

# School Safety and Infrastructure Compliance to Requirements of Face-To-Face Classes of the Selected Public Secondary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

Huge differences were expected in the new normal learning, and a significant transition was needed. While the implementation of face-to-face classes was still at the infant stage, it is very important to know the challenges of the school heads so that actions can be taken in a timely fashion. The study aimed to determine the school safety and infrastructure compliance to requirements

for face-to-face classes of the selected public secondary schools in Butuan City Division. A mixed-method approach was used in the study, which was considered an appropriate approach considering the nature of the data gathered and the objectives of interest. The School Safety Assessment Tool (SSAT) was used to determine the level of readiness of schools in preparation for the safe re-opening of classes, which provided the necessary information on the improvements and adjustments to be made before the implementation of face-to-face classes. An interview guide was designed to determine the experiences and practices of school principals in relation to school management during the pandemic. Strict adherence to necessary guidelines is major preparation for schools to secure permits for the full implementation of face-to-face classes. Information drive and collaboration with stakeholders increase the sustainability aspect of face-to-face implementation. Schools have taken measures to ensure the safety of children who will be attending in-person classes, such as masks and other PPE policies for teachers, school staff, and students by national and local guidelines to enhance hygiene measures and adequate handwashing facilities, frequent cleaning of surfaces and shared objects, appropriate ventilation, and information-sharing mechanisms with parents, students, and teachers.

**Keywords** — Institutional Research, safety, infrastructure, compliance, face-to-face modality, pandemic, transition, mixed-methods, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Relative to other health crises and pandemics that happened in the past, the negative impact of COVID-19 was significantly higher in scope and demanded global solutions. The World Health Organization (2020) reported that the pandemic has adversely affected the operations of public and private institutions across the globe. According to Schwab and Malleret (2020), uncertainties associated with COVID-19 included poor production in the business sector, the closure of business establishments and schools, the inability of people to leave their homes for a long time, and the interruption of classes in schools, colleges, and universities.

One of the drastic measures many countries, including the Philippines, took to prevent the spread of the virus was the suspension of institutional activities. However, the emerging new type of virus caused the temporary closure of schools in all countries, and instructional processes were suspended for a while.

According to the report of UNESCO (2020), in the first quarter of 2020, the total number of enrolled students in the world whose education was suspended had reached 1.57 billion. Therefore, the fact that schools were closed for quite a time may cause not only learning loss for all countries in the short term but also losses in the human capital of countries and reduced economic opportunities in the medium and (Worldbank, 2020).

In the Philippines, it took almost two (2) school years. As a result, all public schools were temporarily closed to prevent the spread of the virus and opted to implement the modular distance learning (MDL) modality. However, several documented challenges are linked to poor student learning outcomes (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020).

Social media reports can speak of the undesirable situations of students who have been bombarded with modular tasks at home without the appropriate guidance of the teacher. In addition, many students suffer from mental health problems brought on by the extended period of home isolation (Park et al., 2020). Because of the learning deficits observed during the MDL modality, the Department of Education (DepEd) cannot afford to pursue the distance learning modality and enforce the opening of schools and implementing face-to-face classes.

In relation to this, in an official statement on September 20, 2021, the Department of Education announced the approval of the pilot implementation of limited face-to-face classes in 100 public schools and 20 private schools located in minimal-risk areas based on the criteria set by the Department of Health. In addition, the schools have passed the safety assessment using the school safety assessment tool of the DepEd and had the support of the local government unit in the form of a resolution or letter of support.

However, the increasing national vaccination coverage from children to adults illuminated the possibility of re-opening all public and private schools in the first quarter of 2022 - 2023. In an interview, DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones highly encouraged all public and private schools to extend more efforts to implement face-to-face classes in the new normal. She further stated that around 73% of public schools have resumed face-to-face classes.

The start of a new school year (2022-2023) was an important time for parents, teachers, and millions of primary, secondary, and tertiary students worldwide. As the academic community kicked off the school year, it was also a time to prepare for potential threats and risks that may arise. All teachers and students have the right to a safe school environment, and maintaining the safety and security of all the nation's schools was the top priority of all government

agencies involved in the security of those concerned as face-to-face classes were fully implemented.

Meanwhile, school safety encompasses a range of measures, systems, and strategies that schools prepare for potential threats and risks that primary stakeholders may face. In addition to the physical security of buildings and campuses, schools were expected to strengthen security postures and build resiliency against a range of threats and hazards, not only for the full implementation of the face-to-face classes but also in the future.

On the other hand, Dayagbil et al. (2021) explored the challenges and issues in teaching and learning continuity of public higher education in the Philippines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the experimental mixed-method triangulation design and analyzing the data from 3,989 students and faculty members as respondents, the study found that during the school lockdown, teachers made adjustments in teaching and learning designs guided by the policies implemented by the institution. Most students needed help complying with the learning activities and requirements due to limited or no internet connectivity. Emerging themes were identified from the qualitative responses to include the trajectory for flexible learning delivery, the role of technology, the teaching and learning environment, and the prioritization of safety and security. The study provided the contextual basis for strategic actions amid and beyond the pandemic.

In the local setting, schools from the Division of Butuan City went the extra mile to return to face-to-face modality. School leaders have exerted extra efforts and considered initiatives to pursue school operations. At the same time, permits have been granted for re-opening schools after being closed for two years. However, in the new normal of learning, huge differences from the previous face-to-face were expected, and a significant transition was needed. While the implementation of face-to-face classes was still at the infant stage, it is very important to know the challenges of the school heads so that actions can be taken in a timely fashion.

The present study aimed to determine the experiences of school heads of public secondary schools in Butuan City in preparing for a face-to-face modality emphasizing safety and infrastructure resources. It shed light on the experiences of the schools in relation to the management of open school units under the unprecedented health crisis context and the observance of health protocols. The study results will help develop transition plans that will contextually address the sprouting issues in the early years of face-to-face implementation.

## FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the school's compliance and effectiveness theory which is primarily concerned with the organization's structures and culture and how these are expressed in its policies and practices and specifically how they relate to and promote the overall goals of the school and teacher effectiveness at the classroom level (Hargreaves, 2001). According to Tiruvoipati et al. (2010), school effectiveness and compliance with the requirements of face-to-face classes involves the ability of the school principals to achieve the conditions of schools and accomplish its objectives.

Furthermore, Tiruvoipati et al. (2010) highlighted that school effectiveness and its compliance with the requirements of face-to-face classes are based on aspects – leadership, management, and organization. The organization of the school has a predestined structure prescribed by the government authorities; the compliance of the school can be imposed by the government by the design of evaluation tools in the form of checklists and evaluation forms, which may not necessarily enhance effectiveness and compliance but will seek to determine learner attainment. School effectiveness and compliance with the requirements can indicate how well the principal manages the school and how well the external stakeholders are actively involved.

Meanwhile, Senator Win Gatchalian introduced Senate Bill No. 1565, An Act establishing policies for education and learning in the new normal, prescribing for the purpose standards for the reopening of safe schools, creating the safe schools reopening task force, appropriating funds therefor, and for other purposes otherwise known as “Education in the New Normal Act.” It states that the State shall promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. Toward this end, the State shall ensure that even in times of public health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, calamities, civil unrest, and other emergencies or crises, the citizens' right to education is maintained and complemented with the protection and promotion of their right to health, safety, and well-being and instilling health consciousness among them. The State shall likewise adopt measures to mitigate the impact of disruption in the learners' education to ensure continuity of learning and provide quality education during prolonged school closures while taking primordial consideration of their health, safety, and well-being.

In addition, the implementing agencies under this Act are mandated to prepare a Safe Schools Reopening Plan (SSRP) in preparation for the re-opening of all public and private primary education schools under the New Normal in education and learning during or after a calamity, public health emergency, civil unrest, and other emergency or crises that resulted to a massive disruption of classes. The SSRP shall contain well-defined timelines, specific benchmarks, policies, and standards to resume classes or reopen schools based on assessing the associated risks, benefits, and the best interest of the learners and the community.

Furthermore, the shared responsibility framework that governs DepEd Order No. 017, Series of 2022, was used to understand the elements of successful implementation of face-to-face set-up under the new normal. The said framework has four pillars, namely; (a) safe operations, (b) teaching and learning, (c) the most marginalized, and (d) well-being and protection. The policy and financial support are cut across all the pillars to ensure operational mechanisms are in place.

The framework will engage the community in ensuring the learners are safe and secure while attending face-to-face classes. Specifically, the framework puts the learner's health and safety at the heart of the implementation, allowing them to learn better. The framework is centered on the following common elements: (a) health and safety of learners, (b) learning opportunities, (c) school operations, and (d) engagement of the entire society.

In the context of the present study, the above-mentioned shared responsibility framework guides the inclusion of the variables that are considerably fitted to understanding school management practices. Figure 1 shows the research flow.

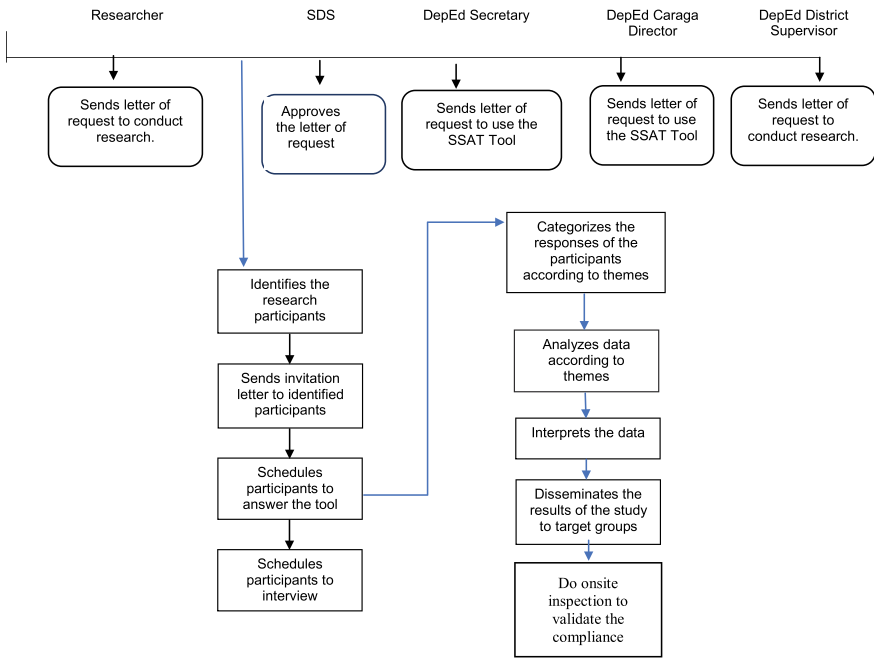


Figure 1. The Research Flow

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to (1) determine the compliance of schools to the requirements of face-to-face classes, (2) identify adaptive strategies or solutions to face-to-face classes, and (3) design a proposal for a transition to face-to-face classes.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The descriptive research design was used in the study to determine the safety school and the infrastructure readiness of the principals in the transition to face-to-face classes. The phenomenological approach was used to determine the experiences and practices of school principals concerning school management during the pandemic. The researcher conducted the on-site inspection to validate the compliance as reflected in the answers of the school principals in the survey questionnaire.

In the context of the study, the procedures and analytical techniques underpinned in the qualitative approach were very useful in understanding the managerial practices of principals based on their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Research Site**

The area of the study included the three (3) districts in the division of Butuan City - West I district, with Libertad National High School (LNHS) and Consuelo National High School (CNHS) representing secondary schools. There were three secondary schools from the West II district - Lumbocan National Secondary School, and West III district, the secondary schools included Kinamlutan National High School, Pareja Integrated Secondary School, and Bancasi Integrated Secondary School. Nine (9) public secondary schools from the Division of Butuan City were considered participating schools in the study.

### **Participants**

All nine (9) school principals of the three districts, namely, West I, II, and III, were taken as participants in the study. They were the right persons who could provide the appropriate information as to the readiness of their schools for the full implementation of the face-to-face classes. Aside from the result of the survey, the nine (9) schools have complied all the requirements in re-opening face-to-face classes based on the series of Regional Memorandum signed by our Regional Director stating that the nine (9) schools included in the research study have complied the requirements.

### **Instrumentation**

The School Safety Assessment Tool was used to determine the level of readiness of schools in preparation for the safe reopening of classes and provide the necessary information on the improvements and adjustment that has to be made before the implementation of face-to-face classes. The information served as the baseline data for proposing an intervention for a safe reopening of classes.

An interview guide was designed to determine the experiences and practices of the school principals in relation to school management during the pandemic. It was submitted to specialists for content validation. Their comments and suggestions were carefully considered, improving the questions' construction to truly determine the participants' experiences in the transition to face-to-face modality.



**Research Ethics Protocol**

During the interview, the respondents were informed of the risk and benefits implied by the discussion. The participants signed the informed consent form. The research objectives and scope were made transparent so that the participants were aware of the purposes and uses of the data gathered from them. All rights and privileges as research participants were clearly explained to them. These rights included their anonymity as participants, the confidentiality of data, rights to reject or withdraw from their participation in the study, and rights to know the study results as part of the dissemination initiatives.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Compliance with Requirements for Face-To-Face Classes**

Table 1 shows the compliance to school preparedness of the nine (9) public secondary schools on the re-opening of schools per DepEd-DOH-JMC-No. 01, S. 2021 (Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-To-Face Learning Modality.)

Table 1  
*Compliance with School Preparedness*

Preparedness Indicators Per DepEd-DOH-JMC-No. 01, S. 2021	Compliance		Non-Compliance	
	f	%	f	%
Managing School Operations	9	100	0	0
1. Shared responsibility	9	100	0	0
2. Alternative work arrangement	9	100	0	0
3. Classroom layout and structure	9	100	0	0
4. School traffic management	9	100	0	0
5. Protective measures, hygiene	9	100	0	0
6. Practices, and safety procedures	9	100	0	0
7. Communication strategy	9	100	0	0
8. Contingency plan	9	100	0	0
Focusing on Teaching and Learning	9	100	0	0
1. Learning resources	9	100	0	0
2. Limited face-to-face classes	9	100	0	0

Preparedness Indicators Per DepEd-DOH- JMC-No. 01, S. 2021	Compliance		Non-Compliance	
	f	%	f	%
3. Teacher support	9	100	0	0
Well-being and Protection	9	100	0	0
1. Personal Protective Equipment	9	100	0	0
2. Covid-19 case management	9	100	0	0
3. Including the most marginalized	9	100	0	0
Home-School Coordination	9	100	0	0

As shown in Table 1, all the participating public secondary schools in the study have complied with the requirements stipulated in the DepEd-DOH-JMC-No. 01, S. 2021 (Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-To-Face Learning Modality). It means that the schools involved in the study are ready to reopen classes and fully implement face-to-face classes. According to Sarmiento et al. (2021), schools have to respond to the requirements of the Department of Education in getting back to face-to-face modality, while learning outcomes have been badly affected by the closure of schools for two (2) years.

In addition, DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones encouraged all public and private schools to return to holding in-person classes for the school year 2022-2023. As reported, around 73 percent of public schools have resumed face-to-face classes.

Table 2

*Compliance to OUA Memo 00-1021-0100 (Conduct of Detailed Assessment of the Readiness of School Facilities for Pilot Face-to-Face Classes)*

Indicators Per OUA Memo 00-1021-0100	Yes	No	For repair	No. of units for repair
I. Classroom Structures				
a. with available seats in every classroom				
a1. Available seats are in good condition	89%	11%		
a2. Seats are arranged 1-2 meters apart	78%		22%	
b. with working electrical lights in every classroom	100%			
c. with electric fans in every classroom	89%	11%		

Indicators Per OUA Memo 00-1021-0100	Yes	No	For repair	No. of units for repair
d. with electrical outlets in every classroom	89%	11%		
e. classrooms are provided with windows and doors				
e1. two (2) seats of doors per classroom	78%	22%		
e2. dedicated entrance and exit are properly marked for every classroom	78%	22%		
e3. windows open and close easily	89%	11%		
f. with markers on the floors for the traffic flow and physical distancing inside the classroom	89%	11%		
g. with directional markers along the hallway indicating the walking direction	89%	11%		
<b>II. School Compound</b>				
a. display of school map at the entrance point indicating the location of the classrooms and traffic flow	100%			
c. separate entrance points and exit points in the school	100%			
<b>III. Water Sanitation and Facilities</b>				
a. with available hand washing station	100%			
a1. With available clean and potable water				
a2. with working faucets	100%			
b. Hand washing facilities in strategic locations	100%			
b1. near the school entrance	100%			
b2. Outside the buildings	22%	78%		
c. with available toilet facilities				
c1. with working faucets and lavatories	100%			
c2. with available clean and safe water supply	100%			
c3. with toilet bowls in good condition	100%			
<b>IV. Other Facilities</b>				
a. school clinic	100%			

Table 2 shows the compliance status of schools per OUA Memo 00-1021-0100 (Conduct of Detailed Assessment of the Readiness of School Facilities for

Pilot Face-to-Face Classes) issued by the Department of Education in October 2021. The percentage distribution unfolds that some schools have seats that need to be in better condition, and only 78% followed the 1-2 meters seating arrangement. In addition, all schools do not comply with the items under classroom structures except for electrical wirings. For instance, the provisions of windows and doors could be more evident in some schools. Further, directional markers inside classrooms to avoid counter traffic flows are not practiced in almost 11% of the schools surveyed.

On a positive note, 100% or all schools are compliant in terms of the school compound. In addition, the display of school maps at the entrance point indicating the location of the classrooms and traffic flow is present in all schools surveyed. Also, separate entrance and exit points in the school are established.

As to water sanitation and facilities, all schools have available hand washing stations with potable water and functional faucets. Toilet facilities with working faucets and lavatories are highly evident in all schools. Accordingly, these facilities are secured before the re-opening of face-to-face classes. However, all buildings inside the schools have handwashing stations. The table posits that only 22% of the surveyed schools have handwashing facilities outside buildings. Moreover, it is remarkably noted that all schools have functional clinics that serve as first aid facilities in case of emergency.

In a nutshell, the given table 2 showcases that the majority of the schools are compliant with the requirements for the reopening of classes. However, some areas need improvements. The permits given to all schools for the authority to operate a face-to-face modality are substantial proof of its compliance with the existing statutory and regulatory requirements. Further, UNICEF is supporting the Department of Education and Department of Health in planning for the phased, voluntary and safe reopening of schools in pilot low-risk areas in the Philippines. Low-risk areas are municipalities with less than 1 COVID-19 case per 100,000 population and a negative growth rate in the last 2 weeks. To ensure the safety of school children attending the in-person classes, all possible steps to mitigate virus transmission in school have been taken as stipulated in the OUA Memo 00-1021-0100 issued by the Department of Education.

Furthermore, the requirements are to enhance compliance and adherence to health measures in COVID-19. It highlights the importance of coordination and cooperation among the stakeholders. As observed in many schools, the school's compliance with the requirements results from the substantial involvement of the teachers, personnel, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders. The

stakeholders’ Bayanihan spirit has indeed displayed an expedient role in the continuity of learning amidst the global education crisis.

**Adaptive Strategies for Face-To-Face Classes**

Table 3 shows the preparations of the school heads in transition to the face-to-face classes grouped according to the appropriate category where themes are extracted.

Table 3  
*Adaptive Strategies as Preparation for the Transition of Face-to-Face Classes*

Response	Category	Theme
<b>P1:</b> I ensure that health protocols are followed in all classrooms. Health signage is installed to remind learners, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders about what to do. Chairs are prepared following the social distancing requirements. There are classroom masks, alcohol, and other related health essentials. Health checklists are available in every classroom for them to fill up; there is a directory of the parents and teachers for emergencies. A body temp is, of course, made ready.		
<b>P2:</b> The school also set up clear and easy-to-understand signage to strengthen observance of health protocols and protective measures. We also display a school map at the entrance point indicating the location of the classrooms and the school offices.	Adherence to health and safety protocols and DepEd guidelines	Strict compliance and adherence to existing policies and guidelines
<b>P3:</b> We follow the DepEd guidelines as reflected in the SSAT.		
<b>P5:</b> Refer to School SSAT Result; Abide by whatever guidelines set by the IATF		
<b>P6:</b> Follow the SSAT provided by DepEd.		
<b>P7:</b> I have prepared the school for limited face-to-face classes by following the Implementing guidelines set in the SSAT.		
<b>P8:</b> We, in the school, follow the guidelines set in the SSAT in preparing our school for the limited face-to-face classes.		
<b>P9:</b> The SSAT is our guide in preparing our school for the limited face-to-face classes.		

Response	Category	Theme
<b>P1:</b> Before they came to class, the school conducted an online orientation of what to do when they came to school. They were also informed of what group or set of students they belonged to.	Information Dissemination Efforts	Conduct orientation to stakeholders.
<b>P2:</b> The school has oriented teaching personnel and non-teaching personnel, the community, the parents, and the students regarding the guidelines set for the opening of limited face-to-face classes.		
<b>P4:</b> Conduct an Orientation for the teachers, Parents, students, and stakeholders to put everything in a proper place.		

As shown in Table 3, common responses are observed in different categories as adherence to health and safety protocols and DepEd guidelines. To reopen classes, all schools must comply with all the requirements before a permit for face-to-face modality is granted. Per DepEd-DOH-JMC-No. 01, S. 2021 (Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-To-Face Learning Modality), all schools are expected to meet all the indicators and requisites before fully implementing the face-to-face set-up. In coherence with existing rules and regulations, the responses from the public school head participants manifest their compliance and firm adherence to the required regulations and policies.

A shared responsibility among stakeholders is to keep a safe and healthy environment for the learners, teachers, and school staff. Schools collaborate with the local government units to implement health protocols inside and outside the school. Parents and teachers work together to create an environment that is conducive to learning while being protected from the virus.

The resumption of in-person classes in the middle of the pandemic has uncertainties. Still, schools provide learners with adequate protection and implement effective and efficient action plans. In that case, parents will gain more confidence in sending their children back to the classrooms. Moreover, according to Rosales (2022), controlling COVID-19 and other infectious diseases allows people to build a safety culture and not merely compliance.

There is more to learn as schools open their gates after the pandemic. But one thing is sure, educators and learners move forward and continue to adjust to the new normal in education, whatever it takes. In the joint memorandum circular of DepEd and DOH, the national government has adopted the Shared Responsibility Framework in piloting physical classes to strengthen the school community health and safety support system. The said JMC features four key

pillars, namely (1) safe operations, (2) teaching and learning, (3) including the most marginalized, and (4) well-being and protection (OUA Memo 00-1021-0100).

In the local setting, many public schools in Butuan City have already responded to the call to implement face-to-face classes. The one-on-one interviews with the public school heads revealed that the common reason for returning to face-to-face modality is to improve learning outcomes. It has been observed that the quality of education has been compromised in the two-year use of the modular distance learning (MDL) modality. At the same time, most students could only learn in the teacher's presence. Teachers have observed that many learners differed from those who answered the modules under modular learning. The good thing about face-to-face classes is that students can draw support from parents, peers, and teachers.

A principal expressed that the preparation for the school opening has been given much effort and attention. Health and safety protocols are strictly observed so that the physical safety of all stakeholders is assured. This reflects that the possibility of Covid-19 transmissions is always addressed but has been taken seriously in preparation for the face-to-face set-up where physical and social interactions are irresistible. The scenario shared by the school heads resulted in the emergence of the theme of *strict compliance and adherence to existing policies and guidelines*.

Meanwhile, the conduct of orientation to stakeholders is the second relevant theme that emerges from the responses of the school heads. As presented in Table 3, the plans and preparations done by the school heads are disseminated to all the involved stakeholders. This is another strategic initiative practice in schools in preparation for the re-opening of schools and implementation of face-to-face modality. In addition, the information on the reopening of schools and its corresponding guidelines have been disseminated to the stakeholders for their cooperation and success in reopening classes for the school year 2022 – 2023.

On the other hand, Table 4 reveals the challenges of school heads despite the preparations conducted before the reopening of classes and the full implementation of the face-to-face classes.

Table 4  
*Challenges in Preparation for the Reopening of Classes*

Response	Category	Theme
<b>P2:</b> Some parents are hesitant to let their children come to school and attend the limited face-to-face classes, and some learners are working, primarily from senior high.	Parental Concern	The hesitation of parents towards face-to-face modality
<b>P7:</b> Some parents hesitate to allow their children to attend face-to-face classes.		
<b>P8:</b> Some parents prefer to let their children join the limited face-to-face classes.		
<b>P3:</b> For JHS - We need more classrooms - We plan to declare the oldest building to be demolished and be converted into 2 story building. For SHS - To install Electricity in the new building.	School Facilities and Resources	Inadequate school facilities and resources
<b>P4:</b> Lack of facilities and other health essentials for the teachers, learners, and parents.		
<b>P6:</b> Lack of resources like health essentials for learners.		
<b>P7:</b> Resources - classroom structuring to conform to the standard; Health essentials.		
<b>P9:</b> We need health essentials for our learners and parents who will visit our school.		
<b>P6:</b> Learners' Readiness to attend the limited face-to-face classes.	Learners' Readiness to the New Normal	Students' difficulty in catching up with the new lessons
<b>P1:</b> One of the challenges I face during this face to face classes is their responsiveness to the lesson and discussion. I have noticed that they need help in reacting to the given lesson.		

Table 4 shows three (3) relevant categories are generated. The first category deals with parental concern, where parents have negative attitudes toward the return of face-to-face classes due to the fear of infection from Covid-19. This needs immediate action and consideration by the school management. For example, a study of Viner et al. (2020) revealed similar findings that showed that



fear of Covid-19 infection was the prime reason parents remained reluctant to allow their children to attend face-to-face classes. In addition, some senior high school students have already found work during the pandemic and can hardly go back to attend face-to-face classes. Management committee members can tackle situations like this for an appropriate intervention plan.

Although all nine (9) schools have complied with all the requirements for reopening classes, the school heads' experiences still reveal the reality of the insufficiency of school facilities and resources. While the majority of the schools in the Philippines have implemented face-to-face classes, problems with essential resources must be addressed by DepEd administrators.

The emergence of the theme of insufficiency of resources and facilities remains a hindrance to the success of the face-to-face set-up unless treated appropriately. In the study of Sheikh (2020), issues on classroom resources and facilities were long before concerns that should no longer prevail in the new normal of learning. School administrators play a crucial role in finding ways to address the deficits in school and classroom resources.

In addition, Sarmiento et al. (2021) have observed students' readiness for the new normal as an evident issue for the early implementation of face-to-face classes. This is collaborated by the experience of school heads further to support the learners' poor readiness for face-to-face classes. This is the effect of the two-year situation where students still need to achieve the desired learning competencies, which are requisites to the following year's level.

Students have needed help catching up with the lessons in the higher years. If this gap is not addressed correctly, it will affect the country's human capital quality. Actions can be taken so that deficits in the learning competencies will be compensated and students acquire the skills needed in preparation for the labor market.

Table 5 indicates the risk management plan of school heads in preparation for the reopening of classes.

Table 5

*Risk Management Plan of School Heads for the Reopening of Classes*

Response	Category	Theme
<b>P1:</b> I have included daily health protocols and reminders in my plans since health is a priority. There is a schedule of hand washing every day and even brushing of teeth. I asked them to bring their health kits to school. They are, of course, told to maintain social distancing, bring their pens (no borrowing), always wear masks, and advise them in case they don't feel okay; they are not forced to come to school but with an excuse letter signed by the parents. They are also asked to bring drinking water n school; a refilling station is available inside the classroom.	Adherence to health and safety protocols and guidelines	Strict compliance and adherence to existing policies and guidelines
<b>P2:</b> The school has followed a decision model and contingency plan for re-closing and reopening the school in case of COVID-19 resurgence in the community.	Prepare Con-tingency Plan	Follow the contin-gency plan in case there is a surge of Covid-19 cases
<b>P3:</b> Follow Social distancing and other guidelines from DRR and submit all the required documents.		
<b>P8:</b> We need to follow the directives of the LGU and the guidelines of the DRR people.		
<b>P4:</b> I plan to meet with the LGU, Health workers, and the GPTA officers to address the possible risk we will encounter.		
<b>P5:</b> Always keep in touch with the Brgy—council on the health status of the community.	Collabora-tion	Strong collabora-tion with stake-holders
<b>P6:</b> We have to ask assistance from the Brgy LGU Medical In-Charge, Brgy, and city DRR, then communicate appropriately to them if there is a risk in implementing the limited face-to-face classes.		
<b>P7:</b> We must collaborate and discuss with parents, staff, teachers, and stakeholders to develop the best plan, especially with the school DRR. However, we are guided by SSAT Tool.		
<b>P9:</b> We have a communication plan that in case there are/are covid cases among the teachers, learners, or parents in our school, we need to connect with the Brgy and city DRR personnel.		

Table 5 shows the risk management plans to prevent the possible infection of Covid-19 along with the implementation of face-to-face classes. Coherence to the preparations as practiced by schools, “*Strict compliance and adherence to existing policies and guidelines,*” emerge as the first relevant theme that describes the plan of schools against Covid-19 infection. Such school practice is expected under the implementation guidelines of face-to-face classes (DepEd-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular 001, s. 2021) - (Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-To-Face Learning Modality.).

On the other hand, strong collaboration with stakeholders is practiced by schools in the implementation of face-to-face classes. Several orientation activities are planned and conducted in different schools to raise awareness among parents, teachers, and staff regarding the important issues and concerns relevant to face-to-face set-up. This practice is highly encouraged under DepEd-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular 001, s. 2021 so that communication plans and detailed procedures in case of emergency will be familiarized to the involved stakeholders, particularly the parents.

Corporate efforts between the key players of school success are instrumental in thriving amidst the educational crisis (WHO, 2021). In addition, current practices of schools, such as constant coordination with stakeholders, are instrumental in sustaining the implementation of face-to-face modality and promoting better learning outcomes.

### **To Design a Proposal for Transition to Face-To-Face Classes**

Considering all the inputs derived from the key findings, Table 6 posits the specific activities and targets composing the face-to-face modality transition plan.

### **Face-to-Face Transition Plan Towards Safe and Better Learning**

#### **Rationale**

The Department of Education (DepEd) welcomed learners, teachers, parents, and personnel in 100 public schools who participated in the pilot implementation of limited face-to-face classes. The stakeholders supported the safe return to school advocacy with the assistance of the Department of Health (DOH) and the IATF, local government units, and other stakeholders for reinforcing the shared responsibility framework in the critical undertaking of the implementation of face-to-face classes.

The Bayanihan spirit still lives on to ensure the safety of the involved stakeholders and the success of implementing face-to-face instruction. With everyone's help overcoming the pandemic outbreak, one's vision to safely reopen schools nationwide was not a far reality.

The problem that was considered in the transition plan was the idea of the parents who were hesitant to allow their children to attend face-to-face classes. Therefore, parental support and their subscription to face-to-face classes are important to comply with the requirements of the Department of Education.

Besides, the learners still needed to be ready for the face-to-face classes. They had to adhere to the health and safety protocols and guidelines in fully implementing the face-to-face classes. The proposed plan acknowledges the difference from the previous normal of conducting face-to-face classes because of the evolving Covid-19 virus. It considers the stakeholders' important role and the need to conduct remedial classes to cover the learning loss during modular distance learning.

## **Objectives**

The transition plan promotes a sustainable, physically safe, and better learning environment for all students. Specifically, it aims to (1) sustain the strict implementation adherence of students, teachers, and parents to the minimum health and safety protocols and guidelines, (2) increase parental support and subscription to face-to-face classes, and (3) improve the readiness of the students on the lessons and desired learning competencies under the new normal.

**Table 6**  
*Face-to-Face Transition Plan Toward Safe and Better Learning*

Objectives	Activities	Target	Time-frame	Source of Funds	Means of Verification
Sustain the strict implementation adherence of students, teachers, and parents to the minimum health and safety protocols and guidelines.	Conduct weekly reminders (either on the online or physical platform) regarding adherence to the health and safety policy.	100% compliance with the minimum health and safety protocol.	Weekly	MORE	Weekly monitoring report on the incidents of non-compliance to health and safety protocol. List of identified focal persons with their contact details as supported in a communication plan.
	Coordinate with LGU, DOH, and other agencies.	At least one (1) identified focal person to coordinate with from LGU, DOH, and DepEd.	Monthly	MORE	
Increase parental support and subscription to face-to-face classes.	Conduct an information drive to parents regarding the need to implement face-to-face classes.	100% of the parents send their children to face-to-face classes.	Monthly	MORE	Monthly monitoring report on the percentage of parents who sent their children to school to join the face-to-face modality.
Improve the readiness of the students on the lessons and desired learning competencies under the new normal.	Conduct remedial lessons to all grade levels, particularly on the least learned competencies during modular distance learning.	90-100% of the students will be able to acquire the desired learning competencies during the face-to-face set-up.	Weekly	MORE	Quarterly monitoring report on the demonstrated competencies of the students.

## CONCLUSIONS

In light of the study's findings, the following conclusions are drawn. (1) Strong and strict adherence to existing and necessary guidelines are major preparations of schools to secure permits for the full implementation of face-to-face classes. In addition, information drive and collaboration with stakeholders increase the sustainability aspect of face-to-face implementation. (2) Schools have taken necessary measures to ensure the safety of children who will be attending in-person classes, such as masks and other PPE policies for teachers, school staff, and students by national and local guidelines to enhance hygiene measures and adequate handwashing facilities, frequent cleaning of surfaces and shared objects, sufficient and appropriate ventilation and information-sharing mechanisms with parents, students, and teachers. (3) The proposed transition plan can help sustain the implementation of health and safety protocols, promote long-term and active collaboration with stakeholders, and provide remedial classes to address the learning or competency loss incurred in the two years of modular distance learning.

## TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of the study suggested that all schools in their application to face-to-face setup must comply and adhere to existing policies and guidelines in the re-opening of classes. School heads have to consider health and safety measures the top priority so everybody in the school community, especially the students, is safe. Treatment plans should reflect strict compliance and adherence to existing policies and guidelines and strong collaboration with stakeholders.

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