Keeping Arts Education Alive: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological inquiry explores the experiences of Arts and Design students in distance learning. Moreover, this study discovers the coping mechanism and insights of the students in distance learning. In School A, purposive sampling was used in choosing 15 participants for the in-depth interviews and focused group discussion. The revealing themes for the experiences of Arts and Design students in distance learning were developing self-efficacy, lacking teacher's guidance, managing time, enhancing creativity and innovation. To cope with the challenges in distance learning, the Arts and Design students were utilizing the internet as a learning supplement, getting support from family and peers, adapting to the changes to the mode of learning, and facing challenges positively. The Arts and Design students continue to face these challenges with insights for the provision of educational technology, setting goals for the future, promoting arts education to others, and participating in classroom discussions and activities. This study suggests that action is needed to place the arts on education agendas and that arts matter for all learners at all levels of education. The benefits of arts education are part of a powerful strategy to keep the arts strong in our nation's schools.

Keywords: arts education, arts and design students, phenomenology, distance learning

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic currently sweeping the world had a tremendous impact in various sectors, especially in the field of education. We all know that this pandemic requires everyone to stay at home to keep their distance and avoid crowds. In the Philippines, the educational system is still in no face-to-face classes. The solution offered is to carry out the education under distance learning. For private schools they opted for online learning while for most public schools modular learning modality was implemented. The emergence of distance education as an alternative to the traditional education system forges problems to the Arts and Design students.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover and understand the experiences and coping mechanisms of Arts and Design. To discover and understand the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of learners in distance learning, this study sought to answer the following questions: What are the lived experiences of Arts and Design students in distance learning? How do students cope with the challenges of Arts and Design track in distance learning? And What are the insights of students to be shared to others?

This study was viewed on the lens of the social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura (1977), that emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior. Moreover, this study considers the environmental factors in this sense, distance learning of Arts and Design students, and cognitive factors involved like attention given by learners to their lessons through modular learning, and how distance learning affects the way they learn and perform in distance learning. Additionally, the theory of Bandura moves with the flow of this study which would highlight the behaviors of the participants in their experiences in Arts and Design Track in distance learning, which consider the

influences of distance learning into the lives of the learners.

METHODS

Research Design

In this study, qualitative research design was used, specifically by employing phenomenological approach because this would involve interpretation and description of gathered information. According to Creswell (2007) Data for qualitative research studies can be obtained from different sources such as interviews, observations, documents, and are variedly used depending on the purpose and nature of the study.

Research Participants

In this study, there were 15 participants, in School A from Tagum City Division. Purposive sampling was used in this phenomenological study. The number of participants in the study were 15 senior high school students. In this study, it was within the range of participants having 8 informants for the in–depth Interview and another 7 participants for the Focused Group Discussion. According to Crossman (2017), purposive sampling technique which is a non-probability sample is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling.

Data Collection

In conducting in – depth interview, the third characteristic mentioned by Seidman (2006) wherein the interviewer asks follow-up questions to gain a deeper perspective and understand the participant's viewpoint, and the fourth characteristic which is generative wherein as a researcher, you must interact with your target audience create new knowledge, was used in collecting data.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, thematic analysis was used which is an excellent method to research in trying to find out something about people's ideas, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values from a collection of interviews, transcripts, social media profiles, or survey results.

Caulfield (2019) mentioned that it is a method where researcher examined data in detail to identify common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. In conducting the study, ethics remained to be a top priority, hence, following and observing ethical codes and guidelines in each step of the research process was considered.

Ethical Considerations

According to Creswell (2007) as cited by Osho (2017) researchers need to look forward to the ethical issues that might come up during their studies. Therefore, moral principles require that research participants and respondents must be protected, have confidence in their response and participation, advocating the excellence of research, guiding against anomalies or misconduct that might replicate on the organizations and to deal with predicaments that keep reappearing during the research.

RESULTS

Experiences of Arts and Design Students under Distance Learning

In the experiences of Arts and Design students in distance learning, the emergent theme developing self-efficacy was revealed as learners shared how they were able to hone their skills. Moreover, the participants' experience revealed a massive development in honing their skills in drawing. It was also manifested that students rely on self to improve and that under distance learning they were learning individually. The Arts and Design students' belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments were evident in the responses they have shared.

Moreover, lacking teacher's guidance was revealed as one of the emergent themes because the participants all shared their experiences of the absence of a teacher in discussing the lesson. The distance learning has caught them to feel that there is no actual communication, and that learning is somewhat difficult without a teacher to guide them in their lesson.

Managing time was manifested in the responses of the participants as distance learning paved the way to make time worthwhile especially when they were confronted with other responsibilities at home. Balancing schoolwork with work at home, having difficulty managing time, and being pressed with so much work was revealed in the responses of participants.

Furthermore, it was also revealed that their creativity in Art works were cultivated and nurtured. Besides, it was revealed that under distance learning, the creativity and innovation of Arts and Design learners were enhanced and that the activities provided for them with their Art teachers have a positive outcome in their Art skills under distance learning. The experiences of Arts and Design students under distance learning have enhanced their creativity and innovation.

Table 1
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of Arts and Design Students under Distance Learning

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Developing Self-Efficacy	• *Honing skills in drawing with massive improvement* • *Relying on self to learn and improve* • *Learning individually* • *Having the will to take a step and make a change for the benefit of ourselves* • *Studying hard to fully understand the lesson* • *Learning more and improve knowledge in music*
Lacking Teacher's Guidance	• *Having trouble without a teacher to teach* • *Lacking communication from the teacher in learning the lesson* • *Having trouble without a teacher to guide us in our subject* • *Challenging without teacher to discuss the lesson*
Managing Time	• *Balancing schoolwork with household chores* • *Having difficulty managing time during the pandemic* • *Having pressed with so much work with so little time* • *Learning to manage my time wisely*
Enhancing Creativity and Innovation	• *Enhancing skills and ability* • *Having art activities to improve art skills* • *Harnessing creativity and innovation* • *Cultivating the creativity in art works*

Coping Mechanism of Arts and Design Students under Distance Learning

In coping with the challenges in distance learning, utilizing the internet as a learning supplement was revealed in the responses of participants. Learners rely on the internet to supplement learning. Watching videos on the internet was used to learn new techniques in Arts Education. Also, getting support from family and peers was one of the emergent themes revealed and that learners turn to the support of family and classmates in coping under distance learning. They asked help from peers and classmates and relied on family members for clarification about their lesson. Indeed, family and peers are the support system of learners under distance learning. Another emergent theme is adapting to the changes of the mode of learning as a coping mechanism of learners in distance learning. This emergent theme was revealed in the responses of the learners as they experience that learning they have learned a lot without a pressure.

Moreover, they cope by composing themselves to be strong again after a downfall. Furthermore, it was manifested that for learners, distance learning is difficult, but it turned out it was a learning experience, and that they tried to cope by adjusting based on circumstances.

Additionally, the theme revealed facing challenges positively as a coping mechanism of learners in distance learning manifested that the participants make

challenges as steps towards achieving goals in college life and that having a positive attitude turned into the reason for choosing Arts and Design Track. Furthermore, looking at the bright side of every challenge as a learning experience and thinking of every positive side of everything were manifested as the coping mechanism of Arts and Design students under distance learning.

Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanism of Arts and Design Students under Distance Learning

Major Themes	Core ideas
Utilizing the Internet as Learning Supplement	• Relying on internet and surveys from others for supplemental learning • Utilizing the internet to clarify some terms • Using the internet to watch art lessons in YouTube • Watching videos on YouTube to supplement learning in visual design technique • Searching the internet to understand the lesson
Getting Support from Family and Peers	• Unwavering support of parents, relatives, and friends • Asking help from classmates about the lesson • Seeking help from peers and classmates • Relying on one's sister for clarification.
Adapting to the Changes of the Mode of Learning	• Learning a lot without a pressure • Composing self to be strong again after downfall • Thinking distance learning is difficult but turned out it was a learning experience • Trying to cope with distance learning • Coping by adjusting based on circumstances
Facing Challenges Positively	• Making challenges as steps towards achieving goal in college life • Having a positive attitude by turning on to the reason for choosing arts and design track • Looking at the bright side of every challenge as a learning experience • Thinking of every positive side of everything

Insights of Arts and Design Students in Distance Learning

Technical assistance is essential and paramount in distance learning. The learners were confronted with the new system, which is in distance learning, thus provision of educational technology is imperative. It was revealed in the responses of learners that there should be provision of educational technology to both learners and teachers to enhance digital art techniques. Moreover, another emergent theme was revealed setting goals for the future as insight of the responses on their experiences in distance learning. It was revealed that they motivate themselves that this is for their future and for their own good. Moreover, they remind themselves of the goal they wanted to achieve in life and reward themselves for the challenges encountered. It was also revealed in the participant's responses the need to promote the Arts education to others.

Moreover, having virtual exhibits and promoting the track were manifested in their responses as their insights in Arts and Design in distance learning. And finally, revealed as insights of learners in their experiences in distance learning was participating in classroom discussions and activities. It was manifested that the learners participated by submitting their projects on time and being able to attend art activities. Additionally, recording their activity in painting and drawing were also manifested as an active participation of students. Additionally, contributing skills and talent in Arts and Design track was revealed as an insight of learners of Arts

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Table 3
Major Themes and Core ideas on the Insights of Arts and Design Students in Distance Learning

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Provision of Educational Technology	• *Providing tools for Arts and Design students and Teachers* • *Supplementing gadgets to enhance learning* • *Providing materials and equipment for Art students* • *Giving software application for digital art techniques*
Setting Goals for the Future	• *Motivating oneself that this is for the future and for own good* • *Reminding oneself of the goal to achieve* • *Rewarding oneself for the challenges encountered* • *Telling oneself that this is for the future*
Promoting Arts Education	• *Supporting arts and design track* • *Having virtual art exhibit amidst pandemics* • *Encourage other learners to take up the track* • *Promoting arts and design*
Participating in Classroom Discussions and Activities	• *Submitting projects on time* • *Being able to participate in art activities* • *Having recorded activity in painting and drawing* • *Participating in virtual class* • *Contributing skills and talent in arts and design*

DISCUSSION

The participants' experience in distance learning revealed that amidst the pandemic and with all the struggles they encounter they can face all these challenges. According to Roick and Ringeisen (2017) it was found out that self-efficacy positively impacted student's test anxiety levels and academic performance. This was evident in the responses of the participants as they have great improvements with their art skills.

According to Mayasari & Kemal (2020), the role of teachers in implementing

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distance learning in the middle of the covid-19 plague, learning has changed from what is usually face-to-face learning to distance learning that does not hold face-to-face activities between students and teachers. Teacher's role in the teaching and learning process in general, the role of the teacher cannot be excluded, because learning is an interaction between teacher and students.

Kelly (2014) mentioned that most learners face issues like errand repugnance and vulnerability, so they begin to stall because they need time and administrative abilities. Time controlling is very fundamental to any student, and it is one of the keys to compete in the field and get achievements.

Creativity is a general ability of humankind - such as intelligence and memory- and all people are creative to some extent (Asma, 2006). Creativity is simply the production of novel, appropriate ideas in any realm of human activity, from science to the arts, to education, to business, to everyday life. The ideas must be novel and different from what have been done before, but they can't be simply bizarre; they must be appropriate to the problem or opportunity presented.

For Arts and Design students, distance learning has confronted them to find ways to cope with distance learning. Moreover, their ability to utilize internet connectivity and other available multi-media were enhanced under distance learning. Coping distance learning with supplemental web programs gained an advantage towards accomplishing students' activities in utilizing the resources of the World Wide Web as mentioned by Ng & Nicholas (2018).

According to Cantiga (2020) parents can encourage their children to study their lessons and answer their modules for enrichment activities or to better understand concepts. It would be beneficial to note that learning from home will be more sustainable if it feels nice for all family members and students as schools and districts communicate with families about these new learning activities to be done from home.

Furthermore, Jaggars (2017) mentioned that those with more extensive exposure to technology or those who have been taught skills in terms of time-management and self-directed learning may adapt more readily to online learning or in this study to distance learning through modular modality of learning.

In addition, Icekson (2020) stated that although optimistic expectations often improve student academic performance, they can also lead to academic failure if they are related to unrealistic beliefs of success. High awareness can control the negative effects of high optimism, such as unrealistic expectations and overconfidence.

According to Wan, Ludwig, & Boyle (2018), one new trend in arts education is the use of various technologies, such as software or online platforms, to teach the arts. Another trend is to study media arts as a course of study. Media arts may be structured as the study of a specific type of technique such as computer-generated arts, or graphic arts or a broad area of study that encompasses many techniques for a specific career-focused use like animation for film and television, advertising, journalism, museum education, and composing.

According to Cook-Sather & Luz (2015), the relationship between personal responsibility and learning has been examined extensively. Some researchers, for example, argue that a common trait among successful learners is that they take an active role in ensuring that their needs are met and sustained over time.

According to Lloyd (2017) the arts education benefits students in several critical ways, improving students' mental health, self-confidence, and life skills. Arts education also helps foster creativity and sustains the natural creativity of young children.

Participation between lecturers and students is integral in the process of learning. Based on a study conducted by Onge, J. & Eitel K (2017), it was found that participation and engagement are important factors in students' academic achievement and in increasing interest and motivation in the learning process.

Implications for Teaching Practice and Further Research

The findings showed that the experiences of Arts and Design and students in distance learning was both favorable and unfavorable. Favorable experience that the learners developed self-efficacy and learned to manage time. Surprisingly, even though the teacher's guidance brought upon the new normal distance learning, their creativity and innovation were enhanced and harnessed.

Furthermore, to cope with distance learning, learners utilized the internet as a learning supplement, with the support from family and peers they were able to cope with. Besides, adapting to the challenges of the mode of learning, learners were able to face challenges with positivity However, the participants felt there is a need for provision of educational technology and promoting a track to foster avenues of a quality Arts Education for senior high school learners.

It is therefore essential that teachers and the school identify factors that would help students adjust to distance learning, help learners face challenges positively and to cope with the changes of the mode of learning, remind learners of their responsibility, support arts by promoting arts education and initiating activities for learner's active participation such as virtual art exhibits. It is paramount that provision of educational technology for Arts and Design must be given with greater emphasis that would benefit the arts education as a part of a powerful strategy to keep the arts strong in our nation's schools.

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