
Reshaping Education Curriculum Landscape: Lessons from Unprecedented Past

Emmie M. Cabanlit, Ed.D.

Professor I

University of Southeastern Philippines (USEP)

Davao City, Philippines

ORCID No. 0000-0002-2283-3869

Abstract. Experiences may be obsolete in the days of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity), but lessons to learn are fresh and essential. This study aimed to explore the academic voices of teachers during VUCA period to find their needs and aspirations as essential inputs in reshaping the academic landscape of the education curriculum. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, seven teachers were purposely selected as participants in the study. Findings revealed that a) teachers' mental anxiety was raised to a higher level; b) they suffered physical illness resulting from psychological stress and c) they experienced instructional frustration such as anxiety in the use of technology, dissatisfaction with virtual classes, and writing course pack as an added burden. As such, they needed a) mental wellness preservation, b) physical health protection, c) spiritual and moral boosters, d) personal quality time and, e) assessing student outcomes was a great challenge. This study recommends to reshape the landscape of the present education curriculum by integrating courses that address the lessons of the unprecedented past like innovative mental anxiety management, catastrophic crisis management, spiritual boosters, work-life balance, hygiene and sanitation, and the new ways of doing things for assessing student outcomes with futuristic approach.

Keywords: mental wellness, teachers, pre-service teachers, reshaping education curriculum

Introduction

The term VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) was used by UNESCO in the European Journal (Vol 43, 2020), during the heightened coronavirus outbreak. This unprecedented catastrophe created the largest disruption in the history of the world causing the educational system turned upside down. It impacted the nearly 1.6 billion learners and millions of teachers in global education (UNESCO, 2020). Because of the unprecedented rush in providing education to children during this pandemic time, innovations were made in education to address the shock and aftershocks of the pandemic. This massive effort in the educational sector caught the teachers off-guarded in the way of doing things. Stress is not new for teachers, however, during this VUCA period, stress comes to teachers as an enormous attack where every one of them is vulnerable. From here and around the world, varied voices of teachers were heard because of the many barriers they are facing in making their jobs possible. These voices may be an outbreak of passion to reach out to the children, or maybe being anxious in doing their job amidst health emergency, or maybe personal and professional needs to protect themselves from being harmed. Whatever they are, these things are considered the voices of teachers during the VUCA period.

At the onset, the education sector where many of our people, adults, and children belong to this social institution is severely affected. In the study of Shenoy et al. (2020), published by Mukta Shabd Journal in the School of Bangalore, revealed that during the lockdown, the teachers underwent the process of technology adoption which caused a lot of fear and anxiety. Besides, teachers have also suffered cognitive dissonance towards various activities in their day-to-day lives about teaching and learning, family, and societal associations.

Moreover, another study conducted by Fauzi & Khusuma (2020), published in *Journal Iqra*, used a quantitative approach to explain the perspective of teachers in teaching during the VUCA period, revealed that teachers understand the context of online learning in instructional delivery however, they found a lot of difficulty in the implementation of this modality such as the availability of resources, net usages, planning, evaluation of learning, collaboration with parents, and the implementation proper of the instruction. Further, this study disclosed that 80% of the teachers were dissatisfied with his modality and it gave them a feeling of ineffectiveness in the performance of their job. In addition to these findings, a study conducted by Sekreter (2019) on Emotional Intelligence as a Vital Indicator for Teaching Effectiveness, published by the *International Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies*, revealed that emotional intelligence is the most important factor in job effectiveness because the process of learning and doing the job involves emotional and intellectual factors. This study strongly concluded that of all the factors considered, it asserted that teachers' emotional competence factors contributed more to teachers' effectiveness in the job than any single factor considered in the study. An effective teacher needs to understand about struggle, frustration, excitement, and anxiety.

Taking into account these research findings, this could safely bring into a statement that this VUCA period caught the teachers unguarded leaving them socio-emotionally incompetent with cognitive-relational disorientation in the execution of their duties and as persons in the community. In line with this statement, UNESCO policy documents published in the *European Journal* (Vol 43, 2020) heightened the term VUCA, which means the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world of the present. At the onset of this VUCA world today, UNESCO emphasized that socio-emotional competence is necessary to cope with this kind of phenomenon.

However, the study conducted by OECD and UNESCO (2020) on fifty-four (54) student-teachers and 24 educators using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, the study revealed that student-teachers did not receive sufficient preparation in the domain of socio-emotional competencies. According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), several reviews were conducted over the years and indicated that socio-emotional competencies do not receive so much emphasis in teacher preparation. This is maybe due to the pre-assumptions that student-teachers are grownups. According to this review, pre-service teachers were given little preparation to improve their knowledge and skills in social and emotional competence to cope with an unprecedented phenomenon such as the coronavirus outbreak. Further, it elaborated that this negligence may be due to the bulk delivery of pedagogy and subject-matter teaching over socio-emotional competencies.

These troubling findings by several researchers such as teachers were tarrying in fear and anxiety in the implementation of technology adoption for online learning; suffering cognitive dissonance in the conduct of their job about teaching-learning, family, and societal associations; feeling dissatisfied and ineffective in the performance of their duties and; catching them unguarded leaving in them the feeling of socio-emotional competence with cognitive-relational disorientation in the execution of their duties as teachers, will serve us a wake-up call to the pre-service institutions to rethink of their curricular content. These are the gaps that need to be addressed in pre-service education to give a balanced input between technology, content pedagogical knowledge, and socio-emotional inputs to pre-service teachers.

In the Philippines, the outbreak VUCA period brought a substantial change in our education sector. Teachers in basic education who have the most number of young and vulnerable learners were placed in a quandary scenario for many reasons. Their multi-faceted roles as teachers become more complicated. First and foremost, while their primary role is to teach the children, VUCA altered their primary instructional role into module writers, lesson compilers, and even menial jobs to distribute and deliver modules to the learners. Hence, not

to forget, pressures are coming in from their immediate supervisors, parents, and other stakeholders. Anent to this, the logistics component to do their deliverables is another constraint that may confront them. These constraints give them a feeling of emotional dissatisfaction and job incompetence.

In situations such as these, voices of teachers should be heard. Curriculum policy makers must have the social obligation to accommodate and delimit the different clamors of teachers working during the VUCA days. Lessons to learn and good and essential inputs for reshaping the education curriculum. Lessons that enrich curricular content by integrating the essentials and removing the non-essentials preparing our pre-service teachers with social, emotional, psychological, technological, spiritual, and hygienic competence so that they become resilient in the field when it is their time to play the role.

Generally, this study aimed to explore the voice of teachers during the VUCA period. Specifically, it sought to answer the research questions such as: a) how do teachers describe their plight during this VUCA? b) What do teachers longed for to continue their role as teachers during the period? c) What are the implications of these findings to reshape our education curriculum such that it prepares everyone in the academe?

The Theory Base. The voice of teachers in this study referred to their longing, and challenges during this pandemic time. This study came across the social cognitive theory (SCT) of Bandura (2002), and the cognitive-motivational-rational theory of emotion (Lazarus, 2000). SCT played a major role in this paper which contended that a person acquires and maintains a kind of behavior in an environment where he performs his behavior. This theory took into account the experiences of the individual, his expectations, and reinforcements which eventually shape his specific behavior and the reason for performing such behavior especially during those unprecedented period. While cognitive concepts here refer to the knowledge and appraisal of a person in adaptation to his present environment, this consists of evaluating his significance in an encountered environment like VUCA. These theories and concepts speak that teachers have varied emotional hang-ups while present in the working environment. While working in the fulfillment of their roles as teachers, they need to understand themselves, the environment, and the kind of work to find their significance in the profession.

On the other hand, the theory of emotions by Lazarus (2000) accentuated that elicited emotions subsequently influenced the actions and reactions of a person. Teachers need to be socio-emotionally competent to cope with the changing period of this coronavirus outbreak. This is reinforced by the relational theory which claimed that emotion is always a product of a person-environment relationship with its harm or benefit. Motivational concepts here would mean two dimensions; the satisfaction of the hierarchical needs of the individual to attain the goal, and the dispositional satisfaction of a person to attain the desired goal by meeting his demands, constraints, and resources in a kind of environment (Lazarus, 2000).

Materials and Method

This study employed a qualitative design which is most fitted to explore the problem. The use of qualitative content analysis (QCA) research method was considered by the researcher. To use this method, the researcher checked the rigors of QCA to ensure that no step in the process is overlooked. QCA is defined as "*a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It is an approach for text analysis within the context of communication. QCA goes beyond the counting of words from the text to examine its meaning, themes, and patterns; it allows the researcher to understand subjectively the social reality in a scientific manner. QCA involves steps to wit: a) preparing the data, b) defining the unit of analysis, c) developing categories and a coding scheme, d) testing the coding scheme in a sample text, e) coding all the text, f) assessing the coding

consistency, g) drawing conclusions from the coded data and, h) reporting the findings (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2020).

The participants of this study were the faculty of the College of Education, especially those who are handling professional and specialized courses in the BEED Program. A purposive sampling was used based on the defined criteria of participants who have taught for 3 years and above, with ages ranging from 30-55 years old. There were seven (7) teachers participated in the study.

The main instrument of the study was an online template containing the details of the study, and major research questions with their sub-questions for probing. Open-ended questions were used in the template to encourage the teachers to freely express their voices, thoughts, feelings, needs, aspirations, and challenges. The time and number of words in answering the template were not limited to give freedom for teachers to reflect on their answers. The template was sent to the participants either through email or a private message or in their most convenient way of receiving documents. The collection of data was done online to minimize incurring risk.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis following the appropriate steps as mentioned. Content data analysis was used in all written text. The open coding procedures were done by the proponent with the assistance of another researcher for independent and deductive content analysis. At least two persons need to separately and independently analyze and code data (Elo & Kyngas, 2008) which also served as a form of triangulation for qualitative content data analysis. When individual researcher has done each part in coding and contently analyzing the data, an organization of the findings was jointly done and a common consensus was considered to answer the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study.

This study observed *ethical protocols* by giving the participants informed consent and stating the objectives of the study. The real names of the participants were withheld for privacy. Data obtained from the participants were treated as highly confidential according to *Data Privacy Act of 2012*, and can only be used solely for this study.

Results

The teachers were caught unguarded by the unprecedented VUCA period which started the declaration of placing Davao City under community quarantine status on March 15, 2020 (EO #10, s. 2020). With the unprecedented situation, everyone was shocked. Teachers as frontliners in the continuing education of our children, unstoppably delivered their responsibilities in giving education to the youth despite and despite. This study revealed the following:

1. Teachers' plight during the unprecedented VUCA period

Caught with thoughtless incidents, teachers were placed in a situation where their predicament gave them the following difficult experiences such as mental anxiety, physical ailment, and instructional frustration.

Mental anxiety was raised to a higher level. Mental anxiety sometimes becomes normal when you are regularly engaged in delivering daily job performance. However, during the coronavirus outbreak, teachers said, "*stress level was raised to a higher level because of restricted movement; anxiety to be sick when far away from family; fear in going out from home to purchase personal and family needs; anxious in riding public vehicles because of disease contamination; fear to be sick because of tracing and societal status implication; too much work given that cause mental anxiety; and extreme anxiety in facing the new normal way of life.*" These were some of the response lines of the teachers that described mental anxiety. According to the publication of Beyond Blue Ltd (2021), causes of stress are major emotional shock following a stressful or traumatic event, change of living arrangements, and work stress. Not to mention that this is a shocking traumatic event in history.

Physical illness results from psychological stress. Since there was very limited physical movement during the time of quarantine, physical health was affected. Works of teachers were done virtually, classes were held online, and all deliverables were performed via computer and other gadgets. Teachers said that their extreme psychological stress caused by immobility, worry about family members being sick, and anxiety about meeting deadlines for deliverables has weakened them physically. They were into handling too many overlapping activities and quick deadlines, which rid them of personal quality time to rest due to indefinite working hours which interferes with personal time. Most of the participants said they were *"hooked in front of the computer which causes headache, eye sickness, high sugar level,"* which lowered their immunity to being contaminated the COVID-19. Sad to note that one participant suffered from COVID-19. For them, teaching is becoming harder than before. At times, *'stomach and nervous attacks are real with quick deadline in submitting reports,'* as one participant said. According to Healthline (Ferguson, 2020), during dangerous times our bodies experience two kinds of stress hormones, the so-called adrenalin and cortisol. This would bring increased heart rate, blood pressure, and suppressed digestive functions, which affect the body's immune system and will result in physical illness. Indeed, teachers had a hard time managing stress related to work because as disclosed by Schonert-Reichl (2017), several reviews were conducted over the years and indicated that socio-emotional competencies do not receive so much emphasis in teacher preparation.

Instructional frustration. This is a heroic plight of teachers during the pandemic time. There are four (4) theme categories of instructional frustration experiences by teachers: a) use of technology anxiety, b) dissatisfaction with virtual classes as a mode of teaching delivery c) uncertainty of students' assessment results, and d) writing course pack as an added burden. Generally, not all teachers are on a high adeptness level in using technology. During the coronavirus outbreak, all processes across disciplines of teaching-learning are delivered either online classes in modular mode or both. These demand the use of technology and handling oneself in front of a camera. Teachers were anxious to use their low-level know-how of technology but maximized to use this skill just to satisfy the students' hunger for knowledge, despite they knew that their students were better than them. Most of the participants said they use self-learning for technology utilization. Some said they were struggling with remote teaching, and thus teaching task is getting harder. According to a study conducted by UNESCO (2020), teachers were tarrying in fear and anxiety in the implementation of technology adoption for online learning and they suffer cognitive dissonance in the conduct of their job about teaching-learning. On the other hand, teachers' dissatisfaction occurs when there is very limited student-teacher interaction during virtual classes. Teachers believed that students can do more for learning during face-to-face classes. Out of the genuine desires of teachers to deliver instruction as expected from them, another factor could be a source of frustration, and that is the uncertainty of students' assessment results. Participants said that they were uncertain about the honesty of students in giving answers, not because of values rooted in them, but because of temptations to find the answer anywhere in the Google world. Lastly, writing course packs is an added burden on the competence of teachers. Teacher's competence in oral teaching has been a routine job. They already had established innovative ways. However, teaching via writing modules was a frustrating work for them especially those who are not adept at writing. A teacher said academic loads become more demanding by writing course packs.

2. Teachers' Needs and Aspirations during the VUCA Period

This refers to varied voices that need to be heard so teachers can continue to deliver their work in the ongoing catastrophic world. The following aspirations were the findings:

Mental wellness preservation. This is almost the voice of every participant in the study, *'We long for mental wellness for students, family, and self; an open line for guidance personnel to cater to mental concerns; do not overload us so mental anxiety will be lessened; scheduling of deadlines and deliverables be properly announced to preserve quality of work.'* The quality to perform daily deliverables is dependent upon the mental wellness of everyone. According to WHO in Geneva 2000, "mental health problems are among the most important contributors to the burden of disease and disability worldwide." If further stressed out that, mental health problems affect functional and working capacity in numerous ways." Thus, one of the ways teachers cry is to lessen their workloads during the pandemic time. Too many workloads would mean a mental overburdened which could lead to mental disorder and physical incapacity (WHO, 2000).

Physical health protection. Teachers voiced out hoping to have active online contact with health personnel to cater to health needs; getting the right amount of protection from sickness by accessing a supply of medicines and vitamins; and a regular body medical checkup. As always, physical health is a primordial requirement to sustain any endeavor. According to Hatak & Zhou (2019), health is the human capital for any business engagement and a determiner of its success. For health protection, this voice of teachers is just right and fitted to be heard by the people in the nearby working environment.

Spiritual and morale booster. Operationally, a motivating factor for a person to continue working is called a booster. Sources of spiritual support are man's communication with God through personal and corporate worship. When Davao City was placed on community quarantine On March 15, 2021 (EO 10, 2021), face-to-face worship inside the church was stopped. Somehow, this denotes spiritual hunger and thirst for the well-being of teachers through they have family devotions. Thus, participants cry for this: long to have face-to-face worship in the church; psycho-spiritual webinars, and group spiritual sharing where one is free to hug and embrace. This only shows that man is both a social and spiritual being. On the other end, morale boosters as cried by the teachers only asked for collegial and administrative support. Collegially, they hoped to be surrounded by people who boost morale, and someone to act as caregivers when in illness. From the administrative group, teachers cried to lessen workload, and internet allowance to be given to faculty without much hassle. From both colleagues and the administration, the teachers hoped to receive assistance in kind when they are suffering from illness especially when caught with catastrophe.

Personal Quality Time. The work-from-home (WFH) scheme as practiced during the pandemic time had varied implications for the work of teachers. To the participants, the WFH scheme resulted in *'indefinite working hours which interferes with personal time.'* Teachers said, *'extended daily work hours which interfere with personal activities; work is demanding; too many reports to do that it diminishes personal time; too many webinars to attend to; working loads become double; performs task even up midnight; and it's difficult to relax and enjoy personal life.'* With these voices, they even long to *'visit farms or shores to freshen mental and physical stress,'* so they could unwind themselves. According to Faustino (2021), personal quality time is important *'because it keeps us intact and in touch with our inner thoughts and emotions.'* Personal quality time is essential in maintaining a fresh beginning to work every day.

Instructional advancement nostalgia. This is a genuine longing for every teacher *'to reach out to students with poor internet connectivity, and long to see the real situation of the students why they cannot attend classes.'* Besides, teachers themselves long for good internet connectivity and hunger for technological skills so they can provide technological opportunities for students to interact. Teachers were nostalgic *'to look back to the face-to-face classes where instructional deliverables were spontaneous and easier to give; physical distance disconnects personal and academic intimacy with students.'* Face-to-face classes and face-to-face

interaction on and off campus are easy to implement, assess, and evaluate and at the same time build academic intimacy with students.

Assessing student outcomes was a great challenge. This posed a great challenge to every teacher. Assessing student outcomes is very important both formative and summative. Summative is a measure if students were able to achieve and possess the necessary competence intended by the course. In virtual and/or modular learning, teachers were challenged to motivate students to work on their tasks; challenged on the manner of assessing students' performance; found difficulty in integrating new apps in classes; uncertain if the students themselves are answering the exams and activities; uncertain if deadlines are not met due to connectivity or other reasons; if students are fully attentive in virtual classes. These are some of the uncertainties of teachers in assessing students' outcomes. According to the final version of EAPRO, a publication of UNICEF (2020), 'putting in place monitoring mechanisms amid a crisis is difficult. It is particularly challenging to measure changes in learning outcomes given that no baseline data may be available. A challenge where teachers' competence and patience were tested.

Discussion

The VUCA period was an unprecedented period in the history which shattered the academic practices of teachers. Things become ambiguous and uncertain because teachers were not exposed to emergent and catastrophic situations while taking pre-service curriculum. Teachers were becoming unready, uncertain, anxious, incompetent to face the VUCA period because they did not possess enough cognitive, technological, social, emotional, spiritual, and work-life balance appropriate skills to face catastrophic situations. They were a product of education curriculum that dwells on the normal setting of the education history.

To underscore, the aforementioned findings of this study presented a number of lessons to learn as good and essential inputs to reshape the landscape of our education curriculum. This reshaping of curriculum provides soft skills for pre-service teachers to work with balance in an ambiguous future. Reshaping the landscape of the education curriculum would include integrating courses that answers the need and aspirations of teachers. Table 1 explains what are the courses and soft skills to be integrated in reshaping the landscape of education curriculum, thus preparing the pre-service teachers for more resiliency in the unknown future.

Table 1. Proposed Courses for Reshaping Academic Landscape of the Education Curriculum

Voice of Teachers	Lessons Gained	Curricular/ Extension Implications
1. Mental wellness preservation	Lack of skills to build psychological walls to avoid too much stress absorption.	Topics or courses that can be integrated are: a) Innovative Mental anxiety management b) Catastrophic Crisis management c) Work-life balance: A lifestyle d) Innovative Ways of doing things at all times. e. Critical Role of Leadership I Education
2. Physical health protection	Teachers were not ready to handle hygiene and sanitation	Hygiene and sanitation be a part of the curriculum.

3. Spiritual and morale booster	Teachers needs spiritual reinforcement to remain positive and hopeful during the occurrence.	Education should not only focus on things of the mind but things of the hearts as well. Spiritual activities should be an integral part of the curriculum.
4. Personal quality time	Overworking is bad.	Work Vis-à-vis Family
5. Instructional Advancement nostalgia	Teachers were not used to virtual professional advancement.	Uphold the value of virtual platform engagements by enhancing online and offline tasks.
6. Assessing student outcomes was a great challenge	Teachers lack the skills in assessing students' outcomes in the virtual modality of instruction.	Innovative ways of assessing students' outcomes.

These interventions above show mindfulness on the lessons learned from the needs and aspirations would impart soft skills to the pre-service teachers reducing stress and at the same boosting their inward coping resources (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). Pre-service teacher training has to be enriched by applying the new normal and innovative ways of doing things. Curriculum makers of education need to revisit the content of the professional compendium of subjects in light of the findings of this study so that they would be able to integrate socio-emotional new normal competencies of pre-service teachers, enabling them to be ready to face the challenges in the unknown future.

Implications

The proposed intervention drawn from the findings of the study can have three (3) future relevant applications; 1) it could be a basis for curricular enhancement for pre-service education curriculum; 2) it could be a basis for webinars that address teachers mental health and preservation, and 3) it could be a basis for an extension project to the education community of the region. The target clientele of the webinars and extension project and activities could be both the in-service teachers of the Department of Education and the pre-service teachers of the university in the region. This would hopefully equip everyone to face another severe pandemic incident in the future.

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Statement of Disclosure

There are there are no competing interests to declare by the author.

Biographical Note of the Author

Dr. Emmie M. Cabanlit is a graduate of Doctor of Education in Educational Planning and Management at the University of Southeastern Philippines, Davao City, Philippines, where holds the rank as a Professor. She is the Program Coordinator of Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management, at the same time a Program Head of the Bachelor of Elementary Education. She has presented research papers both local and international. Formerly, she was a Principal III of the Department of Education, where she served the department for twenty years before she joined the university. The author is academically inclined that she was able to

establish a scholastic record in her studies and was awarded as Magna Cum Laude in her baccalaureate degree.

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