matter to the schools whether or not teachers had given students exams, "Just give them grades." In other schools it was, "Just give them one major requirement on which to base the entire month." These were the solutions in many schools dealing with students struggling with online education because they either had intermittent internet connection or none at all, and didn't own smart phones and laptops and constantly had to find creative solutions to participate.
- Teachers have spent hours developing modules to suit their course content for online teaching. This entails developing input for students to study and activities and exercises for students to do on their own and together online. Yet after all of this effort to prepare for online classes, teachers have to wait for classes to begin and be given a teaching load before they can get paid. Teachers' salaries depend on their teaching load. Without a teaching load, they can't be given their salaries - at least those teachers who still are not permanent employees despite having already taught for years in their schools.

- Schools let teachers with a permanent status have the first pick when it comes to distributing teaching load. Whatever subjects are left are given to the rest of the teachers whose status at the school is not yet permanent. Often these teachers end up teaching 1 or 2 subjects only because of the low enrollment turn out. To make ends meet, teachers are forced to live even more frugally and find other sidelines to cover their monthly expenses.
- The pandemic has put a spotlight on the major difference between teachers with a permanent status and teachers with a non-permanent status. It lies in whether or not they have acquired a Masters degree or a Doctorate degree that's in line with what they are teaching. This is a policy in many schools. It is therefore interesting why there are teachers who achieve permanent status without yet completing any graduate studies. They breezed through getting promoted to permanent status much earlier than other teachers who have been teaching at the school for a long time already. This has been a great cause of demotivation for teachers who have been at the school for a long time already.
- There has been a really low turn-out of enrollees despite schools making it easier for students. For one, schools have cut unnecessary costs like laboratory fees and have offered a staggered payment scheme such as study now and pay later. On top of these, schools have also been racing to out-advertise each other to keep their existing students and entice new enrollees to come. Needless to say, the stress and anxiety among administrators are enormous.
- In one school, only 1/3 of expected enrollees returned. It's the same story everywhere else. What is causing this? A survey in one school found out that students are not enrolling because the pandemic has left their families cash-strapped. Businesses have closed and breadwinners have been laid off. Without a stable income, families have shifted priorities. This explains why continuing online education is not the top priority anymore for many families - it's being able to eat daily.
- It is not surprising that the slump in enrollment has caused massive retrenchments in schools. The first ones to go were the non-teaching staff and then the teachers with no permanent status. However, there are schools that fight to keep their teachers - as long as the teachers agree to work on half month's pay and still do full time work. This sometimes results in the teachers themselves deciding to resign when they feel staying is not worth it when they cannot make ends meet anymore.
- The most affected by the pandemic's economic repercussions are teachers whose only source of income is teaching. For them, it's the end of the road if they do not teach because they depend fully on their salaries. Only a few teachers in this situation have managed to diversify their incomes - and thrive. They have gotten into buying and selling online and growing and selling food and plants, among other things. The main challenges of these new endeavors, teachers say, is their intermittent internet connection and the government's pandemic protocols which make it hard to travel and meet potential customers.
- Teachers shared that with the regular semester starting again this August, September and October, they are most worried about students who do not have access to the internet. In many schools, they compose the majority of students. This is the irony - even if these students want to continue going to school, they can't fully participate. So in some schools, teachers end up teaching the same subject, twice. The first time - online at home - with students who have the means to do so. The second time - face to face in school - with students who can't go online. Or teachers distribute printed modules for students to bring home, answer, and return for checking.

- Tenured teachers who are not used to working with computers at all, are struggling hardest of all to learn online tools. Schools have remedied this by training teachers how to teach online and then pairing up teachers to help each other learn. It has been a frustrating learning curve to teach in a different way.
- Communication between newly-hired teachers and tenured teachers has become strained during the pandemic when working hours are long and tiring and teachers become more cranky than usual. The hierarchical culture of schools is so deeply embedded that instead of dynamic meetings where anyone is free to propose a solution during what is supposed to be a collegial discussion, newly-hired teachers are more likely to keep quiet. This is because they have experienced being rebuffed, overruled, and disapproved of again and again because of their youth.

The pandemic has brought to light at a great scale that schools are not only unprepared but at times also unfair, unjust, very competitive, and not very warm and nurturing. How can education be reimagined and become truly innovative during the pandemic if structural and cultural violence in schools are prevalent? The power structures are so pervasive, they encourage subordination and blind obedience rather than real experimentation, and freedom of expression.

There is also another equally important concern: are school curricula during this pandemic still relevant to the changing needs of the times? How much have schools deliberated what new content to introduce - not just how it's going to be taught online?

It is hoped that the pandemic is going to be the push that schools need to reassess and overhaul outdated curricula and systems. Because if schools don't, they may not be able to keep up with the myriad of other opportunities for students to learn, listen, speak, and collaborate with others from across the world in online seminars and virtual meetups all offering fantastical opportunities for growth and development. Keeping a dynamic school environment that maintains excellence and dynamism, not mediocrity and stagnation, will be the real test of schools during this pandemic. Inspiring students' interest in learning for learning's sake and not because of grades and awards and recognition is the cherry on top.

It would seem that some of the issues faced by the teachers are not just emerging out of the pandemic, but have long existed within the education system of the country. The top-down approach of creating policies and mechanisms without proper consultation of those on the ground implementing these policies, and taking into account their own capacities and needs, is often the cause of violent conflicts within many institutions and the persistence of structural inequalities. The injustices the teachers mentioned, although exacerbated by the current crisis, are only symptoms of the greater problem of the culture of violence that still pervades the education and many other sectors of society. The challenge of building a culture of peace within education institutions, and the Philippine education system, as a whole, still remains. It is the hope of forumZFD Davao that by continuing to journey with the teachers and also engaging key actors in education institutions in a more intentional way, the crisis can also be used as an opportunity to change policies, structures, and attitudes to contribute more to a genuine culture of peace.

Committed to Peace

forumZFD Philippines

Suite B305, Plaza de Luisa Complex, Magsaysay Avenue
Davao City 8000 Philippines
Phone/Fax: +63 82 2822762
www.forumzfd.de/en/philippines
www.facebook.com/forumZFDPhilippines



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