The Emerging Role of Parents at the Time of Emergency Remote Education

Abel V. Alvarez, Jr.*

Abstract

Many dimensions of societal roles have been affected by the pandemic crisis due to Covid-19. Since the government of the Philippines mandated that until a vaccine becomes available, there will be no face-to-face interaction, thus, the students must have to study in the comforts of their home. This educational trend paved the way for parents to play an emerging role towards facilitating their children to continue the learning process. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, this study explores the experiences of parenting roles at the time of emergency remote education. The findings of this paper revealed three themes: parents as facilitators, motivators, and collaborators of the learning process. The results of this study also showed that while macro issues on emergency remote education have been given so much attention, the need to understand and to listen to the experiences of parents who are playing the role of teachers in this time of the pandemic crisis is noteworthy to be given time and attention. This also allows educational institutions to rethink the way they plan and create educational policies toward having a collaborative learning community.

Keywords: Covid-19, emergency remote education, parents' role, parent's involvement

1. Introduction

The UNESCO (2020) reported that around 1.5 billion learners across the globe have been affected by the pandemic crisis brought about by COVID-19. It seems that the impact of this global health threat perpetuated not only in the sectors of social, political, and economical aspects, but it also interrupted the education sector (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Schools around the globe, for instance, resorted to temporarily shut down of their face-to-face teaching and learning interactions to ensure the safety and health security of the students, teachers, and school stakeholders (Alvarez, 2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Bozkurt et al., 2020; Lansangan, 2020; Toquero, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

Aside from the promotion of social distancing and limiting the movements of individuals (Abel & McQueen, 2020; Miller, 2020), the government of the Philippines reiterated the safety of the Filipino learners by ensuring that no face-to-face classroom interactions would not happen until a vaccine against Covid-19 becomes available (Department of Education, 2020). Despite having some uncertainty, the educational institutions and government agencies pointed out that teaching and learning must continue by adapting different measures and approaches such as the emergency remote education (UNESCO, 2020).

Although the entire Philippine archipelago is under community quarantine measures, the government strives to ensure in making education a continued process for all by echoing education as a fundamental right of all humans (United Nations, 1984). A recent study by Alvarez (2020) discussed the lived experiences of students who were abruptly immersed in the context of emergency remote education. Interestingly, the results revealed that learning at a distance in the time of the pandemic crisis was a challenged. Aside from the existing problems on access and affordability (Alvarez, 2021), the issues on financial and affective

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* Far Eastern University, Manila, Philippines,
  Corresponding Email: aalvarez@feu.edu.ph

support had put additional pressures on part of the students learning. Hence, the plethora of learning compliance resulted in learning disruptions.

The Department of Education of the Philippines had put an emphasis that besides teachers in these trying times, parents also play an essential role in their children's learning process. With this in mind, the shared learning experiences about their parenting journey in the time of emergency remote education requires to be given prompt attention by listening to their stories and experiences and giving them voice. Therefore, this study intends to explore the phenomenon of parental roles in the context of emergency remote education.

2. Literature review

2.1. Parents' involvement in education

Over the past few years, parents have been considered to be vital in the formation and sustenance of students' learning progress, literacy improvement, and success (Clarke, Koziol, & Sheridan, 2017; Wall, 2013; Smyth, 2014; Whalley, 2017; Varghese & Wachen, 2016). Several studies have suggested that involving parents in the learning process supports a conducive way of children's learning development (Lv et al., 2019; Pomerantz et al., 2012).

The way parents teach their children to communicate with others affects their reading and communication skills (Cohen & Anders, 2020; Van Voorhis et al., 2013). This reflects the need for parents to ensure a positive communication channel and a conducive space for home learning. Likewise, it posits the idea that parents serve as a bridge in helping their children to develop their learning skills to comprehend and to communicate with others. Additionally, some scholars have claimed that parents having been involved in the education process provide space in improving their children's affective behavior. This enables them to have a positive collaboration of thoughts and ideas (Yap & Baharudin, 2016). At the same time, it develops and strengthens over time children's behavioral skills such as self-efficacy, buoyancy, resiliency, self-esteem, and self-autonomy (Khan, 2013; Lightsey et al. 2013; Sivis-Cetinkaya, 2013; Sun & Shek 2012).

Moreover, the engagement of parents in their child's playing experiences, for example, contributes to the academic scale. As a result, this helps them to develop and enhance their social behavior and affection as well as and it supports the notion of learning engagement and interaction with other children (LaForett & Mendez, 2017; Lin & Li, 2018).

2.2. Parents as teachers and motivators

A study conducted by Berkowitz et al. (2015) showed that developing numeracy skills through parents' participation, such as assisting or tutoring their children, results in increased performance of learners in mathematics. Scholars have emphasized that parental motivation is determined by the range of activities they have to play on behalf of their children (Greenfield et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Furthermore, Yamamoto, Holloway, and Suzuki (2016) pointed out that the construction of parental motivation is a result of expectations from other people (e.g., the school and teachers) whom they have to provide quality learning guidance and supervision to their children. This also reflects that parental involvement should not be underestimated because it contributes to the academic success and the socio-emotional functioning of children's learning autonomy (Lv et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, with the idea that parents must take part in their children's learning process (Walker, 2017), the notion of parents as teachers through the context of guiding their children's homework, building connections, and listening to their stories

about their day at school, and proactively being attached to their academic performance are some of the essential roles of parents which helps to ensure the success of their children's learning growth and development (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Liddell, 2017; Yamamoto et al., 2016). From these lenses, therefore, the need for greater collaboration among teachers and parents, especially in the time of uncertainty, is integral in facilitating the students' continued learning engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

Since this study aims at providing an in-depth understanding about the phenomenon of parenting roles in the context of emergency remote education, the researcher utilized a phenomenological research design to help in facilitating the lived-through experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). This approach provided an opportunity to examine the complexity of meanings that were built out of the direct experiences of the participants (Merriam, 2002). It also accounts for a comprehensive understanding of who have experienced a common phenomenon that can be communicated to the outside world towards translating these meanings of human experiences (Creswell, 2009; Todres & Holloway, 2004).

Further, the phenomenological research design allows the researcher to understand the lived experiences of parents in taking various roles at different capacities and levels towards assisting their children's remote learning. Hence, the shared experiences of the participants created a profound understanding of meanings (Crotty, 1998) which provided a glimpse of the actual phenomenon they lived through (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2012) in this time of the pandemic crisis, specifically the interruption to education.

3.2. Participants

Considering the physical limitations and strict quarantine health protocols being imposed in the entire Philippine archipelago, the use of convenience sampling as a technique in selecting the participants of this study provided the researcher the opportunity to conveniently look for the target participants (Ackoff, 1953). The participants' time availability and their willingness to share their lived experiences on the roles they play at the time of emergency remote education were all carefully considered in the selection process. They were all contacted through online messaging apps, and out of ten target participants, seven showed their inclination to be part of this study.

Table 1. Brief profile of the participants

Participant	Number of children	Educational level of their children	Type of emergency remote education
1	1	Elementary level	Flexible learning
2	2	Both at the elementary level	Flexible learning
3	3	Two are in the elementary level and the other one is toddler	Flexible learning
4	3	Only one in the elementary level and the other two are in tertiary level	Flexible learning
5	2	Both at the elementary level	Flexible learning
6	2	Both at the elementary level	Flexible learning
7	1	Elementary level	Flexible learning

As shown in table 1, all the participants' children are currently studying under the K-12 basic education program, particularly in the elementary level. They all emphasized that flexible learning, which is a combination of different learning delivery approaches such as synchronous, asynchronous, and modular worksheets.

3.3. Data collection and ethical considerations

A preliminary meeting through online messaging was initiated to provide them an overview of the purpose of this study. In this way, the researcher had the opportunity to establish rapport with the target participants through engaging in conversational exchanges that helped to gain their trust and confidence to participate in this research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Doody & Noonan, 2013). From 10 target participants that the researcher had contacted and talked with, only 7 agreed to participate and share their parenting role experiences at the time of emergency remote education.

The researcher explained to them that all information was treated with ethical considerations such as their identity will be anonymized (e.g. participant 1 or P1) to ensure confidentiality of the shared information (Bricki & Green, 2007; Kaiser, 2009; Walford, 2005; Wiles et al., 2008). Throughout the interview process, it was audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data transcriptions (Patton, 2002; Stockdale, 2002). Since community quarantine was still in place in the Philippines, the data collection process was done via an online video app. The use of individual interviews helped the researcher to immerse, investigate, and elicit detailed thoughts and information about the lived experiences of parents taking various roles in facilitating their child's emergency remote education (Gaskell, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1987; Sonesson et al., 2018).

After the actual interview process, the researcher had follow-up questions to some participants by contacting them through online messaging for clarification and deepening of their shared information to ensure data saturation (Boyatzis, 1998). Meanwhile, all raw data were secured in a password-protected device where only the researcher had access to it. This was done to ensure the confidentiality of the information. As agreed with the participants, the raw data were deleted after it was transcribed, interpreted, analyzed, and presented to ensure ethical considerations.

3.4. Data Analysis

The researcher had an initial reading of the partial transcriptions until all audio recorded information were transcribed including the follow-up questions from some of the participants. After a preliminary assessment of the transcriptions, the researcher reread the final transcription which helped to engage and reflect on the answers of the participants. This also helped in grasping and making sense of the meanings being lived through by the participants. In this way, the data were manually coded using Giorgi and Giorgi's (2003) descriptive phenomenological psychological analysis.

Table 2: Summary of initial codes and themes

Theme	Initial codes	Sample Responses
Facilitator of the learning process	Assistive and tutorial-type of activities	"He is actually having difficulties in Math subject, so I act as his teacher at home…guiding him especially in Math." (P1)
		"This is really a tasking role, but I really have to guide my daughter in answering her online activities" (P4)
	Prompt monitoring of learning activities	"…I have to check their lessons from time to time and monitor their worksheet activities if they are doing well." (P5)
Motivator of the learning process	Role modeling strategy	"It becomes my way as well of showing to my children that I also keep on learning…like reading and, sometimes, I do write as well." (P3)
	Socio-emotional development support	"Aside from school tasks, we also allow our children to have play hours and watching YouTube videos to relax from online schooling." (P2)
	Maintaining structural environment	"As a parent, I see to it that school time or school activities are always their priority. That's why we make sure that before anything else, they must accomplish their school activities first." (P6)
		"Sometimes I want to allow my child to play…but I will suddenly think that there should be rules to follow to prevent him from distractions." (P7)
	Engaging in creative learning activities	"…we do the traditional Filipino concept of playing like a teacher at home… [it] is helpful because they are finishing their school tasks on time" (P3)
		"…they are enjoying this teacher-like game which we are both learning and effective in doing their modular tasks." (P5)

Collaborator of the learning process		"Watching different learning materials together in YouTube has become our hobby since these are helpful in supplementing the learning of my children's homeschooling." (P2)
	Provides a sharing space for learning	"We answer his modules together, but I am allowing him to first to answer on his own, then we both work together." (P7)

The results of the initial coded data were translated into chunks of meanings which provided a detailed code of representation (see Table 2). The researcher discussed the initial codes with the participants to gather their insights and feedback about the preliminary findings. After refining the codes, these were presented to the researcher's colleagues in the field to check and to get their feedback. This approach facilitated the trustworthiness of the findings by increasing the credibility of the gathered data (Elliott, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002; Nowell et al., 2017). After a series of code refinement, the themes were generated, and findings were reported for discussion and presentation.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this time of global health uncertainty, the schools, like any other institutions, are also hard hit by the COVID-19 (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Williamson et al., 2020). This results for learning institutions, specifically in the Philippine context, to temporarily shut down school operations and resort to emergency remote education (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Bozkurt et al., 2020; Viner et al., 2020). As such, this calls for an active parental involvement which plays an essential role to ensure that education is continued despite the transactional distance (Moore, 1997) between teachers and students.

The first theme that emerged in the research was talks about the notion of *parents as facilitators of the learning process*. It reflects that parents in this time of the pandemic crisis have the responsibility to guide their children's learning progression through assisting them in learning remotely. Since these were K-12 learners, the need to have close guidance is necessary to ensure proper grasping of the essential concepts like reading, writing, and arithmetic. P1 and P5 described their parenting experiences which they served as a guide on the side of their children.

> "As a single mother of my Grade 4 son, I see that there is really a need for him to be guided properly. Since physical interaction is not allowed by the DepEd, I have to step-up to guide my son's learning process. There are times that I have to review his lessons so I can tutor him. For example, in his Math subject, I made sure that I also supplement his learning activities by giving him worksheets to answer then assist him in finding the solution to the math problems." (P1)

> "Learning at home is new to my two elementary children. Of course, since my husband is working, my role is to guide my children's learning. It's difficult, I must say. But this is now the new normal in education. So, I have to check their lessons from time to time and monitor their worksheet activities if they are doing well. Guidance is really important, I believe, because they are still in their primary years." (P5)

Moreover, P2 and P4 illustrated this phenomenon as an emerging responsibility that is needed to focus on since they also juggled doing other parenting responsibilities like household chores. There is also a need to fully facilitate their children's remote learning to ensure proper learning progression.

> "This pandemic proved that as a mother we have to exert efforts in facilitating the learning of our children. I mean, this is something new to all of us, I guess. With my two sons, I have to guide them properly. I have to make sure that they are learning well even they

are at home. Although, it is difficult to juggle household chores and guiding my children's learning, but here we are in the new normal in educating our children." (P2)

"My experiences in this time of pandemic are definitely an overwhelming of responsibilities. I believe like any other parents; we are looking for reassurance that our child's learning is still in good condition even at home. So as a mother of three children, my focus is now on my youngest daughter who is now in grade 2. I have no problem with my other two children since they are in college. However, with my daughter, there are lots of basic concepts that she must learn. I make sure that I always check and review her lessons online, which is usually pre-recorded videos and I also check her modular worksheets, so I can guide and assist her in answering the assignments and other home school activities." (P4)

This phenomenon reflects the parents' role as a key determinant that bridges the link between the separation of teachers and students towards mobilizing the learning process (Ávila Daza, & Garavito, 2009). It is noteworthy that in this time of the pandemic crisis, the need for parents' inclusion provides an integral part for learners to grasp accordingly the learning or lessons involved at a distance. No wonder that parents have to step up and take the role of their children's teachers at home, thus, learning is still well-guided considering the educational level of learners. At the same time, the need for learners to be provided with proper learning guidance and assistance is important for task accomplishments and learning the essentials (Devercelli, 2020). This presents the idea that classroom teachers need to establish a good rapport and connection with their counterparts, such as with their students' parents. In this way, it facilitates ensuring that continued remote education is still in place and that the most essential learning outcomes are being monitored promptly and collaboratively by both teachers and parents.

More importantly, it argues the practical perspectives that parents having acted as facilitators (McClain, 2018) also serve as negotiators in imbibing the importance of learning responsibilities to their children despite the lessons conducted at a distance. It also points out the disciplining approaches of parents to their children when it comes to homeschooling (Yamamoto et al., 2016). Considering that there are a lot of distractions that the students might encounter in learning at the comforts of their homes, parents' facilitation provides an important component for proper supervision of students' learning progression. In fact, the parents' involvement in their children's learning supports the notion of a safe space for learning autonomy, critical thinking development, and self-discovery of learning interests. In return, it creates a positive home-based learning environment where both parents and students have the time to learn together in accomplishing the learning tasks through having proper guidance from parents. Thus, it provides room for family bonding and being more time with their children (Cluver et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the second theme presents *parents as motivators of the learning process*. This claims that for a child to have a sense of encouragement in learning remotely, parents need to increase the level of their child's motivation to learn. For instance, P3 showed to her children that she was also reading books to serve as a role model and an inspiration that despite having the distance from the face-to-face classroom environment, learning can still happen in the comforts of their home. To wit,

"Prior to this new normal thing, it is a practice that I assure to become my children's model of continuous learning. I mean, it's like an idea of learning something...to look forward to. For example, as a mother, while they are doing their home tasked activities, I also read books to boost and to encourage them to learn more." (P3)

Some parents also made an agreement that for children to have playtime, they must first study their lessons and accomplish school assignments or worksheet activities. P6 and P7, for example, reported that setting an agreement with their children helped them to become motivated to learn and to finish the home school tasks on time.

"I always talk to them and have an agreement that during weekdays even they are learning at home they must still accomplish their homework on time, so they can have an hour or two to play after. While we also agreed that weekends are for rest and play day, but of course with an agreement that they have to finish their school home works. And I guess, it is working." (P6)

"As for our experience, our child's learning is prone to distraction because they feel that it is just homeschooling, and the learning tasks can be done on the next day. That's why we explain to our son the current pandemic situation and playtime must be done after accomplishing all the online class and activities. It is difficult at first. But after quite some time, he is now more determined to finish his school tasks so he can have time to play." (P7)

This shows the notion that for learners to become motivated in learning the lessons and accomplishing the school activities remotely, parents have to take the responsibility to encourage and motivate their children (Cluver et al., 2020). The need to explore various motivational and encouraging activities is necessary to ensure that students learning remotely are still motivated and on track to learn. In fact, role modeling has been seen as an important mechanism for parents to show and to make their children inspired to continue learning despite the currently experienced distance brought by temporary closures of schools. The practicality of having an agreement with their children also creates a positive perspective that school tasks must be finished first before engaging in playtime activities. This approach provides beneficial learning outcomes since it has been observed that learners are becoming more motivated to do the learning tasks (Järvenoja et al., 2018). The idea of having and maintaining a structural environment for learning at home provides opportunities for parents to impose a classroom management style of encouragement where children learn to value and have a sense of responsibility in prioritizing learning tasks before anything else.

The last theme points out the idea of parents as *collaborators in the learning process*. This describes that for emergency remote education to succeed, it requires an extended effort of collaboration in learning together. P2 and P7 shared that there were times that they watched learning tutorials or online lecture series, which helps them to understand together, for instance, the mathematical solutions in solving equations or problems.

"I would like to share that raising children especially in these trying times requires lots of patience and dynamics. That's why after doing household chores in the afternoon, we usually work together in accomplishing their assignments like watching learning tutorials in YouTube, especially in solving Math problems. Basically, that's how we deal homeschooling now. Learning as one." (P2)

"Aside from this, we also introduce an approach to ensure our son's learning by learning with him together. We are researching together on different learning resources that might be helpful in answering the worksheets, special mention to his Math subject" (P7)

Furthermore, P3 and P5 claimed the importance of collaborative learning with their children, hence, they introduced the traditional Filipino street game of playing a "teacher-like" to make learning enjoyable, participatory, and active.

"Embracing the new normal provides us also the opportunity to work and monitor closely our children's learning progression. There are times that we do the traditional Filipino concept of playing like a teacher at home. At some point, I guess, it is helpful because they are finishing their school tasks on time" (P3)

"Since the start of their homeschooling, we usually a lot time to learn together. It's like playing my childhood's teacher-like role-playing. And since they are still in their early primary years, they are enjoying this teacher-like game which we are both learning and effective in doing their modular tasks" (P5)

Parents, in these trying times, serve the roles of collaborators while learning with their children. It showcases that collaboration knows no boundaries. Several scholars have pointed out the importance of collaborative learning across all ages and groups, which allows learners to work dynamically and create shared learning among their colleagues (de Oliveira Lima, & Kuusisto, 2019; Fenech, Salamon, & Stratigos, 2019). In the case of learning remotely, the involvement of parents is vital for children's learning development considering the lack of physical social interactions with other learners, hence, parents provide the learning needs of their children such as the role of learners as well address the gaps and to boost the learning attention of the students.

Moreover, the absence of physical face-to-face interaction with their teachers, classmates, and a learning disruption brought by the school is a challenge for children because they are culturally inclined to have learned in the physical learning environment (Alvarez, 2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). The parents, therefore, have to provide meaningful home-based learning experiences through the promotion of learning together with their children (Liberman et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the role of of parents, teachers, and students working together to lessen the teaching and learning gap that exists in the time of emergency remote education context should not be ignored.

5. Conclusion

Learning in the time of the pandemic crisis is challenging and teaching in these trying times require understanding and collaboration among school stakeholders, such as the teachers, parents, and students. Although this study does not aim to make any generalizations, the findings are noteworthy to be shared and discussed since not only this phenomenon in the context of emergency remote education affects the role of teachers, students, and schools, but also the disruption of roles transcends to the learners' parents. It cannot be denied that the burden of this pandemic crisis also strongly hit the roles of parents specifically in guiding their children's learning process. They have to take multiple and complex roles which are not limited to their usual tasks. And since schools are still in temporary shutdown, parents also deal with various responsibilities such as becoming their children's facilitators, motivators, and collaborators in ensuring to have a well-guided and interactive learning process.

More so, listening from the shared experiences of the emerging role of parents serves as a vibrant parameter in making teaching and learning inclusive for all. It is, therefore, suggested for educational institutions to rethink the way they plan their instructional strategies. The need for school policymakers and administrators, for instance, to involve school stakeholders, such as parents, in the curriculum planning and application would help to ease the challenges of students' learning remotely. Listening and giving them voices would contribute to facilitating clear and relevant future collaborations by learning from the emerging roles of parents in this time of the pandemic crisis. The findings of this study could also be a basis in designing teaching and learning strategies as to how schools should deliver remote teaching and learning with regard to learning tasks and activities of the students.

Nonetheless, despite the study's aim to contribute to deeply understanding the emerging roles of parents at the time of remote learning, it is recommended for future researchers to conduct additional studies such as looking into other aspects of parents' experiences, challenges, and/or opportunities about emergency remote education. In this way, it will help in adding up to the scarce literature about the role of parents in these challenging times specifically in the context of emerging nations. Since this study was also conducted in an urban locale in Manila, Philippines, it would be good to understand the experiences of parents in a rural setting, as technology accessibility and other resources are quite inadequate and challenging. The experiences of parents as collaborators of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process provide an outlook of the current situation, particularly in the Philippine educational context. Hence, this study adds and contributes to the emerging topic about parenting roles at the time of the pandemic crisis.

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